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FOUNDER OF MODERN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: MAHARAJA GULAB SINGH

(Analysis of Military, Administrative, Strategic and Political Capabilities)

Dr. Malkit Singh

Co-Professor/Director, Center for Kashmir Studies,
Himachal Pradesh Central University, Dharamsala

Abstract

Jammu and Kashmir, in the Nilamat Purana, that the gods had expressed their desire to reside here, describing it as more beautiful than heaven, and which today is continuously facing the brunt of terrorism and instability for decades. The role of Maharaja Gulab as the founder of the modern form of Jammu and Kashmir is of paramount importance. Maharaja Gulab Singh had saved Jammu and Kashmir from going into the hands of the British with his political wisdom and established it as an independent state. Many such misconceptions have been spread about the political decisions of Maharaja Gulab Singh, which have no basis. The present study is an attempt to present the true essence of Maharaja Gulab Singh's personality by analyzing the military, administrative, strategic and political capabilities of Maharaja Gulab Singh objectively relative to the then circumstances.

Jannayak Maharaja Gulab Singh was a courageous general of golden Indian history, an important era man, an unforgettable personality, a wonderful strategist, an efficient administrator and a king with true loyalty to the nation. Gulab Singh's life journey from general to become Jannayak Maharaja attains perfection by passing through various ups and downs. Recognizing the characteristics of Gulab Singh's personality, Maharaja Ranjit Singh constantly encouraged him and was given various responsibilities. Gulab Singh also always successfully discharged each responsibility with full devotion. As a result, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's faith in Gulab Singh increased. Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself crowned Gulab Singh on the banks of the river Chandrabhaga (Chenab) on June 17, 1822, and conferred the title of Raja and appointed him as the king of the Jammu and Kashmir region. A legend is also prevalent about this coronation of Raja Gulab Singh that Maharaja Ranjit Singh had done the coronation on his head from top to bottom i.e. in the opposite direction, whereas generally Tilak is always done from bottom to top. According to folklore, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had seen that great ruler in the personality of Raja Gulab Singh, who came down from the huge mountains of Jammu and Kashmir and continued to spread in India at that time. He

had the ability to stop the British Empire. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharaja Gulab Singh proved his assessment to be true, when he not only saved the Lahore Durbar from going under British control, but also saved Jammu and Kashmir from becoming a part of the British Empire. The coronation done by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the opposite direction of Raja Gulab Singh was an inspiration to end the British Empire by symbolically organizing the Indian public against the British.

The appointment of Gulab Singh on the throne of Jammu and Kashmir by Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not only a friendship of two nationalists, or merely a reward for Gulab Singh to expand Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire, but also for its far-future, ambitious move targeting many political, diplomatic and military strategic objectives. From the analysis of historical information about Maharaja Ranjit Singh, it becomes clear that he was a popular epoch-maker as well as a great ruler with very far-sightedness, who understood the qualifications of his generals, council of ministers, state advisors and friends. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a true patriot and a skilled politician. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had made a peace treaty with the British in the year 1809, according to which both the sides had a peace

agreement across the river Sutlej. Due to this treaty, not only the situation of conflict between the Sikh Empire and the British was averted, but the fame of Maharaja Ranjit Singh increased in this area. Maharaja Ranjit Singh always gave importance to the merit of a person above relationships, friendship or false admirers. He was well aware that a capable general and an efficient administrative person can play an important role in maintaining the integrity and integrity of his state. Due to these characteristics, Maharaja Ranjit Singh formed a united and powerful Punjab state by merging small princely states into his state and also included Jammu and Kashmir and other provinces of the Sapta Sindhu region in his state.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh took the services of many foreign people for the prosperity, development and expansion of his state, but never gave these foreign people an important place in his jury. Foreign doctors, military equipment and training experts, modern military instructors from countries like English, French, German etc. were present in his court, but it was Maharaja Ranjit Singh's policy of distrust on those foreigners that he ever gave importance to these foreigners.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a great ruler and he was well acquainted with the history of his ancestors and also the history of the surrounding royal families. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's grandfather Mahan Singh was related to Brijlal Dev, son of Maharaja Ranjit Dev. Maharaja Ranjit Dev was from the Jamwal royal family of Jammu and Raja Gulab Singh was his descendant. Maharaja Ranjit Dev ruled Jammu for about 6 decades from 1728 AD to 1780 AD. The military, political, diplomatic and administrative training of Raja Gulab Singh took place under the patronage of his grandfather General Zorawar Singh (he is called the Napoleon of India) and his elder brother Wazir Mota Singh (Vizier of the princely state of Jammu, Maharaja Ranjit Dev).

Many misconceptions have been spread about Raja Gulab Singh joining the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, mainly because of the jealousy and political motives of British historians and British officials towards Raja Gulab Singh. For this reason, he has described Raja Gulab Singh as a foot soldier to join the

army, which is a completely different fact from reality. While handing over the jagirs of Jammu to Raja Gulab

Singh by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, it has been described that Gulab Singh's ancestors Maharaja Ranjit Dev and Brijlal were the rulers of Jammu. Thus the fact becomes clear that Maharaja Ranjit Singh had no doubt about the historical background of Raja Gulab Singh. He had appointed Gulab Singh as the leader of a contingent in his army at a salary of Rs.275 Nanakshahi. Gulab Singh's brother Dhyan Singh was also appointed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in his court in the Justice Department at a monthly salary of Rs 60 Nanakshahi. Gulab Singh joined the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809 AD as the leader of a military force and as a result of his military prowess and strategic prowess, continuously winning in various campaigns, the expansion and stability of the Sikh Empire helped Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Due to which he became more important for Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Raja Gulab Singh, with his bold campaigns and strategic skills, expanded the empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Lahore Kingdom) to the inaccessible areas of Lhasa, Pashmina, Ladakh, Tibet, Silk Route and Gilgit-Baltistan. Raja Gulab Singh always not only discharged his responsibilities with full devotion, but also proved his official and strategic capabilities in every situation.

Raja Gulab Singh not only expanded the Sikh Empire to the inaccessible areas, but with his bold leadership and strategic acumen, he also successfully suppressed the revolts against the Sikh Empire. Among the many revolts suppressed by Raja Gulab Singh, the Dido Rebellion and the Afghan Rebellion are prominent. In the year 1821, Gulab Singh captured Dido Jamwal, the leader of the Dido rebellion and killed him and suppressed the Dido rebellion. Raja Gulab Singh also played a leading role in suppressing the Afghan rebels in the Battle of Shaidu by Hari Singh Nalwa, the Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh army in the year 1827. After the death of the great hero of the Sikh army Hari Singh Nalwa in the year 1837, when Muslim rebels started revolting in most parts of Jammu and Kashmir, at that time Raja Gulab Singh was entrusted with the responsibility of suppressing these revolts. Raja Gulab Singh suppressed every rebellion

against the Sikh Empire in Poonch, Muri, Hazara, Dhund, Sati, Tanoli, Karral and Sudhan regions with great aggression and understanding. Raja Gulab Singh played a very important role in making the Sikh Empire more powerful, by organizing Jammu and Kashmir divided into 22 small princely states, proving the vision of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in his context. It was the true loyalty of Raja Gulab Singh to the Sikh Empire and Maharaja Ranjit Singh that he successfully discharged all the responsibilities assigned by the Sikh court with full devotion. After making Ladakh and Baltistan a part of the Sikh Empire from the year 1834 to 1840, sent an army to expand the empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to Tibet in the year 1842, and finally got authority over Tibet. These characteristics made him stand at the forefront of the line of confidants of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The only evidence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's growing faith in Gulab Singh was that from the year 1831 to 1839, Raja Gulab Singh was handed over to the North by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Apart from the jagirs of Punjab, jagirs of many other cities of Punjab like Jhelum, Bhera, Rohtas were also handed over. Raja Gulab Singh always kept true allegiance to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Lahore court. Even at that time, after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there was a situation of power struggle in the Lahore court and in this power struggle between the successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, even the brothers and nephews of Raja Gulab Singh were killed. Even after that, Raja Gulab Singh worked with full devotion to bring stability in the Lahore court. To postpone the war between the British and the Lahore court, Raja Gulab Singh had mediated under his loyalty to the Lahore court. The written evidence of Raja Gulab Singh's allegiance to the Lahore court comes from two letters written by Sir Henry Lawrence to Raja Gulab Singh on 11 and 13 February 1846 and the reply to these letters given by Raja Gulab Singh. In these letters, Sir Henry Lawrence tempts Raja Gulab Singh to make him an independent king of Jammu and Kashmir as a separate independent state, reminding him of the murders of his brothers and nephews by the Lahore court and the misbehavior he himself had meted out to him. But Raja Gulab Singh, in response to these letters of his, describing it as an internal matter of the Lahore court and clarifying that Maharaja Dilip Singh was a child at the time

of that power struggle and that he had no role in this incident, said Sir Henry Lawrence. The offer was rejected. After this, under the ceasefire treaty between the Lahore court and the British, 75 lakh Nanakshahi including the entire area between the Sutlej and Beas rivers was found to be given to the British as damages. The Lahore court was ready to hand over the entire area between the Sutlej and Beas rivers to the British, but in addition, the then Vazir Lal Singh expressed his inability to pay Rs 75 lakh Nanakshahi in cash to the British. In place of these 75 lakh Nanakshahi rupees, Lal Singh had proposed to hand over the territories of Jammu and Kashmir to the British. This proposal of Wazir Lal Singh had paved the way for Raja Gulab Singh to get the territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which was given to him by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in the form of Lahore Durbar and an independent state from the British. It is worth mentioning here that the proposal to hand over Jammu and Kashmir to the British in exchange for 75 lakh Nanakshahi rupees was given by the then incapable Wazir Lal Singh. On March 9, 1846, under the Lahore treaty between the British and the Lahore court, Maharaja Dilip Singh, accepting Raja Gulab Singh as the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir independently, also allowed him to make a separate treaty with the British in this regard.

On March 16, seven days after this Lahore treaty of March 9, 1846, as an independent Maharaja, Maharaja Gulab Singh signed the Amritsar Treaty with the British, in which 75 lakh Nanakshahi rupees were fixed under the treaty made by the Lahore court with the British. The amount, which the Lahore court had expressed its inability to pay, was accepted by Maharaja Gulab Singh to give to the British on his behalf. In the light of these facts it becomes completely clear that Maharaja Gulab Singh did not buy Jammu and Kashmir by bargaining with the British, but saved Jammu and Kashmir from going into the hands of the British by the Lahore Durbar in exchange for 75 lakh Nanakshahi Rupees and Under the treaty, he became the independent Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, which was given to him by Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself. A fact is also clear from this that the heritage which was handed over by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to Raja Gulab Singh, in this emergency, he had protected that heritage from the British and the incompetent and conspiratorial Lahore court. It is also worth

mentioning here that Maharaja Gulab Singh thought in the direction of independent occupation of Jammu and Kashmir only after the proposal of handing over the entire area of Jammu and Kashmir to the British in lieu of 75 lakh Nanakshahi rupees by the then Vazir Lal Singh of Lahore court. did. Maharaja Gulab Singh never let the thought of selfishly or conspiratorially occupying Jammu and Kashmir or betraying the Lahore court ever arise in his conscience. Even after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in the event of a power struggle among his successors and the killing of his brothers and nephews in this power struggle, Raja Gulab Singh, without being distracted, addressed the Lahore court from this state of instability.

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the influence of such people started increasing in the Sikh court who had envy and ill-will towards Raja Gulab Singh and the Jammu family. For this reason, after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, members of the Jammu family were murdered in the struggle for power among his successors. These events did not affect the loyalty of Raja Gulab Singh to the Lahore court and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, but this event gave the message to Raja Gulab Singh that such people have now become dominant in the Lahore court with whom his interests and Life is not safe. Therefore, showing strategic understanding, Raja Gulab Singh completed the ceasefire treaty of Lahore court with the British keeping in mind the interests of the Lahore court even under the circumstances and through the Amritsar treaty, Jammu and Kashmir became an independent state.

The personality of Maharaja Gulab Singh replaces him as a patriotic hero, a loyal administrator, a courageous general, a skilled strategist and ultimately a strong mass leader. He never escaped from the situation of conflict but faced the situation of conflict with more devotion and maturity and got success every time. Some so-called historians have been raising questionable questions on the personality of Maharaja Gulab Singh on the basis of narrow-minded assessment of many points of the Amritsar Treaty, which took place on March 16, 1846, but each point included in the Amritsar Treaty was discussed between the then Lahore Court and the British. After analyzing the situation of the middle conflict, the internal power struggle of Lahore court, and the role of

Raja Gulab Singh in these real difficult situations, the manifestation of the skilled politician and strategist side of the personality of Maharaja Gulab Singh comes to the fore. The ceasefire between the Lahore Durbar and the British in the then circumstances, preventing a huge geographical area like Jammu and Kashmir from falling into the hands of the British, to separate and secure itself from the conspiracy going on in the Lahore court. All these important facts reveal the real great personality and skilled strategist side of Maharaja Gulab Singh. Maharaja Gulab Singh did not give up his lifelong patriotism, honesty and conscientiousness. He had great loyalty to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and was always honest to the Lahore court. Even during the state of internal power struggle in the Lahore court, Raja Gulab Singh made sincere efforts to bring stability to the legacy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Even in the decadent situation of Lahore court against the British, Raja Gulab Singh, showing his strategic skill, not only pulled the Lahore court out of crisis, but also saved a vast and important area like Jammu and Kashmir from going into the hands of the British. Maharaja Gulab Singh did every work keeping the national interest first. On various occasions, such proposals came before him in which there were opportunities of great profit for him, but Maharaja Gulab Singh without delay rejected every such proposal which was anti-national. After analyzing the life of Maharaja Gulab Singh, it becomes clear that Maharaja Gulab Singh was a true patriot in the real sense, his every work was rooted in the context of national interest. DJ Cunningham, 2015, History of the Sikhs, Andesite Press, USA.

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