Social Discontent And Protest As Depicted in Oral Literature of Kashmiri Language
Though the Mughal annexation of Kashmir in 1586, AD. relieved the people to some extent from the pain caused by the civil war and the religious fanaticism that Kashmir witnessed towards the end of the Kashmir Sultanate, but it sealed once for all the fortunes of political sovereignty as the sun of Kashmir's independence set behind the thick dark clouds of political gloom and social insecurity. No doubt, for short intervals, particularly in the wake of royal pleasure trips in Kashmir, people of the valley enjoyed some moments of joy and consolation, but the departure of the royal cavalcade often set the new schemes of oppression and extortion into motion. Although the historical literature portrayed the picture of Mughal governance in a relatively bright colour, but the fact remains that since the historians and the chroniclers in the medieval times were often found on the rolls of royal pay registers it was hardly expected from them that they could have painted the grey picture of their masters and patrons.

In contrast to this established trend of medieval historiographical canons, principles, we find glaring examples of public misery and agony in abundance in our folk literature, in different forms. There are innumerable folk expressions in circulation in the vernacular which echo unostentatiously the oppression and the bunglings of Mughal Governors and their favourites in Kashmir. For example the folk
expressions like *Poge Mowagul*, *Rāe Mowagul* and *Mowagul Dēshit getchi Farsi Tagun Bolun*, *Aagur Khanun Hos* etc. etc., speak the magnitude of the disdain and contempt, Kashmiris had developed against the Mughal imperialism in Kashmir.

The machinations and the modus-operandi of Mughal governance find satiric expression in one of the famous Kashmiri folk play *Mowagul Pēther*. The *Pēther* with dramatic effectiveness highlights and exposes the corrupt behaviour of Mughal officialdom towards the miserable and grief-stricken people.

Towards the end of the Mughal rule in Kashmir, people suffered heavily as the agents of the Mughal Governors busied themselves in making the best of the time in squeezing the last penny out of the cultivator and the trader. The people had no means of seeking redress of their grievances. It is not, therefore, surprising that when a relatively, kind and noble governor was deputed to Kashmir to mitigate the distress of the people the Kashmiri bard did not miss an opportunity to appreciate the exercise.

"Hake āv Samad Phowatrin zīn
Na rūd Kuni Sharaf ne rūd Kuni dīn ".

[Samad (horse) came swiftly. Their remained neither Sharief (cardinalship) nor din bigotry).

In the same fashion, during the times of Afghan rule in Kashmir (1752-1919) when valley and its people experienced worst type of political vulgarity and official vandalism, Kashmir *Bhands* painted the high-handedness of rapacious Afghans in the ugliest colour in one of famous Kashmiri folk play *Dirze Pēther*. The play symbolically projects the helplessness of Kashmiri peasant society and unmasks the unkind behaviour of Afghan governors and their subordinate officials. The romance of
Afghan officials with beautiful Derzes¹¹ (Lady characters) depict the licentious and sensual tastes of Afghan elite, who had reached to the height of notoriety. The alien governors who had left the Kashmiri peasantry penniless by way of callous exaction, found its way into a folk ballad popularly known as Greēśbāi te Māch Tuler¹² (The peasant woman and the Bee) the ballad carries the refrain.

Ba day chhasay manch Tuler Vanuk Jānāwar
(I am a honey bee, indeed, a wood land denzen)

The ballad, infact, runs an exchange of woes between the honey bee and the peasant women. The honey bee confides her woe to the peasant woman as to the callous way in which the uncouth bear had forcibly taken away all her honey, while the oppressed peasant women recount the harrowing tale of how she was driven to the woods by the unrelenting tax gatherers who had left not a grain of paddy with her for the family use. A sorrowful state of affairs under Afghans has rightly been versified by a poet:

Pur Sidam Kharabe Gulshan Zi Bagwan¹³
Afghan Kashid guft ki Afghan Kharab Kared.
(I enquired of the gardner the cause of the destruction of garden, Drawing a deep sigh he replied, It is the Afghan who did it!).

The Afghan cruelty reached at its climax during the governorship of Amir Khan and Jabar Khan. Their barbarity is ridiculed by the folk in the following Kashmiri proverbs.

“Amir Khāneny Chety”¹⁴ and
“Jabar Jande Hardes Ti Korun Wandeh”¹⁵.
The assertion of some historians carry enough weight when they hold that they can not discern information about the different ruling houses in a systematic, coherent and in a chronological sequence in the folk literature of any society or nation; but the fact also remain equally justified that folk literature in the form of songs, proverbs, riddles, allusions, folk plays and ballads, offer a penetrating insight into the multifarious facets of the human society. This theory applies with equal velocity to the different genres of Kashmiri literature as well, which mirror the entire gamut of Kashmiri social life particularly at a very critical phase of its historical times (1819-1947). The fragmentary literary works if pieced together, after an objective appreciation, from the stand point of history, the effort is bound to provide a reliable, well documented and historically accurate and authentic picture of the period under review.

The Sikh rule which replaced the Afghan government in Kashmir in 1819 A.D. proved more harsher than Mughal and Afghan ruler. The illegal exactions, drain of wealth, official oppression, peasantry migration, deepening social tensions and crises, caused by way of providing incentives to the influential and the privileged sections of society, the institution of Begar (forced labour) and the religious prosecution coupled with moral degeneration constituted some of the chief characteristics of Sikh legacy in Kashmir.

**Peasant Disconsolation**

It will not be out of context to mention here that an alien government can only rule when it gives good administration to the subject people or is capable of using the apparatus of coercion effectively. In the context of Kashmir, the Sikh and
subsequently the Dogra rulers choose to depend on the apparatus of coercion. The most painful dimension of their political philosophy was that both Sikhs and the Dogras in order to legitimize the otherwise illegitimate rule succeeded in creating a group from both Muslim and Hindu communities, who in turn, against the rich incentives, acted as the custodians of the alien rule. This privileged section of Kashmiri society would seldom miss an opportunity to fleece the people even of their meager belongings and possessions. The State being the sole proprecitor of the entire land in Kashmir, distributed big chunks of cultivable land among the local favourites of the Raj. These collaborators in turn, to appease the greed of Sikh and Dogra masters, resorted to every kind of mean device to command obedience and submission from the people for the alien rule. Such was the magnitude of terror imposed by the vested groups and other cadres of official machinery that people seldom dared to protest against the severest injustice and oppression. These sections enjoyed maximum benefits in the form of liberal land grants and the exemption from multiple of State demands. The unruptured subjugation of masses to alien structure accompanied with highest degree of revenue and industrial barbarities reduced the masses to the lowest degree of penury and poverty. Moorcraft, who visited the valley in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, while giving the details of the abject poverty of the people comments:

"Everywhere the people were in the most abject condition, exorbitantly taxed by the Sikh government and subjected to every kind of extortion and oppression by its officers... not one sixteenth of the cultivable surface is in cultivation, and the inhabitants, starving at home, and driven in great numbers to the plains of Hindustan... The cultivators were in a condition of extreme wretchedness and the government instead of taking only one half of the produce on the thrashing floor had now advanced its demand to three quarters. The Sikhs "seemed to look upon the Kashmirians as little better than cattle."
G.T. Vigne's description is hardly more favourable. He visited Kashmir in 1835. To quote him:

"The houses present a ruined and neglected appearance, in wretched contrast with their once gay and happy condition, and speak volumes upon the light and joyous prosperity that has long fled the country on account of shameless rapacity of the ruthless Sikhs."

According to young husband "the villages were fallen into decay. The rice ground was uncultivated for want of labour and irrigation. In his Bebuñama, a contemporary Kashmiri poet and starist Hameed-ullah-Shahabadi, used metaphoric expressions to strike at the cruel and the oppressive devices of Sikh officialdom and the institutions. While lamenting on the lot of suppressed Kashmiris, the writer asserts:

Bowavad virdey zabän ahle Kharäj
Dharm Kā rāj mulk ka tārāj
(It was on the lips of every tax payer that the rule of Dharma meant the pillage of the country)

Such was the magnitude of Sikh oppression that Kashmiris often equated the wrath of Sikhs with the furry of flood waters. This is evidenced by the refrain of famous Kashmiri satirical poem Lari Shah under the title of Sai Lab Nama.

Hebat Lukan go Kēty geyi mär,
Sēhlab Singh go zōrāvār.
Mandōri geyi tal tchor Pōr,
Vadnes Khērynei bedy thekedar,
Sēhlab Singh go zōrāvār.

(The people became frightened to see the furry of the flood water, scores of men and women died unnoticed! The "flood Singh" (satirically referred to Sikh oppression) caused unimaginable loss of life and property. Towering mansions of rich and wealthy immersed under flood water, wealthy contractors became paupers in a twinkling of an eye. The "flood Singh" brought unimaginable loss to life and property).
Kashmiris, who during the period under review experienced worst type of inhuman treatment at the hands of Sikh governors and their officials, no doubt, failed to register any protest against the oppressive measures of the rule, but the in-depth study of one of the major categories of Kashmiri folk literature documented their discontentment in number of ways. The oral history, which still awaits tapping, will further substantiate our argument.

It is true, that when in the state of utter social insecurity and official wrath, the down trodden and victimized people thought it impossible to fight against oppressive masters, the peasants avenged their oppression by joining hands with the enemies of their oppressors or acted as mute spectators of their downfall. Thus a common saying in Kashmir:

"Akis dazān dēr te bāyakh vushēnāvān ate" 27.

(A mans beard is burning and another is warming his hand upon it).

It is because of this psycho-social trait that Kashmiris came to be called as Par dhār (the enemy's ally).

Even amidst utter gloom, people could not miss the opportunity to appreciate the benevolent exercises of those associated with power during the oppressive Sikh rule. Governor, Col. Mian Singh (1844) who adopted number of welfare schemes for the flood and famine stricken people of Kashmir won great applause from the folk, as is recorded in number of Kashmiri proverbs. He was given the title of "Mahan Singh". (The Great Sikh). When Kashmiris came to know about his gravesome murder, they
mourned his death for days together and the public concern is depicted in this verse of a Kashmiri folk song:

Kot sanā go sōn Mehan Singh,
Kot sana go son Mehan Singh
(Where has gone the great Mehan Singh (Col. Mian Singh)
Where has gone the great benefactor).

This is a sufficient proof that Kashmiris were monitoring attentively all the good and the bad acts of the alien rule. What distanced them from taking any direct action was not their cowardice but during the long rule of subjugation they had developed a kind of social psyche which approved silence to outcry, submission to protest and departure to obedience. This is evidenced by two Kashmiri proverbs:

"Tul Plav Te Vowath Tchelev"
"Tchope Chey Rowape Senz".
(take your cloths and let us run away)
(Silence is no less in value than a silver,
But if maintained, it is no less golden in value).

In presence of a band of secret agents who conveyed every bit of information regarding any development taking place, in any corner of the state and the severe punishment that would be in store for such persons, always deterred the masses from criticising openly and ridiculing directly the official atrocities. Instead, people used a mechanism which proved less harmful, it was to resort to abusive language and give nicknames to various categories of Sikh officialdom which corresponded to their mode of behaviour. The sociology of the nicknames reveal that the subjugated people often use abusive language to give vent to their suppressed emotions, and in the background of Kashmiri social setting, the abusive diction found in the vernacular is suggestive of the contempt and hatred Kashmiris have had against the ruthless rulers.
This is further substantiated by the metaphoric expressions of Hameed-ullah Shahabai, the contemporary satiric poet of Kashmiri who suggests peculiar names for different Sikh officials:

*Here is the list of substitutes suggested for different revenue and other officials of the Sikh bureaucracy:*

- Kazib Rather for Qanungo
- Adawat koul for Patwari
- Fasad Bhat for Harkara
- Rishvat Baba for Qazi
- Shahmat Singh for chief police officer
- Khalafat Razdan for Munsif
- Tawan Koul for Amil
- Dewali Das for store keeper of grains
- Chugli Beg for News reporter.

The selection of the names for different categories of Sikh officialdom not only unmask the real anti people behaviour of these officers but these words also reflect the magnitude of disaffection and hatred Kashmiri nurtured inwardly against them. The anatomy of these metaphoric expressions indicate that Kashmiris were sensitive enough to observe the appalling heights of Sikh barbarity but the silence was maintained because of coercive acts adopted by the alien rulers to silence the otherwise restive populace. At the bottom of this outwardly intriguing silence there rested the worst type of protest and discontentment.

However, powerful the Sikhs would have been, the sources suggest that it was not possible for them to retain Kashmir without being a local supporting structure to act as props of their Raj. Hence the Lahore Darbar created a vast ring of local supporters by way of alienating a small portion of revenues of Kashmir to them. This
alienation was effected by way of granting jagirs and a dharmarth, besides declaring a host of people as ‘arzi walia’ (owners of land).

In the light of this alienation, we must not therefore, be surprised to find a good quantity of Kashmiri folk literature wherein the picture of these supporters of the Raj has been painted in the ugliest colours. A careful study of folk literature reveal that amid severe famine conditions, when the peasant and the worker was left with nothing to feed their dependents, the Sikh governors and the local aides of the Raj seldom showed favourable gestures to console the wretched people of the valley.

An extract from Kashmiri folk story entitled “Mehan Singh” shall further illucidate our assertion.

“Aided by corrupt Kashmiri officials Waris Khan and Chander Bhan, and the Panjabis, Raj people collected heavy taxes from them (people). The Khalsa army behaved like an army of occupation, as it were, treating Kashmiris like so many chattels. People migrated from the valley in large numbers. The famine stricken trekkers reached Lahore, Maharaja Ranjit Singh heard their tales of woe. The exodus increased day by day”

The worst effect of the famine which occurred in the year 1832 during the time of Sikh Governor Sher Singh and which caused great damage to life and property has been tapped by the folk bard in this Kashmiri expression:

“Sher Singh – un – Drāag”

The ravages of the famine left so an indelible imprint on the canvas of Kashmiri mind that people even today feel trembled at the nostalgic recollection of the dreadful sights which Kashmiris experienced at a very critical period of agrarian crises.”
An eye witness account of the massive devastation caused by the severity of cold, extortions of Jamadar Khushal Singh, and the great famine, which followed, is contained in one of the most touching mathnavis (long narrative poem) written by Khazir Shah resident of Bijbihera Kashmir. He says:

"Owing to the famine, cereals became scarce having been secreted by the 'godless' hoarders. The prices of eatables went up ten to fifteen times their normal price... there was no difference between high and low, haves and have nots... all were bundled in the shroud of hunger. To survive, therefore, they started hunger marches to the Punjab, many have died on the way, unwept, unbruised and unsung."

The same situation has been referred to by Sohan Lal Suri. He states that owing to the tyranny of Jamadar Khusal Singh “the people of Kashmir gathered together in Amritsar in thousands and spread out to Delhi, Calcutta and Banaras.”

In the Lari Shah entitled Bate draag (scarcity of food) the poet narrates the pathetic tales related to the famine. The poem also highlights the carelessness of the officials who aggravated the situation beyond repairs. Here are few verses given for record and reference:

Nāznene Sowakhnan Thāv tem kan,
Siteji tuj ā v bata dragan.
Yiman Nai us Kensi Timav Kor Tei,
Sarmai dar esy Tchandan vei
Gala dār galas esi lōth tcharan,
Siteji Tujav Bata Dragan.

(O, my friend, give patient hearing to my woes!
we have been reduced to extreme poverty by the famine.
The people who had little in store died mercilessly,
Even the wealthy traders were looking for a grain of rice.
The hoarders were demanding exorbitant prices for little quantity of rice,
We have been reduced to extreme poverty by the famine).

The valley, during the period under review also witnessed a recurring role of natural calamities in the shape of floods, famines, droughts, fires, earthquakes and
epidemics. These natural disasters coupled with the callous role of Sikh and the Dogra beuracracy not only divorced the people of their meagre possessions but these calamities led to the mass exodus of Kashmiri peasantry to seek their source of livelihood in the plains of Hindustan. The heart piercing tales related to these miserable events have been tapped by our bards in number of Kashmiri Lari Shah's. Some prominent pieces of these Lari Shah which contain peoples agonies include among others, Sehlab nama, Bunil nama, Bata drag, Abe drag, etc. etc. In absence of the chronicler evidence, these folk literary pieces not only provide us a detailed account of the unrecorded events of our history but these works also help us to understand and measure the quantum of human pain and misery caused by these natural calamities. Here are some of the lines given from different Lari Shah’s:

Kendy Zāl Khan Yeli Mutchrene av
Pehras manz Khot Navān Bāv
Edy tcely Kralepur edy vēly tsrār
Sehlāb Singh go Zorāvār. (Sehlāb Nama).

Bata myond mongemy Asad dārs,
Dapnum vole prār iftars.
Treyi pehry ore am ale thef heth,
llahi asi Kar bata barket. (Bata Drāg)

(When there caused a breach in the river embankment at Kandizal, In Pohru village, there increased the demand for boats immediately. Some people moved hurriedly to Kralapora and some ran away to Tsrar; The “Flood Singh” took terrible turn.)
(I asked for a handful of rice from Asad dar, He told me to wait upto Iftar (breaking of the fast in the month of Ramazan) After a long wait, he came along with a piece of pumpkin, 0, God, forgive our sins, and help us to come out of the perilous condition).
# YEAR WISE OCCURANCE OF DIFFERENT NATURAL CALAMITIES IN KASHMIR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fires</th>
<th>Epedemics</th>
<th>Floods</th>
<th>Famines</th>
<th>Earthquakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>1813</td>
<td>1828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>1863</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td>1833-34</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>1894</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1923</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources: Umdat-u-Tawarikh, Tarikh-i-Hassan, Travels Vigne*
A touching reference of the famine ravages has been documented in a very precise manner in these Kashmiri proverbs

i. “Akui ober Te māg, Akui faqe te drāg”

ii. “Drāg tchelī te dāg Tchelān ne”

i. (Even a slight appearance of cloud on the sky, gives an impression of severe cold; and the constant hunger means nothing less than a horrified famine)

ii. (Famine will go but the memories in the shape of deep wounds shall not be forgotten so easily).

These proverbs not only reflect the abject conditions of the people but these expressions give an indication about the collective social behaviour of the people, fashioned under such acute and turbulent conditions. The recurring menace of the torrential rains which often caused floods and famines had such a tremendous psychological bearing on the Kashmiri mind that even a slightest piece of cloud on the sky would send shivers into the spine of every Kashmiri.

The condition of skilled workers in urban Srinagar was no less a horrible than their rural brethren working in the fields. The manufacturers of Kashmiri Shawl, (Which once had been the pride of Asia) had been living in such an unhygienic conditions that they often fell prey to epidemics like cholera, small pox and other diseases. The institution of Dag Shawl department gave a final death blow to the industry and heavy taxation imposed on the trade not only paralysed the workers but it even worsened the condition of Karkhandars. Though the Shawl trade constituted second largest revenue field sector after agriculture but the conditions of the Khandawavs (Shawl bauffs) presented ghastly look. They were made to serve from
dawn to dusk for meagre wages by their wealthy Karkhanadars. The economic level of the Shawl weaver can well be gleaned from this proverb:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Siny nuhimi sowatchal} \\
\text{Rēny muhimi Khandevvav}
\end{align*}
\]

(If any vegetable can not be had one can still get a mellow, 
If for a girl no husband is available one can easily get a shawl weaver for the purpose).

The attentive study of the proverbs and folk songs reveal that the majority of the workers were ill clothed, under nourished and were permanently on debt. The only spot of solace for these uncared human souls was the state of undivided Punjab. Most of these people remained for ever in Punjab and some who came back were disallowed by their masters on land and in the industry to work in the fields and the Karkhana’s. How the family members of the departed persons craved for the safe return of their near and dear one’s is portrayed in the touching tune in these lines of Kashmiri folk songs:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Kam gander Punjāb andar Kashiri taran nā?} \\
\text{Kam gander Sowander sowander Kashir tarn nā?} \\
\text{Bara gēmety pēmety pather Kashmir tarn nā?}
\end{align*}
\]

(See! what a young and beautiful lot of Kashmiri men are languishing across the mountains in the province of Punjab, would they every dare to come back? They might be feeling homesick in absence of their family members! would they ever dare to come back?)

The mass exodus of men folk to the distant lands of Punjab gave rise to number of psycho-oriented problems. During the long absence of male members, some appalling moral laxities found their way into Kashmiri family life, particularly in peasant society. These resulted in an unending process of family feuds, divorces and breaking of the traditional socio-emotionalities. There are number of folk storys
which feature the feminine frailty of Kashmiri women during the period under debate. The following line from one of the Kashmiri folk poems points towards such an unwarranted dimension of Kashmiri woman:

Subheki vāvo bar me eleravō,
Nikun mōl rāt gare tchir ho āv.

(O, morning breeze don't cause the door open,
The father of my son had come back to home late at night).

The metaphoric expression “morning breeze” has been used for illegitimate lover who had been in the habit of visiting the house of his paramour in the absence of her husband. In addition to this there erupted number of other negative traits in Kashmiri social life in the absence of the male members.

In 1846, when the Jammu Dogras replaced the Sikh rule in Kashmir, people expected healthy change in the political behaviour of the ruling elite. But the people’s expectations dashed to the ground on finding the new rulers more cruel and barbarous than the previous Afghan and Sikh masters. This state of mental agony is revealed in this proverb:

“Koli khote kol che sardei”

(Every new stream is more icy and chilly than the previous one)

In a plain language this indicates that new rule was more harsher than the previous one. The folk expression is equally endorsed by the remarks of lieutenant colonel Torrents which he made in reference to the first Dogra ruler Maharaja Gulab Singh:

(This last state was worse than the first, for Gulab Singh went beyond his predecessors in the gentle acts of undue taxation and extortion. The (Sikhs) had taxed heavily it is true, but he (Gulab Singh) sucked the very life blood of the
people. They had laid violent hands on a large proportion of the fruits of the earth, the profits of the loom and the work of men's hands, but he skinned the very flints to fill his coffers.\(^58\)

Even K. M. Pannikar who served as an official of the government under the Dogras and wrote an inspired biography of the Maharaja had to admit that Gulab Singh "did not achieve his ends by methods which were always beyond criticism. He did not hesitate to resort to tricks and stratagems which would, in ordinary life be considered dishonourable. He was trained in a hard school, where lying, intrigue and treachery were all considered part and parcel of politics."\(^59\)

The Dogras, who claimed to have purchased the entire land along with people, livestock and the green forests from the British East India Company against the cash amount of Rs. 75 Lakhs, treated the entire state as the family property.\(^60\) Under such an, obnoxious scheme of governance, we could hardly lose sight of the political philosophy drafted generally to serve the interests of the ruler. To quote Bazaz:

"They (Dogras) established a sort of Dogra imperialism in the state in which the Dogras were elevated to the position of the masters and all non-Dogra communities and classes were given the humble places of inferiors. The people of the valley were thus brought under the imperialism of the Dogras which itself was functioning as a vassal of the super imperialism of the British. But though Dogra imperialism brought nothing but misery, thraldom, physical and mental deterioration in its wake, the other imperialism did not come without some blessings. By coming under the British suzerainty the valley began to have the impact of western ideas and modern civilization which finally awakened the people to demand their birth right of independence and freedom.\(^61\)

The colonial approach set in motion by Maharaja Gulab Singh (1846-1858) continued even with more severity during the time of his son Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1858-1885). The inhuman institution of Begar\(^62\) (forced labour) the official barbarity, unbearable revenue exactions, rampant corruption, decline of rural and urban
economy, establishment of Chakdari\textsuperscript{63} and waddari\textsuperscript{64} system, the managerial hegemony of Jammu Dogras, Punjabi Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits marked the chief characteristics of Dogra government in Kashmir.

All these anti people activities in an autocratic feudal setting accelerated the process of mass migration of the victimised peasantry and the skilled workers. The desertion of land and the loom resulted in the loss of government revenues. In order to fill up the revenue deficiencies, the Dogra government decided to bring major chunks of waste lands under cultivation and the big traces of uncultivable land were granted to the influential people of Hindu and Muslim communities. In order to attract more and more cultivators to work in the ‘Chak’ lands, these were kept out of the ambit of the Begar. The peasantry in order to save themselves from the wrath of begars readily agreed to work as serf and chattels under the cruel chakdars. To work as a serf and a slave on the lands of oppressive chakdars against being carried as a ‘begaree’ seemed to be as an less evil for the fleeced peasantry of Kashmir. These chakdars, who were conscious of the peasantry compulsions made them to work without any halt or recess on their fields to earn for the huge sums for both chakdars and the state as well\textsuperscript{65}. The unparallel cruelties perpetuated by these local chakdars and zamindars on the poor cultivators has been summarised very accurately by Kashmiri Bhands (minstrels) in the \textit{Chakwali Pether}\textsuperscript{66}. The folk drama brings into focus the cruel mechanations of chakdars and their intriguing relations with the different cadres of revenue administration. How the dual robbed the unheard and unprivileged section of Kashmiri society marks the chief feature of \textit{Chakwali Pether}. The magnitude of the
pain caused by this institution is well echoed by the National poet of Kashmir in the beginning of the present century. He Says:

Tati cha zamindār, kāshkār, nāṅgar, Teti cha bedy chakdar,
Tati cha atha cheny range range nyametch
Kumelyn lagan batta mar.67

[Are there (in the next world) also zamindars, tenants, landless labours and big chakdars? Do there also the idlers enjoy the sumptuous dishes and the working class suffer for want of morsel of food)?

Yet another shocking feature of the landlordism of our period was that the dominating majority of landlords belonged to Hindu community who constituted only 20% population of Jammu and Kashmir state and not more than 10% of the Kashmir valley. The statistical information reveal that out of 44 chakdars in the Tehsil Anantnag, 31 were Hindus and only 13 were Muslims in the latter part of the 19th century. Whereas 31 Hindu chakdars held 6,892 Kannals of land, the total land under Muslim chakdars was only 3,727 kannals68. It will not be out of place to mention here that the Muslims who were in possession of Jagirs and chaks were guided more by their own material interests than the community interests. They along with revenue officials left no stone unturned to suck the very blood of the Muslim peasantry69. This class of landed elite acted as the collaborators of the Raj and thus enjoyed incalculable incentives at the cost of wretched cultivators. The general contempt and disdain against these sections of Kashmiri society can well be gleaned from different “Luke Pathers” and “Lari Shai’s”. In one of the Pethers, a group of characters representing this landed vested class were shown as being dragged naked in the filthy lanes of Kashmiri Village, and not satisfied with the avenge and anger, the robbed peasants made them to drink the human waste in presence of the village spectators. By this
dramatic expression, the victimized tillers and cultivators in fact, give vent to their suppressed emotions, which they could not have perhaps done in the practical life as even a meagre act of disobedience tantamounted to severe punishment and in some cases, the penalty was observed as death and flogging. The dramatic representation of chakdari system in the folk play can in no circumstances be dismissed as a wanton flight of fancy, but if judged from a stand point of history and sociology, it unfolds the true pain and the pangs of oppressed and humiliated Kashmiri peasantry.

Not satisfied with the system under debate, the Dogra government invented yet another coercive apparatus to fleece the downtrodden Kashmiri peasantry. The new mode of collection introduced directed the cultivators to deposit some of the state share in cash which was till now paid in kind. The Kashmiri peasants who had never been in a position of possessing the cash money, had to depend upon money lenders known as Wadadars for lending them the necessary money to deposit the state treasury.

Taking benefit of the cultivators helplessness and impoverishment, these wadadars lent them money against the heavy interests. The wadadari system documented the everlasting slavery of Kashmiri peasantry at the hands of greedy wadadars. The cultivators could not release themselves even from the ghastly hold of interest, the principal amount remained as it was. In case of non-payment of interest money, these wadadars purchased the grains at a very low rates. Thus, on the one hand, peasant was exploited by the state by charging exorbitant rates from the peasant for the official demand, he was also skinned rough by the wadadars, who charged high interest on the debt. Thus peasant was deprived of all his gains in the shape of his
produce\textsuperscript{70}. The payment of \(\frac{1}{3}\) of the land revenue in land which was known as Mujwaza\textsuperscript{71} also caused much havoc among the peasantry. By snatching \(\frac{1}{3}\) of the produce in kind, the peasant was left with a small quantity of produce hardly sufficient to fulfill his basic food needs and that too only for few months.

The agonising condition of Kashmiri peasantry can well be discerned from famous Kashmiri Lari Shah entitled Mujwaza nama. Here we quote some of the verses of the “Song” which mirror the scale of social discontent and human agony:

\begin{verbatim}
Hëv Qowadret Parverdigärän,
Yare mujawaza khot zamindäran.
Preth Tarfei voth hul halei,
Zyada gërrh kornei shahran
Yare mujawaza khot zamindäran.
Kath kerhei yimav chake vëieu,
Vunis Tämeth nafa kheyu hälieu.
Tawai phalwuk nisf këshkärän,
Yare mujaaza khot zamindäran.
Nekhy mujwaza Shahr Täm vôlkh
Hëky man Nish Trakri peth kholuk
Yes chonän os tas esy màrän
yare mujawaza khot zamindäran.
Häli bad gô kus kari shëdi
Gei iukan be etimedi
Patwariv lëze kari dyaran
Yäre mujawaza khot zamindäran.
\end{verbatim}

(Yet again the nature has turned against us,
The state has increased the state share in kind (Mujawaza)
In every direction, people raised great hue and cry,
People even petitioned to the high authorities.
Srinagar played active part,
The state has increased the mujawaza.
The chakdars entered into a secret alliance,
They made the plea that insects destroyed,
the crops which they had collected from the cultivators. Thus half of the illegal demand was put on the shoulders of the already fleeced cultivators,
The state demand in kind (mujawaza) has increased
The cultivators were made to carry the shali (unhusked rice) to the city.
Every grain was weighed under strict security,
If even a handful of grain fell short of weight,
cultivators were mercilessly beaten.
The state demanded in kind (mujwaza) has increased.
Such was the state of economic crises that people
in the villages seldom celebrated any marriage,
people became extremely disappointed.
Patwaris made huge profits from this transaction).

Corrupt And Oppressive Officialdom

Another principal agency which had reduced the cultivators to the extreme pathetic state was the long roll of corrupt officialdom. From Wazir-i-Wazarat, the top of the bureaucratic ladder down to the Muqadam (village headman) all engaged themselves in the illegal practices which aimed at robbing the peasants of whatsoever little they would have in their possession. A scene from the folk play Raza Pether reveal that not to talk of cash or shali, which generally fell victim to the coretious eyes of the revenue officials, they did not even loose the sight of a petty domestic item like honey and kangri. Here is an extract from the folk play referred to above.

Sagwan, a character who represents the class of corrupt officials asks the potter, “Have you brought the fowl and the honey” “jenab”, the potter (Kral) replies with trembling lips, “I have brought both the items”, “You can see yourself”, said the Potter. Finding honey in a little quantity, sagwan gives the potter harsh beating with the help of hard pointed stick. The entire body of the potter starts bleeding but the sagwan remains unmoved.
In another folk play, *Buhery Pether* the shameful devises of patwari are exposed in a very touching manner. In one of the songs the picture of corrupt patwari is painted in the following adverse colour:

Patwēry yeli kod qalam te kakud, \(^{75}\)
Athe chui dērith kethis jōo.

(When patwari opened his revenue record register,
He eagerly awaited for bribe from the party).

Though official corruption was rampant in all the ranks of Sikh administration, it reached to its climax during the Dogra period. In the second half of the 19th century the valley was divided into three districts, each headed by wazir-i-wazarat\(^{76}\). The districts in turn were divided into fifteen tehsils each headed by a tehsildar. Under the tehsildar there were one or two naib tehsildars. At the village level, there were the Patwari, lambardar, mukdam, shaqdar and sozawul. In addition to these officials, there were other officials like Tehvildar, Harkara, Kardar, Kotval and others.

The anti-ethical scheme of official corruption attained unimaginable dimension during the period under reference. Right from the top, every official was corrupt and defrauded the illiterate and the ignorant\(^{77}\).

The patwari who was supposed to keep the basic revenue records of the village, began with keeping various versions of land record to book maximum possible graft from his client\(^{78}\). He would also join the lambardars in the falsification of revenue accounts of the cultivator against huge bribes. It is interesting to note that even shaqdar\(^{79}\) whose function was only to watch the crops till the next collection by the government, black marketed the innocent cultivators with the threat of false accusation, that they had stolen the grain.
The Sazowul, who supervised the work of shaqdar also extorted money from the villagers. These unscrupulous officials for moment, forgot that they belonged to the soil to which the poor peasantry belong. They harassed their brethren to the extent of forcing them to desert their lands and occupy those for themselves under the 'Domodes Sword' of Begar. They were all guided by the community of interests. These interests cut across the communal considerations. Notwithstanding the fact, that whole chain of officials at the middle of the line were all Kashmiri Hindus. But the spineless numberdars, who were mostly Musalmans stabbed their co-religionists in their back by colluding with the tehsildar in falsification of their revenue accounts and the land grabs. Commenting on such sorry state of affairs A. Wingate remarks:

"The ignorant Muhammadan cultivator has not only no one he can call friend, but every one, whether Hindu or Muhammadan of any influence is against him."

The nineteenth century Kashmiri poet, Wahab Parrey Hajini gives a graphic picture of the official corruption prevalent among the different rungs of Dogra officialdom.

Sane Shethas tam zulma os garat behisab
Kamavith diyon harde hisel karobegarik azab.
Sery sei very yes sāzāwul beyi Shaqdar, Kardār,
Ēsi Kheth cheth grītsis janas karān tim tār Tār.
Kardārs grīs tchadar esī chon issh o pidar,
Kā naqdi kha jinsi ikhtiyar tas sarbasr.

(up to the eighties of the nineteenth century,
the oppression and tyranny was at its height.
The hard produce of the cultivator was,
snatched forcibly and mercilessly from him.
All along the year, Sazowul and shaqdar,
fatened themselves at the hard labour of poor peasant.
The Kardar would not hesitate from taking the woolen blanket,
he enjoyed every power to fleece the cultivator).
The arrival of sazowul in the hamlet of Kashmiri peasant was so a matter of
terrific nature that the latter would present the most invaluable house hold item before
the farmer. This is also evidenced by the contemporary Kashmiri poet Maqbool Shah
Kralwari in his famous peasant poem *Grees Nama*. He writes:

Sazōwul yud Yiyakh tas bronth neran
Dinas dogh moth te peth kunjai sheren
Gendith guly roznes farman bardar
Pather was gari sutha behi masa mar
Tche chuy na kür gobrä sön ayut
Vechan ēsy rat ēsy bhat vali mayot
Salamey subhans valān chi seri
Karan chis sery byon byon ejezūrē
Nivān chis peskash vethy verhy kowakar pūty
Hevan vowadi peth tulith fakhran tihenz juty
Gewelch theni henzy chene kenh kath Netān keth
Guris bronh bronh pakan chis heth nakhan peth.
Ti nth chuk toti choban vethe ravan
Shalakh kerythey garad chuk veth rawan.

(On sazowal’s visit in the village, all peasants
come forward to welcome him,
After removing his physical fatigue, he is placed
with honour at the elevated spot.
All, present there, remain standing with folded hands,
No body dare to sit down until he gets seated,
We reaffirm our commitment that our sons and
daughters are at our disposal,
We were eagerly waiting you O, pandit, yesterday.
In the next morning, all came one by one to pay him salute,
All present, turn by turn, show their helplessness.
Non fail to present fat hens before him,
They place with honour the shoes of Sazowul on their heads.
Not to talk of earthen pitchers full of ghee and butter,
They carry even more precious items on their
shoulders for the official,
Even after collecting all these items,
the peasants are repeatedly beaten, abused and frightened).

About Shaqdar, Kralwari writes:

Ditumna Shaqdars vuni kenhti lowah,
Temis dardes kalas senis chu dawah.
[I (peasant) have yet to give the Shaqdar his share,
He has legitimate authority even on our heads as well].

Among other agents of official oppression, there included Tehvildar, Kardar and Zeldar. Wahab in a satirical tune portrays the pictures of these officials. He writes:

Āsi hai yus yeth alaqas ahli kārā kārdār
Ōs bar taraj mardam tas be kuli ikhtiyyar
Kharch temy sund teth alaqas bari gardān ōs qaraz
Waqtē waqtiē nakhe walun range rangei ōs faraz (Kardar)

Ōs Khalkan hisa tul tei lise, ale beyi, hakh hand
Reta kēlis os tehvildar hekim andevand
Ōs veryyes kumanevith pushe āsan lōne veny
Kath, kowakar, Tchadar te dah vuh rushwei gev te theny.

(An official who acted a Kardar in a particular area,
it was obligatory on all to feed him with cash and kind.
His demands would never end,
All the times peasants remained indebted to him (Kardar).

The deceitful tricks adopted by the forest official to loot the poor masses have been beautifully versified by Ab. Ahad Azad, a revolutionary contemporary Kashmiri poet. He says:

Yiyam yeli rākhe fēriste, Dimakh nei kenh anān ranger,
Getchem virizyon ti sarkēri,
Be no zera ashqe bemeri,
Hendis keri hūn, hūnis hond,
Kendis keri pōsh, pōshes kond.
Karun chum rēzy patwari,
Be no zare eshqe bemeri.

(Whenever the forest-guard and forester will come to me for bribe,
And if I fail to pay the hush money to them they will complain
to ranger against me.
Hence, even the fire wood of my domesticated
tree (willow) will be declared as state property,
How can I indulge into romance?
He will declare sheep as dog and dog as sheep,
People could not enjoy even the cheap vegetables,
without the permission of Tehvildar.
In the ploughing season,
His authority was unexcelled.
Even after toiling all the year in the field,
The cultivator was bound to pay blankets,
Sheep, fowl, butter, ghee and cash as a bribe to the official).

It was not only the work of revenue officials to rob the peasants of their labour
but each member of the official machinery acted as an incubs to suck the life blood of
the peasant folk. To quote Prem Nath Bazaz:

"Almost the whole brunt of official corruption had been borne by the Muslim
masses. The police, the revenue department, the forest officials .... had their palms
oiled by exaction of the unusual rasum."

On account of all prevailing corruption and communal bias, the institution of
justice had also lost its meaning and purpose. The pervertive role of judiciary and
police is summed up in these verses of Mehjoor, the national poet of Kashmir. He
writes:

Teti ti chā mulzimas vaktuk yi insāf yar bēi heth karan khar,
Teti ti chā adālats lagne yiwan begunah tassendy rishtedar.
Teti ti chā zelim shikanjas manz bārān māziōme sund tarafdar,
Teti ti chā vakteky pirak te gately zelimas vanan dildār.

(Whether there also the judicial system like ours robs the
plaintiff with all his near and dear ones?
There also, the near and distant relative
of petitioner are engaged in false litigation.
Whether there also the supporters of oppressed are
tortured in unwarranted ways?
Whether there also the witty and wise
call the tyrant their friends?).

Even in the chaotic conditions of natural calamities when peasants often found
themselves in utter and abject poverty, the revenue officials never alienated
themselves from the precedental ways of exploitation and corruption. They resorted to still harsher devices to reduce the unprivileged peasantry to the lowest degree of penury.

As already mentioned in the foregoing pages that the valley experienced recurring roll of natural calamities in the form of floods, famines, fires, earth quakes and epidemics, which besides causing great loss of life and property led people to desert the lands and the looms. Besides bringing into focus the disastrous effects of these natural calamities, the folk poems help in understanding the unique devices adopted by Dogra officialdom to unnerve the already fleeced peasantry.

In an extreme state of starvation, how the officials on land accompanied by military personnel brought terror to the friendless peasant is well depicted in these Kashmiri proverbs:

i. "Bata Bata te Pyäde pate"
ii. "Yed dag che Bed dag"
iii. "Èses kûtha Tcheyo te èhi pãthã dreyyö"
iv. "Hakãems te Hêkims nish najãit",
v. "Moqdamas nei Pokhdan äsi gamas tuli Shamas tãm".

i. "Every food grain is being watched attentively a soldier"
ii. "The pain of greed outshines all physical pain"
iii. "Sweatning the tongue (to give something in bribe) leads silencing the criticism."
iv. "An inhuman physician is nothing less than a cruel ruler"
v. "Accountability of Muqadam to higher up keeps him under control".

There can be no touching example of peasant discontent against the high handedness of revenue officials as is expressed symbolically in the following proverbs:
"i. Naman metch te kaman kitch?"
"ii. Halv galaan te dānis dadare kerith." 94

(For whom we toll day and night?
i. Yes, of course, for the long roll of exploiters,
ii. “The grasshoopers will die but only after damaging the crops”).

Not to talk of rice, which was the stapple food of Kashmiri and a major source of his sustanance, even the boiling water meant for the rice was also seized from the peasant family if they failed to grease the palm of a revenue official like Sazowul. This is mirrored precisely in this Kashmiri folk song:

Kus bā chuk Sazōwul? 95
Kya chuk Tchāran?
Enymei Dull
Su Kemy nuey?
Tche te beyi Kemy
Me kar chow
Tchei chuk Tsoōr
Kute wal lāyi lūr.

(Who are you there at the door? O, Sazowul!
What do you search for?
The boiling water of rice.
Who had stolen that?
You, the peasant, “Said Sazowul,
How you came to know that I have drunk it?
You are thief.
Kutawal (Police officer) will put you to task.
You will divulge everything before him).

In yet another folk song, it is indicated that the peasant was not even allowed to use water before filling96 the pockets of the Mirab (incharge of cannal). The lines of one of the folk song give a pen picture of this situation:

Mulki kashmiras kam bidat geyi 97
Hes keriv lūts vetith peyi.
Zelimav ābas rete hei sai,
Rahim Bhatan yām mutcher sāna kuthis bar.
Krekh lēyls forestern gusal masā kar,
Ya roz be taharat nata bar dya.

(What a misfortune has befallen on Kashmiris!
Be aware, officials have come to loot the peasants of their produce.
Even the water which is in abundance in Kashmir gets released only after bribing the incharge of the cannel,
The moment Rahim Bhat opened the door of a village bathroom,
He was cautioned by the forester not to go for ablutions before giving him a tip.)

**Begar (Forced Labour)**

Another brutal exercise which often in the past sent shivers in the spines of Kashmiri peasantry was the infamous institution of Begar. Though the evidences suggest that the institution had been in operation from the early Hindu times, but it reached to the obnoxious heights during the Sikh and the Dogra rule. The Kashmir valley, surrounded by high mountains and in the absence of any other transport, necessitated the employment of large number of men for carrying essential commodities into or out of the valley. During any large scale military venture huge armies of porters were requisitioned from the country side. As Kashmir fell into the hands of unscrupulous conquerors and tyrants, payment to the porters was not made and the custom of forced labour or Begar developed consequently.

During the Sikh rule even an ordinary soldier could command a native to do any work for him. The expansionist policy of Sikhs in the mountainous region of north Kashmir accelerated the moment of Sikh soldiery in the hazardous areas. This led to the frequent call of Begar for the cultivators to help in carrying the provisions and the necessary luggage across the inhospitable mountain summits. During the governorship of Sheikh Mohi-ud-din (1845) ten thousand cultivators have been
reported as collected for carrying arms, ammunitions and food supplies to Baltistan\textsuperscript{100}. It is said that many of them lost their lives in the hazardous mountain paths and the some survived, returned to their homes after months.

But the system assumed extremely dreadful proportion in Kashmir valley during the early Dogras mainly because of the frontier wars for conquest and the consequent necessity of providing the troops on the move as well as the huge military establishments in the conquered territories with adequate supplies\textsuperscript{101}. It was only a miracle if some one survived the most demanding journeys, the frost bites, the severity of winter, the meagre and sometimes an unfamiliar diet\textsuperscript{102}. According to the accounts of the European Travellers, who had a chance to visit Kashmir during the period under reference, “if some porter slipped down the precipice or fell ill or had his feet frost bitten; he was heartlessly abandoned to die by inches, totally unattended in his anguish and a prey to vultures and beasts while the caravan moved on, shamelessly unmindful of his tragic impending doom\textsuperscript{103}.

In case, some disturbance was noticed on the northern frontiers either due to the result of Russian presence in Afghanistan or by the revolt of some disfactory frontier chiefs, the quantum of army movement would increase in dimension of Begar. For instance, in 1853, 1866, 1880, large army movements were made and thousands of Begar collies were pressed into service as the human carriage of loads\textsuperscript{104}.

What made it a forced labour was that it was taken when the cultivators used to be busy with their farming operations. Loads could not be taken to Gilgit during winter months for the road to gilgat would get blocked due to heavy snow fall. Since
the summer and the autumn used to be very busy seasons for the cultivator, naturally he would be unwilling to be withdrawn from his fields and taken to desolate mountain road when he was not guaranteed safe conduct. No wages were paid for such a hazardous job only in case the requisition of Begar would be made for a foreign visitor, a labour would receive annas 14 per stage of carrying the loads. For an ordinary begaree only a ser of rice a day and some straw sandals for making pulhors (grass shoes) was given to them.

The worst part of the institution was that it was levied disproportionately from the various sections of the population. It was also conducted discriminately. The lands of the chakdars, jagirdars, specially assigned villages, as such, villages as were clandestinely occupied by the officials or the influential people were all exempted from Begar. The most horrible dimension of the scheme was that most of the villagers in order to get exemption from Begar would readily agree to work as bonded labour in the house or the field of the privileged people referred to above. These people of inhuman character and nature, taking advantage of their utter helplessness, often sicked the very blood of their views by making them to toil day and might without any recess or the break. Such was the magnitude of terror of Gilgit or Bunji (a stage on the way to Gilgit) that the parents even today to frighten their naughty children tell them that they will be packed to Bavanji. Kashmiri phrases Bavanji Baron or Bavanji Sozen are enough to recall the inquitious Begar days during the period under review.

In addition to this, the city people were also exempted from the cruel exercise of 'Begar'. The favourites and the vested class like Pirzadas, Pandits, Sikhs,
Rajputs and Gujjars were also left outside the ambit of Begar. In case any body hesitated or resented he was dealt with severe punishment. This is also evidenced by the contemporary poet Wahab Hajini. He writes:

Kār begāruk venei Kya ḍas āsān Shorushar,  
Grūs palana ledīth very yes pelham ċīs berkhar.  
Gethihai yas ġer ċezir ċīs āsī amalī hisāb,  
Chōb Tei beizati Jurmane deshām-o-āzab.

(How can I tell you the intensity of terror caused by inhuman act of begar,  
The cultivator was tied illegitimately in the bond to act as a beast carrier.  
Whosoever was found absent, he was to undergo the severest act of torture, And victimization, like beating, fine and some times even death would to be his reward.)

The poetic narrative is further endorsed by the details recorded by Dr. Artheer Neve. He states:

"I was at Islamabad, endeavouring to fight an epidemic of cholera...... and noticed collies collecting from all the surrounding region, each with his blanket, grass shoes, his carrying crotch back. And I was present at the great concourse on green meadow in front of the mosque when a sort of farewell service was held for those starting on this perilous journey. Loud was the sobbing of many and frigid the demeanour of all as, led by mullah, they intoned their prayers and chanted some of their special Ramazan penitential problems. Even braver men than the Kashmiris might well have been agitated at such a time, when taking farewell of their loved ones! Who will till their fields? what would happen during their long absence to their wives and children? To what perils would they themselves be exposed in the crowded bivoucs and snowy passes of the deadly Gilgit district.

The pain and the anguish of Kashmiri women caused by the long absence of their male members sent as begarees can well be discerned from these lines of Kashmiri folk song. A forgotten lady expresses her deep sigh in long absence of her husband had been seized for begar.

Getchi Kuthi Temy Sund brōnth geyōmei.
Teti vutchmas mey Tehāyan,
Be hei bāl lāres vuni nei āmei,
Nāmei sozas Tūry.
Vany hei dimhas shehr te gāmei,
Be hei bāl lāres tūry.

(Sobbing lonely in a deserted room!
I expected his early safe arrival
But it was only a sweet memory,
I shall run to the mountain heights to welcome his return,
But, nothing is known of his whereabouts!
How miserable it is!
Let some body come forward to carry his message for me,
I will search for him in and around the city,
in distant towns and meadows.
I shall go to see him at the high snowy mountain peaks).

Mr. E. F. Knight, who had the opportunity of witnessing the peasant collection for 'Begar' and chanced to accompany one batch to Gilgit and beyond, where he went to cover for London times, military operations against Honza, chitral etc. has recorded. To quote him:

"But a native of this state (Jammu and Kashmir) suffers from a form of oppression for more severe than the extortion of the tax collectors, the latter at least leaves him a bare subsistence, but that of which I am now speaking signifies separation from family, and in too many cases torture and death Kashmiri authorities have been utterly careless of the comfort, and even of the lives, of the unfortunate wretches who are dragged from their homes and families to trudge for months over the wearisome marches of that arid country. They fell on the road to perish at time by the cold on the snowy passes. When a man is seized for this form of Begar, his wives and children hang upon him, weeping, taking it almost for granted that they will never see him again. A gang of these poor creatures, heavily laden with grain, toiling along the desert crags between Astore and Gilgit, on a burning summer's day, urged on a sepoy guard, is perhaps as pitiable a spectacle as any to be seen on the roads of Siberia. But these are not the convicts and criminals; they are Mussulman farmers, harmless subjects of the Maharaja." \(^{114}\)

The echo of an unimaginable pain experienced by a Kashmiri villager on his way to rough and rugged ridges has been dramatically summarised by Kashmiri
Bhand in Angrez Pether. A begaree while approaching the frozen and chilly mountain passes has been shown half naked, eating only a handful of maize corn on short intervals. The trembling curved limbs of a begaree as projected in the play, gives a touching picture of begarees misery, pain and his half starved state of grim life.

The term “Gilgit” had become the archetype of terror for every Kashmiri which is substantiated by the remarks of W. Lawrence as well. To quote him:

"Gilgit to Kashmiri is a constant terror, when it was rumoured that transport was wanted to convey the baggage of the troops going to or coming from Gilgit, there was a general stampede among the villagers. I have seen whole villages bivoucking on the mountains when the agents for the collection of a transport arrived in Tehsil, and I have seen inhuman punishment dealt out to men who demurred to leaving their homes for two or three months with the prospect of death from cold or starvation. I have seen villagers manned from frost bite or shrivelled and paralysed from exposure to cold, and it is no marvel that the Kashmiris should loathe the very name of Gilgit. It may be added that if men would pay four annas in order to avoid carrying a load for one easy stage, they would very gladly pay much larger sums to escape a journey to Gilgit, and I know that since I have been in Kashmir, villagers have paid from Rs.70.00 to Rs.90.00 per head in order to purchase their exemption."

It may be mentioned here that Begar was not only taken for carrying loads to Gilgit or work as porters for foreign travellers, but under its comprehensive name every kind of demand for labour or property was taken unpaid. Top revenue officials would get their lands cultivated or even houses built in the city without any wages. During Pratap Singh’s rule, when there started series of public development works to give boost to the agricultural activities, peasants were pressed into service to dig canals forcibly without any wages. In the following folk song, it is indicated that not only men folk was taken for forced labour but the women were not also spared from being taken as begarees. Here are some verses of the song:
Gari pate gari mongehek akh akh,
Mard nei āsi zeny yī be shak.
Rale mile ēsi shat tchalē nī,
Kowl khene neky böz afsānei.
Kūt jābir pyōs lassa pandit,
Niyōn Moma Dar gase rez gendith.
Dara bhayi chas pata doranei.

Shor shar voth endy pekhy gaman,
Voth tālvās khāsan āman,
Zani asekh kūn hārei īn.
Bār khodaya kery tav yēri,
Legy begari tawnas sēri,
Geyi barbād kam jānanei.  119

(One each collie was sought from every family in the village,
If male member was not available, let the female present herself for the job.
How brutally Lassa Pandit behaved!  120
He dragged Muma Dar tied with a grass rope.
The women folk of Dar family hurriedly followed him,
There was great hue and cry all over the village.
Every one in the village was terrified,
Women folk of the concerned begarees were weeping loudly.
Oh, Great God! Come to our rescue take pity on our lot,
we have been dragged for unpaid labour).

Finding themselves in a state of utter helplessness, Kashmiri Muslims often
sought refuge in the calmly environs of Rishi or Sufi Shrines to invoke the help of the
saintly souls for the rindadance of the official oppression and torture. This is also
mirrored in these lines of Kashmiri folk song.

Hai mōji kur lejiye sabras
Bōr shānan lodhei khezras
kone dasgīr sēb yiman hai gālān

Hai mōji beni lejiye sabras
Bōr shanan lod hei Qādes
Kōne Sheikh sēb yiman hei gālān 121

(Oh, my mother, I appreciate your patience,
See how your son Khazar has been heavily loaded
Why don't Dastagir Sehab kill these oppressors?

Oh, my mother, your sister appreciates your patience
See how your son Qadir has been heavily loaded
Why don't Sheikh Sehab kill these oppressors?

Labour Discontent

In comparison to rural population, people in urban Srinagar enjoyed a slice of official relief and attention. But the common folk who generally worked as skilled workers in the craft centres owned by wealthy Karakhandars faced multiple of problems which did not allow them to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

No doubt, agriculture was the major source of income to the state and was the major source of the public sustenance, but at the same time there existed other non-agricultural pursuits which brought good amount of income to the state. The most significant non-agricultural occupation adopted by the people was handicrafts (dastakari).

According to the sources available, among the different dastkaris, Shawl industry formed the major source of income to the state after the land revenue.

Long before the advent of Sikh rule in Kashmir, the shawls of Kashmir had found markets in different parts of the world. Sikhs who had an exemplary greed for money, the demand of Kashmiri shawl in the European markets especially in France, Germany and Great Britain allured their covetous eyes. In order to amass more and more wealth from this rich trade, they brought this industry under the ambit of exorbitant tax net. In addition to enormous tax imposition, the shawl baufs were made subject to incalculable restrictions. In order to snatch away from them their
last penny, they were forced to purchase the exorbitantly priced paddy of the state. The shawl bauft was so much oppressed by the state that instead of developing interest in his work, which the promising returns would have otherwise induced him to do, he lost interest in the work and whosoever managed fleeing away from the valley, he made no bones in doing it\textsuperscript{127}. If there was no mass exodus, it was because they were like the peasants, tied to their work, and no one could leave the country without proper permission, which was hardly given to them because the government rightly feared that in view of the relieved conditions outside, they would never return and thereby a very important revenue sector would be thrown into shambles\textsuperscript{128}. The government resorted to every kind of oppressive device to restrict the free mobility of shawl workers. The Sikh government which aimed at draining all the wealth out of the state boundaries, forbade the open sale of Kashmiri shawl in the market. No finished shawl of whatever quality could be sold until it bore the seal of the Dagh Shawl Department. According to Young Husband every shawl was taxed 26 percent upon the estimated value, besides which there was an important duty on the wool with which they were manufactured\textsuperscript{129}.

These coercive measures were enough to skin the bonny skeletons of poor Kashmiri shawl baufs. The heavy taxes imposed on Kashmiri shawl weavers has been artistically portrayed by Wahab Hajini in verse:

\begin{quote}
Shāwl bāufs sheyitreḥ rowapeyi bod eyinäsāl,
Ōs teth wakts juda hukma mahali Dāgh shāwl.
\end{quote}

(A Shawl weaver was supposed to pay thirty six rupees annual as a tax to the government; in addition to this, he was to pay the dag shawl tax).
The most detestable piece of oppression committed against the shawl baufs was however, this that none of them were permitted to relinquish their employment without finding of substitute which, of course, it was almost always impossible to do. Shonberg remarking about the taxation of factory owners and weavers of shawls says:

"I have no hesitation in saying that the shawls sold for some hundreds do not cost the seller more than a few rupees worth of a singara."\(^{131}\)

A latter source mention that “the condition of shawl weavers had been so critical that to avoid being compelled to pursue the profession many of them cut off their fingers and some even blinded themselves to escape their miserable condition\(^{132}\).

During the early period of the Dogra rule, Kashmiris particularly shawl baufs starved and no attempt was made on the part of the Dogra government to give relief to the starved shawl weavers. The frequent occurrence of floods, famines and epidemics further aggravated the situation and the people had to run towards Punjab\(^{133}\). Robbed both by the natural forces and the imperial Dogra interests, Kashmiri shawl baufs, the manufacturers of globally reputed shawls sunk deep into the bottomless oceans of dispair and poverty. No parent was ready to give his daughter in marriage to the Khandavav – the shawl weaver. The pitiable lot of the weaver is well depicted in this Kashmiri proverb:

"Siny muhimi tschal\(^{134}\)
Reny muhimi Khandavav"

(In the scarcity of vegetables, one could easily find mellow;
In case of the scarcity of men, one can easily get the shawl baufs as a husband for ones daughter).

The final blow to the industry came in the wake of Franco-Prussian war of 1870. With the defeat of France in the war, Kashmir lost the major export market of
the shawl trade. While the demand of Kashmiri goods in European markets suffered heavily, it threw lot of people out of employment in the valley\textsuperscript{135}. In spite of being the back bone of Kashmir's economy, the shawl weaver was the worst hit of the Dogra oppression. The miserable plight of the shawl weavers can well be gleaned from these Kashmiri folk verses:

\begin{verbatim}
Kam ākh to chawakh gigras tōhēlim,
vutch sethni trusev kam khoja khēlim,
Doh kar phol, kar aftāb dolum,
Dagh senetch, reh shikmetch tōhejim,
Hendi hak to kremi sēthy shury pēlim
Gah rētchan faqeī guly sevīm.\textsuperscript{136}
\end{verbatim}

[I (shawl weaver) can not express the magnitude of my pain and sorrow,
My needle helped in earning enormous wealth for the wealthy karkhanadars.
When the day dawned and the sun set, I did not know,
I patiently bore the strikes of starvation, hunger and sickness.
I brought up my children by feeding them with stray vegetables,
Some times, I lulled them to sleep even without food).

No wonder, therefore, the shawl baufs were the first section of the Kashmiri society who protested against the government in 1865\textsuperscript{137}. The cumulative result of all those factors was that a large number of Kashmiri shawl weavers left the valley and settled in different towns of Punjab. It was in fact, this section of Kashmiri society which played vital role in acquainting people outside Kashmir about the sad plight of the oppressed Kashmiris. The moral support which the Kashmiri freedom fighters received from Punjabi Muslims in the beginning of the 20th century was more due to the efforts of these Kashmiri shawl weavers who had left the valley in the last quarter of the nineteenth century\textsuperscript{138}. Those who continued with very meagre wages as a natural corollary of demand-supply relationship, government took no step to relieve their pain and anguish. To quote P. N. Bazaz:
The government of Kashmir tell us that the Franco-German war of 1870 gave a fatal blow to the shawl trade in the west from which it could not revive. But this is not defence when we know that such blows had been dealt upon the industry prior to 1870. If the market in the west lost temporarily, a government could create new market elsewhere. But this could be achieved only if the government were sympathetic and wide awake.\(^{139}\)

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah offers a touching narrative of a starved shawl bauf who died of debt and starvation due to the decline of shawl trade in Kashmir. He states:

"A boy living in my neighborhood, Abdul Ahad by name worked in an embroidery centre installed in our house. He was attractive, good looking and also highly cultured inspite of his poverty. He remained away from the centre perhaps on account of illness as reported, but soon after he was declared dead. I went to his home to console his parents. It was given out that his homestead had been running in debt of a usurer, who had continuously been asking for clearing the debt. It is also reported that he insulted them in the bargain. My sensitive friend could not withstand this all. Hence, he attempted to save money to clear the debt on the pain of starvation. He somehow managed to feed his two younger sisters but himself remained feeding on craft. This broke down his health and resulted in his consumption to death."\(^{140}\)

The famous philosopher poet, Dr. S. M. Iqbal was also touched by the pitiable condition of Kashmiri shawl weavers and versified their lot as under:

Sarma ki havavon mei uriyan hai badan is ka,
Deta hai hunar jiska amiron ko doshala.

(It is the Kashmiri artisan who provides soft and delicate du-shawls to the rich. But alas! he (the poor artisan) himself remains naked even in the chilly winds of winter).

The Dag-shawl department which was established to regulate the shawl trade was exclusively dominated by Kashmiri Pandits. In sharp contrast to the starved state of Muslim shawl weavers, the Hindu managers of the department lived in the highest styles of luxury and material comfort. The following reference given by Lawrence shall help in bringing out the marked contrast between the Pandit officials and the
Muslim shawl weavers:

"The houses (in Srinagar) vary in size from the large and capacious burnt brick palaces of the Pandit aristocrat and his 500 retainers, warmed in the winter by hamams to the dull house of three stories and their rooms of wood and sundried bricks, where the poor shawl weaver lives his squalid cramped life and shiver in the frosty weather".141

The condition of a shawl weaver as portrayed by Madusudan Gunju is still more heart piercing than Lawrence. He writes:

"the standard of living of the workers engaged in the woolen industry as a whole is very low. Their food is poor, clothing altered, and the houses in the most dilapidated condition. They can not afford to drink milk and eat mutton even once a week. Their staple food in Kashmir province is rice which they eat with an ordinary kind of cooked vegetable leaves called hak. Some of them can not afford even that much".142

The discontentment of a big and vocal class of shawl weavers, majority of whom were city dwellers found its expression in the first labour agitation of 1865143. It was a standard of revolt against the extreme kind of exploitation. Though the agitation was suppressed with iron hand,144 but it provided a fertile ground to those few sensitive souls who realised that for inaugurating a new and just era there was no other alternative but to launch a sustained struggle against the Dogra Raj.

European Missionary And Socio-Political Awakening

With the coming of the Europeans in the second half of the 19th. century, the wrongs done by Dogra imperialism in Kashmir began to be exposed to the outer world.145 This resulted in the indirect intervention of British Indian administration into the affairs of Kashmir. In order to save its honour, Dogra rulers set in motion number of administrative reforms particularly in the field of revenue administration146. The services of some European experts were also sought to give boost to otherwise
abandoned agriculture. The occupancy rights recognised by the new agrarian settlement though created a sense of belonging among the cultivators, but the fundamental question regarding land ownership was left unattended\textsuperscript{147}. In addition to this the granting of Assami rights to chakdars had given further impetus to absentee land lordism which assumed diabolic proportion with the every passing day. This made the peasantry restive once more. The favourites of the Dogra Raj, who had been in the habit of enjoying number of privileges at the cost of oppressed peasantry; did not allow the disgruntled section of the society to raise their voice against the Dogra oppression\textsuperscript{148}. They, instead, used every apparatus to silence the genuine grievances of the distressed people.

The crafty attempts of the favourites of the Raj however, did not work on the disillusioned urban labour who inspite of every official restriction expressed their resentment in public.

The establishment of English Residency in Srinagar and with the coronation of Sri Pratap Singh (1885-1925) as a new Dogra Maharaja, Kashmir began to experience new currents of modern influence\textsuperscript{149}. Kashmir, though geographically an isolated territory could not escape getting influenced by what was happening in British India and all other parts of the world. In the first quarter of the present century, Banihal Cart Road from Srinagar to Jammu had been completed. In 1915, the railway link from Sialkot to Jammu was established. The Jehlum Valley Road had already been completed as back as 1890 and it connected Kashmir with Rawalpendi Rail head. With the availability of means of communication and transport facilities, it was possible for the new ideas to influence the people of Kashmir. The freedom struggle in
British India which by this time had entered into a very critical period, was bound to influence the young Kashmir Muslims, who by that time had enrolled themselves as regular students in Punjab and other Universities of British India.

Thus we observe the simmerings of this temper in Kashmir in the shape of silk factory workers strike as early as 1917 and 1920 for increasing their wages. Emboldened by these strikes silk factory workers gave a major strike call in 1924 against the inefficiency of wages, corruption of officials and the tyrannies of the inspecting staff. The agitation sent shivers in the spines of Dogra government and the Dogra police resorted to indiscriminate firing which resulted in the death of many defenceless silk factory workers.

The Kashmiri Pandits who were the first to enjoy the benefits of modern education and their close proximity with the ruling Hindu dynasty conferred upon them many privileges which the Muslims could not even dream due to their educational backwardness and the prejudicial approach of the Dogra government against the common Kashmiri Muslims. The Kashmiri Pandits who held important administrative positions did little to appease their Muslim brethren, instead, they behaved in such a bureaucratic style which created great distrust among the Kashmiri Muslims who constituted eighty percent of the total population. They were treated more unfairly in every sphere of life than the Kashmiri Hindus. The horrible dimension of the situation was that Muslims could not even effect marriages as they were to pay marriage tax on every marriage. This is also evidenced by this Kashmiri verse of contemporary poet:
(During that time if any Muslim wished to effect marriage,
The parents of the bridegroom would be seen In great tension all along the
year.
He would pay off the debts In recurring installments to the profiteer.
There was a marriage tax, without paying that, no marriage could be
conducted).

Still worse was be ban on cow slaughter which continued to be punished with
harsh tortures and in some cases with brazen death.155

Moved by the sad plight of Kashmiris and the unimaginative mind of the last
Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh (1925-1947) and his advisors, Sir Albin Benerji who
was foreign and political minister of the state, resigned under protest from his post:
His observations regarding the political, social and economic conditions prevailing in
the state made in a press interview, created an uproar in the country and produced
deep effect in the minds of the people of the state. He said:

"Jammu and Kashmir is labouring under many disadvantages, with a large
Muhammadan population absolutely illiterate, labouring under poverty and very
low economic conditions of living in the villages and practically governed like dumb
driven cattle. There is no touch between the government and the people, no suitable
opportunity for representing grievances and the administrative machinery itself
requires overhauling from top to bottom to bring it up to the modern conditions of
efficiency. It has at present little or no sympathy with the people's wants and
grievances. There is hardly any public opinion in the state. As regards the press it is
practically non existent with the result that the government is not benefited to the
extent that it should be by the impact of healthy criticism."156

Insighting into the crumbling state of Muslim poverty, P.N.Bazaz reveals,
"The poverty of the Muslim was appalling. Dressed in rags which could hardly hide
his body and barefooted, a Muslim peasant presented the appearance rather of a
starving beggar than one who filled the coffers of the state. He worked laboriously in the fields during the six months of the summer to pay the state its revenues and taxes, the officials their 'rasum' and the money lender his interest. Most of them were the landless labourers working as serfs of the absentee landlords. They hardly earned, as their share of the produce, enough for more than three months. For the rest they had to earn by other means. During the six months they were unemployed and had to go outside the boundaries of the state to work as labourers in big towns and cities of British India. Their lot, as such, was no good, and many of them died every year, unknown, unwept and unsung outside their homes. The disgraceful environments and unkind surroundings in which so many of them died was a slur alike on the people and the government of the country to which they belonged.\(^1\)

It was at this critical juncture of our history that there emerged a young boy Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, on the political horizon of Kashmir. It was under his dynamic leadership that the struggle for Kashmiris freedom gained momentum and direction and the down trodden people who were earlier dubbed as "Zulum parast" came forward with redoubled courage and conviction to fight against the autocratic rule of the last Dogra Maharaja Hari Singh.\(^2\)

With the Muslim masses groaning under several disabilities and passing through a period of severe economic depression; the administration under an inefficient and unsympathetic bureaucracy, and with the direct encouragement by the British to agitators the stage was set for a convulsion early in 1931.\(^3\)
Historically and politically the 13th July, 1931\textsuperscript{161} is the most important day in the annals of Kashmir History. From this day the struggle for independence and freedom started in a very organised manner. It was of course, the struggle of a victimized and subjugated people particularly Kashmiri Muslims against the oppressive autocratic Dogra rule of Jammu Dogras.

Unnerved by the recent political developments, Hari Singh (1925-1947), the last Dogra Maharaja appointed a commission to go into the grievances of the people and on 12th November he announced the appointment of the commission under the chairmanship of Sir B. J. Glancy\textsuperscript{162} of the foreign and political Department of the Government of India.

The report of the commission was published in April, 1932. It was a document of great historical importance as it acknowledged in a true historical perspective the ugliest discrimination of the state towards the majority of its ruled people. Besides other things, the commission recommended that all the religious buildings of the Muslims in possession of the Government should be restored to them. The commission also recommended that measures should be adopted for the educational development of the Muslims. Regarding the ownership rights of land, the commission recommended that "proprietary rights should be granted in all respects to all lands of which the ownership is retained by the state and right of occupancy is enjoyed by the private persons."
As regards begar, which was still practised by officials, the commission recommended that due payment should be made for any labour sought for the state purpose\textsuperscript{163}. The chained Kashmiris attributed this great success to the dynamic leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. This is endorsed by the following Kashmiri verse, which the people sang when the recommendations were made public:

Glancy commission bronh kun pakān gō,
Yuhei rang anān gō miya Sheri Kashmir.

(The recommendations made by Glancy commission owe its origin to the towering personality and leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah [Whom people address as Sheri-Kashmir] the lion of Kashmir).

A couplet from one of the folk songs sung in praise of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, who emerged as the leaders of the downtrodden Kashmiris, reads:

Asi getchi asun Shahi Sultan,
Be gownah mare geiy esy musalān.
Adi Ledihq qilas edy Jaikhān,
Asi gekhi asun Panun Sultan.

We are oppressed,\textsuperscript{164}
We want our Shah Sultan,
Our own glorious Sultan.
We, the innocent Muslims,
are doomed some are locked in the fort,
some are behind bars.

In the person of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, the Sullen and sick Kashmiris found a man with iron will and courage, who possessed every merit to voice the peoples grievances without caring for the fatal results\textsuperscript{165}. Naturally by exhibiting his outstanding courage and boldness, he enslaved the hearts of victimized Kashmiri Muslims and in a very short period he not only became the hero of political struggle
but also emerged as a legendary hero in the folk literature of Kashmir. People composed dozens of folk songs in honour and admiration of his courage, valour and other leadership qualities. Here we give some of the folk verses composed about him by Kashmiri women.

Soureke bohoduro Karyō guru Gurō
I Tche chuko sōn reh bero, karyo guru guro 166
II Soureke baskine Sherekí nūro
   Keryō bahoduro Tchey fidā pān 167
III Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah
   Shīne Khote Proneye, Deenechi rikhi peth nonye drāv 168
IV. Pane vetheran kya chu Likhith,
   Sheri Kashmir zinda bād 169
V Zene giri Āab drāv,
   Soure manze lāl drāv 170.

I The hero of soura,
   I adore you,
   you are our leader,
   The hero of soura.

II You, the resident of Soura, the light of city
   Let us sacrifice ourselves for your bravery and boldness.

III Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah's
   personality is as clean as snow,
   He came into prominence by voicing the Muslim grievances.

IV It is a matter of great Joy,
   that the leaves of the trees
   bear the name of Sher-i-Kashmir.

V Soura threw up the jewel,
   And Zainagir (canal) got the water.

In tune with the new spirit of political awakening which was increasingly gaining ground in Kashmir, there appeared a new force on the cultural front, who ignited the zeal and fervour of Kashmiri freedom fighters through their poetic compositions. Mehjoor, 170(b) the national poet of Kashmir and Abdul Ahad Azad, 171 the poet of humanism, composed number of revolutionary poems which became the
great source of inspiration for the lovers of freedom struggle. Mehjoor called on Muslims in a sentimental manner to drink once more the old wine they had drunk in their great days.

*Bala al Muslim Kashmir Kabhi Socha bi hei Tune, 172*
Tu hei kis Gulshani rangen Ka Shakhi Gryani.
Tere aslaf woh thei Jinke ilmu - fazl Ueagey,
Adab se Jukte Thei danishveraney hindu Irani.

*(O, Muslims of Kashmir! Have you ever reflected upon the grand culture to which you belonged. Before the wisdom and intellect of your ancestors, Wisemen of Persia and India bowed their heads).*

The poet does not seem to be approving a change that is brought about by slow tactics and in haphazard manner. Instead a strong spirit, not a stop gape arrangement, is considered the determinant factor in fostering a true revolution. He writes:

*Agar vezenahan basti gulan hund trav zirobam, 173*
Bunil Kar, vav kar, gagrei kar tufan paidakar.

*(If habitat of flowers is to be awakened, give up hesitant measures, Let thunder rumble, let there to be an earthquake, let the storms uproot the every relic of old order).*

According to F. M. Hussanaian, "The flames of growing nationalism were to a great extent fanned by his (Mehjoor’s) poetry and his poems became the national anthems for the national movement in Kashmir. 174 His poem *"Valo ha Bagwano"* infused new vigour and dynamism in the hearts of Kashmiri lovers. Such was the appeal of the song that it cut the boundaries of individual craftsmanship and became the part and parcel of Kashmiri folk literature. Here we quote some of the lines of the song:

*Walo hā bogwano nav baharuk shān paīda kar 175*
Phalan gul. gat karan bui bul tithi sāmān pāidā kar.

*(Come gardner, create the glory of spring,*
Make guls bloom and bulbuls sing create such haunts).

The reflection of the new awakening is also admirably mirrored by other Kashmiri poets of the period and Mehjoor was happily joined by a number of younger contemporaries like Azad, Arif, Fani and Aasi.176

Infact the five years (from 1942-1946) were the most significant years of the development of New Kashmir verse. The socialistic out look on life that characterised much of the writing of these years was not the forced result of indoctrination but the natural outcome of a congenial response to a new intellectual development in the country infiltrating into Kashmir mostly through urdu poetry, particularly of Iqbal.177

Azad's "Shikwa-a-Iblees" clearly indicate this influence, yet his humanism, his immense faith in man cutting across all distinctions of caste, community and creed, refused to be circumscribed by any sort of religious fanaticism or communal prejudice; and his whole poetry is, infact, a mighty crusade not only against the social evils but also against all types of national fads.178 No wonder, therefore, that the denunciation of anti-social elements almost became an obsession with him. He had realised:

"The temples, mosques and such other institutions indulge in empty drum-beatings; Their hearts are utterly devoid of love".

Infact, it was a sort of his poetic manifesto:

"To become free, to end tyranny, and to liquidate superstition, This is my cherished dream, This may ambition and this may clarion-call".

By highlighting the age old exploiting devices of the alien rulers and their local collaborators, Kashmiri poets discharged their national role in a most befitting
manner. Infact, it was the enthusiasm created by their poetic creations that helped political leadership to experience a new political environ which followed the partition of Hindustan into two dominions – India and Pakistan in the year 1947.\(^1\)

From the content referred to in the forgoing pages, we can humbly draw a conclusion that unlike other parts of the sub-continent, Kashmir did not experience even a single organised peasant revolt amidst appalling heights of peasant oppression and victimization. But the fact of the matter remains that Kashmiris (both peasantry and urban labour) expressed their resentment against the oppressive devices of the non-Kashmiri rulers and for this purpose they developed a mechanism which was in tune with the contemporary political environ. An attentive study of different genres of Kashmiri folk literature tend us to suggest that oppressed peasantry did not remain as silent spectators against the unjust policies of the alien rulers, infact, their reaction and response was more guided by God centered beliefs rather than the law centered concepts. Contrary to the opinion which dubbed Kashmiris as Zulum parast (blind worshipers of cruelty) it is observed that they attempted all possible means to fight their oppressors, instead of meekly surrendering before them. Finding themselves as surrounded by unfavourable circumstances, they adopted a scheme of collective behaviour which involved lesser risk for striking against the oppressive system. They opted for the desertion of cultivable land of the enemy rather than to be annihilated\(^2\) by him. The exercise inwardly aimed at striking at the very roots of the position and power of his enemy to whom the revenue from the lands constituted the major source of strength\(^3\) and power. While, one the one hand, desertion of land was the only safeguard to survive the wanton annihilatory policy of the ruthless superior right
holders, it at the same time was aimed at bringing the economic downfall of the state, as the agriculture was the mainstay of economy and there was a big gap between the land-man ratio\textsuperscript{184}. This deserting of land was the common form of peasant protest against oppression. Kashmiri expressions “Tul Palve Te Voth Tchelav” (Take your clothes and let us run away) and “Pushuk Ti Nei Tcholukh Ti Na” (If you cannot overcome the enemy, why didn’t you run away) are enough to endorse our assertion and argument.

Besides deserting the land, the peasantry also resorted to a unique style of protest by which they avenged their oppression by joining hands with the enemies of their oppression or acted as mute spectators of their downfall. Thus a common saying in Kashmir:

"Akis dezān dēr te baiyakh washenāvān athei"

(A man's beard is burning, and another is warming his hands upon it).

Abondoning the land amid ploughing season was also yet another form of peasant resentment. The refusal of the peasants to cultivate the lands forced the revenue officers to be present in the villages at the commencement of sowing of a crop. The constant presence and vigil of the police\textsuperscript{185} or armed forces in the fields is borne out by this Kashmiri proverb:

"Bata Bata Te Pyade Pate"\textsuperscript{186}

(Every handful of grain was strictly being watched by the armed soldiery).

The assertion is further substantiated by Walter Lawrence:

"The Tehsildar rarely moved out, except at the time of ploughing for the autumn crops, when it was necessary to urge the villagers to cultivate"\textsuperscript{187}
The indepth study of *Bhande Pethers* (Folk songs) also suggest that peasants might have exhibited their resentment and silent protests against the official tyranny and oppression. That is why we often find satirical expressions and agitating dramatic situations which indirectly aimed at ridiculing the different cadres of revenue administration. The Muqadam, the Patwari, the Shaqdar, the Sazowul, the Domb, the Tehsildar and other officials associated with revenue administration are often made the subject of peasant sarcasm and indignation. Under such system of cruel governance, it would have been impossible to arrange an organised protest which involved punishment no less than death.

The political atmosphere that had not only snatched the power of expression but crushed the very soul of Kashmiris can well be imagined from the following extract stated by G. M. Sadiq:

"We Kashmiris have forgotten the word as well as meaning of the word freedom due to our long span of four hundred years of slavery. Our many generations have been bred and brought up in slavery with the result that we prefer to remain slaves and think that slavery is our birth right. Just as when anyone continues to wear rags or a mad main chains, he thinks such chains to be ornaments. In the same way, the Kashmiris were content with slavery but the wind of the times has changed its side and now nothing can hinder its course. Kashmiris have survived by keeping faith of fate, but fate being unkind has kept their fate in the hands of others. Now the Kashmiris want only this thing that they be allowed to shape their destiny. It is a a revolution which should surely come to this land. It will not stop through the efforts of any one, he may wish or not. After the end of night, there is always a new morning and then sun set."

188
REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Fazli Manzoor *Luka Siyasat*, p.28.

2. In vernacular the expression is used in terms of extreme disdain and hatred.

3. The word ‘owl’ in Kashmiri folk literature is used as a bad omen. But in context under reference, it is referred to the dynasty responsible for robbing the very independent character of Kashmir. The expression carries brazen contempt against the imperial designs of the Mughals official.

4. The expression conveys that in presence of Mughal one should not fumble to speak in Persian. In other words the proverb means that it needs courage and boldness to criticise the Mughal administration in presence of a Mughal.

5. Aagar Khan was a Mughal governor who is said to have imposed tax on elephants which were non existent in Kashmir. This reflects the greed of Mughal governors for money. See for detail *Keshir Talmilt*, (Kash) Nazir, G. N. p.57. Cultural Academy.


8. During the times of Muhammad Shah, the Mughal emperor, there was a man namely Mulla Sharaf-ud-din who acted as Sheikh-ul-Islam. He is said to have followed a policy of persecution of the Hindus and the Shias. There was lawlessness and chaos in the land. Finally the emperor Muhammad Shah, dismissed Inayatullah from the governorship of Kashmir, appointing in his place Abdul Samad Khan. Immediately after taking the charge, Sharaf-ud-din was put to death. There was justice again in land and the Kashmiri bard sang the song referred to in the context. For details see Bamzai, op.cit., p.410.

9. The Bhands or minstrels are a peculiar people. They combine the profession of singing and acting with that of begging, and they travel great distances to enact the folk plays. They are excellent actors, clever at improvisation and fearless as to its results. They are a very pleasant people, and their mirth and good humour form a pleasant contrast to the chronic gloom of the Kashmiri peasant. For full details see. Walter, Lawrence, *Provincial Imperial Gazetteer of Kashmir*, p.38.
10. It is one of the folk plays of Kashmir. The play focuses on the bunglings of Afghan governance. See also *Keshur Luka Theatre*, Bhagat M. S. p.62.

11. *Derzes* are the lady characters in the play which show the sensual tastes of Afghan officials in Kashmir.


13. By inviting the Afghans to take over the administration of the valley, the Kashmiris had hoped a change for good. Little did they imagine that all the beauty and nobility for which Kashmir and its people were famous would be wiped off under their rule. Sorrowfully the poet voices these feelings in the lines under reference.

14. Azim Khan was an incharge Afghan governor in Kashmir. He derived pleasure in engaging Kashmiri as unpaid labours. He fleeced people by imposing multiple unjust exactions.

15. Jabbar Khan was the last Afghan governor of Kashmir. The tradition runs that Jabbar Khan was once told by some one that it a common notion among the Pandits that snow falls invariably on the *Shivaratri* night (13th of the dark fortnight of Phalguna). To test this, he ordered that the Pandits be not allowed to observe this festival in Phalguna (February-March) but in Asarh (June-July). Accordingly it had to be observed on the corresponding night in the latter month. It so happened that even on this night flakes of snow, preceded by a heavy rainfall which had rendered the atmosphere very cold. The Kashmiri bard then, mocking at him, sang. This satirical song.


18. Hangloo, R.L. “*Agrarian crises and the growth of popular protest*”, paper presented in the three day national seminar in the University of Kashmir.


   The poem highlights the devastation caused by floods, which occurred very frequently during the period under reference.


28. Col. Main Sintgh who replaced Kanwar Sher Singh as the Sikh governor of Kashmir in 1834 did commendable job in mitigating the distress caused by great famine of 1832. He was the best of all the Sikh governors of Kashmir. He brought the valley out of the chaos of famine by bringing grain and fowls from the Punjab and these were distributed among the people. It was for his public welfare measures that Kashmiris mourned his untimely death. For details see, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, Vol.11, p.116. *Tarikh-i-Kalan* Ms. Indian National Archives, New Delhi, 11.2-4 (Original MS in the Punjab Archives, Patiala).


32. Quoted by Herbert Read, "To Hell With Culture".

33. The selection of the names as their meanings show, represents the basic characteristics of the holders of the public office. The names are suggested by a master caricaturist in his work *Bebuj nama* (Story of Lawlessness). It is steeped in symbolisms depicting the glaring traits of the bureaucracy under Sikh rulers from the Patwari upto the Nazim or Governor. According to author, the whole lot of the officials referred to in the context was responsible for all sorts of the sufferings of the peasantry especially, their aim being simply to grease their own palms and the sustain Sikh power by force. See for details, *A History of Sikh Rule in Kashmir*, R. K. Parimu, p.5.

35. Ibid; ff.210-300.
38. For details See *Mathnavi* available in the Research Department Library, Srinagar.
40. Shad, Ramzan, Op.Cit., p.117. The details of the famine are touchingly portrayed in this *Lari Shah*.
43. *Lari Shah* which contains horrible details about floods, that occurred in the valley during the period under debate.
44. The poem reveals the ravages caused by earthquakes.
45. The folk poem gives a touching picture of famine stricken people.
46. The *Lari Shah* uncovers the officials apathy during the drought conditions in Kashmir.
52. Kashmiri Shawl which attained world wide fame prior to Franco. German war proved as a great source of revenue during the period under reference. To be benefited exceedingly, Afghan government in Kashmir established a department known as *Dag Shawl Department*. Its function was to collect taxes imposed on shawl manufacturers. No shawl was removed from the Karkhana for sale unless it bore the stamp of the Dagh Shawl Department. The department was put into
alert with more severity during the period under examination. See for details G.T. Vigne, Travels, Vol.11, 129.

53. Karkhanadars or owners of the industry constituted the wealthy and affluent class among the Muslims of the state. According to Moorcraft there were 550 Karkhandars in 1823, who employed from 30 to 500 Shawl weavers in their establishments. For further details see, Moorcraft, Williams, MS D. 264, pp.30-31. For Dag Shawl, See Robert Thorp, Kashmir Misgovernment. p.43.

54. A Karkhana is a house in which looms for making shawls are set up.


57. M. Y. Teng, Keshiris Luke Adabas Manz Keshur Samaj, Anhar, Folklore Number, Kashmiri Department, Kashmir University. Also see Kashmiri Women as depicted in its folk literature, paper presented by Farooq Fayaz in “Three Days Folklore Seminar, organised jointly by Central Institute of Indian Languages and Cultural Academy at Jammu, 1996.


60. The Dogra propaganda that Kashmir was their purchased property gained so much currency among the public that even the famous contemporary poet Sir Mohammad Iqbal Laments over this cheap sale.
Ai bade Sabha ghar be jeneva Guzr Kuni,
Harfe duyi be Majlis Aqwam baz goi,
Dehkan o Kishto Joye Khayaban Farokhtand,
Qume farokhtand ve chi Arzan farokhtand.
(O breeze, if thy happen to go Geneva way,
Carry a word to the nations of the world,
Their fields, their crops, their streams,
Even the peasants in the vale,
were Sold .... Alas!
How cheap was the sale).


62. As per the evidence available, the institution of Begar (forced labour) was in operation here in Kashmir from the earliest times. The earliest mention of Begar is in the Rajatarangni (V-172-174) when King Sankarvermana employed villagers to carry the baggage of, and supplies for army. There is mention of
Begar also in the time of Zain-ul-Abidin, as well as during the rule of many succeeding Sultans. During the Mughal rule this developed into a regular institution, particularly when huge armies of porters were required to carry the baggage of the emperors and their retinue during their frequent visits to the valley. In Afghan, Sikh and Dogra rule, the officials proved more brutal and harsh masters in the employment of forced labour. The institution during the period under discussion reduced the peasantry to the worst class of slaves. For details see Ishaq Khan’s *Some Aspects of Corvee*. Robert Therp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*. pp.64-66.

63. The year 1862 witnessed the creation of a unique agrarian institution in Kashmir, which led to the emergence of a new class of landed aristocracy. This new institution was called as “Chak”. The creation of the institution known as “Chak” was motivated by two objectives; to bring the follow land of the valley under cultivation and to create a class of favourites. For details see A. Wingate, Report, J.K> A, F. No:76 of 1896, J.KA. F. No:16, 1902.

64. It was yet another device of fleecing the people particularly the peasantry. It may be remembered that the state realised its share both in cash as well as in kind. A Kashmiri peasant, who always suffered for want of cash money had to seek the help of money lenders known in vernacular as *Waddar* to pay off the official cash demand. These *Waddars* exploited the helplessness of poor peasants and provided them money against exorbitant rate of interest. For details about *Waddars* see Lawrence, *Valley*, p.5. In order to check the exploitation of the money lenders, the state passed a law in 1928 by which the interest rate was fixed. However, the law remained only a dead letter. See Glancy Commission Report vice *Dastawaizat*, pp.137-138.

65. See Lawrence, *Valley*, p.403.

66. The horrible details about the exploitation of Chakdars have been dramatically depicted in this Kashmiri folk play, *Chekweli Pether*. For the effective presentation of the play the bhands of Akingam and Vathora were presented certificates of merit in one of the folk drama festivals organised at Tagore Hall, Srinagar by Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy.


69. Ibid.

71. The payment of Land revenue fixed as 1/3 in kind was known as *Mujwaza*. See Lawrence, *Valley*, 403, Galancy commission Report vide *Dastawaizat*, pp.137-138.

72. The *Mujwaza* caused much havoc to the peasantry because by robbing of 1/3 of the produce in kind, the peasant was left with a small quantity of produce hardly sufficient to fulfill his basic food needs. The woes and the wails of Kashmiri peasant caused by this unwarranted exercise is depicted very painfully in *Lari Shah* entitled *Mujawaza nama*. See for details poem, *Kashir Luke Beth*, Vol.III, M.L. Saqi, p.138.


75. *Ibid*.


77. Quoted by D. N. Dhar, p.122.

78. *Ibid*.

79. Their duties are to watch the crops while in the ground, and the Government share of the same is being carried to the Government store under his provision. It was said to be a common instance of oppression for the Shaqdar to extort money from the zamindars by threatening to accuse him of stealing the Government grain. He (Sazowul) was the official who was over the Shakdars. There was one Sazowul for about every ten villages. His duties were to inspect the Shaqdars and report to his kardar. It was said that he commonly extorted money from the Shaqdars, in the same way as Shaqdars would demand from the zamindars.


84. *Ibid*; p.56.


93. These sayings reflect the inner pain and discontent of Kashmir peasantry. If a serious decoding of the folk sayings is made, it is certainly to help in understanding the peasant reaction to the official barbarities and oppression.
94. The metaphoric expression is a satire in protest against the unjust and corrupt mechanations of revenue officials.
95. G. N. Aatish, *Kashmiri Folk Songs*, Vol.VII, p.5, 17. In context of the song referred to, the assertion of Lawrence that everything in Kashmir was taxed except air and water falls short of merit and objectivity. For ensuring the constant supply of canal water for irrigation purposes and even for ablution, peasant was forced to grease the palms of official incharge of the supply.
98. Moorcraft, MS. EURD-264, p.119. See also R. Logan, *Report on the Financial Condition of Kashmir State*, Delhi, 1981. Micro Film of this document is available in National Archives of India) p.79, Mirza Saif-ud-Din, Op.Cit; Vol.1, ff.29, 62, 72. According to Moorcraft the State had the right to call upon the cultivators and the artisans to render a certain amount of work for the state and its officials without any payment or at a very low rate. To quote M. I. Khan that a Sikh soldier was given a free hand to kill the local people. M. I. Khan, *Perspectives on Kashmir: Historical Dimesions*, Srinagar, 1983, p.54.
100. Ibid; p.792.
102. Also see Braikman, *Wrong in Kashmiri - Kashmir oppressed*, p.12.
103. Quoted by Bazaz.
106. Ibid; 413.

106(b) It is a kind of shoes woven out of straw. It is cheap and less slippery on the paths covered with frozen snow.


110. Ibid; E. F. Knight, pp.68-70.


113. The song was sung for me by few village ladies at the village Tekuin of District Pulwama (Unpublished).


115. Gilgit attained great strategic importance in the second half of the 19th century for British Indian Government. The establishment of political office at Gilgit was also part of this diplomatic strategy. The Euphoria of Russian expansion in the neighborhood of North Kashmir gave rise to recurring military excursions, which resulted in the frequent call of Kashmiri cultivators to carry baggage and other supplies for troops stationed in Gilgit, Baltistan and Askardu. See for details F. M. Hussanians, *British Policy Towards Kashmir*, p.62. In this Kashmiri folk play *Angrez Pettier* a gruesome picture of Kashmiri porters is shown who accompanied English adventurer on his way to hazardous ridges of Gilgit terrain.

115(b) M. S. Bhagat, Op.Cit; p.126.


118. Quoted by Dhar, p.127.

119. Saqi, *Keshir Luke Beth*, Vol.III, p.113. It may also be noted here that upto 1947, it was obligatory upon the villagers to construct and repair the canals and embankments. See for further details - Unpublished Thesis of m. Y. Ganai under the title of *Emergence and Role of Muslim Conference in Kashmir*, p.68.

120. Pandits though formed a microscopic minority in Kashmir, but under the close patronage of Dogra rulers, this community enjoyed multiple of privileges and incentives. The revenue administration was exclusively being controlled by the people of this community. According to oral and written evidences, the people played havoc with the Muslim peasantry, it is perhaps, on this ground that a folk expression “Bata go grete”, (Pandit is just like a stone mill which grinds the grains into power) has been coined in the vernacular. For details see Yousuf Saraf’s *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*.

121. During my field trip to village Bandipora, an important stage on the way to Gurez, I was introduced by one Khazir Bhat, a local resident to an aged lady, namely ‘Fazi’ who recited this song to me. (Unpublished).

122. In the first place, the residents of Srinagar city were exempted from Begar. Secondly, because of its close proximity to Durbar, officials Took every interest to please the inhabitants by way of providing them Sheli (in husked rice) on controlled rates.


124. George Forster who visited Kashmir in 1783, wrote “In Kashmir are seen merchants and commercial agents of the most of the principal cities of northern ends, also of Tartary, Persia and Turkey who at the same time advance their fortunes and enjoy the pleasure of fine climate. Travels, Vol. II, P.21, Also see. *Keshur Encyclopedia*, PP.213-215. Vol. III, Cultural Academy.


126. Shawl weavers were required to pay number of taxes and still worse a new law was introduced which forbade any weaver, whether ill or half blind or old and tired, to abandon his loom unless he could find some one to replace him though, it was also forbidden to leave the valley without the Maharaja’s permission.
many weavers risked their lives to escape from the valley. For details see G. T. Vigne, Travels, Vol.II, p.223. Sheeraza, (English) Cultural Academy, p.28.


128. Ibid.

129. Younghusband, Kashmir, p.178.


132. Wajit-u-Tawarikh, f.60.

133. Punjab served as a great rescue place for Kashmiri migrants. A territory which was under the control of British India employed innumerable benefits both at land and in the industry. So this was a great source of attraction for jobless Kashmiri labourers and artisans. For reference See Tales of Kashmir, S. N. Dhar, Folk Tales of Kashmir, J. H. Knowls.

134. Shawl weavers equation with mellow places the weaver at the lowest ebb of misery and economic poverty. Even our village folk who were always craving for two times bread, developed uncompromising dislike for the vegetable.

135. Abdul Ahad, Kashmir to Frank Fort, p.188.

136. The song gives a pathetic narration of shawl weaver. This was transmitted to me by a professional Shawl weaver of Chattabal, Gh. Rasool Dar. The song is not published in any of the Kashmiri Folk song collection.


139. P. N. Bazaz, Inside Kashmir, p.78.


141. Lawrence, Valley of Kashmir, p.35.


144. Kripa Ram, who was the governor of Kashmir gave strong orders to crush the uprising. Dogra forces at Srinagar under the command of Col. Bajay Singh,
charged guns and spears in the direction of the procession. Scores of people drowned into the marshy canal and 28 dead bodies were reported to have been returned to the people by the army. Some leaders of the agitation were put to death and some were driven out of the state. For details see Arthur Brinekman, *The Wrongs of Kashmir*, p.35. Nabba Shah, *Wajeej-ut-Tawarkh*, p.201. Also Sahibzada Hassan Shah, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, p.98.


146. Under the Chairmanship of A. Wingate the first Agrarian settlement Commission was set in motion. It signaled the dawn of new era in the history of Revenue administration in Kashmir. Its recommendations were of far reaching importance in the annals of Agrarian History of Kashmir.

147. Since the Maharajas considered the entire land of the state as their family property, the right of ownership thus rested on the state and was not granted until the first quarter of the current century.

148. See for elaborate details *Aatsh-i-Chinar*.

149. With the establishment of English Residency in Kashmir and the influx of European travelers and missionaries, brought with them new currents of western ideology. The Dogra policy under the new influence also underwent a change. These started a series of public welfare measure which until now was a dream in fancy.


151. In 1924, the Silk Factory workers were paid daily wage of four and a half annas per head which was obviously too inadequate, in view of the rising cost of living and the huge profit it earned. Inspite of their repeated representations to the authorities, government took repressive measures to silence the agitating mood of the workers. Hari Singh who was the commander-in-chief, ordered his troops to open fire on the workers. This resulted in the death of several workers. Almost the entire Muslim sector of the city is said to have gone without meals because of the pain of feeling and sorrow. For details see, *Tahrik-i-Huriyat-i-Kashmir*, Rashid Taseer, Vol.1, p.66.

152. Saraf, Kashmir Fight For Freedom, p.351.

153. Lawrence, Valley.

154. Wahab, op.Cit; p.18.


158. Shiekh Muhammad Abdullah was born at Soura, a village ten Kilometers away from Srinagar in 1905. After doing his M.Sc. he was appointed a teacher in government High School Baghi-Dilawar Khan. Moved by the abject poverty of Kashmiris and the oppressive and humiliating behaviour of the Dogra administration, he resigned from the government service and took active part in the struggle for freedom. For details see *Autobiography Atash-i-Chinar*, *Sheeraza*, Sheri-i-Kashmir Number, Cultural Academy.

159. Since the formation of political associations was banned in Kashmir, the Indian return Muslim educated youth formed, what is known as the “Reading Room Party”, in the garb of which they wanted a platform to bring all the educated youth together for devising ways and means to fight out the injustice done to the Muslim community in general and the educated Muslim youth in Particular: Shiekh Mohammad Abdullah took active part in the deliberations of the Reading Room Party. See for details S. M. Abdullah, *Atash-i-Chinar*, Under the secretory ship of S.M.Abdullah, the leaders of the party organised secret public meetings in which they induced the people to cultivate spirit of sacrifice without which freedom would be a distant dream.


The 13th July, the red letter day in the freedom struggle of Kashmir saw the beginning of the gigantic force behind the mass movement. It was as remarked by Zutshi, the first ever open public challenge to Maharaja Hari Singh’s government. (See for detail, *Emergency of Political Awakening in Kashmir*, Zutshi, p.228.

162. The commission was set up to look into the Muslim grievances and the recommendation made by the commission provided a new lease of life in the dull lives of Kashmiris.


164. The folk song composed by Kashmiri women was sung in admiration of Shiekh Muhammad Abdullah and was addressed as Sultan, the real King of Kashmir.


166. Ibid., p.69.
167. Ibid., p.69.

168. Revealed to me by Dr. Afzal Wani, Reader, Law, Aligarh Muslim University.

169. The song attributes some mystic merits to the Shiekh's personality.

170. The song gained wide currency in the thirties of the present century.

170b. Mehjoor was born in the village Mitrgama of Tehsil Pulwama in 1885. He started his career as a petty employee in the revenue department. Inspite of being government employee, he did not fail in projecting the woes and wailings of his countrymen through his poetic verses. His poems generated great enthusiasm among the Kashmiri freedom lovers and for his nationalistic appeal, he was acknowledged as the National poet of Kashmir. For full details see Kulyat, Mehjoor, (ed) M.Y. Teing. Best of Mehjoor (eng) cultural Academy. Mehjoor Shinasi, M.Y.Teing, Kashmiri Zuban Aur Shairi; Ab. Ahad Azad, Keshri Adback Tawarikh; Shafi Shariq Aur Naji Munawar, p.253-255; Mehjoor, His age and poetry; G. N. Firaq, Paper Published in The Literary Heritage of Kashmir, p.209, ed. Kalla.

171. Abdul Ahad Azad was a contemporary of Mehjoor. A Primary School Teacher, Azad authored first literary History of Kashmiri. He was deeply moved on seeing the existing economic order of the society and the age old political slavery, aristocratic social set-up which made life difficult and miserable for the common man, See Naj Munawar and Shafi Shauq, Op.Cit, pp.256-257.


173. Ibid.

174. F.M. Hussanian, Mehjoor-The Poet and Revolutionary

175. S.N. Dhar, Freedom Struggle as seen in Folklore; published in History of Freedom Struggle in Kashmir, Yasin, Rafique, p.231.

176. They were younger talent and all the three poets voiced the woes of the toiling peasants and labourers.


181. Under the banner of National Conference, Kashmiri poets did lot to develop a secular nationalistic make up of the Kashmiri society.


184. M.A. Ashraf, *Folklore Studies*.


