CHAPTER VII

MODERNISATION OF KASHMIR LITERATURE
MODERNIZATION OF KASHMIRI LITERATURE

Literature mirrors life. It is the expression of man's experience, emotions and achievements over the centuries. It reflects human civilization, with a moulding of human behaviour representing culture. It can be expressed through prose, poetry, drama, short-stories and novels.

The Dogra period (1846-1947) witnessed the emergence of most kashmiri authors and poets who wrote in Persian, Sanskrit, Urdu, English and Kashmiri and thus created a taste for literature. It is noteworthy that Persian, which was the official language of Kashmir for over four centuries, influenced and enlarged Kashmiri vocabulary to a large extent. Kashmiri poets adopted the ghazal, the masnavi, the nqat, the marsiya and other Persian forms. They also turned to the typical Persian themes such as the story of Laila-Majmun, Shirin-Khusarau and Sohrab Rustum. The prominent poets of the Dogra period included Mirza Mehdi Mujrim, Mulla Ubaid-Ullah, Kh. Hassan Koul, Mehdi Shah Dika, Hasan Shah Zirak,

Shams-ud-Din Hairat Kamili, Kh. Mohammad Shah, Asad, Mirza Saad-ud-Din and Hashyar. Most of these poets write against the economic policy of the Government and the intellectual degeneration of the Kashmiri Muslims. There were only a few Persian prose writers during the period. Among them Ghulam Nabi Shah Khanyari and Haji Mohi-ud-Din Miskin deserve special mention. They discussed the social, economic, political, religious and literary history of Kashmir in their respective writings titled *Wajeez-ut-Tawarikh* and *Tarikh-i-Kabir*.

Similarly, Sanskrit saw its bloom during the Dogra period and achieved a fantastic delicacy due to the several measures taken for the revival and development of this language. Maharaja Ranbir Singh in particular is reported to have appointed proficient Pandits to teach Sanskrit. Two notable Sanskrit scholars of his reign are Sahib Ram who wrote *Tritha Sangraha* and Pandit Madhu Sudhan Koul who edited and critically appreciated Abhinavagupta's *Tantralok*.

3. It is in manuscript form and not published yet.
5. Ibid, P. 193.
As far as Urdu is concerned, it began to develop under the influence of new factors and a spirit of dissatisfaction with Persian, and Sanskrit started to show itself in the latter years of the Dogra period. Some of the Kashmiri Urdu poets and story writers of the period may be mentioned: Khushi Mohammad Nazir, famous for his Naghmai Firdous, Master Zinda Lal Koul and Nand Lal Talib who authored Rushhat-ul-Takhayyul and Ghulam Rasul Naziki, known for his collection of poems, Nazaakat. Among the prose writers in Urdu the notable ones were: Abdul Ahad Azad, Prem Nath Pardesi and Pitambar Dhar Faani. Azad's famous book Kashmiri Zuban Aur Shairi deals with the history of Kashmiri literature, whereas Pardesi's short stories depict the social evils of Kashmiri society. In addition, there were also some prominent Urdu journalists such as Mir Abdul Aziz, Moulavi Mohammad Sayyid Masudi, Janki Nath Zutshi, Ghulam Ahmad Kashfi, Nand Lal Watal, Kashiyap Bhandu, Jagan Nath Satthu and Prem Nath Bazaz. 6

The dawn of the present century witnessed the emergence of a few Kashmiri authors who wrote in English. Pandit Anand Koul wrote, The Kashmiri Pandit, Geography of Jammu and Kashmir State, The Archeological remains in Kashmir. He also contributed articles on the history

6. Ibid., P.200.
and literature of Kashmir to journals of national and international repute. Writers like R.C.Kak, Prem Nath Bazaz, Jia Lal Koul, Gawash Lal Koul, Som Nath Dhar and others depicted in their writings some social economic and political factors which help us in understanding the causes that led to the growth of freedom struggle in Kashmir.

Kashmiri Literature: A Scenario

It is noteworthy that from the beginning of the twentieth century a new order began to emerge in the literature of Kashmir. Persian and the Persian themes which had previously dominated the literature were relegated to the background and within few years Kashmiri poetry and prose become a powerful and supple instrument of expression. This new development marked the end of the medieval ways of thinking and the beginning of modernisation of the Kashmiri mind and literature. This type of change could be attributed to:

(a) Improved means of transport and communication.
(b) Linking the valley with the rest of India which made possible tourist inflow and enabled young Kashmiris to go outside for higher studies.

7. Ibid., P.194.
(c) Contact with outside forces.

(d) Impact of Indian freedom struggle creating a new ferment in the minds of intelligentsia and an awakening in the souls of the men.

(e) Introduction of Urdu in place of Persian, as the court language.

(f) Middle class developed a keen interest in Urdu and English.

It may be indicated here that the Christian missionaries contributed in a big way in the evolution and development of modern Kashmiri literature by preparing grammars, dictionaries and translation from English into Kashmiri. T.R. Wade compiled a Kashmiri grammar and translated The New Treatment into Kashmiri. Again, J.Hinton Knowles collected a number of Kashmiri proverbs and riddles and published them along with English translation, notes and comments. He also published a collection of Kashmiri folk tales in English.


In 1919, Stein and George Grierson published Kashmiri folk tales titled *Hatim's tales* A Kashmiri – Sanskrit dictionary compiled by Pandit Ishwar Koul was utilised by Grierson for the preparation of his Kashmiri – English dictionary which was published in 1932 by the Royal Asiatic Society under the title of [Dictionary of Kashmiri Language](#). He is also reported to have published *Lalla vaakh* (sayings of Lalla Ded).

Meanwhile under these historical developments poets felt that Kashmiri poetry needed radical change. They composed verses which touched upon the socio-economic and political life of the people of Kashmir. The poets infused a new spirit into artisans, peasants, labourers and other toiling classes who pitted themselves against feudal and imperial forces. The most prominent among them were Ghulam Ahmad 'Mahjoor,' Abdul Ahad 'Azad,' Mirza Ghulam Hasan Beigh 'Arif,' Abdul Sataar 'Aasee,' Zinda Lal Koul, Dina Nath 'Nadim,' Pir Ghulam Qadir and Pithember Nath Dhar 'Faaz.' They have been considered the main contributors to the modern Kashmiri literature.

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since they discarded mostly traditional forms and themes expressed the vehement desire for a just society.

In order to understand and know more about the modern Kashmiri literature in its proper perspective, the rest of the chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the poetry while the second part surveys the prose in Kashmiri literature.

Poetry

This section is restricted to the study of the contributions made by three great poets of Kashmir viz. Ghulam Ahmad 'Mahjoor', Abdul Ahad 'Azad' and Mirza Ghulam Hasan Beigh 'Aarif', towards the enrichment and development of Kashmiri literature as also their nationalist and socialistic ideas.

MAHJOOR

Peerzada Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor is called the father of modern Kashmiri poetry. He was born in 1888 at Metragam, District Pulwama. He was the son of Peerzada Abdullah Shah, who was a Persian and Arabic scholar. His mother Sayyida Begum was well read in Persian literature. Mahjoor received his early education from his father. He was very intelligent from his

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childhood and learnt nine centos of the Holy Quran by heart at an early age. His father sent him Tral to study under the poet Ali Ganaie Ashaiq. Later Mahjoor joined Islamia High School in Srinagar run by a well known Muslim organisation, Nusratul Islam, wherefrom he passed his middle school examination.

As briefly indicated earlier the improved means of road transport and communication linking the valley with the rest of India made it possible for visitors to come to Kashmir and young Kashmiris to go outside for higher studies. Immediately after Mahjoor had passed his examination and left schooling, one Sayyid Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din of Layalpur, Punjab visited Kashmir and developed family relations with the parents of Mahjoor. He invited Mahjoor to visit Punjab. Thus Mahjoor found a chance and left his home for Amritsar (Punjab) where he stayed for about two years with Sayyid Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din. During the period Mahjoor learnt the art of calligraphy and was introduced to Urdu poets like Moulavi Bismil Amritsari and Moulama Shibli Nomani.

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17. Ibid.
He was also associated with Munshi Mohammad Din Fauq who published a monthly Kashmiri Magazine at Layalpur. Mahjoor returned Kashmir in 1907 and was married in 1908. Meanwhile Choudhari Khushi Mohammad got him appointed as a Patwari in Ladakh and was pleased with him. He continued to serve as Patwari and afterwards Ghirdawar till he retired in 1943. But this was all against the wishes of his parents. His father was desirious enough that his son would take up his father's profession. But the post being progressive refused to adopt his father's profession. He spoke these words before his father.

"A strong and healthy Peerzada had no right to accept presents, charity and rewards. How a disciple be compensated by the Peer? After all what will be the name of that income which is secured without work? I bid good-bye to such ill-got money. I can earn for myself... I can not roam about on horse back and on exploitation, and also can not like to eat the good feasts in poor families."

18. T.N. Pandita, Social ideas in Kashmiri Poetry, Dissertation submitted for M.Phil to the University of Kashmir.
19. Chowdhari Khushi Mohammad was a Settlement Officer of the State.
Mahjoor witnessed many ups and downs during the sixtyfour years of his life. The state was governed until 1948 by the Dogras with the British Resident. The valley was very backward. Mahjoor was deeply distressed to the plight of artisans, weavers, workers and other professionals. It was a period of social evils like begging people, especially peasants, were burdened with heavy taxation and corruption. Mahjoor was greatly moved by the abject conditions of people in all spheres of life. He felt impelled to compose verses through which he conveyed his message to the people for freedom and revolt against the existing forces of oppression.

Mahjoor was a born poet in the real sense. He started composing verses in 1905, and in 1912, he began to write Urdu verses, but soon he was stirred to writing Kashmiri by the fortunate circumstances of listening to a song sung in chorus by some village belles.\(^\text{22}\) Mahjoor's greatest contribution is that he popularized Kashmiri. His songs enriched with beautiful smiles and metaphere were on the lips of the masses in Kashmir. His lyric patriotic and political poems was his great laurels.\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{22}\) J.L.Koul, Studies in Kashmiri, P.82.

As already mentioned, the majority of the population suffered under the callous yoke of feudalism. The hardships that the common people was undergoing were aggravated by social evils and bureaucratic banglings. The poet raised voice against all such mal-practices and condemned exploitation. The poet exhorted the labourers and peasants to be united, so that the past evils could be eradicated from the social set-up. Thus he wrote: 24

"Oh worker and peasant be united seek your own rights, leave begging and praying".

(To Jagirdars).

He aroused people through his poetry against the money-lenders, grocers and black-smiths who used to snatch even heap of com from the peasants. 25

Mahjoor was a nationalist. He had a deep love and affection for the valley of Kashmir. He sung of the glory of his land and its inhabitants. He sang of the flowers, mountains, rivers and hills of the valley. He was perhaps, the first poet, who sang about the beauty of the valley, when he wrote the poem "Gulshan Watan

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"The bulbul sings to the flowers,
A garden is our lam,
Like wells of white marble
The mountain speaks enclose
A sunny space of emerald green...
The sweet gift of spring,
To fountains, rivelets, streams
And water falls in Music.\textsuperscript{26}

Mahjoor undoubtedly had pride in ancient culture and past achievements of Kashmir. He disliked communalism and preached humanism and brotherhood amongst his countrymen. He advocated the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity, which was to him "One of the\textsuperscript{27} cardinal principles of Kashmir culture." He wanted a society in which equality would prevail and which would be without any distinction between rich and poor.

"Let you mix milk and sugar again. Hindus will keep the helm and Muslims ply the cars. Let you together row (ashore) the beat of this country."\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26} Raina, T.N. \textit{An Anthology of Kashmir Verse}, P. 73.
\textsuperscript{27} P.N. Bazaz, \textit{Struggle for freedom in Kashmir}, P. 296.
\textsuperscript{28} Kaumudi, \textit{Kashmir and its cultural heritage}, P. 57.
The rich and the poor, weak and the strong, shall not persist, equality shall prevail, man shall turn humane. 

Mahjoor was convinced that the feudal monarchy would come to an end. 'Bulbul' would be the guardian of Kashmiris. These poor people would enjoy the fragrance of the flowers, after the alien rulers are driven out of the soil of Kashmir. The poet says: -

"Bulbul shall rule over, Falcon shall have to obey Hawks shall be your guards". 

It is pertinent to note that Mahjoor touched upon new themes such as "the country lose, "My youth", Arise 0 Gardener and "our country is a garden". In his "Arise 0 Gardener" Mahjoor urged the Kashmiris to attain freedom through earthquakes, galse, thunder and storms. The poem gained such popularity that it was adopted by the National Conference as the national song. Throughout his life he mirrored the new stirrings of the time, through his ghazals and geets. 

The poet in his "Gris Sumi Gareh" or Peasant's home, hoped that the era of tyranny will come to an end. Big landlords, Chakidars and money-lenders will go to wall. In his another poem "Nali-Kashmir" he has expressed that the poor people's labour provided all comforts for the poor.

30. Ibid, P.159.  
rich, but could not afford to enjoy themselves. But at the same time, he expressed the hope that the day would come when the poor labourers would get an opportunity to enjoy in their own home. In this way he inspired the people to revolt against the tyranny and oppression. He desired to see the Kashmir free from the clutches of Dogra exploitation. The famous song "Baghi Nishat ke Gul" was recorded by Columbia recording company in 1936 and his fame spread far and wide. It was this song that proved to be the beginning of his emergence, as a national poet. It is said that Habba Khatoon made the structure of Kashmiri poetry. Rasul Mir, Lal Ded and Bhawani Das gave soul to it, other nourished it, but Mahjoor revived it in its real form and made it worthy for the masses.

33. Socialist ideas and movements in Kashmir, P.146.
Commenting on Mahjoor's poetry, Master Zinda Lal Koul says, "Besides being very musical and correct in the technique of rhythm and rhyme, Mahjoor is perhaps the first to introduce into Kashmiri the idea of patriotism, human freedom, love and mankind, unity of Hindus and Muslims, dignity of work, respect for manual labour and nature". In the words of Balraj Sahini, "Mahjoor's songs and poems are the cherished property of every man, woman and child living between Baramulla and Putsal. If he writes a poem today, it will be on the lips of the populace within a fortnight, children on their way to school, girls thrashing rice, boatmen plying oars, labourers bending in their ceaseless toil, all will sing it".

During his visit to Kashmir in 1915, Rabindra Nath Tagore was deeply impressed by Mahjoor's poetry. Tagore immensely admired him and acknowledged him as the Wordsworth of Kashmir.

Mahjoor was an architect of his own environments in which he was born. He championed the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity through his poetry. Through his songs and

ghazals he infused the spirit of nationalism among the Kashmiris and urged them to stand united in the cause of freedom. He was not totally against the traditional values of life, but was against exploitation, oppression and wanted a society of brotherhood and equality. He was a true patriot. He instilled hope into the depressed souls of his compatriots and urged them to hold aloft the banner of freedom.

AZAD

Born at village Ranger (Chawdora), District Badgam, South-West of Srinagar in 1903. Abdul Ahad Dar Azad received his early education from his father Sultan Dar in Persian and Arabic. Afterwards, he was sent to a local school. He studied the Holy Quran and Persian literature in his teens. He learnt Urdu by patient effort and in 1929 passed the Munshi examination. Prior to that, he was appointed Arabic teacher in Zowhama School in 1919. Azad breathed his last on April 4, 1948, following surgery for appendicitis in the SMHS Hospital Srinagar. His dead body was taken to his native village, where he was buried in the family graveyard. He lived in penury and died a destitute.

Azad started composing poems at the age of fifteen under the poetic name 'Ahad' which he later changed into 'Janbaz'. In the later years, he revised his philosophy of life and from 'Janbaz' he became 'Azad'. Reportedly, his father was in the habit of reciting poems and songs of Moulana Roomi and Hafiz Sheirazi and this helped Azad to discover and develop the poet and good singer in himself.  

Azad was intelligent. He was a man of eloquence and a man of understanding. His expression was sweet. He was witty and had a strong memory. He met Mahjoor in 1935, when he was undergoing a training course in a teachers' training school. Under Mahjoor's influence he started writing in Kashmiri. However, his literary influences were Iqbal and the progressive writers. This influence is clearly indicated by Azad's 'Shikwa-i-Iblis'. Unlike Majeed joor, who was a nationalist, Azad yearned for a socialistic pattern of society. 

Azad lived at a time, when world witnessed great changes. The world was challenging the traditional values of life and accepting new ones. World War and Russian

Revolution had taken place. In 1931, Kashmir also experienced a mass uprising. He was greatly influenced by these movements and urged his countrymen to raise against age-long tyranny and injustice and infused the spirit of revolutionary ideas in the modern poetry. His cherished desire was to establish a classless society where no 'indivious discrimination could thrive'. He exhorted people through his poetry to recognise his rights, position in society and to stand against all such differences, which were prevalent in the then social set up. The following lines are witnessing the fact:-

"Recognise yourself, enjoy the love,  
Away with slavery, show your wit,  
You made rich named him Nawab,  
Therefore, foster Revolution—foster Revolution".

Azad was aware of the fact, that it was a labourer who had brought revolution in Russia. He believes firmly that it is labourer only and not the leader, who brings revolution in the society and sets forth ideal for creating a class-less society.

44. Pushp, Kashmiri Literature, P.116.  
45. Socialistic ideas and movements in Kashmir, P.185.  
46. Azad being a man of progressive outlook was very much influenced by the Russian Revolution of 1917.
Azad refused to bow his head before the rulers of land, who had sucked the blood of poor Kashmiris. He exhorted people to fight against all sorts of malpractices, such as social injustice and oppression. The poet was pained to see the condition of Kashmiris during the Dogra period. He thus says:

"My body is in pain, it cries like a hollow pipe, I am not delicate, nor my speech eloquent, Slavery has encircled me like a reptile, This poison and fear has wrecked me". 47

The poet in his another poem "Daryaw" or (Song of a River) has again inspired people for revolution. Dr. Kaumedi is right in saying that in this poem the rhythmic movements of the waters in symbolic of a call for action and revolt for freedom.

The lines of poem says:

"I hurl myself against stone ramparts, And other mortal burriers, Then collecting once again the fragments of my scattered self, I hurl down rocks, wear down hills, And roam in the forests free". 48

47. Socialist ideas and movements in Kashmir, P.171.
Azad's poetry is full of revolutionary thoughts, and awakes the masses to stood against the oppression of Dogras. His greatest desire seems to have been to constitute a just social set-up in which freedom, equality and equality could prevail.

To him nationalism is 'Jugglery' and cause of 'enmity' between man and man. He says, 'there would be different skies with different races, Had God wished to divide the human race'.

Though Azad's poetry is full of love and romance, it cannot be denied that he struck a new note in Kashmiri poetry. As Dr. Kaumudi observes, "Love is not the consuming passion of Azad. He is capable of great heights, and invoking through the despair of love, a dynamic message for action and revolution". Azad's humanism, immense faith in man eliminating all distinctions of caste, colour and creed is reflected in his sincere, political works. He preached the gospel of love and universal brotherhood. He was sure enough that he was free intellectually and spiritually, but was anxious enough that the Kashmiris should also share such freedom with him. To him the notions of 'Kufr' and 'Din' were

49. Ibid, P.386.
50. Kaumudi, Kashmir, its cultural heritage, P.30.
nothing but empty drum-beating. He says, "Pray, announce to all the Kashmiris the secrets thou hast confined to Azad:

After casting away childish, frevolities of Kufr and Din.\(^{51}\) Azad refused to be a communal. His songs are truly and sincerely against religious bigotry. He was first poet, who spoke against religious prejudices. He was not in favour of such religion, which teaches enmity and develops hatred between man and man. He says, it is better to send that religion back to God as a gift. He refused to accept such religion.

"If Puja and Namaz are different, I shall send such religion there as a gift".\(^{52}\)

It was Azad's great desire that political slavery, social injustice, economic backwardness, cultural degeneration and mutual enmity be done away with and in its place be longed for the constitution of just society, and a new order that could change man's outlook. He insisted to his people that they should fight against injustice, tyranny and exploitation which the Kashmiris were facing under the feudalist government. He expressed his deep concern against such inhuman activities.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., P. 85.

\(^{52}\) Kuliyat Azad, P. 381.
The following lines indicate his fervour: "To become free, to end tyranny and to abolish superstition."

This is my cherished dream, my desire and my slogan.53

Azad was a great literary genius. He not only composed poems, but also wrote the history of Kashmiri literature in Urdu under the title *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shaire* in three volumes. This literary history has become the primary source of information on Kashmiri literature. He also compiled a biography of Mahjoor.

**ARIF**

Born in 1910 in Srinagar, Mirza Ghulam Hasan Beigh Arif's poetical attempts were most intimately linked to the political developments in Srinagar during the period under review. He had been associated with many literary and cultural activities and was a prominent figure in the field of Kashmiri literature for several decades. He was the organiser of many Mushairas held in Srinagar. He gave Kashmiri literature a new direction and status, when he founded the first *Bagme Adab*, in 1940, in Srinagar. His literary influence came from Iqbal, Ghalib, Hazrat Mohani, Chakbest, Josh, Faiz and Munshi Prem Chand.

53. Ibid., P.83.
During his life, Arif never liked any romantic poetry; instead he composed verses in which he showed various aspects of social and political life in Kashmir. He believed that the national freedom could assume its full significance only if it acquired a social revolutionary content. He found his themes in the life of labourers, artisans and beggars. He was greatly moved by the plight of the peasantry. He was acutely sensitive to the wretched condition of the people, and composed verses, through which he conveyed his message of freedom to the working class. A majority of the people suffered under the callous yoke of feudalism and bore hardship generated by social evils and bureaucratic bunglings. He raised his voice against all this. He exhorted the labourers and peasantry to be united so that the past evils could be eradicated from the social set up.

Arif was proud of the ancient culture and past achievements of Kashmir. He disliked communalism and preached humanism and brotherhood among the Kashmiris. He advocated the cause of Hindu - Muslim unity, which was to him one of the cardinal principles of Kashmiri culture.

Arif's sensibility was also touched by the poverty of the labourers around him. He deplored the lot of these poor people whose labour provided all the comforts
for the rich people. He felt sorry for the labourers who being a source of enjoyment for the rich could never afford to enjoy themselves.

**Arif** was pained to observe the poverty and adversity of the Kashmiris. His poetry is full of revolutionary idealism. His greatest desire was to constitute a just social set-up in which freedom and equality could prevail. Many of his poems testify to his sincere interest in social change. His sang of man's liberation from the old social order. Thus he broke away from stereotyped traditions and mors.

**Kashmiri Prose**

It is distressing to note that Kashmiri prose did not receive much attention during the Dogra period and thus Kashmiri literature could not get enriched in prose. We had no prose writers until 1936, when Jia Lal Koul for the first time, introduced a Kashmiri section in the Pratap magazine of S.P. College, wherein he adopted Persian - Arabic alphabet with suitable modification. Among other things, Kashmiri translations of Hindi plays "Ramun Raj", "Savitri" and "Satach Kahwat"

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were also incorporated in the magazine. However, the credit for writing original Kashmiri prose goes to Mahjoor's son who in 1940 started the first weekly magazine in Kashmiri. It was called Gaash. It covered not only the local news, but also published Mahjoor's poems. One of the interesting columns of the magazine was "Asun Ta Girdun" which led to its increased readership. Due to one reason or the other Gaash could not continue its publication for long.

The Quit Kashmir Movement gave impetus to Kashmiri literature. It called for the concerted efforts by the Kashmiri elite for writing Kashmiri prose. It is encouraging to note that in 1945 the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) opened its branch in Srinagar and for the first time in the history of Kashmiri literature, a Kashmiri play titled Bata Har was written by PremNath Pardesi, on the exploitation of the peasantry. As ill luck would have it, the play could not be staged since the Government confiscated the manuscript as it contained some objectionable material against the authorities.

55. Ibid, P.102.
56. Ibid.