

Persian Historiography in Jammu under Maharaja Gulab Singh



Ganeshdas Bahehra traces the history of Jammu from Ramayan and Mahabharat period. For him, the rulers of the ancient Jammu were Suranbanshi or Raghubansh and descendant of Lord Rama and Maharaja Gulab Singh belonged to the same. He mentions Agnibar as the first king of Jammu coming from Ayodhya. But Jammu city was founded by Agnibar's son Jambu Lochan and from that period onwards the city started to be known as Jammu city. He also mentions that some people used to say that it was derived from the Jamun tree, grown in large number in Jammu, and some used to say that it was derived from the Jamwant cave, situated on the bank of the Tawi river. Ganeshdas Bادهhra gives a brief history of the ruling class of Jammu. He uses many Persian terms such as masnad, shikar, zamindar, Jashn, Thanas, Khilat, Kanizak, Zar Baft, Wazir, Peshkash, Darbar and Vakil etc in narrating the historical events of Jammu. Similarly he also uses some Sanskrit terms. This shows that the terms popular in the 19th century were used by Ganeshdas Bادهhra.

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From ancient period onwards most of the states of the world treated historiography as an important component of cultural developments. It was customary during the medieval period to appoint a court historian by the ruling class to record and glorify its policies. Though historiography emerged in India in the 12th century A.D., with the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi during early thirteenth century historiography became a dominant source of the intellectual exercise. It is well established that the foundation of the Sanskrit historiography was laid out in Kashmir during the 12th century and Kalhan's Rajtarangini was the first historical work of the Indian sub-continent.

However, historiography was very much popularised by the Persian writers in the north India. With the passage of time vernacular historiography also emerged in some parts of India. But tradition of historiography was absent in Jammu hills during the ancient and medieval period. There is hardly any local literary work, written either ancient or medieval period, which can be used for the construction of history of Jammu hill states. It is very surprising that not a single ruler of Jammu appointed a historian to record the history of his own state during ancient and medieval periods.

Maharaja Gulab Singh (1846-57) was the

first ruler who realised the significance of the historiography in terms of intellectual activities. When he founded Jammu and Kashmir state in 1846, he decided to get the historical events of his state recorded by his own historian. Since he started his political career at the Lahore Darbar where the maintenance of the tradition of the historiography was treated as a duty of both the ruling class and literary persons, Maharaja Gulab Singh treated historiography as a symbol of royalty and duty of ruling class to get historical events of its state recorded by a court historian. It is important to mention that history writing in the Persian language was most popular in the Punjab and other parts of north India. A large number of historians belonging to the Hindu community wrote in Persian during the Mughal period. More importantly, from Sultan Zainul-Abidin (1420-70) onwards Persian had become the official language of the Kashmir state. Consequently, Persian was treated as most favourite language of the literary persons of Kashmir. Since Maharaja Gulab Singh was the ruler of the Jammu and Kashmir state, he not only declared Persian as the official language of his state, but he also patronised the Persian writers.

Ganeshdas Bادهhra was one of the well-established historians of Punjab. With the formation of the Jammu and Kashmir state, he joined the services of the Maharaja Gulab Singh and settled in Jammu. Before his settlement in Jammu Ganeshdas Bادهhra wrote two important historical works in Punjab entitled

Chiragh-i-Punjab and Sahib-i-Nazim-i-Punjab. However, when he came to Jammu he continued his literary activities and in lieu of the favour extended to him by the Maharaja Gulab Singh he decided to write the history of the Maharaja and his ancestors. Expressing his gratitude to the Maharaja Ganeshdas Bادهhra writes, "It may be laid down that I, Ganeshdas alias Bادهhra, had been the Qanungo (a revenue official) at the Chakla of Gujrat (in Punjab). As the men of His Highness, the source of favours, Shri Maharaja Sahib of high excellence, knower of the secrets of the world, empyrean in status, sun like in dignity, Behram like in impetuosity, -Maharaja Gulab Singh brought me to Jammu and exalted me to an office in his imperial government. Often, this humble one made endeavours in inquiring the account of the ancestors of the chiefs of this place."

Ganeshdas Bادهhra collected some materials pertaining to the history of Jammu and compiled the collected materials in form of a book. He entitled his book Rajdarshani. Though selected Sanskrit title for his book, he wrote Rajdarshani in the Persian language. The meaning of Rajdarshani is the royal audience. It is the first historical work of Jammu region. Professor S.D.S. Charak is the first modern historian who identified the historical significance of the Rajdarshani and translated it into English.

Ganeshdas Bادهhra followed the methods and approach of the Persian historiography. He has traced the history of Jammu from an-