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# Origin and Establishment of Rampur State

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## Abstract

The state of Rampur, though small in size, had got literary, cultural and political importance during the British rule and even thereafter. Rampur is situated in the sub-Himalayan region of Uttar Pradesh, which is as important for a historian as many other larger states. The rulers of the state were the Rohillas of Afghanistan. Daud Khan, one of the adventurers from the Afghan clan, came to this region during the period of Mughal emperor Shah Alam. The brave Daud Khan with the support of several Afghans established his supremacy in the area. After his death his adopted son Ahmad Ali Khan became the head of the Afghan soldiers. But the Rohilla power was destroyed by ShujaudDaulah, the nawab of Awadh with the help of the Britishers. This defeat did not affect the establishment of the Rampur state. The city of Rampur was founded by the nawab Faizullah Khan, the son of nawab Ali Mohammad Khan. The rulers of the state always played an important role in the history of the region. During the first war of independence in 1857, nawab Yusuf Ali Khan, the then ruler of the state protected the British interest, and in return, after the separation of the revolt, he was rewarded by the British government. Soon Rampur became the centre of culture and got the political importance.

**Keywords:** Uttar Pradesh Kather, Rohilkhand, Rohilla.

## Introduction

The region comprising the Rampur lay in Rohilkhand which was a part of the *Subah* of Delhi in the heyday of the Mughal Empire. It was divided between the two Sarkars or districts of Sambhal and Budaun. Rampur was nearly a small village under another name. The region was then known by the name of Kather.

In very early times the region was known as Uttara Panchala or simply Panchala, and since about the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., it was called by the name of Kather. The past history of the region, therefore has been intimately connected with that of Panchala, Kather, Rohilkhand and the Rampur State. No archaeological survey, exploration or excavation has so far been carried out in the region. Ancient monuments and antiquities, if any, were almost entirely wiped out during the last few centuries. Still there are some villages like Anjan Khera, Berkhera, Isakhera, Karkhera, Khandikhera, Lakhankhera, Lambakhera, Mahuakhera, Narkhera, Sunarkhera and Turkhera, with names ending in the term 'Khera' which implies that they are considerably old sites, Villages Bhamraua, Bhitargaon and Saifni, again are locally claimed to be as old as the Mahabharata age<sup>1</sup>, but there is no archaeological or literary evidence as yet available in support. The region is included in the tract where the Vedic Aryans established their early settlement. The tract was usually known as Brahmarshidesa, that part of Aryavarta in the Madhyadesa which continued to be a strong hold of Vedic religion and culture for a long time"<sup>2</sup>.

The first Muslim invasion of Kather appears to have taken place in 1194 A.D., when Shahabuddin Ghauri, soon after the battle of Chandwar (near Etawah), crossed the Ganga and entered this tract<sup>3</sup>.

It was however his favourite slave and general, Qutbuddin Aibak, who finally conquered Budaun, and made it seat of an In 1764 A.D. Saadullah Khan died and in following year Rehmat Khan, who had reluctantly joint Shujaudaula against the English, was defeated at Kora by Colonel Carnic in May 1765 A.D. and peace was concluded with the English in August. For the next five year the Rohilles remained peace, but in 1770 a series of misfortunes began which in less than five year almost extinguished the Rohilla power from its expanding territories.

In 1774 A.D. the Rohillas were routed at Miranpur Katra in Shahjahanpur, by the combined forces of Nawab Shujaudaula of Oudh and English troops of Warren Hastings, and Hafiz Rehmat Khan was slain, after this Nawab Faizullah Khan signed a treaty, by which he was left secure only in possession of the state Rampur<sup>4</sup>. In 1775 A.D. Nawab Faizullah Khan founded a city. It is said that its site was a group of four villages, and Nawab Faizullah Khan gave the name Mustufabad alias 'Rampur'<sup>15</sup>.

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He died in 1793 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Nawab Mohammad Ali Khan, but soon the new Nawab was replaced by his brother Ghulam Mohammad Khan<sup>16</sup>.

The state was now held under the British guarantee, and consequently, when news of Mohammad Ali Khan's downfall was received, the Farrukhabad bridge under Sir Robert Abercrombie was lent to the Nawab Wazir, Asifuddaula, in order that the new ruler might be deposed and Ahmad Ali Khan, the infant son of Mohammad Ali Khan, be installed on the throne<sup>17</sup>.

After some severe losses, the British and Asifuddaula Army's got the success and Ahmad Ali Khan was proclaimed nawab, and Ghulam Mohammad Khan on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and eventually died in 1828 A.D. at Nadaun near Kangra in Punjab. He ruled the state for three months and 22 days<sup>18</sup>.

Nawab Ahmad Ali Khan was confined in possession of the city and of lands yielding revenue of 10 lacs a year, the rest being taken by the Nawab Wazir. The treaty was signed on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1794, and by it, Nasrullah Khan, the son of Nawab Abdullah Khan was appointed regent and guardian of the Nawab Ahmad Ali Khan until the later came of age<sup>19</sup>.

In 1801 the Rohilkhan was ceded to the British government, but this did not affect the state and the rights of the Nawab<sup>20</sup>.

### **Nawab Ahmad Ali Khan (1794-1840) :**

Ahmad Ali Khan was born in 1787 A.D. He was seven years of age when he was proclaimed Nawab<sup>21</sup>.

Asifuddaula was very exacting in his pecuniary demands on Ahmad Ali Khan. Nasrullah Khan, the regent of the Nawab, However offered three lacs twenty one thousand gold mohars, which were accepted. Still the Nawab Wazir was not quite satisfied with this offer and ventured to annex a sizable part of the Rohilla territory yielding six lacs of per annum. Treaties were signed and duly ratified and Ahmad Ali Khan was formally installed as Nawab<sup>22</sup>.

Sir John Shore, the British governor on behalf of the East India Company guaranteed the treaties. The annual value of the Jagir or free grant was stated in treaty ten lacs. Ahmed Ali Khan agreed to pay an allowance of Rs. 1500/- Per month to Ghulam Mohammad Khan, former Nawab, provided he lived quietly outside the limits of Rampur territory. For the four sons of Ghulam Mohammed Khan allowed to remain in Rampur, some small allowances were fixed.

Nasrullah Khan held the office of Regent for sixteen years and a few months. He got Rs.40000/annum as pay. He accompanied Ghulam Mohammad Khan at the Dujora battle<sup>23</sup>, so called on account of the conjunction of two streams. He was a man of liberal views, of good moral character and his administration was popular and fairly successful. Nawab Ahmed Ali Khan liked and respected him and during the time that Nasrullah Khan was regent, Nawab Ahmed Ali Khan never showed any desire to interfere with his

arrangements. Practically the office of Regent only ceased to exist on the death of Nasrullah Khan<sup>24</sup>.

Soon after Nasrullah Khan's death Nawab Ahmed Ali Khan was persuaded by his malicious countries to avenge his father's blood<sup>25</sup>, and though at times he felt inclined to act on the advice, yet the consciousness that he was now a ruler, included him rather to be generous and to forgive. With these views he left up all thoughts in that direction. Leaving the reins of governments in the hands of his servants Ahmed Ali Khan indulged in debauchery and sports. He was fond of tiger shooting and was in camp for a great part of the year in the forests adjoining the Rampur territory<sup>26</sup>.

Notwithstanding many weak points in his character he was firm in his religious tenets and the spiritual leaders of the day were special objects of his regard and patronage. During the Moharram and on other holy occasions, he refrained from drinking and distributed food liberally to the poor and need<sup>27</sup>.

The administration of justice and all revenue and financial arrangements were inadequate.

In 1230 A.H. there was a severe famine and twenty or more corpses of the poor might be daily seen in streets and other parts of the state. Nobody cared for these helpless creatures<sup>28</sup>.

In 1241 A.H. the powder magazine and factory where a large number of men, women and children were at work, accidentally entrapped in fire. The building and the occupants were blown up and the whole city felt a shock as of a tremendous earthquake. The number of lives destroyed was sixty four<sup>29</sup>.

Guchia, a female musician, had acquired great influence over the Nawab. She had a voice in public affairs too and her kinsfolk had accumulated large wealth. She was subsequently married by the Nawab and was entitled "IMTIAZ MAHAL"<sup>30</sup>. Sallo and Batto were two other very influential maids (Londils) in the Haram of the Nawab<sup>31</sup>.

About 1251 A.H., Ghulam Husain Khan, the nawab's minister was shot dead by a person said to be a thakur. He was captured.

Nawab Ahmed Ali Khan suspected several persons of participation in the murder. One of these was Nizam Darogha, who was smashed by the Nawab himself<sup>32</sup>.

Dhonkal Singh, a Kayasth of Shahjahanpur was then appointed to the foremost post of honour. He was a shrewd and powerful administrator and in a short time gained the full confidence of his master. But he was arrogant and to a certain extent willful.

One day in 1255 A.H. as the Nawab was fishing at a tank and Dhonkal Singh attended to him, a Pathan from Bareilly district made a murderous assault on Dhonkal Singh. He received several cuts from a sword on his chest and back, but the injuries were not serious and he recovered in a short time. The culprit was chased, captured and convicted to death<sup>33</sup>.

In the following year 1256 A.H., when the Nawab was seriously ill, and confined to bed, a design was set on foot for killing Dhonkal Singh.

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A large mob of rioters assembled in the city, they provided themselves with firearms and obtained possession of one or two big guns from the artillery. They went to the house of Dhonkal Singh and fired a volley. Dhonkal Singh and his followers shut themselves in, but Karimullah a sepoy of the infantry, and Ghulam Khan, (brother in law of the Nawab) climbed over a wall and thus effected an entrance. Dhonkal Singh's servants made a brave resistance, but were soon overpowered. The assailants entered the house and killed Dhonkal Singh with seventy one of his servants and followers. Dhokal Singhs' property was plundered and a portion of his house demolished<sup>34</sup>.

Mr. Dick, the collector of Bijnor, with a small detachment of British troops, was encamped on the other bank of British troops, was encamped on the other bank of Koshi, and this news was conveyed to him, but as the Nawab, thought seriously ill, was still alive, Mr. Dick did not considered it proper to interfere. When the Nawab died in two or three days time in 1256 A.H.) (1856 A.H.) Mr. Dick came to the city and after a short stay returned to his district<sup>35</sup>.

There was a general grief and mourning on the Nawab's death. Much regret was felt that Nawab had left no male issue. Sharma Taj Dar Begum was the only child that the Nawab left behind. She was then about 8 years old<sup>36</sup>.

Nawab Ahmed Ali Khan was buried in the area of the village of Nankar two miles to the North East of the city and a mausoleum was erected over grave<sup>37</sup>.

### **Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan (1840 to 1855) :**

After the death of Nawab Ahmed Ali Khan the question of a successor was before the British government, the claims of Shamsa. Tajdar Begum was set aside. Mr. Frances Robinson, the commissioner Rohilkhand and agent for the Rampur State, put forward Mohammad Saiyid Khan the eldest son of Nawab Ghulam Mohammad Khan, who was serving the British Government as deputy collector at Budaun<sup>38</sup>. Sir Charles Matcalf supported the nomination which was eventually confirmed by Lord William Bentinck.

Thus the Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan was installed as ruler of the Rampur State in 1256 A.H., corresponding to 20<sup>th</sup> August 1840 A.D.<sup>39</sup>. He was born on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1776.<sup>40</sup>

Immediately after his accession, he embarked on the work of effecting reforms in the state, establishing courts of justice and organizing regular army<sup>41</sup>. He introduced new fiscal measures, these resulted in great improvement in the land revenue and in relief to the cultivators<sup>42</sup>.

Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan was both a soldier and scholar, and no doubt in consequence of the training. He had received in British service. He devoted more attention than his predecessors to the internal administration of the state.

The two prominent officials of the Nawab Shah Mohammad Khan of Moradabad and Hakeem Saadat Ali Khan of Aonla were very capable administrators, and talented persons. With the help of these two persons Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan got a very good control over administration of

the state. The timings of Nawab for state work were from 4 A.M. to 11 P.M. Slowly and gradually he controlled all the matters related to his domination.

Some time after his succession the widows of the late Nawab Ahmad Ali Khan became alienated with him and she sent a complaint against the Nawab to the government, and in her complaint she wrote that the government should allow her family to migrate from Rampur. But according to the agreement with the Nawab, the government wrote to Nawab that if they migrated from Rampur, the pension of these royal ladies should be stopped<sup>43</sup>.

But after some discussion with the Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan. These Begmaats (royal ladies) decided to stay in Rampur and the widow of Nawab Ahmad Ali Khan also agreed to marry her daughter Shamsa Tajdar Begum with Syed Mehdi Ali Khan, the son of Shahabzade Syed Haffezullah Khan (Brother of Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan) But after this marriage a series of confrontation was started<sup>44</sup>.

In 1849 Syed Mehdi Ali Khan went to Moradabad without the permission of the Nawab, he met with Mr. Wilson, the collector of Moradabad and subsequently wrote a complaint against Nawab Mohd. Saiyid Khan to the commissioner of Bareilly. He failed in his efforts and returned to Rampur<sup>45</sup>.

But after some time he again wrote to the British Govt. about the claim of his wife Shamsa Tajdar Begum to the throne of Rampur state but British Govt. rejected the claim<sup>46</sup>.

To stop the confrontation with Syed Mehdi Ali Khan and his wife Shamsa Tajdar Begum, the Nawab Mohd. Saiyid Khan increased the salary of Shamsa Tajdar Begum from Rs. 1000 p.m. to Rs. 2000 p.m.; and in return she confirmed the loyalty of her family with the Nawab. She also agreed with her claim to the throne. This agreement draw took place in January 1852<sup>47</sup>.

In 1851 Lord Dalhousei, the governor general of India, came to Rohilkhand and also visited Rampur. On the request of Nawab Mohd. Saiyid Khan, Lord Dalhousei accepted the right of succession on the throne for his son Yusuf Ali Khan At Moradabad, Governor General presented a Robe (Khilaat) confirming the succession<sup>48</sup> of Yusuf Ali Khan.

During Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan's rule there was a marked improvement in the administration of the state. He organised civil and criminal courts of justice and introduced a system of government previously unknown in the state. The land revenue collection which had fallen to 1½ lacs was considerably raised. He established a Chowki and sixteen Thanas. Some new buildings like a stable, a Buggi-Khana and Moti Masjid were erected, and certain new roads like near Afghanpur and near Bagh Benazeer, were constructed<sup>49</sup>.

He was an excellent scholar and well acquainted with Tib (Unani medicine). He was a poet and good prose writer. He honoured the scholars and gave them services in his Darbar. Shaikh Wahid-uz-Zaman Khan was a famous scholar of his period.

Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan was a follower of Shia Sect.<sup>50</sup> He built an Imam Bara near

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Kothi Khursheed Manzil, and gold and silver Alams and Zarihs presented to the Imam Bara. Nawab Mohammad Saiyid Khan died on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1855 A.D. (13 Rajab 1271 A.H.). After a reign of 15 years<sup>51</sup>. He left five sons and four daughters. His tomb is in the building used as an Imam Bara near the Khursheed Manzil (in Qila Rampur).

He was succeeded by Nawab Mohammad Yusuf Ali Khan who ruled it for a long period and strengthened the state.

### Conclusion

Princely state of Rampur flourished up to the 20th century before it merged into the Union of India, under the Rohilla Afghans. The natural bravery and great support of the native inhabitants strengthened their power. The prevailing political and military condition in the country after the decline of Mughals contributed to their success. These rulers maintained peace and good administration in the region and gave great patronage to the art and architecture, language and literature, their healthy relation with the British government helped them not only to survive but also to develop the state. Almost one and half century marked the prosperity for the people of Rampur.

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