

Development of modern education in Jammu and Kashmir under The Dogra Rulers (1846–1947): A historical analysis

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Abstract

The development of modern education in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra period (1846–1947) represented a significant process of social, political, and intellectual transformation.

Before the establishment of Dogra rule, educational institutions in the region were predominantly traditional and religious in nature, operating through indigenous systems such as *Pathshalas*, *Gurukuls*, *Maktabas*, and *Madrasas*. The establishment of the Dogra dynasty in 1846 initiated a gradual process of educational modernization influenced by British educational policies, indigenous administrative requirements, missionary activities, and social reform movements. The Dogra rulers, particularly Maharaja Ranbir Singh, Maharaja Pratap Singh, and Maharaja Hari Singh, introduced educational reforms that contributed significantly to the development of primary, secondary, collegiate, and technical education. This research paper examines the evolution of modern education in Jammu and Kashmir under the Dogra administration and analyses its contribution to the modernization of society and administration. The study argues that despite financial constraints, social conservatism, and regional disparities, the educational policies of the Dogra rulers laid the institutional foundations of the modern educational system in Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords: Dogra rulers, Jammu and Kashmir, educational history, modernization, higher education, technical education

Introduction

Education has historically served as one of the principal instruments of social transformation, political modernization, and economic development. Societies that invest in educational institutions generally experience advances in administrative efficiency, intellectual growth, and social progress. In Jammu and Kashmir, the emergence of modern education during the Dogra period marked a profound transition from traditional educational systems to institutionalized and state-sponsored education. The period from 1846 to 1947 occupies a central position in the educational history of the state because it witnessed the gradual establishment of schools, colleges, professional institutions, and educational administrative structures^[1].

The Treaty of Amritsar of 1846, which established Dogra rule in Jammu and Kashmir, created a political framework within which educational reforms could gradually emerge. During the initial decades of Dogra administration, educational development remained subordinate to political consolidation and administrative organization. However, increasing interaction with British India, the growing need for educated administrative personnel, and the influence of modern intellectual movements gradually transformed the educational priorities of the state^[2].

The educational transformation that occurred under the Dogra rulers was influenced by multiple factors. British educational policies, particularly those associated with Macaulay's Minute of 1835 and Wood's Dispatch of 1854, provided important models for educational administration and curriculum development. Simultaneously, administrative modernization and economic changes created increasing demand for educated individuals capable of participating in government service and professional occupations^[3].

The present study examines the development of modern education in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra period from 1846 to 1947. It analyses the transformation of traditional educational institutions, the growth of primary and secondary education, the establishment of higher educational institutions, the development of technical education, and the broader social consequences of educational modernization.

Traditional Education in Jammu and Kashmir before 1846

Prior to the establishment of Dogra rule, education in Jammu and Kashmir was organized primarily through traditional and religious institutions. These institutions functioned independently of direct state control and played an important role in preserving cultural and intellectual traditions. Educational activities were conducted through *Pathshalas*, *Gurukuls*, *Maktabas*, and *Madrasas*, which served as the principal centres of learning^[4].

Among Hindu communities, education was imparted through *Pathshalas* and Sanskrit schools. The curriculum emphasized Sanskrit grammar, philosophy, literature, religious scriptures, and traditional sciences. Teaching methods relied heavily upon oral instruction, memorization, and close interaction between teachers and students. Teachers occupied an important social position and enjoyed considerable respect within their communities^[5].

Similarly, Muslim educational institutions provided instruction in Arabic, Persian, Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and literature. Persian remained the language of administration and intellectual discourse throughout much of northern India and continued to influence educational practices in Jammu and Kashmir during the early decades of Dogra rule^[6].

Despite their intellectual significance, traditional educational institutions suffered from several limitations.

Educational opportunities remained restricted to privileged social groups, while large sections of society remained illiterate. Educational facilities were concentrated primarily in urban centres, and female education was almost entirely neglected. Consequently, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the educational system of Jammu and Kashmir remained traditional, localized, and socially exclusive^[7].

Educational Policies under Maharaja Gulab Singh

The establishment of Dogra rule under Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846 initiated a new phase in the political history of Jammu and Kashmir. However, educational development did not receive immediate governmental attention. Maharaja Gulab Singh's primary concern was the consolidation of political authority, the establishment of administrative institutions, and the maintenance of law and order within the newly acquired territories^[8].

Consequently, educational institutions continued to function largely according to traditional practices. Pathshalas, Madrasas, and religious schools retained their importance as centres of learning, while state intervention remained limited. Although the administration acknowledged the importance of education, financial constraints and political priorities prevented the implementation of comprehensive educational reforms^[9].

Nevertheless, the political stability established during the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh created favourable conditions for future educational development. The administrative structures established during this period subsequently enabled the introduction of educational reforms under later Dogra rulers^[10].

Educational Reforms under Maharaja Ranbir Singh

The reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857–1885) represents a significant turning point in the educational history of Jammu and Kashmir. Maharaja Ranbir Singh demonstrated considerable interest in educational development and recognized the importance of education for administrative modernization and social advancement. His educational policy sought to combine traditional learning with modern educational practices^[11].

Maharaja Ranbir Singh extended patronage to Sanskrit scholars and educational institutions while simultaneously encouraging the introduction of English education and Western subjects.

This approach reflected his belief that educational modernization should not result in the abandonment of indigenous intellectual traditions^[12].

Government-supported schools were established in several urban centres during his reign, thereby expanding educational opportunities beyond traditional social groups. Educational facilities introduced subjects such as arithmetic, geography, history, and elementary sciences in addition to traditional curricula^[13].

Maharaja Ranbir Singh also promoted higher learning through support for Sanskrit scholarship and the preservation of classical manuscripts. Administrative reforms increasingly required educated officials, creating additional demand for modern educational institutions. The reforms introduced during his reign established the institutional foundations for subsequent educational expansion under Maharaja Pratap Singh and Maharaja Hari Singh^[14].

Development of Primary and Secondary Education

Development of Primary Education

The development of primary education constituted one of the most important aspects of educational modernization in Jammu and Kashmir under the Dogra rulers. Although traditional institutions such as Pathshalas, Maktabas, and Madrasas had long provided elementary education, their curriculum, organization, and accessibility remained limited. The introduction of state-sponsored primary education represented a significant shift toward institutionalized learning and reflected the growing recognition of education as an instrument of social progress and administrative efficiency^[15].

During the early years of Dogra rule, primary education remained largely under the control of local communities and religious institutions. Government intervention in educational affairs was minimal, and educational opportunities remained confined primarily to urban centres and privileged social groups. However, the educational reforms initiated during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh gradually transformed the character of primary education by introducing governmental supervision and administrative organization^[16].

The expansion of primary education accelerated during the late nineteenth century. Government schools were established in major towns and administrative centres, and efforts were made to provide educational opportunities to a broader segment of society. The curriculum of primary schools included reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, and moral instruction. These subjects were intended not only to improve literacy but also to prepare students for participation in administrative and economic activities^[17].

One of the important features of primary educational reform was the gradual introduction of vernacular languages as media of instruction. Educational authorities recognized that education imparted through local languages would facilitate broader educational participation and contribute to higher literacy rates. At the same time, Persian and English continued to occupy important positions within the educational system because of their administrative significance^[18].

The reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh witnessed further expansion of primary education. Educational administration became more systematic, and educational inspectors were appointed to supervise schools and evaluate educational standards. Government expenditure on primary education increased steadily, reflecting the growing importance attached to educational development. Teacher training programs were also introduced to improve the quality of instruction and ensure uniform educational standards throughout the state^[19].

The educational policies of Maharaja Hari Singh further accelerated the expansion of primary education during the early twentieth century. Greater emphasis was placed upon universal elementary education, and efforts were made to establish schools in rural areas. Scholarships and financial assistance programs were introduced to encourage school enrollment among economically disadvantaged groups^[20].

Despite these developments, primary education continued to face numerous challenges. Financial constraints limited the expansion of educational infrastructure, while geographical barriers hindered the establishment of schools in remote mountainous regions. Social conservatism, poverty, and traditional attitudes toward education also restricted

educational participation among large sections of the population^[21].

Nevertheless, by the end of Dogra rule, primary education had become an important component of state policy and had laid the foundations for the subsequent expansion of education in Jammu and Kashmir.

Development of Secondary Education

The development of secondary education represented another important dimension of educational modernization under the Dogra administration. Secondary education occupied a crucial position within the educational system because it prepared students for higher education, professional careers, and government service. The expansion of secondary schools also contributed significantly to the emergence of an educated middle class that subsequently played an important role in the social and political life of the state^[22].

Prior to the introduction of modern secondary education, advanced learning remained largely confined to traditional institutions that emphasized religious instruction and classical scholarship.

However, the increasing administrative requirements of the state and the influence of British educational models created a growing demand for institutions capable of providing modern secondary education^[23].

The establishment of high schools in Jammu and Srinagar marked an important stage in the development of secondary education. These institutions introduced curricula modeled upon educational practices prevalent in British India. Subjects such as English language and literature, mathematics, science, history, geography, political science, and economics were incorporated into educational programs, thereby expanding the intellectual horizons of students^[24].

Educational reforms implemented during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributed significantly to the modernization of secondary education. Educational standards were revised, examination systems were reorganized, and curricula were aligned with the requirements of Punjab University. These reforms enabled students to pursue higher education and professional careers both within and outside the state^[25].

The administration of Maharaja Pratap Singh played a particularly important role in the expansion of secondary education. Existing educational institutions were strengthened, new schools were established, and educational administration became increasingly systematic. School inspection systems, teacher training programs, and educational regulations contributed significantly to improving educational quality and institutional efficiency^[26].

The development of secondary education also reflected broader social and economic transformations occurring within Jammu and Kashmir. The expansion of government employment opportunities increased the demand for secondary education, while the emergence of new professions encouraged educational participation among urban middle-class families.

Educational institutions gradually became centres of intellectual activity, social mobility, and political awareness^[27].

Despite these advances, secondary education remained characterized by considerable inequalities. Educational

opportunities were concentrated primarily in urban centres such as Jammu and Srinagar, resulting in substantial regional disparities. Access to secondary education remained limited for economically disadvantaged groups, while female participation continued to remain significantly lower than male enrollment. Religious and communal differences also influenced educational participation and educational attainment^[28].

Nevertheless, by the beginning of the twentieth century, secondary education had become firmly established as an essential component of the educational system of Jammu and Kashmir. The institutions established during this period not only prepared students for higher education and professional careers but also contributed significantly to the emergence of modern intellectual and political consciousness within the state.

The development of primary and secondary education under the Dogra rulers thus represented a crucial stage in the broader process of educational modernization. These educational reforms laid the foundation for the subsequent expansion of collegiate and professional education and contributed significantly to the social transformation of Jammu and Kashmir during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Development of College Education

The establishment of higher education institutions in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra period represented a major milestone in the educational history of the princely state. Prior to the beginning of the twentieth century, opportunities for higher education within Jammu and Kashmir were extremely limited. Students who wished to pursue collegiate studies were compelled to seek admission in educational institutions located in British India, particularly in Lahore, Amritsar, and other urban centres of Punjab. Consequently, access to higher education remained restricted to affluent families capable of bearing the financial burden of education outside the state^[29].

The growing administrative requirements of the state, combined with increasing public demand for higher education, gradually compelled the Dogra administration to establish institutions of higher learning within Jammu and Kashmir. Educational reformers, intellectuals, and members of the educated elite argued that the absence of colleges hindered the educational and administrative development of the state^[30].

The reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh witnessed the beginning of organized collegiate education in Jammu and Kashmir. The administration recognized that the development of higher education was essential for producing trained administrators, educators, legal professionals, and intellectuals capable of contributing to the modernization of society and government. Consequently, efforts were undertaken to establish colleges within the state^[31].

One of the most important achievements in this regard was the establishment of Sri Pratap College in Srinagar. The institution emerged as the first modern college in Kashmir and represented a significant advance in the educational development of the state. The establishment of the college was supported by prominent social reformers, educational administrators, and influential public figures who recognized the importance of higher education for social progress^[32].

Although Sri Pratap College initially encountered financial and administrative difficulties, the Dogra government assumed responsibility for its management and ensured its continued development. The college obtained affiliation with Punjab University, Lahore, thereby enabling students to pursue recognized university degrees without leaving the state ^[33]. The institution gradually developed into an important center of intellectual activity and contributed significantly to the growth of higher education in Kashmir.

The curriculum of Sri Pratap College reflected contemporary educational trends and included subjects such as English literature, history, philosophy, mathematics, economics, political science, and natural sciences. In addition to academic instruction, the college promoted literary activities, public debates, scholarly discussions, and intellectual exchange. These activities contributed to the emergence of a modern educated class and fostered political and social awareness among students ^[34].

The establishment of Prince of Wales College in Jammu represented another landmark in the educational history of the state. The institution was established following the visit of the Prince of Wales to India and was formally inaugurated in 1907. Affiliated with Punjab University, the college rapidly emerged as one of the most prestigious educational institutions in Jammu province ^[35].

Prince of Wales College played a crucial role in promoting higher education among the population of Jammu province. It provided educational opportunities in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and produced a substantial number of administrators, teachers, lawyers, and public intellectuals. The institution also contributed to the development of political consciousness and social reform movements within the region ^[36].

The establishment of colleges during the Dogra period had far-reaching social and political consequences. Higher education contributed to the emergence of an educated middle class that subsequently played a prominent role in administration, journalism, literature, social reform, and political movements. College campuses became important centers of intellectual discussion and political mobilization, thereby contributing to the broader modernization of society ^[37].

Despite these achievements, access to higher education remained restricted by economic conditions, geographical barriers, and social inequalities. Educational institutions were concentrated in urban centres, and opportunities for women and economically disadvantaged groups remained limited. Nevertheless, the colleges established during the Dogra period laid the foundations for the subsequent expansion of university education in Jammu and Kashmir ^[38].

Development of Professional and Technical Education

The introduction of professional and technical education constituted another significant aspect of educational modernization in Jammu and Kashmir under the Dogra rulers. Traditional educational institutions primarily emphasized literary and religious instruction and provided limited opportunities for vocational training or professional specialization. However, economic modernization, administrative expansion, and industrial development created increasing demand for technically skilled personnel and professionally trained individuals ^[39].

Recognizing the changing economic and administrative requirements of the state, the Dogra administration-initiated measures to promote technical and professional education. Educational policymakers increasingly realized that literary education alone could not address the practical requirements of modern society and that technical education was essential for economic development and administrative efficiency ^[40]. One of the earliest initiatives undertaken by the state involved the provision of scholarships to students pursuing professional education outside Jammu and Kashmir. These scholarships enabled talented students to acquire specialized knowledge in fields such as engineering, medicine, and industrial technology. Such policies reflected the growing recognition of professional education as an important component of modernization ^[41].

A major milestone in the development of technical education was the establishment of the Sri Amar Singh Technical Institute in Srinagar in 1914. The establishment of this institution marked the beginning of organized technical education in Jammu and Kashmir and represented a significant departure from traditional educational practices ^[42].

The primary objective of the Sri Amar Singh Technical Institute was to promote industrial education, preserve indigenous crafts, and develop technical skills among the local population. The institution sought to combine traditional craftsmanship with modern industrial education, thereby contributing to both cultural preservation and economic development ^[43].

The curriculum of the institute included instruction in carpentry, blacksmithing, woodwork, pottery, painting, engineering drawing, metalwork, and various industrial crafts. These courses provided students with practical skills and employment opportunities while simultaneously supporting traditional industries and artisanal production ^[44]. The Dogra administration invested substantial financial resources in the development of technical education. Modern equipment was imported from abroad, workshops were established, and trained instructors were recruited to ensure high educational standards. Scholarships and stipends were provided to encourage student enrollment and facilitate access to technical education ^[45].

The establishment of the Pratap Technical School in Jammu in 1924 further contributed to the expansion of technical education within the state. The institution maintained academic connections with recognized technical institutions and offered vocational courses designed to satisfy contemporary industrial requirements ^[46].

In addition to technical education, the Dogra administration promoted professional education in fields such as medicine, teaching, engineering, and administration. Teacher training institutions were established to improve educational standards and ensure the availability of qualified teaching personnel. Professional education contributed significantly to the modernization of administration and facilitated the development of a professional middle class ^[47].

Despite these achievements, professional and technical education remained limited in scope. Financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, social attitudes, and regional inequalities restricted educational expansion. Nevertheless, the foundations established during the Dogra period proved crucial for the subsequent development of technical and professional education in Jammu and Kashmir ^[48].

Educational Administration under the Dogra Rulers

The development of modern education in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra period was accompanied by the gradual emergence of an organized educational administrative system.

Initially, educational institutions functioned with limited governmental supervision and depended largely upon local communities, religious organizations, and private patronage. However, as educational institutions expanded and the demand for modern education increased, the Dogra administration recognized the necessity of establishing a formal educational bureaucracy capable of supervising and regulating educational affairs throughout the state^[49].

The establishment of an Education Department represented an important step in the institutionalization of educational administration. The department was entrusted with responsibilities relating to educational planning, curriculum development, institutional supervision, teacher recruitment, and policy implementation. Educational administrators sought to adapt administrative practices prevalent in British India while simultaneously accommodating local educational traditions and requirements^[50].

Educational inspectors played a crucial role in maintaining academic standards and improving institutional performance. They conducted regular inspections of schools and colleges, monitored attendance records, evaluated teaching methods, and submitted reports concerning educational conditions. Their recommendations often served as the basis for educational reforms and policy modifications^[51].

The Dogra administration also introduced measures designed to improve teacher recruitment and training. Recognizing that educational quality depended significantly upon the competence of teachers, the government encouraged the establishment of teacher-training institutions and provided financial assistance to educational personnel. Teacher training programs contributed substantially to improving instructional standards and promoting educational uniformity throughout the state^[52].

Government expenditure on education increased gradually during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Educational budgets included allocations for school construction, teachers' salaries, scholarships, educational materials, and administrative expenses. Although financial constraints continued to limit educational expansion, the increasing allocation of state resources reflected the growing importance attached to educational development^[53].

The educational administration established during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh represented the culmination of administrative reforms initiated by earlier Dogra rulers. Greater emphasis was placed upon educational planning, statistical reporting, curriculum revision, and institutional supervision. These reforms contributed significantly to the modernization and professionalization of educational administration in Jammu and Kashmir^[54].

Development of Female Education

The development of female education constituted one of the most challenging aspects of educational reform in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra period. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, educational opportunities for women remained extremely limited due to social conservatism, economic constraints, and traditional cultural attitudes. Female literacy rates remained low, and educational

facilities for girls were inadequate throughout most regions of the state^[55].

The educational policies of the Dogra administration gradually recognized the importance of women's education as an essential component of social progress. However, governmental efforts to expand female education proceeded slowly due to social resistance and financial limitations. Educational institutions for girls were established primarily in urban centres, particularly in Jammu and Srinagar, where educational reforms received greater public support^[56].

Missionary organizations played an important role in promoting female education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mission schools introduced modern educational methods and contributed significantly to increasing public awareness regarding the importance of women's education. These institutions provided instruction in literacy, arithmetic, domestic science, and other practical subjects designed to improve women's social and economic conditions^[57].

The reign of Maharaja Hari Singh witnessed increased governmental attention toward female education. Educational reforms introduced during this period encouraged the establishment of additional schools for girls and sought to increase female enrollment. Although progress remained uneven, these initiatives contributed to gradual improvements in educational opportunities for women^[58].

Despite these efforts, female education continued to lag significantly behind male education. Geographical barriers, social customs, economic conditions, and traditional attitudes limited educational participation among women, particularly in rural areas. Nevertheless, the educational foundations established during the Dogra period contributed to the subsequent expansion of women's education after independence^[59].

Challenges and Limitations of Educational Development

Despite considerable achievements, the development of modern education in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra period encountered numerous challenges and limitations. One of the principal obstacles was the financial condition of the state. Educational development required substantial investments in infrastructure, personnel, and institutional administration, resources that remained limited throughout much of the period under study^[60].

Geographical factors also posed significant challenges. The mountainous terrain, difficult climatic conditions, and dispersed settlement patterns characteristic of Jammu and Kashmir hindered the establishment and maintenance of educational institutions. Many rural and frontier regions remained educationally underdeveloped due to inadequate transportation and communication facilities^[61].

Another important limitation involved the shortage of trained teachers and educational administrators. Although efforts were undertaken to establish teacher-training programs and recruit qualified personnel, educational institutions frequently experienced shortages of competent staff. This situation adversely affected educational quality and institutional development^[62].

Social conservatism constituted another significant obstacle to educational progress. Traditional attitudes toward education, particularly female education and vocational training, restricted educational participation among substantial sections of society. Many communities

continued to prefer traditional educational institutions over modern schools and colleges^[63].

Regional and social inequalities further limited the effectiveness of educational reforms. Educational institutions were concentrated primarily in urban centers such as Jammu and Srinagar, resulting in unequal educational opportunities for rural populations. Economic disparities also affected educational access, as poorer sections of society often lacked the resources necessary to pursue formal education^[64].

Conclusion

The development of modern education in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra period (1846–1947) represents one of the most important processes of social and intellectual transformation in the history of the princely state. Beginning with a predominantly traditional educational system based upon religious institutions and indigenous methods of learning, the Dogra rulers gradually introduced modern educational structures that transformed the educational and administrative landscape of the region. The educational policies pursued by Maharaja Ranbir Singh, Maharaja Pratap Singh, and Maharaja Hari Singh contributed significantly to the establishment of primary schools, secondary institutions, colleges, technical schools, and educational administrative structures. The introduction of organized educational administration, professional education, teacher training, and university-affiliated colleges represented important milestones in the modernization of education in Jammu and Kashmir^[65].

Although educational progress remained constrained by financial limitations, geographical barriers, social conservatism, and regional inequalities, the achievements of the Dogra administration remain historically significant. Educational institutions established during this period contributed to social mobility, intellectual development, administrative modernization, and political awareness. They also facilitated the emergence of an educated middle class that subsequently played an important role in the social and political development of Jammu and Kashmir.⁶⁶

The educational foundations established during the Dogra period continued to influence educational policies and institutional development long after the end of princely rule in 1947. Therefore, the study of educational development under the Dogra rulers provides valuable insights into the broader processes of modernization, state formation, and social transformation in Jammu and Kashmir.

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