Historical Analysis of Relations of Raja Fateh Singh of Kapurthala with Maharaja Ranjit Singh as Given in The Rajas of Punjab

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Abstract

The British became acquainted with the Punjabi's and especially of the Sikhs quite late in the process of the sojourn and advancement in India. Many British administrative officers and European authors wrote about socio-political conditions of the Punjab and of the Sikhs. One of them was Sir Lepel Henry Griffin. His work"The Rajas of Punjab" was first published in the year 1870. His work is most important historical accounts of the history of Punjab which documents the history of the major princely states of Punjab. Fateh Singh was close companion of Maharaja Ranjit their political relations have been discussed by Lepel Griffin.

Keywords: Fateh Singh, Kapurthala, Cis-Sutlej, Lepel Griffin, Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Introduction

In 1801 A.D Fateh Singh succeeded to Kapurthala chiefship. He was the only son of Bhag Singh. He was a prominent Ahluwalia chief and descendant of famous Ahluwalia Sardar Jassa Singh. After 1803 A.D British had gained power in Delhi so in order to secure their rule for future they were seeking support of some native chiefs, at that time Maharaja Ranjit Singh and chiefs of Cis-Sutlej of Punjab were the subject of their interest. Fateh Singh was close companion of Maharaja Singh. The study seeks to analysis the relation of Fateh Singh and Ranjit Singh as given by Lepel Henry Griffin.

Aims of Study

- 1. To analysis the perspective of Lepel Griffin about Raja Fateh Singh of Kapurthala,
- 2. To study the political relation of Raja Fateh Singh and Maharaja Ranjit Singh,
- 3. To analysis the outcomes of their political relations,
- 4. To study the impact over Punjab History.

Main Text of the Study

Fateh Singh succeeded his father and in his first act he made an alliance with Maharaja Ranjit Singh by exchanging turbans and swore in front of Guru Granth Sahib to remain friends forever.¹ Many sources like *Fateh Singh Parbarkar, Umdat ut Tawarikh, Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh* agree with Lepel Griffin. He then marched against the Kasur along with his new friend but failed to win over it.²

Lepel Griffin mentions that in the autumn of 1805A.D Maratha Chief Jaswant Rao Holkar came to Punjab and the British army under the command of Lake was chasing him. Although he tried to win Cis-sutlej chiefs in his side but he failed to do so. Than he marched towards Amritsar to get assistance from Maharaja Ranjit Singh but according to *The Rajas of Punjab* Maharaja refused to help him under the influence of Bhag Singh and Fateh Singh. But in the opinion of J.D Cunningham and Ram Rao Sukh only Fateh Singh dissuaded Maharaja not to lend any help to fugitive prince against British Government.³ But according to Bute Shah it was Bhag Singh who advised Maharaja that it would be unwise to accept Holkar's friendship because this step might enrage the British Government.⁴ But as per Kaniya Lal, Maharaja at his own behalf refused to render any kind of help to Jaswant Rao Holkar. He deliberately made excuses to Holkar about helping him against the British Government.⁵

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Lepel Griffin tells about the supplementary treaty which was made with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh on which they agreed not to be in any kind of friendship or in relation with Holkar and on the other hand British Government promised to remain their friend as long as their conduct would remain amicable.⁶

In The Rajas of Punjab it is given that Fateh Singh started accompanying the Maharaja in his expedition to the south but actually he didn't wish to join him because he was afraid of his weak position in front of Maharaja due to which he unable to refuse. It seems true because according to R.N Vohra and Anju Arora friendship between both of them was unequal and Fateh Singh was not capable to acclaimed his equal position with regards of Ranjit Singh and was a mere vassal, who lead Maharaja's military expedition along with his own troops.⁷ Ram Sukh Rao doesn't convey that Fateh Singh was his vassal but in the several points he clearly mentioned out that his position was just reduced to General of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.⁸ There are several incidents which depicts the incapacity of Fateh Singh in front of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.9 That's the reason why Fateh Singh went along with him on the expedition of Amritsar (1805) Kasur (1804, 1807) Jhang (1807), and Sialkot (1807).10

Lepel Griffin briefly tells about the Metcalfe's journey to meet Maharaja Ranjit Singh that when in 1808 A.D Metcalf reached Kasur he was welcomed by Ahluwalia Sardar Fateh Singh and Diwan Mokam Chand along with their two thousand cavalry to escort him to the camp. Ram Rao sukh in his account testify that Fateh Singh and Bhag Singh went to meet Lake.¹¹ But according to Bute Shah, Sardar Fateh Singh and Diwan Mokam Chand had only ten to twelve cavalry men to escort Metcalf to his camp.¹² But a different statement is given in Tarikh-i-Sikha that Fateh Singh was initially been confirmed to escort Metcalf but this idea was being dropped and than Meet Singh Farrania was sent along with Mokam Chand to welcome the Metcalf.¹³

Lepel Griffin explains the character of Fateh Singh as depicted by Metcalf. Metcalf put forward that Fateh Singh's alliance with Ranjit Singh in his early life and due to this alliance former is principally indebted to him for his extraordinary rise. Metcalfe justifies his reason by stating that Fateh Singh was used as a ladder, by which Ranjit Singh has mounted to the greatness, his remarks are based on these points that he wasn't the member of Ranjit Singh's councils nor he was entrusted with his secrets but than also he marches with a considerable forces with Ranjit Singh whenever required¹⁴. This judgment about Fateh Singh is undeniable because Fateh Singh helped Ranjit Singh number of times in his campaigns even though he never cared for rewards or benefits. Even sometime when Maharaja left Jalandhar Doab¹⁵ or whenever he left for a journey or a campaign without Fateh Singh than Fateh Singh was given a charge to look after his territories in his absent.16 Metcalfe as per given in The Rajas of Punjab further tells that Fateh Singh was impressed by Lake and this made him to look at the British

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Government with the hope of setting him free from the tyranny of Ranjit Singh. But here Lepel Griffin didn't discuss about the part in which Lake himself approaches Fateh Singh. Ram Sukh Rao gives fascinating details about a meeting between Lord Lake and Fateh Singh, in which Lord Lake and his officers took off their caps when they received Fateh Singh into their camp. Author gives impression that British took special care to humor Fateh Singh and even Lord Lake proposed to have separate arrangements with him. But Fateh Singh tactfully evaded this agreement. The British General then offered Sonipat and Panipat to Fateh Singh as a mark of his appreciation if he plays a role in setting a friendly settlement with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But Fateh Singh refused to accept this proposal and regarded it as bribe. Than Fateh Singh added that he would get these territories some other day since their friendship will going to be last forever.¹⁷ Lord Metcalf's depicted remarks in The Rajas of Punjab are baseless that Fateh Singh wanted to through off yoke of Maharaja Ranjit Singh for an example not only in the context of British but there was another incident when the Sardars of Jallandhar doab approached Fateh Singh; they urged Fateh Singh to leave Ranjit Singh so that they might turn out Ranjit Singh from central Punjab but Fateh Singh refused to do so.18

As per the treaty of Amritsar 1809 A.D signed between British Government and Ranjit Singh in which Fateh Singh was also there. In this treaty British agreed not to interfere in Maharaja's territories of north and Maharaja agreed upon that no further encroachment will be there to south.¹⁹ Treaty of Amritsar 1809 A.D and the presence of Fateh Singh both are confirmed from J.D Cunningham and Ram Rao Sukh's work.²⁰

Lepel Griffin elucidates that Maharaja was not in favor of this treaty, so he marched towards Ludhiana to occupy it form the British Government and the Fateh Singh was directed by Maharaja to provide 30,000 horses and 10 guns against the British. But arrival of Shah Sujha from Kabul and Multan expedition diverted Ranjit Singh's attentions from south.²¹ But from Kaniya Lal and Sohan lal Suri's account it may understood that incident which Lepel Griffin depicts, occurred before the treaty that had been signed.²²

Lepel Griffin affirms that Fateh Singh was present in the treacherous gain over the fort of Raja Sansar Chand, which had been for long besieged by Amar Singh Thappa. In spring season when Ranjit Singh marched for Mutlan he had left Fateh Singh as an incharge of Lahore and Amritsar.²³ These assertions are traceable in Sohan Ial Suri's work.²⁴ In addition he tells that he accompanied Maharaja to Rawalpindi to meet Shah Sujha.²⁵ But according to Sohan Lal and Khaniya Lal, Fateh Singh was not with Maharaja when Maharaja went to meet Shah Sujha.²⁶

Lepel Griffin discusses the siege of Jalandhar where Fateh Singh, Jodh Singh Ramgaria and Mokham Chand marched against Budh Singh. The reason of attack was his refusal to attend Ranjit Singh with contingent in the battlefield.²⁷ But Chief Budh Singh without facing combined forces fled

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across the sutlej and all of his estates were added up to Lahore.

However, Sohan Lal and Kanhiya Lal tells that only Fateh Singh and Mokham Chand went to Jalandhar, Jassa Singh was not with them²⁸ and according to Kahniya Lal reason behind attack was that the Budh Singh had not paid annual tribute to Ranjit Singh.²⁹ On the contrary Ram Rao tells that Budh Singh had crossed sutlej before any action could be taken and Fateh Singh attacked Singpuria tribe in Jalandhar with the help of Mohkam Chand.³⁰

Lepel Griffin gives brief detail of Fateh Singh's war services in Punjab proper that he fought against minister of Kabul Fateh Khan.³¹ He also took part in Bhimbar, Rajori and Bhawalpur campaigns. He was too present in Multan expedition and had also established a military post of his own at Talumba .During the campaign of Kashmir he got a charge of Lahore and in 1821 he took part in Mankera fort reduction.³² As per given in Umda-ut-Tawarikh he actively took part in Bhimbar and Mankera but during battle of Rajori Fateh Singh was in Lahore because Maharaja had left him with a charge of Lahore and in concern of Talumba military post he was not alone, Kuttubdin Khan also camped along with him.3 ['] But according to Kanhiya Lal he was alone at Talumba. In addition, When Ranjit Singh went for Kashmir expedition Fateh Singh had given a charge of Amritsar instead of Lahore.35

Lepel Griffin unfolds a matter of disputes between Fateh Singh and Ranjit Singh on 27th December 1825. Fateh Singh got scared by advancement of two battalions of Lahore towards his territory and he fled across the Sutlej with his family and took refugee in Jagraon.36 Lepel Griffin tells that Fateh Singh was suspicious about Maharaja from a long time, since Maharaja has seized the territory of his own friend Ramgharia, thus he began to believe that his own faith would be the same. Lepel Griffin judgmentally says that fear of Fateh Singh was a result of his over thinking and exaggeration because Fateh Singh was one of the few men for whom Maharaja had any sincere feeling of regards.³⁷ Raja Ram Singh Tota justifies the Lepel Griffin's remarks that Maharaja had exchanged turban with Fateh Singh in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib and he always called him his brother. But Fateh Singh in his mistaken beliefs got scared and fled to the other side of Sutlej.

Author of *Kapurthala and Its Past and Present* says that Maharaja was greedy person and to fulfill his rapacious greed, he would never hesitate to invade into territory of his sworn friends and faithful allies. In case of Fateh Singh he inwardly wanted to take over the possession of Ahluwalia chief. But popularity of Fateh Singh didn't let him to achieve his desires. Ahulwalia scanted danger and sought help from British Government. Maharaja in 1825 A.D got an opportunity therefore attacked Kapurthala and seized it. Thus for the safety Ahluwalia Sardar temporarily shifted his headquarter to Jagraon.³⁹

But according to contemporary sources actual reason behind Fateh Singh's fear was his own *Vakil*. Whom he had appointed as an envoy in Lahore

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darbar Chaudary Kam Bakash; sow the seeds of hateness between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh. He treacherously forward wrong information to both parties.⁴⁰ But Ram Sukh rao tells that Sher Ali (Agent of British Government at Kapurthala) was actual culprit behind the forgery who changed the letters of Qadar Bakash.⁴¹

But in the opinion of Hari Ram Gupta bitterness in friendship occurred when Fateh Singh was building a summerhouse for himself near about one kilometer away from Kapurthala and rumours reached at Lahore Darbar that Fateh Singh was building a fort. Ranjit Singh at once summoned Fateh but Fateh got sacred by recalling the fate of chiefs who had been called to Lahore in same manner. He denied cooperating with Maharaja and in counter reply Ranjit Singh sent the battalions towards Kapurthalla.⁴²

On the flight of Fateh Singh, Maharaja took over his Trans-Sutlej territories but soon desired for reconciliation. Fateh Singh came back in 1827.43 But according to Hari Ram Gupta he came back in 1826.4 Lepel Griffin tells that Maharaja took over Phagwara in 1836 A.D from Fateh Singh but he immediately resorted it back to Fateh Singh because he thought that British might interfere in favor of chief.45 While Mohammad Latif tells that when Maharaja confiscated Phagwara Fateh Singh belived and hoped that British would interfere in the matter in his favor but British Government declined active interference and showed only sympathy with chief.⁴⁶ Sardar Fateh Singh died in October 1837 as per *The Rajas of Punjab*⁴⁷ Mohammad Latif advocates death year48 in favor of Lepel Griffin but according to Kapurthalla and its Past and Present Fateh Singh died in 1836.

Conclusion

It would not be unjust to recall Fateh Singh as a good administrator, enlightened ruler, brave warrior and god fearing soul, enriched with all the qualities a person could hardly ever have. Fateh Singh had played a decisive role between British Government and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was a smart diplomat ruler besides true to his words. He helped the Maharaja several times without claiming anything in return whether he got annoved with Maharaja a number of times though he never left him in difficult situations. But later on Fateh Singh got struck between two ultimate powers that of Maharaia Ranjit Singh and of British Government as clearly seen in the matter of Bhirog where Fateh Singh was neither able to do anything against British Government nor he could say anything to Maharaja and could only sit and watch. On the one hand Maharaja called him his brother but inwardly he treated him as his vassal and on the other hand British Government undergo conspiracies to make Fateh Singh by their side but when Fateh Singh agreed to be with them by leaving Maharaja then British Government denied to give him protection. Fateh Singh had seen his companion's end in front of him therefore he scared for himself too. But at the end he had left with no choice rather than to accept the suzerainty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Endnotes

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