A Historical Study of the Social and Political Movements of Muslims in Poonch State, Jammu And Kashmir against Dogra Raj (1846-1947)

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Abstract

The history of Jammu and Kashmir describes that Poonch State has always been significant position in this region. The social and political history of the state of Jammu and Kashmir is full of regional prejudice. In the political and social history of Jammu and Kashmir, the status of social and political movements in Poonch state was not given the honour as it deserved. Historically, the residents of Poonch state always struggled and raised their voice against the Dogra Raj for their rights. The discriminatory and unfair policies of the Dogra Raj forced the Muslims to start social and political movements in the Poonch state at various times to get their rights. The present study is limited to the social and political movements against unjust actions and injustices during Dogra Raj in Poonch state. The objective of this study is to highlight the importance and role of social and political movements of Muslims in Poonch state of Jammu and Kashmir. In this study, the primary and the secondary data is use to bring out the facts.

Keywords: Poonch State, Jammu and Kashmir, Dogra Raj, Political and Social Movements and Muslims of Poonch

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INTRODUCTION

This study concentrated on the Poonch state in Jammu and Kashmir. Poonch (tail) is a town in Jammu and Kashmir known as "Mini Kashmir" due to its location on the state's extreme border. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, and others coexist in Poonch. Gojri and Pahari are the two predominant languages spoken in the area, however other languages like as Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, and Kashmiri are also spoken. With heights ranging from 2900 feet to 15560 feet above sea level, Poonch's geography is hilly and mountainous. The tallest mountain in the Pir Panchal range is Tata Kuti, which stands at 15560 feet. In the Pir Panchal range, Poonch is a series of valleys, gorges, and glens. Poonch is a series of valleys, gorges, and glens.

Poonch has witnessed several significant events throughout history and has been ruled by both outsiders and locals at various times before becoming a part of India. When Alexander the Great invaded the lower Jhelum belt to combat Porus in 326 BC, the Poonch region was dubbed Dravabhisar, after two warrior tribes named Drava and Abhisara. As noted by the famed Chinese traveller Huien Tsang in the 6th century AD, this region became known as part of Kashmir. The inhabitants named this area "Pronas or Poonch," he wrote. In Kashmiri, it's still referred to as "Pronas or Pervensa." In Sanskrit, Poonch refers to an empire's boundary territory. ³ Raja Nar established the Poonch Principality in 850 AD, with Lahorkote as its capital. In 1020 A.D., Mahmood Ghazanavi invaded this area, according to Kalhen's classic book "Rajtrangani," and Raja Trilochan Pal of Poonch fought him valiantly. Mughal King Jahangir arrived in Poonch in 1596 and appointed Siraj-Ud-Din as the region's ruler. Rooh-ullah- Sangu, a Gujjar leader, gained king of this region in 1798 A.D. This region was ruled by Siraj-Ud-Din and his descendants Raja Shahbaz Khan, Raja Abdul Razak, Raja Rustam Khan, and Raja Khan Bahadur Khan until 1792 AD. 4 Poonch was a component of the Khalsa Darbar in Lahore from 1819 until 1850. According to Pandit Kalhan's work Rajatrangni, Raja Lelta Ditya was the founder of Poonch. ⁵ Poonch was proclaimed a Jagir by the first Dogra Maharaja Ghulab Singh in 1850, and his nephew Moti Singh was given the title of Raja.⁶

Dogra state ruled by Maharaja Gulab Singh (1846-1857) followed by Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885), Maharaja Partap Singh (1885-1925) and Maharaja Hari Singh (1925-1947). Dogra Raja Moti Singh founded the Dogra Raj in Poonch in 1850 A.D. During the reign of Raja Baldev Singh, the Principality of Poonch was elevated to the status of a state by the British Raj in 1901 AD. Poonch fell under the command of Heri Singh Maharaja of Kashmir after the death of Raja Jagat Dev Singh in 1940.⁷

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¹ Khush Dev Maini, "Poonch, the Battlefield of Kashmir: A Complete History of Poonch" New Delhi J&K Offset. p. 69

² www.http://www.poonch.nic.in/Basicdetail/topography/topography.asp/(accessed on 08-03-2022).

³ Rashid Hasrat Baloch, "Gazni say Kashmir Tak Dastan Mardan Hurr "Sudhan" Dairatul Muarif" Waqas Innayat Publishers Foundation Rawalpindi. p. 66

⁴ Khush Dev Maini, "Poonch, the Battlefield of Kashmir: A Complete History of Poonch" New Delhi J&K Offset Printers. p. 222

⁵ Pandit Kalhana, "Rajatarangini" trans. M. A. Stain India: New Delhi Printing Press. p. 32

⁶ Muhammad Saeed Asad, "Jammu and Kashmir Book of Knowledge" Mirpur NIKS. Pp. 317-18

⁷ www.http://www.poonch.nic.in/BasicDetail/History/History.asp/ (accessed on 27-04-2022).

Muslims in Poonch, Jammu, and Kashmir struggle for social and political rights during the Dogra Raj. This work focused on the Poonch region's social and political predicament, as well as the struggle of the citizens of Poonch state for their social, political and civil rights. The This study also considered that how all of these elements interact in order to understand the political processes that transpired before and after the creation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Rather than taking a chronological approach, the study looked into the themes' framework and builds inter- and intrarelationships between various social and political factors.

Administration of the Dogra State

Maharaja Gulab Singh and his predecessors denied Muslims in Kashmir access to state affairs and administrations from 1846 to 1947, appointing 28 Prime ministers, none of whom were Muslims. Even top-ranking positions were filled by Hindus or Kashmiri Pundits. Dogra rule was renamed "Dharam Raj," which means "Hindu Rule." This Dharam raj had no regard for other ethnic groups, particularly Muslims. Even though the majority of the subjects were Muslims, Gulab Singh and his successors adopted a pro-Hindu agenda and did not hesitate to declare Kashmir a Hindu state. Offenses against the Dharam raj grew as a result of rulers' ignorance and bigotry. The Dogra rulers staffed the State bureaucracy with Punjabis and Dogras, as well as Kashmiri Pandits, but not Kashmiri Muslims, in order to create a loyalist elite. Despite the fact that Muslims made up the majority of the State's population and were the largest tax payers, they were not deemed fit for state business, and just a few (Muslims) held significant posts. Hindus and Sikhs had 78% of gazette jobs in the bureaucracy in 1930, compared to 22% for Muslims. In terms of the current proportion of Muslims in the services, some of the more remarkable examples are given.

As a result, the majority of Muslims in Kashmir were left out of the Dogra regime, which was backed by the British. Not only were Muslims not employed in higher-ranking positions in the government, but they were also not employed in lower-ranking positions. In the early 1870s, there was no Muslim in Maharaja's Government, not even in the lowest position of clerk. According to Lawrence, it is important to note that Persian was the official language of Kashmir at the time, and many villagers (Muslims) spoke and wrote fluent Persian.

Even though Kashmiri Pandits were in the minority but dominated the administration, especially the tax department. The Pandits gained political influence and control by occupying administrative positions. Although they were generally uneducated, the Rajputs, who were the Maharaja's brethren, were appointed to top positions in the administration. Despite the fact that there were many Muslims from Punjab in the administration, they were either too loyal to express Muslim issues or did not have actual power.

Muslim grievances during the Dogra Raj

For the Muslims of Kashmir, the Dogra rule was oligarchic and dictatorial. It was a one-man rule, with man wielding all power (Maharaja). Despite their majority population, Muslims were exploited by the monarchs, who controlled with the support of Pundits (Kashmiri Hindus), who

⁸ Muhammad Yousif Saraf, "Kashmiris Fight for Freedom" Lahore Ferozesons publishers. Pp. 593-594

⁹ Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, "Atash-i-Chinar" Srinagar Gulshan Publishers. Pp. 431-66

¹⁰ M. L. Kapoor, "Social and Economic history of J&K State" New Dehli Anmol Publications. p.92

¹¹ Ernest. F. Neve, "Beyond the Pir Panjal, Salisbury Square" London E.C. p. 75

monopolised the entire system and were placed in charge of administration. They paid no attention to the problems that Muslims face. Muslims' lives were made difficult by the rulers and their machines. They did not give any possibility for Muslims to have their problems alleviated. The Begar (forced labour) was one of the worst forms of exploitation, with Muslims serving as supply carriers and Rashan as the army. Even if they didn't want to, the villagers were obligated to follow when these called for beggars. ¹²

Furthermore, during the Dogra dictatorship, the plight of peasants and labourers deteriorated. They used to work for landowners from dawn to sunset, but Hindu landowners or Maharaja's revenue collectors took a big share of their earnings. The peasants and labourers were herded together like cattle. Dr. Elmslie, who visited Kashmir from 1865 to 1872, claims that only 5 of the 45 Jagirs belonged to Muslims, while the remainder belonged to Hindus. The Jaghirdar system was a form of feudalism in which peasants were enslaved solely for the pleasure of the feudalists. The Jagirs were given to Maharaja's allies who worked for him; it was a form of reward for Maharaja's political and spying services.

Although lands provided the majority of the money, peasants were also required to pay various taxes on cows, dwellings, fruit trees, and domestic animals, among other things. Until they lost their eyesight, artisans and craftsmen were forced to work for the wealthy. In this situation, the Kashmiri Muslim had just two options for survival: either submit to the authority or flee the state. For Muslims, even migration was a severe offence. During the reign of Ranbir Singh, a large number of Muslim households fled to Lahore and other Muslim-majority areas to escape the Maharaja's beggars and persecution. Several migrants were drowned in Wullar Lake as a kind of punishment for their migration. Overburdened taxes were enforced by the Dogra era, and even revenue sources were taken. Although the Muslim population was 77 percent, their presence in government departments was negligible. He for example, only 35 Muslims out of 113 Hindus worked in Revenue, 13 Muslim out of 150 in Finance, one Muslim out of 150 in Customs, 4 Muslims out of 33 in Judiciary, 32 Muslims out of 88 in Health, 6 against 56 in Education, and 662 in Police. Muslims were completely forbidden from joining the military, with the exception of serving as military supply carriers. There were four Muslims working in the state gazette services, compared to 71 Hindus.

Social and political Organizations during Dogra Raj

The exploitations of Dogra authority caused Muslims to think on themselves rather than other communities. It was only because Hindus and Kashmir Pundits were both in good positions and had their status preserved during "Dharam raj." Only the Muslims were in the most vulnerable position, and surviving in this situation was a problem for them. The hardships of time forced them to recognize the importance of forming socioeconomic groups to save social and political existence. These organizations later fulfilled their goals by raising their voices against economic, educational, social and political inequity, as well as the beggar system, poverty, and job inequity.

¹² E. F, Knight, "Where Three Empires Meet" London publishers. P. 94

¹³ Charles Elison Bates, "Gazetteer of Kashmir" Srinagar Gulshan Publisher. P. 76

¹⁴ F. M Hassnain, "Freedom Struggle in Kashmir" Delhi: Rima Publishing House. p.26.

¹⁵ D. N. Dhar, "Dynamics of Political Change in Kashmir" Dehli Kanishka Publishers. p. 173.

The subcontinent's history demonstrates that the twentieth century began with political activism as Muslims began to struggle and raise their voices against British slavery. As Muslims in J&K rose up against Dogra authority, such views began to be heard in Kashmir. They established a number of social and political groups with the goal of improving living conditions of Muslims. Before the Muslim organization, the Arya Samaj, one of the first Hindu organizations was founded to bring about changes in the Hindu community. Yuvuk Sabha was created afterwards, and it was able to realise its goals by improving the Hindu population. These groups served as a model for Muslims to form similar organizations. As a result, in 1888, the first socio-religious organization, Anjaman-e-Islamia, was founded. It was the first organization of its kind. Anjaman Nusrt-ul-Islam, a second prominent organization, was founded in 1905) with the goals of protecting religious issues, improving social life, and educating Muslims. The Social and political movements were started in Poonch state for their social, political and civil rights.

Property Ownership Rights Movement

The differences and conflicts in determining the borders between the governments of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the state of Poonch created the administrative issues and problems for both states in this region. It was agreed between the two states that Mr. Goodaife should be hired to demarcate the boundaries of both states. ¹⁷ Minister of Poonch State Babu Devi Singh nominated Sardar Bahadur Ali Khan, Sudhan from Kharak, Sardar Ismail Khan from Tain and Sardar Fazal Khan Abbasi from Chamyati to determine the boundaries of Poonch with Mr. Godaif. After the demarcation of the boundaries, Raja of Poonch Baldev Singh had to hire Mr. Godaif for the land settlement of Poonch state, but he did not stay for long. Mr. Triage was appointed the administrator for land settlement, but he also left the Poonch state after some time, so this responsibility was handed over to Mr. Hamilton. Before Raja Baladev Singh, the Raja of Poonch had verbally completed the land settlement and handed over the area to the respective numberedars. 18 The people of Poonch strongly protested against this, on which the Raja withdrew this law. Mr. Hamilton started the land settlement of Tehsil Sidhnuti after the completing the land settlement of Tehsil Haveli and Mahinder in two years which was completed in 1906 and Poonch State was declared the property of the Raja, but in 1900, Sardar Bahadur Ali Khan from Khirak filed a petition in Lahore High Court, seeing the violation of ownership rights in the land settlement and appointed Mr. Putin as his lawyer. Sardar Bahadur Ali Khan died on 28 December 1902 before the court's decision but by the decision of this case, the residents of Poonch got ownership rights over their property.¹⁹

Movement for Representation in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly

After the recommendation of the Glancy Commission, the Maharaja of Kashmir formed a Franchise Committee under the chairmanship of Sarbar Joor Dalal. The committee made recommendations for the formation of an Assembly for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, in which two seats were allocated for the state of Poonch. Although the state of Poonch was under the patronage of the state of Jammu and Kashmir but the Maharaja of Poonch was against the

¹⁶ Jugal Kishore Gupta, "History of Sirsa Town" Delhi Atlantic Publishers. p.102

¹⁷ Molvi Mir Alam Khan, "Tarikh Azad-e-Kashmir" Rawalakot Publisher Sardar Ismail Kahn and Sardra Baga Khan. p. 57

¹⁸ Khush Dev Charak, "Poonch Tarikh wa Saqafat ky Aaenay main" Poonch Jammu and Kashmir. p. 87

¹⁹ Bashir Hussain Jafri, "Tarikh Sudhan (Sudozai) Qubaila" Rawalpind: Hamza Printers. p. 130

representation of Poonch state in the Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. The Raja of Poonch wanted a separate assembly for Poonch state which was opposed by Colonel Khan Muhammad Khan and Sardar Fateh Muhammad Karalvi and started a formal movement to represent Poonch state in the Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1934, when the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections were held, Sardar Fateh Muhammad Karalvi was elected from Tehsil Mahinder and Haveli, while Colonel Khan Muhammad Khan was elected from Tehsil Bagh and Sidhnuti as members of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly from Poonch State.²⁰

Reform Movements in Poonch State

After the representation of two seats from Poonch state in Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly, it was strongly realized that the voice of the Muslim representatives of Jammu and Kashmir and Poonch does not have that importance in the assembly.²¹ Colonel Khan Muhammad Khan started reform movements in Poonch state along with strong representation of Poonch Muslims on the assembly floor. Colonel Khan Muhammad Khan started various movements to improve the condition of Muslims in Poonch State which achieved great success.

Movement to Get rid of snuff and cigarette

A large number of Muslims in the state of Poonch used snuff and cigarettes, which adversely affected their economic and physical conditions. Khan Mohammad Khan advised the Muslims of Poonch to give up cigarettes and snuff in order to improve their economic and physical condition.²²

Movement to abolish the lavish practices

In the daily life of Poonch state, there were some practices which caused difficulties for social and economic life like "Rum" practice. By mobilizing the people against these practices, Khan Muhammad Khan diverted attention to agriculture, which improved the economic situation of the area.²³

Muthi Ber Aata Scheme

Colnol Khan Muhammad Kahn called a meeting of women of poonch at Dhar Drach, Palandri. He convenced the women for the education of girls and asked them to support the educational scheme. He launched the Muthi Ber Aata Scheeme for the suport of youth of Poonch. The women committed with him to collect the Muthi Ber Aata for education of Muslim youth of Poonch.²⁴

Establishment of Sudhan Educational Conference

Colonel Khan Mohammad Khan wanted to establish an organization "Muslim Educational Conference" to attract the Muslim youth of Poonch state towards education. In 1936, a meeting

²⁰ Muhammad Arif Sodozai, "Tarikh Sudhan Qubail" Trarkhal Idara Tehqeeq wa Tasneef Tarikh Sudhan Qubail, Azad Kashmir. p. 87

²¹ Syed Mehmood Azd, "Tarikh-e-Poonch" Bagh Idara Marif-e-Kashmir Harighel, Bagh Azad Kashmir. p, 101

²² Brigadier M. Sadiq Khan and Dr. Ghulam Hissain Azhar, "Yagana-e-Kashmir" Pallandri Khan Muhammad Khan Memorial welfare Association. p. 63

²³ Op.Cit., Brigadier M. Sadiq Khan and Dr. Ghulam Hissain Azhar, "Yagana-e-Kashmir", p. 64

²⁴ Op.Cit., Brigadier M. Sadiq Khan and Dr. Ghulam Hissain Azhar, "Yagana-e-Kashmir", p. 65

was convened at Pothi Mir Khan, presided over by Chaudhry Niaz Ahmad Khan, Chief Justice Poonch, in which the name of the organization was finalized as "Sadhan Educational Conference" instead of "Muslim Educational Conference". Sadhan Educational Conference played an important role for the education of the Muslim youth of Poonch state by awarding scholarships. After getting education the Muslims of Poonch state raised their voice for their social, political and economic rights.

Movement against the separation of agricultural land from forests

In 1937, the Dogra government planned to separate agricultural land from forests in Poonch state. ²⁶ The purpose of which was to restrict the Muslims of Poonch only to their agricultural land and evict them from the rural Samilat and Khalsa Sarkar and make them the property of Raja Poonch while showing them as part of the forests. The Muslims of Poonch realized this conspiracy in time and stopped these ambitions through movement.

The Incident of Twin Quran

In 1937, during the examination of prisoners in Poonch Jail, Medical Officer Ram Singh desecrated the Holy Quran, which was strongly protested by the Muslim prisoners. This protest spread to all corners of Poonch state, to control it Raja Poonch Jagdev Singh dismissed Dr. Ram Singh from his job and expelled him from Poonch state.²⁷

Anjuman Azadi Poonch

The Raja of Poonch was under intense pressure from the Dogra Maharaja Hari Singh of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to follow the policies of the Dogra government in the state of Poonch. Raja Poonch Jagatdev Singh was not happy with this situation and the political and social conditions in the state of Jammu and Kashmir as well as in the state of Poonch were deteriorating day by day. Maulana Ghulam Haider Jandalvi founded Anjuman Azadi Poonch in 1938 to protect the political and social rights of the Muslims of Poonch state.²⁸

Civil Disobedience Movement in Poonch

The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir directly interfered in the internal affairs of the Poonch state and urged the Raja of Poonch to appoint Hindus and Dogars from Jammu to replace Muslims in government offices. When Raja of Poonch started dismissing Muslims from government jobs, an atmosphere of discontent spread throughout the state and a civil disobedience movement was launched against the Dogra government in Poonch state.²⁹ Considering the situation in Poonch,

²⁵ Op.Cit., Muhammad Arif Sodozai, "Tarikh Sudhan Qubail", p. 180

²⁶ Prof. Dr. Serwar Abbasi, "Kashmiri Musalmanu ki Jehd-o-Jehad-e-Azadi-e-Kashmir" Muzaffarabad, Idara Mutala-e-Kashmir UAJ&K. p. 126

²⁷ Prof. Dr. Serwar Abbasi, "Tehrik-e-Pakistan main Kashmiri Seyasat Key Asrat" Muzaffarabad, Idara Mutala-e-Kashmir UAJ&K, p. 90

²⁸ Bashir Hussain Jafri, "Tarikh Sudhan (Sudozai) Qubaila" Rawalpindi Hamza Printers, p. 166

²⁹ Dr. Mushtaq Hussain Khan, "Tehrik-e-Azadi-e-Kashmir main District Poonch ka Kerdar" Sindh: Unpublished thesis, University of Sindh Jamshoro, p. 92

Jammu and Kashmir, the British government intervened and restored peace and order in the state through an agreement.

The Resolution of Pakistan and Muslims of Poonch State

The Muslims of Poonch state played an important role in the movement for the establishment of Pakistan. In the meeting held in Lahore on March 23, 1940, Maulana Ghulam Haider Jindalvi, representing the Muslims of Poonch and Jammu and Kashmir, announced his full support for the Pakistan Movement and assured to participate in practical measures as well.³⁰

The resolution of Accession to Pakistan and Muslims of Poonch State

July 19, 1947 has a special significance in the history of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. A secret meeting of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was held at the house of Maulvi Iqbal at Poothi in Rawalkot, Poonch, in which it was decided that a meeting will be convened in Srinagar in the next month of July and a demand will be made from Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir that the state accession with Pakistan. It is a historical fact that no one was ready to provide space for the meeting in Srinagar due to the imposition of Article 144 by the Dogra government. In such a situation, Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, elected member of assembly from Poonch tehsil Sidhnuti, arranged a meeting of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference at his home in Srinagar and decided the future path of the state by passing the resolution of accession to Pakistan.³¹

Establishment of Azad Kashmir Government

As a result of the social, political, religious and economic movements in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan established a revolutionary government on 24 October 1947 in the areas of Jammu, Poonch and Kashmir Valley (Mirpur, Poonch and Muzaffarabad). This revolutionary government was named "Azad Kashmir Government" and Ghazi Millat Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan became its first president.³²

CONCLUSION

Although Kashmir has a long history, many historians believe that it has consistently suffered from poor governance. In the majority of the region's history, usurpers ruled and treated the populace cruelly. The Amratsar Treaty, signed in 1846 and lasting 101 years, allowed Dogra Ghulab Singh to create the current state of Jammu and Kashmr. During this cruel and dictatorial time, there were significant restrictions on political engagement. Prior to 1940, Poonch, which had a semi-independent status within Jammu and Kashmir, was the state's westernmost region. These words resulted in a jagir for Jammu and Kashmir, which decreased the Raja of Poonch's authority. Despite the fact that the province had a sizeable Muslim population, the Raja of Poonch was a Hindu Dogra and a close relative of the Maharaja of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

³⁰ Op.Cit., Muhammad Serwar Abbasi, "Tehrik-e-Pakistan main Kashmiri Seyasat Key Asrat", p. 91

³¹ Op.Cit., Bashir Hussain Jafri, "Tarikh Sudhan (Sudozai) Qubaila", p. 193

³² Op.Cit., Bashir Hussain Jafri, "Tarikh Sudhan (Sudozai) Qubaila", p. 367

Due to social, political, religious, and economic concerns, Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir developed a social and political consciousness. After 1846, the Dogra Raj proved to be a tyrannical and repressive regime for Muslims, who were subjected to high taxes and a beggar system that made them into economic slaves. Such discriminatory practices enabled the people of Jammu & Kashmir and Poonch states to band together and speak out against Dogra authority. Numerous social, political and religious organizations were created at the start of the 20th century. Compared to the other regions of Jammu and Kashmir, the situation in Poonch was more worrying. The Poonch province was impoverished and in horrible shape as a result of the twin dictatorship of the Raja of Poonch and the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. As a result, there was uncertainty and concern over the current circumstance. During these difficult times, a number of social and political organizations were founded for the good of Poonch society and its citizens. The movements of these social and political organisations resulted in the liberation of some areas of the states of Poonch and Jammu and Kashmir from the oppressive rule of the Dogra Maharajas, and the Azad Kashmir government was established on October 24, 1947, under the leadership of Ghazi-e-Millat Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan.

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