
**TREATY OF AMRITSAR AND FOUNDATION OF THE MODERN STATE OF
JAMMU & KASHMIR:**

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ABSTRACT: The foundation of Jammu And Kashmir as a modern state was laid by the treaty of Amritsar, signed on 16th March 1846, between Maharaja Gulab Singh and the then British Governor General Lord Hardinge, by which Gulab Singh had to pay seventy Five lakh Nanakshahee rupees to the British. Up to 1947 the administration was run by the Dogra descendants on the lines of the British and finally Kashmir was acceded to India by signing the Instrument of Accession on 16th October, 1947. The main aim of this paper is to analyze the steps that were taken by the Dogra Maharajas in order to extend their territorial control and the paper will also focus on Dogra state craft.

Key Words: *Dogra, Kashmir, Gulab Singh, Treaty of Amritsar, Begaar, Nanakshahee.*

INTRODUCTION: During the second half of nineteenth century, the British Imperial rulers speeded up their efforts in order to consolidate a pan Indian territorial state so that to acquire political legitimacy. Their main aim was to sustain their occupation and control over India through their indirect rule, because at that time India was divided into a large number of princely states. They thought that an entity like India is governed by social codes and customary laws and it is easy to govern it. According to *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, published in 1909, there were 693 princely states (Native States) in South Asia, including Nepal and the Shan states in Burma, and of which majority were estates or Jagirs, while three-fifths of the sub-continent was under direct imperial administration, the rest was under the princely rule. These states were the parts of Indian Subcontinent which had not been conquered or annexed by the British but were subject to subsidiary alliances and were indirectly ruled by the British through their agents Modern state of Jammu and Kashmir is formed by the signing of treaty of Amritsar between Maharaja Gulab Singh and the British.

Origin of Dogra Dynasty in Kashmir:

The Dogras were Indo-Aryan ethnic group of people who inhabited, the hilly country between the rivers Chenab and Sutlej, originally between Chenab and Ravi. According to one account the term ‘Dogra’ is said to be derived from the Sanskrit words *Do* and *Garth*, “meaning two lakes. The names *Dugar* and *Dogra* are now applied to the whole area in the outer hills between the Ravi and the Chenab, but this use of term is probably of recent origin and dates only from the time when the tract came under the supremacy of Jammu.

The ancient capital of the state according to tradition was at *Bahu* where the ancient fort and a small town still exists, Jammu having been founded by *Jambu-Lochan* later on (Sufi, 1974). Fredrick Drew in his book *Jammu and Kashmir Territories- a Geographical Account* has also described about the origin of Dogra Dynasty. He opines that Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu, the ancestor of Maharaja Gulab Singh had occupied Jammu in 1760 and ruled for about 40 years and established his dominance over the Dogra territories which were later followed by his successors. The Dogra principalities are said to have been founded by Rajput adventurers from Oudh and Delhi, about the time of Alexander's invasion when they moved up north to oppose the Greeks. Raja Ranjit Dev gave an orderly and peaceful administration to his subjects at a time when all around there was chaos and insecurity. Jammu thus became a trade hub between the Kashmir valley, Afghanistan, and Centre Asia, and the rest of India (Bamzai, 1962).

Treaty of Amritsar and the Political foundation of Modern State:

The two Anglo-Sikh wars led to the final extinction of Sikh sovereignty in Punjab and the treaties of Lahore (09 March 1846) and Amritsar (16 March 1846) had made the British to take full control over the sovereignty of Punjab. Now, with these treaties the political boundaries of the British Empire extended up to the Southern part of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. And, now by all accounts, the British set its eyes over the valley. However, due to the transfer of Kashmir to the Dogras, the nature of its political world changed. From an earlier continuous topography of coinciding and layered sovereignties, the British now claimed a uniform and territorially bound sovereignty, the lesser version of which they vested in Gulab Singh (Sufi, 1974).

Treaty of Amritsar (16th March 1846) was concluded between the British Government on the one part and Maharajah Gulab Singh of Jammu on the other. The British officials included *Frederick Currie, Esq.* and *Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence*, they were acting under the orders of the Rt. Hon. Sir *Henry Hardinge, G.C.B.*, one of her Britannic Majesty's most Honorable Privy Council, Governor-General of the East India Company, to direct and control all the affairs in the Indian Sub-continent and by Maharajah Gulab Singh in person.

Through the Treaty of Lahore signed on 9th March 1846, the Maharaja of Punjab- Maharaja Ranjit Singh agreed to recognize the independent sovereignty of Raja Gulab Singh, in such territories and districts in the hills as may be made over to the said Raja Gulab Singh, by a separate agreement between him and the British Government, a day after the Raja was conferred with the title of Maharaja, the symbol of sovereignty.

The present state of Jammu and Kashmir came into existence on the 16th of March 1846 through the Treaty of Amritsar which was an offshoot of the Treaty of Lahore signed between British East India Company and Maharaja Gulab Singh. Various distinct territories like Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Hunza, Nagar and Gilgit stripped by the company from the Sikh kingdom of Punjab were mended together to bring into being this state¹. Bhagwan Singh (1973) in the chapter *Looking Back* of his book *Political Conspiracies of Kashmir* opines that

it was not alone due to the treaty of Amritsar that Maharaja Gulab Singh annexed Kashmir to his dominions, but, it was his participation in the conquest of Kashmir in 1819 when he helped Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the final conquest of Kashmir and again in 1846 for getting actual control over Kashmir by subduing the last Sikh Governor of Kashmir- Sheikh Imam-ud-Din. Lord Birdwood in his book *Two Nations And Kashmir* is of the view that Gulab Singh first had to subdue the Last Sikh Governor of Kashmir with the help of British and after that he got control over Kashmir. The British thought that it will be difficult to retain Kashmir and other hilly portions and occupation of these hilly territories would lead to collision with many powerful local chiefs. So, they transferred them to Maharaja Gulab Singh (Khilnani, 1972). The amount that Gulab Singh agreed to pay was really the indemnity of one crore rupees on Lahore Durbar, they were unable to pay it. Gulab Singh had to pay rupees sixty immediately and the remaining in installments according to the Article IV and V of the treaty. Gulab Singh offered to pay it for the possession of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and Baltistan (Sufi, 1974).

In consideration of this transfer, Maharaja was to pay 75 lakh *Nanakshahee* rupees to the British Government and one horse, twelve perfect shawl goat of approved breed (Six male and six female) and three pairs of Kashmir shawls” as a token of the British supremacy.² He had to accompany with the whole of his military force the British troops when employed within the hills or the territories adjoining his possession and on their part British Government promised to give their aid to Maharaja Gulab Singh in protecting his territories from the external enemies. Gulab Singh had to maintain services for the British troops. According to the experts, it was a well-known fact that Maharaja became vassal of the British and no resident was appointed in Kashmir without permission of the British.³

The credit of amalgamation of the modern state of Jammu and Kashmir goes to Kashmiri Dogras (Sundarajan, 2010). Bawa Satinder Singh in his book *Jammu Fox- A Biography of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu 1792- 1857, (1988)* opines that it was only due to the efforts of Henry Hardinge and Henry Lawrence, that the Dogra State was saved from the death blow in the infancy stage and he was given help by the British in order to consolidate the state because of the mutual friendship ties (Bawa, 1988). At the end of the treaty Maharaja Gulab Singh expressed his gratitude to the then British Viceroy (Sufi, 1974). When Gulab Singh took over the charge of Kashmir, the conditions in Kashmir were very deplorable. Two thirds to quarters of the gross product of the land was taken as revenue. The crops after harvesting were collected in stacks of which half- was taken as the government share. And additional amounts were taken as perquisite of various kinds, leaving one-third or even only a quarter with the cultivators. Despite of this revenue was also taken in cash. The whole system of assessment and collection was extraordinarily intricate and practicable only in the interest corruption officials. Gulab Singh usually remained in the hills and used Sikh means in order to extend his authority over his other Dogra Rajputs (Sufi, 1974).

Gulab Singh “brought the principle of personal to perfection,” says Sir Walter Lawrence and showed the people that he could stand by himself.” (“The Kashmir Gazette”, 1999; Sufi, 1979).

Revenue and Police Administration under Maharaja Gulab Singh:

The revenue and police administration was recognized into four wazarats or districts. Experienced and trusted officials were placed in charge of key Department like the Audits and Accounts, the Dagshawl, commissariate and police. Barbara Ramusack (2004) in her book *The Indian Princes and their States*, Regarding the administration, there was a radical change in the government of some princely states in British India such as Travancore, Mysore and Baroda. Still, as in British India the state administration rarely entered past district governance into villages. Whereas, some states copied the revenue practices and legal system of direct rule such as Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagarh. Maharaja wanted to collect the amount from the people that was demanded by the British (Ramusack, 2004).

Beggar or Forced Labour:

The maharaja also introduced the system of beggar in Kashmir. The state being surrounded by high mountains and in absence of other transport facilities necessitated the large number of men for carrying essential commodities in or outside the valley. As Kashmir felt under tyrant rulers, beggar or forced labour developed there. The earliest mention of beggar is in Rajatrangni, when king Samkaravarman (the son and successor of Avantivarman) employed large number of men in order to carry the baggage of his soldiers. During Mughal rule it developed as a regular institution, which was later on continued by Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras. Maharaja Gulab Singh tried to rationalize the system and made some changes in it. The system continued up to 1920, when public opinion developed against it and was totally abolished (Bamzai, 1962; Koul, 1963).

Supply of Food Grains to the People:

Another important reform undertaken by the Maharaja was the rationing of rice in the valley, Kashmir, owing to its extreme unapproachability and the insurmountable difficulties of heavy transport. It was always liable to sudden famines owing either to failure of the rice crops or the surrounding of the grain market. In order to meet this situation rigid monopoly of rice was established and it was sold at a fixed price to the people. Maharaja established a rigid monopoly of rice and it was sold at a fixed price to citizens. This was necessary because majority of the people were artisans and shawl weavers who needed to supply cheap grains to be able to produce the valuable articles for export on which depended the economy of the valley (Bamzai, 1962; Sufi, 1979)

Reorganization of Shawl Industry:

The shawl industry in Kashmir was so important that a government department had been maintained for long to deal with it. Before 1833, the duty on shawls was levied according to the number made and stamped in the year at the rate of three annas in the rupee one. This was found unsuitable, and in A.D. 1835 General Mian Singh established the Baj⁴ (tax imposed on shops), or fixed amount of tax, to be paid by each shop. During sultan Zain-ul-Abidin shawl

industry was recognized as a national industry and there was lot of development in it. Kashmiri shawls were exported to many countries. As soon as Gulab Singh consolidated his possessions he reorganized the Shawl industry (Chhabra, 2005). Once in 1865, Shawl weavers went on agitation that is known as Shawl Baff Agitation of 1865. Due to oppressive rule the revolt was suppressed and large numbers of subjected masses especially shawl weavers were killed, which led to the setback in Kashmir shawl industry⁵.

Land Revenue Administration under Maharaja Gulab Singh:

Land revenue system in princely states differed from each other. In case of Kashmir land revenue administration was run by the officials mentioned below:

1. Tehsildar:

The person had authority of two to five territorial sub- divisions and exercised supervision over all the accounts of Kashmir within district. He had power of punishment and had 200-400 sepoys under him. He was responsible for the governor. (Thorp and Hassnain, 1980).

2. Thandar:

He was the chief officer over each territorial sub- division. He had also the power of punishment and had 40-50 sepoys under him. He made report of all the crops to Tehsildar (Sufi, 1979).

3. Kardar:

The chief official who was concerned with the collection of land produces. All the arrangements were made by the government regarding to full amount collected from the sold produces. He had under him a certain number of villages and he reported to the Thandar. (Thorp and Hassnain, 1980).

Share of the Government:

With the Treaty of Amritsar concluded in 1846, the Kashmir valley was sold to Maharaja Gulab Singh by the British rulers. During Mughal period in Kashmir Raja Todar Mal⁶ made revenue settlement of the valley, which in its broad features forms the basis of the modern revenue system (Kendra, 2007). The first recommendation of Lawrence was announced the cultivators that the new settlement would ensure that only a small part of the land revenue would be taken in cash and partly in kind (Bazaz, 1935). Lawrence had fixed the state demand for ten years. To collect the amount that Gulab Singh had paid to the British Government, he made some troublesome demands to his subjects like hike in land revenue and excessive taxation. He continued the revenue system implemented during Sikh rule (Lawrence, 1929). However, in case of newly assigned lands, some concessions were granted to the cultivators. During Gulab Singh's reign, the system of revenue collection on the Kharif crops was based on Batai system⁷ prevalent in Northern India. The Government



demands consisted of half share of the produce. Experts suggest the gross annual revenue from thirty-six Paraganas (Tehsils) of Kashmir, gained through taxes on grain, oil and cotton was approximately seventeen lakh rupees in 1848 (Bamzai, 1962; Thorp, 1980).

Conquest of the Neighboring Territories by Maharaja Gulab Singh and Political Assimilation.

Maharaja Gulab Singh is recognized as the only ruler in India's long history who could be said to have extended the geographical boundaries of India to the maximum limits. The conquest and annexation of Ladakh is an achievement which made him one of the most remarkable rulers in the history of India. In 1809 Gulab Singh joined the Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In 1818 Gulab Singh took part in the invasion of Multan and rescued some of the Sikh soldiers and in 1819 he received a permission from the Sikh ruler at that time to crush uprisings in the Jammu hills. During 1820 he was sent to make further conquests in the hilly areas. In 1820 he seized Rajouri and Bhimber and in 1821 captured the fort of Basohli (Bawa, 1988). Soon he was allowed make his own army in 1822 as a reward for his conquests and subjugation of other areas like Kishtwar and Rajouri. Due to these expansions he was made hereditary raja of Jammu in a ceremony held by Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Huttenback, 1968; Suri, 2002).

Conclusion:

The handing over of Kashmir to Raja Gulab Singh was a deliberate attempt on the part of the British. It seems that it would have been difficult for the British at that point of time to hold Kashmir. There are some important reasons which were advanced against holding Kashmir. Its occupation, wrote Lord Hardinge to the Secret Committee, "would result in collision with neighbouring chieftains, for whose coercion a huge military presence and greater resources would be needed. This they could not have afforded at that time owing to their weakened military strength and a deficit in the Indian treasury because of their successive military actions against the Afghans and the Sikhs. The extension of the boundaries of the British Empire beyond Sutlej at that time would have been difficult to protect. With a hostile Punjab on the line of communications—as the Lahore kingdom was still outside the pale of the British Empire—it would have been difficult to hold Kashmir. Hardinge further emphasized that the move to take possession of "these largely mountainous territories would be an economy liability, because while the territories except Kashmir were deemed as unproductive which would not ever pay the expenses of its management." The British officials thought that the creation of the Jammu and Kashmir state and handing over it to Gulab Singh would prevent its emotional and political links with the neighbouring Muslim states.

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