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NON-AGRARIAN ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC REFORMS IN KASHMIR UNDER DOGRA RULE (1846-1947)

Ausif Bashir Malik¹ and Dr. Mohammad Nazrul Bari²

¹Research Scholar , Dept. of History ,Central University of Karnataka.

²Assistant Professor , Dept. of History , Central University of Karnataka.

ABSTRACT:

Agriculture has been the backbone the economy of the state of Jammu and Kashmir but people also involved in some non-agricultural production for which this region is famous since pre-modern days. The Development of different arts and crafts were laid by Sultan Zainulabdin who ruled Kashmir from 1420-1470. A new phase of History begins in the region with the establishment of Dogra rule in 1846. The foundation of Jammu and Kashmir was laid by Maharajah Gulab Singh in 1846 and established the Dogra dynasty in Kashmir. Like many others, they considered their kingdom as their personal

Jagir. During the Period of Maharajah Pratap Singh, British were successful in Establishing Residency in Srinagar in 1885. Through this Residency, the British keep interfering in the internal affairs of the state. One of the biggest contribution made by British residency in the state is the development of its economy. Trade also received a new impetus. With the development of communication large scale of Trade was carried with the neighbouring world. Different articles were imported and exported to these regions that lead to the growth of many urban centres in Kashmir. The Dogra rulers also made many reforms for the development of arts and crafts, a large scale of money was spent on different arts and crafts. It may rightly be said that the economy of Kashmir changed from Medieval into Modern.

In this research article, an attempt has been made to explore the non-Agrarian Economy of Kashmir under Dogras in the light of unknown primary and recently published secondary sources.

KEYWORDS: Dogra, Economy, British residency, Indigenous Industries, trade.

INTRODUCTION

The Kashmir is known for its beauty since the ancient period, however, in the last two-three decades, it is in news due to all the wrong reasons. Like its natural beauty, the history of the region is also full of the thriller. Due to the strategic location, this region became the victim of outside invasions one after the others

since ancient to the modern age. Kalhana has rightly summarised the beauty of the region in his masterpiece "Rajatarangini" that "the things available in Kashmir are rare to find it heaven".

Like the other parts of India, Kashmir economy was also mainly based on agriculture only till the independence of India. At the same time, people also follow different arts and crafts but with the establishment of British Residency, the economy of Kashmir greatly changed and its impact of modern

technology and use on the art and craft became visible.

Kashmir was famous for many artistic activities since ancient times. The main industrial centre was in and around the area of Srinagar. We have the sources available with us that many regions of Kashmir which were famous for their special manufacturing. Anantnag was famous for

embroiders, Bijbehara for its woodcarving, Kulgam for its woodwork, villagers of Zainagir famous for softening woollen cloth and Shupian was famous for Blankets.¹

The major shift in the industrial development of Kashmir taken place during the rule of Sultan Zainul Abidin who ruled Kashmir from 1420 to 1470. Many developments took place during his rule like stone-cutting, bookbinding, paper-Mache, shawl and carpet weaving were introduced by him, and he brought artisans from Samarqand, Bukhara and Persia as mentioned by Srivara in Jaina Rajatragini.²

According to other tradition, Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (1314 AD-1384) regarded as having brought various crafts and industries from Iran to the valley of Kashmir. It is said that he brought 700 hundred followers with him including weavers, experts in carpet and shawl making, who taught the craft of pashmina textile and carpet making to the local population of the valley. (Rafiabadi, Hamid Naseem, 2003, World religions and Islam: A critical study, Sarup and sons, pp.97-105). It may be possible that these industries may reach its climax due to the patronage of the king Zainul Abidin. Mirza Haider Dughlat in Tarikh-i-Rashidi writes "In Kashmir, one meets with all those arts and crafts which are in most cities uncommon" (Mirza Haider Dughlat, op cit, p. 434)

The state of Jammu and Kashmir contains abundant mineral resources like Bauxite, gold, zinc, Coal, copper etc. The Dogra government built many industries for this purpose like the Department of Industries which was established in 1923 and the Jammu and Kashmir Marketing Board was created in 1935 which played an important role in the growth of the economy under the area of study. It suggested to establish Mandis at important pilgrimage centres, introduced the uniform weights and measures.³ for the growth of industries and economic condition, banking system was established like state bank and other Banking intuitions like Punjab National Bank, Lloyds Bank etc.⁴ All the above mentioned steps were taken by the Dogra government played an equally important role in the growth of industrial development.

Some of the industries and their details are mentioned below.

Namdah:

A carpet rug industry developed in Srinagar called as Namdah are very warm if used as bed-mattresses and make excellent coverings. Namdahs carpet was imported from Yarkand, an area in Xinjiang of China. It was only in 1918, a well-known firm, Khawaja Garib Shah Ahad Bhat started its manufacturing in Kashmir. Later, two more trading corporations Achemby and Modern felt co., start exporting Namda to foreign countries. At the time of World War II, there was a high demand of Numdas in the United States among the elite class.⁵

Gabha

Gabhas are made of woollen fabrics in many designs. Initially, Anantnag was the hub of manufacturing of Gabhas. Later, this industry was also established in Srinagar provided employment opportunities to the local people in large number. The shifting of the industry from Anantnag to Srinagar also created a new class of traders known as Zachagarus. Few popular types of Gabha known to us as dal guldar, embroidery and printed Gabhas.⁶

Silk Industry

It was the most important and biggest industry in Srinagar. For its development, it undergoes many ups and downs due to many reasons. The silk of Kashmir has been repeatedly mentioned by local source and even by European travellers. Mirza Haider Dughlat, a ruler of Kashmir and the cousin of Babur wrote that "Among the wonders of Kashmir are the quantities of mulberry trees cultivated for their leaves from which silk is obtained". Moorcroft, who was an English explorer employed by the East India Company travelled extensively throughout the Himalayas, Tibet, Central Asia. He also mentions that during the period of Sikhs, the silk produced was "insufficient for domestic consumption"⁷. In 1869 Maharaja Ranbir Singh established sericulture and machinery which were imported from Europe for the development of this industry but could not flourish due to lack of supervision and disease in silkworms. In his rule Silk was made as a Government monopoly under the head of Baba Nilambar

Mukerji. Four production houses were built in Kuthar parganas at villages of Tserpura, Shangas, Naogam and Akin gam. The silk produced in Srinagar is superior to other silk that was produced in India. The silk factory at Srinagar is the largest and biggest factory in the world due to its climatic condition. It is interesting to note that the factory at Srinagar obtained its electric power from Mathura in western U.P. Sericulture department was organised in 1942 and for its development, many methods were adopted including the construction of seed house and sericulture conferences.⁸

Paper Mache

Paper Mache has a long history in Kashmir. It was introduced by Sultan Zainulabdin who ruled Kashmir from 1420 to 1470. It was confined mostly to the Shia community, a hereditary profession mainly passes from father to son. Many kinds of articles were made such as toilet sets, finger bowls, candlesticks, trays, tables etc. The artists also showed their design on the ceiling of the house, walls and palanquins. The paper-Mache work is known as *Kar-I -Kalamdani*. It has a market in foreign countries like Kabul, France etc. During the later period of Dogra rule, the industry would have died but the traders like Suffering Moses and Asia craft on the Bund, Sadiq Ali and Bros in Fateh Kadal popularising this handicraft in European Countries. Paper Mache produced in commercial scale but Industry suffered more from foreign purchasers and due to the heavy taxation and removal of supervision by the State, this industry declined.⁹

Shawl

The shawl has been used in India since pre-Historic times, the history of Shawl is not clearly documented but references have been found in the great epics like Atharvaveda, Ramayana and Mahabharata. The same has also been mentioned in Buddhist literature, where it is referred as a woollen garment. (www.Kashmir.net). Kashmir is known to the outside world by its Shawls but the wool for manufacturing for these Shawls came from Tibet and Chinese Turkestan¹⁰

In 1586 The Mughal Emperor Akbar conquered Kashmir. His court historian, Abul Fazal has described the art of shawl making in great detail. According to M. Dauvergne, the historicity of Kashmiri Shawl goes back to the times of Mughal emperor Babar. With the coming of Afghan rule in Kashmir, Shawl Industry flourished. During the Sikh rule, Kashmiri Shawl has its market in Turkistan, Afghanistan, even Russia and later in Europe. Kashmiri shawls were of two kinds, such as loom and handmade. In the handmade system, the person was known as Sada Baf, in the loom system, there was a Karkhanadar who employed a number of persons in his Karkhana. The best Shawls were produced during Ranbir Singh's time that was very soft and highly decorated. We have the evidence that even French agents were coming to Kashmir to purchase Shawls. Messrs, uhlan and Co., were the agents of Kashmir State in France. During the period of Dogra, in general, the condition of shawl weavers was not good. Maharajah Gulab Singh had imposed an annual tax on each shawl weaver. During Ranbir Singh's rule, the high taxation and miserable wages further deteriorated the condition of Shawl Weavers. In the view of Andrew Wilson, the Shawl weavers got miserable wages. He further says that Weavers were like slaves, they could neither leave Kashmir nor can change their employment.¹¹ With high taxation and oppression by government officials, Shawl weavers laid a protest during Maharaja Ranbir Singh's rule. The Shawl weavers started the procession against the governor Raja Kakdar and assembled at Zaldagar in the city. The Darogha informed the Governor that the processionists will attack the house, on hearing this governor immediately send his troops to disperse the protestors and in the incident, twenty-eight shawl weavers were killed and dozens were injured. The leaders of the weavers, Sheikh Rasool, Abli Pala, Qudda Lala and Sona Shah were imprisoned. Later, two of them died and other two leaders were put in Bahu fort at Jammu. By 1925, this Industry became extinct, due to many reasons. Charkha which was found in every household has been turned out from the cities and towns. Taxes were high and also the government did not make efforts to protect the industry. Shawl trade received another death blow during the French-German war in 1870. France was the market for Kashmiri Shawls but due to its defeat by Germany, Shawl trade declined. The Shawl weavers' hopes

were dashed, when a famine in 1877 visited the valley and thus Shawl weavers were mostly affected and many left the Valley and settled at Lahore, Amritsar and Agra.¹²

Woollen and Cotton textiles: The earliest reference of the woollen industry has been given by Chinese Pilgrim, Hieun Tsiang who visited Kashmir in 630 A.D. Kalhana in his Rajtarangi has also mentioned the Woollen Industry. According to Kalhana woollen, the industry had been localised in Pattana (Patan) during the 12th century (www.thecherrytree.in) by Prof. Abdul Hamid Malik. There were many products made of wool like Plain Cloth and Blankets were made of wool and were used by Villagers to keep them warm during winter. Pheran used by people in winter was also made of wool. The manufacture of woollen clothes gave employment to the villagers in the winter. As per the sources, there were three qualities of wool depending on colour black, grey and white. The best wool in Kashmir was found in North and interestingly best weavers were from the South. Kashmir blankets formed a great article of export to India. By 1946, Srinagar Woollen Mills was known all over India for its excellent art manufacturers.¹³

Cotton Textile Industry in the state was run on a small scale. The industry was found both in Jammu and Kashmir. In the Kashmir, cotton cloth was made without machinery. The industry declined both in Jammu and Kashmir towards the close of the 19th century with the coming of cheap-mill-made cloth. (Trade Reports, 1905-06, p.10, Trade Reports, 1907-08, p.14)

Wood Work:

Jaya Jaitly in her book titled, 'Crafts of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh', mentioned that woodcraft was greatly developed in the reign of King Ananta who ruled from (1028-1063). Alberuni has also mentioned wooden idol of Sarada in Kashmir that was visited by pilgrims. It is said that it was introduced in Kashmir by Sultan Zainulabdin. Many of the mosques during the Sultanate period of Kashmir were made of wood. Khanqahi-Muallah and Makhdum Sahibs Shrine are the best examples of carpentry excellence. A good example of woodwork is seen in Naqshbandi Sahibs Shrine in Srinagar. Some of the centres in Srinagar like Fateh Kadal, Zana Kadal, Safa Kadal and Rainawari were best specimens of woodwork and wood carving. Dr. A. Mitra one of the Ministers of Maharajah Pratap Singh made a special contribution for the Wood-Carving Industry. He arranged an exhibition of all arts and crafts in the Government Museum. (Bhan, R.K. Economic survey of wood industry and trade in Kashmir p.1) Maharajah Pratap Singh presented a wood carved gate to George V at a coronation Darbar at Delhi. Sultan Mohd Buddha one of the famous Kashmiri artisans developed new designs in wood carving. We have the reference that during the Dogra Period, wood carving was done on trays, cigarette boxes, jewel cases, chairs etc. was mainly for decorative purposes.¹⁴

Basket Industry:

The basket making was another famous industry in Kashmir. Raja Amar Singh established the Basket Industry in Kashmir.¹⁵ In most of the villages, there were artisans who make baskets for Kangar and as well as domestic and agriculture purposes. Kilats, a different type of basket used for the transport of apples and other village works. The superior Kilats which were covered with leather was made in the city which was mainly made for the European travellers.¹⁶

Boat making:

Biscoe while writing about Kashmiri boatman, said that the art of making the boat was known to Kashmiri since the days of Noah. Boat Industry is one of the oldest industries in Kashmir. In Ain I Akbari, it is mentioned that boats were used for the purpose of trade and commerce. Abul Fazal further writes that 'In Kashmir, there was a model of a ship that astonished everyone who saw it'. For making a boat, deodar wood was used and then split it into halves and these halves make the two planks then a hole of each of their planks was made to insert short ropes and then planks used to left in the river for two or three years and thus these planks form two sides of boat and then more wood was used for flooring and finishing of the boat.¹⁷

Initially, it was known as doongamainly used for visitors but the Hanjies (boatmen) realised its importance and began to care for guests with the passage of time. Later, the doonga then developed into a Boat. There were some political factors also responsible for the development of this boat. As mentioned in the treaty of Amritsar in 1846 between British and Gulab Singh, the Law introduced was that no outsider could buy land in the State. (www.quora.com). An order was issued by the state government that no European could buy land or build houses in Kashmir. With the rising interest of English people in the valley, it gave a fillip to the newly born Industry. It was Martyn Kennard, who built a houseboat in Srinagar. It has a great advantage as it can move wherever you want, it also created a newly boatman community in Srinagar.¹⁸

Reforms of Dogra Rulers:

Maharajah Gulab Singh organised the administration, he suppressed crime ruthlessly, he captured the leaders of Gala Wans and executed them, he defeated the Khakhas and Bombas and thus established normalcy for trade and commerce¹⁹. He also reorganised the Shawl Department. During Gulab Singh's time, there were 27,000 weavers working at 11,000 looms but were given low wages and also the Karkhanadar kept the workmen under bondage but Maharajah Gulab Singh listened to the grievances of weavers and the weavers were paid according to their work and also they can change their employee.²⁰ Silk was an important export of trade during the period of Gulab Singh etc. (Kashmir life.net). Maharajah Ranbir Singh also re-organised the agriculture department, he spent money on vines, silk industry and hops. Tea gardens were laid and silkworms were imported from China and distributed to the villagers, for the development of trade and commerce he built roads, the cart road from Rawalpindi to Srinagar began to develop during his rule, telegraphy and a postal system was also built by him. He spent lakh of rupees on repairing the paths. Maharajah Pratap Singh also reformed the economy of Kashmir. During his time British were successful in establishing the Residency in Kashmir and due to the efforts of the Residency, Kashmir changed from medieval to the modern age. During the period of Maharajah Pratap Singh, two British officers Wingate and Lawrence made land settlement of Kashmir and the revenue assessment carried by Walter Lawrence whose memory is still cherished and the people of Kashmir called him as Larn Sahib²¹. Through his settlement peasants were given property rights in land. It was through the efforts of Maharajah Pratap Singh that in 1912 when the powers were restored to him and one of his ministers Dr A. Mitra, planned to construct a cart road over Banihal and thus in 1915 Srinagar was linked with Jammu.²² Maharajah Pratap Singh also developed many industries like sericulture, he brought the seeds from Italy and France and distributed among the peasants for rearing cocoons and a factory was established in 1907 in Srinagar for rearing cocoons. He also improved the Horticulture department. French experts were called to study the making of wine in the Valley, many experts came like M. Ermens, M. Bouley, and M. Peychaud but they were not successful in establishing the Wine Industry but the State established the Department of Agriculture and Horticulture in 1907 through their efforts.²³

Trade:

Trade and commerce flourish in Kashmir since ancient times. During the ancient Kashmir, we have the reference of trade relations with a different part of India including South. We also have the evidence of trade contacts of Kashmir with Tibet, China, Central Asia and Persia through the North and North West. With the coming of the Sultanate Phase and Mughal, Afghan and Sikh rule, a new phase of trade in the history of Kashmir which connects Kashmir with the regions which were not yet having a trading link. The trade received new impetus with the coming of Dogra rule, trade was carried on the backs of Kashmiris as well as by Markhbanas (Horsemen). Trade was carried with three routes that were Banihal route, Pir Panjal route and Jhelum valley route. Jhelum valley route was the most important route through which trade was carried in large scale²⁴. Later with the development of communication and road, large scale trade was carried with Punjab most importantly of perishable commodities like ghee and fruits. The chief centres of trade were Srinagar, Anantnag, Shupiyon, and Bandipur²⁵. There were the number of items which were imported and exported in Kashmir. Trade was with

Jammu, Ladakh, British India and Punjab. Different articles were imported and exported to these regions. The exports from Kashmir to Jammu were wool, cotton clothes, Namdhas and dyeing materials (Trade Report of Jammu and Kashmir, 1908-09). The import articles were silver, arms and ammunition etc. Trade was also with Ladakh and the main import from Ladakh was Pushm that was the raw material for making Shawl. Trade was also carried with Punjab many articles were exported from Kashmir to Punjab like shawls, raw, silk, paper-machie articles etc. and the imports were cotton piece goods Blankets and Namdhas etc²⁶. The high volume of trade in favour of Jammu and Kashmir, leading to the development of urban growth. Other developments like the construction of cart road, Gilgit road and the development of tourism brought large wealth to the Valley, but it also has a negative impact particularly on Arts and crafts. Some indigenous Industries were declined like Gabba, carpet and woodwork etc. Some centres of traditional crafts like Anantnag declined and Srinagar flourished.²⁷

Internal Trade:

As far as internal trade during the Dogra period, manufactured articles like Gabhas, Namdhas were brought from Anantnag to Srinagar and from Srinagar, these articles were exported to different Pargans. There were also many articles that were famous for internal trade like pashmina, articles of Pattoo etc. (Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, p.78) There were many internal trading centres of Kashmir like Anantnag, Bijbehara, Shupian, Krieri and Baramulla. These centres were famous for certain manufactures like Anantnag was famous for Gabha and Sopore famous for Pattoo. The internal routes used for the trade were Baramulla cart road that runs from Baramulla to Srinagar. Initially, the Trade was carried by Boatman who brought the grains from the city and then supply to the neighbouring villages of the city. These Boatmen were experts in frauds and adulteration but due to development of Baramulla cart road trade received new impetus.²⁸

CONCLUSION:

The above study shows that the valley of Kashmir was rich in different non-agricultural products and people practised different arts and crafts since ancient times. With the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir, the Industries received a new impetus. The arrival of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani in 1383 in the valley and the period of Sultan Zainulabdin from 1420-1470 start a new phase in the non-agricultural economy of the region under study. Both the historical figures introduced many new industries like Paper Mache, shawl, woodwork, etc. which improves the economy and the standard of living of the people.

The establishment of Dogra dynasty in 1846 by Gulab Singh reformed these Industries in their own ways as discussed above. Maharaja Gulab Singh established the Shawl department and Maharaja Ranbir Singh developed different roads and connects the Srinagar with the rest of the country. During the Period of Maharaja Pratap Singh, British established the Residency in Srinagar and it is through this residency, trade received a new impetus. Articles of a number of varieties were imported and exported from the Valley of Kashmir to the rest of the country and the economy of Kashmir changed from Medieval to Modern.

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Ausif Bashir Malik
Research Scholar , Dept. of History , Central University of Karnataka.