Chapter - 2

Agrarian Relations
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AGRARIAN RELATIONS

(A) ZAMINDARS

In Mughal India, the word Zamindar is a Persian compound, meaning literally the controller or holder of Zamin or land.¹ The institution of Zamindari occupied a pivotal position in Mughal revenue system and represented in fact a variety of superior interests in the land or its usufruct.² The nature of Zamindari rights and interests differed from place to place, and even within the same region or locality different types of Zamindari rights could be found.³ Zamindars held some superior rights on the land of the locality as well as functioned mostly as the intermediaries between the basic producers and the state.⁴

Zamindars in the Mughal Empire may be classified in three broad categories: (a) The Primary Zamindars or Village Zamindars; (b) The Intermediary Zamindars or Pargana Zamindars; (c) Tributary Chieftains or Hilly Chieftains. In Mughal Kashmir, these Zamindars generally belonged to different castes, such as Chaks, Dards, Beig, Bandey, Mirs, Afridi, Yusufzai, Khans, Dars, Bhat, Nayiks, Thakurs, Rainas, Khashus, Gangoos, Magreys, Kant, etc. They are believed to have sprung from one or the other gotra or the tribal families or the tribal division of the Hindus called Pandits in Kashmir.⁵

³ Ibid.
⁴ Mushtaq A.Kaw, op. cit., p.191; According to Anand Ram Mukhlis, who was in the service of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah in the 18th century, the word (Zamindari) originally meant a person who possessed land, but in his own time it denoted a person who owned land in a village or town and carried on cultivation: Mirat-al Istilah, a glossary of idioms and technical terms, A.D.1745, per text, Anjuman-i-Taraq-i-Urdu Library, Aligarh, ff.122-23b.
The term primary Zamindar has been used for the village headman by a modern historian, who possessed Zamindari over several villages together. In Kashmir, Malik Akram, (the headman of village Gundsursing), who held Zamindari over four villages. After his death, Zamindari of the captioned area was possessed by his successor Rasul Malik, is suggestive of the fact that Zamindari generally ran into a particular family notwithstanding the periodical dynastic changes. Gulshan-i-Dastur also reinforces the viewpoint that Zamindari, in essence, was heritable for after the death of a Zamindar, his entire property including the right to hold the Zamindari and asamis falling there under, were equally distributed among his male heirs. The norms of inheritance were set and legally established. Needless to say, that the important business of primary Zamindars or village Zamindars was revenue collection. Similar type of responsibility was disburdened by them for the assignees in jagir land also. In lieu of their services, they claimed a direct share from the produce of the peasants. In connection with their right and privileges Mushtaq A. Kaw writes that “their right of ownership was recognized only on that portion of village land which they inherited from their predecessors. Excluding their interests as Zamindars, village headmen were otherwise much like their fellow peasants; registered asamis who contributed to

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7 Mushtaq A. Kaw, *op. cit.*, p. 195; Also see Walter Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p. 307: According to Lawrence, wealthy and influential persons acted as petty chieftains and lords of three villages together.
10 Munshi Har Karan, *Insha-i-Har Karan*, Sulaiman collection, 406 / 139, MAL, AMU, Aligarh, ff. 35ab; Also see N.A. Siddiqi, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-40: The term primary Zamindar has been used for the village headman.
11 Mushtaq A. Kaw, *op. cit.*, p. 196; Also see Simon Digby, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-22.
the revenue of the state along with other asamis. The only difference was that they were comparatively resourceful and carried a little that earned them certain privileges in their respective villages.”

Besides village Zamindars, there were intermediary Zamindars or the pargana Zamindars who belonged to different castes of Kashmir. Abul Fazl, in the Ain-i-Akbari, has provided an exhaustive account bearing the names of several Zamindars castes and their spatial distribution over different parganas of the valley. Besides, Ain, other sources like Tarikh-i-Hasan, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, Majmuat-Tawarikh, Waqiat-i-Kashmir, etc., have also given a good account of landed aristocratic families as well as the chief of the most prominent land-holding castes, who were generally patronized by the Mughals and the Afghans to hold Zamindari in their respective parganas and enjoyed privileges and jagirs in their respective areas. According to Hasan, the chief of the Bandey tribe held village Bandipora in jagir. Qasim Khan, the first Mughal governor, gave titles and jagirs to Sher Islam Magrey. As far as the Pathan rule is concerned, Afridi and Yusufzai tribes came over from Afghanistan or Kabulistan and settled in different parganas of Kashmir. Having come from Afghanistan they were usually known by the name Khan and Khaibari. In Ain, we find that the caste Khan held Zamindari over two parganas. The chieftains of the passes leading into Kashmir from across

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13 Ibid, pp. 196-97. Also see nos. 22; Where he writes that “Rasul Malik, the Zamindar of village Gundursing that he had his hereditary land in village Panur of pargana Lar also. On the village records, he was, therefore, registered as an asami required to contribute to the revenue of the state along with other asamis.

14 Ain, II, pp. 176-78.

15 Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, pp. 414, 506.


18 Ain, II, pp. 176-78.
Hindustan or Turkistan held the title of Malik. Mukhtar’ul Malik son of Namdar Malik, Zamindar of Shahabad, laid down his own life for the sake of Mughal power. Haider Malik Chadoora was granted the title of Chaghta’i and Ra’esu’-l Malik by Jahangir. Yusuf Shah, Ali Magrey, and others were provided mansab and granted jagirs within and outside the valley and also conferred with princely favours. Beig, Bandey, Kant and Dhar castes, enjoyed prominent position in the land revenue as well as the general administration of the country. According to Hasan, the caste Beig owed its origin to a Chaghta’i caste from Central Asia. The members of the said caste came to Kashmir during the period of the Sultans in Kashmir. They held mansab and played the role of local chieftains. He also writes that the people of the Bandey caste migrated from Turkistan and settled in Kashmir during the Mughal rule. Its chief members enjoyed prominent position in the government and held Bandipora village in jagir; hence called Bandey. While about Kant he says that, the word Kant did not exactly specify a caste but an imperial title conferred on one Khwaja Husain Kabuli who had been assigned the job of the construction of the Nagar Nagar hillock. On its completion, Mirza was rewarded with an ornament named Kant (ear-ring). Later on, imperial Khilat was also bestowed upon him on the name Kant itself. One single caste Bhat held Zamindari over as large as four parganas (i.e. Mattan, Nagam, Zainagir

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20 Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj Collection 32/150, f. 252a.
24 Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, p. 414.
25 Ibid.
and Inderkot) at one and the same time.\textsuperscript{27} We also find, the existence of numerous Zamindar castes (like Raina & Khan, Bhat / Brahman, Dardi & Shal, Bhat / Musalman, Khasi, Gangoo, Raina) in a single pargana (like Brang, Vihi, Ular, Pattan, Dachin Khawara) respectively,\textsuperscript{28} should also be viewed in the perspective of the hereditary nature of the right of Zamindari which was bound to split in the event of the death of its holder. In the process, multiple Zamindars came into being in a single pargana.\textsuperscript{29} During the time of the Afghans, pargana Shahabad had numerous Zamindars such as Rahim Malik, Rasul Malik and Bahadur Malik, all belonging to one and the same caste implying in a way that the Afghans like the Mughals also upheld the hereditary principle underlying the functioning of the Zamindari.\textsuperscript{30}

Like primary Zamindar, pargana Zamindars were responsible for the collection of revenue from the primary Zamindars and paid it to the imperial treasury, or to the jagirdars, or to the chieftains – or in certain cases kept it themselves and the maintenance of law and order.\textsuperscript{31} For these functions, they were entitled to a various types of perquisites, such as commission,\textsuperscript{32} deductions, revenue-free lands (nankar or banth), cesses, etc.\textsuperscript{33} According to Mushtaq A. Kaw, “the same was reciprocated either by allowing them to hold a revenue-free land or else through a specific share claimed from the peasants produce which usually amounted to one and a half ser from each kharwar of paddy. In addition, they claimed numerous cesses and perquisites besides

\textsuperscript{27} Ain, vol. II, pp. 176-78. \\
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{29} Mushtaq A. Kaw, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 201-202. \\
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{31} N.A. Siddiqi, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 34-35; S. Nurul Hasan, \textit{Zamindars Under the Mughals}, Edited by Robert Eric Frykenberg, Manohar, 1979, pp. 24-27. \\
\textsuperscript{32} Elsewhere in Mughal India, the commission ranged between 5-10 % and somewhere between 10 to 20 % on the revenue realized: N.A. Siddiqi, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 35; Irfan Habib, \textit{The Agrarian System}, p. 187. \\
\textsuperscript{33} S. Nurul Hasan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 24-25; Document no’s : 528/5, 574/2, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.
levied tax on variety of commodities that passed through several poll-posts falling within their Zamindaris. The rate of the poll-tax levied varied from commodity to commodity. The Zamindars were equally authorised to levy imposts on forest and water products.34 Elsewhere in Mughal India, a Zamindar was entitled to customary claims even after Zamindari was taken away from him.35

The pargana Zamindars also retained a certain contingent comprising both sawar and piadah for the purpose of the collection of land revenue and other taxes, which was a difficult task that could not be generally performed without the support of a standing force. Such a force was always furnished with muskets and other war weapons36 and it largely contributed to the soldiery of Kashmir.37 In Ain, Abul Fazl has estimated its number at thirty thousand, nine hundred and sixty seven with three thousand, two hundred and two sawar and twenty seven thousand, seven hundred and sixty five piadah.38 While Hasan in his Tarikh-i-Hasan, has numbered the Zamindar force at ninety five thousand, two hundred and ninety two with four thousand, eight hundred ninety two sawar and ninety thousand four hundred piadah.39 The pargana Zamindars also participated in every such act of the imperial authorities that sought to subdue the hilly Chieftains, to expand the territorial extent of the Mughals and to enthrone or dethrone someone on the subedari of Kashmir. In all such type of matters, they reacted for or against a certain contending party.40

34 Mushtaq A. Kaw, op. cit., p. 203.
35 N.A. Siddiqi, op. cit., pp. 33-34 & n.58.
36 Tuzuk, p. 312.
38 Ain, II, p. 176.
Notwithstanding, during our period of study, the landed aristocratic families (like Malik and Nayak) of Shahabad / Batu usually performed the job of keeping vigil on the passes that fell within the parganas where they had generally their jagirs also.\(^{41}\)

For example, Zamindars of Shahabad, held complete control over parganas of said locality, was the residence of Akbar’s Maliks.\(^{42}\) Likewise, Mahdi Nayak and Husain Nayak, the two Zamindars of pargana Batu, guarded and regulated the whole traffic on the entire Mughal road or route via important villages of Hirapur, Poshana, Bahramgalla, etc.\(^{43}\) Badauni, in his *Muntakhabu-t Tawarikh*, mentioned that, Mughal occupation of Kashmir would have been fairly difficult, without the support of pargana Zamindars.\(^{44}\) Khafi Khan in his *Muntakhabu-Lubab*, says that one of the important factors that helped the Mughal forces to carve out their rule in Kashmir, was manifest in the mutual animosity that obtained among the ruling families and Zamindars of Kashmir some of whom had already joined their hands with the imperial army.\(^{45}\) Besides, they were also called upon to render necessary services as and when the imperial forces were engaged in clashes with the hilly Chieftains. For instance, Raja of Kishtwar was subdued with the active support of the local


\(^{42}\) G.T. Vigne, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp.324-25; Also see, *Tariikh-i-Hasan*, I, p. 419: The word Malik did not signify any particular caste or clan but simply an imperial title conferred on the Chieftains, Jagirdars and Mansabdars during the Sultanate. The Chieftains of the passes leading into Kashmir from across Hindustan and Turkistan held the title of Malik. The term Malik was generally applied to the Sheikh caste.

\(^{43}\) *Tuzuk*, p. 316, Jahangir, in his account does not name the pargana (Batu) these two Zamindars hailed from. From the Abul Fazl’s account (*Ain*), Nayik caste is registered against the pargana Batu: *Ain*, II, p. 177. Also see *Akbarnama*, vol. III, part-II, p. 503: “In Rajauri, Bahram Nayik, Ismail Nayik, and Shanki Charwar, who were the chief conductors of the passes, came and paid their respect. They offered up good wishes for the conquest of the country.”

\(^{44}\) *Muntakhabu-t Tawarikh*, vol. II, pp. 353-54.

Zamindars of Kashmir, in the time of Jahangir. Likewise, during the reign of Shahjahan, Raja of Tibet was made to acknowledge Mughal suzerainty with the assistance rendered by the local potentates. For example, the local Zamindars of Kashmir provided a force of 2,000 horsemen and 10,000 footmen to but even themselves fought shoulder to shoulder with the imperial forces of Mughal governor (Zaffar Khan) who had laid a seige to a strong-hold in which Abdal, (the son of Ali Rai), the Tibetan Chief was besieged. The services of Kashmiri boatmen were also arranged by the local potentates, when the imperial forces were crossing the river Nile on the banks of which the strong-hold of Abdal was situated. Not only that, they contributed whole-heartedly and cared least about their own lives. For example, Mukhtarul Malik (son of Namdar Malik), Zamindar of Shahabad, laid down his own life for the sake of the Mughal power. They played an important role in making and unmaking the subedars, during the Afghan period. For instance, Zamindar of Shahabad, dethroned Amir Khan Jawansher and enthroned Karimdad Khan in his place on the subedari of Kashmir. Another important as well as significant role played by local potentates, could be viewed in dynastic changes. That Haider Chak and Hakim Ali, the erstwhile Chieftains of Kashmir, inspired Emperor Akbar, in 1586 for the Mughal occupation of Kashmir. In 1753, invitation was extended by Mir Muqim Kant to Ahmad Shah Durrani for establishing Afghan rule in Kashmir.

46 Tuzuk, p. 312.
51 Majmuat-Tawarikh, MS. No. 148, pp. 367-68.
A systematic policy of appeasement was pursued by Akbar and his successors, towards these warring Zamindar castes. Abul Fazl has given a good list of the Chiefs of the most prominent land-holding castes like Bha ts , Nayik , Chak , Magreys , etc. who were granted with princely favours and were conferred with titles , for example Haider Malik Chadoora was granted the title of Chaghtai and Raesu-l Mulk by Jahangir.52 They were also provided mansabs, granted jagirs and thereby enrolled in the imperial service. For instance, Yusuf Shah, Ali Magrey, and others were provided mansabs and granted jagirs within and outside the valley.53 Most of them were granted Zamindari in their respective areas.54 With the purpose of creating friendship, matrimonial relations were established with the family members of these Zamindar castes. As Emperor Akbar married the daughter of one of the Zamindars of Kashmir. His son Prince Salim , sought in marriage the daughter of another Zamindar Mubarik Chak.55 Shahjahan’s son, Prince Murad , was betrothed to the youngest daughter of Zamindar of Shahabad.56 Besides, the rulers and the princes, nobles and other courtiers were also united by social contracts with them.57 The Mughal Emperor Akbar reconciled with the local potentates as long as they remained loyal, otherwise he behaved with them ruthlessly when they became refractory.58 His successors not only resumed their Zamindari and seized their landed estates but even eliminated them from

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54 Mushtaq A. Kaw, op. cit., p. 211.
56 Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, f. 149a.
the overall administration of the country.\footnote{Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, ff. 132b-34a; Mushtaq A. Kaw, op. cit., p. 212.} Most of them (Chak caste) were forced to adopt the job of wage-earners and ordinary agriculturists.\footnote{Ibid: During the reign of Jahangir, the governor Itiqad Khan massacred several members of Chak caste in groups. In 1594 Muhib Ali, the foujdar of Dechan Khawura, killed a large number of Kashmiris near Mattan. Baharistan-i-Shahi, f. 205.} Zamindars were completely annihilated, under the Afghans too, so that they were left with no hand in the administration of the country.\footnote{Mount Stuart Elphinstone, op. cit., vol, II, p.238.} The Afghan governor Azad Khan replaced many of them and in their place employed around 3,000 Sikhs on different administrative positions.\footnote{Mushtaq A. Kaw, op. cit., p. 212.} In particular, the Chaks was thus hardly allowed to heave a sigh of relief and they were consequently forced to go in for the marauding activities in the forests they generally dwelt in.\footnote{G.T. Vigne, op. cit., vol. I , pp. 301-302.} Besides Chaks, the Nayik caste was also suppressed under the Afghans. Their landed estates were seized and the charge of the important passes leading into the valley was taken over from them.\footnote{Mushtaq A. Kaw, op. cit., p. 213.}

There were some other families who became fairly influential during the period. For example, the caste of Raina, became powerful enough during Jahangir’s reign. It was one among the important families of Kashmir and was known by the name Chandra during the Hindu rule. With the onset of the Sultanate, it came to be designated as Raina meaning “great”.\footnote{Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, pp. 417-18; Haider Malik Chadoora, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, vol. I, ff. 130a-132b. Idi Raina, Musa Raina, Malik Ali, Haider Malik etc. were its most important chiefs: Haider Malik Chadoora, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, vol. I, ff. 136ab, 212b-213a; Srivara, Rajatarangini, Eng. Transl. J.C. Dutt, pp. 225-60.} Its Chief namely Haider Malik not only enjoyed the Zamindari of his native village but was also enrolled in the imperial services; hence functioned as the Daroga-i-

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60 Ibid: During the reign of Jahangir, the governor Itiqad Khan massacred several members of Chak caste in groups.
   In 1594 Muhib Ali, the foujdar of Dechan Khawura, killed a large number of Kashmiris near Mattan. Baharistan-i-Shahi, f. 205.
64 Mushtaq A. Kaw, op. cit., p. 213.
imarat (incharge building). During the reign of Shahjahan, Zamindar family of Shahabad shot into prominence. Later on, we find that the castes like, Beig, Bandey, Kant and Dhar castes enjoyed eminent positions in the land revenue as well as the general administration of the country. One of the Chief of the Dar caste was allowed to hold superior rights over large tract of land, under the Afghans.

Besides, village and pargana Zamindar, the third category of the Zamindars was composed of the tributary Chieftains of the hilly states bordering on the external boundaries of Kashmir. These states were Little and Large Tibet, Kishtwar, Pakhli, Muzaffarabad and Poonch, Iskardu.

67 Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, f. 149a.
69 Mushtaq A. Kaw, op. cit., p. 216.
71 Kishtawar, situated to the South of Kashmir, 60 kos distant from the capital Srinagar, was first conquered during the reign of Jahangir. The people of the country belonged to the caste of Thakurs and were fairly poor. They were concentrated in the villages which were scattered over the plains and surrounded by hedgeless fields, irrigated by little streams. The Zamindar of the country retained 700 musketeers (tupchi): Tuzuk, pp. 294-97, 312; Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, p. 241; G.T. Vigne, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 202-207.
72 Pakhli situated in the North-West of India, was conquered in 1619. It was 35 kos in length and 25 kos in width: Tuzuk, pp. 290-91; Majmuat-Tawarikh, MS. No. 148, p. 266.
Chenani, Jammu, Khushial, Dung, Akhnoor and Rajaouri. The Chieftains were the hereditary autonomous rulers of their territories and enjoyed practically sovereign powers. Both the Mughals and Afghans had tried to obtain from these Chieftains the recognition of their overlordship and imposed on them the obligation to pay regular tribute (Peshkash) and to render military assistance to them whenever called upon.

The hilly states, that bordering on the peripheries of Kashmir, mostly constituted vast mountains, thick forests and difficult passes. Their population largely comprised the Muslims who owed their ancestry to different tribes.

The people of Pakhli owed their ancestry to the Mongol tribe called qarlugh, the people of Muzaffarabad and Poonch belonged to the khokha-bomba and gujar tribes. All these tribesmen were military strong enough to resist any

Zamindar caste of Muzaffarabad owed its birth to a Rajput caste the people of which accepted Islam at a certain period of time. Few Chief persons of the caste were in the service of Sultan which they retained under the Chaks as well as the Mughals. Under the Afghans, Zamindars of Muzaffarabad enjoyed jagir in Kashmir: Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, pp. 236-37, 229.

Poonch was situated to the West of Kashmir; it was 3300 feet high above the sea level and was 76 miles away from the capital Srinagar via Baramulla route. Its population comprised of both the Hindus and the Muslims. In the early 17th century, Emperor Jahangir made them to acknowledge imperial rule and got a mosque built there through one of his nobles Haider Malik Chadoora. But, during the time of later Mughals, they raised their head and most often ransacked villages of Kashmir: Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, pp. 238-39.

Zamindari could be bestowed upon any person who was capable to administer the hilly country, willing to acknowledge the imperial suzerainty and pay annual tribute regularly: Lahori, Badshahnama, vol. I, part-II, pp. 285-87; Majmuat-Tawarikh, MS. No. 148, pp. 404-406.

From the Zamindar of Tibet, the tribute was realized in the form of leather and wool: F. Bernier, op. cit., pp. 419-21.

The Zamindars of Chenani, Jammu, Khushial, Dung, Akhnoor and Rajaouri were subjugated by and made to pay regular tribute to the Afghan governor at Srinagar: Mount Stuart Elphinstone, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 241-42.

The Zamindars of Chenani, Jammu, Khushial, Dung, Akhnoor and Rajaouri were subjugated by and made to pay regular tribute to the Afghan governor at Srinagar: M.S. Elphinstone, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 241-42.


Tuzuk, p. 290.

effort or attempt seeking to subdue them. For example, during the reign of the Chaks, people of Poonch became refractory. During the period of later Mughals, they again raised their head and most often ransacked villages of Kashmir.\textsuperscript{82} During the reign of Jahangir, the Zamindar of the Kishtawar retained 700 musketeers (tupchi). When given his leadership qualities, he could afford organizing 6,000 to 7,000 soldiers besides several horses and horsemen to meet any eventuality.\textsuperscript{83} In Saleh’s account, we also find that during Jahangir’s reign, the effort of Hashim Khan, the Mughal governor, to conquer the Greater Tibet, proved abortive due to the strong resistance offered by the Tibetens, reinforced by their strong forts and the difficulties faced by the Imperial forces in terms of rough weather, shortage of supplies, cold climate and presence of heavy snow.\textsuperscript{84} Both for purpose of defence as well as for strategic reasons, the Chieftains retained strongholds which were generally built along the banks of the rivers having terrible flow of water. The forts were believed to represent a symbol of power, authority and grandeur. With their surrender, was the defeat of the defeated party considered complete.\textsuperscript{85} Usually, the state avoided the chances of a conflict with the hilly Chieftains keeping in view their military strength together with the complex geo-physical formation of and inaccessibility to their respective regions.\textsuperscript{86} The necessity of the state to retain normal ties with them was again called for because in the event of the strained relations, the hilly Chieftains offered un-called for asylum to whosoever entered their country to escape the imperial punishment.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{82} Tarikh-i-Hasan, I, p. 238.
\textsuperscript{83} Tuzuk, p. 297.
\textsuperscript{84} Amal-i-Saleh, ed. Ghulam Yazdani, vol. II, pp. 253-54.
\textsuperscript{87} As, during the governorship of Itiqad Khan in 1612, a virtual number of Chaks, the erstwhile rulers of Kashmir, wore the mantle of defiance against the rule of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir in Kashmir. Although, most of them were subdued, yet a few of them including their Chiefs like
The state, in order to woo their friendship as well as to promote goodwill and cordiality with the Chieftains of the mountainous regions of Tibet and Karnah, it often sought the services and the assistance of chiefs like Baba Talib Isfahani, Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi and Haider Chak. In order to woo their friendship, the matrimonial relations were also established by the Mughals with the family members of the hilly Chieftains. For instance, while Prince Salim married one, Emperor Jahangir married another daughter of the Zamindar of Tibet. Prince Shah Shuja married one of the daughters of Oghar Sen, Raja of Kishtwar, during the reign of Shahjahan. Likewise, the Afghans also cultivated matrimonial relations with the hilly Chieftains. For example, in 1800 the daughter of the Zamindar of Muzaffarabad was betrothed to the Wafadar Khan, the Afghan governor.

Unlike Primary Zamindar and pargana Zamindar, the hilly Chieftains did not function as intermediaries responsible for the collection of land revenue

Habib Chak and Ahmad Chak, still managed to escape and seek shelter with Zamindar of Tibet. It was only after a lapse of around twenty four years that during a military expedition launched by Zaffar Khan, the governor of Mughal Emperor Shahjahan against Abdal, the Mirzaban of Tibet, that both Habib Chak and Ahmad Chak were captured and brought to Kashmir. The charge of the hilly country was then handed-over to Muhammad Murad, the brother of Abdal, who, as was expected, might have inter alia, undertaken to refuse shelter to every such seditious element who in future ran away from Kashmir for fear of imperial punishment: Amal-i-Saleh, ed. Ghulam Yazdani, vol. II, p. 262; Lahori, Badshahnama, vol. I, part-II, pp. 281-82; Maathir-ul-Umara, vol. I, ed. By Maulavi Abdur Rahim, ASB, Calcutta, 1888, vol. I, part-I, pp. 180-81; Elliot & Dowson, op. cit., vol. VII, pp. 62-63; Saksena, op. cit., p. 114.


Baba Talib Isfahani hailed from Isfahan but lived in Kashmir for a pretty long time. In due course of time, he opted to become an official and enter the imperial service. From Kashmir, he was sent as an envoy to the ruler of Little Tibet, Ali Rai. On return, he presented to Abul Fazl, a treatise written on the wonders of Tibet: Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh, III, pp. 265-66.

Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi persuaded the Zamindars of Karnah to cooperate with the Mughal forces: Akbarnama, III, part-II, p. 481.


Majmuat-Tawarikh, MS. No. 148, p. 405.
and other subsidiary kind of duties. The Zamindar of the hilly states had contrarily no such bar, in fact, they were free to manage their own affairs as per their local customs. They were tied to the central authority only for the purpose of the Peshkash (tribute) payable to the Mughal and the Afghan subedar at Srinagar. For example, in Kishtwar no land tax was imposed on agricultural produce. However, revenue was generated from other sources which included annual tax of six Sanhasi, imposed on each household besides penalties on small offences together with a special tax realized from whosoever was wealthy and rich. Out of the revenue realized, they were required to pay a part as tribute that always varied from locality to locality. For example, out of the total revenue of rupees one lakh, Zamindar of Kishtwar paid rupees one thousand as tribute. Whereas, Zamindar of Tibet paid an annual tribute of rupee one lakh to the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan. The Zamindar of Damtoor paid rupees three thousand as an annual tribute to the Afghans.

Thus we find that they required to pay a part as tribute according to the extent of their respective domains and the degree of the resources available in their hilly principalities. We also find that the amount of tribute was realized in kind, which varied in nature, weight and size. Bernier mentions that the tribute was realized in the form of leather and wool from the Zamindar of Tibet. A Kashmiri traveller also states in his account that, the Zamindar of Tibet paid annual tribute to the governor of Kashmir in the form of “9 pods of musk, 9 head of Tibetan ponies, 9 head of Shrigar [sic, yaks], from the tails of which

92 Tucuk, pp. 296-97.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
they make *chowries*, 9 pieces of Chinese *linari* cloth, 9 *takhtai Chah* [bricks of tea], and 100 balls [dana] of Chinese zedoary.\(^{98}\)

*Zamindari* of these hilly states was held in perpetuity. It, therefore, ran into a particular family in which a deceased *Zamindar* was always succeeded by his male-heirs. The hilly principality of Muzaffarabad had “two or three Chiefs called Rajas” (i.e. co-sharing *Zamindars*), the principal of whom dwelt in proper Muzaffarabad.\(^{99}\) The medieval state generally up-held such a hereditary principle. But if called by circumstances, *Zamindari* could be bestowed upon any such person who was able to administer the mountainous region, willing to acknowledge the imperial suzerainty and pay annual tribute regularly.\(^{100}\) For example, in 1800, the Afghan governor Wafadar Khan handed over *Zamindari* of the entire country (Poonch) to his Wazir Ruhu-Illah who did not at all belong to any *Zamindar* family and arrested Raja Khan Bahadur, *Zamindar* of Poonch, for his unruly behaviour.\(^{101}\)

The state adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the hilly *Chieftains*. In order to promote goodwill and cordial relationship, few *Chieftains* were directly enrolled in the imperial service; granted *mansabs* and so that they performed a different sort of responsibilities for the state outside their own domain.\(^{102}\) They were allowed to hold, in part or in toto, their country in *jagir* so that the revenue accruing from that place was suitably adjusted against their salary.\(^{103}\) In addition, the amount of tribute payable by them was occasionally

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adjusted against the salaries which they were due to receive as servants of the state. For example, the Zamindar of Muzaffarabad enjoyed a cash jagir worth the amount of rupees two thousand which otherwise was payable by him as tribute to the Afghan governor. Besides cash jagirs, they were occasionally authorised to appropriate the revenue of a certain area outside their own principality.\textsuperscript{104} For instance, Zamindar of Tibet, Kishtwar and Muzaffarabad were also granted jagirs within the valley which they managed through their agents.\textsuperscript{105} During the time of Afghans, the villages of Drau and Karnah were in the jagir of Mahmud Khan, the Mirzaban of Muzaffarabad.\textsuperscript{106} During the same period, the respective Zamindar held pargana Krohin in jagir. Besides, he held a cash jagir of rupees 20,000 payable from the revenue of pargana Khwara.\textsuperscript{107} Besides, mansabs and jagirs, these hilly Chieftains were conferred titles, robes of honour and presented with gifts by the rulers. For example, Zamindar of Rajouri and Tibet were conferred the title of Raja.\textsuperscript{108} Zamindar of Poonch was presented Khilats and gifts comprising articles such as dagger, sword, horse, etc. by Emperor Shahjahan in 1645.\textsuperscript{109} In return, the rulers also received gifts as well as presents from the Zamindars.\textsuperscript{110} Indeed, such warm and enthusiastic relations obtained only exceptionally and that too where a Zamindar unhesitatingly submitted before the imperial authorities. Generally, no

\begin{itemize}
\item[]{104} Mushtaq A. Kaw, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 227.
\item[]{105} Simon Digby, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.9-10; \textit{Tarihk-i-Hasan}, I, p. 227; The Zamindar of Kishtwar was granted jagir actually during the reign of Jahangir. But his successors held the same till the advent of the Sikh rule in Kashmir: G.T. Vigne, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. I, pp. 203-4; Also see, Mushtaq A. Kaw, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 227.
\item[]{106} \textit{Tarihk-i-Hasan}, I, pp. 227, 232.
\item[]{107} \textit{Ibid}, I, p. 237.
\item[]{108} Muhammad Kazim, \textit{Alamgirnama}, vol. II, p. 838.
\item[]{110} F. Bernier, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 422: According to Bernier, Zamindar of Tibet annually sent several articles of presents to the Emperor Aurangzeb comprising “the productions of the country; such as crystal, musk, a piece of Jade, and those valuable white tails taken from a species of cow peculiar to Great Tibet, which are attached by way of ornament to the ears of elephants.”
\end{itemize}
Zamindar was willing to surrender his political identity and financial autonomy. They were reluctant to pay tribute and were always on the look out for a chance to strike against the imperial rule. There are number of examples to certify the recurrence of armed conflicts between the contending parties on the question of tribute; one strongly desirous as well as keen to realize and other unwilling as well as offering resistance to pay. For example, Zamindar of Kishtwar turned refractory, in 1623. The then subedar “Irdat Khan was ordered to proceed hot-foot, before they had time to establish themselves firmly, and having inflicted condign punishment on them to tear up the root of sedition”.-----“and regained the mastery” and made the respective Zamindar to pay the tribute (Peshkash) regularly.\textsuperscript{111} In 1665, Raja of Tibet, for his unruly disposition, met the same fate, when the Mughal governor, Saif Khan, arrested and presented him before the court of Aurangzeb where, in addition to reading Khutba in the name of the Emperor and embracing Islam, he accepted to pay baj and kharaj without any break.\textsuperscript{112} Raja of Jammu turned defiant, in 1679. Subedar Hafizullah rebuked him and convinced him to pay the peshkash as usual.\textsuperscript{113} In 1701, Raja of Rajouri adopted an ostentatious attitude. He too was shown path and subjected to all those conditions extraneously related to the payment of tribute although the military campaigns launched for the purpose drained off the imperial resources thereby obliging as well as compelling the subedars to impose illegal and additional taxes and cesses upon their masses.\textsuperscript{114}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} \textit{Tuzuk}, pp. 345-46.
\item \textsuperscript{112} \textit{Maasir-i-Almagir}, p. 52; \textit{Majmuat-Tawarikh}, MS. No. 148, pp. 306-8; \textit{Hashmat-i-Kashmir}, ff. 50-51.
\item \textsuperscript{113} \textit{Majmuat-Tawarikh}, MS. No. 148, pp. 311-12; \textit{Hashmat-i-Kashmir}, f. 51; \textit{Waqiat-i-Kashmir}, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, f. 188a.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Mushtaq A. Kaw, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 229; Also see, \textit{Hashmat-i-Kashmir}, ff. 51-52.
\end{itemize}
Taking advantage of the weakness of the imperial authority, the *Chieftains* would on occasion assume independence, or extend their territories and they came, killed, looted and returned. Thus, particularly after the death of Aurangzeb, 115 *Zamindars* raised an unprecedented chain of revolts in the wake of which they expanded the extent of their *Zamindari* by occupying a few directly administered villages. For instance, in 1712-13, *Zamindar* of Pakhli, forcibly occupied villages such as Drau and Karnah which formed the part of the administrative division of Kamraz. 116 In addition to this, they plundered adjacent villages and laid hand on almost everything of the cultivators including *mahsul* that was in other manner payable to the state. 117

These *Zamindars* also played a significant role in making and unmaking the *subedars*. In this regard they directly interfered in the event of struggle as well as conflicts for the *subedari* of Kashmir. However, while taking sides with one or the other contending party, in lieu of the support given, they were always rewarded. Sometime, they succeeded in reaffirming as well as reasserting their identity, avoiding payment of *peshkash* (tribute) and appropriating the state revenue in such areas on which they had no claim whatever. In 1739, two leading *mansabdars* Abu Barkat Khan and Khilatullah Khan had an armed conflict over the *subedari* of Kashmir. While *Zamindar* of Muzaffarabad took the side of the latter, *Zamindar* of Poonch contrarily sided with the former. *Zamindar* of Kishtwar had also got involved in the conflict. Abu Barkat Khan ultimately came out victorious. In lieu of the support given,


the tribals of Poonch were allowed to stay in the valley. During their stay, they unleashed a reign of loot and plunder.\(^{118}\) Again in 1741-42, the tribals of these two mountainous regions got involved in the fight for the subedari of Kashmir between two prominent mansabdars, Abu Barkat Khan and Inayatu-llah Khan. In reward to the support given, Zamindar of Muzaffarabad was granted a jagir in Kashmir by Abu Barkat Khan.\(^{119}\) Again in 1800, in lieu of the support given during the fight for the subedari, Zamindar of Muzaffarabad was given the total control of the area between Baramulla and Muzaffarabad.\(^{120}\) We have a few examples, which certified that, the growing power and influence of these turbulent tribesmen was effectively suppressed as well as received final setback during the Mughal and Afghan rule respectively. The Mughal deputy governor Sa’dat Khan (1712-17), though very capable, nevertheless sought the services of the then diwan Abdu-l Azim Khan, an Irani noble, who effectively suppressed bombas as well as khokhas.\(^{121}\) Likewise, in 1783, Afghan governor Karimdad Khan, struck a fatal blow to the power of the Zamindar of Muzaffarabad for his uncalled interference in Kashmir affairs else his resistance to pay annual peshkash (tribute) and submit before the imperial authority of the Afghans.\(^{122}\)

\(^{118}\) Majmuat-Tawarikh, MS. No. 148, pp. 350-54.

\(^{119}\) Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, ff. 252a-265b.

\(^{120}\) Majmuat-Tawarikh, MS. No. 148, pp. 404-6.

\(^{121}\) Hashmat-i-Kashmir, ff. 53-54; Also see, Waqiat-i-Kashmir, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, ff. 227ab.

\(^{122}\) In this regard, the Afghan soldiers penetrated deep into Muzaffarabad and arrested all the elderly persons of the tribe who were later brought to Srinagar where they were drowned in the Dal lake: Majmuat-Tawarikh, MS. No. 148, pp. 390-93.
(B) PEASANT AND NATURE OF LAND RIGHTS, MATERIAL CONDITIONS

During Mughal rule the agrarian system in different parts of the empire was based on socio-economic pattern and polity inherent in the Indian situation. Economically speaking, situated amidst natural panorama of hills as well as mountains, dense growth of trees, alluvial fields, and a stream running by, the Kashmiri village, was a self-sufficient unit. The village represented the features of a diversified socio-economic whole which produced, more or less, everything that was demanded as well as needed within. Till recent past the villages required as well as demanded hardly anything from outside. The need for clothes, medicines, salt and tea was borne out from the sale of surplus produce by the peasantry at such market towns which were available at Islamabad, Bijbehara, Pampore, Shahabad, Sopore, Baramulla, Pattan and Chrar, etc. Self-sufficiency was rendered possible by the co-existence and interrelation of a large number of special groups of workers found in the Indian village. The husbandman, blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers, potters, oil-pressures, cobblers, the washer man, the shepherd, the won (grocer), the galadar (corn-dealer), barbers, priests and the pir and beggar, who have all been connected with the village economy, contributed their share individually as well as collectively, to the socio-economic as well as socio-religious stability

of the village. The periodical urs (fairs) gave to the remotely placed villagers opportunities to meet and exchange their commodities. In every village, peasants were more or less comprised of three fragmented groups. Larger group was that of the petty producers who were comparatively self-sufficient in as much as they did not hire out or hire in labour and just lived about their subsistence level. Second group was composed of the owners of large holdings who hired labour to the moderate extent. Village muqaddam and patwari belonged to this group. Third group consisted of the large scale producers who wholly or solely depended upon village labour. Zamindars, qanungos and chaudhuris belonged to this group. Howsoever, the peasantry termed as muzari’an, ri’aya and kishawarzan in the persian sources, was the most predominant group that contributed to the social formation of the village.

According to Moorcroft, the peasantry comprised both the Hindu and the Mohammedan, who together owed their association to several castes though one particular Zamindar caste was generally pre-eminent in each village.

European travellers visiting Kashmir from sixteenth to nineteenth centuries came to argue that ownership of whole land vested with the ruler or the king in Mughal India. For example Father Xavier was the first European to visit Kashmir in 1597, opined that the king was the owner of the soil in India. He might have Kashmir equally in mind, while framing his opinion on the subject. Similarly, Bernier writes in his own travels account that “the land

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8 Mushtaq A. Kaw, op. cit., p. 119.
throughout the whole empire is considered the property of the sovereign......”\(^{10}\)

He also writes that “he is proprietor of every acre of land in the kingdom, excepting, perhaps, some houses and gardens which he sometimes permits his subjects to buy, sell, and otherwise dispose of, among themselves.”\(^{11}\) Further he also writes that “……the rents are paid to the king, who is the absolute Lord (Seigneur) of all the lands of his Empire.”\(^{12}\) George Forster who visited Kashmir in 1782-84 has particularly equated the relations of the king and his subjects with that of the master and the servants.\(^{13}\) According to William Moorcroft & G. Trebeck, “…the whole of the land in Kashmir is considered to have been, time out of mind, the property of the ruler.”\(^{14}\) Both G.T. Vigne and Baron Charles Hugel have also complied to the European contention that land was the property of the state headed by a king.\(^{15}\)

As far as *uftada* (unploughed) land in Kashmir was concerned, its possession and ownership normally vested with the state at least until the peasants undertook its cultivation under certain conditions prescribed by the ruler as the head of the state.\(^{16}\) Both in the urban as well as rural areas of Kashmir, a certain proportion of Kashmir population enjoyed private ownership on various item of property. For instance, besides land, there were various other items of property, viz., residential house, gold and silver ornaments, grains, live stock, textiles, etc. They were definitely held by the private individuals; hence freely disposed of or gifted away.\(^{17}\) On the authority of Kalhana, private individuals definitely

\(^{10}\) F. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

\(^{11}\) *Ibid*, p. 204.

\(^{12}\) *Ibid*, p. 455. Also see pp. 226, 232, 238.


\(^{16}\) *Akbarnama*, vol. III, part-II, pp. 726-27.

held proprietorship in the urban areas.\textsuperscript{18} For the period of the Sultans, one commands a couple of evidences which really prove that a good number of persons strictly enjoyed ownership of land in the rural areas.\textsuperscript{19} According to Prof. Irfan Habib, “in one sense, the land belonged to the peasant, in another, the peasant belonged to the land.”\textsuperscript{20}

The 18\textsuperscript{th} century documents informs that the villagers, exercised definite occupancy and cultivating rights, in the rural areas.\textsuperscript{21} For instance, a sale deed of the year 1765 A.D. showing one Khwaja Rehman and Khwaja Amin selling their hereditary, occupancy and \textit{milikiyati} rights on a tract of land measuring 8 \textit{patts} in village Nadihal of \textit{pargana} Khoi.\textsuperscript{22} Similarly, a document of the year 1776A.D. viewing the sale of 480 \textit{kharwars} of \textit{shali} amounting to Rs.60/- by one Baba Muhammad Maqsood to Shahzada Bano in village Naribal, \textit{pargana} Sairul Muwazai.\textsuperscript{23} Likewise, a document of the year 1788 A.D., showing the private individuals holding possession, cultivating and ownership rights on both \textit{abi} and \textit{khushki} types of land in rural areas. Their rights could be easily inherited or transferred as and when thought necessary.\textsuperscript{24}

The 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} century documents which substantially prove that, they disputed over the assertion, retention or expansion of their right of possession

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\textsuperscript{18} His reference to the existence of the office of the Real Estate of sale-deeds strengthen as well as corroborates the view that the king’s subjects could at will, sell, or purchase, any kind of property quite bold and courageous by any state regulation. He held that king Yasaskara, while deciding the property case of a Brahman, had no examine the sale-deed of a house wherein he discovered a fraudulent inter-polation by the Registrar of Real Estate sale-deeds. Kalhana also writes that, the land, could be alienated by way of sale and making gift of it. The records of such transactions were properly entered in a registry: Kalhana, \textit{Rajatarangini}, transl. by M.A. Stein, vol. I, pp. 238-41.
\textsuperscript{19} Mushtaq A. Kaw, \textit{op cit.}, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{21} Document no’s 528/5; 559/3; 574/27 and 33, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.
\textsuperscript{22} Document no. 528/5, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.
\textsuperscript{23} Document no. 574/33, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.
\textsuperscript{24} Document no. 559/3, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.
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A good number of documents pertaining to the different years, essentially prove that peasant’s right of possession and cultivation was evenly reinforced by his right to alienate arable land, as and when, it pleased him. Usually such acts of alienation materialised through the duly registered will, partition and sale deeds. There are few examples for above this simplification.

In the year, 1665 A.D. a document shows one Haider Mir alienating his right of possession and ownership on plots of land, both *abi* and *khushki*, situated in several villages. A document of the year 1692 A.D. shows the sale and transfer of right to possess, use and own a plot of land at MakhdooM Mandau, Kalashpora, Srinagar. Further a document of the year 1702 A.D. indicates the sale of 3 *manwattas* of land in village Neoh in *pargana* Sairul Muwazai for 3 *Alamgiri* rupees by one villager namely Noori Rather. The sale was accompanied by the transfer of the *milkiyati* right on the said portion of land.

A sale deed of the year 1765 A.D. shows one Khwaja Rehman and Khwaja Amin selling their hereditary, occupancy and *milkiyati* rights on a tract of land measuring 8 *patts* in village Nadihal of *pargana* Khoi. In the year 1788 A.D. a document implies the private individuals holding possession, cultivating and ownership rights on both *abi* and *khushki* types of land in rural areas. And their

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25 For example, the document of the year 1664 A.D. which pertains to the reign of Shahjahan, is in fact in the form of a judgement given by Mir Jaffar, the *gumashta* of the then governor Nawab Saif Khan, with regard to a case of dispute over two pieces of land i.e. *abi*, measuring 4 *kharwars* and 4 *patts* and another *khushki*, measuring one *kharwar* stretched over six plots in total. Both the disputed pieces of land were located in village Neoh of *pargana* Sairul Muwazai: *Document* no. 574/4 & 23; Another document of the year 1665 A.D. shows one Haider Mir alienating his right of possession and ownership on plots of land, both *abi* and *khushki*, situated in several villages: *Document* no. 574/2 A; Also see the *Document* (1773 A.D.) no. 574/25, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.

26 *Documents* no’s. 528/5, 21; 559/3, 4, 5 and 574/35, 40; 2592 and 574/2 A, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.

27 *Document* no. 574/2 A, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.

28 *Document* no. 574/40, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.

29 *Document* no. 559/5, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.

30 *Document* no. 528/5, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.
rights could be easily inherited or alienated as and when thought necessary. Lastly, a document of the year 1793 A.D. shows the sale of possession and ownership rights on a poorun of land for 2 rupees at Kalashpora, Srinagar.

In Mughal India, peasants had both rights as well as obligations. We have information in the form of an Aurangzeb’s Farman to Muhammad Hashim. According to P. Saran, in Mughal India, the peasants were the ultimate proprietors of land. But his argument lacked much evidence. Aurangzeb’s farman to Muhammad Hashim, diwan of Gujarat, issued in 1668-69 defines peasants rights on land. In this farman, the terms malik and arbab-i zamin (land owners) has been used for the actual cultivators of land and full rights of sale and mortgage are invested in them. Further, certain provisions and statements in the farman and elsewhere suggest recognition of the peasants’ right to permanent and hereditary occupancy. The Article 13 of the above quoted farman provides that if the cultivator malik was found in capable of cultivating the land or abandoned it altogether, it was to be given to another for cultivation, so that there was no loss of revenue. But if at any time the original malik recovered his ability to cultivate the land, or returned to it, the land was to be restored to him.

Prof. Irfan Habib says that peasants of Mughal time enjoyed hereditary right of occupancy which the English gave to some section of the peasants after permanent settlement. The peasant of Mughal India had no right to enjoy,

31 Document no. 559/3, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.
32 Document no. 528/21, Iqbal Library, Srinagar.
abandon or dispose of the land under his plough as he might choose at certain occasions. He could not refuse to cultivate.\(^{37}\)

When the Mughals took over the valley from the Chaks in 1586, they found the valley in a deplorable state. Akbar in the first instance fixed the revenue rate at one-fourth\(^{38}\) in the districts of Maraj and Kamraj. Afterwards on the recommendations of one of the *Mutassadis* of Mirza Yusuf Khan, the *Nazim* of Kashmir, Akbar increased \(^{39}\) the land revenue from one-fourth to one-half of the total produce but actually it was taken more than one-half. This action of Akbar caused resentment among the Kashmiri cultivators and consequently they revolted\(^{40}\) against the Mughal administration in which Qazi Ali was killed. To contain the Kashmiris, Akbar declared the whole of the valley as a *Khalisa*\(^{41}\) land and the army was also deployed for cultivation. Later on, Aurangzeb issued *Farman* to Muhammad Hashim to the effect that the land revenue be collected according to the Islamic law or principle.\(^{42}\) Thus it is presumed that the *Farman* would have some effects on the prevailing agrarian system of Kashmir and consequently Kashmiri cultivators should have got the proprietary rights in land. Let us examine whether the *Farman* which Aurangzeb issued from time to time had any impact on the agrarian system of Kashmir and on the social condition of the Kashmiris or not? It is a recorded fact that the conditions of the Kashmiri cultivators became worst after the valley came under the control of the Mughals.\(^{43}\)

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\(^{38}\) *Ain*, I, (Eng. Transl.), p. 370.


\(^{40}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{41}\) *Ibid*, I, p. 371. “As Mirza Yusuf Khan refused to remain in the charge of Kashmir under the increased revenue, the country was made *Khalisa* and Shams-ud-Din Khafi was appointed governor with 3,000 troops.”

\(^{42}\) B.R. Grover, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

\(^{43}\) Father Xavier, “*Letters From Kashmir*”, pp. 109-130.
Aurangzeb visited Kashmir in 1663 and issued the following three *Farmans* to stop unislamic practices being followed by the Kashmiri:

1- The cultivation of poppy should be stopped.
2- Kashmiri Muslim women should wear drawers.
3- “Bhands” should stop performing of their feast.

But we see that these *Farmans* were not heeded by Kashmiri people and during the Afghan and Sikh rule the cultivation of poppy was there, the Kashmiri women never wore drawers to cover their legs and “Bhands” continued to perform their feast.

The application of Aurangzeb’s *Farman* in Kashmir which he addressed to Muhammad Hashim is very much in doubt. Not to speak of Kashmir but according to Grover even in India “it is very doubtful if the *Farmans* had any effect, what-so-ever on the working of agrarian administration under Aurangzeb.”

Most of the scholars who have worked on the Kashmir history are of the view that the proprietary rights of land in Kashmir were vested and remained in the hands of the ruler till 1933.

As far as the material and living conditions of the peasants in medieval Kashmir is concerned, the peasant’s right to enjoy the fruits from land was

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47 Wilson H.H., *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, p. 104; C.E. Bates, *A Gazetteer of Kashmir*, p. 100; P.N.K. Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir*, Delhi, 1962, p. 578; Walter Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp. 402, 432 : “The land in those days was apparently regarded as the absolute property of the state, and every year allotments were made to the cultivators”. “Knowing as I do that the right to sell and mortgage land in India has been attended with ruin to many Musalman communities, I would counsel the Darbar to consider carefully whether it is necessary to confer the right on the Musalmans of Kashmir.”
considerably restricted. The state share was fixed at one-half of the gross produce.\textsuperscript{48} Every peasant was allowed to retain half of his produce, out of which he bore the expenditure incurred on the maintenance of the village and its records. The perquisites of land revenue functionaries were also paid by the peasants out of their own share. They were, therefore, left with less than one-fourth of their produce and they subsisted on fruits, milk, vegetables etc.\textsuperscript{49} According to Father Xavier, “speaking in general, they are very poor and I never saw so much poverty among other peoples……”\textsuperscript{50} According to Pelsaert “the inhabitants of the country and the city are for the most part poor……”\textsuperscript{51} Further he mentioned that “owing to their mode of life, which is that of beasts rather than men.” \textsuperscript{52} It is worth referring that ‘the Kashmirian peasants differ but little from the inhabitants of the city ……”\textsuperscript{53} Their material possessions included a wooden pestle and mortar for husking rice, a few earthen vessels for cooking and earthen jars for storing grain.\textsuperscript{54} In general, “the peasants’ huts were made with materials that were most easily procurable and without the use of much building skill, ……”\textsuperscript{55} They had mud-walled and thatch-roofed houses. Usually, the thatches were of paddy straw and reed. These houses had usually four storeys The lower storey was used for stabiling the cattle and for keeping sundry stores. The second storey contained the family apartments. The third and fourth storeys contained the household chattels.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{49} Mushtaq A. Kaw, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{50} Father Xavier, “Letters From Kashmir”, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{51} Francisco Pelsaert, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 34-35.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} G.T. Vigne, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. II, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{54} Ain, II, pp. 173-74; Walter Lawrence, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 250.
Due to their inborn poverty, the peasantry could afford to have a single dress which until torn fully was not changed.\(^{57}\) According to Jahangir, “----the poor of Kashmir suffer hardships in the winter from the excessive cold, and live with difficulty, I ordered that a village of the rental of Rs. 3,000 or Rs. 4,000 should be entrusted to Mulla Talib Isfahani, to be expended in providing clothes for the poor, and for warming water, for purposes of ablution, in the mosque.”\(^{58}\) “The common women do not wear clean, washed clothes.”\(^ {59}\) It seems that the concept of washing them was quite unknown even though there was no scarcity of water.\(^ {60}\) The women of the peasantry used a tunic of pattu for three or four years\(^ {61}\) and which due to the constant use was susceptible to such a dirt that all the outsiders who passed through them looked upon them with “contempt and disdain”\(^ {62}\) and were not used to wearing drawers (izars).\(^{63}\) According to Pelsaert, “the women wear a coarse gray woollen garment, open from the neck to the waist. On the forehead they have a sort of red band, and above it an ugly, black, dirty clout, which falls from the head over the shoulders to the legs; cotton cloth is very dear, and their inborn poverty prevents them from possessing a change of raiment.”\(^ {64}\)

In Kashmir, rice, being the major crop, should have formed the staple diet of the masses.\(^ {65}\) The rice eaten by the ordinary people was very coarse, in the form of what is termed in Kashmiri batha. They boiled it fresh and allowed it to get cold, and then eat it, and called it batha. It was not usual to take their

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57 Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri, p.154; Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh, p. 80; Also see Tuzuk, p. 301.
58 Tuzuk, p. 345.
59 Ibid, p. 301.
61 Tuzuk, p. 301; Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri, p. 154.
63 Tuzuk, p. 301.
64 Francisco Pelsaert, op. cit., pp. 34-35.
65 Ain, II, p. 170; Tuzuk, p. 300.
food warm. The rice cooked in the morning was taken in the evening and that of the evening in the morning. Cooked rice i.e. *batha* was supplemented by various vegetables which were at times dried and preserved. Salt was imported from outside. It was not the custom to put salt into the *batha*. They boiled vegetables in water and a little salt was poured in order to add the flavour to the vegetables. There was no salt in Kashmir, and they brought it from Hindustan. Because of its supply from outside, salt was very expensive in Kashmir. The peasantry and the husbandmen were dispensed with little amount of salt as wages for collecting saffron from its petals and stamens. According to Jahangir, “those who want to have something tasty put a little walnut-oil into the vegetables.” They also used cow-oil (*raughan* i.e. *ghi*), but this was taken fresh from newly-made butter (*maska*). It was not the custom to eat bread (*nan*). Fish entered or contributed to the dietary of the masses. The villagers of the Wular Lake and Machibhavan or Asifabad, carried fish to a great extent and preserved a good deal of produce by simply cutting the fish open and drying it in the sun, using very little or no salt. Besides fish, the milk of cow and meat of goat and sheep entered the diet of the peasantry. “The poultry (fowls, ducks and geese) is abundant, and the ordinary cultivator will eat fowls perhaps six times a month, and mutton perhaps five times in the month.” Variety of fruits also entered to the diet of the masses. The Kashmiri tea,

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66  *Tuzuk*, p. 300.
67  *Muntakhabu-Lubab*, vol. I, part-I, p. 302; It is not usual to take their food warm, but people of small means keep a portion of the batha for a night, and eat it next day: *Tuzuk*, p. 300.
69  *Tuzuk*, pp. 300, 315.
70  *Ain*, I, p. 63; *Tuzuk*, p. 315.
71  *Tuzuk*, p. 300.
74  Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-54, 359-64; *Ain*, II, p. 170; *Tuzuk*, p. 301; *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, p. 80.
75  Ibid, pp. 253-54.
imported from China, served as a stimulant and vigorous means of digesting one’s food. “The peasantry of Kashmir….eat honey raw, or mixed with various articles of common food, whilst the most wealthy substitute it for sugar in preserving fruits.” Inspite of their hard labour the little food they usually consumed. For example, Pelsaert has mentioned in his account that “--they were physically strong, especially the men, who can carry quite twice the load of a Hindustani; this is remarkable in view of the fact that men and women get so little food.” Notwithstanding their scanty means of subsistence, they exhausted whatever little resources they had on festivals, rites, pilgrimages, beliefs, etc.

As we have already seen that in normal times or years, the dietary of the peasantry comprised as well as contained a few articles of food, which too would turn to be scarce as and when the valley of Kashmir experienced failure of crops due to untimely or excessive rain and snow. This inevitably cherished as well as fostered a situation of famine or this resulting in food scarcity and inflated prices. This was a most distressing factor in the agriculture of Kashmir. In 1597 Kashmir experienced the first famine under the new rule due to “an acute scarcity from drought in Kashmir, where destitute people having no means of nourishing their children, exposed them for sale in the public places of the city.” Many others would even voluntarily agree to baptise their children believing that it would fetch them a piece of bread.

The contemporary sources pointed out that, famines in Kashmir followed either untimely or excessive rains resulting in the immaturity of the

77 Majmuat-Tawarikh, MS. No. 148, pp. 371-72; Lawrence, op. cit., p. 254.
79 Francisco Pelsaert, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
80 We have a enough references on the beliefs in the Persian sources. For detailed description see Ain, II, pp. 172, 174; Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh, pp. 80-81.
82 Akbar and the Jesuits, pp. 77-8.
autumn harvest at its ripening stage. Famines usually owed their origin to unprecedented floods which caused great damage to the standing crops. For example the great flood of 1640-42 alone wiped out four hundred thirty eight villages in Kashmir, and even their names did not survive. Due to the great famine of 1640-42, thirty thousand starving people went to Lahore. In 1664-65, untimely snowfall destroyed the crops. Contemporary sources pointed out that floods occurring over different years resulting in food scarcity and inflated prices. Thus a kharwar of shali (unhusked rice), was obtained in famines for as high a price as six-seven, eight rupees; often worth its weight in gold.

While those who still stayed in the valley took to violence which is exemplified by the raid on and the endeavour to set ablaze in 1643 the dwelling of one Pandit Mahadev, the then Peshkar. Similar incident of popular uprising which led to the killing of mir ‘adl and daroga-i-adalat and setting ablaze the houses of the grain dealers, is detectable during the deputy governor of Ihtiram Khan (1731-32).
Both the Mughal and the Afghan rulers enacted a few relief measures. For instance, Akbar, on the occasion of the 1597 famine, promptly came to the rescue of the people. Free kitchens were opened everywhere in the cities.\(^93\) During the reign of Shahjahan, numberless free kitchens were opened in the city and grains were sent from Lahore, Gujarat and Multan to Kashmir, at the time of the great famine of 1647.\(^94\) Shahjahan, at the time of the great famine of 1642-43, also provided a cash grant of thirty thousand rupees, for distribution among the famine-hit people, which was later supplemented by twenty thousand rupees.\(^95\) In 1664-65, seventy-nine thousand rupees were sent by Aurangzeb as relief.\(^96\) Besides the opening of free-kitchens and cash grants, the state also opened its granaries in times of scarcity, for the free distribution of grains among the distressed people. For instance, in the year 1755, there occurred an untimely snowfall which destroyed the standing crops. Foodstuffs became scarce and precious. But Khawaja Abul-Hasan Bandey, the chief minister of the Afghan governor Sukhjiwan Mal, took immediate steps to relieve the distress of the people. He had in his stores some two lakh kharwars of shali. He took a house-to-house census of the city population, and supplied each family with rations to suffice for six months. He then distributed a lakh of kharwars as taqavi loan among the empty handed peasants for the ensuing year. The poverty of the peasantry was so deep rooted that they could not liquidate the cost of the loan even till the end of the Afghan rule though mode of repayment was fixed in a manner that the peasants had to simply pay 1 trak per-kharwar after every harvest.\(^97\)

\(^95\) Ibid; Muntakhabu-Lubab, I, part-II, pp. 587-88.
\(^97\) Taqavi was provided to the peasants to reassure safety to agriculture and to reclaim uncultivated land. Such type of loans was provided even during the reign of Akbar, by his minister Todar
According to Lawrence, the *taqavi* seeds meant for the empty handed peasantry were fraudulently appropriated by “the village officials, the headman, and the *patwari*, and the value of the grain was gravely entered every year as an arrear against the village.” Moreover, relief measure to provide labour to famine-stricken Kashmiris in 1597, could provide labour for only a fraction of the valley’s population. We have the authority of the inscription on the *Kathi Darwaza* of Akbar’s fort round *Hari Parbat* to prove that labour employed in constructing it was paid for. Likewise, when Aurangzeb visited Kashmir, all the luggage of the royal camp was carried from Bhimber to Srinagar by Kashmiri porters, were paid for. Besides, the use of *begar* (forced labour) is particularly conspicuous in the history of saffron collection. As, the peasants were especially forced to collect saffron from its buds. But it was Akbar who on his third visit to Kashmir abolished this custom to the great relief of the peasants. Itiqad Khan (1622-32) introduced the system of *begar* for collecting saffron flowers, after it had been abolished by Akbar and he attached private fruit gardens and did not allow their owners to use the fruit themselves. Later, it was abolished by Shahjahan by issuing the imperial *Farman* proclaimed that the autocratic and oppressive rule of Itiqad Khan had ceased.

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99 *Akbarnama*, III, part-II, pp. 726-27; No *begar* or forced labour was exacted from anyone all got paid in cash from the state treasury: See the text of the inscription in My paper, *Mughal Building Activity: Imperial Investment In Kashmir, Proceeding of the Indian History Congress*, 67th Session Farook College, Calicut University 2006-07, pp. 1029-37.
100 Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 392: The wages fixed by the emperor were ten crowns for every 100 pounds weight.
102 *Ain*, I, p. 63; Also see *Akbarnama*, III, part-II, pp. 727, 734.
It seems that under the Mughals the condition of the peasants and labourers seems to have improved. While during the Afghan period, Azad Khan (1783-85), the governor, forcibly employed the peasants of Maraz and Kamraz divisions for the construction of a bund (weir) at Batwara, to divert the water of the river Jehlum into a lake.\textsuperscript{104} Similarly, the peasants were compelled to carry the provisions on the occasion of Azad Khan’s military expeditions against the \textit{Chieftains} of Muzaffarabad, Poonch and Kishtwar.\textsuperscript{105}

The scarcity and starvation of the masses as well as peasantry was not always caused by crop failure, but due to many other factors. For instance, during the 18th century, the tribesmen of Muzaffarabad and Poonch, ravaged the villages and stripped the peasantry of their livestock and grains.\textsuperscript{106} All this caused constant despair and anxiety to the peasantry who were consequently subjected to the conditions of starvation followed by death and mobility.\textsuperscript{107}

The intrusion of the \textit{Gujar} raiders from Punch and the \textit{Bombas} of Muzaffarabad was a new phenomenon in the politics of Kashmir and proved very excruciating to the population for a long period. There was acute scarcity of food; a rupee did not fetch two seers of rice. People were compelled to dispose of their belongings and bartered away their children for food. Many died, unwept and unsung, the river Jehlum serving as their common graveyard.

\textsuperscript{104} Mushtaq A. Kaw, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 335-36.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, p. 336.
\textsuperscript{106} Taking undue advantage of the internal strife, these tribesmen penetrated deep into the valley in and around 1730-32, 1734, 1737, 1741-44, 1746-51, and 1771 respectively and thereby despoiled the villagers of their livestock not to speak of their stored grains: \textit{Waqiat-i-Kashmir}, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, ff. 251b-52h, 259a-60a, 265a-69b. \textit{Majmuat-Tawarikh}, MS. No. 148, pp. 335, 351-59, 379-88; \textit{Tarikh-i-Hasan}, I, pp. 460-61; Also see R.K. Parmu, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 339-45; P.N.K. Bamzai, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 398-99.
Those who could quitted Kashmir and went to Lahore, Sialkot and Delhi.\textsuperscript{108} Moreover, the state stimulated a process which in itself led to the exploitation of masses by the grain dealers in Kashmir.\textsuperscript{109} Particularly when the state granaries were depleted,\textsuperscript{110} the grain merchants while creating a situation of artificial scarcity sold their stocks for high prices, which were unaffordable for the famine-affected people.\textsuperscript{111} Abul Fazl, in Akbarnama mentioned that “----by the coming of the victorious army the scarcity was increased----.”\textsuperscript{112} Jahangir had accordingly instructed his imperial servants to reduce as far as possible the number of their beasts and followers, because the price of grains and vegetables had risen very high, due to the presence of the huge imperial force in the valley.\textsuperscript{113} About the impact of their presence on the stock position of the Kashmiris, Father Xavier has maintained that, “owing to the king’s coming, they (Kashmiris) have more than twenty-five thousand additional mouths to feed, besides many horses and elephants. They ate whatever they had stored up; and so the poor folks suffer much and even perish------and though we (Christian missionaries) gave them (babies) nurses and milk, they did not profit by the care taken of them, as they were already worn out with hunger”.\textsuperscript{114}

Thus on the whole, the peasantry was finally pushed into the most unfavourable as well as miserable living conditions in medieval Kashmir.

\textsuperscript{108} R.K. Parmu, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 339-40; Also see \textit{Waqiat-i-Kashmir}, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, ff. 268a-70a.
\textsuperscript{109} Mushtaq A. Kaw, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{110} If the state granaries were accomplished, then the state would not have imported grains from outside and paid the wages to the labourers in cash: Lahori, \textit{Badshahnama}, II, part-I, pp. 309-10; \textit{Tarikh-i-Hasan}, I, p. 460; \textit{Waqiat-i-Kashmir}, Habib Ganj collection, 32/150, ff. 150ab; Also see my paper, \textit{Mughal Building Activity}, pp. 1029-37.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Tuzuk, p. 286.
\textsuperscript{114} Father Xavier, “\textit{Letters From Kashmir},” p. 116.