

Afghan Rule and Economy of Kashmir (1753-1819 Ad)

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Abstract: Kashmir in the words of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir a “paradise on earth” remained under Afghan rule (1753-1819 AD). The valley of Kashmir stretched over a vast area, with Tibet, Kashgar and Ladakh in the east, Punjab in the north, Badakshan and khorasan in the south and Afghanistan in the west. The occupation of the land by the Afghans shifted the bridle of reign from Delhi and Agra to Kabul, Qandhar and Herat, which affected the destinies of the people living in the territory. The valley during the period experienced the rule of Ahmad Shah Abdali, Timur Shah, Zaman Shah and Muhammad Shah. The sources revealed, though they ruled with the administrative set up as established by their predecessors, yet the people of the valley passed through suffering and agony. The peasants left the land uncultivated, revenue exactions were multiplied, and trade declined industries doomed and economic resources were drained off, which collectively created an atmosphere of threat in the society. The valley presented a deserted look.

Keynote

1. Asudahahwal (well to do)
2. Saqim-ul-ahwal (indigent)
3. khalisa (govt. land)
4. Dagshawl (Department of shawl)
5. shawlbaft (shawl weaver)
6. trak (5kgs)
7. Mahsul (preposed revenue assesment)
8. Dagi-Pashmina (wool thread)

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I. INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan was a part of Achaemenian Satrapies under Daris Hystaspes in 500 BC. Alexander the Great a Greek invader while on missoin to conquer world, penetrated through this land into Northern India. But due to his sudden death and division of empire among his generals the land had remained a battle ground till *Seluekus* emerged as an unchallenged ruler of the territory. The empire spread over from Euphrates to the Oxus and Indus¹. Chandragupta Maurya of India while on expansion of his empire defeated *Seluekus* at Punjab in 305 BC. The episode ended with an agreement of matrimonial alliance. Accordingly *Seluekus* agreed to marry his daughter with Chandragupta Maurya and handed over four provinces, Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Baluchistan to him as dowry². Since then it remained a part of Mauryan Empire. Ashoka of the dynasty after adoption of Buddhism spread the same faith there (Afghanistan) as supported by his pillar edicts in *Kharoshte* script, who even conquered the valley of Kashmir in 250 BC and annexed it to his empire³. It further flourished during Kushan rule, who even extended India's trader relations with central Asia. Kanshika established a marvellous school of art known in the ancient Indian history (Gandhara School of Art) there (Kandhar). The art of course had a foreign influence as Buddhist idols found in the areabore Hellenic stature. The strong ties led free commercial, political and cultural intercourse between India and central Asia, through silk route established by Kanshika. The valley of Kashmir of course functioned like an artery between India and central Asia during the Mauryan and Kushan periods. In addition to it the territory of Kashmir has been mentioned in the annals of Buddhist history for holding fourth Buddhist council at Harwan Srinagar⁴. The land (Afghanistan and Kashmir) after Kanshika witnessed the rule of different dynasties. Hieun Tsang a Chinese traveller (630-645 AD) wrote that there were both Indian and Turkish princes in the Kabul valley. The land had experienced the spread of Islam (644-658 AD) under third Caliph Hazrat Usman and Kashmir valley passed into the hands of locals rulers—Karkutas, Utpals, Lohars, Damras and Sultans. During the period there existed political and cultural ties between Kashmir and Afghanistan as Kalhanha mentioned in his famous book *Rajtarangini*⁵. It was by the end of 10th century AD that Hindu rule totally ceased in Kabul and it fell into the hands of Turks. Subktgin, his son Mohammad of Ghazni and his descendants ruled till the middle of 12th century AD. The Ghazni dynasty was succeeded by Ghor with Shahb-ud-in Mohammad Gori (Maiz-ud-din Mohammad) a famous one, who establishwed Muslim rule in India⁶. The relations between Afghanistan and Kashmir halted from 1015 AD for a long period as Mohammad of Ghazni invaded the valley twice (1015&1021) AD during the Hindu rule. It enjoyed independence till its final annexation by Akbar the Great of the Mughal dynasty in 1586 AD⁷. During the Mughal rule there was close commercial and a political intercourse between the two subas with which Kashmir again became familiar with their old neighbours, which cemented their moral and social relations.

The dawn of 18th century enshrined Persia with the noble services of Nadir Quli to replace the rule of Safavi dynasty. In 1729 AD, he expelled the Afghans from Ifshan and Fars, extended the Persian monarchy to its ancient limits⁸. In 1736 AD he ascended the throne of Persia as Nadir Shah. The political situation in India was pitiable, which caught his attention. He was anxious to avail the opportunity of expansion towards India but he was bound to depend upon the goodwill of the Afghans. Consequently he approached the nobility of the Afghans for the same and patronized Ahmad Khan of Abdali clan, who excelled in his services and won the goodwill of his master. By dint of his services, he rose to the position of a commander of Abdali contingent with 6000 strong forces under his control. In 1747 AD due to the assassination of Nadir Shah, table turned in favour of Ahmad Kham. He had a strong force of 10,000 and control over treasury, which embodied the famous *Koh-i-nur* (diamond). The jewel was taken away by Nadir Shah in 1739 AD while he had invaded India. Being a master of treasury and powerful personality, the Afghans had chosen Ahmad Shah Abdali their leader at Qandhar. He assumed the authority of ruler ship over the eastern part of Nadir Shah's empire. It was with the services of Ahmad Shah Abdali that Afghanistan got elevated to the status of an empire among the kingdoms of the world, who in a short span of time carve out a mighty kingdom. The limits of which were the Caspian Sea in the west, the Punjab and Kashmir in the east and the Oxus in the north. Baluchistan and Khurasan paid tribute to him.⁹

Unfortunately in 1746-47 AD Kashmir witnessed a devastating flood, which washed off standing crops. The event was followed by political upheavals and chaotic administration. The result was horrible as more than ¾th population of the valley wiped off, through death, migration and disease. The situation presented a heart broken site, as dead bodies lay on ground unburied and uncremated. The situation further worsened with accession of Ahmad Shah (Mughal King) to the throne of Delhi, disunity among the nobles and Mughal governors. The incompetence of the Mughal rule resulted in the death of Afrasiyab Khan (deputy governor) of Kashmir by his employee through poison. The event followed anarchy in the state which compelled Ahmad Shah to appoint a new governor Alaquli Khan. He appointed Mir Muqim Kanth as his deputy, who economize the expenditure, disbanded troops and reduced the salaries of the rest. The situation created disaffection in the army. Abul Qasim Khan Son of Abul Barkat Khan tried to avail the opportunity by winning forces to his side and dethroned Mir Muqim Kanth from the political scene. Abul Qasim indulged in insensate cruelty, which spread distress in the land. Ahmad Shah Abdali while in Lahore watched the scene at a distance¹⁰. Mir Muqim Kanth and Khwaja Zahir-ud-din Didamari, the two Kashmiri leaders, distressed at the depredations of Abdul Qasim took an impolitic step in inducing Ahmad Shah Abdali to invade Kashmir and bring it under his control, like Rana Sanga of Mewar and Daulat Khan Lodhi of Punjab did in 1526 AD to induce Zahir-ud-din Babar of Mughals and brought the closure of Lodhi rule in India. Ahmad Shah Abdali accepted the offer. Accordingly in 1753 AD he sent a strong force under the able commandership of Abdullah Khan Ishaq Aqasi. Abul Qasim the governor of Mughals in Kashmir mustered his army at shopyan, at the foot of Pir-Panjial pass to face the invader. The battle continued for fifteen days, there was heavy loss of men and material on both sides. At last Abdullah Khan Ishaq Aqasi won over the commander of Abul Qasim (Gul Khan Khabri) to his side like Aurangzeb of Mughal Dynasty did in the southern campaign against the ruler of Bijapur. Abul Qasim left the battle field in distress but he was arrested and taken to Kabul. Abdullah Khan Ishaq Aqasi entered Srinagar with triumph and furlled the Afghan flag on the rampart of Akbar's fort at Nagar Nagar. Thus he brought an end to the rule of Mughal emperors in Kashmir¹¹. The Afghans ruled the province for a period of sixty seven (67) years (1753-1819 AD) like their predecessors (Mughals). The territory during the period witnessed the rule of five Afghan kings who dispatched twenty eight (28) governors to monitor the administration in the valley. The table of the kings and governors who ruled the state is as:

Ahmad Shah Abdali(1753-1772 AD)	Abdullah Khan Ishaq Aqasi	1753 (six months only)
	Abdullah Khan Kabuli	1753-1754 AD
	Raja Sukh Jiwan Mal	1754-1762 AD
	Nur-ud-din Khan Bamezi	1762-1764 AD
	Buland Khan Bamezi	1764-1766 AD
	Lal Mohammad Khan	1766 (six months only)
	Khoram Khan	1766-1767 AD
	Mir Faqir Ullah Kant	1767
	Nur-ud-din Bamezi	1767-1770 AD (2nd term)
	Khuram Khan	1770-1771 AD (2nd term)
	Amir Khan Jawan Sher	1771-1772 AD
Timur Shah Abdali (1772-1793 AD)	Amir Khan Jawansher Diler	1772-1776 AD
	Haji Karim Dad Khan	1776-1783 AD
	Azad Khan	1783-1785 AD
	Saifud-dula Maded Khan	1785-1786 AD

	Mir Dad Khan	1786-1788 AD
	Mulla Ghaffar Khan Subedar	1788 AD (four months only)
	Sardar Jumma Khan Alkozai	1788-1792 AD
	Mirza Khan	1792-1793 AD
Zaman Shah Abdali (1793-1802 AD)	Mir Hazar Khan	1793-1794 AD
	Rehmat-ullah Khan Alkozai	1794 AD (four months only)
	Kifayat Khan	1794-1795 AD
	Arsala Khan	1795-1796 AD
	Abdullah Khan Alkozai	1796-1802 AD
Mohammad Shah and Shah Shuja (1802-1819 AD) in rotation	Abdullah Khan Alkozai	1802-1807 AD
	Atta Mohammad Khan	1807-1813 AD
	Mohammad Azim Khan	1813-1819 AD
	Jabbar Khan	1819 AD (six months only)

The first three kings ruled the territory with utmost zeal, but the last two were weak and incompetent which created anarchy and political upheaval in Afghanistan. The nobility assumed the role of king makers, which provided an ample opportunity for opportunists to make hay while sun shines. Though they continued to rule the valley with minor modification in the system established by their predecessors (Mughals) yet the novel feature of the period appeared on the surface was the inclusion of Kashmiri pandits (hindus) in bureaucracy as administrators, revenue collectors and diplomats¹² likewise the Britishers did in Bengal after the battle of Plassy in 1757 AD to get maximum benefit through the introduction of local element¹³. The period witnessed a deep impact on different walks of life in the territory, but the writer thought it prudent to highlight the economic setup alone. Same has been discussed under the following heads to provide extensive information in the aforesaid aspect.

II. AGRICULTURE

Agriculture formed the backbone of economy in the valley. The land in the valley was found in abundance, but Jahangir, in *Tuzki-jahangiri* recorded that out of the total area only 1/4th was arable and the rest was mountainous. Mirza Haidir Dughlat, in *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* mentioned that the land in the valley was stratified into four categories, Abi, Lalmi, Bhagh, and Nambal. The Abi land was meant for paddy cultivation. It entailed regular irrigation which was possible in the valley due to natural springs, streams, and proper technique as utilised by Suya the minister of Avanti Warman in 9th century AD. In addition to it several canals were dug out by Sultan Zain-ul-abidin of the sultanate period. This irrigated large tracts of arable land in different corners of the valley. The Mughals appointed a person in every village designated as Mir-i-aab to render necessary service for the distribution of water for irrigation. Though the Afghans were not interested in public welfare yet it has been recorded that Amir Khan Jawansher (1771-1772 AD) built a canal to link Dal Lake with Anchar lakes. The canal still bore his name at present as well. Due to the abundance of water and its proper usage, the villages and hamlets changed into fertile and highly cultivated tracts. Lalmi land was meant for cultivation of secondary crops including wheat, barley, flax, millet, oats, rapeseed, maize, etc. the same depend upon periodical rains to grow. Bhagh land was meant for growing fruits as orchids were found in plenty in the valley which had affixed a famous name to the valley in the annals of history since ancient times. Nambal land was swampy and unfit for cultivation. In addition to it, the valley bounded by the forests and pastoral land provided a sufficient scope for grazing the cattle¹⁴. The valley as recorded was fertile and abundant in numerous agricultural products. The plough driven by a pair of oxen was of immense importance in breaking the hard clods. The crops such as paddy, maize, pea, and millet sown in April-May and reaped September-October were categorized as kharif or autumn crops. Similarly the crops sown in October-November and reaped in April-May were designated as Rabi or spring crops which generally comprised wheat, barley and pulses mustard. In short every crop grew under a peculiar geo-physical condition. Vegetables such as lettuce, turnip, radish, carrot, spinach, cucumber, potato, onion, beans, and chilli were grown all over the valley. The cultivators also produced a variety of vegetables on floating islands around the Dal lake as introduced by Sultan Zain-ul-abudin (1420-1470 AD) further in rural areas every cultivator possess a vegetable land called “ver” (kitchen garden) attached to his residence or arable land. The land was also known for different varieties of fruits. The Mughals during their stay made introduction of grafting to preserve and produce new varieties out of it. They even introduced cherries, apricots, pears, almonds, peach and pomegranate. Abdul Hamid Lahori in *Badshah nama* mentioned that melons of Kashmir were superior to those of Kabul. One finds different varieties of fruits available at cheap rates in the territory.

The sources revealed that different areas of the valley were specialised in different agricultural products. G.T.Veign epitomizes the fact and hold that the wheat of Shahabad, the turnip and potato of Haripur, the rice of Nirpur, the ghee of Lethpore (Pampore), the sheep of Nandpur, the hump of Jehamu, the silk of Kotihar are the best in the valley. This had made different parganas of the valley interdependent in terms of need¹⁵. Further, cash crop saffron was extensively grown and cultivated on kcarewa (plateau) of Pampore. The ensuing period had not witnessed any addition rather descending indicators appeared due to scorched policies of the administrators, revenue collectors and other functionaries which had affected the economy of the territory badly. Moorcroft (1819-20) wrote that people were in abject condition. They migrated to the plains of India and hardly 1/16 of the cultivable land was under cultivation. The peasants were worst sufferers, whose economic condition appeared pitiable¹⁶.

III. OWNERSHIP OF LAND

Ownership legally meant the power of total possession, use, disposal and enjoyment held by a person over a determinate thing. By applying the definition to the source material available on the subject matter, one finds ample scope to establish that in Kashmir people enjoyed private ownership on various items of property between 16th to 19th centuries. Since the arable land was concentrated in the rural areas, the villagers exercised occupancy and cultivating rights which was authenticated by a document during the rule of Shah-i-Jahan (1628-1658 AD). Despite this they faced a practical difficulty in shape of poor land-market i.e. limited money, economy, and abundance of land and shortage of labour. Further peasants were left with bare subsistence e.g. 75% of their agricultural produce was taken away from them by the state and its revenue functionaries as land revenue. After examining the above references one reached to the point that a peasant could not hold the title of Malik (owner).

In reality it was the state which was the real owner of the land for it enjoyed the optimum benefit of the peasant's labour. Thus one may argue that the apparent legal and fiscal limitations together with practical difficulties, the position of peasants was reduced to a "limited" rather than "real" owner of the land in Kashmir. Despite this a village represented the features of a diversified socio-economic setup. The concept was rendered possible by the co-existence and interrelation of a host of social groups inhabiting each village which were generally artisans, priests, blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, weavers, potters, oil-pressers, cobblers, peasantry etc. The village officials like makuddam, patwari, shiqdar, sazawol, tarazudar, etc were meant to co-ordinate between the collector and cultivator in relation to guard crops weigh shares and collect the land revenue. However the peasantry was the most pre-dominant group that contributed to the social formation of a village. Socially the peasantry characterized a homogeneous class but on economic differentiation they were largely stratified into two major categories, "*Asudahahwal*" (well-to-do) and "*Saqim-ul-ahwal*" (indigent). Though all of them were uniformly registered as "Asamis" yet their unlikeliness was profound enough. Accordingly the seed and *takavi* (loans) were distributed among them on their varying economic status. Therefore cultivation in villages was based on individual peasant forming. Though land was available in plenty to the peasants yet to enjoy its fruit remain a dream as heavy fiscal exactions imposed on them led their embarrassment to cultivate the land. Evidently the peasants left the land uncultivated during the aforesaid period¹⁷.

In Kashmir land was divided into three divisions:

- a. Khalisa
- b. Jagir
- c. Madad-i-Mash

Major revenue used to come from Jagirs and 5% from Khalisa. In the Khalisha land it was collected by the officials of the state and deposited in the state treasury, but in the jagir land the right of collection was delegated to the mansabdars in lieu of their services. Further land grants conferred upon men of letters, eminent scholars, distinguished poets were not subject to any obligation. Such grants were called madad-i-mashgrants¹⁸.

IV. INDUSTRY

Kashmir is known in history from ancient times for its artistic zeal. The Valley being land locked and majority of the population lived in rural areas. Therefore they remained busy in agricultural pursuits and agro-based industries like cloth weaving, smithy, carpentry, oil pressing and animal husbandry. The artisans received a share out of the village produce in lieu of their services which in history has been designated the system of Client-Patron relationship¹⁹. As such a village to a greater extent remained self-sufficient in the period. The surplus produce found its way to cities. The flow of village surplus in course of time changed the economic life of the urban dwellers. It is an established fact that the Mughal aristocracy was chiefly urbanized and as such they preferred to live in towns and cities. This led to the expansion of towns in general and city of Srinagar in particular. The urban centres turned into a hub of artisans. During the period arts and crafts received great impetus. It was in the time of Akbar that shawls were manufactured in numerous ranges of price to suit the purse of different classes. During the rule of Aurangzeb it progressed more as these were used by both the sex. The

skillful artisans were specialized in various techniques and designs. The mode of production, the system of monopolization of resources and markets and concentration of surplus profit in the hands of mercantile community led to the emergence and growth of the capitalist class under whom the artisans manufactured the requisite shawls. This naturally reduced the artisans to a state of semi-bondage, perpetuated by social compulsions and lived in wretched plight with their meager wages. The misfortune further accelerated during the Afghans due to their cruel taxation policy which sucked the blood of shawl weavers and traders tied to it. Haji Karim Dad (1776-83 AD) an Afghan governor introduced *Dagshawl* (dept of shawl) to regulate the activities of the *shawl bafs* (shawl weavers) which proved heavy for them as indicated by the reduction of looms from forty thousands (40,000) during Mughals to sixteen thousands (16,000) during the period. No doubt under Atta Mohammad Khan, (1800-05 AD) shawl had become a fashionable item in Europe, as Napoleon had received it as a gift from Khediva. Consequently the demand increased, with which the number of looms rose to twenty four thousands (24,000). Unfortunately during Azim Khan (1813-19 AD) who found it a profitable source of income revived the forcible sale of grain at enhanced rates to the shawl weavers. The shawl thus produced on the loom was taken away by the state and the price of grain together with the amount of duty livable on it was recovered from its sale proceeds²⁰. The shawl weavers under pressure left the profession as they preferred death to the wretched craft. Thus the decline was inevitable. Similarly carpet industry parallel to shawl flourished too. Though the industry owes its origin to Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin yet under the rule of Jahangir (1605-1628 AD) through the efforts of Ahmad Beg (governor) was revived. The pile carpets made in Kashmir attained greater perfection and were of floral design with mosques, gardens, wild animals, gliding fish etc. The carpets produced in the Valley were considered superior to those of imported from Persia (Iran). Unfortunately it decayed under Afghan rule as they were least interested with it as the craft fetch them a meagre income. Barnier, a traveler noted that wood carving flourished at a rapid speed during the period. The specimens of carpenters' art are still extent in the Khatamband ceilings, pinjra or lattice-work as carving in the mosques of Shah-i-hamdan and Nakshband Sahib in Srinagar. There were state-owned Karkhanas apart from private karkhanas. Besides galichas, dhurries, gabas and other floor carvings were also manufactured. Further a good deal of iron, silver, brass vessels and furniture of delicate nature and boats of different styles were manufactured in the territory. In addition to it Kashmir was famous for its paper which was in great demand outside the territory. George Foster (1783 AD) hold "The kasmirians fabricated the best writing paper of the east." The paper was peculiar which was reused for writing after being washed off. The manufacture of the paper had given birth to a famous art know of as papier-mache, the skill shown by the *naqash* (designer) in sketching and desining was remarkable. The industry reached its zeentz during the Mughal rule, when the products the papier-mache art like pen boxes, jewellery boxes, book ends, etc had become an important item of the external trade. The valley attracted the Europeans who had penetrated to Indian subcontinent with the establishment of British rule in India. The same opened a way to European travellers. Through their accounts and writings they introduced Kashmir with their novelties to the European world, which in the long run helped in the growth of tourist industry and foreign trade²¹.

V. MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Though the Valley was encircled by lofty mountains yet was pierced by various passes to establish its link with the outside world. The Mughal occupation enhanced the importance of the territory; as they maintained a permanent link of the province with their empire. Abul Fazl in his book *Ain-i-Akbari* noted that there were (26) routes which linked Kashmir with the rest of world²², out of which (6) were regularly used. These routes remained open in winter as well. The Mughals paid their due attention for the maintenance of roads, construction of bridges and establishment of inns, which boosted the trade and commerce of the state. Some of these routes may be introduced in brief as:

- a) Mughal road:- This route connected Kashmir with Gujarat. It runs over the Pir-panjal pass via Hastivanj. The important stages on the road were Saidabad, Noushahra, Chingas, Rajouri, Thane, Bahramgalla, Poshiana, Aliabad, Hirapure, Shopiyan, Khampure and Shadimarg where inns were established which turned these places into trade centres of the time.
- b) Muzafferabad pakhli route:- this route connected Kashmir with Rawalpindi and Peshawar. The route remained open for the whole year.
- c) Poonch route:- the route linked Kashmir through Haji-Pir pass and Tosamaidan pass. Further it linked Jammu via Rajouri.
- d) Kishtwar route:- there are two routes leading to Kishtwar from Kashmir, one from Singhpur and another via Dasu. The route connected Kishtwar with Badarwah and Jammu through Ramban. The road was traversed on foot and ponies were also used due to its uneven terrain.
- e) Central Asian trade route:- the route passes through Ladakh from east to west. It was passable from March to November, but merchants often used the route due to its commercial importance. It connected Kashmir with Tibet, Kashgar, Yarkand and China. The trade between Kashmir and Bhutan, Nepal, Bengal etc. was also carried on by this route. No doubt the route functioned as an artery to the cottage industry of Kashmir

as the entire raw shawl wool was imported through this road. Due to its high elevation and scarcity of fodder, the trade was carried on by the potters on their back, though horses, mules and yaks were also put into service.

- f) Navigation: - it was the main source of transport in the Valley, but mules, camels and donkeys were used in hilly tracks and yaks in Tibet. The bulk of trading commodities were carried on the back of potters as wheeled traffic was unknown. There were 7500 boats in Kashmir when Akbar visited the Valley in 1589. The cargo boats were known as Bhats (big boats) and Shikaras (light boats). During the period Akbar introduced new types of boats in Gujarati and Bengali model to accelerate the flow of trade.²³

VI. TRADE

Trade and commerce played an important role in the economy of Kashmir. It remained a good source of revenue to the state which stimulated manufacturers and gave employment to a reasonable portion of the population. The same poured wealth in the state by its merchants whose commercial activities were connected with Bengal, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Tibet, Iran, Central Asia. The sources revealed that the traders were engaged both in internal and external trade which stabilized the economy of the territory but the ensuing period showed signs of decline, as outside merchants left the territory under the tyrant rule of the Afghans.

Internal trade:

The peace and tranquility in the territory boosted the internal trade. It was carried on in imported and locally produced commodities which were salt, luxury goods, shawl, silk, coarse woollen goods and other products of handicrafts. No doubt in Sultanate period, the trade though flourished yet was carried on indoors. The Mughal period witnessed a systematic marketing system. Bernier hold that trade in Srinagar was very brisk and the streets were linked with long rows of shops offering various commodities for sale²⁴. The same led the development of separate markets e.g. Bazari-Saraffan, Bazari-Baqulla, Bazari-Sabaka. Consequently, trade at Anantnag, Sopore, Shopiyan, Awantipore, Baramulla got a flip. The chief means of transport in the Valley was river Jhelum. Potters carried heavy loads over difficult terrain. Pack ponies were used for carrying paddy and other food grains from distant villages to the town market as wheeled carriages were unknown. The rivers were spanned by bridges constructed of stone and timber, that expedite the flow of trade as journey and transaction of goods became easier. Though Amir Khan, governor of Kashmir (1772-76) AD built a famous bridge (Amira kadal) yet the period witnessed the indications of decline in the aspect due to the abnoxious attitude of the rulers.

External trade:

Despite the Valley being land locked, its trade relations with Persia, Central Asia, Russia, Bhutan, Nepal, Bengal and Patna remained excellent, which even extended to Bijapure and Golkanda as well. Due to the increasing demand of luxury items by the Mughal nobility and aristocracy the trade flourished tremendously. The route leading to Central Asia via Srinagar remained over busy. The chief commodity of export was shawl. The merchants had monopolized the wool trade in the wool producing regions of Ladakh, Gilgit and Tibet. They had deployed their agents throughout this region to advance loans and collect the shawl wool from the producers. They had established their Warehouse in Chinese Turkistan, Central Tibet, Lahasa, Nepal and Bhutan. In addition to the shawl, floor coverings like carpets, dhurries, printed and embroidered sheets were also sold. Silkworm seeds were imported from Gilgit and China, the silk cloth was exported to India and Central Asia too. Saffron grown in Pampore, Inderkot, Kishtwar was exported to Yarkand, Tibet, China and was even purchased by the English and Dutch merchants. The merchants of Kashmir delivered the forest products like Saussursa, Lippa (costus), calamus, amberbeads, warmwood to Indian markets like Surat, Ahmadabad etc. Besides these articles various kinds of scent and flowers were exported which yielded handsome profit to the traders²⁵. Further Kashmir was famous in the production of fine paper. It had a great demand in India who exported it to Persia. In addition Kashmir imported various articles like salt, shawl wool, cotton cloth, cloves, mace, pepper, turmeric, ginger and sugar. Like wool salt trade too flourished on account of its major consumption. During the period the labourers received salt as wages. The commodity was brought from Bengal and Thane (Rajouri) turned into a salt mandi where from Kashmiri merchants purchased it. The payment for external trade was made by the Hundis. Further all kinds of merchandize were subject to duty or tax e.g. Rs 3 were levied on each shawl exported from Kashmir and Rs 4 on each *Trakof* shawl wool imported. In this context goods imported or exported from Kashmir to Tibet and Yarkand were taxed. Though it augmented the govt. income, yet it had affected the external trade of the valley badly. Ganderbal Srinagar functioned as a tool-post just like Indus and Hoogly functioned during the period of Sher Shah Suri of India (1540-1545) AD to charge taxes on import and export of goods. It proved heavy for commercial and skilled class tied to it²⁶.

Coinage

The monetary system of Kashmir as prevailed during the Hindu, Sultanate and Mughal periods remained in operation under Afghans as well with slight change in type and weight. The currency under the period consisted of Dinar, Bahagani, Puntsu, Hath, Sasun, lakh, Crore their value was as:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| a) 12 Dinars | 1 Bahagani |
| b) 2 Bahagani | 1 Pansu |
| c) 4 Puntsu | 1 Hath |
| d) 10 Hath | 1 Sasun |
| e) 100 Sasun | 1 lakh |
| f) 100 lakh | 1 crore (10000000 dinars) |

In addition to these there were other types of coins like Ashrafis and Tankas. In Srinagar Sarafa Mohalla in Zaina Kadal is said to have been the locality of mint in the city. Further Atta Mohammad Khan the governor of Kashmir issued coins bearing the name of two famous saints of Kashmir:

- 1: Sheikh Noor-ud-din
- 2: Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom

To win the hearts of Kashmiris who loved them much. The tenure represented a republican rule without any mark of king or chief on the coins. Further five double *mohars* of a beautiful design were struck later on²⁷.

Weights and measures.

The units of weight and measurement during the Afghan Period in Kashmir had not undergone to any major change to the prevalent system of its predecessors' period which existed as:

- 1) 16 Mashas = 1 Tola (11.76 gm)
- 2) 80 Tolas = 1 seer (940 gm)
- 3) 7 ½ pols = 1 seer
- 4) 5 seer = 1 *Trak* (4.700kg)
- 5) 16 *Trak* = 1 Kharwar (76kg)
- 6) 1 Kharwar = 80 seer
- 7) 1 Gira = 2 ¼ inches (5.6cm)
- 8) 16 Gira = 1 Gazz (90cm)
- 9) Men (mound) = 40 seers

Even the payment in cash was calculated in kharwars of paddy and the measurement of land in *Traks*, which was equal to ¼ of an acre of the present day²⁸. However, at present 80kg is considered a Kharwar in Kashmir.

Source of Revenue

In Kashmir land revenue remained the main source of income to the state ex-chequer. The revenue assessment evolved by Shah Mir of the sultanate period held good but civil wars in the concluding epoch and external intervention threw it out of gear. The revenue demand under the sultanate period was 1/3rd of the total produce but more was exacted. Further the Jagirdars appropriated the surplus produce from the tenants in shape of illegal cesses. As such cultivators collapsed under the heavy burden of exorbitant taxes. The situation worsened after the Valley got annexed by the Mughals, due to mobilization of forces. Hence this immuned Akbar the Mughal Emperor to send a group of officials namely Sheikh Faizi, Mir Sharief Ahmad, Khawaja Mohammad Hussain, Shams-ud-din and Kanwar Singh to scrutinize the revenue documents of Maraz (South) and Kamraz (North) districts of the Valley. Accordingly he enhanced the rate of revenue lightly, but the Subedar (Governor) of the time exacted more which gave birth to a revolt in 1592 AD led by Mirza Yadgar against the exorbitant exaction²⁹. Owing to the incident Akbar utilized the services of another group of officials headed by Asif Khan, who surveyed the whole province and suggested the remedy. Accordingly in 1597 Akbar introduced some reforms to ascertain the actual revenue. The new demand was fixed as per the fertility of the land and the span of cultivation. This way he succeeded in evolving a planned revenue settlement. The methods of collection e.g. *Nasqi*, *Galabakhash* as introduced by Akbar remained in practical operation throughout the Mughal period. No doubt the tenants were benefitted by the system as were least affected by the fluctuating prices. The burden of drought and flood was borne by both the parties viz: the cultivator and the assignee, but at the same time it was harmful. The system was expensive as it involved a great number of officials at the harvest to crush the peasants' stability. The presence of Shiqdar at the time of harvesting and thrashing was essential. On one hand the short spanned harvesting season was a domicile sword hanging over the head of the peasant and on the other he had to wait upon the village officials, who proved responsible for the spoliation of produce. The state share was fixed at ½ of the gross produce. But the perquisites of land revenue functionaries such as of the Mukaddam, choudhri, qanun go, patwari, shiqdar, and sazawal were also paid by the peasants out of their own share. After meeting all these and other items of village expenditure, the peasants were left with less than ¼ of their produce, so they were unable to build up their own food stalk hence depended upon the creditors who

sucked their blood by imposing high rates of interest on lent. These forces pushed the peasants into destitute³⁰. Further such villages as yielded revenue of 400 kharwars of paddy were bound to pay a cess to revenue functionaries equal to the cost of two goats individually. The zamindars also levied a poll tax called, *dastar-shumari* (turban tax), *Sar-i-darakhti* (tax on orchards), *Zar-i-dudi* (smoke or hearth tax) *Telli-chargh* (fuel tax) etc. they even were entitled to a share from grown fruits. The peasants also paid *Zar-i-niaz* (presentation tax) to mansabdars and jagirdars through the village *muqaddam*. In addition several other sections of the society were brought in the tax net to augment the resources of the state. *Baj* and *Tamgha* were realized. Besides *Zar-i-nikah* (marriage tax) *Zari-i-bayutat* (tax on building) *Zari-i-hasrat* (tax on shops) and tax on shawl weavers and *hanjis* (boat men) were also exacted. In the fiscal exaction by the state the peasants were worst sufferers. An important feature of the period was the emergence of a middle class, who monopolized the woolen textiles, shawl industry and later on the revenue forming as well. Of course the state adopted several measures to ensure greater relief to the peasantry. But in practice all these remained a distant dream. In addition the period witnessed an elevation of taxes. A villager yielding minimum revenue of one kharwar of paddy had to pay one *trakextra* annually towards the revenue functionaries, two *aanas* to every rupee of *mahsul* to the *kardar*. They further charged five to ten sheep, two to four *traks* of oil, four *traks* of salt and five to ten *kharwars* of rice (paddy) from the peasants of every village. The peasants unable to pay these taxes cut down their fruit growing trees and sold the same as firewood, which denuded the fruit production³¹. During *Haji Karim Dad Khan (1776-83)* *zar-i-niaz*, was collected even from *Mansabdars* and *jagirdars*. Similarly taxes were imposed on Shawl weavers in the name of *Dagi-Pashmina* which was collected at the rate of one *aana* to a rupee on the sale price of every manufactured shawl. Hence craftsmen preferred death to work in these conditions. Consequently it shattered the economy of the territory. As a result the peasantry, craftsmen continued to be fleeced at the hands of unscrupulous *sobedars*, *jagirdars* and revenue collectors³².

VII. CONCLUSION

The valley of course witnessed a change of rule as wished by its aspirants, but their dream dashed to the ground, due to the obnoxious behavior of the rulers. The tribal character of the rulers, who were deeply interested to acquire wealth by fair or foul means let loose their subedars in the territory for their selfish ends. They created a state of fear in the society, who fleeced the people of their wealth, impoverished the peasants, sucked the traders and craftsmen by imposition of horrible taxes. Their activities operated like a sponge and squeeze the same in their mother country (Afghanistan). The valley in the period passed through a tyrannical rule which revealed it had fallen from "a frying pan into the fire", where it experienced extreme suffering and pain. The same had a deep impact on the political scenario of Kashmir as well. Consequently the territory slipped away from their hands and fell into the lap of Sikh rule in 1819AD under the dynamic rulership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab.

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- [12] The best example was Pnadit Nandram Tiku, who rose from a humble station to the Diwan of Kabul which was followed by Mohand Dhar, Kailash Dhar, Dilaram Kuli, Sahazram Sapru, Diwan Hardas, Balbadhar Dhar, Rajkak Dhar, Munshi Bhawani Das, Vasakak Dhar etc who acted as tehsildars, sahibkars (chief secretaries) Peshkars (Magistrates and collectors) and diwans (collectors/general) of Afghan governors. R. K Parmu; opcit; PP352
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- [32] Abdullah Khan Isaq Aqasi (1753 AD) in his brief period of six months as a governor amassed a wealth to the tune of One crore, Sardar Mohammad Azim Khan (1813-19) AD, made a fortune of two crore rupees. Maulvi a Hassan Shah; *Tarikh-i-kashmir*; PP447-48; R.K.Parmu; *Opcit*; PP354, 383

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