Reflection of Kashmiri Woman in Folk Verse

CHAPTER Sixth
No study of a society is considered complete without a reference to the position of women in it. The position of a woman in a society reflects the cultural level, mental refinement and the standard of its civilization. The ancient historical literature bear evidence to the fact that women in Kashmir enjoyed the maximum degree of freedom and liberty. No socio religious pursuit or exercise was deemed complete without the active participation of the women. With the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate in the fourteenth century, women in Kashmir, received new incentives to continue their literary pursuits. This is evidenced by a galaxy of celebrated ladies Kashmir produced during the period. But the dawn of Afghan rule in Kashmir signaled an unending period of gloom, aversion and degeneration. In the wake of Afghan rule, not only the political fortunes of the state underwent a drastic change but the social institutions as well, did not remain unaffected. Kashmiri women, who once occupied a prominent position in the social milieu of Kashmir went into the deep oblivion of obscurity, ignorance, illiteracy, disease and dependence. Her responses, reaction and the protests against the system to which she was subject to, found expression in no other form as in the folk songs of "Rov and wanvun". Unlike historical literature, we do not find a stereotype picture of Kashmiri women in these rich folk melodies but we come across a Kashmiri women who is
full of virtues and vices and with all beauty and ugliness. We find her in the form of a sincere wife, helping her husband by discharging multiple of domestic and commercial duties; and at the same time we find in her the feminine frailty which prompts her to satisfy the sensual lust of her paramour. In the same contrasting portrayal, we see her as a compassionate daughter, providing every sort of relief and consolation to her parents and at the same time, we find her engaged into number of anti familial exercises as a daughter-in-law in her husband's house, causing rupture and disturbance in the other wise peaceful and cordial atmosphere. With all these contrasting colours, we find a true picture of Kashmiri women in different genres of Kashmiri folk literature and most particularly in "Wanvun" and Rov songs. These songs are said to be the running commentary of the sad plight of Kashmiri women, who in a particular period of our history were denied access even to the slightest degree of dignity and honour.

**Birth of a son was regarded fortunate**

There is ample evidence available in the folk literature which show that the birth of a son was regarded more fortunate than that of a daughter. A quite good number of 'Rov' and Manzly Bēth (cradle songs) refer directly or indirectly to the disappointment of a woman who had given birth to a female child. Take for example this cradle song.

Deke prezlium nikeney zenai,
Vowani kenh nai gam méy chum.
Hash Miani khoash Cham Tanai;
Vowany Kenh nai gam mey Chum.10

(My fortune Changed with the delivery of a male issue,
I am relieved of agony and pain.
My mother-in-law looks pleased with me now,
I am relieved of agony and pain).

OR

In the following verse of a wanvun (marriage song) parents recall the painful moment when a daughter was born to them. See for example

zen chani dowakh tchayi wanchanyarien,
Dariyen peth chi hore wanvūn.¹¹

(your birth caused bend to the towering trees of the jungle, now on your wedding, fairies are singing melodies to depart you).

However, in absence of any female child in the family, parents and elders in the family usually expressed pleasure and delight on the birth of a daughter. This is depicted in this cradle song,

Bakhte bed kūr seny,
Dūr deny dūre deny.
Hēri tāpe rūde shreny,
Dure deny dura deny¹².

(Our daughter has come with a good luck for the family.
She is the priceless diamond; she is the priceless diamond.
She is just like a fountain shower,
Amid scorching summer heat).

The enthusiasm created by the birth of a male child was equally contrasted by the down mood of the family members especially woman folk at the birth of the female child. But with the passage of time, it has been observed, that the daughter would receive extra love and care from the parents and family elders and there are innumerable child songs (shury Beth) which deal with the extra parental devotion towards their daughter. this is also substantiated by the prevalence of an institution of “Dowakhtari-khana-Nashin” during the period under reference. According to this scheme, the husband of the daughter is made to stay in wife’s house, instead of taking wife to his home.
A portion of a marriage song concerning the delight of a father expressed on the occasion of bringing the husband of her daughter at his home is given as under.

Bebe seng kuri khānai moje
Chōn deka lōn hai garai āv,
Maji ros kuri khanei mōjī -
Chōn deka lōn hai garai āv.¹³

( O my sole daughter 'stop shedding tears, you will not have to part with me!
Your husband will settle with us permanently in your parental home.
O, motherless daughter- don't sob and sigh-your husband will stay with us permanently in your parental home.
we have a very good number of folk expressions in the form of proverbs , riddles and sayings which furnish suitable information on the subject under discussion.

**Early Marriage**

Though the popular literature does not provide us any definite clue which may help us to ascertain the actual marriageable age of Kashmiri girl, but we can infer from innumerable folk expressions that girl were married at the very early age during the period under review¹⁴. As already stated in the foregoing pages that the first phase of the period under review (1819-1846) witnessed appalling heights of immoral activities; the parents thus were found always disturbed to get their daughters married as early as possible¹⁵. In addition to this the poverty factor could not also be altogether ignored which might have prompted the parents to get their daughters married at the early age. Our folk literature abounds in references which suggest that girls were married at the early age. In the following ‘Rov’ song the pain experienced by such girls is expressed in a heart piercing tune. See for example:

Sane chum gomut vele vesy bavei,
Havei chowakh tai jigreky dāg.
Tele tche pheri yeli bo ravei,
Havei chowakh tai jigreky dāg.
Mēly maji tchorum azlei lonei,  
Bali hai osum vuni lowakchar.  
Mūr bo zejnes tez tule narei,  
Havei chowakh tai jigrekty dag.\textsuperscript{16}  

(O, my friend would you like to share my woes?  
i am plunged into grief and gloom!  
You will definitely have a remorse!  
But, when I will depart the world around!  
My father managed my marriage, without taking me into confidence,  
i am reduced to ashes inwardly, who is there to listen me?  
Would you spare some time to share my agony and pain?)

In yet another verse, we find the same protestive tune of a Kashmiri girl, who had been given in marriage without being asked for and how she spends her days in an environ of mistrust and suspicion, is depicted in this ‘Rov’ song.

Shine mani hendy pēthy endri gejsei,  
Bali hai Rovum tāza lowakachār.  
Wāvas athi soze tethis gravei,  
Havei chowakh tei gigrety dāg.\textsuperscript{17}  

(I have been allowed to melt like a frozen ice in a mid sun shine,  
Alas! I have been robbed of my beauty and youth!  
i will convey my sad impressions through a crow to my father,  
Shall it listen the song of my sick soul?)

In addition to this, there are good number of folk expressions such as ‘Bala Pan,’ ‘Shury Pan’ ‘Lev mur’, ‘Poshi ther,’\textsuperscript{18} etc. etc. Which stand as an evidence to the fact that girls in Kashmir were married at the very early stage of their life.

In one of the Kashmiri proverbs girl has been dubbed as the “pot of the fire in flames over the head of the father. If any leniency was displayed on the part of the father in discharging the marriage of his daughter, parents were made subject to severe criticism and ridicule\textsuperscript{19}. But at the root of the seemingly social transaction, the
youth, beauty and the blooming dreams of the delicate bride were left to destroy unsung and unheard.

As for the marriage negotiation, we can infer from popular literature that the bride and the bridegroom in a Kashmiri social life, during the period under survey had no voice in the selection of a match. The opinion of the girl or the boy relating to their marriage negotiation was regarded nothing less than indecency and opprobrious. No doubt, in Muslim families, the consent of the boy and girl was sought before penning down the marriage agreement (Nikah) but it was done more as an act of formality rather than enacting the conviction. The silence of a Muslim girl was generally taken for her approval to the marriage alliance. The Kashmiri proverb in circulation is an indicative to this set of situation. The proverb is as under:

"Sherif kori heng tchopei gō ankár."

(The very silence of a girl symbolises her decent character and gentleness and her approval for marriage contract)

Ignoring all together the opinion of a girl or boy, before being tied into the wedlock, often resulted into the post marriage conflicts, psychological tensions and the domestic feuds. There are number of Kashmiri folk songs which contain ample information regarding the disastrous effects of the inconvenient and uncongenial marriages. Some times parents did not hesitate to marry their young daughters to the aged and ailing persons in exchange of petty benefits. See how an aged and handicapped bridegroom married to young and beautiful bride is made subject to abuse and ridicule in this Kashmiri satirical folk song.

Ade khor ade lyok gomut chotye,
Ami khote oswe motye jān.
Not only among Kashmiri Muslims was the child marriage in vogue, but the practice was in operation among the Kashmiri Pandits too. Literary evidences suggest that many Hindu girls would become widow even at a very tender age and spent the entire life in seclusion and servitude. The grim picture of the enforced widowhood among the Kashmiri Pandits is stated by P.N. Bazaz in these words:

"The savage practice of burning widows had been abolished but the custom of enforced widowhood still persisted among the Pandits. Its evil effects were worsened by the bad custom of early marriage. The status of a family was measured by age of a girl at the time of nuptials; the younger the girl the more respectable the family. Many of the girls lost their husbands in childhood. There were cases when girls of tender age, mere tiny toddlers, became widows. What mental agony and physical privations a maiden endured when, on reaching the age of puberty, she learned that she was married long ago and her husband was already dead! And the wretched widow could claim no friends to champion her cause."

As revealed from Hindu folk religious song, Kashmiri Pandits considered it irreligious to marry their daughters even at the very tender age of eight. It was believed equal to sin, if a Hindu parent showed a slightest delay in getting their daughter married. This is evidenced from this “mekhi vatchin”.

Telik bata kya darmi esi
Sata verish karan esy keniydän.
Timnei sôwargekí bār vethy esî
Ram Lakhman vane vesîj gov.

OR

Azik bata kya pepi esî
Sata veryshan koriyen aṭhadaran
Timnei nargekí bar vethy esî
Ram Lakhman Vanvesy geî. 26

(Pandits in the past were highly religious minded,
They married their daughters before they reached
seven years age.
We presume a corner reserved for them in the
heaven,
Abiding the dictation of Father, Ram and Lakhman
decided to leave for the jungle.)

OR

(Pandits of today are sinners;
By allowing their daughters to stay at their fathers
house at the age of seven.
Hell awaits them!
Ram and Lakhman proceeded towards jungles)

But the trend underwent an abrupt change at the close of the period under
review. This was largely because of the modern education, initiated by European
missionaries, that a roll of young Kashmiri Pandits began to crusade against the age
old practice of early marriage, child widowhood and sati.

But so far Kashmiri Muslims were concerned, the trend continued even after
close of the period under survey. No attempt was made even by the religious elite
among the Muslims like Mulhas and Pirzadas to liberate the Muslim community
from the clutches of age old traditions and practices. 27

The unmatching conjugal relations sometimes led girls to resort to immoral
exercises, which not only brought shame to the parents but all the relations had to
cut a sorry figure. How this ugliest reality of our social life has been metaphorically depicted in this folk verse.

Subheki vāvo bar me eleravō,
Nikum Mōl rat gare tchir hō āv.29

(O, cool morning breeze, don't cause the door of my house open,
Father of my baby (husband) had reported back abruptly to his home.)

An address to the morning breeze was practically a hint to the paramour not to venture into her lovers house in presence of her husband. The above cited verse suggests that loyalty and trust was not the virtue that could always be attributed to Kashmiri women. Incidental exposure of such immoral exercise would often lead to divorces among Kashmiri Muslims. Even at times, it so happened that due to familial animosity, the conjugal partners were forced by their parents to break the emotional relations. Under such circumstances, the parted couple would never forget the delightful memories connected with their sweet conjugal life. The magnitude of the emotional crises caused by such forceful separation is portrayed in this Kashmiri proverb.

"Khetli ditchayokh kath
Temy dop myanian chi bhar vethy"

(A divorcee though she is!
But she still feels emotionally concerned
with her ex-husbands house).

Knowing that she had been divorced long back; and had ceased to be the member of that family, she still feels worried to see her ex-husband's family members in trouble. The contrasting shades of Kashmiri women depicted in our folk literature is difficult to find in other literary sources.
Marriage of a boy and girl was almost settled in the family of like socio-economic level. An indication to this social dimension can be discerned from below proverbs.

Zechi zet te pechi pat
OR
Hivis hue go nabad tchioh.

The only qualification which was put to strict examination was to see whether a boy was in possession of a strong muscular strength or not. Any boy lacking such a basic qualification was generally dropped out. Folk sayings like orzu te dor kot, hak bata khenewol and Hivis huo refer to some of the fundamental qualifications, generally attached with the institution of marriage in Kashmir. Any compromise even of a slightest nature on above cited conditions and qualification was bound to lead towards negative results in the Muslim family life in Kashmir.

Polygamy

As regards polygamy, we find uncountable reference in the folk literature, but the content and the treatment of various Kashmiri folk tales lead us to suggest that Hindus as well as Muslims opted for second marriage only after the death of their previous wives. No doubt, the institution might have been in operation in the families of the upper strata of Kashmiri society; but its presence among the commoners particularly during the period of utter economic crises could hardly be attested by qualification and merit. However, the frequent use of folk expression like "Sowan" in the vernacular, which stands for evil machinations of the co-wife could not be also ignored altogether. It symbolised a constant terror in the otherwise calm and cordial family life of Kashmir. Judging against this background, the presence of
the institution like polygamy could not be disputed altogether. In context of Kashmir society during the period under review, there could have been little for commoners to follow the feudal or elite tastes except during the periods of unavoidable urgency and need.

**Purdah**

In spite of being in majority, only the women of few privileged and orthodox Muslim families observed Purdah in the strict sense of the term. Not to talk in public, even within the four walls of their houses, these families, maintained separate chambers for their lady folk. In tune with the aristocratic and feudal temperament, women of the privileged Kashmiri Pandit families also adhered to a kind of veil which marked their special status and position. Barring these privileged and the Muslim religious families, there was no strict purdah system in operation in Kashmir during the period under survey. No doubt, Muslim women in Srinagar city belonging to the artisan families were in the habit of using a kind of Purdah known as Burqa when they usually came out of their dwellings for discharging any social assignment. As per the literary evidences, Kashmiri Pandit women belonging to common Hindu families did not use any kind of veil to conceal their charms. To quote G.T. Vigne, "There is no purdah or concealment of the features of women excepting among the higher classes". The habit of maintaining privacy and confinement by the privileged Kashmiri Pandit families seems to be guided more by aristocratic fashion than any religious dictation. A careful study of Kashmiri 'Rov' songs reveal that it had always been the ardent desire of women belonging to common folk to have a glimpse of the ladies of the privileged and the economically
well off families. With all probability, it might have been thought indecent and undignified by the upper class families of Kashmiri society to allow their lady folk to mix with the ladies of the common origin.

The inborn tendency of a fair sex to share every recreational occasion collectively of course, prompted the women of unprivileged classes to invite the ladies of the privileged one to take part in the group recreational exercises like ‘Rov’ especially on festive days of Idd and other occasions. The intense desire of women of common origin to enjoy the idd jubilation together with the ladies of privileged classes is expressed in a very touching style in this Kashmir ‘Rov’ song.

Pīr kōren quowārāba neryn-kati neran nebar lō!  
Sheikh kōren quowrāba neryn-kati neran mebar lō!  
Idd ayem rov hei karv dery gando vesev lō,  
Mire koren qowrēba neryn,-kati neran nebar lō!  
Awai Ramzan Quran Parv,-vele sarv jenat lō  
Mirza koren quawaraba neryn,- kati neran nerbr lō!

(Girls of Muslim Pir families cant move out of their dwellings-They maintain strict veil,  
Idd has come, let us sing idd choruses-It is futile to call the girls of ‘Mir’ family to share ‘Rov’ songs with us.  
Ramzan has come-let us recite Quran in melodious tune Girls of Mirza family wore pherans with qowaraba’ type sleeves- How is it possible for them to come out and take part in the ‘rov’ songs).

Even for common Hindu women, it was a dream desire to share any occasion of jubilation with the ladies of the aristocratic-Dhar family of Kashmiri Pandits see how this intense desire is expressed in this festive song of Kashmiri language-

Dhare bhayi vese cham mandāchan ches tai  
Vesi hund getche hā manze cham dowes tai.
(I crave to have a company of the daughters of Dhar family, inspite of my strong urge, I could not see them why? there is big high wall separating the two)

In Srinagar as well as in rural areas, the majority of the Muslim women had to work side by side with men either in the Karkhana or in the field. In these circumstances purdah was an object, which was hardly taken care of. Women folk in villages moved freely without any purdah and in urban areas too the women belonging to Hanjis (boatmen) Kander (bakers) dandar (vegetable growers) moved and exhibited their charms publicly. For this public orientation and the sense of superiority rooted in the perception of rich pedigree, Muslim religious families often treated these Muslim sections with disdain and contempt.

**Working women**

An attentive study of Kashmiri folktales lend us to hold that common folk believed less in gender discrimination particularly in context of work culture. We find abundance of information regarding Kashmiri women working side by side with their male partners in different disciplines of life. This is also substantiated by the information contained in the literary texts of the period. The folk poems like 'Kral Koer', 'Pehli Koer','Dhobi Bhayi', 'Kander Koer' and 'Grees Korey' bear ample evidence to the fact that Kashmiri woman discharged its professional talent very skillfully and thereby she would contribute in the overall welfare and the happiness of the family life. Not to talk of discharging domestic assignment or field works, Kashmiri women discharged the function of a shepherd lending sheep and cattle both in the plains and on the mountain summits of the beautiful valley. In the 'Pehly Koer' (shepherd girl) folk balled, Kashmiri girl has been shown in full possession of
professional wit and wisdom which she discharges while regulating the large flock of sheep. In ‘Kral Koer’ (potter woman) folk balled also, she is appreciated for her unmatching patience and person qualities. The folk poem “Grees Koer” not only unveils the beauty gifts of her bewitching youth but it also uncovers her resourcefulness to enact any kind of work assigned to her by her family members. From the content of above referred to poems, we can hold with less doubt that except the women of privileged classes, the ladies of common nature helped their families in multiple of ways and thus it carries enough to erode the myth that Kashmiri women were devoid of physical charms and professional gift.

The Widow

Reflections regarding widow in Kashmiri folk tales and proverbs draw us to believe that widowhood especially at a young age was considered to be the worst possible misfortune. Although, Islam does not put any restriction on the widow remarriage, but still the death of a husband would divorce a Muslim women from all the worldly gifts. She was looked down upon and on times was badly treated by her family members. The different folk expressions prevalent even today in Kashmiri language guide us to great extent in understanding the collective attitude and behaviour of the individuals towards the widows in the society. See the following folk sayings:

"Mowand kiyi diyi mowandi pam"
"Mowandi Nei qesmet asiha bad runei kyaze merihas”.
"Mowandi nish cha reny mangleyi gatchen”
"Moond kya di kowali bund”  

“It does not behave proper for a widow to pass bad remarks against another widow”

“Had widow not been herself unfortunate, her husband would not have died so untimely”
“You can not place a petition for husband before the widow”
“How widow could be expected to repair the cracks in a flooded river bank”? 

In sharp contrast to the description of a widow in the proverbs, we find revealing details about widow in number of Kashmiri folk tales. In folk tales a widow is often dubbed as the embodiment of human virtues like patience, tolerance, sacrifice and her commitment to the deceased husband is appreciated when she is being projected as taking every care to look after the relics of her dead husband. There are quite a good number of references in our folk tales wherein a Muslim widow is shown to as taking a job of maidservant in the rich Kashmiri Pandit family to earn the livelihood for herself and for her children. She also acted as a go between (manzimyor) arranging the marriage for Muslim couples.

But the most reliable companion, Kashmiri widow generally found in her isolation was the “Yender”, the spinning wheel. We have a good number of wheel songs (Yendre beth) which contain pathetic account of painful life of a Kashmiri widow. An attentive examination of these wheel songs unlock the deep pain and the pangs of Kashmiri widow, caused by her family members in permanent absence of his life partner. See how human pain is depicted with poetic touch.

From the above account, it looks less imaginary to hold that “Yender” (wheel) was not only a major source of widows sustenance but it was a friend in solitude, a solace amid exhaustion and a hope in misery.
Barrenness-woman's greatest misfortune

Along with widowhood, barrenness was also recognised as the gravest flaw of a woman. A barren woman was often compared to an eagle. She was given no respect and her voice in the household carried little weight and value. This is understandable, as motherhood is regarded to be the supreme function of women. Here are few folk sayings which may help us in understanding the general mood of the society regarding the barrenness of a woman.

"Vēntis hei keryze
Te hēntis kya karakh"
:"Hānt kya zani shury sund dōd
Gānth kya zani pūty sund dōd"
"Powatre bowachi hūn koawachi"

(Hard nut is fruitful enough than a barren lady)
It is impossible for a barren lady to have a slightest idea of labour pain)
A widow resembles with an eagle which is devoid of any love to chick.
(A barren lady likes to have a puppy in her lap than to remain childless).

In a joint family structure which was prevalent in Kashmiri during the period under reference, a barren lady was often made subject to taunts and teases especially from her mother-in-law and sister-in-law (Hash te zam). She was put to live under constant psychological strain and if she failed to ward off barrenness, she was forced to leave the house under the dictations of ‘Hash’ and ‘zam’. Sometimes she was not even divorced for years together and was left unattended in her parental house. The sad plight of such ladies is depicted in this folk saying.

"Setet verish beni che ametch sethe vehris bhēysis vapas"

("A seventy year old divorced sister had come back to her seven year old brother).

Under such strained situation, the only spot of solace for maltreated ladies seemed to be the shrine of any saintly soul. We have plenty of references available in
different genres of Kashmiri folk literature which may be advanced to attest our argument. Here we quote a verse of a folk song in which a barren lady is advised by her friends to visit the shrine of Sheikh Noor-ud-din to ward off her barrenness.

\[
\text{Alamdar sund patchi sān khasīvei} \\
\text{tālī nērān khabān tār} \\
\text{Sāth cheym tātī kowatch bervey} \\
\text{tātī nērān khabān tār}
\]

(0, lonesome and broken! You rush to the shrine of Sheikh Nur-ud-dīn at tchvar,\textsuperscript{50} Your dream and yearning will bear the fruit there! You reveal all your deepest pangs there, I am sure you will be blessed their with a similing hope!)

The same kind of feeling is depicted in this Kashmiri proverbs also.

"Demby dadi chī larun pewan astanan" (Barrenness prompts a lady to rush madly towards the tombs of the saints).

Though there was no restriction on the widow remarriage among the Muslims, it was found that the ladies whose husbands died even during their youth preferred to live lonely for their children than to go for second marriage\textsuperscript{51}. In case of Kashmiri Pandit family, widow remarriage was discouraged more by Brahminical conservatism rather than the personal wish or intention of the widow. To quote Bazaz:

"Divorce and remarriage of widows were detested by selfish Hindus who attached moral and religious stigma to these essential liberties and thus the unfortunate women remained subservient to the male authority for the whole of their lives. The magnitude of cruelty in enforced widowhood can be estimated by the fact that, in 1920 A.D, during Pratab Singhs days, there were thirteen percent of Hindu girls who had lost husbands in early childhood when they were totally ignorant of the significance of the marriage ceremony, or consequences of widowhood. Equally distressing was the case of hundreds of deserted young Hindu wives whom society refused the elementary human rights of divorce and remarriage despite the fact that they were known to be innocent and had been caste aside by the caprice of heartless husbands.\textsuperscript{52}\)
The estimation of A.L. Altekar regarding the position of widow in a Hindu civilization applies with equal justification to Kashmiri Pandit community. To quote him:

"Generally a widow, economically dependent on members of her husbands family, could be ill treated and abused, sometimes blamed for an unhappy occurrence in the family... She had to work hard and put up with all kinds of indignities and humiliation from seniors, sometimes, junior house hold members. And if this were not sufficiently disregarding, she was considered 'inauspicious'.

Not to talk in terms of degree or magnitude widowhood both among the Muslims and the Hindus was treated as a big family disaster and misfortune. This is also evidenced from the folk expressions where in, it is wished and prayed that the husband of a lady should remain alive with a smile on his face.

The commonest and the best way of blessing a married women in Kashmiri folk expression is

"Deke ruzy nei vara"
"Deke pushy nei vensi"
"Deke prezelinei vensi"

[Let your forehead (symbolising husband) remain safe and secure for all the times. Let your life partner remain by your side in all thin and thick. Let the shine of your forehead remain bright for all the times].

The worst possible curse which a Kashmiri women would give out of intense animosity and hatred to her enemy is that "let she become widow". In vernacular it is expressed as

"Mowande vedal getchynei"
"Peyi nei mondetion karun"
(You be destroyed like a widow
Let you live life of a widow)
Adoption

In order to manage an alternative for the natural heir, Kashmiri Muslims resorted to somewhat secular arrangement known as ‘Pisri parwardahi’. According to this system a male kinsmen or tribesman was appointed as a heir by a sonless proprietor to inherit his property. But the institution received little appreciation of the society as is evident from this proverb;

"Yi watchi taluk kari
Ti kati kari betchi taluk"55

(what a person can expect from his natural heir,
can not expect from adopted one)

In a published doctoral thesis Altaf Ahmad Ahngar gives his impression of the institution in the following words:

"Among Muslim agricultural tribes of Kashmir, customary appointment of a heir is in no sense connected with religion and is purely a secular arrangement resorted to by a sonless owner of land in order to nominate a person to succeed him as his heir. The object is not to secure any religious benefit for the soul of the appointer but to obtain a practical and temporal benefit."

Relations between various family members

From an attentive analysis of different categories of Kashmiri folk literature we find that there emerge certain stereotyped pictures of each relationship over and time again. For instance the, ‘Hash’ and ‘Zam’ and ‘Bei kakeny’ will be found behaving with each other in the same way in innumerable songs. Though the folk literature provides several pictures of a relationship, each of these has certain specific features which are repeated in more or less the same combinations. To go back to our example, the relations between the ‘Hash’ and ‘Nosh’ (sas and Bahu) are portrayed as discordant in majority of the songs while in few songs the relations between the two are shown as cordial. A study of these variations adds to the understanding about a
relationship derived from the study of its typical depictions. Let us now consider the relationship one by one.

**Mother and Daughter**

In Kashmiri oral literature, we seldom find a woman wishing to be a mother of a girl but the moment she is born, it captivates the heart of a mother. A Kashmiri mother is seen more inclined towards daughter than the son particularly at the marriageable stage. The "wanvun" songs sung at the time of departure describe in a very touching way the separation between the mother and the daughter. The following verses from a departure song show mother’s concern for her daughter well being in her husband’s house.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Az tam rechmeh dowad tei dane} \\
\text{Khanei mejh ghar getche khei} \\
\text{Kihey chak dilas tei konei chak bavān.} \\
\text{Kyazi chak tchali tchali osh travan, Aadench kurei} \\
\text{khasi soane takhtasBakhts geye bederiye.}^{57}
\end{align*}
\]

(Until now I have brought you up with milk and butter,
Now the time has come for you to depart your parental home.
Why don’t you express freely to your mother?
What grieves you inwardly my daughter?
You are destined to live a happy married life, This is indicated
by the golden decorated doll awaiting you in the courtyard).

The daughter also seems aware of the magnitude of her mother’s love towards her. This can be culled from the songs in which a girl, in her husband’s place, tells about her miserable life in the ‘veriv’ (susral) to her brother who had gone there. In nearly all such songs the girl asks her brother not to tell about it to her mother, for it would be unbearable for her. The following lines occur in several ‘Rov’ and ‘Vanvun’ songs.
(O, my brother, you are the sole source of my consolation,  
I am betrayed and broken in my husband's house!  
But don't reveal my sad plight to my mother,  
I will die if you reveal my condition to my mother).

A motherless daughter is always seen broken in tears particularly in her  
"Veriv" (surasal). If her brother fails to visit her veriv for long, she is shown in the  
songs as addressing to the wind around to convey her impressions of sadness and  
loneliness to her father and brother. If incidentally she meets any close or distant  
acquaintance, she does not miss the opportunity to reveal him or her miseries and  
woes.

zēry gowagleo maliyun ketey,  
Māliyun myon tule mului veley  
Shetch hai sōzās kāvas athey59  
Kiho kāvō őy nō ethey.

(Does any one know where my parental home is?  
Let me tell, it is on the way to tullamulla.  
If I see none whom I know! I will send the message through crow,  
Oh, crow, you will hardly be misled to reach the destiny my parental home)

In yet another 'chakri beth' (Folk choral song) how a motherless daughter  
consoles herself is expressed in a very touching manner.

Bebe myane zinde roz panei,  
Jan vendeyo yari jananei.  
Maji malyon yelichu asanei,60  
Raja malyon teli chu basanei, Mej panei chi taslah diwanei.  
(O, my father, I pray for your long life,  
in case mother is alive,  
Parental home looks nothing less than a royal abode,  
Mother is a great source of love and compassion).
Contrary to this cordial relationship that exists between the mother and the daughter, we find constant protests of a daughter in our folk tales against the step mothers harsh treatment. There is a famous Kashmiri proverb where in a step mother is equated with wild wolf or jackal.

"Voawre mej gei ven shej"61 In almost all folk tales which feature the antagonised relationship between the children and the step mother, children particularly female children are often shown grudging against the inhuman approach and the maltreatment of the stepmother’s. In some of such tales, a step mother does not even hesitate to poison62 the step children out of unimaginable grudge and hatred. However, it is this variation and contrast that provides real touch to otherwise ornamental literary creations. These literary expressions not only depict the overall mood of the society but these creations help in understanding the social pulse of the concerned society.

Beside being projected as an embodiment of noble human virtues, mother, in Kashmiri folk literature is presented as an effective tool of character formation. In one of the Kashmiri proverbs, she is compared with potter. (Moj geyi krej)- Mother is just like a potter. The way potter makes and moulds the raw mud to give new shapes and styles of his pots, in the same way mother displays her responsibilities in fashioning the character of her children. For her utmost love, compassion and selflessness, children in Kashmiri society are more inclined to their mothers than to their father. This is also endorsed by different folk expressions used as pledges and vows to attach more reliability and weightage to ones commitments. She is always seen painfully conserved for the general welfare and the happiness of her children63. In different folk
forms mother is always pictured as an unmatching symbol of sacrifice and servitude.

The mothers concern for her children is also depicted delicately in these folk verses.

*Tchope kero, Tchope karō
Rowani neri garyō,
Karo mej lejyō, hō nete hō.
Astanan zalei tile pej,
Mastana mej lej yō.
Chani bapth ves me gēj

(Stop crying! Stop crying,
I will adore your arms with variety of silver ornaments.
O, my hope, I am ready to sacrifice my life for you).
(I will offer heavy quantity of oil for the illumination of the shrine,
What then if I have to undergo torture and trouble to reach to a distant shrine!
You know that I have been robbed off all my valuable possessions for you).

**Hash and Nosh Relations (Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relations).**

One of the most intriguing relationship we find in Kashmiri folk literature is that of “Hash and Nosh” (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law). It is a relationship portrayed as one of mistrust, doubt, animosity and disintegrity. Kashmiri folk literature both in prose and poetry abound in references to the oppressive behavioural style of ‘Hash’ and how it affects the entire gamut of emotional scheme of family life has been the subject of major chunk of Kashmiri folk songs. In addition to this there is a sizeable number of folk sayings and proverbs in use even today which tell us about the unpleasant relationship between the ‘Hash’ and the ‘Nosh’. See for example these proverbs:-

i) "Hash to thez Nosh ti thez
Deg dez te vale kus"

ii) "Heshi hendy ti doh tchor
Te noshi hendy to doh tchor"
iii) "Nosh beni ne kur
Hash beni ne moj"

iv) "Nosh demie phoher
Hashi demie budith"

i) (Since both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law equally claim high pedigree, none is ready to remove a boiling pot from the burning stove which is ready to be spoilt).

ii) (In their own turn, both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law enjoy dictatorial positions in the family)

iii) (Neither daughter-in-law is any substitute for daughter nor mother-in-law can replace mother in love and devotion).

iv) (Remember, daughter-in-law I have given you a spoilt food I know, O my mother-in-law, I will pay you in the same coin when you grew old and grey).

It appears from the study of folk songs that the "hash" considers it to be her right to order about and scold the "nosh". Examples from folk songs of such assertions by the 'Hash' are innumerable. The 'Hash' may not say such things in real life but her desire to rule over the 'Nosh' is well known.

References regarding conflict between 'Hash' and 'Nosh' abound in Kashmiri folk literature. There are number of tales also that describe the cruelties of the hash. In some of the tales, 'Nosh' is shown as taking her revenge when she is in a position to do so or when she feels sure of her husbands support and patronage. In the following folk song 'Hash' is shown as poisoning the ears of her husband's daughter against the newly married daughter-in-law.

Hange mange bednām nosh bichari
Hashi hendy kharei kya wanei
Ōre yiwani wonenam heras
Nosh chei seras bhate khewān
Ōre yiwiāni wonenam zēmei
Dowahas nei meny nam kemikanh.
(My mother-in-law levelled baseless allegations against me, How could I recall the countless ill machinations of my mother-in-law. Without losing a minute, she complained about my over eating to my father-in-law. She even poisoned my husband's sister about my unfounded noncompliance of her dictates).

Not in tune with the established notion the content of some other proverbs and sayings suggest that the presence of the 'Hash' in a family and her taunting tune worked as a corrective against manifold family evils. Her presence in the family marked the discipline and order in the family life of Kashmir. By not allowing her daughter-in-law to indulge in non serious and meaningless pursuits, she played a positive role in bringing domestic peace and the prosperity of the family. It is perhaps, of this creative function that the presence of a 'Hash' in the family has been appreciated by the society. This is evidenced by the following folk sayings and the proverbs:-

i) "Hash ros ghara go peshe ros ler"
ii) "Hash ne zam wajare gam"
iii) "Verheji maktche per nei asi noshi nei asi hash tei zam"

i) (A family without mother-in-law is just like a house without roof.
ii) In absence of mother-in-law and sister-in-law family presents a deserted look).
iii) (Mother-in-law and sister-in-law is to daughter-in-law what an axe is to hard log of wood).

From the indepth study of Kashmiri marriage songs ‘Wanvun’, we are guided to observe that at the time of daughters departure for her husbands house along with the ‘barat’ party, she is repeatedly advised by her mother to serve her mother-in-law
in the same way as she treated her own mother. The same feeling is expressed in these lines of Kashmiri 'Wanvun' song

Hash cheny ametch halam dERY deRi,
Kery zes piyale berdery ye,

(O my daughter, your mother in law had come here with high hopes,
You are advised to show complete submission, obedience and respect to her).

One of the most striking reason for this kind of unpleasant relations between 'Hash' and 'Nosh' as I perceived after examining some marriage songs, seems to be rested more on the material reasoning than on the traditional stereotyped relation between the sas and the behu. In Kashmir during the period under reference, all marriage expenses were exclusively borne by the parents of the bridegroom, therefore, the mother and the sister of the husband took it as a matter of right to dictate terms and conditions to their newly married bride. They treated her not as a respectable member of the family but as an ordinary market commodity that was purchased against the cash payment. It is why she was to act as a drudge from dawn to dusk, going to distant jungles to bring firewood on her head and on her return from the distant woods, she was often asked to pound shali in a stone mortar with wooden pestles. The pain she would experience from dawn to dusk domestic pursuits is depicted in a very touching style in this mortar song (Kanze beth).

Yete legim,
Hete khetchem,
Bhangi vetches,
Tchangi khethes,
Dur legis, Hur gegis,
Tapa dezes, chite chi).

(Continuous pounding the rice from down to dusk with redoubled body movements caused skin cracks in my hands,
I have been married distant away,
My youth and beauty faded out abruptly!
I feel exhausted in the mid day scorching heat.

In some of the 'Rov' songs we find a deviation and a contrast to traditional unpleasant relationship between the 'Hash' and the 'Nosh'. There are number of folk songs where a 'Nosh' has been shown praising her 'Hash' for her civility and gentleness. Few lines of one such song I record here for reference.

Khīr dowad tei shaybat chāvanāvān,
Mōj hash chem mage range renzenāvān.
Ayi Qurān Sehra Perenāvān,
Maji melis āye cham manganavan.⁶⁸

(My mother-in-law frequently offers me different kinds of sweet dishes,
She entertains me in a variety of ways.
She convincingly induces me to recite the Quran every day early in morning,
She asks me to offer special prayers for the well being of my parents).

This contrasting explanation of the 'Hash' and 'Nosh' relations led us to maintain that the reason behind the repeated protest of the 'Nosh' against the teasing attitude of the 'Hash' was perhaps due to the fact that usually an unmarried daughter in her parental home was treated with exemplary love and affection. Her petty liking and interests were taken care of. She would feel disturbed in her husband's home at the notice of even a slightest deviation to the treatment she was used to at the hands of her parents. In such a seemingly unbalanced situation a newly married bride could not help but to protest in an exaggerated way even at slightest stingy remarks of her husband's parents⁶⁹.
Village Women pounding the *Shali* (unhusked rice) with pestles in the stone mortar.
Zam-kakeny (Relation between bride and her husband’s sister)

A Relationship between Zam and Beikakeny (bride and sister-in-law) as depicted in Kashmiri folk literature is no less a strained and quarrelsome relation then that of ‘Hash’ and ‘Zam’. At times the relation between the two assumes such an alarming position which would result in the total disintegration of the Kashmiri family life. The sister of the husband who used to enjoy a privileged status before her brother was married finds herself in somewhat changed situation and she holds her sister-in-law responsible for her brothers alienation. She poisons the ears of her father and mother against the wife of her brother and in turn they start teasing their daughter-in-law. Immediately after the marriage of a son, in almost majority of the Kashmiri families particularly in lower middle classes, the process of disintegration starts in the family. The zam as shown in the literature does not leave any stone unturned to tease and taunt her ‘Beikakeny’. There is a Kashmiri proverb which indicates to this state of social affairs.

"zām hei asi gām tāti peth sozes pam"

(How does it matter, if zam is married distant away,
She will seldom miss an opportunity to tease her sister-in-law)

Under such disturbing conditions the only way left for a “Bheikakeny” was to leave for ‘Maliyun’ (parental home). The pain caused by the long enforced separation is expressed in number of Kashmiri ‘Rov songs’.

Lolan temy sendy dath cham kermetch
Deth cham kermetch.
Tas kemy bery nam kan tei lō lō
Hai bēlī yaras vente lō lō.
Keli gethi yawun zaye tei lō lō
Doh gō bālas tchaye lō lō.71

(His (husbands) separation had plunged me into deep grief,
Who had poisoned his ears? I know it is his sister.

O, my bosom friend, please convey my heartfelt impressions to my life partner,
The bloom of any youth will go waste- How painful
It is to live separately!
The sun of my youth is about to set in).

In number of Kashmiri folk tales, zam is frequently shown levelling false charges against her brother’s wife. She often makes her brother suspicious about the chastity of his wife. Perhaps its most striking example is furnished in this Kashmiri folk balled “Zam Hendy Zulum”. Some of the lines of this long poem is given here for reference.

Maji henz ëses khanei möji,
Veriv gari kiya gudrun piyom.
Shine mëny tapan heni heni geysis,
Maji henz eses khanei möj.
Dur shaharas legnes dekenei,
Kotah kruth pyom azleilon.
Zem bo nehkei hantchan légis,
Maji henz eses khanei möj.

(I was the sole object of love in my parental home,
How can I reveal the magnitude of pain, experienced in my husbands house?
I was allowed to melt down like a slate of frozen ice in a scorching sun heat.
It was destined that I was married distant away,
How painful my fortune proved!
My ‘Zam’ levled unfounded allegations of immorality against me).

In multiple of Kashmiri folk tales the role of “Bhei kakeny” has also been painted in a black colour. She is shown taking her revenge against the zam immediately after the death of her father-in-law or mother-in-law. The death of a father or mother is no less a death for the unmarried daughter. Now it is the turn of
‘Bhei kakeny’ to poison her husband against his sister. The indifferent attitude of the ‘bhabi’ towards her zam on the occasion of latters marriage’s is depicted in the following lines of a Kashmiri marriage song.

Huri cha nērun veriv kuneye,
Bheyis veny tos pate neres.
Bhabi keti ches bihit kuny zenyye,
Bheyis veny tos pate neres.\(^7^3\)

OR

Moji ros korey menz cha attenei,
Kona chive wataney zul kerith.\(^7^4\)

(A beauteous bride like fairy is about to leave for her husbands house,
Tell her brother to see her off!
Does any one know where her bhabi has confined herself on this auspicious event?
Tell her brother to see her off,

OR

O mother less bride, mehendi on your hands is still fluidy,
It is sad not to have streets illuminated on the auspicious day like marriage).

In Kashmiri folk tales and in some of the songs, we often find that a mother less bride prefers to live in her husbands house to avoid her jealous and arrogant ‘Bhei kakeny’.

But the references are not wanting too about the exemplary love and devotion of a bhabi towards her orphan zam. In a folk story “Damane Tchroth Asun” we find that a Bheikakeny discharges the role of a real mother in arranging the marriage of a zam and in order to console her zam she even offers her jewellery to her.

**Brother and Sister**

The relation between brother and sister is portrayed as extremely affectionate in the various forms of Kashmiri folk literature. But there is a proverb in Kashmiri
language “Beni geyi theny to Boyi go keny” which means sister is as sober and mild as butter and brother is as hard as stone. This similarity though predominantly find expression in the day to day behavioural pattern of the brother and sister relations, one can not ignore the indepth love an average Kashmiri brother possess for her sister. In different Kashmiri marriage songs the sister express the wish that her brother should accompany her to husbands house at the time of her marriage. If a brother fails to visit her married sister, she gets restless and frustrated as is revealed in different Kashmiri 'Rov' songs. The visit of a brother to her married sisters house brings her new hope and pleasure. In a folk story 'Lole Metch' a sister is shown feeling afresh and relieved to see her brother in the courtyard of her husbands house. In yet another Kashmiri folk tale Beni te Boy leaves her husbands house madly without seeking the permission of family elders, when she comes to know that her brother has been caught in a trouble. On seeing his wife so concerned towards her brother, her husband also cultivates an indepth love towards his wife's brother. The intense love of a brother-in-law towards the brother of his wife is well depicted in this Kashmiri folk saying.

'Betchen manzekusu chi toth heher'
"Bata manza kheh chuy tath tehar".

(In family relations none excelle brother-in-law in love and affection).
(Among rice dishes, Tehr is unmataching).

**Husband wife Relation**

The indepth study of different forms of Kashmiri folk literature tend us to maintain that woman as a wife in a Kashmiri peasant set society was not given her due respect. This is also depicted by a famous Kashmiri proverb.

"Zanane geyi brande keny"
In context of Kashmiri social life as was stated earlier, she was treated nothing more than a drudge or the hired domestic servant. In rural Kashmir her position as a wife was more pitiable. She was assigned every kind of rough and rustic job. In some well off families both among the Muslims and the Hindus, she was not allowed to enter into a dialogue with her husband in presence of the family elders. She was to seek prior permission of the family elders before she could meet any member of her parental side on his visit to her home. She was often made subject to severe humiliation even for petty lapses by every member of the husband's family. If any unpleasant occurrence happened there in the family, she was usually held responsible for that. She was supposed to get up early in the morning and was not allowed to go to her bed chamber before the completion of the days home task. Her domestic engagements include among other things, husking of Shali in a stone mortar; (Kanz) cooking every item of the Kashmiri's dietary day calendar, sweeping the entire house and the adjacent courtyards and the lawns; cleansing the utensils; washing clothes of all the family members; bringing water near earthen pitchers from distant or nearby river ghats, making beddings for all the family members etc. etc. In addition to this, she was also desired to bring firewood from the distant jungles for daily use and the storing for winter days. This dawn to dusk busy schedule of domestic engagements would often tell upon her health and this is substantiated by the horrible accounts of European medical missionaries who visited the valley time and again during the period under reference. According to the Kashmiri Medical Missionary society report within twelve months of woman doctor Fanny Butler's stay in Srinagar she treated
five thousand women patients. Paying rich tributes to Fanny Butler for her noble task of treating ailing Kashmiri women, Mark L.G. Wilson writes:

“For ten long years, the Kashmiri women, who wept bitterly for their doctor ‘Miss Sahib, waited for such another to minister to their sufferings.”

Not only under feeding, over work and the ill treatment of the elders towards them constituted some of the major causes for the worsening of the physical charms of Kashmiri women, but equally torturing was the pain caused by the long absence of their husbands who had either been sent forcibly fully to under take the inhuman task of ‘Begar’ or had voluntarily migrated to Punjab at the outset of winter to earn the necessary livelihood for their dependents. The pains and pang of this category of forlorn women of Kashmir find pathetic expression in different Kashmiri folk songs. In the following folk song, Kashmiri women express intense desire for the early return of their male members from Punjab.

Kam gander Punjāb ander keshiri tārān nā,
Kam gander sowander sowander keshiri tārān nā,
Bare gemety peymety pather keshir tārān nā,
Harde wavey phoruk kajer keshiri tārān nā.

(A sizeable number of Kashmiri youth had gone to the plains of Punjab, we prey for their safe and early return, They were the beautiful lot among the Kashmiri youth. They might be feeling home sick now, Before the winter set in, they had migrated to Punjab, we prey for their safe and early return).

In yet another ‘Rov’ song, women lament deeply for the long absence of their male partners who had been sent for begar and nothing was known of their whereabout:-
Mot hei poshan geyom yör konei áv,
Rözi roshan geyou yör konei áv.
Nejde balan ketchom yor konei áv
Shere legith geyom yor konei áv.82

(My life partner had been taken away forcibly to go across the high mountain summits,
In a broad mid day light, he left us mournful!
Why didn't he seek my permission before undertaking such a hazardous journey?
Of course, he consoled me with a warm kiss on my forehead!
I wish I could see him as early as possible!).

To quote Lawrence,

"The Kashmiri wife is a real helpmate, and joint work and joint interest give rise to a camaraderie between man and wife which is very healthy"83.

But the statement of Lawrence, when judged in the light of contemporary literature fall short of merit and qualification. A close scrutiny of Kashmiri folk tales tend us to hold that the relationship between the husband and wife was not exclusively one of friendship, cordiality and mutual trust. We find scores of tales which predominantly feature the quarreling nature of their relationship. The details are not also wanting regarding the feminine frailty which often resulted in the litigations and the divorces84.

**Moral laxity**

In an atmosphere of political despondency, social degradation, physical-insecurity coupled with the feudal sensual tastes, one can not ignore altogether the presence of licentious and scandalous traits among the Kashmiri women during the period under review.

The legacy of the Afghan rule characterised by the sensual make-up continued
with redoubled vigour during the Sikh and the Dogra Rule. Commenting on the licentious tastes of Afghan rulers Pandit Ramjoo Dhar states, 'No beautiful or married women could pass through streets unmolested'.

Under abject poverty, a class of Kashmiri women did not hesitate from exhibiting their bodily charms before the affluent traders and businessmen. There existed a class of Kashmiri women who worked as professional prostitutes known as 'gani's or malzadis. During the Sikh period there sprang two colonies, one each at Guru Bazar and Shaheed Gunj which attracted ladies in anklets. With the passage of time, these localities, during the period under reference became the main centres of flesh trade in Kashmir. The notoriety of the trade assumed such a magnitude that folk bards composed satirical rhymes to express their indignation against the institution. See for example:

Yi duniya chi Narsingh garch malzat,
Akis sethy doweh tei akis sethy rath.
(The world is like a Narsinghgarh flesh women at sale, To live with one during day and with the other during the night).

These girls according to G.T. Vigne were not only used by the Sikhs for their own entertainment but even for all those travellers who visited valley during the period of our study. To quote P.N. Bazaz:

"when the land was over run by the armies of Mughals, Afghans and Sikhs, women suffered along with all other people. Men took advantage of chaotic political conditions to enslave women. Hence from the very beginning the oppression was the common lot of women in Kashmir but in the first half of the nineteenth century it touched its highest magnitude."
Equally yet another saddest aspect of Kashmiri society was the trafficking in women. Victor Jacquemont who visited the valley during the Sikh rule reports that "girls were sent to outside the state to stock the harems of Musalman, Sikhs and the Hindus". To quote W.G. Osborne, "Ranjit Singh received beautiful girls as a tribute from Kashmir". According to J.Wolf, "The women were sold and purchased like pieces of bread". Jacquemont gives the horrifying details of Kashmiri girls at sale. He writes:

"All little girls who promised to turn out pretty were sold at eight years of age and taken to the Punjab and other parts of India. Their parents sold them for a petty sum of fifty to sixty rupees."

But the investigations reveal that the trade was exclusively run by the members of the "wattal" community. I had a chance to listen few lines of a satirical song at village 'Pohru' during my field survey, which also refer to the same fact. The few lines of the song are recorded here for reference.

Asmane vesi na threth watlan tei,
Nani vane koriyan karan bapār.
Lānet vasān mā chak gānēn tei,
Nani vane koriyan kārān bapār.
Mand chan machik dralez khenesei,
Kōrīn sozān vech te Punjab.
Ras kiya chi lagan tchor patchan tei,
Nani vane koriyan karan bapār.

(Let the houses of the wattals reduce to ashes due to fire! Because, they publicly put their daughters on sale. They deserve extreme degree of disgrace and curse. Because, they publicly put their daughters on sale. the persons involved in the trade get huge money as a commission charge, By sending the little girls to the plains of Punjab. The money they receive in the exchange, This spend on drinking and dancing).
G.T.Vigni and Fredrick Drew also attest this observation. To quote Vigni, "The girls of Wattal tribe were mainly sold and sent as slaves to the Punjab"98.

With the passing of political fortunes of the state from the Sikhs to the Dogras in 1846, the valley witnessed no significant change in the attitudinal make-up of the aristocratic circle. Kashmiri beauty continued to lure the aristocratic craze. The institution of Hafiza which once symbolised the mark of civility and aristocratic etiquette degenerated into brothel during the rule of Jammu Dogras99. In close proximity to the official Dogra quarter at Srinagar, Maisuma emerged as one of the major spots of flesh trade in Kashmir100. In the thirties of the present century the infamous trade outraged the citizens so much that one man, Muhammad Sabhan, a barber by profession launched a one man but fierce fight against it and subsequently, it was banned in 1934. Here I quote few lines of one of the popular folk song, Sabhana sung in condemnation to the prostitutes of Maisuma.

Pump shus shubinä yiman gane delenei,
Gane byöl gatenei galenei av.
Navi chene kanh yiwan pranieu hyot tehclenay,
Gane byol galenei galenei av.
(It does not behave proper for prostitutes to wear pump shoes,
The infamous institution shall be soon uprooted from the soil of Kashmir.
No, new prostitute takes admission in the brothel,
The infamous institution is about to die).

The last phase of the Dogra period was a witness to number of socio-religious reform moments, which intended among other things to liberate the Kashmiri women from the variety of abuses she had fallen into101.

Alongside the Christian women missionaries, the organisation known as "Fraternity"102, framed by progressive Kashmiri Pandits, played an important role for the overall welfare of Kashmiri women.
Hafiza – in her informal Kashmiri attire
Hafiza – about to take off for a dance
REFERENCES AND NOTES


3. Ibid.

4. M. Ishaq Khan, Kashmir’s Transition to Islam, p.245

5. S.L. Shali, Kashmir History and Archaeology through the Ages, p.287. According to Pt. Ramjoo Dhar, No beautiful or married women could pass through streets un molested: Kifiat-i-Intizam-i-Mulk-i-Kashmir, f.4.

   In Governor Abdullah Khans time such incidents occurred very frequently. Syed Bazruk Shah raised his voice against the ruler Abdullah Khan but still the Afghan governor did not hesitate indulging in such activities. Moorcroft, MS. EURD-264. p.88.


10. The major Chunk of Kashmiri cradle Songs are composed in praise and appreciation of the male babies. There are very few songs in all folk song collections which feature the parental concern and affection for female babies. The lines of the song under reference have been collected from Sakina of Dalgate. The oral recording of the song lies with the researcher.


13. Unpublished Wanvun collected from Haproo Batapora, a village situated about thirty Kilometers away from Srinagar.

"It was an unusual sight to see a boy... unmarried at the age of fifteen, custom disapproved of keeping a girl under parental roof after she had passed twelve summers of life. It was a sin to have a virgin of marriagable age in house".

Bazaz, Daughters of vitasta, p.221.

15. Mar Walter Del, The Romantic East, p.177. The writer holds that girls are married as early as the age of seven and the co-habitation is general at twelve and some times as early as nine. Also seen Pt. Anand Koul, The Kashmiri Pandit, p.32.

16. This song was revealed to me by a young lady Zamrooda, at village Bandipora, District Baramulla. The song is put to record for the first time. It is not referred to in any of the folk song collection.

17. Source same.

18. The different expressions in the context under reference stand for innocent, delicate and minor girls who are yet to reach the puberty age. In Wanvun songs, Kashmiri girls often use these expressions to register their silent protest against their family elders.


21. Very often extreme poverty led parents to marry their daughters to aged and ailing persons despite the girls unwillingness. The unmatching alliance is often made subject of great ridicule and contempt by the sensible womenfolk in Wanvun songs. See how a Kashmiri girl in one of the folk tales express her mind on such unhealthy conjugal alliance.

"My mother is old, she is bent on having my betrothal performed with an old man, who had already lost his teeth and has three wives. He is no doubt, rich; he will pay her one thousand rupees for me and he will arrange the wedding on our side - it is too bad".

S.N. Dhar, Tales of Kashmir, "Robin Hood of Kashmir", P.121.

22. Bazaz, Op.Cit., p.221. Kashmiri pandits considered the early marriage of the children not only a proper discharge of a religious duty but as one bringing credit to the family which practiced it. See Anand Koul, The Kashmiri Pandit, p.32.


25. Ibid., p.221.


31. These folk explanations qualify the equality of economic status and position. Among the lower middle Muslim families in Kashmir, preference in the process of matrimonial selection was given to the family of equal socio-economic level and position.

32. The assertion that polygamy was common in Kashmir during the period under review falls short of merit and qualification on the ground that it was effected almost in a situation of dire socio-emotional need. Even in Muslim elite families, it was treated as an anti-ethical exercise to go for second marriage in presence of the first wife unless conditioned by unavoidable need and necessity. The economic poverty which was the general rule during the period of our study could have never allowed people particularly belonging to middle or lower rung of the society to go for more than one spouse.

33. In a feudal set-up, the existence of co-wives generally stands for economic well being and aristocratic taste. In a grip of psychological predominance, the lower strata always attempted to barrow the social niceties of their overlords that is why we find in abundance the expression "*Sowan*" in vernacular. The frequent usage of the word may be taken as a corrective against any unforeseen emotional imbalance that is generally caused by the presence of a co-wife in any family composition.

35. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, p.179. Purdah in the local expression does not only mean a special garment meant to cover the face of a Muslim women, it in the wider sense of the term is mostly used for Sharmo-Haya or unpublic image of the Muslim woman. In tune with the Muslim elite culture, Kashmiri aristocratic Pandits also adopted a type of concealment for their ladies in the wake of the Muslim rule in Kashmir. It was done more under the aristocratic craze than by any religious merit or necessity. That is why Moorcroft and Vigne do not support the theory that Hindu women also adopted Purdah during the period under reference. Moorcraft, *Travels*, Vol.11, p.131. G.T. Vigne, *Travels*, Vol.II, p.143.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. The recording of the song is preserved in Radio Archives library vide SR/= 7421. Programme *Nagme vazen Neeryn te Nayen*.


41. Famous Kashmiri folk singer Gulam Mohammad Dar of Sathu Bagwanpora, Bar Bar Shah who had the privilege of presenting this folk balled in Uzbekistan Russia during one of his cultural trips, revealed to me that this Chakri song was highly applauded by the Uzbek people present in the auditorium.


44. These folk sayings which are in circulation even today are suggestive of the teasing and taunting behaviour of the family members towards the widow.

45. Sources at hand reveal that widows in Muslim families often preferred to look after their minor children than to go for remarriage. Such widows were held in high esteem. To earn their livelihood and support the dependents, these widows often resorted to the occupation of maiden servants in the well-off families of Kashmiri Pandits and the Muslims well off families. For reference see Knowles, Op.Cit., p.189; Saqi, Op.Cit., Vol.III, p.21; B. A. Dabla, *Working Women in*
46. Ibid.

47. Since Kashmir was famous all over the world for the delicate and finest texture and embroidery work of Shawl, it as such accommodated good number of female folk in the work of spinning. The destitute and forlorn Kashmiri women often earned their bread by working from dawn to dusk at the spinning wheel. In the time of distress and agony, the spinning wheel served as the sole trustworthy companion of Kashmiri women. Kashmiri women’s unbroken emotional alliance with the wheel has given birth to scores of touching folk wheel songs of Kashmiri literature. These wheel songs (Yendre Nagme) contain the inner pain and the pulse of Kashmiri women. See for example:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tose mey kotmei ha yendrō,} \\
\text{Lose nev thas ha myne yendrō,} \\
\text{Rafaqash Tchei chuhum ha yendrō} \\
\text{Jafaqash Tchei chuhum ha yendrō} \\
\text{Gēn Gēn mō kar myani yendrō}
\end{align*}
\]

(I have delicately spin the best quality of the shawl wool, 
The dawn to dusk engagement with the spinning wheel has exhausted all my bodily energy. 
Oh! my wheel, you are the only companion of my broken life! 
My wheel is my only source of sustenance, 
It does not look nice that my wheel will give a disturbing sound)

In Moorcraft’s estimation there were about 100,000 women engaged in spinning wool till late in the night. Moorcraft William, *MSEURD.*264, p.43.

48. The barren woman is believed to be inauspicious and is despised. In various Kashmiri sayings and proverbs, we find tearing references to the sad plight of the barren women. The barrenness of woman in Kashmiri Muslim families often led the couple for adoption. The institution though not in tune with the Islamic spirit, was well adhered to for obvious reasons during the period under debate.

Adoption is of Hindu origin and has been maintained among the Mohammadans in spite of all the bigoted attacks against this institution for the last six hundred years. The Zamindars of the valley still think an adopted son as good as heir as a real son. See for detailed information A. H. Ahanger, *Customary Succession Among Muslims in Kashmir,* pp.195-197. Also see Saqi, *Keshir Luke Beth,* Vol.III, p.121. Ahsan, *Keshir Luke Beth,* Vol.III, p.117.

49. Different oral sources tend us to suggest that most of the divorce cases which occurred in Muslim Kashmiri families happened more due to the machinations of Hash and Zaam.
50. There is a practice prevalent even today in Kashmir that the barren ladies are advised by their well-wishers to pay a visit to the shrine of Baba Payam-ud-Din at Tangmarg (Gulmarg). The concerned ladies plaster the mud daan (stove) of the shrine in a most purified way with the hope of being blessed with the offspring. After the wish is fulfilled, the concerned family members find themselves bound to visit the shrine with some offerings in the shape of sheep, jewelry or cash.


"The misery caused by this unnatural system of child widowhood can be better imagined than described and one of the saddest incidents of the cholera of 1890 is the number of girls who were left widows."

Neve, E. F., Beyond the Pir Punjal, p.240. Neve further states that:

"Hindu widows had no right to marry. She had therefore, to stay in the house of her father-in-law, taking advantage of her helplessness, she was often compelled to live an unholy life. The children born to them were thrown, it is said, either in a river or to the pariah dog at night."


54. The object of the institution seems not to secure any religious benefit for the soul of the appointer but to obtain a practical and temporal benefit. Altaf Ahangar - Customary succession Among Muslims, p.197.


58. Shad Ramzan, Keshiren Luke Betan Hund Intikhab, p.64.


61. Woaremej (Step Mother) as else where, in Kashmiri literature too is generally painted in the grey colour. I could not find the "saying" refereed to in the context
in any of the folk saying collection, but it was aired to me by one Salam Ganai of Tchoka pora, Tehsil Chadora during one of my field trip to that village.


64. Ibid., p.21.


68. This song was collected from Batapora, Zakoora. It is unpublished and put to record for the first time in the dissertation at hand.


71. In almost all genres of Kashmir folk literature “*Bei Kakeny*” (Brother’s wife) has been shown as nursing grudge against the brothers and sisters of her husband.

72. This song I gathered from a lady namely Saida from Sheikhpora village, falling in District Pulwama. The village is some forty five kilometres away from Srinagar and is situated on the banks of Ranbi Ara Shupian. The song is not published in any folklore collection.

73. Source same.

74. Source same.


76. This song was transmitted to me by Abdul Khaliq Thukeroo of village Jamnagri Tehsil Shupian.

77. In comparison to Urban woman, the woman as a wife in Kashmiri peasant society was often made subject to humiliation and disgrace. There are different reasons which had been already dealt in the body content of the chapter under debate.
78. This information was given to me by Gulla Wani, aged 92 at his residence Narbal Srinagar. The photograph of the narrator is enclosed with the dissertation. The information conveyed has been further substantiated by one lady, namely Azi of Bagwanpora Sathu, who now resides at Badshah Nagar, Nowgam.


80. Quoted in Europeans on Kashmir; Shafi Shauq and others, p.117.


83. Quoted in Europeans on Kashmir, p.181.


85. Robert Thorp, Cashmere Misgovernment, p.70.


91. Bazaz, Daughters of Vitasta, p.91,93,193.


97. This trade was generally carried out by the people belonging to Wattal tribe of Kashmir. The main centres of trade in women were Lahore and Ludhaina. Even the European Travellers indulged in this immoral trade. See also Henry Thoby Princep- History of the Punjab, Vol.II, pp.165-169. Sohan Lal Suri, Umdat-u-Tawaraikh, Vol.II, p.261.


100. Ibid. Biscoe, Autobiography, pp. 29-60.
