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## MAKING OF A PRINCELY STATE: A CASE STUDY OF BALLABGARH

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this research paper is to study the formation of Princely State of Ballabgarh. Ballabgarh came to prominence after the death of Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb when, in 1705, Gopal Singh ousted the *Taga Brahman* cultivators of Sihi and established Ballabgarh. Murtaza Khan, the local Mughal officer of Faridabad, appointing him as *Chaudhry* of Faridabad *pargana*, entitled to a cess of one *anna* in the rupee on the revenue in 1710. This was the beginning of new regional identity. In, 1720, peasants started a movement under the leadership of Balram Jat against heavy land revenue. Balram killed Murtaza Khan at Faridabad. *Jat Sangh* of Suraj Mal and Balram with his son Kishan Singh and Bhim Singh Gohad Gwalior joined fight against Royal Army on 11 January 1750. Jat power won & Delhi had to give special treatment. For sometime Ballabgarh remained under the Bharatpur State & Maratha. In 1775 the estate was transferred by Delhi Emperor to Ajit Singh. Haryana territory was transferred to the East India Company by the treaty of *Sirji Anjan Gaon* on December 30, 1803. Now Ballabgarh recognized as Independent Princely State and continued as princely state up to Uprising of 1857.

**Key-Words:** *Tewatia got, Taga Brahman, pargana, anna, gajnal, sutarnal, Jat Sangh, diwan, palki, qanungo, kiledar, nazim, qizzilbash, khillat, chaudhry.*

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## Introduction

Ballabgarh came to prominence after the death of Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb. In 1705, Gopal Singh of the Tewatia *got* of the village Alawalpur, came and settled in Sihi<sup>i</sup> (three miles away from Ballabgarh in north) village in the area of Ballabgarh<sup>ii</sup> having forcibly ousted the Taga *Brahman* cultivators of that place who originally established Ballabgarh. After being taken over by Jat adventures<sup>iii</sup> the regime became all the more wealthy and powerful by highway robbery on the Delhi-Mathura road. Murtaza Khan, the local Mughal officer of Faridabad, instead of punishing the rebel, made peace with him by appointing him as *Chaudhry* of Faridabad *pargana*, entitled to a cess of one *anna* in the rupee on the revenue in 1710.<sup>iv</sup> This was the beginning of new regional identity.

In 1711, Gopal Singh died and was succeeded by his son Charan Das who was captured in 1714 and imprisoned in Faridabad fort where he spent some time till his son Balram, duping the *Mohammedan* officer under the pretence of paying a ransom, set him at liberty.<sup>v</sup> In 1720, the local officer of the *pargana* Faridabad, Murtaza Khan was forcefully collecting revenue from the peasants instead of famine. Peasants started a movement under the leadership of Balram Jat.<sup>vi</sup> Balram, son of Charan Das, duped the Murtaza Khan to get free his father. Both fled to Bharatpur and secured the aid of Suraj Mal<sup>vii</sup>.

Balram killed Murtaza Khan at Faridabad who had once imprisoned his father & closed the Delhi-Agra road. In 1739, Muhammad Shah, the Emperor gave the titles of *Naib Bakhshi* and *Rao* to Balram. After Safdar Jang<sup>viii</sup>, Mir Salawat Khan also expedited against Jats. But battle ensued between Royal Army and Suraj Mal. Royal army facilitated their *gajnal* and *sutarnal* artillery from the front to avoid the attack of the Jats. Suraj Mal attacked them from behind on 11 January 1750. As a result, Jat power won. It seemed that this was the informal beginning of '*Jat Sangh*' because Suraj Mal and Balram with his son Kishan Singh and Bhim Singh Gohad Gwalior joined this fight.<sup>ix</sup>

Then Safdar Jang, *wazir* marched against Balram, reached at Khizirabad on June 30, 1750, Balram made his submission through the Maratha envoy but sent back to home. Ahmad Shah dismissed Safdar Jang and appointed Intizam-Ud-Daullah as new *wazir*. Safdar Jang revolted, backed by Suraj Mal and Balram confronted royal army at Faridabad and Ballabgarh. Imad's Chief Agent, Aqibat Mahmud Khan, son of Murtaza Khan (who had been killed by Balram) came forward, Balram offered a fight, but after some fighting, Balram made his submission and agreed to pay the rent and tribute. Aqibat asked Balram to come and settle the revenue demand. When Balram arrived with his *diwan*, one son and an escort of 250 men, Aqibat demanded payment. High words were exchanged and Balram in anger laid his hand on

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the hilt of his sword, but the Badakashis surrounding Aqibat's *palki* fell upon Balram and slew him with his sons, his *diwan* and nine other men on November 29, 1753<sup>x</sup>.

Suraj Mal could not tolerate this insult<sup>xi</sup> & seized Palwal on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1754. The Jats killed Santokh Rai, *qanungo* of Palwal, who had incited the murder of Balram. The Qazi of the place was also captured. In November 1755, he regained Ballabgarh and Ghasira.<sup>xii</sup> Suraj Mal appointed Kishan Singh and Bishan Singh as *kiledar* and *nazim* respectively. Both used their rights upto 1774.<sup>xiii</sup> In 1757, Ahmed Shah Abdali marched against Suraj Mal's strongholds.<sup>xiv</sup> Faridabad was destroyed by fire. The Afghans on 2<sup>nd</sup> February brought 5000 to 7000 heads of poor people saying these were Marathas and Jats. The Shah rewarded them rupees eight per head.<sup>xv</sup>

Suraj Mal had appointed his son Jawahar Singh to take care of the territory near Delhi, while he had himself retired to Kumbher. Ahmed Shah marched against Jawahar Singh with the determination of conquering Bharatpur areas. The campaign began with the siege of Ballabgarh, as Jawahar Singh had taken his post there with Maratha chiefs Shamsheer Bahadur, Antaji Manakeswar, Kishan Singh and Bishan Singh.<sup>xvi</sup> Ahmed Shah personally directed the siege, inflicted a destructive bombardment on Ballabgarh.<sup>xvii</sup> The Jats put up a brave fight, but they could not resist the heavy fire of the Afghans.<sup>xviii</sup>

Jawahar Singh, Kishan Singh, Bishan Singh and the Maratha leaders dressing themselves in *qizzilbash* (Persian) cloths had gone through an underground chamber into the ditch of the fort. From this place, the Afghans issued out to slaughter and plunder.<sup>xix</sup> Suraj Mal opened negotiations with Durrani and Ahmad Shah demanded 45 lakhs. Towards the end of September 1760, Ahmad Shah and Shuja-ud-daulah tried to assure themselves that Suraj Mal should not join the Marathas. So both of them sent robes of honour to Raja Suraj Mal at Ballabgarh. The Raja agreed, put on the *khillat's* and took many oaths giving every assurance that he would not support the Marathas.<sup>xx</sup>

On June 12, 1761, after the defeat of the Marathas, Suraj Mal captured Agra fort by bribery, and in 1762, Kishan Singh and Bishan Singh, sons of Balram were restored the fort of Ballabgarh and nominated *kiledar* and *nazim* of the *pargana* under the Bharatpur ruler.<sup>xxi</sup> At the time of Suraj Mal's death on December 25, 1763, Ballabgarh was a part of Bharatpur State.<sup>xxii</sup>

Balram's sons had been defected as the government had dismissed them from service and wrested their fort at Ballabgarh. The Mughal General set out from Delhi on September 24, 1773. Marching through Barpula and Badarpur, Najaf Khan reached Ballabgarh. Here he

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received a highly important accession to his strength in the person of Ajit Singh, and Hira Singh, son of Bishan Singh, the deposed heirs of Balram.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Ajit Singh and Hira Singh, presented themselves before the emperor at Delhi and agreed to deliver possession of the Ballabgarh *pargana* to the royal authority. Accordingly, Najaf Khan of the imperial establishment was deputed to take it.<sup>xxiv</sup> War broke out between Najaf and Nawal Singh Jat at Banchari. A decisive battle was fought midday on October 30, between Sahar and Barsana. Najaf Khan's superior Generalship gave him victory over the Bharatpur Chief.<sup>xxv</sup> Ajit Singh and Hira Singh were restored the *pargana* of Ballabgarh on April 20, 1774. Ajit Singh was formally entitled 'Raja' and Hira Singh was called 'Raja' and also 'Salar Jang'.<sup>xxvi</sup> In this way, in 1775 the estate was transferred by Delhi Emperor to Ajit Singh.<sup>xxvii</sup> In 1793, Ajit Singh was murdered by his brother Zalim Singh, but was succeeded by his son Bahadur Singh.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Ballabgarh remained under the control of the Marathas till 1803 A.D. With the battle of Laswari on 1<sup>st</sup> November, the Maratha power vanished from northern India.<sup>xxix</sup> British also brought the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam, under their control.<sup>xxx</sup> The Haryana territory was transferred to the East India Company by the treaty of *Sirji Anjan Gaon* on December 30, 1803.<sup>xxxi</sup> Now Ballabgarh came direct control of British. Bahadur Singh died in 1806, and was succeeded by his son Narain Singh who died in the same year.<sup>xxxii</sup> His son Anrudh Singh succeeded him.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Anrudh Singh informed Governor General about the death of his father. He expressed deep grief on this sad incident and solicited favors from the Governor General.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Raja Anrudh Singh died in 1819, leaving two brothers Ram Singh and Kunwar Bughwant Singh and an infant son Sahib Singh. Sahib Singh was his successor, and the grand uncle Kunwar Raj Singh was appointed guardian of the child and the manager of the Estate. The most violent feuds and rancorous disputes ensued and at length the Rani mother taking the infant with her fled from Ballabgarh and fixed her residence in a tent under the walls of Delhi.<sup>xxxv</sup> Sahib Singh, who died childless in 1825 and was succeeded by his paternal uncle Ram Singh.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Ram Singh died in 1829 and Nahar Singh, his son, came to power at the age of 9 years.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The year of 1857 marks a turning point in the history of India. The Uprising broke out in 1857 & Raja Nahar Singh played important role in it. In 1857, there were in all ten princely states in Haryana including Buria, Kalsia, Jind, Jhajjar, Bahadurgarh, Farrukhnagar, Ballabgarh, Pataudi, Dujana and Loharu.<sup>xxxviii</sup> A list with the description of 406 persons who had taken a leading part in the rebellion was prepared by the Government. In the papers on record in the Home Department, Raja Nahar Singh of Ballabgarh was one of them, and figured at serial 176.<sup>xxxix</sup> After the trial by the European Military Commission Raja Nahar Singh was declared a rebel and hanged till death on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1858 in *Chandni Chowk*, Delhi.<sup>xl</sup>

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At the end, it can be concluded that Ballabgarh came to prominence after the death of Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb with the efforts of Gopal Singh who was entitled to a *cess* of one *anna* in the rupee on the revenue in 1710. This was the beginning of new regional identity. In, 1720, peasants started a movement under the leadership of Balram Jat against heavy land revenue. Balram united the local populace. *Jat Sangh* of Suraj Mal and Balram with his son Kishan Singh and Bhim Singh Gohad Gwalior played important role to establish Ballabgarh as centre of power. Delhi had to give special treatment. For sometime Ballabgarh remained under the Bharatpur State & Maratha. In 1775 the estate was transferred by Delhi Emperor to Ajit Singh. Haryana territory was transferred to the East India Company by the treaty of *Sirji Anjan Gaon* on December 30, 1803. Now Ballabgarh recognized as Independent Princely State and continued as princely state up to Uprising of 1857. Therefore, the Princely State of Ballabgarh established under Mughals, aided by Suraj Mal of Bharatpur, controlled by Marathas and approved by British continued up to the end of Uprising of 1857.

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<sup>iv</sup> *Faridabad District Gazetteer*, 1994, p.32.

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<sup>vii</sup> Ranjit Singh Saini, *Raja Nahar Singh ka Balidan*, Delhi, 2000, p. 8.

<sup>viii</sup> *Faridabad District Gazetteer*, 1994, p 32/ J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I, 1739-54, Calcutta, 1964, p. 231.

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<sup>xi</sup> *Faridabad District Gazetteer*, 1994, p 32.

<sup>xii</sup> *Ibid./ H.R. Gupta, Marathas and Panipat*, Chandigarh, 1961, p. 45/J.N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 315.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ranjit Singh Saini, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Faridabad District Gazetteer*, 1994, p. 38./ S.C. Mittal, *Haryana: A Historical Perspective*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 3.

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<sup>xx</sup> H.R. Gupta, *op.cit.*, p.138-139.

<sup>xxi</sup> K.R. Qanungo, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> *Faridabad District Gazetteer*, 1994, p.44.

<sup>xxiv</sup> *Delhi District Gazetteer*, 1883-84, p. 213.

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