Abstract

The Dogra rulers of Jammu and Kashmir have contributed a lot in the heritage of Dogra state. In the field of Architecture, they have constructed beautiful temples, Saraias, Bowalies, forts etc. Among such construction forts catches the eyes as they are extended to the boundaries of the Jammu and Kashmir state. This paper is an attempt to study the role of forts like Bahu, Akhnur etc. as a heritage of Dogra rulers, which help in restoring Dogra identity. The paper studies the stratigraphic location of fort as an important strategy behind the unification of twenty-two principalities into one Dogra state during nineteenth century. The forts disclose the reason to build them, engineering skills, aesthetic values etc. of Dogra rulers. It also highlights the Role of archaeological survey of India and state archaeological department in preserving these forts as revenue generator and tourism industry. Although the paper discusses the role of forts in restoring glorious history of Dogra but the main focus is on the Bahu fort as it is situated in the heartland of the Jammu region. This paper will help in understanding the role of forts in reviving the Dogra identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Jammu and Kashmir state forms a part of the hill regions of the Himalayas. Under the patronage of the Dogra ruler, Jammu and Kashmir princely state witnessed large number of developments in the field of architecture during eighteenth and nineteenth century in all parts of the state, most of them are still exist in good condition. Among all these construction, Jammu is famous for its forts, the remains of which can been seen scattered all over the region. They are the heritage of Dogra rulers, which help in restoring Dogra identity. The archaeology as a science is significant for the restoration of
the various stages of the development of man in the past for a region such as Jammu where literary text is scanty and its history is written on the basis of the archaeological evidences. The word Archaeology is derived from Greek words Archaies meaning "ancient" or Archie meaning “beginning” and logos meaning “discourse”, which means the discourse that deals with the ancient period. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Archaeology established as a formal discipline.

In the context of Jammu region, Archaeology has played an important role in reconstructing the unrevealed regional identity of Dogra. The Archaeological and Research Department was established on 20th June 1904 in Jammu and Kashmir state. On 1st July 1958, the Archaeological and Research Department was divided into two separate archaeological departments, one branch of archaeology in Kashmir and other branch in Jammu. In Jammu region, the Archaeological Survey of India became active in 1961-62. The early history of the state is lost in the mist of past and even common tradition is silent. Hence, the archaeological object such as fort plays an important role in reviving Dogra splendour.

The architectural activity that flourished in the 18th and early 19th centuries includes Palaces, Haveli, Temples, Sarais, Baolis, forts etc. Among all these monuments the forts reflect the rich and the glorious triumphs of Dogra history. Jammu being located on the frontier of India always has the fear of foreign invaders. So, provisions of forts become important for the existence and security of Dogra people. The rulers of twenty-two princely states and their successors constructed these residential and defensive forts from time to time at their respective capitals and in adjoining areas, which tells the story of rise and downfall of Dogra dynasty. These forts are furnished with the names of kings, their eras, grandeur and many other important actions of Dogra antiquity are chronoclsed here.

II. METHODOLOGY

The work is based on literary and archaeological data. The literary sources are consulted to understand the development of archaeology in Jammu region. To study the present day status of the fort heritage of Dogra the the interview technique-using detailed questionnaire schedule is used to understand the people opinion regarding this building.

III. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR STATE:

The Jammu & Kashmir is the northern most state of Indian republic and lies between 32°17” north to 37°6” north latitude and 73°26” east to 80°30” east longitude. Jammu was an ancient principality seems to have suzerainty over all the states in the outer hills to the east, as far as the Ravi and over Kishtwar and Bhadarwah in the Chenab valley. The duggar or Jammu land is bounded by huge mountains like Hindukush, Karakoram etc. in the north, rivers like Indus, Jhelum, Chenab etc. drain this region and make the plain area a fertile land. The Jammu region presents an extraordinary variety of climatic conditions from sub-tropical in the summer season to temperate in the winter season.
All these geographical factors have played an important role for the construction of fort. Forts like Samba, Bhimgarh, Mahorgarh etc., were constructed on hilltops, forts like Bahu, Akhnur etc., on the banks of river on a hill top, forts of Jasrota, Bahu, Basholi etc., were constructed as fort cum palaces.

Jammu has limited ancient buildings or remains, nor anything that indicate that it is a place of great antiquity. Though the term Jammu is not referred by that name in Sanskrit literature or in any ancient records. The first historical mention of the state, under the name of Durgara, occurs on two Chamba Copper Plate of the eleventh century referring to this state, it was than in existence and ruled by its own chief.\textsuperscript{iv}

The term Dogra, firmly applicable to the residence of entire territory from the Ravi to the Jhelum river. The land they inhabit is called ‘Dugar’, in Sanskrit Dvigartdesh term is used, and people of this land are called Dogra.\textsuperscript{v} It includes the territory of Kathua, Jammu, Reasi, Khistwar, Kashmir, Ladakh, Rajouri etc. The Dogra are the great Aryan race that settled in the mountain, or rather, who settled in the lower hills. Dogra does not mean Hindu only but the Muslims, Sikhs, and other communities living in Jammu region.

The importance of forts in Jammu region can be gleaned from the fact that the very name Dogra has perhaps, been derived from the word Durgara, which symbolized ‘people who lived in Durgas’ (forts). The valour of the Dogra can be seen from the presence of these abundant Forts. The literary texts classify forts into seven types; among them mountainous forts are most important. But in Dogra region there are some frontier fort, mountainous fort, some forts are fort cum palace. These fort were found in only those areas where the Dogra ruler expanded their rule, with the motive to protect themselves and their people from invasion. It was this process of building small and large forts in every corner of the state that helped the unification of the twenty-two principality of Duggar land. At last, the “Treaty of Amritsar” signed on 16 March 1846 between Gulab Singh and British government resulted into the formation of Jammu and Kashmir State.

Dogra were highly skilled and it can be reflected by the fact that the majority of the forts use brick built structures while some are built of wooden, stone or stone and brick combined.\textsuperscript{vi} From these we come to know that Dogra’s were highly skilled in utilizing the naturally available material for construction of such a magnificent forts. Most of the forts of Jammu were constructed on hilltops, surrounded by deep ravines, nallahs or the rivers on three sides, while fourth side was connected with land through a moat. Another important feature that is found in almost every fort was Kula deva temple, Isht dev temple built in its campus such as the fort of Bhimgarh, it is dedicated to Bhim devta, the temple of Maha Kali (popularly known as Bawe Wali Mata), found inside the Bahu fort, was perhaps, built by Maharaja Ranjit Dev of Dev dynasty, all this show that the Dogra ruler were religious person and they have their local dieties to whom they offered pray and they belief in Shakti cult.
Every height and spur of Jammu region was crowned by a defensive fort or a watch tower. There are about one hundred twenty-eight forts has been reported in Jammu region. These forts are found from Punch to Basohli and most of these are the hill forts. It seems that an effective system of defence mechanism in the form of forts developed in Jammu region. As these forts were well garrisoned and mounted by guns.

The need for building so many forts in a region like Jammu seems to have arose from the fact that the twenty-two states that came into existence in the 9th-10th centuries AD started facing disturbances in the plains and the adjoining areas of Jammu region due to foreign invasion. The destruction was caused by the invaders from the 13th century AD onwards till the last quarter of 17th century AD. The rulers of Jammu thus, remained busy in struggle with these forces up to 17th century AD, because of which attention begin to be paid to make defence systems strong to counter the foreign invasions. Hence, the period saw the mushroom growth of forts in this region.

IV. HISTORY OF FORTS

The archaeological remains of fortified town prove the construction of forts back to Indus valley Civilization. In Vedic literature, reference to the term ‘pur’ is found, which meant a fort. Rajatragini does mentions the forts constructed near trade routes to keep an eye on the safe transit of caravans. These small forts built at the different dranga, shows that they served the purpose of defence, customs and police administration. They are garrisoned by troops under special commanders, designated as drangesa or drangadhipa. This proves that the frontiers were protected by forts. This shows the the Dogra rulers have concerns for their subject and love for their land.

The beginning of the fort building in Jammu region can be trace back to the ancient period, when Babbor, on the route between chamba to Kashmir, became the capital of this region. Due to Muslims inroads the capital of Jammu Raj was shifted to Babbor or Babbapura for security reasons. It is here, where we found the earliest evidence of fort. Later in 14th century Raja Maldev of Jammu shifted the capital from Babapura to Jammu, Bahu fort was made there. Ferishta mentions the construction of a fort in Jammu by a Persian king Kaid Raj. The literary sources mention the fort of Loharakotta or Lohkot, constructed to stop the Mohammadan inroads. Timur in his autobiography, the Malfuzat-i-Timuri, mentions at least two forts of Jammu, one near Mansar and other, the fort of Bahu, which he invaded in 1398-99 AD. The Abdullah in his work, Tarikh-i-Daudi, refers to the Sur fort of Mahorgarh, which was constructed in 1549.

V. FORTS CUM PALACES: RESTORING DOGRA IDENTITY

Identity refers to modern formulation of dignity, pride, or honour. Jammu is a cultural mosaic and represents diversities in regional identities. These diversities based on religious, linguistic, cultural, tribal and caste categories are so placed that one can see a pattern of multi-layered and overlapping identities. So, state that earlier have only one identity, which is Dogra. Now has been divided into three different identities: Dogra,
Kashmiriyyat, Ladhakhi. There is an urgent need to revive that old lost Dogra identity that used to hold all these different cultures, ethnic groups together.

There was a time when Dogra were the rulers of this territory. Now, in the 21st century they are facing the discrimination problem. Under the influence of the urbanisation and dominance of Kashmiri’s issues the glory of Dogra is fading. In last few years, there has been as increasing proclamation for Jammu’s regional identity. Various political parties, leaders and organisations have been speaking on behalf of the people of the Dogra region.

The Jammu region has large number of forts and among them prominent is Bahu fort. The famous state protected Monument Bahu fort is located on a hillock on the left bank of River Tawi opposite to the old Jammu city. The fort was naturally protected on three sides-north-western sides was protected by River Tawi and southwest and south-eastern sides by slopes with dense forest. Local legends ascribe the construction of the fort to Bahu Lochan, founder of Jammu city, over 3,000 years ago.

It is believed by some scholars that the fort was built by raja Jag Dev (1530-1571), while other considered Raja Parasram (1580-1610), son of raja Jag Dev as its founder. Number of Dogra ruler came but it was Raja Kripal Dev who enhance the fort by building the Palace within it. It was Raja Gulab Singh who rebuilt the fort after 1822 AD. He used Mughal Laukhori bricks with lime mortar in the construction of the fort. The fort which was abandoned for a while, was again made the palace for royal family by Maharaja Gulab Singh. The fort which was abandoned for a while, was again made the palace for royal family by Maharaja Gulab Singh.

According to tradition, the capital of Jammu was at Bahu, where the ancient fort and a small town still exist. The wall of the fort is about 35 ft. high. There is a flank tower at each corner and in the middle of each face, except on the east side. The fort has all the important features of a strong fort like bastions, slits, turrets, rampart wall, gateway, towers, and cloisters. The fort had sustained the invasion of Sikh misls, Mughals etc. Looking at this fort one can imagine the wars fought here, invasions it has faced, and the grandeur that the royal family have enjoyed.

Residential chambers of Rajas in different forts, which was once decorated with these fading wall paintings, are still visible, help in imagining the aura of the Dogra’s personal, social, political life. Though constructed in the early period, they are in good state of preservation. Combined with the glorious history of Dogra for years from now, the fort can be developed as an archaeological park cum museum, it is a part of our tangible heritage that stored the Dogra identity, which are essential to be conserved and preserved.

There is a need to study the different perspective on Dogra regional identities which have largely been ignored. The feeling of the regionalism has emerged among the Jammu people because of the neglecting behaviour of the government for this region. Different historical circumstances, economic systems, culture, religion and politics have all contributed to the changing and shaping the Dogra identity. The Dogra are always
very conscious about their identity. The Dogra cultural renaissance started in 1940’s. These forts are not only the rich treasure house of the Dogra’s past, but also the immediate source for the modern Dogra renaissance. The rulers or warrior like Maharaja Gulab Singh, General Zorawar Singh etc. were revived through the study of these architectural development as a modern symbol of Dogra identity, valour, sense of justice etc. All these were also thought to function as the central icons that, hold the Dogra society together. The Dogra forts and Palaces is a mirror to the personality of Dogra’s and a benchmark of their identity.

VI. CONCLUSION
Forts that dominate the majority of the Dogra region can be seen in the length and breadth of the Dogra region and they help in the formation of the Dogra identity. The tradition of raising forts was very old in Jammu. After the coming up of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the construction of forts increased in this region. By looking at these forts, we can see the one of the finest monumental remains that depicts the aura of Dogra rulers, who have ruled over this territory. These forts are the preserver of Dogra identity; by studying these forts and Palaces Dogra history can reach up to new height. Now-a-days the area around Archaeological remains is coming under urbanisation, because of that these architectural buildings are in stage of endanger, that carries the glorious past of Dogra ruler. The archaeological survey of India and state archaeological department is playing their role in preserving these forts by making them as source for reviving Dogra identity, revenue generator, and tourism industry. Common masses should come forward in reviving the Dogra Identity, before we lose our heritage and waste our time to blame each other. It is time to, initiate a movement to restore Dogra identity which is now lost in the history, to preserve our cultural heritage, to promote the tourism industry and for all those who have curiosity to know the history of the Dogra.

VII. REFERENCES


TO CITE THIS PAPER

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