

The New Kashmiri Woman

State-led Feminism in 'Naya Kashmir'

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Influenced by the leftist ideals of the *Naya Kashmir* manifesto, the post-partition state governments in Kashmir sought to empower its women. Scholarly work on this period covers how it was a particularly liberating moment for Kashmir's women. Using an autobiography and oral history, the existing scholarship on the meanings of the "Naya Kashmir" moment for Kashmir's women is critiqued. Even while Kashmiri women were able to benefit from a number of economic and educational opportunities, we must be cognizant of the ways in which the state became the purveyor of patriarchy. One of the shortcomings of this period of state-sponsored feminism was that no indigenous, grass-roots women's movement emerged in Kashmir, given that those working on women's issues in Kashmir were exclusively dependent on the state, which was becoming deeply contested and politicised.

In the last decade of the 20th century, as Kashmir Valley was in the midst of an armed uprising against the Indian state, Shamla Mufti (1928–2008), one of the first female Muslim educationists in Kashmir, published her autobiography, *Chilman se Chaman* (From Darkness to Light) (1994). Mufti was the former principal of the premier Women's College in Srinagar, and was also one of the first Muslim women to receive her master's degree from Aligarh in the 1950s. In the beginning of the autobiography, Mufti states that her target audience is the new generation of girls in Kashmir, a generation whose experience of Kashmir has been refracted primarily through the prism of armed conflict. She desires that this generation learn about their recent history and is afraid that they are being raised without an understanding of the sacrifices and struggles of their predecessors.

Mufti's autobiography is structured alongside three important moments in the history of modern Kashmir. The first, which encompasses the final two decades of the repressive monarchical rule of the Dogras in the state, describes her family background, childhood, and early marital and home life, and speaks to the multiple ways in which she, as a young Muslim female, was restricted both in relation to the Dogras as well as the prevailing conservative norms of the emerging urban, middle-class Kashmiri Muslim society at the time. Mufti was married at an early age, before she completed her schooling, and much of

her narrative revolves around how she continued her education and gained employment, despite criticism from her family and her in-laws. The second moment, which arises in the immediate aftermath of partition and Kashmir's disputed accession to India, as well as the rise of the Kashmiri-led National Conference (NC) government, narrates her experiences of obtaining higher education and working in a number of schools and colleges. It traces an "opening" that existed for a number of Kashmiri women, who were able to leave the confines of their homes under the new policies of the state government. Finally, the third moment, which is not covered as much in depth as the other two, provides a brief overview of increasing political instability in the state and its implications for everyday life, including the closures that it enforced on the period of "opening."

While I will briefly address the first and the third moment, it is the second moment—the construction of the new NC state government and its policies for female empowerment—that will be the focus of this article. In doing so, it is argued that state-sponsored feminism—while providing an upwardly socially mobile group of Kashmiri women opportunities for education, employment, and mobility—was paternalistic and ideologically motivated in its vision. As a result, no indigenous, independent women's movement emerged in the state, and women's issues became contested and linked to what was increasingly seen by them as an illegitimate rule.

Building a 'Naya Kashmir'

The NC was an anti-monarchical, left-leaning, secular, nationalist Kashmiri political party that, with the support of the Government of India, came to power in Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, in the aftermath of partition and the accession of Kashmir to India. While the leadership of the NC had links to the Indian National Congress, the party retained a distinct political identity that emerged in the late Dogra period, and was instrumental in formulating a unique brand of Kashmiri nationalism. In 1944, the NC had published *Naya Kashmir*, a Soviet-styled manifesto that sought to pave the way for an independent, modernising, socialist welfare state that would reduce the monarch to a titular figurehead. Addressing the dire social conditions that were prevalent under the Dogras, it incorporated important interventions, including free education, the abolition of landlordism, and land to the tiller.¹

The manifesto also had an entire section that was dedicated to women's issues. Indeed, the cover of the manifesto, which was on a red background, featured a Kashmiri Muslim woman, Zuni Gujjer, who was an activist in the NC (Whitehead 2017). The use of Zuni Gujjer was no small matter; the party sought to be the voice of the most marginalised in society. On the question of women, the manifesto "advocated equal wages, paid leave during pregnancy and the right to enter trades and professions, to own and inherit property and to consent to marriage" (Whitehead 2017). It also promoted girls' education and opportunities for women's employment.

While Kashmir's political context shifted after 1947, the NC state government, which had

approved of the accession to India, still attempted to implement various sections of the *Naya Kashmir* manifesto, and also struggled to maintain political autonomy for Kashmir. Women's education and later, employment, became a primary target for intervention by the state government as it was committed to creating a citizenry that would be able to take part in the development of the region. One of the important legacies of Sheikh Abdullah's government is the founding of the Women's College in 1950, which was the first institution of higher education for women in the state.² In 1953, Abdullah was deposed from power and his successor, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, became the second Prime Minister of the state. He continued to implement the ideals of the *Naya Kashmir* manifesto in his project of state building and reform. Thus, using the manifesto as a frame of reference, I refer to the period of state building post 1947 as "Naya Kashmir."

Mufti's autobiography provides an important lens with which to view Naya Kashmir. This is primarily because Mufti's autobiography goes beyond the realm of the political intrigues of Kashmir, and speaks directly to issues of social and cultural transformation within families, homes, schools, colleges and workspaces. Her account, therefore, gives us a unique perspective of Naya Kashmir that is not found in the existing narratives of the Kashmiri male political and religious leadership of the time.³ Through her personal observations of the changes in Kashmiri society at this time, we are able to envision the impact of Naya Kashmir on Kashmiri women in particular.

Historiographical Limitations

The limited historiography on Naya Kashmir covers how it was a particularly liberating moment for Kashmiri women. Shahzada Akhter (2015) writes how the NC upheld women's equality, and involved all sections of society, especially the lower classes, through free education, land reforms, modernisation, and development programmes. Andrew Whitehead (2017) mentions the Women's Self Defense Corps of the NC in 1947 that received training against the invading tribal army from Pakistan, describing the military-style drilling as "a moment of political empowerment just at the eruption of the still unresolved Kashmir conflict." Farida Abdullah Khan (2005: 136) compares the situation in Kashmir with those of other states in India, and says that in contrast with the colonial context of the 19th century, education for women in Kashmir began "under a socialist program rather than by elite groups of philanthropic organisations with their own agenda for women's education ... the goal was ... to produce ... partners in the development and progress of the region and its people and the emergence of a 'new' Kashmir."

Nyla Ali Khan (2010) also notes how the Women's College was an emancipatory forum for women, allowed women to broaden their horizons, and also mobilised women from various socio-economic classes to enhance their educational and professional life. In another work, Khan notes how Begum Akbar Jahan, Sheikh Abdullah's wife, paved the way for the empowerment of women, stepping out of ascribed gender roles to create a presence for

women in public life. As women broadened their horizons, Khan (2014: 12) argues that they were “mobilized to avail themselves of educational opportunities to enhance their professional skills and attempt to reform existing structures so as to accommodate more women.” Yet, none of these authors provide the broader context for NC’s rule: the secular, democratic, “nationalist” NC agenda was also deeply contested in the state due to its ties with the Government of India, and there was a significant amount of coercion that took place in order to maintain its rule, even in the schools and colleges. For example, the fact that Kashmiri women were allowed to vote, as Akhter details, obscures the context that elections in the state were held under the most undemocratic of circumstances, where only NC candidates were “elected” into positions.

While portraying the NC government as being particularly empowering for Kashmiri women, most of these scholars situate the blame for the decline in women’s empowerment on the armed militancy in Kashmir. For example, Khan (2010: 115) attributes this to the militancy, given that women’s activism in Kashmir was reduced to “their identities as grieving mother, martyr’s mother or rape victim.” She also mourns this period as one in which civil society voices were relegated to the background and dissenting voices were clamped down on, giving the impression that such a clampdown did not exist earlier when Abdullah was in power.

Both Krishna Misri and Rita Manchanda, who have also written on the relationship between gender and the Kashmir conflict, concur with this assessment. For example, Manchanda (2001) argues that in the recent past, the pro-freedom groups have instrumentalised Kashmiri women, using them for their propaganda purposes. Misri (2002: 25) suggests that the “post-independence era opened new vistas for the emancipation and empowerment of women,” that the “new political and institutional milieu encouraged women to look forward to the future as equal partners in the reconstruction of the socio-economic matrix,” and that Kashmiri women became partners in the struggle to create a greater political consciousness as well as better economic and educational opportunities for all. As a result, they were able to step out of their usual familial caste and religious identities. The “changing landscape saw them making their own small choices and this was reflected in their dress, demeanor and deportment. Breaking free from purdah, many donned sari which did not symbolize a particular identity then” (Misri 2010: 311). Misri (2010: 311) affirms that “women had come into their own ... Reconstituting themselves, they exhibited confidence to break the shells of stereotype images and projected new images of modern and professional women.” Once more, the “secular” and “democratic” state government is seen as breaking women away from the cultural and religious shackles that bind them, and propelling them towards modernity.

In these analyses, the Kashmiri state before the 1980s had made significant progress in women’s emancipation, as evidenced by increased economic and employment opportunities, a greater presence of women in public life, and the removal of the burqa or purdah. Nyla Ali Khan, Misri, and Manchanda place the blame on right-wing Islamist movements that

emerged during the militancy for effectively curtailing the progress that had been made (Khan 2010: 122). Although Misri takes into account how patriarchy reconstitutes itself in male-initiated processes of social change, she does not critically examine the state's project for Kashmiri women, placing the blame for the lack of women's emancipation entirely on these male-led Islamist movements.

Far from being a feature of the post-militancy period, however, I contend that the nature of Naya Kashmir's state-sponsored feminism in and of itself restricted the full potential of women's emancipatory projects. I want to focus on the ambiguities of the state project and highlight the openings that were created for women at this time, but also note how these openings were curtailed. The attempt here is to sidestep the binaries of empowerment or disempowerment, underscoring both the nature of the state project as it related to women at this concrete historical moment and the multiple effects it had on the ground.

Given that women's empowerment was intrinsic to the development of a socialist, modernising state, the vision for the "new woman" in Kashmir was linked to, but also separate from the "new woman" that emerged in social reform projects in India and Pakistan, which were centred more on grounding woman's spiritual/religious difference from that of her Western counterpart (Chatterjee 1989). As Reza Pirbhai (2014) argues for the case of Pakistan, the non-clerical male leadership affiliated with the Muslim League promoted an ideal for the "new woman" that was grounded in Islamic principles, promising the rights of inheritance, divorce, and property, while also challenging customs like purdah and polygyny.

Nirmala Banerjee (1998) argues that modernisation in Nehruvian India failed to get rid of gender discrimination between men and women because, instead of passing radical economic measures, policies of the post-independence Indian state continued to situate women as targets for household- and motherhood-oriented services. She contends, "challenging the patriarchal ethos of society has never been the agenda of the Indian state" (Banerjee 1998: 2). One important parallel between the Indian case and the Kashmiri case is what Banerjee refers to as the "exclusive dependence on the state" of women's movements, which "neglected mass mobilization and remained blind to subtle class and patriarchal barriers" (Banerjee 1998: 2). The Kashmir case is still unique as there was no indigenous women's movement to speak of, or even one that was dependent on the state. The state was the movement. Furthermore, the state had no interest in cultivating a new *Muslim* woman as in Pakistan, but rather a new *Kashmiri* woman that could implement the state's socialist programme for Kashmiri society. Women's empowerment was, thus, inextricably linked to the ideologies of the new government.

Life under the Dogras

As many scholars have noted, the Dogra period served as an immediate counterpoint to the Naya Kashmir era (Rai 2004; Zutshi 2004). It is, thus, important to recall that the changes

engendered by the Naya Kashmir project were occurring in the context of significant illiteracy in the state, especially amongst Kashmiri Muslim women. Under the Dogras, while a small number of Kashmir Pandit women began to get educated, education for Muslim women was lagging. Even by 1941, the literacy rates for Muslims overall were staggering, with only 1.6% of Kashmiri Muslims being able to read and write (Sikand 2002). The statistics for Muslim female literacy were even lower.

The bitter memory of life under the Dogras can be evidenced from the first half of Shamla Mufti's autobiography. She laments the position of Kashmiri Muslim women in the late Dogra period. Women had little financial independence and had to completely rely on their husbands. Their days were spent in cooking, washing, raising children, and sometimes spinning thread. Parents would worry about their daughter's marriage, and once a girl was married, she was beholden to her in-laws' wishes. *Khandani* women, or those with a higher social status, were especially restricted in terms of mobility and access to education. Although some girls from *khandani* families, such as Mufti and her sisters, went to school, this practice was generally considered unacceptable. Mufti narrates how her father received significant criticism from his friends and family for sending his daughters to school. In contrast to some of the reforms made for women's education in colonial North India, education for girls was still perceived negatively in Kashmir. *Khandani* women were primarily restricted to the domestic space.

Mufti describes that from her window she could see the activities of the *Hanjis*, lower-class families, who lived in boats along the river. Unlike the women of Mufti's family, the *Kanji* women would be seen walking outside, attending to menial labour. She writes of the intimate social relations that developed amongst the women in the neighbourhood, describing the proximity between the houses and how women would sit at the windows and talk for hours amongst themselves. This closeness enabled women to develop familiar social relations with each other. Yet, Mufti is ambivalent about this closeness, as it also created unwanted interference, gossip, and idle chatter. Mufti attributes this to the constriction of mobility. "Women would remain in their own four walls," she describes, "they were not aware that their land is like heaven" (Mufti 1994: 16-17). She also bemoans the fact that women were largely unaware of what was going on in Kashmir outside of their homes. With restricted mobility, *khandani* women were only able to go from their in-laws' home, where they lived with their husband and his extended family, to their parent's home, usually with a guardian. On special occasions, they would visit the gardens with their families. Some of the elderly women would also visit the shrines of local Sufi saints or attend sermons held by religious leaders (Mufti 1994: 16). Yet, on the whole, women remained enclosed in their domestic spaces and their activities in the public sphere were limited.

Women's Educational and Economic Empowerment

After describing the stark state of life for women under the Dogras, Mufti's account marks women's changing roles in society, precipitated by the post-1947 NC government's policies.

Mufti recalls how women were increasingly able to challenge, overcome, or negotiate existing gender norms in ways that allowed them to participate in the social and educational realms. The opening of schools and institutions of higher education for Kashmiri women allowed for their active presence in the public sphere. Mehmooda Shah, who was an active female member of the NC, was referred to in Mufti's autobiography, alongside the oral histories of a number of women who attended schools and colleges under Naya Kashmir, as an important figure in the rise of women's education in Kashmir. As a lecturer, and later as principal of the Women's College, she would personally visit Muslim families in the city and encourage them to send their daughters to college.

After working as a teacher for some years, Mufti went on to receive her bachelor's degree from the Women's College at Maulana Azad Road, much to the initial dismay of her in-laws and family. Because of the lack of higher educational institutes for women until the establishment of the Women's College, there were very few Kashmiri women who had obtained adequate education to teach in schools and colleges. Mufti writes that most of the female teachers were from outside Kashmir. The NC government, acknowledging this deficit, began to send Kashmiri women outside the state to receive higher education, promising them teaching positions once they returned (Mufti 1994: 116). In 1953, Mufti, along with a select few other Kashmiri women, left Kashmir for Aligarh Muslim University. In an act almost unheard of at the time, she left her 10-year-old son, Altaf, with his father and her in-laws in Srinagar. In Aligarh, she completed her master's degree in Farsi within two years and returned to Srinagar.

Upon her return, Mufti was posted as a lecturer of Farsi at the Women's College. She was later transferred to serve as the principal at the Nawa Kadal College, a second women's college that was established in 1960 to serve the population of girls in the Old City. She was at the Nawa Kadal College from 1966 to 1974. Finally, she returned to the Women's College, where she served as the principal from 1974 to 1982.

The founding of the Women's College marked a pivotal moment in Mufti's personal development as well as the development of women's education in the state. The government, she says, "wanted to create a new soul and new life for Kashmir's downtrodden girls" (Mufti 1994: 122). Describing her first day at the Women's College in Srinagar, Mufti recalls:

The college was an awesome building, beautiful gardens, magnificent Chinar ... I saw many girls walking, running here and there. They were all dressed in clean and smart uniforms. Some girls had a hockey stick in their hands ... some were talking about badminton matches. Some went towards the field to play netball. Some girls were coming from the classroom. Some were in a hurry to go to the library. Some had to go to a drama practice and they were running around for that reason. (Mufti 1994: 119)

Muftis's description highlights the variety of options available to female students. Not only were they exhorted to focus on their studies, they were also involved in a variety of sports and in theatre. These activities were meant to increase the students' confidence. The students at the Women's College would also go with their professors to nearby villages or downtown Srinagar for various social service projects.

In a week they would free up two hours to go from house to house in the village. They would bathe the kids, clean the houses, they would pick up garbage from the courtyards, they would give the people in the village lessons on health and cleaning, they would let the women know about how to take care of their health and let the mothers know how to keep their children away from different sicknesses. In addition to this, they would tell them the importance of keeping women educated. (Mufti 1994: 196)

These extracurricular activities played an important role in the government's cultivation of the modern Kashmiri woman. They propagated the emphasis on discipline, service, and a well-rounded personality. All of these qualities were to help women play a critical role in the construction of a Naya Kashmir. By transforming the mentality of the female students, the government envisioned that they would be able to make their inroads into the broader Kashmiri society, as the students would be able to influence their families, relatives, and neighbours. The shift in just a few years, in societal perceptions of women's education and role in society was notable. At home too, Mufti (1994: 129) realised that over time her in-laws also became more accepting of her career endeavours.

The young women were enthusiastic and disciplined, and it appeared that the environment was always bustling with activity. According to Neerja Mattoo, a Kashmiri Pandit who went on to serve as a Professor of English in the college:

The years from 1950 to the '70s were the kind of years when everything seemed within reach, anything possible with hard work and determination. The achievements of women during these decades were so significant that they altered the gender landscape of schools, colleges, offices, courts, police stations, hospitals, hotels and business establishments. Women were everywhere, making their mark in every field. This revolution had been brought about surprisingly, without there being an organized women's movement in the state. (Mattoo 2002: 164)

Mattoo's reflection of the "surprising" nature of the developments for women without there being an organised women's movement in the state is important. As I will discuss further, the paternalistic attitude of the state creates its own limitations for women.

Through her description of the college atmosphere, we see Mufti ascribing a form of cosmopolitanism to the educational space. Indian dignitaries, including Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, would come to the Women's College on their visits to Kashmir. Regular cultural programmes in multiple languages would be held for these important guests. And, yet, it was not just the space of the college that gave the female students more exposure to the outside world. The young women, for the first time, were able to travel to places within and even outside Kashmir. The college would take the girls on field trips and camps. Mufti describes these visits in great detail, including the initial hesitation from families to permit their daughters to travel, the various modes of transportation, and the scheduled activities. The novelty of mobility, especially for girls in that time period, is particularly salient. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, these trips were curtailed, and families were less willing to allow their daughters to venture afar given the prevalence of sexual violence in the region by the Indian armed forces, including the mass rape that occurred in the villages of Kunan and Poshpora (Batool et al 2016).

Mufti discusses how Bakshi's government soon realised that the school catered to a more elite and upwardly mobile class of females. Many families who lived in the Old City would not send their daughters to the Women's College. In seeking to uphold its socialist and egalitarian vision, the government established a separate Nawa Kadal College in 1961, catering to the population of the Old City. The Nawa Kadal College also held debates, plays, and competitions, to which the girls and their mothers were invited. Mufti stated that the activities held at the college enabled the women in the Old City to think critically about the role of women in society and the importance of education for their daughters. Both the colleges were similar in their efforts to promote women's education in Kashmir. It is evident that this was a time of great improvement for those women who were able to attend these institutions, gain education, and have greater mobility. It was also a moment in which the benefits of education were not just limited to a particular social class.

The state was able to utilise women's emancipation as a way to empower the Muslim middle class, in particular. As a number of scholars have noted, gender is intrinsically linked to class as particular class-based formations have defined ways of being male and female (Sarkar and Sarkar 2008; Banerjee 2004; Fernandes 1997). Oftentimes, in elite or middle-class formations, the construction of womanhood is relegated to the private and domestic spheres, while manhood is defined in the public sphere. In the post-1947 Kashmir, however, these formations were linked to the socialist ideological underpinning of the state, and demanded a particular political inclination. For the state, the new Kashmiri woman, much like the new Kashmiri man, was educated, progressive, and a secular nationalist. In many ways, the space of the Women's College reflected this gendered construction. The government was in charge of appointing its professors, lecturers and principals; ideally, those it saw as being politically loyal. The individuals involved with the Women's College, as well as a number of other institutions set up by the NC, exhibited a form of Kashmiri nationalism that was not opposed to increasing identification with the Indian state, and

suppressed those who argued otherwise.⁴

State-led Feminism

Despite the important shifts in increased opportunities for education and employment for women, our understanding of this time as bringing forth a new era of women's liberation must be tempered. It was certainly empowering for a group of women who were willing to ascribe to a particular brand of Kashmiri nationalism, including those who were close to the leaders of the NC. Even then, their agency was effectively curtailed by the constraints of the paternalistic state apparatus. Those possibilities that were opened up for them were still constructed by the state and were in service to state ideology, what Partha Chatterjee (1989) has referred to as the "new patriarchy" embedded in nationalist movements. In fact, the Kashmir context translates into additional limitations, given the politically coercive and thus illegitimate nature of the state, where any form of opposition, or alternative visions for Kashmir, including those who were pro-Pakistan or pro-plebiscite, were effectively curtailed.

We see a subtle example of this in Mufti's autobiography in her description of her time at the Nawa Kadal College. This college was established for girls in the Old City in Srinagar, so that the Naya Kashmir ideology may also reach them. The politics surrounding the locality of the college, however, was different from the brand of Kashmiri nationalism found at the Women's College. Since a majority of the families that would send their daughters to this college were not members of the bureaucratic class, the students at the college were significantly more critical of India and vocally sympathetic of pro-plebiscite groups such as the Awami Action Committee and the Plebiscite Front.

Mufti narrated an incident in which the female students protested against official Indian presence in the college. In an effort to quash the tension, the Department of Education appointed Mufti to serve as the principal of the Nawa Kadal College. As a Kashmiri Muslim who was originally from that part of town, she was seen as a safe candidate for the position. Nonetheless, Mufti admits that the government had used her; while they appointed her as a principal, they still paid her as a lecturer. Her appointment was purely a political one. Here, we see the paternalistic attitude of the state. Had women's empowerment been the primary motivation, Mufti would have at least received the salary that was due to her.⁵

This paternalistic attitude was experienced in the Women's College as well. Asmat Ashai and Nighat Shafi Pandit, both sisters who attended the Women's College at the time, spoke of how they resented having to perform during cultural functions in front of Indian delegations, but they had no choice. Pandit recalled how Mehmooda Shah, the principal of the Women's College, would make sure that the female students would attend college on the day that important figures were visiting, including Indira Gandhi, who visited the college a number of times during these years.⁶ She remembered having no interest in meeting her, but the punishment for not attending was severe. Neerja Mattoo also mentioned how pro-

Pakistan sentiments were suppressed. She recalls an incident when the students were knitting sweaters for Indian soldiers. One girl “raised the slogan for Pakistan ... and Miss Mehmooda slapped her.”⁷ In addition, the students were not allowed to express any critical views in the school magazines or newspapers on the subject of Kashmir’s ties with India, or the NC government. From these examples, we can see the coercive nature of the state, and how women’s empowerment was inextricably linked to ascribing to a form of secular modernity and pro-Indian sentiment.

This tension came to the fore in 1973, when the government proposed that the name of the Women’s College be changed to Kamala Nehru College, after the mother of Indira Gandhi and the wife of Jawaharlal Nehru. Students from the Women’s College, in addition to other students from the nearby Sri Pratap and Amar Singh colleges, protested the plan to change the name.⁸ The female students “smashed the sign board that was installed on the main building of the college,” and also pelted stones at Sheikh Abdullah’s vehicle as he was arriving at the college to preside over the official function (ud-Din 2017). The protest at the Women’s College was important as it revitalised the movement for plebiscite. This incident, however, is remarkably absent from the scholarly accounts that have focused largely on women’s unequivocal acceptance of the state government’s agenda and subsequent “empowerment.”

I suggest here that women’s empowerment, though an important aim of Naya Kashmir, became embroiled in the political compulsions of the state. State-sponsored feminism had other goals in mind, including consolidating the power and legitimacy of the state as an integral part of India. Thus, even while Mufti described the many openings that these women benefited from, we must understand them as being reflective, and not independent, of the broader political developments under the NC-led state government. One of the shortcomings of this period of state-sponsored feminism is that no indigenous, grass-roots women’s movement emerged in Kashmir, given that those working on women’s issues in Kashmir were exclusively dependent on the state. As a result, the mass mobilisation of women’s rights groups that arose in a number of other postcolonial societies was relatively absent in the Kashmiri scene. This was to have important ramifications for women’s movements in Kashmir in later periods too, as state-led women’s empowerment initiatives remain contested given the groundswell of resistance to the state.

Notes

1 There are debates over the reasons why the National Conference government issued the *Naya Kashmir* manifesto, with some suggesting that it wanted to regain its popularity, which it was losing to its rival, the Muslim Conference.

2 Sheikh Abdullah led the Kashmiri nationalist opposition to the Dogra monarchy. He was the first Prime Minister of the state after accession.

3 These include the writings of Sheikh Abdullah (Prime Minister) and Syed Mir Qasim (Chief Minister), as well as the writings of Munshi Ishaq, the former head of the Plebiscite Front, and Qari Saifuddin, the former head of the Jamaat-i-Islam.

4 The autobiography is largely silent on these contestations, except in the section where Shamla Mufti discusses how her appointment was a political one, to quell the level of distrust that existed in the community. Here, I also draw upon my conversations and oral interviews and an understanding of the broader aims of the state project.

5 While Mufti does not use the term “paternalistic” in her autobiography, she does describe her disappointment with what happened. She did feel that she was just a political appointee, as the neighbourhood would be more amenable to having a Kashmiri Muslim as the principal.

6 Interview with Nighat Shafi Pandit, Srinagar, 5 May 2014.

7 Interview with Neerja Mattoo, Srinagar, 24 May 2014.

8 This incident is mentioned in detail in Mir Fatimah Kanth’s article “Women in Resistance: Narratives of Kashmiri Women’s Protests” in this issue of the Review of Women’s Studies.

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