

Politics of Accession in the Undivided India: A Case Study of Nawwab Mushtaq Gurmani's Role in the Accession of the Bahawalpur State to Pakistan

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Before analyzing the role of Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani in the affairs of Bahawalpur, it will be appropriate to briefly outline the origins of the state, one of the oldest in the region.

After the death of Al-Mustansar Bi'llah, the caliph of Egypt, his descendants for four generations from Sultan Yasin to Shah Muzammil remained in Egypt. But Shah Muzammil's son Sultan Ahmad II left the country between 1366-70 in the reign of Abu al-Fath Mumtadid Bi'llah Abu Bakr, the sixth 'Abbasid caliph of Egypt,¹ and came to Sind.² He was succeeded by his son, Abu Nasir, followed by Abu Qahir³ and Amir Muhammad Channi. Channi was a very competent person. When Prince Murad Bakhsh, son of the Mughal emperor Akbar, came to Multan,⁴ he appreciated his services, and awarded him the *mansab* of "Panj Hazari"⁵ and bestowed on him a large *jagir*. Channi was survived by his two sons, Muhammad Mahdi and Da'ud Khan. Mahdi died

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1 *Punjab States Gazetteers*, Vol. XXXVI, A. Bahawalpur State 1904 (Lahore: Civil Military Gazette, 1908), p.48.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*, p.49.

5 *Ibid.*

after a short reign, and confusion and conflict followed. The two claimants to the *jagir* were Kalhora, son of Muhammad Mahdi Khan and Amir Da'ud Khan I. The latter, however, was forced to withdraw his claim. Thus, abandoning the *jagir* to Kalhora, he went with his followers, to Khanpur and occupied himself in the profession of agriculture. But he was eventually forced to vacate Khanpur too, whence he led his tribe to Bat Dubli, now in the Dera Ghazi Khan district.⁶

Thus the Abbasids were divided into two branches—the descendents of Kalhora, who became known as the Kalhoras and long ruled over Sind,⁷ and the descendants of Da'ud's tribe, afterwards called the Da'udpotras, who founded the Bahawalpur State. In 1732, one of the descendents of Da'udpotras, Amir Sadiq Muhammad Khan I, son of Mubarak Khan, was invited from Bat Dubli by the Bukhari Makhdums to come to Uch.⁸ Due to Makhdums' contacts with Nawwab Hayatullah Khan, the governor of Multan, Sadiq Muhammad, received in 1732, the "Ilaqa" of Chaudry in *jagir*.⁹ In 1739, Nadir Shah granted him the title of Nawwab.¹⁰ In 1746, Sadiq Khan I died. His eldest son, Bahawal Khan, was elected by the tribe and placed on the throne.¹¹ It was during his reign, in 1748, that Bahawalpur was founded.¹² In 1780, Shah Alam II, King of Delhi, awarded Bahawal II the titles of Rukn al-Daula, Nusrat Jang, Hafiz al-Mulk.¹³

In 1802, the Nawwab, with the permission of Shah Mahmud of Kabul, introduced a mint at Bahawalpur.¹⁴ There was no prior system of coinage in the State. During this time, Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent a force under General Ventura to expel the Nawwab's officials from the areas lying north of the Sutlej, who occupied the

6 *Ibid.*, pp.48-49.

7 Shahamat Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur* (Lahore: Milli Publication, n.d.), pp.45-6.

8 *Ibid.*, p.47.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Saeed Hashmi, *Jugraphia aur Tarikh-i-Bahawalpur* (Urdu) (Bahawalpur: Maktaba Al-Tahir, n.d.), pp.65-67.

11 *Ibid.*, p.67.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Punjab States Gazetteers, Vol.XXXVI, A. Bahawalpur State 1904*, p.60.

14 J. Royal Robeberry, *Imperial Rule in Punjab: The Conquest and Administration of Multan 1818-81* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1988), pp. 52-59.

aforesaid tracts now in Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh and Multan Districts.¹⁵ The Nawwab was grieved at this loss and sent an envoy to the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, at Simla, seeking his help to defend himself. The British warned Ranjit Singh not to cross the Sutlej. The Nawwab also asked for the appointment of a British Agent at Bahawalpur. Captain Wade was deputed to Bahawalpur to negotiate a treaty. This treaty was signed on 28 March, 1833.¹⁶

Under this treaty, Lieutenant Macheson was appointed as Political Agent at Bahawalpur.¹⁷ In 1848, when the rebellion of Mul Raj at Multan broke out, the then Political Agent, Lt. Edwards requested for help. The Nawwab provided him cavalry and artillery forces. On account of these services, Lord Dalhousie, the Viceroy of India, awarded him a pension of Rs.100,000 a year for life.¹⁸

When the next ruler, Rahim Yar Khan died, his son Sahibzada Sadiq Muhammad Khan was only four and a half years old. He was not installed until 1879.¹⁹ During this period, the State was governed by the British officers through a Council of Regency.²⁰ Nawwab Sadiq Muhammad Khan died in February 1899. He was succeeded by his son, Muhammad Mubarak Khan, with the title of Bahawal Khan.²¹ The latter passed away on 15 May, 1907²² leaving behind his son and successor, Nawwab Sadiq Muhammad Khan, only three years old. Thus, in the interim period, from 1907 to 1924, the State was supervised by the British officers²³ when finally Nawwab Sadiq Muhammad Khan was invested with ruling powers.²⁴

15 *Punjab States Gazetteers, Vol. XXXVI, A. Bahawalpur State 1904*, p.65.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*, p.64.

18 J. Royal Roberberry, *Imperial Rule in Punjab*, p.81.

19 Mas'ud Hasan Shahab, *Bahawalpur ki Siyasi Tarikh* (Urdu) (Bahawalpur: Maktaba Al-Tahir, and) pp.52-53.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, pp.87-89.

In 1946, when the Cabinet Mission came to India to finalize the basis for the transfer of power to the princely states, the states made it clear to the members of the Mission that they wished to retain maximum degree of sovereignty and pleaded that paramountcy should not be transferred to an Indian Government. The Mission met and interviewed several Indian leaders. In its statement of 28 May, 1946, the Mission recommended that there should be a 'Union' of India and the states, which should deal with the following subjects: foreign affairs, defence and communications.²⁵

The states were to conduct negotiations with the British authorities during the interim period with regard to the common relations in future. But the princes were opposed to the idea of joining the Constituent Assembly in the absence of an agreement with the British Government. The British Government statement of 20 February, 1947, announced 1948 as the date for the transfer of power to Indian hands under the Cabinet Mission Plan, and according to it, the paramountcy was to lapse after the constitution had been set up. But under the June 3 Partition Plan, power was to be transferred on 15 August, 1947 and the paramountcy was also to lapse on that very day. It was, however, reiterated by the British Government that paramountcy would not be transferred to any Government and that with the lapse of paramountcy, every princely state would become sovereign.

On 3 June, 1947 Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, stressed that as the princely states had been independent in their treaty relations with the British Government, with the lapse of paramountcy, they could take an independent status, and were absolutely free to choose to join one or other Constituent Assembly or to make some other arrangements.²⁶

On 7 June, 1947, when Mountbatten met Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, the Muslim members of the Interim Government, and Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, the Prime Minister of Bahawalpur, was also present in this meeting. He pointed out in

25 Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1977), pp.521-23.

26 Lord Mountbatten, *Time Only to Look Forward* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 39-42.

particular: “the difficulties which that State would face as a result of the partition of the Punjab.”²⁷

On 13 June, the Viceroy discussed the question of the states at a meeting attended by Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Acharya Kripalani on behalf of the Congress, Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, and Abdur Rab Nishtar on behalf of the Muslim League, and Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikhs.²⁸ In this meeting, it was decided that each of the two new governments should set up a States Department to deal with the problems of the princely state.²⁹

On 14 June, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution suggesting that the lapse of paramountcy did not lead to the independence of the states as they could not live in isolation from the rest of India.³⁰ Jinnah, however, was of the view that there should not be any compulsion on states. The states should be free to decide for themselves, although it was in the mutual interest of the states and the dominion governments to make the necessary adjustments. In a statement on 17 June, 1947, Jinnah observed: “The Indian states will be independent sovereign states on the termination of paramountcy and they will be free to decide for themselves to adopt any course they like. We do not wish to interfere with internal affairs of any state.”³¹ Jinnah further maintained: “We shall be glad to discuss with them and come to settlement which will be in the interest of both.”³²

The States Department initiated policies regarding the states, which desired to join Pakistan dominion or enter into any understanding or a treaty with it. Pakistan found it useful to

27 Record of interview between Louis Mountbatten, M.A. Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and Abdur Rab Nishtar, 7 June, 1947, Z.H. Zaidi, ed.-in-chief., *Jinnah Papers: Pakistan in the Making, 3 June–30 June 1947*, Vol. II (Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam Papers Project, National Archives of Pakistan, 1994), pp.914-15.

28 Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power*, Vol.XI (London: HMSO, 1982), pp.80-81.

29 *Ibid.*, pp.xxi-xxiii.

30 E.W.R. Lumby, *Transfer of Power in India* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1954), p.233.

31 Rafique Afzal, ed., *Selected Speeches and Statements of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah 1911-34 and 1947-48* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan. 1976) pp.415-17.

32 *Ibid.*

conclude Standstill Agreements with a number of individual states to fill up any gap that may arise in the administration and control of these states. The Standstill Agreements were to take care of the immediate problems that may result from the lapse of paramountcy. Earlier, the British Government had also proposed in its memorandum of 12 May, 1946 that existing arrangements, especially in the economic and financial fields, should continue for the time being.

Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, at this point in time, was serving as Director-General Resettlement and Employment, Government of India, and Joint Secretary to the Government of India in the Labour Department. He had personal relations with the Nawwab of Bahawalpur and had met him several times in Delhi. In one of these meetings, on 12 December 1946, he was offered the Prime Ministership of Bahawalpur.³³ As the Nawwab put it: "I am only waiting for the happy occasion when I shall have you here with me to assist me in the task of carrying out the very great responsibilities that are mine as a ruler of my state; you will not be disappointed."³⁴ The Nawwab was confident that he could depend on Gurmani's loyal and sincere support and cooperation. Gurmani readily accepted the offer,³⁵ saying: "I will have your Highness's fullest support and encouragement."³⁶ He requested the Labour Department to relieve him by the first week of April 1947.³⁷ On 25 March, 1947, Gurmani joined the Bahawalpur State Service as an Officer on Special Duty,³⁸ and eventually took over as the Prime Minister of Bahawalpur on 16 April, 1947.³⁹

In April 1947, Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani proposed a regional union of the Punjab and toured the neighbouring states to seek support.⁴⁰ At that time, the Muslim League was trying to lure

33 Letter from Nawwab of Bahawalpur to M.A. Gurmani, 6 February, 1947.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

36 Letter from M.A. Gurmani to Nawwab of Bahawalpur, 25 February, 1947.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Office of the Prime Minister Bahawalpur Government, Order No 1008-T dated 25 March 1947.

39 *The Pakistan Times* 18 May, 1958.

40 Wayne Ayres Wilcox, *Pakistan: The Consolidation of a Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p.71.

Hindu states into joining Pakistan. The Congress was attempting to persuade the Muslim rulers to join the Indian union. In the early summer of 1947, Gurmani even told the British that his government believed that the Sutlej valley should be under one political authority.⁴¹ He feared that if the Indians were allowed to take control of headwaters of the river and perhaps even the Sulaimanki Dam, they might reduce the flow of water, and Bahawalpur would return to the desert.⁴² He made it clear in unmistakable terms that the State government was acting as an independent agent, and said that, “the fact that the terms of reference suggested by Bahawalpur Government are different from those agreed upon by the leaders, of the Muslim League and the Congress clearly supports my presumption that we have been regarded as an independent party interested in the partition of the Punjab.”⁴³

This spirit of independence was conveyed to Sir Zafarullah Khan, the League’s representative on the Punjab boundary negotiations, who was not impressed. Strangely enough, Gurmani was not willing to take his lead from the Muslim League, even after he was warned by Zafarullah Khan that he was playing into the hands of the foes.⁴⁴ Later, Gurmani refused a post in the reconstituted Punjab government offered to him by Jinnah and the Khan of Mamdot, and chose to stay in Bahawalpur.⁴⁵

Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, the Communication Minister, and a close confidant of Jinnah, pointed out that the Pakistan would not want the states to accede on more than three clearly defined subjects, that is, defence, external affairs, and communications.⁴⁶ Indeed, Pakistan did not want to accept all states that wished to accede, and declared that “their request will be considered on

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*

43 Letter from M.A. Gurmani to Ch. Zafarullah Khan, July 17, 1947, in M.A. Gurmani, “Princely State in the Polity of India” (np, nd.).

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

46 Mansergh, ed.-in-chief, *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. XII (London: HMSO, 1983), pp.71-72.

merit".⁴⁷ Interestingly, the contiguous states of Johdpur and Jaisalmere wanted to accede to Pakistan.⁴⁸

Bahawalpur, being a Muslim State and situated between Sind and the Punjab, seemed destined to be linked in one way or another with Pakistan. Jinnah, unlike the Congress leaders, was not hostile to the ruling princes and had no plans for sweeping them away or even for curtailing their powers. Therefore, it was obvious that the Bahawalpur State would remain autonomous with regard to its internal affairs and would cede sovereignty to Pakistan only in respect of defence and foreign relations.⁴⁹ When Gurmani was appointed Prime Minister in Bahawalpur, nothing had been decided in the matter yet.⁵⁰ But Gurmani was hopeful that, with the departure of the British and the lapse of paramountcy, Bahawalpur would become completely independent.⁵¹

No wonder, when the issue of the accession of the princely states came to the fore, Gurmani resisted the voluntary accession of the State of Bahawalpur either with Pakistan or India. He corresponded with the Secretary to the Viceroy, and demanded a separate time with the Boundary Commission to discuss the case of accession of Bahawalpur. The staff officer of the Viceroy, G.B. Williams agreed to his request and noted: "I understand that the suggestion has been made to you separately that the Bahawalpur Government should request the Boundary Commission to give them a hearing."⁵²

Soon after, Gurmani approached Zafarullah Khan, the representative of Muslim League in the Bombay Commission, and Justice Din Muhammad Shah who was the Muslim member in the Punjab Boundary Commission. He explained to them his views about the future of his State and again requested for separate quota of time to represent its case before the Commission. He argued that:

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*, pp.603-04.

49 Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), pp.104-05.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*

52 Letter from G. B. William to M.A.Gurmani 14 July, 1947. For details see, *The Times of Karachi*, 14 April, 1958.

The government of Bahawalpur represents both Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the State and cannot identify itself with either of the religious groups in the Punjab interested in the partition. Its representation is independent of the claims of Muslims and non-Muslims of the Punjab and deals with the implications of the partition of the Punjab as it will affect Bahawalpur State. Our request to H.E. the Viceroy was that Bahawalpur government should be treated as an independent party and be afforded opportunities and facilities for representing their case before the Commission similar to those given to other parties. H.E. the Viceroy has accepted this request and forwarded our preliminary memorandum and the draft terms of reference suggested by us to the Chairman of the Boundary Commission. The fact that the terms of reference suggested by leaders of the Muslim League and the Congress clearly support my presumption in that we have been regarded as an independent party interested in the partition of the Punjab.⁵³

Based on his earlier letter to Zafarullah Khan, Gurmani also wrote to Justice Din Muhammad for the representation of case of Bahawalpur State before the Punjab Boundary Commission. He stressed, once again, that: "I regard this as a matter of vital importance to Bahawalpur and I hope you will do everything possible to get Bahawalpur recognized as an independent party interested in the partition of the Punjab."⁵⁴

On 25 July, Lord Mountbatten, in his capacity as Crown representative, called the princes to meet with him to discuss the future of their states.⁵⁵ The Nawwab of Bahawalpur attended the meeting.⁵⁶ Lord Mountbatten impressed upon him and all the rulers the need to accede to one or other of the two new dominions in respect of defence, external affairs and communications. Indeed, according to one source: "He used every weapon in his armoury of persuasion."⁵⁷

However, some of the bigger states had other plans to pursue. They thought that they could successfully seek and secure

53 Letter from M.A.Gurmani to Ch. Zafarullah Khan ,17 July, 1947. For details see, *The Times of Karachi*, 20 May, 1958.

54 Letter from M.A.Gurmani to Justice Din Muhammad ,17 July, 1947. For details see, *The Times of Karachi*, 20 May, 1958.

55 *Ibid.*,

56 Allen Compbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London: Robert Hale & Company, 1953), pp.140-41.

57 Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p.106.

independent status.⁵⁸ A plan had also been made and had received some backing from the Political Department for combining the states.⁵⁹ Gurmani was particularly attracted to this idea.⁶⁰ However, Penderel Moon, Minister of Revenue and Public Works in the Bahawalpur State, was confident that Bahawalpur would quietly accede to Pakistan. Thus, he was surprised when Gurmani informed him that the Nawwab “is being advised in certain quarters to accede to India”.⁶¹ Moon warned Gurmani that the Nawwab would be promptly assassinated if he attempted such a course.⁶² The Congress leaders, he thought, were not interested in having Bahawalpur into the Indian union.⁶³

Mountbatten did everything in his power to secure the accession of as many states as possible to the Indian dominion. By contrast, he did nothing for Pakistan, although as Crown representative, he owed an equal duty to both dominions. On 15 August, 1947, more than five hundred Hindu-majority states had acceded to India except, of course, the three states of Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagarh. In contrast to the spate of accession to the Indian dominion, no state acceded, to Pakistan before 15 August. 10 states were contiguous to West Pakistan, and had a Muslim majority population, and were even ruled by the Muslim princes. They were Bahawalpur, Khairpur, Lasbela, Kharan and Mekran and the four frontier states of Amb, Dir, Swat and Chitral.⁶⁴ Bahawalpur State had various ties with Pakistan. 83 per cent of its less than two millions population was Muslim. And in case of any serious threat to its security, internal or external, Bahawalpur would have had no option but to turn to Pakistan for protection.⁶⁵

58 Allen Compbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, pp.140-41.

59 Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p.106.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*, p.107.

62 *Ibid.*

63 *Ibid.*

64 Report of Deptt. Div-B Indian State's Relations with India and Pakistan, NDC, Accession No. 4619.

65 Ch. Muhammad Ali, *Emergence of Pakistan* (Lahore: Services Club Book, 1988), pp.228-29.

Immediately before the transfer of power to India and Pakistan, the Bahawalpur State, along with other states, was advised by Mountbatten, to enter into a Standstill Agreement with the dominion concerned in respect of matters of common concern. The Government of Bahawalpur discussed with the representatives of the Governments of India and Pakistan arrangements for the conclusion of Standstill Agreements on such matters. The Government of Pakistan readily agreed to the proposal.⁶⁶ But the representative of Government of India insisted that they would only accept the Standstill Agreement on the standard form which they had prepared for all Indian states, as any exception in the case of Bahawalpur State was likely to create difficulties for the Government in negotiating similar agreements with other states. "Relief from double income tax and other arrangements relating to existing privileges and immunities enjoyed by the rulers, were of common concern between the dominion of India and the State."⁶⁷ Gurmani agreed and added that "it is to the benefit and advantage of the dominion of India as well as of the Bahawalpur State."⁶⁸

Gurmani himself approached the Government of India for a Standstill Agreement and, signed a Standstill Agreement between the dominion of India and Bahawalpur on behalf of the Bahawalpur State on 14 August, 1947.⁶⁹ In the Schedule to the Agreement, he included such matters as "currency and coinage, extradition, irrigation, motor vehicles, relief from double income tax, and other arrangements relating to existing privileges and immunities enjoyed by the rulers."⁷⁰ This Agreement was signed despite the fact that the Government of India was clearly of the opinion that Bahawalpur would naturally be associated with Pakistan.⁷¹

66 *Pakistan Times*, 11 May, 1958.

67 Letter from Gurmani to Desai, 14 August, 1947. DO. No. 185-C For details see, *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

68 *Ibid.*

69 Letter from Gurmani to Desai, 14 August, 1947. DO. No. 185-C For details see, *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

70 *Ibid.*

71 The Office of the High Commissioner for India in Pakistan at Karachi claimed that Gurmani himself contacted the Indian Government for Standstill Agreement. For details see, *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

Gurmani informed Abdur Rab Nishtar about the Standstill Agreement.⁷² He also informed Ikramullah, Secretary Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations, and observed that “it will take some time to get Agreement and arrangements in regard to the matters of common concern between Pakistan Government and Bahawalpur State.”⁷³ He, therefore, suggested, on behalf of his government, that the existing agreement and administrative arrangements on matters of common concern between the former government of India and Bahawalpur State should for the time being continue.⁷⁴

The Nawwab of Bahawalpur and his Prime Minister, Gurmani, felt that if they opted for Pakistan, they would immediately lose their right to assert the paramountcy of the old State in the new order.⁷⁵ Thus, there was hesitation and delay on the part of the two to “maintain a quasi-independent existence,” and, in the process, a strong bargaining position. They started various delaying tactics.⁷⁶ They agreed, in the end, to accede to Pakistan in respect of defence, external affairs and communications only.⁷⁷ They did not want that Pakistan should interfere in the internal affairs of the State.⁷⁸ The State’s pretension assumed new importance on Independence Day when the Nawwab adopted the titles of “A’la Hazrat Jalala-tul-Mulk Ghazi Amir Sadiq Muhammad Khan ‘Abbasi, Amir of Bahawalpur.”⁷⁹ However, Lt. Col. A.S.B Shah, then Secretary of the Ministry for States, promptly recommended that the government should not recognize the new titles assumed by the

72 Letter From M.A. Gurmani to Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, 14 August, 1947, D.O. No.187-C. For details see, *Dawn* 22 May, 1958.

73 Letter From M.A. Gurmani to Mr. Ikramullah, 14 August, 1947, D.O. No. 186-C. For details see, *Dawn* 22 May, 1958.

74 Letter From M.A. Gurrnani to Mr. Ikramullah, 16 August, 1947. For details see, *Dawn*, 18 May, 1958.

75 Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p.157.

76 *Ibid.*

77 *Ibid.*

78 *Ibid.*

79 Nawwab of Bahawalpur’s Firman, 15 August, 1947. For details see, *The Pakistan Times*, 12 April, 1958.

ruler. These titles were incongruous because the Nawwab did not possess these titles before partition.⁸⁰

The Nawwab projected Bahawalpur as an Islamic state with a firm commitment to the protection of minority rights. In particular, he called for religious freedom and justice, and asked for cordial relations with all his neighbours. He added: "In view of the geographical position of my state and its culture and economic affinities with the Pakistan Dominion, my representative should participate in the labours and deliberations of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly."⁸¹ This suggested clearly that he saw Bahawalpur as a separate legal entity.

On 9 September, 1947, a meeting of the central cabinet of the Government of Pakistan was held in Karachi, which was presided over by Jinnah, in which it was resolved that immediate negotiations should be opened with the Bahawalpur State regarding accession.⁸² On 15 September, the Government sent the following telegram to Gurmani: "We have many very urgent and important matters for discussion. Would you kindly come to Karachi at once?"⁸³

Gurmani refused to oblige. He did not go to Karachi. Indeed, he sent the following message to Ikramullah, the Foreign Secretary: "Regret. Owing to recent disturbance in Bahawalpur, it is not possible for me to leave just at present."⁸⁴ On 27 September, however, he came to Karachi for the discussion. He could not defy any more. But still no accession was forthcoming. According to Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, there was some "hitch", which needed further discussion and appraisal.⁸⁵ The Government indeed decided to secure the accession through other means. Col. Shah moved to secure the Instrument of Accession through the good

80 *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

81 Nawwab of Bahawalpur's Firman, 15 August, 1947. For details see, *The Times of Karachi*, 20 May, 1958.

82 *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

83 *Ibid.*

84 Telegram from Ikramullah to MA. Gurmani, 15 September, 1947. For details see, *Dawn*, 20 May, 1958.

85 From M.A. Gurmani to Ikramullah, 19 September, 1947. For details see, *Dawn* 23 May, 1958.

offices of Amjad Ali, a close friend of Gurmani.⁸⁶ Amjad Ali was convinced that Gurmani had pro-Pakistan sympathies and he would eventually agree to the accession of the State to Pakistan.⁸⁷

Amjad Ali, therefore, proceeded to discuss the matter of accession with Gurmani and the Nawwab.⁸⁸ The result was quite encouraging. On 2 October, 1947, Gurmani informed Ikramullah that: "I have had a preliminary discussion with A'la Hazrat Jalalatul-Mulk Amir of Bahawalpur this morning. I hope that the Cabinet will advise His Highness on Accession."⁸⁹ Gurmani further informed Ikramullah that: "His Highness has agreed on the accession of Bahawalpur State to Pakistan, and has signed the Instrument of Accession which I will bring myself tomorrow."⁹⁰

On 3 October, 1947, Gurmani came to Karachi with a signed Instrument of Accession,⁹¹ which dealt with defence, external affairs and communications. The Instrument was accepted by the Government right away. It was the first Instrument of Accession signed by any State with Pakistan.

After the accession of Bahawalpur to Pakistan, Gurmani went to persuade other princely states to do the same. In particular, he made efforts to convince the rulers of Khairpur. He met Mir Ghulam Hussain, President of the Council of Regency, Khairpur, and Sheikh Bahauddin, member of the Council, and advised them to pass a formal resolution authorizing Ghulam Hussain to sign the Instrument of Accession on behalf of the Khairpur State.⁹² Earlier, a letter was sent by the Foreign Secretary, Ikramullah, to the President of the Interim Executive Council Khairpur State, suggesting that an Instrument of Accession with regard to defence, external affairs and communication be executed between Pakistan

86 *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*

89 Letter from M.A. Gurmani to Ikramullah, 30 October, 1947. For details see, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 20 May, 1958.

90 Letter from M.A. Gurmani to Ikramullah, 30 October, 1947. For details see, *ibid.*

91 Accession list of *Quaid-i-Azam Papers*, File No. F.97-G. G/47, Islamabad.

92 Letter from M.A. Gurmani to Ikramullah, 30 October, 1947. For details see, *Morning News*, 25 May, 1958.

and Khairpur.⁹³ Apparently, thus, Gurmani was acting on behalf the Government of Pakistan. The result was a foregone conclusion. On 5 October, 1947, Ghulam Hussain, on behalf of the Ruler of Khairpur State, signed an Instrument of Accession which was promptly accepted by the Government. On 9 October, Khairpur State formally acceded to Pakistan. The Frontier States of Chitral, Swat and Amb also offered to accede to Pakistan during the next few months.⁹⁴ Only four Baluchistan states, Kalat, Kharan, Mekran and Lasbela remained undecided.

Many years later, on 3 September, 1957, on the eve of his resignation as the Governor of West Pakistan, the matter of accession of the Bahawalpur State in particular was highlighted in a libel suit filed by Gurmani against the *Times of Karachi* which published a letter⁹⁵ allegedly sent by him to Sardar Patel. The letter offered the accession of Bahawalpur to India if the ruler of the State would be appointed *Rajpromubh* (head) of the three adjoining states, Bahawalpur, Bikaner, and Jaisalmer. Fortunately for Gurmani, the Nawwab of Bahawalpur testified at the trial that Gurmani had not approached him concerning accession to India, and that he was in London during the critical month,⁹⁶ and that he had been advised to assume the royal title because he had not acceded to either dominion on 14 August, 1947.⁹⁷ However, the matter was settled with a Press Information Department release issued on 28 May, 1956, which noted: "... It is clear that this allegation is not correct. On the other hand, Mr. Grumani was responsible for advising Bahawalpur to accede to Pakistan."⁹⁸ The published letter was ruled by the West Pakistan High Court as a 'forgery' and the then Prime Minister, Feroz Khan Noon, was censured for his involvement. Later, Noon told Gurnami that he did not think that he would contest the issue and that he would raise other questions as well.⁹⁹

93 *Ibid.*

94 *Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

95 For the Text of letter, see, *ibid.*

96 *The Pakistan Times*, 18 May, 1958.

97 *Ibid.*

98 Press note E.No.2565. Press Information Deptt., Government of Pakistan.

99 Penderal Moon, *Divide and Quit*, pp.126-7.

With the accession of the Bahawalpur State to Pakistan, the Hindus began to leave the State in large numbers. The 'extremist' Hindus believed that they could ruin Pakistan by depriving it of all the banking and commercial facilities which the Hindu community had provided in the State. However, Gurmani who was held in high esteem by the minorities, decided to step in and stem the tide. He ordered the deployment of the Bahawalpur army to Bahawalnagar, Harunabad and other towns to protect the Hindus and other minorities.¹⁰⁰ He ordered the battalion commanders to take every step possible to help the minorities. He even sent a telegram to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and requested for railway police on Karachi Lahore line and Samasatta section for the protection of Hindu railway passengers and the staff He assured that: "State authority will fully cooperate with Railway Police."¹⁰¹

Gurmani also contributed generously to the efforts to rehabilitate Muslims refugees coming from India. He sent two cheques of 2,50,000 rupees each (total rupees 5 Lacs) as a donation from the Amir of Bahawalpur to the Quaid-i-Azam Refugees Relief Fund.¹⁰² Gurmani was the chairman of the Fund.¹⁰³ Gurmani also helped settle 70,000 refugees from East Punjab, Bikaner and Punjab states on lands within the State and provided them with accommodation, agricultural implements and necessary food, houses and shops in towns, and *mandis* in the State.¹⁰⁴ Jinnah particularly appreciated Gurmani's services and noted that he "worked day and night for our Muslim brethren in distress."¹⁰⁵

100 *Ibid.*, p.145.

101 Telegram from M.A. Gurmani to P.M. of Pakistan, File 201 of 1947, National Documentation Centre, Islamabad.

102 Letter from M.A. Gurmani to Jinnah, 29 September, 1947. *Quaid-i-Azam Papers*, File No. F.80(3)GG/47.

103 *Ibid.*

104 *Ibid.*

105 Letter from Jinnah to M.A. Gurmani, 6 October, 1947. *Quaid-i-Azam Papers*, File No. F.80(3)GG/47.