



## LIVESTOCK AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HISTORY OF KASHMIR DURING 19<sup>TH</sup> AND FIRST HALF OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.

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### **Abstract:**

*In this paper the researcher will highlight the importance of livestock in the history of Kashmir. The cattle were indispensable for carrying out agricultural pursuits and providing clothing and bedding as well as fuel for cooking purposes. After all, agriculture depends upon cattle for ploughing and manuring of the land. The poor peasantry wore woollen clothes even in summer and the people in general used cow dung for fuel besides using it as the basic manure for their fields. This is besides the fact that cattle provided milk, butter, ghi, and meat along with defraying the peasants' expense he had to incur on various necessities in the absence of any other non-agriculture source. Given this crucial significance of livestock for the survival of peasantry, it is not surprising that the men and the cattle lived under the same roof. The other assets mentioned above were collectively called mal meaning wealth or more appropriately as muhimuk yar meaning the friend in need.*

### **KEY WORDS:**

Livestock, Sheep, Cattle, Wool, Manure Mal, Muhimuk Yaar, Gojjar and Bakarwal.

### **INTRODUCTION-**

The history of civilization is closely associated with domestic animals. In the early days of human communities, around 10-12,000 years ago, a few large mammalian and bird species were domesticated which have enabled humanity steadily to rise from primitive conditions to life of higher quality. Large domestic animals made possible the move from hunting, gathering and shifting cultivation to more settled life styles. How have domestic animals played such a key part in the development of human community? What are the special contributions of animals to human well-being? Animals release people from the hard labour of heavy field work, animals make possible the transport of natural resources and farm products to other communities for barter or sale, animals provide animal fat and protein for improved nutrition, animal milk enables infants to survive and grow when quantities of human milk are insufficient, animals provide leather, wool and horn for clothing and shelter, animal fat is used for lighting, dried manure from large animals is fuel for cooking and heating, animal power is used for extracting water from the ground and from rivers for domestic use and for irrigation, animals contribute to improved and integrated farming systems on cropped land, ruminant animals harvest natural vegetation that would otherwise not enter the human food chain, throughout human history, riding animals was the fastest way to travel over land until the invention of the railway in 1829-only 170 years ago. The domestication of animals was the first step to improve the quality of life through science and technology.

Today the majority of people in the world still depend upon animals for these services and without

them life, even in the simplest societies, would disintegrate again into the slavery of food production. The major advances in European civilization leading to trade, industrialization, the application of science and the development of market economy capitalism were possible because animals had first freed a proportion of the population from the daily routine of food production.

The stock breeding of all these animals in Kashmir was the result of a gradual process of domestication in which sheep and goat appeared first followed by cattle, fowl and dog. Such a progression shows close resemblance to the domestication pattern available in west Asia, even though there is a fundamental difference in time, since the domestication process began there as early as 7000 B.C while in Kashmir it started towards the closing stages of the early Neolithic period around 2500 B.C Nevertheless, the major wild types were certainly living in this geographical area when the domestication process began there and their domesticated offspring would not have been difficult to establish in and around the villages.

Livestock also produce plentiful amounts of manure in the form of excrement thus helping out in increasing the fertility of land. Livestock has been one of the potential sources of income of the rural people besides agriculture. The rearing of cattle, sheep, planting of walnut, poplar and willow trees collectively called *Mal* (wealth) was considered *Muhimuk Yar* (the friend in need/problem) in facing the problems like food scarcity, payment of land revenue and other taxes in cash, diseases, devastating fires and the floods. That was why village people lived together with livestock in one house, usually the livestock in ground floor and humans in the first floor. It was only in recent past that separate cowsheds were made for livestock. In order to understand the importance of livestock it would be pertinent to discuss the same under the following headings:

### **Types of Livestock:**

**SHEEP (*Tuer*):** The sheep provided warmth to the house, manure to the fields and wool for sale or use. The important category of farmyard manure *mengan* was also provided by sheep which was comparatively potent than *pah* (cow dung). *Mengan* means the decomposed tail, litter and urine of sheep and goat. Manure was a perpetual need of a peasant for the proper output of his labour which he invested in the soil, therefore, we find him keen in the domestication of sheep in spite of a number of difficulties. The high fertility value of tail known to the cultivator, further developed this interest. Hence we find a Kashmiri cultivator adopting every possible method to procure more and more *mengan* from his flock. For that purposes he confined his herd in separate cotes and added large quantity of litter like leaves and grass for the convenience of sheep to lie upon and at the same time to increase the volume of manure. However he did not recover the refuse of sheep daily but only once or twice a year. Usually it was recovered in spring when the sheep were driven out to graze in different pastures. The sheep dropped maximum portion of tail in the cots and a lot of litter was added to it.

**GOATS (*Tsawaj*):** Goats are allied to sheep but are much hardy and more active animals. Goats were not numerous in the valley but every year enormous flocks were brought up to the Kashmir mountains by the Bakarwals and Gujjar of Poonch and the lower hills of Jammu. The people in villages were also rearing goats especially in kaandi areas, but goat rearing was not common phenomenon as that of sheep. The goats of the Gujjars were very fine animals and were valuable as they supplied ghee, meat and skins for carrying food items. It is reported that a hectare of land receives a sufficient dressing of manure if 2000 goats are folded there overnight. The soil excrement of the goat is several times richer in nitrogen content and phosphoric acid than that of either the cow or the horse. Goat urine is equally rich in both nitrogen and potash and is more valuable than that of any other animal.

**CATTLE (*Gupan*):** The cattle of Kashmir were small but hardy in character. Generally one household possessed one ox and it were only well off peasants with big holdings who possessed a pair of oxen. Ordinary peasants could not afford to feed oxen because it required good amount of fodder especially for winters. Those small households who possessed only one ox came into an agreement for ploughing the land called *Alsud* or *Bajwath*, whose oxen had same height, for maintaining equilibrium under plough. The Kashmiri cattle were conservative in their habits. Cow provided milk and its dung was used for manure purposes. There was a practice in Kashmir valley, cow's milk was converted into the curd and then that curd was converted into *Gurus* (a kind of milk shake). In addition to personal use *Gurus* was distributed among the neighbours as well. The bulls were used for ploughing the fields and drawing the oil mil called *Tilwanvan* and for lift irrigation (*Arhat*) and other agricultural purposes. In the domestic sector, bullocks contributed a lot in absence of modern implements. In rural areas cattle was regarded as the backbone of the economy.

**POULTRY (*Koker*):** Poultry farming occupies an important place in the economy of a country and human interest in the domestication of poultry dates back to ancient times. India and some neighbouring countries are the original homes of the well-known Red jungle fowl which is regarded as the ancestor of the present-day poultry breeds of the world. Poultry was abundant in Kashmir and excellent fowls were to be found in every village. Poultry and eggs were a source of considerable income to the villagers. Eggs also formed a medium of exchange. Villagers battered eggs against commodities like tea, salt, soap and other things with the village shopkeeper called *wani*. Moreover, poultry made the peasant self sufficient with regard to meet requirements which they occasionally needed. Poultry animals are also used as sacrificial animals at different shrines which are very common in the valley of Kashmir and it is also no wonder that like cattle, poultry was also accommodated in the house in which the peasant lived. Poultry was occasionally taken by the state officials in the form of illegal tax called *Rasum*. It was a source of fertilizer. Kashmiri farmer had well understood the fertility value of poultry droppings and considered them more potent than other types of manures. The scientific analysis of chemical composition of poultry droppings has proved right the perception of Kashmiri cultivator regarding the potency of poultry droppings.

### Categories of Rearers

**A. Gojjar and Bakarwal:** Gojjar and Bakarwal constituted a significant proportion of the population of the state. In general, they had nomadic character and largely depended on flocks and cattle keeping for their livelihood. Due to climatic conditions which varied from place to place, Gojjar and Bakarwal had attuned themselves to different patterns of life and adjustment.

The pastoral economy of Gujjars and Bakarwals was dependent on the availability and utilization of natural pastures. These pastures were markedly seasonal in their occurrence. During winter when the higher Himalayan ranges in the north were covered with snow, the pasturage was available only on the Siwalik-ranges in the south which had mild winters. As summer approached the pastures in the Siwaliks dried up, but those higher up (Margs) begin to thaw, resulting into the growth of luxurious and nutritious grasses. Consequently, the Gujjars and Bakarwals moved back and forth from the lower Himalayan to the pastures in the upper-Himalayan region. In their movements they followed well defined tracks known as *Rasto* from *Sardiyonki Charageh* (winter pastures) to the *Dhoks* (summer pastures). In this process they drew large *Rewads* (flock) through snow clad *Galis* (mountain-passes) over the ridges, steep slopes, spurs, streams and rivers.

**B. Shephreds (*Phol*):** This was another category of rearers. The shepherds of Kashmir were locally known as *chaupan* or *pohal* and though there was nothing in their physiognomy to distinguish them from the peasants of the valley, they formed a separate class, inter-marrying sometimes with the Galwans. *Chaupan* was a cheery active man with a most characteristic whistle and his healthy life in the high mountains made him strong and robust. He also had some knowledge of samples and brought down medicinal herbs for the local doctors. The whole of the great mountain grazing lands were partitioned among the various families of *chaupans* and an intruder was very quickly persuaded to retire. The newcomer was admitted only if *choupan* brotherhood consented. The *chaupans* helped one another from loss of client and as such it was difficult for a villager to change his shepherd.

In the spring and early summer the valley was green with grass and the sheep found a rich, sweet food in the willow leaves. When the days become warm and the sheep sought the shelter of the trees, the professional shepherd made his appearance and led the village flocks away to the higher slopes of the valley. As he passed along with his flocks he folded the sheep on the rice fields as yet unsown and in one night added enormously to the fertility of the soil, for this service he was well paid and as the shepherd passed up towards the mountains he was very popular and jaunty person. But when once the shepherd was on the mountains popularity was followed by distrust and at fixed intervals the villager took a long journey to carry up salt for his sheep. If a sheep was missing the shepherd had either to produce the skin or to return the sheep in place of missing sheep called *Dandh*, but as he never sold a sheep without stipulating that the skin is to be returned, he was always able to silence the complaints of an importunate client. When autumn arrived and the sheep had eaten their fill of the sweet mountain grasses, the *chaupan* used to descend to the valley where clamorous clients awaited him and then haggling commenced about the loss of sheep and the shepherds wages which took the form of grain. Sometimes the villagers insisted on the shepherd clearing himself by taking an oath at a shrine or beneath some tree of ordeal.

**VILLAGERS:** The villagers were another category who reared the livestock. Owing to the significance of livestock in rural economy almost every village house hold used to rear cattle. The types and number of livestock varied from family to family. Poor families of the villages without any cattle average possessed

only milch cow and economically affluent households with large holdings whose number used to be very little assumed a good number of cattle. Those peasants who were rich in livestock as well as land were called *Bued Grees* (rich peasants). As summer approached the village folk used to send all the cattle except the milch cows to the high mountains, under the control of *chaupan* (a herd keeper) who was paid for his work either in grain or cash, where they obtained excellent grazing, returning in the autumn to the stubbles.

The villagers obtained various products from their live stock. The cow fulfilled the daily requirement of milk in peasant homes. Only the limited number of families afforded to take milk tea while as the poor families had to be contend either with milk less tea *Tet Chai* or they consumed Goat milk, that is why goat was called poor man's cow. The droppings of the sheep were used in the fields in order to increase the fertility of its soil. The people sometimes also slaughtered their sheep especially on festive occasions; however the preference was always given to wool, manure and warmth than mutton. The cottage industry was also dependent on livestock for raw material.

**C.MILK-SELLERS (*sher-gujri*):** The milk sellers reared cows for commercial purposes. Each milk seller possessed at least four to five cows. There were two kinds of milk sellers, urban and rural milk sellers. Rural milk sellers sold milk locally mainly against kind. Whereas the urban milk sellers supplied milk to urbanites generally against cash. These people supplied milk and milk products mainly to urban population. The livestock acted as the main source of income for them. In the long and bitter winters of Kashmir valley the milk sellers depended upon peasants for fodder because of their not being in possession of enough land. However, in the summers milk-sellers grazed their cows in common pasture lands called *Gass-chrai*.

**D.GOOR (*cow-herd*):** In every village there was one *Goor* (cow-herd) who reared the cattle of villagers. He was taking his flock in autumn when the peasant was completing his harvest. The people belonging to the lower section of the society did this work. In the early morning villagers used to bring their cattle to a place called *Goorwan*. It was a place where all the cattle of villagers were gathered in the morning. Then *Goor* took this flock to the grazing fields and other places around the village. In the evening the *Goor* returned to the village with the cattle and handed over them to their owners. Later, he was collecting from every household some quantity of rice. Besides, he was taking *Mangai* from every type of peasants produce. During this door to door campaign the *Goor* was very often invited by someone from his clientele for evening tea. But with the passage of time due to encroachment of pastures the institution of *Goor* almost ended and these people switched over to other professions.

## LIVESTOCK FEEDING

It is said that in past the winters were very long and crude. The whole surface of earth was covered by heavy snow, and the cattle depend exclusively upon the fodder. Thus the villagers worked very hard to collect fodder for the winter season for their livestock. Rice and maize straw was the chief fodder. Besides, the grasses, the leaves of different trees were carefully collected. The mountain willow and poplar, the cotoneaster and the hawthorn, all yielded a valuable fodder and as autumn drove on, the trees of Kashmir wore a very maimed and desolate appearance. In the winter the plough bullocks and milch cows were given a little oil cake and cotton seed, but the other cattle fared badly and emerged in the spring from their hot, dark byres beneath their master's house, looking poor and thin.

During winters the villagers fed their cattle with rice-hay and starchy rice water. This type of fodder was used by villagers in morning as well as in the evening. In winters oil-cake was also given to the bullocks and milch cows. In winters cows and bulls were given preference as compared to their young ones. Maize was also given to the bulls and milch cow in the form of *Addab*.

Sheep were also kept closed during the heavy snowfall. They were also given fodder like *Rous*, *Bachi*, *Mujipous*, *Gazripous*, *Gogjipus* and *Addab*. *Rous* was a combination of boiled water and Soyabean (Moth), dried knoll khol, turnip etc and some salt was put into it to become tasty. There was a proper time table for feeding the sheep. In the morning they were given paddy grass, in the mid day they were taken to a place called *bachiwaan* (a place where dried willow branches were reserved on trees) where tiny willow branches carrying leaves served to sheep

**Contribution to Economy:** In Kashmir valley agriculture and livestock had been traditional source of wealth until recent times. The two could not be separated from each other as both are interdependent. Geographically speaking the valley of Kashmir is bounded by Himalayan mountains as a result its climate is cold. Moreover the average height of Kashmir valley is 5,200 feet above sea level which also makes valley a cold place. The cool climate of alpine pastures, good amount of rainfall and perennial streams all favours the rearing and keeping of livestock in the valley. Livestock formed one of the major sources of

income of people of Kashmir right from ancient times and is true of the period under study. Livestock formed potential source of income of both settled and nomadic people. To former it formed an alternate source of income. Since settled communities depended mostly on agriculture, they undertook livestock as subsidiary occupation. Moreover, agriculture being their main occupation they had enough fodder available to raise livestock. Animal rearing not only helped in performing agricultural task, but also yielded several items which could have been marketed. Nomads took livestock as primary occupation. For them it was the lone source of income. Livestock formed an item of exchange for them. Their sustenance of life depended on them and their products. Live stock contributed not only to economy of individual families and groups but also to state economy. Live stock promoted mixed farming i.e., raising of animals and practicing of agriculture. Mixed farming promoted growth of both livestock as well as agriculture and hence to the overall economy of the state. The economic importance of livestock is discussed below:

**Manure:** Livestock helped in adding to soil fertility. Live stock dung was used as manure by peasants of Kashmir in their farms. In the absence of modern chemical fertilizers, dung was the only fertilizing agent available to poor Kashmiri peasant. Moreover, use of cattle dung ensured continuity of cultivation and regular supply of food. Dung was also used in kitchen gardens for raising vegetables. *Mengan* (excretion of sheep and goat) was also used in the fields as well as in the kitchen gardens to maintain their fertility because *Mengan* was better fertilizing agent as compared to cow dung. *Rekh* (excretion of poultry birds) was also used in kitchen gardens for raising vegetables. Kashmiri peasant families used dry dung as fuel in domestic hearths (Daan) for cooking as well as in fire pots (kangris). Manure was a perpetual need of the peasant for the proper output of his labour which he invested in the soil. Therefore, we find him keen in the domestication of sheep in spite of number of difficulties. The high fertility value of dung known to the cultivator, further developed his interest. Poultry manure contains nitrogen 2%, phosphoric acid 1.25%, and potash, 0.75 %. Hence we find a Kashmiri cultivator adapting every possible method to procure more and more manure from his flock.

**Wool:** wool of animals like sheep, etc was used by Kashmiris to make mating for winters known as *Namdas*. *Namdasaz* were specialized in this craft. Such mating suited winters as it provided warmth. The hair of Goat was also used for making ropes. Wool was also used to make cloths, blankets (*chaddar*), pheren (*pattu*). These items were woven at home by the Kashmiri people during winters. The best wool in Kashmir was found in the north where the grasses were good but the best weavers were found in the south. The shopian blankets (ekbari) were sold according to quality and fineness and the *khudrang* blankets made at Turk Wangam, 12 yards long and 1 ½ yards broad commanded price of Rs 24 to 25. The *dobari* blanket which consists of two breadths sewn together commanded a lower price and used to be sold by weight, 1 seer fetching Rs 2. A good *khudrang dobari* blanket by 1890 cost Rs 6-7, while a white blanket could be bought for Rs 5-5.8. Considering the great amount of labour that was expended by the villagers on the production of a blanket the price was very low.

**Exports from Kashmir**

Item	1886-87	1887-88	1888- 89	1889-90	1890-91	1891-92	1892-93
<b>Wool</b>	10386 Rs	5697 Rs	4880 Rs	17602 Rs	50795 Rs	20001 Rs	18149 Rs

The contribution of wool to the economy of Kashmir is shown by the given below tables

**Exports from Kashmir to Jammu**

Article	1905-06	Value in rupees	1920-21	Value in rupees
	Quantity or maunds		Quantity or maunds	
<b>Wool</b>	117	15,925	156	34,740

**Exports from Kashmir to punjab**

Article	1905-06	Value in rupees	1920-21	Value in rupees
	Quantity or maunds		Quantity or maunds	
<b>Wool</b>	4,702	2,74,844	3,267	5,58,808

**Skin and Hides:** Hides and skins of livestock also acted as a source of income for Kashmiris. A section in Kashmir society known as Sheikh's (*watals*) performed this type of work. They preserved and dried skin of animals. They worked out several items from skin of animals like shoes, sandals, saddles, leather chapels etc. There was a large trade of leather in Kashmir. Hides were prepared in the villages by the *watals* and were then brought in raw to Srinagar, where they were refined. Moorcraft also praised the leather of Kashmir. According to him the saddles of Srinagar were of best quality and if anybody wanted to buy pure leather he can surely get it in Srinagar if only he is prepared to pay a fair price and to wait for some time. The quantity of livestock was so great and increased so steadily that there must always had been a considerable export, as shown in the table below.

**Value in rupees**

Items	1886-87	1887-88	1888-89	1889-90	1890-91	1891-92	1892-93
<b>Hide</b>	1,13,504 Rs	77,535 Rs	97336 Rs	131260 Rs	232143 Rs	277594 Rs	186594 Rs
<b>Skins</b>	71443 Rs	85319 Rs	116994 Rs	191048 Rs	20224 Rs	178931 Rs	139386 Rs

The contribution of hides and skins to the economy of Kashmir is shown by the given below tables

**Exports from Kashmir to Jammu**

Article	1905-06	Value in rupees	1920-21	Value in rupees
	Quantity (No's or Maunds)		Quantity (No's or Maunds)	
<b>Hides and Skins</b>	25	510	52	2510

**Exports from Kashmir to Punjab**

Article	Quantity (No's or Maunds)	1905-06	Quantity (No's or Maunds)	1920-21
		Value in rupees		Value in rupees
<b>Hides and Skins</b>	11,017	3,09,264	4,685	2,27,667

Alternate Source of income and Food: Livestock provided alternate source of food to the people of Kashmir:

**a.Milk:** Animals like cows, goats, buffaloes etc provided milk which was used in different capacities. Milk was adequate nutritional diet to people. Owners of large number of milk yielding animals conducted trade of milk and it was also as source of income. One section of the society called milk sellers (*Dudeh-Guer*) depended upon the business in milk. They supplied milk to both villages as well as towns.

**b.Meat:** Livestock acted as a source of income through meat. Beef and mutton were both consumed. Kashmiris because of geographical reasons were fond of meat. No dish was complete without meat. Meat was mark of hospitality. The importance of meat in the valley of Kashmir can be judged from the fact that in marriage ceremonies several meat dishes were prepared and Kashmir is famous for its *wazwan*.

**c.Eggs:** Poultry was raised by the people of Kashmir mostly for eggs and meat. Besides, peasants, non-agricultural families also used to rear poultry as part time occupation. However, poultry raising by and large was common among peasant communities because they had surplus grains to feed them. Eggs laid down by hen and ducks were so important for Kashmiris that they were also used as an item of gift on auspicious occasions like circumcision. Eggs and poultry were also presented to friends and relatives on the occasions of their illness. This shows that Kashmiris had fully assessed nutritional value of eggs. As we know that barter system was a common phenomenon in feudal societies and eggs had a good market value. People easily send their eggs to shopkeeper (*wani*) to fulfill their day to day life requirements. Sometimes people sold their eggs to a person called *Tholwool* and in this way eggs acted as a source of income to the valley people. The ducks were exported to panjab. The best breed of fowl was found in the Lolab valley where the practice of making capons was common. A capon during 1890 was sold at prices varying from eight to twelve annas. Poultry and eggs were a source of income to villagers, but the fowl cholera *koker-kon*, which sometimes visited Kashmir, caused a great loss. The corrupt revenue and forest officials were also taking the poultry of the villagers as *Rasum*. Nevertheless, it was a considerable source of income in fragile village economy.

**Draught Power:** Bullocks were also used in the ploughing. Livestock acted as draught power. Oxen and sometimes barren cows owing to paucity of oxen were used for ploughing fields. Ploughing reduced manual labour and at the same time ensured deep ploughing which raised productivity of soil. Ox was particularly of great significance because it was used to draw the plough. The death of an ox in peasant house hold was not less than a tragedy because to purchase another was always difficult for an average peasant.

Ox was also used in *Arhata*. As the animal with a draw bar on his neck walked in a circular path the lantern pinion revolved. The circular motion was transmitted to the pot- garland by intermingling of spacer bars and teeth. Since the pot-garland used to be adjusted or hanged on wheel when the wheel revolved the pots dipped into the well came up filled and discharge the water into the head tank. Ox was also used in extracting oil from the mustard seeds called *Tilwanvan*. It was like a modern oil pressure machine.

**Livestock as Load carriers:** Live stock acted as beasts of burden. Many animals particularly ponies were used by peasants of Kashmir on a large scale for carrying out various agricultural operations. Ponies used to shift grains from fields to the grainries. Ponies were used to pull wheeled carts to carry men and material from one place to another. The owners of these carts (*Tangas*) carried passengers from one place to another called *Tangvool* (driver of cart) and in return demanded payments, and it was a source of income for these people. Ponies also carried agricultural produce on their back which reduced manual labour. However, peasants who were owners of small size of land could not afford large size of livestock.

## CONCLUSION:

The history of livestock in Kashmir unearths the largely self reliant and even exporting economy, local processing of a host of livestock products, available by means of best application of traditional wisdom rearing practices, feeding and many other husbandry practices. Our traditional livestock industry strongly depended on large grazing areas and semi-cooperative mode of rearing where *Chopan* and *Goor* played pivotal role. However institutions of *chopan* and *Goor* are gradually becoming extinct as pastures are disappearing. There is a need to revive age old institutions creatively by adopting cooperative farming managed by local bodies.

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26. *Ibid.*, p. 359.

27. *Half grinded pieces of maize*.

28. *Combination of Soyabean and Salt water*.

29. *Dried Branches of Willow Trees*.

30. *Dried Leaves of Reddish*.

31. *Dried Leaves of Carrot*.

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33. *Ibid.*

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