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### **State Economy and Policies of Jammu and Kashmir During Dogra Regime With Special Reference to Agriculture (1846-1947)**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The complex history of Kashmir records that it has been fought over and ruled by Hindus, Muslims, Afghans, Sikhs and finally by the Dogras until 1947. The condition of the people when Gulab Sing took over Kashmir was indeed deplorable. Petty intrigues and quarrels as between the Governor and revenue farmer led to the lower rank officials to freely oppress the common man and amass wealth quickly. The administration was in complete disarray, there being no security of service. As can well be imagined, the economic chaos in the land prevailed to the utmost. The tiller of the soil paid in the heavy taxes. He was liable to be forced to work for the Government and petty officials without any payment at all. The artisans and craftsmen were in equally miserable condition. Cultivation of land had fallen to minimum. All land virtually belonged to the ruler but for the sake of popularity some of the Dogra rulers signed away Jagirs to their favorites at court in lieu of their service to the state. The present work traces the history of agricultural conditions of the people and an endeavor has been made to in out the causes of agricultural backwardness, economic chaos and mass poverty prevailing in the state during the period of study.

**KEY WORDS-**Agriculture, Economy, Revenue, Irrigation, Fertilizer, Crop, Land.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The state of Jammu and Kashmir was earlier ruled by three different rulers who ruled with independent sovereignty in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh without any interference in each other's territory. The British took control of Kashmir from the chaotic regime of Sikhs, using the help of Gulab Sing and on March 16, 1846 he helped the British to win the second Sikh war. Kashmir was sold to Gulab Sing for a sum of 75 lakh rupees and the sale deed was conducted through the treaty of Amritsar<sup>1</sup>, thus came into existence the state of Jammu and Kashmir<sup>1</sup>. The economic system established by Dogra rulers in Kashmir was essentially feudalistically oriented. Its feudalistic character was manifested in this claim of the Dogra ruler that the proprietary rights in all lands of Kashmir belonged to the ruling prince exclusively for the simple reason that the territories of Kashmir were purchased by them<sup>2</sup>. This claim was used as a justification of the feudal order to declare that all land belonged to the Maharaja. The Dogra rulers introduced a new feature to the structure of Kashmiri society. It was the emergence of a landed-cum military aristocracy which consisted of members of the royal family, their relatives and persons who belonged to the same caste and religion as professed by the ruler himself. It also included all those persons who had proved, the service or otherwise, their loyalty to the person of the maharaja or the as well as to his throne<sup>3</sup>. The major portion of the land always remained under the direct possession of the maharaja of which he possessed both proprietorship and revenue. The land under direct control of the state came to known as Khalsa.

The Dogra rule in Kashmir is characterized by extreme exploitation particularly with regard to the economic sector. The population of the state in general and that of the valley in particular was living in the most miserable conditions. During this particular period an overwhelming majority of the population of the state was dependent on agriculture. Absentee landlordism prevailed in the agrarian structure of the state due to which the agriculturalists and the agricultural workers were leading a life of miserable conditions and poverty. The Dogra rulers directed their policies towards protecting and promoting their own interests than advancing the welfare of the general masses<sup>4</sup>.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology used in the paper is mostly based on primary and secondary data. The relevant data has been scrutinized in order to reach new conclusions. Data has been collected from administrative reports, books, journals, web links and research papers etc. Multidisciplinary approaches in collecting the data have been used in order make the work authentic.

## **AGRICULTURAL SECTOR; AN ECONOMIC BASE**

Agriculture has been the predominant sector of the economy of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in general and the Kashmir province in particular. In view of the limited resource endowments in other fields, agriculture continued to be the main source of income and employment to the bulk of its population<sup>5</sup>. Owing to the mountainous character of the valley of Kashmir, the area of land under cultivation has been very small; the character of economy throughout the period of study has been agrarian. The fertility of the land, the ploughing animals, implements, agricultural conditions varying from region to region and tehsil to tehsil, have always had their share in determining the agricultural production and thereby the condition of agrarian life.

One important feature of Kashmir's agrarian economy was that on account of the restrictions imposed by the physical environment only a small percentage of the total geographical area was under cultivation. The total area of land surveyed by the Land Revenue Settlement Department towards the close of 19th century amounted to about 11, 95,600 acres. However this survey excluded forests, mountain sides, hills and lakes. Yet, marshes, swamps, cultivable waste and fallow lands were included in that total area of land. Out of this total area of land, marshes and swamps alone constituted 4, 12,069 acres and cultivable waste land was not less than 2, 57,360. Thus out of total area of land, which excluded forests, mountain sides, hills and water bodies, not more than 51% was under cultivation.

Based on the availability of irrigation and water, the land in Kashmir was divided into two groups. One type called Kushki Land (un-irrigated land) and second type called Abi Land (irrigated land). The crops like paddy, Mustard and pulses were grown on Abi Land and Khushki land produced wheat, dry fruits and saffron. There two types of crops—Kharif or autumn crops which included rice, maize, cotton, pulses, saffron, millet and sesame; and Rabi or spring crops which include wheat, barley, opium and beans were cultivated. As the snow fell so soon after the Kharif crops were harvested. Rabi crops could only be planted in fields that had been under Kharif cultivation. As a result, Kashmiri cultivators had to subsist on one crop-economy either Kharif or Rabi<sup>6</sup>.

Rice was cultivated frequently because the physical characteristics and climate of the valley lent itself to rice cultivation while preventing the intensive farming of most of other crop.

## **IRRIGATION: SOURCES AND METHODS**

Irrigation has been an ancient practice in Kashmir. The main sources of irrigation were water-rivers, streams [nallahs], lakes and springs which are abundant in Kashmir valley. Although

Irrigation remained a neglected economic activity during the early Dogra rule but received attention of the state during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh. After the commencement of the Land Settlement in 1888-89 the state looked after irrigation channels promptly but this was done by levying an extra irrigation cess. In the year 1891-92, Rs. 6066 were spent for repairing the irrigation facilities in the valley and a separate department of irrigation was established in the state in 1923 however, the development activities remained largely concentrated in Jammu and registered very little progress in Kashmir<sup>7</sup>. The improvement in irrigation facilities in the valley started in 4th decade of the 20th century. It was during 1931-40 that the irrigation canals like Zaingir-canal, Lal Kuhl, Martand canal were repaired and new canals which were fed by Jhelum, Vashav and Lidder rivers constructed.

The area irrigated from different sources in the state during 1930's is shown as under:

**Table-1: Land area irrigated from different sources**

Year	Govt Canals	Private Canals	Tanks	Wells	Others	Total
1934-35	72.8	219.3	2.4	2.8	8.0	305
1935-36	81.7	219.3	2.4	2.8	6.8	313
1936-37	50.1	262.6	2.4	2.8	6.8	324.7
1937-38	46.5	254.5	2.0	2.8	6.8	312.6
1938-39	47.7	246.8	2.4	2.8	7.6	307.3

Source: N.S Gupta (Development of Agriculture in the states of India)

## **AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY AND METHODS OF CULTIVATION**

Improved agricultural technology constitutes one of the basic tools for cultivation of various crops on scientific besides seeds fertilizers plant protection. But the agricultural technology of Kashmir was ordinary and primitive<sup>8</sup> and the valley of Kashmir because of its physical character remained by and large aloof from the rest of the world including India. This seclusion of the valley accounted for the difference in the lifestyle of Kashmir with that in other parts. The system of land cultivation and the implements used in agriculture were somewhat different from those in use elsewhere. Agricultural implements were very primitive. The implements included Shovel, rake, hoe and sickle. Threshing was done with a wooden log or a big stone. The husking of paddy was done by husking machines in few areas and in the rest of the valley, the mortar and pestle were generally in use Fanning was done by a rectangular cloth end the chaffing by a trapezoid winnower (shup). In the later period same new implements were introduced by the Agriculture department but they had not become popular yet, as these were costly end the poor peasant of the valley was not able to purchase them.

## **ANIMAL HUSBANDRY**

The animal husbandry of Kashmir included cattle like oxen, cows, sheep, goats, horses and poultry. The agro-climatic and topographical conditions, lush green meadows and pastures, abundance of water bodies, grazing grounds were conducive to the growth of animal husbandry in the Kashmir valley thus serving as a reliable source of subsistence from the very early times<sup>9</sup>.

During Dogra period this particular sector was given a due consideration. Following the recommendations of the Royal Commission for Agriculture (1929), appointed under the chairmanship of Lord Linlithgow, the Dogra state took some measures towards organized cattle farming in the state. But, initially most of the efforts of the state remained confined to the development of its [Dogras] own livestock population and that of its close associates. Farms were set-up for the cattle under personal use of the Maharaja– a cattle farm was established at Shalteng near Srinagar which maintained Sindhi and some local cows and bulls, another private farm with some imported cows and bulls of Ayrshire breed was established at Cheshmashi. Civil Veterinary Department with two livestock inspectors was established primarily to provide veterinary care for mules and horses of the Maharaja's cavalry. The cattle of the state started showing some qualitative improvements with the establishment of two breeding farms in the late 1930's one at Srinagar and other at Jammu.

## **HORTICULTURE AND SERICULTURE SECTORS**

Horticulture was an important sector of economy in Kashmir valley during the period under study. Among the fruits commonly grown in Kashmir were apple, pear, perch, plum, apricot, cherry, quince, pomegranate, raspberry, gooseberry, melon, water-melon, walnuts, hazelnuts, grapes and almonds<sup>10</sup>. The grapes formed an important item of the economy of Kashmir, A large portion of its produce was used for preparing wines. In 1895 the total production used for the said purpose was 164 kharwar. In 1902 the government, in order to develop, included such operations as establishment of nurseries, plantation of mulberry the horticulture of Kashmir, government, in order to develop the horticulture of Kashmir trees, cultivation of fruit trees in general and many other schemes<sup>11</sup>. The department started four nurseries at Thid Bagh, Panjgam Verinag and Naupura in Kashmir and imported fruit trees from Europe were planted on experimental beds for extending the fruit cultivation. In the beginning, trees were distributed among the cultivators without any payment, but later on they were charged about 12 to 25 paise per tree, of whatever nature and kind it might be. As a consequence, horticulture in the valley made tremendous progress. The progress was remarkable after the establishment of a separate department. The orchards were arranged on scientific principles

and new systems of planting, budding and grafting from European countries was introduced. The development and progress made by this industry which was completely Agro-based can be realized from the fact that the value of export of fruit from Kashmir to the Punjab increased from Rs. 349917 in 1905-0694 to 1060018 in 1920-21.

Sericulture also played an important role in the economy of Kashmir valley. The silk of this country found its way to Damascus and Bhokara; and the Issidones, the inhabitants of modern Khotan, were the chief agents in the transmission of silk into Western Asia and Europe by the Oxus over the Hyrcanian Sea and the Black Sea. The modern industry, however, dates from the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, who in the year 1871 made an attempt to organize sericulture on a large and extensive scale placing the industry under the supervision of Mr. Nilamber Mukerji, who made great efforts and succeed in improving it. The industry lingered on until 1882, and from that time to 1890 the state left it to the silk-rearers. Money was spent unstintingly by the state and the results justified the expenditure, far from the year 1913 the state was able to make a clear profit of seven to nine lakhs of rupees a year. In the year 1923 there were 46,431 rearers of silk worms and 34,948 mounds of cocoons were brought in, from which 2,005,376 lbs. of silk were produced<sup>12</sup>. The state had made proper arrangements for the preservation and expansion of the plantation of the mulberry trees. Considerable attention was made to their pruning in order to save them from diseases. Silkworm eggs were issued to the Zamindars shortly before they were likely to hatch. The quantity issued was 40,000 oz. the number of worm rearers registered was about half a lakh.

Sericulture undoubtedly proved a boon to Kashmir, inasmuch as it was a source of 5,000 laborers at the silk factories and employed an immense number of persons as silkworm rearers during the rearing season.

## **CONTRIBUTION OF FOREST RESOURCES IN THE ECONOMY OF KASHMIR**

Kashmir is rich in forests, which produce a great variety of timbers. Next to agriculture, forests constituted the most important basis of the state economy. In 1881 when demarcation and boundary survey of state forests was completed, the total area under state forests was estimated at 2,179 square miles. Besides the state forests there were vast areas under Jagir forests owned by the members of the ruling family—Raja Ram sing and Raja Amar Sing. The total area controlled by the forest department at the close of 1942 was 10,274.33 square miles against 10,165.27 square miles at the close of 1940<sup>13</sup>. The forests acted as good source of revenue for the government. The following

table shows, in approximate lakhs of cubic feet, the quantity of timber and firewood extracted departmentally and by purchasers as compared with years 1940-41.

**Table-2: Table showing fire wood and timber extracted**

Timber and fire wood extracted	1941	1942	1943
Department			
Timber extracted	0.21	0.02	0.47
Firewood extracted	0.08	-----	0.08
By purchasers			
Timer extracted	216.13	110.78	199.66
Firewood extracted	13.24	5.36	8.88

Source: P.N.K. Bamzai (1987), Socio- Economic History of Kashmir (1846-1925).

The total quantity of drift timber and firewood collected from river operations was 0.87 lakhs of cubic feet in the second half of 1941 and 3.05 lakhs of cubic feet in 1942. The revenue realized was Rs. 1, 70,078 in 1942. The stock of timber and firewood in sale depots was 0.20 and 0.06 lakhs cubic feet respectively at the close of the second half of 1941 and 0.60 and 0.04 lakhs of cubic feet respectively at the close of 1943.

## **POLICY OF LAND REVENUE AND TAXATION**

The main source of state income during the Dogra rule was agricultural revenue. During the Dogra rule feudalism and its related institutions, the out of date revenue system, the harsh taxation and the corrupt administrative set up were causes from which masses suffered an acute poverty<sup>14</sup>. The exploitative land revenue system of Sikhs was continued by Maharaja Gulab Singh. He took three quarters of rice, maize, millets and of oil-seeds, pulses and cotton and the share taken was nine sixteenth. This system lasted till 1860, when the Government reduced its share to a little over one-half. Additional amounts were taken as perquisites of various kinds, leaving even only a quarter with the cultivator. Besides the land revenue, the state took in addition four traks per Kharwar. Similarly Nazrana was levied four times a year and Tambol, a tax of two percent, was imposed on the common man on the eve of the marriage ceremony in the royal family. The villagers had also to feed the state watchers of the grain called Shakdars. The cultivators paid almost twenty traks and six seers out of thirty two traks of each grain of the Rabi crop, out of which twenty traks were the share of Government. Besides taxes upon Rabi and Kharif crops, there were other taxes like those of Russo-dart, fruit tax, animal tax, taxes on ponies. Malikana was also paid by the cultivators in recognition of Maharaja being the owner of the land. The realization of state revenue in kind gave opportunities to several abuses and it became almost impossible to prevent excessive collection of grain or to prove cases of illegal exaction against the officials. Lawrence writes that for every fifteen traks of grains which a cultivator had to pay to the state, he usually paid seventeen traks. Another system of

revenue in force during Ranbir Singh's reign was known as Mujwaza. It was actually the system of annually setting the demand in kind and cash. It was a source of distress to the rural masses. An assessment known as *assamiwari khewat* was introduced in 1880 under which the state tried to make cash assessments. But the reform proved to be failure due to apathetic and callous attitude of the officials. A defective system of Izad Boli or device of auctioning villages introduced in 1882, led to many disastrous consequences. Under this system the villages were auctioned to highest bidders, who had to pay the amount to the state after collecting it from the cultivators.. Moreover, The Dogra rulers gave away the revenue of big areas of land to intermediaries with different designations like Jagirdars, Pattadars, Illaqdars, Chakdars and Muafidars. Revenue of small part of the valley was bestowed upon the religious persons and institutions called Maufis, majority of such endowments being given to the Hindus<sup>15</sup>.

Apart from land revenue the Kashmiri peasant was subjected to several other kinds of taxes. The following table shows the payment of various other kinds of taxes paid to the government by the peasant

**Table-3: The payment of taxes of various kinds**

S. No.	Name of the commodity	Tax paid
1.	For each milk cow	1 1/2 seers of ghee
2.	For each household	1-10 fowls
3.	Fruit	3/4ths of the total produce
4.	On 500 kharwars of grain for each village	2 to 3 goats or sheep
5.	For each village	1 pony
6.	Putto (wool)	1 blanket
7.	Honey	2/3rds of total produce

Source: Parveez Ahmad, (2007), *Economy and Society of Kashmir (1885-1925)*

## STATE POLICY TOWARDS AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

It was after replacing the policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs by a policy of intervention which was symbolized by the appointment of a resident in 1885 during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. With the appointment of resident in Kashmir there were wide ranging reforms in the Dogra state<sup>16</sup>. These included the lighter assessment of revenue to be collected preferably in cash; the abolition of system of revenue farming; cessation of state monopolies; the revision of existing taxes and dues especially transit and custom duties and taxes on various trades and professions. Walter Lawrence succeeded Wingate as settlement Commissioner in 1889. Lawrence found the existing system of assessing a group of villages at the same rates defective as there were hundreds of tenants in an assessed group of village. Lawrence divided the entire area into assessment circles. In each assessment, estimate of average produce were obtained by conducting crop cutting experiments for different crops<sup>17</sup>. On the basis of prevailing prices, gross assets for each



circle were worked out. Next Lawrence suggested to fix the period of assessment at ten years, because of the fact that it would be unfair to the hands of the state government by fixing a longer period as the population of Kashmir was not sufficient for the adequate cultivation of land. The important step to introduce in the new settlement of Walter Lawrence was grant of assami or the permanent occupancy rights to cultivators.

Lawrence had fixed the state demand for ten years. The land Settlement of 1883 not only settled the problems like collection of revenue, fixation of term and allotment of land but it also worked for the increase of the area of land from non-cultivable to uncultivated and then to cultivable by making its allotments to the landless agriculturists.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus from the above discussion we can conclude that lack of transportation which preserved the essentials of its backwardness, the mass illiteracy, the low agricultural production, ignorance, superstitions and religious taboos were the main features of the state during the Dogra Regime. The state suffered from social, economic and cultural backwardness during the particular period. The agriculture was primitive owing to the lack of irrigational facilities and crude methods of cultivation. As a result large tracts of land remained uncultivable and barren. The agricultural yield was not sufficient to meet the needs of the population. Besides, the exorbitant taxation to meet the state's demand was a burden on the peasants who lived in very miserable condition. The people in general were equally backward in education and mass illiteracy was the main feature of the society. Due to the poverty the people had neither the means to get their children educated nor were the educational institutions in the state.

No doubt Dogra rulers tried to improve various sectors like agriculture, trade and commerce and means of communication. Some initiatives were taken to improve the land system but all this was designed to suit the needs of the Maharaja. The common people lived a life of utter poverty, miserable conditions and ignorance.

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