

# COMMODITY STRUCTURE OF EXPORT TRADE IN MUGHAL KASHMIR

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## Abstract

*Although having a great geo-political significance, Kashmir also served as a vacationer destination for the Mughal rulers. The geographical location of this region provided it a great opportunity to carry on trade and commerce with the different regions of the world. Kashmir was also naturally rich in trade routes which further augmented its economic progress. Kashmir had always been famous for its unique products that were produced in this region by the local people. Some articles attained an eminence due to their best quality and remained always in great demand. A large number of commodities were imported from different regions which helped the local industries to flourish. The present paper is an attempt to study the commodities of export of Kashmir that were locally produced and were exported to the diverse regions of the world during the Mughal period.*

**Key Words:** Mughal, Kashmir, Trade, Export, Commodities

## Introduction

Since the early times, Kashmir remained an economic hub as it served as a transit place of trade carried on among the different countries. It shares its borders with India, Tibet, Afghanistan and Central Asia, a feature that make her a great centre of trade and commerce.<sup>1</sup> Giving the geo-political features of the Kashmir, Abul Fazl states:

"It lies in the third and fourth climates. Its length from Qambar Ver to Kishan Ganga is 120 kos, and its breadth from 10 to 25 kos. On the east are Paristan and the river Chenab: on the south-east Banihal and the Jammu mountains: on the north east, Great Tibet: on the west, Pakhil and the Kishenganga river: on the south west, the Gakkhar country: on the north-west, Little Tibet."<sup>2</sup>

Abul Fazl further says that Kashmir is encompassed by the Himalayan ranges on all the sides.<sup>3</sup> However, the fertility and temperate climate of the enclosed valley of Kashmir, situated on a caravan-route between hot and cold zones, was capable of sustaining a considerable artisanal population.<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Mushtaq Ahmad Kaw, 'Central Asian Contribution to Kashmir's Tradition of Religio-Cultural Pluralism', *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 54, No. 2 (2010), pp. 237-55.

<sup>2</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, transl. by H. S. Jarret, corrected and further annotated by Jadunath Sarkar, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1949, vol. II, p. 351.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Simon Digby, 'Export Industries and Handicraft Production under the Sultans of Kashmir', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 44, No. 4 (2007), pp. 407-23.

routes which linked this region with the outside world were both politically and economically important. Kashmir was linked to Hindustan by twenty-six different roads.<sup>5</sup>

Trade and commerce was an important sector of Kashmir economy. A considerable section of the local population was associated with this sector. There was a revival of commercial activities during the Sultanate period which had greatly suffered due to the Mongol invasions.<sup>6</sup> The relations (both political as well as commercial) with the outside world reached to its zenith during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul Abidin (1420-1470).<sup>7</sup>

During the Mughal period, the Kashmir economy got further developed and we find the Kashmiri goods were exported to Central Asia, Persia, Russia, China, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan,<sup>8</sup> etc. Kashmir had also established commercial relations with the important trade centres of Mughal India like Delhi, Agra, Punjab, Lahore, Patna, Bengal, Surat, Golconda, Bijapur,<sup>9</sup> etc. The Mughals constructed the *serais* (inns) along the Mughal road which further augmented the trading activities of the mercantile class.<sup>10</sup>

The Kashmir region manufactured articles like shawls, woollen textiles, paper, carpets, silk, etc. and also produced other goods such as saffron, forest products, fruits, vegetables, and which remained the commodities of export.

Shawl formed an important article of trade during the Mughal period. The art of shawl weaving was introduced to the other parts of the Mughal empire by Akbar.<sup>11</sup> In spite of being the bulky item, shawl was the most important article of export and was carried on with Mughal India on a large scale.<sup>12</sup> According to Abul Fazl, 'Shawls were sent as valuable gifts to every clime.'<sup>13</sup> Shawls were also exported to the diverse regions of the world. We find the shawl merchants of Kashmir had thriving business and established their warehouses in Chinese Turkistan, Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, transl., vol. II, p. 351.

<sup>6</sup> Mohibbul Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, Ali Mohammad & Sons, Srinagar, 1959, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1974, pp. 33-36.

<sup>7</sup> Jia Lal Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, Gulshan Books, Srinagar, 1955, reprinted 2015, p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> Ippolito Desideri, *Mission to Tibet: The Extraordinary Eighteenth-Century Account of Father Ippolito Desideri, S.J.*, transl. by Michael J. Sweet, ed. by Leonard Zwilling, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2010, pp. 228-29, 467; Clement. R. Markham (ed.), *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet, and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, Trubner and Co., London, 1876, p. 125; P. M. Kemp, *Bharat-Rus, An Introduction to Indo-Russian Contacts and Travels from Medieval Times to the October Revolution*, Delhi, 1958, p. 107; Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal and of the Territories Annexed to this Dominion by the House of Gorkha*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1819, reprinted 1990, p. 212; Ratan Lal Hangloo, *The State in Medieval Kashmir*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 116-18; K. Warikoo, *Central Asia and Kashmir: A Study in the Context of Anglo-Russian Rivalry*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Charles Danvars (ed.), *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East, 1602-1613*, Marston & Company, London, 1896, vol. I, p. 32; vol. V, p. 109; William Foster (ed.), *The English Factories in India 1618-21*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 906, pp. 19, 50; Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie*, pp. 35-36; Abdul Majid Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals 1586-1752 A.D.*, Golden Horde Enterprises, Srinagar, 1988, p. 220.

<sup>10</sup> A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 213.

<sup>11</sup> There were more than a thousand workshops in Lahore. W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar: An Economy Study*, Macmillan and Co., London, 1920, p. 177.

<sup>12</sup> Francisco Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie*, transl. by W. H. Moreland and P. Geyl, *Jahangir's India*, W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., Cambridge, 1925, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. II, p. 170.

<sup>14</sup> Ippolito Desideri, *Mission to Tibet*, pp. 228-29, 467; Ratan Lal Hangloo, *The State in Medieval Kashmir*, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 116-18.

Carpets also formed item of export trade of Kashmir. According to Lahori, the Kashmiri carpets were considered superior to those imported from Persia.<sup>15</sup> Such was the exquisiteness of the Kashmiri carpets that the carpets of Kirman woven in the factories of the *Val-i Iran*, were equivalent to coarse woollen cloth in its comparison. The cost of a *gaz* [yard] of superior quality of Kashmiri carpets exceeded over a hundred rupee.<sup>16</sup> Both state as well as private carpet karkhanas existed in Kashmir.<sup>17</sup> The Kashmiri carpets on a large scale were supplied to the imperial *Farashkhana*.<sup>18</sup>

The silk production of Kashmir was worked up locally, but does not appear to have been extensive.<sup>19</sup> The people of Kashmir planted vines at the roots of the mulberry trees, so that grapes and mulberries were seen hanging from the same branches.<sup>20</sup> Abul Fazl writes, "The mulberry is little eaten, its leaves being reserved for the silk-worm."<sup>21</sup> However, Kashmir had to depend largely on foreign countries for the silk-worm eggs and these were brought from Gilgit and Tibet.<sup>22</sup>

Saffron also formed an important commodity of trade during the Mughal period. It was exported to Mughal India, Tibet, Nepal, China and Yarkand.<sup>23</sup> English and the Dutch merchants also purchased this commodity during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>24</sup> Four hundred *mans* were annually exported to Mughal India from Kashmir.<sup>25</sup>

According to Forster, the Kashmirians fabricate the best writing paper of the east, which was formerly an article of extensive traffic.<sup>26</sup> There was a great demand of Kashmiri paper in Mughal India.<sup>27</sup> Large quantity of paper was exported from Ahmedabad to Persia, which was presumably brought from Kashmir.<sup>28</sup>

Kashmir also exported the wooden articles to Mughal India. To quote Bernier,

<sup>15</sup> Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Padshah Nama*, transl. by Hamid Afaq Siddiqi, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi, Delhi, 1910, vol. I, p. 145.

<sup>16</sup> Mutamad Khan, *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri*, ff. 168-69; Cf. A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 224.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Lahori, *Padshah Nama*, vol. I, p. 145; Ratan Lal Hangloo, *The State in Medieval Kashmir*, pp. 116-18.

<sup>19</sup> W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar: An Economic Study*, p. 175.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits: An Account of the Jesuit Missions to the Court of Akbar*, transl. by C. H. Payne, Harper & Brothers, London, 1926, p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. II, p. 353.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.; Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, transl. by Alexander Rogers, ed. by Henry Beveridge, London, Royal Asiatic Society, 1914, vol. II, p. 146.

<sup>23</sup> Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie*, pp. 35-36; A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 220.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, vol. II, pp. 177-78.

<sup>26</sup> George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England through the Northern Part of India, Kashmere, Afghanistan, and Persia, and into Russia by the Caspian Sea*, vol. II, p. 22; A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 222.

<sup>27</sup> A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 222.

<sup>28</sup> William Foster (ed.), *The English Factories in India, 1618-1621*, pp. 7 n, 76, 143. See also A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 222.

"The workmanship and beauty of their palekys [palanquins], bedsteads, trunks, inkstands, boxes, spoons and various other things are quite remarkable and articles of their manufacture are in use in every part of the Indies."<sup>29</sup>

Horses of Kashmiri breed were exported to the imperial horse stables.<sup>30</sup> Hawkins noted that two thousand horses from Kashmir were exported to the Mughal state.<sup>31</sup> The Kashmiri horses fetched 200, 300 and even up to 1000 rupees.<sup>32</sup>

Kashmir also produced varied kinds of fruits and vegetables which were exported to Mughal India. Dry fruits were exported to the markets of Lahore,<sup>33</sup> Agra, Ahmedabad and Amritsar.<sup>34</sup> Grapes, apples, walnuts, almonds, peaches, quince, melons and water melons were the main fruits exported to the Indian market.<sup>35</sup> The grapes were transported by the porters on their backs in the conical baskets.<sup>36</sup> Superior quality of rice known as *Janjan* from Rajouri was exported to the imported kitchen though on a small scale.<sup>37</sup>

Kashmir also exported some forest products to India and other countries. *Costus* (*Saussurea Lappa*) which was obtained from the forests was exported to India. The factors at

Surat and Ahmedabad were the main customers of this root or herb.<sup>38</sup> Putchock was also exported to China on large scale where it served as the principal ingredient in Joss-sticks.<sup>39</sup> Worm-wood, an aromatic herb was also exported to India. It was mainly exported to the English Factors.<sup>40</sup> Two kinds of Amber beads were exported from Kashmir to Surat.<sup>41</sup> Large quantity of Calamus (a herb), was also exported to Mughal India from Kashmir.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, transl. on the basis of Irvine Block's version and annotated by Archibald Constable, 1891, second edition revised by Vincent A. Smith, Oxford University Press, London, 1916, p. 402.

<sup>30</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. I, p. 132; Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama*, ed. by Agha Ahmad Ali and Maulavi Abdur Rahim, Bibliotheca Indica, 3 vols., transl. by H. Beveridge, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1907, vol. III, p. 824.

<sup>31</sup> William Foster (ed.), *Early Travels in India 1583-1619*, Oxford University Press, London, 1921, pp. 103-04.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 148-49.

<sup>33</sup> Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie*, pp. 34-35; Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor or Mogul India 1653-1708*, transl. by William Irvine, John Murray, London, 1907, vol. II, p. 174; Ratan Lal Hangloo, *The State in Medieval Kashmir*, pp. 116-18.

<sup>34</sup> Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie*, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 221.

<sup>36</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. I, p. 65.

<sup>37</sup> Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie*, pp. 34-35; Lahori, *Badshah Nama*, vol. I, p. 29. See also A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 221.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, vol. II, p. 20, n. 10; George Watt, *Commercial Products of India*, p. 980. See also A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 221.

<sup>39</sup> Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive*, ed. by William Crooke, John Murray, London, 1903, pp. 744-45.

<sup>40</sup> William Foster (ed.), *English Factories in India, 1618-21*, p. 338, n.1.

<sup>41</sup> William Foster (ed.), *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East, 1617*, Sampson Low, London, 1901, vol. V, p. 109.

<sup>42</sup> A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 221.

The *charas* or *bhang* (*Cannabis*) was universally popular and was also exported from Kashmir to India.<sup>43</sup> It was also an item of import and was imported from Agra.<sup>44</sup> Various kinds of flowers and scents were also exported to from Kashmir to India.<sup>45</sup> Feathers of okar and the coloured plumes of various birds were exported in large quantities. Although the nobility was the main consumer of these articles, however, large quantity was supplied to the Royalty.<sup>46</sup> As much as 10,700 feathers were annually exported.<sup>47</sup>

Though the export trade was carried on a large scale, yet the low volume and high priced articles constituted the main articles of the export trade of Kashmir. Both imported as well as the locally produced goods constituted the commodities of export trade, however, the local goods dominated the external trade of Kashmir during the Mughal period.



<sup>43</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture*, transl. by Corinne Attwood, ed. by Burzine K. Waghmar, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p. 103; John Martin Honigberger, *Thirty-Five Years in the East: Adventures, Discoveries, Experiments, and Historical Sketches, relating to the Punjab and Cashmere in Connection with Medicine, Botany, Pharmacy, &c.*, R. C. Lepage & Co., London, 1852, pp. 14-15.

<sup>44</sup> Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie*, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>46</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. II, p. 174. See also A. M. Mattoo, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, p. 222.

<sup>47</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, vol. II, p. 178. Mutamad Khan has mentioned as 2,700 feathers. Mutamad Khan, *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri*, Urdu transl. by Muhammad Zakarya Maayil, Urdu Publishers, Lucknow, new edition, 1947, p. 157.