

ENGLISH PEDAGOGY IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: HISTORICITY AND GROWTH

Aneesa Bashir (Ph.D. Scholar)

Mewar University,

Rajasthan, India.

***Abstract:** English Language, the primary lingua franca of the world, has today established itself as the only bridging language across cultures, regions, nations, and continents. It has succeeded in earning a lasting place on the academic map of the country for it is the language of excellence, education, research, IT, business, Science and what not. Almost all our activities revolve now around it. It symbolizes better education, brighter future, better culture and higher intellect. It is truly the most preferred language which leads one to gain greater employability, higher paying jobs, strong mobility and a great deal of success at all stages of life. Now in India, English enjoys the status of a second language. Over the years, English has been taught in our educational institutions and it has been made a compulsory subject in the syllabus of all Indian schools including J & K.*

This paper will make an attempt to show the history and growth of English language and how it reached to the state of Jammu and Kashmir and evolved here through ages as the most important language of education, administration and research. It will also show how it has emerged now as the most significant language for one and all in India. It would further make necessary investigations into the problems of language reaching to the higher educational level of the State.

***Key Words:** English Language, Historical background, English Education, Educational Commissions.*

Main Argument:

In the emerging world order, historicity of language has specified importance. Language is marked as the vehicle for expression of cultural values, aspirations and instrument of conserving culture. As such Language possesses certain homogeneity of culture and is characterized by common traits in history, folklore and literature. Among various cultural symbols religion, race, language, traditions and customs etc differentiate an ethnic group from the other, language is thus the most potent cultural marker for any group identity. Its spatial spread over a fixed territory makes language more important than religion as a basis of ethnic identity formation.

This research paper has been undertaken to analyze the complex dynamics of language and education in the multi-lingual state of Jammu and Kashmir. Often described as a three-storied construction composed of three geographical divisions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh bound

together by bonds of history and geography and linked by a common destiny. The Jammu and Kashmir State presents a classic case of linguistic and ethno- religious diversity.

Like other parts of the country, traditionally language and education in the state of Jammu and Kashmir was imparted through indigenous institutions. These indigenous institutions were under the influence of Afghan, Sikh, Muslim and Dogra rule. The regions had witnessed centuries of vicissitudes and mapping of languages with their individual historical courses with their distinct socio-political character. The Ancient Kashmir was known for its center of Sanskrit learning. Kashmiri scholars made a significant contribution to its language and literature. Since two thousand years, Kashmir has been the home of Sanskrit learning and from this small valley masterpieces of history has been evolved- poetry, romance, fable, and philosophy and what not. Kashmiries are proud of these literary glories from their land.

For centuries Kashmir was the house of the greatest Sanskrit scholars, and at least one great Indian religion of 'Shaivism' has found some of its most eloquent teachers on the banks of the Vitasta. Some of the greatest Sanskrit scholars and poets were born, and wrote in the valley and from it has issued in Sanskrit language a world famous collection of folk-lore. (116)

In the field of Philosophy, Kashmir's contribution is the "Shiva School of thought", which assumes a distinctive character in the Valley. "It is known as Trika (Triple) Shastra, as it pertains to the three central matters of greatest importance namely (a) man (b) his universe and (c) fundamental principle which keeps on restoring order, equilibrium and harmony in the universe which was later disturbed and disrupted by constant change. The three great Acharyas of this school are Vasugupta, Kallatha and the great Abhinavagupta. Hundreds of other Kashmiri philosophers, and thinkers wrote masterpieces on this philosophy in the subsequent periods of our history.

Another distinct school of philosophy was the emergence of Mahayana Form of Buddhism during the time of Kanishka, when the 3rd Buddhist Council met here at Harwan. It was Vasumitra and Nagarjuna who gave profile and form to this new school of thought. Nagarjuna, in the words of Havell, was the Luther of Buddhism, the apostle of Bhaktimarga, who would find means of expression for the deep seated religious instinct of the masses, through the way of devotion and dedication to the divine teacher, rather than through the dry agnostic philosophy of Hinayana School. This creed became very popular in China, Japan, Tibet and in Ladakh. Nagarjuna has been raised to the exalted position of Buddistava and enjoys the reputation of being the greatest thinker of the age. In the field of Literature, there is hardly any branch of learning which the people of Kashmir had not studied, and to which they did not make their own original contribution. In philosophy, religion, medicine, astronomy, literature, engineering, sculpture, architecture, painting, music, dancing, and in many other walks of life the progress of Kashmiries since the ancient times is astonishing and striking.

The arrival of Buddhism although did not affect the learning of Sanskrit. Islam replaced Buddhism and penetrated deep into the valley. This period was a period of glory for the promotion of learning in the form of creating madrassas and makhtabs where Sanskrit and Persian

were taught. However, Kashmir once again witnessed succession of struggles and with the advent of Chaks the educational development in the valley got badly affected. The educational expansion in the valley once again gained momentum when Akbar conquered Kashmir in 1587. This was followed by Afghan rule which began from 1752 and virtually pushed the valley back into darkness for 69 years. Both Hindu and Muslim started to systematize themselves and voice their grievances. These developments compelled Dogras to take some measures to advance the educational conditions of the people in the state. Maharaja Gulab Singh (1846-1857), the first Dogra ruler of the state made no efforts to educate the masses. It was during the reign of his successor, Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885) that a few steps were taken to stimulate and regenerate the social life of the people. He was the first Dogra ruler to take an interest in the education of the state. He established few customary schools and pathshalas. The first state school was opened in Jammu in the early 1860s and another such school was opened in Srinagar in 1874. The curriculum however followed the traditional pattern and the education was imparted in Persian and Sanskrit.

It was in 1854, Colonel Martin and Reverend Robert Clark who were on tour to Kashmir, on return represented the needs of the Kashmiri people to the Christian Missionary Society in London. Rev. Robert Clark received much support for his views and a requisition was sent to the Christian Missionary Society to start work in Kashmir. It was decided that on priority basis these missionaries should be to work for the improvement of the people of the state. These missionaries encouraged them to pay attention to the enormous problem of mass illiteracy. The opening of the mission school heralded the dawn of the new era. A change in the medieval educational system was brought in 1880 when the first school on modern lines was established by the Christian Missionary Society of London on the outskirts of Srinagar. The founder of the school was J. Hinton Knowles. However, the response was not satisfactory. The school was latter shifted to the city in 1890 and was named after reverend Biscoe, who took over in 1892. The school to this day is one of the foremost educational institutions in Srinagar and has played an important and positive role in bringing in and spreading modern education in Kashmir. In 1904, for the first time the State Council provided funds for the establishment of two girls' schools at Srinagar, one for Hindu girls and the other for Muslim girls, which were to be managed by separate committees of the leading men of the two communities under the guidance of State educational authorities. It was the first attempt witnessed at imparting secondary education to women. A few of the primary schools were raised to the secondary level. There was increase in the number of schools to twelve. The instructions given in these schools were virtually restricted to reading of literary and religious books, writing, some arithmetic, needle and other minor household work. During this period the State council's initiative was limited. With the result female education still remained far from satisfactory.

In 1907, Maharaja Pratap Singh appointed a committee to formulate a scheme for imparting education. In 1909, he again stressed upon the need to draw up a scheme for making primary education free and compulsory throughout the state. Many private institutions started receiving grant-in-aid from the government. College education was available only outside the

state and very few families could afford the expense while others could not avail this opportunity. As Kashmiri residents were reluctant to leave their homes to go to Punjab or elsewhere for receiving training in institutions there, alternative arrangements were made in the State. Colleges were established in Srinagar and Jammu in 1905 and 1907 respectively. Sri Pratap College was the first college in Srinagar established in the year 1905. The College was affiliated to the Banaras Hindu University and was open to both men and women but it remained predominantly a male institution.

To review and evaluate the educational development of the state, the State Government constituted various education commissions from time to time. In this regard a Conference of Education Offices and Headmasters of secondary schools was held during 1915-16 under the chairmanship of the then Education Minister. The Conference laid emphasis on the retention of vernaculars as the medium of instruction upto Class VII and for History and Geography upto class VIII as well. No mention was made about the introduction of teaching of English in school education.

On the other hand the Muslim associations: Kashmiri Conference and All-India Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Education Conference raised the issue of education of Muslims in Kashmir and started submitting petitions to the Maharaja. On March 17, 1911 the first Kashmiri Conference was held under the chairmanship of Khan Bahadur Gulam Sadiq at Lahore, to look into various problems including the educational backwardness of Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir. This was the first petition to the Maharaja, setting forth in general terms the grievances and needs of Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir towards their up gradation and education.

On May 22, 1914, yet another petition was submitted by Syad Mohsin Shah, Honorary Secretary, in a Muslim Kashmiri Conference at Lahore, suggesting remedial measures to deal with the backwardness of people in the state. The demands of the Conference were the opening of Primary schools on an extensive scale, creation of scholarships, and distribution of text-books among students and appointment of Muslims from outside the state to the education department. Bishan Das, the then Education Member of the State Council was not satisfied with the progress. On May 20, 1915, he expressed his opinion in the State Council for examining the working of the education department and suggested the appointment of an Education Commission to be headed by an expert educationist for this purpose. He suggested the name of Sir Henry Sharp, Educational Commissioner of the Government of India in this respect. It was in this context that Maharaja Pratap Singh's government in 1916, appointed an Education Commission with Sir Henry Sharp as the President to look into the educational system, and to suggest such measures as it might deem desirable to further advance and expand the existing system of education and language. In addition to all this he also recommended medical, mechanical and agricultural schools but in all these courses he did not mention anything related to the teaching of English in the education system nor was anything said about the medium of instruction through which education would be imparted to the students. Thus, the expansion of education in the state started gaining momentum. By 1925 there were thirty-six middle schools for boys with an enrolment of 8169 students and six middle schools for girls with an enrolment of 1019, the

number of primary schools for girls stood at thirty-four and enrolment was 1945. In 1926- 1930 there were 480 students in Sri Pratap College. Another college, Amar Singh College was also established as a technical one in the 1930s, in the memory of the late Raja Amar Singh and given the status of a degree college.

The next important Commission followed some sixteen years later which came to be known as the Glancy Commission. This commission was appointed by Maharaja Hari Singh in 1932 under the chairmanship of Mr. H. Glancy to look into the grievances and complaints of the people and to make further recommendations. Some of the recommendations, which this Commission made, were:

- People should receive practicable encouragement in the matter of education.
- The Principal of S.P College, Srinagar should be careful to see that Muslims were given a fair chance of admission to the science classes.
- Allotment of the scholarships and free studentships were fairly carried out in practice.
- The number of Muslim teachers and professors in High schools and colleges should be increased.
- Appointments and scholarships should be properly advertised and given wide publicity.
- Due regard should be paid to the legitimate interests of every community in the matters of recruitment to government services and the grant of scholarships for training suitable candidates.

The state government in 1938 further appointed the Education Reorganization Committee under the chairmanship of K. G. Saiyidain. The committee again preceded various recommendations regarding the improvement and enhancement in the quality and efficiency of the teaching personnel; it recommended 'Urdu' written in Devnagri or Persian script to be the medium of instruction. This committee also made important recommendations regarding basic education formulated under the Wardha Scheme. With regards to girl's education, the committee recommended the opening of more primary and middle schools, increase in scholarships and distribution of free books as incentives. Till now the Commission however, made no specific recommendations on the place and role of English in the education of the state.

Immediately after India achieved independence in 1947, the whole country faced a major problem regarding medium of instruction. Whether English should be retained as a subject in education or should it be continued as medium of instruction. This controversy, however, did not affect the State of Jammu and Kashmir since Urdu had been retained as an official language of the state right from 1947. Several commissions were setup time to time to bring reforms in the educational system of the state. In 1947-1948 Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference was asked to form interim government in the state. Soon after taking over as first Prime Minister of the state, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah retained the portfolio of Ministry of Education under his control. The taking over of education portfolio personally, by the Prime Minister was a recognition of the importance attached to education in

the state. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah started bringing reforms and revolutions in the system of education. Along with bringing the education system under its purview, however, the state found itself responsible for the education of its subjects. Thrust was given to raise the general level of literacy as well as to provide adequate opportunities for Primary, Higher and Technical education. The most significant development in the history of education in the state of Jammu and Kashmir during the post-colonial period was the establishment of a full-fledged University at Srinagar. This development was a turning point in the educational history of the State. The University of Jammu and Kashmir came into existence in March 1948 as its affiliation with Punjab University was broken abruptly due to partition of the Country. The University was bifurcated into two divisions and was given a federal structure. The one was in Jammu division and the other in Kashmir division. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference thus tried to stand for an active and progressive policy of education which could help to carry the knowledge to the farthest and most backward areas of the state. Education was not only made liberal, but also technical, and allied to the National Economic Plan.

In the future free and democratic state of Jammu and Kashmir, The National Conference looks forward to the time when women will take an active and honorable role in the development of the arts and sciences and the cultural life of the community. It calls for:

- a) Encouragement of women scholars and artists of all kinds.
- b) Inclusion of women in the cultural services of the State.
- c) Special provisions for the cultural development of women in villages and remote areas.

In the opinion of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah education for everyone was the basic need of the people if they were to emerge into enlightenment. Thus, efforts were made to bring a cardinal change in the educational system and work on this was taken up with great enthusiasm. This resulted in the gradual expansion of institutions at all levels and their number started increasing but these efforts could not match up with the requirements.

In 1950 The Education Reorganization Committee was framed which was also known as Kazimi Committee. This Committee was appointed by the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir state under the chairmanship of A. Kazimi, the then Director of Education to meet the needs and aspirations of "New Kashmir". The committee made various important recommendations, some of which are:

- 1) Mother-tongue should be used as the medium of instruction at the primary stage.
- 2) Regional language should be the medium of instruction at secondary stage.
- 3) English should be the medium of language at university stage with the federal language as one of the compulsory subjects.

Kothari Commission submitted its report in 1966 for improving the educational set up in the government and on the advancement of the general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages, need was felt to bring about those changes in the State of Jammu and Kashmir as well. Accordingly, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir appointed an Education Commission in April 1972 under the chairmanship of Shri Bhagwan Sahai, the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. In its report the committee recommended:

- 1) Growth in secondary education through careful planning, transfer of P.U.C and the first year of T.D.C to secondary schools and the development of a large scale programme of diversification and vocationalisation.
- 2) Revision and upgrading of curricula at the school stage with special emphasis on work experience, provision of opportunities for participation in community service and national development and the teaching of science, new mathematics and English.
- 3) Starting of three-year honors courses at the undergraduate stage.
- 4) Special emphasis on the education of girls and women (Report 1973)

Early 1970s witnessed the scene of massive student turbulence in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Strikes, agitations and boycott were followed by closure of educational institutions for a long period. To endure with these situations a conference was organized in 1974 under the chairmanship of Shri Bhagwan Sahai, the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. The Conference he state. One of the important measures was the legacy of English as a medium of instruction in our State has been given up immediately, replacing it by the regional language. Simultaneously, knowledge of the mother-tongue should be promoted. National Policy on Education recommended the 10+2+3 pattern of education for the country. In order to execute the recommendations of this policy the government of Jammu and Kashmir organized a state-level Conference in 1976 under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah. In respect of languages the Conference recommended the implementation of the three-language formula at different levels of education. The Conference recommended the teaching of Hindi and Urdu at the primary and secondary level. English was to be taught at the secondary level though as a separate subject. Urdu was recommended as the medium of instruction for all levels of the school education. The textbooks and guide books prepared in English/Hindi by the NCERT were to be translated into Urdu. It was also decided to adopt the mode of evaluation as prescribed by the NCERT. In 1978, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir appointed the Kashmir University Committee under the chairmanship of Badru-ud Tayibji. The main purpose of the Committee was to look into the performance of the University and suggest ways and means for improving its working and raising its all round standards. The Committee submitted its report in 1979. Among its various recommendations the Committee also made some important recommendations regarding the place of English in the educational system of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Some of the recommendations are listed below:

- 1) A course in General English should be introduced and made compulsory for all undergraduate students to enable them to use English as a library language.
- 2) The university's admission procedure should be streamlined. Only qualified students should be admitted in higher studies.
- 3) Honors courses to be started in selected colleges in the state. Facilitate should be provided to them for this purpose by the State Government.
- 4) Teaching methods be re-oriented to make a meaningful use of library facilitate provided.

- 5) For developing the academic standards of the affiliated colleges. University centers should undertake specific programmes including refresher courses.
- 6) A regular programme for the exchange of teachers between the university and the colleges to be introduced.

Excluding few, the reports of most of the committee had spoken nothing about retaining of curtailing of English as a subject or as a medium of instruction. However, practically speaking English continued to be the language of the government, public administration, the legislature and law courts. It is the language of commerce and largely of business; and it is the medium of instruction at the secondary, Higher Secondary, College and University levels. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is one of the few states in India where 'General English' continues to be a compulsory subject not only at the degree level but also at the undergraduate stage, higher secondary level and primary level as well. It has succeeded in earning a lasting place on the academic map of the state for it is the language of excellence, education, research, IT, business, Science and what not. Almost all our activities revolve now around it. It symbolizes better education, brighter future, better culture and higher intellect. It is truly the most preferred language which leads one to gain greater employability, strong mobility and a great deal of success at all stages of life.

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