

# Why celebrate the birthday of Maharaja Hari Singh...

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## Celebrating Sept 28 as 'Surgical Strikes Day'

Coinciding with the birth anniversary of the freedom struggle revolutionary Shaheed Bhagat Singh, the day of 'Amrit Mahotsav', there is one more thing to celebrate of the national importance and pride. That is about the surgical strikes conducted by Indian forces at four places deep into the territory of Pakistan where terror training camps were being run by Pakistan to roll out terrorists to create violence in and attacks on army posts etc in Jammu and Kashmir. It has been suggested and not officially directed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his monthly "Mann Ki Baat" aired on All India Radio. Invoking the "Josh" to be thus caused to rise in the countrymen, he accounted the two words for the same – "Surgical Strikes".

The "josh" or the zeal, excitement and the verve coupled with infusing a peculiar will to do whatever more in whatever capacity for the country and the welfare of the countrymen when seen in collective form, can really create wonders. It may be reiterated that this "Josh" for the pride of the country is no ephemeral phenomenon but a spirit for all times down the generations. While we take inspiration from the supreme sacrifices of revolutionary freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh, Azad, Rajguru, Sukhdev, Ishfaq and the youngest revolutionary Khudi Ram Bose and others, at the same time their unparalleled contribution and role in the freedom struggle is providing us moments to value our hard earned freedom.

Celebrating such occasions, therefore, are not merely for completing or fulfilling some formalities and forgetting thereafter till the next year but these commemorations and celebrations create a lot of enthusiasm and imprint in the psyche of the countrymen a deep sense of belongingness and pride about the country. On these annual events while we keep reverentially remembering our martyrs who offered supreme sacrifice for the motherland, at the same time we must lose no opportunity to hailing the valour of our brave heroes who do a pride to the country in defending it. These events, therefore, also lend lot of importance and strength to the avowed policy of this country that "we shall never trouble anyone but if one dares to do it with us, we will hit back possibly right in its own home".

It is also the wider manifestation of the well established and cherished principle of "live and let live". While remembering our revolutionary national figures, especially who laid down their lives for the sake of the motherland is not merely an act of paying tributes by us to them but deriving the ethical concept regarding the high spirit of "Tyag" or forsaking and renouncing ordinary worldly comforts and pleasures which this country is known for from ancient times both as a spiritual philosophy as well as a way of simple life aiming at selflessly doing more for others. While attaining such highest pursuits, at the same time, national events of pride imbibe in us, especially the younger generations, to accord top most preference to the country and other things only thereafter.

Had the neighbouring country not been instrumental and deeply involved in sponsoring terror attack on Sept 18, 2016 in Uri Army camp in Kashmir, India would have not been compelled to repay it just within a few days only for the first time since Pakistan sponsored terrorism erupted in Jammu and Kashmir. Had Pakistan not caused the brutal and inhuman Pulwama terror attack in Kashmir on the convoy of vehicles carrying personnel of security forces on February 14, 2019, this country would have not conducted airstrikes deep inside Pakistan to smash terror camps of Jaish-e- Mohammed (JeM) in which more than 200 terrorists were killed.

The Prime Minister also shared with the countrymen the decision to name Chandigarh Airport as Shaheed Bhagat Singh Airport which demonstrates the sense of deep gratitude of the countrymen towards such legendary heroes of the country who smilingly and bravely kissed the noose that was meant to take them to the status of revered martyrs. Needless to add, only a few days ago, statue of Netaji Bose was set up at Kartaviya Path in New Delhi pointing to the fact that such iconic national figures remain always in our hearts.

## Departmental exoneration not impacting criminal charges

We have been pleading for adequate professional autonomy for the Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) in handling cases of corruption and the manner as to how they investigated cases with an aim to ensure the guilty were punished to eradicate the scourge of corruption. The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has ruled that merely by exonerating an accused employee as a result of departmental enquiries and proceedings does not necessarily mean that such an accused got relief from the courts accordingly in the form of quashing of the criminal charges filed against such person.

While it is no aspersion or undermining of the importance or the competence of findings of such departmental proceedings but since the courts deciding cases strictly as per with the laws of the land / constitution of the country etc after considering each and every aspect, there being ample scope of erring in departmental proceedings which may therefore not stand the test of judicial scrutiny hence criminal charges may not necessarily be quashed against the accused employee. This must give an opportunity to hasten and not delay departmental proceedings but initiate action as early as possible following establishment of involvement of an employee in corrupt practices.

Why the celebration of Maharaja Hari Singh is important? This question was doing rounds in some sections of Jammu before the Govt of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir announced a holiday to commemorate the birth anniversary of the erstwhile Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir.

This question to me sounds ridiculous! It is not only bewildering but causes a headache for sure. I wonder how skewed is public understanding and especially of those who deliberately want to forget the visible high points of the past. They don't even tend to recognize the magnificent edifices and emblems of the yore that seem to be crying for attention of one and all by their sheer magnificence. And these edifices are extending yeomen service to the people of J&K even today.

Maharaja Hari Singh was crowned in 1925 when the politics of India and the world was in a churn. 1st world war had ended and a new world order was taking shape. The state of J&K, that included Gilgit, Baltistan, Ladakh, Aksai Chin besides Jammu province and Kashmir etc was saddled in one of the most important and geopolitically strategic locations of the world. The borders of the Dogra state touched Afghanistan, Tibet (China), Pakistan (the new Nation) and was separated from USSR by the narrow strip of the Wakhan province.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir was founded by the blood, sweat and tear of thousands of Dogra men, women and children. The rulers ruled this diverse state as justly as was possible during those days of impossible communication and connectivity. Today's generation that is used to mobiles, cars and other rapid means of transport will obviously not realise the tiring effort of those who carved out the state of J&K almost from the chaos prevailing at that point in history of the region.

In my opinion following are a few of the high points of the Dogra rule, that impacted the lives of the people of J&K for better. The points were establishment of a modern judicial system and compilation of civil and criminal laws into Ranbir Penal Code during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh and land revenue settlement under the indomitable Walter Lawrence hired by Maharaja Pratap Singh as Settlement Commissioner. By this one act, Walter Lawrence mentions in his book (The Valley of Kashmir) that "cultivation extended and improved, houses were rebuilt, repaired, fields fenced in, orchards planted, vegetable gardens well stocked and new mills constructed" (because of improved economic condition). Walter Lawrence further adds that "women no longer were seen toiling in the fields, for their husbands are now at home to do the work and the long journeys to Gilgit are things of the past". This also shows that "beggar" - the oft repeated blame on Dogra rule - had already come down drastically, if not eliminated, during the rule of Maharaja Pratap Singh itself.

People today forget that before the Dogras came to rule the State, the Kashmir valley, had been through the most brutal and ruthless rule of Afghans who had no respect for human lives not to speak of any respect for rules and regulations - that in any case were non-existent. Sikh Empire too ruled Kashmir for around 26 years but they didn't have much to offer as the Sikh Empire was already on the wane.

Whenever you look around in Kashmir or in Jammu you'll find schools and colleges built tastefully during Dogra rule. Amar Singh College, Sri Pratap College, MP School and several other such institutions built by the Government of the time. Many missionary and other schools were also established in the Valley. In Jammu the erstwhile Prince of Whales College (renamed GGM Science College), Govt Women College, Parade (Maharani College), Ranbir School and Ranbir Library were established during Dogra rule. There are several schools dotting the landscape of Kashmir and Jammu that were built during the Dogra regime.

Surely, Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues also went through these educational institutions to Aligarh Muslim University where they got educated in the mould of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, eventually falling to the trap of the British and the illiterate, uneducated and mysterious rabble-rouser Abdul Qadir who didn't even belong to J&K. He faded into oblivion as swiftly as he had come to vitiate the political environment of Kashmir.

The Dogra Maharajas also invested in health care. They established Hospitals such as State Hospital Hazuri Bagh and around six dispensaries in different Districts at the time. Sri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital was established in Kashmir while as Sri Maharaja Gulab Singh (SMGS) Hospital were established in Jammu to cater to the health requirements of the citizens of J&K.

The unmatched Ranbir Canal running through Jammu is catering to the irrigation requirements of the farmers in Jammu even today. Earlier the canal was navigable and people would take joy rides in the cool waters of the Chenab River in the canal. This too was built by the Maharajas.

The Dogra rulers built Mohura power house (on Jehlum river) in Kashmir with a receiving station in Pattan as well and a hydel power station near the present day Bhagwati Nagar which would run on the waters from the Ranbir canal. J&K was probably the 2nd princely state in the country, after Mysore, that installed power generating and distribution facilities. These stations are now in defunct condition though they can be revived with enhanced generating capacities with the availability of new technology in present times.

# Rabies: Dreadful but preventable disease

Dr R K Bhardwaj, Dr Ranj Bal

In 2015, the world urged action by establishing a global target of zero human dog-mediated rabies fatalities by 2030.

World Rabies Day is observed on 28th September every year for awareness of people about rabies and enhance prevention and control measures. The day is commemorated on the death anniversary of Louis Pasteur, who first developed an effective Anti-rabies vaccine. It was first initiated by Global Alliance for Rabies (GARIC) in collaboration with many international human and veterinary health organisations like the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in 2007 as an international campaign.

The theme of 16th World Rabies Day is 'Rabies: One Health, Zero Deaths'. This highlights the connection of the environment with both people and animals.

The theme is most relevant to the current situation and global trends for rabies and also health in general. It focuses on One Health, coupled with the reminder of the "Zero by 30" goal and the fact that dog-mediated human rabies elimination is possible if we stand united against this dreadful disease. There was severe impact of COVID-19 on public health, which has also affected the rabies control programs globally. It was due to more focus on prevention and control of COVID-19. The theme is selected to bring focus back on rabies so that momentum can be regained towards achieving rabies elimination.

The concept of One Health is well established in control programs of various diseases like COVID-19 and antimicrobial resistance around the world which is indistinguishably linked and interdependent on the health of people, animals and the environment. The importance of One Health was also discussed at major platforms like in the G20 summit-2020, as well as the development of the WHO Neglected Tropical Disease roadmap and the One Health companion document that specifically mention rabies. Rabies elimination typifies the One Health approach, with participation and collaboration from human, animal, and environmental sectors. This One Health aspect of the theme has been engineered to be inclusive, ensuring everyone participation to bring change and help us to collectively achieve the goal of rabies elimination by 2030. The spirit behind this theme encourages collaboration, partnership, and a joint approach towards rabies elimination or "Zero Deaths", in line with the "Zero by 30: Global Strategic Plan for the elimination of dog-mediated human rabies deaths by 2030".

The second part of the theme refers to "Zero

deaths". This aligns directly with the Zero by 30 Global Strategic Plan and highlights that rabies is preventable and that it can be eliminated as well. In fact, rabies is the only vaccine-preventable Neglected Tropical Disease. This part of the theme also reminds us that we have a clear goal to work towards, and while significant progress has been made, we need to continue to work.

Rabies is one of the Neglected tropical disease that afflict people of more than 150 nations and territories worldwide, especially those living in poverty with low- and middle-income nations in the tropics and subtropics, and impose a major economic burden on these countries, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Rabies is an acute and highly fatal viral encephalomyelitis which affects all warm blooded animals. It is caused by a number of viruses, but the Rabies Lyssavirus is the most significant in terms of public health, since it causes nearly all human and dog rabies infections.

The rabies virus is endemic in dogs, wolves, foxes, jackals, mongooses, monkeys etc in India. Spread of infection is caused by bite of an infected animal.

Rabies is a vaccine-preventable viral disease, where dogs are responsible for the great majority of human rabies deaths, accounting for up to 99 percent of all human rabies transmissions. Dog bites account for more than 95 percent of incidents, owing to the country's estimated 60 million stray/free-ranging canines.

Every year, more than 59,000 people die as a result of a dog bite due to a lack of understanding about the importance of seeking medical attention. The majority (35712) of these deaths occur in Asia. India is endemic for rabies, accounting for 59.9 percent and 35 percent of Asia and global mortality, respectively. The true burden of rabies is unknown in India, but according to current data from World Health Organization, rabies kills 20,565 people every year. In India, 30-60 percent of reported rabies infections and deaths occur in youngsters under the age of 15 years as a result of bites. But statistics of 2018 is different as Centre Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) reported only 116 deaths due to rabies in India. There is huge gap between estimated and

actual reported cases of human rabies. There is need to have a strong surveillance system to report exact data on human rabies which will help to develop strategies as per regional condition to achieve the WHO goal of Zero deaths due to Human Rabies by 2030.

To overcome the underreporting of human rabies cases, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GOI declared human rabies as a notifiable disease by D. O. No.2283429/NRCP/DZDO-NCDS/DGHS of dated 20-09-2021 under Clinical establishment registration and regulation act 2010 or respective state public health act or nursing home act. It has become mandatory for all government and private health facilities to report all suspected, probable and confirmed human rabies cases as per guidelines given by National Rabies Control Program.

Reporting of rabies and notification are also of value for rapid identification of foci and the implementation of control measures. Since, rabies is highly infectious and fatal disease and affect domestic, wild animals and of public health significance. Notification will help in contact tracing and immediate prophylactic measures to prevent infection in other people exposed to same source. It will also help in prompt identification of emerging rabies foci in animals and measures to curtail the spread of rabies to other animals and humans.

The annual number of dog bites is estimated to be at 17.4 million with stray dogs' population of 35-40 millions in India. In 2018, India's pet dog population was estimated to be at 19.5 million which is expected to exceed 31 million by the end of 2023. Most of these dogs fall into category of unrestricted/partially dependent type and free ranging type. Dog bites account for 91.5 percent of all animal bites in India, with 60 percent of strays and 40 percent of pets. Animal bites occur at a rate of 17.4 per 1000 persons. Every 2 seconds, someone is bitten, and every 30 minutes, someone dies from rabies. The yearly number of person-days lost due to animal bites is 38 million, with a cost of \$25 million for post-bite care.

Rabies fatalities in humans are entirely avoidable with proper vaccination and timely medical intervention. In cases of bite of a stray or unvaccinated carnivore or insectivore animal, the wound must be cleaned immediately with a lot of running water and

The foresighted Dogra rulers revolutionised connectivity of the state with the construction of the Jehlum Valley and Banihal Cart Roads thus improving the lives of the people.

It may be noted that J&K wasn't a resource rich state, but the Maharajas left no stone unturned to ensure that the basic facilities were available to their subjects as much as possible, within the resources available) enabling their march towards prosperity.

1931 was a turning point in the politics of J&K. It was a conspiracy forced upon the Maharaja to push him into a corner for the Nationalistic stand taken by him at the First Round Table Conference in London. It resulted in death and mayhem in Srinagar and heightened tensions further. The Sheikh took advantage of the unfolding situation and communalised it to the hilt.

Meanwhile the Maharaja continued with his social and political reforms. He formed Praja Sabha, that had elected and nominated members and became a precursor to the legislative assembly later. The number of the elected members to this body were proportionate to their population in the state.

From Sept 1934 the elected members started making laws under Praja Sabha. This was also 1st for any princely state of India. He

ordered Brigadier Rajinder Singh to March to Uri he could barely find 150 personnel from his army to march to Uri. With his 150 people and lots of grit and determination he ensured that the bridge at Uri was blown up and the raiders were halted for a few days from proceeding to Srinagar, the capital city, by his improvised military techniques.

But for inherent love of Maharaja for J&K it's people and also that for the people of the rest of India he was always projected as a fall guy since 1931 by the powers that be; in fact, it became gruesome after 1947. The contribution of the Dogras, his ancestors, in the creation of the state and their efforts to uplift the downtrodden masses and empower the state were always given a short shrift. It was ensured through concerted efforts at personal and Govt level and with high intensity propaganda that not even a shred of the progressive nature of the Dogra rulers be brought to the knowledge of the people of the country, for then, the powers that be were bound to be asked questions. One of the major questions, that remains unanswered is as to how easily they allowed the dismemberment of the state of J&K?

One of the many and most scathing charges against the Maharaja was that he escaped from the Valley in the face of Pakistan/tribal invasion. Where had he escaped to? Did he escape to UK, the US or any other foreign land or even to the newly independent Indian nation? He was well within his state boundaries, his winter capital.

Where was the Sheikh, the person who spread, propagated and amplified the canard vigorously with an unmatched religiosity and a razor sharp tongue, on the day of the invasion by the Pakistan forces into the Valley? He was already in Delhi along with his family members and returned to Kashmir valley only after the Indian forces landed in Srinagar and the city was secured.

Regarding the so called escape of the Maharaja from Srinagar, VP Menon mentions in his book (Integration of Indian States) "that the first thing to be done was to get the Maharaja and his family out of Srinagar. The reason for this was obvious. The raiders were close to Baramulla. The Maharaja was quite helpless and if the Govt of India decided not to go to his rescue, there was no doubt about the fate that would befall him and his family in Srinagar. There was also a certainty that the raiders would loot all the valuable possessions in the palace. In these circumstances I advised him to leave immediately for Jammu and take with him his family and his valuable possessions." He further mentions that he left to his guest house in the early hours of the morning after assuring himself that the Maharaja would leave for Jammu that night. Even VP Menon, Mehar Chand Mahajan, the PM of the state and a crew of 6/7 of their aircraft had to leave hastily for the airport immediately thereafter as they got information that some elements of Pakistan raiders had already entered Srinagar too. VP Menon was the person who worked very closely with Sardar Patel in integration of Indian states

But the propaganda will would have nothing of the factual position especially when falsehood was being piloted by the Sheikh himself.

The biases against Maharaja can be better understood if we compare him with the Nizam of Hyderabad where India was facing a war from the ruler. It must be underlined once again that it was a war from the ruler of Hyderabad whereas the Maharaja of J&K had already acceded to India by signing the Instrument of Accession.

The Nizam with a force of around 30,000 personnel, 200,000 razzakars, 40000 askars fought battle with the Indian forces. He hobbled with Pakistan and imported weapons clandestinely from Europe and Pakistan and loaned huge sums of money to Pakistan for bolstering their war effort against India in Kashmir. He went to UN against India. And finally, when he surrendered to the Indian forces he was allowed to continue as Nizam and finally was made the Rajpramukh/Governor of Hyderabad in Jan 1950.

Thus, the natural question is as to why the Maharaja of J&K, a Nationalist to the core and who cooperated with the Indian Govt after 1947 was unceremoniously exiled while the Nizam with all his follies and evil intentions against the Indian Nation was made the Rajpramukh?

It is this inherently contradictory attitude of the Govt of India towards the Maharaja and the Nizam that was one of the many reasons of heartache of the Dogras/Jammuites for last 75 years. Holiday to commemorate the birthday of the Maharaja declared by the LG of the UTJK is a recognition of his services and that of his ancestors to the people of J&K in particular and Indian Nation in general by the government and thankfully it has come at a time when the country is celebrating Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

This recognition will give Dogras/Jammuites a reason to reclaim the glorious past of the Dogra rulers who ruled this state justly and with forbearance. This is surely the first step and not the end, the finality...



also framed a written constitution for the princely state that came into effect from Sept 1939. He made primary education compulsory and free in the state and prohibited child marriage. He opened all places of worship for the "low caste" subjects - again a first for the country.

In 1937 he was introduced to Jawaharlal Nehru and both became friends and political allies. From there on started a negative phase in the life of the Maharaja and the state. Nehru developed blind faith in the Sheikh and the Maharaja was completely side-lined. Nehru understood the duplicity of the Sheikh later and got him arrested on 09th Aug 1953 but by then the J&K state had gone through immense upheaves and lot of water had flowed down, both in Tawi and Jehlum rivers.

The state raised by the Dogras had ceased to exist; Pakistan had occupied mostly areas from Jammu and some from Kashmir. Gilgit and Baltistan were snatched away in one of the most deceitful operations ever conducted. That Aksai-Chin was also lost to China is a completely different story. Shakasgam was ceded to China by Pakistan.

The might of the then Govt of India and the machinations of the Sheikh were not able to hold on to a state that was built with the blood, sweat and tears of Jammuites/Dogras.

Thus the Dogra state was fragmented factually between 1947 and 1962 and not on 5th Aug 2019 as many would like us to believe. Coming back to the celebration of the birthday of Maharaja Hari Singh.

The Maharaja was the last ruler of the state and it's through his signatures that the state of J&K ceded to the Indian Union. As a true Nationalist he spoke up for the people of India in the 1st Round Table Conference in London. He never spoke or went against the people of India or the Indian Government. He requested the Indian Government to send in troops to defend the people of the state in 1947. He knew his limitations. His army of around 10000 personnel was infinitely stretched and bogged down in Poonch, Uri and elsewhere. Half of his troops had conveniently shifted their allegiance to Pakistan for obvious reasons and killed their trusting comrades in arms unabashedly. The situation was so grim that when the Maharaja



(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)

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