PREFACE
The study of structures and organizational patterns of different economic sectors of the past societies has been receiving an increasing attention at the hands of the historians, thanks to the present thinking on the meaning and subject-matter of 'history'. The preferential treatment of this subject is not without a profound reason. After all, the superstructure of a given society is largely determined by the type of production relations that obtain there. Since agriculture was the basic source of pre-modern societies, it is, therefore, no wonder that the scholars have probed agrarian relations comparatively more thoroughly. Thus for understanding the background of any of the aspects of pre-modern society many questions beg a neat and clear clarification. How the agricultural produce was shared among the different agencies? Was the producer master of his produce or he had no right over it? Was he simply a labourer who had to helplessly accept the terms dictated by his master? What part of the produce was left with him? And what were the different agencies that appropriated the major produce, which was snatched away from the producer by way of different land and other revenues? What consequences followed the oppression of the producers? What was the reaction of the producers against the exploitation of the state and the superior right-holders?

Once these and other related questions are probed into, the philosophy of the whole history of a given period becomes almost intelligible to us. The present thesis has attempted at answering
these questions of the agrarian sector of a vital important phase of Kashmir history. Thus apart from examining the question of land ownership, we have attempted to throw a detailed light on different agrarian classes and their inter-relationship.

The period covered by the present thesis is a distinctive period in the agrarian history of Kashmir. It starts with 1846, when the Britishers transferred Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh and his successors "in lieu of seventy-five lakhs of rupees." The Maharajas exploited the so-called sale of Kashmir and treated the whole Valley as their personal property and, therefore, felt free to treat the subjects as they liked. The worst hit of the "sale" was the peasantry which not only lost their rights in land but was subjected to heavy impositions with no parallels in the annals of Kashmir. Added to this, the peasantry was subjected to an entirely novel and crucial type of begar, viz., "Gilgit begar," which rubbed salt against their injuries. The result of this harsh attitude of the state towards the peasantry was the appealing poverty of the masses, forcible flight and depopulation of the peasantry. Consequent upon this, agriculture witnessed an unprecedented decline. The agrarian stratification remained unaltered and a minuscule population comprising the Maharaja, his family, the Jagirdars, the Muafidars and other privileged right-holders continued to appropriate the major share of the revenues. However, there was only one change, i.e., the privileges shifted from one group to another group. The old class of privileged right-holders suffered heavily, when the Maharaja pampered a new class which belonged either to their religious community or their caste.
The period from 1395 saw the beginning of some changes in the system though not the change of the system when the state conceded the important recommendations of its Land Revenue Settlement Officer, W. R. Lawrence. Besides conferring the occupancy rights in land to the hereditary Khalsa peasants, the land tenure system was also fixed. Some taxes, too, were either abolished or reduced to great extent. But the major work done after Lawrence's Settlement was the abolition of most dreaded Gilgit begar— that followed the construction of the Cart Road between Kashmir and Gilgit. However, begar in other forms still continued.

The period from 1930 onwards witnessed some drastic changes in the agrarian system. These changes followed the birth of the political consciousness in Kashmir which culminated in the formation of the first known political organisation of Kashmir in 1932, which was predominantly supported by the peasant community. The result was that the hereditary occupants were conferred the proprietary rights in land in 1933. Not only this, laws were passed to restrict the transferrence of land into the hands of non-agriculturists. Besides, numerous relief measures also were taken to ameliorate the abject condition of the peasants. The revenue demand also was minimized to a great extent.

No indepth study has been made on the subject under reference. There is one Ph.D. thesis entitled "Agrarian System of Kashmir (1845-1900)", by R. L. Hanguoo, submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. But the present work
deals with the whole Dogra period. Besides, we have incorporated
details on many important aspects like Khalsa, land ownership,
peasant stratification, peasant oppression and peasant reaction
to oppression.

Before concluding, it seems pertinent to mention here
that we have consulted many types of sources like Land Assessment
Reports, Official correspondences and reports, village land
revenue records, chronicles, poetic literature, biographies,
auto-biographies, newspapers and travelogues. Besides, we have
been greatly benefitted by the oral history, as there is a good
number of people still with us who have lived a fairly large
part of their lives during the last phase of the Dogra Raj and
from whom one obtains valuable information not available in
the written records.

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(ALI MOHAMMAD WANI)
RESEARCH SCHOLAR