

6. MOHYAL HISTORY

It looks as if the need for a Mohyal History book was an obsession with the community and it has remained that way.

Soon after its formation, the General Mohyal Sabha, a Mohyal Research Committee was set up for this purpose at Peshawar and later it was decided (Mohyal Conference, Jammu, 1906) that "All Mohyals should collect information about their ancestors from their Purohits and also prepare their family trees. English and Persian knowing Mohyals should do research on Mohyals." However, researching history is a specialised discipline and the community failed to come up with a satisfactory compendium: probably, it did not have the requisite talent. Mohyals remember some of the achievements of their ancestors, which have come down the memory lane during foreign rule for a thousand years, and some erudite Mohyals had collected and compiled this corpus. Under pressure to deliver (Mohyal Conference, Pind Dadan Khan, 1908) the Sabha settled for whatever knowledge could be put together, which was incorporated in T. P. Russel Stracey's *The History of the Mohyals: the Militant Brahman Race of India*, published at Lahore in 1911. As stated already, it had a Foreword by the former Commander in Chief, Roberts, and a detailed Review in the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore on 23 March, 1911' resulting in the recognition of Mohyals as a vibrant community of Punjab. Even if a "cavalier job" (according to P. N. Bali, page 157) the book rendered a very useful service because of its English medium and pioneering position. Several Mohyal intellectuals were inspired to write caste-histories: *Bali Nama* (Persian), *Tarikh-e-Vaidan*, *Jang Nama of Mohans* etc. but few works have survived the vagaries of time and events.

Raizada Harichand Vaid, *Gulshane Mohyali*

Incensed by the motley collection of anecdotes and certificates in Stracey's work, Raizada Harichand Vaid of village Sukho/Rawal Pindi bent his energies to the task and produced his *Gulshane Mohyali* (Urdu) (Lahore, 1923). One is highly impressed by the high quality and wide sweep of the sources he consulted – about 40 standard works. With its Urdu medium, the common language at that time, it became very popular and played a significant role in educating that generation of Mohyals about their history and inculcating self-pride in their past – the elixir of Mohyalayat. It has not been possible to collect much information about the author, Raizada Harichand Vaid, except some hints that he was a freedom fighter and probably shifted to U.P. for survival.

Sadly, *Gulshane Mohyali* became unavailable after the Partition in 1947. After a very long search I could trace a copy in Jammu. One photocopy (in book size and bound) is with GMS, Delhi and one hopes that they have some sort of ARCHIVE for rare heritage material like this. It is necessary to preserve our primary sources of Mohyal History, for consultation by future reserchers.

Ch. Gauri Shankar Datt 'Sagar', Kajirvi's Mohyal History

It appears that before Raizada Harichand Vaid could publish his tome, but around the same period, Chaudhry Gauri Shankar Datt 'Sagar', Kanjrurvi, an editor and journalist of repute also wrote a small book (137 pages), titled 'Mohyal History' in Urdu. It was based on the limited corpus of knowledge in Stracey's history book and was hardly remembered. But it is valuable in its own way. Incidentally, we could trace its only copy with a saintly Datt family in Mendhar, now a border village in Jammu. It was also a personal initiative and, like Gulshane Mohyali, this also does not appear to have received any patronage from the then GMS. A photocopy was duly provided to GMS and trust it will also form part of their Archives.

The history of the Mohan caste of Mohyals was first written by Rai Seegarh, their *Bhatt* (bard- *charan*), in his *Pothi Rai Seegarh*. This book was available to the writers of Mohyal History in the early twentieth century, but has since been lost after the Partition in 1947. Based on the *Pothi* a *Jangnama Mohana* had been written by another Bhat, sometime later, covering the history of Mohans. It appears that Ch. Gauri Shankar Datt got hold of a copy of this heritage document "*Jangnama Mohana*" and tried to give it publicity by incorporating the *Jangnama* his book. Even if Ch. Gauri Shankar's book is preserved, it being in Urdu, the *Jangnama* would be lost to the posterity. It is a primary source of history of Mohans. So, I wrote it in Hindi script (173 verses) and this has been published as part of a booklet "History of Mohans", through the patronage of Sh. O. P. Mohan, former Senior Vice President of GMS. One hopes that some enterprising Mohyal will expand its scope and reprint it for wider distribution

Recapitulating, the corpus of knowledge in *Gulshane Mohyali* remained the source material for the subsequent writers of Mohyal History during the twentieth century (Ch. Chuni Lal Datt and Sh. P. N. Bali). They selected and churned the same information, without any significant research. The community's craving for a Mohyal History book remained undiminished. After Stracey's book, the powers that be in GMS did not appear to have taken interest in patronizing history: possibly they did not have the requisite intellectual cognition towards history. Both, Rzd. Hari Chand Vaid and Ch. Chuni Lal Datt were worried about the sale and obtained assurances/some advance payments from benevolent patrons. Sh. P. N. Bali also initially wrote, and sold, his book at his own initiative, till it was 'adopted' by GMS. Despite some notable initiatives, during its long journey, GMS does not appear to have covered itself with glory in respect of exhorting and educating their flock in the matter of community's glorious past – beyond some often repeated platitudes. They have not recognized that pride in their glorious past can best strengthen the self-esteem of Mohyals in the current environment: and that is *Mohyaliyat*.

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