

A European account of the Socio-Economic and Educational condition of Kashmiris under the Dogra Rule: A Critical Appraisal

Mohmad Ashraf Khaja

PhD Research Scholar,, Centre of Advanced Study Deptt.of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

Abstract- By the middle of the 19th century the state of Jammu and Kashmir was formed (sold to Dogra ruler, Gulab Singh, by British East India Company under the Treaty of Amritsar, 1846) under the protection of the British Government. Under the autocratic rule of Gulab Singh, the basic rights of the Kashmiri Muslims were trampled, they were denied opportunities of socio-economic development and their religious sentiments were intentionally hurt. The British Government made lackluster attempts to ameliorate the pathetic condition of the majority community of the state. At the outset of Gulab Singh's reign, he confiscated all previously held jagirs. He dispossessed Kashmiri peasants by establishing harsh and unjust economic policies. The peasants were simply reduced to tenants at will. For the first time in its history, the Kashmiri Muslims lost ownership rights over their lands. In order to work on behalf of the government, the Maharaja fixed a number of men in each village to do begar (indentured labour) a brazen exploitation and inhuman practice by any standard. The unfortunate Kashmiri Muslims who were made to work as beasts of burden in far off places, in rugged snowy mountain terrains for months and a considerable number among them would perish due to hunger and inclement weather. Further, the Dogra rulers would eat into the hard toil of artisans especially the shawl weavers by imposing heavy taxes on their products. The horrible tales of exploitation of Kashmiri people motivated people like Fredrick Henry Cooper and Lord Bishop of Calcutta to visit Kashmir and find out truths about starvation deaths. It was Robert Thorp, who wrote numerous articles for English newspapers about the plight of Kashmiri Muslims. A number of European writers visited Kashmir during this period and among them few travellers like Arther Brinkman, Robert Thorp, William Digby etc. pointed towards the miseries of Kashmiri Muslims. They perceived that among the gravest problems of the people of Kashmir, (both rural and urban) was that of poverty. It was mostly due to the exorbitant taxes and communal bias against the majority section of people on the part of Dogra rulers, Kashmiri Muslims were filled with a sense of indignation for the oppressive treatment they were meted out by the Dogras. Few writers even were moved by the pathetic condition of Kashmiris by which they wrote that all the atrocities were the deliberate creation of the Dogra government, and unsurprisingly patronized by the British. The present paper is an attempt to explore the circumstances in which the State of Jammu and Kashmir was formed. The paper highlights the political expediencies of British government vis-a-vis the political interests of the Dogras. The prime focus of the paper is to uncover the contours of communal nature of the Dogra rule in

Kashmir's politics and governance. It besides had tried to explore how the religion based discrimination of Kashmiri Muslims under Dogras gave birth to a religio-cultural nationalist awakening in Kashmir- that, among other things, shaped the political discourse in the state in a communal way even after the lapse of British paramountcy and Dogra rule in 1947. The impact of 'religion-inspired' anti-Dogra struggle on the political culture and social basis of the state has also been examined in the paper. Furthermore an attempt has been made to unfold the oppressive taxation system and harsh measures of Dogra Rulers over the people of Kashmir. The critical description of the Dogra Rule mainly narrated by European Writers like Walter Lawrence, Tyndale Biscoe, Robert Thorp, Arthur Brinkman, William Digby, Ernest F. Neve etc. is the part of paper.

Index Terms- Kashmir, Muslims, Dogra Rule, Socio-Economic, Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Kashmir became a part of the newly created state of Jammu and Kashmir ostensibly through the Treaty of Amritsar (16th March, 1846) which deprived it of even having the status of a conquered territory. The boundaries of the state were redrawn more for geo-political and administrative convenience rather than on a commonality shared by the people living there. The British placed an alien Dogra ruling house over Kashmir without considering the wishes or interests of the vast majority of its people. Of course, the pre-colonial Mughal, Afghan and Sikh rulers of Kashmir were no more interested in consulting Kashmiris to determine the latter's acquiescence in their own rule. However the Dogra period ushered in a critical break in terms of a vital change in the nature of arrangements of power inaugurated at the same time as the state of J&K was founded by the colonial government of India.¹ The whole valley was commoditized and sold like property. As a result it was treated more as an economic asset rather than a political possession. To add to this psychological trauma was the religious, linguistic and cultural divide between the rulers' own territories and Kashmir. Thus deprived of any bond with the people, the Dogra regime backed by the British Empire reduced Kashmir to serfdom. Starting with agriculture the regime gradually took over industry, trade and commerce, lakes, forests, and other natural resources

¹Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers Muslim Subjects, Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir*, (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 4.

for back-breaking taxation. Not satisfied, the naked and semi starved human beings themselves were forced to act as beasts of burden for government forces and officials without any remuneration. In fact the oppression pursued even after death when the grave diggers were also subjected to tax. The sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir in 1846 was negotiated with the person of the ruler not with the people of Kashmir. As a result of this, the vast majority of the people, who happened to be Muslims found themselves unrepresented in an enterprise of Dogra domination without legitimacy.² The basic rights of the Kashmiri Muslims were trampled under the autocratic rule of Gulab Singh, they were denied opportunities of socio-economic development and their religious sentiments were intentionally hurt. The British Government made lackluster attempts to ameliorate the pathetic condition of the majority community of the state. At the outset of Gulab Singh's reign, he confiscated all previously held *jagirs*. He dispossessed Kashmiri peasants by establishing harsh and unjust economic policies. The peasants were simply reduced to tenants at will. Their honor, freedom and rights were bartered away by the two parties for their own vested interests.³ The Dogra rule was forcibly imposed upon the people of Kashmir who were allowed no choice in the matter by the British and were thus subjected to most inhumane, torturous and miserable slavery of the then world. Robert Thorp mentions, though implicitly that 'For purposes entirely selfish, the British deliberately sold millions of human beings into the absolute power of one of the meanest, most avaricious, cruel, and unprincipled of men that ever sat upon a throne.'⁴ It was not only the ignorant and incapable ruler imposed upon the people but a crowd of rapacious and unprincipled ministers, courtiers, hangers on of every grade who descended upon Kashmir like a flock of hungry vultures and swept away the prosperity and happiness of its people.⁵

Since the treaty of Amritsar was, from its very nature, an embodiment of the policy of subordinate isolation, and manifestly contained the stipulation of non-interference in the internal affairs of the new born state of Jammu and Kashmir. But this stipulation of non-interference had immediately led to a gross misrule in the state subjecting the people to an extreme economic stagnation and economic servility.⁶ Within less than two years of Maharaja Gulab Singh's rule the British intervention in the internal affairs of the state began to show its signs. The principal causes of this intervention were the complaints which the Government of India had received about Maharaja's oppression on the people.⁷ The superior notion of Gulab Singh that he had purchased the valley gave him a strong conviction to commit any kind of oppression on the subjects of the land the state of affairs of which has been further described very well by Pearce Gervis: 'All these epidemics and natural calamities have come upon the people, but in addition there have been the ever present conquerors, oppressors and masters who have taken and held the country in their power, each of the rulers

with different edicts, each with changing moods, some kindly, others inhuman. For the most part over the years one community of the people had death always before them as the punishment for falling to do physically or accept mentally that which their masters forced upon them. They were starved by them of those necessities of life which they had both made and grown in plenty with sufficient and more to keep them and their families. They learned to lie in order to save themselves and their loved ones from destruction at times; they learned to hoard and hide against the famine which might come on them through the elements or the invaders, and because of that and their having little, to steal when the chance presented itself, they learned to fear the sword and the gun for what both have done to them and theirs. They learned to appear poor, and in doing so that those who taxed them might be deceived into extracting of what little they had to treasure.'⁸

In order to work on behalf of the government, the Maharaja fixed a number of men in each village to do *begar* [indentured labour], a brazen exploitation and inhuman practice by any standard. The unfortunate Kashmiri Muslims who were made to work as beasts of burden in far off places, in rugged snowy mountain terrains for months and a considerable number among them would perish due to hunger and inclement weather. Further, the Dogra rulers would eat into the hard toil of artisans especially the shawl weavers by imposing heavy taxes on their products. The horrible tales of exploitation of Kashmiri people motivated people like Fredrick Henry Cooper and Lord Bishop of Calcutta to visit Kashmir and find out truths about starvation deaths. The regular flow of western visitors witnessed only after Gulab Singh's friendship with the British, plus the fact that it became considerably safer to travel to the valley after Britain annexed the Punjab. All of them seem to have found themselves torn between delight at the beauty of the valley and horror at the abject state of the people and the harshness of their ruler. Robert Thorp came to Kashmir, like many other European visitors, to shoot big game on the mountains; but his mind was soon directed to a more important matter namely, the sorrows of the Kashmiris under the Dogra maladministration. He found the peasants, who were Mohammedans, suffering terribly under the rule of Hindu officials, who sucked the very life-blood out of them. They paid their taxes in kind, the State claiming half the crops, and the State officials who collected the grain taking a quarter or more. He wrote numerous articles for English newspapers about the plight of Kashmiri Muslims.

II. EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS AND DOGRA ADMINISTRATION

Economically downtrodden, morally quashed and politically suppressed, the Muslims of Kashmir were also educationally backward. In the rural areas where they constitute more than 80% of the total population, their illiteracy was almost hundred percent. The causes of their backwardness were manifold: harsh poverty, their own ignorance, the unsympathetic attitude of non-Muslim students in the government schools, conservative outlook of religious leaders and the discriminatory policies of the Dogra

² Ibid., 4.

³ M. Ishaq Khan, *Crisis of a Kashmiri Muslim, Spritual and Intellectual*, (Srinagar, 2008), 164.

⁴ Robert Thorp, *Cashmere Misgovernment*, (London, 1870), 112.

⁵ Ibid., 113.

⁶ G. H. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir, 1931-1940*, (Srinagar, 1980), 4.

⁷ M. L. Kapur, *Kashmir Sold and Snatched, 1846-1889*, (Srinagar), 20.

⁸ Pearce Gervis, *This is Kashmir*, (London, 1954), 330.

administration.⁹Primarily speaking the most important cause of the educational backwardness of Muslims was the anti-Muslim attitude of Dogra administration.¹⁰It was only after the coming of Christian missionaries, the Modern Education started in Kashmir. J. H. Knowels earns the credit for founding the first Christ missionary school in Srinagar and the Mission ladies founded the first girls' school at FatehKadal in Srinagar.¹¹In the educational field, the majority section was not spared too from the discriminatory approach on the part of Dogra administration. Walter Roper Lawrence, points out that, 'out of a population of 757433 Mohammadans only 233obtain any benefit from the state schools, while out of 52576 Hindus, 1327 are receiving state instructions.¹²These figures show that though the Hindus form less than 7% of the population, they monopolize over 83% of the education bestowed by the state. Prem Nath Bazaz,criticized the Dogra Government for its indifference towards education among the Muslims and not working for their welfare and held the Government responsible for the backwardness of Muslims. 'The poverty of the Muslim masses is appalling. Dressed in rags which can hardly hide his body and barefooted, a Muslim peasant presents the appearance rather of a starving beggar than of one who fills the coffers of the state.'¹³ The majority community of Muslims in Kashmir found themselves unrepresented under the British sponsored Dogra rule.¹⁴ There was no Muslim gazetted officer in most of the departments, like defense, hunting, scientific research, libraries, archaeology and agriculture.¹⁵In early 1870's there was no Muslim occupying even a lowest position or clerk in the employment of Maharaja's Government. For the Muslims the question of a share in government services had become next to impossible. By the time the governmental machinery came to be manned entirely by people professing the Hindu religion¹⁶ There is no doubt that Muslims had taken to English system of Education very late, yet their educational progress was not so bad as commonly propagated. At that time Persian was the official language of Kashmir, and according to Lawrence, many villagers (Muslims) would speak and write good Persian.¹⁷The Muslims were not employed in the administration, they were to do menial work, and were 'the hewer of wood and drawer of water.'¹⁸In 1930 in the bureaucracy, Hindus and Sikhs held 78 per cent of gazetted appointments compared to the Muslim 22 percent.¹⁹The Rajputs, being the brethren of the Maharaja, were appointed on the high posts in the administration, although, they were mostly illiterate.²⁰The Kashmiris were also disqualified for military servicesand it became the monopoly of Dogras. Even outsiders

were recruited in the army.²¹Under the State's Arms Act, only Rajputs and Dogras were permitted to own and utilize fire arms,to use them against the Kashmiri people.²²And it seemed that British too were not in favor of Muslims in the army. One object of the Treaty of Amritsar was to establish a strong Rajput power in Jammu and Kashmir, which would achieve the British Government of the defense of a difficult country.²³

III. THE EXPLOITATIVE ECONOMY

Kashmir lived and sustained through a very repressive economic exploitation and misery. It was characterized by ruthless taxation, inhuman collection machinery, unjust and unfair tax criteria and utter deprivation. The peasants of Kashmir had no propriety rights of land while the peasants of Jammu enjoyed full propriety rights of land. They suffered most miserably under the entire economic system which was generally feudal marked by the problem of transition into a weak type of capitalism.²⁴The state functioned partially and communally in in levying and collecting the tax from the people. All the classes of Muslim community were tax payers except the tailors. Even the poorest of all and worst off of all, the lake dwellers, locally called *Gaerhaenz* who procure aquatic nuts and reeds from the lakes for making the living paid tax.²⁵During the period of Dogras the people of the state suffered miserably. There is no doubt that the British gave the state a semblance of peace and to some extent ameliorated the conditions of the people but actually their policies at best helped 'the upper class of Hindus in particular to consolidate and fatten themselves at the expenses of the masses. The masses remained in an abject poverty.'²⁶E. F. Knight says, that any traveller visiting Kashmir can see for himself how the officials of the Dogra Maharaja in all parts of the country kill for him the goose that lays the golden eggs.²⁷The trade and barter was officially prohibited between the producer and the consumer. This had deprived the former of the money that he needed to make his life functional and the latter of the food for his own self and family. Different wants were created and consequently exploitation expanded both vertically as well as horizontally. The villagers would only watch their crop being taken away by the 'alien taskmasters', as Arthur Brinkman calls them, for the crop of the villages were stored in the open air granaries strictly guarded for weeks and months for regular or otherwise taxation. When the whole produce of country had been duly calculated and valued, the grain is doled out in quantities just sufficient to keep life and soul together.²⁸Francis Younghusband who admired Ranbir Singh wrote the following about the economic conditions of Kashmir in 1860's. "In the early 'sixties cultivation was decreasing; the people were wretchedly poor, and in any other country their state would have

⁹ Khan, *Freedom Struggle*, 22-26.

¹⁰ Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, (Srinagar), 251.

¹¹ M. Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar*, (Srinagar), 162-167.

¹² Walter Roper Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, (London: 1895), 229.

¹³ Bazaz, *Kashmir*, 252.

¹⁴ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers*, 4.

¹⁵ Presidential address by Sheikh Atta Mohammad, All India Muslim Kashmir Conference Amritsar, published in *Siyasat*, (Lahore: November, 7-8, 1923)

¹⁶ P. N. K. Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir*, (Srinagar) 688.

¹⁷ Lawrence, *Valley*, 229.

¹⁸ Bazaz, *Inside*, 250.

¹⁹ Memo by Resident, dated October 6, 1931. IOR, R/1/29/780, cited in Ian Copland, 'Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir, 1931-34, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 2, (Summer, 1981), 228-259, 233.

²⁰ Bazaz, *Inside*, 61.

²¹ Ibid. 295.

²² *Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Report*, 1931, 6-10, JKA., Bazaz, *Freedom Struggle*, 136-137.

²³ *Gazetteer of Kashmir*, 138.

²⁴ Prof. J. S. Bhan, *Social and Economic Life (ed.) Trade and Tour 1947-48*, (Srinagar), 159.

²⁵ Thorp, *Misgovernment*, 105.

²⁶ Bazaz, *Inside*, 61.

²⁷ E. F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, (London) 67.

²⁸ Arthur Brinkman, *The Wrongs of Kashmir*, (London, 1868), 36.

been almost one of starvation and famine; justice was such that those who could pay could at any time get out of jail, while the poor lived and died there almost without hope. There are few men of respectable and none of wealthy appearance; and there were almost prohibitive duties levied on all merchandise imported or exported”²⁹

In the 1870's, some improvements were made, but taxation remained high. Francis Younghusband is of the view that, there was still much wasteland which the people were unwilling to put under cultivation, because under the existing system of land revenue administration they could not be sure that they would ever receive the results of their labour.³⁰ Under Gulab Singh the Kashmiris were not persecuted in quite the ruthless, random way they had been under the previous two regimes, but nonetheless the new ruler was greedy for revenue, the taxes were burdensome and the lives of the people did not improve. Aggravating the situation was the fact that though the vast majority of the Kashmiris were Muslims they were treated as second class citizens by the maharaja and his officials who were fiercely Hindu. Hindus were promoted and favored above the Muslims in every way, they were usually exempt from the system of *begar* or forced portage and Hindu tax collectors were blatantly corrupt.³¹ Francis Younghusband writes, Corruption and obstruction impeded all measures of relief, and even forbade the starving inhabitants migrating to parts where food could be had. In addition, the communications were so bad that the food, so plentiful in the neighboring province could be imported only with the greatest difficulty. As a result two-thirds of the population died; a number of the chief valleys were entirely deserted; whole villages lay in ruins, as beams, doors, etc., had been extracted for sale; some suburbs of Srinagar were tenantless, and the city itself was half destroyed; trade came almost to a standstill, and consequently employment was difficult to obtain.³² The test of this great calamity showed bare the glaring defects of the system. *Begar* means to the Kashmiris far more than the mere impressment of labour, for under its comprehensive name every kind of demand of labour or property taken but not paid for by the officials was included.³³ Walter R. Lawrence points out that it is an unfortunate fact that in Kashmir there is no special laboring class, and it has been the custom to exempt the people of Srinagar from *begar* and to throw the whole demand for labour on the villagers. Also the Pandits, Sikhs, Pirzadas, Gujars and cultivators working on the land grants of officials were free from all fear of being forced for *begar*. In consequence of these exemptions, out of total population of 814241, 52216 men are free because they are Hindus, 4092 because they are Sikhs and 114170 because they are Musalmans residing in the city and towns.³⁴ After the villagers finished the job of filling the government *kotas* with their life and land, they were sent up in the autumn of every year with the loads of food on their backs to the Frontier areas of Gilgit and Astor. They were asked to cover their journey in twelve days, in some cases a month, without the slightest

provision for their shelter, clothing or food.”³⁵ Since nothing was available to be purchased on the snowy hilly mountain tracts, they were either forced to eat raw food which was discouraged by the government or starve. In most of the cases they died either of harsh weather or hunger. The institution of *begar* was a potent instrument of oppression and exploitation in the hands of dishonest and corrupt officials of the state. The Dogra regime expanded its oppression to every shade of Muslim population. Women and children also became victims of it. Exploitation had gone so deep and wide that women resorted to certain ‘socially disapproved’ ill practices for the survival of their families. Robert Thorp observes, this heinous crime was protected and encouraged by the government for granting permission to purchase a girl for prostitution for about one hundred Chitke Rupees revenue to the government. Like the shawl-bafs, these unfortunate women were legally forbidden from returning to normal lives. The sale of young girls and in some cases children, did take place due to the grasping and avaricious nature of Dogra government.³⁶ Thorp writes, ‘*The sale of young girls in cashmere to established houses of ill-fame, is both protected and encouraged by the Government; and it helps to swell that part of his revenue which the Maharaja derives from the wages of prostitution.*’³⁷

Kashmiri Shawl weavers who were wealthy during the Mughal rule were poor by the 1870's through a different form of taxation. Francis Younghusband records, “*On the manufacture of shawls parallel restrictions were placed. The wool was taxed as it entered Kashmir; the manufacturer was taxed for every workman he employed and at various stages of the process according to the value of the fabric; and, lastly, the merchant was taxed, before he could export the goods, the enormous duty of 85 per cent ad valorem. Butchers, bakers, carpenters, boatmen, and even prostitutes were still taxed, and coolies who were engaged to carry loads for travellers had to give up half their earnings. The whole country, in fact, was still in the grip of a grinding officialdom; and the officials were the remnants of a bygone, ignorant, and destructive age, when dynasties and institutions and life itself were in daily danger, when nothing was fixed and lasting, when all was liable to change and at the risk of chance, and each man had to make what he could while he could; and when, in consequence, a man of honesty and public spirit had no more chance of surviving than a baby would have in a battle.*”³⁸ However, in 1877-78, a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing or genocide by starvation occurred with the death of thousands of Muslims in Kashmir, when stockpiles of food, grain and additional supplies were seized by the Hindu government. “The year 1877 was a cruel time. A bad season was added to excessive taxation, so that the people preferred leaving their crops to rot in the ground to gathering what would bring in so little profit to themselves. Villages were deserted, trade went down, and starvation decreased the population. It was only with the last Maharajah that a turning loomed in the long lane of Kashmir's misfortunes”.³⁹ “The Lolab valley was depopulated and a large extent of the district beyond that become deserts.”

²⁹ Francis Younghusband, *Kashmir*, (London, 1911) 176.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

³¹ Brigid Keenan, *Travels in Kashmir*, (New Delhi: 1989, Ed. 2006), 60.

³² Younghusband, *Kashmir*, 180.

³³ Lawrence, *Valley*, 411.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 412.

³⁵ Thorp, *Misgovernment*, 100.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁸ Younghusband, *Kashmir*, 179.

³⁹ Finetta Bruce, *Kashmir*, (1911)

Such is the lamentable result of our having handed over this splendid and fertile country to the tender mercies of a Hindu bigot, with officials of the same faith as himself, the inhabitants of the country being Mohammedan.⁴⁰The famine of 1876-78, in which from one-third to two-fifths of the Kashmiris were swept away, was directly due, according to Sir Lepel Griffin and Dr. Downes, to the maladministration of corrupt native officials; and visitations of cholera have been wholly the result of outrageously defying sanitary laws".⁴¹The fact is being substantiated by the observation of William Digby as, '*The famine and the injudicious action of the revenue authorities had reduced the people to a state of absolute poverty*'.⁴²

IV. COMMUNAL ATTITUDE OF DOGRA ADMINISTRATION

The Dogra state functioned in partial, communal and unjust manner degrading the majority section of population and systematically ignored their basic human rights. Religion crept in the state functioning, determining the distribution of privileges, honors and even rights and liberties. *Mridu Rai* points out that the Dogra State was actually a Hindu State and its rulers tried their best to broaden its Hindu nature, with the result Kashmiri Pandits as a co-religionists' class found it easy to get associated with it and the Muslims were marginalized.⁴³Colonel Torrens, who visited Kashmir (1859-60) during the reign of Ranbir Singh, records that the Dogra rule was the Hindu 'rule' which was run by 'Hindu' *faqueers*, detested by people, they prey upon, but supported and encouraged by the Government. The Hindu code of laws is in force in the country.⁴⁴In order to prove it a Hindu State it invaded Muslim places and erected temples.⁴⁵A large number of Muslim shrines and mosques were confiscated and declared State property, like Pather Masjid, Khanqah Sokhta, Khanqah Bulbulshah, Khanqah Darashikoh, Idgah and so on in Srinagar and Khanqah Sufi Shah and Bahu Mosque in Jammu.⁴⁶In order to check the spread of Islam, a law was promulgated by the Government by which if a Hindu converted to Islam, he was debarred from the right of inheritance and in case of vice versa, he could attain the right of inheritance.⁴⁷Besides they (who would convert to Islam) were subjected to various difficulties and inconveniences by local officials.⁴⁸The punishment for killing a cow used formerly to be death, but, owing to the remonstrates of the British Government; it was changed to imprisonment for life. The Hindu vengeance does not only fall upon the actual cow-killer himself, but on the whole of his family. All who in any way participated, in or were cognizant of

the dead, are imprisoned with him also for life.⁴⁹From the time the law was put into effect up to 1931, eight thousand *Musalman*s have spent their lives in prison under this crime.'⁵⁰The height of puerile superstition of Dogra rulers was such that Maharaja Ranbir Singh banned the catching of fish because of the belief that the late maharaja's soul had transmitted into the body of a fish. And in the valley itself, when dying from the scarcity which had affected the land, the people sought a substitute for their usual food in the fish of their rivers; they were met by a stern interdict from their rulers.⁵¹Ranbir Singh also closed the Friday market in Jama Masjid, Srinagar and opened a new market called Maharaja Gunj.⁵²Even the Muslim names were not tolerated and many Muslim names were changed into Hindu names; like Islamabad into Anantnag, Takt-i-Sulimani into Shankaracharya.⁵³After ascending the throne in 1885 Pratap Singh would not tolerate to see the face of a Muslim (till noon) and the shade of a Muslim over the water, which was brought from CheshmaShahi Srinagar for him, and the guilty was punished and imprisoned.⁵⁴Maharaja Hari Singh discouraged the business of Muslims and Muslim contractors. Instead of encouraging local contractors, the Maharaja encouraged the high contractors from outside and gave them loans without any interest. The majority Kashmiris [Muslims] were subjected to grave injustice during the Dogra period. Their hopes were alienated to the level of extinction by the discriminatory policies of Dogra rulers. Robert Thorp points out that, '*Of justice, there is, in fact, little or none. Offences against the Government or against the Hindoos are punished with undue severity. While offences perpetrated by Hindoos or Government officials are either passed over, or adjudicated with partiality and injustice.*'⁵⁵This observation is substantiated by Arthur Brinkman's statement when he remarks in, *The Wrongs of Cashmere*, '*Justice is thus alien to him and injustice lies at the door. His example has been followed by his ministers, and there appears no end to fraud and treachery.*'⁵⁶Most of the European Travellers perceived that among the gravest problems of the people of Kashmir, (both rural and urban) was that of poverty. It was mostly due to the exorbitant taxes and communal bias against the majority section of people on the part of Dogra rulers by which the Kashmiri Muslims were filled with a sense of indignation for the oppressive treatment they were meted out by the Dogras.

V. CONCLUSION

Though the Kashmiri Muslims suffered socio-economic and political disempowerment under the predecessors of the Dogras, but the Dogras took this exploitation to unprecedented levels.

⁴⁰ Younghusband, *Kashmir*, 179.

⁴¹ Mrs. Ashley Carus Wilson, *Irene Petrie, A Woman's Life for Kashmir: A Biography*, (London: 1901), 113.

⁴² William Digby, *Condemned Unheard*, (London: 1890), 113.

⁴³ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers*, 80.

⁴⁴ W. Wakefield, *The Happy Valley*, (London: 1879), 90.

⁴⁵ Col. Torrens, *Travels Through Ladakh, Tartary and Kashmir*, (London: 1862), 300.

⁴⁶ *Report of the Glancy Commission*, Appointed under the orders of His Highness the Maharaja, dated November, 12, 1931, To Enquire in Grievances and Complaints, (Ranbir Government Press, Jammu, 1932), 3.

⁴⁷ Fida Mohammad Hussnain, *Freedom Struggle in Kashmir*, (New Delhi: 2002), 153.

⁴⁸ *Glancy Commission report*, 5.

⁴⁹ Thorp, *Misgovernment*, 103.

⁵⁰ *The Kashmiri Musalman*, Weekly, (Lahore: May, 25, 1931)

⁵¹ Brinkman, *Wrongs*, 36-37.

⁵² Mohammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, Vol. I, (Lahore: 2005), 303.

⁵³ M. Sultan Pampori, *Kashmir in Chains*, (Srinagar: 1992), 52., see also, G. M. D. sufi, *Kashmir Being a History of Kashmir*, (New Delhi: 1974), 570.

⁵⁴ Rasheed Taseer, *Tarikh-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir*, (Urdu), Vol. I, 1931-1939, (Srinagar: 1968), 67.

⁵⁵ Thorp, *Misgovernment*, 103-104.

⁵⁶ Brinkman, *Wrongs*, 52.

Besides, de-industrializing and de-humanizing the majority Muslim population of the state, they sowed the seeds of a communal politics in the state. They watered it with religious fervor and ethnic 'otherness'. The vicious fruits of this communal environment only ripened and mushroomed after the end of the Dogras. Under Dogras the centuries old inclusive, tolerant and pluralistic political culture of the Kashmir was poisoned. The state was shaped on the lines of supposedly incongruous ethnic and religious identities. The contemporary

narratives in the state are to a large extent impacted by the divisive and communal history scripted by the Dogras.

AUTHORS

First Author – Mohmad Ashraf Khaja, PhD Research Scholar, Centre of Advanced Study Deptt. of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Email: sahibkhawaja@gmail.com; Cell: 8755218807