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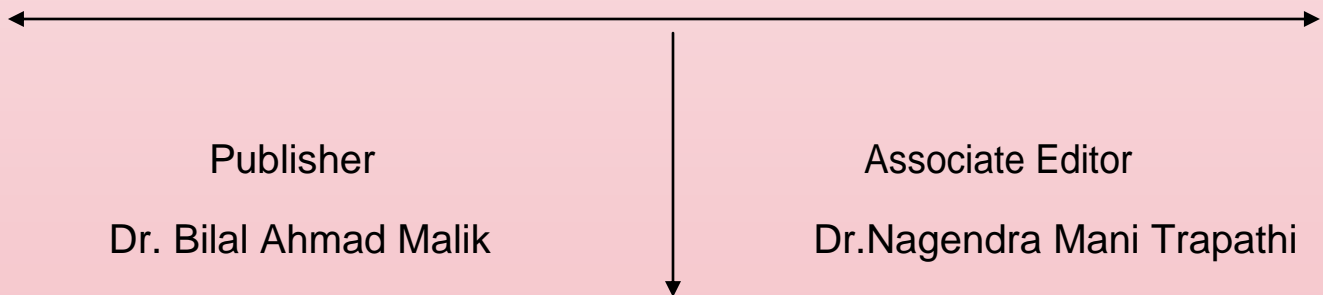
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## TRADE AND COMMERCE IN ANCIENT KASHMIR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AROMATIC PRODUCTS

SHABIR AHMAD GASSI\*

\*PhD, Research Scholar, Vikram University Ujjain, (NAAC Accredited Grade 'A')

### ABSTRACT

*The prosperity of Ancient Kashmir depended upon agriculture, agricultural products and trade and commerce. In earlier times Kashmir was having trade contacts with India, China, Afghanistan, Rome, Tibet, Egypt, Persia, Central Asia etc, which makes her a great centre of trade and commerce. There were many trading items of import and export like saffron, kutha or costus, sandalwood, devadaru (Aromatic Products), Pashmina Shawls, blankets, embroidered cloth pieces, precious stones, wood, copper, indigo, iron, food grains etc. which contributed a lot in the economic progress of the valley. The Aromatic products like Saffron and Costus were in great demand outside the valley.*

*Keywords: Saffron – Kutha (Costus) – Sandalwood – Pashmina – Nilmatapuram – Rajatarangini - Beryle – Corandum–Tourmalines - Turquoise – opaque – Perfume.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that Kashmir is situated on and near the trade routes which connected it with her neighbours in the north and north-west. Kashmir served as a sale centre for traders of India, China, and Afghanistan etc which were reaching Kashmir after passing high mountains. Our knowledge regarding the internal trade of Kashmir is comparatively meagre. Kalhan's mention of regularly arranged markets (*hatta*) in the city of Pravarapura<sup>i</sup> and references of new foundations of market by some members of the royal family in the other towns, however, leave no room for doubt that a brisk inland trade was carried on in Kashmir from a remote period. Kalhans description of the semi-legendary town of Narapur where the markets were associated in the Kashmirian mind with the idea of a large town.<sup>ii</sup>

The main products within the country were probably the different kinds of woolen cloth, food – grains, grape – wine, Saffron and Kutha or Costus (Aromatic Products), cattle, iron implements, earthen wares, bronze and copper utensils, leather goods, etc, which were the chief natural and industrial product of the country. Though

no detailed evidence is forthcoming, it seems almost certain that various towns and cities of the valley like Parihaspura, Avantipura, Huskapura, Surapura etc were principle commercial centres. Kalhan informs us that Sarkarapattana was a city famous for purchase and sale of cattle and for cloth weaving.<sup>iii</sup> The internal trade was carried on both by land and river. Most of the internal trade in the valley was carried by the river Jhelum and its tributaries. From ancient times the boats were the principle means of transport and travel is shown by the frequent references to river journeys, boats and boat bridges and ghats or landing places in the chronicle of Kalhan.<sup>iv</sup> Dayaram Sahni is of opinion that the large size stone blocks which were needed for the construction of big temples must have been carried in strong boats. The river *Vitasta* played an important part in the chronicle traffic of the valley is also evident from the fact that most of the cities and towns of ancient Kashmir flourished on its banks.<sup>v</sup>

Various sources provide us information that various commodities of Kashmir were exported to different countries. Among the Kashmiri goods which were having much consumption elsewhere, the most important were Saffron, Kutha etc.

## USES OF SAFFRON AS AN AROMATIC PRODUCT

Saffron was extensively cultivated in Kashmir. The texts mention it as *Kumkuma*. Its various uses are also mentioned in such texts. Its use in *Puja* ceremonies was very common and has been mentioned repeatedly in the *Nilmatapurana*. Its use for the preparation of medicine was also there.<sup>vi</sup> Further, saffron was used to flavour the wine also. Besides this, because of its fragrance it was used as a scent as well as unguent. The *Kumkuma* Tilak was known to almost each and every part of the country. Besides this it was also used as Cosmetic. Saffron was one of the main articles of export of Kashmir. Its association with Kashmir has been known to the Sanskrit literature to the extent that it is also known in that language as Kashmiraja (obtained in Kashmir).<sup>vii</sup> And from Kalhana we learn about its natural growth in the valley. That demand for the Kashmiri saffron in Indian market was very great in ancient times can be inferred from Sri Harsha's "*Ratnavali*", where the saffron of Kashmir is preferred to the saffron of Parasikas (Persia) and the Bahlikas. Kashmiri saffron was exported to china and other parts of the country. The gazetteer informs us that even today Kashmir sends saffron in large quantity to Ladakh and other parts of India.<sup>viii</sup>

Kutha (*Costus*, a root of composite herb) was very popular because of its aromatic properties. It was perhaps used as medicine because nowadays it is mainly used for this purpose. It was grown in Kashmir and

especially exported to Rome where it was used for Scenting Shawls.<sup>ix</sup> It was also used in preparing the ointments, medicines, perfumes, and the Scenting of food and the seasoning of wine.<sup>x</sup> It was also used in sacrifices and in the preservation of fruits. It was probably exported to Rome through Patala, Barbaricum and also through land routes.<sup>xi</sup>

The other main market for the export of “Kutha” was China. The Chinese used it as the chief ingredient in various incenses and medicines.<sup>xii</sup> Besides China, its use in Tibet too was very common. Like Chinese, the Tibetans also used it for medicine and as an ingredient for incenses. Hieun-Tsang mentions that Kashmir is famous for fragrant turmeric and medicinal plants.<sup>xiii</sup>

### USES OF SANDAL WOOD

Sandal wood of both red and white variety has been mentioned in the Nilmatapurana and in the Rajatarangini.<sup>xiv</sup> It was used as an ointment. Besides Red Sandalwood is used in Ayurveda for curing various skin related issues like acne, sunburn, blemishes and premature aging. Red Sandalwood is also rich in natural antioxidants that corrects hyper pigmentation and lightens marks, scars and dark spots. This formula also contains a blend of cold pressed Extra Virgin Coconut Oil and natural Beeswax which lightly nourish the skin keeping it Kashmir also produced yellow sandal which was used as an unguent by the kings in the rainy season.<sup>xv</sup> From the numerous references we came to know the use of sandalwood both for religious purpose and for use in daily life, we can presume that it was an important item.<sup>xvi</sup> It is also known that sandal wood is not native to Kashmir thus indicating that it was probably acquired from the south where it is grown in large quantity. The reference to it in the Rajatarangini suggests that Sandalwood was mainly obtained from the hills of Malabar.<sup>xvii</sup>

### TRADE AND COMMERCE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PASHMINA SHAWLS, WOOL & PRECIOUS STONES

The wool and *Pashmina* shawls from Kashmir were exported to Rome and other western countries and fetched considerable amount of foreign gold to India.<sup>xviii</sup> The Kashmiri Shawls, especially the white ones were much prized in the Roman world.<sup>xix</sup>

Like Rome, Egypt also provided market for Kashmiri shawls. Thus many types of woolen clothes, shawls, pallium, blankets, and embroidered cloth pieces from Kashmir had an eager and ready market outside India. Shawls both coloured and white, embroidered are plain were available for export purposes.<sup>xx</sup> These were

generally valued in the western markets and Warmington has enumerated numerous instances of their presentation as an honour or a prized gift. Thus a Persian ruler presented a red – dyed short woolly pallium (Kashmiri Shawl) to Aurelian as an expensive gift.<sup>xxi</sup>

Precious Stones and Gold also formed an important aspect of Kashmiri trade. The region produced precious stones like sapphire, beryle, corandum, diamond, ruby, emerald, aquamarines, tourmalines, turquoise and opaque.<sup>xxii</sup> Classical writers refer to sapphire from Kashmir, probably from the Zanskar range, which was favoured in comparison with those from other regions.<sup>xxiii</sup> Precious stones like beryle, corandum and sapphire were exported to Rome from the Kashmir region.<sup>xxiv</sup> We also find references to the kharas and tangavas two traded in gold brought from Kashmir by *Pipilakas* of Tibet.<sup>xxv</sup>

Kashmiri wood had been exported to Persia.<sup>xxvi</sup> The Indian wood logs have been found in the temple of moon at Ur. The Gadera wood used in Susa palace was probably obtained from Kashmir forests.<sup>xxvii</sup> The Kashmiri wood was sent to Western Asia from Kashmir.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The texts of both early and late periods of Kashmir history inform us about items like pepper, dried ginger, assofoetida, camphor and cardamom etc.<sup>xxix</sup> These items are still available from south India and the coastal regions. Camphor nowadays is produced in Punjab and U.P. but in earlier days it was brought from Bengal and coastal regions of South India. Cardamom is still produced in coastal regions alone. The assofoetida, pepper and other kinds of spices which were used but did not grow in Kashmir appears to have been brought from outside, presumably from regions adjoining Afghanistan. Kalhan also makes mention of Camphor being used as perfume.<sup>xxx</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that traders from Kashmir were good caravan leaders and used to obtain such things from the coastal areas and other parts of the country. The contact of Kashmir with Bengal and Karnataka as mentioned above cannot alone provides such items. Thus we have to presume that the trade contacts of Kashmir were with other parts of south as well as eastern India.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Copper was a metal of common utility. We have references to images and utensils made of this metal.<sup>xxxii</sup> The use of copper for coining money is as early as the reign of Toramana. King Jayapida alone is known to have issued large quantity of copper coins after obtaining probably a hoard of copper coins.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The large scale use of copper in daily routine could not have been possible if it was not imported from outside as the valley does not

have copper ore of its own. In this context it has been suggested that copper was obtained from Nepal when the region of Punjab was disturbed due to foreign invasions.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Thus it can be easily guessed that Nepal exported copper which reached Kashmir either by way of Tibet and Ladakh or through the mid Indian trade – route which was more in vogue during the winter.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Damodaragupta clearly tells us that the Kashmiris did not attach so much value to saffron as to indigo.<sup>xxxvi</sup> It appears true, the indigo was brought from outside whereas Saffron was a producer of Kashmir. And therefore people of Kashmir had more access to Saffron than indigo.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The present study reported that most of people in Ancient Kashmir were depended upon agriculture, agricultural products and trade and commerce. In earlier times Kashmir was having trade contacts with different countries. The main export products like saffron, kutha or costus, sandalwood, devadaru (Aromatic Products), Pashmina Shawls, blankets, embroidered cloth pieces, precious stones, wood, was exported through world during Ancient Kashmir. At present the people of Kashmir is satisfied with trade and commerce. But the aspirants want more reforms in this system.

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