



Inland and external trade in Kashmir during the Mughal period (1586-1752).

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Abstract

Since the early times, Kashmir remained an economic centre owing to its great geographical significance. The establishment of Muslim rule in 1339 A.D. marked the development of commercial relations with the Central Asian region and it gave impetus to both inland and external trade of Kashmir. During fifteenth century it established trade relations with Samarkand, Kashgar, Bukhara, Khurasan and Yarkand. The Mughal occupation of Kashmir in 1586 not only created favourable conditions for the improvement of trade with Central Asia, but generally it gave a new Philip to the revival of Kashmir's trade with other neighbouring regions and also increased the Indo-Kashmir traffic. This paper is an attempt to highlight development of internal and external trade during the Mughal Period in Kashmir.

Key words: Kashmir, Mughal, Import and Export, items.

Introduction

Kashmir witnessed huge growth in trade and commerce during the Mughal period (1586 to 1752 A.D). The era witnessed the establishment of a stable and uniform provincial government. During this period, a relative peace and security, trade and commerce flourished. The Mughal paid great attention to the maintained trade routes, constructed bridges and *serais* and thus promoted the great extent, the export and import of various items to every part of India and its neighbouring countries. It shares its borders with India, Tibet, Afghanistan and Central Asia, a feature that make her a great centre of trade and commerce. The growing inland and external trade led to the development of market places not only in the towns but also in the villages.

Export (External Trade)

For centuries, Kashmir had excellent external trade relations with Persia, Tibet, Central Asia, China, Russia, Bhutan, and Nepal and within the Mughal with Bengal, Patna, Golconda and Bijapur. The significant aspect of foreign trade during this period is the coming of Europeans. This increased India's foreign trade and commerce. Most of this trade was in the form of exports of Kashmiri goods whereas the imports were very small. There were two famous trade routes to Central Asia. One was through the Gilgit and Kashgar and the other, from Skardu to Yarkand, which crossed the Baltero Glacier, which now, owing to changes in the ice, is no longer passable. These two routes also led to China, with which country

distinguishable quantity of tradeⁱ was in existence at that time. But the trade relations between Kashmir, Central Asia and Tibet were so closely familiar that they could not be cut off altogether. The items of Inland trade of Kashmir within the main land of the Mughal Empire were as Saffron. This costly condiment (*Crocus Sativus*) was cultivated in Pampore.ⁱⁱ Saffron was exported to mainland,ⁱⁱⁱ Ladakh and Yarkand.^{iv} During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we find that a small quantity was also bought by the English and the Dutch merchants.^v Another important item was Vegetables and fruits as we find large quantities of vegetables and fruits were sent to mainland.^{vi} The vegetables like *upalhak* (local vegetable) and *kenkachu* (local name) were required for the imperial kitchen at Delhi.^{vii} Kashmir also sent large quantities of fruits and dry fruits to Lahore, Ahmadabad (Gujarat), Agra and Amritsar.^{viii} During the seventeenth century the fruit merchants of Kashmir reached as far as South India with the fruits.^{ix} Among fruits the Apples, grapes, walnuts, melons, water-melons, peaches, almonds, quince, and quince-seed were the main fruits sent to the various markets within the mainland.^x The Rice which is the staple food of Kashmir as it is today, but the Superior quality of rice known as *jinjin* was grown in Rajouri was transported for the imperial kitchen.^{xi} The Water-fowls from valley were required for the imperial kitchen.^{xii} The other items sent from Kashmir to various parts of the Mughal Empire were feathers of *okra* and the coloured plumes of various birds.^{xiii} Horses of Kashmiri breed were also sent from Kashmir to different parts of the Mughal Empire.^{xiv} It was during the eighteenth century the Kashmiri merchants and traders had started trade of Forest products (medicinal herbs) and such other products with the East India Company.^{xv} The Costus (Putchock) also known as *Saussursa Lappa*. This root was obtained from the forests of the Kashmir valley, locally known as *kuth*.^{xvi} The herb was important and famous for its medicinal properties. The factories at Ahmedabad and Surat were the main customers of this herb (root).^{xvii} Calamus, this herb of Kashmir was delicate and odoriferous than the common sort^{xviii} was also sold to the factors at Surat.^{xix} Amber Beads were grown in Kashmir, there were two species of amber beads herb in the valley. These were mainly sold to merchants of Ahmedabad, Surat and Kashmir.^{xx} Worm Wood (*Artemisia*), an aromatic herb found in the valley at an altitude of 5000 to 7000 feet.^{xxi} After distillation process it yields a dark green oil of intoxicating properties.^{xxii} For the first time, it was purchased by English factors during 1618 and 21. It was found highly nutritive and especially conducive to the sailors.^{xxiii} The world famous item Bhang (*Charas*) is also called as *Cannabis*. This item grows higher, stronger and more abundantly in the valley than in the plains of India. The *charas* was prepared from it which was mixed with tobacco^{xxiv} and it was used for the purpose of producing intoxication.^{xxv} This intoxicant was extracted from the leaves of dried hemp.^{xxvi} The *charas* was universally famous and was also exported from Kashmir to India.^{xxvii}

Various other items exported from Kashmir to India and other parts were Fine paper, inkstands, trays, boxes, spoons, bedsteads, trunks, *khatim band kursi*, ornamented pen-cases and papier-mâché etc. were also in great demand in mainland.^{xxviii} Various kinds of scents and flowers were also exported to India and sold at excessive prices. *Salix Caprea* (*Bed Mushk*),^{xxix} scents of roses and flowers and musk deer^{xxx} yielded handsome profit.^{xxxi}

Internal Trade

In Kashmir, the state administration served to boost the internal trade to a considerable extent during the Mughal period.^{xxxii} This trade consisted of both imported commodities as well as goods produced in the Kashmir valley. Before sixteenth century, there was no systematic market system. The business though flourishing was carried on inside the houses.^{xxxiii} The shawls and other commodities which were manufactured in the valley improved and promoted the trade of the country filled it with wealth.^{xxxiv} Francois Bernier, remarked that the trade in Srinagar was brisk and the streets were

linked with long rows of shops offering various commodities for sale.^{xxxv} Besides, the regular shops, the petty dealers and shopkeepers also carried on their business in movable stalls. But in late eighteenth century, the systematic marketing system got fully developed and separate markets were established as those of *bazar Saraffan*, *bazar Baqalia*, *bazar Sabaga* (chintz market) etc. etc.^{xxxvi} Although the towns became busy centres of trade and commerce and also for arts and crafts, etc. *Qasbas* and townships acted as the major market places for the internal place. In addition to the Srinagar city which had long history of a commercial centre, other towns such as *Baramulla*, *Sopore*, *Dooru*,^{xxxvii} *Islamabad*, *Bijbehara*, *Pampore*, *Shupian*, etc. developed as centres of commercial activities.^{xxxviii} The internal trade was largely effected through the river Jhelum, however, the trade with hilly areas was carried on by means of ponies, asses and horses etc.^{xxxix} The internal trade was conducted both by the state and by the private traders, and in case of trade in grains was, however, controlled by the government all through the medieval period. And the most important feature of internal trade in Kashmir was the practice of barter system, as according to Abul Fazl, the payments were estimated in terms of paddy.^{xl} This resulted from the custom of realizing land revenue in grain rather than in cash. Whereas, paddy predominated over other crops in the internal trade in which payment in coin and kind were estimated in terms of *Shali* (unhusk rice).^{xli}

Items of Import

The chief items of import were salt, shawl-wool, cotton cloth, cloves, Mace, pepper, silkworm seed, turmeric, ginger and sugar.^{xlii} But the salt was an important item of import. Like wool, salt trade was also a flourishing trade.^{xliiii} It was brought from Bengal also.^{xliiv} The labourers received their wages in terms of salt.^{xliv} The Kashmiri merchants mostly purchased it from Thana which later turned to be a salt *mandi*.^{xlvi} It had various qualities and better quality of the salt was imported from Punjab via the Pir Panjal route. However, a small quantity was also imported from Ladakh as it is inferior in quality.^{xlvii} Tea was imported from Ladakh to Kashmir in large quantity.^{xlviii} Tea was known as *Ja (Cia)* in Ladakh and *Cha* in Iran.^{xlix} Irfan Habib says that tea was unknown during the Mughal period.¹ However, from the mid-seventeenth century, tea was an important item of Dutch trade at Surat, nevertheless its volume of trade might have been very small as it was not always available in the market.ⁱⁱ This is further corroborated by Ovington who writes in 1689 A.D., that “tea is a common Drink with all the inhabitants of India.”^{lii} This item was also imported from Yarkand.^{liii} The Kashmiri merchants at Ladakh mainly dealt with China tea, and had placed their agents in Yarkand, Lhasa and Kashmir.^{liv}

We find that all kinds of merchandise were meant to one or the other kind of duty. Whereas, we have no details information about the item-wise duty, that was levied on all goods as well as on the transportation of goods. The trade relations of Kashmir with the outside world were mean to certain financial duties. For instance, the grapes were exported for market at Delhi, and grapes used to sell at 108 *dams* a maund, but the cost of their transportation to Delhi was two rupees per maund.^{lv} Other example, all goods imported into and exported from Kashmir to Tibet and Yarkand were taxed to the tune of one lakh rupees, that payable at the treasury situated across the *Sindh* River at *Ganderbal*.^{lvi}

ⁱ Francois Bernier *Travels in the Mogul Empire* A.D 1656-68, Eng. tr., On the basis of Irving Brock's version by A. Constable, with notes 2nd edition revised by V.A. Smith, Delhi, Reprint, 2005, pp.425-27.

ⁱⁱ. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, 2 vols. Nawal Kishore's edition, Lucknow, 1879-80, & its. transl. vol. I, by H. Blochmann and vol. II-III (Bound in one) by H.S. Jarrett, New Delhi, 1949, Text, I, p. 64; II, p. 172.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, p. 55; *Tuzuk*, p. 296.

- ^{iv} Ghulam Hasan Khoihami, *Tarikh-i Hasan*, 2vols., Eng. tr., by Shafi Shauq, Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Srinagar, 2016. I, p. 408.
- ^v *EFI* 1618-1621, p.169; Karl Fischer, “*The Beginning of Dutch trade with Gujarat*,” *PIHC*, 1965, pp. 210-11
- ^{vi} Nicolao Manucci, *Mogul India (1653-1708) or Storia do Mogor*, (in 4 vols. Bound in 2), translated with Introduction and notes by W. Irvine, Delhi, Reprinted in LPP 2005, vol. III., p. 396.
- ^{vii} *Ain*, I, pp. 34, 39-40.
- ^{viii} Pelsaert, p. 36; Manucci, vol. II, p. 174.
- ^{ix} Aurangzeb, *Ruqat-i-Alamgiri, Tarikh-i-Mughal*, Abdus Salam Collection 321/91, manuscript section, MAL, AMU, Aligarh, p. 163.
- ^x Pelsaert, pp. 35-36.
- ^{xi} *Ain*, I, pp. 34, 39.
- ^{xii} *Ibid*, I, p. 34.
- ^{xiii} The main consumers of these items were the Mughal nobility and they decorated their banners and headgears with these beautiful plumes. *Ain*, II, p. 174
- ^{xiv} *Ibid*, I, pp. 94, 103-4.
- ^{xv} *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East, 1602-17*, 6 vols; vol. I, edited by F. C. Danvers; vols. II-VI, edited by W. Foster, London, 1896-1902; Letter Received, vol. I, (1602-1613), p.32.
- ^{xvi} William Moorcroft and G. Trebeck, *Travels in India Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and Kashmir, Kabul and Bokhara from 1819 to 1825*, in 2 vols. (Bound in 1.), ed. by Horace Haymen Wilson, Reprinted in LPP New Delhi, 2000, vol. II, p. 155.
- ^{xvii} Lawrence, Sir Walter, *The Valley of Kashmir*, Srinagar, 1967, pp. 77, 83. 137.
- ^{xviii} Frederick Charles Danvers (ed.), *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East, 1602-1613*, Sampson Low, London, 1896, vol. I, p. 32.
- ^{xix} *Letter Received*, vol. I, (1602-1613), p. 32.
- ^{xx} R. L. Hangloo, *The State n Medieval Kashmir*, New Delhi, 2000 pp. 116-18.s
- ^{xxi} George Watt, *The Commercial Products of India: Being An Abridgment of the Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*, New Delhi, Reprint Edition, 1966, p. 93.
- ^{xxii} Abdul Majid Matto, *Kashmir under the Mughals 1586-1752*, golden Horde, Kashmir, 1988, p. 222.
- ^{xxiii} Court Minutes, East India Company, November 20, 1618. See, *EFI*, 1618-21, p. 338.
- ^{xxiv} Muhammad Azam Didamari, *Waqiat-i-Kashmir*, Urdu tr., from Persian, Khwaja Hamid Yazdani, Lahore, 1995, f. 215b.
- ^{xxv} John Martin Honigberger, *Thirty-Five Years in the East: Adventures, Discovers, Experiments, and Historical Sketches, relating to the Punjab and Cashmere in Connection with Medicine, Botany, Pharmacy*, & R. C. Lepage & Co., London, 1852, pp. 14-15.
- ^{xxvi} Ippolito Desideri, *An Account of Tibet, The Travels of Ippolito Desideri of Pistola, 1712-1727*, ed. Filippo De Filippi London, 1937p. 470.
- ^{xxvii} Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals – History, Art and Culture*, tr., 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*, pp. 14-15.
- ^{xxviii} Bernier, p. 402; Manucci, vol. II, p. 402.
- ^{xxix} *Ain*, I, p. 56; Lawrence, pp. 77-78.
- ^{xxx} Desideri, p. 78.
- ^{xxxi} Lawrence, p. 78.
- ^{xxxii} Matto, p. 223.
- ^{xxxiii} *Ain*, II, p. 170.
- ^{xxxiv} Bernier, p. 402.
- ^{xxxv} *Ibid*, p.351.

xxxvi Matto, p. 223; *Waqiat*, f. 9a.

xxxvii *Tarikh-i Hasan*, vol. I, p. 227.

xxxviii *Ibid*, vol. I, pp. 252-58.

xxxix *Ain*, vol. II, p. 354; Bernier, p. 392.

xl *Ibid*, Vol., II, Eng., tr., H. S. Jarrett, p. 366.

xli *Ibid*, II, pp. 175-76.

xlii *Tuzuk*, p. 286, 291; Pelsaert, pp. 35-36:

xliii Matto, p. 222.

xliv *Ibid*, Mohibbul Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, Ali Mohammad & Sons, Srinagar, 1959, 2nd edition 1974, p. 245.

xlv *Ain*, II, p. 174.

xlvi Muhammad Murad Tang, *Tuhfatul Fuqara*, (1710) Acc. No. 98, f. 24b; *Waqiat*, f. 173a.

xlvii *Tuzuk*, p. 282; M.K. Parmu, *A History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1320-1819*, New Delhi, 1969. p. 422.

xlviii Moorcroft & Trebeck, vol. I, part-II, ch. III, p. 350.

xlvi Qazi bin Kashifuddin Muhammad Yazdi, *Risala-i Chub-i Chini*, Add. 19, 169, ff. 155b-156a; Cf. Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707*, 3rd edition, 2014, p. 51n.

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 51&n, 62 n. Probably, Irfan Habib is of the opinion that the cultivation of tea was unknown during the Mughal period.

li William Foster (ed.), *The English Factories in India 1655-60*, 13 vols., Oxford, 1906-27, pp. 56, 276.

lii J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, ed. by H. G. Rawlinson, Oxford University Press, London, 1929, p. 181.

liii Mushtaq Ahmad Kaw, *The Agrarian System of Kashmir, 1586-1819A.D.*, Srinagar, July, 2001. pp. 104-05.

liv Simon Digby, 'Travels in Ladakh 1820-21: The Account of Moorcroft's Persian Munshi, Hajji Sayyid Ali, of His Travels', *Asian Affairs*, vol. 29 (1998), pp. 299-311.

lv *Ain*, I, pp. 43-44.

lvi Mushtaq Ahmad Kaw, p. 105.