

# THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE MUGHAL GOVERNOR'S ROLE IN KASHMIR'S HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

This research explored the roles, responsibilities, and impact of the Mughal governors on the administration, the economy, and the socio-cultural aspects of the Kashmir region during the 16th to 18th centuries. This research used qualitative methodology of Persian history by analyzing primary Persian documents, Mughal documents, farmān and mansab, and Mughal secondary administrative literature. A descriptive-analytical method was used by the researchers to study the relationships of control and subordination in the case of Mughal control and the governors in the control of the former over the latter's control of the revenues, troops, and administrative functions. Though the study found that Mughal governors had overwhelming administrative and military powers to the extent that they were sole superiors to the emperor, they were still in charge of the military and administrative hierarchies and they facilitated the economic development of Kashmir by effective control of the revenues, administration, and promoted the construction and inter-culture integration and matrixed economies of the region. Moreover, the governors' relationships with the region's socio-religious leaders provided the region with the political order and social cohesion that the region greatly needed. This study concentrated on the Mughal Empire's provincial governance with special attention to these governors and Kashmiri socio-political and economic history and the functions of these imperial brokers to balance the central power over the locality's administration in this important border province.

**Keywords:** Roles, responsibilities, impact, Mughal governors, administration, economy, socio-cultural aspects, Kashmir region.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Mughal dynasty governed the Indian subcontinent from 1526 to 1857, and during this period the dynasty developed one of the most sophisticated bureaucracies in the world. The empire began to expand into the region of Kashmir in 1586 as a result of the Mughal's Expansion under the Emperor Akbar. This expansion transformed the political and cultural landscape of the region. While the Kashmir district had political and administrative value as a result of its location and the expansion into Kashmir transformed the Mughals rule into a political administrative rule of the empire. as a result of the empire. the province had financially economically and Kashmiris empire prosperity (Bibi et al., 2025). Doug and the Mughal Subahdars, nawabs governors vast were of military, and power, economy judicial as delegates emperors act power of the territories. These governors and their intricate democracy power relations with the of the center of the empire local of the region. These relationships surrounding central power of the empire and local power to the regions demonstrate the empire and Kashmiri democracy complex society (Ramesh, 2024). The choice of governors in the Mughal Empire exemplifies the administrative ethos of the Empire. In every province, emperors appointed loyal, trained, and capable noble administrators, and even military commanders and

governors, able to exert effective control and manage the turbulent frontier districts. Governors were given the authority to collect taxes, lead the army, and carry out judicial and administrative functions. However, they were, in the end, mandated to answer to the central court, report to, and be checked by, a tier of junior governors and court officials who had the power to oversee the governors. This system of delegation and accountability was a hallmark of Mughal provincial rule, distinguishing it from other empires of the period (Akram & Ishaq, 2023).

Mughal governors in Kashmir held multi-faceted roles in the region. Their control was crucial economically, socially, and culturally. By surveying and assessing the land, they determined what revenue could be collected and ensured the collection of taxes to fund the administration at the provincial and imperial levels (Choudhary, 2021). Governors of the Mughal Empire maintained large military forces for the protection of Kashmir and the control of civil disorder. Their control of the military in border defense contributed to the stability of the region. They also financially sponsored the Cultural and Economic Development of the region including the building of gardens and mosques, the construction of bridges, and the enrichment of culture through the sponsored artistic landscaping (Guha, 2024). The Mughal governors' and Kashmiri elites' socio-political systems, such as feudal lords, religious authorities, and the merchant class, were, and continue to be, quite important and applicable in modern socio-political systems. The Mughal governors have, and continue to be, highly adept in the consolidation of Kashmiri elites into an administrative position and thus have empowered them with titles and land while keeping antagonistic players under control. The Mughal and Kashmiri socio-political systems of governance. It was a political hybrid. The policies of the Mughal center and the governance of the region of Kashmir were a hybrid. The governors were balancing the interests of the Mughal center and the local Kashmiri ones (Bhat, 2024). To evaluate the influence of Mughal governors in Kashmir, an inquiry into the imperial ideology of the Mughals and the governance of the empire is a prerequisite. The administrative system of the empire was constructed, albeit imperfectly, under a set of conditions which were multi-faceted political, economic and administrative challenges. The peculiar geography of the province, which bordered the empire and was a cultural and economic frontier, required a configuration of governance that was different from the other provinces of the empire (Sood, 2022).

The Mughal governors in Kashmir lost their imperial capital and had to deal with threats from Central Asia while also managing and exploiting the region's diverse religious and economic communities without economically exploiting the local population. The governors' responses to the multi-faceted challenges demonstrate the intricacies of Mughal imperial administrative thought and practice and point to the complexities of formal state governance and the formation of nation states in South Asia in the pre-colonial era (Vanina, 2023).

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the extent of the exercise of administrative powers, functions, and responsibilities of the Mughal governors in Kashmir, and how these powers and functions coexisted in the sphere of the imperial administrative framework in the 16th – 18th centuries.
2. To evaluate the economic impact of the Mughal governors of Kashmir on the economic systems of revenue, agrarian, and trade administered in the Kashmir economy on the overall economic growth of the region during the Mughals.
3. To assess the socio-cultural legacy of the Mughal governors in Kashmir, their Mughal architectural heritage, Mughal religious structures, and the syncretism of Mughal and Kashmiri arts and traditions.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What were the powers, functions, and constraints of Mughal governors in Kashmir? How did they balance dual roles of central imperial control and regional self-governance?
2. What were the economic consequences of the Mughal governors' revenue management, agricultural policies, and trade facilitation on the development of diversified economic sectors in Kashmir in 16th to 18th centuries?
3. What were the Mughal governors' impacts on the socio-cultural and architectural patronage of Kashmir, their relationships with different architectural and religious institutions, their intercultural integration, and their cultural integration with diverse communities?

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research expands and deepens the previous studies on the Mughal provincial governance and the administrative history of Kashmir, and offers a multi-layered perspective. The research addresses the powers and functions of governors, which is a gap in the historiography of the provincial tier of the Mughal administration. The research shows the mechanisms of the Mughal control of the distant border regions of the empire and the integration of local customs and hierarchies. This study significantly contributes to the understanding of the relations of the center to the empire, the center itself, the relations of pre-modern governance and administrative history, and the formation of an empire. This study also contributes to our understanding of the socio-economic, architectural, and institutional structure of the

Kashmir valley in the history and cultural legacy of Kashmir. This study also has important implications for the analysis of the evolution of the South Asian administration, cultural relations, and politics, and provides more detailed accounts of the imperial legacy, the self-identity of the region, and the articulation of history in the South Asian region.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past century, the Mughal administration in Kashmir has acquired vast historiography, encompassing the facets of the governor-general's powers, the configuration of the administration, and the relations of the empire with its subordinate kingdoms. In the early days of a Mughal empire, colonial historians, while concentrating on the political history and the genealogies of the controlling households, viewed the empire's dominion as a magnificent tyranny, and the rule as an exploitative one. Such views emanated from colonialism, and were exacerbated by a lack of familiarity with the Persian primary sources (Dzüvichü & Baruah, 2025). After the subcontinent's independence, Mughal historiography underwent an advanced stage, with a mixture of sophisticated canon and primary sources that aimed to clarify the complexities. Most recent historians pivoted to the Mughal administration, its institutions, the local elite integration, and the socio-economic upliftment of Kashmir in the latter period, especially during the able governors (Anderson, 2021). As an integrated system evolved the valuation of the governors and their impact on the history of the region became more balanced and just. Gaps in the administrative structure that Mughal governors in Kashmir employed became the focus of researchers (Khan, 2021). As the emperor's representatives, the governors had complete military, financial, and judicial authority. They, however, had to answer to the central authority and were, therefore, kept in check. The research discovered that in terms of Kashmir, the Mughals had a system of administration in which there was a centralization of power and a fragmented administrative system, which gave the governors the ability to manoeuvre within the scope of the local policies. The appointment, length of service, and removal of the governors were indicative of the emperor's course of action in corrective maintenance to control this significant province. The scrutiny of each of the governors in question demonstrated to have different patterns of governance which in turn produced varied policy orientations and different degrees of achievements. This alluded to the fact that the degree of success a governor could attain and the influence he could exert were influenced to a great extent by personal attributes and political affiliations (Muneer & Rahman, 2021).

Scholars, particularly interested in the distribution of power and the governance of revenue and agriculture, focus on the unusual economic aspects of power in governance (Howard, 2023). Historians know the meticulous revenue systems and land surveys, the classifications of agricultural land, and assessments of the varying productive capacities of the land in the Kashmir valley. This complex system of governance was exercised from the top. The governors collected taxes without the imposition of taxes that would result in a revolt and economic depression. The research demonstrates that the majority of governors with Kosovo's positive economic reputation, to a large extent, met the agricultural requirements of the economy, advanced the development and maintenance of irrigation systems and the construction of economically essential works, and supported the sustainability of the economically vital irrigation systems. The flourishing economic reputation of Kashmir, evident with the export of the notable shawls and the richness in agricultural produce, has been achieved under the notable governance concerning the maintenance of order, security, infrastructure, and unimpeded markets. Some scholars condemned the governors for their greed, economic shortsightedness, and self-serving policies, which ignored the long-term economic growth of the area and stagnated the economy, resulting in an economic depression and resentment in the area (Parrey et al., 2025). The research pertains to the military responsibilities that Mughal Governors held. Being the most remote and outermost region of the Empire, the Mughal Governors had to withstand and protect against Central Asian threats and local insurrection of war lords. Therefore, the frontier region required not only large military personnel, but also military and strategic capability. There are accounts of military campaigns waged by the Governors to eliminate potential threats of local turbulence on the frontier. This was in service of the preservation order and stability of the empire. Research has been conducted on the troopers of the Governors. This has been inclusive of Mughal soldiers, local conscripts, and vassals of the nobles (Hasan, 2023). The empire's military tactics and the systems of fortresses used to defend the region of Kashmir and maintained peace, have been the subject of scholarly attention. The Governors' successes in military command were not uniform. The successful ones were granted additional command and the failed ones were succeeded by other personnel. The military dimension of these governors helps explain how the Mughal Empire was able to militarily dominate its remote and exposed frontiers (Suman, 2024).

The socio-cultural impact of Mughal rule in Kashmir has caused augmented intrigue within the scholarly community in recent times. Documented accounts of governors' architectural construction of mosques, bridges, Jardins, public buildings, and the re-toiling of Kashmir's topography are becoming more common. These constructions catered to religious, political, economic, and cultural purposes. The famous mosques and Jardins of Kashmir are a testimony to this multi-purpose patronage. The scholarly community has studied the governors' interactions with the religious institutions, funding of the Muslim establishments, and the accommodation of the Hindu practices, which are testimonies to the Mughal religious tolerance. The courts of the governors became the centers of the Persian literary

culture, attracting and hosting diverse groups of poets, scholars and artists which culminated in the cultural prosperity of Kashmir. Studies attest to the fact that the cultural patronage from the governors facilitated the cultural integration of the Mughal metropolitan practices and the Kashmiri cultural practices to form hybrid variations in the architectural, artistic, and literary spheres (Hasan, 2022). Researchers have turned their attention to Mughal governors' interactions with local hierarchies and the annexation of Kashmir into the empire. How governors interacted with local capitaines, how they granted titles and lands to compliant lower nobility, and how they interacted with rival challengers of the empire. This process of coercion and accommodation transformed the political geography of Kashmir by incorporating self-contained political entities into the zone of the empire, and integrating the regions to the empire (Akram & Ishaq, 2023). Customs and privileges of the political units were retained. This led to these provincial governors being dubbed as the cultural brokers of the empire. This is how they negotiated the loyalty of the center with their customizing the center's demands to local conditions. Periphery studies of the relations of particular governors and local elites have improved understanding of the Mughal empire. They have exposed patterns of collaboration, accommodation, and conflict. The prosperous governors exhibited the paradox of control and collaboration, coercion and peace, to create an order of functioning empire and regional order (Wink, 2024).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed qualitative research methods to assess the role of Mughal governors in Kashmir. The primary approach was the historical method. The researchers undertook chronological ordering and categorization of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were the Persian chronicles of the period, Tarikh-i-Kashmir and Baharistan-i-Shah, and Mughal Farmans, Mansabas and other writings dated 16th to 18th centuries in the administrative domain. The secondary sources were the Indian and foreign historians research the writings and historical monographs who have dealt with the Mughal administration and Kashmir. The researchers then employed the description and analysis of collected data, that is, governance, power, economics and socio-cultural of the Mughal governors of the region. The researchers studied the power system of the Mughal empire in Kashmir, and the governors in turn of the provincial powers, revenue, military and policies of the empire. The credibility of the research was fortified by the researchers establishing the chronology of events using a plethora of historical sources. The interrelated and integrated civic and cultural architecture of the Kashmir used by the researchers along with the governors and the local chieftains and the religious systems were also examined. The socio and economic development of the region also was of interest to the researchers. Writing from the institution and from the library aided researchers to comprehend the administration of the Mughal in Kashmir.

## RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Historical sources have provided valuable insight pertaining to the rule, power, and control of the Mughal governors in Kashmir. From the primary sources, chronicles, and administrative records and secondary literature, there are various emerging sub-patterns that the researchers have identified. These sub-patterns exhibited different aspects of the governors' control and impact and the intricate nature of the Mughal rule in the province of Kashmir. These aspects offered a view of how the governors, in collaboration with the governing and dominant power of the Mughal Empire in the area, envisioned, formulated, and governed the policies and development of the region.

### **Theme 1: Administrative Authority and Imperial Accountability**

Mughal governors in Kashmir had the power of appointing lower functionaries through the implementation of an administrative hierarchy, supervising an ordered collection of taxes, maintaining governmental order, and executing the laws of the empire. This authority, however, was always constrained by the obligations due to the central court, and the duties of reporting, inspection and surveillance by other imperial officers. From the documents, it can be gleaned that governors had to balance unilateral authority, and control of the empire, an illustration of the paradox of imperial governance of the Mughals. The governors achieved this paradox by successfully maintaining the peace of the province.

### **Theme 2: Revenue Administration and Economic Management**

The governors of Kashmir have overseen the estimation of revenue generated from land and the management of the revenue derived from crops, which has led to Kashmir becoming the administrator of Kashmir's economy. Archival reports have revenue thoroughly estimated under document the governors of revenue control, and the revenue control collection strategies, along with mechanisms of collection, which have been documented. The economic development of the Kashmir is also due to the governors who supported the development of crops, the preservation of the irrigation system and refrained from excessive taxation. The governors were shown to have exercised a great variety of policies, and even economic policies, the most effective of which were those, who exercised control to a great detriment of the economy and the more popular crop, and, within the more primitive and economically detrimental framework of policies, exercised control extraction.

### **Theme 3: Military Command and Strategic Defense**

There is documentary evidence showing the governors commanded large segments of militaries of Kashmir, the defenders of the onslaught and the defenders of the internal rebellions of the military of. The documents outline the governors of the military of campaigns, engineering and military tactics of the fortified defenses. Strong military leaders of governors of the military the governors of Mukhalistol region of the military with of, and the leaders of region of Mughals and military leaders to of. Military Leadership was the most important criteria for selection of the governors of Kashmir which in turn illustrates the great strategic importance of the region to the Mughal Empire.

### **Theme 4: Architectural Patronage and Urban Development**

Mughal governors in Kashmir, as recorded by history, funded the construction of buildings, mosques, gardens, bridges, public works, and other major infrastructures. These constructions served religious, political, administrative, and economic functions, as well as changed the landscape of Kashmir. Evidence shows that these constructions served architectural patronage to legitimized the governors, showcased their imperial power, altered the architectural legacy and metropolitan Kashmiri traditions and arts, and integrated quadra patronage of Kashmiri civilization. The remaining monuments of urbanization and Kashmiri architectural heritage act as evidence to the governors of the empire.

### **Theme 5: Cultural Integration and Religious Policy**

As the analysis shows, the cultural transfer of Mughal metropolitan customs and local Kashmiri traditions by Rajput governors was reflected in the endorsement of Persian literature, encouragement of artistic creation, and the patronage of the diverse religions of his dominions. Documents provide evidence of the governors' amicable relationship to Islamic rituals as well as Hindu customs, which corresponds to the Mughal religious tolerance policy. The cultural activity centers, which the governors welcomed to their court, greatly enriched the intellectual, artistic, and cultural life of Kashmir by the scholarly, poetic, and artistic elites the governors invited. Local responses in the empire's center, with the monarchical culture and the civilization of the polity, construct the empire's civilization and the center of the polity's civilization, the empire's monarchical culture, civilization, and the polity's culture.

### **Theme 6: Relations with Local Elites and Power Structures**

From the source, there were complexities recorded in the relationship of the governors with the Kashmiri Indo-Sarai elites, such as the feudal chief, religious leaders, and the merchant class. The governors employed a dual strategy of both accommodation and coercion, where the soft governors rewarded submissive local leaders and eliminated other potential challengers. The evidence suggests that the most successful governors incorporated local power structures into the imperial systems of administration via sophisticated sub-contracting and controlling alliances and patronage, along with a fine balance of competing interests. Over the years, this shifted the political landscape of Kashmir, which had previously been a hotbed of localized autonomous power, retained a selective form of imperial control, along with resource interpositions so as to tilt the balance in favor of imperial governance.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study dealt with the different functions and roles of the Kashmiri governors of the Mughal Empire and their impact on the rule and administration and the socio-economic and cultural development of the region. These governors represented the empire and exercised considerable authority, but in the end, they were merely high-level middlemen and were ultimately responsible to the top. Their performance impact, however, was effective to a point, depending on their ability to manage the equilibrium of the empire's court, the local powers, and the general populace. Those who managed to achieve this balance integrated a unique set of skills that included military and administrative prowess, socio-political appreciation, and cultural mastery, and thus managed to dominate and sustain on the thriving region of the empire. The differences in the performance of the governors determined the difference in the political and administrative outcomes to the varying extent of the individual capabilities, political circumstance, and other factors.

The economic effects of Mughal governors in Kashmir were positive. Prosperous governors promoted the growth of agriculture and the development of trade and economic revenue systems. Such systems, along with others, economically integrated Kashmir to the Mughal Empire and are a testament to the economic administration under a Mughal governor. A form of exploitation existed within the governors' economic policies as the governors' personal enrichment ambitions, as unsustainable in character as the governors' policies were, were more important than the efficient economic management of the region. This hints at a form of paradox within the governors of the Empire's provinces.

The Mughal Empire's Kashmiri architecture, culture, and social formations illustrate Mughal rule's socio-cultural legacy in the area. Mughal governors' supervision of construction activities, sponsorship of the arts, and cultural dialogue between the Mughals and Kashmiri patterns redefined the character of Kashmir. The governors' attempts to control the religious diversity and local customs were, however, imperial and flexibly shrewd, reflecting the Mughal



imperial system's efficient provincial governance. This contributed to investigating the imperial system to understand the means of control exercised over culturally pluralistic territories as well as the policies of governance in a flexible manner using soft power and co-opted resource control.

## CONCLUSION

This research has shed light on governors' roles, duties, and their influence/regional relations through a detailed study on the Kashmir province continues to from the 16 to the 18 centuries, and the transcripts from the Mughal Empire. It highlights the intricate and sophisticated nature Mughal provincial administration. Within the structure of the Empire, the governors were the only ones wielding the powers of administration, military, economics, and culture without being interleaved by any other coexisting powers. The governors ensured the Kashmir Valley's. Within the imperial and subsidiary frontiers, the socio-economic prosperity was maintained. The research also delineated the graduated inter and intra political administrative prowess of the provincial governors. The proficient ones improved the socio-economic strata and protected the cohesion, while the incompetent, hindered the progress, of the socio and political affairs and brought decline of the economy.

The effects of the Mughal governors on the development of Kashmir were comprehensive in scope as well as widespread in consequence. The Mughal governors instituted a revenue system and fostered agricultural productivity, thereby facilitating economic growth. The governors maintained internal peace and defended the region against external aggression. Additionally, the architectural and artistic patronage of the governors beautified Kashmir. The social structures of the region also saw improvements as the Mughals and the local populations united; the diverse elements of the society were integrated in a harmonious manner. The Mughal governors were more than just the governors of the empire as they were responsible for the one-dimensional and the multifarious development of the region.

This study provides further insights into the history of pre-modern imperial governance, center-periphery relations, and the history of Kashmir. The research highlighted how empires controlled the distant provinces, balanced direct rule and self-rule, and how policies were modified to fit local conditions. The political and economic sophistication and cultural flexibility of the 'effective' Mughal governors enhanced the understanding of historical state formation and the multifaceted legacy of empires and South Asian regional identities. This research contributed to the understanding of the intricacies of Mughal provincial administration and the legacy of the empire in the region, particularly in Kashmir during the Mughal Empire.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To continue studying the differences in the performance of the governors of the former region of Kashmir, it may be most useful to undertake more extensive individual studies, focusing primarily on individual governors - their policies, achievements, and failures. It may shed light on the more peculiar differences in governance in contrast to the Mughal rule in other provinces of the empire. The hierarchies of administration and the governors' subordinate officials are just as important as the governors themselves in exercising administrative discretion. The combining of different strands of archaeology, fieldwork on the built environment, and studies of material culture would greatly enhance our understanding of the governors' impact on the landscape of Kashmir. Within the social structure, the peasants, traders, and artisans, as well as the different religious communities may have shaped and articulated varied responses to the governors' powers, and their unification in purpose may be worth studying. It would greatly enhance the design of the historical inquiry to engage more freely in other disciplines, in particular political science, economics, and sociology. This would fortify the knowledge about the history of Kashmir and its Mughal imperial history by increasing the understanding of the pre-modern systems of governance in relation to current administrative issues and problems.

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