CONCLUSION:
In this work an attempt has been made to trace the political and socio-economic conditions of the people of Kashmir from 1846 to 1885 A.D. The year 1846 A.D. witnessed the most important event— the Sale of Kashmir. Raja Gulab Singh had entered the Sikh army as a trooper and took part in many battles and gained the highest position through conquests, treachery and diplomacy. In the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46 A.D. Gulab Singh helped the British while himself he kept aloof from the war. He acted as the adviser to and mediator between the Lahore Darbar and the British. Rani Jindan thought him fit to conclude the peace treaty with British after the Sikh defeat in the war. Thus the Treaty of Lahore was signed on 9th March, 1846 A.D. by this Treaty the Lahore Government was to pay a huge war indemnity of one and a half crore rupees and had to cede the country between the rivers Beas and Sutlej to the British. The Lahore Government unable to pay the sum ceded all the forts, territories, rights and interests between the river Beas and Indus, including the province of Kashmir and Hazara. It was only after a few days that the Treaty of Amritsar was signed on 11th March, 1846 A.D. and Kashmir was sold by the British to Raja Gulab Singh for seventy-five lakhs of rupees who became thus Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir State.
The British East India Company was a trading company and its first and foremost ideal was to acquire the wealth which it got by selling Kashmir to Gulab Singh. The sale was not liked by the people of Kashmir and later also by the British themselves. The people were sold cheaply out with any reference to their interests and rights. The British subsequently regretted the sale as a great political mistake. Indeed they were at loss in this transaction and the people of Kashmir were the worst sufferers.

The Treaty made Maharaja Gulab Singh as the nominal ruler. Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, the Sikh Governor, continued to be the administrator of the Valley. The Maharaja sent his forces to Kashmir, but the Governor was assisted by the people of Kashmir and the tribes of Bambas, Khokhars and the Rajas of Hazara and Gakhass and a tough resistance was offered by them to Gulab Singh's troops. The Dogra forces were defeated and many generals were slaughtered. But Maharaja Gulab Singh asked the British for help and it was merely by the British threat that Sheikh Imam-ud-Din surrendered. The Sheikh left the Valley on 25th October, 1846 A.D. and Maharaja Gulab Singh entered Kashmir on 9th November, 1846 A.D. After the capture of Kashmir, Maharaja Gulab Singh faced many difficulties from the hill tribes but was successful in putting down the insurrection from the tribe of Hazara, conquered the Chiles Fort, and tried to put down the frequent revolts from Gilgit but actually it was left to Maharaja Ranbir Singh to subjugate Gilgit. Thus Maharaja's state constituted the provinces of Ladakh, Gilgit and Baltistan, Kashmir and Jammu.
Maharaja Gulab Singh came from the Jammu ruling family. This family had tried to maintain their independence. They had to pay a tribute to the rulers of Hindustan but on the disruption of the Mughal empire they got complete independence. In 1808 A.D. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the ruler of Punjab brought the Jammu province under his control. Gulab Singh and his brother Dhian Singh went to Lahore where the former entered the Durbar as a trooper and gained fame by participating in many battles. In 1819 A.D. Dhian Singh became the chief door-keeper of the Durbar. In 1820 A. D. the Jammu Chakla was granted to Gulab Singh in jagir, and his brothers Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh got the jagirs of Punch and Ramnagar respectively. Gulab Singh maintained the internal peace at Jammu and took part in many battles conducted by the Lahore Durbar. In 1846 A. D. he took over Kashmir from the British.

Maharaja Gulab Singh was the master of treachery, intrigue and lying. He based his power on force, absolute monarchy, cruelty, torture and tyranny. He brought the principle of personal rule to perfection and claimed himself to be the state with every right on his people and their labour. He believed in the colonial Maxim that "all that is yours is mine and all that is mine is my own", so was the master of everything-living and non-living and the ruled were expected to work all the time for the benefit of the master and his officials. Virtually he kept his subjects in a state of slavery. He had immense greed for wealth. He had purchased
Kashmir and was eager to make good that money which he had invested in its purchase. So he extorted a sum far in excess from a society which was trodden down by the tyranny of centuries. In the acquisition of wealth he exercised a hundred arts and opened new doors of exploitation, tyranny and oppression. Thus the people lived on the starvation line. His way of justice was quite novel which is clear from the fact that he ordered the erection of a large weighing scale in the compound of the court, in which the complainant and the defendant was first to be weighed and one who had more weight was declared to be a liar. He had no inclination to introduce the reforms.

It was in 1858 A.D. that Maharaja Gulab Singh held the coronation of his son Ranbir Singh and himself he died in 1857 A.D. Maharaja Ranbir Singh was, no doubt, kind and simpler than his predecessor. He reformed the army and also education. A large number of other reforms were also introduced by him. But he had no capable officers who could join hands with him in removing the defects of the government. There was absence of law and order. The Valley was still in the hands of grinding tyranny and oppression. The entire society groaned under the rule that plunged the people into misery. Everything was on decline and liable to change at the risk of chance. The rulers held grand Durbars when the people were dying due to scarcity of food.
The tools and agencies employed by the rulers in carrying the administrative machinery were exploitative. Various privileged classes came to the front and became a part of the socio-economic structure of the Valley, though in origin some of them were exotic. They ranked from Governors to the petty officials and were the products and perpetuators of an ignorant and destructive age. They were the worst tyrants to their own people and lived free on the exactions made on the people. Maharaja Gulab Singh encouraged and awarded those officers who collected extra sums in addition to normal revenue taxes. The people had neither any right nor any privilege but were liable to the duty of paying the government demands. The officials in charge of revenue collection and other departments were members of the privileged segment of society who were exempt from payment of taxes and were given to easy living. A new element, which was entirely foreign, was introduced in the administration of Kashmir with the appointment of Governors from outside. They became jagirdars and joined the Maharaja's service as officials. These officials fleeced the masses of Kashmir.

Agriculture was the main sector of economy and more than eight percent of the population depended on it. The villages were picturesque and beautiful but most of them were tenantless and deserted, fallen into ruins. The people left their lands and houses owing to the oppression exercised on them by the corrupt officials. The soil was rich and water plentiful, yet the peasant was indigent. During the normal years the agricultural out-put was abundant and the shali (was even exported to the neighbouring states. But in this
land of plenty there was acute poverty. The peasants produced enormous wealth with the sweat of their brows but it was difficult for them to make both ends meet. They looked like beggars and asked for alms which they rarely got. Most of them had to live for many months of the year on the fruits and wild herbs. Their conditions were further worsened by the natural calamities which occurred during the period under study. In the famine of 1865 A.D. the people were drowned in the Wular lake and the terrible catastrophe of 1877 A.D., which continued up to 1879 A.D., removed a large portion of the people and the government again turned to the shameful measure of drowning them. The worst sufferers were the peasants and the shawl-weavers. Though government tried to import the grains and adopted some preventive measures the officers were never so cruel to these famine-stricken people than in the famine. The government had during the earlier years, allowed no person to cross the border Rahdari system but at the end of 1878 A.D. the ban was lifted and people migrated in thousands to the plains of India. Cholera was a frequent visitor to the city due to the insanitary conditions of Kashmir, the fires, floods and earthquakes also had devastating effects on the economic conditions of the people.

The land revenue system and its collection was haphazard. The proprietary rights were vested with the ruler who was the sole proprietor of the land and the cultivator could be evicted at
any moment. The long chain of revenue officials were frequently transferred or dismissed so they were quick to amass as much wealth from the peasants as they could during their tenure of office.

The land revenue was collected both in cash and kind, which was most irksome, unmanageable and expensive. The Government had a monopoly in "Shahi" which was sent to the state granaries to feed the city population. The revenue system was such that regardless of the peasant's effort much or little—he was left with barely enough to get along till the next harvest but it was the right of the city-population to be well-fed. The method of revenue collection was harassing to the peasants who were plundered by the revenue officials and were subjected to severe penalties if they dared to use little crop for themselves or even if an animal ate a little of the stacked grain, the owner of the animal was severely punished. If the peasants could not satisfy the revenue officials, they were deprived of their cattle and sheep.

There was the absence of any settled land revenue system, one system followed the other, each being more faulty than the previous one. Obviously, the revenue demand was not fixed but it varied from village to village and also from time to time. It is no wonder that the peasants were not only left to suffer but a distinction was also made between the peasants of Kashmir and those of Jammu. The Jammu peasants were treated mostly as the
owners of land whileas the peasants of Kashmir were treated only as serfs with no proprietary rights in land nor to its produce. Thus there was no other choice left to them but to flee from their villages and roam from one village to another.

The rulers cared little for the welfare of the people and taxed them heavily. In fact, they sucked the life-blood of the people. They had monopolized the maximum number of products of the Valley. Everything was taxed except the air and water which was abundant in the Valley. The peasants had to pay the water-cess too. In addition, they were subjected to begar, which was not only maintained but also fastened by the rulers. The peasants had to carry the loads to Gilgit and Chilas and many of them died on the way and it was a miracle if any one returned safe and alive. The oppression on the peasants through this institution was much more than the extortion of the tax-collector who even left a little subsistance allowance to them or left them to live on fruits and vegetables. But the institution of begar meant separation for the villagers from their families with prospects of perpetual torture and imminent death. Their absence from their fields during the sowing or ripening time caused a lot of damage to agriculture resulting in decrease of produced. Scarcity was prevalent which meant a loss both to the cultivator and the government.

The Srinagar city presented a very sad picture. The streets were full of filth and in absence of any system of drainage the city became an inferno. Consequently, unhealthy
conditions prevailed in the city. Cholera broke out with greater frequency in the city and people caused a considerable loss of human life. In the city the people were mostly engaged in arts and crafts and in various trades and industries. The shawl-weavers were the worst-sufferers. They were highly taxed by the Government. The Department of Dagh-i-Shawl further worsened their conditions. They were shut into the unventilated rooms by the karkhanadars who oppressed them. Most of them cut their thumbs and fingers due to the tyranny of the karkhanadars, and could escape those atrocities only at the occurrence of death. Other industries were also brought under the heavy taxation, as a result some of the workers died owing to unhealthy conditions and over-work. Those that survived were reduced to the lowest ebb. Inevitably the socio-economic conditions of the artisans were deplorable. The trade in various commodities was carried on under government supervision and heavy cesses were imposed on the trading activities of the people. The old system of weights and measures was used by the people which changed from place to place. Moreover, the government frequently changed the currency which caused much loss both to the state and the people.

All this reduced the standard of living of the people. The people usually wore dirty to be found in tattered clothes. Even if a person had a tolerably usable wear he avoided it simply to escape the noose of the tax collector. No doubt, there main
item of diet was rice but most of them were denied the same, and widely used the wild herbs and fruits. They also took fish for their diet but it is a well-known fact that during the period under study the superstitious Maharaja Ranbir Singh forbade the people to eat the fish because he was told by the priests that the soul of his father, the late Maharaja Gulab Singh had trans­migrated into the body of fish. Even the people, who were driven by hunger during the famine of 1865 A.D. to eat the fish, were severely punished. Same was the case with the cow slaughter. People lived in shanty and filthy cottages. The least out­ward show or a neat appearance would have meant a better position and imposition of taxes on the people. The people were murdered enslaved and oppressed. Oppression and tyranny took the life and heart out of them and they lost their betterselves. They learnt to lie to save themselves and their families from any official engine of oppression.

The Kashmir society consisted of various classes and tribes. The social gradation was marked by the possession of wealth, which alone determined the division of the people into various segments. The majority of the people both Hindus and Muslims were orthodox, superstitious and chiefly under the strangle holo of the priests. Both respected their religious places, Gurus, Pirs and Fakirs. The Hindu-Muslim relations were harmonious in the Valley. Sometimes even the rulers tried to intervene into their lives and sow the seeds of discord between them. The system of education was traditional in the hands of Mullas and Pandits. But the Britishers tried their best
and founded a few schools in the Valley. Likewise, the Kashmiris depended on the oriental medicines but with the arrival of the Medical Missionaries better and most modern medical facilities became available to the people. All this was happening much against the wishes of their ruler. The traffic in women continued, the prostitution, gambling and drinking was not only encouraged but also fastened.

This was the picture of the life and conditions of the people of Kashmir from 1846 A.D. to 1885 A.D. It must be said that if there had been a ruler whose chief concern were the welfare of the people and not the exaction of money, the position would have been quite different. Since Maharaja Gulab Singh had invested his money in the purchase of Kashmir, he wanted to recover the money with the profit thereon. The example of exacting money was faithfully followed by his subordinates. So it is no wonder that when a ruler, Maharaja Ranbir Singh wanted to introduce some reforms, he had no agency to carry them out.