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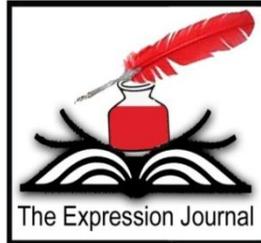
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## **TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN PRINCELY KASHMIR**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to study the character of traditional system of education prevalent during the early Dogra period. Maharaja Ranbir Singh developed a systematic traditional/classical system of education for both Hindus and Muslim subjects in the form of Pathshalas and Madrasas. The main focus was to impart education in the classical languages like Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian leaving out vernaculars. The main argument of the paper is to analyse why Maharaja patronised the classical system of learning instead of modern education. It finds that patronising the classical system of education was a tradition of Rajas and Maharajas in order to legitimize their rule. It will further explain the typical features of this traditional system of education in second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kashmir.

### **Key-Words**

Pathshalas, Madrasas, Classical Learning, Persian, Sanskrit.

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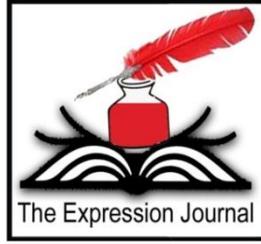
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## TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN PRINCELY KASHMIR

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### Introduction:

Gulab Singh (1846-57), the founder of Dogra State in Kashmir did not pay much attention to educational status of his subjects.<sup>i</sup> Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-85) the son and successor of Gulab Singh, was first to take an active interest in education.<sup>ii</sup> He was endowed with a scholarly bent of mind which found expression in lively patronage of learning and art. His personal interest in the progress of education was not confined to the state, but had a wider field. He donated liberally to Sanskrit institutions in Banaras, and established a big *Pathshalaat* Kashi for which all expenses were borne by him.<sup>iii</sup>

But despite all this the system of education that prevailed under his rule continued to be dictated by indigenous functional concerns, although Ranbir Singh encouraged religious education through a study of classical languages--Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. However, in keeping in with the religious tenor of his rule, Ranbir Singh's ultimate aim was the spread classical Hindu learning among his Dogra subjects Persian and Arabic learning to Muslim subjects. Thus the shrine he consecrated to the worship of Rama, known as the Rangunath temple, became a centre of classical Sanskrit learning where several hundred Brahmin pupils were trained in various branches of Sanskrit scholarship.<sup>iv</sup>

### Education in Pathshalas, Madrasas and Maktabas

Ranbir Singh revived old system of education on the pattern of *madrassa* and *Pahshala*. *Pathshalas* for learning of Sanskrit, Hindi scriptures and law, grammar, logic, science and medicine were established at Jammu and Uttarbehani, on the principles of ancient *mathas* and *ashrams*. These institutions were residential and also admitted day scholars and were maintained by donation from the Maharaja, the royal family and well to-do-citizens.<sup>v</sup> Education at all levels was free and all the students were given stipends in the shape of free books and free boarding and lodging. Ranbir Singh founded a well equipped *Pathshala* in Jammu in 1857, known as RanbirRangunath*Pathshala*, located in the premises of Rangunath temple Jammu for the teaching of

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Hindi and Sanskrit. The teaching of Sanskrit was put on a special footing and in addition to the best available local talent the Maharaja went to India personally to request erudite *Pandits* to man his *Pathshala*. The instruction included the teaching of Vedas, grammar, poetics, logic etc.<sup>vi</sup>

Under the Dharmath charter it is clearly defined that in the *Pathshalas* at Rangunath temple Jammu and Uttarbani, arrangement is to be made free boarding and lodging and books for one thousand students and among the translators of books ten men should be such as can translate Arabic and Persian books in Sanskrit.<sup>vii</sup> The *Pathshalas* were also centres of high Hindu learning. As many as 2100 boarder scholars were admitted in the institutions. These institutions were thrown open to scholars from the adjoining regions and from all over India, like Punjab, Tran-Sutlej territory and other parts of India.<sup>viii</sup>

To keep students active in learning and to keep enable them to come up to the standard, a comprehensive system of periodical check up and examinations were framed. Examinations were held in three different periods--monthly--at the end of each month all the *adhiyapaks* gathered together and examined scholars. At the end of the each such test, to each scholar was given a certificate showing as to how he has stood in the examination. Half-yearly examination was conducted in the presence of the members of the council. If a scholar wished to commence a new book, he was examined in the book already finished by him. Annual examinations were conducted at the Rangunath temple complex, Jammu and list of examinees, recommended by the teachers as candidates, was framed out of which a group of 25 was examined everyday on the date given to each group of students in advance.

Syllabi taught in those *Pathshalas* were comprehensive and included all types of Indological studies. In addition to four Vedas, *vyakaran*(grammar), and *shastras*, the subjects included mathematics, astrology, demonstrative science, and occult science. Both the *mimasas* (system of philosophy) *nyay* (logic) *sankhand yogi*, *vedant*, *Dharamshastras* and *mantarshastra*, *gyotishand chikista* were included in the *shastric* studies. A number of text books were prescribed on each of these subjects according to the standard of each of the subjects according to the standard of each of the seven courses taught in the *Pathshalas*.<sup>ix</sup>A number of teachers, specialists in each study, were appointed on good salaries. Students had to study each subject of their respective courses with the teacher specialising in the respective subjects. Teachers were placed in the five grades according to which their salaries were fixed.<sup>x</sup>One institution of higher learning was established in Jammu and one in Srinagar with 400 and 500 scholars on rolls respectively. The institutions were affiliated to the newly established university in Punjab. The courses of study included English, *shastric* Sanskrit, law, vernaculars, Persian and medicine, both *ayurvedic* and unani system.<sup>xi</sup>

English was taught up to matriculation. One student was sent to take his middle school examination in 1883 and he was declared successful four students were preparing to sit for the matriculation examination of Punjab University. Sanskrit was taught according to the Punjab University syllabus for *prajnya* (intuitive knowledge) course.<sup>xii</sup> The vernacular department imparted education up to middle standard and the students of this department has acquired good knowledge of Persian also. The law department taught laws in force in State. In 1882 students

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were taught revenue and *patwar* laws. In the following year all other laws were also expected to be taught, successful students were being absorbed in the state services. The *ayurvedic* department imparted education in *ayurvedic* medicine. They were given practical lessons in government hospitals. Four successful students of the department were appointed as *vaidsin* the *wazarats* and tehsils. The *tibia* department was imparting education in the *unani* system of medicine. They were expected to complete their course after one year and qualify themselves for appointments in the *wazarats* and tehsils. The Persian department was imparting education up to *munshifazil* (higher Persian) standard of Punjab University. The successful students of this department were appointed in various offices. The Arabic department imparted education up to *moulvialim*(middle Arabic)standard of Punjab University.<sup>xiii</sup>

Maharaja Ranbir Singh established the first printing press in Kashmir. It was known as Vidya Vilas press and was located at Jammu. Maharaja is credited with founding of translation bureau for the translation of books from various languages. Pandit Ishwar Kaul was appointed as head of translation department at Srinagar and Pandit Jagdhar at Jammu.<sup>xiv</sup> The idea behind it was to prepare readymade books for scholars reading in various schools which he got opened in the state. In this way books on geography, geology, history and other subjects were translated in to Hindi and Sanskrit. Arabic books were translated in to Hindi as also in Persian. Many Sanskrit texts in *shardascript* were translated in to *devangriscript*. Indigenous system of Kashmir has always been in connection with the mosques, where boys are taught to read Arabic so that they may be able to read the Quran, but necessary to understand it.<sup>xv</sup> The *maktabs* and *madrasas* of earlier time remained dominant, with slight changes in educational system of Kashmir.<sup>xvi</sup> Likewise the Brahmans have their schools called *Pathshalas* where Sanskrit was taught so that the boys may be able to read the sacred Hindu books. To these languages, Arabic and Persian<sup>xvii</sup> was added, and a certain amount of arithmetic was taught the scholars range from the age of five years to sixteen or eighteen. They are all taught together, in a single room in winter and in the verandas in summer, but they may be divided into groups.<sup>xviii</sup>

## Leading Pathshalas and Madrasasin Srinagar in 1872

Madrassa/Pathshala	No. of Students	Sanskrit Readers	Vedic Readers	English Readers	Persian Readers	Arabic Readers
Pathshala of Srinagar	75	----	75	----	----	----
Madrassa of Nawakadal	192	----	----	----	192	----
Madrassa of Maharaj Gung	136	----	----	----	68	68
Madrassa of Rainawari Below Hariprabhat	71	----	----	----	71	----
Madrassa of Basantbagh	154	----	----	----	154	----
Madrassa of Aisha Kadal	51	----	----	----	51	----

Source: Khan, *History of Srinagar*

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From the above description it is obvious that the city of Srinagar, which was main hub of Kashmir, was backward in education. In the above mentioned institutions no one is found as English reader. We can also infer from the above figures that Persian was dominantly read in this period, it is because of its utility, as it was the official language of the state.

Even the administrative report of 1873, which, the first of its kind in Jammu and Kashmir State, testifies to the educational backwardness of the city population, not to talk of rural population. The report makes mention of government schools only in the city and these are named as *Pathshala*, Nawakadal school, Maharajung school and the Basant Bagh school.<sup>xix</sup> It is further stated that the expenditure on education in Srinagar amounted to the sum of Rs, 36,372. The breakup of expenditure for the year, 1872-73 is given below.<sup>xx</sup>

**Table 2.2 Expenditure on Education during the Year 1872-73**

Item	Amount
Salary of Teachers	11,875
Inspection and Establishment	1,567
Free Ration to Students	2,268
Scholarships	18,661
Prizes	40
Miscellaneous	8,22
Cost of Books	1,138
Total	36,372

Source: Report Majmui (Urdu), Government of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1873-74

## Characteristics of Education

Memorising, a typical characteristics of medieval education system remained a main aspect of the education system, to quote Biscoe, “when you enter the classroom you will see the thirty to fifty scholars squatting on the floor in small groups, swinging backwards and forwards as they commit the sentences to memory by shouting them out. As every boy is learning a different word or sentence you can imagine what the babel of sounds is like. So stirring is the sight and sound that you feel inclined to join in and shout out some nursery rhyme or something in keeping with the bedlam.”<sup>xxi</sup>

Commenting on the hygienic condition of class rooms, Biscoe was so distressed that he wanted the schools to add the subject of hygiene to the curriculum. “Before entering the school room”, Biscoe articulates, “Your nose will have communicated to you the fact that there are plenty of dirty clothes next at hand, and on entering your eyes will corroborate this fact. The teacher has certainly been most successful in keeping his scholars from the water.”<sup>xxii</sup>

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If it happens to be winter time, when all the windows are fast closed, and every boy plus the teacher has *kangri* (fire pot) under his *pheran* (long gown), you will have no desire to spend unnecessary time over the inspection of school. If it is the summer time when you pay the school a visit it is not at all unlikely that you will see the teacher comfortably tucked up in the corner of the room fast asleep, and the boys not making so much noise as usual, as they are hoping that his sleep may be a very long one, with no bad dreams to disturb his dreams.<sup>xxiii</sup>

For a *pandit* (Hindus in Kashmir), the education course in *tsathal* (indigenous name of *pathshala*) began with *sharda* character in which boy learnt his religious duties. A small percentage of the boys remained satisfied with this, but the large majority carried on with Persian for the advantage which they expected to gain from it. A few devoted themselves to the *sastras*.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In Kashmir there was large number of private agencies for imparting instruction existing in indigenous schools. Some of schools were well attended and self-supporting, and contained as many as one hundred boys. Generally the teacher was a *pandit* with a fair knowledge of Persian, who taught under his own roof and was content with fees varying from two to four *annas* (equal to 1/16 of rupee) per month, according to the means of parents.<sup>xxv</sup> There being no normal schools, all intending teachers had to pick up their knowledge in the same way as others. They had no method and taught only in an imperfect but in an unreasonable way. They began with the alphabet, went on to easy stories of two syllables, and after hurrying through them took up a reader like *Karima*.<sup>xxvi</sup> But the student had hardly a chance of mastering the alphabet to say nothing of their ability to understand new words and phrases; so he simply learnt by ear.<sup>xxvii</sup> After *Karima* he would be given the *Gulistan*<sup>xxviii</sup> and *Bostan*<sup>xxix</sup> and after going through a few chapters of each, students would be called on to explain the substance in their own tongue, a process which their previous training made him equal.<sup>xxx</sup>

The *Sikandarnama*<sup>xxxi</sup> was also favourite book with these books an ordinary student finished his course. Those who desired to advance further read, *Sakinama*, *Shrin Khusroo*, *Abul Fazal*, *Tahir Wahid* and books of same stamp.<sup>xxxii</sup> Practice of letter writing and calligraphy and a little arithmetic were only other studies pursued in these *tsathalas*. A practical knowledge book-keeping was left to be acquired in office. Education was generally stopped at the age of sixteen years, though there were a few cases in which it was continued, a year or two longer.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Besides his monthly fee *akhoond* (teacher) received occasional small presents, either in cash or kind as, for instance, when a boy began a new book or when he has married, or was invested with the sacred thread, or in the case of a Muslim was circumcised.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Most severe punishment was *falak* that is that is say suspension by the heels from the ceiling of the classroom by a tight chord. Whipping was also administered sometimes. As regards the female education, Charles Girdlesstone, an English official in Kashmir during 1871 wrote that one or two attempts were made at Srinagar to establish schools for girls, but the experiment failed.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Though the traditional education in Kashmir declined gradually, but did not fade away from the scene. In fact, it continued till the Dogra regime ended in 1947, these schools became the aided institutes by getting funds from the government. We have a number of evidences, which

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4132 shows that this system of education continues for a long time.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Muslims, majority community of Kashmir, were the mainly getting education in these institutions even after the introduction of modern education as these types of institutions provide mainly religious education including the moral education. *Nam-i-aqq*,<sup>xxxvii</sup> *pandnama*,<sup>xxxviii</sup> *badiamanzoom*<sup>xxxix</sup> were other Persian texts which were taught during this period. These institutions were mostly run by individuals either having some nominal fees or free. They do not have any particular time table usually begins education at early morning up to 11 p.m.<sup>xl</sup> Persian as not only confined to the Muslims, Pandits also were great lovers of Persian education. Pandit Ram Ukhun, a resident of Vessu Village in Anantnag has started a Persian *maktabin* the village where both Hindus and Muslims boys got education in Persian.<sup>xli</sup>

## Patronising Classical Learning

Revivalism of classical learning especially the Sanskrit learning, patronising the learned Sanskrit scholars and *Pandits* and establishment of grand institutions of Sanskrit learning under Maharaja Ranbir Singh, is to be seen as a relationship between patron and client. Sanskrit as a system was ascribed a natural role of special, superior sanctity to the teacher, with a host of rituals and ideas to support this sacredness.<sup>xlii</sup> Rulers and the elite patronised Sanskrit education because that bestowed legitimacy on them. The Brahman, the Sanskrit teachers were revered in articulation of *guru*.<sup>xliii</sup> From all written and oral accounts we may say that though (predominantly Brahmin) scholars and (chiefly Kshatriyas) rulers were interdependent in that the former depend on the latter for material support and the latter depend on the former for social legitimacy, as far as the demonstration of hierarchy went, the scholar, the *Pandit* or *vidwan*, whether Brahman or not, was always given precedence. Whereas, the *Pandit's dharma* was simply the pursuit of knowledge, the ruler's *dharma* was to support and honour him. This involved a range of practices like inviting teachers on important occasions, seating him high symbolically, giving him gifts etc. The Maharaja of Banaras, Darbanga and Maharaja Ranbir Singh were regarded as outstanding in the fulfilling their *dharma*.<sup>xliv</sup>

There had been many changes in the relationship of *Pandit* and a *raja*. But theoretically the superiority of *Pandit* has been maintained. We have an interesting tale of the Maharaja Ranbir Singh and Pandit Shivkumar Shastri of Banaras (b.1857). The Maharaja had organised a *Sabha of Pandits* to the latter arrived in a palanquin (passenger conveyance). As he was about to alight the following words escaped from the *Raja's* lips: 'This place was not so far. Shastriji could well have walked. Palanquins are appropriate for Rajas and Maharajas.....'<sup>xlv</sup> As these harsh words reached Shastriji's ears, he changed his mind and returned home. The Maharaja was extremely repentant but helpless. At Shivkumar Shastri's departure all the scholars arose and left, saying, 'how can there be a learned assembly without Shastriji?' the Maharaja had to beg forgiveness the next day, and even assent to some tough conditions before Shivkumar relented.<sup>xlvi</sup> So this kind of relationship between *guru* and *Raja* remained intact until the British made some drastic changes in the whole set of the learning process.<sup>xlvii</sup>

## Conclusion

So in conclusion we can say that Maharaja Ranbir Singh's aim was to appease the Sanskrit gurus and Islamic Mulas that is why we see he revived the classical learning. Networks of Sanskrit

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institutions were established in Jammu and in Kashmir also number of Pathshalas and Madrasas. We did not find any serious attempt on the part of Maharaja to promote modern education. In addition to that he may have apprehensions that modern education may make the common people conscious about their different rights and against the authorities. In fact the State made every attempt to stop Christian missionaries from disseminating the new system of education to Kashmiris.

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- <sup>ii</sup>Sukhdev Singh Charak, *Life and Times of Maharaja Ranbir Singh: 1857-1885*, Jammu: Jay Kay Book House, 1980, p. 243.
- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>iv</sup> Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 172.
- <sup>v</sup>Charak, *Life and Times of Maharaja Ranbir Singh*, p. 245.
- <sup>vi</sup> Seru, *History and Growth of Education in Jammu and Kashmir*, p. 34.
- <sup>vii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>viii</sup> Amar Singh Chohan, *Development of Education in Jammu and Kashmir State: 1846-1947*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1998, p. 2.
- <sup>ix</sup>Chohan, *Development of Education in Jammu and Kashmir State*, p.4.
- <sup>x</sup>First grade, Rs 100 p/m; second grade, Rs 80; third grade Rs 60 and fourth Rs 30. Charak, *Life and Times of Maharaja Ranbir Singh*, p. 254.
- <sup>xi</sup> Report Majmui (Urdu), Government of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1882-83.
- <sup>xii</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Seru, Seru, *History and Growth of Education in Jammu and Kashmir*, p. 33.
- <sup>xv</sup> C. E. Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade: A Description of the Beauties of the Country, the Life, Habits and Humour of its Inhabitants, and an Account of the Gradual but Steady Rebuilding of a Once Downtrodden People*, Srinagar: Ali Mohammad and Sons, 2006, p. 241.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Khan, *History of Srinagar*, p. 160-61.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Persian, introduced in Kashmir by Muslim rulers, continued to remain official language till 1907 when it was replaced by Urdu. Ibid.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*.
- <sup>xix</sup> Khan, *History of Srinagar*, p. 161.
- <sup>xx</sup> Report Majmui (Urdu), Government of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1873-74.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Teachers were requested by the parents to keep away their children from the river, for the fear of drowning. For that purpose, a dye was printed on the legs of boys to prevent them from going into water, for boys none of them can swim they might get drowned. Ibid. pp. 242-44.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> P. N. K. Bamzai, *Socio-economic History of Kashmir: 1836-1925*, Srinagar: Gulshan Books, 2007, p. 353.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Hari Om, *Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir: A Study in the Spread of Education and Consciousness, 1857- 1925*, New Delhi: Archives Publishers and Distributors, 1986, p.22.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> *Karima* is a Persian verse written by a famous thirteen century poet, Sheikh Saadi of Shiraz Iran. It is an elaborated moral description containing a range of lessons on morality. It begins with the praise of God and Prophet, <sup>PBUH</sup> one of the lessons in the book is about the importance of acquiring knowledge. According to Saadi, it is only true knowledge which helps us in knowing the God and shows us the way to heaven. It denounces the ignorance and injustice. Mukhtar Ali BniMohammad Ali, *KarimaiSaadi*, KutubKhanaImdadiyaDevband, Uttar Pradesh, pp. 2-7.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Bamzai, *Socio-economic History of Kashmir*, p. 254.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Also written by Saadi, during the middle of thirteen century, it was the one of the popular Persian books of the time even in western circles. The book deals with virtually every major issue faced by mankind, with both optimism and subtle satire.

<sup>xxx</sup> It was Saadi's first book, contains the fruits of Saadi's long experience and his judgments upon life, and is illustrated by a vast collection of anecdotes. It includes accounts of Saadi's travels and his analysis of human psychology. He often mentions his accounts with fervour and advice.

<sup>xxx</sup> Om, *Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir*, pp. 22-24.

<sup>xxx</sup> An important Persian verse written by Nizami, Ganjavi of Azerbaijan, *SikandarnamaThe Book of Alexander the Great*. Offering an unusual perspective on the life of Alexander the Great Nizami's work is both biography as well as philosophical tome, a massive work written in verse.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Bamzai, *Socio -economic History of Kashmir*, p. 254.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Om, *Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir*, p.23.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> I have conducted interviews to a number of well read persons who have been contemporaries to the Dogra Raj in Kashmir. Almost all of them have studies in *maktabs* and *madrasas*. Interview with Mr. Bahar Shah (b. 1930). Retired as Tehsil Education Officer of Anantnag, got *maktab* education from his father and then went to a *madrasa* to a nearby place.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> It is a tract in verse by Saadi, dealing with the rules for the fulfilment of ritual obligations of ritual purity, or fasting and *nimaz*(prayer).

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Written by Faridudin Attar, is about the moral and religious aspects.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Written by an anonymous author, providing a statement of different tracts of life.

<sup>xl</sup> Interview with Mr Abdul Rashid Shah (b. 1940), himself a teacher got masters in Persian.

<sup>xli</sup> Interview with Bahar Shah.

<sup>xlii</sup> Nita Kumar, *Lessons from Schools: The History of Education in Banaras*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000, p. 38.

<sup>xliii</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-55

<sup>xliv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xlv</sup> BaldevUpadhyaya, *KashikiPandityaParampara*, (The Pandit Tradition of Kashi), quoted in Nita Kumar, *Lessons from Schools*, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xlvii</sup> British challenged the old hierarchy of upper cases, since there was a new aristocracy, an aristocracy that did not have to worry about patronising Pandits. They just need the support of colonial government.