

History of Lahaul - Lahaul & Spiti , District Website, HP

Content Provided by :Prof. Sanjay Kumar , Department of History , Kukumseri Geographical information contained in Samhitas Brahmanas Upanishad and Sutras make us believe that no time had India Considered Kailash Mansarovar region a foreign land which is still considered as a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus. Tradition tells us that one of the earliest rules of the land was Manu who ruled between 3100 B.C. and 2550 B.C. The geographical Knowledge which one derives from the accounts of the Mahabharata and the Bhagwad Gita Provides sufficient ground for believing that the people of Lahoul and spiti also must have been the participant in the great Mahabharata war . In the ancient, Lahoul –Spiti must have been either the part of Kalakluta or Mandamati territory. The Himalayas were the part of the Ashokan empire . From the period of Kanishka, Kashmir to Kafiristan, there was a great Janapada Ki-Pin. In the neighbourhood of the Yamuna, Sataluj and Beas, the Kuinidas tribe was ruling. To this, Lahoul-Spiti must have been a part. Kullu was inhabited by Kulutas. Territory to the East of Kangra was occupied by Audumbaras. Yashodharman of Malwa (A.D. 530-540) had his empire upto the Himalayas in the North. All the exiting Kingdoms of Kapisa, Kashmir, Kuluta, Satadur, Mo-li-pa-La and Suwarngootra were situated in the high Himalayas. It was ruled by women and was Known as the kingdom of women. It is well known that under the Kushanas, North India including Central Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and East Lran were united in a single state formation. Coin and inscription to this period were found at Kanihara in kangra. A stupa connected with the great Kushan King Kanishka named Kanika –chod –ten (Kanishka chaitya, Kanishka stupa) is found in Zanskar. There is no doubt that Kanika is the name of the same as the Kusan King kanishka . Similarly a stupa called Kanika Chaitya in Peshawar built by Kanika (Kanishka) has been described by Al Bruni. Ladakh undoubtedly belonged to the empire the Kanishka . In such a condition when all the countries around Lahoul were under the Kushanas , we can say without doubt that Lahoul also formed part of Kushanas empire. During the Gupta period and the rule of Kannauj the position Lahoul was probably that of an outland.

The most powerful of the Guptas, Samudragupta, s empire extended only upto the Beas Valley. But during the reign of Harshavardhana of Thaneswar (A.D. 606-664) Lahaul again become connected with its capital at Brahmpura, is stated to have conquered Lahaul in A.D.600 but soon was lost, perhaps only a portion, to kullu. However the principalities of Brahmpura and kullu were included in the empire of Harshsvardhana. Therefore, through them Lahaul also become connected with the great empire. It is in the same period, as already stated, that first historical mention of Lahaul is found.

Hieun Tsang visited Kullu in A.D. 635 and noticed Lahaul as a country by the name of La-hua-la. Spiti in early times was ruled by Sen Kings. One of the earliest known rules was Samuudra Sen. In the course of time, during the reign of Rajendra Sen, kullu became tributary to Spiti for a short period . The fortunes of spiti declined during the reign of Cheat Sen and in the seventh century, it was annexed by Ladakh. The kingdom of Ladakh in the time of Skyid-Lde-Nima-mgon extended from the Northern mountain ranges upto Raduk including Demchong, Guge (South-East of Raduk and West of Masarover) and the modern district of Lahoul –Spiti. His son Lde-Gtsug-mgon, became the ruler of Zanskar and Spiti. It is certain that rulers of Spiti were the Nonos from the very beginning . It seems that during the strong rule of Ladakh, Spiti was an integral part of Ladakh and during the weak rule

,it was an autonomous state until nominally attached to Ladakh.In the eighth century A.D. the Raja of Chamba, Ajayavarman, A.D.730-75 became a vassal of Kashmir. Thus Lahaul too came indirectly under the influence of Kashmir, this is evident from the carved wooden relief's in the mixed Kashmir-Kannauj style of Lalitaditya's period found at Maylang in Lahaul. **Ladakh's Involvement with Lahoul**

Since the history of Ladakh is not traceable before the 9th century ,Ladakh involvements with the Lahoul prior to that period is not clear .If over conjecture of Gyamur or being seen has Gyamur

in Lahoul is correct ,then it seems that this part of Lahoul in early times was not under Ladakh, instead some part of Ladakh might have been under Gyamur . Vijay verma the Raja of Chamba ,again gained power around 1175 A.D. and invaded Kashmir and Ladakh it seems that he might have taken over at least Chamba – Lahoul and the Patton Valley .Ladakh had already been attacked by the Mongols in 1207 and had accepted the Suzerainty of Ghanghiz Khan and his Successors .It seems that neither Ladakh nor Lahoul were ever ruled by the Mongols or the Mohammedans .Graves and dead bodies found in Lahoul must substantiate these attacks ,since Hindus and Buddhists do not bury their dead.

This period may also be attributed to the Spiti chiefs ,known as Pitti Thakurs ,who ruled over a part of Kullu and had established a capital Jagat Sukh in the Kullu Valley .Lahoul seems to have come under Guge, a petty Buddhist Kingdom extending from Chhumurti to upper Kinnaur .Around 1410 A.D., the Gelugpa sect of Buddhism founded in Tibet by Tsong Khapa (1357-1417), known as the Yellow Hats, spread rapidly into these areas. Between 1532 and 1559 Bhadur Singh reversed the earlier situation of Lahoul's Being under Guge or Ladakh .He first captured Teenan or the Gondhla valley and then expanded towards the Ghar valley .Bhadur Singh appointed Tsering Angrup, the Thalur of Barbog as his regent in the Gahar Valley. Tsering Angrup ,however ,being Buddhist actually favoured Ladakh. Bhadur Singh was succeeded by Partap Singh in 1559,who ruled until 1575.During Partap Singh's reign Trashi Gyapo of Barbog was the foremost chief of those part of Lahoul which were attached to Kullu. It is felt that if not the whole of pattan, at least area beyond Jahalma and Chamba, Lahoul must have been a part of Chamba at that time.

At the beginning of the 17th century; the Buddhist Gyalpo Jamya began extending his territory.He captured Spiti; there is no mention of his capturing Lahoul.Senge Namgyal was succeeded by his son De-den Namgyal in 1645 who ruled until 1675.Like his father he also extended his kingdom to include Nubra,Spiti,Upper Kinnaur, Zaskar, and Lahoul.The Lahoul mentioned here must be only the Tod valley directly, while most of the other parts were with Kullu. In 1671 the Mongols, under the leadership of Golden Tsewang attacked Lahoul,which was known as the attack of Segpo.It is believed that they remained in the area for only a couple of years. This Mongol force is supposed to have stormed the Kolong fort. After that they crossed the river and attempted to capture the Gondhla valley on their way to attack Kullu. A misfortune, however, struck them and most of the force was annihilated in an avalanche near Ropsang in Gondhla valley. Evidently these Mongols did not reach the Pattan valley. In 1672 after the retreat of the Mongols, Raja Budhi Singh, son of Raja Jagat Singh of Kullu seized the opportunity to influence the people of Lahoul.Budhi Singh married the daughter of the ruler of Kishtwar, on the occasion of which he himself went to Kishtwar through Lahoul. Evidently most of Lahoul, especially the Pattan,Gahar, and Tod valleys were under Guge at that time. By the later part of 17th century the Guge government had become weak. Therefore first Budhi Singh and later Man Singh of Kullu tried to capture most of Lahoul. On the other side Chatter Singh of Chamba acquired considerable influence in the western part of Lahoul.Thus for some time Triloknath and rest of Chamba-Lahoul along with some part of the Pattan Valley came under Chamba.

The Thakur of Barbog was the regent of the Kullu Rajas for the Gahar valley .These Thakur, however ,were inclined towards Ladakh due mainly to their being Buddhist ,and also perhaps due to an earlier obligation incurred by Ladakh permitting settlers to migrate to the Gahar valley . This is discussed more in the Chapters .Thus following this last partition of Lahoul between Chamba and Kullu , no other major political re-alignments seem to have occurred in Lahoul until the time of Charat Singh who ruled Chamba from 1808 to 1844 .During his time a powerful governor of Padar in Chamba invaded Zansker,perhaps through Mayar Nallah in Lahoul ,and made Zansker a tributary of Chamba. Moorcroft has also written that the peasantry in Lahoul held their land by the authority of the Raja of Kullu except for four villages-Barkalanak and three others- they passed on their way to Tandi. He added that while these villages acknowledged military fealty to the Raja of Kullu, they paid rent to the state of Ladakh. At the end of the First Sikh war by the treaty of 9th March 1846 , the hill country between the Satluj and Indus was ceded to the British Government , and the portion between the Satluj and the Ravi , including Lahoul , finally remained British territory, the rest being sold to Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu by another treaty concluded on 16th March 1846 ,at Amritsar. Kullu including Lahoul was then placed in charge of an Assistant Commissioner as part of the newly formed district of Kangra .At the same time Spiti was disjoined from Ladakh and annexed to Kullu . The boundary between Lahoul & Chamba was marked by the nullahs of Chukam (Tso-Khang)on the right and Nalda on the left bank of the Chandrabhaga, and between Lahoul and Ladakh by Baralacha range ,This part was given the name of British Lahoul and the other part lying below Thiroth was known as Chamba Lahoul . The two parts were eventually united in 1975.

The British hardly ever fought for territory, instead they conquered by stealth, taking piece by piece through negotiations. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs also became comparatively weaker, while British influence increased. In the treaty of March 9, 1846, Gulab Singh, the Dogra Raja of Jammu was recognized as an independent ruler by both Sikhs and the British. The Sikhs were forced to cede the territory between the rivers Byasa and Sindh to the British including Kashmir and Hazara. The British in turn transferred them to Gulab Singh for the sum of 10 million rupees. This deal was later changed, The British wanted to keep Kullu and Mandi, and therefore the sum was changed to 7,50,000 rupees. Lahoul followed the fate of Kullu. In fact the change was made to keep Lahoul, for the sake of trade with Tibet. The part of Lahoul that came under the British, previously a part of Kullu, included the Gondhla and Gahar valley, Tod valley up to Darcha, and the Pattan valley up to Thiroth. This part was henceforth called British-Lahoul also and made a part of Tehsil Kullu, which in turn was made a part of the Kangra district. The total area of Lahoul that came under British control was reckoned at 2255 square miles. Captain Hay was the first Assistant Commissioner of Kullu. Bali Ram, the head of Lahoul, was given the title of Negi. Somehow, it seems differences erupted between him and the British Government, and Bali Ram was forced to relinquish the position, though it was claimed that he himself declined it. As a result Tara Chand of Kolong was made the Negi of Lahoul. The British Lahoul was divided into fourteen kothis (counties). Each Kothi was assigned a Lambardar (the head man) and a Chowkidar known as Krounka. The Negi of Lahoul was also an honorary magistrate, who was vested ex officio with the power of a subordinate magistrate, second class. He could therefore imprison a criminal up to one month, and fine or entertain civil suits of up to fifty rupees. Tara Chand Negi was allowed twenty-Five rupees per month to establish the office. Tara Chand resided at Kolong. Lord Elgin, the Governor General of India, crossed Rohtang in 1863 and returned on the same day. Harcourt called it a feat that few Englishmen would care to undertake and it indeed proved unfortunate. This excursion was blamed for causing Lord Elgin's heart trouble, which shortly afterwards led to the demise of the statesman Tara Chand was succeeded by Hari Chand as

Negi of Lahoul in 1876. He was conferred with the title of Wazir of Lahoul. He exercised the entire administration of Lahoul until 1914 when Amar Chand took over from Hari Chand. In the First World War, Amar Chand was appointed as jamadar in the British Indian army with five Lahoulis under him. He was given a title of Raj Bahadur in 1917. This began the tradition of Thakurs joining the Indian army. He died in 1921, while his son Abhe Chand was still a minor. Therefore the administration was vested upon his younger brother Mangal Chand. He was the last ruler of Lahoul before the independence of India.

During 1920s to 1940s when rest of India was fighting for freedom from the British rule, a group of people in Lahoul fought for Liberation from the tyrannical rule of the Thakurs. It is said that at one time the public was so much suppressed that no one dared open his mouth in front of the Thakurs, no matter what happened. People had to prostrate, literally lie down flat on the ground any time the Thakurs happened to pass through. Wherever the Thakurs rode their horses, passersby had to rub their foreheads on the Thakurs feet or else stand a whip on the back. Those who had been ruled by Thakurs for a long time had become accustomed to it, but it was a little too much for the people of the Pattan valley who had never suffered oppression like this before. They were proud people who cared for self respect, and this kind of behavior was beyond their tolerance. In this situation, one man named Saja Ram from the village of Lote, revolted against the wazir's tyranny. Saja Ram was among the very first ones to have modern education, and although it was only a primary education, he served as a Munshi (office secretary) for the Naib Tehsildar, a class III magistrate, when this office opened. For that reason he later came to be known as Munshi Saja Ram. He had a great personality and a face like a lion. He took a stand against the ruling Thakurs, who had Power, wealth, and position.

Although most people of the Pattan valley were sympathetic to him, very few had guts to stand by him openly. Only a few followed him bravely. This struggle took a multifarious form from direct disobedience to open demonstration to physical violence, to fist fights. They had several direct encounters. Munshi Saja Ram had six sons, of which the three youngest were in school those days. He gave them special physical training to prepare them physically and mentally for direct encounters. The boys of the ruling Thakurs were in the army. Any time they would come on leave, it was sure that there would be a fight between them and the children of Munshi, wherever they came across each other. This struggle went on, and became a serious issue. In 1938, Mr. Arthur Lall, the Assistant Commissioner of Kullu, recommended to the government the posting of a Naib Tehsildar in Lahoul to serve during the winter when the wazirs were called for military duty. Thus began the transition to the permanent posting of the Naib Tehsildar, without giving the wazir the feeling that his powers were being abruptly eroded. In 1940, Lall's successor, Azim Husain, reemphasized the need for a change in the administrative set up. He observed that the atmosphere of Lahoul had become a terror. People by then were resisting the administration of the wazir very openly. The demonstrations and the disobedience had become a daily affair. The Thakurs had lost both control and respect from the majority of the masses. Azim Husain realized that the arrangement suggested by Arthur Lall was no longer adequate, so he suggested a more drastic step to prevent the situation from getting completely out of control. The government accepted his recommendation and appointed a Naib Tehsildar, thus bringing an end to the wazarat in 1941. With the addition of a seasonal police post in 1943, the struggle for liberation also came to an end. Thakur Pratap Chand held the position of Naib Tehsildar after retiring from the army as a captain. As a Naib Tehsildar, however, his position was quite different from being a wazir, and it was not possible for him to act like an independent ruler.

After independence Lahoul continued to form part of the Kullu sub-division of Kangra district in the province of Punjab. Because of its remoteness

Lahoul combined with spiti was made a district in 1960:the object to tone up the administration and step up developmental work in the otherwise backward and neglected area .After the reorganization of Punjab in 1966, this district along with other hilly areas was transferred to the union territory of Himachal Pradesh, which by a law of the Parliament became a state of the Union in 1971(January, 25).