

# Role of Outer Hill States in the Mughal Conquest of Kashmir (1526-1586 A.D.)

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***Abstract- This study examines the strategic maneuvers and military campaigns of the Mughal Empire in Kashmir, particularly during the reigns of Emperor Babur and his successors. Starting with Babur's initial attempts in 1527 to assist Sultan Sikandar and secure Mughal interests in the region, the research highlights the establishment of alliances, particularly with Raja Goghar Dev of Jammu. The subsequent successful invasions by Humayun's foster brother, Mirza Kamran, and the occupation of Kashmir by Mirza Mohammad Haider Dughlat are discussed, along with the political landscape that emerged with the Chak dynasty under Ghazi Shah Chak. The narrative intricately details the political and military strategies employed by Akbar to consolidate power over Kashmir from 1585 onwards, including diplomatic missions aimed at fostering relationships with regional rulers of Rajouri and Bhimbar. The analysis reveals how these relationships were crucial for the Mughal conquest, culminating in Akbar's successful invasion in 1586, following previous military failures. The study underscores the importance of regional alliances and the roles of local rulers in shaping the fate of Kashmir during this transformative period, as well as the implications of Mughal rule for the political landscape of the region.***

## I. INTRODUCTION

To extend the boundaries of their empire, it had always been a historical tradition among the powerful rulers to subjugate the weaker rulers and make them tributary States and the Mughals were no exception in this regard. It is a known fact that the Mughals from Babur's time tried to keep Kashmir under their control, though their design was fulfilled in 1586 A.D. <sup>1</sup> by the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Though there is abundance material available on the Mughal conquest of Kashmir but there is hardly any work which elaborates the Role of Outer Hill states in the annexation of Kashmir in 1586 by the Mughals. The Proposed above-mentioned Topic

intends to describe the same in detail in this regard.

Emperor Babur diverted his cohorts twice against Kashmir with a fair measure of success. Muhibul Hasan writes, in Kashmir Under the Sultans<sup>2</sup> that Kashmir was threatened by an invasion of the Mughals under Kuchak Bage and Shaikh Ali Bage who were dispatched by Babur in 1527 AD to assist Sultan Sikandar, the ruler of Kashmir, in securing the throne of Kashmir. It is also known that when Emperor Babur (1526-1530 AD), established friendly relations with Raja Goghar Dev (1500-1530 A.D) of Jammu, the latter promised him to protect<sup>3</sup> the Mughal's Caravans of fruits and other articles from Kashmir against the onslaught of Jaral and Chib tribes of outer hill - states which included Rajouri and Bhimbar areas. Thus, these efforts of Babur paved the way for his subsequent successors to claim complete suzerainty over Kashmir later. During Mughal Emperor, Humayun's reign (1530-1540 A.D.) his foster brother, Mirza Kamran in 1531 AD, under Mehram Bage & Sheikh Ali Bage sent 30,000 Mughal soldiers who became successful in occupying Kashmir.<sup>4</sup>

In 1540 A.D. Mirza Mohammad Haider Dughlat, half-brother of Humayun conquered Kashmir<sup>5</sup> and ruled till 1551 A.D. Mirza Haider Dughlat also subjugated and annexed outer hill states i.e. Rajouri and Bhimbar to Kashmir in 1548 A.D.<sup>6</sup> for political security.

He also appointed his own able governors and entrusted these areas to Muhammad Nazar and Sabr Ali.<sup>7</sup> After the death of Mirza Dughlat in 1551 A.D., the Chaks founded Chak dynasty over Kashmir under Ghazi Shah Chak in 1554 A.D. He also annexed Rajguri to Kashmir.

Two Mughal invasions were faced by him. One in 1557 A.D. under Shah Abul Maali which was successfully repulsed<sup>8</sup> second in 1559-60 A.D. by Mirza Qara Bahadur<sup>9</sup> on behalf of Emperor Akbar who agreed to assist, a group of disgruntled nobles who had been driven out of valley but Mughals were badly defeated and Ghazi Shah's forces came out to be victorious. These two defeats made a deep impact

on his mind and Akbar delayed his conquest till 1587 A.D. i.e. for a period of twenty-seven years<sup>10</sup> and meanwhile prepared various strategies to wait for a suitable opportunity to conquer Kashmir.

After the death Ghazi Shah Chak, a line of weak successors succeeded him. First strategy of Emperor Akbar was sending Mughal envoys from time to time to Kashmir just to enquire about suitable opportunity to invade Kashmir but apparently with many other objectives. In his first mission, Akbar sent mughal envoy named Mirza Muqim Isfahani<sup>11</sup> to the court of Husain Shah Chak, the sultan of Kashmir. Mughal envoy was warmly received and returned with gifts and along with his daughter for Emperor Akbar.<sup>12</sup>

In his second mission Akbar sent Qazi Sad-ru-din and Mulla Ali to the court of Sultan Ali Shah Chak, apparently with the object of proposing a marriage<sup>13</sup> between Prince Salim and Ali Shah's niece but in reality, to find out favorable conditions to invade Kashmir. The mission was successful. Sultan Ali Shah proclaimed Akbar his Sovereign, read the Khutba and minted coins in his name.<sup>14</sup>

After Ali Shah Chak, 1579 Yusuf Shah became sultan of Kashmir. He became unpopular among masses and was expelled from Kashmir. Yusuf Shah sought protection at Lahore under Raja Man Singh, who took him to the court of Akbar in 1580 A.D. <sup>15</sup> Akbar wanted to use him as a tool to fulfil his dream to annex Kashmir. He assisted him with Mughal auxiliary troops to regain the throne of Kashmir. Meanwhile, Kashmiri nobles wrote Yusuf Shah to come without Mughal force and get the throne without fight.<sup>16</sup> In November 1580 A.D. Yusuf regained without using Mughal troops. In his third mission, Akbar in 1581 A.D. sent two envoys, Tahir and Salih Aqil with a farman for Yusuf Shah that since Yusuf could not report to Akbar about the political conditions of Kashmir, it is, therefore necessary to pay homage before the emperor.<sup>17</sup>

Sultan Yusuf Shah and Kashmiri nobles realized the objective of the farman, that Akbar wanted to annex Kashmir. In his fourth mission, Akbar sent Timur Bage<sup>18</sup> with farman to present himself before His Majesty. Timur Bage was received honorably but envoy failed in this mission in February 1585 A.D.

In August 1585 in his fifth mission, Akbar from Kalanaur sent his two envoys, Hakim Ali and Baha-ud-Din Kambu<sup>19</sup> to Yusuf Shah with farman, that now his Majesty is in

Punjab, he must pay personal homage to him. This mission again failed as Yusuf could not pay homage to Akbar. The Emperor Akbar at once decided to invade Kashmir.

Accordingly, the Mughal forces under Raja Bhagwandas and Mirza Shah Rukh invaded Kashmir on 20 December 1585 A.D. Due to snow and rains many Mughals were killed and received tough resistance near Bulias by the Chaks.<sup>20</sup> Before proceeding further, Akbar adopted second strategy of his Mughal conquest of Kashmir, that was to establish friendly relations with outer hill areas of Bhimbar and Rajouri. These areas were frequently mentioned by Kalhana in his Rajtarangini as one of the important hill states.<sup>21</sup> Rajouri and Bhimbar were situated on the direct route between the Punjab and the Kashmir.<sup>22</sup> Outer hill states occupied considerable importance in terms of security and economic activities of Kashmir because it acted as a bridge between north India and Kashmir.<sup>23</sup> The Mughal Emperor Jahangir in his biography, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri writes that Rajouri is the gate-way to enter Kashmir from Hindustan.<sup>24</sup> Because of this strategic location Rajouri and Bhimbar developed political cultural and economic relations with Kashmir since ancient times and also most of the time remained under the direct control of Kashmir Rulers till Sultan Ghazi Shah Chak.

After his death, outer hills declared its independence. There were many factors which compelled Akbar to win outer hill areas to his side before final annexation of Kashmir. First was failure of Abul Maali and Qara Bahadur in the reign of Ghazi Shah Chak.<sup>25</sup> Second, he realized, that these areas are the main route between the north India and Kashmir, their friendship could be instrumental in the success of Mughal conquest of Kashmir. To use this area as a spring board for invasion of Kashmir, loyalty and friendship of its ruler felt a necessity for Akbar.

The dream of conquest of Kashmir could never be fulfilled without their support as these rulers were fully aware of the topography and geography. They could be used as Nayaks (one who shows paths) in their mission and in time of need military assistance could be sought from ruler of Rajouri and Bhimbar. On the eve of the Mughal conquest of Kashmir Sarmast Wali Khan was the Raja of Rajouri.<sup>26</sup>

On June 28, 1586, with the permission of the Mughal emperor Akbar, the Mughal forces under Qasim Khan crossed the river Chenab and took the route of Rajouri. From the way Qasim Khan sent his envoy with a letter for Raja of Rajouri. According to Tazkirah-i- Bemisaal - Rajgan-i-

Rajour, the contents of the letter run: "I, Qasim Khan, with Akbar, the Emperor of Hindustan, soon coming to Kashmir and it is my humble submission to you (Raja of Rajour) that I have no enmity with you but in conquering Kashmir I need all sorts of assistance from you, for which Raja of Rajour would be suitably rewarded."<sup>27</sup>

The ruler of Rajour was also ordered to tender his submission before Qasim Khan at once and in case of his failure to comply the royal order, he would be dealt some other way. After the departure of Mughal envoy, Raja Mast Wali called a meeting of his courtiers over the contents of the letter of Qasim Khan.

According to Zaffarullah Khan Jaral, it was decided that instead of facing Mughal attack, it would be better to acknowledge Mughal sovereignty.<sup>28</sup> Next day, Raja Mast Wali submitted before Qasim Khan with a number of presents for him and Qasim Khan honoured Raja Mast Wali with a Royal Dress (*Khillat*) and promised to grant a number of jagirs in Kashmir after the successful conquest of Kashmir.<sup>29</sup> After his return, Raja Mast Wali made all the arrangements to assist the Mughals in their Kashmir campaign.

Details regarding Raja of Bhimbar is not known much from sources but Bhimbar is mentioned frequently in the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri and must have been visited many times by Mughal Emperor's in going to and returning from Kashmir.<sup>30</sup> Bhimbar is also referred by Bernier who accompanied Emperor Aurangzeb in 1665 A.D. during his visit to Kashmir. The Sarai of Bhimbar became an encamping ground for the emperors and in later times Bhimbar became powerful state with a revenue of nine lakhs of rupees.<sup>31</sup> This indicates that Bhimbar, also must have been rewarded in lieu of their services provided to Mughals for conquest of Kashmir and would have well participated in all sorts of assistance Mughals needed. According to Akbarnama, "on September 1, 1586, the Mughals passed through defile of Bhimbar. In Rajouri, Bahram Nayak, Ismail Nayak and Shanki Charwar came to pay respects and said good wishes for success."<sup>32</sup>

According to Rajgan-i-Rajour, Raja Mast Wali was made commander of one of the Mughal contingents and his son Prince Tajjuddin Khan commanded the Rajour forces.<sup>33</sup> On 16th October 1586 A.D., Qasim Khan successfully conquered the valley of Kashmir and the Khutba was read in the name of Akbar and the coins minted in his name Sultan

Yusuf Shah has already been imprisoned and sent to Biswak (Bihar). In lieu of his services, Raja Mast Wali Khan was rewarded with a *Khillat* (robe of honor) and a jagir of Rs. 50,000 value in Kashmir.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, conquest of Kashmir by Mughals in 1586 was consolidated by establishing friendly relations with Rajas of Rajouri and Bhimbar who accepted Emperor Akbar as their sovereign and Akbar left their areas into the hands of native rulers. Earlier, Kashmir rulers took tribute from outer hill states but now Mughals on their journey halted at these places and these Rajas provided all sorts of necessary things to Emperor and their Lashkar.

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