

KASHMIR MAHARAJAS, THE DESPOTS

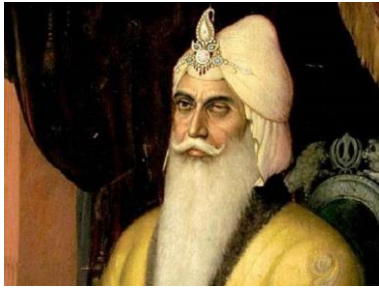
The 16th of March, 1846 was the fateful day when Kashmir was sold by British to ruthless Maharajah Gulab Singh for a paltry sum of Rs.75,00,000.00 (Nanakshahi Rupees seventy five Lakhs) which if converted at the current rate of exchange in Sterling Pounds amounts to a meagre sum of approximately £ 93,750.00.

اے باد صبا گر بہہ جنیوا گذر گئی
حرف زما بہہ مجلس اقوام باز گوی
دہقان و کشت و جوئے نیاباں فروختند
قومے فروختند چه ارزاں فروختند

O! ye the morning breeze, if you pass via Geneva,
word from us, The League of Nations, say repeatedly
say, Peasant in the agricultural fields, Streams,
Streets, Avenues! Sold, a nation was sold and at
what price!

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MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH 1780 – 1839



Ranjit Singh succeeded his father at the young age of 12. Blind by one eye Ranjit Singh was born in 1780 in the Punjabi town of Gujranwala now in Pakistan. At the time much of Punjab was ruled by Sikhs as well as Afghans. Ranjit Singh was a Punjabi of the sovereign nation of Punjab. His samadhi is located in Lahore, Pakistan. He invaded and captured Jammu and Kashmir (1819). Sikhs have ruled Kashmir with an iron hand and stories of misrule, torture and humiliation of local population are numerous. In order to encircle and establish political hegemony, Ranjit Singh encircled the valley by allotting land to his army to rehabilitate to keep an eye on the local population on permanent basis. He did this by allotting land to his army and their families by selecting four corners, Shopian, Tral, Baramulla and Rangrett. Ranjit Singh died in 1839.

MAHARAJA GULAB-SINGH 1792-1857



Gulab Singh an illiterate to the end, signed and negotiated the TREATY OF AMRITSAR with British on 16th of March, 1846. The treaty transferred the territories of Jammu, Kashmir, Gilgit and Hunza (excluding Lahul) to his independent possession. He is said to have played an eminent role in extending the boundaries of his kingdom. He faced a threat from Khalsa army of Punjab and turned to British for help and protection. As is said, the condition of the people of the state was deplorable and almost everything was taxed heavily Gulab Singh married to Rani Rakwal entered capital city of Srinagar on November 9, 1846 and to give a brief introduction of Gulab Singh's monstrous behaviour, **M L Kapur** in his book the history of Jammu & Kashmir mentions the Maharaja in the following words:

To quell the rebellion in Poonch and Chibbhal territory, returning from Peshawar Gulab Singh after some desultory warfare, the rebels were completely routed. Many of them were captured, and treated with vengeance; their hands and feet were severed by axes, while skins of Mali Sabaz Ali, and two of the close accomplices of Shams-ud-Din, were peeled off their bodies. Their heads were hung on gallows in a crossing as a warning to others. Hands were ultimately laid on the chief rebel as well, and his head was cut off.

He further mentions, examples of severity were thought necessary but the cruelties perpetrated by Gulab Singh both in this and in the other campaigns in which he commanded have caused his name to be generally decried and execrated. Gulab Singh as a treacherous and licentious person generally applauded by panchas and the talks with Jammu Raja which went for a week were entertained with abundance of food, sweetmeats, drinks and women.

Gulab Singh sent Dewan Jawala Sahai to the British Camp to represent that Jammu territory be granted as sustenance to his dependents. The Dewan met Lawrence and Currie, who after discussing the whole matter with Lord Harding, laid the condition that if the Maharajah paid the indemnity of one Crore (Ten Million) of rupees, the British would be willing to bestow on him the territories lying between the source of the Bias to the Sindh, including Kashmir and Hazara. Gulab Singh was, however, not in a position to pay such a heavy amount. He,

therefore, suggested the exclusion from the grant the territory lying to the right hand of the Bias and corresponding reduction in the amount demanded. This suggestion was accepted, rather welcomed by the British authorities. And in consideration of the exclusion of this territory, the amount of indemnity to be paid by Gulab Singh was reduced by twenty-five Lakhs.

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After paying their dues to the government, gratifying the illegal demands of the corrupt officials, the cultivators of the crop were hardly left with the third of their produce. Secondly, the security of life and property had disappeared. British Government received complaints against misrule of Gulab Singh which was termed as oppressive. Maharaja Gulab Singh born on October 18, 1792, an illiterate to the end died at Srinagar on 30th June, 1857.

MAHARAJA RANBIR SINGH (1830 - 1885)



Ranbir Singh succeeded his father on 20 February, 1856. A great Persian scholar educated privately, knowledgeable of Sanskrit, English and Pashto. He died on 12th September, 1885 at the age of 55 years.

Ranbir Singh allied with the British during the Sepoy Mutiny. Unlike European women and children, Indian mutineers were not allowed to take refuge in his state. He also sent his troops to help the British to besiege Delhi. He was subsequently rewarded for his behaviour during the mutiny. He went on to annex Gilgit which had previously witnessed a rebellion against the state. The princely states of Hunza and Nagar started paying tributes to Jammu and Kashmir during his reign. He also established a modern judicial system. Civil and criminal laws were compiled into the Ranbir Penal Code during his reign. Ranbir Singh was a scholar of Sanskrit and Persian languages and had many books translated.

The mutineers of Sepoy Mutiny 1857 were not allowed to take asylum in the state bordering the then British India. British women and children had taken refuge in the Kashmir valley. After the death of Gulab Singh, Ranbir Singh sent a battalion of Jammu and Kashmiri soldiers to help the British to besiege Delhi who was subsequently rewarded for his loyalty to the British. The Treaty of Amritsar was amended in 1860 and a new provision inserted allowed Dogra rulers to adopt a child from a collateral branch of the family. Previously, according to the treaty, the state would have been annexed by the British if a ruler did not have a natural heir.

During the final years of Gulab Singh's reign, a rebellion in Gilgit caused heavy casualties to the Dogra troops. In 1860, Ranbir Singh sent his army under the leadership of Colonel Devi Singh Naranja, Colonel Bijai Singh and General Hoshiara Singh to Gilgit. They successfully recaptured Gilgit and by the end of 1870, the states of Hunza and Nagar started paying tributes to Jammu and Kashmir.

Ranbir Singh established a modern judicial system. Civil and criminal laws were written and consolidated into the Ranbir Penal Code followed in Jammu and Kashmir even today. The judicial system was handed over to the executive officers. Separate prisons were built for political prisoners. Ranbir Singh organized two durbars in a day in which he heard petitions. Ranbir Singh founded separate departments for foreign affairs, home affairs, civil affairs and army. He founded a silk factory in the state. The shawl industry flourished during his reign which provided employment and a minimum income to his subjects.

As per the Treaty of Amritsar, there was no provision for the appointment of a Resident in the state. With the appointment of an Officer-on-Special-Duty in 1851, the idea of appointing a Resident started dominating amongst the British government. In 1873, The Lord Northbrook, the then Governor-General of India wrote to Ranbir Singh about a proposal to appoint a British Resident in Kashmir. However, Singh rejected such a proposal. He submitted a memorandum and reminded the services of Gulab Singh to the British. He also reminded the British that unlike most of the monarchs of princely states, he refused to take any jagir as a gift in lieu of his services during the Sepoy Mutiny.

MAHARAJA PRATAP SINGH (1848-1925)



Pratap Singh ruled the longest and known to have done a great deal for his subjects. The longest reign of all Dogra rulers, generous by nature, a moderniser and a visionary; out of the four Dogra rulers, did a lot towards establishing local self governing bodies, democratic processes, educational systems, health care and infrastructure development.

By 1925 Kashmir, particularly Srinagar had undergone significant social and cultural transformation connecting the Valley to the outside world by two major road networks and River Jhelum, which was the central artery of communication and large and small size boats ferrying people and goods up and down the river in a systematically regularized manner. Commenting upon his rule, British historian Walter Lawrence wrote, “He has done much to change the position of his subjects. His kindness to all classes in Kashmir won him the affection of his people”. Born at Reasi, he is remembered as General Zorawar Singh on his annual birth anniversaries.

Soon after his coronation he had to endure and agonize over the personal humiliation meted out to him by a diplomatic ‘coup-de-grace’ engineered by the British blaming him of hobnobbing with Russians against British, which abolished his authority. Eventually nothing was proved against him. Though restored, yet his powers remained curtailed. Despite British apathy, Jhelum Valley Cart road, a wonderful mountain road of the world, starting from Kohala to Baramulla was completed in 1889.

In 1897 it was extended to Srinagar. Thereafter another highway, the Bannihal Cart Road (BC Road), connecting Jammu with Srinagar was thrown open to the public in 1922. Besides these highways, many other roads and tracks connecting Srinagar to Gilgit and Leh & many other places were completed. The benefits of these roads on general public may be judged from the fact that before Maharaja Pratap Singh’s reign, there wasn’t any Tonga / Bael Gari (wheeled conveyance), nor even a hand driven cart seen in the state. By the time his rule ended, large boats, B class buses and trucks (motor vehicles) became the principal means of conveyance and transportation.

Jammu was linked to Sialkot by rail in 1890 after which Jammu got connected to Delhi and rest of India. Today when everyone is talking about development as premier Modi's agenda and Nitin Ghatkare's push for speeding up road connectivity, let us not forget that nineteenth century rulers were equally keen to develop their states despite British control but they did not have the resources and the mandate as available today in the democratic set up.

Dept of Agriculture and Cooperative Societies were the other initiatives taken to further improve the lot of farmers and cultivators. In 1887, Maharaja ordered land settlement. As a result, the rights of the agriculturists were clearly defined. The share of agriculture produce for the state was fixed at 1/3rd of the gross produce. Revenue was collected in cash. The land settlement gave much needed security to the cultivators and became responsible for increased productivity and increasing prosperity. The revenue of the state more than doubled.

By 1912 jurisdiction of Tehsils and Districts was completely settled. A model agricultural farm was set up at Srinagar to project scientific methods of cultivation. By 1929, the number of Cooperative Credit Societies in the state rose to 1,100 with a membership of 27,500. This enabled farmers to untangle from the clutches of Sahukars (money lenders). As a social reform, 'Begar' in its more objectionable form was abolished.

Lot of stress was laid to popularise education. Number of boys and girls schools and hostels were opened. Primary education was made free. Grants for education were budgeted. Several initiatives were taken to educate Muslims. Unqualified teachers were sent to Lahore for training. One degree college each at Srinagar and Jammu were opened. First one was started in Srinagar in 1905 and was named Sri Pratap College. The other was established in Jammu in 1907 which was named 'Prince of Wales College', commemorating the visit of His Royal Highness, Prince of Wales, the future King George V. As a great visionary, he created institutions of higher learning in Jammu & Kashmir regions. Amar Singh Technical Institute was established in Srinagar in 1914 and Sri Pratap Technical School was set up at Jammu in 1924. By 1938, Sri Pratap College, with 1187 students was adjudged being the second largest college affiliated to Panjab University and with 69 years of independence we are still grappling with providing quality education to the youths of our state.

Real drive in modernisation of health care occurred during Maharaja Pratap Singh era. Kashmir Mission Hospital was expanded which soon became a hub of health care activities. In 1889, in two largest cities of Jammu & Srinagar, two govt Hospitals were commissioned. He opened separate hospitals for males (Mardana) and females (Zenana) at Srinagar and Jammu. In other towns and important villages, dispensaries were started under qualified doctors. These initiatives went a long way in improving health of the people. Smallpox used to take a very heavy toll of life in the valley. Large scale vaccinations were administered in 1894 to prevent it. Besides agriculture; sericulture, viticulture and horticulture were made into flourishing industries. A silk factory was set up at Srinagar which attained the distinction of being the largest of its kind in the world. He was succeeded by his nephew, Hari Singh as the Maharaja in 1925.

MAHARAJA HARI SINGH (1895-1961)



On August 12, however, Hari Singh tried to enter into a standstill agreement with both India and Pakistan. While the former hesitated, the latter accepted this arrangement two days later. In the meantime, the actual partition of India took place on the night of August 14-15, 1947.

All Dogra rulers have taken liberties with Kashmiri's Muslim majority population and apart from routine inhuman (begaar) conscription rules, Hari Singh, like his predecessors, would stick to the tradition of bullying, harassing and humiliating the local Muslim population in order to rule over them with comfort. Succeeded his uncle Maharaja Pratap Singh and ascended the throne on October 14, 1925. He manoeuvred to maintain his independence by playing India and Pakistan with each other by signing stand still agreement with both the countries. He was forced by India to Sign the doubtful instrument of accession on 26th Oct, 1947. In 1951 Hari Singh's rule was terminated by Government of India and externed to live in exile for rest of his life. He died in Bombay on 26th, April, 1961. He was succeeded by his only son heir apparent with the title of Yuvraj Karan Singhji Bahadur.

In order to create a fear psychosis and terror, Hari Singh followed the tradition of humiliating people as a routine matter and his tactics was slightly different from his ancestors. He would, very frequently, order his infantry battalion, known as Risaldar mounted on horsebacks to march through the main business hub **Maharaj Ganj** in downtown Srinagar and pick and choose a few healthy Kashmiri Muslim shop keepers to receive a number of lashes for no fault or crime, depending on the forbearance of a particular person. This kind of treatment had made Kashmiris timid, cowards and tolerant to face hardships.

After paying their dues to the government, gratifying the illegal demands of the corrupt officials, the cultivators of the crop were hardly left with the third of their produce. Secondly, the security of life and property had disappeared. British Government received complaints against misrule of Gulab Singh which was termed as oppressive. Successive governments of Ranbir Singh, Pratap Singh and even Hari Singh were no different as corruption was always at its peak and the Muslim majority community suffered at the hands of these Dogra rulers who treated people like animals and would get a thrill by humiliating them which the rulers did on daily basis. To give an example, a Muslim would be sent to gallows for killing a cow compared to a hindu who would be accorded a minor sentence for a similar offence or for killing a Muslim. He abdicated in his sons favour on 20th February, 1856.

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Talking about Muslim rulers, a special mention of **Sultan Sikandar** (1389-1413) is made, who banned gambling, drinking of wine, dancing of women and the practice of Sati among the

Hindus. In matters of religion also, Shah Mir and most of the successors were perfectly tolerant, and made no distinction between their Hindu and Muslim subjects. **Qutb-ud-Din** 1373-89) even used to offer prayers at the Hindu temples.

YUVRAJ KARAN SINGHJI BAHADUR (1931)



Karan Singh born at Cannes, France on March 9, 1931 succeeded his father Maharaja Hari Singh on 11th May, 1931 and was appointed Yuvraj. He was appointed by Government of India as the Sadri-Riyasat on November 1, 1956 and lasted as Sadr-e-Riyasat till 1965. He was later appointed as Governor of J&K till March 15, 1967. Thereafter he joined politics and became a cabinet minister in Government of India. Nowadays, keeping a low-profile, for unknown reasons, is detached from active political life.

The heir apparent Yuvraj Karan Singh, of the last Dogra ruler Hari Singh, in his biography throws some light on the plight of Kashmiris saying:

The condition of the people of the state at the advent of Dogra rule was deplorable. In Kashmir, for instance, almost everything was taxed heavily. After paying their dues to the government, gratifying the illegal demands of the corrupt officials, the cultivators were hardly left with a third of their produce. Security of life and property had disappeared. The Sikhs governors had been very lavish in granting jagirs so that there were as many 3,115 of these when Gulab Singh took over Kashmir.

And while defending the first Dogra ruler, his ancestor, he continues: Despite these measures, the British authorities in India received some complaints against Gulab Singh's government, which was termed as oppressive. Though some of the British officers had earlier paid short visits to Kashmir and submitted their reports, the British authorities contemplated sending one of their officers to stay at Srinagar for three to four months in order to make detailed inquiries about the condition of its people. Subsequently, on finding that the complaints were exaggerated and made mostly by disgruntled elements, the proposed measure was dropped.

Karan Singh further says: Gulab Singh died in Srinagar in 1857 and was succeeded by his only surviving son, Ranbir Singh. The new Maharaja was popular with his people but he was handicapped due to lack of honest and capable officials. Despite this the state made some progress during his reign.

While highlighting the achievements of his father, he points out various outstanding feats performed which, according to him, were unheard during earlier Dogra rulers.

In 1877 the state government carried out the first land settlement. As a result, the rights of the agriculturists were clearly defined and the states demand was fixed for ten years.

Begar or forced labour in its most objectionable form was abolished. By 1912 practically every Tehsil and district was settled either for the first time or in revision. The share of the state was fixed at 30 per cent of the gross produce and the revenue was to be collected in cash. The land settlement gave much-needed security to the cultivators and became

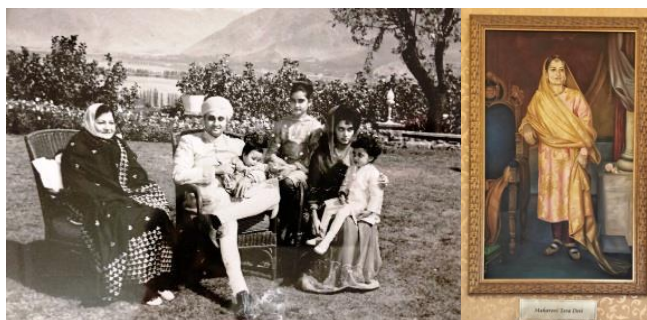
responsible for their increasing prosperity, the revenue of the state also increased by more than 100 per cent.

Special stress was laid on the measures to protect agriculturists. Thus under the Agriculturist's Relief Act, a debtor could bring his creditors to a court of law for the settlement of accounts. This freed the peasants from the rapacity of the moneylenders. The Land Alienation Act forbade the transfer of agricultural land to the non-agriculturists. If they wished improvements on their lands, they could easily get loans from the government on easy instalment basis.

While making special reference to Hindu population of Jammu province he mentions that female infanticide, child marriage, traffic in women, untouchability and other social evils were common among the people of the state. Steps were taken to control these evils. Simultaneously he took up the matter of child marriage and promulgated an ordinance in which the age of marriage of boys and girls was raised to 18 and 14 respectively, and its violation was punishable by one year's imprisonment or fine up to rupees one thousand or both. Maharaja Hari Singh threw open all public schools, colleges and wells to the untouchables in 1931. The next year all state temples were also thrown open to them. In 1940, he proclaimed untouchability a cognizable offence. This all is with reference to Hindu dominated Jammu province.

A commission was appointed to inquire into the grievances of the Muslims and other communities. Chief recommendations of the commission included a fair and adequate representation in the services to all the communities, grant of freedom of press and platform, return of the confiscated religious sites and establishment of a representative Assembly. The government accepted the recommendations and accordingly new rules for recruitment to state services were framed. As a result of this there was gradual expansion in the representation of Muslims in the civil services.

DEMOGRAPHY CHANGED IN JAMMU



TARA DEVI

Tara Devi, Son Dr.Karan Singh, wife Lakshmi, daughter Jyotsna, son Vikramaditya

The Maharani, fourth wife of Hari Singh, will go down in the history of Kashmir as being instrumental for changing the demographic character of Jammu province. As is said, when Dogra forces suffered heavy casualties fighting infiltrators from North West Frontier areas, Maharaja along with his Maharani fled from the valley with all his possessions and reached Jammu.

Upon reaching the main bazaar in Jammu, wailing Maharani demonstrated to the people on the streets that they had escaped murder, mayhem and humiliation at the hands of Muslims

in Kashmir. This sparked off anti-Muslim feelings and people joined by Maharaja's army went on a murder hunt and a massacre started killing Muslims wherever they could find them.

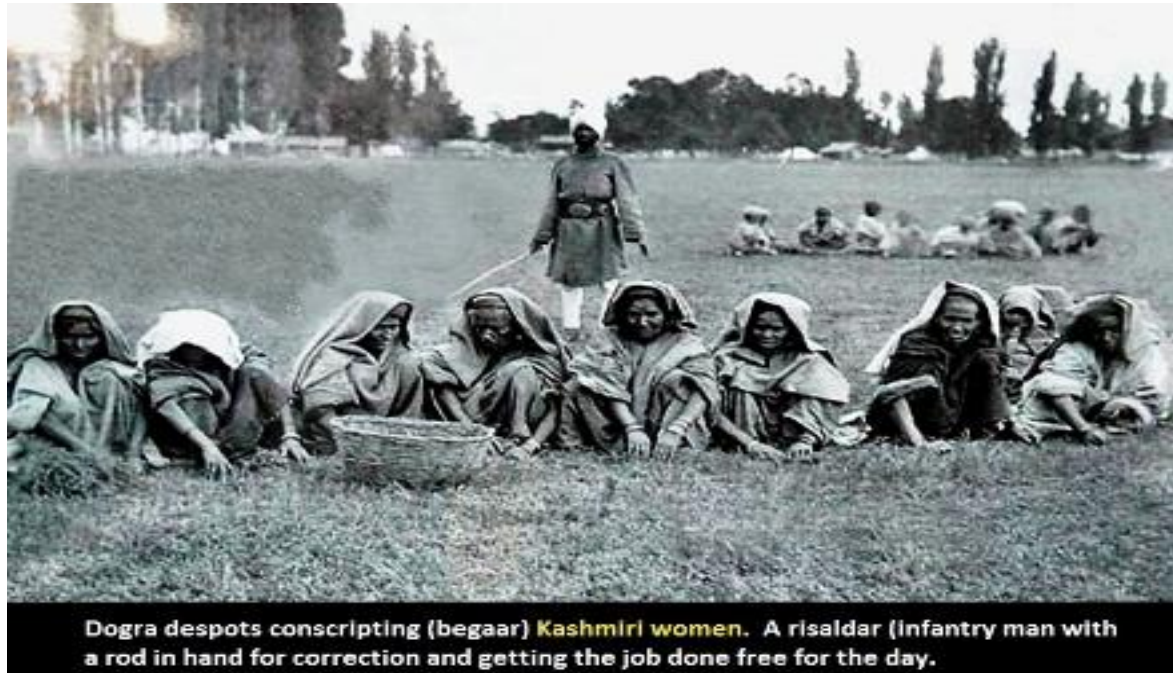


The majority population of Muslims was converted into minority reducing the percentage to just 6% and a few lucky ones fled to the areas of Muslim dominated areas now in Azad Kashmir. In spite of all this Kashmir valley remained peaceful and there was not even a single case of a backlash. In this connection Alastair Lamb in his **A BIRTH OF A TRAGEDY** writes: In Jammu Maharaja (Hari Singh) was engaged in a series of massacres of Muslims which some observers have considered to have been the nastiest of all in that wave of atrocities which followed immediately upon the transfer of power: conservative estimates suggest over 600,000 deaths here between August and December 1947.

PAINFULL HORROR STORY

An painful story to remember is when Maharaja Hari Singh fled Srinagar he was followed by a group of Hindus who came down to Srinagar from different areas and hired Muslim TONGAWALAS to carry them to Jammu along with their possessions. Tongawalas obliged and carried them to Jammu and upon reaching their destination; these Tongawalas were butchered one by one for the services rendered. Muslims of Kashmir were paid measure by measure for maintaining human-rights, secularism and good human relations. The sadists were not satisfied even after butchering two hundred thousand Muslims of Jammu and adjacent areas.

CONSCRIPTION RULES



Dogra conscription rules strictly adhered to by Maharaja's Risaldars (infantry men) to get maximum output from men and women alike. After finishing with men in the background, the officer, rod in his hand (an instrument for punishment), is approaching towards women.

PATHAN TRIBESMEN 1947



The time was running out as Indian plans to occupy Kashmir were gaining momentum. Maharaja Patiala had been roped in and his battalions were clandestinely stationed around Srinagar airport. Newly formed government of Pakistan unaware of the developments faced the treachery of its Chief of Army Staff, General Douglas Gracy. The unorganised, undisciplined Pathan tribesmen's march into Kashmir was a desperate step by awakened ex-army freedom fighters who did not match the military strength of Indian army already present were pushed back near Uri that came to be known as **Cease Fire Line**.

MOUNTBATTENS IN KASHMIR



21st June, 1947 In the Maharaja's boat on the lake at Srinagar

Mountbattens enjoying a ride in Maharaja's boat but on the pretext of illness due to a stomach bug, Maharaja avoided seeing him; Pamela Hicks termed it as *diplomatic illness*. Maharaja in unequivocal terms had told Lord Mountbatten that he wants to stay independent. Maharaja had developed an allergy with Pandit Nehru as he had understood Nehru's game plan to entice Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah to commit the worst blunder in Kashmir's history.

INSTRUMENT OF ACCESSION

Challenged by many quarters to be purported and unauthentic

Whereas the Indian Independence Act, 1947, provides that as from the fifteenth day of August, 1947, there shall be set up an independent Dominion known as INDIA, and that the Government of India Act, 1935, shall, with such omission, additions, adaptations and modifications as the Governor-General may by order specify, be applicable to the Dominion of India,

And whereas the Government of India Act, 1935, as so adapted, by the Governor General provides that an Indian State may accede to the Dominion of India by an Instrument of Accession executed by the Ruler thereof:

Shriman Inder Mahander Rajrajeshwar Maharajadhiraj Shri Hari Singhji Jammu and Kashmir Naresh Tatha Tibbet adi Deshadhipathi, Ruler of Jammu and Kashmir State, in the exercise of my Sovereignty in and over my said State do hereby execute this my Instrument of Accession; and

- I hereby declare that I accede to the Dominion of India with the intent that the Governor-General of India, the Dominion Legislature, the Federal Court and any other Dominion authority established for the purposes of the Dominion shall, by virtue of this my Instrument of Accession but subject always to the terms thereof, and for the purposes only of the Dominion, exercise in relation to the State of Jammu and Kashmir (hereinafter referred to as "this State") such functions as may be vested in

them by or under the Government of India Act, 1935, as in force in the Dominion of India, on the 15th Day of August 1947, (which Act as so in force is hereafter referred to as "the Act").

- I hereby assume the obligation of ensuring that due effect is given to provisions of the Act within this State so far as they are applicable therein by virtue of this my Instrument of Accession.
- I accept the matters specified in the scheduled hereto as the matters with respect to which the Dominion Legislature may make laws for this State

I hereby declare that I accede to the Dominion of India on the assurance that if an agreement is made between the Governor-General and the Ruler of this State whereby any functions in relation to the administration in this State of any law of the Dominion Legislature shall be exercised by the Ruler of this State, then any such agreement shall be deemed to form part of this Instrument and shall be construed and have effect accordingly.

The terms of this my Instrument of Accession shall not be varied by any amendment of the Act or the Indian Independence Act, 1947, unless such amendment is accepted by me by Instrument supplementary to this Instrument.

Nothing in this Instrument shall empower the Dominion Legislature to make any law for this State authorising the compulsory acquisition of land for any purpose, but I hereby undertake that should the Dominion for the purpose of a Dominion law which applies in this State deem it necessary to acquire any land, I will at their request acquire the land at their expense, or, if the land belongs to me transfer it to them on such terms as may be agreed or, in default of agreement, determined by an arbitrator to be appointed by the Chief justice of India.

Nothing in this Instrument shall be deemed to commit in any way to acceptance of any future constitution of India or to fetter my discretion to enter into arrangement with the Government of India under any such future constitution.

Nothing in this Instrument affects the continuance of my Sovereignty in and over this State, or, saves as provided by or under this Instrument, the exercise of any powers, authority and rights now enjoyed by me as Ruler of this State or the validity of any law at present in force in this State.

I hereby declare that I execute this Instrument on behalf of this State and that any reference in this Instrument to me or to the Ruler of the State is to be construed as including a reference to my heirs and successors.

Given under my hand this 26th day of October, nineteen hundred and forty-seven.

Hari Singh, Maharajadhiraj of J&K State

Acceptance of Accession by the Governor-General of India

I do hereby accept this Instrument of Accession.

Dated this twenty-seventh day of October, nineteen hundred and forty-seven. Mountbatten of Burma, Governor-General of India