

## **Living Faith: *Madrassa* Education in Kashmir**

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Kashmir was a Hindu majority region but the tyranny of Hindu kings and rigidity of Hindu elite Brahmans coupled with their hegemony had made the common masses averse to Hinduism and they accepted Buddhism for solace and equal rights, but after sometime Brahman elite struck back and Buddhism lost its foothold in Kashmir. Islam in Kashmir did not come in the form of conquests or invasions by Muslim rulers but it spread through the peaceful spiritual preaching of the Sufis. Eminent historian Prem Nath Bazaz says “Politics had dehumanized the Kashmiris, Islam made them men again. Just as the Muslim rule was established in Kashmir without much bloodshed, so was Islam spread throughout the length and breadth of the valley by peaceful preaching and lucid persuasions of Mir Sayyid Ali and hundreds of the Sayyid missionaries who came from Hamadan and other parts of Persia.”<sup>1</sup>

The earliest known Sufi in Kashmir was the Turkistani Suharwardi Hazrat Sayyid Shrafuddin Abdur Rahman known as Bulbul Shah, who travelled extensively in West and Central Asia before finally arriving in Kashmir in CE 1295; in the reign of the Hindu king Raja Suha Dev. It is believed that he stayed in Kashmir only for a short while on his maiden trip, but later he came back in CE 1324 in the reign of the Buddhist ruler Rinchen Shah, whom he converted to Islam,<sup>2</sup> and who laid the foundation of the Muslim rule in Kashmir which then continued for centuries. Bulbul Shah succeeded in making few converts to Islam through peaceful preaching, but with the death (alleged murder) of Rinchen the valley retrograded back to Hindu rule.

The next Sufi who preached in Kashmir was the Iranian Kubrawi Hazrat Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani (b. CE 1313/14) who converted many Kashmiris to Islam along with his seven hundred disciples and acquaintance Sayyids (*Sadaat*) who preached through every nook and

corner of the Valley. He brought social, economic and political revolution along with the religious one. Islam eased the rigid caste boundaries which were upheld by Hinduism, thus hundreds of poor peasants entered the fold of Islam. He and his *Sadaat* brought many new arts and crafts to Kashmir which ushered an economic revolution among the poor masses and made them financially strong.<sup>3</sup> He also penned down *Zakhirat ul Maluk*, a treatise for rulers on Statecraft though Muslim rulers of Kashmir neglected it, but as a great scholar and prolific writer he penned numerous Sufi treatises in Persian and Arabic. He was aware of the conditions prevalent in Kashmir, despite being strict in matters of Shariah he introduced the collective loud chanting of litanies in praise of Allah and the Holy Prophet (SAW) after the Dawn Fajr prayer, the *Aurad-i Fathiyya*, a booklet he compiled resembling the mantras which Hindus chanted in the temples. It is still followed in many mosques and has now grown as an indigenous practice which is unknown beyond the Kashmir.

However as a Sufi, most of the teachings of Syed Ali Hamdani particularly as espoused in his political treatise, *Zakhirat ul Maluk*, were abhorred by the newly converted Muslim rulers. According to Hamdani, the Non Muslims had to pay *Jaziya*, remain subservient and not allowed to build any new temples. So it was unacceptable to the king as political pragmatism demanded that the faith of his majority subjects be respected. These strict and rigid conditions on Non Muslims as espoused by Mir Syed Ali Hamadani have drawn flak and severe criticism from various quarters too. S.A.A Rizvi writes, about these conditions on Non Muslims as, “In emphasizing such a covenant, Syed Ali was acting as an *‘alim* and not as a Sufi. Sultan Qutub-ud-Din adopted Persian dress and divorced one of his wives whom he had illegally married earlier.<sup>4</sup> Also A. Q. Rafiqi in his book, *Sufism in Kashmir*, takes a similar stance and describes Syed Ali Hamadani’s mission in Kashmir as a failure because Sultan Qutub-ud-Din did not subscribe to his political ideology of imposing severe and rigid code of conduct of the Sh’afi law upon his Non Muslim subjects. Also another writer describes the relations between Sultan Qutub-ud-Din and Syed Ali Hamadani as not cordial. “There was a conflict between them,

arising from their different attitudes towards Non Muslims. Thus it made it impossible for him to be reconciled with the policies of Sultan Qutub-ud-Din. Dissatisfied with the Sultan's response to the teachings, Syed Ali Hamadani decided to leave Kashmir."<sup>5</sup> Some meticulous researches rebut these views about the personality of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani.<sup>6</sup> So Mir Syed Hamdani did not have time and opportunity to establish any full fledged *madaaris* in Kashmir.

Here it may be noted that recent research shows Muslim presence in the Valley before the arrival of these Sufis. Legend is that the Prophet (SAW) had dispatched two emissaries to the court of the seventh century Kashmiri king, Venna Dutt, who is said to have been so impressed by their exposition of Islam that he began "to lead a simple life and even distributed one tenth of his agricultural produce amongst the poor and needy as *ushr* (an Islamic levy)."<sup>7</sup> Despite the presence of Muslims in Kashmir it remains a fact that only after the advent of Sufis did the Islam spread on a mass scale and became a new creed of the people. The sufis did establish some hospices, *madaaris* and also the Muslim kings established them where the new converts of Islam would be imparted teachings of Islam, Qur'anic recitation and learning few verses. Some scholars who had migrated to Kashmir, also established their *madaaris* and wrote *fatawa* but most of the *fatawa* or legal opinions were articulated by the King in consultation with jurists.

Sufism in Kashmir developed its own indigenous form which is popularly known as Rishism<sup>8</sup> whose greatest proponent was Shaikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani (1356-1440) popularly known as Nund Rishi. Nund Rishi made Kashmiri poetry as a genre to carry the message of Islam among his fellow Kashmiris and his poetic compositions, *shrukhs* are still accorded as the finest pieces of literary gems in Kashmiri language and are granted the status of *Koshur* Qur'an or Kashmiri commentary on Holy Qur'an. The life style of these Muslim Rishis drew heavily upon pre-Islamic traditions. They spend long periods in forests and caves practicing stern vigorous austerities for spiritual upliftment, though Noorani later came to believe

that renouncing the world was cowardice and escapism from the reality and brutal facts of life. A true, Rishi he stressed must actively intervene in the day to day affairs, and take side of the poor, oppressed and wretched ones of the earth. He crusaded against the oppression by elites, castist Brahmans and the 'Ulama attached to the royal court, following his criticism and being vocal as a champion of the rights of the poor thousands entered the fold of Islam. The Mughal Emperor Jehangir in his autobiography *Tuzk i Jehangiri* says about these Rishis that “Though they have no religious knowledge or learning of any sort, yet they possess simplicity and are without pretence. They abuse no one; they restrain the tongue of desire and the foot of seeking. They eat no flesh, they have no wives and always plant fruit bearing trees in fields so that men may benefit by them; themselves desiring no advantage”

The valley of Kashmir with the inception of Islam did undergo drastic changes at all levels and strata of society. Islam in Kashmir was not a result of some brutal and bloody conquest but by the efforts and toil of Sufi Saints. It is due to the abundance of these Sufis and Rishis at every nook and corner of the Kashmir that valley came to be known as *Pir Vare* (abode of saints). These Sufis had certain specific characteristics which set them apart from the mainstream 'Ulema and literalists, and these principles guided their individual and collective lives.

These Rishis always stood for Communal harmony, love for all humanity and Social Justice. Thus said Noor-ud-Din Noorani about Communal Harmony

*Children of the same parents,  
When will Hindus and Muslims cut down the tree of dualism?  
When will God be pleased with them and grant them his Grace?  
We all came into this world as brethren  
One lives in a palace, another in a hut  
Still as brothers we came here all,  
But now we are strangers and foes to each other  
O God! When will this ever cease?*

He further says

*We belong to same parents,*

*Then why this difference?  
Let Hindus and Muslims worship God alone.  
We came into this world like partners.  
We should have shared our joys and sorrows together.*

Noor-ud-Din was preceded by Lalla Aarifah or Lalleshwari (Lal Ded or Lal Mouj) the former used by Muslims and latter by Hindus to describe her, though she did not convert to Islam but was deeply influenced by its fundamentals and tenants espousing humanity, fraternity, equality and communal harmony. Her verses known as *vaakh* in Kashmiri are still part and parcel of the local vocabulary and folklore. She castigates the Brahman greed for animal sacrifices as,

*It covers your shame,  
Saves you from cold,  
It's food and drink,  
Mere water and grass,  
Who counseled you, O Brahman,  
To slaughter a living sheep as a sacrifice,  
Unto a lifeless stone.<sup>9</sup>*

She revolted against the existing monopoly of knowledge and learning by Brahmans who took pride in describing themselves as learned,

*The thoughtless read the Holy Books,  
As parrots, in their cage, recite Ram Ram  
Their reading is like churning water,  
Fruitless effort, ridiculous conceit.<sup>10</sup>*

She described the various rituals and practices as obscure and useless and preached love for all humanity.

*Siva abides in all that is everywhere  
Then do not discriminate between a Hindu and a Musalman  
If thou art wise, know thyself  
That is the true knowledge of the Lord.<sup>11</sup>*

Noor-ud-Din paid Lalla rich tributes in these famous verses,

*That Lalla of Padmanpore  
Who slepted down her throat, the Divine nectar  
Was an avtar of ours  
O God, grant me the same spiritual power.*

The Rishi inspiration and culture owes its popularity to various factors, among them the non proselytizing missionary activities of Rishis, little concern towards the establishment of religious *madaaris* and remaining aloof from the power centers and ruling clique were the characteristics that won the hearts of millions of Kashmiris. The message of Rishis passed through oral medium from generation to generation and few established hospices, but institutionalized *madaaris* were not a part of the Rishi culture. This Sufi and Rishi culture along with the conversion of Kings and establishment of Muslim rule later resulted in the mass conversion of the Kashmiris to Islam.

The decades passed and the monarchs changed but the common people continued to live in harmony and peace only to be disturbed time and again by skirmishes, internecine wars and foreign invasions. Most of these disturbances were of temporary nature, but during the rule of Chak dynasty, the persecution of majority of Sunnis at the hands of Shia minority led Chak rulers sow the seeds of discord that paved way for the invasion by Mughals in 1585 led by Akbar who was waiting for an opportunity to annex Kashmir to his Kingdom. Later, he sent the last independent ruler of Kashmir, Yusuf Shah Chak in exile to Bihar where he died a sad unsung death.

With the decline of the Mughal rule, Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras ruled Kashmir. They committed numerous atrocities against Kashmiris. During Mughal and Afghan rule some *madaaris* were established, few existing ones given grants and others encouraged. But the Sikh and Dogra period witnessed antagonism towards these institutions, some even fell into dismay and various declined. Education was confined to a specific class of people who had the caste or material privilege. Education under Dogras was mostly imparted on traditional pattern through *tsatahals* or traditional schools. It meant *gurukul* for Pandits where Sanskrit learning was imparted and Qur'anic education for Muslims in *madaaris*. The *madaaris* also trained students in Persian language. Also there was a huge network of *makaatib* associated with each big mosque, where children

were taught to read Qur'anic Arabic but without understanding it. The working hours were mostly at dawn or dusk.<sup>12</sup> Persian language was the gateway to administrative posts, but due to the Hindu nature of the Dogra regime, most administrative posts of the state bureaucracy were monopolized by handful Pandit families.

Even obstacles were insurmountable for establishment of religious *madaaris* in the nineteenth century. Allama Anwar Shah Kashmiri, who was educated at Deoband and struggled for three years to establish a *madrassa* at his birth burg in Lolab to enlighten his people about the correct tenets of Islam at last gave up his efforts and settled down permanently in Deoband.<sup>13</sup> Today, he is considered one of the stalwarts of Deobandi school of thought in whole South Asia.

The Pandit Hindu minority of the Valley was spared from the persecution and oppression so were the upper caste muslim Syeds, Pirs and Khojas.<sup>14</sup> Pandits, Syeds, Pirs and Khojas were exempted from the *begaar*<sup>15</sup> that every Kashmiri Muslim was eligible for. The oppressive and discriminatory nature of Dogra regime towards Muslim subjects was documented by various visitors and travelers. But these Muslim Syed and Pirs did continue a tradition of Qur'an teaching and learning in their individual capacity. They taught Qur'anic recitation in mosques and even their women taught Qur'an in their homes. They were known as *Oatanjis/Ustanjis* (Female Qur'an teachers). The local boys and girls went to their homes for learning the recitation and they paid them in cash or kind for learning the book of Allah. This was also an important activity and role that was confined to Syeds and Pirs.

### ***Madrassa Education in Kashmir after Indian Independence***

With the end of Dogra era, the autocratic rule was over, but the family and personality oriented politics continued.<sup>16</sup> In this new scenario, the old loyal class of Dogra regime was disempowered. The land to tiller act got the Jagirdari system abolished. In most cases the landlords were paid nominal or no compensation. This Act made Sheikh Abdullah darling of the masses. This one step disempowered some Khoja Muslims too.

They bore the double brunt because unlike Syeds and Pirs most of them were involved with business and maintaining huge chunks of lands. They had distaste for education because they were not interested in jobs as it did not offer them lucrative material gains. Syeds and Pirs being poor and dependent on Khojas for their survival when confronted with the overhauled system were the first ones to avail the fruits of the new system. They had been educationally aware, as it was the only criteria that offered them an elevated social status. They would offer their services to Khojas and survive by conducting the religious rituals whether teaching Qur'an or leading prayers. The Khojas continued with the Dogra norm of not availing education in the first two decades in post accession years. Syeds and Pirs now had to avail the state patronage in the form of government jobs that were previously monopolized by the Pandits. So being aware of the prospects of education and continuing with their previous normal routine, Syeds and Pirs were the first among Kashmiri Muslims to avail the educational opportunities. Unlike the Khojas, they let their women to be enrolled in schools too and allowed them to go for jobs too.<sup>17</sup>

The distribution of land and educational opportunities over the next few decades gave rise to the middle class in Kashmir. The development of middle class had diverse impact and ramifications on the Kashmiri society. Maharaja Hari Singh in late 1930s had started compulsory but coercive schooling (Jabari schools). The parents were compelled to enroll their children in government schools of their locality. This trend was continued by the Sheikh Abdullah's government and a generation was rendered literate.<sup>18</sup> The state continued its efforts to establish more schools, colleges and universities.<sup>19</sup> These efforts continued with the establishment of professional colleges like Medical College and Regional Engineering College in Kashmir. But the events of 1953 that led to the deposition and incarceration of Sheikh Abdullah disrupted the academic calendar as strikes and hartals were observed continuously in the next few decades.<sup>20</sup>

On the otherhand, the religious and revivalist movements also established a network of educational institutes in Kashmir. Jamiat e Ahle



Hadith, Jamaat e Islami, Anjuman Tablighul Islam, All Jammu & Kashmir Shariye Shuiyaan established their educational institutions.<sup>21</sup> These educational institutions were offering mixed curriculum of government/secular and private/religious education to the children. They also opened their doors to the girls. These educational institutions affiliated with these religious organizations certainly were a blend of *madrasa* and school system, although they were offering some religious education they were not *madaaris*. These religious and revivalist movements established new *madaaris* and some of them are affiliated with government institutions of higher learning and they grant dual degrees.<sup>22</sup>

The threat to be rendered irrelevant and left behind had prompted certain initiatives aimed at education of Muslims in Kashmir. Earlier too the educational activities of Christian schools coupled with Dogra rulers' prejudice against Muslim masses made religious scholars particularly of Mirwaiz family initiate a movement for social and religious reform. They intended to keep themselves relevant among the masses and fueled by the Islamic spirit of education and knowledge, Mirwaiz Rasul Shah established *Anjuman e Nusratul Islam* in 1889. Rasul Shah perceived Kashmiri Muslims to be ignorant and backward because of their lackadaisical attitude towards modern and religious education. To overcome these impediments he established a primary school namely Islamia school in 1899 under the aegis of Anjuman. This school opened new vistas of education for the masses. They were not reluctant to enroll their children in this school because Mirwaiz enjoyed the religious sanctity. Hence faith and morals of children were safe in Islamia school as compared to the missionary schools run by Christians. Mirwaiz did not openly oppose the missionary or government schools but set up an alternative model school and given his following particularly in the Srinagar city, the Anjuman schools were successful in educating the Kashmiri Muslims.

The education of many Muslims in different *madaaris* of India who were to play a pivotal role in education and social reform also

perpetuated mushrooming of *madaaris* in Kashmir. Mirwaiz<sup>23</sup> Yusuf Shah studied at Darul uloom Deoband. After completing his studies, he played an important role as the chief cleric of Jamia masjid, Srinagar. His role was instrumental in the political awakening of Kashmiris from 1920s till partition. Most of the founders of Islamic revivalist movement Jamaat e Islami (JeI) chapter in J&K (JeIK) were also trained in different *madaaris* and colleges outside the Kashmir valley.<sup>24</sup> If these young men through their education in undivided India had not been exposed to the new ideas and values of liberty, freedom and democracy then the struggle against the Dogra regime would have been delayed by few decades. The political, social and religious reform too would have taken a backseat if these young men who studied in India had not returned back to play an important role in their respective domains and fields.

JeIK was headed by the class of Pirs during its initial decades after it was founded in 1943.<sup>25</sup> In the post accession decades it played an important role in the educational and socio-political scenario of Kashmir. It rebelled against the traditional Sufi oriented clergy who were helping maintain the status quo. JeIK was confronted by the traditional clergy associated with the shrines and mosques. For JeIK leaders, Islam is a holistic system that espoused and encouraged its faithful adherents to take charge of the socio-political and educational leadership roles in the society. They were dissatisfied with the status quoist education and religious practices embedded in ritualistic Islam. For this revolutionary role of education and Islam had to be reinterpreted anew.

Similarly a number of Kashmiri youth went to Saudi Arabia and Iran in 1980s and after returning established a number of *madaaris* to propagate their interpretation of Islam. These *madaaris* are still functional in different parts of Kashmir and hundreds of students are imparted religious education in these institutions. Even now every year hundreds of Kashmiri students enrol in different *madaaris* in India and abroad for gaining religious knowledge.

The *madaaris* in Kashmir have witnessed a perpetual growth. Now in every area of Kashmir, a *madrassa* is present. They are affiliated with different *madaaris* of India, schools of thought and sects. Each *madrassa* has a curriculum that follows the *Dars e Nizami*, with few additions, deletions and deviations here and there. The course books are somewhat similar, except that the Qur'anic exegesis prescribed is the one written by some scholar of their sect. Similar is the case with jurisprudence, they follow a single school of thought, except for the Salafis and Ahle Hadith who may claim to follow no jurist or school of thought. But even in Salafi *madaaris*, the textbooks prescribed for jurisprudence are written by the Salafi scholars, in most cases those based in Saudi Arabia or Gulf. Similarly in JeIK affiliated *madaaris*, the basic textbooks and opinions of Mawlana Mawdudi and other JeI affiliated scholars are part of the curriculum.

In most *madaaris* affiliated to Deobandi, Barelwi and Salafi schools of thought, the students are trained in debating skill (*Manazira Baazi*). The aim of this exercise is to prepare the students with polemics so that they can defeat their opponent and declare the triumph of their school of thought. So the emphasis in most *madaaris* is to declare the other school of thought as deviated and straying from the path of Islam. The libraries of most of these *madaaris* are filled with tomes and volumes that are written by their protagonists rebutting the other sects. The curriculum, covert and overt, both, has components that have sectarian tinge among them. Later when these *madrassa* students graduate they opt for the same polemical approach and are filled with false pride that makes them believe that only their interpretation is infallible and gospel truth. So as is the case in South Asia and other countries where these *madaaris* have spread their networks, sectarianism is on rise. The case is no different in Kashmir. The sectarianism rules roost and to add insult to injury social media is being used to spread it. Earlier these sectarian debates were confined to mosques and books but the advent of social media has granted a new boon of life to these sectarian *mullahs*.

These sectarian mullahs do not allow change in the *madrassa* structure and curriculum. I found computers rarely in *madaaris*, even if there are few, they are for maintaining records and out of bounds for the students to operate. The use of ICT in classes is out of question. The pedagogy too is very traditional, where rote memorization is the ultimate goal. The prevalence of smart phones is a fact that has been accepted; otherwise for students it is abhorred. The development of critical thinking and questioning the teacher is looked down upon. The teacher still enjoys the reverence of a great saint or *Pir* whose sayings are sacred and beyond question. The manifestation of this reverence can be witnessed in the form of hagiographies that are written in huge numbers by the *madrassa* trained scholars. Unless the questioning spirit is not a part of *madrassa* curriculum things will not move in a positive direction. Pedagogy, curriculum and education have moved beyond them. The centre of education now is the student not teacher, textbooks and pedagogy. But it will take *madaaris* decades to learn about this simple fact and adopt child centric approach.

### **Gender and *Madrassa***

The curriculum of girl *madaaris* though based on Dars e Nizamiyyah but certainly the emphasis of girl *madaaris* is to prepare girls to become examples of obedient wives and good mothers besides carrying out the message of Islam.<sup>26</sup> The syllabus of girls' *madrassa* is different because women are supposed to have different capabilities thus they need differential treatment. Further only few girls are supposed to go for higher education or *Ifta* (Juristic knowledge) that will allow them to issue *Fataawa*.<sup>27</sup> Women are supposed to stay at home, raise a family and help the man in looking after his children. The whole corpus of religious literature produced about women just deals with their duties with few focusing on their rights. Most of the literature produced about women just deals about their responsibilities with little focus on their rights. Most of the literature is advisory in nature that is heavily influenced by social context and patriarchy.<sup>28</sup>

Most of the literature written on women by 'Ulama is advisory in nature<sup>29</sup> that intends to make them fit certain gender roles. South Asia and India particularly being a patriarchal society, women are supposed to uphold certain roles. Islam is used to justify and legitimize these gender roles, misogyny and patriarchy. The Muslim women are quite behind men in every aspect including socio-economic and political one.<sup>30</sup> The rights that Islam has bestowed on women including the property rights, *Mehr* (dower money), right to education and right to marry are violated with impunity. Most mosques and *madaaris* have no space for women. They continue to remain illiterate, existing in their specific gender roles as home makers and upbringing children. The *madrassa* teaches the same classical interpretation of Islam that was rooted in an agricultural society and is deeply patriarchal. The new discourse about gender, *Just Islam*, which engages with a new gender neutral and positive interpretation of Islam is quite alien to *madaaris*.<sup>31</sup> With the changing times, there certainly is urgency of *Ijtihad*<sup>32</sup> to deal with the context specific questions, Gender and Women rights being the most important one. The girl *madaaris* in Kashmir are no different than their counterparts in India. However their trajectory is different as Islam in Kashmir and Islam in India followed different patterns, routes and lived realities.

The mass conversion of people to Islam in Kashmir coincided with the foundation of Muslim rule in Kashmir,<sup>33</sup> but the status of women did not improve considerably, because Islam did not impact social life as such and the economic relationships between the kingdom and masses also maintained a status quo, though a few women did find their way to the echelons of power like the Queen Habba Khatoon, who was the Queen of Kashmir's last independent King Yusuf Shah Chak. But women like her were an exception than rule as the status of women in Kashmir remained almost the same if not degraded as before the advent of Islam. However, the Rishi syncretic culture allowed women to be a part of learning and spreading the teachings of *Rishism*, as many women were disciples of Rishi masters.

Islam neither contributed nor acted as a retribution for this progress and development of women. In case of education, the women belonging to the elite upper castes were the first to avail education and secure various lucrative administrative and educational jobs. Despite the fact that immediately after 1947 it was still considered taboo to send girls to school, but this taboo seems more circumstantial than cultural or religious because the schools were located at long distance from homes, hence parents preferred not to send their children. Also economic conditions were responsible for this apathy.<sup>34</sup> Further women *madaaris* were unknown to the Kashmiri Muslims. Women played no role when it came to religious articulation, discourses or jurisprudence. Only few women were associated with teaching Qur'an that too as a role passed from generation to generation in Syed and Pir castes. Similar was the case with mainstream education.

The harbingers of education in Kashmir were the English missionaries who established various schools in Kashmir. The credit for establishing a girl school also goes to these missionaries particularly to the efforts of Miss Muriel P Mallinson.<sup>35</sup> The Mirwaiz family of Srinagar also helped in the spread of education among the Muslim masses and one Mirwaiz Rasul Shah better known as Sir Syed of Kashmir established schools where girls were enrolled too.

With the advent of education among the elite women, their customs and dress patterns also depicted a remarkable change. *Burqa* and *Purdah* were discarded<sup>36</sup> by them, as this pattern of dress and seclusion of women was confined among the upper castes only and they comprised of the Syeds (those who claimed to be descendants of Holy Prophet Muhammad <sup>(SAW)</sup> and *Khojas* (those who belonged to upper caste and were rich too). The common women never practiced or adhered to the strict dress code of *Burqa* or *Purdah* though modest dress was always a part of Kashmiri culture. Kashmir being an agricultural society; a majority of women work in the fields hence cannot veil themselves strictly in long cloaks, *jilbabs* or *abayas*.

The upper caste women practiced *Burqa* or *Purdah* system more due to class, social and customary reasons than for religious reasons of Islamic piety. Thus with the advent of education and economic independence these upper caste women discarded the *Burqa* and *Purdah* only to be rescued and taken up by the lower caste women much out of the reasons for upward social mobility than for adherence to religious spirit.

In the wake of secular education, the religious education of women in most cases remained confined to learning to read Holy Qur'an without understanding it and performance of certain rituals. Islam only had a ritualistic and strictly traditional religious role in the lives of women who in majority of cases remained unaware about their rights and duties as enshrined and bestowed on them by Islam. The situation continued like this till early 1990s when the armed insurgency initiated in the valley.

Kashmir could not remain oblivious to the influence and impact of various Islamic Revivalist Movements that initiated in various parts of the Muslim world particularly in the Indian subcontinent. Among them three are worth mentioning: Jamaat e Islami (JeI), Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) (these two were founded in India) and Ahl e Hadith movement. All these three movements had only a slight influence on the lives of Kashmiri women though their influence was still remarkable if contrasted with the misogynist Deobandi and Bareilvi schools of thought, where women are supposed to play no socially engaged or public roles.

Jamaat e Islami, though founded in Kashmir in year 1945 but after the birth of present day Kashmir conflict in 1947, JEI Kashmir (JeIK) chalked out its own course suitable to the political environment and local milieu. It remained aloof from both JeI India and Pakistan and had its own indigenous character though Mawlana Abul Ala Mawdudi's writings continued to be the fountainhead of its ideology. JeI Kashmir was successful in impressing and influencing thousands of Kashmiri educated youth through its teachings and chain of schools that were banned in the wake of Emergency in India (1975-1977). It has a women's wing, but not much is known about it, though its members regularly meet for various

religious programmes through a vibrant network of study circles. Most of the women members come from those families whose male members are associated with the JeI. But the acquaintance of one's kith and kin with JeI does not guarantee one's induction in JeI. JeI still upholds the credentials of a strict moral and religious conduct for its cadres while inducting new ones and granting them membership.

But JeI women members and cadres remain in oblivion from the public eye and the teachings of Mawlana Mawdudi are conservative, cultural and traditional when it comes to role of women in public life. Its women members even if deeply religious don't play any big positive role in changing or uplifting the status of Muslim women in Kashmir. Their primary focus is to make Islamic political system prevail over other systems, and they deem that if they are successful in this particular goal then it will lead to the remedy of all other social, political and economic evils and injustices, including the problems confronting women.

Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) operates through the network of mosques and rarely there is an exclusive women's Jamaat. Once in a blue moon a women Jamaat accompanies men's Jamaat that mostly comprises wives of the Tablighi cadres, who would accompany them on various religious tours for particular number of days, during which the Tablighi cadres will put a stay in the mosques and try to reach out to other Muslims located near the mosques and convince them of coming to Masjids regularly and essence of joining the TJ.

The women associated with TJ are a miniscule minority who are very religious and their religion is confined to personal piety and reaching out to others to purify them from the instincts of baser self. They don't have a mandate for a larger public role and they cannot play a huge role in social reforms and in fighting violence committed against women. Also the women in TJ are supposed to remain invisible and their public roles are discouraged, guarded and vetoed by men. The primary focus of TJ is to make Muslims adhere to the ritualistic Islam and spread the message of Islam through their network.



The Ahle Hadith movement started initially as a movement to purify Islam from the yoke of sectarianism and religious divisions within the Muslim societies but in the process of this reformation it reduced itself to a sect too. They believe and adhere to a puritanical, scriptural and literalist interpretations of Islam, in which women have a very marginal role to play. The only contribution of Ahle Hadith sect is that they opened the closed doors of mosques on women and women had access to one of the religious rights, that other sects had denied them. It is a feature of every Ahle Hadith mosque that they have separate facility for women to offer prayers. But except that they also played no bigger role in the upliftment of women. Their primary focus is on purifying Hindu influenced Sufi practices prevalent in Kashmir, like reverence of shrines and grave worship. For them spreading *Tawhid* (oneness of God) is much more important than improving status of women.

Women constitute half of the population of any society. In conservative and patriarchal societies women are discriminated against in every field including politics, religion and education. In South Asian countries women are facing numerous problems including domestic violence, foeticide, wage disparity and illiteracy. Muslim women particularly in the Kashmir valley are among the marginalized sections of society. Muslim women are educationally backward and historically they have been deprived the right to interpret religion. The lack of religious authority among women is a result of various reasons. Muslim women are mostly ignorant about religious scriptures because they are educationally backward as there is a dearth of institutions that impart religious education to women.

One such glaring example is “Jamiat-ul-Banat” that was founded by JeIK. It is meant only to cater the educational needs of womenfolk and is a pioneer in this field among the other Valley’s educational institutions which banish the womenfolk from acquiring religious and worldly education. The Jamia is situated in the Umer Colony B of the Lal Bazaar area away from the hustle and bustle of city life. The chief administrator of

the Jamia, informed me that the institution was established in July 1999 by a Trust known as “Taleem-e-Niswaan Trust”. The purpose behind the trust was to quench the thirst of religious knowledge of young girls. The admission to this institute is solely done on the basis of merit in a written test conducted by the faculty. A girl must have completed her matriculation after which she is eligible for the test. This is unlike the *madaaris* where no pre requisite educational qualifications are needed. Those students who pass the test with distinction are then made to pay the admission fee of rupees 11,000 for six years which are to be spent for their bed, cupboard, utensils, books and other essentials during their stay at the Jamia hostel. Thereafter they have to pay Rupees 1500 monthly as tuition, mess and hostel charges. A ten percent quota for orphan girls is also reserved under which all the burden of their educational expenses is borne by the institution.

### **Course**

The six (6) year course is divided into three phases:-

A) Pre-Aalimah: It is of one year duration in which the student becomes acquainted with the Arabic language and grammar, so that she can understand, write and be fluent in the language which is essential to understand Islam from its primary sources.

B) Aalimiat: After the completion of Pre-Aalimah course, the students become eligible for the Aalimiat course, which is of two years duration, in which Qur’an, Ahadith, Fiqh and Muslim history are taught besides that English, Urdu and Islamic Studies subjects from the prescribed books by J&K Board Of School Education are also studied. At the completion of this course a course certificate is given to the students. Then they enter the final phase.

C) Faziliat: It lasts for three years, besides the religious subjects, books prescribed by Kashmir University (KU) for English, Urdu and Islamic Studies are also opted. The exam to this course is conducted by the KU itself which is equivalent to three years of bachelor degree from any other

college. Thus this recognition of the Faziliat makes it possible for them on the completion of the course (Faziliat) to be eligible for Post-Graduation and higher studies in various branches of Humanities from KU.

Besides education, all students are made familiar with the basics of computer sciences. To cater this need the institute has a well developed computer lab. There is also a vocational training center in which students are taught the art of tailoring. In addition to it, Home Science department renovates every student into a good chef. The executive body of the Jamia wholly comprises of Males, and the non-teaching staff consists of forty odd souls. The teaching staff of seventeen comprises of all females except four retired male ones. The hostel is also managed by women.

The administrator reminded me that only education in a narrow sense is not the sole purpose of this institution, but real character building and infusing spirit of piety among the womenfolk because our slogan is “The education of male is of a solitary soul whereas education of a female is education of the whole family”. He then continues on repeating different sayings of Prophet <sup>(SAW)</sup> in which he emphasized on the education of womenfolk. “Our students are working independently within Islamic boundaries in various educational institutions, as teachers, as preachers and also as students earning degrees in various fields” responds the administrator to my question as to what do the students opt after completion of the course from the institution. He informs me that the institute is in constant contact with its ex-students, they have been given “Eleven Point Programme” to work towards building a better and evil free society and we meet after every six months to know about their progress and gain from their experience in the field.

The administrator takes me on a roam in the varsity of Jamia, where I have a privilege to witness a well built up hostel, well furnished classrooms, well equipped library, a spacious dining hall and a well decorated but small auditorium where regularly debates, meetings and seminars are held. Besides this a medical unit is also installed equipped with services of veteran medical practitioner who caters to the need of the

sick students. A meeting room is also present where parents and “Mahram” acquaintances of students can meet them accordingly with instructions. Banat has also got its own vehicle for student facilities.

Having not been satisfied with official version only, I requested the administrator that I wished to interact with some students, he agreed and within minutes some Hijab adorned girls came and started answering my questions befittingly, “We came here because the education we receive here makes us to excel in this world as well as hereafter” answers one responding to my question “Why did they opt for Banat while other institutions were quite attractive too?” At this instance I shot another flaring question at them “Can you dare to compete with students of other institutions who are a lot more exposed to the society than you?” At this one of the students answers me back fluently in English that we have also got good exposure but within Islamic boundaries and are well versed to debate with common students of other institutions in oratory, writing skills and essay competitions.” What are you going to do once your studies are complete?” “We will start to work for Positivistic Islamic changes among womenfolk who are ignorant about Islam and study further”, they respond in unity.

They convince me that the conditions in the Jamia are ideal for their sound Physical, Moral and Intellectual development, also the Fiqh which is taught is non-sectarian which doesn't compartmentalize the students in different sects each striving to prove his interpretation of Islam as the Solitary Truth thus shattering the unity of Ummah beyond repair.

Besides this another girls' *madrassa* is run by Mubeena Ramzan known as Mahdutul Muslimaat Education Trust. Unlike Jamiatul Banaat this institution is imparting religious education to girls run and managed by women solely. But its degree is not recognized by Kashmir University as it is an independent educational institution. I met and interacted with Mubeena, the dynamic founder and chief executive of the Trust, at their Srinagar campus. She related the journey since the establishment of the institution to its present evolution in chronological order with brevity. The

institution was established in 2001 at Sopore and in 2008 the institution started operating from Parraypora, Srinagar. It has scores of girls on its rolls at both campuses who are studying in various levels of their religious courses. Its syllabus is similar to other *madaaris* with no inclusion of English language or social sciences. It is a purely religious institution. When I questioned Mubeena about the role of these women religious scholars once they graduate, she optimistically informed me that they do establish study circles, preach in women congregations and try to be better wives and mothers, as that is the basic role of a woman. I further questioned her about the public role of these women as religious scholars particularly articulating religious opinions, she answers quite partially. Although she speaks at various functions but she is not quite vocal and different in her opinions about various issues. Further she has no strong opinions about the change and modernization of *madaaris*. The empowerment of women that religious education should lead to is unfortunately not found. Women in Kashmir still face numerous problems particularly they are among the least educated sections of our society. Religious education instead of empowering them has further reinforced patriarchy, giving it a religious tinge, thus reinforcing their disempowerment.<sup>37</sup> In the Kashmiri patriarchal culture where a woman is treated as a second class inferior citizen whose only purpose of life is to satisfy the carnal desires of her husband, raise the children and look after his household, she is being praised for her selfless household activities and dedication towards her husband. Her salvation in the hereafter depends on how happy her husband is with her services. Any disobedience is treated as sin. She is doomed to raging fires of hell if her husband is unhappy with her. The disobedience of her husband is equal to disobedience to creator. The misogynist Hadith wrongly attributed to Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) tried to reinforce this mindset. The patriarchal mindset wants to demean the status of women by stating that “if prostration was allowed for anyone other than Allah then it would have been allowed for a wife to prostrate before her husband.” Also another misogynist Hadith states that, “If a husband is angry with his wife, Allah doesn’t listen to her prayers.”

Also another Hadith that tries to reinforce the upper hand of husbands by stating that, “If a husband doesn’t permit his wife to fast, she shouldn’t keep the non obligatory fasts.” When the patriarchy and misogyny is inculcated and camouflaged in religious terms then obedience and submission becomes a religious duty that few women would dare to oppose. Islam, Qur’an and Prophet Muhammad <sup>(SAW)</sup> gave revolutionary rights to women that were snatched by Muslim men over centuries. *Madaaris* instead of empowering Muslim women have further helped in reinforcing patriarchy and misogyny.

### **What Mars the *Madrasa* System in Kashmir**

Religious education is meant to inculcate ideal values among the students in order to prepare them to be contributing, productive and progressive citizens of a nation. Education is the backbone of every society. The more educated a society is more the chances of its being a leader in the comity of nations. Kashmir after its accession with India has progressed by leaps and bounds and education too has spread to all its nooks and crannies, but it has resulted in bringing down the rates of illiteracy rather than spread of education. The two terms literacy and education are mostly confused with each other, but they have a huge difference. Literacy is the ability of a person to read, write and speak a certain language whereas education constitutes the overall development of body, mind and soul. This holistic development of citizens continues to evade most literate persons. *Madaaris* too are able to churn out religiously literate people, but the real goals of education continue to evade them.

The ‘productive’ crop of millions of literates that our *madaaris* produce is ill conceived, half baked and ill prepared amalgam of ‘educated’ souls that alone constitutes the biggest flaw of our *madrasa* system. It is a complex problem that needs a multipronged strategy to rectify the wrongs. The shortcomings in the *madrasa* system results in our products being deformed, ill prepared and non concerned to baffle with the challenges of higher values of life, like truth, justice, compassion, empathy, mercy and productivity among the students for which they can

stand up in their lives and struggle. Instead most of them retrograde towards sectarianism and are easily tempted by superstitions and other vices.

In order to right the wrongs a complete overhauling of *madrasa* system alongwith the drastic evolutionary changes, are needed to be implemented time and again in a systematic manner. The flaws, challenges and shortcomings need to be corrected in a three pronged strategy at three different levels if we want our *madrasa* system to be a positive contributing cornerstone of the society.

### **Administrative Rectification**

Every educational setup needs a hierarchal system that can streamline the process of education through the web of institutions, teachers and administrative clerical staff. The system of granting recognition to the *madaaris* is shrouded in mystery. The basic criterion that renders a *madrasa* eligible for recognition is not transparent. Is it just that they need to have few students, boarding and lodging facility, following certain textbooks and subscribing to a school of thought that renders them recognition, eligibility and affiliation for running a *madrasa*? Many more *madaaris* are running without affiliation to any big *madaaris* on personal whims of an individual or a group of individuals. Numerous *madaaris* are being run in sub human conditions with no proper classrooms and other facilities that make them non conducive for teaching. But they continue to run for decades because there is no system of inspection, thus they continue to function while civil society turns a blind eye to their flaws.

The teachers in these *madaaris* are paid meager amounts of money as salaries and are hence exploited by the owners of these *madaaris*. No labour laws are applicable in this case that can give respite to these teachers. The condition is worst for female teachers as they are paid less salary as compared to their male colleagues. This sheer exploitation continues unabated and no civil society and scholars seem serious to put an end to this discriminatory practice.

The recruitment system of the *madaaris* should be meeting highest standards in order to choose the best candidates. But rarely there is an advertisement for recruitment of faculty in *madaaris* advertised. The recruitment is not held in transparent and accountable manner. Further to add insult to injury, the promotion of teachers again is very rare.

The next is the issue of infrastructure. Most of the *madaaris* lack proper infrastructure and in many cases the funds are not available for the infrastructure development and there is no accountability for the same. Plus the washroom and pure drinking water facility is improper in many *madaaris*. The food served in most *madaaris* is not a proper balanced diet.

### **Teachers: Builders of Nation or Scavengers of a Dead Society**

*“A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops”*

(Henry Adams)

A Teacher should be the most progressive elite of a nation. Teachers must be trend setters. The nation has bestowed a great task to a teacher to prepare generations of leaders in every field. The progress, vibrancy, productivity and moral health of a nation can be gauged from the status that a nation accords to teachers. The status of *madrassa* teachers in Kashmir is pathetic.

There are many reasons for this apathy. The meager salary of teachers in *madaaris* adds to their daily woes. During the survey, I didn't come across any single such *madrassa* that would provide its teachers more than ten thousand rupees per month. Most teachers are paid in the range of three to six thousand rupees per month. So whosoever is a teacher has a hand to mouth existence, and cannot be expected to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

Most of the candidates selected as teachers have not adopted it as the profession of first choice. They have just landed in the teaching out of chance or sheer luck, thus the aptitude that teaching demands is missing. Lack of aptitude renders them loveless for books and in these circumstances how can they inculcate the same among the students? I have



found few teachers studying books, except the prescribed text books that have been revised long back. The teachers use a certain reference, dictate the answers and the students cram them, sit in exams and pass the tests with below average grades.

The bookish knowledge is essential but beyond books they know nothing because they love to spend time in futile debating rather than in reading. The reading is abhorred and creativity is discouraged among teachers. Even the *madaaris* seem unconcerned about developing and harnessing the creativity of teachers. There are rarely any teachers trainings organized by the *madaaris*. Any new idea is grossly opposed and discouraged by the senior teachers and administrators who try to downplay it by stating that they are new to the *madrassa* system and it has been going on like the same since many decades. Any change in the status quo is not welcome, that kills the enthusiasm of the freshly recruited teachers desiring any change. The new aids of teaching learning methods and pedagogical practices are in vague as the teachers themselves are not aware of the same.

The biggest problem with teachers is that they fail to impress the students as role models. When they are de-motivated themselves how can they inspire the students for higher goals in life? When a teacher does not deliver well in *madrassa* how can he justify the claim of being a noble professional? The teachers in *madaaris* have failed to inspire students and become role models that would help in creating a better progressive future.

In many *madaaris* due to few on roll students, teachers make fictitious roll about students. This is essential as it helps in generating funds for the *madrassa*. It is another problematic aspect of functioning of *madaaris*.

### **Conclusion**

Many 'Ulama have talked and voiced concerns about the reforms in *madaaris* but they were never successful in implementing these revolutionary reforms or initiate and implement changes in the curriculum.

None of the reformist 'Ulama was successful in establishing any *madrassa* that bridged the gap between the modern and traditional education. In a way every new voice for change in *madaaris* has been neglected and marginalized. Even Ashraf Ali Thanvi's, Shibli Noamani's, Abul Kalam Azad's and Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's efforts met but with no or very limited success. In fact *madaaris* are defending the status quo on various pretexts including the conspiracy mindset, state intervention and nefarious designs of Zionist powers that are hell-bent to destroy the citadels (*madaaris*) of Islam.<sup>38</sup> So if the community has to progress, the *madaaris* need to keep pace with time. Otherwise they would be left redundant with time. The *madaaris* are relevant and would remain so in the coming decades so their reform is essential, but since last one century every attempt at reform has failed so, *madaaris* are not ready to accept the change. A discourse, process and way had to be created or invented to add value to the *madaaris* and render them relevant to our current times.

An English language course that empowers its students to master the universal language should be introduced in the *madaaris* that will increase their scope of activities, employment opportunities and skills. They can promptly visit different countries of the world and be adjusted in various fields besides representing Islam. The real task of *madaaris* should be to produce 'Ulema who cater to the public role of Islam. They should be well grounded in the traditional and modern knowledge systems, so that they can offer solutions in the light of Islamic principles. "In a world that is shaped and controlled by another civilization, the real task facing the Muslim Ummah is the creation of an intellectual space which is a genuine embodiment of the world view and culture of Islam. Without this intellectual space, reformist ideas and programmes will bear no fruit. Muslim civilization is in a dire need of genuine intellectuals; unless Muslim societies cultivate the barren lands of today's intellectual vacuum, the Ummah's marginalized existence will be institutionalized. The real world offers us no choice but to start our homework immediately".<sup>39</sup>

“The duality of the education systems which has found currency among Muslims after the establishment of the government (read colonial British) that holds sway over the country should be done away with and only one system should be adopted. It is for this reason that I have called my educational scheme ‘the theory of unification of the educational system’”<sup>40</sup> The founder of Aligarh Movement that led to the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University in 1920, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was aware of the shortcomings of *madrassa* curriculum and its failure in addressing the modern issues.<sup>41</sup> Dr Obaidullah Fahd remarked that, “*madaaris* should include change, overhaul their curriculum, add new subjects, have Hindu scholars invited for guest lectures and be mobilized for introducing change within”.<sup>42</sup>

The *madaaris* still have not opened their doors to the new subjects because for them:

- “1. Western culture and Indian philosophy weaken Islam and therefore no such subjects should be introduced
2. If any modern subject is taught at all, it should be Islamised first
3. It is better to give Islamic education to Muslim children who are studying in modern schools than to give modern education to *madrassa* students”<sup>43</sup>

So Western education too needs to be reformed only then will it be acceptable to the Muslim ‘*Ulama*’.<sup>44</sup> Though there are instances in history when integration of traditional and modern education was attempted. It was experimented with by the famous Arab reformer Shaikh Tahir Al Jaziri of Syria who was the torch bearer of this trend. During the reign of Governor Midhat Pasha, he had established a society called Al Jamia al Khairiyah al Insha al Madaris under which he had established thirty *madaaris* which helped preserve rich Islamic heritage and also taught modern subjects to students.<sup>45</sup> The inclusion should be like religious subjects are taught in a school for an hour or so, instead of be allocated to modern subjects in *madaaris*.<sup>46</sup>

To conclude, serious efforts need to be undertaken on multiple levels so that *madaaris* are rendered vibrant. These *madaaris* should not only produce more prayer leaders and *madrassa* administrators but leaders who can guide the Muslims using the prevalent idiom and language.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir Cultural and Political from earliest time to present day*, Gulshan Publishers, Srinagar Kashmir, 1954, p. 74.

He further writes about the impact of Islam on Kashmir as, “Had Kashmir not adopted Islam and Muslim rule in the 14<sup>th</sup> century it is difficult to say what would have happened to it. It might have perished. Surely the powers that were generated among the people in various branches of creative life such as learning art and architecture would not have come to play. By coming into contact with a new culture and civilization as a result of Muslim rule, Kashmiris extricated themselves from the morass in which they had fallen and in which they were sinking deeper and deeper. Now they started their life afresh”. Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> There are conflicting reports about his conversion.

<sup>3</sup> Syed Ali Hamadani and the advancement of Arts and Crafts in Kashmir, in Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi, *Islam and Sufism in Kashmir*, Sarup Book Publishers, New Delhi, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> S.A.A Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 1978, Vol. 1, P-295-296.

<sup>5</sup> Shafi Ahmad Qadri, *Kashmiri Sufism*, Gulshan Publishers, Srinagar, Kashmir, 2002, P-169.

<sup>6</sup> M Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's Transition to Islam, The Role of Muslim Rishis*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Mohiuddin n.d *Islam in Kashmir*, in F.M Hassnain (ed), *Heritage of Kashmir*, Gulshan Publishers, Srinagar. Also there are other stories like Kalhana, the noted twelfth century Kashmiri Brahman scholar, writes in his celebrated *Rajatarangni* that the Kashmiri Hindu King Harshadeva(CE 1089-1101) employed many *mlecchas* (a derogatory term he uses for Muslims) in his court and army.

<sup>8</sup> See Muhammad Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's Transition to Islam, The Role of Muslim Rishis*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Jayalal Koul, *Lal Ded*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1973, p. 110.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 107.

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- <sup>12</sup> After *Fajr* morning and *Maghrib* evening prayers.
- <sup>13</sup> Nazir Qadri, Allama Muhammad Anwar Shah: *The Pride of Kashmir*, self published, 2015, p. 82.
- <sup>14</sup> Syeds are the Muslims who trace their lineage to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The Kashmiri Syeds trace their roots mostly to central asian distant lands, maintain and take pride in being migrants from other lands. They practice endogamy and look down upon the native Kashmiris as converted Muslims. Pirs are local converted Kashmiris who like Syeds distinguished themselves in Persian and Arabic learning. They attained social status due to their learning. Unlike Syeds, Khojas and Pirs did intermarry. Khojas are Muslim most of who are native Kashmiris but they too enjoy upper caste status, with the distinction that they are rich and mostly a business community, unlike Syeds and Pirs whose economy was related to religion and performing rituals. Dogras had bestowed Jagirs and endowments to these Muslim Syeds and Khojas like Pandits as they were inevitable for their rule. See Dr Bashir Ahmad Dabla, *Directory: Castes in Kashmir*, JayKay books, Srinagar, 2012.
- <sup>15</sup> It was a form of bonded labor that Kashmiri Muslims had to undertake for the Dogra regime. The Dogra soldiers would select able bodied young men from a locality who were to act as laborers and porters for the Dogra soldiers. They would carry their ration and ammunition in the harsh winters on perilous mountainous roads and passes as far as Gilgit and Baltistan. Most of them would perish during the journey. C.E Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, Dilpreet Publishing House, New Delhi, 2015, pp. 237-238.
- <sup>16</sup> Sheikh Abdullah led N.C was aggressively intolerant of dissidents and critics. Sheikh banished, exiled, incarcerated all members of political opposition and dissidents, including politician and historian Prem Nath Bazaz.
- <sup>17</sup> It was quite unusual in such a conservative, patriarchal and traditional environment for women to work in government offices and schools. But in that sense Syeds and Pirs were quite progressive. They even sent their daughters for higher studies in different states of India. This progressivism was more driven by instinct of survival and staying relevant as in the changed regimes the patronage of the Khoja class was not available to Syeds and Pirs as earlier. So only by availing the opportunities of new education they could survive and maintain the caste pride and social status. But not everything was rosy particularly for the women of Syed and Pir families. They had to face their own share of obstacles as is evident from the autobiography of Shamlā Mufti, *Chilman Sey Chaman*, n.d, 1998, p 9.
- <sup>18</sup> G. Rasool & Minakshi Chopra, *Education in Jammu and Kashmir: Issues and Documents*, Jay Kay books, Jammu, 2016.
- <sup>19</sup> Prominent educationist Agha Ashraf Ali in his autobiography transcribed by Syed Habib titled *Kuch Tou Likhney Ki Loug Kehtey Hain*, Kashmir Times Publications, 2010 has vividly depicts the problems, challenges and impediments that government had to face while trying to spread educational network in Kashmir.
- <sup>20</sup> After his incarceration Sheikh Abdullah patronized the Plebiscite Front that continued to espouse the demand for implementation of right to self determination for Kashmiris. Sheikh Abdullah did not join the Plebiscite Front as a leader or member but only

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patronized it. P.F was used as a pressure group and bargaining chip against New Delhi. After the Indira Abdullah Accord in 1975, P.F was buried and N.C led by Sheikh Abdullah once again revived.

- <sup>21</sup> Nazir Ahmad Dar, *Religious Institutes of Kashmir*, Jay kay books, Srinagar, 2015.
- <sup>22</sup> These include but are not confined to Jamia Madinatul Uloom, Hanafia Arabic College, Jamiatul Banaat.
- <sup>23</sup> It is an indigenous religious institution of Kashmir. The Mirwaiz family played an important role in the spread of education in Kashmir. They have been involved in continuum in religious and political affairs of Kashmir.
- <sup>24</sup> Maulana Gulam Ahmad Ahrar, Hakeem Ghulam Nabi, Syed Ali Shah Geelani all had studied in different madrasas and colleges of India. Khakhi Muahmmad Farooq, *Jamaat e Islami Jammu wa Kashmir Ki Chand Aham Shaksiyaat*, Chinar Publication Trust, Srinagar, 2017.
- <sup>25</sup> JeI was founded in Pathankot in 1941 in undivided India. The J&K chapter was established after two years.
- <sup>26</sup> Muhammad Aziz Saieb Al Mazahiri, *Ladkiyun Ki Aela Deeni Taleem Ka Masla*, in *Deeni Madaris Aur InKey Masail: Maqalaat e Seiminaar*, Idarah Ilmiyah, Azamgarh, India, 2007, pp. 112-113.
- <sup>27</sup> Mareike Jule Winkelmann, *Reading the minds of young Muslim women: Girls Madrasa in India*, Hope India Publications, Gurgaon, India, 2007. The ethnographic study of a girl's madrasa can be generalized for most of them with certain exceptions.
- <sup>28</sup> One example of such piece of advisory religious literature is that of *Bihisti Zewar* written by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi who was one of the stalwarts of Darul Uloom, Deoband. This book was for a long time given with dowry for young brides to understand their duties towards their husbands and family.
- <sup>29</sup> Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi's, *Bihisti Zewar*, is a glaring example of this fact.
- <sup>30</sup> Zenab Banu, *Muslim Women in Political Process in India*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2016.
- <sup>31</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Rights of Women in Islam*, New Dawn Press, New Delhi, 2004 and Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999 and *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*, Oneworld Publications, Malaysia, 2006.
- <sup>32</sup> Al Haj Moinuddin Ahmed, *The Urgency of Ijtihad*, Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi, India, 1992.
- <sup>33</sup> Though historian-journalist like Muhammad Maqbool Sahil holds the Muslim rule in Kashmir as alien too, as both Sultan Sadruddin, who was the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir was a refugee of Ladakh and converted from Buddhism to Islam, while his successor Sultan Shahabuddin Shahmiri was also not a native of Kashmir. See Muhammad Maqbool Sahil, *Tanzay e Kashmir Tarikh Key Aaiyeny Mein* (The Kashmir Tangle in Historical Perspective), Apple Books, An imprint of Watan Publications, Srinagar, 2011. But the difference among these Muslim rulers and later ones starting from the Mughals is that they didn't consider Kashmir as a conquered

territory, neither did they rule it as an occupational regime. They adapted to Kashmiri ethos, were based in Kashmir and their power centers were in Kashmir, unlike the others, who looted the resources of Kashmir and their power centers were based outside. They could never assimilate themselves to Kashmiri ethos neither didn't Kashmiris integrated with the mainstream of these occupying powers. Herein lays the difference that Maqbool Sahil tries to overlook.

- <sup>34</sup> Farida Abdulla Khan, *Other Communities, Other Histories A Study of Muslim women and Education in Kashmir*, in Zoya Hasan & Ritu Menon (ed), *In a Minority Essays on Muslim Women in India*, Oxford University Press, India, 2005
- <sup>35</sup> For more about the efforts of Christian missionaries in spread of education in Kashmir, See C.E Tyndale Biscoe *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, Ali Muhammad and Sons, Srinagar, Kashmir, 2006.
- <sup>36</sup> See Shamla Mufti, *Chilman Sey Chaman*, (From Oblivion to Public Life) Urdu, autobiography, ex-principal of Government Women's College, Maulana Azad Road, Srinagar, publisher, n.d, 1998.
- <sup>37</sup> Juhi Gupta, *The Future of Indian Muslim Women: Fatwa versus Feminism*, Readworthy Publication, New Delhi, 2010.
- <sup>38</sup> Maulana Abdul Razak Iskander, *Tahafuz e Madaris Aur 'Ulama wa Taulba Sey Chand Baatein*, Maktaba Shah Waliullah, New Delhi, 2017.
- <sup>39</sup> Omar Naseef Abdullah (ed.), *Today's Problems, Tomorrow's Solutions*, Mansell Publishing Limited, 1988, p. 56.
- <sup>40</sup> Maulana Sayyid Manazir Ahsan Gilani, Introduction and Translation Madiha Younas, *Outlines of a Unified Educational System for Muslims* occasional papers 90, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan, 2008, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>41</sup> Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Maqalat e Sir Syed, Vol 8*, compiled by Maulana Muhammad Ismail Panipati, Majlis Taraqi e Adab, Lahore, 1991, pp. 75-76.
- <sup>42</sup> Dr Obaidullah Fahd though has an expertise on Muslim revivalist movements but has translated from Arabic a treatise about duality of education systems written by Dr Taha Jabir Al Awani, *Deeni Taleem: Islah wa Jamood ki Kashmakash Ka Mutala*, Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, 2012.
- <sup>43</sup> *Mulk wa Millat Ki Tameer Aur Dini Madaris*, Idara Ilmia, Balariaganj, Azamgarh, 1994. The above noted points are the crux of argument of most papers compiled in this book.
- <sup>44</sup> Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Nizam e Taleem: Magribi Ruhjanaat aur Iss Mey Tabdili Ki Zaroorat*, Syed Ahmad Shahid Academy, Rai Bareli, India, 2012.
- <sup>45</sup> Uzma Naheed, *Traditional Madrasas: Deoband and its Inspiration* in Tahir mahmood (ed) *Politics of Minority Educational Institutions: Law and Reality in the subcontinent*, Imprint one, Gurgaon, Haryana, 2007, pp. 184-185.
- <sup>46</sup> Maulana Syed Jalaluddin Umari, *Deeni Uloom Ki Tadrees: Hindustan Key Madaris Ka Nisab aur Iski Khasusiyat*, Markazi Maktaba Islami, Publishers, Jamia Nagar, Delhi, 2009, p. 16.