



THEY KINGDOM WE COME KASHMIR, DAS REICH DER TRÄUME

The customer waiting for the car in India was Colonel His Highness Shriman Raj-rajeshwar Maharajadhiraj Sri Sir Hari Singh Indar Mahindar Bahadur, more concisely known as Maharaja Hari Singh, the Maharaja of the state of Jammu & Kashmir. One of five most important states in British India, Jammu & Kashmir was, at 222,441 square kilometers (85,885 square miles), the biggest of all the princely states of India, almost the combined size of England and Scotland. Reason enough for the Maharaja to be accorded the very highest of honours, the top rung amongst the multi-stratified levels of Indian royalty, a status signalled by the British Raj bestowing the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir a 21-gun salute, similar to the Maharajas of the states of Baroda, Gwalior and Mysore and the richest of them all, the Nizam of Hyderabad.

The Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir's lineage was not quite in the league of many of the ancient Indian dynasties, with Hari Singh's ancestry going back less than a century to Gulab Singh. Gulab Singh served as the Prime Minister to the Sikhs but secretly allied with the British

Empire. As compensation for having rendered the Sikh army an easy prey, he was made the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir for a price of 7.5 million Nanak Shahi rupees (the Sikh monetary unit which worked out to a little less than a million pound sterling).

Gulab Singh's reign was relatively short, from 1846 to the 30th of June, 1857, when he died. He was succeeded by his son Ranbir Singh in 1857, a landmark year in Indian history that marked the first fight for independence in the form of a rebellion by the Indian sepoy (soldiers) of the British East India Company's army. The Sikh army though sided with the Company and Kashmir, like many of the bigger states, decided not to aid the rebels. The rebellion - or the Indian Mutiny as the British prefer calling it - led to the dissolution of the Company and the subcontinent of India came under the direct rule of the British crown the following year. This eventually led to the monarch of England becoming the Empress of India, a title that Queen Victoria chose to use from the 1st of May, 1876.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh's rule of Jammu &

Der Kunde, der auf das Auto in Indien wartete, war der Maharadscha des Staates Jammu & Kaschmir, Hari Singh Indar Mahindar Bahadur. Jammu & Kaschmir war einer der fünf wichtigsten Staaten im britischen Indien mit einer Fläche von 222.441 Quadratkilometern und der größte aller Fürstenstaaten in Indien, sogar größer als das

heutige England und Schottland zusammen.

Maharadscha Hari Singh wurde am 23. September 1895 geboren und erhielt eine erstklassige Ausbildung. Später folgte eine militärische Ausbildung. Zu seinem Abschluss im Alter von nur 20 Jahren wurde Hari Singh zum Oberbefehlshaber der Armee von Jammu & Kaschmir ernannt. Als er im Alter von 30 Jahren den Thron



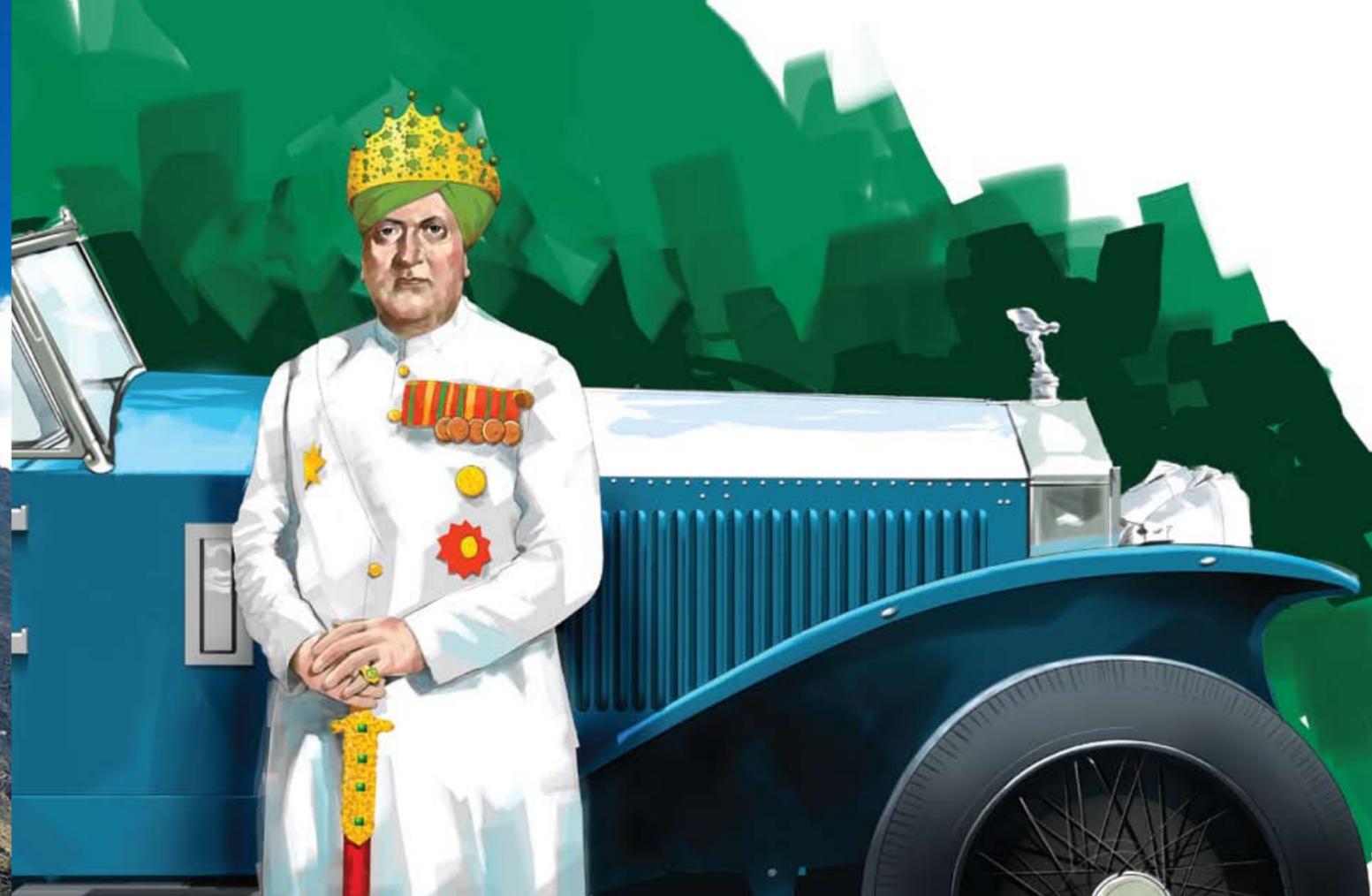
Opposite page: Maharani Tara Devi and Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir (AS Collection)

Gegenüberliegende Seite: Maharani Tara Devi und Maharadscha Hari Singh



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Kashmir lasted till 1885, when he died. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Pratap Singh, who brought about several land and other reforms. He was instrumental in abolishing bonded labour and building the first of cart roads to connect to the several inaccessible parts of the mountains and valleys of the more remote corners of Kashmir. As Pratap Singh had no issue, on his death on September 23, 1925, he was succeeded by his nephew Hari Singh, the son of Pratap's youngest brother, Raja Amar Singh.

Born on 23rd September, 1895, Hari Singh

received the best of education, with schooling at the expensive public school of Mayo College, in Ajmer, in Rajasthan, followed by military training at the Imperial Cadet Corps, in Dehra Dun, at the foothills of the Himalayas. On his graduation Hari Singh was made the commander-in-chief of the Jammu & Kashmir army at just 20. By the time he ascended the throne at the age of 30, Hari Singh had served as a Page of Honour to the Viceroy of India Lord George Curzon, he had trained the state army unit that saw action during the First World War, travelled

bestieg, hatte Hari Singh Bahadur schon dem Vizekönig von Indien, Lord George Curzon, als "Page of Honour" gedient und die Staatsarmee ausgebildet.

Für seine Krönungszeremonie im Jahre 1925 gab der Maharadscha geschätzte 2,5 Millionen

Rupien aus, was zur damaligen Zeit mehr als 75 Rolls-Royce Phantoms entsprach! Der Maharadscha war auch für seine unglaubliche Sammlung von Edelsteinen, Diademen, mit Edelsteinen besetzten Dolche, Schwerter und Juwelen bekannt, die im Jahr 1983 zusammen auf einen

extensively in Europe and had imbibed the very best and worst of British high society, including the ignominy of being implicated in a scandal related to the fairer sex.

And even if history may not have been that kind to Maharaja Hari Singh and the role that he played during the Indian independence struggle leading up to the partition of the country into India and Pakistan, there's no denying that in several respects the Maharaja was most enlightened. During his rule, Maharaja Hari Singh made primary education compulsory in

Wert von etwa 937 Millionen Euro geschätzt wurden.

Schmuck war jedoch nicht die einzige Leidenschaft des Maharadschas - er hatte auch eine Vorliebe für erstklassige Automobile. Als Hari Singh den Thron bestieg, war der königliche

his state, introduced laws prohibiting child marriage, allowed Hindu widows to remarry and threw open temples to the lower castes.

At the same time, the Maharaja was no less profligate in his ways. For his crowning ceremony (which was shot by an American motion picture team) His Highness spent an estimated Rs 2.5 million, which was well in excess of 200,000 pound sterling then! In automotive terms, you could buy more than 75 Rolls-Royce Phantom Is for that kind of money then!

But then that must have been chicken feed

che Fuhrpark des Maharadschas von Jammu & Kaschmir bereits Heimat von mindestens sieben Rolls-Royce Silver Ghosts. In den nächsten sechs Jahren erwarb Maharadscha Hari Singh 17 weitere Rolls-Royces.

Das auffälligste Modell unter ihnen war je-

Photos above: A vista of Kashmir and the maharaja with 17EX (© Bob Rupani/ Sameer Pawar)
 Preceding pages: Kashmir's most beautiful city, Srinagar and its famous Dal Lake (© Bob Rupani)

Oben: Ein Blick auf Kashmir und den Maharaja mit seinem 17EX
 Vorhergehende Seite: Kashmir's schönste Stadt, Srinagar mit ihrem berühmten See Dal Lake



OH! CALCUTTA 17 EX IN DER HAUPTSTADT VON BRITISH-INDIEN

Destiny has not been kind to what was once the second city of the British Empire. And even if Mother Teresa and her Sisters of Charity and Dominique Lapierre and his City of Joy have fostered the image of Calcutta as a city of poverty, depravation, filth and slums, it was not so in the 1930s. Though Calcutta had ceased to be the capital of British India for some two decades then - since the English administrators decided to shift the capital of India to the imperial city of Delhi in 1911 - the City of Palaces was still a very glamorous and wealthy metropolis boasting the finest of palaces, the most elegant of avenues and some of the most flamboyant of automobiles.

One household in Calcutta really stood out for its automotive jewels, that of the Mitter family: five amazing cars, which valued today could easily add up to 30 million dollars or more! The Mitter family's fascination with sophisticated cars began with a Duesenberg Model J that the second oldest amongst the five Mitter brothers, Satish Chunder Mitter, ordered

in 1929. The beautifully finished Weymann-bodied Duesenberg sedan had been specially equipped with a variety of appointments (including 'airbags' in the seats!) to make traveling in India that much more comfortable. A big four-door sedan that was not only luxurious and superbly well-finished, but was also powered by a most advanced in-line eight-cylinder engine that developed for its time a mighty 265bhp from 6.9-litres, courtesy cutting edge technology in terms of double overhead camshafts and four-valves per cylinder. Clearly, the elegant and fleet-footed Duesenberg had all the younger brothers of Satish Mitter notably impressed by its refinement and performance despite the American car's considerable heft.

Satish Mitter and his four brothers were five of 10 children of one of Calcutta's most prominent lawyers, Right Honourable Sir Benode Chandra Mitter. The son of Sir Romesh Chunder Mitter, a judge of the Calcutta High Court, who was for some time the first officiating Indian Chief Justice, Benode Chandra was born in Cal-

Das Schicksal meinte es nicht gut mit der ehemals zweitgrößten Stadt des britischen Weltreichs. Bis 1911 war Kalkutta die Hauptstadt von British-Indien. In diesem Jahr beschlossen die englischen Machthaber die Hauptstadt nach Delhi zu verlagern.

Aber die Stadt der Paläste, wie Kalkutta genannt wurde, war in den 1930er Jahren immer noch eine sehr glamouröse und wohlhabende Metropole mit den schönsten

Palästen, den elegantesten Alleen und einigen extravaganten Automobilen.

Ein Haus in Kalkutta stach mit seinen Luxus-Automobilen besonders hervor: Das Haus der Familie Mitter: Fünf erstaunliche Autos, die heute einem Wert von nicht weniger als 30 Millionen Dollar entsprechen! Die Faszination für anspruchsvolle Autos begann bei Familie Mitter mit einem Duesenberg Model J, das vom zweitältesten der fünf Brüder, Satish Chunder

Opposite page: Interior of a Calcutta palace
(© Anirban Mitra)
Following pages: Calcutta, the second city of the British Empire

Auf der gegenüberliegenden Seite: Inneneinrichtung eines Palastes in Kalkutta
Auf den folgenden Seiten: Kalkutta, die zweite Stadt des britischen Reiches



cutta in 1870. By 1918 when Benode Chandra Mitter had been knighted, he had served as a member of the Council of Governor of Bengal (1910-17), apart from serving as a Standing Counsel to the Government of India (1910-16) and being the Advocate-General to the Government of Bengal in 1917. Later he went on to become the Law Member of the Viceroy's Council of British India. No less prominent was his younger brother Sir Provash Chandra Mitter, who also held several distinguished offices.

Being a prominent part of Calcutta's high society during the inter-war years must have had its advantages, as when Sir Benode Mitter passed away in 1930, he left behind substantial wealth in terms of properties and monies, which allowed the sons to indulge in some expensive purchasing of boys toys, starting with Satish's Duesenberg Model J. Chassis number 2220 (with the shorter 3.6 metres wheelbase), engine number J196, was incidentally the 93rd Model J Duesenberg to have been produced.

Brothers number three and four - Subodh and Sailen Kumar Mitter - opted for something from the old Continent, two cars from Germany's best, a pair of Mercedes-Benz SS 38/250s! So what if the elder brother had one of the most powerful cars in the world at that point of time, Subodh and Sailen decided to get themselves the fastest street legal cars in the world then: the Mercedes-Benz SS were capa-

ble of a top speed of 166kph. Designed by Ferdinand Porsche, just before the Austrian engineer left Daimler-Benz, the SS 38/250 featured a supercharged straight-six engine of either 7.0 or 7.1-litre that not only developed 225bhp (and later 250), but with the supercharger on full song, was reputed to provide serious neck-snapping acceleration.

But the youngest brother didn't wish to get into a horsepower or max speed race. Instead, Provat Kumar Mitter decided to focus on cars with both grace and pace. The first car that he acquired was Italy's finest, an Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8A. Though not quite as powerful as a Duesenberg, Isotta Fraschinis were beautifully constructed automobiles that - at over 20,000 US dollars then - were pricier than a Model J Duesenberg in the US of A. "It was in the year 1931, when my father was just 21 years old," relates Provat's son Jayanta Mitter, "that he came across this magnificent Isotta Fraschini parked in front of the luxury Delhi hotel, Maidens. Speaking to the chauffeur standing by, he was told that the car was for sale, as the car just wouldn't get into reverse!"

That didn't deter the young enthusiast and Provat Kumar Mitter became the second owner of a relatively new Tipo 8A Isotta Fraschini "for a song," as Jayanta Mitter explains. With the reverse gear problem addressed by one of Calcutta's many expert mechanics, the Isotta Fra-

Mitter, im Jahr 1929 bestellt wurde.

Satish Mitter und seine vier Brüder waren fünf von insgesamt zehn Kindern eines prominenten Juristen Kalkuttas, Sir Benode Chandra Mitter, der als Ratsmitglied des Gouverneurs von Bengalen und als ständiger Berater der indischen Regierung gedient hatte. Als Sir Benode Chandra Mitter im Jahr 1930 starb, hinterließ er großen Reichtum und seine Söhne

begannen eine Einkaufstour, bei der zunächst Satish ein Duesenberg Model J erwarb.

Die Brüder drei und vier, Subodh und Sailen Kumar Mitter, entschieden sich für zwei deutsche Spitzenmodelle, zwei Mercedes-Benz SS 38/250 - die damals schnellsten Autos der Welt! Der jüngste Bruder wollte jedoch nicht am Rennen um das schnellste Auto oder die höchste PS-Zahl teilnehmen. Stattdessen

Opposite page: Weymann-bodied Duesenberg Model J of S C Mitter (top) and one of the two Mercedes-Benz SS 38/250s of the Mitter family (Jayanta Mitter Collection)

Auf der gegenüberliegenden Seite: ein von Weymann gebautes Duesenberg Modell J von S C Mitter (oben) und einer von zwei Mercedes Benz SS 38/250s der Familie Mitter

