



CHRONICLES OF SUFFERING: UNRAVELLING KASHMIR'S 200-YEAR STRUGGLE IN THE 'PARADISE ON EARTH'

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Abstract: This research paper explores the intertwined history of Kashmir within the broader context of the Indian subcontinent, incorporating influences from Central and East Asia. Originally denoting only the Kashmir Valley, the term now encompasses a larger region, divided among India, Pakistan, and China. The historical trajectory of Kashmir includes periods of significance as a centre for Hinduism and Buddhism, followed by the rise of Islam during the 13th century. Muslim rulers, such as the Shah Mir dynasty and later the Mughals and Afghans, governed the region for five centuries. In 1846, the Treaty of Lahore resulted in the purchase of Kashmir by Gulab Singh from the British, leading to the rule of his descendants under British paramountcy until 1947. Post-independence, Kashmir became a disputed territory administered by India, Pakistan, and China, setting the stage for the complex geopolitical landscape seen today.

Key Words: Durrani, *Pandits*, Pir Panjal, *Khalsa*, Dogra, "*Khakha*" and "*Bamnba*", Leh, Ladakhi, Poonch, Bharatiya Jan Sangh, Gilgit,

Introduction

A place called Kashmir is encircled by tall mountains. In the middle of this, the Jhelum River irrigates a plain region. Mountains, plains, and valleys make up the remaining terrain. Kashmir was the most major and key region that was predominately influenced by Buddhist and Hindu ideas until the Muslims acquired power in the 14th century. Emperor Akbar effectively overcame this region in 1586, and Kashmir was under Mughal rule for the ensuing 166 years. Following the end of the Mughal era, Ahmed Shah Abdali launched an offensive and conquered Kashmir. The Durrani Empire, headed by Ahmed Shah Abdali, ruled the area at the time of this incident in the eighteenth century. During the Mughal rule, the condition of Hindus in Kashmir deteriorated significantly, and they faced oppression and injustice. The prolonged period of subjugation weakened the Hindu community. Before the *Sikh* rule, the Afghans also asserted

their authority and inflicted hardship on the Hindus in the region.¹ The Mughals carried out horrible crimes in Kashmir. Muslim males forcibly removed and abducted Hindu women, and their houses were pillaged. The Brahmins were not permitted to carry out their religious rites. Anyone who objected was put to death.² The dawn of the 20th century marked a pivotal period, as Kashmir found itself at the crossroads of independence and the subsequent Indo-Pak partition in 1947. The emergence of the Kashmir conflict, fuelled by territorial claims from both India and Pakistan, reshaped the geopolitical landscape. This paper delves into the intricate history and contemporary dynamics of Kashmir, exploring the multifaceted impact of events such as the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 and the recent hosting of the G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar. By examining the historical currents that have shaped the region and addressing the complex geopolitical challenges it faces today, this research endeavours to contribute to a nuanced understanding of Kashmir's past, present, and future. In doing so, it seeks to emphasize the importance of international collaboration and diplomatic solutions in fostering a peaceful and prosperous trajectory for this culturally rich and geopolitically significant region.

Khalsa Rule in Kashmir (1820–1846)

Sikhs took control of Kashmir in 1819, 150 years after Guru “Tegh Bahadur's” sacrifice and martyrdom. The Kashmiri *Pandits* asked the *Sikhs* for aid during the Kashmiri conflict, and they obliged. At that time, “Birbal Dhar,” the prime minister of Kashmir, visited Lahore court to ask for assistance. He asked Ranjit Singh to help him free Kashmir from the Afghans.³ Maharaja Ranjit Singh, upon hearing all these matters from “Birbal Dhar”, became deeply saddened and instructed Hari Singh Nalwa to gather the *Sikh* army and launch an attack on Kashmir. The objective was to establish *Sikh* rule in Kashmir and remove the Afghan oppressors from the region.⁴ In April 1819, the *Khalsa* army launched an invasion of Kashmir. Witnessing the advance of the *Sikh* army, the Afghan governor of Kashmir sought assistance from the British to counter the *Sikh* forces.⁵

A sizable force under the direction of Hari Singh Nalwa and Misar Diwan Chand attacked Kashmir; the second division, commanded by Kuwar Khadak Singh, offered support and aid from behind. Ranjit Singh had direct control over the third division. During the war, they were positioned at the back to support logistics and guarantee the timely supply of supplies and ammunition for their advancing forces.⁶ Beginning in early June, the *Sikhs* won the battle in the southern Pir Panjal provinces of Razouri and Punch. The Tosa Plain Pass was achieved when they led a sizable army of 12,000 men into the Kashmir

¹ Foster, G. (1798, 1808). *A Journey from Bengal to England through the Northern Part of India, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Persia, into Russia by the Caspian Sea* (Vol. 1). London: R. Faulder. P 24.

² Singh, A. (1903). *Chamakda Hira Ya Jivan Britant Sri 51 Maan Sardar Hari Singhji Nalwa, Commander-in-Chief Khalsa Fauj, Governor of Peshawar Va Illaka Hazara etc.* Lahore: The Khalsa Agency Lahori.p21.

³ Latif, S. M. (1994). *History of The Punjab – From The Remotest Antiquity To The Present Time.* (First work published in 1891). New Delhi: Kalya ni Publishers. P 417.

⁴ Singh, Amar. (1903). *Chamakda Hira Ya Jivan Britant Sri 51 Maan Sardar Hari Singhji Nalwa, Commander-in-Chief Khalsa Fauj, Governor Of Peshawar Va Illaka Hazara etc.* Lahore: The Khalsa Agency Lahori.p. 21-22,29.

⁵ National Archives of India at New Delhi/Foreign Political Consultation 20-3-1819: 15-16.

⁶ Suri, S. L. (18-19th Century). *Udmat-Ut-Tawarikh Daftar Vol.2* (V. S. Suri, Trans., 2002). Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University. P 246-8; (Murray, 1830: 118-19).

Valley. After that, they made their way down through the Supeya (Sopiya) valley until they reached the Sarai Ali plain. During the absence of Azam Khan, Sardar Zabar Khan served as the governor at that time. He arrived at the battlefield of *Sopiya* with a force of 5000 soldiers and immediately initiated the battle.⁷

On the morning of 5th July 1819, the Sikh army advanced to the battleground with the sound of war trumpets blaring. There was a ferocious and intense combat when the two armies collided. Zabar Khan attacked the *Sikh* soldiers by crossing the river before the *Sikh* army could begin their assault. Positioned on higher ground, the *Sikh* army was able to stave off the Afghan soldiers' onslaught from the low-lying districts, inflicting more serious casualties on their side. The Afghan army was effectively driven back by the *Sikhs*.⁸ The Afghans fought with great bravery, but they could not withstand the relentless attack of the Sikhs and eventually retreated from the battlefield, leaving it behind. The Afghan forces withdrew to "Shergarh", and some Afghans managed to escape by crossing the Sindh River. As a result, the Kashmir Valley was secured by the Sikhs after their victory in the battle.⁹

There was a joyous mood in the Sikh camp, and in the city of Amritsar, the representatives of the *Khalsa* government ignited rows of exquisitely adorned oil lamps or candles for three consecutive nights, enhancing the festive and vibrant spirit of the occasion. All the mosques and temples in the city of Lahore received generous gifts. With the revenue derived from Kashmir, the *Khalsa* Empire won an important battle. It posed a significant challenge for Kabul's administration, and the significant loss of income caused the Afghan government to fall. Without the money brought in from Kashmir, Kabul's government would not have been able to endure. After losing to the *Khalsa* Empire, the affluent king of Kabul was in such a dire predicament that he had to put his wife's jewellery up as collateral in order to battle the *Sikhs*.¹⁰ After winning in Kashmir, the *Sikhs* came to Amritsar, and there they took a bath in the holy tank (Amritsar) and donated plethora of the gold.¹¹ With the victory of the Sikhs in Kashmir, the 67-year rule of the Afghans came to an end.

Moreover, Muslims subjected Hindus and Shia¹² Muslims to oppression for 500 years, but they finally experienced relief from that tyranny. In the first half of the 19th century, Kashmiri *Pandits*, who were Hindus, used to live in Kashmir. During the time of Muslim rule, the population of Kashmiri *Pandits* nearly diminished. However, later, some *Pandits* started migrating from the south and began to settle in Kashmir again. The *Pandits* from the south had a slightly darker complexion, while Kashmiri *Pandits* had

⁷ (NAI/fpc 25-7-1836:14; Murray, William. (1981). *Historical and Political Memoir, Rare Documents on Sikhs and Their Rule in Punjab*. Compiled by H.S. Bhatia, New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publishers. (First published in 1830). P. 119.

⁸ Moorcroft, W., & Trebeck, G. (1841). *Travel In India, Himalaya, Province Hindustan and the Punjab. In Ladakh and Kashmir. In Peshawar Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara from 1819 to 1825* (H. H. Wilson, Ed.). Delhi: Low Price Publications. Vol. 2. P 292-3.

⁹ Latif, S.M. (1994). *History Of The Punjab – From The Remotest Antiquity To The Present Time*. Reprint edition, New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers. (first published in 1891). P. 418.

¹⁰ (Nalwa, 2021: 48).

¹¹ (Sitaram in Amar Singh 1903: 22).

¹² *Shia* is a branch of Islam that represents one of the two main sects, the other being Sunni. *Shia Muslims believe that Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammed*, was the rightful successor to lead the Muslim community after the Prophet's death. Shia Muslims make up a significant portion of the Muslim population and have unique religious practices and beliefs compared to *Sunni Muslims*.

fairer skin. Kashmiri *Pandits* were more urban, predominantly meat-eaters, and fluent in Persian, whereas the *Pandits* from the south were mostly vegetarians, rural, and skilled in Sanskrit.¹³ For centuries, Kashmiri *Pandits* have been an essential part of Kashmir, and their local knowledge and experience have been relied upon by Mughals, Afghans, and Sikhs alike.¹⁴ Despite that, they couldn't escape the atrocities committed by the Mughals.

The *Pandits*, Shias, and "Bamba," or residents of the Jehlum Valley, were all treated horribly and severely by the Afghans while they were at the height of their power. Asad Khan viewed himself as the succeeding Nadir Shah. He would bind the *Pandits* and force them to stand in the lake, and heap dirt on top of them in a pot. He would advise the Muslims to pelt the pot with stones so that when it shattered, the *Pandits* would be covered in all the scum. They were humiliated by him in this way.¹⁵ The Sikhs put an end to all these oppressions and granted freedom to the Hindu *Pandits* to wear the *tilak*¹⁶, keep their mustaches, tie turbans, and wear footwear. The *jizya*¹⁷ tax was also abolished by the Sikhs. With freedom now, Hindu women can live without the fear of being abducted by Muslims.¹⁸ There is ample evidence to conclude that Kashmir's indigenous population was Shia Muslim. They were members of the two largest tribes in *Gilgit*, the "Khakha" and "Bamnba" and they reside in the Leh Valley and Tibet.¹⁹ "Khakha" were *Khatris*²⁰, and "Bamba" were *Pandits* who had converted to Islam many centuries ago, and their names were derived from the names of their respective areas.²¹ "Khakha" lived on the left bank of the Jhelum River, and "Bamba" lived on the right.²²

After conquering Kashmir, Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Diwan Moti Ram as the first *Khalsa* Governor in the region. During Diwan Moti Ram's administration, Hari Singh Nalwa suppressed rebellion in the area, established peace in Kashmir, and efficiently managed the military. Diwan Moti Ram did not even complete a year as the Governor of Kashmir when he received the news of his youngest son, Ram Dayal's death during a fight with *Gandhgarhiya* people in the mountainous region of West Kashmir. Upon hearing the news of his son's death, Moti Ram was devastated, and he sought permission from Ranjit Singh to return to Kashmir.²³ Seeing Hari Singh's bravery and loyalty, Ranjit Singh appointed him as Governor of Kashmir.²⁴ Under *Khalsa* control, Kashmir was the most affluent province.

¹³ Hugel, Baron. (1836). *Notice of a Visit to the Valley of Kashmir in 1836*. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 5, p186.

¹⁴ (NAI/fsc 6-3-1837: 13).

¹⁵ Lawrence, W. R. (1895/1967). *The Valley of Kashmir* (Reprint). Srinagar: Kesar Publishers. P 197; Nalwa 2021: 48.

¹⁶ *Tilak* is a religious mark or ceremonial dot worn on the forehead, typically by Hindus.

¹⁷ *Jizya tax was a historical tax imposed on non-Muslims living under Muslim rule*, in return for their protection and exemption from military service.

¹⁸ (Lawrence 1895: 198).

¹⁹ (NAI/fpc 20-9-1822: 68)

²⁰ *Khatris* are a *Punjabi caste* that has historically held positions in commerce, administration, and trade.

²¹ Vigne, G. T. (1842). *Travels In Kashmir, Ladakh, Iskardo, The Countries Adjoining The Mountain-Course Of The Indus And the Himalaya, North Of The Punjab* (Vol. 2). London: Henry Colburn. p181.

²² Not available. (1909). *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series: Jammu & Kashmir*. Oxford University Press. P 34.

²³ (Amarnath 19th cent.:132)

²⁴ Shahamat Ali. (1970). *The Sikh and Afghans, in Connection with India and Persia* (Original work published 1847). Patiala: Language Department Punjab. p.53.

In 1834 Zorawar Singh Kahluria Conquered High Altitudes

Ladakh

Back in 1780, after Ranjit Deo passed away, the Sikhs took control of the Jammu kingdom (located south of the Kashmir valley) and made it a tributary. Gulab Singh, who was Ranjit Deo's grandnephew, then worked at Ranjit Singh's court, did well in later military actions, and became the Raja of Jammu in 1820. With the assistance of his officer, Zorawar Singh, Gulab Singh quickly secured the lands of Ladakh and Baltistan for the Sikhs.²⁵ In the eastern part of Kishtwar and Kashmir, you find the snowy mountains of the upper Himalayas. The Zaskar Gorge, Suru River, and Drass rivers start from these snow-covered peaks and flow across Ladakh's plateau into the Indus River. Many small territories in this area were under the rule of the Gyalpo of Ladakh (King).

In 1834, one of these territories, ruled by the Raja of Timbus, asked for Zorawar's help against the Gyalpo. Around the same time, the Rajput general Zorawar Singh had a strong desire to expand Raja Gulab Singh's territory. According to the Gulabnama, during this period, Kishtwar faced a drought that led to a loss of income. To cope with this financial challenge, Zorawar had to resort to warfare to extract money.²⁶ The mountain warriors of Jammu and Himachal Pradesh, known as Rajputs, have a long history. Zorawar had little trouble navigating the mountain ranges and arriving at Ladakh because of his knowledge. He came through the Suru River's source, where his 5,000-man force soundly beat the Botis army residing there. Zorawar forced the Ladakhis to submit after conquering Kargil and subduing the local landowners. To sabotage Zorawar's communication channels, the reigning Gyalpo, Tsepel Namgyal, dispatched his general Banko Kahlon via a deceptive path. Banko Kahlon, the cunning commander, went back to Kartse to spend the winter there with his soldiers. The next spring, 1835, saw Zorawar's soldiers overcome Banko Kahlon's large Ladakhi army. So they marched triumphantly in the direction of Leh. In response to Zorawar's army's might, the Gyalpo promised to pay a yearly tribute of 20,000 rupees along with a war indemnity of 50,000 rupees.²⁷

The Ladakhi chieftains were incited to revolt by Mehan Singh, the ruler of Kashmir, who was worried about the Dogras' territorial advances. In retaliation, Zorawar quickly left the Himalayan regions, put an end to the uprising, and forced the Raja of Zaskar to give Jammu a separate tribute. But Mehan Singh, who had connections to the Lahore durbar, encouraged the Gyalpo to rise up once more in 1836. In less than 10 days, Zorawar marched his army quickly to surprise and subdue the Ladakhis. Then, he built a fort outside of Leh and established a 300-man garrison under Darel Singh's command. The Gyalpo was deposed and granted an estate, and Ngorub Stanzin, a Ladakhi commander, was named the new head of state. But Ngorub Stanzin's allegiance was dubious, which resulted in the Gyalpo's restoration to the throne in 1838.

²⁵ Great Britain Commonwealth Office. (1908). *The Imperial Gazetteer of India (Volume 15)*: Karachi to Kotayam. P. 94-5.

²⁶ Khanna, K. K. (2015). *Art of Generalship*. Vij Books India Pvt Ltd. p.131.

²⁷ Cunningham, A. (1854). *Ladák, Physical, Statistical, and Historical with Notices of the Surrounding Countries*. Allen. P. 10–19, 333–340, 349–354.

Baltistan

Baltistan is located north of Kashmir and northwest of Ladakh. The son of Raja Ahmad Shah, the monarch of Skardu, Muhammad Shah fled to Leh and asked the Gyalpo and Zorawar for assistance in fighting his father. But some Ladakhi nobility supported Ahmad Shah, which made it possible for him to seize his son. They then asked Ahmad Shah to join them in a larger uprising against the Dogras. Invading Baltistan in the winter of 1839–1840, Zorawar defeated the Ladakhi rebels and included a sizable number of Ladakhis in his army.²⁸ Nidhan Singh's 5,000-strong leading brigade encountered difficulty in the snow and cold, being lost and encircled by the enemy. The severe weather claimed the lives of several troops. Mehta Basti Ram, a prominent Kishtwari Rajput, succeeded in getting in touch with the main army. When they arrived, they vanquished the Skardu Botis, forcing them to escape. Zorawar pursued them to the fort of Skardu, where he besieged it for several days.

After considerable battle, the Dogras one night scaled the steep mountain behind the fort and took control of the little fort at the top. They shot at the main fort from this advantageous location, forcing the Raja to surrender the following day. Next, Zorawar built a fort on the banks of the Indus and positioned some of his warriors there. A Dogra detachment under the command of Wazir Lakhpat advanced westward after installing Muhammad Shah as the king and imposing an annual tribute of 7000 rupees. They succeeded in taking Astor's fort and imprisoning its Darad Raja. This Raja, nevertheless, was subject to Mehan Singh, the Kashmiri administrator. Mehan Singh expressed his worries at Lahore because he believed that the Dogra conquests would only help Gulab Singh's dominion and not the durbar of Lahore. Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu received the complaint and ordered the Darad Raja to be released.²⁹

Later he traced the path of the Indus River and moved to Tibet where he died.

Kashmir Was Under Dogras' Rule (1846–1947)

In 1845, the First Anglo-Sikh War erupted. Gulab Singh managed to remain neutral until the Battle of Sobraon in 1846. During this battle, he emerged as a valuable mediator and a trusted advisor to Sir Henry Lawrence. As a result of their negotiations, two treaties were signed. The first treaty involved the State of Lahore (West Punjab) ceding the hill territories between Beas and Indus to the British as compensation for an indemnity of ten million rupees. The details of the second treaty are not provided in the text you provided.

Under the Treaty of Amritsar, the British handed over the hilly or mountainous region east of the Indus and west of the Ravi, including the Vale of Kashmir, to Gulab Singh for a sum of 7.5 million rupees.³⁰ This agreement relieved Gulab Singh of any obligations to the Sikhs and established him as the Maharajah of

²⁸ Hāṇḍā, O. (2001). *Buddhist Western Himalaya: A Politico-Religious History*. Indus Publishing. P. 194.

²⁹ Charak, S. D. S. (1983). *General Zorawar Singh*. Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. P. 48.

³⁰ Great Britain Commonwealth Office. (1908). *The Imperial Gazetteer of India (Volume 15)*: Karachi to Kotayam. P. 94-5.

Jammu and Kashmir.³¹ The loyalty of the Dogras proved beneficial to the British during the 1857 revolt against British rule in India. The Dogras did not harbour mutineers, allowed English women and children to find refuge in Kashmir, and sent Kashmiri troops to support the British. In return, the British rewarded them by ensuring the continuation of Dogra rule in Kashmir.³² After Gulab Singh died in 1857, his son Ranbir Singh expanded the kingdom by adding the emirates of Hunza, Gilgit, and Nagar to its territory.³³

The Princely State of Kashmir and Jammu, which was established between 1820

and 1858, failed to establish a completely cohesive identity due to its rather artificial structure. This resulted from its varied beginnings and the despotic governance it encountered in the periphery of the Empire. The state united areas with disparate cultures, faiths, and ethnicities. Ladakh, to the east, had a Buddhist majority and was a Tibetan cultural region. There was a mixed Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu population in Jammu in the south. The densely populated central Kashmir valley was predominantly Sunni Muslim, although there was a sizeable Hindu minority known as the Kashmiri Brahmins or Pandits. The people who practised Shi'a Islam in the sparsely populated north-eastern region of Baltistan were linked to those of Ladakh ethnically. The Gilgit Agency, to the north, was a multi-ethnic and mostly Shi'a area. Although the Muslims in Poonch were not of the same ethnicity as those in the Kashmir valley, they did live there. The diverse range of geographic and cultural influences throughout the state led to its overall variety.

Despite being the majority, Muslims in the area experienced severe discrimination during Hindu authority. The tyranny took the shape of discriminatory legislation, hefty taxes, and forced work without pay. Famine and the Dogra rulers' policies led many Muslims from Kashmir to decide to leave the Valley and travel to Punjab.³⁴ A large section of the population, the Muslim peasantry, were underprivileged and under the control of the Hindu aristocracy.³⁵ Muslim peasants' circumstances were defined by a persistent debt to landlords and moneylenders, a lack of education, and an ignorance of their legal rights.³⁶ To add to their socioeconomic difficulties, they did not participate in political organisation until the 1930s.

Kashmir's Situation Before 1947

In 1931, Molvi Abdullah, a versatile figure proficient in various fields and a lawyer, emerges as a leader in a public movement advocating for freedom, justice, and democracy. He passionately inspires the youth of Kashmir to stand up against the ineffective king. In response to the growing agitation, the king appoints a grievances commission, with the seasoned colonial administrator Sir Bertrand James Glancy serving as its president. The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was then founded a year later by Mohammed Abdullah Sheikh, also known as Sheikh Abdullah, Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas, and Molvi Abdul Rahim, the

³¹ Schofield, V. (2010). *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*. I. B. Tauris.p. 105.

³² Schofield, V. (2010). *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*.p. 9.

³³ Schofield, V. (2010). *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*.p. 11.

³⁴ Sevea, I. S. (2012). *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal: Islam and Nationalism in Late Colonial India*. Cambridge University Press. p. 16.

³⁵ Talbot, I., & Singh, G. (2009). *The Partition of India*. Cambridge University Press.p. 54.

³⁶ Bose, S. (2005). *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict Paths To Peace*. Harvard University Press.p. 15-17.

son of Molvi Abdullah. It is the kingdom's first political party, and its goal is to run for the new legislative assembly that Glancy advises the king to establish.

In 1934, the Praja Sabha, a new legislative assembly, was established. However, women were denied the right to vote, and so were men who were illiterate or lacked adequate property, title, or annual income. Scholars estimate that only 3-10% of the population has the right to vote. Despite the formation of the legislative assembly, the king retains full authority and power. Sheikh Abdullah and Jawaharlal Nehru established a close friendship after meeting. They shared a common goal, advocating for similar rights for their respective people from the British rulers and their allies. Nehru actively supported the people of princely states, including their struggle for a representative government. Together, they worked towards fostering a vision of democratic rights and representation for their communities.

Following an extensive and energetic campaign, 172 out of 176 members participated in a special session of the Muslim Conference to vote on changing its name to the National Conference. With this decision, the party became inclusive of all religions. It is reported that Sheikh Abdullah drew inspiration from Nehru in making this significant transformation within his party. The shift reflected a broader commitment to openness and inclusivity, aligning with the principles advocated by Nehru.

Not everyone had supported Sheikh Abdullah's stance. His former comrade-in-arms, Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas, had revived the Muslim Conference as an opposing force. This revived party quickly aligned itself with Muhammad Ali Jinnah's All-India Muslim League, which aimed to establish Pakistan. In 1946, Sheikh Abdullah initiated the Quit Kashmir agitation against Hari Singh's rule. As a consequence, he was arrested and subsequently sentenced to three years of imprisonment.

During India's Independence, Kashmir saw three major events: The 1947 Indo-Pakistani War, the 1947 Poonch Rebellion, and the 1947 Massacre in Jammu

In 1947, Hari Singh, the reigning monarch of Kashmir, (he sat on throne in 1925)³⁷ faced a complex situation as the British rule in the subcontinent ended, leading to the partition into the Dominion of India the Dominion of Pakistan. Internal unrest began in the Poonch region due to oppressive taxation imposed by the Maharaja. In August, the Maharaja's forces responded harshly to demonstrations favouring Kashmir joining Pakistan, resulting in the burning of villages and massacres.³⁸

As a response, the Poonch rebels declared an independent government of "Azad" Kashmir in October. The Princely States were encouraged to accede to either India or Pakistan, considering factors like geographical contiguity and the wishes of their people. In 1947, Jammu and Kashmir had a population of "77% Muslim and 20% Hindu."³⁹ To delay a hasty decision, the Maharaja signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan,

³⁷ Bajaj, P. N. (1941). *Inside Kashmir Srinagar*. (1st ed.) The Kashmir Publishing Co. p 83.

³⁸ United Nations Security Council. (1948). *Official Records of the United Nations Security Council, Meeting No. 234*. P. 250–251.

³⁹ Stein, B. (1998). *A History of India* (1st ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.p. 368.

preserving trade, travel, and communication between the two. A similar agreement with India was pending.⁴⁰

Amidst riots in Jammu, Pashtuns from Pakistan backed by Poonch rebels, invaded Kashmir in October 1947, allegedly in response to atrocities against Muslims. The invaders engaged in looting and killing, aiming to intimidate Hari Singh into submission.⁴¹ Instead, the Maharaja sought assistance from the Government of India, and Lord Mountbatten agreed under the condition that Kashmir accede to India. After Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession, Indian soldiers entered Kashmir, pushing back the Pakistani-sponsored irregulars from most of the state. India accepted the accession on a provisional basis, pending the determination of the will of the people.⁴² Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah endorsed the accession as a temporary measure, to be ultimately decided by the State's people. He was appointed head of the emergency administration by the Maharaja.⁴³

The Pakistani government disputed the accession, claiming it was fraudulent, suggesting the Maharaja acted under duress, and contending that signing an agreement with India was inappropriate while the standstill agreement with Pakistan was in force.

Post-Independence Events in Kashmir

On January 1, 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, took a significant diplomatic step in the Kashmir conflict. Successfully pushing back Pashtuns and Pakistani forces, he approached the United Nations Security Council, opting to withdraw Indian troops as a peace gesture, resulting in the establishment of the Line of Control (LoC) as the de facto border. On April 21, 1948, the UN Security Council issued a historic resolution, calling for a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. While instructing Pakistan to withdraw its troops and India to maintain minimal forces for law and order, both nations, unfortunately, chose to ignore this resolution, setting the stage for a prolonged and complex chapter in the on-going Kashmir dispute.⁴⁴

Elections were held in October 1951 for the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir, with 25 seats set aside for the region controlled by Pakistan and 75 seats allocated for the region managed by India.⁴⁵ Unexpectedly, Sheikh Abdullah's National Conference wins 75 seats, kicking off the process of creating a new constitution. With the July 1952 Delhi Agreement, Sheikh Abdullah and Jawaharlal Nehru achieved a significant milestone by allowing Jammu and Kashmir some autonomy. Additionally, the accord

⁴⁰ Schofield, V. (2002, January 16). *Kashmir: The origins of the dispute*. BBC News UK Edition.

⁴¹ Jamal, A. (2009). *Shadow War: The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir*. Melville House. p. 52–53.

⁴² Government of India. (1948, July). White Paper on Indian States. New Delhi. p. 77.

⁴³ Sheikh Abdullah. (1993). *Flames of the Chinar*. New Delhi. P. 97.

⁴⁴ The New York Times. (1947, November 3). NEHRU URGES U.N. TO POLL KASHMIR; Would Have Supervised Ballot to Decide Accession – Bomb Attack by India Reported. The New York Times. Retrieved May 4, 2010.

⁴⁵ Das Gupta, J. B. (2012). *Jammu and Kashmir* (First published in 1968). Springer. P. 186.

guarantees autonomy to its various areas, including Jammu and Ladakh, which is a noteworthy shift in the political landscape of the area.⁴⁶

Syama Prasad Mukherjee, the head of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, which was the precursor to the Bharatiya Janata Party, invaded Jammu and Kashmir and opposed Article 370, marking a momentous historical step. The local leader, Sheikh Abdullah, then arrested him as a result. Unrest among the public was triggered by Mukherjee's strange death, but Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru refused to conduct an investigation. A presidential decree issued in 1954 under Article 370 gave Jammu and Kashmir the power to determine who is a permanent resident while restricting the rights of others. There was discontent since no other Indian state had such unique advantages, and this directive eventually became Article 35A. The event heightened tensions and the continuing discussion about Jammu and Kashmir's unique status inside the Indian Union.⁴⁷ All rivers in the Indus basin are divided between India and Pakistan according to the terms of the 1960 Indus Water Treaty. Control over the three eastern rivers provides India with about twenty per cent of the basin's flow, while Pakistan maintains control over the western rivers to protect its water supply. This pact demonstrates remarkable persistence in water resource management collaboration, even in the face of successive military wars between the two countries.⁴⁸ In 1962, China decisively defeated India in a brief war, causing humiliation for Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his defence minister, the arrogant and incompetent Krishna Menon. Following the defeat, Menon resigned, taking responsibility for the failure. However, Nehru chose to remain in office. China established full control over Aksai Chin during the conflict. In the same year, elections were held for the second Legislative Assembly, with the National Conference securing victory by winning 68 out of the 74 seats.⁴⁹

The Indo-Pakistani War broke out between August 1965 and September 23, 1965, as a result of Pakistan taking advantage of unrest in the Kashmir Valley. In Operation Gibraltar, thousands of armed Pakistani infiltrators broke through the cease-fire, increasing bloodshed in the Kashmir Valley. Following the outbreak of a full-scale Indo-Pakistani conflict, a ceasefire agreement was reached. With Russian intervention, the Tashkent Declaration was signed on January 10, 1966, mandating a return to pre-1965 stances for both nations. After the ceasefire, Pakistan-backed rebel organisations in Kashmir intensified their operations in contravention of the accord. With the goal of liberating Kashmir from Indian rule, Kashmiri nationalists Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhat founded the Jammu and Kashmir National Liberation Front (NLF), an armed branch of the Plebiscite Front, which is headquartered in Azad Kashmir.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Bose, S. (2003). *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*. Harvard University Press. p. 56-57.

⁴⁷ The Times of India. (2018, April 4). Article 370 has acquired permanent status: Supreme Court.

⁴⁸ Keller, A., Keller, J., & Seckler, D. (n.d.). *Integrated Water Resource Systems: Theory and Policy Implications* (Research Report). Retrieved January 31, 2020.

⁴⁹ Bose, S. (2003). *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*. Harvard University Press. p.77.

⁵⁰ Puri, B. (1993). *Kashmir Towards Insurgency*. Orient BlackSwan. P. 31-2.

In December 1971, India and Pakistan waged another war, resulting in a decisive victory for India. East Pakistan was liberated, giving rise to the birth of Bangladesh as a new country and challenging the notion of Pakistan as a unified nation for South Asia's Muslims. On February 24, 1975, the Indira-Sheikh accord was reached between Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah. This led to the dissolution of the Plebiscite Front, which was renamed the National Conference. Sheikh Abdullah, after an 11-year gap, assumed the position of Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. On September 8, 1982, Sheikh Abdullah passed away, and his son, Farooq Abdullah, later assumed office as the Chief Minister of J&K. In April 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi appointed Jagmohan as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir due to concerns about the worsening security situation in the state.

In 1987, Farooq Abdullah secured victory in the Assembly elections. However, the Muslim United Front (MUF) alleged that the elections had been rigged. Subsequently, the insurgency in the Kashmir Valley gained momentum. The MUF candidate, Mohammad Yousuf Shah, who fell victim to the rigging and state mistreatment, adopted the name Syed Salahuddin and eventually became the chief of the militant outfit Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. His election aides, known as the HAJY group—comprising Abdul Hamid Shaikh, Ashfaq Majid Wani, Javed Ahmed Mir, and Mohammed Yasin Malik—would later join the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

The Gilgit Massacre of 1988 was planned by extremist Sunni organisations under the leadership of Osama bin Laden and with the help of people like General Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf. It took place between May 16 and May 18, 1988. Sectarian tensions in the area were brought to light by the horrific murder of hundreds of Shia Muslims during this violent incident. Under the command of General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistani forces crossed the Line of Control and took over Indian outposts in the Kargil region between May and July 1999.⁵¹ After U.S. participation, the threat of nuclear war decreased and the Indian Army waged fierce fighting to retake the land, ultimately resulting to a limited settlement. Pakistan finally left the areas it had taken over.

Omar Abdullah, the son of Farooq Abdullah, became victorious in the 2008 elections and was appointed as the state's youngest chief minister. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference, the principal separatist organisation in Kashmir, had called for a boycott of the polls, raising doubts about his legitimacy. As a result, separatist demonstrations started, and security personnel found it difficult to quell the chaos. The greatest demonstration against Indian control in more than ten years took place in Srinagar on August 22, 2008, in response to the turmoil in Kashmir. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims participated in the freedom march.⁵² In 2014, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the former home minister, won the December elections and became the chief minister in 2015. When he passed away a year later, his daughter Mehbooba Mufti succeeded him, continuing the dynastic succession in Kashmiri politics. The Sayeeds

⁵¹ Musharraf, P. (2006). *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*. Free Press. p. 90-91.

⁵² Kashmiris march for independence". France 24. 22 August 2008.

allied with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to secure power. However, in 2018, Mehbooba Mufti's alliance with the BJP collapsed, resulting in the imposition of direct rule on Jammu and Kashmir by New Delhi. Despite being kidnapped by an Islamist group in 1989, Mufti shifted her support to Islamist groups after the political fallout with the BJP.

In August 2019, India repealed Article 370, ending Jammu and Kashmir's special status, following Narendra Modi's election to a second term with a sizable parliamentary majority. The state was divided into Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir, two union territories that are under the direct administration of New Delhi. This action sparked responses throughout the world, with Pakistan and several foreign news sites voicing concerns. While some questioned the ruling, most Indians hailed it as the fulfilment of Syama Prasad Mukherjee's aim, having rejected Article 370 in 1953 and founded the Bharatiya Janata Party. 51.5% of eligible voters cast ballots in Jammu and Kashmir's District Developmental Council elections held in November 2020, the newly constituted union territory reported.

In May 2023, India hosted the third G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar. Despite receiving a mixed reception from Western media, the event demonstrated improved safety, peace, and economic development in the region. However, delegates from China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt boycotted the meeting. Meanwhile, economic and political turmoil afflicted Pakistan-controlled Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

Conclusion

Kashmir's intricate history, woven into the broader fabric of the Indian subcontinent, reflects a tapestry of cultural, religious, and political influences. From its roots as a centre for Hinduism and Buddhism to the Mughal and Afghan periods, Kashmir's narrative has been shaped by diverse rulers. The Sikh rule in the early 19th century marked a significant transition, liberating the region from oppressive regimes. The subsequent Dogra rule and the events surrounding independence in 1947 set the stage for the on-going Kashmir conflict, with India and Pakistan claiming the territory. The introduction of Article 370 granted the region special autonomy, but its abrogation in 2019 altered the political landscape. The recent hosting of the G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar signals an attempt to showcase improved safety, peace, and economic development. However, the absence of key nations like China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in the meeting underscores persistent geopolitical tensions. The region's challenges include economic and political turmoil in areas like Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, mirroring the complex and fragile nature of the Kashmir dispute.

As Kashmir moves forward, international collaboration and attention are crucial for addressing its deep-rooted issues. Balancing development efforts with diplomatic solutions that consider the aspirations and well-being of the Kashmiri people is paramount. The intricate tapestry of Kashmir's past and present demands a nuanced, collaborative approach to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for the region.

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