

Contribution of Hindus in the Persian Historiography of Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

In the history of Indian Sub-continent, Kashmir occupies an important place as its known history goes back to five thousand years B.C. The soil of Kashmir bears mother to some remarkable learned scholars and intellectuals whose personality and works laid their traces on the world history. Although historiography of Kashmir started from early ages but Kalhana was the first whose versified history in Sanskrit is known to us. Jonraja, Srivara, Prajabhatta and Suka followed the same trend of historiography. After the advent of Islam, scenario of Kashmir changed and Persian replaced Sanskrit. Thus, historians also changed their trends by the change of language and style. There are some evidences that show that Tarikh-i-Nadari by mullah Nadari and Tarikh-i- Kashmir by Qazi Ibrahim were the first Persian written chronicles but unfortunately scholars could not find any trace of them. The first available Persian chronicle of Kashmir is Tarikh Syed Ali Magray written in 1579 A.D. With the passage of time more histories were composed and the Hindu historians competed very well to their Muslim counterparts but on deeper inspection, like Muslim histories some errors are noticeable here as well. There are four famous histories of Hindu historians namely Muntakhib-ut-Tawarikh, Majmu-at-Tawarikh, Gulzar-i-Kashmir, Gulabnama and Tarikh-i-Kishtawarh by different authors. The authors of these chronicles were scholars and intellectuals of their own period. These histories stand different from their Muslim counterparts giving them due scope and recognition in the field of historiography. This paper makes a study of art of these historians. Particularly it will attempt to undertake an examination of the contribution of these historians with reference to their approaches, styles and characteristics of their historiography.

Keywords: *Kashmir, Hindu historiography, Muntakhib-ut-Tawarikh, Majmu-at-Tawarikh, Gulzar-i-Kashmir and Tarikh-i-Kishtawarh.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Kashmir from very beginning was a hub of traders and scholars. Due to its strategic importance Kushan, King of Kanishka dynasty held fourth Buddhist Council at Kundalvana, Kashmir in 72 A.D. This council distinctively divided the Buddhism into two sects: Mahayana and Hinayana. Since ages, Kashmir has had its relation with Iran and central Asian Countries. Although scholars of Kashmir had good acquaintance with Persian language and literature, however, Persian deepened its roots with the advent of Islam propagated by Syed Sharf-ud-din

Bulbul and Mir Syed Ali Hamadani in 14th century. Rinchana was the first Hindu king who accepted Islam along with some of his courtiers.

With the establishment of Sultanate in Kashmir many learned men from Persian and Turkistan began to penetrate into Kashmir. Naturally they brought with them Persian and central Asian tradition of historiography. However, it was Khalana pundit who wrote his first ever available history of Kashmir “Rajatarangni” in Sanskrit before the establishment of Sultanate. Rajtarangni is a metrical legendary and historical chronicle of the North Western Indian Sub-Continent, particularly the kings of Kashmir. After two hundred years Jonaraja continued *Rajtarangni* and wrote its supplementation and completed it in the reign of great king Zain-ul-Abdin. Srivara, the pupil of Jonaraja further continued the work under the name of “Juna *Rajtarangni*”. The process did not stopped here and another chronicle namely *Rajavalipatika* was composed by Prajabhatta and again his pupil Suka wrote another chronicle after the name of *Rajatarangni*. These are the Sanskrit chronicles which cover the history of Kashmir from the beginning till 1596 A.D. In the coming period, for the development of Persian historiography among Hindus these histories played an important role because the successors follow the same pattern and used them as a primary source for the coming histories.

It is said that when Mir Syed Ali Hamadani entered into the valley he was accompanied by seven hundred scholars, sufis, artisans, poets and literates who not only preached Islam but also introduced the new cultures, traditions and language as well. During the reign of Shah Mir dynasty, Persian became the official language of Kashmir and scholars as well as common people warmly adopted this newly introduced language as common spoken language. All academic activities have been done in Persian and in this field Hindus were not behind but they always equally competed with Muslims. They got such kind of excellence in Persian that Iranians of that time did not get any superiority over them. In this regard examples of Srivara, Soma Pandit and Budhi Bhatt are quite enough. The great king of Kashmir Zain-ul-Abdin (1401 to 1470 A.D) employed them in his translation bureau. Soma pandit who held a high post in the translation bureau wrote an account Zain-ul-Abidin’s life in his book ‘Zain Cherit’. Soma pandit and Bodhi Bhatt helped Mullah Ahmad to translate *Mahabharata* and Kalhana’s *Rajtarangni* from Sanskrit into Persian. Besides these not only some parts of Vedas and Shastras were translated into Persian but also some famous Arabic and Persian books were rendered into Sanskrit. Death of Zain-ul-Abidin in 1420 A.D became the cause of decline of dynasty, language and literature. Although after the demise of Zain-ul-Abidin, Kashmir faced internal disturbance, however it is very strange that from the death of great king to later Mughals there is no or very little involvement of Hindus in Persian literature. We hardly find any Hindu poet or author during this period. Matter of concern is that how could they detach themselves from Persian language and literature for so long?

II.HINDU PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHERS

Narayan Kaul Ajiz enjoys the status of becoming the first Hindu historian of Kashmir who has written his history in Persian. Kaul wrote *Muntakhib-ut-Tawarikh* on the requisition of Arif Khan, deputy governor of Kashmir in the reign of Mohd Shah Alam in 1710 A.D corresponding to 1122 A.H. It is a brief description of

political, social and geographical conditions of Kashmir. He opened this chronicle with the praise of God and noted reason for its compilation by saying that the nobles of that time insisted him to compose a history of Kashmir in Persian.¹ Deputy Governor Arif Khan provided him Manuscripts of all pre written histories which he re-examined and corrected their mistakes by writing the factual one. He also criticised the style of Haider Malik Chadoora's *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*. While commenting on this he says that, although Malik Hyder had recorded the translation of events of Kashmir from Sanskrit sources but due to exaggeration and verbosity his work was not appreciated by anyone. When historians of India compare the events of above said translation with the Kalhana and other reliable histories they, due to its exaggeration do not accept it.² Narayan Kaul not only criticised Mirza Haider but also praises himself by saying that, in order to help reader not get bored and confused he narrates the event with conciseness. He also claimed that his history is free from frivolity and extravagant language. After the introduction of his work he narrates the same tale about the name and origin of Kashmir that all his predecessors had narrated. Kaul, briefly record the events of Hindu dynasties while describing sultanate period he laid extra focus on Zain-ul-Abdin's reign. Again he prolonged the annexation of Kashmir by Akbar but laconically examine the affairs of Mughals and their representatives. Towards the end of this history its author gave brief account of about the geographical characteristics, income and revenue affairs and wonders of Kashmir.

The another glorified chronicle of Kashmir is by Pandit Birbal Kachru which he himself named *Majmu'at-ut-tawarikh* but G.M.D. Sufi has written its name as *Mukhtasr-ut-Tawarikh* as he mentioned in the second volume of his book *Kashir*, "Pandit Birbal Kachru commenced writing this history in Colonel Mehan Singh's time in 1251 A.H = 1835 A.C, and closed it in 1262 A.H = 1846"³. In the beginning, he himself gave a brief introduction about his work and said that he has recorded the events on factual basis. Kachru also claimed that he took some measures to make his chronicle different from old ones while commenting on predecessor historians Birbal Kachru criticised the most famous chronicle of Mohammad Azam Dedamari by saying that; a Person Mohammad Azam penned down the events of thirty eight years till 1160 A.H, as his chronicle has been composed on the tradition of Tadhkira writing of Sufis and poets and little bit has crossed the limits of historiography writing therefore, the study of this chronicle does not openly reveal the reality.

Kwaja Azam nami shakshi kawaifi se wa hasht saal ta saneh yek hizar wa yek sad wa shaht hijiri dr zabti qalm dar aawordeh wa chun bh aayeni tazkarai fuqra wa sho'ra tasteer namudeh az mutalieh aan haqeeqat mashroohan wazeh nameshawad ki dar qanuni tarikh naweesi anduk az rah rasti pa beroon guzashteh wa bi tool nigashteh. **4**

This chronicle also begins with the early history of Kashmir. He divides ages into four long periods called Yuga, followed by geographical wonders of Valley. The detailed description of different dynasties like Hindus, Shah Mirs, Mughals, Sikhs and that of Afghans has been given in chronological order. To it he added his own information on contemporary history and culture. For this, his work can be regarded as useful source of cultural, political, social and religious development of Kashmir. Unlike his predecessors, Kachru laid equal emphases on

political as well social aspects of Kashmir which gives him a unique status in Persian historiography of Kashmir. By using the histories like *Rajatarangni*, *Jonaraja*, *Tarikh-i-Rasheedi*, *Tarikh-i-Haider Malik*, *Muntakhib-ut-Tawarikh* and *waqi'at Kashmir* as his primary source, he re-examined the events and arranged them in a specific order. Scholars from different fields also have commented on *Majma-ut-Tawarikh*, one of them presented his view as follows:

Its style, content, technique and method adheres to the principle of historiography and that way, it is a valuable addition to the body of historical literature available on the 19th century Kashmir..... The chroniclers description of geography, climate, fauna and flora ,Zamindars, Jagirdars, Mansabdars, Nobility, floods, famines, earthquakes and their devastating effects on the people of the valley, from the central features of kachru's monumental work. The role of the exploitative classes, the ruling elite, grain dealers and other hoarding groups also engage Birbal Kachru's attention in the Majmu'at-ut-tawarikh. Drawing comparison between native and alien rulers, the chronicler termed the afghan rule as ruthless and unjust.⁵

The Dogra rulers did not lag behind in the field of literature they patronaged the Persian poets and scholars among them Diwan Kirpa Ram is more significant. Kirpa Ram belonged to a well reputed family of the great Diwans of Eminabad, gained fame by reason of their close association with Jammu And Kashmir State. Kirpa Ram's father and grandfather enjoyed great status in the kingship of Gulab Singh. Kirpa Ram held the office of diwan or Prime Minister from 1865 A.C to 1876 A.C. Kirpa Ram was not only a good administrator but also had a good literary taste which boast him and he authored five literary pieces among them *Gulabnama* and *Gulzar-i-Kashmir* are more prominent due to their historical importance.

Gulabnama is the history of Dogras in general since ancient ages and a comprehensive biography of Maharaja Gulab Sing in particular for which it is reliable and first hand source because Gulab Singh himself had provided the author with necessary documents and assisted with verbal information. Author's grandfather and father also share their information with Kirpa Ram, who had both been the Diwan of Gulab Singh. The other sources of his information was the oral tradition preserved in the memories of some personalities who participated in the events described in the *Gulabnama* and who were alive at Kirpa Ram's time. He himself lays down his method of research in these lines:

For a long time I enquired from the grandees of this family and the wise and truthful old persons, and the youngsters full of zeal and of noble character, and from reliable servants- and have put all this in black and white. Most of the anecdotes have reached my ears from the late highness who remembered many incidents and events since early childhood on account of his keen memory .I verified several incidents from Diwan sahib, my revered father, and scratched out all the doubts and suspicions by the pen of certainty ⁶

Gulabnama was written in 1865 A.C and published in 1876A.C in which Diwan Kirpa Ram gave detailed account of all important events of Dogra rule. For example, about the third Article of treaty of Amritsar which changed the discourse of history of Kashmir, he says:

In consideration of transfer of the tract made to Maharaja Gulab Singh by the provisions of the foregoing articles, the said Maharaja will pay to the British Government, in lump the sum of seventy-five lakh Nanak- shahi rupees, i.e., fifty lakh rupees to be paid on the ratification of this treaty and twenty five lakh within six months from this date. 7

In *Gulabnama* Kirpa Ram tried to follow the style of *Akbarnama* of Abul Fazal which is written in highly difficult verbose and flowery language. While describing the life events of Gulab Sing he used conventional Persian diction which is highly literal and at some places creates ambiguity. He frequently made use of synonymises which are stuffed in every sentence to the point of saturation. The usage of unnecessary words for insufficient or no meaning became cause of prolongation which sometimes diverts the mind of reader from its main topic. *Gulabnama* is decorated with verses quoted from the great master-pieces like *Shahnamah* and *Skindarnamah* of Firdousi and Nizami respectively. These verses have no other use in the text than of giving it a classical touch. In the beginning of every new topic author gives long unnecessary introduction having no bearing on the events to follow. Although the style and method of presenting of facts have made the text somewhat difficult but theses do not minimise its value as reliable source of the history of Dogras.

Gulzar-i-Kashmir is a concise history of Kashmir with chapters on the basis of topography, geography, dynasties, products, arts, crafts etc. It was written 1864 A.C and published in 1870A.C and Mr. Roberts, the Judicial Commissioner of Punjab was its proposer. It covers the events from the beginning to the Maharaja Ranbir Singh's reign. 8 *Gulzar-i-Kashmir* is not merely history but deals with geography, medicines, arts, crafts, and professions, inorganic and organic things also. He divides this book into six Chamans (Meadows) and each Chaman is sub divided into several Gulbans (bunch of flowers). Further each gulban is divided into Guls (flowers). First chapter has six sub-chapters which deal with name and origin of Kashmir history, its villages and districts, its wonders, flowers, famous springs, rivers, roads, temples and other worship places, buildings and gardens. Second chapter also have four sub chapters, which gives us valuable information about the kinds of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Dogra dynasties. Third chapter with six sub-headings is about the different kinds of productions, cultivating methods and techniques, wild and domestic trees, plants, flowers and fruits. Fourth chapter divided into three parts, is description of different kinds of birds, animals and fishes. Fifth chapter carries two topics, i.e. professions of professionals, instruments and materials used by them and the methods of production. The last chapter have seven sub-units which gives a general survey of saffron, silk, letters, weights and measures, different periods of cultivation, types of minerals, trade, imports and exports from Ladakh and Indian states.

Gulzar-i-Kashmir is a general survey of social conditions of that time of Kashmir which due to its versatility have an important place in the Persian literature of Kashmir. Kirpa Ram was known in his contemporary scholars for Arabic and Persian knowing so it natural that he decorated his text with phrases and idioms of Arabic and uncommon words of Persian. Its style resembles with the Gulabnama which to some extent affects its historical importance but literally it holds more significance in Persian literature.

Tarikh-i-Kishtwar is a brief history of district Kishtwar of Jammu and Kashmir written by Pandit Shivji Dar son of Pandit Mahanand joo Dar who possessed a sound Knowledge of Persian. While describing the cause of composition of this book he says that by Maraja Ranbir Singh, he was appointed as a head treasurer and Wazir-i-Wizarat of Kishtwar and Badarwah there he decide to write the history of Kishtwar.⁹ this is the first arranged political history of Kishtwar and apart from this some interesting social events were recorded for which he went through different hardships. Through Shivji's efforts we get acquaintance with the history of rulers of such far-flung area like Kishtwar. This history was written in 1881 A.C and published in 1962 A.C. Shivji opens this history according to the tradition, with the praise of God. After introduction main topic starts in which he gives brief historical account of Kashtiwar. As he was the revenue officer so he kept the detail of all blocks and villages which he mentioned in his chronicle. Due to lack of the sources the historical events were not explained but at some places he mentioned the name of places with their historical background. This history starts from Reshi Sharahpal and ends with the last days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

III.CONCLUSION

Hindus of Kashmir played an important role in the historiography of Kashmir and contributed some master pieces to the Persian literature of Kashmir. Although Muslim historians had also written histories but no Muslim historian had penned down the biography of Maharaja Gulab Singh in Persian and no one took some pain to give detailed account of history of Kishtwar. It is the Hindu historian who filled the gap which was left by Muslim historians. Diwan Kirpa Ram adopted the European method of historiography in which he equally described all aspects of the society. We can say that these chronicles gave a new way to historiography of Kashmir.

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