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76

## The Tapestry of Power: British Manoeuvres in Punjab and the Genesis of Jammu and Kashmir's Integration with India

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the deliberate strategies employed by the British Empire to assert and consolidate control over northern India, with a particular focus on the subjugation of the Sikh State of Punjab and the establishment of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. Through a multifaceted approach encompassing political manipulation, economic exploitation, and military intervention, the British gradually eroded Punjab's autonomy and integrated it into their colonial empire. To safeguard British commercial interests and establish a strategic buffer zone in the north, the British separated Kashmir from Punjab and created the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. The interconnected histories of Punjab and Kashmir illustrate the enduring impacts of the British in northern India, shedding light on the complex dynamics of colonial power in the region. Maharaja Hari Singh admitted Jammu and Kashmir to India after the country gained independence in 1947. Article 370 granted the territory special autonomy, giving it a unique position within the Union of India. In 2019, the Indian government made history by repealing Article 370 and downgrading Jammu and Kashmir to Union Territory.*



## Keywords

British Empire, Sikh State of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, Dogra Kingdom, Instrument of Accession, Maharaja Hari Singh, Article 370

## Introduction

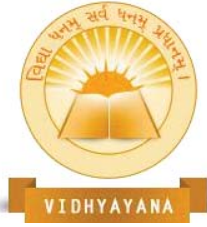
The Sikh state of Punjab was an integral element of the British Empire's systematic and thorough strategy to acquire and retain control over Northern India. Through deliberate actions meant to destabilise the Sikh rulers and progressively subjugate the kingdom, the British intentionally undermined the autonomy of the Sikh state of Punjab. The British used internal strife in Punjab to their advantage, sowing instability and weakening the power of the Sikh rulers by exploiting differences. The local populace suffered due to their discriminatory economic practices, which also helped tighten British authority over the region. These strategies were part of a bigger scheme to progressively erode Punjab's independence and bring it under the control of the British Colonial Empire. Following Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, the British employed a variety of strategies, including military and political manoeuvres to weaken the Sikh Empire. His death created a power vacuum, which enabled the British to exploit pre-existing disputes among Sikh leaders and establish their control over the territory's military systems and government. The British entered Sikh Sardars' affairs and changed Punjab's power dynamics, therefore undermining the unity of the Sikh leadership and enabling British rule (Ali). The formation of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir in the mid-nineteenth century was a key component of the British colonial strategy for securing authority over northern India. This tactic was more than just a territory grab; it was also a planned political act reflecting the British Empire's greater imperial goals. The Dogra kings, who were essential in establishing this princely state, had British help, allowing them to impose authority over an area with different ethnic and religious groups, notably Muslims and Hindus. The British used the Dogra dynasty as a buffer against possible threats from neighbouring territories, notably the north and west, where Russian expansionism was a major concern during the Great Game (Brown, 191-218). Further, by tightly controlling key commercial routes between India and Central Asia, the British were able to safeguard their financial interests. The princely kingdom served as a strategic buffer zone as well as a wall dividing



British India from its neighbours, such as Afghanistan. By appointing a kind and submissive ruler in Jammu and Kashmir, the British attempted to secure their borders and protect their empire from any external threats. Finally, Jammu and Kashmir's 1947 admission to the Union of India after independence was one of the most significant historical turning points in the region. On October 26, 1947, Lord Mountbatten unconditionally approved the 'Instrument of Accession', and on March 1, 1948, Maharaja Hari Singh named Sheikh Abdullah as the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government. The relations between India and Jammu and Kashmir continued to be based on the Instrument of Accession till August 5, 2019. However, a complete reworking of India's relations with the state of Jammu and Kashmir took place in 2019. After proposing the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 in Parliament on August 5, 2019, the Indian government declared that the State of Jammu and Kashmir was subject to all the provisions of the Indian Constitution. The act divided the state into J&K, which is home to a Legislative Assembly, and Ladakh, which is not. The August 2019 Presidential Order and its August 6 announcement completely altered India's constitutional relationship with J&K, placing the state on par with the rest of the country.

## **The British Empire's Strategic Use of Punjab**

As the Sikh faith spread over northern India around the fourteenth century, the Sikh community started to wield political and military power. Between 1799 and 1823, the Sikhs established a powerful kingdom with a strong military, advanced agricultural skills, and a rich cultural legacy. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Punjabi history witnessed the organisation of the Sikh community into military formations known as Misls. These Misls were confederations of Sikh warriors formed in reaction to the Sikh population's political disintegration and external challenges, mainly the Afghan invasions and the collapsing Mughal Empire. The Misls played an important role in solidifying Sikh dominance and creating some autonomy in the region, laying the framework for the creation of the Sikh Empire in the early nineteenth century under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Blane 56–64). The first Sikh king of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, declared Punjab the Sikh Empire and officially assumed the title. He established a capital there in 1799 and considerably enlarged his dominion, eventually

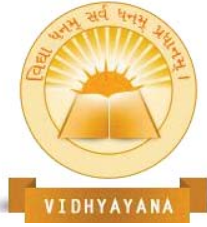


controlling a territory bounded by the Jhelum and Sutlej Rivers by 1808.<sup>1</sup> In addition to expanding the empire's domains and modernising its governance, Ranjit Singh brought peace and prosperity to the region. The Sikh State of Punjab was one of several local kingdoms that existed when the British were trying to gain control of the Indian Subcontinent. The formation of the Punjabi Sikh State and British interference in its internal affairs were intricate and complex processes that left a lasting impact on the region and its inhabitants. British rule gradually weakened the Punjab Sikh State's influence, leading to its absorption into their colonial empire toward the middle of the 19th century. British involvement in Punjab's political and military issues was minimal in the early years, and they followed a policy of 'benign neglect' towards the Sikhs, allowing them to establish their state and solidify their control without interference. Furthermore, fearing that the Sikh state's growing power might imperil their interests, they began to take a more active role in Punjab. The British adopted appeasement to reduce tensions between the two emerging powers. On April 25, 1809, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Charles T. Metcalfe of the East India Company signed 'The Anglo-Sikh Treaty', commonly known as the 'Treaty of Amritsar', in Amritsar. The treaty's provisions led to the relocation of the British Indian frontier from the River Jumna to the Sutlej. After all, this line served as the first genuine international boundary between the British and Indian possessions.

For a generation, the treaty put a halt to hostilities between the British and Sikhs. With the 'Anglo-Sikh Treaty', the East India Company sought to secure Singh's support in the event of a French invasion, while Singh aimed to fortify his territorial gains south of the Sutlej River, having established the river as their respective boundary. Ranjit Singh, on the other hand, wanted to legally incorporate the Malwa into his realm, which was located between the Sutlej and Yamuna Rivers, thereby bringing all Sikhs in Punjab under his control. The treaty's clauses prohibited Singh from expanding his domain south of the Sutlej but granted him free permission to do so north of the river. Additionally, after destroying the Afghan Durrani Empire, Maharaja Ranjit Singh expanded his control over the Sikh Misls, finally reaching Peshawar, Multan, and Kashmir. The British need firm control to preserve their position of

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<sup>1</sup> R. Singh



power during a period of upheaval and transition in British India. To maintain their dominion, the British had to battle the Marathas and Gorkhas, cope with Ranjit Singh's expansionist intentions within the kingdom, obstruct French ambitions (until 1815), and then deal with Afghanistan and Russia from the outside.

Simultaneously, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was at the height of his power and wished to expand his dominion into the Trans-Sutlej region without interference from the British. The British aimed to maintain a robust and amicable command over Punjab, enabling it to serve as a backup defence when needed. In this situation, where the interests of two expanding nations clashed and the friendly Sikh Kingdom became a threat to the British, conflict was inevitable. The British conquered Punjab following two fights between the British and the Sikhs in the middle of the nineteenth century, known as the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-1846) and the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-1849). The battles marked a new era in British relations with the Sikhs and reinforced British control over the region. The British recognised the Sikhs' military capabilities, which they originally attempted to co-opt rather than eradicate. Following Punjab's conquest in 1849, the British began to enlist Sikhs in their army, seeing them as veteran warriors capable of defending the British-Indian boundary from Afghan assaults (Singh 57-80). This recruitment technique was part of a larger imperial campaign that sought to incorporate Sikh troops into the British military structure while also undercutting Sikh leaders' political power. The British portrayed themselves as Sikh guardians, but this was a premeditated ploy to keep the Sikhs dependent on British military support, reducing their autonomy (Singh 57-80). Following their annexation of Punjab, the British formed a colonial government and implemented several political, monetary, and social reforms.

'Following its annexation by the British in 1847, the Punjab province witnessed several significant developments individualisation of property rights in land, fixation and rigorous collection of land revenue in cash, the introduction of a new legal-administrative system, construction of a road and railway network, canal-building activities and a colonisation program, commercialisation of agriculture, and increased monetisation of economic transactions (M.M. Islam).' Overall, the creation of the Sikh state of Punjab, as well as the British role in it, was a complex and crucial period in Indian history. The foundation of the Sikh



state was a watershed moment in the region's political and social history, whereas the British annexation of Punjab had long-term consequences for the province and its population, helping to shape India's current political and social environment.

## **Kashmir when Ranjit Singh was at the height of his influence**

Al Masudi (941-43), who visited the Indus Valley, records about Kashmir, 'This territory, he writes, is unapproachable except from one side so that he (the king of Kashmir) can shut up the whole of his dominion with one gate for it surrounded by mountains of such height that neither men nor wild animal can climb over them... the natural fortification of this country is well known in Khurasan and other provinces, and it is wonderful things in the world (Al Masudi, 941-43).' Throughout its history, Kashmir has provided strategic advantages to its occupiers due to its unique location. In addition, the region was abundant in natural resources and had a significant economic possibility for its occupants. Naturally, this treasure trove attracted the attention of numerous powers throughout its existence. The Mughals (1586–1753) and Pathans (1753–1819) established Muslim sovereignty in Kashmir in 1320, followed by the Sikh monarch of Punjab. The Durarini rulers of Afghanistan held the last reigns in Kashmir, and after that, it merged with the Sikh Kingdom of Punjab. The Pathans also administered Kashmir through their governors, just like the Mughals. During their 67-year reign, Pathan governors brutally controlled Kashmir. Under their rule, Kashmir suffered significant political, economic, and cultural setbacks. The period between 1752 and 1819 AD is considered one of the worst eras in Kashmir's history. At this time, Afghans controlled Kashmir and terrorised the local population. Records Tyndale Biscoe 'It is said during the Afghan rule in Kashmir, the Afghans were in the habit of riding into the Kashmiri houses on their horseback, stabling their horses in the lower portion and occupying the rest for themselves. The Kashmiris were unable to check these outrages by force. They devised therefore the plan of having so low doors that not only the intruder had to dismount, but also to bow his head on entry. As the Afghans were haughty and no one of them was willing to make obeisance to a local person, they were forced to remain outside (Tyndale Biscoe).' The collapse of Kashmir's central authority after Zaman Shah's death, caused all routes of passage between Kashmir and Afghanistan to be disrupted. Kashmir was thus famished and unable to export her commodities from either India or Afghanistan. As





a result, Kashmir experienced a severe economic crisis and terrible poverty. During times of starvation and drought, Kashmir was reliant on the Sikh Kingdom for the delivery of essential goods because of its proximity to that kingdom. Punjab was Kashmir's primary source of wheat and rice. Infighting among the tribes rendered Afghanistan powerless, demoralised, and decimated after 1800; Kashmir's sole chance lay in Punjab, led by Maharaja Hari Singh. Birbal Dhar, a Kashmiri Pandit, brought about the transition of power from Muslim to Sikh rulers. 'Throughout the Afghan period, different classes of people vied with each other for political control. Thus, it was a conflict of interests that ultimately led to the establishment of Sikh rule in Kashmir. Birbal Dhar, a very high official during the period of Afghans, invited Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab to invade Kashmir when he feared punishment at the hands of the Afghan ruler for embezzling public money (A.S. Dar and A.M. Shah).' Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not officially annexe Kashmir into the Sikh Kingdom. He did, however, seize control of a few locations in the region and have some influence on the government. In 1819, Ranjit Singh struck an agreement with the Raja of Kashmir after he had vanquished the Afghan forces that had taken possession of Kashmir. The treaty granted the Raja the right to maintain his throne as a vassal of the Sikh Empire but also required him to pay Ranjit Singh tribute and acknowledge Sikh rule over the territory. Despite Kashmir's legal exclusion from the Sikh Kingdom, this arrangement allowed Ranjit Singh to assert control over the region. The agreement preserved the independence of both the Sikh Empire and the local Kashmiri tyrants while establishing a balance of power. The Kabul rulers ruled over Kashmir for almost 67 years, until Maharaja Ranjit Singh's expedition captured Kashmir in 1819, ending Afghan sovereignty. On July 3, 1819, the Durrani Empire's governor of the Kashmir valley region, Jabbar Khan, and an expeditionary army from the Sikh Empire engaged in the Battle of Shopian. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was able to control Kashmir because of the brewing political unrest within the Afghan Empire. The battle between Ranjit Singh and Kabul's prime minister, Vazir Fateh Khan, led to the collapse of the Afghan Empire and the eventual incorporation of Kashmir into the 'Sikh Empire'. From 1819 through 1846, Kashmir was under Sikh sovereignty.



## **The fate of the Sikh State of Punjab and the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir was intertwined**

Sikhism and the Muslim Mughal Empire both saw parallel growth in South Asia. Sikhism and Islam share ideals such as monotheism, equality, tolerance, and love for all people. Sikhism's message of 'tolerance and religious coexistence' was consequently warmly accepted by both Sikhs and Muslims, including many saints and sages.<sup>2</sup> These parallels established a very solid foundation for collaboration between the two religions. Sikhism came into being during the 15th century, as the Mughal Empire was expanding its dominion over the Punjab region. Many people, regardless of their religious affiliation, found common ground with the Sikh Gurus' teachings on the value of social justice and equality. For example, in line with Islamic teachings on social justice and monotheism, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, called for the rejection of caste differences and the belief in one God (Akbar 153-160). Sikhism was well-received by Muslims because their ideologies were similar; both groups aimed to spread the virtues of tolerance and harmony in the face of religious diversity. The Afghan terror, therefore, presented the Sikhs of Punjab as the ideal substitute for Kashmir, attracting Birbal Dhar and others to Punjab by default. However, the intricate and multifaceted connections between the Sikh State of Punjab and Kashmir, along with the political, economic, and social factors, drove the growth of the British Empire's supremacy in India. To continue exploiting the Indian subcontinent for their gain, the British sought to maintain control over it. The British exploited India's economy through a combination of trade policies, tariffs, and taxes that benefited their interests. The Sikh States of Punjab and Kashmir were politically managed using a mix of military force, treaties, and agreements that secured British dominance over the provinces. From around 1819 until 1839, Sikhs ruled Kashmir. However, after Ranjit Singh's death, Kashmir saw a period of abhorrent ineptitude and mismanagement. The Sher Singh administration in Punjab nominated Sheikh Gulam Muhy-ud-din as governor of Kashmir to strengthen ties with Punjab. After Ranjit Singh's death, Sheikh Gulam Muhy-ud-din and his son Imam-ud-din's fates were sealed by political upheaval in Punjab and conflict with the British, but they were unable to prevent the aspirant Raja Gulab Singh from seizing control of Kashmir. During the first Anglo-Sikh

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<sup>2</sup> B. Sadaf, J. Saad and etal,





war, Raja Gulab Singh aided the British and was rewarded by them. Because of Raja Gulab Singh's cooperation, the British were able to combine Kashmir with the Dogra Kingdom of Jammu, creating the regal state of Jammu and Kashmir. The 'Anglo-Sikh Treaty,' which the British wished to preserve, established the conditions for relations between British India and the Sikh kingdom up to 1845. The pact broke when the Khalsa army crossed the Sutlej, putting the British in danger from the friendly Sikh kingdom. War was therefore inevitable. In the First Anglo-Sikh War, which lasted from 1845 to 1846, the British East India Company mainly crushed the Sikh Empire. The 'Treaty of Lahore' and 'Treaty of Amritsar' were signed on March 9, 1846, and March 16, respectively. The 'Treaty of Amritsar' formalised the agreements made in the 'Treaty of Lahore' between Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu and Kashmir and the British East India Company. Gulab Singh was designated the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir under the stipulations of the 'Treaty of Lahore (1846), while Maharaja Delep Singh received authority over Punjab. To counter Sikh supremacy and safeguard the nation's northwest frontiers, the British had to take control of the Punjab Kingdom. Concurrently, the British established a single state, Jammu and Kashmir, to serve as a buffer zone. The British benefitted equally from this arrangement, which allowed them to keep control over British India's troublesome northwest frontier with Afghanistan and Russia. On March 16, 1846, Maharaja Gulab Singh of the Dogra Kingdom signed the 'Treaty of Amritsar,' sometimes referred to as the 'Sale Deed' of Kashmir. He had to give the British around 7.5 million rupees in exchange for Kashmir. As a result of this accord, the creation of the independent state of Jammu and Kashmir, which includes Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, is notable. The creation of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir was a significant event in British India's history. Because of its excellent location in the middle of British India and Central Asia, the British founded this kingdom to maintain their authority over the region. To safeguard their interests in the region and balance off the expanding Russian power, the British established the Princely State. The British formed the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir through a variety of tactics, including the use of military force, the influence of regional leaders, and political and economic power structures.



## Accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Union of India

Meanwhile, political conditions in British India were drastically changing, with the nation experiencing a political upheaval that had destroyed its sociocultural fabric. Before the British opted to leave the country, the Muslim League advocated for the division of India into two separate dominions, Pakistan and India. Only four princely states had second thoughts about joining the new dominion, with 561 having already joined by the time India attained independence on August 15, 1947. Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Junagarh, and the Khanate of Kalat were the four princely states.<sup>3</sup> Although the princely states had the freedom to select their rulers, they were required to give geographic closeness the weight they deserved. Even though the great majority of people in Jammu and Kashmir were Muslims, Maharaja Hari Singh, the state's monarch, was a Hindu. Since joining India would have meant giving up his monarchical power, he had fought to keep his state independent. To ensure that trade, communication, and travel would go as they had before the division of the monarchy, Maharaja Hari Singh signed a 'Standstill Agreement' with Pakistan. Nevertheless, a similar agreement with India was unable to materialise. Later, Pakistan breached the 'Standstill Agreement' and stopped the supplies meant for the state-occupied part of Jammu and Kashmir (now under Pakistani control), and sent tribal Muslims on October 21, 1947, to conquer the rest of Jammu and Kashmir. In the state, there were serious problems with law and order. Under such unusual circumstances, Maharaja Hari Singh had to sign the 'Instrument of Accession'.<sup>4</sup> On the night of October 26, 1947, Lord Mountbatten unconditionally accepted the 'Instrument of Accession', and on March 1, 1948, Maharaja Hari Singh appointed Sheikh Abdullah as Prime Minister of the Interim Government. Despite the absence of Jammu and Kashmir's Constituent Assembly, the Indian government chose to enhance Jammu and Kashmir's ties with the Union of India by extending certain articles of the Indian constitution beyond those mentioned in the IOA. Thus, the state government approved the issuance of a presidential order on January 26, 1950. Then, the democratically chosen J & K Constituent Assembly convened for the first time on October 31, 1951, and on November 19 officially ratified the J & K Constitution. The Constitution

<sup>3</sup> Gupta, A. 2022

<sup>4</sup> Singhvi, S. 2019

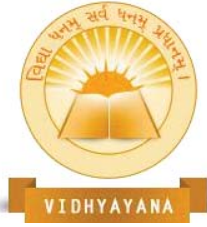


(Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order 1954 quickly took the place of the 1950 order. The order implemented the requirements of the Indian Constitution's Part III, which deals with fundamental rights.<sup>5</sup> The Parliament approved the agreement in August 1952, and the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir approved it in September 1952. Jammu & Kashmir's Constituent Assembly voted for India's accession in 1954. The following May, President Rajendra Prasad passed the '1954 order' codifying the terms of entrée. The 1954 Order, enacted in 1954 and labelled the '1954 Order', gave permanent residents of J & K the right to free trade, property ownership, and higher education.

### **Changing dynamics of J&K's relations with the Indian Union**

In 1947, the then princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was given the option to accede to either India or Pakistan during the partition of India. The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir signed the 'Instrument of Accession' on 26th October 1947, choosing to join India. This document formalised the relationship between Jammu and Kashmir and India, allowing the Indian government to exercise control over the defence, foreign affairs, and communication matters within the state while leaving the internal administration and governance to the local government. In 1947, Jammu and Kashmir became part of India. This is a very important event in the history and politics of South Asia. Maharaja Hari Singh signed the 'Instrument of Accession' on October 26, 1947. This gave India power over defence, foreign affairs, and communications in the area, while the local government continued to handle domestic issues. Tribal groups backed by Pakistan were invading the area, forcing the Maharaja to ask India for military help, which he only got if he signed the accession paper (Razia; Singh & Jha 73–83). However, Pakistan did not accept Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India and claimed the state as its own, leading to conflicts and tensions between India and Pakistan. The relationship between Jammu Kashmir and India has been dynamic, marked by a series of changes and amendments over the years. In 1950, a Presidential Order was issued to streamline J&K's relationship with the Union. This was followed by the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954, which applied the provisions of Part-III of the Indian Constitution related to fundamental rights to J&K. This order was passed with the concurrence of both the

<sup>5</sup> Indian Express, 20 March 2019



state government and the J&K Constituent Assembly. Since then, the relationship has continued to evolve, as evidenced by the 42 Presidential orders that have been issued subsequently to amend the 1954 order. The relationship between Jammu & Kashmir and India has evolved significantly since the region's admission in 1947. A pivotal event in this process happened in 1950, when a Presidential Order was issued to simplify relations between Jammu and Kashmir and the Indian Union. This directive sought to define the governing structure and the degree of the region's autonomy. The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of 1954 was adopted as a result, extending the provisions of Part III of the Indian Constitution, which deals with basic rights, to Jammu and Kashmir. This decree was noteworthy since it was signed by both the state administration and the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly, thereby institutionalising the state's connection with the Union of India (Jha 279-281; Noorani 290-302). These orders have extended a majority of the entries in the Union and Concurrent Lists, as well as the Articles of the Indian Constitution, to J&K. The political and constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir has been unique in India since the state acceded to India in 1947. Initially, Jammu and Kashmir had a Prime Minister as per the provisions of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, which was adopted in 1957. However, in 1964, the position of the Prime Minister was abolished, and the state adopted the position of a Chief Minister as per the Indian Constitution. This change was made to align the state's governance structure with that of the rest of India. Another unique aspect of Jammu and Kashmir's constitutional status has been the existence of a separate Constitution for the state. This Constitution was adopted by the state's Constituent Assembly in 1957, granting authority to the state in several areas, such as internal administration, taxation, and land ownership. However, the Constitution also provided for the state's integration with India and recognized the sovereignty of the Indian Parliament. In addition to having a separate Constitution, Jammu and Kashmir also had its flag, which the Constituent Assembly adopted in 1952. The state flag featured a plough and three stripes of red, white, and green and was used alongside the Indian national flag. In 2019, however, India's relations with the state of Jammu and Kashmir were entirely overhauled. The Government of India made all provisions of the Indian Constitution applicable to the State of Jammu and Kashmir after introducing the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019 in Parliament on August 5, 2019. The statute split the state into two Union Territories: J&K, which has a



Legislative Assembly, and Ladakh, which does not.<sup>6</sup> The 2019 Presidential Order, published in August 2019, and announced on August 6, has changed India's constitutional relationship with J&K, putting the state on an equal footing with the rest of India. The J&K Reorganization Act of 2019 separated the state of J&K into two Union Territories (hereafter UT) in the form of UT from J&K one Legislative, similar to UT of Puducherry, and UT of Ladakh, similar to UT of Chandigarh.<sup>7</sup> India's decision to end Article 370 in August 2019 showed how active Jammu and Kashmir's relationship with the country is. This ended the region's special status. A lot of people were against this move because they saw it as an unfair one-sided choice that took away the independence that Jammu and Kashmir had had since 1954. The abrogation has caused big changes in the way the area is governed. It is now split into two Union Territories, called Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. This reorganisation has made things more difficult because it has made people question the rights and political participation of the local people (Jha 279–281; Aslam & Sudan 144–179).

## Conclusion

The establishment of the princely states of Jammu and Kashmir and the dissolution of the Sikh State of Punjab were among the major developments that took place in Northern India around the 19th century. Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh's regime, the Sikh State of Punjab prospered as a strong monarchy with a potent military, cutting-edge agricultural practices, and a rich cultural history. Jammu and Kashmir became a princely state under British suzerainty, with Maharaja Gulab Singh and his successors ruling over the region until India's independence in 1947. The establishment of the princely states of Jammu and Kashmir and the Sikh State of Punjab, along with their subsequent interactions with the British, had a profound and lasting impact on the history and character of Northern India. The legacies of these states continue to shape the political, cultural, and social dynamics of the region to this day. Later, one of the most significant historical turning points in the region occurred with Jammu and Kashmir's admission to the Union of India in 1947. Maharaja Hari Singh's signature of the 'Instrument of Accession' opened the door for Jammu and Kashmir's assimilation into the recently independent

<sup>6</sup> Goel and Sharma. 28-45, 2020

<sup>7</sup> Bhatia, A 132-141, 2021



India. The accession was not without difficulties, though. Due to a breakdown in the Standstill Agreement with Pakistan, which was intended to preserve pre-partition commerce and communication, Pakistan invaded and occupied areas of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, resulting in tribal violence. Amid this situation, Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession, which Lord Mountbatten approved and requested help from India. The state's future political and constitutional development inside the Indian Union was made possible by the state's membership. Following its accession, Jammu and Kashmir was given access to the Indian Constitution through a series of orders, beginning with the 1950 Presidential Order and ending with the 1954 Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order. This integration came with a twist, though, since Jammu and Kashmir had its own Prime Minister and Constitution from the outset, representing a certain amount of autonomy within the larger Indian framework. The relationship between the Indian Union and Jammu & Kashmir has developed over time. Aims to harmonise the state's governance structure with the rest of India were paralleled in political and constitutional reforms, such as the state's move to a Chief Minister and the elimination of the Prime Minister's post in 1964. The unique state flag and different constitutions of Jammu and Kashmir highlighted the region's unique status. However, by repealing Article 370 through the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act in 2019, the Indian government drastically changed the constitutional position of the region. As a result, the state was divided into two Union Territories: Ladakh, which lacked a legislative assembly, and Jammu and Kashmir, which had one. The region's historical autonomy was significantly altered by the abrogation, which put it on a level with other regions of India. The Indian administration has made the rehabilitation of Jammu and Kashmir a top priority after the abrogation.





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