

State Formation in Colonial India: An Analysis of the Formation of Modern State of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract- Nationalist and Marxist historiography in India have tended to assume that the British colonial politics of land tenure, taxation and commercialisation which led the conditions for the formation the princely states in Indian Sub-continent. According to the available literature, there were about 565 princely states in Colonial India and their administration was run by the British through their appointed agents. Among these princely states, Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagarh were the important Princely states. At the time of partition and independence all these states were given the choice either to accede to India or to Pakistan or to remain independent. The foundation of Kashmir as a modern state was laid by the treaty of Amritsar, signed on 16th March 1846, between Maharaja Gulab Singh and the British, by which Gulab Singh had to pay seventy Five lakh 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 the paper is to analyse the steps that were taken by the Dogra Maharajas in order to extend their territorial control and also the paper will also focus on Dogra state craft.

Index Terms- Dogra, Kashmir, Instrument of Accession, Treaty of Amritsar.

I. 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 Sameer Ahmad Bhat, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 202002. 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 (Ramusack, 2004). Modern state of Jammu

and Kashmir is formed by the signing of treaty of Amritsar between Maharaja Gulab Singh and the British

4.1. 1— 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).

4.2. 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 and Amritsar 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).

vTreaty of Amritsar (16th March 1846) was concluded between the British Government on the one part and Maharajah Gulab Singh of Jammu on the other part. 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 state.¹ 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 by 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 rupees annually 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

¹ According to the Article 1 of the Treaty, ‘ the British government transfers and makes over forever, in independent possession, to Maharaja Gulab Singh and his heirs male of his body , all the hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the east ward of the river Indus and Westward of the river Ravi, including Chamba and excluding Lahol, being part of the territories ceded to the British Government by the Lahore state according to the provisions of Article IV of the treaty of Lahore dated 9th March, 1846 A. D. signed between the British and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. For full text of the treaty, see, Singh, Amrinder. (2010). *The Last Sunset-The Rise and Fall of Lahore Durbar*. New Delhi, Roli Books.

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 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).

4.4.1— 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*

² To quote Article 10th of the treaty Maharaja Gulab Singh acknowledges the supremacy of the British Government and will in token of such supremacy present annually to the British Government one horse, twelve perfect shawl goats of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Kashmiri shawls. For full text of the treaty, see, Kapur, M. L. (1980). *History of Jammu and Kashmir state- the Making of state*. Jammu, Kashmir History Publications.

³ As quoted in the Article VII of the treaty “Maharaja Gulab Singh never to take or retain in his service neither any British subject nor the subject of any European or American State without the consent of the British”. For full text of the treaty, see, Kapur, M. L. (1980). *History of Jammu and Kashmir state- the Making of state*. Jammu, Kashmir History Publications.

States, Regarding to 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).

4.4.2— 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* employed large number of men in order to carry the baggage of his soldiers. Later, it received a further boost. The system was first introduced during the period of Sultan Zain- Ul- Abidin and also during the rule of his successors. 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).

4.4.3— 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).

4.4.4— 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 *Baj*⁴, 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 Bauj 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.

4.5.1— 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:

4.5.2— Tehsildar:

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

4.5.3— Thandar:

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

4.5.4— 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).

4.5.5— 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.

⁵ 421 years of foreign rule in Kashmir, Available at <http://www.kashmirnewz.com/a0008.html>. Accessed on 05/11/2014.

⁶ Raja Todar Mal was great revenue and finance minister of Mughal Emperor Akbar. He introduced a new system of revenue known as *zabt* and a system of taxation called *dahshala*.

⁷ Batai was a system of land revenue system during the time of Mughal emperor Akbar. In this method of crop sharing the produce was arranged into heaps and divided into three shares, one of which was taken by the state. Under this system the peasant had the choice to pay in cash or kind, but in the case of cash crops the state demand was mostly in cash.

⁴ Baj was tax imposed on shops.

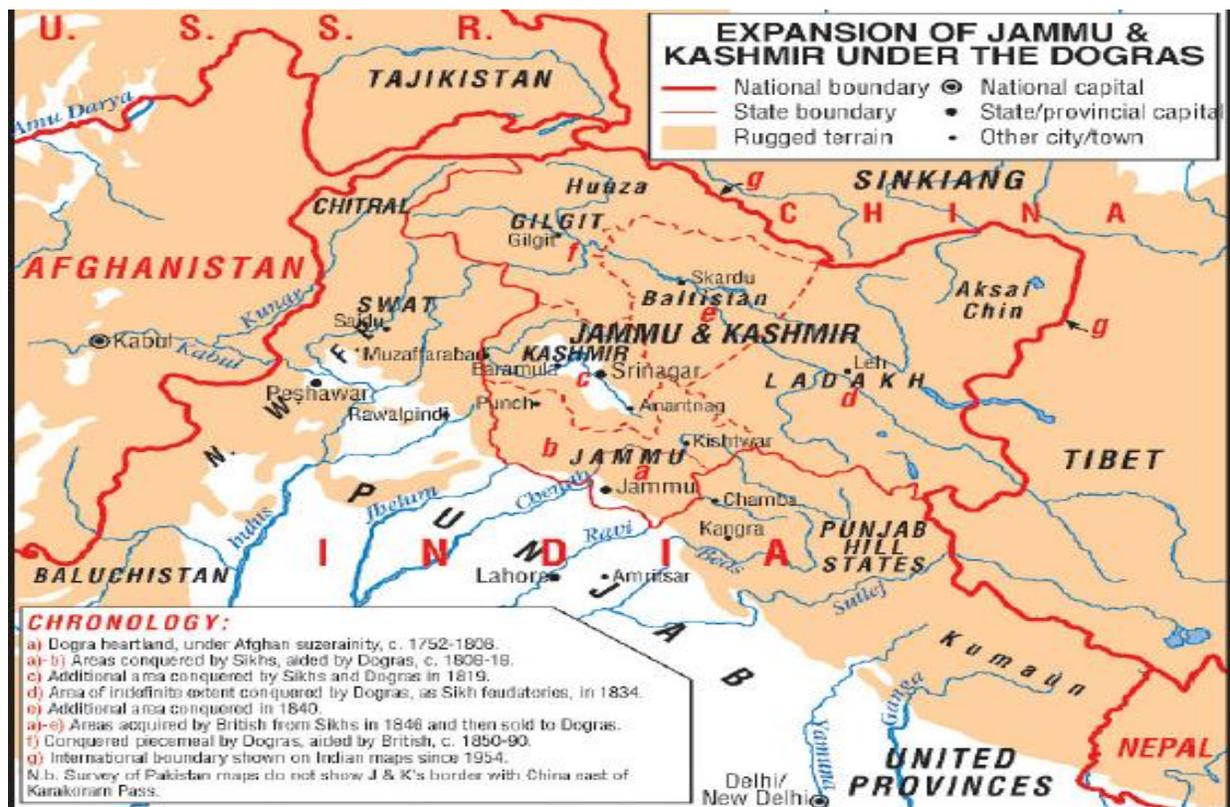
Experts suggest the gross annual revenue from thirty-six Paraganas (Tehsils) of Kashmir, gained through taxes on grain, oil and cotton was approximately seventeen lakh rupees in 1848 (Bamzai, 1962; Thorp, 1980).

4.6.1— 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).

Fig. 4.2: Map showing the expansion of Kashmir under Dogras.



Source: Kashmir and Its Region: A Historical Overview.

Retrieved from http://kashmirstudygroup.com/awayforward05/p5_kashmirregion.html.

- i. Portion “a” of the map shows the Dogra heartland under Afghans 1752-1808. Afghans secured active support of the Sikh Government for operations in Dogra heartland and bound Gulab Singh for their evitable political interests in the Punjab. The Dogra heartland included Jammu Hills.
- ii. “a” and “b” show the areas conquered by Sikhs and the aid was given by the Dogras in 1808- 18. It was inclusion of some other parts like Pouch and Kishtwar with the Dogra heartland. As Gulab Singh served in Lahore Durbar as a trooper and he made many conquests of the neighbouring territories.
- iii. “c” shows areas conquered jointly by Sikhs and Dogras. The areas included the parts of Kashmir Valley like Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag.

- iv. “d” shows the areas conquered by Dogra feudatories in 1834. It includes Ladakh and Aksai Chin area. They were also merged into Kashmir.
- v. “e” additional areas conquered in 1840. These include Baltistan and Skardu.
- vi. “a” and “e” show areas conquered by the British from Sikhs and then sold to Dogras. The boundary of Kashmir now extended to some areas of Jammu, Baltistan and Skardu. These areas were early conquered by the British and later were sold to Gulab

Singh. After the defeat of Sikhs in Anglo- Sikh wars (1845-46), they had to pay war indemnity of one Crore Nanak Shahi Rupees to the British and they were unable to pay the whole war indemnity. The remaining war indemnity was paid by Gulab Singh, due to which Kashmir along with some hilly territories was transferred to him.

- vii. “I” shows further areas like Gilgit, Baltistan and Hunza conquered by Maharaja Gulab Singh with the help of the British.

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