

# Socio-cultural Life of Kashmir During 19th Century A.D

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## Abstract

The paper discusses various aspects of the society, including religious narrow-mindedness, superstitions, and the prevailing conditions of ignorance and lack of education during the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. One of the key points highlighted in the paper is the dominance of devout superstitions and mental insolvency among the people of Kashmir during that era. The society was deeply rooted in religious practices and rituals, Hindu engaging in symbol worship and religious ceremonies while Muslims were superstitious. These superstitious beliefs were considered obstacles to the progress of science and education. The lack of education was a significant issue in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Kashmir. The scarcity of educational opportunities led to widespread ignorance, and this ignorance further propagated the prevalence of superstitions and religious practices. The paper also sheds light on the status of women in Kashmiri society during that period. Women faced numerous social injustices, such as trafficking, female infanticide, widowhood, and child marriages. The portrayal of these social disasters highlights the gender inequality and the mistreatment of women at that time. The paper touches on the issue of caste segregation in Kashmiri society, indicating that it was a significant aspect of the societal structure. The rigid caste system limited the freedom of individuals to choose their occupations, as societal norms dictated their roles based on their caste and sub-caste. Additionally, the paper mentions that the society was heavily male-dominated, with men holding dominant positions and having more authority in various aspects of life. Overall, the paper provides an insight into the societal conditions of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Kashmir, emphasizing the prevalence of religious superstitions, gender inequality, lack of education, and the influence of the caste system.

**Keywords:** Superstitious, Social Stratification, Beliefs, Social Injustice, Child Marriage.

## Introduction

From the beginning, the social structure and organisation of the Kashmir valley were rigorous, traditional, and orthodox. Kashmiri society was hugely influenced by its ancient customs till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ancient rituals were still very much practised in nearly every facet of society till 1890. Kashmir was totally isolated before the construction of the Jhelum valley Cart Road. The valley's roadways were in appalling shape. It would not be incorrect to claim that there was no road worthy of the word. Because of its isolation, Kashmir developed parochialism and remained backward. The structure of society in Kashmir did not see a significant change, as determined by a review of prior practices. Despite

the influence of western notions of modernization, Kashmir maintained its ancient customs, ceremonies, rituals, and superstitions—except for a few segments of the population of the valley during the Dogra era. Overall, Kashmir still adheres to its longstanding traditions and customs.

There was a joint family mechanism in place, and it was thought to be a sign of healthy ties among family members. Joint families were seen to be civilised families. It seems that the practice was in force because the finances of the family prevented newlyweds from maintaining a separate kitchen for themselves.<sup>1</sup> The existence of the practice in the valley may have been influenced by traditional beliefs.

The arrangements of system setup summarise human experiences acquired through centuries of human knowledge and intrinsic human qualities to all periods, notably in pre-modern eras when continuity rather than a change in every culture was marked by all-time validity. The latest advances in technology and culture and the relevance of their ancient philosophy have a multidimensional aspect and a profound philosophy embedded in them. These practices contain certain conflicts due to human psychology and nature, and the system that was established was followed by successive generations. As a result, Kashmiri society was split into various related groups based on race, caste, and professional groups.

### **1.1 Social Stratification**

A stratified society is one that has two or more distinct groups of people, each of which is ranked high and low in relation to the other. It becomes clear that there are significant variations in the perks, incentives, constraints, and duties between members of one group or stratum and those of another. Members of groups with lower rankings typically have fewer privileges than members of groups with higher rankings. They usually lack basic resources and tend not to be of the same degree. To put it briefly, social stratifications and duties amounts institutionalise inequality within the population itself.<sup>2</sup>

### **Community of Hindus**

The history of the Kashmiri Pandit community goes back more than five thousand years. Pandits from Kashmir refer to themselves as "Saraswat Brahmins"<sup>3</sup>. The majority of Kashmir's Hindu population were Brahmins, it is said that the pandits of Kashmir were classified into 133 exogamous Gotras<sup>4</sup> and that they were named after the great sages from whom their families descended. However, only six Gotras were originally created, which were later increased by intermarriage with Brahmins.<sup>5</sup> Despite being a small community, the pandits are well-educated. Writing and reading are their primary pursuits. Many of them make their income as writers; some of the top Persian and Nagri writers also work for the government.

In the Valley, the Brahmins (Kashmiri Hindus) were also referred to as Kashmiri Pandits. The three classes of Kashmiri pandits were the priest (Guru), the astrologer (Jyotish), and those who practised secular professions (Karkuns). The bulk of the Karkun category of Kashmiri pandits were salaried state employees working at lower levels of administration, while some worked in agriculture and other related areas. A small percentage of people, mostly from the first two groups, work in different religious jobs including astrology and performing pandit rituals and rites.<sup>6</sup> The priest class does not marry outside of its own class.

Hindus continued to live in the valley; their descendants were called Malmasi, while subsequent immigrants from Deccan were called Banmasi. In order to find work, both of these distinct groups started learning Persian in addition to Sanskrit. The Karkuns are people who learnt Persian in order to gain employment. And those who learn Sanskrit for the sake of priesthood as a source of income or to study scriptures and execute priestly obligations are called Bachabats, or often named the Gor (derived from the

Sanskrit guru for g or mentor). The adherents of secular occupation were known as the Karkun. The higher position in the Pandit social hierarchy was assumed by the Karkun. A class known as Bhattarakas among the Karkuns was created as a result of their connection to the royal families. The Kashmiri pandit aristocracy gave rise to yet another class called Razdanikas. The Bachabats were financially disadvantaged as they accepted all forms of charity, but the Karkuns opposed this practice since it was against their dignity. Despite being despised by the Karkuns, the Kashmiri pandits were also involved in trade and cultivation. There was a section called Wurun or Purbi. They were allegedly the offspring of those Kashmiri widows who had in the past secretly wed Purbis in defiance of societal norms.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the Bohras were a minority Hindu sect in Kashmir. This was the only non-Brahman caste of Hindus known in Kashmir. This group's antecedents are not yet known with certainty. Bohras are most likely of Punjabi descent. Trade, grocers and confectioners were their primary occupations. Some of them were formerly accepted into the pandit caste, who afterwards followed the practises and rituals of the Brahmans. They were only discovered in the urban areas of the Kashmir Valley.<sup>8</sup>

### **Community of Muslims**

The population of Kashmir was primarily composed of Hindus and Buddhists up to the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A majority of Kashmiri people who had previously only been Hindus were converted to Islam before the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, all past distinctions based on race and caste were eliminated. Foreign monarchs who intermittently reigned over the valley left their mark on the country and its people, resulting in a small but noticeable presence of Tatar, Tibetan, Mughal, and Afghan families among the local population. However, the Kashmiri populace began to be referred to as either Kashmiri Muslims or Kashmiri Brahmans.<sup>9</sup>

The Muslims were divided into several different groups. The majority of the divisions, however, were only family names or epithets and lacked the essential characteristics of a caste. Accordingly, among the Muslims, family names or caste names that had been derived from the qualities, demeanours, dispositions, or specific deeds of their ancestors included Saraf, Kukru, Hondu, Paizar, Dastar, Choor, and Drand. Another type of caste was based on where a person or family resided, such as Sopori, Mazari, Trisal, and Kausa, while those who were associated with a profession or occupation included Harkars (runners), Jotshi (astrologer), Kandru (baker), and Pardozi (patcher). Some Muslims continued to use their krams, or Hindu caste names, such as Pandit, Trantre, Magre, Nayak, Lone, Kathre, Dar, Batt, Parry, Mantu, Yattoo, Kunbi, and Dum.<sup>10</sup>

There were certain foreign castes among Muslims in addition to these native castes, like Sayyids, Pathans, and Mughals, who, except the first caste mentioned, had subdivisions of Mirs, Ashai, Bachh, Kant, Beigh, Bande, and Ganie.<sup>11</sup>

The aforesaid Muslim classes, unlike Hindu castes, did not, however, convey any social distinctions. The Zamindars, or agriculturalists, and the Taifdars,<sup>12</sup> were the true division among Kashmiri Muslims. There was no intermarriage between these two classes. Pirzadas, Babzadas, and Wanis were included in the respected caste of the Sheikhs, who represented the convert class, while the Dums, Galwans, Choupans, Bands, Watalis, and Hanjis were included in the lower castes.<sup>13</sup>

Sayyids who claimed direct descent from the Islamic prophet (peace be upon him) were comparable to the Hindu Brahmans. They came from outside Kashmir, accompanied by Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani, also known as Shahi-i-Hamdani, and his son Mir Mohammad Hamdani. They adhered to the law of hypergamy. They were divided into two groups: The Pirs and the Mirs; the former were religious speakers (Pir Muridi),

while the latter was engaged in agriculture and other activities. The Sayyids occupied the highest rank in terms of their social status.<sup>14</sup>

A separate class of boatmen were known as Hanjis. They included a range of grades in their own group. The proprietors of the Dunga, or passenger boats, known as Dunga-Hanz, were less reputable. The fishermen Gad-Hanz were still the lowest of all. The Watal were Kashmir's lowest social stratum. They were a rare group of people with unique customs and were known as the gipsies of Kashmir. The Bhaggats or Bahnds of Kashmir were very cheerful and funny characters because they entertained the populace with their joy and good humour. Besides the aforesaid castes, we also find that some Dums, Galwans, Choupans, and Nangars lived in Kashmir. They formed separate castes in society.

### **1.2 Superstitions and Religious beliefs among Muslims and Hindus**

In Kashmir throughout the period of our study, the customs and rites associated with birth, marriage, and death were elaborate and extremely expensive. It should also be highlighted those traditions and customs (Rewaj) governed the lives of the Kashmiri people. It was difficult for the people to sustain a subsistence level when they had to spend money on marriage, birth, death, and other religious and social ceremonies.<sup>15</sup>

Hindus blend profound philosophy with superstitions, myths, and worship of nature in their religious practices. The Hindus shared the Muslim belief that involving the gods and performing certain religious rituals might prevent natural calamities. A volcanic eruption happened in hamlet Nichihama of Parganah Machipura during the administration of Afghan Governor Atta Mohammad Khan (1806-13). At the site of the eruption, the Pandits gathered. They scraped the surface and used the heat of the soil to boil rice, which was then distributed to the birds. Offerings were offered in the hope that doing so would lessen the fury and mayhem that the earthquake would wreak.

Although Islam opposes superstitions, Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir, like their Hindu neighbours, however, believed in them. They had faith that the sick men might be healed using an ointment produced from Fuller's earth that they had discovered at the shrine of Saint Nur-ud-Din in Rishipura, Kother Valley. They held illogical beliefs in the efficacy of amulets offered by faqirs and believed that smallpox could be avoided by donning amulets<sup>16</sup> or reciting verses of the Holy Quran. The typical Kashmiri believed that wearing an amulet was vital to ward off bad spirits, protect his health, and ensure his wealth, hence it was commonly worn. They worshipped and offered cowries to saints who dwelt on the summit of the Pir Panjal in exchange for their safe passage through the Pir Panjal. They also practised animal sacrifice at a spring in Pargana Achh.

The Kashmiri Muslims would summon Mukhdoom Sahib as soon as they were in trouble and swear, they would offer fresh sugar if they survived. Younger girls would pray to Mukhdoom Sahib for healthy, attractive husbands, and women who were already married prayed for a son. In times of peril on the Wular Lake, the boatmen would summon the Pir Dastgir by uttering the phrase "ya pir dastgir" for a safe return to the shore. A cholera pandemic once broke out in Kashmir while Dewan Kirpa Ram was the governor, killing thousands of people. Dewan Kirpa Ram enquired of the Muslims the reason behind the disaster. The Muslims made use of this opportunity to advance their religious beliefs. They explained that this was because Muslims were forbidden from calling Azan and from consuming meat. For the time being, the governor granted their plea, and the cholera gradually subsided. Afterwards, the Muslim-specific preference was withdrawn. Droughts were usually seen as the result of a divine curse. As a result, people used to organise processions and offer open prayers at places of worship to call for rain. God was praying

to bring rain there. They also had a belief in the curse of their saints, and it was said that Mukhdoom Sahib's curse caused the Tazar and Zaingir regions to become dry. Muslims made promises to refrain from sin in the future while standing beneath the different species of trees, which were likewise revered as holy.<sup>17</sup>

It was believed that changes in the sound of the river or the colour of the spring water were signals of impending events. Jins and Bhuts were haunted by certain mountains and other places. It was thought that they might hurt anybody and assumed the appearance of beautiful women or other creatures. People believed that bhuts and dayins (witches) haunt the living. People believed that bhuts and dayins (witches) haunt the living in every area of Jammu. Witches were blamed for every conceivable ailment, and any woman may become one by memorising a two-letter spell. The public imagination in Jammu and Kashmir State was greatly influenced by the belief in demonic spirits. Witchcraft and sorcery were widespread in Jammu's hills and Kandi tract. Witches were thought to be responsible for a variety of ailments, either directly or indirectly through the terrible spirits they controlled.

A plethora of superstitions about every imaginable event and action infect human society throughout the state. The bulk of them had as their source an evil eye, sacrifices, illness and death, contacts with members of particular castes, fortuitous and unpleasant dream omens, and specific kinds of birds and animals, such crows, cats, owls, dogs, horses, buffalo, snake, stars, planets, and days. The phrase "evil eye" is frequently used as a translation of the term nazar. When a person intent on wickedness saw something beautiful or lovely. It pushed him to cause harm, but anything unpleasant was shielded from the evil eye. Therefore, anything beautiful was flecked with black to draw attention to the fleck rather than the actual object. Similar to this, an iron container was hung up during the construction of a house as a nazar-wattu or averter of nazar. Although the bulk of people are apathetic to their children's gender, and their society is so brutish and primitive that nothing can be found in the way of ideas, scientific or otherwise, about the controlling of sex while the child is in the phase of gestation, Yet, it may be worthwhile to clarify such opinions about this problem as are held even by the small minority that is concerned about these issues.<sup>18</sup>

In Jammu and Kashmir, both Hindus and Muslims had a common belief in good and bad omens. Sneezing at the beginning of the task, dogs clawing near one's dwelling, and water dripping from cooking rice were all seen as unlucky signs. However, sneezing before going to bed, while leaving for work, or by chance seeing a cow, a kid, or milk were all seen as fortunate events.<sup>19</sup> It was thought that seeing translucent water, cooked rice, bread, and grapes would bring good fortune. Dreams about walnuts and copper coins were seen as portending unfavourable future occurrences. The sound of the cuckoo (Byal) was thought to indicate the time to sow seeds. It was believed that walnuts distribution, offering rice to anybody passed by the field, and being present when the first plough was formed were all auspicious and necessary for the safety and plentiful crop harvest.

### **1.3 Societal rituals and customs related to marriage**

Societal rituals and customs hold a special role in the interactions of society. Fundamentally, they were imposed by either the ruler of the specific territory or nation or by some social institutions. In Jammu and Kashmir, social rites and customs were essentially the same as those that were popular across India. The most significant Hindu samskara was vivaha. For a variety of reasons, marriage was seen as the most devout and essential aspect of a man's life. Marriage served as the rule and foundation of domestic life, as

well as a way of perpetuating and continuing the vansa or kula. As a result, every Hindu and Muslim did everything to enter into the bond of marriage.

Infant marriages were customary among Hindus in general, except for very high-caste girls who found it difficult to find a perfect match. A parent was forced to get his daughter married as soon as possible for socio-political and religious reasons. Rajputs and Brahmans practised exogamy or marrying into clans other than their own. Every caste was equally rigid, even the lowest. It was against the law and even deemed incest to marry within a clan. Early marriages, which have been a common tradition in Kashmir from ancient times, spread throughout the country under Afghan rule and persisted even under the Sikhs. When the practice of marrying daughters in their youth grew more common, parents had greater control over the fate of their young daughters.

Marriage was regarded as a religious obligation. To get religious credit, it was recommended to be done as soon as possible, which led to the evil of child marriage. All groups, including Muslims, Kashmiri Pandits, and members of lower castes, practised early marriage. Compared to women from upper castes, women from lower castes had a substantially lower marriageable age. Early marriage of girls was preferred since it was considered disrespectful for parents to have a teenage daughter living at home unmarried. The marriageable age was 12 to 13 years. Numerous problems including widowhood, a high mortality rate, and high birth rates were caused by early marriage.

When it came to marriage, boys and girls were not allowed to choose their partners. Parents or guardians had the exclusive right to make the decision since it was thought that children, no matter how old they may have been, would not be able to make the best decision due to their inexperience. The discussion about the marriage proposals from other houses was avoided by the single guys entirely because it was judged unethical. When it comes to marriage, Muslims prefer to marry somebody from their own class. The Sayyid families, in particular, attempted to marry solely within their own lineages. However, they did not hesitate to marry beyond their own class if appropriate partners could not be found. On the other hand, because they were at the bottom of the social spectrum, the hanjis and the watalis only got married to people from their own classes.

The Muslims in the city made fewer wedding expenditures than the Pandits did. Their major source of marriage expense was the wazwan (feast). Both Muslims and Hindus held opulent feasts lasting for hours on the occasion of marriage. Dowry was essentially non-existent among the Muslims, but among the Pandit, the system of dowry had almost gained the force of law. The system of dowry appears to be primarily a result of the pundits' quick advancement in western education. Because a young man who did well in college was a very demanding bridegroom, the cost had naturally tended to increase gradually along with demand. The oppressive tradition that required a father to spend enormous sums on feasts, processions, and dowries on the occasion of a daughter's wedding put a lot of pressure on the underprivileged. Most dads were compelled to obtain outside financing, which caused them to stress and accumulate debt for the rest of their lives. Due to growing prices and increased income, people spent a lot of money on festivals and weddings. People who couldn't afford it began to overspend as a result, they were forced to mortgage their real estate and borrow money at astronomical interest rates.

By the close of the 20th century, Muslims began spending far more on marriages than they did on wazawan, gold jewellery, priceless presents, elegant clothing, and cosmetics. The financially well-off also used dowry, boys and girls enjoyed assisting their families to choose their life partners, residences were ornamented, and shamiyanas and other decorations were used.

#### **1.4 Status of Women**

In mediaeval Kashmir, women are divided into two classes upper-class women and lower-class women. The former belonged to the Wani, Qazi, Dhar, Mulla, Sheikh, and Pirzada families; they lived in seclusion in their homes.<sup>20</sup> The lower-class women had very little opportunity to interact with the upper-class women. However, upper-class females did not exist in their own right. They were restricted from basic training, prohibited free movement, and allowed no open relationships with other women in their neighbourhood. In contrast, women from the lower middle class, as well as the peasants and labour classes, were free to roam around and assisted their male family members in the fields. Their most challenging task, besides cooking, was husking and grinding food grain. The paddy was placed in a wooden mortar and crushed with a hefty wooden pestle. Urban women assist their spouses in the workplace as well. The potter's wife, for instance, dug the clay for her husband and painted the pots before they were baked.<sup>21</sup> The spinning wheel served as the sole reliable companion for women in both rural and urban areas during the Middle Ages. It represented the fortitude, hard labour, cooperation, and self-sufficiency of Kashmiri women. When their life partner was experiencing financial hardship, they would serve as wise advisors and step forward to assist them in getting out of poverty. In the case of domestic rivalries, the vanquished women would find not only their livelihood but also mental calm and comfort in the companionship of the spinning wheel. At their in-laws' home, the daughters-in-law received terrible treatment. Education among women was uncommon. Domestic disputes among women, as well as societal resentment and misunderstandings, had become widespread phenomena.<sup>22</sup>

The institution of prostitution was prevalent during the mediaeval and Dogra epochs. There were two notorious prostitution hubs during the Dogra period, one in Maisuma and another in Tashwan. Some licenced prostitutes contributed to the state's overall revenue by giving the state between 15 to 25 per cent of their earnings. In 1880, there were 18, 15, state-licensed prostitutes in Kashmir. Despite the Maharaja making a lot of money from them, no funds were allocated for their benefit. According to Mr Henrey, an officer on special duty in Kashmir in 1880, little care was offered to the sick prostitutes, which led to the spread of syphilis across Kashmir.<sup>23</sup>

The middle and upper-class women were not in a favourable position. The major event in their life was getting married. The most challenging task for a parent was to arrange a daughter's marriage. According to Bisco, "Self-respecting women are required to wear dirt clothing for the simple reason that if they wore clean ones, people may mistake them for ladies of loose lives." Since the purdah was widespread among Muslim women, hardly any upper-class women were ever spotted on the streets.<sup>24</sup>

Both Pandits and Muslims were involved in child marriage. Widow remarriage was prevalent among Muslims, but not among Pandits. Following the death of their spouses, some Pandit women were forced to reside at their in-laws' homes and suffered several cruelties.<sup>25</sup>

The Sikh rulers of Kashmir introduced taxes on both nikah (wedding) and khula for the first time in the region's history (divorce). It took on the form of law and was carried out under the guise of zar-i-qazaya. The amount was determined for both urban and rural populations based on their social position and economic strength. A patwari used to receive an anna as Rasum-i-Patwari from each marriage in the city of Srinagar. Furthermore, the government got two rupees from the wealthy and one rupee eight annas from the poor. Each party was required to pay the state one rupee and eight annas in the case of repudiation. In both marriage and divorce cases, the villagers paid a fee of one rupee, seven annas, and two paise. They weren't subject to Rasum-i-Patwari. The levy imposed an additional hardship on parents who had already spent a significant amount of money on marriages. Obviously, it would have made marriages more

challenging, especially for the lower sections of society. However, it would have reduced the number of divorce cases to a certain extent.

### **1.5 Dress and Ornaments**

The typical outfit of the locals in the valley is a pheran (long loose wrapper) and trousers for both men and women.<sup>26</sup> The pheran is made up of two clothes that are equal in size. Muslim women wear pherans that are smaller than those worn by men. The pheran is mostly appropriate for kangari users. Because they sit down and put the firepot between their knees, "it makes a fantastic tent."<sup>27</sup> The head-dress of a Kashmir Muslim lady was the kasaba, whereas a Pandit woman wore the taranga.<sup>28</sup> In reality, it was only worn by ladies of the higher classes, especially those from the Sayyid family, who can trace their ancestry to Central Asia, Persia, and Arabia. The kalposh (turban) was typically worn by men on their heads. Some affluent families also utilised the dastar instead of a simple kalposh, while well-off women wore the takani, a beautifully crafted Turkish-style cap. During the Dogra period, a change in the headdress became visible when the dastars and kalposhs were replaced with caps and fur caps.<sup>29</sup>

The ordinary Kashmiris throughout the Valley used the pulhor (straw sandal) and the khraw (wooden chappal) as shoes till the first part of the twentieth century. Due to religious reasons, Kashmiri pandits did not wear leather shoes. So, instead of leather shoes, they wore wooden clogs. But in addition to wearing wooden clogs, Muslims also wore leather shoes. The literate Pandits disowned the usage of wooden clogs.<sup>30</sup> The purdah was popular during the mediaeval era, but its use began to diminish following the National Movement in 1931. Women leaders such as Begem Abdullah and Zainab were among the first to reject the purdah.

The absence of jewellery makes a woman "like a dry landscape." Similar to how a dry meadow seems lifeless, a woman with few ornaments lacks much fascination.<sup>31</sup> In fact, since the earliest days, humans have used gold and silver jewellery as a necessary part of daily life. The discovery of valuable and rare metals by man dates back to ancient times. For centuries, silver and gold have been used to create ornamentation. There are usually some joyful events and customs, such as weddings, when ladies put on their jewellery, and females, young and old, have always been fond of wearing different ornaments. These fragile objects eventually acquired the term "ornaments." The Vedas, the Ramayana, and other ancient epic dramas all make mention of gold and silver jewellery.<sup>32</sup>

Kashmiri women had worn many types of jewellery for a very long time, both precious and semi-precious. In the past, women adorned themselves with anklets, fillets, armlets, finger rings, and wristlets. Thus, references to the wearing of these and other jewellery types by Kashmiri women can be found in the Nilmatpurana.<sup>33</sup> According to Kalhana, King Harsha introduced various styles of jewellery for Kashmiri women. His women wore golden kitaka leafed three pendants over their brows and gold strung at the ends of their strands of hair.<sup>34</sup>

Both Muslim and Hindu women frequently wore necklaces, bangles, bracelets, finger rings, nose rings, and other jewellery during the Middle Ages. The affluent and well-to-do wore gold and precious metal ornaments, whereas the impoverished wore silver ornaments.

In fact, the ornaments from Kashmir were distinctive in their style. During the era of the Sultans and Mughals, these ornate motifs were further enriched. Especially during the Mughal period, the fashion for jewellery changed. According to legend, Empress Nur-Jahan brought more delicate jewellery styles to the valley, and Kashmiris imitated the ornaments worn by the elite of the Mughal Empire. It is believed that nose rings first appeared during this period. It was until recent times; some brides wore nose rings during



their wedding ceremonies.<sup>35</sup> Jewellery was a favourite accessory for Kashmiri women. They may be seen wearing Kanwaji, Jhumka, Bale, Doors, Tops, Dolamall, Halqaband, Tikka, and Deji-hor, among other things. Ornaments were equally popular among poor women. They adorned themselves with silver, brass, and other cheap metals. They adorned themselves with silver, bras, and other base metal ornaments. Therefore, both wealthy and poor women wore jewellery. In reality, jewellery was popular among all Kashmiri women.<sup>36</sup>

### **1.6 Dwellings and Cuisine**

Houses are often constructed of mud, wood, bricks, and stones. People built timber buildings due to the availability of timber. The dwellings in the villages were typically two to four stories high,<sup>37</sup> with the ground floor normally kept for livestock and the upper floors housing the family lodging and other belongings. In order to protect against earthquakes, which often struck the valley, the homes were constructed of stone, brick, and mortar with a substantial amount of timber interspersed. For instance, a tremendous earthquake on June 26, 1828, caused the collapse of 1200 homes.<sup>38</sup> Both baked and unbaked bricks were used. Like in Europe, the windows were rectangular, numerous, and arranged in rows. The window frames' final trellis work displayed a wide range of Moorish patterns. They were covered with a small piece of homemade paper that served as glass. The houses of affluent families, both Hindu and Muslim, were often situated on the banks of the river Jhelum, and the roofs of the dwellings were generally covered with sheets of birch bark. The impoverished people thatched their dwellings with rich straw. However, because thatched roofs would cause hazardous fires, they were outlawed and replaced with mud roofs.<sup>39</sup> In Moorcroft's opinion, houses are "primarily in a neglected and ruined condition, with broken doors, or no doors at all, with shattered lattice, windows closed up with boards, paper, or rags, walls out of the perpendicular, and pitched roofs threatening to fall."<sup>40</sup> However, Vigne, who travelled to the valley in 1835, provides a more positive account of the structures in Anantnag, the second-largest city of Kashmir. "It (Anantnag) is now only a shadow of what it once was; it has only 600 or 700 houses; many of them are ornamented with the most elegant trellis and lattice-work, but their present ruined and neglected appearance is placed in wretched contrast with their once gay and happy condition, and speaks volumes, upon the light and joyous prosperity that has long since fled the country, due to the shameless rapacity of the ruthless Sikhs. Hugel, who visited Kashmir the same year, shared this assessment and noted that owls and jackals now frequently resided in these homes and had entirely ruined their intricately carved windows and terraces.<sup>41</sup> The city of Srinagar was made almost entirely of the remains of previously magnificent and imposing structures. In other words, the entire valley showed signs of fading beauty.

The primary food used by Kashmiris during the mediaeval and Dogra periods was rice. Numerous varieties of rice, including laar byel, bahri, kathwar, aulyaa, mushqa, and budij, were cultivated. Wheat and maize were stapled foods in qandi regions. Kashmiri cuisine also includes vegetables in addition to meat, fish, eggs, and butter. Kratch, Obi, Nunar, Hand, Wopul-Hak, and Hader were among the wild vegetables that were used and produced. There were also many other types of vegetables used, including turnips, palak, tomato, brinjal, cabbage, and radish. The stem and root of the lotus were taken along with watery vegetables like nadru. It is ten inches long, an inch and a half in diameter, straw-grey in colour, and cylindrical in form. The stem and root of the lotus plant are among the watery vegetables that are eaten. It is ten inches long, an inch and a half in diameter, straw-grey in colour, and cylindrical in form. It was believed to be very nourishing when boiled and spiced. Even the lotus' unripe beans were eaten. Additionally, it was dried out for usage in the freezing winter months. Since Kashmiris prefer their food

to be rather salty, salt was another necessary dietary ingredient. There were two varieties of salt, the more desirable of which originated in Punjab and the less desirable of which originated in Ladakh. Fish was also consumed. Hindus and Muslims both ate the meat of sheep and goats. The Hindus only consumed wild poultry and lake bird eggs, and don't ever touch chicken, eggs, garlic, or onions.<sup>42</sup> The beef was not available, and slaughtering a cow was considered a grave offence punishable by death. The Hanjis, who lived along the banks of the Dal, Nageen, and Anchar lakes, ate mostly Singhara, also known as water nuts.<sup>43</sup> When Moorcroft visited the valley in 1823, he noted that water nuts were "pretty exclusively foodstuff for at least thirty thousand people for five months of the year."<sup>44</sup>

On certain occasions like weddings and other significant events, Kashmiris offered their customary feast, wazwan, to relatives and neighbours.<sup>45</sup> Wazwan is a multicourse feast with meat from sheep, goats, or beef as the major component, along with other ingredients including poultry, fish, and vegetables. The genesis of Kashmir's ethnic/heritage cuisine may be traced to the Mongol king Timur's invasion of India in 1348, which occurred during the rule of Nasiuddin Muhammad of the Tughlaq dynasty. Timur sent professional workers from Samarkand, including cooks, to Kashmir. These talented chefs, known as wazas in their native tongue, prepared a variety of meals using meat and categorised them based on their shapes and gravies. Persian and Sanskrit immigrants are credited for popularising wazwan cuisine. The word "waazi" is essentially the Sanskrit word "waja," which means "to cook." The word's origins can also be traced to the Persian word ashpaaz, which refers to a skilled soup maker and through time evolved into the word waza. The use of freshly slaughtered meat in its preparation is a fundamental requirement for a wazwan. After acquiring the meat, the waza separates it into several categories for the various recipes. For instance, ribs are used to prepare tabakh maaz, while ground meat is used to make kabab, rista, and goshtaba.<sup>46</sup>

In Kashmir, tea was a staple item that was offered with every meal. Among the locals, it had been customary to always give guests a cup of tea. Two cultivars of tea, Surti and Sabz, were imported into Kashmir. The people of Kashmir have always enjoyed tea and would consume both sweet and salty tea.<sup>47</sup> According to Schonberg, Kashmiris, like Tibetans, never travelled without their tea hardware (Samavar).<sup>48</sup> Everyone used to carry his tiny copper can hung at his saddle bow and all the accessories in his pocket.

## Conclusion

The current study gave a thorough account of the social, cultural, and economic changes that Kashmir underwent in the 19th century. These changes were prompted by a number of factors, including social reform movements, British influence, economic advancements, and the modernization process. Below is a breakdown and explanation of some of the main points.

1. **Social Reform Movements:** The emergence of social reform movements in Kashmir's urban centres demonstrates the need for betterment and change in all facets of society. These movements often looked to address issues such as gender inequity, education, and societal standards. The difficulty of implementing reforms in various social and geographical contexts is shown by the fact that rural regions lagged behind in reaping the rewards of these initiatives.

2. **British Influence:** 1. The British had a huge influence on Kashmiri society with the introduction of contemporary sports, education, clothes, eating, and construction techniques. These factors influenced the

adoption of new living habits, the empowerment of women, and alterations in cultural preferences. The British influence also reflects the interdependence of regions and societies during the colonial era.

**3. Impact on Traditional Aspects:** The process of modernisation resulted in changes in traditional aspects of life, both in rural and urban areas. The demise of the village community, joint family system, and simple lives reflects a trend towards individualism and changing social fabric. This change exemplifies the conflict between preserving tradition and welcoming modernity.

**4. Economic Changes:** A greater variety of products, greater interaction with the outside world, and economic prosperity all contributed to improvements in the standard of living. These changes had an impact on numerous aspects of living, including dwelling structures, decorations, and household goods. The evolving economic landscape also had an impact on marital practises, with weddings becoming more elaborate and expensive.

**5. Complex Interplay of Factors:** The interplay of social reform movements, British influence, economic developments, and modernization demonstrates the complex nature of societal change. These elements frequently interacted in complex ways, resulting in multifarious changes in several aspects of life.

In nutshell, the study provides a comprehensive overview of how various factors shaped Kashmiri society during the 19th century. The interplay between social, cultural, economic, and external influences illustrates the dynamic nature of societal change during this period. This analysis offers valuable insights into the complexities of historical transformations and their impact on different segments of the population.

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Ishaq Khan, History of Srinagar, Srinagar, 1978, p.84

<sup>2</sup> Masrat Shafi Zargar, Kashmir: Socio-Economic-Cultural changes from 1846-1947, Srinagar, Gulshan Publishers, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Jiji Paul, Socio-Economic Conditions of Kashmiri Pandits, 2015, Srinagar: Book Palace, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Iqbal Ahmad, Masterpieces of Kashmir, Srinagar: Gulshan Books, 2012, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Parviz Ahmad, Economy & Society of Kashmir, Srinagar: 2007, Oriental Publishing House, p. 271.

<sup>6</sup> Jiji Paul, Socio-Economic Conditions of Kashmiri Pandits, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> Parviz Ahmad, Economy & Society of Kashmir, p.271

<sup>8</sup> Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> Parviz Ahmad, Economy & Society of Kashmir, p.271

<sup>10</sup> Walter Lawrence, Provincial Gazetteer of Kashmir & Jammu, Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1909, p.36

<sup>11</sup> Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 305.

<sup>12</sup> The Taifdars are people who work as gardeners, ranchers, shepherds, boatmen, minstrels, leatherworkers, and domestic helpers.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Neve, Things Seen in Kashmir, Seeley, Service and Co. Limited, London, 1931, pp.151-52

<sup>14</sup> Parviz Ahmad, Economy & Society of Kashmir, p.275

<sup>15</sup> Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, pp. 256-61

<sup>16</sup> Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 233

<sup>17</sup> Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 292-94

<sup>18</sup> Census of India, 1911, Volume XX, *Kashmir Part I*, Report by MD Martin-Uz-Zaman Kahan, Lucknow, 1912. The first thing these ignorant people consider is superstition, and they turn to charms and amulets; Hindus make vows to gods and goddesses, and Muslims make vows to the shrines of holy men; the Bodh refers to his yearning for the male child to the ubiquitous Lama; p.17

- <sup>19</sup> Census of India, 1961, Kashmir, p. 25.
- <sup>20</sup> Mohib-ul-Hassan, Kashmir under the Sultans, p.218
- <sup>21</sup> Wakefield, G.E.C. Recollections-fifty years in service of India. Lahore, 1934, pp. 143-45
- <sup>22</sup> Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 256
- <sup>23</sup> National Archives of India/Foreign Department, section E/ May, 1983, No.86
- <sup>24</sup> Tyndal Bisco, Kashmir in Sunlight & Shade, pp. 131, see also James Milne, The Road Kashmir, Hodder and Stoughton Limited London, 1929, p. 126
- <sup>25</sup> A.K.Bamzai, The Kashmiri Pandits, p .52,
- <sup>26</sup> Pheran is a garment that drapes below the calf of the leg and covers the body and arms. Both Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir use pherans during the winter seasons to remain warm.
- <sup>27</sup> Mohammad Ishaq Khan, History of Srinagar, p.87
- <sup>28</sup> The first modifications in Kashmiris' clothing began to occur during the Dogra era. Dupotta's arrival caused the disappearance of Kasabas and Tarangas. It was also preferable to wear shalwar, churidar-pyjamas, and frocks.
- <sup>29</sup> Mohammad Ishaq Khan, History of Srinagar, p.88
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid. p.89
- <sup>31</sup> G.S.Ghureye, Indian Costume, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1966, p. 19
- <sup>32</sup> Census of India. 1961, Rural Craft Survey, (Himachal Pradesh) (Gold and silver ornaments, Editor Ram Singh Chandra Pal, pp.3-4
- <sup>33</sup> M.L. Kapur, Kingdom of Kashmir, Gulshan Books Srinagar, 2005, p.255
- <sup>34</sup> Sir Aurel Stein, Rajatarangini, Vol.II, pp. 928-931
- <sup>35</sup> P.N.K. Bamzai, A History of Kashmir Political-Social-Cultural from the Earliest time to Present Day, Gulshan Books Srinagar, 2008, p.512.
- <sup>36</sup> Bazaz, Daughters of the Vitasta, pp.7-8.
- <sup>37</sup> William Moorcroft; Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab: in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshawar, Kabul. Kunduz and Bokhara, vol. II, p.118
- <sup>38</sup> Godfrey Thomas Vigne, Travels in Kashmir. Ladakh, Iskardoo, the countries adjoining the mountain course of the Indus and the Himalaya, North of the Punjab, Vol. II, 271
- <sup>39</sup> Tyndale Bisco, Kashmir in Sunlight & Shade, p.87
- <sup>40</sup> William Moorcroft; Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab: in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshawar, Kabul. Kunduz and Bokhara. 2 vols. London 1837, it was also reprinted in Indian' edition in 1971. P.119
- <sup>41</sup> Godfrey Thomas Vigne, Travels in Kashmir. Ladakh, Iskardoo, the countries adjoining the mountain course of the Indus and the Himalaya, North of the Punjab with map engraved by direction of the Hon. East India Company, and other illustration, London, 1842. P.357.
- <sup>42</sup> Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p.254
- <sup>43</sup> Sadly, the Dogras levied high taxes on the Singaras, and these nuts were harvested and sold to Hanjis at astronomical prices. When Robert Thorpe came upon the Hanjis, they were in dreadful condition.
- <sup>44</sup> William Moorcroft; Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab: in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshawar, Kabul. Kunduz and Bokhara. 2 vols. London 1837, it was also reprinted in Indian' edition in 1971.
- <sup>45</sup> Kashmir is distinctive for having wazwan. It is believed that various forms of Wazwan evolved here only after the advent of the Mughals. Despite social reformers' concerns about the huge amount of money spent on it. It is still regarded as a key aspect of their extensive cultural legacy.
- <sup>46</sup> Sajad A. Rather F.A. Masoodi Rehana Akhter, Journal of Ethnic Foods, Ethnic meat products of Kashmiri wazwan: a review, <http://journalofethnicfoods.net/>
- <sup>47</sup> Baron Erich Von Schonberg, Travels in India and Kashmir, 2 vols. London, 1853, p.127
- <sup>48</sup> A samovar is a traditional Kashmiri kettle for brewing, boiling, and serving tea and kahwa. Kashmiri samovars are made of copperware with carved or embossed calligraphic designs.