CHAPTER IV

THE MUSLIM EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENT
As everywhere else, Muslims of the Jammu and Kashmir State remained for long disinterested and often distrustful of western education, which most of the Hindus welcomed as an opportunity to better their future. The Hindus, in the changed political circumstances, did not fail to avail themselves of every opportunity afforded.\(^1\) The attitude of Muslims in India towards the western education was at first one of aversion and opposition.\(^2\) Because the British had taken the political power from the Mughals, the rulers became the subjects, and this replacement of rulers, affected the whole of India in general and the Muslim community in particular. Muslims being the former rulers could not forget the past glory of their predecessors and as such they became inactive and were drifted from the main stream of active life. This aloofness created a gulf between the British and the Muslims.\(^3\) The British used state-craft and underhand means to deprive the Muslims of their suzerainty. The

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British in a bid to humble down the martial race of the Muslims encouraged Hindus against the Muslims. They followed a systematic and scientific policy of paralysing the Muslims in every field. The introduction of permanent settlement and the replacement of Persian by English as the court language in Bengal reduced them to the lowest ebb of penury.\(^4\)

In 1857, the Mutiny took place. It is an established fact that both the Hindus and Muslims participated in it. But the British held the Muslims responsible for the Mutiny and made them special object of their vengeance. Not only were the individual Muslims persecuted but there was a systematic policy of discrimination against them all in every field of life.\(^5\)

Even as late as 1869, a Persian newspaper in Calcutta, Durbin, complained: "Gradually Muslims were being driven out of the services and Hindus are being recruited in great numbers. It was announced in the official gazette that no Muslims should be appointed. Recently, there were some vacancies in the office of the commissioner of Sunderban (Bengal) alongwith the advertisement, there was an official note that none


but the Hindus need apply.*

It was this situation which forced Syyid Ahmad to get involved in the affairs of the Muslim community; he appeared like a saviour to save his community from further decline. He started a movement to regenerate and modernise the Muslims which came to be known as the Aligarh Movement in the annals of Indian history.7

A similar situation was prevailing in Kashmir, where the Dogra Maharajas did not care for the education of common people, especially the Muslims. When modern education was introduced in the valley, the Muslims did not respond. But the Kashmiri Pandits, after their initial reluctance to modern education responded gradually. The Muslims of the valley remained in the background for long.3

It would be pertinent to know about the traditional system of education in Kashmir, before throwing some light on the Muslim educational movement, launched by Moulana Rasool Shah, also called the Sir Sayyid-i-Kashmir.

6. CF. Mushir-ul-Haq, Muslim Politics in Modern India, (Meerut 1970), P.42.
The traditional education

The traditional educational system was basically religiously oriented. Both the Hindus and Muslims were concerned about the religious education of their children, so that they would prove to be the true inheritors of the religion and culture of their forefathers. No wonder, then, that the educational aims, curricula, organisation and practices, all articulated religious concerns. The education was equally directed to build up a moral society. That is why besides imparting religious teachings, books like Karima, Nama-i-Haq, Gulistan and Bostan were invariably taught in the upper classes. Books like Hur-karam, and Sikandranama were also taught. Those who desired to advance further read Saqi-nama, Shirin-Khusrou, and other books of the same stamp.

Often the teacher was simply the most religious and learned person in the community, eligible to perform religious functions. These functions included leading prayers, solemnising marriage rites and ceremonies, circumcisions, funerals, settling disputes and so on. The less knowledgeable teachers passed on to their students mind their superstitious passions.
The traditional society was a society of illiterates, with only a very small number of educated people belonging to the religious class, which, because of tradition and the given economic, social and political climate, had established its sole monopoly in educational matters. An educated common man could only read the religious books without understanding the literal meaning.\(^{14}\)

Education did not form a part of state responsibility; it, no doubt, provided cash and land grants to those who imparted education to the children but these were purely charitable grants.\(^{15}\) A majority of the teachers were provided fees by the students. Besides the monthly fees, the teacher received occasional small presents, either in cash or kind, as, for instance, when a boy began a new book or when he got married or when he was invested with the sacred thread.\(^{16}\)

The state had no control over the educational institutions. It was almost a private affair. All the Maktabs, Madrassas and Pathshalas were attached to the mosques and temples respectively, which were run by Moulais and Pandits alike.\(^{17}\)

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15. These grants during the Muslim period were known as Madad-i-ma'ash grants, the sikhs and Dogras call them as Dharmarth. For Dharmarth grants see *Dastur-ul-Amal-i-Kashmir* (Anonymous), PP.189-208.

16. Ibid.

Education was given to the male sex. There was hardly any Maktaba or Madrassa for females. Some of the ulema taught their daughters how to read the holy Quran but without knowing its meaning. It was because of this reason that the majority of the Muslim women in Kashmir did not even know how to offer their prayers.18

This style of education articulated a just and humanistic approach to life. But at the same time it did not produce people who would have been induced to fight against the oppression of the rulers. It was because of this reason that until the modern education made its way into the old values of Kashmiri life, people had accepted this oppression and tyranny as their fate, and endured it silently.

The Muslims of Kashmir were, before the western education was introduced, under complete control of their religious heads, who told their co-religionists, that so long as they truly followed the Quran and Hadith, they would make progress. Adoption of western education would make them infidels and they would not be able to differentiate between right and wrong; western education would spoil their minds.19 The fanatic mullas did not

18. Census of India, 1911, P.160.
favour those Muslims who were for western learning and modernism. They turned against them and created problems for them. The main concept prevalent among the Muslims was that those who received western education would become infidels. The Muslim preachers thought that the western learning was alien to Islamic culture. As it is, the Muslims in general feared that under the influence of western culture and learning their future generation would lose their Muslim identity. It was because of this reason, that initially there was not even a single Muslim student among the 250 pandit boys who attended the C.M.S. School.

**Causes responsible for the Muslim education/backwardness**

There were many factors which prevented the Muslims from taking to modern education:

1. Kashmiri Muslims' apathetic attitude towards western education.

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2. Poverty a real impediment and not a mere excuse in the way of their education. Village boys, after completing their primary education, could not continue, because of inadequate arrangements for their living in the city as well as in towns.  

3. Non-availability of Muslim teachers in the State schools.

4. Absence of schools in many villages, and whereever there were schools, the instructions imparted were unpractical and unsuited to the requirements of the students.

5. Fewer scholarships were granted to the Muslims of Kashmir.

6. Educated young men of Muslim community were not encouraged.

The indifferent attitude of the state authorities and the dearth of Muslim teachers in schools also contributed to the backwardness of Muslim in the field of education.

25. President of Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam made the presentation to the Govt. on the subject of the Muslim educational backwardness, see File No. 1609/E-84 of 1923, J&K Archives General Department.


The real cause of Muslim educational backwardness was their apathy and incapacity created by the Mullahs. They had developed an attitude among the common masses, not to adopt anything which according to them was un-Islamic. They opposed anything which they thought was not based on tradition of the Quran as understood by them. They actually were ignorant of the pure and real Islam. They were less knowledgeable, narrow-minded and conservative.

Be it as it may, the Muslims remained backward in the field of education and were attached to their age-old customs, superstitions and beliefs, whereas their pandit brothers took the lead and secured monopoly in different departments of the state. Lawrence has rightly said that 'the Kashmiri Pandits had seized all power and authority and the Muslim cultivators were forced to work and to keep the idle Brahmins in comforts.'

Emergence of Rasool Shah, as a Saviour of Muslims

It was at this critical juncture that Mirwaiz Moulana Rasool Shah appeared as a Saviour of Muslim community, who aroused them from their deep slumber.

29. Sir Walter, R. Lawrence. The India we served, PP. 126-127.
We are indebted to the Mirwaiz family for producing a personality like Rasool Sahib. He proved a pioneer in the difficult age. While preaching among the Muslims, he had realised, that the ignorance could be washed off by introducing modern education along with Islamic teachings, among the Muslims. For this reason, he initiated a campaign of educating them on modern lines, which was termed the Muslim educational movement in the annals of Kashmir history.

Rasool Sahib was imbued with progressive ideas. He believed, like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, that illiteracy was the main cause of backwardness among the Muslim community. He was of the opinion, "that a good education on western lines, supported by wise religious teachings from the Quran would produce young Muslims of capacity and character". He through a series of public speeches made the people aware of the advantages of modern education to young generation. The Moulana was a gifted scholar

whose sincerity and untiring efforts evoked a very positive responses.33

In momentous year of 1899, Moulvi Rasool Shah laid the foundation of a primary school, the first of its kind in the whole valley, at Rajveri Kadal in Srinagar.34 The beginning of the institution was very humble. In raising the structure of the school, unburnt bricks and timber of cheap quality were used.35 After this great historic event, Moulana Rasool Shah, with the help and advice of some eminent persons, founded the Anjuman-i-Nusratul-Islam in 1905, in order to mobilize public opinion in his favour.36 He was unanimously elected the President of the organization. The officiating body was constituted of the following personalities:37

1. Khawaja Hasan Shah Naqshbandhi - Naibsadar Awal
2. Khawaja Muhammad Shah - Naib Sadar Second
3. Moulavi Atiq ullah - General Secretary
4. Munshi Kamal - Joint Secretary
5. Moulavi Ahmad ullah - Financial Secretary
6. Munshi Saarif Ali Khan - Joint Financial Secretary

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. The persons who helped Moulana in his sacred cause were, Hasan Shah Naqshbandi, Aziz-ud-Din Kawoosa, Abdul Samad and Munshi Gulam Rasool Shah, M.I.Khan, History of Srinagar, P.139.
7. Shaikh Muhammad Husain - Accountant
8. Khawaja Aziz-ud-Din - Examiner
9. Malik Sher Muhammad - Secretary Nazim-i-Talim.

Aims and objectives

The following were the aims and objectives of the Anjum-an-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam:

(a) To equip the youth with modern education along with Islamic teachings;
(b) to make educational arrangements for the teaching of Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah;
(c) to provide right kind of leadership to the people in the cultural, economic and moral affairs;
(d) to project the character of the Muslims reflecting the value system of Islam;
(e) to create a balance between modern education and religion.
(f) to strengthen the cause of universal peace and brotherhood by promoting in them spiritual and moral consciousness.

Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam as an Educational Movement

So the first organisation to initiate educational and social reform among the Kashmiri Muslims was Anjuman-i Nusrat-ul-Islam. While preaching among the people, Rasool Shah had realized that an educational movement, should be launched to remove the lethargy, ignorance and backwardness among the Muslims, which finally would give rise to consciousness among them. He being far-sighted enough had realised that the modern education in the long run would open to the people the gates of Government services. He was of the opinion that no nation could progress and claim to be civilized until it reached the zenith of its educational career.

As has been already noted, the foundation of a primary school was laid by Moulana Rasool Shah in 1899. Poor students irrespective of caste, creed or sex were admitted to this school without levying any tuition fee on them. It was on 16th February 1908 that this school was raised to the status of a High School, and in the same year the first batch of six students of this school

42. Anjuman-Nusrat-ul-Islam Srinagar(A Pamphlet),P.2.
appeared in the Matriculation examination through the Punjab University. Out of the six students, five came out successful. Khawaja Gulam Ahmad Ashai secured the first position, while Pt. Sarwanand stood second, among the successful candidates of Jammu and Kashmir. The University results for the subsequent years were also brilliant.

It is relevant to note here that the orthodox Mulas initially opposed the Mirwaiz and his supporters and nicknamed them as Yezar pirs. In spite of strong opposition from the orthodox section of Muslim society, another primary school was started by the Anjuman at Nowshehra Srinagar in 1907. In the subsequent year a middle school was opened at Amira Kadal in Srinagar. Besides the financial assistance by the government, the Maharaja of Baroda donated Rs. 1,500 in 1907. For the maintenance of the educational institutions run by the Anjuman. Another primary school was also established at Safa Kadal in 1908. With the passage of time, a good number of schools were opened in Srinagar and also in some towns of the Kashmir valley. These schools were

44. Yezar is Kashmir word, which means Pyjama, since these stressed the need of wearing Pyjama they came to be called as Yezar Pirs. See G.H. Khan, History of Freedom Movement in Kashmir, P.75.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid. 48. Ibid.
controlled and run by the Anjuman. The Anjuman tried hard to persuade the Muslims to take to modern education.

The emphasis on education laid by the Anjuman can be judged by the proceedings of its meetings held in Srinagar in 1924. In the meeting, one of the speakers spoke in favour of expansion of modern education among the Muslims. He said that it was because of educational backwardness that the Muslims were in a very bad condition. Their Hindu brethren had gone far ahead of them. They did not wish ill for the Hindus, they were a part of their being. The speaker further said that the Maharaja had provided all facilities for the education of the Muslims, but they did not avail themselves of these facilities.

Almost all the speakers praised Moulavi Rasool Shah for his devotion to the cause of Muslim education, and also praised him for his bringing home the importance

50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
of education to the Muslims of the valley. 52

Moulavi Rasool Shah inaugurated a new era in the life of Kashmiri Muslims and infused a fresh spirit among them. The aim of his life was to arouse the Muslim community from the sloth and mire of ignorance. He took them out of darkness and gloom into the light of education. He could be called the father of Muslim renaissance in the valley, as he dedicated his whole life for the welfare and betterment of his community. 53

Moulana Rasool Shah Sahib lived a short life of only fifty-six years; his life was a crusade in the cause of Muslim education. He never lost his heart and never felt defeated. In spite of strong opposition from the orthodox mullas, he stood strong and advocated the cause of education. In 1908, Moulavi Sahib fell ill, and did not survive his illness. Thus great hero and champion of Muslim cause passed away. 54

52. Ibid, Khawaja Saad-ud-Din Shawl, Moulavi, M.Y.Shah, Munshi Ghulam Mohammad, Moulavi Abdul Haq, Raja Mohammad Shah Naqshbandi, Ghulam Hasan Vakil, Amirullah and Abdullah Shah were among the other speakers, who spoke on the meeting.


Rasool Shah Sahib was succeeded by his brother Moulavi Ahmadullah Shah (1909-31).\(^{55}\) He, like his predecessor, was very keen about the Muslim education. The credit of founding Kulia Sharqo a oriented college goes to him.\(^ {56} \) He was fully aware of the educational backwardness among his community. As per the census of 1911, less than one per cent of Muslim population was educated; there were only six graduates in the whole community. Among 1400-1500 students receiving education in the two State High Schools, only one hundred students were Muslims. This state of affairs made him in 1924, approach the Government of the Maharaja requesting him to improve the lot of his community with the following suggestions;\(^ {57} \)

(a) Compulsory primary education may be introduced in order to remove the pathetic attitude of Muslim community, as was recently introduced by the government of Punjab. Other states of India were toeing the same line.

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\(^{57}\) Minute Book of 1925, Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, Srinagar.
(b) An oriental school be established, which would provide education in English, Arabic and Persian, so that young Muslims would join these schools in large numbers. There was already an institution of this kind for the Hindu students which was attached to Srinagar and was called Pathshala. This Pathshala produced many graduates in Sanskrit every year and proved very useful for the Hindu community.

(c) The Muslims who take lead in education be encouraged by grant of easy terms and concessions in employment and other inducements - their recruitment to responsible posts. Adhoc appointments may be made till able and capable Muslims be produced.

(d) Educationally qualified Muslims may be given preferential treatment in service and training and that they may be appointed to higher posts so that they were encouraged. This would induce more Muslims to develop interest among themselves for the modern education.

(e) All the primary schools may be staffed by Muslim teachers and one of the state high schools may be headed by a Muslim teacher and in all other schools where the Headmasters could not be
a Muslim, a Muslim may be given the post of second master at least.

(f) Scholarships may be provided for the Muslim students.

(g) An extraordinary grant may be given to the Islamia School. And there should be a separate amount in each year’s budget for the said school.

(g) Other schools run by the Anjuman should also be liberally helped.

(h) The site for Islamia School, near Pathar Masjid, may be allotted as was recognised by the Punjab University.

(i) A Muslim member may be appointed in the department of education who would look after the interests of Muslims and would be able to prepare a report on Muslim education.

(j) The state should adopt a policy on the lines of the government of Bengal, where the conditions were the same, as ours, some twenty years ago in the field of education.

(k) Since the number of young Muslims educated in English is very limited, the Muslims who are well read in Urdu and Persian may be appointed in
the Departments, such as settlement, revenue, police, customs, municipalities, etc., and that where Muslims with necessary qualifications are not available requisition may be made from the Anjuman.

(1) The villages be provided with the schools and there should be one school for every village having the population of more than one hundred. It was strange that only the villagers had to pay educational tax. But they did not enjoy any educational facility.

(m) Begar system may be replaced by Thaika system.

(n) Mosques may be restored to the Muslims which were under the state control, and were used as stores for foodgrains.

(o) The Muslims should get their due representation in the assembly that may come to existence in future. 58

In response to the above suggestions Maharaja Pratab Singh took some measures to improve the lot of Muslim community in the field of education:-

(a) The aid of Rs. 3,000, a year was given to the Islamia High School, Srinagar. 59

58. ibid.
59. Jammu & Kashmir Archives, File No. 84/24-e of 1924.
Among six inspectors, appointed by the Government, four were Muslims; a special officer's post was also created Muslim education.  

Scholarships of Rs. 3,200 were given to the Muslim pupils of the Jammu and Kashmir State. Muslim students could also participate in open scholarships. A small allotment was also made for the girls scholarships.

Eighty mullas were appointed in eighty primary schools for the teaching of Quran to the lower classes.

Maktabs also received aid in the valley of Kashmir.

The above measures had some good effects. The number of Muslim students in the public institutions in the state increased. The number of pupils, receiving education in the middle schools also rose. Appointment of mullas in aided Maktabs and state schools contributed towards the increase of pupils in these institutions.

The growth and development of modern education among the Muslims was thus the direct result of the activities of the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, first under

60. Ibid.
61. Ibid. 62. Ibid.
63. M.I. Khan, History of Srinagar, P. 155.
the dynamic leadership of Moulana Rasool Shah and later under his successor Maulana Ahmedullah Shah. By launching the movement for education among the Muslims of the valley of Kashmir, Maulana Rasool Shah did a commendable service to the Kashmiri Muslims. His role in shaping the destiny of Kashmiri Muslims is memorable. It is this modern education that enabled them to look for their rightful place in the community of nations. Had Moulana Rasool Shah lived for sometime more, the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam would have worked wonders towards the socio-economic amelioration, quick educational advancement and better political consciousness among the Kashmiri Muslims.