

Evolution of Health in Kashmir During Dogra Rule 1846-1947

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Abstract: Current work emphasises the health system of Kashmir during Dogra Rule. The papers also highlight the ways of treatment adopted by the people during the said period. Role of Dogra Rulers in development of health sector in Kashmir was also mentioned in the paper. Advent of modern technology with the help of Britishers were also highlighted in the current work.

Key words: - *Health, Traditional ways of treatment, Dr. Elmsile, first Dispensary*

Evolution of Health in Kashmir

The development of health system in Kashmir during the medieval period was very down, except during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. The other rulers instead providing health facilities to the people pushed them to the sufferings and only gave stress to fill their treasuries only. During the Dogra Rule the scenario started to change slowly. The ruler of the time during the Dogra Rule started to take important steps to overcome from the health issues of the people. The people of the state during initial years adopted the religious men to cure the diseases. The Priests usually gave them the piece of paper on which something was written, the Muslim Priest “Mullah” wrote the name of Allah and the Brahman Priest inscribed “Shiva”¹. The patient had to swallow the paper with water. The other mode of treatment was wearing of amulets. The amulet was attached to the part of body which was suffered with some disease. With the spread of western education, the people’s superstitions and ignorance began to lose ground. The people realized that the disease was caused by germs, and therefore could be cured by proper treatment. This made the people to take the western system of medicine. Attaching a medical missionary to the new Christian Missionary School Mission in Kashmir was considered at the Lahore conference in early 1862. In the general resolution Kashmir was specially referred as being the country where medical aid was not available and where deep prejudices might be resolved by new means of including Medical Missionaries. The day of 8th, May of 1865, was the historical day in the history of Kashmir’s Medical Mission, as Dr. Elmsile opened his Dispensary in Srinagar². The opening day saw only 10 persons visited the Dispensary. He used to visit Srinagar city and its environs and gave the people medical advices. Slowly the number of patients started to increase at the Dispensary, in month of August and September the number of patients visited to the Dispensary was 90 per day. The Maharaja during that time stopped Dr. Elmsile for performing his duties and denied him to perform the practice in a building thus he performs his duty and operated his patients under the trees. The government ordered the people that nobody is allowed to consult the doctor and appointed agents to keep an eye on people and stopped them for visiting and consulting the doctor. Many

¹. Kapur, ML, Social and Economic History of Jammu and Kashmir (1885-1925), p.97.

². Elmsile, Seed Time in Kashmir, pp.96-97.

people disobeyed the order of government and were imprisoned by the authorities³. In 1866 Dr. Elmsile set up his hospital in a tent for his patients. The local people who were sick flocked to Dr. Elmsile despite the opposition of officers, 3365 sick people were treated during that year. During the summer of 1867 a Cholera was broke out in Kashmir and Dr. Elmsile was denied support from the government⁴. During the period of Dr. Elmsile he cured thousands of people in Kashmir and did an immense deal of good work for the betterment of health of people in Kashmir⁵. After the death of Dr. Elmsile in 1872, the medical work was continued by Dr. Theodore Maxwell, by this time the conditions had changed. The prejudices of local officers were overcome by the selfless labour and dedication of Missionaries. The impact of English Medical Mission was so much that government opened the first state Dispensary at Srinagar in 1870⁶. During 1860, did not want to give an inch of land to Missionaries to establish their hospitals or to do their health camps, but in 1874, Maharaja Ranbir Singh granted a site in Srinagar for establishment of Mission Hospital⁷. The building for the hospital was constructed by the state government on their own expenses. Free electric light throughout the year and yearly donations hospital was given by the state government. With the start of era of Maharaja Pratap Singh, the conditions of health sector in Kashmir were very deprived especially in Srinagar, because the city was continuously hit by epidemics and the terrible fires⁸. Thus, the need of hour for the government was to made people suffering free from these conditions. For this vaccination against disease small pox and modern facilitated hospitals should be established with modern techniques and equipment's. with the help of missionaries, the health system in the valley start to develop during the tenure of Maharaja Pratap Singh. Neve brothers took keen in the health sphere of Kashmir, the interest of common people start to increase in western system of health⁹. The rule of Maharaja Pratap Singh started the period of modernisation of health sector in Kashmir. In 1889, foundation of two hospitals was led one in Jammu and other in Kashmir. The site proposed for hospital in Srinagar was one left bank of river Jhelum near famous Lal Ded hospital. The site was near the river because river way was easier way of transportation during that time. The hospital was first named as Maharaja's Hospital but later after name change it was called as Sadr Hospital, the name hospital was again changed and finally it was called State Civil Hospital. The hospital was remarkable achievement for the people. It does not only witness the patients from the valley but also from outside valley. Due to epidemics during that time in valley the hospital proves much insufficient for the patients as it can only accommodate 105 patients at that time. In the last decade of 19th century in 1896, new building was constructed at the cost of Rs24000 to accommodate more patients. Modern techniques like Antiseptic Surgeries, X-Rays and

³. Biscoe, Tyndle, Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade, p.240.

⁴. Elmsile, Seed Time in Kashmir, p.195.

⁵. Wilson, The Abode of Snow, p.354.

⁶. Nave, E.F., Beyond the Pir Panjal, p.71.

⁷. Biscoe, Tyndle, Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade, pp.240-242.

⁸. Khan, Mohammad Ishaq, History of Srinagar (1846-1947), p.13.

⁹. Nave, E.F., Beyond the Pir Panjal, p.272.

Bacteriology Laboratory were started in hospital¹⁰. State owned one hospital and 6 dispensaries in 1891-92, out of 6 dispensaries 3 were established in other parts of valley. These health institutions treated many indoor and outdoor patients, fever, respiratory diseases, rheumatic infections, skin diseases etc were the diseases treated in those health institutions. In 1897, people of valley got other cause of celebrations after the establishment of Diamond Jubilee Zanana Hospital for female patients at Nawa-Kadal¹¹. This was second hospital established in valley during the rule of Maharaja Pratap Singh. The hospital was located at the place which was assessable for the people with both water and land transport easily. At first the hospital structure was constructed at the cost of Rs40000 from the state funds, but from time to time it was extended and equipped with modern techniques. In 1904-1905, Operation Theatre was started, Out Patient Department was started in 1916, electric light and maternity block was setup in hospital in 1917 and 1920 respectively. Miss R. Gubbey and Miss Edith Hartly were the famous doctors of the hospital, who served patients with utmost care. For leprosy patients, a hospital was started in 1891 and was constructed at the cost of 300 euros, construction of this hospital was major achievement in the field of health sector of the valley, as this hospital proved to be vital for the Lepers of the valley. Although this hospital was run by English but the foundation was led by state government.

The traditional and old ways of treatments saw the decline during the period of Maharaja Hari Singh in valley as the hospital culture started to flourish and people started to use Allopathic medication for treatment. The people both from villages and towns started to prefer modern ways of treatment rather than old and traditional ways. The year 1940, was the historic year of valley in the field of health mission because many steps were taken to improve the conditions of health sector by the government. Viceroy Marquis Linlithgow led the foundation of Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital on 15th October 1940, in Srinagar and the hospital was inaugurated on 11th October 1945. The cost of money spent for the construction of the hospital was Rs 3.5 million which was allotted by State. During the time of Maharaja Hari Singh there were 35 well qualified doctors at the hospital. Due to the great progress of this hospital, the hospitals Civil and Diamond Jubilee were closed and all their facilities were made in this hospital for the patients. The architecture of the hospital was of modern times, the heating system of the hospital attracts the patients from all parts of the valley. The wards of the hospital were of the Nightingale style and the long corridors provided the look of Classical Georgian era.

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¹⁰. Mufti, Gulzar, Kashmir in Sickness and Health, p.123.

¹¹. Khan, Mohammad Ishaq, History of Srinagar (1846-1947), p.143.

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