

Annexation of Kashmir to the Mughhal Empire

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Archaeological and historical studies show that Kashmir has been one of the most ancient regions of the Indian sub-continent. From ancient period onwards dynastic changes in terms of political domination in Kashmir were usual phenomena. Both indigenous and non-indigenous warrior groups ruled Kashmir. It is known that the Mauryan King Ashoka (273-232 B.C.) was the first non-indigenous king who established his rule in Kashmir and made certain socio-political changes including introduction of the Buddhism. Similarly Kanishka, the Kushan ruler, also conquered and ruled Kashmir in the first and second century A.D. However, till first half of the 16th century A.D. the kingdom of Kashmir was largely ruled by its indigenous ruling families who believed in both the maintenance of independent political authority in Kashmir and its territorial expansion. The ruling dynasties such as the Karkota, Gupta, Lohara and Damra worked for the socio-economic and political developments in Kashmir. When in 1339 Shah Mir founded Sultanate in Kashmir several administrative and socio-economic changes were made in Kashmir. The Sultans such as Shamsuddin or Shah Mir (1339-42), Alauddin (1343-54), Shihabuddin (1354-73), Qutubuddin (1373-89) and Zainul-Abidin (1420-70) intensified the processes of cultural developments in Kashmir and conquered some of the neighbouring areas. But after the death of the Sultan Zainul-Abidin, political stability in Kashmir started to diminish because of struggle for throne among his successors.

When Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur founded Mughal rule in the north India he tried to introduce his rule in Kashmir. Though an army sent by Babur defeated the army of Kashmir, Mughal army collected wealth and left Kashmir. After Babur's death, his son Kamran also attacked Kashmir, but he was defeated by the army of Kashmir. Mirza Haider Dughlat was the first Mughal who conquered Kashmir in 1540 and established his political dominance in Kashmir. Though Mirza Haider Dughlat virtually acted as the sovereign of Kashmir for eleven years, he did not declare himself as the ruler of Kashmir. He made Nazuk Shah as the Sultan of Kashmir. However, Mirza Haider Dughlat formulated all the major policies of Kashmir and kept Nazuk Shah as the approver and legitimizer of his policies. When Mirza Haider Dughlat died in 1551, Kashmir again faced the political crisis. After ten years of his death the rule of Shah Mir dynasty came to an end. In 1561 the Chaks, a dominant tribe of Kashmir, under the leadership of Ghazi Chak, dethroned Sultan Habib Shah (1557-61), the last Sultan of Shah Mir dynasty, and laid the foundation of the rule of the Chak dynasty. Ghazi Chak (1561-63) was declared as the sultan of Kashmir. Ghazi Chak, Husain Shah (1563-70), Ali Shah (1570-78) and Yusuf Shah Chak (1579-86) were the four important sultans of Chak dynasty. But under Yusuf Shah Chak several administrative problems emerged in Kashmir. Though Yusuf Shah Chak was a very generous ruler, he lacked administrative qualities. Very soon he became very unpopular because of neglecting his administrative duties. He failed to suppress his opponents. Ultimately, Yusuf Shah Chak abdicated his throne in favour of Lohar Chak.

Lohar Chak ruled Kashmir for thirteen months. But in 1580 Yusuf Shah Chak decided to regain his lost sovereignty. For that he made contact with Man Singh, the Mughal governor of Lahore. Man Singh asked Yusuf Shah Chak to meet the Mughal Emperor Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar (1556-1605) at Agra. Yusuf Shah Chak accepted the advice of Man Singh and went to Agra. Akbar welcomed Yusuf Shah Chak and agreed to help him in restoration of his sovereignty in Kashmir. It is



important to mention that the Mughal emperor Akbar believed in Centralised political authority. According to his political theory, local ruling class was to be granted political autonomy by the Mughal emperor within the Mughal empire. Therefore, he promised Yusuf Shah Chak to provide him military assistance for the reestablishment of his rule in Kashmir and making the latter a tributary of the Mughal empire. Akbar sent his army under the command of Raja Man Singh, the most competent and trusted army officer of the Mughal empire, for the help of Yusuf Shah Chak in Kashmir. But when Yusuf Shah Chak was on way from Agra to Kashmir he became suspicious of the Mughal help to him in terms of his political authority. He thought that the restoration of his authority in Kashmir with the Mughal assistance could make him a weak ruler and he had to depend on the Mughal for the maintenance of his authority in Kashmir throughout his life. Therefore, he adopted a diplomatic policy to avoid the entry of the Mughals in Kashmir. He requested Raja Man Singh not to accompany him to Kashmir so that he could garner large socio-political support of the Kashmir. Raja Man Singh accepted the request of Yusuf Shah Chak and the latter entered Kashmir. He defeated his rivals and re-established his rule in Kashmir.

After his success in Kashmir, Yusuf Shah Chak was expected to invite Raja Man Singh to Kashmir. But this never happened. Raja Man Singh felt to be deceived by Yusuf Shah Chak and decided to take action against the latter. The Mughal emperor Akbar declared that India from Kabul to the sea was one country. Therefore there could be only one sovereign power and one empire; others were to be tributaries of the Mughal empire. Describing Akbar's perception of India's boundaries the famous historian Abul Fazl of Akbar's court writes, "Hindustan is described as enclosed on the east, west and south by the ocean, but Ceylon, Achin, Molacca and considerable number of islands are accounted within its extent. To the north is a lofty range of mountains, part of which stretches along the uttermost limits of Hindustan, its other extremity passes into Turkestan and Persia. An immediate region lies between this and the vast frontier of China, inhabited by various races, such as Kashmir, Great and Little Tibet, Kishtwar and others." (Ain-i-Akbari, Vol.III, Eng. Tr. by Colonel H.S. Jarret, Corrected and further

annotated by Sir J.N. Sarkar, Delhi, 1994, p. 1). To act in accordance with his political theory Akbar decided to make all the states, from Kabul to south, as the tributaries of the Mughal empire. Strategically, Kashmir was a very important state from Mughal point of view. It was closely associated with Central Asia and the Uzbeks were one of the worst rivals of the Mughals. It is important to mention that Babur was expelled from Central Asia by the Uzbek leader Shaibani Khan. Therefore, the Mughals were very cautious of the Uzbeks and decided to keep Uzbeks far from the frontiers of the Mughal empire. Moreover, Kashmir was ruled by Mirza Haider Dughlat, an ancestor of Akbar, therefore, Akbar thought to bring Kashmir under his control. It is important to mention that from very beginning the Chak Sultans sent rich gifts to Akbar which were symbol of their loyalty to the Mughal emperor. But when Yusuf Shah Chak failed to express his gratitude to Akbar after regaining his rule in Kashmir, Akbar took it as a rebellious attitude of Yusuf Shah Chak.

To realise Yusuf Shah Chak that he was a vassal of the Mughal empire Akbar ordered him to appear at the Mughal court. But Yusuf Shah Chak sent his younger son to the Mughal court. Akbar did not accept the actions of Yusuf Shah Chak and once again asked his personal appearance at the Mughal court as a symbol of his loyalty to the emperor. But again Yusuf Shah Chak sent his son Yaqub Chak to the Mughal court. Akbar was very much annoyed with the attitude of Yusuf Shah Chak and decided to take action against him. In August, 1585 Akbar went to Kabul for administrative purpose. In October, 1585, Akbar left Kabul, but when he reached Kalanaur (in Punjab) he sent his two officers, Hakim Ali Gilani and Bahauddin Kambu to Kashmir to bring Yusuf Shah Chak with them. Meanwhile, Yaqub Chak who was with Akbar left Mughal camp and came to Srinagar before the arrival of the royal envoys. The escape of Yaqub Chak from the royal camp with permission of the emperor was very much resented by the latter. Yusuf Shah Chak was also very much disturbed with the arrival of his son in Srinagar without permission of the Mughal emperor. After some time the Mughal envoys, sent by Akbar, also came to Srinagar and told Yusuf Shah Chak that he had to go to Kalanaur to meet the Mughal emperor. Yusuf Shah Chak received these envoy

honourably and agreed to accompany them to the Mughal Court. But the decision of Yusuf Shah Chak to meet the Mughal emperor was opposed by his nobles and army. Therefore, Yusuf Shah Chak cancelled his plan to meet the Mughal emperor. When the two Mughal envoys came back from Srinagar to the Mughal court and told the attitude of Yusuf Shah Chak, his nobles and army men Akbar decided to change his policy of Kashmir.

When Akbar failed to establish his sovereignty in Kashmir through negotiation and peaceful means and found that his theory of kingship was not accepted by Yusuf Shah Chak, he decided to follow the policy of war against the latter. It is important to mention that some of the Kashmiris had already approached the Mughal emperor for the removal of Yusuf Shah Chak. In December 1585, Akbar sent army under Mirza Shah Rukh, Raja Bhagwan Das and Shah Mahram to attack Kashmir. The Mughal emperor ordered Haider Chaka and Shah Yaqub Sharfi (both of them were Kashmiri and anti-Yusuf Shah Chak, to guide the Mughal army to Kashmir. The Mughal army followed the route of Pakli and reached Kashmir. However, when the Kashmiris came to know about the arrival of the Mughal army they compelled Yusuf Shah Chak to check the advancement of the Mughal army. Though Yusuf Shah Chak never wanted to come into conflict with the Mughal emperor, he resisted the entry of the Mughal forces in Kashmir. Since it was the winter season, the snow and other weather adversaries did not allow the Mughals to achieve any success against the Kashmiri force. Though Kashmiri forces succeeded in check the advancement of the Mughal force, Raja Bhagwan Das decided to make negotiation with Yusuf Shah Chak for the establishment of Akbar's sovereignty in Kashmir. He sent his two agents with a letter stating that the present defeat of the Mughals did not mean that they would leave Kashmir. He warned Yusuf Shah Chak very soon another Mughal force was expected to arrive Kashmir to suppress the Kashmiri resistance and it was better for Yusuf Shah Chak to visit Mughal court. Ultimately, Yusuf Shah Chak agreed with the proposal of Raja Bhagwan Das and in February 1586 he reached the Mughal camp. But the Kashmiris continued their resistance against the Mughals and declared Yaqub Chak, the son of Yusuf Shah Chak as the

new Sultan. Again the Mughals faced the weather problems i.e. snow, cold, rain and scarcity of food. Therefore, he opened negotiation with Yaqub for peace. Though the latter agreed the peace proposal of Raja Bhagwan Das, peace was signed between Yusuf Shah Chak and the Mughals. According to the agreement, Yusuf Shah Chak accepted the sovereignty of Akbar and promised to send son Yaqub to the Mughal Court. The Mughals agreed to leave Kashmir and promised that the throne of Kashmir to be retained by Yusuf Shah. Yusuf Shah accompanied Raja Bhagwan Das and at Attock he met the Mughal emperor. Akbar welcomed Yusuf Shah Chak, but did not allow him to retain the sultanship of Kashmir. Akbar imprisoned Yusuf Shah Chak. Raja Bhagwan Das felt very much humiliated with the treatment meted out to Yusuf Shah Chak. But Akbar retained Yusuf Shah Chak under the custody of Raja Todar Mal for two and a half years. Afterwardshe released Yusuf Shah Chak and assigned him a mansab (rank) and sent him to Bihar.

However, the Kashmiris continued their resistance against the Mughals under the leadership of Yaqub Chak. But very soon Yaqub Chak lost the support of some of his powerful nobles because of his arbitrary and fanatic policies. The dissatisfied Kashmir nobles approached the Mughal emperor against Yaqub Chak. The Mughal emperor sent an army under the command Qasim Khan to attack Kashmir and dethrone Yaqub Chak. Consequently, in September 1586 Qasim Khan attacked Kashmir. Though Yaqub Chak marched to check the Mughal advancement, he was deserted by his own nobles who allied themselves with the Mughals. Ultimately, dissession among the Kashmiri nobles led to the success of the Mughals in Kashmir. Finding himself in a very adverse situation in Kashmir Yaqub fled to Kishtwar. The Mughal conquest of Kashmir in 1586 led to the introduction of Mughal administration there and its annexation to the Mughal empire. Qasim Khan was appointed as the first Mughal governor of Kashmir.

Although Yaqub Chak tried to recapture Kashmir many times, he was unsuccessful. In 1589 Akbar came to Kashmir. Yaqub Shah Chak submitted before the emperor. Thus the processes of annexation of Kashmir were completed. With it annexation to the Mughal empire, Kashmir was declared a part of the Mughal Suba of Kabul. Abul Fazl's Ain-i-Akbari mentions Kashmir as a Sarkar (district) of the Suba of Kabul. Since the Mughal emperor Akbar believed in policy of Sulh-i-Kul (peace with all) accelerated the processes of the cultural developments in Kashmir. He founded a new city Nagar Nagar. Akbar introduced garden culture in Kashmir and laid out the gardens such as Nasim Bagh, Hari Parbat garden and Wah Bagh. He also brought cherry (Shahalu) from Kabul and planted it in Kashmir. The processes of Cultural development in Kashmir under Akbar were intensified by his successors. The Mughal emperor ensured that the fruits of developments in Kashmir were to be shared and enjoyed by the Kashmiris. The Mughals contributed to the development of tourist places in Kashmir on large scale. At the time natural calamity huge financial support was extended to the Kashmiris by the Mughal emperor. Thus the annexation of Kashmir to the Mughal empire led to the strengthening of the security of its frontier and end of the political instability in Kashmir. Under the Mughals Kashmir was connected with different parts of India as well as other countries. The arts and crafts of Kashmir received huge publicity during the Mughal period. Several Kashmiris were provided opportunity to exhibit their skills in the Mughal empire. Akbar got Kalhan's Rajtarangini translated into Persian. A Kashmiri calligraphist in the Mughal court was honoured with the title of Zarrin qalam or golden pen.