

historical past maintained an understanding of difference. Historical memories were gradually interpreted verbally diffusely over the generations. Thus, the imagination of everyday social and genetic descent was consciously developed and propagated through intelligentsia and was diffused throughout the social strata. This mobilisation was supported by social and cultural differentiation. Instead, a distinct, intense, and exclusive culture erupted with its social boundaries. This was followed by continued dichotomisation between the members and the outsiders, making the entire phenomenon continuous.

The chapter also examines how various socio-political processes created the identification of the self and the dichotomisation of the other as a stranger. It broadly tries to understand how the boundaries of Kashmiri nationalism were set.

Politico-Economical Factors

Class formation in Kashmir and the corresponding politico-economic changes are instrumental in understanding the nature of nationalism in Kashmir. The political discourses emerged with the change in economic character for both rural peasantry and urban artisans.

The state became a single geographical entity through the Treaty of Amritsar, signed between Maharaja Gulab Singh and the British on 16 March 1846 for a meagre Rs 75 lakh². Since Gulab Singh sought to earn back the vast amount quickly, he enlarged the existing taxation system from the pre-Dogra period. The trade in the valley was monopolised, and

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- 2 After the Anglo-Sikh War of 1845, the British demanded 1.5 crore from the Lahore Durbar against the cost of war and breaching the friendship treaty with the British. They also realised how controlling the entire Sikh territory would require more significant military and financial costs. More so, a mountainous territory like Kashmir was difficult to defend and closer to the Russian frontier. The inability of Lahore Durbar to pay the war indemnity paved the way for the sale of the territory eastward of the River Indus and westward of the River Ravi to the Dogra rulers. (Zutshi 2004)

there was a tax on every trade and profession. This monopoly also led to pervasive hoarding and black marketing.

Kashmir's rural landscape presented a picture of extreme despondency where the cultivator was at the bottom of the social ladder, and several social groups lived off their labour. In the case of Kashmir, the office holders were primarily Kashmiri Pandits and the Pirs (the preachers from Central Asia settled in Kashmir) who exercised the revenue functions, and these classes were exempted from regular revenue assessment and other taxes the state levied. Zutshi (2003) and Rai (2004) explain how the exploitative revenue system discriminated against the Kashmiri Muslim cultivator. The Kashmiri Muslim cultivator had to feed the Darbar and an entire contingent of intermediaries between himself and the state.

As large tracts of land were concentrated in very few hands, the intermediate class perpetuated all sorts of miseries on the cultivator; the state took away not less than 3/5th of the gross produce from the cultivator besides other shares of 3 per cent for Patwari and Qanungo, 2 per cent for village servant and other charges too. Lawrence (1895) records that the state collected one-sixth of its produce from the cultivator in the early Hindu period. During the Sultans, cultivators paid off one-half of their produce. Under the Mughals, taxation intensified, and the cultivating class was asked to dispense grain for three months. Since then, the state's share has been fixed as three-quarters of the land's produce.

The nature of the vast-scale exploitation could also be understood from the fact that land ownership rested with the state. The land was demarcated into two categories Khalsa and the Chakdar, Jagir and Imam grant. In the first category, the land was given directly to the peasants who worked on the land, and the intermediate class collected revenue on the state's behalf. The second category was Chakdars, Jagir land, and Imam grant. This category also did not own the land but held the ownership instead of services provided to the state. During the Sikh period, the rulers were firm on retaining the proprietorship rights, resulting in Jagirdars holding Jagirs but without proprietorship.

The condition of Muslim cultivators could also be gauged by the system of *begaar* or forced labour. Since labour was scarce and a valuable

commodity, the Dogras devised ways to obtain it for free. Here again, Pandits became the intermediaries to collect the human resources. They would exaggerate the number of persons required to make easy money instead of the actual requirement. Those who could grease Pandit intermediaries' palms would be saved from the ordeal of *begaar*. Ahmad (2017) narrates how *begaar* was the worst manifestation of the Dogra regime, with an unspecified number of able-bodied Muslims serving as beasts of burden and being devoured by an inhospitable terrain. The forced labour took a more dangerous turn as the administration herded them to bring supplies for the armies engaged in military expeditions in far-off Gilgit, Leh, Chilas, Askardu, and Hazara. The fellow villagers would tearfully bid goodbye to the male folk who were taken away for *begaars*, as most of them would die en route to these far-flung areas. Doubtlessly, rural Kashmiri peasantry was at the bottom of the economic ladder since the ownership rights rested with the Maharaja. To make ends meet, many of these peasants migrated to Punjab for labour during the winter months and returned to Kashmir in early spring.

There has not been a specific peasant insurgency in Kashmir to identify any ideological variant of peasant consciousness. But certainly, the existing relational opposition of power meant that the dominated possessed particular subjectivity, where they were autonomous and un-dominated. The historical material describes the resistance to practices like '*Begaar*' as a methodological procedure by which one can obtain access to peasant consciousness. Since they were dominated by their power and had no means of recording their knowledge, Ranajit Guha (1985), in his exemplary work, recognised six elementary aspects of insurgent peasant consciousness-negation, modality, solidarity, ambiguity, transmission, and territoriality.

In the case of Kashmir, Lawrence (2005) records the revenue administration as being highest to lowest based on loot and corruption. The loot was based on intelligent calculation, and the administration was vested practically in the hands of the Kashmir Pandits. Lawrence (2005:19) writes,

It has been pointed out that the revenue administrator keeps three additions of the statement of holding, one for himself, which was supposed to near the truth, one for tehsildars and another for villagers, the two latter being prepared with a view to convincing each side of the excellent bargain he had secured.

This way, peasant consciousness was shaped as an essentially negative, expressing itself solely through opposition to the difference and antagonism towards its dominators. In the case of Kashmir, the dubious official morality and other signs of domination, such as the imposition of taxes or rent or the power to punish, became the targets of resistance. Lawrence (2005:20) writes, “The Kashmiri, despite his abject condition, is very obstinate and determined, and in cases where he considered the assessment too high, he has steadily declined to pay the excess”.

The forms of resistance by the peasantry involved a higher degree of ambiguity. There was an assurance of self-definition belonging to a specific collectivity separate from the oppressor. However, the idea of self-definition comes to the fore through solidarity. Solidarity ensured the message was easily transmitted, and the single unifying idea that gave peasant resistance its fundamental character was the notion of community, where respective rights and duties are established and contested.

If forceful taxation and *begaar* exterminated rural peasantry, the urban artists and shawl weavers could not be in a better position. The royal court controlled the shawl trade by reinstating powerful institutions like *Dagh* Shawl, which levied a heavy duty on shawls at various stages of their production and distribution. From purchasing yarn, dyeing threads, and creating motifs to the actual completion, a shawl would go through a series of taxation milestones. There were separate tax brackets for differential embroidery patterns. Then, the shawl would be taken to *Dagh* Shawl, where a 25 per cent tax would be levied. The shawl makers lived in the worst poverty and could not relinquish the trade or choose other vocations.

Ali (2017:35) notes that in 1847, about 4000 shawl *bafs* managed to flee the valley for Punjab to escape the horror of forcible taxation and compulsory weaving. The mass migration by the shawl weavers would mean

an excessive loss to the tax regimes. Maharaja introduced the *Rehdari* System to evade the situation, ordering his troops to plug all the escape routes and passes. The hapless shawl weavers, stranded in a whirlpool of oppression, began chopping off their thumbs to evade weaving.

Despite several delegations sent to the British government to deal with the grievances, things only worsened. Ali (2017) writes about the agitation of 1865 when the shawl workers agitated against the Maharaja's atrocities. It was perhaps one of the first organised demand days in the history of class struggle in the erstwhile subcontinent. Workers from all parts of the city marched towards *Zaldagar* and raised slogans against the Dogra administration. The protestors were dealt with severity, and many lost their lives after getting drowned in a marshy canal nearby. The dead bodies were buried secretly, and punitive fines were put on those who survived.

The international situation also impacted the politico-economic conditions in Kashmir. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 had deteriorated the condition of shawl trade and weavers as France, which had emerged as a significant market for Kashmiri shawls, had ceased to exist as one. It is pertinent to understand that the decline of the shawl merchants had implications for Kashmir's social and political landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Shawl merchants were an influential class in the valley, developed contacts with the outside world, and contributed immensely to the revenue. After losing the principal sources of income to the decline of the shawl trade, many merchants recognised the Muslim community's political and economic condition, paving the way for internal and external contestation.

Sociological Factors

Gellner's concept of social entropy can help us understand the position of Kashmiri Pandits as an entropy-resistant group. Gellner (1983:65) explains his exposition in hypothetical terms, "supposing a society contains a certain number of individuals who are by heredity, pigmentationally blue. After several generations, the blues persist in occupying either