

## A Historical Perspective on Jammu and Kashmir: The Pre-Independence Years

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### Abstract

This research paper examines the historical development of Jammu and Kashmir from the formation of the princely state under the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 to its integration with India in 1947. The British acknowledgement of Gulab Singh's sovereignty established Jammu and Kashmir as a strategic buffer between British India and adjacent nations, fitting with British imperial objectives. During Dogra's governance, the state saw considerable social and economic inequalities, particularly affecting the Muslim majority, who endured oppressive laws and biased taxes. This exploitation incited resistance movements, particularly under Sheikh Abdullah, whose Quit Kashmir movement in 1946 epitomised the increasing need for political reform. During the Dogra era, political activism escalated, as organisations such as the All Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference (subsequently the National Conference) pursued socio-political rights and the abolition of authoritarian governance. The accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India during the partition of British India represented a pivotal moment in the region's history, influencing its identity and establishing its position within the geopolitical framework of South Asia. This paper analyses the history of Jammu and Kashmir's political, social, and economic dynamics, offering insights into the reasons that facilitated its integration into modern India and the enduring legacies that affect the region's contemporary difficulties.

### Keywords

Jammu and Kashmir, Treaty of Amritsar, Dogra rule, Gulab Singh, British India, political activism, Quit Kashmir movement, Sheikh Abdullah, All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Instrument of Accession, partition of India, regional identity, socio-political change

### Overview

A thorough analysis of historical events is needed to understand why the British Government recognised Jammu and Kashmir as a separate state in 1846 and installed Gulab Singh as its independent ruler. Though the political necessities of the time firmly anchored the decision, exploring various historical events intricately is essential to piece together the complex puzzle of past choices. Revisiting the 'Amritsar Accord,' made in 1809 between the Maharaja of Lahore (Ranjit Singh) and the East India Company (EIC), demonstrates that both parties desired to keep their relationship cordial. The 1809 agreement between the British East India Company and the Maharaja of Lahore was an effective means of reconciliation and restoration of equilibrium in the context of Maharaja's attempt to integrate the Cis-Sutlej kingdoms. The agreement of 1809 established a long-term relationship between the concerned parties, elevated the status of the State of Lahore in diplomatic circles of Britain, demonstrated the capacity for cooperation between the two sides, and defined the demarcation lines of the region with the British Government acquiring the territory north of the Indus River.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Treaty of Amritsar (1809)

The Treaty<sup>2</sup> protected British India from other countries, mainly France (until 1815), Afghanistan, and Russia, who wished to dominate the area. By obtaining the Treaty, the British effectively stopped these geopolitical dangers while neutralising the expansionist ambitions of local forces such as Ranjit Singh, the Marathas, and the Gurkhas. This strategic approach enabled the British to preserve their supremacy in India while preventing foreign or domestic forces from opposing their authority. Though the Treaty was signed only by the British and the Maharaja, Ranjit Singh's backing and extensive domain reach were critical in keeping other foreign powers at bay and prevented them from invading British territory. According to Hardinge, 'the Sikh Nation' under Ranjit Singh was powerful enough to guard the Afghan frontier but 'so hemmed in by natural boundaries' that it never could increase its power so as to be an object of jealousy to us.<sup>3</sup>

British had a carefully considered policy for the power that ruled north of the Sutlej. Since 1809, the policy was to have a strong Sikh State in the entire territory between the Afghan kingdom and the Sutlej, which the British fixed as the north-western boundary of their Empire in India. They wanted such a state to act as the buffer between them and the Afghans. Such a buffer state suited the British imperial interest very well. They were concerned about the Afghan frontier and its defence both because by then, they had become the paramount power in India up to the river Sutlej and, till the middle of the nineteenth century, feared one or the other of the European powers threatening it and needed a state as much interested in the defence of this frontier as the British (Bal 42). Although the Treaty prevented Ranjit Singh from capturing the Sutlej and the formation of a new Khalsa commonwealth by uniting Majnu and Malva Sikh communities, yet provided the Sikh ruler with some privileges.<sup>4</sup> It solidified his dominion in Punjab, enabled the development of a centralised administrative system, facilitated the build-up of a robust military, and gave him the freedom to further his conquests in the north, northwest, and southwest, facilitated by a secure southern boundary.<sup>5</sup>

Conversely, Ranjit Singh's death in 1839 left the Sikh Kingdom in a state of chaos, characterised by factionalism, inter-party power struggles, and weak governance. The Lahore Government, mainly comprised of Sikhs and Dogras during the reign of Ranjit Singh, was no longer around after his demise, and the strong Dogras in Jammu were getting ready to fight. Hardinge was anxious that the 'Sikhs' would soon lose control of the kingdom and could not control the enormous territory that Ranjit Singh had given them. He was also concerned that the Muslims and Dogras would take over the north and northeast of the state, which would leave the Sikhs with a fragile kingdom in Punjab.<sup>6</sup> The Treaty of 1809 established Anglo-Sikh relationships. However, new circumstances made the British authorities alarmed about the potential dangers arising from the fragmented state of Punjab. In 1845, the Khalsa army violated the Treaty of 1809 by crossing the Sutlej River and ending any pretence of continued Anglo-Sikh cooperation. This development compelled the British to forgo diplomatic attempts and adopt a harsher stance towards the Sikhs. The breach of the Sutlej River sparked the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1846 and had far-reaching consequences for the region. "The British thought it a conducive situation that rooted out the Sikh dispensation from Punjab permanently (Schofield, 6)". To counter the Sikhs and secure their territory's north-western and north-eastern borders, the British needed to take control of the Punjab Kingdom and isolate Kashmir. Kashmir, part of the Sikh Kingdom, was strategically located on the border with Afghanistan and Russia. Before annexing Punjab, the British felt it was important to establish Jammu and Kashmir as an autonomous, powerful, and friendly buffer state to defend the country's northwest and northeast borders and counterbalance the might of the Sikhs. Lord Hardinge observed that both Sikhs and Dogras would have "a common interest in resisting attempts on the part of Mohammedan power to establish a state on the side of the Indus" (Parmu 56).

Ranjit Singh's Kingdom of Punjab constituted a significant danger to the British Empire, therefore they signed the Treaty of 1809. However, upon Ranjit Singh's death, the British government took a restrictive posture, causing the Kashmir area to get entangled in the power dynamic. Kashmir was important to both the British and Sikh empires. The British viewed Kashmir as an extension of their territory, which could be used as a shield against

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<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Friendship concluded with Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809 by the British East India Company was driven by a combination of political exigency and economic necessity, and its underlying policy was to employ the resources of friendly Indian powers against unfriendly powers.

<sup>3</sup> Ripon Papers F.89

<sup>4</sup> Majnu is more historical and local, related to a disciple of Guru Nanak named Majnu and Malva are the Sikhs from the Malva region of Punjab

<sup>5</sup> Anglo- Sikh Treaty, 1809

<sup>6</sup> 23 January 1845, Ripon Papers, f.91

external threats. The British strengthened their sovereignty and control over Kashmir but did not wish to control the region directly. There are several compelling arguments against the occupation of Kashmir; Lord Hardinge wrote to the Secret Committee, "Its [Kashmir's] occupation by us would on many accounts be disadvantageous - It would bring us into collision with many powerful chiefs for whose coercion a large Military Establishment at a great distance from our Provinces and Military resources would be necessary. It would more than double the extent of our present frontier in countries assailable at every point and most difficult to defend without any corresponding advantage for such large additions of territory - New distant and conflicting interests would be created - and races of people with whom we have hitherto had no intercourse would be brought under our rule - while the Territories, excepting Cashmere, are comparatively unproductive and would scarcely pay the expenses of occupation and management." <sup>7</sup> The events of this period highlight the intricate and multifaceted relationships between the British and the Sikhs, the British and Gulab Singh, and the complex dynamics between the Sikhs and Gulab Singh.

Since 1819, Kashmir has been under the protection of the Sikh Empire, which established a government in the region following its capture by Sikh forces. However, after Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, the name of Dhyani Singh rose to prominence in the governance of Kashmir. Later, his brother, Gulab Singh, was appointed as a member of the Advisory Board of the Lahore Durbar for Kashmir-related matters.

The British were impressed by Gulab Singh's control over neighbouring Muslim hill kingdoms, especially Kohistan, and by his army composed of hillmen. They viewed him as a potential leader for establishing a home rule in Kashmir. Kashmir served as an ally, a fortified state, and a strategic buffer; its conquest aligned perfectly with British strategy and promised stability. Since Gulab Singh had agreed to pledge loyalty to the British and pay an annual retainer, the acquisition of Kashmir facilitated the establishment of a 'Home Government' and a British Protectorate, allowing the British to maintain control without expending significant resources on its administration. Kashmir was integral to the larger British strategy, safeguarding the Northwest Frontier and strengthening their Encirclement Plan.<sup>8</sup> Gulab Singh's involvement ushered in a period of relative peace and stability. With Ranjit Singh's Punjab as the cornerstone, Kashmir, situated within this region, evolved into a vital link. This development significantly bolstered the northern 'bastion' of the British encirclement strategy. This change was intricately connected to British geopolitical objectives and significantly impacted their strategic plan. In 1846, the State of Jammu and Kashmir was established after the Lahore Agreement, which ended the Sikh Empire, and the Treaty of Amritsar, which formalised Gulab Singh's sovereignty over the region. The first Head of State of the state was Gulab Singh, and the Dogra rule in the state continued for 100 years till 1947 when the state became part of independent India.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Birth of an Independent Jammu and Kashmir**

The State of Jammu and Kashmir was founded in 1846 following the signing of the 'Treaty of Lahore' between the Sikhs and the British Empire on March 9, 1846, and the subsequent 'Treaty of Amritsar' with Gulab Singh on March 16, 1846. The First Anglo-Sikh War (1845–1846) ended with the 'Treaty of Lahore', which saw the British East India Company overthrow the Maharaja Dhuleep Singh-led Sikh Empire. The battle and subsequent Treaty greatly enhanced British dominance over Sikh territory, significantly reshaping the region's political and geographical landscape. The Treaty's conditions included ceding certain lands, disarming Sikh soldiers, and recognising Gulab Singh's authority over Jammu. The Treaty was concluded between the following parties: Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, acting under the directions of the Right Hon'ble Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, on the part of the British Government. Bhace Ram Sing, Rajah Lal Sing, Sirdar Tej Sing, Sirdar Chuttur Sing Attareewalla, Sirdar Runjore Sing Majeethia, Dewan Deena Nath, and Faqueer Noorooddeen, on the part of the Maharajah Dhuleep Sing. The Treaty has been ratified this day by the seal of the Right Hon'ble Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, and by that His Highness Maharajah Dhuleep Sing.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> IOL, Secret Letter no. 7, March 4, 1845

<sup>8</sup> In the context of British colonial strategy in South Asia, it generally pertains to the British efforts to secure their interests and control by surrounding potential threats and consolidating their territorial holdings.

<sup>9</sup> Bal 40

<sup>10</sup> Anglo-Sikh Treaties: 1806-1846

### **Role of Rajah Gulab Singh**

Gulab Singh was instrumental in enabling the rapprochement between the Lahore and British governments. His cooperation led the British Government to recognise his autonomous sovereignty over several hill regions and territories, including Jammu and the surrounding area. His particular position is emphasised in Articles XII and XIII, and this pact safeguarded his domains. The establishment of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, which Gulab Singh's heirs controlled until India's independence in 1947, was made possible by this acknowledgement of Gulab Singh's independence.

Article XII: The Maharaja agrees to recognise Raja Gulab Singh's independent sovereignty over some areas and districts in the hills in exchange for the services he provided to the Jummoo (Jammu) State in securing the restoration of cordial relations between the Lahore and British Governments. A separate agreement between Raja Gulab Singh and the British Government calls for transferring these areas to Raja Gulab Singh. Additionally, the British Government recognises his independence in certain areas and accords benefits following a different Treaty. The British Government's arbitration is accepted in the event of any conflicts between the Lahore State and Raja Gulab Singh, and the Maharajah agrees to follow its ruling.

Article XIII: The British Government's involvement in mediating disagreements between the Lahore State and Raja Gulab Singh is reiterated in this article. They must bring any disputes or differences between them to the British Government for settlement. The Maharaja promises to accept the British Government's decision as the last word.

These articles, especially Article XII, acknowledge Raja Gulab Singh's crucial contribution to restoring harmonious ties between the Lahore State and the British Government. They establish his status and power inside those areas by granting him particular hill districts and territories as part of his autonomous sovereignty. Meanwhile, Article XIII creates a mechanism for the British Government to mediate disputes between the Lahore State and Raja Gulab Singh. These articles depict the establishment of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir under the leadership of Rajah Golab Singh, as well as the diplomatic complexities of the Treaty.

### **Treaty of Amritsar March 16, 1846**

Following the First Anglo-Sikh War, the 'Treaty of Amritsar, signed on March 16, 1846, between the British Government and Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu, was a crucial development. The British Government's Frederick Currie, Esq., and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, acting on Sir Henry Hardinge's instructions as Governor-General, and Maharaja Gulab Singh personally negotiated and signed the 'Treaty of Amritsar', which had ten articles. The Governor-General, Sir Henry Hardinge, signed the pact with his seal. Following the conclusion of the Treaty of Lahore, Maharaja Gulab Singh and the British East India Company signed the 'Treaty of Amritsar' on March 16, 1846. Jammu and Kashmir was founded as a consequence, and it is now a Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and a Union Territory of Ladakh. A few of the several territories that were amalgamated to create this state were Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Hunza, Nagar, and Gilgit, as well as other places like Nagar and Gilgit that had been expelled from the Sikh kingdom of Punjab by the British.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Dogra Administration in the Early Days of Jammu and Kashmir State**

The 'Treaty of Amritsar'- 1846 between the British and Gulab Singh of the Dogra Kingdom of Jammu led to the creation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The resulting state was incredibly complex, with three main divisions: Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was divided into three major regions: the Jammu Province, the Jhelum Valley, and the Indus Valley. The Jammu Province comprised the areas of Jammu, Udhampur, Kathua, and Reasi. The Jhelum Valley included Srinagar, Baramulla, and Muzaffarabad. The Indus Valley region consisted of the Tibetan Block, Ladakh, Gilgit, and the Frontier Illaqa. These regions differed in geography, culture, language, and predominating religion. According to the 1941 Census, the Vale of Kashmir had a predominantly Muslim population, comprising nearly 90%. In contrast, Jammu was primarily inhabited by Hindus and Sikhs and was governed by the Dogra Rajputs. Ladakh, with its small population, was mainly composed of Tibetan Buddhists. In Jammu and Kashmir, 77.11% of the population was Muslim, 20.12% was Hindu, 1.64% was Sikh, and 1% was Buddhist.<sup>12</sup> After the *Treaty of Amritsar* in 1846, the Muslim-majority population of Kashmir came under the rule of the Hindu Dogra dynasty. The Dogra kings considered Kashmir the conquered territory and owed allegiance to Jammu as their motherland. The Dogra rulers organised internal matters according to their whims, as the *Treaty of Amritsar* did not mention how the state's internal administration

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<sup>11</sup> Treaty of Amritsar 1846

<sup>12</sup> Hussain 3

would be managed. Dogras were a Rajput Hindu land-owning class of Jammu who ruled the state (mediating on behalf of the British) before it acceded to India. The Muslims, who made up 78% of the total population, were primarily tillers, labourers, and artisans and were generally subjected to exploitation. The princely state of J&K was peculiar in that while its rulers and elites belonged to the Hindu religion, most of the subjects were Muslims (Rai, 2004). Dogra regime was led by Maharaja Gulab Singh, followed by Ranbir Singh (1857- 1885), Partap Singh (1885-1925) and Hari Singh (1925-1947). This regime lasted for ten decades at the cost of the blood of Kashmiris. From 1846 to 1947, Gulab Singh and his successors systematically excluded the Muslims of Kashmir from state affairs and administration. For example, 28 Premiers were appointed, but none were Muslim.<sup>13</sup>

The Dogra regime adopted a more oppressive stance towards the Muslim population, as evidenced by the intimidating manner in which Gulab Singh treated Muslims, according to Vigne. Governor Shams-ud-Din led a mutiny in Poonch against excessive taxation by Diyan Singh and was killed along with his companions, "Then ordered one or two of the murderer's skins to be stuffed with straw; the hands were stiffened and tied in an attitude of supplication; the corpse was then placed erect and the head which has been severed from the body, was reserved as it rested on the neck. The figure was planted by the way-side so that the passersby might see it." (Vigne 29) The Dogra regime employed repressive methods reminiscent of medieval times, imposing several illegal levies designed to diminish the status of the population. This was particularly evident in the struggles faced by skilled artisans in prominent sectors like the silk and shawl industries. Despite these industries' significant revenue, the workers were burdened with excessive taxes. Astonishingly, even with such heavy exploitation by the Government, a skilled shawl weaver earned only four paise a day. As a result, many artisans lost interest in their crafts, leading to the decline of once-thriving art and craft centres. Other types of taxes exacerbated their financial difficulties by adding to their problems. The citizens' situation made them desperate, and they turned to drastic means to eliminate the oppressive tax load. They resorted to cutting off their thumbs and fingers to seem to be disabled, illustrating the desperate situations they were forced into. The occurrence in which people committed suicide by drowning in the streams of Zaldagar, Srinagar, in 1865 serves as an illustration of this despair. This terrible incident highlights the Dogra rulers' harshness, who imposed various fees that affected every part of life. The taxation on a staggering array of things painted a clear image of the oppressive authority of the Dogra emperors. This included levies on land ownership (the malikana tax paid to the Maharaja), grain watchers, and agricultural products like rice. The tax load impacted marriage, home ownership, and even the payment of taxes on tombs, sheep, chinars (chinar leaves), and ploughs. Taxes on artists and related trades, such as shawl weavers and silk workers, further exemplified these harsh policies. The list of taxes included various levies and ones on alcohol and forced labour (begging). When one considers that the Dogra overlords confiscated nearly 90% of the population's wealth, leaving them with a meagre portion of their wages, one can see the seriousness of the situation. Even the most fundamental needs, like air and food, looked on the verge of taxation amid this high taxation. With even the air feeling subject to taxation, the people were forced to find a means to live and turned to rescue what they could from the taxation assault.<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Hultenback's *Kashmir and the British Raj 1847-1947* contains damning material on the Dogras. The Viceroy Lord Lytton wrote to London on February 25, 1880. "The people are systematically oppressed and depressed; the administration thoroughly rotten; the land settlement vicious; the officials corrupt and unscrupulous; and their pay in arrears.... I consider the time has come when we must decisively intervene for the rescue of a perishing population on whose behalf we certainly contracted moral obligations and responsibilities when we handed them over to the uncontrolled rule of a power alien to them in face and creed, and representing no civilisation higher than theirs." Josef Korbel, the Czech member of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan, wrote in his acclaimed book *Danger in Kashmir*: "The land was mostly owned by the Maharaja or the Hindu landowners. The Muslims, toiling on their land, had to pay such high taxes that economic crises bordering on starvation became more or less a regular affair.... Not the least of his idle pleasures was his persecution of the Muslims, and to his underlings, he gave his blessing for their slaughter. The Dogra authorities were cruel, inhumane, and exploitative. Kashmiri Muslims have been dealt a huge blow by the rule of the Dogras, which has left them in a tough spot economically, politically, and socially. When Hari Singh took the throne in 1925, Kashmiri people were already feeling really angry at the rule of the Dogras. They started to speak out against Hari Singh's policies. The educated class of Kashmiri people were supportive of them, and Mohammad Abdullah was one of the most prominent. He later

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<sup>13</sup> Abdullah 303, Saraf 593-594

<sup>14</sup> Idib

became a key figure in Kashmir's political history and worked hard to make sure the Kashmiri people got their rights. During Hari Singh's rule, the Kashmiri people started to show signs of political awakening and started asking for their share of government services.<sup>15</sup>

Further, incidents such as the ban on Khutba-e-Eid in Jammu, the desecration of the Holy Quran and the dreadful incident of July 13, 1931, in Srinagar where the Dogra police killed 22 innocent Kashmir Muslims created havoc. The people of Kashmir were awakened by the mistreatment of Kashmiri Muslims by the Dogra authorities. To address the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims, the All Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference, a political organisation, was established in 1932 under the auspices of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The members of the All Jammu and Kashmir Conference (AJKMC) were Ghulam Ali Abbas, Molvi Yahousuf Shah, and Gholam Rehman. Sheikh Abdullah was the President of the organisation. The name of the Conference was later changed to the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference to reflect the secular nature of the party. Sheikh Abdullah led the transformation of the political situation in Jammu and Kashmir and initiated a political movement against the Dogra rule. Sheikh Abdullah started the 'Quit Kashmir' movement on May 10 1946, against the Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh. The call sought cancellation of J&K's deed of sale.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Kashmir's Political Awakening: Sheikh Abdullah's Leadership and Resistance to Dogra Rule**

The security of the people of Jammu and Kashmir was safeguarded by laws such as the State Subject Act, which the Dogra monarchs introduced as part of their developmental initiatives. After the death of Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1857, the succeeding Dogra kings undertook several notable initiatives to further the region's development. These included the construction of the Banihal cart road, the Jehlum Valley cart road, and the Zojila pass, which connected the region across Jammu and Kashmir. All developmental works encouraged potential economic growth and facilitated increased communication.<sup>17</sup> But the progress was a smoke screen, and the Dogras were more interested in the economic exploitation of Kashmir as they wanted to recoup the Rs. 75 lakh they had given the British to acquire the region. The Dogra rulers imposed heavy taxation on the Kashmiris to raise the seventy-five lakh rupees they had paid to buy Kashmir (Mukhtar, 187). In Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), the pervasive caste system has contributed to widespread dissatisfaction, compounded by limited job and educational opportunities. A weak political system and widespread corruption have further intensified these grievances. Numerous political movements have emerged to address these structural issues and promote reform. These efforts seek to tackle social and economic disparities and create a more equitable and inclusive society. In the predominantly Muslim state of J&K, where 77% of the population is Muslim, there has been significant discontent with the caste system, inadequate education, lack of job prospects, corruption, and ineffective Government. In response to these concerns, political institutions were eventually established to challenge the inequalities and caste-based discrimination perpetuated by the Dogra regime.<sup>18</sup> In J&K, few organisations actively promoted the Muslim community's awakening before 1930. But the reading room party (1930), started by young people with education, set the stage for the sit-in. Although the reading room's original purpose was to read books and newspapers, it marked a significant milestone in advancing political rights.<sup>19</sup> Kashmir had violent riots in 1931 as a result of religious interference and insults to the Holy Book. Abdul Qadeer, a British army officer's employee, made a fiery speech against the Maharaja that the Dogra authorities deemed seditious. He was arrested and imprisoned for the trial.<sup>20</sup>

When Dogra soldiers attempted to free him during his trial on July 13, they opened fire, resulting in the deaths of 22 people. This incident profoundly shocked the Muslim community in Kashmir and paved the way for the emergence of new leadership. Organisations like the All India Kashmir Committee, Anjuman-i-Kashmiri Muslamane, the All India Muslim Kashmir Conference, and the Muslim League severely criticised Maharaja's policies towards Kashmiri Muslims. On the advice of the British Government, the Maharaja was forced to establish a Commission due to the protests over the July 13 tragedy. Ch. Gulam Abbass and Kh. Ghulam Muhammad Ashai represented the Muslims on the panel, which was presided over by Sr. B. J. Glancy and had representatives from all communities. By endorsing demands for the liberation of holy sites, increased

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<sup>15</sup> Mukhtar, 2021

<sup>16</sup> Gupta, A. 2022

<sup>17</sup> Andrabi, 126

<sup>18</sup> Ali, Khan, Iqbal, 2019

<sup>19</sup> Saraf, p.369.

<sup>20</sup> Saraf, p.401

participation in services, and improvements in education and social welfare for the Muslim community, the commission acknowledged and addressed the issues faced by Muslims. The Muslims established themselves in governmental and political activities as a result of this, which was a huge success. The panel's findings were not implemented because a protest against the commission was organised by a Kashmiri pundit, known as the Roti Agitation. The Muslim leaders thought that these conditions were needed to create a political organisation that could defend the political rights of Muslims. On October 16, 1932, the Muslim Conference (MC) was established to support political rights.<sup>21</sup> In 1939, the Muslim Conference was renamed the National Conference to adopt a more secular stance and incorporate non-Muslims in the struggle against the Maharaja. During this period, Sheikh Abdullah developed a closer relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru and began to align more closely with the directives of the Indian National Congress. Ch Ghulam Abbass chose to go in a different direction since he did not feel at ease with the new direction that NC was taking.<sup>22</sup> Ch Abbass and Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah decided to revive the previous Muslim Conference. By 1941, there was a National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah and another Muslim Conference led by Ghulam Mohammad Abbass, each working on their objectives.

During this period, British India was experiencing a profound political transformation that disrupted its sociocultural landscape. The British, facing mounting pressure, chose to grant independence but opted to partition the territory into two separate dominions—India and Pakistan—acceding to the Muslim League's demands. By the time India celebrated its independence on August 15, 1947, 561 princely states had integrated into the newly formed dominion. However, four states—Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Junagarh, and the Khanate of Kalat—hesitated and reconsidered their decisions to join.<sup>23</sup> The princely states could choose their allegiance, with geographic proximity being a significant consideration. Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, was a Hindu, while the majority of his subjects were Muslims. He sought to preserve his state's independence, fearing that joining India would diminish his monarchical power. He signed a 'Standstill Agreement' with Pakistan to maintain the status quo, ensuring that trade, communication, and travel would continue uninterrupted despite the impending partition. However, a similar agreement with India failed to materialise. Tensions escalated when Pakistan violated the 'Standstill Agreement' by halting supplies to the state and sending tribal militias on October 21, 1947, to seize the remaining parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The situation in the state, particularly in Srinagar, became increasingly volatile, with law and order rapidly deteriorating. With this crisis, Maharaja Hari Singh was compelled to sign the 'Instrument of Accession,' formally aligning Jammu and Kashmir with India.<sup>24</sup> The 'Instrument of Accession' was unconditionally accepted by Lord Mountbatten on the night of October 26, 1947. Following this, on March 1, 1948, Maharaja Hari Singh appointed Sheikh Abdullah as the Interim Government's Prime Minister. These pivotal events solidified Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the region's history.

### **Conclusion**

To summarise, Jammu and Kashmir's complicated history, which began with the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 and ended in its admission to India in 1947, displays a wide range of political, cultural, and economic aspects. Under Dogra's authority, the princely state, known for its diversified population in places like Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, faced various obstacles. The largely Hindu Dogra rulers enforced severe regulations and discriminatory taxing tactics, causing social instability and economic suffering, especially among Kashmir's Muslim majority. Political activity and resistance groups began to emerge in the valley, giving a venue for protest against the harsh Dogra administration. Sheikh Abdullah's 1946 Quit Kashmir movement was a significant statement of mounting unhappiness and a call for political reform. As the political environment changed, groups campaigning for Kashmiris' rights developed, with the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference playing a prominent role. Under increasing internal and external pressure, Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession in 1947, bringing Jammu and Kashmir into India. This event opened a new chapter in the region's history, becoming part of the larger saga of a newly independent nation. The historical path of Jammu and Kashmir demonstrates the significance of political awakening, resistance, and the pursuit of socio-political change in moulding the region's destiny. Jammu and Kashmir became part of India's geopolitical landscape, and its complicated past continues to impact the present.

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<sup>21</sup> S. M. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chanar* (Rawalpindi: Royal Publishing House, 2012), p.124.

<sup>22</sup> Jag Mohan, *My Frozan Turbulence in Kashmir* (Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1991), p.43.

<sup>23</sup> Gupta, A. 2022

<sup>24</sup> Singhvi, S. 2019

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