CHAPTER II

SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL CONDITION OF KASHMIR (1560 A.D. - 1940 A.D.)
THROUGH MISSIONARIES' EYES
In retrospect, the socio-economic conditions and the educational situation prevailing during the period was far from satisfactory and this necessitated the introduction of a phenomena of change. The appalling condition of the people of Kashmir in the socio-economic, educational and political context proved inviting for missionary activity. The people, by and large, were deprived of any sort of privilege, otherwise granted. There are revealing incidents, mentioned in the records which speak of the typical feudal character of the Kashmiri community. As a result of the absence of any socio-political recognition and abject poverty, there was a trend to ignore the common people so far as any effective educational change resulting in social rejuvenation was concerned. The moral life and standard of living was so degrading that even contemporary historians and researchers have made references in this context.

The moral deprivation of the people which Canon Tyndale Biscoe observed, has been the argument with Ishaq Khan as well. The much trumpeted
dirt and filth, even resistance to cleanliness had a purpose which even Mr. Bisson could not infer. Women had to be dirty to avoid any slander. In such a society, education alone could bring an awareness and moral uprightness. The emancipation of the people in this context was obligatory for any awakened illuminary no less than pioneer missionaries who through education encouraged the aspect of awareness among the people. Ishaq Khan has gone further in making the then representatives of the Muslim faith largely responsible for allowing such a situation to perpetuate.

The moral turpitude among the womenfolk is again, a reflection on the system and social ethos. Here also, the background of this obnoxious malady in the community is traced to the economic deprivation of the community. The malnourous history of the womenfolk has been the resultant factor of such a degradation that the term 'Kashmiri bazar' in some towns in the sub-continent is symbolic of the sorry state of the women kind of those days. There

were attempts to see that prostitution among the women was abolished but the fact remained that the average home was disturbed, dehumanized and subjected to projected dirt and filth because of this social evil. Ishaq Khan observes the position of women in this context as follows:

"The women of the 'Hanji' class deserve a special mention. From early dawn to nightfall, she was kept busyly employed in preparing food, looking after babies, fishing in the river, selling vegetable products of the lakes and the floating gardens and doing such field work as she was able to perform. Her only relaxation was the chat with her friends at the river or with her customers who used to joke with her; and the 'hookah' which she loved as much as her husband. — Another class of women was known as 'Gaan' (prostitutes). There were two ill-famed centres of prostitution in Srinagar viz., Tashwan and Maisuma. The sale of young girls in Kashmir to established houses of ill-fame in Srinagar and Indian cities was both protected and encouraged by the Dogra rulers."

3. The Hanji or boatmen form a separate class in Srinagar. According to the Census of 1911, the Hanji numbered 2,796 in Srinagar alone.

4. Cashmere Misgovernment (type: copy) Chapter 4 P.35
It is a very sorry commentary on the leaders of the religious reform movements in Srinagar that the sad plight of the innocent young girls did not engage their attention. Never did they raise their voice against the houses of ill fame and immoral traffic in women?

But the Kashmiri society is known for its tolerance and assimilation of values. The culture of Kashmir knows no limitations consequent to sectarianism. This land has been a scene of conflicting civilization ever since the dawn of history. Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic influences penetrated here from early times. Yet the heritage of Kashmiri has neither been exclusively Hindu nor purely Muslim. It is in fact, an outgrowth of various influences and traditions.

Common social and cultural ties bind together the Kashmiri Hindus, the Kashmiri Buddhists and the Kashmiri Muslims. Reverence for spiritual teachers and holy men has always been a striking feature of Kashmiri life. And in their zeal for earning social or religious merits, the Kashmiri have recognised no

difference of caste or creed. Muslims enthusiastically pay their homage to Hindu religious men like 'sadhus' and 'sanyasis', whilst Hindus reverently kiss the feet of Muslim 'Aulias' and 'Pirs'. Religious men are esteemed by all alike and enjoy a high social status. There are many shrines - memorials to such holy men of the past which to this day, are sacred to both communities. Visits to such shrines or tombs once again go to show the common ideals and aspirations cherished by Kashmiris.

Men and women flock to these common places of worship from near and far to pay their homage, to the memory of holy sadhus or 'Aulias', considering it either as the most appropriate service to God or as a means of getting a wish fulfilled. Supernatural and miraculous powers are attributed to such places, and prayers are offered at these quarters.

During the period of the Dogras, the people of the state suffered miserably. There is

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7. Ibid., p. 195.
8. Ibid., p. 197.
no doubt that the British gave the State a semblance of peace and to some extent ameliorated the condition of the people, but actually their policies at best helped the upper classes of the Hindus in particular to consolidate and fatten themselves at the expense of the masses. The masses remained in abject poverty.

The reason for this economic backwardness of the masses were due to the very character of the state, its 'Jagirdari' system and the system of revenue, taxation and corrupt administration. It was a feudal state with some variations. The feudal character of the state was evident in the claim of its ruler that all lands in Kashmir belonged to him. The Maharaja was thus the biggest 'Jagirdar' at the apex of a chain of Jagirdars subordinated to him. Most of the state was divided into a number of Jagirs (estates) and these estates were granted by the Maharaja to the members of the royal family, to their relatives, to the people who belonged to the same caste and religion as professed by the ruler himself and to those persons who had proved, by service or otherwise, their loyalty to the person of the ruler as well as his throne.

The Maharaja also enjoyed unquestioned authority to deprive any person of the estate granted to him.

The condition of education in Kashmir was limited in its financial context. The two reasons that are advocated in this behalf namely, Kashmiri as a peasant society and Kashmiri as an economically deprived community are not the only reason for such a great neglect. The political situation of those times was also a contributing factor. The natives were ruled with a presupposition of doubt and mistrust. Subjugation was thus, a typical result of the feudal system. A few attempts were made to bring in reforms in the field of education but the scope of such activities was very limited because of financial limitations. The bulk of the population could not reap any benefit from the educational possibilities available as these were out of their reach. It would be relevant to quote the educational and social situation from the works of Lawerence and Ishaq Khan.

Sir Walter Lawerence, was appointed the official surveyor of Kashmir in 1667. His detailed

11. Walter R. Lawerence was appointed as 'Settlement Commissioner' of the state of J&K in 1867.
account on almost all aspects of life in Kashmir in the second half of the nineteenth century is vivid and self-explanatory. Piecing up his threads from the earlier accounts, he quotes Victor Jacquemont who analyzed the historical and political background of Kashmir as early as 1885, in the following words: "...in the intervals of peace anarchy and oppression have done their utmost against labour and industry, so that the country is now completely ruined, and the poor Kashmiris appear to have thrown the handle after the hatchet, and to have become the most indolent of mankind. If one must fast, better do so with folded arms than bending beneath the weight of toil. In Kashmir there is hardly any better chance for a meal for the man who works, weaves, or plies the oar, than for him who in despair slumbers all day beneath the shade of the plane-tree."

Commenting on the sad state of education in the valley, Lawrence writes, "...out of a total population of 52,576 Hindus only 1,327 are receiving state instructions, while out of a population of

7,57,433 Muhammadans, only 239 obtained any benefit from the state schools. These figures also that though the Hindus form less than 7 per cent of the population they monopolize over 83 percent of the education bestowed by the State. A further fact should be noticed which is that of the 1,585 boys on the roll of the state schools 1,220 attend schools in Srinagar. These figures would justify the opinion that education is backward in Kashmir and it might be urged that the state ought to establish more schools. Considering the enormous sums and vast labour which have been expended in India on state education, it is only natural to ask why Kashmir state, which is always so apt to borrow institutions from India has not followed the example of giving practically free education to the people of the valley. The answer is that the more affluent of the villagers prefer the mosque schools, or the system of private tuition to the instructions given by the state and it is a surprising fact that a large number of rural Muhammadans can read and write Persian with ease”.

Ishaq Khan also paints a vivid picture of the poor state of education. Supporting his arguments

A School Boy of the Early '90s.
Many were Married and several were Papas.
on the basis of facts and figures, he writes, "Even the Administrative Report of 1875 which is the first of its kind in Jammu and Kashmir state testifies to the educational backwardness of the city population. The report makes mention of Government schools only in the city and these are named as Pathnala, Nawana School, Maharaj Gunj School, and Basant Bagh School. It is further stated that the expenditure on education in Srinagar amounted to the petty sum of Rs. 36,272. Out of this amount Rs. 11,875 were spent on the pay of teachers, Rs. 1,567 for the maintenance of institutions, Rs. 2,66 for free rations, Rs. 18,661 for scholar's, Rs. 40 as rewards, Rs. 1,157 for the purchase of books for the use of scholars. Besides, it is stated that the then Maharaja Ranbir Singh spent Rs. 17,737 on translation work.

He comments on the causes of educational backwardness among Muslims in these words, "There were many factors which prevented the Muslims from taking to modern education. The bulk of the population of the city consisted of the artisans who were naturally little enthusiastic about education. Besides poverty

17. Ibid Administrative Report. P. 64
and a reactionary clergy discouraged modern education among the Muslims. But added to these facts was the indifferent attitude of the state authorities towards the education of the Muslims. Almost all the newspapers published in Punjab deplored the paucity of Muslim students in public schools. This paucity was ascribed to the smallness of the number of Muslim teachers employed in these schools.

S. L. Seru, compiling the educational statistics for the year 1872-73 writes, “Kashmir Province shows that 230 people read in the main Srinagar Middle School. In the Nawazad School the enrolment was 216 of whom the Hindus were 126 and Muslims 80. 203 students read Persian and 15 Arabic. The number of teachers were six-three for teaching Persian and three for Arabic. In Maharaj Gaj School the enrolment was 75 of whom 23 were Muslims and 25 Hindus. All students read Persian under two teachers. The enrolment in Basant Bagh School was 110 of whom Hindus were 92 and Muslims 18. There were 99 scholars in Patendas taught by 2 Pandits”. He compiles the

20. The Pahal Anbar, Sept 9, 1911.
following subjectwise enrolment table for Kashmir province and Enrolment wise table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Sat &amp; Matua</th>
<th>Arabic Urdu &amp; Persian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On 15.12.1874</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>On 15.12.1875</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Enrolment in Kashmir Province (Middle & High Schools)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1869</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1892</th>
<th>1893</th>
<th>1894</th>
<th>1895</th>
<th>1896</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>465</td>
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The above information is a glaring proof of deprivation from which Kashmiris were suffering. The political situation was becoming fluid. The influence of the religious organisations among the Muslims and the Hindus with regard to education was waning. It was in the light of this background

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that the early missionaries could be successful in bringing a system of education, primarily based on Christian philosophy and in recognition of the state of ignorance and social depravity to offer education with social relevance. Before embarking on the systematic plan of missionary education these Christian pioneers deeply studied the Kashmiri society in all respects. Following is what they saw and noted.

Social and General Conditions in Mid Nineteenth Century

Being aware of the urgent need of starting missionary work in Kashmir for various obvious reasons and yet hopeful of a glorious future for Kashmir, the pioneer missionary, Rev. Robert Clark, the first OMS missionary to Kashmir describes the social and general condition of Kashmir of the mid nineteenth century in the following words.

'The degradation of the Cashmeri in his own fairest of lands is more profound, in that his intellectual and physical endowments are of the highest order. He is a by-word and a reproach. 'Kiss him first, then speak and you would be practical in
dealing with the Cashmeri' says the Punjabi proverb, while another declares him to be 'abandoned, neither salt nor sweet'. He wrote in his journal, 'The ignorance, darkness and wickedness of Cashmere seem to be beyond all conceptions. It is like the dirt in his own city, that lies in the dark winding narrow lanes untouched and unre moved. It is even unnoticed, and is best expressed by the story in one of the Punjabi books which describes the comfort with which a tanner can live all day, and even eat his food with relish, in his own tan yard, whilst strangers are sickened by the sight and smell and are obliged to leave it because it is to them beyond endurance. The Cashmerians are unconscious of the filth either physical or moral. We have been brought up in it, they say themselves, and so we do not mind it, but if anyone come from the country, it makes him ill. The people have been so long imprisoned in the cage that confines the powers and capacities of the body, mind and soul that like caged birds, they love their captivity, and have no desire to burst throughout the bars that enslave them and become free. Brought up in the dark dungeons

Noe, Barnett: Beyond Pir Panjal P. 255

25. Denys, P. Ward, Our Summer in the Valley of Kashmir P. 166

of vice and ignorance they cannot bear light; and if
but one spark appears, they try to exclude it, or else
they flee back again from it into their dark abode.

He further wrote, "The state of Bashmore dwells heavily
on my mind. The only source of comfort is the Angel's
question 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' He states
his conviction that '.... We believe therefore, and
doubt not that these mountains of difficulties shall
all be thrown into the sea, and that this garden of
the earth shall yet become a garden of heaven.

Sir Walter Lawrence, while writing that
'they were extremely dirty in their habits and person,
and washed about once in ten days, and this coupled
with the fact that their clothes were equally dirty,
made them unpleasant companions in the warm weather.
Soap was made in the valley but was never used for
personal ablution; also mentions that 'the Hamam was
a great institution, and there were four public
baths in Srinagar. The men went to the bath in the day
while the women used to go to the Hamam at night.'

27. Ibid. Clark, P. 175
29. Ibid, Lawrence. P. 281
Canon Tyndale-Biscoe, the pioneer of modern education in Kashmir writes, 'All the streets, with the exception of the main street, are very narrow and generally very filthy. There are no side walks, so that pedestrians, equestrians, laden animals, laden men, cattle, fowls ad pariah dogs are all jumbled up together.... In the winter time it is of course more difficult going in the streets on account of the pools of liquid filth.' Biscoe further writes, 'It is extraordinary how dirty the Kashmiris are, considering the amount of water that is round them every where, and though washing opportunities are at hand they prefer to wear dirty garments. Self respecting women are obliged to wear dirty garments, for if they wore clean ones they might be taken for women of loose life.'

Srinagar even lacked ordinary sanitary arrangements. The majority of inhabitants of Srinagar used the public streets or lanes or court yards of their own houses as latrines. This had been going on from time immemorial, wrote Maj. General de Bourbel who

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submitted a report on the epidemic of 1688. Private houses with a few exception had no privy and even those were very seldom cleaned. Dr. Mitra, the able and energetic Chief Medical Officer of Kashmir, in a pamphlet on medical and surgical practice in Kashmir, tells the same story regarding the want of sanitary arrangements in Srinagar. "Barastal was filth at door is proverbially admitted to be mark of affluence." Dr. Earnest has remarks that infection from want of sanitary precautions took its regular toll. Contagion was responsible for many of the local diseases which were rampant such as ophthalmia, coalhean, and the itch. Srinagar indeed was a filthy city.

During the early days, Mr. Knowles - the founder of Mission Schools in Kashmir - had started the boys on cricket and other games which they played wearing a tight bandage-like puggaree, golden ear and nose rings, wooden close and the pheran. He introduced physical exercises and installed parallel bars and horizontal bars. When the State authorities heard of this, the sporting activity, thought to involve manual labour and thus to be derogatory

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for the boys, was forbidden by the order of the Maharaja. The Maharaja himself had a very low opinion of his subjects and considered them as incorrigible and beyond redemption. "Let be,' cannily observed Maharaja Gulab Singh (to Rev. Robert Clark), 'my people are so vile no man can make them worse. I am curious to see whether the gentleman's preaching can do them any good.'

Eric Lyndale Brooke, a Vice-Principal of the CMS School in Kashmir describe the unhealthy condition of those times in the following words:

'Not only were they dirty in fact and clean in imagination, but they were utterly unmanly while at the same time they thought themselves superior to all other creatures. They had no shame, for there was no standards of honour by which to shame them. They had lost their self-respect, and one way to put that into them was to make them clean instead of filthy, and smart instead of slipshod. In Kashmir there are three great enemies to cleanliness: (1) Parents, (2) Custom and (3) Public Opinion. Here cleanliness is not next to godliness, but just the reverse. It was therefore, with the idea of

35. Ibid. Fifty Years Against the Stream p. 9.
   (Sir Richard Temple who visited Kashmir in 1659 remarks: 'I asked (the Maharaja) whether Srinagar city could be drained and cleaned, to this he answered that the people did not appreciate conservancy, and that they would much prefer to be
giving them self respect that the battle against dirt was begun. 37

Character and Disposition of the People

Although Kashmir is such a marvellous paradise, this fact has been a curse to the inhabitants. Its far famed wonders had attracted conquerers from most of the neighbouring nations, who had ruthlessly harried and trampled upon Kashmiris till their spirit had been broken. The history of Kashmir bears witness to the unabated fear, tyranny and cruelty through which the people of this beautiful land had gone for generation after generation. Therefore, it is no surprise that the very process of socialization and development of social and ethical values had gone through such a negative and recessive course that in a country where there was practically no justice, the only weapon in the hands of the weak was nothing but social vices. 38 Walter Lawrence writes:

'The theory held by the Kashmiris themselves is that they were once an honourable, brave

37 Op. cit. Fifty years against the Stream, P. II.
38 Ibid. P. XIV.
39 Ibid. Lawrence, P. 275
people, and that they were reduced to their present abject state by continued foreign oppression....

but when one reflects on what they now are, one cannot help the thought that many races, had they lived through generations of oppression, like Kashmiris, might have been more cunning and more dishonest 40.

Moorcroft describes the Kashmiri as,
'selfish, superstitious, loquacious, supple, intriguing, dishonest and false. He has great ingenuity as a mechanic and a decided genius for manufacturing and commerce; but his transactions are always conducted in a fraudulent spirit, equalled only by the effrontery with which he faces detection 41. But it must be remembered that Moorcroft was speaking of the city people, and that it would not be fair to apply Moorcroft's epithets to the villagers of Kashmir 42. He admits that the vices of the Kashmiris are not innate, but are due to the government under which they lived. 'The natives of Kashmir have always been considered as amongst the most lively and ingenious people of Asia, and deservedly so. With a liberal and wise government, they might assume an equally high

40. Ibid., Lawrence, p. 274.
42. Ibid., Lawrence, p. 275.
scale as a moral and intellectual people, but at present a more degraded race does not exist," he admits Knight says, "Whenever (they) saw a Kashmiri they would run up to him barking, whereupon in almost every instance that fine-looking, athletic, bearded disgrace to the human race would behave as a five-year old English child would be ashamed to do, howling, weeping and throwing himself down in the snow in deadly fear."

Walter Lawrence, who had close contact with all categories of Kashmiris writes, 'The Kashmiri bears an evil reputation in the Punjab and indeed throughout Asia ... The Kashmiri sticks at nothing and has a great belief in the efficacy of a registered letter to the Darbar, in which he charges his rivals or enemies with a most detailed list of offences, chiefly untrue. It has been the custom for him always to overstate his case ... A Kashmiri who wishes to show that he has been beaten by the officials or his neighbour will always produce a lock of hair, which has been carefully packed up in paper and stored away in his pocket. This is usually horse-hair. At the same

43. Ibid., Lawrence, p. 273.
44. Knight, E.P., 'Where Three Empires Meet'; p.111.
45. Ibid., Lawrence, p. 295.
time Lawrence admits that 'in intellect the
Kashmiris are perhaps the superior of the natives
of India. They are very quick in argument, and
they never abandon the case unless they are convinced
that, is hopeless and they always insist on knowing
the grounds of a decision ... Offences against person
are extremely rare, and when Kashmiris quarrel they
call one another by bad names, and will occasionally
go as to knock off a turban or seize an adversary
by his eliminate gown. 'It is difficult to describe
a people's character admits Lawrence yet adds that
Kashmiris possess an individuality and national character
which will cling to them where ever they go. Finally,
though the character of Kashmiri leaves much to be
desired, I think that it is to their credit that it
is not worse, considering the few chances they had
for becoming truthful manly and self-respecting. A
man who can be beaten and robbed by any one with
a vestige of authority soon ceases to respect himself
and his fellow-men, and it is useless to look for the
various of a free people among the Kashmiris and
unfair to twit them with the absence of such virtues.' 47

46. Ibid., p. 278; Autobiography' Eyndale Bisooe,
p. 62.

47. Ibid., pp. 282 - 283
Canon C. Lyndale-Biscoe gives a similar account of the people of Kashmir of the late nineteenth century in these words, 'To call a man a 'Kashmiri' is a term of abuse, for it stands for a coward and a rogue, and much more of an unpleasant nature. I hate having to write thus of the Kashmiri as I am really very fond of him. I can name scores as my friends. Many have stood by me in dangers and difficulties and a few have suffered for me, and I know many who have risked their lives in saving life, from drowning and other causes so that I look upon them as heroes and true gentlemen and all the more so on account of their adverse surroundings and environments. Yet to be truthful, and I do not believe in writing lies, I must say that the ordinary Kashmiri, such as I have known for thirty years, is a coward, a man with no self-respect and deceitful to a degree. Instances of cowardice, deceit and villainy I could give 'ad nauseam' and no one everyone who knows Kashmir'. But he too ad it, 'It is quite possible that if we Britishers had to undergo what the Kashmiris have suffered in the past, we might have lost our manhood'.

Magic, Superstitions and Social Evils

Like most of the Indian cultural and ethnic groups, Kashmiri society was also in the grip of a variety of superstitions, magic and social evils during the nineteenth century. In Kashmir, the religious leaders were the interpreters of the various effects of superstitions and were also the saviours of the people from those effects. Laurence writes, 'The outcome of this curious medley of saints and sects is an intense superstition and an unhappy and sullen fatalism. The saints cure all kinds of illness, and a man has only to anoint himself with a kind of fuller's earth, found at Nur Dina shrine at Rishipura in the Kotahar valley to become well. A charm from a holy man will arrest the spread of 'rai' which is so disastrous to the rice crop. The Kashmiris believe themselves to be under a curse. It is to this curse that they attribute the severity of their rulers, their sufferings in time of famine, earthquakes, and cholera, their anxiety and hopelessness of their condition. But they distinguish very quickly between temporary evils caused by man and inevitable evil caused by the curse. The whole valley is rich in

Many of these legends are given in the 'Ain Ahsaril. Ibid., Laurence, p. 293.
supernatural, and there is not a mountain, river, or spring which has not some quaint legend attached to it. Canon Tyndale likewise writes, 'If you look at a house just completed by a Hindu, you would notice an old and broken earthenware pot slung from one of the projecting beams, to keep off the 'evil eye'. This belief in the evil eye pervades all things, whether it be new-born babies, or carpets.

Canon Tyndale likewise further describes the strong belief of Kashmiris in magic and spells. He writes, 'When a man wishes to get rid of his enemy he goes to certain priests, practitioners of the 'black art', who expect to be paid heavily for their work. They make a figure of clay or wax which represents the victim. This figure they pierce with a sword or nails in that part of the body where the client wishes his enemy to receive the mortal wound. This art is done in private with incantations and afterwards, the figure is burnt'. In his diary Rev. F.R. Wade speaks of this ceremony having been performed by certain people in Kashmir, who wanted to get rid of himself, the Revd. Robert Clark, and of the British Resident, but all

51. Ibid., Lawrence, pp 293 - 294.
53. Ibid., Tyndale Bible Society, C., p. 165.
these three survived for many years and both Mr. Wade and Mr. Clark lived to a good old age. In the following, Biscoe narrates a vivid account of an encounter with a group of priests who were collecting food from the poor cholera-stricken citizens of Srinagar threatening them with a fatal curse if they didn’t give donations.

When I arrived at School I heard that one of our Brahmen students had been struck by cholera so I went at once to his house which I found deserted. Everyone had run away except the stricken boy and his mother, whom I found lying on the floor, left by their relatives to die. As I was speaking to the boy, I heard an unearthly row outside. Men were shouting, a motor horn blaring, and the din was terrific. On looking out of the window I saw fifteen holy sadhus, their faces and bodies covered with ashes and long daubs of red paint on their foreheads and noses. They were marching in single file, holding iron tridents in their hands and wooden bowls which they held out, and shouting in unison as they stamped their feet: 'If you do not give, you will die! As they went from house to house, frightening and terrorizing women, thus forcing food from them. I went down and asked the ring-leader

what he was doing. He answered, 'collecting food.'

So I naturally said, 'Can't you see what trouble
the people are in, come and help them.' He answered,
'That is not my job.' Who are you? I asked. 'A holy
man,' said he, 'You look it,' said I. I had a stick
in my hand, so I waved this and ordered those fifteen
holy rascals to 'right about turn and quick march'.
As they did not like the look of me and my raised stick
they thought it best to obey. 55

One of the most difficult habits to
correct was the universal foul language 56 for there
was no high ideal to which to appeal, remarks
Biscoe while trying to correct a boy who affirmed
that his father used this language and his mother had
taught it to him even the priests always used it. This
statement of the boy was corroborated by a Brahmin
judge, who when Mr. Biscoe brought to him a case of
grace imorality said, 'You must remember, Mr.
Biscoe, that the Hindu law sanctions a certain amount
of impurity.' 57

One other social evil rampant during
the last century was sodomy. 'The city of Srinagar
was

56. Ibid., Lawrence, P. 276.
57. Tyndale Biscoe, C.S.; Kashmir in Sunlight and
the city of Sodem and this was how I discovered the fact," narrates Bisbee. "One day a party of hooligans came to the football ground and attempted to catch and carry off good looking boys. In the fight that ensued, the leader of the gang was knocked down and a book was taken from him which proved to be the minute book of the Srinagar Sodomy Club in which were written the names of the officers of the club, President, Secretary, Treasurer etc., and of 140 pretty boys with their addresses and other particulars. I compared this list with our school roll and discovered that about half of these boys were in our school and the rest in the State school..... I realised that a small army would be needed for the campaign ... We had the city and even the brahman priests against us, because pretty boys were needed to attract worshipers to their temples; as in other parts of India girls were needed in the temples. ... I visited the judge, who tried to frightened me that the city was angry with me and that I should be careful what I was doing. 'The general public was furious at this high handed interference with their 'sport'. But it was enough, From

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that day organised clubs of this sort have ceased to exist or at any rate, have had to carry on business more carefully.39

Another social evil among the literate was the filthy literature and pornographic material. Canon Blasco described his encounter with such a situation when such material found its way in his school. He narrates the incident in the following words:

'On entering the school compound, one morning, I noticed many boys crowded together, who were trying to see something which was in the centre of the group ... As soon as I came up to them, they stopped and I saw at once that they were looking at some thing which they did not wish me to see. However, I soon discovered the cause of their interest. It was a book, a manuscript in Hindi script, illustrated with the filthiest pictures I had ever seen ... However, I was not going to permit the matter to stop there, for if a boy had been punished for bringing such a book to the school, certainly the devil who wrote and painted it was worthy of punishment. So I set to work to discover who made such books and at what shops they were sold. I soon

discovered the shops at which the books were sold, and also where the pictures were painted. ... When we arrived at the street just outside His Highness' Palace in which were shops chiefly kept by priests, I saw my man sitting up by a shop reading a book. I walked up to him and asked him for the book and handed it to the police... by careful manœuvreing to circumvent interested people from giving warning, we got to a large brick house in the priest's quarter of the city where the filthy painters were busy. In a small room on the right I saw an old priest, with a grey beard busy engaged painting one of these dreadful pictures. As soon as he saw me he began putting about twenty under his voluminous garments and sitting upon them. At that moment the police inspector came puffing and blowing up the stairs. I told him to look after this priest and his pictures, whilst I tackled a second priest at the same work.... These priests were not put on trial until I left Srinagar for holiday. They were not tried by the Chief Judge, but by a brother Brahman Judge who let them all off with a fine of Rs. 2/- each, on the ground that they were ignorant that it was against the law to make and sell such books. 

Position of Women:

During the Hindu period the women enjoyed equal rights with the men. This position of importance implied that women of at least upper class received education of not only a general nature but in diplomacy and statecraft too. Bilhana, the poet laureate at the court of Saluva King Parmadi (11th century A.D.) mentions in the last cento of his Life of Virmamahadeva, while describing his home land, that women of Kashmir spoke Sanskrit and Prakrit fluently. There is however, reason to believe that women of lower classes did not have this privilege and they had to be content with their vernacular speech. They had more over to learn botany, painting, needle work, wood-work, clay modeling, cookery and receive practical training in instrumental music, singing and dancing. Kalhana mentions that women owned and managed the private property. Regarding the proper age of marriage there is no evidence forthcoming from Rajatarangini. But it seems that pre-puberty marriage

62. Virmamahadev跋arita VIII - 63; as quoted in 'A History of Kashmir' Ibid., P. 200
63. Rajatarangini V - 106.
64. Ibid; VIII - 3115.
The custom of 'sati' was practised. Rajatarangini gives a number of historical cases of widows burning themselves at the death of their husbands. The custom seems to have been in general vogue long after the end of Hindu rule, when Sultan Sikander, considering it contrary to the law of Islam, stopped it forthwith. Prostitution and the institution of 'devadasi' was popular in society during the Hindu period.

The advent of Muslim rule towards the middle of the fourteenth century did not produce an immediate change in the position of women in the society. Slowly the purdah or seclusion of women became a common practice among the upper class and the women's right place was considered to be her home and most sacred duty — obedience to her father and brother and husband. Education does not seem to have been widespread among the women of medieval Kashmir. There is no doubt that the women of well-to-do families received education but women of the general mass of people...

65: Ibid., VIII - 459-60.
66. Ibid., V - 226
could neither have the time nor money to receive proper education in private institutions endowed by kings and queens.

The custom of marrying boys and girls at an early age among both Muslims and Hindus became common during the Afghan rule. An Afghan would not molest a married woman, however, pretty. So the only remedy to save the person and honour of a woman was to marry her young. Kashmiri women, irrespective of caste or creed were physically and spiritually shattered; their presence in every sphere of social activity was totally eclipsed. But although the women had considerably lost her position and privileges during the Muslim rule, yet Islam conferred on her the rights denied to her by the Hindus.

The position of women deteriorated as the time passed and it was at its lowest ebb during the nineteenth century. Eric Tyndal Biscoe narrates their condition thus:

All the dreary, ghastly consequences of child-marriage, unequal marriage, where immature girls are married to old and diseased man, enforced

68. Bazaz, P.N.: Daughters of Vitasta, p.16.
70. Only in 1928, H.H. The Maharaja passed a law forbidding the marriage of any girl within his dominion under fourteen years of age.
widowhood, the terrible child-birth customs whereby children must be born on certain days, even though it means using artificial methods to accelerate or retard delivery.

Canon Bissoe writes, '... it is women who have to give way to men in the streets; it is women who have to fetch and carry water in their heavy earthen pots; it is women who are worn continually because they are only women and even the poor madwomen are misused by the filthy bipeds after dark.'

There were two ill-famed centres of prostitution in Srinagar at Tashwan and Maisuma. The sale of young girls in Kashmir and other parts of the country was encouraged by the Dogra rulers. According to Robert Thorp, the licence fee for purchase of a girl for this purpose during Ranbir Singh's time was 100 cullas rupees. In 1880 the Maharaja received 15 - 25 percent of the whole revenue of his State from the gains of his licensed prostitutes. Mr. Henvey,

73. Tyndale Bissoe; Eric; Fifty Years Against the Stream; p. 75.
74. Tyndale Bissoe; C.S. Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade; p. 263.
75. Kashmir Misgovernment (typed copy) Ch. IV, p. 35.
76. Ibid.; p. 35.
77. NAI/ Foreign Sec. E. March 1883, No. 66.
Officer on Special Duty, in Kashmir in 1860 wrote that no care was taken of sick prostitutes. The records of the Srinagar Mission Hospital show that of 12,377 new cases treated during 1877-79, 2,516 were for 'venereal diseases'. It was in 1934 that the St. John's Assembly passed an Act suppressing immoral traffic in women as a result of selfless service of valiant Subhan Haed, fully supported by the Christian Missionaries in Kashmir.

The position of middle and upper class women was not good. The upper class women were never seen in the streets. Biscoe writes: Self respecting women are obliged to wear dirty garments, for if they wore clean ones they might be taken as women of loose life. Child marriage was prevalent among the Pandits and the Muslims but widow-remarriage was practiced by Muslims only. From Biscoe's autobiography, we get some idea of the sad plight of young Brahman widows. He writes, 'As there was no restriction to early marriage there were number of child widows who were obliged to

76. NAI/Foreign Sec.B.March 1863 No.56
79. Ibid., No. 66
80. Ibid., No. 86
     Ibid., Autobiography, Tyndale-Biscoe C.E.,p.236.
82. Ibid., 'Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade', p.106.
live in their father-in-law's house, and to do as they were told. I came to know of the cruelties practiced on these girls, especially by the Brahmin priests, who were often the fathers of the drowned babies. The infants were thrown either in the river or to the pariah dogs at night so that Hindu religion should not be disgraced. 63

Social and Religious Harmony

Kashmir has a long history of communal harmony and tolerance. The political, religious, and social changes caused no serious dent in the mutual and social relations of the people. The worst onslaught, the Kashmiri society ever suffered, was during the time of Afghan rule but even during that period Hindus and Muslims suffered together. Dr. Earnest Neve, who had an intimate knowledge of Kashmir observed, 7

In Kashmir there is very little fanaticism. In some respects tolerance is surprising. The friendly relations existing between Mohammedans and Hindus are remarkable, and partly to be explained by the fact that many Hindu customs have survived, even among

About Kashmiri Brahmin Lawrence writes, 'They will drink water brought by a Musalman; they will eat food cooked on a Musalman boat; the foster-mother of a Hindu children is usually a Musalman, while the foster brother often obtains great power in a Hindu household. Maharaja Gulab Singh did his utmost to stop the practice of drinking water brought by a Musalman and severely interdicted the eating of cheese. But it was all to no effect. ... Hindus failed to comply with Maharaja Gulab Singh's edicts'.

Another aspect of this harmony was the mutual respect for each other's places of worship and common saints. Lawrence wrote that Muslims were Hindu at heart and in this connection mentions certain places held in reverence by Hindus and Muslims alike. He writes, 'As an instance, at Pattenpura in the Vernag Ilaha and at Waripora in the Mavdam Ilaha, I have seen the imprints of a foot.

84. Ibid., 'Beyond Pir Panjal' p. 164
85. Ibid., Lawrence, 'The Valley of Kashmir', p. 300
86. Mirza Saifud Din 1653 Vol. VI p. 22 as quoted by M. Ishaq Khan, History of Srinagar p. 120.
in a stone worshipped by the Musalmans as Vishnepau (Lord Vishnu's foot). Generally speaking, it may be said that then one sees the Muslim shrine a little search will discover some Hindu Astham.

The foremost among the saints of Kashmir was the Patron saint of Kashmir, Sheikh Nur-ul-Din. Among Hindus, he was known as 'Nand Rishi' or Shasanand. Though unable to read or write, he gave utterance to hundreds of beautiful sayings which furnish Kashmiri literature with gems having both a terrestrial and celestial meaning. The motivating force behind the goodwill and tolerance lies in the cultural and social structures, and in the unity in the diversity of the Kashmiri society. Even during the political conflicts during medieval times, the people of the valley were inspired by their two saints, Lala Dadi and Sheikh Nur-ul-Din Wali. The 'Rishi' order of sufis did much to foster a feeling of love in Kashmir. They would abstain from taking meat on the anniversaries of the Rishi Saints.

A number of similar customs of the two divergent

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67. Ibid., Lawrence, p. 286.
68. Ibid., Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade, p.
69. Ibid., Banazai, A History of Kashmir, p. 29.
70. Ibid., Banazai, p. 529.
71. Ishaq Khan, A History of Srinagar, p. 121.
72. Ibid., Ishaq Khan, p. 121.
Groups have also contributed to the growth of religious tolerance in Kashmir. But it would be wrong to think that there never arose a feeling of vengeance between the two communities. History bears witness to the numerous cruelties of conquerors on the people of Kashmir which almost always tended to divide the Kashmiris into two camps—one helplessly supporting the oppressor to save their own skins and the other oppressed. But unlike the communal outbursts in the Indian subcontinent, Kashmiri society without an outside instigator or oppressor, rarely fought within itself.

Perhaps the only incident of strained feelings in Kashmir in recent times was the outcome of the struggle for freedom from the maharaja's despotic rule and from his officials in July, 1931. The Hindus were associated with the despotic ruling class and thus were attacked, but the responsibility for creating misunderstanding goes always to the vested interests. The very people who were branded as 'communists' in 1931 came to the rescue of their brothers in the other camp when the valley faced the tribal raid in 1936.

93. Ibid., Ishaq Khan, pp 122.
94. Ibid., p. 122.