



Changing Processes In Agro-Horticulture Pattern During The British Period In Chamba Princely State

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Abstract: This research paper highlights how the Chamba Princely State changed after British colonial rule. Through this paper, an attempt has been made to find out how agriculture changed, how the kings of Chamba adopted pro-British policies. New canals and kuhls were built for irrigation. The changes made in this by the British government were studied systematically. Through this research paper, an attempt has been made to know that land and revenue reforms were done during the British era. Through this study, an attempt will also be made to understand the revenue historical background of Chamba.

Index Terms-Agriculture, Horticulture, Chamba, Princely State, and British Period.

I. INTRODUCTION

Chamba Princely State was established in 550 AD by Maru Varman at a place called Bharmour. At that time, it was known as Brahmapur. The capital was shifted from Brahmapur to Chamba by Varman King Sahil Varman. He made Chamba his capital. Chamba city was named after a princess named Champa who was the daughter of King Sahil Varman. At present, it is known as Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh. Wars continued for a long time between Chamba Princely State and Nurpur Princely State. In which a war took place between King Raj Singh Chamba and King Jeet Singh at a place called Rihlu in which King Raj Singh of Chamba was defeated and died. Apart from this, many other battles also took place which are recorded in history¹. Chamba district was also influenced by Mughal rule. The revenue minister of Mughal ruler Akbar captured the Rihlu area of Chamba and brought it under Mughal rule. The King of Chamba, Chattar Singh, refused the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's order to demolish the temple and offered urns at every temple. After the Gorkha British War of 1815, the British influence increased on Himachal as well as Chamba Princely State and Chamba State came under the control of the British Company. After gaining control over Chamba, the British Company made many changes in the administration and social level of the Chamba Princely State. It made new military reforms. To accomplish this task, the British agents played a major role in Chamba. British influence in Chamba started during the time of Raja Shri Singh. When the Sikhs were defeated by the British government, the British imposed a war fine of Rs. 1.5 crores which the Sikh government could not pay. So, they made another treaty on 9th March 1846 AD. According to this, the

entire area between the Sutlej and Beas rivers was sold to the British for Rs. 1 crore and it was decided to give Rs. 50 lakhs in cashⁱⁱ. The British government sold the area between the Indus and Sutlej to Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu for Rs. 1 crore. Chamba was also included in this. The border on one side was fixed as the river Ravi. The river Ravi flowed through the middle of Chamba. This treaty divided Chamba into two parts. Earlier Chamba was under the control of the Sikhs, now it came under the control of Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu. Which was not acceptable to Chamba. So, the Wazir of Chamba went to Lahore and met Sir Henry Lawrence there and explained to him the whole problem that how the Chamba state would be divided into two parts and the people and rulers of Chamba state would not accept any situation under the King of Jammu. Somehow the Wazir of Chamba convinced Henry Lawrence and the British government gave the area of Lakhanpur to Gulab Singh in exchange for Chamba and maintained the integrity of Chambaⁱⁱⁱ. In return, the British government imposed an annual tax of twelve thousand rupees on the Chamba state. On 6 April 1848, the British government granted a charter to Mr. Singh and Chamba came completely under British control. Chamba not only became a part of the British administratively or not only had to pay twelve thousand rupees tax but now the British influence started showing in the domestic and revenue policies here as well. In 1851 itself, Lord Napier took over Chamba's Kathalga, Potren, Terah, Bhangour and Bakrota villages to make a cantonment and in return reduced the annual revenue of 2000 rupees which Chamba used to pay to the British. This place was named Dalhousie after Sir Donald Macleod^{iv}. Due to the British-friendly attitude of Chamba State, Chamba's jurisdiction also increased, in which a charter was issued on 11 March 1862, according to which the King of Chamba got the right to adopt a son. King Shri Singh of Chamba was young, so the state and the administration were facing all the problems, so King Shri Singh requested the British Government of Punjab in 1862 for the service of an English officer. As a result, the British Government appointed Major Blair Reed as the manager (superintendent) of Chamba, who came to Chamba in January 1863 and took charge.

II. AREA OF RESEARCH

Chamba, a princely state in India, is traditionally settled on both banks of the river Ravi. At present, it is known as Chamba district on the map of Himachal Pradesh. It is situated in the north-west of Himachal Pradesh. It is located between 32° 11' 30" to 33° 13' 6" N Latitude and 75° 49' 00" to 77° 03' 30" E longitude^v. Chamba district is divided into eight sub-divisions and nine tehsils. Before 1947, some areas of Lahaul Spiti and Kangra were also part of Chamba Princely State. Apart from this, some parts of Bhadarwah area of Jammu were part of Chamba Princely State^{vi}. For the present study, data has been collected keeping in mind the areas of new and old Chamba.



Figure-01: Present Map of District Chamba

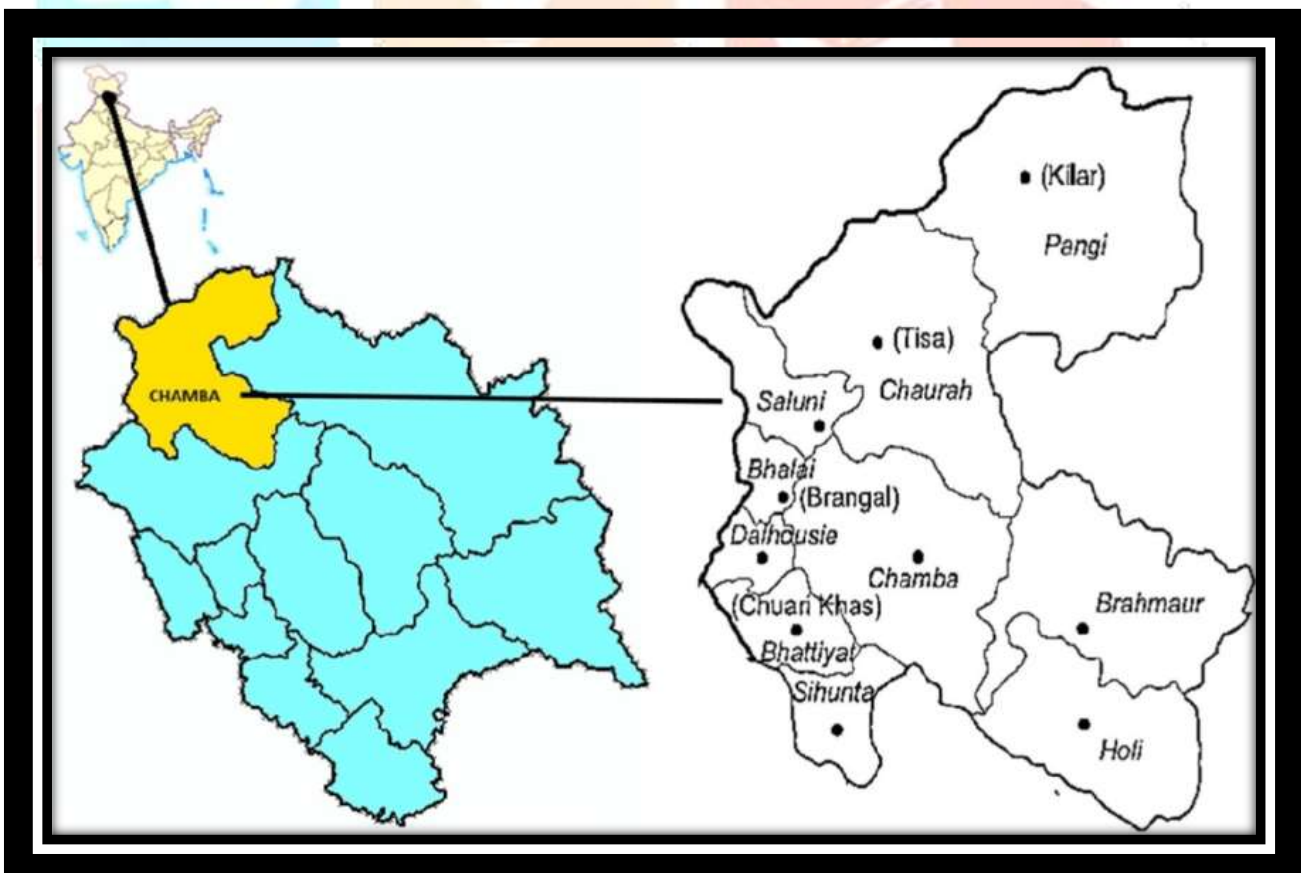


Figure-02: Map of Chamba Princely State

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on information from secondary sources and is a fieldwork and report-based investigation of the agrarian and revenue reforms in the Chamba region of Himachal Pradesh. The aim of this study is to understand the agrarian changes that came about after the intervention of the British government and the challenges faced by the peasants. This study is augmented and supported by data from secondary sources such as district gazetteers, historical documents, archives and reports of government and NGOs. The data presented in this research paper has been collected during 1857 - 1947 through the use of various research methods such as oral history, field observation and participatory mapping. The study of secondary sources focuses on understanding the history, evolution of agricultural systems, their socio-economic and historical implications. The research involved an in-depth review of historical records, including gazetteers published at different times, land revenue records, government gazetteers and government and private papers available in district and state libraries and local government offices. A lot of valuable information has been collected about the traditional agricultural system and cropping pattern from books, research papers, journals, books and reports published by governmental, semi-governmental and non-governmental organizations on the agricultural sector of the princely state of Chamba and the changes brought about by the direct or indirect intervention of the British government and the kings' officials. It also aims to understand how the agricultural system has evolved over time and how it has been affected by changes in revenue, socio-cultural developments and policies over time. The findings of this research can provide valuable insights on agricultural changes, revenue and the broader challenges faced by farmers.

IV. OBJECTIVE

- The main objective of this article is to deeply analyse the expansion and changes in the agriculture and horticulture sector in Chamba Princely State between 1857 and 1947 before independence.
- The objective of this research is to study the factors inducing changes in the agriculture sector.
- To study the development pattern in the agriculture and horticulture sector.

V. CHANGING PROCESSES IN AGRO-HORTICULTURE PATTERN IN CHAMBA

The British influence is clearly visible on all the policies of Chamba Princely State. Major Reed started making changes in the revenue process in Chamba. To increase the income of the state, he promoted agricultural land. In the same sequence, Major Reed leased the forests of Chamba to the British government for 99 years in 1864^{vii}. Due to which the Chamba state received an income of 22 thousand. This lease given to the British government was reviewed every 20 years and this amount was increased. Major Reed also improved the revenue tax system. Efforts were made to make barren land cultivable and efforts were made to take tax in cash instead of in the form of grains. Canals and wells were constructed for irrigation in the cultivable land of Chamba state. Administrative settlement was introduced in the state. Major Reed retired in January 1865 and went out of the state. After that Captain Forge and Lieutenant E. Zee Weiss came but during their tenure no major administrative change is seen in the revenue or administrative system. Major Reed joined the Chamba Princely State again in the year 1866 and between 1866 and 1870, Chamba's income increased to Rs. 173,000/-. At that time there was no industry or factory, all the income was agriculture based. This income included a large part of land revenue and also a large part came from lease from forests^{viii}. Major Reed also worked with Raja Gopal Singh after the death of Shri Singh, in which special emphasis was laid on land reform. New lands were allotted to the people, barren lands were made cultivable again. The administrative structure of tax collection was reorganized. When Gopal Singh left his throne to his son Sham Singh, Sham Singh was only seven years old. At that time the administration was completely in the hands of British officer Major Reed and Wazir Mian Autar Singh^{ix}. All the administrative work was going on as per British rule.

The British government officials encouraged cash crops in Chamba, which included potato, pea, sugarcane production. They encouraged the production of maize, wheat, channa, urad (maah). Apple cultivation was started in areas like Bharmour of Chamba and it continues even today. Colonel Reed passed the Land Revenue Settlement Act in Chamba for the first time in 1876. With the passing of this act, the entire tax system of the Chamba Princely State changed. This act was done to increase the income of Chamba^x. Now,

on a large scale, the farmers of Chamba princely state started getting influenced by the policies of the British officers. Under their influence or the pressure of rent, they were inspired to leave the old traditional farming and do agricultural reforms. The newly issued Settlement Act included the provision of converting barren land into cultivable land. These reforms were done on a large scale and the farmers also opposed the new revenue reforms^{xi}. As a result of this, after a few years, the farmers revolted in the Bhatiyat area of Chamba district.

The soil of Chamba is divided into two main categories, Kuhli which is irrigated by Kuhls and Otari which is entirely rain fed. Both the categories are further divided into types according to the condition and nature of the land viz. Maidan, Oti and Gaggal. Maidan means more or less level and open land, Oti means rugged and uneven land and Gaggal means land full of stones. Thus, we have six types of soil namely Maidan Kuhli, Oti Kuhli, Gaggal Kuhli, Maidan Otari, Oti Otari and Gaggal Otari. The Rabi crop is called Bahari and Kharif crop is called Sairi.

The Bahari crop is sown in Asooj (September-October) and harvested in Sawan (July-August), Sairi crop is sown in Sawan and harvested in Asooj. It is observed that the spring harvest is particularly late in these areas as compared to the plains, and this makes the summer time of the hill farmers of Chamba very busy. It is not, however, the case that two crops are obtained in many places. The crop rotation here is largely of complex nature, but being a hilly area the sequence varies with the varying conditions. In the Bhatiyat and the lower parts of the Ravi valley, rice is sown along with wheat in the Kuhli or irrigated land and maki, mash etc. are sown along with wheat or barley in the Otari or non-irrigated land. Rice is rarely grown in the higher mountains, and the winter crops consist of wheat, barley and lentils, usually followed by makki, phulan or bream etc. The general order of rotation is as follows. wheat, fullan mash or brace, followed by maize. The land intended for the crop is often left fallow for the winter, and after the maize is harvested, wheat is sown on this land; and then fullan, brace or mash is sown the following summer. The rotation is not done on any fixed scientific system; it depends very much on the individual practice of the farmers.

Organic manure is added to the fields as far as possible for every crop, but special manure is arranged for wheat, maize and tobacco crops. The material used as manure is goha or mal, which is fresh or dry dung of cattle, which is collected in a heap near the village, called maluh, leaves and grass used for cattle bedding, after getting wet with animal excreta, cattle dung and any other reused material or broom, is added to the heap daily. Manure is also prepared from this. Which is put in the fields. Here no inorganic matter was used as manure, this organic manure is added to the fields according to the crop for which the field is prepared. The farmers here also used green manure. Green manure is a method in which millet or wheat is sown in the field and then when the seeds grow to about five to six inches, it is plowed again so that these small plants get mixed in the soil, their rotting becomes manure for the next crop. With this layer, the fields are prepared for plowing and seeds are sown in it.

Wheat, barley, bres, Phullan and Potatoes are common in all hilly areas. The hilly areas of Chamba, Pangi, Bharmour, also grow elu, suil, bazaar, bhang, chinani, kodra, and peas. All hilly areas and sunny villages grow potatoes.

Like the changes that took place at the all-India level after the land reforms, the land and agriculture reforms in Chamba Princely State also had very deep and far-reaching consequences. These affected both the livelihood and social system of the local people. The changes made keeping the market in mind affected the traditional agricultural system of Chamba Princely State. Chamba Princely State is in a hilly area, the size of land holdings here is also very small, so the number of small farmers was high here. These farmers used to do farming for their livelihood. Due to the agricultural policies made under the supervision of the officers of the British government, there was a lot of pressure on these small farmers. Now the revenue started being taken in cash, due to which there was pressure on these farmers to grow cash crops and these farmers left the traditional agricultural system and accepted the new system. This market-oriented agricultural system had an adverse effect on small farmers because it took them time to adapt to the new economic system^{xii}. Also, due to lack of technology and resources, the economy of Chamba Princely State suffered a setback. But since the revenue was collected in cash, its effect was not seen in the revenue treasury. Rather, a big increase was recorded in the king's revenue. Small farmers went deeper into the debt of moneylenders.

Moneylenders, big landowners, landlords and traders grabbed the lands of small farmers. Now small farmers were forced to become tenants and sharecroppers.

With changing times, horticulture has been promoted in the cold areas of Chamba. Apple production started on a large scale in Bharmour and Churah areas of Chamba. The credit for starting apple horticulture here indirectly goes to the British. Apricots and pears are also cultivated on a large scale in these areas. There is sufficient snowfall in these areas^{xiii}. Due to this, apple production is good here. This land also provides sufficient nutrition for peach and plum. There is no snow or grit in the low altitude areas of Chamba, among which Bhatiyat Bala area is prominent, where mango and gooseberry are cultivated. Fruits like lemon, orange, galgal are cultivated in these areas. Chamba is an important place in Himachal Pradesh for vegetable production. Various species of cabbage, peas, potatoes, capsicum, tomato and ladyfinger are grown in this area. The soil of the Chamba region is very fertile and the farmers here are also very hardworking. It is the result of their hard work that even in areas like Pangi, they produce vegetables and get their hard work recognized in the market. The people of the Chamba region have historically been self-reliant and hardworking. These people do animal husbandry along with farming. Gujjar and Gaddi are the two major and main shepherd tribes here. The present government is also encouraging these activities by making various policies^{xiv}. In which the government is encouraging farmers by giving many types of subsidies and indirect benefits.

The Chamba Princely State has been greatly influenced by the British market forces, as a result of which the farming and horticulture here has completely changed. People adopted market-oriented agriculture to give cash revenue, due to which the people here had to face many disastrous results. Traditional agricultural techniques ended, some old and healthy crops disappeared. The market-oriented system destroyed the social harmony. Now private ownership of land became dominant and many more classes were formed between the king and the farmer, which included the traders, numberdars, market and mandi brokers^{xv}. Due to their influence, the concept of subjects and king ended. As a result, there were protests in the Bhatiyat region but they were suppressed.

VI. CONCLUSION

As a result of British policies, the agricultural culture of Chamba changed completely. Due to the change in agricultural culture, there were major changes in the socio-economic and social sphere of Chamba. The sacred and emotional bond between the king and the subjects was also affected. British policies changed the cropping pattern but with time these farmers were not provided with modern facilities due to which the agriculture and horticulture of Chamba also lagged behind other regions. In today's time, the agricultural techniques in Chamba are a century old which are slowly losing their place in the markets. According to today's standards, there is a need to promote agriculture according to scientific techniques. By doing this, the historical injustice done to the farmers of Chamba can also be compensated.

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