

# Employment Generation and Socio-Economic Changes through Sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir

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**Abstract** - This paper examines the role of sericulture in employment generation and socio-economic transformation in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra rule. It analyses the development of the sericulture industry, the administrative policies that supported its expansion, and the labor structure associated with the silk industry. Particular attention is given to the participation of women and child labor and the working conditions of laborers engaged in sericulture activities. The study highlights how the growth of the silk industry contributed to employment opportunities and influenced the socio-economic conditions of the region.

**Keywords** – Sericulture, Employment Generation, Jammu and Kashmir, Silk Industry

## I. INTRODUCTION

The state policy of the Dogra rulers of Jammu and Kashmir concerning sericulture divided into four phases Maharaja Gulab Singh ruled the state for ten years (1846-1856), during his period it was a prerogative of the private enterprises. These private enterprises and the individuals were involved in the profession of sericulture and its trade within and outside the state. However, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the son and successor of Maharaja Gulab Singh, ruled the state from 1856 to 1885. During his rule a department known as *Mahal Nivarawas* set-up, which looked after the management of the forests, industries etc. So, under this department sericulture for first time got the intention of the top officials of the industries and in a rag-tag manner state followed a policy towards sericulture. Since, 1846 the European and the Americans were visiting the state, therefore, apart from the shawl trade sericulture trade was also promoted Maharaja Pratap Singh ruled the state between 1885-1925, during these years a concrete state policy concerning sericulture was followed, when various experts in the sericulture operations were deputed in the state from other Indian provinces which were involved in sericulture endeavor such as Mysore and Bengal.

The State Government also got deputed or appointed some English and European experts in the state for sericulture development.

The successive governments in Jammu and Kashmir also enhance various legislations to grant aid to the industries and promoting welfare of the silk-workers. Various silk industries were set up in Kashmir and Jammu by the State Government.

Thus, as a result of the state policy apart from setting up silk factories, the governments also set up nurseries in various parts of the state to ensure the supply of mulberry leaves. Therefore, a large number of people were employed in these operations who earned their livelihood. Since the Silk Factories provided employment to the thousands of workers, most of these workers belonged to rural areas. Therefore, they settled near or around these factories. The government also provided them basic facilities of life, like drinking water, electricity, dispensaries, schools etc. As a result, a process of urbanization began in Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, the sericulture not only provided employment but also strengthened them economically a reflection of which one could see through their dresses, ornaments and celebrations and organizations of their social ceremonies, especially their marriages, Eid's etc. In order to understand the socio-economic impact, we had to go through the following sub-headings:

### A. Conditions of Labor:

The silk industry of Kashmir, after it was reorganized and established on modern lines, like other industries, involved the employment of labor for conducting sericultural operations. However, detailed account about their conditions and how many of them were absorbed by the industry from time to time, was not available for the whole period under discussion. Though in the beginning the laborers had no importance, but with the growth of various industries of the state, the labor class became an important part of the society and statistics of more or less accurate nature were made available in various reports published from time to time.

### B. Strength of the Sericulture Laborers:

As already pointed out the industry provided employment to a large number of agricultural families.



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The two silk factories of Srinagar and Jammu alone absorbed fifty six percent of the total number of laborers engaged in textile industries.<sup>1</sup>Of this number 1461 one thousand four hundred sixty-one were skilled workmen and the rest unskilled.<sup>2</sup>Besides about 5000 five thousand families got part time employment in the silkworm rearing operations.<sup>3</sup>

With the passage of time, this number increased and towards the end of our period of study there were about two lakhs and fifty thousand people in the villages who found part time employment in the silkworm rearing operations.<sup>4</sup>Moreover, four thousand laborers in the cities depended entirely, for their living, on silk reeling, seed production and silk weaving.<sup>5</sup>This did not include fairly large number of men who were involved indirectly in the various operations of the industry such as laborers engaged casually on mulberry nurseries, watching of mulberry plantations, carrying the loads and also those working in the companies who insured the goods of the industry.

*C. Employment of Female Labor in the Sericulture Department*

A peculiar feature of the silk industry in Kashmir was that it employed mainly male as against female laborers.<sup>6</sup>But in other sericultural countries, particularly France, Italy and Japan the labor engaged in silk reeling processes, apart from the minor operations involving manual labor were all female.

They played an active part even in the rearing of silkworms including the collections of mulberry leaf from the trees where bushes and dwarf sized trees were grown for raising the necessary stock of leaf. Operations in regard to mulberry culture which involved heavy labor such as digging of pits or climbing the tall trees were, of course conducted by men.<sup>7</sup> In Kashmir an attempt seems to have been made to recruit female labor for running the reeling side of the activities which included sorting out of the cocoons in different grades and qualities<sup>8</sup>and by the end of nineteenth century there were fifty-two female workers dependent on the industry.<sup>9</sup> There is also a reference in the census report of 1921 as regards their caste and rate of wages.<sup>10</sup>But what is here important to note, is that their number did not increase with the increase in the size of the factory day by day. It has been difficult for the writer of the reports to explore the true causes of this state of affairs. Probably social customs of the people in regard to marriage and feeding of children were responsible for no increase in the number of the female laborers. More important is the fact that the idea of women offering themselves as laborers was not liked and at the same time even the males among Hindus were not prepared to go for manual labor. What was left of this tradition of the employment of female labor towards the end of our period of study was only a female section of the sorting department in Kashmir sericulture and entire sorting section of the Jammu province.<sup>11</sup>Only a small number amounting to not more than fifty in Kashmir and seventy-five in Jammu represented the strength of the female laborers in the two factories of the state.<sup>12</sup>



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Mostly widows, with a sprinkling of destitute, old married women and young girls, before they attained the usual age of marriage comprised the strength of this labor community.<sup>13</sup> According to the census report of 1921 two-thirds of the strength of this labor community was the Muslims of lower ranks and their number was twenty, under fourteen years of age mostly engaged in sorting out of cocoons.<sup>14</sup>

*D. Engagement of Child Labor*

Engagement of child labor was not unknown to the industry in Kashmir as it was not unknown in important sericultural countries of the world.<sup>15</sup> The fact is that the nature of certain operations connected with the industry was that it easily attracted non adult labor at comparatively cheaper rates. The cheaper cost of such laborers served as an inducement to the employees as well to engage them. This was pre-eminently the case with countries where people were poor and the state was backward in matters of social legislation.<sup>16</sup>

After World War I, the International Labor Organization had not been without effects in molding the thought of industrial countries all over the world in the direction of a liberal advance in respect of avoiding the employment of child labor in the industries. India as an original member of the League of Nations was represented on the organization.

Most of the conventions sanctioned by the International Labor Organization were adopted by the Government of India. It must, however, be said to the credit of the Government Jammu and Kashmir that attempts were made to move with the spirit of the time, by having some sort of a minimum age limit fixed for the employment of labor in the factories. The age limit was fixed by the management of the factories at eleven years and subsequently raised to twelve.<sup>17</sup>

As already discussed that the nature of some operations connected with the industry was such that it attracted child labor. A word of explanation seems necessary in this connection.

Various operations involved in the industry called for technical skill. Such training was not imported in any organized institutions, established for the purpose in the state as is done today. It was acquired by habitual association and contact in actual working conditions with those who had already acquired the skill. The new recruits were generally taken in for the simplest operations which needed least amount of technical skill, such as cooking of cocoons, the cleaning of wastes and knotting of broken ends of the silk thread and finally the reeling of raw silk and all subsequent processes. By a few months' association with the skilled seniors, the juniors learnt the art and made themselves fit for independent work on their own account. The old laborers thus found it convenient to associate their little children or brothers or relatives with themselves for learning the art, obviously for economic reasons.<sup>18</sup> This is what led to the involvement of child labor in the industry in the state.

## II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

### *A. Rudimentary State of Labor-Legislation in the State*

During the first half of the twentieth century, the labor legislation for the betterment of industrial laborers was still in a backward state in India. No doubt, as a result of the influences of the International Labor Organization the matters were improving more or less satisfactorily in British India. They had there a Factory Act which was being steadily improved and brought in line with advanced legislation in other countries.<sup>19</sup> The state of Jammu and Kashmir was also trying to follow the example set by British India. Towards the end of our period of study the State Legislature passed the Factory Act and workmen's compensation act more or less on the same lines as those obtaining in British India.<sup>20</sup>

However, what was wanted in respect of formal state legislation through the normal constitutional procedure was to some extent made up in the state by executive orders necessitated by the peculiar organization of the industry on the monopolistic basis. These orders were passed by the State Council of Ministers to grant bonus to the laborers; thereby, making them co-sharers with the state in profits. Some relief was also afforded in certain cases of accidents. A systematic attempt to regulate such relief and other allied matters are discussed as under:

*B. Social Amenities provided for the labor*

During the first four decades after the organization of the industry, nothing was done on a large scale to provide social amenities to the labor community. As already referred to the comprehensive enquiry made into the conditions of the industry in 1942, as a result of which a scheme of reorganization was proposed and the same, after being considered by a Special Committee appointed for the purpose, was sanctioned by the government.<sup>21</sup> Some very interesting recommendations for providing social amenities to the laborers and ameliorating, in many respects, the general condition of the laborers in the factories concerned are given below:<sup>22</sup>

- 1) Providing a Maternity Bonus of rupees fifteen per birth bearing in mind that there were only fifty female laborers in Srinagar silk Factory and seventy-five in the Jammu silk Factory.<sup>23</sup>
- 2) Providing a sickness allowance in case of serious illness, to be duly attested to by the competent medical authority, the allowance was to be up to Ten days wage of the class to which the laborer concerned belonged at the time of his illness.<sup>24</sup>
- 3) Providing a contributory provident fund for those laborers who had a continuous service of at least five years, the laborer contributing six percent of his wage and the Government contributing an equal amount the

total with simple interest at the same rate as in vogue in case of permanent employee to be payable when the laborer attained the age of sixty-five years or was otherwise incapable of work. This was to be a sort of pension for the laborers to fall back upon in their old age.<sup>1</sup>

- 4) Establishment of a social center for the workers in the factory at Srinagar as had already been established at Jammu factory. The center was to have arrangements for<sup>25</sup>
  - i) Adult Education.
  - ii) A reading room and a library in order to prevent lapses into illiteracy.
  - iii) A Radio set to provide recreation to the laborers at lunch and other intervals of leisure.
  - iv) Arrangements of lectures on subjects of common interest to the laborers such as the advantage to the injured, precautions against the epidemics and so on.

The expenditure on these items was partly to be financed by the laborers themselves and Government was to provide only the necessary accommodation for housing the reading room and the library.

- 5) Establishing an accident fund to provide compensation for work to those who got incapacitated permanently or temporarily<sup>26</sup> through accident while discharging their functions.<sup>27</sup>
- 6) Providing the facilities of accommodation on spot to certain vendors who were to supply articles of granted purity under the supervision of the department. This had already been tried on a small scale with great success in Jammu.<sup>28</sup>
- 7) Establishing medical dispensaries at the two factories, one in Srinagar to have a whole-time doctor of the sub-assistant surgeon grade and the other in Jammu on a part-time basis with necessary stocks of medicine etc.<sup>ii</sup>



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Some of these recommendations were straightaway accepted by the government and action was taken to implement them. The most important recommendation which the government accepted was, to sanction a temporary measure of bonus<sup>29</sup> of twenty-five percent of wages in order to improve the efficiency of the laborers and to attract new recruits to the industry. This step, as a matter of fact, did a lot of good to the labor community.

*C. Drive against Illiteracy among Laborers*

A few years before the end of our period of study, the state launched a campaign to drive away illiteracy from the state especially among the laborers. A serious attempt seems to have been made by the management of the industry to impart training in (three R.S) to all the illiterate members of the staff and laborers in all the branches of the industry at the headquarters.<sup>30</sup> The results were gratifying enough. Practically hundred percent of the employees and operatives (including the female sorters) in Jammu factory were declared literate after the prescribed test conducted by the State Education Department. This was a record which any concern will be legitimately proud of. The problem of avoiding lapses into illiteracy was also tackled along with the campaign against illiteracy.<sup>31</sup> This lapse was provided against by the institution of a reading room and library, solely for the benefit of the laborers and those backward in education. A further interesting feature of the benevolent campaign on the part of the management of the factory was the installation of a radio set at the factory premises with a loud-speaker to provide, by way of recreation, and facilities for listening to the news of the world at their dinner time and at other leisure hours.<sup>32</sup> The most commendable feature of the scheme, however, has been the association of competent representatives of the labor itself with the organization and management of this Social Welfare Centre. It may be mentioned here that the part played by the laborers themselves in ensuring the success of the scheme by attending classes regularly, taking advantage of the library and even contributing funds to a large extent for financing the scheme deserves the highest praise.

The members of the staff too acquitted themselves creditably by playing the role of honorary teachers and taking the classes outside the legitimate working hours of the factory, to say nothing of their contribution to the funds required for this purpose.<sup>iii</sup> Indeed, the whole movement and the results achieved, was an instructive lesson in what honest and genuine cooperation among various groups, which composed the personnel of an industry, achieved for the common good of all concerned.<sup>33</sup>

However, no details about the steps taken and the results achieved in Srinagar silk factory are available to us. But from the scanty references it appears that the size of the factory and other circumstances stood in the way of this factory achieving the same solid and substantial results as was the case with the factory at Jammu. But all the measures adopted in Jammu were sanctioned for the Kashmir factory as well.<sup>34</sup>

*D. Labor problems – Institution of suitable machinery for ending industrial disputes*

We had a brief survey of the condition in which the labor engaged in the industry had worked. But a true estimate of the conditions of the labor in general cannot be complete without a discussion on the peculiar problems of labor in the factories of the silk industry. The production of cocoons in Kashmir province touched the fairly respectable figure of forty thousand maunds in 1911.<sup>35</sup> That was the time when the factory had not yet been equipped with modern reeling machinery, which was later imported from Italy.<sup>iv</sup> The efficiency of working and the capacity of the then existing machinery were rather limited as compared with the conditions prevailing by the end of the second quarter of the present century. Therefore, the number of men engaged in consuming the total output of cocoons then available was fairly large. At any rate it was larger than, what had been there during the forties of the present century; or what was required by improved machinery on one hand and the reduced crop of the cocoons on the other hand which was somewhere between twenty to twenty-five thousand maunds towards the end of our period of study.<sup>36</sup>



The inevitable consequence had been a substantial reduction in the number of working filatures. As against ten existing ones in the early years of the present century not more than four of these (no doubt of bigger size) were functioning towards the end of our period of study.<sup>37</sup> A great calamity befell the old factory, when a large number of old filatures were gutted down in an accidental fire.<sup>38</sup> The new filatures constructed afterwards were larger in size and equipped with locally manufactured machinery. These again were over-hauled and reorganized in the twenties of the present century as already indicated.<sup>39</sup>

The peculiar social and economic conditions prevailing in the state invested the labor of the industry with a power and influence after the first decade of the twentieth century that they had hardly enjoyed ever before. For certain political and quasi-political reasons, it was difficult to resist the pressure of the labor beyond a certain limit.<sup>40</sup> The truth of the statement was magnificently provided in the phenomenon than prevailing the number men actually required to run the industry according to the production of cocoons as obtained towards the forties of the present century, as those actually engaged. The latter was far in excess of the actual requirements. This was solely because labor force did not in the past affect a reduction in the number of men proportionately in spite of the fact that the lower production of cocoons would have reduced the number of the working days in a year.<sup>41</sup> As purely a commercial concern would have at once adjusted its working days including, the number of laborers engaged according to the actual amount of work required to be done. But the state had engaged the staff and laborers for the whole year round even through the number of working days for laborers would have amounted to not more than fifteen days in a month, this naturally saddled the cost of production with unnecessary over-head charges which was a great handicap to the commercial working of the

industry.<sup>42</sup> But this was the price which the industry had to pay for the monopolistic basis on which it happened to be organized.

Another problem with regard to the labor conditions, which had been engaging the attention of the authorities for a long time past, was that of the wages paid to the workers in the factories. The rates of wages were the same for males and females for simpler kinds of work and equal out-turns. But the males being generally more efficient in certain branches of the work were allowed a slightly higher rate of wages ranging between two annas and eight annas per day according to the nature of the work entrusted to each operative.<sup>43</sup> The children were, however, given a comparatively easier and simpler work and their wages were naturally low.<sup>44</sup> These rates were much below the level that prevailed towards the end of our period of study. The laborers on their part tried their best to bring the wages at par with the prices line because of the general rise in the cost of living.<sup>45</sup>

Following rates of wages were prevailing in Kashmir and Jammu during the third decade of the present century in the reeling section.<sup>46</sup>

*KASHMIR*

	RsAn.	Ps.	
8 Skeins reeler	1	0	0
7 Skeins reeler	-	-	a day
6 Skeins reeler	-	-	
5 Skeins reeler	0	100	

*JAMMU*

	<u>Regular</u>		<u>Irregular</u>			
	RsAn.	Ps.	RsAn.	Ps.		
8 Skeins reeler	1	2	0	1	0	0
7 Skeins reeler	1	0	0	0	140	
6 Skeins reeler	1	130	0	110		
5 Skeins reeler	-	-	-	-		

<sup>42</sup>I.T.B (Sericultural Industry) 1933, p.85.

<sup>43</sup>Census of India 1921, vol. XXII, part I, pp.178-179.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>I.T.B (Sericultural Industry) 1933, p.85.

According to the Indian Tariff Board of 1933 these wages were higher than the wages prevailing in other industries and such as canvas and carpet-making.<sup>vi</sup> However, the wages of the laborers engaged in different branches of the industry at two factories of Srinagar and Jammu in 1942 are given below.<sup>47</sup>

*Table of work and wages*

**KASHMIR**

**Scale of work                      Scale of wages**

*I) New Filatures*

Spinner	Reeling 53 Ibs, of No.1 cocoons or 6 Ibs, No.2 cocoons	1-0-0
Knotter	One with four spinners	0-8-6
Cook	One with two spinners in Filature Nos.1 & 2, with each spinner in Filature No.3	0-7-0
Waste cleaner	One for cleaning waste got from 6 basins.	0-7-0
Muraniwalla	One for cleaning silk reeled by six spinners of Iran silk and 8 of Kashmir silk.	0-10-0

*II) Old Filature*

Spinner	Reeling 3 ½ Ibs, of No.1 cocoons and 3 ¾ Ibs of cocoons.	No.	2
Knotter	One with four spinners	0-6-0	
Cook	One with two spinners	0-6-0	
Waste cleaner	One for cleaning waste got from 6 basins	0-6-0	
Muraniwalla	One for cleaning silk reeled by 9 spinners in case of Iran cocoons and two for all spinners in case of Dopost Pauda.		in
		0-9-0	

*III) Cocoon stores and sorting*

Bagman	Bringing down cocoons from stores, weighing and filling the cocoons in the bags to be issued to sorters.	0-7-6
Sorters	‘A’ class sorter sorting 15 seers of Kashmir cocoons or seers of Iran cocoons	0-9-0
	and ‘B’ class sorter sorting 12 seers of Kashmir cocoons and 18 seers of Iran cocoons	0-7-0
Weigher	Weighing of cocoons by varieties sorted by sorters	0-7-6
Godown coolies	Storing separately in the racks of the Godowns the assorted cocoons after these were received from sorting house.	0-7-6
Safai Boy	Picking up of cocoons which fell on the ground while sorters and other coolies carrying the cocoons from and to the Godowns	0-5-0
Dandidars	Bringing down the cocoons from the cocoon Godowns for issue to the spinners.	0-7-6
<b>IV) Silk Testing Section</b>		
Silk Tester	Testing of silk got from filatures	1-0-0
Literate Coolie	Engaged for numbering and writing addresses of purchasers on silk sales and also copying test reports	0-10-0
Silk Cleaner	Cleaning of silk	0-10-0
Store Coolie	Making books of loose silk received from filatures and testing house	0-9-0
Carting Coolie	Carting and weighing of fuel consumed in the boilers	0-8-0

**JAMMU**

Class of Spinner	Cocoons issued according to size to be reeled				Wages per day	
	<u>9 to 15</u>	<u>16 to 39 Drs</u>	<u>40 to 110</u>	<u>Do-</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Irregular</u>
	<u>Drs</u>	<u>Chs</u>	<u>Drs</u>	<u>post</u>	<u>Rs.As.Ps.</u>	<u>Rs.As.Ps.</u>
	<u>Chs</u>		<u>Chs</u>	<u>Chs</u>		
8 Skeins	40	50	58	66	1-0-0	0-15-0
7 Skeins	36	46	54	62	0-14-0	0-13-0
6 Skeins	32	42	50	58	0-12-0	0-11-0
5 Skeins	28	38	46	54	0-10-0	0-9-0
4 Skeins	24	34	42	50	0-8-0	0-7-0

Rs As Ps	Rs As Ps	Rs As Ps	Rs As Ps
Master Spinners	0 – 14 – 0	0 – 12 – 0	
to	to		
	1 – 2 – 0	1 – 0 – 0	
Silk cleaners and	0-12-0	0-11-0	
Muraniwalas	0-8-0	0-7-0	
Cooks ('A' class)	0-8-0	0-7-0	
Cooks ('B' class)	0-6-0	0-5-0	
<b>Knotters</b>			
1-Above 16/20 drs upto		30/35	
drs size one		Knotter for 48 Skeins	
2-16/20 drs and below		sizes	
one Knotter for		32 Skeins	0-7-0
0-6-0			
Silk Cleaners	for Neel special	Re 1 for every	36
Sheikhs			
For Neel 'A'		-do-	
For Neel 'B'		Re 1 for every	48 Sheikhs

We must also compare the wage rates with those obtaining in sister industries in other parts of India or for that matter other sericultural countries of the world.

We can safely state that on the basis of the Indian Tariff Board the wages paid in the state of Jammu and Kashmir were much higher than those obtaining in other parts of India.<sup>vii</sup> Indeed, it has been a matter of complaint on the part of the Indian Tariff Board, that the over-head charges of the Sericulture Department in Kashmir, in which the labor wage was included, were comparatively higher.<sup>48</sup> This already high scale of wages had further to be increased owing to the exigencies of the Great War II. Such increase on the whole amounted to not less than fifty percent to eighty percent. Even then the struggle of labor for further increase had not ceased.<sup>49</sup>

With this state of affairs on one hand and the rising political consciousness of the country, which had made the people concerned more and more sensitive to the incongruities and inequities of the system in vogue on the other, it should not be difficult to understand the labor troubles which occurred from time to time. The administration had to deal with the riots in the silk factory in 1924.<sup>50</sup> These riots were bound sometimes, as they did, to assume serious shapes and importance influencing the state administration as a whole.

A study of the figures of wages as contained in the above tables, may not lead us to any rational conclusion, with regard to the condition of labor, unless we also take into consideration, the price index which prevailed in the state by that time.



*Growth of Consciousness among the laborers*

It was an established fact that the Britishers had come to India with the definite purpose of economic exploitation. They succeeded in expanding their imperial yoke up to Kashmir also, but sold the same to Maharaja Gulab Singh according to the terms of the Treaty of Amritsar concluded on 16<sup>th</sup> of March, 1846.<sup>viii</sup> Later the twin appointments of the agent at Leh and Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir secured them a very strong foot-hold on the state which they effectively used afterwards to extend their further influence.<sup>51</sup> The establishment of British Residency in 1884 strengthened their influence and they began to dominate the entire administration of the state.

The Britishers had least interest in the well-being of the people of Kashmir, no doubt the Maharaja was the head of the state, but under the influence of the British Residency could not relieve the economic drain, which the people of Kashmir were subjected to at the hands of the British people.

The Britishers had no interest in the well-being of the labor community also. The Government always crushed this community with a view to getting maximum benefits from all the available resources. The laborers of the silk factories in Srinagar and Jammu had constantly been complaining against the insufficiency of wages, the corruption of the officials and the tyranny of the inspecting staff.<sup>52</sup> They were sometimes insulted by the officials who demanded bribes from them and sometimes compelled them to work in their homes as domestic servants.<sup>53</sup>

With the passage of the times the laborers realized the gravity of their problems and importance of coming on the same platform and fight for their common cause and to get concessions for themselves.

As already pointed out that in 1921, when T.C. Wazir<sup>54</sup> returned from Europe after making a study of European sericulture and subsequently made some recommendations for the future development of the silk industry in the State,<sup>ix</sup> he had also recommended the installation of European

machinery for effecting improvements in the reeling branch. The Government accepted his recommendations and as a result modern machinery was ordered from Italy in 1924.<sup>x</sup> But before this machinery was being installed the laborers became conscious of the fact that the installation of modern European machinery would result in the reduction of the labor strength on the factory and would be deprived of their Job.<sup>55</sup>

So in order to compel the authorities to meet their demands, the laborers of the silk factory at Srinagar struck work for many days in July 1924, and their programme of action included the holding of meetings and taking out the procession.<sup>56</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 1924, Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam convened a public meeting to pray for the welfare and good health of the Raja Sahib (Hari Singh) who was confined to sick bed.<sup>57</sup> On the same day the laborers of the silk factory took out a procession with a view to joining the public meeting. No untoward thing happened and the Government took no action against the precisionists.<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile the Muslims of Kashmir had a number of grievances against the Government. Their miserable lot had created a feeling of restlessness among them. Communities other than the Muslims were making steady progress.<sup>59</sup> The Pandits of Kashmir were making a rapid advance in the field of education and had on this account begun to capture offices as subordinate clerks. The Khilafat Movement had infused a spirit of mobility among the Muslim masses, who had become impatient, because they had now many grievances against the authorities.<sup>xi</sup> A deputation in this behalf had waited on the Maharaja of Kashmir; but it yielded nothing.<sup>60</sup> At this stage a bold step was taken.



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A memorandum was submitted by them to Lord Reading, the then Viceroy of India, when he visited Kashmir in 1924.<sup>61</sup> In the memorandum the Muslims demanded that proprietary rights of land should be given to the peasants; a large number of Muslims should be taken into services and the measures to improve the education of Muslims should be taken. The system of *Beggar*[Forced Labor] should be abolished and Muslim mosques in possession of the Government should be released and handed over to them.<sup>62</sup>

However, the Government instead of placating the Muslim population started persecuting those who had signed the memorandum.<sup>63</sup> At this the Muslims of the State got agitated and they scheduled to take out a procession on 19<sup>th</sup> of July, 1924 which was to be addressed by Khawaja Kamal-u-din, the Head of the Ahmadiyyah Community.<sup>64</sup>

The Government stationed troops in the compound of the silk factory and fixed machine guns at the Sherghari, the official secretariat of the State.<sup>65</sup> The action taken by the Government was simply meant to prevent the workers, from taking out a procession according to the scheduled programme, so that they do not join the public meeting, which was to be addressed by Khawaja Kamal-u-din.<sup>66</sup> But the laborers had already changed their mind and instead had gone to attend their duty.<sup>xiii</sup> The presence of troops alert with guns in the compound of the factory shocked them and this was a sufficient provocation for them. They assembled together and challenged the action of the authorities.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile the Director was immediately informed about the happenings, who rushed to the factory premises. In the meantime, people associated with the industry had gathered there in such numbers that the Director reached the office building with great difficulty.<sup>68</sup> The Director asked the laborers what the trouble was. They put forth their grievances and especially spoke against T.C. Wazir for having introduced European Machinery, which as they expressed, would result in the reduction of the labor strength.<sup>69</sup> In the meantime the Maharaja of Kashmir was informed about the incident. The police under the charge of B.N.Koul<sup>70</sup> took possession at the entry gate of the factory as well as the filatures,<sup>71</sup> where the laborers had now entered and were raising slogans "Down with T.C. Wazir."<sup>xiii</sup>

The police, however, informed the laborers that in case they did not leave the factory premises immediately and quietly strong action would be taken against them.<sup>xiv</sup> Since it was a situation first of its kind in the valley, the laborers and other people left the factory immediately and without creating further trouble. However, from the enquiries conducted by the police it appeared that the laborers had become politically very conscious, who had established a parallel Government of their own appointing somebody as king, the other as Prime Minister and so on.<sup>xv</sup>

During the night, the police arrested all the labor leaders and looked them up in the Sherghari Thana near Hazouri Bagh, Srinagar.<sup>72</sup> On the next day a mob of laborers joined by the common people gathered together on the western side of the Hazouri Bagh near the police station and demanded the release of their leaders.<sup>73</sup>

But the Revenue Minister tackling the situation asked the people to disperse, but they remained adamant. The revenue minister read out an order to them twice again warning them to disperse.<sup>74</sup> Since the people did not obey, the Minister ordered the troops to attack and fire. Guns were let loose on the defenseless people, several were killed and many were injured.<sup>75</sup> The corpses of those killed were carried away by the sepoys. The injured were carried by the people to the Mission Hospital. The military action generated an atmosphere of hysteria.<sup>xvi</sup> Everybody was awe-stricken and the entire city was handed over to the military, which patrolled in trucks. The situation became calm and thus the agitation was brought under control with a firm hand. The arrested leaders were prosecuted and Choudhry Niaz Ahmed was appointed for this purpose.

However, an important result of the agitation was that the Government granted some concessions to the labourers. Thus we may conclude that with the growth of class consciousness among the laborers they could make headway. In the realization of their ends when peaceful means failed, they resorted to violent methods. The spirit of the times came to their rescue and as such they got concessions for themselves. The factory after remaining closed for about six weeks was reopened.<sup>xvii</sup> From this time onwards the laborers remained quiet and concessions were granted to them from time to time as to the filature laborers in 1934.<sup>xviii</sup>

But in 1938 again the laborers of the filature Nos.1 and 2 wanted to get themselves accommodated in filature No.3, which had good machinery. Since this could not be done the laborers got agitated.<sup>76</sup> As persuasion failed, the two filatures were closed for two days. Labor leaders were expelled and the loss of Rs. 169 suffered on this account was recovered from laborers at fault as penalty.<sup>77</sup> Again in the forties of this century the laborers wanted special concession to be granted to them in respect of time-honored demand for increase in the wages and reduction of the hours of work.<sup>78</sup> At this stage the laborers were backed by the National Conference.

They resorted to strike, pasted posters asking all the laborers to fight unitedly. Some of their demands were fulfilled and concessions granted to them.<sup>79</sup>

#### BACK NOTE

1. Census of India, 1921, vol.XXII Part I, p.178.
2. *Ibid*, pp.178-179.
3. *Ibid*, p.179.
4. Census of India, 1941, vol.XXII, Part I & II, pp.242-244.
5. *Ibid*.
6. T.C. Wazir, *op.cit*, pp.128-132.
7. *Ibid*, p.128.
8. *Ibid*.
9. Census of India 1901, vol.XXIII, Part II.
10. Census of India 1921, vol.XXII, Part I.
11. Wazir, M.M, *op.cit*, p.93.
12. Reorganisation Report of 1942, p.110.
13. Census of India 1921, vol.XXII, Part I, pp.178-179.
14. *Ibid*.
15. Wazir M.M, *op.cit*, p.93.
16. *Ibid*.
17. *Ibid*.
18. Wazir M.M, *op.cit*, pp.96-97.
19. *Ibid*.
20. Reorganization Report of 1942m,
21. Part II, pp.35-37.
22. Vide Council Order No. 463/C of 1942 dated 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1942.
23. Reorganization Report of 1942, pp.110-113.
24. The expenditure on this account was not expected to be considerable. Taking births to number annually 30 to 40 in both the factories, the amount involved was expected to be Rs.500 (Rs.200 in case of Srinagar and Rs.300 in case of Srinagar)
25. Here again the amount of expenditure involved was not expected to be considerable. Taking 5 to 10 percent of

the laborers to have such illness the expenditure was estimated at Rs.1200 for Kashmir and Rs.300 for Jammu.

26. Taking a total maximum wage to an amount of Rs.300,000; the expenditure on this account was expected to be not more than Rs.7000 in case of Kashmir and Rs.3000 in case of Jammu.

27. Reorganization Report of 1942, p.112.

28. Not less than a week.

29. Such cases usually were few and far between each case was to be judged on its merits. An amount of Rs.500 in case of Kashmir and Rs.100 in case of Jammu was to be allotted for this purpose.

30. Since it did not cost the government too much, there was also some profit for the state on account of the rent charges to the vendors.

31. The expenditure on this account was estimated to be Rs.1500 in case of Kashmir Rs.500 in case of Jammu.

32. Memorandum No.S144-C/42 dated 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1942 from the Development Minister order no. SOR/C/1942 dated July 27, 1942.

33. Wazir M.M, *op.cit*, pp.100-102.

34. *Ibid*.

35. Personal conversation with T.C. Wazir, Chief Director of Sericulture.

36. Wazir M.M, *op.cit*, p....

37. *Ibid*.

38. *Ibid*.

39. Administration report of the year 1910, p....

40. Administration report of the year 1970 and 1971.

41. See figure of cocoon production in chapter "Process of production of silk."

42. Ganju, *op.cit*, p.202.

43. It was the fire of 1913, for details see administration report of the year 1969.

44. See administration reports of the years 1978 to 1980. See also "Kashmir the playground of Asia", by S. Sinha.

45. I.T.B (Sericultural Industry) 1933, p.32.

46. Wazir M.M, *op.cit*, p.103.

47. *Ibid*, p.104.

48. I.T.B (Sericultural Industry) 1933, p.85.

49. Census of India 1921, vol. XXII, part I, pp.178-179.

50. *Ibid*.

51. *Ibid*.

52. I.T.B (Sericultural Industry) 1933, p.85.

53. *Ibid*.

54. Reorganization report of the year 1942, pp.104-108.

55. I.T.B. (Sericultural Industry) 1933, p.85.

56. *Ibid*.

57. Wazir M.M, *op.cit*, pp.110-111.

58. The Amrit Bazar Patrika, August 25, 1931.

59. For details see K.M. Fanikkars "Founding of the Kashmir State."

60. M.L. Kapur "Kashmir Sold and Snatched", p.83.

61. Ghulam Hassan Khan "Freedom Movement in Kashmir", p.87.

62. *Ibid*.

63. Senior Sericulture Assistant, Kashmir Silk Factory.

64. For details see T.C. Wazir "Notes on a tour of Sericultural Study in Europe", 1921.

65. Administration Report for the year 1923, pp.33-34.

66. T.C. Wazir "Life Story", pp.232-234.

67. Khan .G.H, *op.cit*, p.27.

68. *Ibid*.

69. *Ibid*.

70. P.N. Bazar "History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir" p.136.

71. *Ibid*, pp.136-137.

72. *Ibid*, p.137.

73. *Ibid*.

74. P.N. Bazar "Inside Kashmir", pp....

75. Kh. Saad-ud-Din Shawl, one of the signatories to the memorandum was banished from the state by Partap Singh. But under political pressure Maharaja Hari Singh was obliged to lift the ban on the exiled leaders' entry to Kashmir. On his return in 1927 Saad-ud-Din Shawl was given a hero's welcome by the people of Srinagar. Tarikh-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir, vol.I, p.72. Also see 'The Ranbir', August 23, 1927.



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76. Ghulam Hassan Khan, *op.cit*, pp.37-38.
  77. T.C. Wazir, *op.cit*, pp.236-240.
  78. Ghulam Hassan Khan, *op.cit*, p.88.
  79. *Ibid*.
  80. *Ibid*.
  81. T.C. Wazir, *op.cit*, pp.234-235.
  82. *Ibid*, p.235.
  83. Superintendent of Police, Srinagar.
  84. Ghulam Hassan Khan, *op.cit*, p.88.
  85. T.C. Wazir, *op.cit*, p.235.
  86. *Ibid.Ibid*, p.237.
  87. *Ibid*.
  88. Ghulam Hassan Khan, *op.cit*, p.88.
  89. *Ibid*.
  90. *Ibid*, Rashid Tassir “Tarikh-i-Hurriat-i-Kashmir”, vol.I, pp.65-66.
  91. Ghulam Hassan Khan, *op.cit*, p.88.
  92. Administration report of S. year 1981, pp.33-34.
  93. Administration report of S. year 1994-95, p.118.
  94. Administration report of S. year 1995-96, p.196.
  95. T.C. Wazir, *op.cit*, pp.248-249.
  96. *Ibid*.
  97. *Ibid*.
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