
Development of Health System During Dogra Rule in Kashmir

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Abstract

The health system of Kashmir is very old and possess a rich history but with the passage of time many ups and downs were encountered by this health system. After Mughals the health system of valley suffered a setback which resulted into large number of deaths in the valley until the health system was bring back to line by the Dogra rulers especially by Maharaja Pratap Singh. The epidemics used to sweep away a large portion of population whenever it spread because of the poor sanitation and the role of the state to curb these epidemics is outstanding though there are certain mistakes done during the Dogra regime which hindered the process, but the over condition was best. The credit of developing the modern allopathic system is the most astonishing feature of this period. During this period health system of the valley developed and the state provided new opportunities to the people because hospitals like Sadar Hospital Srinagar, Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital Srinagar (SMHS) where erected in this era. Therefore, this research paper will focus on the developments that took place during Dogra period in Kashmir valley.

Keywords: *Medical System; Epidemics; Sanitation; Allopathy.*

1. Introduction

Being vulnerable to various infections and diseases, medicine has always remained a key requirement to man's survival from the early developments in social life. Man, in this world needs medicine or any other kind of cure for avoiding several types of ailments. History

witnesses the victimization of mankind from various kinds of diseases from time to time and to overcome the ill effects of these diseases, man has discovered several types of medicines and methods of treatments, which he thereafter utilised to survive and live a healthy life. With the passage of time many changes had occurred in the developmental aspects of cure, medicine and health systems. Here an attempt has been made to throw light on the steps taken by the state during the period of study¹. India has been credited as one of the oldest civilizations of the world so far and so is the health care system. Therefore, deciphering the understandings about one of the most important old civilisation adds to its beauty. Kashmir being a part of this country from ancient times had adopted this system of medicine and the rulers who from time to time ruled the country take important steps to improve the health system. Sometimes kashmir was ruled by other dynasties native as well as foreign and remained isolated from the rest of India. Here an attempt is made to know the role of the state during Dogra period². The state progress in this field was slow until the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin. No remarkable steps were taken by the kings of valley to provide health facilities to the subjects and it was the great Zain-ul-Abidin was set separate state departments to uplift the downtrodden population of Kashmir. He had equal love for his subject's weather Hindu or Muslim, poor or rich and was equally famous among all. Hakims and vaidyas flourished during his tenure and both the health systems Ayurveda

and Unani touched the heights. New hospitals and dispensers were opened in the state for the welfare of people. Almost all the departments flourished and the king himself examined progress of every department with the help of his efficient state officials. He took great interest in medical care of his subjects and brought trained midwives and bright physicians from Samarkand (U.S.S.R) ³. This was a measure step by any king of Kashmir to provide health facilities to his subjects especially female patients. He patronised scholars and learned men from all fields which include Unani and Ayurvedic physicians of that time. Shri Bhatta and Karpura Bhat were well known Ayurvedic physicians of his court and Mansur-bin-Mohd a Unani physician who came from Persia compiled an important anatomical medical work Tashrih-e-Mansuri ⁴. This work hampered during the reign of successors of Zain-ul-Abidin and the others. The health system like other social welfare departments experienced a decline again. During the Sultanate period in Kashmir the men who were learned in Quran and Hadis occupied the posts of doctors, clergy men and court officials ⁵. Overall the state always tried to help people, but the nature was cruel in the whole sultanate period because due to continuous famines and floods people suffered much and diseases became common ⁶.

The measures taken by Mughals were also to a large extent respectable because the atmosphere was healthy enough for Hakims and Vaidyas to use their medical knowledge for the treatment of people. It was in this period that the Arabic medicine was introduced in the Kashmir Valley and many learned physicians served the diseased people and were famous all over valley ⁷. The Mughals tried to keep the environment clean and stressed on the beauty of environment and the city of Srinagar was

made beautiful by turning it into a health resort. The famine struck, and diseased people suffered but the number was not too much because the efforts of Mughals to keep the environment clean directly had good impact on the health of people ⁸. Despite these efforts the health system during the Mughal period was not satisfactory and people had to remember the days of Zain-ul-Abidin's era. The condition became nastiest during Afghan and Sikh rule and every aspect of society became stagnant and development of social welfare department also hindered until the state was sell-out to the Dogra's. During the Dogra reign the state of Jammu and Kashmir underwent a change almost in every aspect of society and the valley was no exception. This chapter will focus on the altitude of state towards the development of health systems in the period of study. There were many changes and developments that took place in the field of medicine by the direct and indirect efforts of state under different rulers. In the early years of Dogra rule Srinagar was the same as it was under Sikh and Afghan rule, the environment was telling the sad story of dust, filth and sewage like bad things everywhere. This all had bad impact on the environment and health of the people. The Dogra state government from time to time took necessary steps to improve the health condition of people ⁹. Many big hospitals and dispensers were erected by the state during this period for better health of populace. One thing or the other developed with the state efforts and the development process in all spheres went on and changed the outlook of valley in many aspects. It in the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh many new projects were started, and health system also developed. There were many forces behind the developmental process of health systems and the other social welfare institutions of that period. Despite many failures in the

developmental process the Dogra proved to be most significant and the downtrodden and poor people had in many aspects a sigh of relief.

1.1 Ranbir Singh (1856-1885)

As we know the development of health systems in medieval period was very slow except during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin. The rulers instead of providing facilities to the people push them to the suffering and only stressed on the revenue to fill the state treasure. The whole scenario changed slowly during the Dogra regime as the state took necessary steps to overcome all this. The work started during Maharaja Ranbir Singh's reign when a number of medical texts of Ayurveda and Unani were translated into local language and the local physicians had opportunity to have knowledge of many new medicines and other forms cure to treat the sick. The translation bureau was supervised by Hakim Muhammad Baqir who was a learned physician and is said to have cured a paralysed patient¹⁰. The real beginning was with the establishment of state funded dispensary in Srinagar at Amira Kadal in 1870. The permission was also given by his highness to the missionary doctor Dr William Elmslie to start medical work in the valley and this step proved to be a milestone for the health care system of the Kashmir valley¹¹. His highness started a separate medical department and allotted funds for the same yearly. Bakshi Ram controlled this department by the permission of Maharaja in 1883. The amount allotted for this purpose in 1880- 1881 was Rs 46,801 and in 1882-1883 it was increased to Rs 52, 456. This was a necessary step by state after a long period the work that was started by Badshah (Zain-ul-Abidin) for the populace of valley again resumed in this era. Now the department started working smoothly and Jammu and Kashmir had two separate Chief Medical Officers. These officers were responsible for

the medical systems in their provinces and the Chief Medical Officer for Kashmir Valley was a British qualified surgeon. Therefore, it was a fortunate time for the people now, not only the state started medical work, but the missionaries had introduced the modern western medicine with dispensary as an institution where the sick got treated and medicines were dispensed¹². State was strengthening the native health care system and it was working well but on the other hand the western system or we can say the allopathic system was taking over with pace. The competition between the two helped the people to have new facilities in their own areas as state started to establish its own state run Shafakhana (dispensaries) to cure the sick. With time the number of such institutions remain increasing in number. One of the measure step taken by the state was the site granted for the establishment of hospital on modern lines to the missionaries and the expenses for the construction were given by him and yearly donation to the hospital by Maharaja was also notable. This site was granted by Maharaja Ranbir Singh to Dr Theodore Maxwell in 1874 to treat the sick¹³.

1.2 Sir Ranbir Ganj Dispensary

One of the historic dispensaries that was established in his era was Sri Ranbir Ganj Dispensary (Maharaj Ganj) that was an Unani dispensary and Hakim as a head of the same. This building was once damaged due to fire in 1898-1899 but the medicines were saved. After that event this dispensary was reconstructed, and the construction work was completed in 1903. This dispensary is situated on the right bank of river Jhelum near the tomb of Budshah which is a very beautiful location. This dispensary had a great place in the health care system of valley as it served people in all times both happy and sad. During the Dogra uprising and the other conflicts between different

political groups after 1946 and as well as against Indian rule or the other events the wounded persons of downtown Srinagar were treated in this dispensary. This dispensary has been an essential institution from the very beginning when it was erected, and the work of dispensary is palpable¹⁴. The position of the dispensary is written by Dr Gulzar Mufti in his book in the following words:

“As education took a foothold in the valley and doctors qualified from outside started returning, the compounder had to hand over the responsibility of managing the dispensary and treating patients to a qualified doctor. A number of well-known and popular doctors Shri Kanth Shanglu, Amar Nath Raina, Shamboo Nath Ghasi, Mir Hafiz-Ullah, Ali Muhammad Jan (alias Aligan), Ghulam Qadir Allaqaband, Mohammed Yahya Alvi and many more. My wife too had the privilege of serving at this historic institution in 1976, when it was still a dispensary. It was upgraded to a Primary Health Centre in 1984, and is currently staffed by five doctors, including a lady doctor, and a dental surgeon¹⁵.”

The dispensary that was started by the state during the Maharaja Ranbir's period with a single physician at that time developed slowly and served the poor population who in past had faced tyrant rulers and tyrant nature have never hoped of such facilities. This all changed the life of people completely and showed the populace another side of life that is happiness which they have forgotten from centuries. Thus, we can say weather big or small step it provided a notable service to the people and played a prominent role in the upliftment of society which people will never forget.

1.3 Pratap Sing's Period (1885-1925) and health system of Kashmir

Sadar Hospital Srinagar

The condition of valley at the time when Maharaja Pratap Singh ascended the throne of Jammu and Kashmir was extremely worst because Srinagar was continuously fighting with the epidemics on one side and with the terrible fires on other¹⁶. Therefore, measures were taken by the state to reduce the sufferings of people to some extent and the measure steps were the vaccination against small pox and well-equipped hospitals and dispensers¹⁷. During this era the medical culture was developing with the efforts of missionary doctors especially Neve Brothers. Interest towards modern medicine was increasing among people as they were showing a good faith in hospital culture and western medicine¹⁸. The modernisation of health care system started in this period under Maharaja Pratap Singh and the first step was the foundation of two hospitals one in Jammu and one in Kashmir in 1889. Site for hospital was selected in Srinagar on the left bank of river Jhelum at the same place where Famous Lal Ded Hospital of valley is located at present and river was the main means of transport to the people. At that time this hospital was known as Maharajas Hospital later it was known as Sadr Hospital, but its name was again changed and was officially named as State Civil Hospital. This was a remarkable step by the state for the subjects of valley. People from far away areas in the valley and outside valley came to this hospital for treatment. But to the population of valley it was not adequate as per the needs and the number of terrible diseases prevalent in the valley¹⁹. At first this hospital was not very big and could accommodate not more than 105 male and female patients but in the late 18th century in 1896 it was extended so that it could



accommodate more patients and therefore new complex was erected on the state expenditure of Rs 24,000. New 48 beds were added to the hospital and the rooms were facilitated with excellent ventilation and separate rooms for women patients were available and all the wards had heating facilities too. Operation theatre was well developed, and all the new facilities of that time were present like antiseptic surgery. Hospital staff had a good number of personal from Punjab and Bengal. The hospital was further equipped with an X-ray plant in 1913-14 and the bacteriology laboratory²⁰. This state hospital served the populace for more than 50 years and state always tried to take all the necessary efforts for the medical help of people and this hospital was best example. In 1891-92 state upheld one hospital and six dispensaries out of six three were positioned in different districts of valley. The state hospital and dispensaries during 1891- Table 1 show number of patients treated by state institutions in years 1891-92 and 1905-06.

92 treated many in-door and out-door patients. The most common diseases were treated in hospital and in dispensers were fevers, respiratory diseases, rheumatic infections, skin diseases, dyspepsia, etc. which means the diseases were common in rural as well as in urban area. The problems of sanitation prevailed everywhere, and the poor population of the valley was in desperate need of medical facilities. The facilities provided by the state could not cope up the pressure of the patients and the patients had to use corridors and verandas of the hospital and the dispensers. Vaccination drive was under taken by the state against Small pox from 1890-1910 and large number of persons were vaccinated to avoid infections of various types. The number of patients treated in government hospital and dispensers also increased. The progress made by the state hospital and the dispensers in 1891-92 and 1904-05 is given below:

Year	In-door patients	Out-door patients	Surgical operations	Total no of patients
1891-92	615	122,575	2,188	123,575
1905-06	4338	396,782	11,830	4,01,120

There we can say the medical work was gaining pace during Maharaja Pratap Singh's time and state was playing an active role to promote the same. It was due to these efforts that he won the affection of populace. At that time medical missionaries were also working fast, and people had a number of good options for treatment^{21,22}.

1.4 Diamond Jubilee Zenana Hospital Srinagar

One more fortunate movement came in the medical history of Kashmir when British was celebrating 60 years of Queen Victoria's reign and the state government of Jammu and

Kashmir also give a cause to the valley of people to celebrate the same by establishing Diamond Jubilee Zenana Hospital for women at Nawakadal in 1897²³. AT present Girls Higher Secondary school is housed in the structure of that Hospital. Therefore, this was the second state hospital erected during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Sing and was named to honour the Queen Victoria. This site was also easily assessable to the populace through water and land transport. The state constructed this structure from the state funds and the cost for the construction was 40,000. From time to time the hospital was extended to

meet the needs and necessities of patients like operation theatre 1904-05, in 1916 out-patients block was added, in 1917 electric light was provided to the hospital, in 1920 maternity block etc. thus all the new technologies and equipment's made it possible to cope to some extent the huge number of patients. The hospital made it possible for the thousands of female and children patients to get the opportunity of medical care from the famous doctors like Miss R Gubbey and Miss Edith Hartly etc. who served the patients with great care and affection. Almost for 50 years this hospital served the downtrodden and backward population of valley. Therefore, we can assume that this step of the state was of great importance to the people which sown the seeds of modern health care system in the valley. This makes it clear that Maharaja Pratap Singh was a farsighted man who provided many new facilities to his subjects not only in healthcare but in education and other aspects of the society²⁴.

1.5 Leper Hospital and the state

Leper hospital was erected by the state on the request of missionary doctors in 1891 and a site of about 12 acres was also provided by the state. This was also a generous effort for the lepers of the valley and one of the modern step towards modern health care system. The construction was started in 1891 and sum of £300 was allotted for the construction. Two other blocks were added to it in 1894 and 1895 to accommodate more patients. This was one of the modern major development in the field of health system of the valley. The condition of this hospital was extraordinary and proved helpful to the lepers of Kashmir during the Dogra period. Though this hospital was run by the missionary doctors, but the foundation was laid by the state expenses²⁵.

1.6 Cottage Hospital

The Cottage Hospital was started for Europeans in 1891 at the foot hills of Shankaracharya Hill Srinagar. This hospital was maintained beautifully and provided a grand look and all the residents and visitors to the valley could get any medical aid from it. It was a state-run hospital and maintained by state on state expenses. The physician who used to see patients at this hospital was native and was expert physician of the state. Patients were treated with great care and every effort was made by the staff to provide special service to the visitors²⁶. Dr Denys in his work "Our Summer in the Vale of Kashmir" describes the condition of Cottage hospital in the following words:

"No one can realize how great a boon a provision of this kind is until he has had personal experience, and then it cannot be too highly praised, for here not only does the patient have expert medical treatment, but the most careful trained nursing. Every provision is made for the treatment of disease and the comfort of the patients that the limited area of the structure will permit, and it is highly probable that a great many lives have been saved simply because it has been possible to take them to a place of this sort where they could receive just the care required²⁷."

From the above description we come to know sometimes healing is a matter of time but sometimes it is matter of opportunity and this opportunity was provided to the visitors with great care in this hospital. The hospital for Lappers was also made on the state expenses with the help of medical missionaries. It was during the latter half of the 18th century that the medical system developed very well. The pace was slow during the early years of Maharaja Pratap Singh's reign but with time the speed



increased to meet the challenges of health care system.
Table 2 given below shows the development of health care system during Maharajas period.

Year	Number of Hospitals and Dispensaries in Kashmir Valley
1891-1892	1 hospital and 6 dispensaries.
1901	13 includes 2 missionary run hospitals.
1911	18 includes the above two and a dispensary in Anantnag.

This was the period of modern technology and western medicine and the same was replacing the old health care system of the valley. Unlike the predecessors Maharaja Pratap Singh was kind person and started public welfare works and laid the foundation of modern medicine in the valley^{28,29}. The modern medical structure which is found in the valley was the outcome of these efforts. Walter Lawrence while unfolding these efforts of Maharaja writes the following:

“Maharaja has done much to change and improve the position of his subjects. His kindness to all the classes in Kashmir has won him the affection of his people.

It is difficult to realize the change which has come over Kashmir in the short period of Dogra rule- a period of less than fifty years³⁰.”

Therefore, Walter Lawrence realized a change in only fifty years of rule in which the first 20 years of this rule were of no significance. The change was faster in the closing years of the 18th century that make it possible for the valley to have such developed medical system. Enlightenment in all the spheres started in this period that helped the state to achieve new heights in education, medicine, agriculture, etc. Pratap Singh was succeeded by his nephew Raja Hari Singh who was the last Dogra ruler of Jammu and Kashmir till 1947.

1.7 Maharajah Hari Singh and the Hospital Culture in Kashmir

The traditional medicine saw the decline during the period of Maharaj Hari Singh (1925-1949) and at the beginning of his reign, hospital culture got flourished through out the Kashmir. There happened development and establishment of allopathic medicine of which people from villages and cities preferred hospitals than the traditional medical system.

Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital Srinagar (SMHS)

It was during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh that the political atmosphere of Jammu and Kashmir was undergoing a change. Political and educational consciousness was developing very fast among the masses and a type of all-round transition was taking place in every sphere. Modern allopathic system of medicine was replacing the Unani and Ayurvedic systems of medicine³¹. Maharaja tried everything to please the people, but the political environment was very hot, and people of valley were rising the voice against the state. The year 1940 turned to be one of the historic year for the growth of medical mission of the state because several important decisions were taken by the state to improve its condition. In Oct 15, 1940 the foundation of Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital Srinagar (SMHS) was laid by the then Viceroy Marquis of Linlithgow of India and the hospital was inaugurated in Oct 11, 1945 by the next Viceroy who succeeded Linlithgow. The sum of rupees to build this hospital was 3.5 million and the sum was allotted by the state³². The site was for this

hospital was fixed at Diwan Bagh down town Srinagar and is known to Kashmiri's with the name of 'Headwun'. In the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh there were 35 qualified doctors in the state. The hospital developed in such a way that the two previous hospitals of state, State Civil Hospital and Diamond Jubilee Hospital were closed after some time and all the facilities were made available in SHMS hospital for all types of patients. The structure for hospital was one of the best because the architecture was impressive and of modern style. The hospital soon became famous in the valley and patients from all areas visited this hospital for treatment. Therefore, it became a crowded place where people started to earn money from different kind businesses. But with the new developments in health care system of Kashmir valley the pressure of patients realised but the hospital is still serving the populace with great zeal. The hospital has astonishing heating and cooling system which makes patients feel comfortable³³. The long corridors and the Nightingale style wards provided the look of English hospitals of classical Georgian era. The hospital had all the modern facilities that makes it more attractive and helpful to the people. It can cope large number of patients back time because it has at least 18 big and other departments with modern technology. This hospital served the people of Kashmir from Maharaja's times and is doing the same even today with enthusiasm. SMHS is one of the remarkable asset to the people of valley by the Dogra rule. At present this asset of Dogra rule is fine example of the development of health care system in the valley till 1947³⁴. The medical system replaced the old system after the independence of India and allopathic doctors managed the whole system. It may be unbelievable to most of the population of Kashmir that before a century our ancestors

were fighting with terrible diseases with poor medical system, cruel natural calamities and the tyrant rulers have made the life of the poor people hell. It is appreciable that now we have modern health system in valley with the help of all the kind-hearted persons and rulers who from time to time take new steps to improve the same. After insurgency in the Valley the development in all the departments got setback and same was the case with the medical system of the valley. But with slow pace the development continued and now-a-days we have a well-developed medical system in the valley. According to health ministry report of 2015 Jammu and Kashmir Ranks 2nd in the rank of hospital in the whole India after Rajasthan³⁵.

1.8 Conclusion

Dogra rulers started the medical work for the people when there was very little development in health care system and that too was by the efforts of medical missionaries. The previous rulers were tyrants who suck the life blood of the people and did not took any measures to improve the health care system of the valley. Foremost step was taken by the ruler Rambir Singh by translating the medical texts into Dogri, Kashmiri, Urdu and Persian so that the local Hikams could use the new knowledge of medicine and cure the patients in the state. Another important step was permit the medical missionaries in the valley and give them financial assistance and security, which led to the development of medicine in the valley and the poor populace had a chance to get medical assistance. With the establishment of state founded dispensary at Amira Kadil the process started, and it provided the way for new projects in future that enhanced the state medical health department. This mission proved successful in the year 1883 when a separate department was established, and



Bakshi Ram was made head of the department and separate funds were allotted for this purpose. Year after year the number of medical intuitions remained increasing which was the need of the hour and helped the poor population of the valley to get a chance to have medical facilities of modern type. The allopathy system also developed as the state granted site for the hospital and allotted funds for its construction. Sri Ranbir Gunj Dispensary was one of the historic dispensary that was constructed during Ranbir Sings Era served the people in good and bad times with great zeal. During Mahraja Pratap Sing's reign people suffered very much as they were fighting with the epidemics that killed the population on large scale, but the modernisation of health care system started in this period and the first step was the foundation of two hospitals one in Jammu and one in Kashmir in 1889. The one that was constructed in the vale was known as Sadar Hospital which served to the people and could accommodate large number of patients back time. This state hospital served the populace for more than 50 years with modern technology in this field that made possible to save the lives of large number of patients. In 1891-92 state upheld one hospital and six dispensaries out of six three were positioned in different districts of valley. The most common diseases were treated in hospital and in dispensers were fevers, respiratory diseases, rheumatic infections, skin diseases, dyspepsia, etc. At that time the pressure very high and the hospital and dispensers could not cope up the pressure of the patients and the patients had to use corridors and verandas of the hospital and the dispensers. The new method developed in the west was also introduced in the valley in the shape of Vaccination. Vaccination drive was under taken by the state against Small pox from

1890-1910 and large number of persons were vaccinated to avoid infections of various types. Next important step was the Diamond Jubilee Zenana Hospital for women at Nawakadal in 1897. The hospital made it possible for the thousands of female and children patients to get the opportunity of medical care from the famous doctors like Miss R Gubbey and Miss Edith Hartly etc. who served the patients with great care and affection. Almost for 50 years this hospital served the downtrodden and backword population of valley. Not only this a separate hospital for lepers was also erected to provide medical facilities to such patients on the request of missionary doctors in 1891 and a site of about 12 acres was also provided by the state. The founds were also allotted by the state for the construction of the same. This process continued in the period of the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh too when the foundation of Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital Srinagar (SMHS) was laid by the then Viceroy Marquis of Linlithgow of India and the hospital was inaugurated in Oct 11, 1945 by the next Viceroy who succeeded Linlithgow. The sum of rupees to build this hospital was 3.5 million and the sum was allotted by the state. This hospital is the best example of Dogra reign that served the people in the time of insurgency and is doing the same at present. The deadly diseases like cholera and small pox were almost controlled till 1947. The developments in the medical system during this period helped the poor population of the valley to forget all the terrible diseases that they had encountered.

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