Relations of Shardul Singh Shek hawat with the Jaipur princely state

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To understand the relationship between Shardul Singh Shekhawat, who established Shekhawat power in Jhunjhunu during the medieval period, and the Jaipur state, it is important to understand the relations between the Shekhawats and the Jaipur state. Shardul Singh belonged to the Raisalot branch of the Shekhawats. The name 'Shekhawat' is used for the descendants of Rao Shekha, the progenitor of the Shekhawats.[1] That is, the descendants of Rao Shekha came to be known by his name as Shekhawats. Rao Shekha was the grandson of Baloji, the second son of Udaykaran, the 13th ruler of Amer of the Kachwaha Rajputs, and the son of Mokal Singh. According to the prevailing tradition of succession, after the death of Udaykaran, his eldest son, Narsingh, ascended the throne of Amer, and the remaining sons were given some territories for their livelihood. Baloji was given the village of Barwara. After Baloji, his son Mokal Singh left Barwara and established the present-day Amarsar village and also took control of the 'nearby Nyan'. Subsequently, son of Mokal Singh, Shekha also brought many other villages under his control. After Rao Shekha, his successors divided into various branches and established their influence over a vast area. The Shekhawats greatly expanded the territory under their control. During the time of Akbar, the area of villages under the Shekhawats was larger than the area under the influence of Jaipur.[2]

Rao Shekha's grandfather, Baloji, received the village of Barwada in the Jaipur state because he did not have an elder son. Therefore, Baloji had to send some of the foals born in his territory to Jaipur every year. This arrangement gradually transformed into a political tax (lag). This tradition continued during Rao Shekha's time as well. Rao Shekha had acquired most of his territory through his own strength, and therefore, he considered himself independent of Amer's influence. For this reason, he considered the tradition of giving horses to Amer every year to be wrong. Consequently, he stopped sending horses to Amer. This led to six battles between Amer and Rao Shekha. In the final battle, when Shekha drove the Amer ruler, Chandrasen, back to his capital, Amer, Chandrasen granted Shekha equal status and made a settlement. In this way, Shekha became independent of Amer's political dominance

The freedom obtained by Rao Shekha was enjoyed by the Shekhawat clan for several generations. During the time of Rai Sal Ji, who was the third-generation descendant of Rao Shekha, the power of the Shekhawats increased even further. Their descendants came to be known as Raisalots after him. There is no evidence available to suggest that Rai Sal Ji was under the suzerainty of Jaipur. On the contrary, there are examples of them being granted independent mansabs (military ranks) by the

Mughals.[5] Bhupal Singh, the founder of the Khetri thikana (estate), also belonged to this Raisalot branch of the Shekhawats. Thus, it is clear that the Shekhawats were completely independent of the Jaipur state from the very beginning of their rise to prominence. They were not subject to any tax from Jaipur.

After understanding the development of their relations with the Jaipur state at the time of the Shekhawats' emergence, one should understand the process by which Shardul Singh established Shekhawat power in Jhunjhunu. Shardul Singh Shekhawat removed the Kaimkhani zamindars, who had been established in Jhunjhunu for years, and established the rule of the Shekhawats in Jhunjhunu. Shortly afterward, he also established his authority over areas like Narhad and others. After Shardul Singh's death, the territory he controlled was divided among his five surviving sons. This division of Shardul Singh's territory is known as Panchpana. Bhupal Singh, the son of Kishan Singh, one of the shareholders of Panchpana, was the founder of the Khetri Thikana. Thus, the beginning of the establishment of Shekhawat influence in Jhunjhunu by Shardul Singh culminated in the establishment of the Khetri Thikana.

There has been considerable controversy regarding Shardul Singh's role in making the Shekhawat power influential in Jhunjhunu and the surrounding areas. The Shekhawats maintain that they conquered several areas in the past by force of arms. For centuries, they have established their influence in this region by defeating the landlords, Kayamkhanis, and Pathans who resided here. Therefore, their status is similar to that of independent landlords, like the Kayamkhanis.[6] On the other hand, the Jaipur state maintained that the Shekhawats established themselves in this region as subordinate leaseholders of Jaipur. Therefore, they are merely leaseholders who collected taxes under Jaipur, and for this reason, they cannot be placed in the category of independent chiefs or landlords.[7]

The dispute between the two sides escalated. Jaipur constituted a committee under the chairmanship of C.U. Wills to obtain a true picture of this dispute, which submitted its detailed report to the Jaipur court. However, the thikanedars (landlords) refused to accept the report, accusing it of being biased against Jaipur and motivated by malice towards the thikanas. They rejected the conclusions of the Wills report and presented their own side of the story. Due to the controversial nature of the report, the Jaipur court postponed the implementation of the recommendations of the Wills report.

The recommendations of the Wills report could not be implemented, but the issues on which this report was focused remained a point of contention between Jaipur and other thikanedars, including Khetri. These can be considered the main reasons for the disputes that have been ongoing for years. In fact, the issues raised in the Wills Report formed the basis of the disputes between Khetri and Jaipur that lasted for many years. For example, what is the extent of Jaipur state's authority over

Khetri? What is the status of the Khetri thikanedar (feudal lord)? Is he an independent chief or a subordinate jagirdar (landlord) under Jaipur? To what extent does Khetri's internal autonomy extend, and what rights does he possess, etc.? On some of these questions, both powers—Khetri and Jaipur—had slightly different opinions, and this difference was the cause of the disputes. The events in the history of relations between Khetri and Jaipur have been influenced by these fundamental disputes. These fundamental disputes, depending on the influence of contemporary events, took on various forms.

As mentioned earlier, the Shekhawats, under the leadership of Shardul Singh, defeated the Kaimkhanis from Jhunjhunu and established their influence. This was the situation. From this perspective, the Shekhawats should be accepted as the power that filled the void created by the removal of the Kaimkhanis. Thus, the position that the Kaimkhanis held in the politics of that time was now occupied by the Shekhawats, the power that replaced them.

The Kaimkhani were the hereditary landlords of this region. One branch of their family held sway over Fatehpur, while the other controlled Jhunjhunu. The Kaimkhani were originally Chauhan Rajputs, who converted to Islam during the time of Karmchand, son of Moterao, who was in the sixth generation of Jait Singh. This event took place during the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq. Firoz Shah converted Karmchand to Islam, gave him the name Kaim Khan, and it is for this reason that the descendants of Kaim Khan became known as 'Kaimkhani'.[9]

Fateh Khan, son of Taj Khan, established the influence of the Kaimkhani in Fatehpur.[10] On the other hand, the credit for establishing the Kaimkhani Nawabate in Jhunjhunu goes to Shams Khan, son of Muhammad Khan.[11] The successors of Shams Khan ruled for a long time. The Kaimkhani rulers maintained their control over Jhunjhunu and the surrounding areas during the reigns of various powers in Delhi. They remained the landlords of Jhunjhunu for almost two hundred years until they were driven out by Shardul Singh. A very clear and important document describing the position of the Kaimkhanis is from 1721 AD, known as the Zamindari Agreement. In this document, Fazal Khan and Ruhel Khan are referred to as the landlords of Jhunjhunu.[12] In Jaipur State Papers number 4, 7 and 9, Fazal Khan Kaimkhani is also referred to as the landlord. For a long time due to their land rights in the region, these established landlords held the status of chiefs.[13] These chiefs were landowners of relatively smaller areas. They were referred to by terms like zamindar or chief, which were used synonymously during the Mughal period. Moreland referred to the large tracts of land in the imperial territories, which were under the control of Hindu chieftains and acted as intermediaries between the peasants and the government, as zamindars or chiefs.[14] In addition to paying a share of the land revenue from their territories, the chiefs enjoyed complete internal autonomy in other matters.

After understanding the position of the Kaimkhanis, it is also necessary to know whether the Shekhawats, under the leadership of Shardul Singh, defeated the Kaimkhanis and seized their territory in Jhunjhunu or not. The Wills Report rejects the incident of Shardul Singh defeating the Kaimkhanis by force.[15] It considers Shiv Singh and Shardul Singh merely as contractors of Jaipur.[16] However, very strong evidence to disprove Wills' claim is a letter from January 1732, written by Shiv Singh and Shardul Singh to Hemraj, an officer of Jaipur. This letter clearly mentions the battle between the Kaimkhanis and the Shekhawats.[17] In addition to this, there are several other writings that provide information about the Shekhawats driving out the Kaimkhanis.[18]

The assistance given by Jaipur to the Shekhawats in ousting the Kaimkhanis was limited to using Jaipur's influence to prevent the central power, the Mughals, from taking the side of the Kaimkhanis.[19] This assistance, provided by the larger branch of the Shekhawat clan of Jaipur, was natural at the level of kinship, and at the political level, it was based on the Shekhawats accepting the symbolic suzerainty of Jaipur in exchange for this assistance. This was the relationship that made the Shekhawats subordinate to Jaipur.

Another dispute that made the relations between the two powers contentious was Jaipur's acquisition of the lease of Jhunjhunu and other areas and granting the right of revenue collection to people like Shardul Singh.[20] Sawai Jai Singh took the lease of Jhunjhunu, Narhad, etc., from the Mughal subedars and subleased it to Shardul Singh and some others. Since Shardul Singh was a lessee of Jaipur, the Wills Report attempted to prove that Shardul Singh's right over Jhunjhunu was only for revenue collection and not the right of ownership over the land.[21]

As explained above, Shardul Singh had not only a leasehold but also zamindari rights over this area. Zamindars were required to collect revenue from their area and pay it to the supreme power. Whether the supreme power was the Mughal Faujdar or his revenue collector (ijaredar), it did not affect the status and rights of the zamindar. The process of replacing the Kaimkhanis was a struggle for acquiring zamindari rights at the local level; it did not affect the relations of the zamindars with the powers above them. The zamindars simply had to collect the revenue and pay it to the government, whether the authority was the Mughal Faujdar, his ijaredar, the Jaipur ruler Sawai Jai Singh, or someone else. When the influence of the Mughal power declined, collecting revenue became difficult, and then the powerful ruler of Jaipur, Sawai Jai Singh, acquired the rights to collect revenue. Thus, this change was at the upper level, concerning those who collected revenue. In areas like Jhunjhunu, the change in zamindari at the lower level and the change in ijaredari at the upper level were both almost simultaneous. This happened simultaneously. It was easy for the local landlord to collect revenue from his area. Therefore, the Shekhawats, in addition to being landlords, also obtained the right to collect revenue through the ijara system, thus gaining a double advantage. For the ruler of Jaipur, Sawai Jai Singh, it was also more logical and convenient to grant the right to

collect ijara revenue to the local landlords. In this way, the 'Sadhani' branch of the Shekhawats in Jhunjhunu and their relations with Jaipur were established.

The land grants made by Shardul Singh and his descendants also prove that Shardul Singh possessed zamindari rights. The right to grant land was never given to a contractor. A contractor is merely a contractor who collects revenue, not the owner of the land. Only the owner of the land could donate his property. Shardul Singh and his descendants donated a large amount of land.[22] This proves their zamindari rights.

The opinions expressed by various British officers also provide information regarding the status of the Thikanedars. Regarding Jaipur's relations with the Shekhawati chiefs. Colonel Sadarland has written: "Jaipur's position towards these petty chiefs is the same as that of the supreme power, the British, towards Jaipur. As long as they continue to pay regular tribute, Jaipur will have no right to interfere in their internal affairs."[23] Major Broke has placed the rulers of Shekhawati under the status of feudatory states, whose ancestors acquired the territory by conquest.[24]

Colonel Tod, famous for writing the history of Rajputana, has called the chieftains of Shekhawati "chiefs" who had achieved victory by the power of the sword and who were connected to Jaipur through kinship ties rather than political relations.[25] The Rajputana Gazetteer, edited by Alfred Lyall, also refers to these chiefs as independent conquerors, who had acquired land through conquest rather than receiving it as a jagir from Jaipur, and emphasizes that the relationship of these chiefs with Jaipur was based on kinship.[26] Although the above views of Layal, described in the Rajputana Gazetteer, have been rejected in the Wills Report, Layal's assertion is confirmed by the documents of the Sikar Thikana.[27] Layal's opinion was also confirmed by Elphinstone, Hamilton, and Colonel Lockett.[29] Various English officers such as Lockett, Benyon, Bradford, Thorsby, Byles, etc., who were closely associated with Jaipur and Shekhawati, considered the Thakurs of Shekhawati as chiefs in their reports and writings. Since these officers held high positions and had sufficient access to government documents, their writings cannot be considered false or based on insufficient evidence, as Wills considered them to be in the Wills Report. Among the officers mentioned above, Colonel Lockett was specifically appointed for Shekhawati. It is also noteworthy that in the years following Shardul Singh, when Mughal power was revived under the leadership of Najaf Khan, the Mughals ruled from 1777-1778 and from 1786 to 1789 tax collected by Mughals from Khetri and other thikanas as independent units.[30] The Marathas under the leadership of Mahadji also did the same.[31]

Thus, based on the above analysis, it can be said that the Sadhanies, by struggling at the zamindari level, displaced the Kayamkhanis from the Jhunjhunu, Fatehpur and other areas through the use of force. During this period, the Jaipur court provided them with effective protection and patronage at a higher level (at the level of the central Mughal power), due to which the Kaimkhanis could not obtain sufficient effective assistance from the Mughal court in Delhi. As a result, the Kaimkhanis

were defeated, and their attempts to re-establish their authority over this region proved unsuccessful. The indirect influence of Jaipur was used in defeating the Kaimkhanis. Because of this, the Shekhawats accepted the political suzerainty of Jaipur and agreed to pay a permanent tax to Jaipur for this purpose.

This suzerainty of Jaipur also provided the Sadhaniyas with protection from higher powers. On the other hand, due to the inclusion of Jhunjhunu and other areas in various Mughal jagirs and Jaipur taking its 'ijara' (revenue farming contract), the Sadhani zamindars also became revenue collectors for paying the revenue due to the government to their ijaredar, Jaipur. Later, with the decline of Mughal power, this relationship became permanent. Thus, the Sadhani sardars established a dual relationship with Jaipur. Being zamindars here, they became his subordinate powers and, as jagirdars (landlords), were responsible for revenue collection. However, this did not affect the internal autonomy of these chieftains. Later, the territory conquered by Shardul Singh was divided into five parts (Panchpana), and several thikanas (estates) emerged from it. Khetri was one of the prominent thikanas. Therefore, the fundamental relationship between Jaipur and Khetri remained similar to Shardul Singh's relationship with Jaipur.

The above discussion of Shardul Singh's relations with Jaipur is useful for understanding the initial relations of the Sadhani clan with Jaipur. This is the main factor that led the thikanadars, especially Khetri, to continuously resist Jaipur's attempts to establish unauthorized dominance over them.

References and Notes

1- Jhabarmal Sharma, History of Khetri, page 2

2- Tod, Volume 3, page 1351.

3- Jhabarmal Sharma, History of Khetri, page 23.

4- Ibid., page 23.

5- Ibid., page 23.

6- Reply to Wills Report, paragraph 23.

7- Wills Report, paragraph 23.

8- Reply to Wills Report, paragraph 76.

9- Kayamkhan Raso, page 12 (Wakiyat Kaum Kayamkhani, pages 29-30).

10- Jhabarmal Sharma, Maru Bharati 1/3, page 6.

11- Nainsi Ri Khyat (Editor Sakariya), Part 3, page 274.

12- Jhunjhunu Zamindari Agreement, 1721 AD.

13- Reply to Wills Report, paragraph 23, page 30.

14- Moreland, Agrarian System of Muslim India, pages 6, 25, 26.

15- Wills Report, paragraph 59.

16- Wills Report, paragraph 59.

17- Paper relating to Panchpana Singhana, used in Wills Report Number 40 B

18- Ibid., pages 40 C, 40 D, 40 F and 45.

19- Reply to Wills Report, paragraph 76.

20- Wills Report, paragraphs 76, 77, 78.

21- Ibid., paragraphs 76, 80.

22- List of grants given by the Shekhawats, see Reply to Wills Report, page 87.

23- Captain Sutherland, Sketches of Relations with the Native States, 1837.

24- J.C. Brooke, Political History of Jaipur State, page 11.

25- Tod, Volume III, pages 1404-1407, 1412-1413.

26- Rajasthan Gazetteer, Volume 2, page 141.

27- Letter used in Wills Report, relating to Siker, Paper No. 40.

28- Lockett Report, page 90. And see: Elphinstone, Account of the Kingdom of Kabul; Walter Hamilton, Descriptions of Hindustan.

29- See W.H. Benyon's Report on the Administration of the Rajput States 1867-68, page 29; Lockett Report; Bradford's Rajputana States Administrative, Baiylo's Princely state Tour Report

30- Reply to Wills' report, paragraph 26.

31- Ibid., paragraph 27.