



Famine in Kashmir: The Policy of Dogra Ruler: 1846-1925

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at analyzing the historical causes leading to food famines because historical approach, like any other scientific approach, does not attach any importance to those causes which are beyond the control of humans. The “prosperity or adversity” of people of the Valley depended on the natural resources and weather conditions. The “physiography” seemed to be the primary factor responsible for the famines. High mountainous terrain hindered the lay down of roads in addition to the worst conditions of the main routes that ultimately resulted havoc to the people. Additionally, famines were caused by early snows and heavy rains at harvesting seasons. Since the time immemorial, Kashmiri’s had suffered not only by the hands of cruel and wicked rulers, corrupt officials and religious zealots, but also faced the extremities of natural calamities like famines, floods, epidemics, earthquakes and fires. Famine of 1877-79 as per the reports of different authorities has resulted into enormous loss of life. One authority has stated that the population of Srinagar was reduced from 127,400 to 60,000 while as others believe that, only two-fifths survived of the total population, and it took more than two decades for Kashmir to recoup the loss of economy and the manpower. Most disastrous famines occurred in A.D 1865 and the 'Ghastly' one in 1877-79.

Keywords: *Kashmir, Dogra rule, Famine, Ranbir Singh, Peasantry,*

I. INTRODUCTION

During the long direction of their history Kashmiris have suffered not only by the hands of cruel qualities rulers, corrupt official and religious zealots, but they have off and on been the victims of natural calamities like famines, floods epidemics, earthquakes and fires. This visitation left deep scars on their lives and their economy. Famine spelled death to thousands of people. Whole villages were emptied of their human and cattle population resulting in neglected fields and abandoned crops [1].

During the period of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin’s reign, Kashmir suffered twice on account of natural calamities. In A.D 1460 a heavy and ultimately snowfall damaged the standing paddy crop ripe for harvest. The loss was enormous. A serve famine started the peasants in the face and wide spread distress among people was the consequences. Deaths occurred by starvation. It was closely followed by another calamity in 1462 A.D., when excessive rains caused a terrible flood which inundated fairly large areas in the valley. There was great loss of life and property.

Under Sikh rule, from 1819-1846 a series of rapacious Governor, aided by famine, earthquakes and pestilence, reduced the population to 2,00,00 and turned half the cultivable area into a waste [2]. There were two famines during the Sikh rule; In A.D 1832 when Sher Singh son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled the valley on behalf of the Sikhs and the other when Diwan Kripa Ram was governor at Srinagar [3]. From A.D 1832 to A.D 1846 a series of rapacious Governors aided by famine, earthquakes and pestilence, reduced the population to 200,000, and turned half the cultivable area into a waste [4].

There occurred a number of famines during the period under study. During the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh, In A.D. 1850, the valley of Kashmir witnessed two more famines; one was caused by heavy rainfall for eight days and the second due to the snowfall at the harvest time. With the result of famine a huge cattle wealth of the peasant was destroyed for want of grass and folder. Saif-ud-din says “that of a result of excessive heat in the preceding seasons and the drought the soil became so hard that it become difficult for the peasant to plough and to lay seeds; then suddenly it rained so heavily that fields were lost in flood” [5].

In 1854, the rainfall damaged the Rabi harvest in the low lying areas and caused flood in the river Jhelum, and again in 1855 the snowfall damaged the uncollected harvest. In 1861 the crops were unripe due to rains. Only twelve lakh *kharwar* of paddy was produced, but due to the blessing of almighty, there were no sign of famine. In A.D 1859 Maharaja visited Kashmir, this time food grains were made available and sold at the rate of two annas per *kharwar*. One person purchased one *kharwar* of paddy for only one cock. The officials digested lakhs of rupees in this loot. As a result, the government grain stores were empty and the price of paddy at once exceeded four to five rupees. Maharaja abolished the *Pargana* system of Chugais time and replaced it by tehsils. But the most disastrous famine occurred in 1865 and 'Ghastly' one in 1877-79.

The heavy rainfall mixed with the official tyranny was responsible for the calamity of 1865. There occurred the scarcity of food and resulted in the famine of 1865. Food grains were imported for distribution among the city people, but nothing was done for villagers, who were allowed to die. The hungry people, "when dying from scarcity found a substitute for their usual food in fish, and was punished for eating it for the simple reason that the soul of late Maharaja Gulab Singh had transmigrated into the body of a fish according to the Hindu theory of the transmigration of soul. It was claimed that atrocities had been committed by the Dogra soldiers on the starving Muslims. The persons who violated the law were severely dealt with. The State government took steps to suppress such adverse news [6]. Pandit Har Gopal, who was a pleader informed the British Government in order to stop them to migrate one hundred famine stricken people were got drowned in the Wular Lake [7]. In A.D 1865 Dewan Kirpa Ram was appointed as Governor of Kashmir. Before his arrival wazir Pannu deliberately destroyed available food grains and the conditions of peasants were deteriorated by the famine. The wazir ordered that searching of houses be made, and wherever paddy is available, be taken forcibly. As a result, the country reeled under famine. The price of paddy at once soared to sixteen rupees per *kharwar*. The date of this famine was acknowledged as "*Saal Gader*". It means that unhappiness of wazir and his subordinates was responsible for damages of State [8].

It is said that the cause of the famine was excessive rainfall for months, but the cause lies elsewhere. First was the assessment of land revenue, second was the arrangement for collecting land revenue, third was the excessive taxation on everything capable of being taxed and the fourth was the state monopoly over various items produced. Among them the main item was rice, which was considered to be the staple food of the people of valley. Before the famine the govt. announced before to take revenue in cash, but when the rains fall continuously the rice crop which was cut and stacked was spoiled by heavy rain. The government revoked previous orders and announced their intention of collecting dues in kind. The crop remained on low grounds and in open air and at least one half of it was lost. Every grain was set apart from public granaries and agricultural population during the winter was left without food. The immediate effect was the morality and flight of peasantry [9]. All the crops and fruits suffered from long wet and cold. Thus famine increased in the severity as the year 1878 wore on. The govt. store houses were closed for months and the officials succeeded in procuring food, these officials resold the rice secretly at five times the regular price [10]. Morality thus increased and the roads bazaars were thronged by starving wretches [11]. Due to the heavy rains on hill sides the importation of grain stopped. At the same time the then governor Wazir punnu receive instructions to open relief works and distribute food to the poor urban population. But no attempts were made to discriminate between those who were really in want. Handful of cooked rice was given out at two or three places in Srinagar. Only those who were able to ask for it get food, while the women and children, the sick, infirm and aged went empty handed away [12].

In A.D 1877 a number of chief valleys were entirely deserted; whole village lay in ruins, as beams, doors, had been extracted for sale [13]. Heavy rain fell in the autumn, before the crops were gathered in. The rice and maize which was the staple foods rotted till half was lost. During the winter, rain continued [14]. Combustion set in and the grain became black and rotten. When it was evident that there would be no rice and maize for food, the officials became nervous and ordered to sell at cheap rates the grains collected in revenue and stored by the government, with out husbanding a portion for seed purposes. The Foreign visitor, Missionary Arthur Neve, who was then posted in Srinagar, has left the following records of the Famine:

"This is party what happen in A.D 1877; but the fatal mistake was the great delay in making the official assessment of the crops that autumn. In those days all taxes were levied in kind, and the village assessment was not made till the crops were ripening. It was commonly believed by all the Mohammedan cultivators that the delay was deliberate, as the result of orders by Wazir Pannu to punish the Mohammedans, who had the previous year sent a deputation to complain to his highness of the exactions of one or two of his chief officials.....And there were gruesome stories of the rapacity of many of the officials in buying up rice and retailing at huge profits, through other contributed to relief funds. There was even a rumour that some hundreds of starving people had been purposely drowned in the Wular Lake, to which colour was lent by the student death of an eye-witness and informer within a few hours of making the report" [15].

When travelers entering on Kashmir, the valley the eye meets wide tracts of unreclaimed swamps, fields thrown out of cultivation, and wretched hamlets in which half of the houses are empty and many more roofless and ruined. The appearance of the peasants is pitiable in the extreme. In the fields the women and children's digging for edible weeds and roots. In Srinagar, the capital, and in some of the large places, such as Islamabad near the headwaters of the Jhelum, Shupiyon on the imperial road, and Sopur by the margin of their Wular lake, there were vestiges of populousness; but the bazaars were sadly thinned, the suburbs were cities of the dead, trade is either decaying or gone, and large number of impoverished that they had no money to buy food even when food was procurable.

The condition of the people was described by a Mr. Wade of church mission society in these words "Men, women and children are dying now daily of starvation and many others are seen on every side crawling about who bear the seal of death on them. Quiet recently I have seen them dying in their villages, unsheltered and uncared for, lying in mire and filth, too weak to rise, and only able to open and shut their mouth to signify that it was food they wanted, and their relations and neighbours, when money was given them, would look up hopefully and say: 'for Gods sake give us a little food.' I have seen them lying dead in their houses with starving ones waiting their turns to die; dead by the roadside, their relations and their friends too poor to obtain a piece of cloth in which decently to wrap them, or unknown and therefore, unburied; in one case at least the body had been half-devoured by birds and beasts. Yesterday there was a girl of about twelve years of age lying dead at the door of our orphanage; and the day or two before I saw a man dead lying under a rock at a little distance from this. several of our coolies have died on the famine relief works; a large majority of the 60 or 70 in-patients in hospital are suffering from the effect of starvation; and some 50 of the children taken into the orphanage never recovered from the terrible state to which they had sunk, but gradually grew weaker and weaker, and at last died notwithstanding all efforts to save them... The appearance of the villages is most desolate, many of the houses deserted, roofless and ruined, no sound or work or play, but a few half-starved, half-naked forms lying in sun. Those who have the strength or out in the fields, the men trying to prepare the land for the next harvest, and the women and children grubbing up roots and gathering plants and bark. Everything that can possibly serve for the food is eaten. I have collected, myself, about forty kinds of roots and plants the people eat; indeed, constrained by hunger they sometimes ate what is injurious and poisonous... and what efforts have been made to meet this terrible distress caused by the famine? Had famine relief-works been commenced on a large scale, the great pressure upon the poor houses might easily have been removed, the people assisted and the country improved. But in the winter the Governor of the province told a gentleman, who called upon him to try and get a little work done, that orders have come from Jammu that during the short days all government works had to be suspended, as a proper days work could not be obtained from the coolies for a day pay" [16].

During the summer of A.D. 1878 the famine almost daily to increase; although death of inhabitants of the Kashmir was fixed by the almighty, but wazir Pannu by his oppressive measures murdered them mercilessly. The people were suppressed beyond explanation. The people were deprived of the fount, they turned to the grasses and roots of the swamps and forests and other abnormal foods, which proved fatal the famine, showed no signs of abatement and kept raging throughout the summer of 1878. As a result, the famine continued until October, 1879 [17]. Oil-cake, rice, chaff, the bark of the elm and yew, and even grasses and roots were eagerly devoured by the starving people, who became absolutely demoralized and like ravenous beasts, each struggling for his own life. The corpses of those who had perished were left lying or hastily dragged to the nearest well or hole, until these became choked with dead bodies. Dogs wandered about in troops preying upon the unburied carcasses. The Gujars of the mountains were the harvest sufferers, and many orphan girls were sold to the city Hanjis. Pestilence dogged the steps of want and cholera broke out. Everything combined to intensify the disaster. Many officials in high places proved apathetic, or worse still, for selfish purposes, aided and abetted in keeping up prices, and even intercepting the grain which was being sent in over rough mountain tracks for the relief of the dying [18]. Many attempted to escape Punjab, but at the barriers troops were stationed to prevent the migration of the people [19]. These things are not easily forgotten and the Kashmiri proverb, "*Drag tsalih ta dag tsalihna*," which means that "the famine goes but its stains remain," is full of true in all senses, and the country has not yet recovered from the awful visitation of 1877 [20].

At the end of A.D. 1878, however, the old system of *rahdari* under which no man could leave the valley without the permission, was given up, and some of the weak survivors tottered over the passes to the Punjab, many dying in the way [21]. Harrowing tales were told of the fathers of families getting past the barrier by bribing the guardians of the passes, while the wives and children's were left to die in Kashmir [22]. Ghulam Ahmad Mehjoor, who is considered as national poet of Kashmir, has critically summed up the nature of their periodical migration by versifying [23].

*Gareh yeud aaseh Mayane bachnek mayaneh yeud aasehai kanh intizam
Faerhan ma wandeh rachen darbadar bekar maen*
Had there been opportunities of my survival within my home;

Sheikh and Bodha

My unemployment would have not been roaming during the dread nights of winter.

W. Gollan written in his note "there are tales of men and women being stripped naked, because a village would not pay the revenue, and every account I have heard of that miserable event is fully of the cruelty and corruption of Pandits." Kashmiri are apt to resort to coining of proverbs to describe a situation. One such proverb says, "*Batta Yar, Berozgar*: a Pandit is your friend only so long as he is unemployed, which means that after getting into service, one's acquaintance cannot prevent him from fleeing you. Another proverb of those dark days is: "*Batta, Gatta Kar*". Pandit rule is a dark rule or Pandit administration is a dark administration [24]. For instance, the Dogra Governor, Wazir Ratnu was also very cruel and corrupt. People were tried of his misrule [25]. Someone coined the following phrases which became quickly a popular cry: '*Wazir Talih, tah Kashir Baleh*'. Kashmir will recover from its illness only if the wazir runs away. When due to heavy taxation which left people practically with nothing for themselves resulting in a terrible famine and yet the tax-collector were still after them, the following proverbs was described the position: "*Batta batta, the piada pata*", meaning while we are starving even for a morsel of bread, the tax-collector haunts us with his tax-demands. The office of the *Kotwal* (police chief) was formed out for a fixed period. One can imagine the fate of people in such surroundings [26]. The corruption was so rampant that almost every incident was utilized for illegal exaction so much so that if a boy or girl got drowned, the parts were arrested on a charge of murder.

After the appointment of Dewan Kripa Ram, under his administration, first of all, ordered for census of population and later on introduced Weekly Ration system, with the result that everyone was receiving ration up to the end of month [27]. Maharaja due to his magnanimity purchased thousand kharwars of wheat from Punjab and sends it to Kashmir. Dewan treated people benevolently and sold the wheat of Punjab at a very cheap rate. Sixty thousand kharwars of paddy were brought from villages and distributed at the rate on one *kharwars* for every home by which the effects of famine were over [28]. The Dewan divided Kashmir into five divisions and setup five wazarats. Among them one was *share-khas*; second *wazarat Shopain*; third *Wazarat Anantnag*; fourth *wazarat Pahad* [29].

In the same year the shawlbafts were forced to complain against Pandit. Raja Dhar with Diwan Kripa Ram, due to his oppressive measures, Raja Dhar presented the matter in a different manner and said to Diwan Kripa Ram, that shawlbafts not only aim to agitate but they went to kill also. The Diwan ordered for their arrest and threatened shawlbafts. The soldiers chased them, by which a good number of people fell down in Kota Kul streams from Haji Rather Bridge. Some famous Karkhandars were imprisoned and penalized. After two months Raja Dhar himself died suddenly.

Diwan Anant Ram, he was appointed Governor of Kashmir. His main struggle was to do away with famine. With this reason the people of Kashmir were satisfied without eating and drinking. He was hearing the cases on simple sheet of paper. He was making people happy by rule of justice. Maharaja purchased one 1,95,744 mounds of food grains from Punjab plus its carriage charges. But due to ill luck of Kashmiris enough of grains were lost during carriage which decayed and some was embezzled by the government officials. In short the Diwan Anant Ram established fifty three beggar homes on roads, city and wazarat of Punjab which were supposed to provide food to famine sufferers. The Diwan also established several factories for the welfare of the people to provide them jobs. The wages were offered in both kind and cash [30].

The effect of the famine lasted long, and for years after the valley did not recover from this awful visitation. Lawrence quoted in his book, valley of Kashmir, "when I commenced the work of inspecting villages in A.D 1889, there was hardly a village where I did not see deserted houses and abandoned fields, the owners of which had perished in the great famine of A.D.1878" [31].

Afterwards, a complaint was received from English government about mismanagement of affairs in the State during famine, the British Government getting a handle to condemn the Maharaja's administration tried to plant their own officers in the valley and on its frontiers. In this context the written documents and printed magazine about the condition and destruction by famine and presented to Maharaja Ranbir Singh. His contemporary historian, peer Ghulam Hassan Khuihami, "prepared a memorandum in Persian verse and submitted the same to Maharaja Ranbir Singh. It had the desired effect and the people were delivered of the tyranny of wazir Pannu and relief measures were ordered by the Maharaja [32]. After read this papers Maharaja was deeply pained and the same time he deputed Dewan Anant Ram for making arrangements during the famine. At the same time the roads were also opened. Wazir pannu after seven years rule was dismissed under the order of English government [33].

Then, too late, half-hearted and feeble attempts were made to organize famine relief. A few government houses were established and grain was imported from the Punjab; but the agency for its distribution was often corrupt, and the grain was adulterated with dirt and embezzled by officials, who retailed it to the wealthy at Rs. 25 per *kharwar*. At the end of 1878 the old system, *Rahddri*, under which no man could leave the valley without permission, was given up, and the weak survivors tottered over the passes to the Punjab, many dying on the way[34]. In view of the prevailing agony, the Maharaja abolished the *Rahddri* system and permitted free movement of the people. He opened 74 free Langers 33 in the city of Srinagar, 27 in mufassil and 14 at various stages on the

routes leading to Jammu and Murree. As many as 10,74,235 got free food at the langers in the valley while more than thirty thousand people were served free food enroute Banihall, Pir-Panjial and Kohala [35].

The officers were also deputed to Rawalpindi, Jhelum and Sialkot districts to purchase and rush grains to the valley. His highness issued an *ishtihar* exempted from custom duty the grains imported by any local dealer and also declared that whosoever imported grains worth Rs. 20,000 rupees would get a cash award of Rs. 500 [36]. As transport arrangements were still found unsatisfactory and ponies and mules were not readily available, the Maharaja announced a cent percent increase in the existing transport rates.

In October 1878, large quantities of grains purchased in the Punjab living at Thanna, Ramban and Chenani were got transport by head-loads. Although the grains so imported cost Rs. 15-14-6 (British coin) per *kharwar*. The sale rate of *makki* and *singhara* was also reduced by four annas a *kharwar*. The Maharaja also remitted the land revenue in the effect areas [37]. The Punjab trade report shows, the export of grains and pulses from Kashmir to the Punjab increased from 44,643 maunds in 1877-79, while the imports of grains and pulses into Kashmir territory from the Punjab decreased from 3,14,352 maunds in A.D 1877-78 to 1,78,104 maunds in 1878-79 [38].

The Government of India deputed Hon'ble Cunningham, President of Indian Famine Committee, and Anderson Assistant Commissioner from Sialkot to enquire into the famine conditions in the State. He was accompanied by F. Henvey, the officer on special duty in Kashmir. They met the Maharaja Ranbir Singh on 20th October, 1878. After obtaining full information about the famine in Kashmir and decided the steps so far taken to meet the situation. The Darbar led Henvey estimated the outturn of the whole autumn harvest, including rice, to be 11, 00,000 *kharwars*, or about half of the average. But the Maharaja apprehended that there would be a deficiency of food-stock in 1879 of 2, 00,000 maunds of grains, and his Highness consequently proposed that he should endeavour during the winter to throw in 1,00,000 maunds by Banihall road, while British government might help him by importing another 1,00,000 maunds by road from Murri along the valley of the Jhelum, through the agency of native officer, who would be responsible for its transport [39].

Henvey returned to Kashmir to consult with Diwan Anant Ram on his subject. The darbar made its own arrangements for purchases and transport food grains from Jammu. Cattles were purchased at Amritsar for transport, and one of the young princes was charged with the duty of seeing the convoys off daily. The Maharaja wish was to import 50,000 maunds before the winter set in, and a great deal of grain was forwarded as far as within three months. But some obstacles were met in the shape of broken bridge, which no one seems to be able to repair, and disease sprang among the cattle; so ultimately only little grains did get in before the winter, and only 60000 maunds reached Kashmir by this route [40].

In consultation with the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab set up a committee of officials and non-officials to look to the supply of arrangements at Srinagar. Thirteen members were nominated to it, of which were European, seven Kashmiri, one non-official, and four State officials. The committee was given full powers to take necessary steps to mitigate the sufferings of the people. It got the city population remunerated. Beside the government stores from which shali was used in a fixed quantity at cheaper rates a number of shops were also opened in the city from where additional ration could be obtained at a slightly higher rate [41].

At the end of June Maharaja Ranbir Singh reached Srinagar to personally supervise the arrangements, in spite of the famine raging in the valley and also at Banihall. The Governor of Kashmir Dewan Badri Nath reported that 2000 *kharwars* of shali was available in the stores. Ranbir Singh reduced the sale price of shali from 2 to 3 (chilki coin) per *kharwar*. In June A.D. 1879 Maharaja issued orders that his government would purchase the shali at the rate of 6 rupees per *kharwar* to anybody who had any stock to sell. The two officers were appointed and they were assisted by the necessary staff and respectable citizen.

Before his visit no attempt was made to open poor-houses on a proper system and sweep all the homeless and starving people of the city into them. They were left to die in the Bazars and around the places as usual. The house-to-house tickets were still retained, and a new census was made, which gave even a higher return than before. At last, towards the end of the month the Darbar were induced to open 100 shops for sale in the city, a maximum amount *viz*, ½ seers, being fixed for each purchaser [42]. This plan was adopted in Bihar, and it was found to work very well there. In Srinagar it could not be worked so as to do away with all favoritism of the official class [43]. But the result was deadly satisfactory as compared to former attempts to distribute food. Six hundred to 700 hundred *kharwars* of wheat and barley per diem were now really sold, and the Mussalmans got a portion of this, whereas formerly they got nothing; at times before the Maharaja's arrival there were no sales at all and no distribution for days together. But the private stores which they held acquired largely no doubt embezzlement, and which they sold to others [44].

The Maharaja was exceedingly anxious to cultivate a large area with turnips, the seed of which was sent for from France [45]. For this work he prepared the ground near the Srinagar, some 4000 people were employed, these works were not strictly speaking relief work. A certain amount of activity in collecting carriage for Mr. Russell was displayed on the Maharaja's arrival, but as usual it soon died. A hundred orders were issued no doubt for relief measures, but they were impracticable or opposed to official interest or cancelled by other orders; none was carried

out. The carpenters were to built boats; the blacksmiths were to the arsenal; the shawl weavers were to weave for Government; the women were to spin; everything was to be provided for on paper, nothing was to be done that cost money [46].

After the kharif crop of A.D 1878 was harvest, the Maharaja arranged transport 4000 kharwar of shali by boats and labourers. Even the houses in the State stables were used for transport purposes. The existing number of government stores which was raised 12 to 23. He also ordered storage of 1,500 kharwars of shali in each store. He fixed the scale of supply at two traks per adult and one trak per child per fortnight [47]. In short during the famine, the Maharaja got 195,714 maunds of food grains imported from the Punjab at a total cost of Rs. 39,70,044 (chilki coin) the average land cost was Rs. 20-4-9 per maund. The food grains were sold to the public at 3-1-6 per maund. The State thus incurred a loss of Rs. 33, 64,195-3-3 (chilki). Another sum of Rs. 88,145-15-3 was spent on feeding the poor in the Langers. The labour employment in construction was paid 1,94,587-9-6. In addition Maharaja ordered following remissions: *Tarki tax* Rs. 2, 09,000, *dag-i-shawl* Rs. 4, 96,000 [48].

In A.D 1885 the earthquake showed up and increasing the affliction of the general population by causing misery and starvation. Under Maharaja Ranbir Singh administration Kashmir was gone to by quake which took substantial toll of men and material, representing 35,000 which included 20,000 horses, 10,200 cows, 1,500 human lives [49]. Cholera in 1888, 1892, 1900-1902 in Jammu created panic even in Kashmir valley. Again heavy floods in A.D 1893 and 1903 were very destructive. The 2225 houses were wrecked and 329 cattle killed.

Another innocuous institution was that of *corvee* (beggar) or forced labour. The cultivators were taken for work without any payment. They were taken in maid agricultural season and were kept away for long time from their fields which resulted in the damage to their own crop. The people of Srinagar were mostly exempted from this humiliation [50]. The condition was so bad they were used as wild beasts to carry the load on a very difficult terrain, mostly to the Gilgit to carry supplies for the army [51]. No wages were paid to the labours for their work, but were given only a seer of rice and straw for making grass shows [52]. These coolies were supplied by the officials in charge in the villages, which provide them opportunities to grab their lands. To get exemption from this forced labour the villagers sometimes pay Rs 70-90 [53]. They were even some times taken during winter months. The roads were so dangerous more often they would not come back alive. Some of them become paralyzed, due to the extreme cold. Many of them were sold as slaves to the foreigners in the way. Other than this every work of the village officials was done by those poor people [54].

II. CONCLUSION

Kashmir has had many famines in history. The cause has always been the same, the floods. The nature has endowed Kashmir with plenty of water so drought has never been an issue. The nineteenth century witnessed two horrible famines in Kashmir. One occurred during the Sikh times in A.D. 1831 and other in Dogra regime. Ranbir Singh's famine however pales in contrast when you consider the devastation caused by the famine of 1878. It was the worse famine by far. According to the chroniclers of the famine almost all of the people who died in the famine of A.D. 1878 were Muslim. Lawrence in his book claims that it was because the Hindus of Kashmir were used to fasting and therefore were able to withstand the famine, a claim that is patently ridiculous. Dr. Neve and Tyndale Biscoe however blame Maharajas religious bigotry for this. According to Tyndale Biscoe (Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade) the Hindus survived because many of them were fed out of Government warehouses [55].

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- 40 British sirs of cleaned rice, which gives over 21 sirs per company rupee. New Delhi, Henvey, Report on Famine in Kashmir. Foreign Dept, Consult. 86, Feb. 1883, New Delhi
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