**Solving the Kashmir dispute**

**[Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/dr-ghulam-nabi-fai)**

June 26, 2021

If promises are made to be broken, then Kashmir may be summoned to prove this treacherous proposition. Broken promises haunt Kashmir’s history, and explain its tragedy. I will confine myself to the last century as a concession to the shortness of life.

Under the 1846 Treaty of Amritsar, Great Britain sold Kashmir and its then 2 million people to a Sikh ruler, Gulab Singh, like sheep and cattle. The strutting British Empire valued Kashmiris every bit as much as it did the Irish then undergoing the Potato famine, which many in New York condemn as a British genocide. But that was of little solace to their South Asian counterparts.

Kashmir was a princely state under Gulab Singh and his successors, Ranbir Singh, Partap Singh, and Hari Singh. A princely state was not directly ruled by the British raj like India, but was subject only to British dictation over matters of defence and foreign policy.

Maharaja Hari Singh, a Hindu, began his princely rule over Kashmir in 1925. The people of the land were predominantly Muslim, but lived a warm coexistence with Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Their understanding of Islam had taught them mutual respect, harmony, and ecumenism.

[US not changed stance on recognizing Israeli sovereignty over Golan Heights](https://nation.com.pk/26-Jun-2021/us-not-changed-stance-on-recognizing-israeli-sovereignty-over-golan-heights)

The Maharaja inherited a regime earmarked by brutal repression of Muslims. Heavy taxation, discriminatory laws, forced labour and the absence of representation in services and lack of educational facilities were chief grievances. The slaughtering of a cow was a capital crime and mosques were controlled by the state.

All dissent or political protest was brutally suppressed. For instance, the Maharaja summarily drowned state silk factory workers in 1924 for the audacity of demanding higher wages than the likes of Oliver Twist. Muslims who petitioned British Viceroy Lord Reading to correct or ameliorate their grievances during his 1924 visit were sent into exile and their properties confiscated. The British then appointed a commission headed by B.J. Clancy to investigate the grievances. It confirmed their authenticity, recommended remedial measures, which were largely neglected by the Maharaja.

A Kashmiri national movement was galvanised in 1931 when a state factotum forbade the Imam to deliver a sermon before the customary Friday prayer. Mr. Abdul Qadeer answered with a fiery speech denouncing the Maharaja’s anti-Islamic injunctions. Muslims rallied to protest his arrest, and 22 were slaughtered when the police opened fire.

[One dose of Sputnik V reduces mortality rate in people by 70-80%](https://nation.com.pk/26-Jun-2021/one-dose-of-sputnik-v-reduces-mortality-rate-in-people-by-70-80-percent)

The British, predictably, did nothing. After all, it was difficult to distinguish the Maharaja’s savagery from the mass killings of Indians by the British in 1919, known as the Amritsar massacre. I would argue that this British callousness or aloofness was a pre-partition broken promise number one. As Rudyard Kipling had versified to the world in 1899, the British Empire and suzerainties had been undertaken to discharge the “White Man’s burden” of civilising ‘backward’ races or religions. But in Kashmir, it had apostatised from its promise and abandoned Muslims to the law of the jungle.

With the lapse of British paramountcy on August 15, 1947, broken promises over Kashmir came not like single spies but in battalions, to borrow from Hamlet. Princely states enjoyed three options: accession to India, accession to Pakistan, or independence. But the choice, according to India’s Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and tacitly endorsed by the British was to be made by popular referendum in cases where the creed of the ruler varied from the religion of the majority. That fundamental democratic principle had been sternly applied by Nehru with military means in Hyderabad and Junagadh where the rulers were Muslim but their inhabitants largely Hindu. Kashmir presented a converse case: the Maharaja was Hindu but the majority subscribed to Islam.

[Germany bans Hamas flag, PKK symbols after wave of anti-Semitic incidents](https://nation.com.pk/26-Jun-2021/germany-bans-hamas-flag-pkk-symbols-after-wave-of-anti-semitic-incidents)

When paramountcy lapsed in Kashmir, the Maharaja’s despotic regime was tottering. An indigenous rebellion was in full swing. Instead of submitting to a referendum, Maharaja’s vaulting and mean-spirited ambition prompted a plea to the Indian army for intervention. Nehru responded with alacrity on October 27, 1947, and intrigued to generate a bogus instrument of Kashmiri accession to India to justify its aggression. British scholar Alistair Lamb has persuasively exposed the forgery, a first cousin to the Tzar’s Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Indigenous Kashmiris fought Indian troops to a standstill. Contemporaneously, India’s head of state, Lord Mountbatten, officially promised a Kashmiri plebiscite in plain language over which only Mr. Pickwick might puzzle: “[I]n consistence with their policy that in the case of any state where the issue of accession has been the subject of dispute, the question of accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people of the state. It is my government’s wish that as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and its soil cleared of the invaders, the question of the state’s accession should be settled by a reference to the people.”

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India then raced to the United Nations Security Council on January 1, 1948, and championed a pair of resolutions on August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949 that prescribed a self-determination vote for Kashmiris on the heels of United Nations supervised demilitarisation. Pakistan eagerly endorsed that solution to Kashmir’s disputed territory.

India, however, was soon undeceived of its delusions over Kashmir’s political yearning. Recognising that its people would never freely vote accession to India, it contrived excuse after excuse to frustrate a plebiscite. When the United Nations proposed arbitration, a reference to the World Court, or any other method of resolving minor demilitarisation quarrels, India nixed them all. After a few years, it dropped all pretence of acceding to a referendum by unilaterally proclaiming its annexation of Kashmir. India’s proclamation has never been accepted by the United Nations, which continues to list Kashmir as disputed territory and subject to the Security Council’s self-determination resolutions.

[Uganda government taken to court over COVID-19 treatment cost](https://nation.com.pk/26-Jun-2021/uganda-government-taken-to-court-over-covid-19-treatment-cost)

When Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations was asked to clarify the position of the UN on Kashmir soon after the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A by the Government of India, he said on August 8, 2019, “The position of the United Nations on this region is governed by the Charter of the United Nations and applicable Security Council resolutions.”

Dr Syed Nazir Gilani, President, JKCHR is correct when he said, “Indian action of 5 August 2019 in Kashmir has consequences at home, in the neighbourhood and at the international level. This action is a breach of the terms of the Instrument of Accession and under the UN template on Kashmir India has loaded upon itself a very grave offence against the United Nations and the right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to self-determination”.

Broken promises two, three, and four thus represent India’s reneging on its Kashmir plebiscite pledges made by Lord Mountbatten, Prime Minister Nehru and Indian delegate to the United Nations. Broken promise number five can be laid at the feet of the Security Council which has never exerted any moral or other clout to even nudge India towards compliance with its resolutions. It seems that the Security Council has honoured India’s indefensible defence of its Kashmir broken promises because of its muscular military, nuclear and economic profile and hegemony in South Asia.

Broken promises number six, seven, and eight came in 1966, 1972, and 1999. At Tashkent following the 1965 India-Pakistan war, promises were made by India to negotiate seriously over Kashmiri sovereignty. But nothing was done. At Simla, following a 1971 war over Bangladesh, India again agreed to talk seriously about Kashmir. But again the promise was honoured in the breach, not the observance. During a brief honeymoon between India and Pakistan at Lahore in 1999, India once more promised genuine negotiations over Kashmir, and once more betrayed its pledge by instantly insisting that India’s claim of sovereignty over Kashmir would never be placed on the negotiating table.

When President Donald Trump offered his office of mediation on July 23, 2019 to resolve the Kashmir dispute, S Jaishankar, Indian foreign minister said on August 2, 2019 that any discussion on Kashmir will only be conducted with Pakistan and only bilaterally. Then Jaishanker broke promise number nine when he told Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi just two weeks later on August 13, 2019 that Kashmir was an internal matter of India.

The train of broken promises over Kashmir might be forgiven if the consequences were innocuous or inconsequential. But I submit the opposite is the case. India exerts an iron-fisted rule over Kashmir that would stir the heart of Genghis Khan. With approximately 900,000 military and paramilitary troops in the territory, gruesome human rights violations are perpetrated with impunity on a scale that makes East Timor under Suharto seem like a tea party. Every human rights group that has surveyed the grim Kashmir landscape, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, has been shocked and horrified by the daily atrocities against the people of Kashmir. Ditto for the annual human rights country reports of the US State Department.

To hide its human rights inferno in Kashmir, India prohibits world parliamentarians, international broadcasts or unchaperoned international electronic media. With no heart-clutching pictures in the living rooms of the United States and the European Union, no moral clamour has arisen to do something to relieve the horrors of millions of Kashmiris. But griping at the unfairness of the world is as otiose as shouting at the weather.

The people of Kashmir are not vengeful. Charity and magnanimity would be their loadstars if self-determination were honoured despite so many betrayals. Let us hope that the last promise over Kashmir has been broken.