

Chapter Two

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

“...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. Torrens

Their fields, their crops, their streams,
Even the peasants in the Vale,
They sold. They sold all, alas!
How cheap was the Sale.

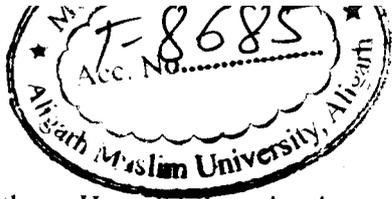
—Sir Mohammad Iqbal

The princely State of Jammu and Kashmir,¹ the “Sentry State”² 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 16th March, 1846.³ The formation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir was unique as disparate territories stripped by the 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

¹ The State of Jammu and Kashmir is usually referred to as simply Kashmir. In that, strictly speaking, Kashmir means the Vale of Kashmir only, and not other parts of the State such as Jammu, Ladakh and Baltistan. It has been tried here, as much as possible to use the term Kashmir to mean the Vale of Kashmir, and Jammu and Kashmir to refer to the State as a whole. Inevitably, however, it has not been possible to be consistent in this system of terminology as one might wish.

² Owing to its strategic position in the north-western frontiers of India, Kashmir was rightly described as, “The Sentry State” of British Indian Empire. Sachchidanand Sinha, cited in Madhavi Yasin, *British Paramountcy in Kashmir*, (Delhi: 1984), p. xv, fn.1.

³ C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, vol.6, (Calcutta: 1909), pp.165-6.



there. How did the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which lasted for more than a century, come into being?⁴

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 A.D.

Kalhana, the celebrated historian of the 12th century, recorded that Kashmir's political history began 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 B.C. and 237 B.C.⁵

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,

⁴At 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.

⁵“Kashmir can claim the distinction of being the only region of India”, wrote Dr. M.A. 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...” Kalhana. *Rajatarangini*, Tr. M.Aurel Stein, 2 vols, (Westminster: 1900), vol. 1, pp. 30-1.

when Rinchan Shah, a Tibetan soldier of fortune seized the power. Embracing Islam, Rinchan Shah became the first Muslim king of Kashmir. Kashmir attained the peak of her glory during the period of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420 to 1470 A.D.), popularly known in Kashmir as Budshah. Budshah's Kashmir was a model of economic prosperity, social justice and communal harmony in this part of the world. 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, the Mughal kings visited Kashmir quite often and took steps to add to its loveliness by raising stylish buildings and beautiful gardens. But Mughals, generally speaking, did not bother much to improve common man's lot. In 1752, with the collapse of the 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 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.⁶

Unlike Kashmir, the early history of Jammu is still folded in mist. From times immemorial—for 5000 years, the legends say—the principality of Jammu had been the seat of the rule of a Hindu dynasty, of a family of Rajputs, whose influence spread for

⁶ For a comprehensive history of Kashmir, See G.M.D. Sufi, *Kashir: Being a History of Kashmir From Earliest Times to our Own*, 2 vols, (Delhi: 1974); Prithvi Nath Kaul Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir: Political, Social, Cultural, From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, (Delhi: 1973); Also see, Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir Cultural and Political: From the Earliest times to the Present Day*, (Srinagar: 2003). A useful account is also given in W. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, (Srinagar: 1967)

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.⁷ Dhruv Dev (1703-42) established the Dogra⁸ Rajput family as rulers of Jammu in the declining days of the Mughal Empire. The most notable ruler of Jammu was Ranjit Dev. With his death, which occurred in 1780 A.D., 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 jagirdar⁹ of the Jammu principality.¹⁰

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 15th century A.D., when Tibet was conquered by the Chinese, Ladakh became completely independent.¹¹ But Ladakh with its sparse population and strong neighbours was more often the victim of aggression

⁷ Fredric Drew, *The Jammu and Kashmir territories*, (Jammu: 1999), p. 8-9.

⁸ The 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. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10, 43-7, G.M.D. Sufi *Kashir*, vol.2, pp.752-4. See also, Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 201.

⁹ A 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 of his overlord, keeping a part of it for his services, and to render military assistance to his overlord whenever asked for.

¹⁰ A brief outline of the history of Jammu is given by Sukhdev Singh Charak, *A Short History of Jammu Raj*, (Jammu: 1985); Molvi Hashmatullah Khan, *Tarikh-i-Jammu*, (Mirpur: 1991)

¹¹ William Moorcraft & George Trebek, *Travels in the Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab; in the Ladakh and Kashmir*, (New Delhi: 1971), pp. 66-7.

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 so 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.”¹² 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, yet the courage showed by Gulab Singh in bringing his forces back safely pleased Ranjit Singh and he promoted him in his command. At the siege of Multan, in 1818, Gulab Singh’s personal bravery attracted Ranjit Singh’s favourable notice.¹³ In 1819 he received the Sikh ruler’s permission to crush the revolt of Mian Dido, ‘the robber’, at Jammu.¹⁴ He finished the campaign successfully. The next few campaigns which saw his bravery were against the pretty chieftains of Rajauri, Bhimber, Basohli and Kishtawar.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ He personally travelled to Akhnoor (Jammu) in 1822 to confer the title of Raja on Gulab Singh. At the same time,

¹² Victor Jacquemont, *Letters from India*, (London: 1835), vol.2, p.166.

¹³ Diwan, Kripa Ram, *Gulabnama*, tr. Sukhdev Singh Charak, (Delhi: 1977, repr. 2005), pp.65-8.

¹⁴ Jammu was conquered by Ranjit Singh in 1808.

¹⁵ Kripa Ram, *Gulabnama*, pp. 75-6., 83-5, 95-7, 104-10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.115-6.

his brothers and a nephew also secured unique positions of authority and influence at Lahore Darbar. Dhian Singh was installed as the Wazir of the Maharaja and conferred the title of Raja-e-Rajgan, i.e. Raja of Rajas, in 1828.¹⁷ 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.”¹⁸ 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 the Lahore Darbar.

While his brothers remained at Lahore, Raja Gulab Singh focused his attention towards his newly assigned territory.¹⁹ The ambition to acquire new territories certainly motivated Gulab Singh to send an expedition to Ladakh in 1834 under his ablest general Zorawar Singh²⁰ which the latter successfully accomplished. Baltistan was conquered in 1840, and an unsuccessful bid to control Tibet was made in 1841. Although these conquests were carried out on behalf of the Sikh State, 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.”²¹

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

¹⁷ Syed Mohammad Latif, *History of Punjab*, (Lahore: 1891, repr. 1984), p. 440.

¹⁸ Lapel Henrey Griffin, *Punjab Chiefs*, (Lahore: 1890), p. 323.

¹⁹ 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. Shahmat Ali, *The Sikhs and Afghans*, (London: 1874), p. 94.

²⁰ Born in 1786 near Kalhoor (now in Himachal Pradesh), he joined Gulab Singh’s army during 1817. Nargisdas Nargis, *Zorwar Singh*, (Jammu: 1964), pp.1-7.

²¹ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. xv, (Calcutta: 1908), p. 95.

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.²² 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, save Gulab Singh, who stayed away from Lahore.²³ This changed political scenario of Lahore forced Gulab Singh to make his moves with extreme caution. Increasingly marginalized at the Sikh kingdom, Gulab Singh waited for an opportune time to turn the tide to his favour.²⁴

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.²⁵ This objective of the British had been duly fulfilled by the Sikhs after the treaty of “perpetual friendship” was signed in 1809.²⁶ But after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh the British saw their interests in jeopardy. The situation was further aggravated by

²² C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, (Cambridge: 1993), p.126.

²³ Suchet Singh died in 1844 in a clash with his nephew, Hira Singh and the latter was murdered by the Sikh army in Dec.1844. Bawa Satinder Singh, *The Jammu Fox*, (Delhi: 1988), pp.54-6, 63-73.

²⁴ Mridu Rai , *Hindu Rulers Muslim Subjects Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir*, (Delhi: 2004), p.25.

²⁵ Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, pp.126-8.

²⁶ The 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. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, vol. vi, p. 22.

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 face-off with the Sikhs.²⁷

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.²⁸

Though the first Anglo-Sikh war had begun in November 1845, the most memorable and the last battle of the war was fought at Sohraon on 10th February 1846.²⁹ 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 in regard to the state of Lahore which they might have in view.³⁰ Gulab Singh took the decision of collaborating with the British after giving serious considerations to the other alternatives available to him. Gulab Singh thought that he could neither participate in the war on the part of the Sikhs, nor remain secluded at

²⁷ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers Muslim Subjects*, p. 25.

²⁸ Bawa, *Jammu Fox*, pp. 98-9, 101-8.

²⁹ J. D. Cunningham, *A History of Sikhs*, (London: 1853), pp. 327-8; Latif, *History of Punjab*, pp. 537-8.

³⁰ Lord Hardinge to Secret Committee, cited in Bawa, *Jammu Fox*, p. 112.

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”.³¹

Though leaderless and abandoned, the Sikh army fought with reckless resignation but was ultimately defeated.³² However, the victory of the East India Company was achieved at a huge cost. Its budget went soaring back into deficit.³³ 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 1st Anglo-Afghan war (1839-42). The occupation of Punjab also needed a great military deployment.³⁴ So the best possible means to fulfill their objectives seemed to weaken the Sikh state militarily and to break its territorial unity.³⁵ 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

³¹ Bawa, *Jammu Fox*, p. 121.

³² There 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 Jindan, 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. Cunningham, *A History of Sikhs*, p. 327; Latif, *History of Punjab*, pp. 541-3, Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, (Princeton: 1963,1966), Vol. 2, p. 48.

³³ Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, p. 127.

³⁴ C. Hardinge, *Viscount Hrdinge*, (Oxford: 1891), pp. 132-3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-4 and 133.

*Company the territories situated between the rivers Beas and Indus, including the provinces of Cashmere and Hazara.*³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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 provided the opening for 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...’³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ The treaty obliged the Maharaja to submit any disputes to the British arbitration “that may arise between himself [Gulab Singh] and any neighbouring state.”⁴¹ The Treaty promised the British aid “to Maharaja Gulab Singh in protecting his territories from external

³⁶ Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, vol. vi, pp. 38-41.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ It 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”. Hardinge, *Viscount Hardinge*, p. 123; Cunningham, *A History of Sikhs*, pp. 322-4.

³⁹ Aitchison. *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, vol. vi, pp. 165-6, Article I.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. Article V.

enemies.”⁴² Article 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.”⁴³ 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-Khureed*, or gold-boughten slave!”⁴⁴ The phrase “*Zur-Khureed*” had unfortunate overtones and would haunt Kashmiri self-respect for many generations to come.⁴⁵

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 Imamuddin cleared the way for Gulab Singh’s entry into the Valley in November 1846. Thus emerged the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.⁴⁶

Why Transferred?

There followed a heated debate in and outside the British official circles pertained to the wisdom of handing over of Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh. 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

⁴² Ibid. Article IX.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Cunningham, *A History of Sikhs*, p. 324.

⁴⁵ M.J. Akber, *Kashmir Behind the Vale*, (New Delhi: 2002), p. 59.

⁴⁶ Bawa, *Jammu Fox*, pp. 125-9.

Singh. General 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!”⁴⁷ Lord Ellenborough, the predecessor of Hardinge in India, irritated by the creation of the new mountain state, wrote “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.”⁴⁸

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.” Further, lamenting over the ‘sale-deed’—as the Treaty of Amritsar was denunciated—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.”⁴⁹ ‘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.’⁵⁰

⁴⁷ William Napier, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles Napier*, (London: 1857). Vol.3, p. 400.

⁴⁸ Ellenborough to Hardinge, quoted in Bawa, *Jammu Fox*, p. 120.

⁴⁹ Lieut. Colonel Torrens, *Travels In Ladakh, Tartary and Kashmir*, (London: 1978), pp. 300-1.

⁵⁰ Sir Francis Younghusband, *Kashmir*, (Srinagar: first published 1908, repr. 2008), p. 90.

After his sojourn in Kashmir in 1875, W. Wakefield observed, "...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."⁵¹

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."⁵² 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."⁵³

As late as in the beginning of the 20th century, the controversy over the Treaty of Amritsar was perhaps revived by poet 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. He expressed himself in an entirely different perspective.⁵⁴ But his views echoed the same feelings as were those of the critics of the treaty. His now famous verse reads as:

⁵¹ W. Wakefield, *The Happy Valley*, (Delhi: first published 1908, repr. 2008), p. 90.

⁵² J.D. Cunningham, *A History of Sikhs*, p. 323.

⁵³ Robert Thorp, *Cashmere Misgovernment*, (London: 1870), p. 60.

⁵⁴ Dr. 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, 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.

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.⁵⁵

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 subcontinent and all the policies 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."⁵⁶ 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 military 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

⁵⁵ Mohammad Iqbal cited in Bawa, *The Jammu Fox*, (Delhi: 1988), p.103.

⁵⁶ Hardinge to Secret Committee, Foreign Dept., Sec. Branch, Ref. No. 7, 4 March, 1846, N.A.I.

Lahore kingdom was still outside the pale of the British Empire—it would have been difficult to hold Kashmir.⁵⁷ 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 ever pay the expenses of its management.”⁵⁸ 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 the Jammu and Kashmir state and handing over it to Gulab Singh would prevent its emotional and political links with the neighbouring Muslim states.⁵⁹

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.⁶⁰

The debate over the Treaty of Amritsar continued. Its advocates, however, prevailed, and Kashmir remained under the control of the Dogras until the British withdrawal from India.⁶¹

⁵⁷ K. M. Pannikar, *The Founding of the Kashmir State*, (London: 1930), p. 105.

⁵⁸ Foreign Dept., Sec. Branch, Ref. No. 7, March, 1846, N.A.I.

⁵⁹ Foreign Dept., Sec. Branch, Ref. No. 8, 19 March 1846, N.A.I.

⁶⁰ Bawa, *Jammu Fox*, p. 118.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 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 Himalayan 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. 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."⁶²

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.⁶³ 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

⁶² Michael Breacher, *The Struggle for Kashmir*, (Oxford: 1953), p. 4.

⁶³ A. N. Raina, *Geography of Jammu and Kashmir* (New Delhi: 1981), pp. 9-10.

princely state, over half of the population of the state was found in the Kashmir province, of which over 90% comprised of Muslims.⁶⁴

The original heartland, Jammu, which was separated from the valley by the 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.⁶⁵

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, Ladakh and Gilgit were sparsely populated areas. The people of Ladakh were almost entirely Tibetan Buddhists. Gilgit and Baltistan formed an overwhelmingly Muslim population.⁶⁶

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 separate 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

⁶⁴ Walter Lawrence, 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. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*. The census report of India gave, by and large, the same figures. R.G. Wreford, *Census of India, 1941, Vol. xxii, Jammu and Kashmir, Parts I and II, Essays and Tables*, Ranbir Government Press, 1943, p. 81.

⁶⁵ Census of India, 1941, vol. xxii, p. 80.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

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 decidedly been advantageous for the preservation of historical traditions.⁶⁷

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 entity, with Kashmiri and Dogri as its principle languages.⁶⁸

The newly-founded state of Jammu 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.⁶⁹ The state occupied strategically a unique position in the All India British Empire. The state was created in the interest of the imperialist 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.⁷⁰ 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

⁶⁷ Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, vol., 1, p. 30-1.

⁶⁸ About 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. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, (Oxford: 1908), vol. xvi., p. 99.

⁶⁹ Sufi, *Kashir*, vol.2, p. 776.

⁷⁰ The 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.” Governor General’s Despatch to Secret Committee, 19 March 1846, No. 8, Foreign Department Proceedings, NAI.

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.⁷¹

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.”⁷²

⁷¹ Rai, *Hindu Rulers Muslim Subjects*, p. 26.

⁷² Richard C. Temple, *Journals kept in Hyderabad, Kashmir, Sikkim and Nepal*, 2 vols. (London: 1887), vol. 1, p. 267.