Transport and communication are the chief means of contact between distant parts of a country and between two countries. The prosperity of a country especially in the sphere of economic activity is largely dependent on the efficient means of communication and transport. These means influence the development of agriculture and industry of a country or countries within a region. The volume of a country's trade, has, to a considerable extent, always depended upon the nature and extent of the means of transport and communication. Since it has been regarded as the chief means of all-round progress, the transport and communication has rightly been described as "the circulatory system of country's activities, the foundation of commerce, the social well-being and of a development of thought." Therefore, the utility and importance of transport can in no way be over-estimated. Trade and commerce seemed to expand as the means to carry goods to different and distant parts became easy and those of communication fluent. The ever-extending net-work of transport and communication have accounted for the increasing contacts among different parts of the world. The mobility of men and material from one place to another helped the growth not only of trade and commerce, but of agriculture and industry as well.

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The mountainous character of the valley of Kashmir added to its glamour, beauty and grandeur, but it ordinarily defied the attempts at creating a network of transport and communication. The result was that the road building was both costly and difficult. The absence of roads made the travelling and trading very difficult and time consuming and isolated the valley from the rest of the world including even India. Though there were many bridle paths or tracks which passed over dangerous mountain peaks, these were risky and were not fit for cart transport. It is obviously, genuine to point out that the mountainous nature of the valley greatly obstructed the over-all development of the country. "One of the points which at once strikes a visitor to Kashmir is the absence of roads fit for wheeled carriage. There are roads along which ponies and bullocks can pass in fair weather, but roads as understood in other countries do not exist."

2. The mountainous nature of the valley on the one hand attracted the tourists but on the other it prevented the building of gentle and sound roads.


4. M. S. Ganju, op. cit. p. 11; H. S. Boys Seven Hundred Miles in Kashmir, p. 36. These passes were not fit for the wheeled traffic, which the valley absolutely lacked. Indeed, these paths were suited to pack-ponies, mules, camels, bullocks or human labour. The risks entailed in the journey were numerous and immense.

5. Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 23.
Nevertheless, for transporting goods from one place to another either forced labour (beger) or the pack animals like ponies, horses and bullocks were in use. The system of forced labour had been in vogue since ancient times. It was so ruthlessly practised that none could escape the clutch. It is a labour which was not willingly performed and in the face of acute economic stress, forced labour was an agonising process, yet the people of the valley were victim to such labour from time to time. During our period of study the system was regularised and perpetuated with much emphasis supplies despatched to the frontier areas were sent on the backs of the human beings. The aim was to cater to the needs of the troops stationed in the frontier areas like Gilgit etc. In order to meet the transportation

6. Owing to the great demand for ponies, they were sold at Rs. 15 to Rs. 20/- Please see Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 245.

7. The system of begar prevalent in Kashmir was a sort of French prototype corvee. The begar labour apart from being used for transportation, was utilised for the collection of Kuth (please see S. N. Koul, op. cit. p. 59).

8. M. I. Khan, Some Aspects of Corvee (beger) in Kashmir (833--1858 A.D.) Article in J&K Research Bi-annual Vol. 1, No. 2 pp. 59-60; The curse of begar fell on the villagers owing to the absence of an organised labour class in the valley. They were set on forced labour even when they were badly required to attend to their fields.

9. In 1866 A.D. an unusual number of troops were to be sent to Gilgit. This movement of the troops drew the attention of the authorities, who were supposed to ensure the regular supply of commodities.
problem the peasants, boatmen and people in various other trades were forced to carry their supplies and baggage without any slightest provision except one seer of rice per head per day as their food and payment. Usually, many casualties and deaths of the begaris were reported and as such their return from such places was considered miraculous. The lack of transportation often involved human labour massively and on such occasions the state authorities exploited the masses callously. In fact, the state authorities never relaxed their efforts in sending them through tortuous snowbound roads. The begar labour was a permanent feature of the socio-economic life then and the method of conducting the system was extremely in-human. It had become a rule that each house in a village had to furnish a man, who was paid from 4 to 7 chilki rupees for the double journey (from Bandipur to Astor and back from Astor to Bandipur) by their kardars.

10. S. N. Gadru, *Kashmir Papers (Kashmir Mis-Government)*, p. 73; and f.n. The expedition which was arranged to carry the loads to the far off places was usually dangerous. A good number of labourers used to die on the way especially along the route to Gilgit.

11. Selif-ud-Din *Diary*, Vol. X f. 352; S. N. Gadru, *Kashmir Papers (Kashmir Misgovernment)*, p. 75; In the autumn of 1866 A.D., a group of begaris were sent with supplies on their backs. Many of them died on the way due to hunger and cold. Such deaths occurred owing to the lack of proper management, which the authorities were unable to provide.

12. In the operation of begar, there existed discrimination. Mostly the Muslim populace was subject to this sort of labour. The non-Muslims were exempted. Out of the total population of 814,241, 350,000 persons were free by rule and another 50,000 were exempted by favour. It follows that the incidence of begar fell with intense severity on the remaining 414,291. Please see, Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 412.
The roads of the valley were extremely rough and bed and a considerable part of transportation was operated by means of pack-animals like ponies, mules, horses and bullocks.\(^{13}\) Maharaja Gulab Singh, in order to maintain sufficient transport felt the need of ponies and mules.\(^{14}\) He reserved rakha (pastures) for the grazing of ponies. This policy of the Maharaja did not last long, and his successors\(^{15}\) did not pay much attention towards this problem. Consequently the land meant for the rakha was grabbed by the members of official class, who once again utilized these pastures for cultivation of grain rather than the production of grass. These officials got nearly all the arable land ploughed for their own benefit. This practice once again gave rise to begar, because with the disappearance of pastures what remained of the state stables were a few half-starved ponies.\(^{16}\) Cultivators who were in possession

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13. Since 1887 A.D., the price of the bullocks was raised by Rs. 1/- per annum. Please see Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 245.

14. Such measures provided transport for the troops, as helped state to control distant dependencies. Even stallions and mares were imported for the purpose. Please see Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, p. 91.

15. It is believed that had Gulab Singh's successors followed his policy, the problem of transport would have been much less acute.

16. Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, p. 91. Kashmir was famous for the breed of ponies and these were in plenty in the valley.
of ponies were liable to tax and in 1880-81, Rs. 6-13 percent were obtained on the village revenue. It was in 1885 that this tax was remitted. After the remission of this tax there appeared an increase in the breed of ponies. A pony along the ordinary routes carried about 2½ maunds over a stage of 10 to 22 miles. The ponies were undoubtedly hardy, sure-footed animals, and would carry with expedition and safety where animals of greater promise were quite unable to contend with the difficulties of the route. These local ponies were better suited for the bad roads. The mules were generally led by coolies. It is believed that there were 2,000 ponies available for transport between Kashmir and Gilgit, "of which 1,400 belonged to the government."

The condition of roads within the valley was awful. There were more beaten tracks awfully muddy during winter and wet weather. At some places these were so narrow and dark that no wheeled traffic was possible within the city limits. Up to the close of nineteenth century the class of porters, an important factor in transport, acted as the beasts of burden themselves.

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17. Ibid.,
18. Ibid., For riding purpose, the Yarkandi ponies were preferred.
19. Ibid.,
The inland trade was however, carried on through different means of transport\textsuperscript{22}. Such as water transport, which was heavily resorted upon. The surface transport was operated by means of donkeys, ponies and bullocks. All these beasts of burden occupied a very important place in the economy of Kashmir. In mountainous and hilly regions one had to make it along the bridle-paths or tracks, therefore, donkeys and ponies were used or human beings too were employed as porters. The communication between the villages was very difficult owing to generally unbridged rivers, canals, irrigation cuttings, rice lands and swamps. In all the main tracks the villagers maintained little crossings of logs covered with mud over irrigation canals and streams\textsuperscript{24}.

\textsuperscript{22} Means of transport like porters, asses, mules and human backs as operated in the surface transport were employed in fair weather, Lawrence, \textit{The Valley of Kashmir}, p. 23. Girdlestone, says that with the exception of a few gun-carriages at Srinagar and a most primitive little cart at Sopore, I saw no wheeled conveyance, during my residence in Kashmir, Girdlestone, op. cit. p. 18.


\textsuperscript{24} Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, p. 16. Near Srinagar the roads generally begin with a mile or two of poplar avenue.
Nonetheless, the internal transport was dependent on water. It was the cheapest means and in the valley there was no dearth of water-ways. River Jhelum was navigable between Khanabal and Baramulla, a distance of seventy miles or so. Therefore, passengers and goods were transported to and fro on barges and boats at a nominal cost to the passenger or tradesmen. From Khanabal (Anantneg) to Srinagar it took fifteen hours to cover a distance of about thirty-five miles, whereas from Srinagar to Baramulla it took twenty hours to cover a distance of about 33 miles. The city had a net-work of (streams) or canals as these were called and much passenger and goods traffic was carried on through these canals. The and the both joined the Del-lake. Evidently, the importance of the rivers and the numerous canals, lakes and streams was immense to trade and traffic. Seemingly, the river transport had been in existence in some parts of the valley, since ancient times.

25. Girdlestone, op. cit, p. 18. While doongas, boats and shikaras were generally used to carry passenger traffic, and koch were used for carrying all types of goods, grain, fuel, wood, charcoal, stone, bricks and similar other articles, Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, p. 13.


27. Ibid., p. 17.

28. Stein, Ancient Geography of Kashmir, pp. 99-103; The canals connecting the Jhelum have hitherto served all purposes of traffic.

29. Ibid., p. 103. Girdlestone, op. cit, p. 18.
The Jhelum was the main waterway of Kashmir. Thus the internal needs of the transport within the valley were met by the Jhelum waterway. Within Kashmir transport system was made cheap, easy and convenient by the river Jhelum. The Jhelum was spanned by thirteen bridges through the valley of Kashmir. Hence the water traffic or the water-ways throughout the Kashmir valley were of greater importance than the wheeled or road traffic. It formed the main source of transportation and served as a close link between various parts of the valley.

The lack of regular contact between Kashmir and the outer-world gave the valley a sort of insularity. However, Kashmir was not absolutely cut off from other parts in its immediate and even distant neighbourhood. There were a number of passes and routes connecting Kashmir with certain parts of India and through these with the outside world. Routes to Central Asia were also known. In view of such an exposure adequate provision had to be made for the protection of the mountain passes.

30. H. R. Firle, *Kashmir the Land of Streams and Solitudes*, p. 10; The Jhelum was called the road Par-excellence of Kashmir.

31. These bridges were called kadal in Kashmir and constructed in a peculiar form, *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, p. 13.

32. Supra, p.

through which trade was carried on. The fear of foreign aggression had always been there. To meet such an eventuality the state had always stationed army to guard the (watch stations) and passes. Custom officers had been posted at the passes to collect duties on all transactions of imports and exports taking place through these passes. The custom officer, while charging duties, stamped and registered transactions. For reasons of security from aggression, the Afghans closed many routes leaving only the Baramulla route open for contact through transport and communication with Kabul. During the Afghan rule, the warden of Marches collected punctiliously a tax called from traders. There were complaints of extortion, practised by the wardens. The defaulters among the wardens were severely dealt with. Moreover certain wardens failed to safeguard the persons & goods of traders while they travelled. Such negligence on the part of the wardens gave a setback to trade & commerce.

36. S.C. Ray, op. cit. pp. 114, 136, 148, Saulkika was the designation of the custom official, while the custom house was known as Sulkasthana, Stein, Ancient Geography of Kashmir, p. 68.
37. Ibid., pp. 136, 148.
39. Ibid., Rahdar was more or less similar to the modern system of permit or passport. Nobody was allowed to leave the valley without the travel document. The traders had also to have it.
40. Ibid., The wardens of watch-stations did so to make up for the loss of lands, which they had been deprived of.
After the establishment of Sikh rule roads were thrown open connecting Kashmir with the Punjab. Obviously, the business between Kashmir and Punjab and through it with India began to look-up.

No roads worth the name existed. Even as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, the roads of Kashmir were in bad shape. In 1848 a provision of Rs. 5750/- per annum was made for the repair of roads. Maharaja Ranbir Singh intended to improve the roads and kept apart a sum of half a lakh chilki rupees per annum for this purpose.

The necessity of means of transport and communication was felt intensely when a severe famine visited the valley in 1877-79, which destroyed the whole crop, and there was nothing to eat. The system of transport being in bad shape, the state could not import any substantial quantity of grain from outside. There appeared the urgent need for a good road that could connect the valley with the Punjab from where grains and other things could be imported.

41. R. H. Davis, op. cit. pp. 58, 87, Appendix XXIV, Nos VII, VII, IX, and X.
42. Girdlestone, op. cit. p. 18.
43. Z. L. Jala, op. cit. p. 387.
could be imported for relief of the afflicted. This project was initiated in real sense by Maharaja Ranbir Singh who earmarked resources and ordered the construction of a road which later on came to be called as The Jhelum Valley Cart Road. It was in 1881 A.D. that the construction work of this road commenced from Baramulla to Kohala. Its length was 97½ miles. The important factor in the speedy construction of this road was the fear and anxiety of the British, who later in 1885 A.D. seriously felt the advance of Russia in Central Asia. Under such circumstances the British got alerted "in order to resist, if necessary, an attack from that quarter." In the year 1888 A.D. Col. Perry Nisbet was sent to Kashmir as British Resident and he assisted the state in accomplishing the desired end. The Jhelum Valley Cart Road which was already under construction was given

44. Knowles, *Folk Tales of Kashmir*, p. 250, f.n. 2; F. Youngusband *Kashmir*, p. 181.

45. Hilton, *Report on the New Road into Kashmir From Kohala to Baramulla*, 7th of Nov., 1885, pp. 7-15; It was the time when Kashmir had acquired an important place in the context of the Anglo-Russian strategy in Asia. The British were menaced by Russian advance in Central Asia and it was necessary for the British to construct a road for their troop movement in order to resist, any advance from that quarter. T. Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p. 30.

46. Ibid., it was by 1885 that this 25 mile road was completed.

top priority and the work of construction was done with
greater zeal, when the contract was made over to a British
firm of Contractors Speedling Mitchel and Co., brought the
work to completion in record time. Thus, it was in 1889 A.D.
that this road was completed. In the following year 1890 A.D.,
the road was ceremoniously inaugurated, when Maharaja Partap
Singh was driven through from Baramulla to Kohala on the borders
of his state. The travel, hence forwarded, became comfortable
and easier for passengers travelling in Tongasse and Ekkas. Apart
from the easier access given by the road to the visitors and to
trade, its construction has brought out Rs. 217,870/- from the
state hoards and thrown this large amount of money into
circulation.

Nonetheless, the passes which connected the valley with
the neighbouring and distant countries were as under; the first
of these passes was the Banihal Pass, to the south of Kashmir.

Gaya Prasad Singh, Pictorial Kashmir, 1914, p. 3; Harrison,
M. C. A Lonely Summer in Kashmir, p. 257. The road was not
yet complete, it was further extended from Baramulla to
Srinagar at Amlrekadel. Its length from Srinagar to Kohala
was estimated to be 132 miles. Thereafter, it led to
Rawalpindi while crossing over the Murree hills. This road was
spoken of as a master piece of mountain engineering.

49. Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 244.

50. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XV, p. 74; Lawrence,
The Valley of Kashmir, p. 383; A Name, Picturesque Kashmir
p. 2. The pass in the south of the valley was known as
Bansala now called Banihal. "The Banihal pass is the only
one across the Pir-Panjal range on which communication is
never entirely stopped by snowfall", Stein, Ancient Geography
of Kashmir, p. 71. Mohibbul Hasan, Kashmir Under the Sultans
524; According to Drew the distance between Srinagar and
Jammu comes to 177 miles.
It connected Kashmir with Jammu. Maharaja Ranbir Singh improved this road and constructed shops and rest houses along the road for the convenience of travellers. This pass usually remained closed with snow and frost for at least two months—15th December to 15th February—in a year. The distance of this road from Srinagar to Jammu was 190 miles. This route passed through different stations viz., Pampur, Sijbehara, Verineg, Devahgol, Ransoo, Ramban, Chandercot, Betote, Chinani, Udhampur, Insal and Jammu. The second of these roads was to the west and was named Sidu or Budil. This pass lay on a route which connected "Srinagar with Akhnur and Sialkot in the Punjab plain". It was suited only for foot traffic. Beyond the lower Raten Pir Range in the westerly direction lay "the passes of Rupri and Dharal". These passes gave direct access to Rejauri, the

51. De Bourbel, Routes in Jammu and Kashmir, p. 57. There were three branches of this route. I by the Chenab valley II by the Singipal pass and III by the pass over the Larulari Range, Ibid., p. 45. Dewan Anant Ram, op. cit. p. 152.

52. Hasan, op. cit. p. 197; presently the distance from Srinagar to Jammu is 203 miles.

53. It is ten miles away from Srinagar

54. It is thirty miles away from Srinagar.

55. It is ninety miles from Srinagar.
ancient Rajpuri. Very important was the Pir Parijel route "the most frequented line of communication from Kashmir to the Central part of the Punjab." Coming from Rajpuri to Kashmir via this route one entered the valley at Hurapur, the ancient Surpur, founded by Sure, the minister of Avantivarman, in the ninth century A.D. Abul Fazl states that "His Majesty (Akbar) thrice traversed" this route on his way to the rose garden of Kashmir. It was the Imperial Road constructed in early Mughal times. This route was taken for their summer visits to Kashmir by the Mughal emperors from

56. Stein, Ancient Geography of Kashmir, p. 72. Being crossed without much difficulty, these passes seem to have been used since an earlier times. Bates, op. cit. pp. 466-485, Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, p. 15.

57. The route was in the westerly direction of Kashmir and has been used from early days to the present time. Stein, Ancient Geography of Kashmir, p. 72. There was a custom post at Surpur, Mohibbu'l-Hasan, Kashmir Under the Sultans, p. 409. Stein, Reisterbenzini, I, 302 n. Vol. II, pp. 392-394, 395-396.

58. Stein, Reisterbenzini, V, 39n. VII, 558, 1348, 1352, 1355, 1520, VIII, 1051, 1134, 1286, 1404, 1513, 1574, 2799. "It was a convenient emporium on this important trade route. Stein, Ancient Geography of Kashmir, p. 72.


Akbar's time down to the reign of Aurangzeb. The regular supplies for the royal court and kitchen seem to have come from Kashmir through this road. This road obviously would have been the busiest one witnessing heavy passenger and goods traffic. Aliabad Sarai was one hospice, built on this road by the Mughals. The Imperial Road ran through various stations:

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62. Long before the Imperial Road assumed the importance of the life-line between Kashmir and India through Punjab, the Hastingana route had been traversed by the travellers and traders since the days of Mihirakula the Hun ruler (515-550 A.D.). This route had fallen into disuse for several centuries. This route was not far removed from the Imperial Road. Stein, *Raisterangini*, I, 302n; Ibid., Vol. II, p. 394; Stein, *Ancient Geography of Kashmir*, pp. 73-74; Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, (Tr. Jarrett), p. 352.


Abul Fazl had mentioned the number of roads leading into Hindustan to be thirty-six\(^64\). He regarded the Bhimber and Fakhli roads to be the best and generally usable on horsebacks.

Then there was a route connecting Kashmir through Zojila\(^65\) with Ladakh and through it with Tibet and certain parts of Central Asia and China. The other route via Bandipora, Guresis and Bonji led to Gilgit and parts of Central Asia and Russia. The routes leading from Kashmir to Frontier districts like Gilgit were neither smooth and sublime nor easily accessible. Therefore, the need for a good road was greatly felt and its construction became a matter of great concern to the state machinery. Thus the construction of a broad-path way from Srinagar to Gilgit for pack-pony transport was undertaken in 1890 A.D., from which the link roads to Leh (Ladakh), Iskardu and other places were constructed lateron\(^66\).

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\(^{65}\) Stein, *Rajat*, Vol. II, p. 488; Kalhana calls it the "great trade route to Ladakh and Central Asia".


M. S. Genju, op. cit. p. 13.
Before the construction of the aforementioned road, the communication between Kashmir and Gilgit was maintained through a rough track which was quite impassable for any means except the coolie transport. It was often obliterated by the huge landslides, and snow-falls. The goods were carried under a harsh practice, with a chequered history in Kashmir since long. Under this practice Kashmir labourers were employed by force. The road along which such labour was employed ran from Srinagar to Gilgit. Frequent deaths and accidents were reported on the goat-paths. This journey was considered like the journey of siberia as the journey to death. The construction of Gilgit road brought some relaxation in respect of the forced recruitment of labour, but begar was not abolished. Hence, the lack of dependable transport and communication was largely responsible for the hardship of human beings and agony of begar. The exaction of corvee or impressed labour made up for the lack of transport particularly in carrying supplies of food, clothing and war material for troops stationed out in the frontier districts of Ladakh and Gilgit.

69. The porters and corvee labour on these long journeys used sticks, about four feet in length, with a cross bar.
Yet the routes leading to frontier districts from Kashmir were not suitable and fit, but these were the important trade routes. Vigne mentions twenty routes leading into Kashmir. Bates too has given a list of eighty-seven routes, most of which were internal while some of these led to foreign countries.

The distance from Srinagar to Ladakh was 246 miles and it passed through various stations mentioned below:

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70. Vigne mentions the passes and the important ones other than the already referred to were the Baramulla pass, Gulmarq, Tossmaiden, Song-i-Safed, Nandensar, Kurigroute, which was improved by Gulab Singh, Kuligam, Nowburgh nai, Phelgam, Amarnath, Zojila, Drass Lalab to Curzim, Vigne op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 146-47; R. K. Parmu, History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir, op. cit., Vol. X, pp. 45-49. Ganeshi Lal mentions four to five passes through which ingress and egress took place. Sayehat-i-Kashmir, p. 32. Ganeshi Lal did not, perhaps he could not, during his tour, take note of all the routes. His stay was short enough.


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**Totals**: 246 miles

The Kashmir-Yarkand route passed through Kargil and Leh. The Kulu-Yarkand route via Lahaul passed into the Indian territory. It had a couple of favourite resorts for the traders.

From Ladakh five routes led to Yarkand, i.e., Ladakh to Yarkand via Karakoram and via Changchamno. The distance from Ladakh to Yarkand was 155 miles and 209 miles to Iskardo. Please see De-Bourbel, op. cit. pp. 343, 349, 336, Hasan, op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 198-200, Karakoram was called *Zenistani* or winter route and Changchamno was called *Tahistani* or summer route.
from Hoshierpur and Amritsar. The roads together formed a route known as the Treaty-Highway Road. The Khalsi-Chowabat route left the Treaty Road near Khalsiskardu route at Kivas. The Tanktsi-Lhase route reached Rudok via Minpangoan and Shushal. The Giab-Demchok route led to Lhasa. The main roads that linked Baltistan with the outer world were the Kargil-Srinagar, Kargil-Leh and Kargil-Skardu routes. All of them were suited to pack-animals only.

There were also a few more routes, which were used mainly for internal trade and traffic. These roads going in different directions were narrow foot-paths, running up and down the hills and mountains and sometimes winding through thick forests. We have evidence to show that there existed a few paths which connected different parts within the state.

Ladakh rivers were also used as means of transport. The wooden bridge called Zampa and suspension bridge called Choo-Zam were the two types of bridges used in Ladakh. The

74. *Imperial Gazetteer of India (Provincial Series)*, pp. 80-81; *Preliminary Reports on Ladakh Settlement*, 1908, p. 2.
75. R. H. Davis, *op. cit.* pp. 54-55.
76. *Assessment Report on Kargil Tehsil*, 1911, p. 35.
utility of these highway routes depended largely on the aid of yaks. In Ladakh besides yaks, asses and ponies too were used.

**POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH SYSTEM**

Adequate and normal system of communication paves the way to smooth flow of trade within and commerce abroad. Soon after the transfer of Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh, it has been recorded, the postal system was initiated between Jammu and Srinagar. The Punjab notification No: 673 dated 16th March 1867, contained earliest rules with regard to the postal communication with Kashmir which provided for the conveyance, by the Maharaja's agency of a sealed bag to and from British Officer on Duty at Srinagar. There were thirty-eight post offices in operation and at every post office was installed a harkara, who was a mail runner carrying mail from one station to another.

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81. Ibid., pp. 16, 93; Yaks were most suited and ecologically well-disposed to high altitude passes.


83. Harkara (runner) was an employee working in a post office. He carried letters and other things related to the postal system from one station to another. *Narsing Des' Nargis*, op. cit. p. 587. Obviously this harkara was different from the revenue functionary of the same denomination.
to another. In order to maintain decorum and establish smooth functioning of the department four Paroas were appointed to supervise the work of herkaras. There was another class of service-men, besides the Paroas, known as Chalan Navis (clerks). It was reported that four such officials were appointed to look after the transit of mails and were posted at Srinagar, Rampur, Rajouri, Gujrat and Lahore. The system had developed largely till we come to the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. There were one hundred and twenty nine post offices working between Srinagar and Jammu. After the improved postal system the mail from Srinagar to Jammu would take only 25 to 30 hours. Maharaja Ranbir Singh invited Mr. Hag (Post-Master General) to Jammu for suggesting measures to reorganize the postal department in the state, so that it could function more systematically and more efficiently. The British Indian


85. All this cost Rs. 550/- Hari Singh (equivalent to Rs. 343-12-0 British rupees).


87. Ibid., Narsing Das writes that Mr. Hag was called upon to hold conversation with the Maharaja regarding the smooth working of the postal department. The Maharaja emphasised the need for running the postal system of the state according to the system working in British India.
Government extended its willing cooperation to Maharaja and assured him of the financial assistance for the smooth running of the postal system. Besides the British post offices, the state also maintained its own postal service and its main offices were at Srinagar and Jammu. Within the state, letters took from a few days to a month or six weeks to reach the addresses.

The system of postage was peculiar. There was a system in vogue that instead of posting stamps on envelopes as is common now-a-days, payments in cash were realized. The system seemed to have till such time as the state issued her own stamps. Subsequently, the procedure of registration of the mail was initiated and the registration fee was fixed at four (4) annas a letter. Improvement in the communication system marked a gradual increase in the number of European visitors to Kashmir and this led to the establishment of an imperial government post office at the head quarters.

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90. Ibid., "A fee equal to half the British postage was levied, on behalf of the Maharaja, on all letters to and from visitors in the valley, who used what was termed The Residents Dak. Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, p. 17.

During Maharaja Rambir Singh’s reign in 1867, Imperial Post Office was established permanently for the convenience of all, particularly the Europeans. Subsequently, in 1868 A.D., the parcels were, for the first time, sent through the postal system. The Maharaja appointed Babu Devi Deen as the Superintendent of the Post Offices. Besides a training class was set-up to train the people in postal system.

In 1875 A.D., a sub-telegraph office had been opened at Leh which continued to operate till first January 1876 A.D. Same year in the month of August it was made permanent. In 1877 A.D., telegraph line was established between Srinagar and Gilgit. The construction of telegraph line between Srinagar and Jammu was also undertaken at the same time and it was completed in 1878 A.D. The Maharaja himself sent the first telegraphic message from Jammu to Governor Wazir Punoo in

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93. Ibid., Z. L. Jala, op. cit. p. The state government started training classes, with a view to being able, among other things, to acquire through the trained people, knowledge of the conditions of people in rural areas. There is a suggestion in the scheme towards the start of intelligence system which is an indispensable apparatus of the Argus-eyed state of today.

94. Ibid., G.L. Koul, Kashmir Now and Then, p. 87. The first man to learn telegraphic system was Kashi Ram, who was appointed in the state Telegraph Department, Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, pp. 17-18; D. P. Marson, The Stamps of J&K (Part I), p. IX.
in Srinagar. The Kashmir postal charges and rules were applied also to Leh. From Srinagar to Leh, the transit under ordinary circumstances took seven days. The written correspondence was undertaken only at official level, otherwise there was not much public correspondence between Kashmir and Ladakh.

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