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Formation of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir: The Historical Perspectives

ABSTRACT: The formation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir was unique as disparate territories stripped by the English East India Company from Sikh Kingdom of Punjab were brought together to form the state. The boundaries of the state were redrawn more for geo-political and administrative convenience rather than on a commonality shared by the people living there. Further, the heterogeneity of the state was the direct by-product of the military and diplomatic accomplishments of the founder of the Dogra dynasty, combined with the political acumen which completed the expansion of British power into northern India. This paper, however, attempts to discuss the historical background of the territories of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh; and the processes and procedures which were involved in cobbling together of these disparate territories by the English East India Company and Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu to bring into being the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. An attempt to highlight the polemic that followed the creation of this state is made to draw a conclusion regarding the handing over of Kashmir to Gulab Singh. The study attempts to examine the distinctive characteristics of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

KEY WORD: Princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, historical background, English East India Company, distinctive entities, and military and diplomatic accomplishments.

IKHTISAR: Makalah ini berjudul "Pembentukan Negara Kerajaan Jammu dan Kashmir: Perspektif Sejarah". Pembentukan negara bagian Jammu dan Kashmir adalah unik karena wilayah yang berbeda itu dilucuti oleh Perusahaan India Timur Inggris dari Kerajaan Sikh di Punjab untuk dibawa bersama dalam membentuk negara. Batas-batas negara digambar ulang lebih untuk kenyamanan geo-politik dan administratif daripada untuk kepentingan bersama oleh orang-orang yang tinggal di sana. Selanjutnya, heterogenitas negara adalah produk langsung dari prestasi militer dan diplomatik dari pendiri dinasti Dogra, dikombinasikan dengan kecerdasan politik untuk menyelesaikan perluasan kekuasaan Inggris ke India utara. Makalah ini, bagaimanapun, mencoba untuk membahas latar belakang sejarah dari wilayah Jammu, Kashmir, dan Ladakh; serta proses dan prosedur yang terlibat dalam pembentukan bersama dari wilayah-wilayah yang berbeda itu oleh Perusahaan India Timur Inggris dan Raja Gulab Singh dari Jammu agar menjadi negara kerajaan Jammu dan Kashmir. Sebuah usaha untuk menyoroti polemic yang diikuti pembentukan negara ini dibuat untuk menarik kesimpulan mengenai penyerahan Kashmir kepada Raja Gulab Singh. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis karakteristik khas dari negara bagian Jammu dan Kashmir.

KATA KUNCI: Negara kerajaan Jammu dan Kashmir, latar belakang sejarah, Perusahaan India Timur Inggris, entitas khas, serta prestasi militer dan diplomatik.

INTRODUCTION

*No Englishman can leave Kashmir without
a sigh of regret that a province so full of
promise should ever have been allowed*

to slip through our fingers (Lieut. Colonel
Torrens, 1987:300-301).

*Their fields, their crops, their streams.
Even the peasants in the Vale.*

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*They sold. They sold all, alas!
How cheap was the sale* (Dr. Sir
Mohammad Iqbal as cited in Bawa
Satinder Singh, 1988:103).

The Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, the “Sentry State”¹ of the British Indian Empire, bordering the three great powers in the East: the British, the Russian, and the Chinese, came into existence with the ominous terms of the Treaty of Amritsar signed between Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu and the British East India Company on 16 March 1846 (Aitchison, 1909, 6:165-166). The formation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir was unique as disparate territories stripped by the British East India Company from Sikh Kingdom of Punjab were brought together to form the state. The boundaries of the state were redrawn more for geo-political and administrative convenience rather than on a commonality shared by the people living there. How did the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir that lasted for more than a century come into being?²

Before moving ahead to the processes which were involved in the formation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, it is necessary to give a brief historical background of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh which were brought into a single political entity. A significant point to take note of is that the administrative entities which formed the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir were politically independent of each other before 1846 AD (Anno Domini).

Kalhana, the celebrated historian of the twelfth century, recorded that

¹According to Sachchidanand Sinha, owing to its strategic position in the north-western frontiers of India, Kashmir was rightly described as “the Sentry State” of British Indian Empire, as cited in Madhavi Yasin (1984:xv, fn.1).

²At the time of the Transfer of Power in India in 1947, the conflict between the two successor states – India and Pakistan – to the British Raj began over the right to control the destiny of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. In the process the state got bifurcated, the greater part of which is being held by India, while as the rest remains with Pakistan.

the Kashmir’s political history begun in the middle of the 3rd millennium. Most historians, however, started their history of Kashmir with the reign of Ashoka. The historical record becomes less ambiguous with the conquest of Kashmir by this Mauryan King, who lived between 274 BC (Before Christ) and 237 BC.³ The succeeding two thousand years saw the constant flow of invasions and dynastic eruptions which brought to power ruling families representing the three major communities of India: the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs as well as the Afghans.

A succession of Hindu dynasties reigned Kashmir until the early part of the 14th century, when Rinchan Shah, a Tibetan soldier of fortune seized the power. Embracing Islam, Rinchan Shah became the first Muslim king of Kashmir. He was followed by various Muslim dynasties for next three centuries; and in 1586, Kashmir became a part of the Mughal Empire. As lovers of natural beauty, they visited Kashmir quite often and took steps to add to its loveliness by raising stylish buildings and beautiful gardens. But Mughals did not bother much to improve common man’s lot.

In 1752, with the collapse of Mughal Empire, the power vacuum created was filled by the Afghans. The Afghan rule over Kashmir, which lasted for 67 years, was one of cruelty and loot. The valley was removed from the grasp of the Afghans by the Sikhs in 1819. The Sikh rule was not less worse than that of the Afghans. This was perhaps

³“Kashmir can claim the distinction of being the only region of India”, wrote Dr. M. Aurel Stein, the translator of the celebrated history book, *Rajatarangini*, “which possesses an uninterrupted series of written records of its history [...]. In other parts of India, the student of history is obliged to reconstruct the general outlines of the history with the help of the scanty and frequently uncertain data [...] and can scarcely ever hope to recover a continuous account of the leading events even for a couple of centuries. If the student of the Kashmirian history finds himself in a far better position this is due to the preservation of the documents”. See, for further, Kalhana (1900, 1:30-31).

the shortest reign in Kashmir's long history for in less than three decades the advancing power of the British East India Company, combined with internal dissension in the Sikh empire, following the death of Ranjit Singh, the fate of Kashmir was sealed and it was placed under the control of the Dogra dynasty (Lawrance, 1967; Kaul Bamzai, 1973; Sufi, 1974; and Bazaz, 2003).

Unlike Kashmir, the early history of Jammu is still folded in mist. From time immemorial — the legends say for 5,000 years — the principality of Jammu has been the seat of the rule of a Hindu dynasty, of a family of Rajputs, whose influence spread for some distance over the lower hills. There was little intercourse with the outer world; some contact with it occurred indeed during the 16th century onwards from the passage near, if not through, the country of Mughal Emperors of Delhi towards Kashmir (Drew, 1999:8-9).

Dhruv Dev (1703-1742) established the Dogra⁴ Rajput family as rulers of Jammu in the declining days of the Mughal Empire. The most notable ruler of Jammu was Ranjit Deo. With his death, which occurred in 1780, began changes from outside influences. Jammu became the target of expanding Sikh power in the early years of the nineteenth century; and in 1808, General Hukam Singh conquered this hilly tract for the Lahore Durbar. In 1822, Ranjit Singh, the architect of the Sikh state, made Gulab Singh the *jagirdar*⁵ of the Jammu principality (Charak, 1985; and Hashmatullah Khan, 1991).

⁴The Dogras, broadly speaking, are a linguistic group found primarily in the Jammu region. Their language, Dogri, is highly influenced by Punjabi. The Dogras include Muslims and Rajputs among their members. For further information, see W. Lawrance (1967:201); G.M.D. Sufi (1974, 2:752-754); and Fred-eric Drew (1999:9-10 and 43-47).

⁵A *jagirdar* was the holder of a non-alienable land revenue assignment. He had to maintain law and order in his jurisdiction, collect the revenue on behalf his overlord, keeping a part of it for his services, and to render military assistance to his overlord whenever asked for.

Squeezed between Tibet, India, and Kashmir, Ladakh as an independent entity suffered a precarious existence. The entire Baltistan-Ladakh area was one of the several small semi-independent Muslim and Buddhist states ruled by autocratic chiefs. Ladakh originally formed one of the provinces of Tibet. But in the fifteenth century, when Tibet was conquered by the Chinese, Ladakh became completely independent (Moorcraft & Trebek, 1971:66-67). But Ladakh with its sparse population and strong neighbours was more often the victim of aggression than an aggressor itself. Occupied in 1834, by Gulab Singh, Ladakh was for the first time made the part of the Indian subcontinent.

Raja Gulab Singh, a direct descendant of the Hindu ruler Dhruv Dev, was born near Jammu in 1792. He was enlisted in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh — the undisputed Sikh ruler of Punjab — in 1809, followed by his two brothers, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh, and a nephew Hira Singh. It was mainly through his skill on the battlefield that Gulab Singh rose in the ranks of the Sikh hierarchy. His ascent was remarkable that he came to be described by Victor Jacquemont, the French traveller, as "*the greatest Lord in the Punjab; second only to the Sikh Maharaja*" (Jacquemont, 1834, 2:166.)

Gulab Singh set out to the career of conquests — as a Sikh lieutenant — to a first expedition to Kashmir in 1813. Though the campaign led by Ranjit Singh in person into Kashmir ended in disaster, the courage showed by Gulab Singh in bringing his forces back safely pleased Ranjit Singh and promoted him in his command. At the siege of Multan, in 1818, Gulab Singh's personal bravery attracted Ranjit Singh's favourable notice (Kripa Ram, 2005:65-68).

In 1819, Ranjit Singh received the Sikh ruler's permission to crush the revolt of Mian Dido, "the robber", at

Jammu.⁶ He finished the campaign successfully. The next few campaigns which saw his bravery were against the pretty chieftains of Rajauri, Bhimber, Basohli, and Kishtawar (Kripa Ram, 2005:75-76, 83-85, 95-97, and 104-110). Delighted with the latest territorial acquisitions of Gulab Singh in the hills, Ranjit Singh decided to place Jammu solely under the charge of Gulab Singh (Kripa Ram, 2005:115-116). He personally travelled to Akhnoor (Jammu) in 1822 to confer the title of "Raja" on Gulab Singh.

At the same time, his brothers and a nephew also secured unique positions of authority and influence at Lahore Darbar. Dhayan Singh was installed as the *Wazir* of the Maharaja and conferred the title of *Raja-e-Rajgan*, i.e. Raja of Rajas in 1828 (Latif, 1984:440). His son, Hira Singh, became a favourite of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and "*was allowed a chair in [the Maharaja's] presence when all others [...] stood or took less exalted places*" (Griffin, 1890:323). Such a public demonstration of favour showed by Ranjit Singh towards the Dogra Rajas enhanced their stature and they became a power to be reckoned with at Lahore Darbar.

While his brothers remained at Lahore, Raja Gulab Singh focused his attention towards his newly assigned territory.⁷ The ambition to acquire new territories certainly motivated Raja Gulab Singh to send an expedition to Ladakh in 1834 under his ablest general Zorawar Singh,⁸ which the latter successfully accomplished. Baltistan was conquered in 1840 and an unsuccessful bid to control Tibet was

made in 1841. Though these conquests were carried out on behalf of the Sikh State, but all these attacks originated not in Lahore, but in Jammu; and in result much of the region passed under the personal control of Raja Gulab Singh. Thus "whether it was a policy or whether it was accident, by 1840, Gulab Singh had encircled Kashmir" (*The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908:95).

The stability of the Punjab depended on the astuteness of Ranjit Singh himself. His death in June 1839 opened up many factions in the Sikh society, caused as much by the British presence at the Punjab frontiers as by the conflicts following the creation of a new army and the ranks of the nobility. The army and the royal relatives now came out in the open (Bayly, 1993:126). Dhian Singh continued as wazir under Kharak Singh, the new Maharaja.

However, the attempts of the Dogra Rajas to fill the power vacuum, created at the Lahore Darbar, met with bitter opposition. Dhian Singh was caught up with court intrigues in 1843 and was thus murdered. Same was the fate of the other Dogras Rajas. Thus, by the end of 1844, most of the powerful figures of the Rangit Singh era had been eliminated except Gulab Singh, who stayed away from Lahore. This changed political scenario of Lahore forced Gulab Singh to move with extreme caution. Increasingly marginalized at the Sikh kingdom, Gulab Singh waited for an opportune time to turn the tide to his favour (Rai, 2004:25).

In the meantime, the British officials of the East India Company were watching the factional fighting and the growing instability at the Lahore Darbar with great uneasiness, because they had an important reason to see a strong Sikh kingdom for they treated it as a useful buffer between their Sutlej boundary and the turbulent Afghans (Bayly, 1993:126-128). This objective of the British was duly fulfilled by the Sikhs after the treaty of "perpetual

⁶Jammu was conquered by Ranjit Singh in 1808.

⁷Raja Gulab Singh presented himself at the Sikh capital on important occasions. He visited the court on the eve of festivals, when he received *Khilats* (robes of honour) and was required to be present during the visits of foreign dignitaries. See, for example, Ali Shahmat (1874:94).

⁸Zorawar Singh was born in 1786, near Kalhoor (now in Himachal Pardesh), he joined Raja Gulab Singh's army during 1817. See Nargisdas Nargis (1964:1 and 7).

friendship” was signed in 1809.⁹

But since the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the British saw their interests in jeopardy. The situation was further aggravated by the news of the efforts of the Afghan ruler to strengthen his army and an attempted alliance with Russia. Alarmed by the developments at the Northern frontier, Sir Henry Hardinge, the Governor General, began to prepare his army for the final showdown with the Sikhs (Rai, 2004:25).

On the other side, examining the political scene at the Lahore Darbar, Gulab Singh desired to become independent in the territories already under his jurisdiction. He was pragmatist enough to perceive that the expansion of the Company’s power beyond the Sutlej was inevitable after the death of the old monarch. He concluded that his objectives could be achieved only under the patronage of East India Company. So keeping in view this motive, he made repeated offers to join the British against the Sikhs, if they would recognize his sovereignty. But his offers were either rejected or not responded (Satinder Singh, 1988:98-99, 101 and 108).

Though the first Anglo-Sikh war had begun in November 1845, but the most memorable and the last battle of the war was fought at Sobraon on 10 February 1846 (Cunningham, 1853:327-328; and Latif, 1984:537-538). In the meantime, Gulab Singh was installed as *Wazir* at Lahore, who immediately put himself in communication with the British, tendering every assistance in his power for the fulfillment of any ends with regard to the state of Lahore which they might have in view.¹⁰

⁹The Treaty of Lahore was signed on 25th April 1809, whereby it was agreed that the Sikhs would not commit any encroachment beyond the Satluj, while the British agreed to have no concern with the territories and subjects of the Maharaja to the north of the Sutlej. See C.U. Aitchison (1909, 6:22).

¹⁰Lord Hardinge to Secret Committee, as cited in Bawa Satinder Singh (1988:112).

Gulab Singh took the decision of collaborating with the British after giving serious considerations to the other alternatives available to him.¹¹ Though leaderless and abandoned, the Sikh army fought with reckless resignation but was ultimately defeated.¹² However, the victory of the East India Company was achieved at a huge cost. Its budget went soaring back into deficit (Bayly, 1993:127).

It compelled the British to drop the idea of annexing Punjab to their own empire. There were certain other reasons which weighed on their mind for not taking control of Punjab. The acquisition would have brought them face to face with the Afghans who had defeated them in the first Anglo-Afghan war (1839-1842). The occupation of Punjab also needed a great military deployment (Hardinge, 1891:132-133). So, the best possible means to fulfill their objectives seemed to weaken the Sikh state militarily and to break its territorial unity (Hardinge, 1891:123-124 and 133). These twin objectives were achieved through the treaties of Lahore and Amritsar.

The Treaty of Lahore signed on 9th March 1846 brought to an end the 1st Anglo-Sikh war. Article IV of the treaty required the Sikhs to cede “[...] to the Honourable Company the territories situated between the rivers Beas and Indus, including the provinces

¹¹Gulab Singh thought that he could neither participate in the war on the part of the Sikhs, nor to remain secluded at Jammu. He stood the risk of losing his territories in both the cases. In case of “an amicable Anglo-Sikh settlement, his territories would be negotiated away”, or his indifference would invite him the wrath of the Khalsa, if it emerged successful in the war. He, thus, concluded that his interests would best be served only by paving the way for a “decisive Sikh defeat”. See Bawa Satinder Singh (1988:121).

¹²There is some evidence that Gulab Singh was not the only Sikh functionary to make overtures to the British. Lal Singh, Gulab Singh’s predecessor at Lahore Darbar; Tej Singh, the commander-in-chief; and even Rani Jinden, the Regent of the infant ruler Dalip Singh, and other members of the Darbar had also secretly offered their help to the British against the Sikh army. See, for example, J.D. Cunningham (1853:327); Khushwant Singh (1966, 2:48); and Syed Mohammad Latif (1984:541-543).

of *Cashmere and Hazara*” (Aitchison, 1909, 6:38-41). Article XII of the treaty obliged the Sikh Maharaja to recognize the independence of Gulab Singh in the territories as may be made over to him by the British government (Aitchison, 1909, 6:38-41).

The peculiarity of the Treaty of Lahore lay not only in the fact that a new territorial unit of Jammu and Kashmir was created out of the Lahore State but clearly speaks of a pre-arrangement of Gulab Singh with the British.¹³ The Treaty of Lahore also virtually paved the way for the second treaty signed a week later on 16th March 1846. The second agreement signed by the East India Company with Gulab Singh came to be known as the Treaty of Amritsar.

Article IV of the Treaty of Lahore literally opened the Treaty of Amritsar whereby the British government transferred “[...] in independent possession to Maharaja Gulab Singh and the heirs male of his body, all the hilly or mountainous country [...] eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravee” (Aitchison, 1909, 6:165-166). Gulab Singh agreed to pay the British government the sum of seventy-five lakhs of Rupees “in consideration of the transfer made to him”, as stated by the Article III of the Treaty (Aitchison, 1909, 6:165-166).

The treaty obliged the Maharaja to submit any disputes to the British arbitration “that may arise between himself [Gulab Singh] and any neighbouring state” (Aitchison, 1909, 6:165-166, article v). The treaty promised the British aid “to Maharaja Gulab Singh in protecting his territories from external enemies” (Aitchison, 1909, 6:165-166, article ix). Article

¹³It was on the eve of Kasur negotiations, when a Sikh delegation led by Gulab Singh arrived to sign an agreement with the British authorities that the latter made a plan to sell Kashmir to Gulab Singh. “This could be done”, Henry Hardinge conveyed to Prime Minister, “by forcing the Sikh government to surrender Kashmir to them, which would be then handed over to Raja”. See, for example, J.D. Cunningham (1853:322-324); and C. Hardinge (1891:123).

X of the Treaty stipulated that Gulab Singh acknowledged and recognized the British supremacy and would “[...] in token of such supremacy present annually to the British government one horse, twelve perfect shawl goats of approved breed [...] and three pairs of Cashmere shawls” (Aitchison, 1909, 6:165-166). It was at this point of time that Gulab Singh is reported to have “[...] stood-up, and with joined hands, expressed his gratitude to the British Viceroy, – adding, without however any ironical meaning, that he was indeed his Zur-Khareed, or gold-boughten slave!” (Cunningham, 1853:324). The phrase “Zar-Khureed” had unfortunate overtones and would haunt Kashmiri self-respect for many generations to come (Akber, 2002:59).

The Treaty of Amritsar only transferred the legal title of *Maharaja* to Gulab Singh. He had to face a stiff resistance from Sheikh Imamuddin, the Sikh governor, who refused to turn over Kashmir to him. It was only after the united authority of the British, Lahore, and Jammu governments that Sheikh Imamuddin cleared the way for Gulab Singh’s entry into the Valley in November 1846. Thus emerged the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (Satinder Singh, 1988:125-129).

WHY TRANSFERRED?

There followed a heated debate in and outside the British official circles pertained to the wisdom of the creation of the Jammu and Kashmir state. The polemic continued throughout most part of the nineteenth century. Lord Hardinge, the then Governor General, had been severely criticized for the transfer of Kashmir to Gulab Singh. General Sir Charles Napier, the then Governor of Sindh, remarked about the transfer: “What a king to install! Rising from the lowest foulest sediment of debauchery to float on the highest surge of blood he lifted his besmeared front, and England adorned it with a

crown!" (Napier, 1857, 3:400). Lord Ellenborough, the predecessor of Lord Hardinge in India, irritated by the creation of the new mountain state, wrote as follows:

[...] there have been times when the treaties with Gulab Singh as the Minister of the Lahore Government and the detaching from the Lahore dominions a very extensive territory for the purpose of placing it under the independent authority of that minister, thus rewarding a traitor, would have been measures a little too oriental in principle.¹⁴

Lieut. Colonel Torrens, during his visit to Kashmir in 1861, wrote, "*Poor Kashmir! When after so many vicissitudes of slavery to a foreign yoke, [...] it seemed that at last its condition was about to be ameliorated, its old ill-luck stuck by it still! [...] and they were again sold into the hands of the Philistines*" (Torrens, 1980:300). Further, lamenting over the "sale-deed" – as the Treaty of Amritsar was denounced – Lieut. Colonel Torrens remarked, "*No Englishman can leave Kashmir without a sigh of regret that a province so full of promise should ever have been allowed to slip through our fingers*" (Torrens, 1980:301).

"*Surprise has often been expressed*", wrote Sir Francis Younghusband, sometime the British Resident in Kashmir, "*that when this lovely land had actually been ceded to us, after a hard and strenuous campaign, we should ever have parted with it for the paltry sum of three-quarters of a million sterling*" (Younghusband, 2008:90). After his sojourn in Kashmir in 1875, W. Wakefield observed as follows:

[...] the huckstering spirit that so often pervades our national policy, and which caused the great Napoleon to apply to us the term of a nation of shop-keepers, was dominant in this case; for, relinquishing all the advantages that accrued to us from its possession, the supreme government sold

this fair province to the Rajah Gulab Singh (Wakefield, 2008:90).

J.D. Cunningham, who had served under Lord Hardinge, wrote in 1853 that, "*[...] the arrangement was a dexterous one, if reference be only had to the policy of reducing the power of Sikhs; but the transaction scarcely seems worthy of the British name and greatness*" (Cunningham, 1853:323). Robert Thorp, who visited Kashmir in 1870 and openly criticized the Dogra regime, wrote, "*[...] in no portion of the treaty made with Gulab Singh was the slightest provision made for the just or humane government of the people of Cashmere and others upon whom we forced a government which they detested*" (Thorp, 1870:60).

As late as in the beginning of the twentieth century, the controversy over the Treaty of Amritsar was perhaps revived by poet Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal. It is important to mention here that the poet never wrote in the context that the Dogra rule should have been substituted by that of the British or some other power. He expressed himself in an entirely different perspective.¹⁵ But, his views echoed the same feelings as were those of the critics of the treaty. His now famous verse reads as lineal as follows:

*Oh! Morning breeze! If thou happen to pass
by Geneva,
convey my message to the League of
Nations.
Their fields, their crops, their streams,
even the peasants in the Vale.
They sold all, alas!
How cheap was the Sale* (Mohammad Iqbal as cited in Bawa Satinder Singh, 1988:103).

¹⁵Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, who had a Kashmiri ancestry, wrote this verse on the occasion of the inauguration of the League of Nations. His motive seems to have been to seek the attention of the international community towards the pitiable conditions of the people they were in after British handed over Kashmir to Gulab Singh. Further, Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal's condemnation of the treaty as "sale-deed" might well have inspired the people of Kashmir to denounce the Dogra hegemony, and uniting them into an organized struggle against their rulers.

¹⁴See file "Lord Ellenborough to Lord Hardinge" as cited in Bawa Satinder Singh (1988:120).

It seems that the handing over of Kashmir to Gulab Singh, as the above-mentioned views reveal, was a foolish act and a short sighted stroke of British policy. The critics were of the opinion that the cool and temperate valley could have been utilized as a colony. But the fact of the matter is that the British were becoming a paramount power in the Indian sub-continent and all the policies which they followed were perceived to be in the best interests of the new imperialists. It was not without taking into consideration all the relevant circumstances that the agreement by which Gulab Singh got Kashmir was signed.

The handing over of Kashmir to Gulab Singh was a deliberate attempt on the part of the British. It seems that it would have been difficult for the British at that point of time to hold Kashmir. There are some important reasons which were advanced against holding Kashmir. Its occupation, wrote Lord Hardinge to the Secret Committee, "*would result in collision with neighbouring chieftains, for whose coercion a huge military presence and greater resources would be needed*".¹⁶ This they could not have afforded at that time owing to their weakened military strength and a deficit in the Indian treasury because of their successive general actions against the Afghans and the Sikhs.

The extension of the boundaries of the British Empire beyond Sutlej at that time would have been difficult to protect. With a hostile Punjab on the line of communications — as the Lahore kingdom was still outside the pale of the British Empire — it would have been difficult to hold Kashmir (Pannikar, 1930:105). Lord Hardinge, further, emphasized that the move to take possession of "*these largely mountainous territories would be an economy liability, because while the territories except*

Kashmir were deemed as unproductive which would not even pay the expenses of its management".¹⁷

One of the main features of the British policy at that time was its anti-Muslim stance that had developed in the wake of its disastrous defeat at the hands of the Afghans. The British officials thought that the creation of Jammu and Kashmir state and handing over it to Gulab Singh would prevent its emotional and political links with the neighbouring Muslim states.¹⁸ This consideration later on proved to be an excuse for the British to interfere in the internal affairs of the state.

The other considerations which weighed with the British authorities for slicing away Kashmir from the Lahore Durbar and making it over to Gulab Singh were, their desire to weaken the Sikh state and to reward Gulab Singh for his behavior during the Anglo-Sikh War. The new hill state would be setup to act as a counterpoise to the Sikh state at Lahore (Satinder Singh, 1988:118).

The debate over the Treaty of Amritsar continued. Its advocates, however, prevailed and the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir remained under the control of the Dogras until the British withdrawal from India (Satinder Singh, 1988:120).

EMERGENCE OF A DISTINCTIVE ENTITY

By virtue of the Treaty of Amritsar, Gulab Singh succeeded not only in severing his feudatory allegiance to the Lahore Durbar but he now became an independent ruler of his native land Jammu and the Himalyan kingdom of Kashmir. He also retained his authority in the frontier areas of Ladakh and Gilgit. The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir thus assembled was, therefore of considerable complexity.

¹⁷See file *Foreign Dept., Sec. Branch, Ref. No. 7, March, 1846, N.A.I.*

¹⁸See file *Foreign Dept., Sec. Branch, Ref. No.8, 19th March, 1846, N.A.I.*

¹⁶See file "Harding to Secret Committee" in *Foreign Dept., Sec. Branch, Ref. No.7, 4 March 1846, N.A.I.*

It was, moreover, in the context of the broad sweep of Indian history a totally new polity quite without precedent. The complex configuration of the princely state was acutely summarized by Sir Owen Dixon, a United Nations Mediator, in his report to the Security Council in 1950: “*The state of Jammu and Kashmir is not really a unit geographically or economically. It is an agglomeration of territories brought under the political power of one Maharaja. That is the unity it possesses*” (cited in Breacher, 1953:4).

The newly formed state of Jammu and Kashmir consisted of the three distinctive entities which differed from one another not only in physiography, but also in demography and culture. The Valley of Kashmir, a structural basin, with its temperate climate and fertile soil was enclosed by high mountains which gave it rather clearly defined physical boundaries (Raina, 1981:9-10). Its position between roughly parallel ranges — the Pir Panjal to the south-west and the Great Himalayas to the north-east — gave a singular insularity to the Valley. Constituting a little more than 10% of the total area of the princely state, over half of the population of the state was found in the Kashmir province, of which over 90% comprised of Muslims.¹⁹

The original heartland, Jammu, which was separated from the valley by Pir Panjal range, rose gradually to the south-west from a low alluvial plain of the Punjab. Jammu was predominantly Hindu in population and dominated by the Dogras.²⁰

The frontier areas of Ladakh, Gilgit, and Baltistan consisted of high and dry mountains and covered almost three-fourths of the total area of the

new State. Though being the largest division of the princely state in respect of area, yet Ladakh and Gilgit were sparsely populated areas. The people of Ladakh were almost entirely Tibetan Buddhists. Gilgit and Baltistan formed an overwhelmingly Muslim population.²¹

In ethnic and cultural terms as with its physical makeup, the identities of the people of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir were characterized by a heterogeneous quality. The great geographical barriers which separates Kashmir from the rest of India, occupied with the marked difference of climatic conditions, have from early times assured to the alpine land a distinct character of its own which manifests itself in all matters of culture, customs, and social organization.

The seclusion which Kashmir has enjoyed owing to its peculiar position has even to the present day materially restricted the geographical horizon of its inhabitants. This small mountain territory to which nature has given sharply-defined boundaries and a uniform character of its own has had always borne a distinctly local culture. It cannot be doubted that this fact has been a decided advantage for the preservation of historical traditions (Kalhana, 1900, 1:30-31).

The people of Ladakh were of Mongolian stock, while those of Jammu and Kashmir provinces descended from the Indo-Aryans. The cultural distinctiveness was reflected by the affinities of the people of Jammu to the culture of Punjab, and by those of Ladakh, to the culture of Tibet. Furthermore, the new state became a multi-lingual, with Kashmiri and Dogri as its principle languages.²²

The newly founded state of Jammu

¹⁹Walter Lawrance, the settlement Commissioner of Kashmir, wrote that the Muslims formed 93% of the total population of the valley. The rest included the Hindus and the Sikhs. The census report of India gave by and large the same figures. See, for further information, Walter Lawrance (1967) and *Census of India, 1941*, Vol.xxii, p.81.

²⁰See *Census of India, 1941*, Vol.xxii, p.80.

²¹See *Census of India, 1941*, Vol.xxii, p.82.

²²About 34 percent of the population speak Kashmiri and nearly 15 percent Dogri, while Punjabi is the tongue of nearly 30 percent. A great variety of languages are used, in various parts of the state, by comparatively small numbers. See *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.XVI (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), p.99.

and Kashmir became territorially the largest princely state of India. It had an area of over 84,000 square miles, followed by Hyderabad with an area of over 80,000 square miles (Sufi, 1974, 2:776). The state occupied strategically a unique position in the All India British Empire. The state was created in the interest of the imperial frontier defence — a policy which postulated that the state should be sufficiently strong for such a role, and that the British-Indian government should have an adequate control over its affairs.²³

The touching of the boundaries of the newly founded state of Jammu and Kashmir with the big powers of the time, particularly Russia, was the key factor to determine the formulation of the British policy in regard to the state. The state acted as a sort of buffer between their Indian Empire and Russia (Rai, 2004:26).

CONCLUSION

Thus, the foundation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and the assumption of power by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846 was attended by extraordinary circumstances. Further, the heterogeneity of the state was the direct by-product of the military and diplomatic accomplishments of the founder of the Dogra dynasty, combined with the political acumen which completed the expansion of British power into northern India. And yet the Dogra rulers were not able to unify the state.

The different communities continued to live a separate existence. As noted by Richard Temple, a Resident in Hyderabad, the “double title” of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir was “characteristic of his country [...] a political agglomeration of mountain tracts that have little connection otherwise with each other” (Temple, 1887, 1:267).

²³The British hoped that the state “would resist any establishment of a Muslim state on this side of the Indus” and also to “act as a counterpoise against the Sikh state”.

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State of Jammu and Kashmir: Between India and Pakistan

(Source: www.google.com, 17/8/2013)

The formation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir was unique as disparate territories stripped by the British East India Company from Sikh Kingdom of Punjab were brought together to form the state. The boundaries of the state were redrawn more for geo-political and administrative convenience rather than on a commonality shared by the people living there.