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# MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

## First Death Centenary Memorial

### Contributors :

ST. NIHAL SINGH

TEJA SINGH

GANDA SINGH

G. S. SARDESAI

SITA RAM KOHLI

G. L. CHOPRA

HARDIT SINGH

HARBANS SINGH

GURDIT SINGH

ABDUL QADIR

G. N. SINGH

K. C. KHANNA

GULSHAN KAI

PREM SINGH

JOGENDRA SINGH

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# **Publisher's Note**

It may look unprogressive to bring out another reprint of a book which was first published as far back as the later years of the nineteenth century. It is possible that lot of further research might have taken place in this subject during the succeeding years, yet these works maintain their own reference value. The idea behind the present venture is to make available these rare works to most libraries and readers.

The British and other Western scholars rendered great service to this land and their works still have great bearing on the Language, Culture and History of the Punjab. The Languages Department has planned to bring out reprints of the most valuable works, including the present one, for the benefit of most readers, scholars and research workers.

The Department is extremely thankful to the authorities of Khalsa College, Amritsar who were kind enough to allow reproduction of one edition of this book without charging any royalty.

**LAL SINGH**

**Director**

**Language Department**

**Punjab,**

**Patiala**

**May, 1970**



## **EDITORS' NOTE.**

This book does not pretend to be an exhaustive study of the life and work of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After giving the historical background and a short life-sketch, it presents certain essential features of his work, which have not been brought out so clearly in the existing works on him. Some of the topics dealt with in the present volume are quite new, and it is hoped that they will lead to a new orientation of the appraisal of the Maharaja's achievements. There being different writers for different chapters, it was but natural that there should be some repetition. To avoid this, the Editors had to delete certain portions here and there, for which they crave the writers' forgiveness. There will be observed some marks of hurry in the make-up of the book, of which we are not unconscious, but when the reader knows that the whole work of writing and printing has been gone through in about four weeks, he will not be too hard in his judgment.

With all its shortcomings the book, it is hoped, will make some real contribution to the literature on the great national hero of the Punjab, and as such will be acceptable as a souvenir on the first centenary of his death. For enabling us to present it to the public we are much beholden to our contributors.

**Khalsa College, Amritsar,**  
20th June, 1939.

**TEJA SINGH.**  
**GANDA SINGH.**



# IMPRIMIS

(BY ST. NIHAL SINGH)

## I

The time was ripe for Ranjit Singh—and he was ripe for the time. He, in consequence, adventured upon the path of glory at an age when usually a boy born in the most fortuitous circumstances has hardly learnt to cipher. From martial success, reinforced by diplomatic astuteness, he rose to kingship. He whose patrimony had been a tiny mud fort in a town that, till then, few persons had heard of, became, in less than three score years, the unquestioned arbiter of a state that stretched from the deserts of Rajputana to the passes provided by Nature for purposes of communication in the mountain chain with which she has girt India's north-west corner.

Administrative acumen that had not been sharpened by any mortal instructor gave him the status of a sage among his own counsellors and at international parleys. He gave largess as if the treasure of Croesus formed his till—gave without any consideration as to a man's caste, creed or colour. Faith—even his own—did not hem in his charity.

Not once did he permit himself to be betrayed—or dared—or angered—into disaster or humiliating retreat.

Long before his soul had winged its way to the lotus feet of the King of Truth, on the 27th of June, 1839, just one hundred years ago, he stood head and shoulders above his compeers, were they Asian, European or American—valiant in the field of action, knightly towards the fallen,

a mentor to his ministers and a pillar of strength to his allies. He exalted his people far higher than he elevated himself and left them, as a legacy, confidence in their genius that has been to them a never failing fount of inspiration.

## II

Many causes had combined to produce the spring-board for Ranjit Singh's life-action. The part of the world upon which he first opened his eyes on November 13 1780, was in an agitated state. The Mughal Empire had crumbled, primarily because of internal weakness that invited attacks from outside. Interference in the sphere of the spirit had alienated the great bulk of the ruled from the rulers. The Punjab which had been the sword-hand of the empire had become so rent by feuds, jealousies and animosities that soldiers of fortune with greed-filled eyes ventured, time and again, to thread their way through the north-western passes and scourged the smiling valleys and pillaged its prosperous plains.

Many states, petty for the most part, had come into existence there. Situate in the hills were principalities, some under Dogras, others under Pathans. In the level land lying at their feet were "Nawabates" governed by men who acted as they pleased even though not daring to declare or, at any rate, to maintain their independence.

To this medley of administrative units, a further touch of diversity was added by the rise of a people that prided themselves upon being pure-souled, pure-minded and pure-bodied—the Khalsa. With the sharp-pointed, razor-edged *kirpans* (swords), which they wielded with no mean skill, they had carved strips out of the Mughal Empire. United, somewhat loosely in a confederacy consisting of twelve distinct units, known as *Misals*, they derived their

strength directly from a common faith, remarkably free from dogma and broad-based upon man's unquestioning obedience to the divine will.

Their territories were in a constant state of flux. Now a village was lost—now one was added. The size and shapes were regulated by skirmishes that occurred without warning.

Among these twelve theocracies, one was called Sukkarchakkia. That name was derived from the *chak* or village in Majha from which had sprung Charht Singh, who, gathering round him a few men of adventurous spirit, began to take what he could. By 1780 this group had managed to distinguish itself for its intrepidity, though by then it was neither numerous in its membership nor particularly important in the scale of *Misals*.

### III

In that year a man-child was born to the then leader—Mahan Singh—and named Budh Singh. The father was away at the time, engaged in daring exploits. When victory crowned his emprise and he returned to his home, he signalized his triumph by renaming the infant Ranjit Singh, meaning “the victorious lion.” Had Mahan Singh lived to see it, he would have realized how true a prophet he had been. By his prowess the son was destined to lift the Sukkarchakkia Misal to the pinnacle of fame. Posterity was to know him as the “Lion of the Punjab.”

There was nothing very remarkable in Ranjit Singh's childhood, except that smallpox completely deprived him of the sight of one (the left) eye. He was sent to a class attached to the Gurdwara, but it is to be doubted that he got beyond the Gurmukhi (Punjabi) alphabet. A little later a Brahman who lived in the neighbourhood gave him a few rudimentary lessons in sword play.

When in his tenth year he lost his father. Strange to relate, Mahan Singh had suffered a similar misfortune at exactly the same age.

Ranjit Singh's mother—Mata Raj Kaur, affectionately known as Mai Malwain—the lady from Malwa, as the southern Punjab plain is known—was equal to the emergency. With the aid of "Lakhu," her husband's *diwan* (factotum), she managed the affairs of the *Misal*.

Ranjit Singh was not content to acquiesce in this arrangement for long. Before he was seventeen he assumed the administration of his patrimony. No one wondered when he did so—or doubted his ability to carry on. He had given cause to people to realize that with his one eye he could see far more quickly and surely than any of his contemporaries with a pair of them. From visual proof they had come to know that his hand had grown so swift at the draw that his flashing steel dealt deadly strokes before the enemy knew what was happening—his aim was unerring—he hit hard and, endowed with lion-like courage, no odds were too great to daunt him.

It is related that in 1798, when the Afghans, under the leadership of Shah Zaman, had established themselves in the Fort at Lahore, he with a few followers rushed up to the walls and dared the invader to come out and engage in single combat with him. The Shah refused, however, to take up the 18-year-old Sikh soldier's challenge.

In his 19th year his first opportunity came to him. Men in Lahore, who could speak with authority for their fellows, sought him out in Gujranwala, told him their tale of woe and begged him to come to their rescue and possess himself of the town. He did so



The grandees of the sister—Bhangi—*Misal* hungered for the opportunity. They, consequently, were not pleased that this plum had fallen into Sukkarchakkian's lap. What could they do, however? Their arm lacked the strength to wrest it from the boy. With his grip established over Lahore, Ranjit Singh's career as a king began.

The opening was provided, it is true, by the unsettled conditions of the age. Not only to Ranjit Singh, however. Opportunity knocked at the door of the leaders of other *Misals* as well—more particularly that of the Bhangis.

There were others, too, besides the Sikh Sardars. The Nawab of Kasur (Nizam-ud-Din) had, for instance, been coveting this kingdom. He, in fact, was intending to swoop down upon Lahore. His record was so black, however, that the citizens of that town, among them Muslim leaders, invited Ranjit Singh to step in and save them from that plague.

Of the men who may have acted, the Sukkarchakkian was the only one who had the prescience to recognize that destiny was calling him and the wit and the will, the sinew and the skill, to make the fullest use of it.

But for the genius inherent in him he, after acquiring Lahore, might have been content to stand still, or may even have retrogressed. He, however, went from conquest to conquest. The campaigns in which he engaged made him, in less than four decades, the unquestioned monarch of a tract that yielded over Rs. 30,000,000 a year.

Brilliant indeed was the Maharaja's record. Apart from the material gains accruing from his thrust for-

ward in the debatable region in the north-west, there was a psychological reaction of incalculable advantage to the people who acknowledged him as their king. It instilled in them a new faith in their fighting capacity and generalship—opened up before their mental vision a new and a glorious world that ever beckoned them onward.

## IV

This was not, however, Ranjit Singh's only or even his greatest achievement. He shone just as brightly in the civil sphere.

At the age of 19 when, with popular acclaim, he had become the master of Lahore, the experience that he had gained in administering the petty state to which he was heir and such extensions as, up till then, he had been able to make, mostly at the expense of some of the *Misals*, came to his help. Mounted on his noble charger he went about irradiating a calming, soothing, consoling, cheering influence upon every one with whom he came in contact. So honeyed were his words and so winning his manner that whoever came into his presence cleaved unto him.

This personal effort was backed up by action that solidified the work of rallying the people to his standard. So afraid were the soldiery of the youthful hero's ire and so sure were they that his hand would ruthlessly descend upon every culprit that not a shop was looted, not a house despoiled, not a maid or matron shamed. To the citizens of Lahore that had oft been bled and humiliated by invading hordes, this was a novel experience indeed.

No truer foundation could have been laid for kingship. The administrative structure that Maharaja Ranjit

Singh built in subsequent years rose four-square upon it, as if it had been measured with a plumb-line.

His policy of pacification in the territory wrested from the militant Pathans round about Peshawar was as humane as it was wise. He distrusted the tactics suggested by his officers, who believed that there was but one way to deal with the turbulent tribesmen—to repress them ruthlessly—to strike them with a heavy hand. He ordered his agents there to comport themselves so as to win the goodwill and affection of the frontiersmen. He insisted that in case any hardship had been imposed upon any of his subjects there, the fullest reparation be made. Even the great General Allard had, on one occasion, to submit to what he surely must have regarded as an indignity, so that a wrong he had committed might be righted. So faithfully were the mandates issued by the Maharaja carried out that in my childhood years stories used to be current of how Pathans placed implicit trust in a Sikh's honour.

## V

To this man, who lived, worked and died before the dawn of the age that we acclaim as modern, was vouchsafed the vision to wind up theocracy in which he had been born and to set up a secular state in its stead. For separating the affairs of the spirit from mundane matters—or putting a period to *Gurmatta*, as it has been called—his action, far ahead of his time, exposed him to criticism from some of his contemporaries and even more so during subsequent decades. We, who, one hundred years after his demise, can see his actions in their true perspective, cannot but laud him for the deep insight into human psychology that he displayed in this regard. Upon no other basis could he have governed a state comprising elements professing diverse faiths.

Even before he had formally effected this divorce between the spiritual and temporal spheres, he had been making appointments heedless of the creed, caste or colour of the men he installed in office. When he entered Lahore, for instance, he placed a Muslim in the highly responsible post of *Kotwal* (Chief Constable). After Peshawar had been conquered, he selected another follower of the Prophet of Islam to be his Governor.

As Maharaja Ranjit Singh set up department after department for expediting and improving the administration, he installed Hindus, many of them Brahmans, in charge of them, one of them (the Dewan, later the Raja, Dina Nath) from Kashmir. So far as I can recollect, not one of these high offices was bestowed upon a man professing the same faith that the Ruler did.

In the Household as in the civil administration, credal considerations were not permitted by the Maharaja to sway his judgment. From his boyhood to his demise, one *Misr* or another was in charge of the Privy Purse and affairs pertaining to His Majesty's person, ceremonial functions and the like.

Even in the military sphere, a Sikh was placed in command only if he were adjudged to be fitter for the post than all the other men available. Nor did the Maharaja limit his choice to Indians. Realizing the need for modernizing the army and even more so its equipment, he took Europeans and at least one American into his service; remunerated them munificently and, by kindly treatment, won their allegiance and admiration.

Likewise in the matter of largess, if he made grants for the embellishment of Sri Har Mandar Sahib

at Amritsar, he did not forget the shrines of the other sections of the community. Not so very long ago, when I was trying to pick out a spot from which I could make an attractive photograph of the great Saivite fane—sacred to the Visvanatha, the Lord over the Universe—in Benares, a Brahman reminded me that :

“It took 33 maunds of gold to plate the *shikhars* (steeple) of this temple. Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave the precious metal for the purpose.”

Withal the Maharaja was a Sikh of Sikhs. The title that delighted him most was that of “the Singh Sahib.” He ruled under the “protection of the Timeless One”—*Akal Sahai*. His coinage bore a legend that proclaimed that fact. It also acknowledged that the realm had come to him through the ten *Gurus*: “*Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.*” His army saluted him with the Sikh war-cry: “*Sri Wah i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa! Sri Wah-i-Guru Ji Ki Fatch!*”

Tradition has it that on one occasion a band of *pujaris* went to Lahore to interview the Maharaja. He received them in *darbar*. Descending from the cushion of State (*masnad*), he went forward and, in front of courtiers and retainers, wiped their feet with his beard.

On another occasion he was adjudged guilty of breaking some religious canon. Immediately he was said to have bared his back so that the Akali at the Akal Takht, established by the Sixth Guru—Sri Guru Har Gobind—may lay the whip across it.

## VII

Ambitious.—highly ambitious—as the Maharaja Ranjit Singh was, he was a realist as well. His ability accurately to judge the means he possessed to encompass

an end so never to lose sight of his limitations made it possible for him to keep a tight rein upon his ambition. Without that corrective his vision splendid might easily have betrayed him into adventures that may have hurled him from the crest of conquest into the abyss of defeat.

He had dreamt, for instance, of uniting, under his banner, all the Sikh States. Despite the considerable pains he took to conciliate the Sikhs ruling the territories east of the Sutlej, they refused to join him.

He had also conceived the idea of extending his way into Sind. With that object in view he had, in fact, launched upon an expedition. This was destined, however, to remain only an aspiration.

Were he to have forced matters in either zone, he would inevitably have come into conflict with the Hon'ble East India Company. He was urged, again and again, by men in his employ whose opinion in other matters he had valued—he was beseeched by supplicants from other quarters—to disregard counsels of timidity and brave the British lion. Even taunts flung at him failed to move him.

In the light from which the heat of partisanship has been removed by the century that has elapsed since Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, we can visualize causes and effects more clearly than could his contemporaries. There is little doubt that truth was on the side of the forward *blocc* who contended that the pact made in behalf of the Company had been broken by its agents.

Ranjit Singh's decision to wink at all infractions of the treaty was, however, justified in the peculiar circumstances of that day. His military resources, despite all the efforts he had put into expanding and improving them and

particularly into the modernization of the equipment, were not adequate for him to jeopardize his eastern front, secured by the Anglo-Sikh treaty. Any chances that he may have taken in this direction would have been sure to embolden the turbulent spirits in the north-west to exploit the situation to aggrandize themselves. Even more important than that consideration was the presumption that his own people across the Sutlej would not be on his side in the struggle, and might even be expected to pull their weight against him.

In this respect, too, the Maharaja was a modern—modern before modernism had dawned upon India. He understood the need of compromise—a faculty in which most Indians are sadly lacking, as Lord Morely reminded me in 1910.

Daring he was, otherwise he would not, to this day, be hailed as the Lion of the Punjab. He was, however, not a gambler. "All or nothing" was not inscribed on his escutcheon. His one eye could measure within a fraction of an inch all that he could take—all that he could keep.

Therein lay the greatest secret of his success.

## VIII

In the pages that follow an attempt has been made to delineate Maharaja Ranjit Singh's character and to set forth his many-sided accomplishments. That attempt has been made by various hands—all capable hands.

The opening chapter is appropriately devoted to the religious impulse that quickened life in the Punjab beginning with Guru Nanak Sahib, without which there would have been no Sikhs and no Sikh Empire. The paper is by a scholar whose work I have had occasion to praise in public print.

The articles on the Maharaja's manifold activities are from the pens of men, each of whom has, through diligent research and lucid exposition, won title to distinction. Since their names are at the head of their respective contributions, it is not necessary to try the reader's patience by repeating them here.

I must, however, say one word about the initiator of this project—Principal Jodh Singh Ji. As one who first met him when we both stood on the threshold of young manhood, I must pay a tribute to the earnestness with which, in addition to his other duties, he has directed research into Sikh history ; and the scholarly guidance he has given to men engaged in it.

ST. NIHAL SINGH.

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# CHAPTER I

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

(BY PROF. TEJA SINGH, M. A.)

'Sikh' (Sanskrit *Shish*) means a disciple; and his religion is best understood when it is regarded as a life, a discipline, and not as a system of philosophy. Sikh history reveals the gradual making and development of a nation in the hands of ten successive leaders, called *Gurus*. They had much in common with other contemporary reformers who were doing so much to purify religion and enrich vernacular literature; but these reformers appear to have been so impressed with the nothingness of this life that they deemed it unworthy of a thought to build up a new order of society. In the words of Joseph Cunningham, "they aimed chiefly at emancipation from priestcraft, or from the grossness of idolatry and polytheism.....They perfected forms of dissent rather than planted the germs of nations, and their *sects* remain to this day as they left them. It was reserved for (Guru) Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those foundations which enabled his successor (Guru) Gobind (Singh) to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes."

The movement began with Guru Nanak (1469-1539), who was born in the Kshatrya clan at Talwandi (now called Nankana Sahib), near Lahore. He found his people in the depths of degradation. The Punjab, which had once been the land of power and wisdom, had through the successive raids of the foreigner become utterly helpless and ruined. It lay like a door-mat at the

gate of India. The people had no commerce, no language, no inspiring religion of their own. They had lost all self-respect and fellow-feeling. It has become a maxim now to call the Punjabis brave, sociable, practical, and so forth; and we found them recently fighting thousands of miles away from their homes for the men and women of France and Belgium; but we forget that the same people, before the birth of Sikhism, were content to see their wives and children being led away as so many cattle to Ghazni, without daring to do anything in defence of them. When Baba Budha asked his father to drive away the invader who was destroying his fields, the latter could only shake his head and confess his inability to do so. This is how Guru Nanak describes the political condition of the people in his *Asa-di-Var*:

Sin is the king, Greed the minister, Falsehood the  
mint-master,

And Lust the deputy to take counsel with; they sit  
and confer together.

The blind subjects, out of ignorance, pay homage like  
dead men.

They were so cowed down in spirit that 'they mimicked the Mohammedan manners, 'ate meat prepared in the Mohammedan fashion,' and 'wore blue dress in order to please the ruling class' (*Asa-di-Var*). 'Even their language had been changed' (*Basant, I*).

Guru Nanak's heart bled when he saw his people's helplessness in the face of cruelty and havoc wrought by the enemy. There is nowhere expressed such a bitter anguish for the suffering of others as in the memorable songs of Guru Nanak, sung to the accompaniment of Mardana's rebeck, when he was actually witnessing the horrors of Babar's invasion. In one of his jeremiads he sang, "When there was such slaughter, such groaning, O God! didst Thou not feel pain? Creator! Thou

belongest to all. If a powerful party beat another powerful party, it is no matter for anger; but when a ravenous lion falls upon a herd of cows, the master of the herd should show his manliness." Guru Nanak determined that the people should no longer remain a herd of cows, but should be turned into a nation of lions. Sikh history reveals how this miracle was performed. We see its consummation on the Baisakhi day of 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh baptised the Sikhs into *Singhs* or lions, calling each one of them 'a host of one lakh and a quarter'.

Laying aside such short-cuts as mantras, miracles and mysteries, Guru Nanak began his work with man himself, and based his uplift on his own character. Looking at the helplessness of his countrymen, he discovered that moral degradation was at the root of it all. When asked by his companion why such suffering had come to the people, he replied, "It is ordained by the Creator that before coming to a fall one is deprived of one's virtue" (*Asa, I*). He felt sure that as long as men were steeped in ignorance and corruption, nothing could be done for them. He began the work of education first: "Truth is the remedy of all. Only Truth can wash away the sins" (*Asa-di-Far*). Guru Nanak freed the people from the bondage of so many gods and godlings, and led them to accept one Supreme Being as the creator and sustainer of all, no matter by what name they called Him. "One should not recognise any but the one Master" (*Maru, I*), as this was the only condition on which the people could become one unified whole. In order to raise the dignity of the ordinary man, he taught that there were no incarnations, no special revelations. Man was the greatest and the highest revelation of God. His humanity was the greatest miracle, and must be cherished as the most precious gift from heaven.

Before the advent of Sikhism the leaders of thought had fixed certain grades of salvation according to the different capacities of men, whom they divided into high and low castes. The development of character resulting from this was one-sided. Certain people, belonging to the favoured classes, developed in themselves a few good qualities to a very high degree, while others left to themselves became degenerate. The Gurus did not want to have such a lop-sided growth. They wanted to give opportunities for the highest development to all classes of people.

There are lowest men among the low castes.

Nanak, I shall go with them. What have I got to do with the great?

God's eye of mercy falls on those who take care of the lowly. —*Sri Rag*.

It is mere nonsense to observe caste and to feel proud over grand names.—*Sri Rag*.

Some work had already been done in this line. The Bhagats or reformers in the Middle Ages had tried to abolish the distinction between high-class Hindus and the so-called untouchables by taking into their fold such men as barbers, weavers, shoemakers, etc. But the stigma of untouchability still remained, because the privilege of equality was not extended to men as men, but to those individuals only who had washed away their untouchability with the love of God. Kabir, a weaver, and Ravidas, a shoemaker, were honoured by kings and high-caste men, but the same privilege was not extended to other weavers and shoemakers, who were still held to be untouchables. Ravidas took pride in the fact that the love of God had so lifted him out of his caste that even the superior sorts of Brahmins came to bow before him, while other members of his caste, who were working as shoemakers in the suburbs of Benares, were not so honoured.

The Sikh Gurus made this improvement on the previous idea that they declared the whole humanity to be



one, and that a man was to be honoured, not because he belonged to this or that caste or creed, but because he was a man, an emanation from God, whom God had given the same senses and the same soul as to other men :

He who looks on all men as equals is religious (*Suki, I*).

To look on all men as class-fellows is to belong the highest order of saintliness (*Jajji*).

Recognise all human nature as one.

All men are the same, although they appear different under different influences.

The bright and the dark, the ugly and the beautiful, the Hindus and the Muslims, have developed themselves according to the fashions of different countries.

All have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body and the same build—a compound of the same four elements (*Akal Ustat*).

Woman also received the respect due to her. How could she be called inferior, when men born out of her were so much honoured ? (*Asa-di-Var*).

The whole outlook of life was thus changed. The world, which the people had considered as the home of sin, or at best a mere delusion, was shown to be the house of God. The worldly life, which in a spirit of despair they had contemned, now became the only field for good action : “Only service done within the world will win us a place in heaven ”(*Sri Rag, I*).

The Guru's general rules of conduct were very simple, in as much as they did not forge any new shackles in place of the old ones, and left the people free to work out their social conscience themselves :

Put away the custom that makes you forget the Loved One (*Wadhans, 1*).

My friend! the enjoyment of that food is evil which gives pain to the body and evil thoughts to the mind (*Sri Rag, I*).

The same rule is given about dressing, riding, etc.

The principles laid down by Guru Nanak were excellent and just suited to the needs of the people. But the preaching of principles, however lofty, does not create nations. Two things are necessary at the outset to produce the desired result: (1) General improvement of intellect, and (2) a feeling of unity. Without the one there can be no consciousness of a corporate life, and without the other it is impossible to have the national spirit which brings about the habit of making compromises to agree. Constant friction, born of dislike and distrust, will too frequently tear open the habit and never allow the solder to set.

By adopting the vernacular of the country for religious purposes, he in a way roused the national sentiment of the people. It was strengthened by the community of thought and ideal daily realised in the congregational singing of the same religious hymns. It also improved the understanding of the people. The high truths conveyed to them in their own tongue made them conscious of new powers of thought in themselves. To this was added the illumination of intellect that comes with the sincerity and enthusiasm of a newly-found faith:

Love and devotion enlighten the mind (*Sukhmani*).

Best of all, he enjoined upon his followers to open elementary schools in their villages, so that wherever there was a Sikh temple there was a centre of rudimentary learning for boys and girls. This system continued up to very recent times, and may be seen even now in certain villages.

Guru Nanak organised *Sangats* (or local organisations) of people wherever he went. These *Sangats* linked up the followers with themselves and with their Guru as the centre of their organisation. Guru Angad encouraged them to use a separate script, called *Gurmukhi*, which made them independent of the priestly class. Guru Amar Das strengthened the *Sangats* by narrowing their frontiers within

manageable compass and by disallowing every possible schism. Guru Ram Das further strengthened the system by appointing regular missionaries called *Masands*, and by providing a central rallying place at Amritsar. Guru Arjun built the Golden Temple, and placed in it the Holy Granth, compiled by him as the only authentic scripture for the guidance of the congregations. In it he included the writings of himself and his predecessors, along with some chosen hymns from Hindu and Muslim saints of India, most of whom were considered untouchables and who made their living by working with their own hands. This was the most practical way of removing untouchability and creating respect for honest labour.

The immediate effect of the teaching that religion could be best practised within the secular concerns of life was that all prejudices against honest labour and trade were removed, and the people began to take an active part in what were called the worldly affairs. Gango, a Khatri of Bassi tribe came to Guru Amar Das and asked, "Lord ! what shall I do to save myself ?" "Open a bank at Delhi," was the Guru's reply. Possession of wealth was no longer to be considered as Maya, but as a very salutary and helpful thing in the conduct of human affairs. "For a religious man," said Guru Ram Das, "it is not unholy to get wealth, provided he spends it in God's way, and gives and lives in comfort." The same Guru once said to his Sikhs, "When a Sikh has got an important business in hand, join him and pray for him. If you see that it cannot be carried on without financial assistance, collect money for him from every quarter, and at the same time give something yourselves." Henceforth we often hear of horse-dealing, banking, embroidery and carpentry among the Sikhs. The Gurus patronised and encouraged them, and for this purpose they founded commercial cities like Amritsar and Tarn Taran, in which

they opened markets, called *Guru-ka-Bazaars*, at their own expense. It is remarkable to note that the men invited to open shops with the money lent by the Gurus did not all belong to the Sikh community, but most of them were Hindus and Mohammedans.

All this created a stir in the Government circles, and Emperor Jahangir on a pretext caught hold of Guru Arjun and handed him over to his worst enemy who tortured him to death.<sup>1</sup> This released forces of discontent, and the next Guru, Hargobind, organised the Sikhs as soldiers and fought many successful battles with the Imperial forces. There was a lull for some time under the next three Gurus ; but when Emperor Aurangzeb martyred Guru Tegh Bahadur, who had gone to Delhi to plead the cause of persecuted Hindus, the anger of the Sikhs knew no bounds. They received baptism of the sword from Guru Gobind Singh, and were organised as a band of warrior-saints, called the *Khalsa*, to right the wrongs of the people and not to rest until they had made India safe for Indians. At the baptism they drank out of the same cup, and were enjoined to wear the same symbols—Kes (hair), Kangha (comb), Kachha (shorts), Kara (iron bangle), and Kirpan (sword). They fought many battles with the Mughal armies. The struggle was yet unfinished when the Guru died at Nander in the Deccan. But before dying he had written a letter to Aurangzeb in which he reminded him of his ill-treatment, and told him

1. That he suffered for his religion at the hands of Jahangir may be seen from the following words taken from the Emperor's own *Tauzak*: "So many of the simple-minded Hindus, nay, many foolish Moslems, too, had been fascinated by his ways and teachings. He was noised about as a great religious and worldly leader. They called him Guru, and from all directions crowds of people would come to him and express great devotion to him. This busy traffic had been carried on for three or four generations. *For many years the thought had been presenting itself to my mind that either I should put an end to this false traffic, or that he should be brought within the fold of Islam.*"

that though so many of his Sikhs had been killed, his cause was still unconquered : "For what is the use of putting out a few sparks, when you raise a mighty flame instead ?" The work which the Guru had started had become a world-wide movement, and therefore it could not be crushed by the defeat or death of a few individuals. The Guru was dead, his children were dead, but there was no lack of successors. The whole community as a unit was invested with the authority of the Guru. This new Guru was the Panth—the community—which was to guide itself by the teachings of the Holy Granth.

The political struggle was carried on under the leadership of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur who, after teaching a severe lesson to the wrongdoers, was killed with great torture at Delhi along with hundreds of other Sikhs. The Sikhs after this were outlawed, and prices were fixed on their heads. A general order was issued against them. They were hunted down like wild animals, and any man who killed a Sikh could get a prize from the viceroy of Lahore. Many died in this way. Those who escaped went to live in hills and jungles.

Men feared to become Sikhs, for to wear long hair and to receive baptism was to call for death. Those who believed in Sikhism, but had not the courage to die for it, went about shaved. They were called *Sahajdharis*.

Most of the Sikhs, however, did not mind dying for their religion. They kept bravely to their faith, and would now and then come down to the plains to visit their sacred places. They were often slain in making these attempts. In revenge they would fall upon the government parties carrying treasure and looted every pie from them.

Slowly they gathered strength, and the Mughal power grew weak. What was left of the Mughal power was destroyed by the invasions of Nadir Shāh and the Abdalis. Between them the Sikhs grew strong.

Mir Mannu, the Viceroy of Lahore, tried to do his worst against the Sikhs. Hundreds of them were brought daily to Lahore and killed outside the Delhi Gate. But this only increased their anger and they vowed to get rid of the cruel rulers at any cost. They sang,

“ We are the grass, and Mannu the sickle ;  
The more he cuts us, the more we grow.”

They began to build forts, which when pulled down were put up again.

Their anger rose to the highest pitch, when in 1757 Prince Taimur, son of Ahmad Shah Abdali, pulled down the great Temple of Amritsar and filled up its sacred Tank. They united under two able leaders, both called Jassa Singh, and defeated the enemy. They drove out the invader and occupied Lahore. They also restored the Temple of Amritsar. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia declared the Khalsa to be a state.

The Mohammedan viceroy of Lahore invited the Marathas to come to his aid. They came and occupied the Punjab. But they could not stay for long. Ahmad Shah Abdali came again and defeated them at Panipat in 1761.

As soon as the Abdali was gone, the Sikhs came forth again and began to fortify their villages. Time after time they defeated the Mohammedan armies, and the Abdali was forced to return again. The Sikhs retired beyond the Sutlej. But Ahmad Shah was too quick for them. He totally defeated them near Ludhiana and destroyed about 30,000 of them. On his return he blew up the Temple of Amritsar with gunpowder and filled up the sacred Tank.

This was too much for the Sikhs. As soon as the Abdali had turned his back in 1763, they came out again and spread themselves over the whole Punjab. They defeated the Mohammedan forces at Sarhind and occupied

the land between the Sutlej and the Jumna. Next year they turned out Kabuli Mal, the Hindu viceroy of Lahore, and occupied the territory between the Sutlej and the Jhelum. In a few years they had advanced up to the Indus.

All this land was held in joint ownership by the whole Sikh nation, called the *Surbat Kha sa*.

The nation was divided into twelve powers of equal rank, called the *Misals*. Each misal was under a chief called *Sirdar*, who was generally elected by his own followers. He was quite independent of outside control. But when a common enemy came to invade the Khalsa lands, these sirdars acted together. They met at the Akal Takht, in Amritsar, and decided upon joint action.

As long as there was danger from outside, these misals acted together. But when that danger was over, quarrels arose among them.

There were six misals in the Majha and six in the Malwa tract. In Majha the greatest misals were those of the Bhangis, the Kanhaiyas, the Rangarhias and the Sukkarchakkias. They began to fight each other for supremacy. In the end the Sukkarchakkia misal was successful in putting down the others and acquiring their lands. The greatest leader of this Misal was Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

## CHAPTER II

### MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

#### A SHORT LIFE-SKETCH

(BY GANDA SINGH, RESEARCH SCHOLAR,  
KHALSA COLLEGE, AMRITSAR.)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the greatest man of his time in India and was one of the two greatest men of the world of his age, the other being Napoleon Bonaparte. Ranjit Singh was the product of that evolution that had been at work during some three centuries before his birth in the form of the religio-political movement of Sikhism which ultimately aimed at the consummation of a homogeneous national brotherhood working for the emancipation of the suffering humanity that had been bleeding for ages under their iron heel of religious and political tyranny. In him, as we shall see in the following pages, was fulfilled the prophesy of George Forster made in his letter XI of March 1783 when he said: "Should any future cause call forth the combined efforts of the Sicques to maintain the existence of empire and religion, we may see some ambitious chief led on by his genius and success, and, absorbing the power of his associates, display, from the ruins of their commonwealth, the standard of monarchy."<sup>1</sup>

The first ancestor of Ranjit Singh to have been transformed from an ordinary ploughman into a saint-soldier of Guru Govind Singh was Sardar Buddha Singh,<sup>2</sup> of the village of Sukkarchak, who had been initiated into the fold of Sikhism by the seventh Guru Har Rai.

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1. *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I, p. 295.

2. Some recent writers have given him the name of Budh Singh بدھ سنگھ due to an error in reading the word بدھا or بودہ in Persian Mss. But the printed edition of Sohan Lal's *Umdat-ul-Twarikh*, Vol. II, p. 2, leaves no doubt about it and clearly mentions it as بدھا سنگھ.



Buddha Singh was a daring adventurer and a brave soldier and is said to have fought in the battles of Guru Govind Singh and Banda Singh Bahadur. He was a giant in strength and is said to have received thirty sword cuts and nine match-lock wounds on his body. He was famous for his piebald mare, called Desi, on whose back he swam across the rivers Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum some fifty times.

On his death in 1715 Buddha Singh left two sons, Naudh Singh and Chanda Singh, the latter being the ancestor of the Sandhanwalia Sardars. Naudh Singh came into prominence during the pursuit of Ahmad Shah Abdali under Nawab Kapur Singh in 1749, and died in 1752 in a struggle against the Afghans near Majitha. He had four sons, of whom Charhat Singh was the eldest. Those were the days of the rise of the Sikh Misals. Charhat Singh was a spirited young man and had attracted the notice of eminent Sikhs at Kot Buddha in 1749. He soon became the leader of the Sukkarchakkia Misal, so called after the name of his ancestral village, and embarked on a career of conquest with his headquarters at Gujranwala. The condign punishment that he inflicted on the tyrannical Governor of Eminabad endeared him to his people, and his successful defence of Gujranwala against Khwaja Obed of Lahore and a decisive victory over Nur-ud-Din Bamezai, a military commander of Ahmad Shah Durrani, added much to his glory. He conquered Wazirabad, Ram Nagar, Sialkot, Rohtas, Pind Dadan Khan and a large portion of Dhanni and Pothohar, including the salt mines of Kheora and Miani. He thus carved out a principality for his Misal which, on his death in 1827 Bikrami, passed into the hands of his ten years old son Mahan Singh.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The date of Sardar Charhat Singh's death is given variously by different writers. I have here followed the *Umduat-ul-Twarikh* of Sohan Lal who depends for his data on the works and personal knowledge of his father Ganpat Rai, whose Mas., according to Sir Richard Temple, "are dated back till not long after 1770 and even previous to that."

**Mai Desan** the widow of **Sardar Charhat Singh**, was a courageous lady of great tact and ability. By matrimonial alliances of her daughter **Raj Kaur** with **Sardar Sahib Singh Bhangi** of **Gujrat**, and of her son **Mahan Singh** with **Raj Kaur**<sup>1</sup> the daughter of **Raja Gajpat Singh** of **Jind**, she enlisted the sympathies of the **Bhangis** and the **Phulkian** for her family. She also extended and strengthened the fort of **Gujranwala**. Not long afterwards **Mahan Singh** led his men to a successful expedition against **Nur-ud-Din Bamezai** and regained the possession of **Rohtas** and conquered the blacksmiths' town of **Kotli Loharán**. He next marched against the bigotted **Pir Muhammad Chattha** of **Rasul Nagar** for his enmity against the **Sikhs** and renamed that town as **Ram Nagar**. It was on his triumphant return from these expeditions that **Mahan Singh** was blessed with a son who was destined to become the national hero of the Land of the Five Rivers.

Three years later he had again to reduce the **Chatthas**, when he converted their town of **Alipore** into **Akalgarh**. With the increase of his power and resources, **Mahan Singh** carried his arms to **Pindi Bhattian**, **Sahiwal** and **Isa Khel** and, in the year 1782, advanced upon **Jammu** which yielded him an immense booty. The uncompromising jealousy of **Sardar Jai Singh Kanhaiya** estranged his relations with the young **Sukkarchakkia**. **Mahan Singh** called in from his exile the fugitive **Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia**, and, in the struggle that ensued at **Batala**, the death of **Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh**, son of the **Kanhaiya** chief, broke for ever the back of **Jai Singh**, and the **Ramgarhia** **Sardar** regained his territories.

The relations of the **Kanhaiyas** and the **Sukkar-chakkias** were, however, soon cemented for all time to

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1. By strange coincidence so many lady members of **Mahan Singh's** family bore the same name, **Raj Kaur**.

come by the sagacity of Mai Sada Kaur, the widow of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh, with the matrimonial alliance of her daughter Mehtab Kaur with Ranjit Singh, the son of Mahan Singh.

On the death of Sardar Gujjar Singh Bhangi, there arose a cause of quarrel with his son Sahib Singh, and he was forced by Mahan Singh to take refuge in the fort of Sohdra. It was here in 1790 that Mahan Singh was suddenly taken ill. He entrusted the command of his forces to his ten years old son and retired to Gujranwala, where he died on the 5th Baisak, 1847 Bk., April, 1790. The young chief displayed a wonderful military genius in checking the advance of the enemy's reinforcements under Karam Singh Dulo and others, near Kot Maharaja, and gaining a decisive victory over the Bhangis.

Ranjit Singh, the only son of Sardar Mahan Singh Sukkarchakkia was born of Bibi Raj Kaur, otherwise known as Mai Malwain, on Monday the 2nd Manghar, 1837 Bk., Margshirsha *Wadi* 1, 13th Shábán 1253 al-Hijri, 13th November 1780 A. D.<sup>1</sup> He was at first given the name of Budh Singh, but, apparently, in commemoration of the victorious campaigns of his father, it was subsequently changed into Ranjit Singh, the Lion Victor of Battles.

In his early infancy he was attacked by a virulent type of small-pox. After several days of despair, he triumphed over his disease, but was left disfigured for life with the loss of his left eye.

Bute Shah tells us that at the age of six he went out with other boys on swimming excursions to the river Chenab and distributed among them whatever he could take away from home in coin and kind.

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1. Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*. II, 17, 19; Bute Shah, II. Amar Nath in his *Zafar Nama-i-Ranjit Singh* gives the date as Monday the 3rd Manghar, but as Monday falls on 2nd Manghar, the date of Sohan Lal and Bute Shah is correct. This corresponds to the 13th November, 1780, and not to 2nd November, as erroneously mentioned in most of the books.

For his education he was sent to Bhai Bhagu Singh at his Dharamsala in Gujranwala. But Providence had willed it otherwise. He was not destined to be a man of letters. Those were the days of adventure, and every youth was required to shoulder a musket either in defence of his hearth and home or for the career of a successful soldier. He could not, therefore, continue his studies for long and was placed in the charge of Amir Singh Brahmin for training in musketry. He now accompanied his father on his expeditions and learnt the art of war at an early age under his expert guidance.

On the death of his father, Sardar Ranjit Singh was in his tenth year. His mother, therefore, acted as a regent, with the assistance of Diwan Lakhpat Rai, also called Lakhu Mal. But he soon took the administration of the *Misal* in his own hands and displayed great tact and ability in the management of his affairs.

An attempt was made on the life of Ranjit Singh in the following year by Hashmat Khan Chattha to avenge the ignominious defeats that he had suffered at the hands of his father Mahan Singh. The Sardar was out on a hunting excursion, and had got away from his companions when the Chattha chief suddenly sprang out of his hiding place and fell upon the youthful sportsman. The blow went amiss, cutting only his belt. Ranjit Singh then returned him a fatal blow which sent him rolling to the ground. Had not the hidden hand of Providence come at this time to the rescue of the future builder of the Sikh Empire, 'the history of India and England, would have been materially changed.' During the same year Ranjit Singh strengthened his power by a union with the Nakai Sardars, and married Raj Kaur (also called Datar Kaur), the sister of Sardar Gian Singh of Satghara.

In 1852 Bikrami, 1796 A. D., at the age of sixteen, he was married at Batala to Mehtab Kaur, the daughter



**Throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh**



of Mai Sada Kaur, head of the Kanhaiva Misal, who, for her active support in his early conquests, has been called 'the ladder by which Ranjit Singh climbed to greatness in his early years.'

Shah Zaman, the King of Kabul and a grandson of Ahmad Shah Abdali, made several frantic efforts to re-establish the Durrani power in India, and in 1797 occupied the city of Lahore, but he had soon to retire to his country.

After the defeat and death of his deputy General Ahmad Khan Shahanchi-bashi at the hands of the Sikhs, the Shah again descended upon the Panjab in December, 1798. As the Sikhs had, as usual, according to their old tactics, retired from the Capital to pounce upon him unawares when an opportunity offered itself, he took possession of the fort of Lahore. According to Sohan Lal<sup>1</sup> and Bute Shah,<sup>2</sup> Ranjit Singh at this time thrice rushed upon the Samman Burj of the fort with a limited number of Sardars, fired some shots, killed and wounded a number of the Afghans, and challenged the Shah to a hand-to-hand fight. "Come on, O grandson of Ahmad Shah," shouted Ranjit Singh, "you should try two or three hands with the grandson of the Great Sardar Charhat Singh." But as there was no response from the other side, Ranjit Singh had to retire without a trial of strength with the Durrani.

On the return of Zaman Shah to his country, news came that Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur was preparing for an invasion of Lahore. To the people of Lahore, he was as unwelcome a ruler as the Bhangi triumvirate which was then in power. A petition was, therefore, drawn up and signed by the leading citizens of Lahore, including Mian Ashiq Muhammad, Mufti Muhammad Mukarram, Mian

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1. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, ii. 39.

2. *Tarikh i-Punjab*, ii. 638.

Mohkam Din, Muhammad Bakar, Muhammad Tahir, Mir Shadi, Hakim Hakam Rai and Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh, and was submitted by a deputation to the rising youth of the Sukkarchakkia Misal. 'Only his presence,' it was said, 'was required at the Capital, the petitioners engaging to do all that was necessary for securing the object in view.'

Ranjit Singh availed himself of the offer and, with the assistance of his mother-in-law Mai Sada Kaur, became the master of Lahore on 7 July, 1799, Harh Sudi 5th, 1856 Bk., 3rd Safar, 1214 Hijri, without any effective resistance from the Bhangi Sardars.<sup>1</sup>

'Under express orders from him, the city and the citizens were to be treated with the greatest consideration by the conquerors, and any acts of plunder and ill-usage on the part of his troops were to be severely dealt with.' He rode through the public thoroughfares assuring the people that their rights, persons, and property were perfectly secure as long as they continued faithful to him, and he soon established a strong police for the security of his new Capital. He treated the fallen Bhangi Sardar Chet Singh with every mark of consideration, and granted a respectable jagir for his maintenance.

The disappointed Nizam-ud-Din played upon the jealousies of the Sikh Sardars, and, in 1800, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Gulab Singh and Sahib Singh Bhangis and Nizam-ud-Din entered into a coalition to cut short the career of the new ruler of Lahore. They collected a large force at the village of Bhasin. Ranjit Singh set out to

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Some of the English and Indian writers have given currency to the baseless report of Captain Wade that Ranjit Singh occupied the city of Lahore on the authority of a grant from Shah Zaman for his services in recovering the Durrani guns from the river Jhelum and forwarding them to Katul. There is no mention of this incident in the contemporary works of Sohan Lal, Ahmad Shah Batalia, Amar Nath and Bute Shah. Even Sultan Mohd. Khan Durrani and Imam-ud-Din Hussaini make no mention of it in their *Tarikh-i-Sultani* and *Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi*,



meet them, but the sudden death of Gulab Singh shattered the combination and he was left in undisputed possession of Lahore.

His financial difficulties were solved by the accidental discovery of a hidden treasure from the old brick-kiln of Budhu (Budhu-ka-Awa). He now marched towards Jammu and on his way conquered Mirowal, Narowal, and Jassarwal. The Raja of Jammu, thereupon, paid a tribute of twenty thousand rupees, and the conqueror returned, by way of Sialkot, to defend his town of Gujranwala against the intended attack of Sahib Singh Bhangi and Dal Singh of Akalgarh. Ranjit Singh was more than a match for them. He worsted them both at Gujrat and Akalgarh, and it was only the appeals of Baba Sahib Singh Bedi and Sodhi Kesra Singh to his magnanimity that saved them from deserved punishment.

Towards the close of the year, Mir Yusaf Ali Khan, an agent of the East India Company, arrived at Lahore with presents valued at ten thousand rupees for the rising Sikh Chief, with a view to gaining his sympathy in case of a future emergency, and Ranjit Singh reciprocated in a befitting manner.

Early in 1801, his first son Kharak Singh was born of Rani Datar Kaur (alias Raj Kaur) Nakai on 12th Phagan, 1857 Bk., and full forty days were spent in great rejoicings and thanksgivings. During these days the chiefs, notables and other prominent citizens decided to offer the title of *Maharaja* to him and the Baisakhi day of 1858 Bk., 12 April, 1801, was fixed for the ceremony. A grand Darbar, attended by all the important Sikh Sardars and Misaldars, and prominent Hindu and Muslim notables was held for the purpose, and, after the performance of certain Sikh religious rites, Sardar Ranjit Singh was annointed with the *Tilak* of *Maharajaship* by Baba Sahib Singh Bedi. But he claimed no royalty for himself. To him the Guru was the *Sacha Padshah*, the Real King,

with himself only as His humble servant deputed for the service of the people. He desired that he should henceforth be addressed as the *Sarkar*. Out of his overflowing devotion he ordered that the coins of his Empire should be struck in the name of the Guru, the Real King, with the inscription:

دیگ و تیغ و فتح نصرت بیدرنگ  
یافت از نانک گورو گویند سنگھ

‘Kettle (symbol of the means to feed the poor), Sword (symbol of the power to protect the weak and helpless), Victory and Unhesitating Patronage have been obtained from Nanak-Guru Govind Singh.’

The Rupee and *Paisa* were called *Nanakshahi*, and they are still remembered by that name.

He now turned his attention to administrative affairs of the State and placed the local Government of Lahore in the hands of his most trusted officers, irrespective of caste and creed. “Kazi Nizamooddeen,” says a writer on Amar Nath’s *Zafar Nama*, “was nominated the religious head of all the Moslems who recognised the Government of Runjeet, and his power was final in all matters of religious importance between members of his faith. As a legal adviser to the Kazee, in matters relating to deeds of mortgages, sales, contracts and the like social transactions, Moufti Mahomed Shah [and also Chishti Sa’dullah] was appointed; and the city police was placed under the authority of *Kutwal* Emambux. Thus it was proclaimed to the world that, in his choice of public officers, Runjeet Singh consulted efficiency and merit rather than the feeble claims of party.”<sup>1</sup> Free dispensaries were opened in different places and Hakim Faqir Nur-ud-Din was appointed the Chief Public Health Officer. A lac of rupees was sanctioned

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1. *The Calcutta Review*, Dec., 1858, p. 259.



Maharaja Kharak Singh  
(1801-1840)



for immediate repairs to the city wall, and new constabulary was recruited for policing the gates. And thus, after a long time, a new era of peace and plenty dawned upon the country.

Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur, as we know, had been responsible for exciting the coalition against Ranjit Singh in 1800, and his unsuppressed enmity was a standing obstacle in the consolidation of his territories. An expedition under the command of Sardar Fateh Singh Kalianwala was, therefore, despatched to Kasur. The Pathan could offer only a feeble resistance and accepted the overlordship of the ruler of Lahore, and sent in his younger brother Qutb-ud-Din, and Haji Khan and Wasal Khan as hostages.

The Maharaja next moved out to the north-east to defend the territories of his mother-in-law *Mai Sada Kaur* against the aggression of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra. Sansar Chand fled into the hills. The Mai's lost territories were restored to her, with the addition of Naushahra. On his way home, the Maharaja occupied the fort of Sujampur and allowed the depredatory Sardars suitable jagirs as an inducement to follow peaceful avocations.

During his visit to Gurn Arjan's tank and temple at Tarn Taran in 1802, the Maharaja called upon Sardar Fateh Singh, the head of the Ahluwalia Misal, at Fatehabad, and the two chiefs exchanged turbans as a mark of perpetual friendship. The alliance placed the resources of the Ahluwalias at the disposal of Ranjit Singh and proved of great benefit to his future plans. The territories of Pindi Bhattian and Dhani across the Jhelum, conquered in 1802 by the allied forces, were placed in the charge of Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, who next accompanied the expeditionary force to Chiniot which fell to the Maharaja after two months' siege.

While the Maharaja was busy at Chiniot, Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur collected a large number of Pathan crusaders and plundered some villages in the neighbourhood of Lahore. This was a signal of open rebellion, and the Maharaja with Sardar Fateh Singh marched out in 1803 to suppress it. In spite of all preparations, the Pathans could not stand against the Maharaja, who on one occasion rushed upon them with sword in hand and drove them out of their entrenchments. Nizam-ud-Din now sued for peace, and was forgiven by Ranjit Singh a second time on promise of loyalty and payment of the expenses of war.

The Maharaja marched upon Multan for the first time in 1803 and, on payment of *Nazrana* and promise of future submission, allowed the original ruler—Nawab Muzaffar Khan—to retain the territories and to rule them on his behalf.

On his return from a fortnight's visit to Hardwar, the Maharaja occupied Phagwara and handed it over to Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. He next drove Raja Sansar Chand from the plains of Hoshiarpur, where he was carrying on depredations, and established his own *thana* at Bajwara.

The refusal of the Bhangis to hand over the famous *Zam-Zam* gun, known as the *Bhangian-icali Top*, resulted in the march of Ranjit Singh upon the city of Amritsar. It 'had been assigned to his grandfather Sardar Charhat Singh as his share of the plunder when Lahore was captured in 1764,' but the Bhangi Chiefs were withholding it. The Maharaja was received with cannon shots from the city walls, to which he was preparing to reply when Sardar Jodh Singh Ramgarhia and Akali Phula Singh came in between the two forces. The city was evacuated for the Maharaja on 14 Phagan 1864, February 1805, and he was

pleased to grant suitable jagirs for the maintenance of *Mai Sukhan* and her young son *Gurdit Singh Bhangi*.

The Maharaja was now in possession of two Sikh capitals, political and religious. But his Government was not of and for the Sikhs alone. It was a secular state and was shared by all alike. It is true that it was the Sikhs alone who had sacrificed their all for about a century to free the land from the clutches of the Mughal governors and the aggressions of the Durrani invaders. But when freed, the Sikh ruler, true to the teachings and traditions of the Sikh Gurus, unhesitatingly placed its government and resources in the hands of the Muslims and the Hindus alike.

After the conquest of Jhang, the Maharaja was moving towards Multan when the news of the arrival of the fugitive Jaswant Rao Hukkar in the Punjab was received by him. He was being pursued by Lord Lake, who had come as far as the banks of the Beas. Ranjit Singh hurried back to Amritsar where all the important Sikh sardars were invited for a *Gurmattat* on the attitude to be adopted towards the Maratha and his pursuers.

The Maharaja could ill-afford to make the Punjab a theatre of war between two foreign armies. His own position was not yet secure. Multan, Peshawar, Kashmir and the Sivalik Hills had not been conquered as yet, and were in the hands of his ferocious enemies. The result of war, as such, was doubtful. It was, therefore, decided to follow a surer course of negotiations for reconciliation.

1. *Gurmattat* is not the "assembly of Sikhs" as has been erroneously supposed by some writers, but it is a resolution or decision made by Sikhs in the presence of the Sacred book. A *matra* literally means an opinion or a resolution, and it is called a *Gurmattat* on a resolution made in the Gurm, because the Gurm is believed to be present at the deliberations of Sikhs holding a meeting in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

tion between the two, which were soon brought to a successful conclusion by the efforts of the Maharaja and Sardar Fateh Singh, and all the territories of Holkar beyond Delhi were restored to him. At the same time a treaty was entered into on 1 January 1806 between Lord Lake and the Sikh chiefs by which the Maharaja and Sardar Fateh Singh agreed to 'cause Jaswant Rao Holkar to remove with his army to the distance of 30 coss from Amritsar and ... never hereafter hold any further connection with him, while Lord Lake undertook that so long as the conditions of this treaty were observed, 'the British armies shall never enter the territories of the said chieftains, nor will the British Government form any plans for the seizure or the sequestration of their possessions or property.'<sup>1</sup>

At this time the Maharaja was called into the south of the Sutlej for the settlement of the dispute regarding the village of Duladi between Nabha and Patiala. On his way to Malwa he received tribute from several petty sardars and from Sardar Tara Singh Ghaiba, the head of the Dallewalia Misal. On his arrival there, the dispute was settled in favour of the Maharaja of Patiala, and the Raja of Nabha was appeased by the grant of thirty-one villages, in addition to Jagraon, Kot Basian and Talwandi, conquered from Raikot. Ludhiana and its neighbourhood was given to the Raja of Jind, while some other territories were granted to Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia.

On his way back the Maharaja was passing through the Jullundur Doab when Mian Fateh Chand, brother of Raja Sansar Chand, appealed to him for assistance against the Nepalese General Amar Singh Thapa, who was then laying siege to the fort of Kangra. Discarding all

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<sup>1</sup>. Atchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, etc.*, 1892, Vol. IX, p. 22.



offers of a large tribute from the Gorkha, Ranjit Singh arrived at Jwala Mukhi and compelled him to raise the siege at night and retire towards Mandi and Suket. Sansar Chand gratefully offered him a *Nazar* of two horses and three thousand rupees and he returned to Lahore via Amritsar, leaving a detachment of a thousand men in the fort of Nadaun and appointing Fateh Singh Kalianwala to watch the activities of the Nepalese.

It was near Jwala Mukhi that the Maharaja received from Batala the news of the birth of twins, Sher Singh and Tara Singh, and he hurried to Amritsar to pay a thanksgiving visit to the *Har-Mandir Sahib*, now called the Golden Temple.

On his arrival at Lahore, the Maharaja was informed that Qutb-ud-Din, the Pathan ruler of Kasur, had thrown off his submission on the death of his brother Nizam-ud-Din. He at once marched upon Kasur in February 1807, and found no other alternative but to reduce for ever this breeding place of intrigues and rebellions, and place it under his direct control with Sardar Nihal Singh Atariwala as a Jagirdar. The Maharaja, however, treated Qutb-ud-Din with great magnanimity and generously bestowed upon him the respectable jagir of Mamdot worth about a lac of rupees for his maintenance. He also gave a jagir to Fateh Khan, son of Nizam-ud-Din, at Marup in the Gurgaon district.

Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan had been secretly instigating and helping the Kasur people in their rising. The Maharaja, therefore, set out for Multan to punish the Nawab for his perfidy. A compromise was, however, effected through the efforts of the Nawab of Bahawalpur, and Muzaffar Khan agreed to pay an indemnity of seventy thousand rupees.

The Maharaja this year was again called to Patiala

to settle the dispute between Maharaja Sahib Singh and Rani Aas Kaur, when he was loaded with *Nazars* and presents by the various Sardars. The fort of Naraingarh was occupied, as Raja Kishen Singh refused to offer his submission. He was at Jullundur, on his way back to Lahore, when he received the news of the death of Sardar Tara Singh Ghaiba. He, therefore, moved to his capital at Raion, and, providing suitably for the maintenance of his descendants, annexed the territories of the Dallewalia Misal to his Empire.

At this time Diwan Muhkam Chand entered the service of the Maharaja

In January 1808, he extended his influence to Pathankot and the Sivalik principalities of Jasrota, Chamba and Basohli, and then to Sialkot and Akhnur in the Jammu Hills. Sardar Sahib Singh Bhangi submitted to him through Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, and S. Jaimal Singh Kanhaya paid him a rich tribute on his own accord. The fort of Sheikhpura was also occupied without much opposition.

On the arrival of Diwan Bhawani Das of Kabul into his service during the year, the Maharaja reorganized his financial administration on a firmer footing and established offices, and appointed competent clerks under the able and expert guidance of the new financial minister.

With the rise and gradual consolidation of the power of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh states south of the Sutlej found themselves enclosed by two great powers, the other being that of the East India Company on the east of the Jamuna. Their safety lay, they thought, in seeking protection under one of them. To decide about their future, they met in a conference at Samana and resolved to approach the East India Company for the purpose, by virtue of their cordial relations with the

English since 1803 when the latter had occupied Delhi. A petition under the seals of Bhai Lal Singh of Kythal, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Sardar Chain Singh, agent of the Maharaja of Patiala, and Sayyed Ghulam Hussain Karnali, *Vakil* of the Raja of Nabha, was therefore submitted to the British Resident at Delhi, and was received in his office on 27 March 1808. But in view of the political situation in Europe, he could give them no encouraging reply, beyond forwarding it to the Governor-General at Calcutta for his orders.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, on the other hand, had no intention to alienate their sympathies. His heart bled to see the Sikh chiefs falling into the lap of a foreign power. He invited them to Amritsar and assured them of his goodwill. He met Maharaja Sahib Singh of Patiala again (November 1808) at Akhnur, and, as a mark of perpetual friendship, exchanged his turban with him.

News was now received of the intention of Napoleon Bonaparte to invade India with the help of the Sultan of Turkey and the Shah of Persia. This brought about a change in the non-intervention policy of the British in India, and, to counteract the Franco-Turkish-Persian danger, British missions were sent to the Maharaja of Lahore, the Amirs of Sind, the Amir of Kabul and the Shah of Persia for defensive alliances against the French, and a verbal assurance of protection was given to the southern chiefs.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was encamped near Kasur, when Mr. Charles T. Metcalfe saw him at Khem Karan on 11 September, 1808, and begged for co-operation against France and for passage for armies through his territories, in case the British chose to invade Afghanistan. Ranjit Singh was not willing to accept these terms and asked of the British to acknowledge his supremacy over

all the Sikh states and to remain neutral in case of a dispute between himself and the Amir of Kabul.

Metcalf could give him no assurance and only forwarded his terms to the Governor-General. Ranjit Singh now thought it best to employ the interval in the consolidation of his dominions south of the Sutlej by the absorption of a few petty Misaldars. His successful march through Faridkot, Malerkotla, and Ambala to Shahabad frightened the British Governor-General. In the meantime the political situation in Europe had changed and the fear of a French invasion of India was gone. This stiffened the suppliant attitude of the British into a coercive one, and a large force under Colonel David Ochterloney was despatched to Ludhiana to restrict the activities of the Sikh ruler, who by this time had returned to Amritsar. The southern Sikh states now definitely decided to place themselves under the protection of the British. On receipt of this information, the Governor-General authorised the issue of a proclamation to this effect, and demanded of Ranjit Singh to confine himself to the territories that he had occupied before the present march, and to restore his recent conquests to their original masters. This was most distasteful to the Maharaja, and he prepared for war. But he soon found it to his advantage to sign the new Treaty of 25 April, 1809, because it secured him from British interference in his conquests to the south-west (Multan and the Deras), the north-west (the territories beyond the Indus, including Peshawar), the north (the Provinces of Jammu and Kashmir) and the south-east (Kangra and the Sivalik Hills) with a small sacrifice to the south of Sutlej, where, even otherwise, by virtue of his assurances, he had to leave the actual control of the territories into the hands of the Phulkian ruling chiefs.

The years 1809-11 added a large number of territories

to the Maharaja's Empire. In the middle of 1809. he moved to Kangra, in response to the appeals of Raja Sansar Chand, to save him from the second invasion of Amar Singh Thapa of Nepal, for which he promised to make over the fort of Kangra to the Maharaja. But on the arrival of the Maharaja on the scene of action, Sansar Chand was found unwilling to keep his promise. The Maharaja, therefore, occupied the fort of Kangra for a base of operations. The short-statured Gorkhas could not face the long swords of the tall Khalsas and were driven away after a desperate struggle. On the successful conclusion of the war, the Rajas of Kangra, Chamba, Nurpore, Kotla, Jasrota, Basohli, Jaswan, Mandi, Suket, Kullu, etc., acknowledged Ranjit Singh as their overlord.

On his return from the hills, he took under his own control the territories of the late Sardar Baghel Singh, Karor-Singhia of Hariana, and provided his widow with a suitable maintenance. He next annexed the town of Gujrat and, soon afterwards, called in the fugitive Sardar Sahib Singh from his exile and granted him a respectable jagir. The Belochis of Saliwal and Gujrat attracted his attention in February 1810. As Ranjit Singh was averse to shedding blood unnecessarily, he persuaded the Beloch chief to evacuate the fort of Khushab for him, and allowed him to reside at Khushab itself on a substantial grant. It was here that the fugitive Shah Shuja of Kabul met the Maharaja and then retired to Peshawar via Rawalpindi.

The Maharaja now marched upon Multan and occupied the city. With the fall of the fort, which had held out for some time, Nawab Muzaffar Khan sued for peace and paid a heavy tribute.

Jammu, in the meantime, fell to Sardar Hukma Singh Chimni without any resistance, and Wazirabad came into

the possession of Khalifa Nur-ud-Din, in June 1810, on behalf of the Maharaja. Daska and Hallowal were next added to his dominions. After the occupation of Kask, the Maharaja paid a visit to the fugitive blind King Shah Zaman of Kabul at Rawalpindi and invited him and the family of Shah Shujah to Lahore, where on their arrival in November 1811, they were received with the greatest cordiality, and suitable arrangements were made for their maintenance.

With a view to consolidating the remaining territories of the central Punjab, an expedition was sent under the command of Prince Kharak Singh and Diwan Mohkam Chand to occupy the *Ilaga* of the Nakais, whose chief Sardar Kahan Singh was granted a jagir worth twenty thousand rupees in the pargana of Bahrwal.

In December 1811, *Wazir Fateh Khan's* agent Godar Mal arrived from Kabul to seek the Maharaja's co-operation in the conquest of Kashmir. When Wafa Begam, wife of Shah Shujah, came to know of this, she became very anxious about the fate of her husband, then a prisoner in Kashmir. She appealed to the Maharaja for his release from Kashmir and promised in return thereof to give him the famous *Koh-i-Nur* diamond on the Shah's safe arrival at Lahore. The allied forces of *Wazir Fateh Khan* and Maharaja Ranjit Singh marched upon the valley and defeated the Governor Ata Muhammad Khan at Sher-garh. Diwan Muhkam Chand secured the person of Shah Shujah and brought him safe to Lahore in spite of Fateh Khan's jealousy on this account. But Wafa Begam was not now willing to give away the Koh-i-Nur. The Maharaja had, therefore, to place guards on the Shah's residence, when he made over the diamond to the Maharaja in June 1813 after about two months' vacillation. The Shan was at Lahore upto April 1815, when he

left it to further his designs on the kingdom of Kabul.

Jahandad Khan, the Governor of Attock, found his position unsafe after the defeat of his brother Ata Muhammad in Kashmir. He, therefore, offered to place the fort of Attock in the hands of the Maharaja on promise of a substantial jagir. The Pargana of Wazirabad was granted to him for the purpose, in addition to a lac of rupees to pay off the arrears of his men, and the fort was occupied. This was very distasteful to Wazir Fateh Khan who descended upon the Punjab with a large force. But he was worsted by the Sikhs in the battle of Hazro, 12-13th July 1813, and was forced to fall back upon Peshawar.

In view of the unfriendly behaviour of Fateh Khan, the Maharaja collected a large force at Sialkot, in October 1813, for the conquest of Kashmir, but, on account of a heavy snow-fall in the hills, it had to be postponed till April 1814. In 1814 the force was divided into two divisions : one under the Maharaja marched by way of Poonch, while the second under Ram Dayal, grandson of Muhkam Chand, passed through Bahramgala and defeated the Afghans in more than one battle. But he could not completely occupy the country. Azim Khan, however, found his safety in coming to terms with Ram Dayal. The progress of the Maharaja, on the other hand, was retarded by heavy rains and he returned to Lahore in August 1814.

Raja Aggar Khan of Rajauri had behaved very treacherously towards the Maharaja during his last expedition. His territory was therefore annexed in December, 1815. Nurpur was the next place to be occupied and its Raja Bir Singh was given a suitable jagir.

In March 1816 the Nawab of Bahawalpur undertook to pay an annual tribute of seventy thousand rupees. The Maharaja then marched upon Multan to demand the arrears of the tribute. The city was occupied

by Akali Phula Singh by a surprise attack, when Muzaffar Khan came in to pay eighty thousand rupees immediately, with a promise to clear the balance within two months. Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan of Mankera was the next to submit to the Maharaja, followed by the annexations of Jhang and Uch.

Prince Kharak Singh had now attained the age of fifteen. The Maharaja, therefore, nominated him as his successor amidst great rejoicings on the Dussehra day of 1873 Bk., 1816 A. D.

On the death of Sardar Jodh Singh Ramgarhia in September 1815, there had arisen an incessant quarrel amongst his dependants, which brought about the disruption of the Ramgarhia Misal. They caused great annoyance even to the widow of the Sardar. The Maharaja, thereupon, annexed their territory and granted them a jagir of thirty thousand rupees.

An expeditionary force was sent to Multan in 1817 to receive the arrears of the tribute, but as Diwan Bhowani Das could not bring the Nawab to immediate submission, the Maharaja despatched a much larger force for the occupation of the place. The Nawab, on the other hand, had summoned an innumerable host of *Ghazis* to his aid, but, ultimately, he found it impossible to stand against the Sikhs for long. He, therefore, sued for peace and offered to evacuate the forts of Multan and Muzaffargarh, provided he was promised the territories of Shujahabad and Khangarh for his maintenance. But when the agents of Prince Kharak Singh, who was in command of the siege, arrived in the fort to conclude the terms of peace, the Nawab was dissuaded by his friends and relatives from keeping his words. On receipt of this information at Lahore, the Maharaja addressed a stirring letter to his officers. The operations



now began with renewed vigour, and there was a great loss of life on both sides.

It is about this time that a soul-stirring incident is recorded by Ghulam Jilani in his *Jang-i-Multan*. While the bombardment of the fort-walls was going on, one of the Sikh guns lost one of its wheels. The Sardar in charge of the gun was of opinion that if he could fire a few more shots, he would succeed in causing a breach in the wall. There was no time for repairs, and the delay was very dangerous. He, therefore, proposed to his gunners that they should all be prepared to sacrifice their lives for the honour of the Khalsa by laying their shoulders one by one under the axle on the broken side. Their lives would be lost, no doubt, but it would be a worthy contribution towards the victory of the Panth. They all jumped at the idea and there was a wrangling amongst them for priority. But they were soon silenced by the Sardar, who ordered that they should come in only in the order of their ranks, the senior (meaning himself) going in first. One by one the brave gunners went forward to lay down their lives, and it was after the tenth or the eleventh shot, when as many of them had been sacrificed under the pressure of the gun, that a breach was seen in the wall, and Akali Sadhu Singh rushed to the spot with sword in hand, shouting *Sat Sri Akal*—*Akal* to proclaim 'Victory to the arms of the Guru.' Ghulam Jilani tells us that he was then moving about amongst the Sikhs in disguise and that more than once even he felt inspired and moved by this spirit of self-sacrifice to follow them under the axle. But if there was anything that kept him behind, it was nothing but the desire in his mind to narrate to the world the story of this unique spirit of self-sacrifice of these

Sikhs in the cause of their nation.

The Nawab himself came into the breach with his sons and friends, but he fell there under the swords of the Sikhs with two sons and a nephew, and the fort fell into the hands of the Maharaja on Jeth Sudi 11, 1875 Bk., June 15, 1818 A. D.

The Maharaja now turned his attention to Peshawar. He knew that without the conquest of this place there could be no peace in the Punjab. He took advantage of the disturbed state of affairs in Kabul that followed the murder of Wazir Fateh Khan, and moved with an army to Attock in October 1818. When a small Sikh detachment entered the Khairabad hills, the Khatak Pathans under Firoz Khan fell upon them unawares and inflicted a heavy loss of life. This infuriated the Maharaja who rushed across the Indus and drove the Pathan before him in the battle of Jahangira. Dost Muhammad Khan was so terrified on receipt of this news as to leave Peshawar and retire to Hashtnagar. The Maharaja entered Peshawar and appointed Jahandad Khan as his Governor there and returned to Attock. But Dost Muhammad Khan now returned to Peshawar and offered to hold it on behalf of the Maharaja with an annual tribute of a lac of rupees, which he accepted and returned to the Capital.

This conquest of Peshawar brought about a tremendous change in the history of India. For about eight centuries, India had been the hunting ground of foreign invaders from the north-west who carried away year after year the children of this country to be sold in the bazaars of Ghazni and Kandhar. This conquest of Maharaja Ranjit Singh not only damned the current of north-western invasions and drove the erstwhile invincible Afghans back into their mountain defiles, but it

rather turned the tide of conquests from east to west—a thing so far unknown to the history of India, and an achievement for which he deserves the greatest credit from his countrymen. Rightly may he claim for this to be one of the greatest national heroes of the country.

To secure his boundary on the north, the Maharaja decided upon the conquest of Kashmir in 1819 and a large army was collected at Wazirabad. One force was placed under the command of Prince Kharak Singh, and another under Sardar Sham Singh Atariwala and Misar Diwan Chand, while the third the Maharaja kept under his own command at the base depot for reinforcement purposes. Raja Aggar Khan had not been true to his previous engagements. Rajauri was therefore besieged. Aggar Khan fled away during the night. His brother Rahim Ullah Khan came in to the Sikh camp the next day and was subsequently appointed the Governor of Rajauri. The two forces now moved forward. After the occupation of the fort of Shupin, Zabardast Khan of Punchh was defeated in a sharp battle and was forced to sue for peace.

The Maharaja also now marched into the hills and sent reinforcements to the advance forces. A battle was fought at the foot of the Pir Panjal where the Pathans were put to flight. On the arrival of the Sikh forces at Aliabad on the other side of this great mountain, the news arrived that Jabbar Khan was blocking the passage to Srinagar. After a day's rest, a rush was made on the 21 Harh 1876 Bk., 3 July 1819, and Jabbar Khan was defeated in a hard-fought battle. Srinagar was occupied the next day and the beautiful valley of Kashmir—the impregnable stronghold of the Afghans—was converted into a Sikh Province after a glorious campaign.

The Maharaja was touring the Multan territories when he received the news of the birth of two sons to Ranis Rattan Kaur and Daya Kaur at Sialkot. There were great rejoicings in the Maharaja's camp and the boys were named Multana Singh and Kashmira Singh in commemoration of his two recent conquests.

The year 1820 began with the insurrection of the Pathans of Hazara, which originally belonged to the Afghan ruler of Kashmir, and its suppression cost the Maharaja the life of his youthful General Ran Dayal. In 1821 the territories of Mankera and Dera Ismail Khan were permanently conquered and added to the Sikh dominions.

The overthrow of Napoleon in 1815 had sent out a large number of European soldiers in search of employment with oriental rulers. The fame of Maharaja Ranjit Singh attracted to Lanore Ventura, an Italian, and Allard, a Frenchman, in March 1822, and they were taken into service by him at Rs. 2500-0-0 p. m. in Infantry and Cavalry respectively.

Muhammad Azim Khan Barakzai, the Wazir of Kabul, was looking for an opportunity to oust the Maharaja from his possessions west of the Indus, and with that intention came down upon Peshawar in December 1823. It was then held by Yar Muhammad Khan, his own brother, on behalf of the Sikh ruler. Muhammad Azim Khan, therefore, occupied the city without any opposition, and declared a religious war against the Sikhs, which brought to his standard an innumerable host of Pathan *Ghazis*. On receipt of this information, the Maharaja despatched a force under Prince Sher Singh and reinforced him with Sardars Hari Singh Nalwa, Phula Sing Akali, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Desa Singh Majithia. The Pathans could not hold for long against the Sikhs and were defeated in

the battle of Jhangira. The infuriated Muhammad Azim Khan hurried down to Nowshera and despatched Dost Muhammad and Jabbar Khan to block the passage of the Maharaja on the Indus, while the bridge of Attock was broken by Muhammad Zaman Khan.

News was at this time received that the Sikh force on the west of the Indus had been surrounded by Muslim fanatics from all sides. Without a second thought, the Maharaja ordered his force to cross the river, and with a few selected horsemen jumped into the Indus to lead his men. The terrified Ghazis now left their posts and retired to Nowshera to join the main force where they were soon followed by the Maharaja. The two armies came to grips on the morning of 14th March, 1824, and the memorable battle of Nowshera ensued with all its fury. The death of Akali Phula Singh filled the Khalsa with 'anguish and ire,' and 'they rushed upon the foe like a devouring fire.' The *Ghazis* could not stand against the wrathful Sikhs, who were soon the masters of the field. Muhammad Azim Khan was very much dejected by this defeat, and he died of a broken heart before he could return to Kabul.

The victorious Maharaja entered Peshawar where Dost Muhammad Khan and Yar Muhammad Khan came in to offer their submission, apologized for their past conduct and promised to hold the Peshawar territory on his behalf on payment of a tribute of one lac and ten thousand rupees. The Maharaja accepted the offer and returned to Lahore in April 1824.

The agent of the Nizam of Hyderabad arrived at Lahore in 1826 with presents for the Maharaja, including a beautiful canopy. The Maharaja was so charmed with its beauty that he declared, in all humility, that it could only be used for the divine Darbar of the *Sacha*

*Padshah*, the True King, and passed it on to the *Darbar Sahib* Temple at Amritsar, where it is preserved upto the present day and is spread over the Holy Sikh Scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*, on great religious occasions.

The peace of the Peshawar frontier was next disturbed in 1827 by Sayyed Ahmed Shah of Bareilly, who led a *jihad* against the Sikhs with men and money collected from the eastern provinces of the East India Company. He appealed to the religious sentiments of the Pathans and raised the frontier tribes in rebellion. He was defeated in two battles in 1827 and was forced to fly into the hills, but, in the following year, the Sayyed pounced upon the city of Peshawar with a host of forty thousand fanatics, and took possession of it after the death of Yar Muhammad Khan in the struggle.

At Peshawar the crusaders rendered themselves very obnoxious, even to the Muslim population, by forcible marriages and by a *Fatwa* that, "All the widows in the country of Peshawar should be married within three days, otherwise the houses of their guardians will be set on fire." Another *Fatwa* was issued a little later in respect of the unmarried girls saying that "all virgin girls, not given away in marriage within twelve days, will be brought into the presence of our deputy for the crusaders." This raised a storm of indignation against the crusaders of the Sayyed and they lost their hold upon the people.

A Sikh force under the command of Prince Sher Singh and General Ventura was despatched in 1830 for the relief of Peshawar which was occupied after a short struggle. Sultan Muhammad Khan was appointed the Governor of the place. On the return of the expeditionary force to Peshawar, the Sayyed again sallied out of

his hilly recesses but only to be defeated and slain in May 1831 in a battle with the Sikhs. again sent by the Maharaja under Prince Sher Singh and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa.

In July 1831 Lieut. Alexander Burnes brought a present of five horses and an English coach from the King of England. The secret object of the mission in travelling by the Indus, however, was that 'the authorities both in England and India, contemplated that much information of a political and geographical nature might be acquired in such a journey.' He had received secret instructions from the Chief Secretary at Bombay that 'the depth of water in the Indus, the direction and breadth of the stream, its facilities for steam navigation, the supply of fuel on its banks, and the condition of the princes and people who possess the country bordering on it, are all points of the highest interest to Government.' The Maharaja received Burnes with all cordiality and he left for Simla on 21 August to acquaint Lord Bentinck with the result of his mission.

The Maharaja had seen through the secret object of the journey. He feared lest the East India Company should extend its *protection* to the state of Bahawalpur. Therefore, while Burnes was yet on his way to Lahore, the Maharaja took under his direct control the territory of Dera Ghazi Khan, that had been farmed out to the Nawab of Bahawalpur.

Apprehensive of future political exigencies, Lord William Bentinck arranged, through Captain Wade, a meeting with the Maharaja in October 1831 on the bank of the Sutlej at Rupar. "The object of the Governor-General was mainly to give to the world," says Cunningham, "an impression of complete unanimity between the two states."

While Bentinck was arranging a meeting with the Sikh ruler, Colonel Pottinger was sent by him on a politico-commercial mission to the Amirs of Sindh which resulted in the opening of the Indus to British traders by the Treaty of April 1832.

In December of the same year Captain Wade negotiated with the Maharaja a commercial treaty, signed on 26 December 1832, 'to regulate the navigation of the Indus and the collection of duties on merchandise. The levy of duties on the value and quantity of the goods, however, gave rise to misunderstandings, and in November 1834, it was arranged by a supplementary Treaty to substitute a toll, to be levied on all boats with whatever merchandise laden." This was further supplemented by the Agreement of 19 May 1839, when it was agreed to levy duty on the merchandise at one place and not on the boats.

Dr. Joseph Wolff, an old Christian missionary to the Jews and Muhammadans, paid a visit to Lahore in 1832 and was received by the Maharaja with proverbial cordiality. Wolff visited the Armenians there, and then issued proclamations without the knowledge and permission of the Maharaja, 'calling on the people to turn to Christ.' As the Maharaja was averse to disturbing the religious sentiments of his subjects, and it was feared, according to Lord William Bentinck, that 'Wolff would excite a revolution in the Punjab by his missionary zeal,' he sent him 'a polite letter of disapprobation' asking him, '*Een Sukhn na-bayad guft, na-bayad gasht,*' i.e., such words should neither be said nor circulated.

In the course of an interview, the Maharaja said

"Now I will try you with questions. Do you teach that we should not be afraid of anything?"

Wolff said, "Yes."



**Maharaja:** "Do you preach that we should trust in the Giver of all things?"

**Wolff** said, "Yes."

**Maharaja:** "Then why were you so afraid when you crossed the Indus over the suspension bridge on an elephant?"

By this the Maharaja referred to the screams of the *Padre* on the occasion of his crossing the river Indus on the back of an elephant over the suspension bridge when he entered into the Punjab.

**Wolff** replied, "Here your Majesty has certainly caught me, and all I can answer is that I am weak, and I have daily need to pray that God will show His power in my weakness."

**Ranjit Singh** said, "Now, I call this candour and uprightness; but answer me another thing. You say you travel about for the sake of religion; why then do you not preach to the English in Hindostan, who have no religion at all?"

And it is remarkable that when **Wolff**, on arriving at Simla, told his last observation to Lord William Bentinck, says the compiler of *Wolff's Travels and Adventures*, he said to **Wolff**, "This is alas! the opinion of all the natives all over India!"

In reply to a question of Dr. **Wolff** "How may one come nigh unto God?" which corresponded to the Christian inquiry, "How may one be saved," the Maharaja politely, but humorously, replied, "One can come nigh unto God by making an alliance with the British Government, as I lately did with the *Laard Nwab Sahib* (i. e., 'Governor-General') at Roopar."

The Maharaja praised him for his enthusiasm in his correspondence with Lord Bentinck, and permitted him to

proceed to Kashmir at the request of the Governor-General.

'In 1833 Shah Shuja, the ex-monarch of Kabul, who was living as a British pensioner at Ludhiana, undismayed by the failure of his previous attempts to recover his kingdom, resolved to make one more effort, and for this purpose he entered into a Treaty [dated 12 March, 1834] with Ranjit Singh, in which, in consideration of the assistance to be rendered by the Maharaja, he disclaimed all title to the territories in possession of the Maharaja on either side of the Indus. The Shah's expedition to Kabul ended in a disaster [January 1834], and he returned to his exile in Ludhiana.'

In view of the struggle between Shah Shuja, the claimant, and Dost Muhammad, the *de facto* ruler of Kabul, the Maharaja considered it advisable, in the interest of his Empire, to take Peshawar under his direct control, and Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh, son of the heir apparent Kharak Singh, was appointed the first Sikh Governor of Peshawar.

The removal of his brother Sultan Muhammad Khan's control from over Peshawar incensed the Barakzai King Dost Muhammad of Kabul, and he marched upon it in 1835 to drive the Sikhs away. But on the arrival of the Maharaja he found his own safety in flying away without striking a blow. The Maharaja now decided upon constructing two more strong forts on this frontier, and left Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa to complete the work. Sultan Muhammad and Pir Muhammad Khan were given jagirs of three lacs in Kohat and Hashtnagar, with a territory in the Doaba yielding a revenue of twenty-five thousand rupees.

The year 1837 is memorable for the marriage of Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh with the daughter of Sardar



Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh  
(1820—1849)



Sham Singh of Atari when the grandeur of the Sikh Empire and the proverbial generosity of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were seen at their best.

The battle of Jamrud, April 1837, was the last struggle of Dost Muhammad Khan for the possession of Peshawar. The disgrace of his ignominious flight in 1835 was preying upon his mind, and the construction of the fort of Jamrud by the Sikhs at the mouth of the Khyber Pass appeared to him as a standing monument of his helplessness. A large army of about 7000 horse, 2000 matchlockmen and 50 pieces of artillery, joined by some 20,000 Khyberis, therefore, advanced to the fort of Jamrud in April 1837. Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was then lying ill at Peshawar, and Jamrud was garrisoned by about 800 men. The result of the siege appeared to be gloomy when Hari Singh, ill as he was, came to their relief with about 10,000 men of all ranks, but he was fatally wounded in the battle and his force had to retire into the fort. In spite of all their efforts, however, the Afghans could neither occupy the fort of Jamrud nor dislodge the Sikhs from their position and gain possession of Peshawar. The shocking news of the death of Sardar Hari Singh filled the Maharaja with anguish, and within a few days his avenging army appeared on the plains of Peshawar. But in the meantime the Afghans, fearful of the advancing Sikhs, raised the siege and withdrew, without fighting, to Jalalabad. Tej Singh was appointed the Governor of Peshawar and was succeeded not long afterwards by General Avitabile.

The Maharaja was at Amritsar when he received the news of the birth of Prince Duleep Singh to Mai Jind Kaur (popularly known as Maharani Jindan) on 23 Bhadon 1894 Bk, 6-7 September, 1837.

It was at this time that the danger of the Russian

intrigues being pushed through Persia and Turkestan to the banks of the Indus frightened the East India Company, and, according to Lord Ellenborough, it could only be averted by having a friendly ruler on the throne of Kabul. Sir Alexander Burnes was, therefore, sent on a mission to Dost Muhammad Khan who now found an opportunity to demand of the English a guarantee against Ranjit Singh and active help in securing Peshawar. Ranjit Singh, on the other hand, would under no circumstances surrender Peshawar to Dost Muhammad. The friendship of the Maharaja was valued more by Auckland than that of Dost Muhammad who, he thought, 'was not to be trusted.' Moreover, he had an exaggerated idea of the influence of Shah Shujah in Afghanistan. He, therefore, decided to place this unwelcome pensioner of the British on the throne of Kabul, and sought the cooperation of the Maharaja. Ranjit Singh had no high opinion of the ruling capacity of Shah Shujah, 'whom he distrusted as much as the Governor-General distrusted Dost Muhammad..... But, notwithstanding these objections, he realised that if Shah Shujah was to be reinstated, it would be to his advantage to have a hand in the transaction.' He, therefore, gave his consent, and a tripartite treaty was concluded on 26 June, 1838, between the British Government, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Shah Shujah, to place the last named on the throne of Kabul.

The British force assembled at Ferozepore towards the end of 1838, when a meeting of Lord Auckland and Maharaja Ranjit Singh was arranged and hospitalities were interchanged between the English Viceroy and the Sikh ruler. Shah Shujah accompanied the British force via Bahawalpur, Sind and the Belan Pass to Kandhar, which was occupied on 24 April 1839, while his son

Prince Taimur, accompanied by Captain Wade, was escorted by the Sikh force through the Punjab. It was on his sick-bed that the Maharaja heard in May 1839 the news of the occupation of Kandhar by the British force.

The Maharaja had not been keeping good health for some time, but his iron constitution had enabled him to triumph over his ailment. In April 1839 'dropsy, attended by fever, made rapid inroads and defied the power of medicine,' and at last, on 15 Harh 1896 Bk., 27 June 1839, he passed away from the scene of his earthly activities, leaving a brilliant mark on the pages of history. Although Maharaja Ranjit Singh is no more and his dust returned to dust a century ago, yet he lives in the memory of his people, and in the songs of the youth and maidens of the country as a maker of the Punjab and as a National Hero of the Land of the Five Rivers.

(ii)

## A NEWS-LETTER REGARDING THE DEATH OF THE MAHARAJA<sup>1</sup>

(Translated from Marathi by Rao Bahadur  
MR. G. S. SARDESAI, B.A., KAMSHET, BOMBAY)

To these money was going to be distributed in charity. Maharaja Ranjit Singh caused Beliram to bring before him the famous *Koh-i-Noor* with a view to give it away in charity to the Brahmans; but no one would come forth to offer cash to the Brahmans and buy it from them; and as all the revenues of India would not have been sufficient to meet its price, the Maharaja was persuaded by several princes and persons to give up his intention [of disposing of the *Koh-i-Noor*]. Instead, he fixed a jagir of twenty-five thousand rupees for the Gurdwara (temple) of Amritsar<sup>2</sup> by way of charity. The Maharaja gave to Pandit Madhusudan the aigrette and the pearl necklace, which the Lord Governor-General had presented him a short while before. In this way gifts and charities continued to be made till the evening, while the Maharaja was alive<sup>3</sup>. The physicians were busy watching his pulse. The Queens took proper measures to guard the city, the jewellery stores and the armoury and to prevent strangers coming in. Similar measures were adopted by

1. During my visit to the Historical Museum, Satara (28th June-11th September, 1938), I saw the original of this Marathi news-letter there, placed at No. 22 of File No. 1, *Rumal* No. 6 of Section No. 1. A transcription of it was made for me by Mr. B. S. Bhusari, the Curator-in-charge. It is from this transcription that Rao Bahadur Mr. G. S. Sardesai has rendered it into English at my request.

The first sheet and the last portion, which probably contained the name of the writer and the date of writing, are missing. It, however, appears to have been written immediately after the occurrence. —

Ganda Singh.

2. The Maharaja also ordered that the horses and elephants kept for his personal use should be sent to the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.

3. For more details of gifts and charities, see *Undat-ul-Tawarikh* by Sohan Lal, Vol. III, pt. 5, 148-53.



Misra Shukla [Sukb Raj] at Amritsar. Sardar [Jamadar] Khushal Singh and Kharag Singh had written to [Kanwar] Sher Singh and asked him to come at once. In the meantime Maharaja Ranjit Singh departed this life<sup>1</sup>. Immediately upon this the Queens, Kanwar Kharag Singh and Raja Dhyan Singh, so also Jamadar Khushal Singh and others, raised loud lamentations of grief, tore away their hair, knocked their heads against the floor, on stones and bricks, so that they required medical attention during the night.

The gates of the fort were kept closed, but Kharag Singh sent an order round for the people to open their shops and carry on their pursuits. Kanwar Kharag Singh, Raja Dhyan Singh and others prepared a bier of Sandal-wood, and decorated it with gold flowers. Raja Dhyan Singh prepared to burn himself along with the dead Maharaja: but Kharag Singh and others threw down their turbans upon his feet, saying that the *raj* could not go on without him: and with great effort dissuaded him from his intended suicide. Dhyan Singh at last declared his resolve to repair to Kashi after a year, to which Rani Katauchan<sup>2</sup> gave her assent. This Queen is popularly known as *Gadan*. She is the daughter of Raja Sansar Chand of Catauch. She and Rani Bannat,<sup>3</sup> daughter of Mian Padam Singh of Bidrinupur [?] arrived near the dead, crying aloud. Then they all declared their resolve to burn themselves with their husband's body. Kanwar Kharag Singh tried his utmost to dissuade them from such a course; but they did not give up their intention.

1. On Thursday, 15 Harh 1896 Bk., 14 Rabi-us-Sani 1255 Hijri, 27 June, 1839.

2. The name of Rani Katauchan was Mahtab Devi. [*Punjab Chiefs*, 1890, ii 389.]

3. Her name according to Sohan Lal [*Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, iii, pt. 5, 515] and Lepel Griffin [*Punjab Chiefs*, 1890, ii 389] was Raj Devi.

Rani Katauchan held the hand of Dhyan Singh and placing it upon the dead Maharaja's chest, made him swear aloud that he would not act inimically to Kharag Singh and that he would do nothing that would hurt the interests of the State. Dhyan Singh took the oath, whereupon the Queen similarly got Kharag Singh to place his hand upon the dead Maharaja's chest and swear that he would not act against Dhyan Singh, and would take no account of complaints brought against him. If he violated this promise, he swore that he would be committing the sin of killing a thousand cows.

Thereupon Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh bathed the dead body in the Ganges water and placed it upon the bier, when Raja Dhyan Singh, and Raja Hira Singh, and Khushal Singh and Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia and... Ahluwalia and... and ... and the Wakil of Teira, Harsarandas, &c., all placed their shawls upon the dead body. It was then carried away to the garden in the fort near the Hazuri Bag, close to the place where the Wah-Guru<sup>1</sup> lives. Thereafter the four Queens, attired in their full grand dresses and with valuable ornaments on, walked to the spot, distributing on the way clothes, ornaments and money to Brahmans and to those who sang praises of Nanak. When the body was placed on the pyre, Rani Katauchan sat by its side, picked up the Maharaja's head on her lap; the other three Queens, surrounded by seven maid-servants took their places around. They all showed cheerful faces and great contentment. At ten o'clock, when the Brahmans assembled and declared the appointed moment, Kanwar Kharag Singh set fire to the pyre.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Lord of

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1. The Dera Sahib, where Guru Arjan was cremated.

2. Friday, 16 Harh-1896 BK., 28 June 1899.

the Punjab and his four Queens and seven maid-servants were quickly burnt away. A few drops of rain from the gathering clouds fell upon the raging fire, but as it quickly stopped, the whole crowd that had assembled attempted to jump into it, but were with difficulty prevented. When the affair was finished, Kanwar Kharag Singh and the Sardars and others had a bath in the tank and assembled in the Hazuri Bag. Then fifteen shawls and twenty mohars were given to the devotees of the Nanak sect,<sup>1</sup> and a thousand Rupees were distributed to the poor. Kharag Singh sat down in awful distress<sup>2</sup> ...

(Incomplete)

1. Those who sang hymns from the Sikh Scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*.

2. For a more detailed account, see *Umrat-ul-Tawarikh*, Vol. III, pt. 5, 154-6; *Thirty-five Years in the East* by Honighberger, 96-100.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE CONSOLIDATION OF SIKH MISALS**

**(By SITA RAM KOHLI, M.A., PRINCIPAL, GOVERNMENT COLLEGE,  
HOSHIARPUR.)**

In the opening years of the nineteenth century when young Ranjit Singh was just entering upon his career of conquest and consolidation, the Punjab was split up from the Jumna to the Sutlej into a large number of small independent principalities and chieftainships of Sikh, Rajput, Pathan and Muslim chiefs. The territory in the possession of the Sikhs lay, for the most part, in the country between the Jumna and the Indus, and was bounded on the north by a range of hills that extend in an oblique line across the Punjab, on the east by the districts of Karnal and Panipat, on the south-east by the Agra district, on the south by Multan, and on the west by the Indus. Within these wide limits as many as twelve Sardars, or Misaldars as they were called, held their estates, each independent of the other. The boundaries of these estates were so inconstant and shifting that any attempt to define them with even a show of precision is bound to meet with failure. All that is possible is to indicate the approximate limits of a Misaldar's jurisdiction and to locate his principal seat of authority. Some of these towns where the Chiefs had established their headquarters were Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kaithal and Ambala in Sarhind; Kapurthala, Phagwara, Banga, Hoshiarpur and Hariana in the East Jullundur; Batala, Qadian, Sri Hargobindpur, Lahore and Amritsar in the

Bari Doab ; Gujranwala, Gujrat, Wazirabad and Sialkot in the Rechna and the Chaj Doabs; and Pind Dadankhan, Dhanni and Rawalpindi in the Sind Sagar Doab.

Interspersed within the Sikh dominions there were a few Muhammadan Chiefships like that of Kasur, Attock and Mankera (Mianwali, etc.).

The hilly tract in the north was mostly inhabited by the Dogra Rajputs and comprised, among others, small principalities like Suket, Mandi, Kulu, Kangra, Basohli, Chamba, Nurpur and Jammu, with an aggregate fighting strength which may be estimated at about 2,500 men.

Kashmir and the adjoining territories comprising Punchh and Rajauri on one side and Pakhli, Dhamtaur and Hazara on the other side, were governed by the Afghan rulers with a fighting strength of not less than 7,000 horse and foot. In the north-west of the Punjab, the Derajat, Tank, Bannu and Peshawar under their Pathan governors formed provincial governments attached to the Durrani empire. The nominal force maintained for the support of these provinces was about 3,000 men, but the entire Pathan population was warlike and could be depended upon to supply an undefined number of fighting men who could at once take the field. Again, in the south of the Sikh dominion, Bahawalpur and Multan were two powerful independent Muslim provinces which maintained between them a force of 8,000 picked men who could give a good account of themselves in the open field. Across the Jumna, the East India Company had secured a strong foothold by occupying the Imperial cities of Delhi and Agra in A. D. 1804.

Within the limits of the Punjab, between the Jhelum and the Indus, there was a large number of individual zamindars and other warlike clans organised more or less

on a feudal basis such as the Gakhars of Jhelum, the Maliks of Shahpur, the Baluches of Sahiwal and Khushab, and the Sials of Jhang. They all possessed armed retinues and, feeling secure in their strongholds, could defy any encroachment of their territory. They could always put into the field some 3,000 men, but at a pinch the number could, without difficulty, be doubled.

Briefly, such was the political state of the Punjab when Ranjit Singh appeared on the scene. The dominions of the Khalsa, including those of Ranjit Singh's own, were thus hemmed in by a ring of independent powers: Bahawalpur, Multan, Derajat, Mankera, Peshawar, Kashmir, Jammu and Kangra, with the British beyond the Jumna—none of which was either friendly to the Sikhs or shared their political aspirations. Worse still was the fact that the Sikh Misaldars themselves were engaged in mutual warfare caused by personal jealousies and ill-will of the Sardars. Blinded with selfishness they ignored the common interests of the Panth. That happy generation of selfless workers who, by working in concert with one another succeeded in wresting the power from the hands of the Pathan and the Mughal rulers, had passed away. With them, too, had vanished the spirit of co-operation: and in its place the unfortunate spirit of self-aggrandisement had entered into the brotherhood. Combinations and counter-combinations of the Misaldars were formed to defeat or even to destroy the opposing factions. This sad drama was being staged throughout the closing decade of the eighteenth century, with the result that almost all the actors in the play were left thoroughly exhausted. It was obvious even to a casual observer that, if this state of internal conflicts and discords were allowed to continue, the day was not far off when their ambitious neighbours on

the west or on the east, on the south or on the north, would nibble away these mutually warring principalities and eventually absorb them one by one into their own possessions. The question with the Khalsa, indeed, was one of "to be or not to be," and the one great and supreme need of the moment was a really gifted leader who could clearly visualise the situation and save the dissolving confederacy from its rapid ruin.

Luckily the Khalsa found one in Ranjit Singh. Born in 1780, Ranjit Singh lost his father in 1790, that is, before he had completed the tenth year of his age. Thus thrown upon his own resources during his tender years, Ranjit Singh developed those rare virtues of self-reliance, love of adventure, and sound judgment of men and things which stood him in good stead in later years. He visualised the situation, and feeling the urge of necessity set to work to save the Khalsa by bringing the various independent chiefships under one flag. There was to be no half-way house. The Misals had done their work. They had outlived their usefulness. An independent Misaldar had no room in Ranjit Singh's scheme. He must make way before the united power of the Khalsa, and be satisfied to occupy a subordinate position in the new dispensation of things, if the Panth was to be saved from the impending danger. An ambitious plan, indeed, for a lad of twenty to entertain! But those who have read the previous history of the Khalsa would know that Ranjit Singh's plan was not altogether beyond the bounds of possibility. The movement had already undergone substantial changes during the course of its history extending over a period of more than two centuries and a half. Founded originally as a theocracy, it developed into theocratic commonwealth and the latter organization had in its turn given place to one of the type

of feudal chiefship. From feudal chiefship to monarchy was only one step forward in the process of natural and even irresistible evolution. Again, we must remember that at each turn from one phase to another it was the effort or rather a gigantic effort on the part of one or more gifted leaders that had brought about the change. And Ranjit Singh was one such gifted leader who could give the right lead to his community.

There are not wanting those who have doubted the wisdom of Ranjit Singh and even questioned the sincerity of his motives, but we must judge his actions in the light of the circumstances under which he was called upon to act. Does the result justify his policy? Was it one which centred round his personal ambition? Was it not rather based on the essential elements of constructive statesmanship? As we all know, under his political or military leadership, the Sikhs were not only able to stem the rising tide of the dangers which confronted them at the time, but they also eventually succeeded in establishing a large and powerful kingdom, stretching from the banks of the Sutlej across the plains of the Punjab, right up to the passes leading to the Hindu Kush and the Sulaiman Ranges. The full significance of this achievement can only be realised when it is remembered that, for 700 years beginning from the eleventh century, that is to say, ever since the defeat of Raja Jaipal by Mahmud of Ghazni, the tide of invasion had flowed constantly and steadily eastwards from Central Asia into India, and it was reserved for the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh not only to dam the flood, but actually to roll it back across the Indus. At Nowshera, Peshawar, Hazara, and other strongholds in their own homelands were the Pathans worsted so completely that, in pain and despair, they are said, on more than one occasion, to have exclaimed



"*Khuda ham Khalsa Shudah* (God himself has become Khalsa)."

This was not all. In the north, Ranjit Singh did not only bring under his sway the whole of the fertile valley of Kashmir, but also pushed his conquests as far as Ladakh, while in the south his frontiers ran alongside the territories of the Amirs of Sind. In this connection, it is worthy of note that, realising the strength of the British who were his neighbours on the other side of the Sutlej, he did everything possible to avoid a collision with them. At times he yielded to them with no small reluctance, but on no account was he prepared to risk a clash of arms with a well-organised and greatly superior power. He even winked at the establishment of a sort of British protectorate over the trans-Sutlej Sikh states who were allied to him by the strong affinities of faith. He had his eyes fixed on one great central object of his rule, namely, the union and consolidation of the Khalsa Misals into a strong, compact kingdom, with natural defensible frontiers on all sides. He was not unaware of what was happening in Europe at the time, and although he had great confidence in his own strength and resourcefulness, he possessed enough political wisdom and sagacity to realise his own limitations, and not to embark upon what was expected at best to be a perilous adventure involving a breakdown of his grand scheme.

Thus it was that, by dint of single-minded devotion to his plans formed early in his life and carried out with thoughtful, patient and persistent energy through twenty years, Ranjit Singh was at last able to found a kingdom as large as France. It brought him an annual revenue of over three crores of rupees, besides providing handsome and lucrative careers for thousands of Punjab youths in the civil, military and political departments of the Khalsa

Government. Thanks to the peace which now followed a long period of anarchy and confusion, indigenous industries were revived. The formation of an ordered government was attended with a marked development of various new industries, notably those catering to the wants and needs of a well-equipped army numbering a hundred-thousand men belonging to all arms of the service. Swords, powder, cannon, shells, muskets, bullets, saddlery and accoutrements of all sorts—all began to be turned out in factories set up by the state. At the same time, trade and commerce flourished, and there were visible on all sides signs of growing prosperity, contentment and the uninterrupted flow of quiet civic life.

It must be said to the credit of the Maharaja that, in selecting his own ministers as well as other high civil and military officers of his government, his choice was never limited to his own community. Indeed, the one criterion which he set before himself in making appointments to high positions was the fitness of the incumbent for the duties of his office and not the community to which he belonged. Hindus, including even Brahmans, Muhammadans, Sikhs and Europeans were appointed to most responsible posts in the army, and all acquitted themselves creditably well. Some of his ablest and most trustworthy generals were taken from the classes that have since been dubbed non-martial. This explains the cosmopolitan character of the Maharaja's court and the great personal regard and esteem with which his memory is still cherished by the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike.

## THE ABOLITION OF THE *GURMATT*A AND THE MISALS

(BY TEJA SINGH, M. A.)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh is often blamed for the abolition of the old institutions of *Gurmatta* and the *Misals*. Upto 1809 the Akal Takht, Amritsar, had combined political power with religious suzerainty, and had always been looked up to as the greatest centre of Panthic control. It was there also that relations with foreign powers were discussed and treaties signed on behalf of the *Sarbat Khalsa*.

The last *Gurmatta* was held in 1809, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh abolished it so far as political affairs were concerned, and began to take action on the advice of non-Sikh as well as Sikh counsellors.

This abolition of the *Gurmatta* in the political sphere was a long-awaited fulfilment of the Sikh idea, the secularisation of service. ... It began with the Guru's free kitchen which was open to all. The civic sense was further developed among the Sikhs when the Fourth and the Fifth Gurus set the example by helping Hindus and Muslims as well as Sikhs to set up their business in the Guru's market (Guru-ka-Bazar) in Amritsar, and Guru Hargobind founded cities and built temples and mosques at his own expense. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was only following in their footsteps when he took measures to rule, not as a Sikh monarch but as a common ruler of Hindus and Muslims as well as of Sikhs. There was a time when Muslims regarded themselves as foreigners and Hindus were down-trodden and looked upon as nobodies in the political sphere. In those days the Sikhs alone

were the true nationals, and were right in acclaiming "the Khalsa shall rule" (*Raj karega Khalsa*).

When Ranjit Singh came to the throne, he wanted to make Hindus and Muslims feel that they were as much the people of the land as the Sikhs, and had the same right to be consulted as his own co-religionists. He therefore abolished the rule of the Akal Takht so far as political affairs were concerned, and began to take the advice of ministers who were drawn from the ranks of all communities. The *Gurmatta* of the Akal Takht had no place in such a secular scheme. It would have put a great strain on the loyalty of his Hindu and Muslim subjects, if he had still tried to rule over them by the religious edicts issued from the Mecca of the Sikhs.

His abolition of the Sikh Missals can also be explained from the same point of view. The Misals were Sikh powers, their leaders always being Sikhs and their decisions always taken by religious *Gurmattas*. Such a system was necessary as long as Hindus were politically dead and Muslims were aliens, but now that the right of citizenship was extended to them and they were to form a respectable and self-conscious part of the Punjab nation, the rule of a communal federation over them had grown out of date, and was rightly brought to an end by a power that was to be called the *Sircar* of all. The Misals in the beginning had developed the Sikh character to a high degree and the noblest features of the Sikh organization appeared in those days; but about the time of Ranjit Singh they had lost their old efficacy and the selfishness and internecine quarrels had reduced the democratic forms to a mere farce.

After the abolition of political *Gurmatta*, religious *Gurmatta* was allowed to continue, but as the occasions on which it had to be used became rarer and public spirit being dead, it fell into the hands of illiterate fanatics or the irresponsible incumbents of temples, who made it degenerate out of all recognition.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE KHALSA ARMY

(BY SITA RAM KOHLI, M.A.)

#### **The Khalsa in Pre-Ranjit Singh Days.**

*Early Tactics of War—Guerilla Tactics.*—The ideal of a Khalsa Army, as such, may be said to have been created by Guru Gobind Singh and fostered and promoted later by the Guru's secular successor Banda Bahadur. But during the period of three decades of years following the execution of Banda, the Khalsa lost its old solidarity and became considerably disorganised and weakened. They were left without a secular or spiritual leader who could keep them together. And to add to their misfortunes, as it were, the government of the day was not slow to enforce repressive measures against them. The enormity of their sufferings increased, and some of the saddest events in Sikh history, indeed, took place during this period. The followers of the Guru were literally driven from pillar to post. Several hundreds of them, we are told by the author of the *Panth Parkash*, chose to leave their homes and lead a homeless life in jungles, hills and deserts rather than abjure their faith. But these troubles eventually proved a blessing in disguise. Compelled by economic necessity these exiles would often swoop on the villages at the foot of the hills or on the skirts of the deserts and carry away all that they could. The government, on the other hand, organised special moving columns of light cavalry

*Gashti Fauj*) and set them in their pursuit. The Sikh exiles, therefore, almost to a man, were forced to equip themselves for offensive and defensive fight. The horse and the musket thus became the constant companions of a Sikh. In the course of these unequal conflicts the exiled bands of Sikhs were led to develop novel devices, subterfuges and methods of fighting and strategy (guerilla warfare) which stood them in good stead in subsequent years.

*Early Organization.*—The life and death struggle into which the Sikhs were plunged during these years did not prove altogether unfruitful. It produced some of the very capable military leaders who led them on the bolder and more successful enterprises and also conferred upon them the blessing of military discipline. Amongst these may be mentioned Nawab Kapur Singh, Buddha Singh Sukkerchakkia and Bagh Singh Hallowalia who are credited with having conceived the idea of establishing a sort of military organization. The small groups of tens and twenties into which the Sikhs were divided were all merged (1734 A.D.) into two larger groups called the *Buddha Dal* and the *Taruna Dal*, i.e. groups of the older and the younger folks each having a recognised leader of its own. The author of the *Shamsher Khalsa* estimates the total strength of the Khalsa Dal between 1,500 and 2000 men.

*The Swelling of the Khalsa Ranks.*—The invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 threw the whole province of the Punjab into utter confusion. The author of the *Ibrat Nama*, which is almost a contemporary account, gives us to understand that for a considerable time even after the departure of Nadir law and order could not be restored. Pillage and anarchy became the order of the

day. Such a confused state of affairs was too tempting for the intrepid and adventurous spirits, and the ranks of the Khalsa began rapidly to swell. There was, indeed, no dearth of soldiers in the country. The art of war was still in its infancy. Primitive weapons like the sword, the spear, the lance and the dagger which demanded little or no technical skill were still in general use, so that every able-bodied man was a potential soldier. A daredevil young man did not find it difficult to collect around him a number of equally bold and ambitious men from his village or clan and offer his services to a chief on such terms as he could secure for himself and his men. The chiefs were, on their own part, only too glad to welcome accession to their strength. As many as sixty-five group leaders, or *Jathedars* as they were called, appeared on the scene, and established their respective *derahs* or camps in open defiance of the ruling authority.

*The Dal Khalsa 1748.*—There was no unity of command and the various *Jathedars* were scarcely, if at all, combined for a collective purpose. The anarchical condition of the country, however, invited and held out hopes of greater success with organised military operations. Some of the more talented and far-seeing Sikh leaders were not slow to realise the necessity no less than the advantage of organizing the entire resources of the community. The aged leader Nawab Kapur Singh, who had a large share in the earlier organization of the Buddha and the Taruna Dals, was still active and commanded the highest esteem and regard amongst his co-religionists. In consultation with other senior members of the Panth he succeeded in persuading the group leaders who had gathered together in Amritsar, on the occasion of the Baisakhi festival, to pool their resources for national service. The entire fighting strength of the Khalsa was thus brought to serve the



common cause and was given the name of the *Dal Khalsa* or the National Army of the Sikhs. The chief command of the united forces was now entrusted to Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, a daring and a gifted soldier. Some sort of re-grouping of the *Jathas* was also made and many of the minor groups were merged into bigger ones, so that the entire Dal was distributed into eleven big divisions, each with its distinctive badge and banner.

*Beginning of the Territorial Power of the Sikhs—the Rakhi System*—A fair amount of unity and understanding was, thus, established among the Jathedars, and each felt readily inclined to assist his neighbour. The political condition of the country proved of further help and assistance to them. The repeated invasions of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1748--61) had thrown the Punjab into utter confusion and removed even the last vestiges of authority from the country. This unfortunate Province was thus exposed to the free-booting excursions of brigands and highwaymen. It was literally the rule of "Might is Right". Poor peasantry was being ground down by the big zamindars, revenue failed, trade and industry came to a stand still. The peace-loving section of the population were in dire need of protection and failing the government they would welcome this protection from whatever quarter it came. The only organised community, well-equipped for purposes of offensive and defensive fighting who could extend this protection at the time were the Sikhs with their Dal or the National Army. Their gifted leaders thus seized another opportunity and by offering to the people the necessary protection laid the foundations of their future territorial and political power in the Province. One or more units of the National Army were detailed for the purpose and placed in charge of the territory that was brought under

their system of protectorate. Arrangements were also made for reinforcing these divisions in the case of necessity by way of building small fortresses and keeping garrisons therein. Small slices of territory in four out of the five doabs of the Punjab were thus taken under the *Rakhi* system and a regular source for the maintenance of the National Army was thus secured—the usual rate being  $1/5$  of the revenue of the protected territory at the time of each harvest. These slices of territory served as so many tentacles that eventually helped in spreading the territorial sway of the Khalsa; and before the century closed twelve of the big Sikh leaders had established themselves as masters of important principalities in the Province.

*Change due in the old system.* — During the closing years of the eighteenth century when the Sikh leaders were busy in establishing their authority over the province of the Panjab, the Indian princes, in the rest of the country were meeting with a new experience in the methods and strategy of warfare. The use of artillery and the employment of large masses of disciplined infantry by Europeans in India had rendered the old tactics of war ineffectual. They had, in fact, clearly shown that cavalry could not long hold out against a steady fire of guns or muskets. Accordingly some of the Indian princes like Sultan Tippu, Mahadaji Sindhia and Jawsant Rao Holkar had already reformed their respective armies on the European model. Ranjit Singh, too, when he came to power perceived the advantages of the new arms, namely the artillery and infantry. Himself being one of the free-lancers and like them having been brought up in the military traditions of his race, he soon came to realize that even if the Sikhs had been successful against the Mughals and the Durranis, it was not possible for them to be able to hold their own against a European

nation unless they gave up their indigenous weapons and old tactics of war and adopted the new ones in their place. The close proximity of the British on the other side of the Sutlej was a constant reminder to Ranjit Singh that, brave and intrepid though his men were, they could be no match against an equal body of soldiers of the East India Company who were trained in western methods and strategy of war. He was convinced that a change in the training and discipline of his army had become imperative and that unless it was done not only would the efficiency and value of his army remain unchanged, but their very existence might be jeopardised at a critical moment. Excellent material, indeed, he had with him. What was required was patient, persistent and earnest endeavour on his part to persuade his people to accept the change. How far did Ranjit Singh succeed in his efforts could be known from the study of the military records of his government, as well as from other facts of the history of his reign.<sup>1</sup>

## II

### Ranjit Singh's Infantry

*Reforms introduced by Ranjit Singh.*—The Khalsa army under Ranjit Singh presents an entirely new picture. The change is distinctly perceptible in three important directions, namely the organization, the equipment, and the mode of fighting. The first and foremost difference that strikes one, on a comparison of the *Khalsa* in the eighteenth century and the Sikh army under Ranjit Singh, is in their composition. The two branches, namely the infantry and

<sup>1</sup> In what manner and on what lines Ranjit Singh remodelled his army has been described at some length by the present writer in a number of articles contributed to the *Journal of Indian History*, Madras, between 1922 and 1936.

the artillery, which were not considered important in the eighteenth century, now came to be regarded as the mainstay of military strength. And, as may be seen from the table given in later pages, these two branches show a considerable increase in strength. This change in composition was the outcome, as already remarked, of a general change of opinion regarding military tactics and the efficiency of various arms. A steady fire from guns or muskets was considered more conducive to success than irregular attacks of cavalry or a guerrilla mode of warfare. Again, the maintenance of a standing national army, regularly paid from the treasury, displaced the old system of feudal levies by the chiefs. It was indeed a radical change in the old order of things, and the scrapping, though gradual at first, became complete in the end.

*Infantry—Its early history.*—The Infantry, as the previous military history of the country reveals, never became popular in India, either with the Mughals or with the Sikhs and the Marathas. A foot soldier was held in poor esteem, and little or no consideration was shown him. In the time of Akbar he was included in the Pay Lists with the door-keepers, the palace-guards, the letter-carriers and the palki-bearers. Similary with the Sikhs in Pre-Ranjit Singh times, Infantry was mostly relegated to the position of garrisoning forts. But, as already explained, the prevailing views about military tactics and the usefulness of different arms in time of war were undergoing a thorough change. And Ranjit Singh, in common with other Indian princes, shared this view and applied himself to the task of raising trained and disciplined battalions of infantry.

In the beginning the Sikhs would not get themselves enrolled as foot-soldiers, and the Maharaja invited the

*Poorbias* and the other deserters from the E. I. Company's troops for recruitment both as instructing officers and soldiers. It is said, that in order to make the service popular, the Maharaja himself took to attending parades in person and extending considerable favours to infantry men. Further, for those who joined this branch the conditions of service were made specially attractive with the result that in the course of time Infantry Service became popular with the Sikhs and with other communities of the Punjab. An examination of the Pay Rolls upto Sambat 1870 (1813 A. D.) shows that the bulk of the infantry men consisted of Hindustanies, Gurkhas, and Afghans; whereas those of Sambat 1875 (1818 A. D.) and onwards reveal that the Sikh element was becoming more predominant.<sup>1</sup> In 1838, i.e., a year previous to the demise of the Maharaja, the total strength of the Infantry branch stood at 26,600 men with a monthly salary at Rs. 2,27,600. A glance at the Pay lists reveals another interesting fact and that is that both the regimental officers, and the rank and file were indiscriminately filled with Sikhs, Hindus and Mohammedans. There were also a number of European officers: French, English and Italians, etc. So long as one was efficient in his calling the Maharaja made no distinction on the basis of creed or community either in giving service or promotion.

In regard to the organization and constitution of the Infantry branch it may be said that Ranjit Singh bestowed assiduous attention to it. The recruits were, in the beginning, trained and drilled by the ex-Naiks of the Company's troops, but later on<sup>2</sup> the Maharaja gave

1. The Pay Rolls of Ranjit Singh's army (1811-1849) are preserved intact in the archives of the Punjab Government and were arranged and catalogued by me in 1918-19.—S.R.K.

2. It should be borne in mind that the Maharaja had made all his important conquests before 1832, when the European officers joined his

employment to a number of able European officers like Ventura, Avitabile, Allard, Court, and others, who considerably raised the efficiency of his troops.

*Constitution of an Infantry battalion.*—As in the modern system, in Infantry a battalion was the administrative and manoeuvring unit which contained about 800 men and was commanded by an officer of the rank of a commandant called *Kumedan* (Fr. Commandant). Next to the Kumedan were the Adjutant and the Major who assisted him in his duties. To each battalion was attached a *Munshi* (clerk), whose business was to call and check the rolls, *Mutassadi* or accountant who kept the regimental accounts, and a *Granthi* who recited the Sikh scriptures. The Granth Sahib was kept generally near the regimental flag.

Each battalion was supplied with a number of camp followers or *Amla*. It usually consisted of *Khalasi*, *Saqqā* (water-carrier), *Sarban* (camel-driver), *Gharyali*, *Jhandabardar* (flag-bearer), *Beldar* (spadesman), *Mistri* (smith), *Najjar* (mason) and *Langri* (cook). Light tents and beasts of burden were allowed in a fixed proportion to each battalion of infantry.

*Cost of maintaining a battalion of Infantry.*—The following statement prepared from the records of Ranjit Singh's government will enable us to form an idea of the annual cost incurred to maintain a battalion of infantry. The statement is based on the scheduled rates or *Ain* sanctioned by the Maharaja in sambat 1884 (A. D. 1927-28) in the case of a *Paltan* or battalion of infantry to be raised and maintained by S. Hari Singh Nalwa in lieu of the jagir

given to him.

(A)	Strength and Salary	per annum	632 men	Rs. 56,892
	(i) Combatants	576	Rs. 4,447 per month	
	(ii) Non-combatants	56	Rs. 264 „ „	
	(iii) Contingencies		Rs. 30 „ „	
	Total 632 men		Rs. 4,741 per month	
(B)	Estimated cost of equipment			Rs. 12,108
	(i) Uniform after every two years.			
	(ii) Tents after every three years.			
	(iii) Animals for carriage and transport.			
	(iv) Ammunition and magazine equipment.			
	(v) Repairs.			
	(vi) Contingencies.			
(C)	To make up for deficiency in the income from Jagir and other sources of income			Rs. 13,100
	Total estimated cost of maintenance of Infantry battalion 632 strong			Rs. 82,100

To meet these expenses Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was given a Jagir of the annual value of Rs.67,100 which, together with the estimated income of Rs. 15,000 per year on account of deductions for kit and clothing from the pay of servicemen, would make the total of Rs. 82,100.

The details regarding equipment, etc., are equally interesting and instructive and enable us to form an idea of the prevailing prices of various articles required for the Military department.

(i)	O/C of uniform of men and officers	...	Rs. 3,596
(ii)	„ <i>Douls-o-toshdan</i> (saddles and leather-pouches etc.)	...	...
	(a) Rs. 1-8-0 per piece	...	790
(iii)	„ <i>Tu/ang</i> (matchlocks) @ Rs. 16 per piece	...	7,680
(iv)	„ Tents	...	1,100
(v)	„ <i>Jhanda</i> (flags)	...	30
(vi)	„ 2 banners ( <i>Nishan</i> )	...	50
(vii)	„ Cooking utensils	...	250
(viii)	„ Musical instruments	...	200
(ix)	„ Camels for transport @ Rs. 60 per camel	...	3,000
	Total	...	16,526*

1. The details under this item reveal that a good leather belt would cost -/8/- per piece and that the amount sanctioned for the uniform of (i) the commandant was Rs. 100; (ii) the Adjutant, Rs. 50; (iii) the Major, Rs. 25; (iv) the Sutedar and Jamadar, Rs. 30 each; and (v) the Havaldar and Private, Rs. 5 each.

2. This total exceeds the estimated cost of Rs. 12,108. These figures represent actual expenditure incurred by the Sardar on the items under the head (B).

Further details given in connection with the pay of men and officers of this battalion will be found equally interesting :

(A) Combatants :

		Rs.
(i) Commandant	One	@ 100 p. m.
(ii) Adjutant	"	60 "
(iii) Major	"	15 "
(iv) Subedar	5 men	105 "
(v) Havaldar	20 men	220 "
(vi) Naik	20 men	180 "
(vii) Quarter Havaldar	5 men	40 "
(viii) Nishanchi (banner-bearer)	2 men	24 "
(ix) Privateers	505 men	3,535 "
Total		<u>4,2791</u>

(B) Establishment or Non-Combatants :

		Rs.
(i) Langri (Cooks)	10 men	@ 40 p. m.
(ii) Saqqa (water carriers)	10 men	40 "
(iii) Sarban (Camel drivers)	7 men	35 "
(iv) Jhanda bardar (flagsmen)	4 men	16 "
(v) Gharyali (gongsmen)	4 men	21 "
(vi) Khalasi	7 men	36 "
(vii) Smiths and carpenters	4 men	30 "
(viii) Boldars (diggers, etc.)	7 men	42 "
(ix) Harkara (runner)	one man	4 "
Total		364

*Strength and efficiency of Sikh Infantry.*—The following table is compiled from the records of Ranjit Singh's Government and is intended to show how far the Maharaja eventually succeeded in making Infantry service popular with his men.

Year.	Strength.	Monthly
		R
1876 (1819 A. D.)	7,748	60.
1890 (1823 A. D.)	11,681	84
1885 (1828 A. D.)	15,825	1,16
1890 (1893 A. D.)	20,577	1,67
1895 (1898 A. D.)	26,617	2,27
1900 (1843 A. D.)	37,791	4,83
1902 (1845 A. D.)	53,962	5,70

1. It will be noticed that the estimated strength of combatants is 576 men @ Rs 4,447 per mensem, whereas the actual strength of the battalion was 560 men @ Rs. 4,279 per mensem.



Ranjit Singh's greatest concern, as evident from the account of his conversation reproduced in their journals by European visitors at his court, was to raise the efficiency of his regular army and to bring his regulars up to the level of the East India Company's troops. He was unremitting in his care to keep this army in a most efficient state of equipment and training. Be it said to the credit of the Sikhs also that they soon mastered the complicated manoeuvres of a European army and all the tactics of European warfare. Between the years 1842 and 1845, when almost all the European Officers had left the service, the Indian officers maintained the discipline and efficiency of the *Khalsa*. Furthermore, in 1845-46, when their efficiency was put to an acid test during the war with the British, they were found equal to the occasion.

### III

#### ARTILLERY

*Artillery: its history.*—The Sikhs previous to the time of Ranjit Singh had not familiarized themselves with the use of heavy pieces of artillery, although they used to employ occasionally small guns called *Zamburas* or Swivels in their warfare. But they placed their chief reliance on cavalry, and right up to the close of the eighteenth century they could not shake off their belief in its effectiveness. Ranjit Singh, as we have had occasion to observe before, had a wonderful insight and intuition in matters military. As in the case of infantry so in that of artillery he recognised their use and importance and was bent on perfecting both the arms for his military service. Accordingly when the infantry had been put through its facings in modern methods of drill and warfare, the artillery received the Maharaja's attention, and in the course of time

he succeeded in organizing a regular ordnance department.

As in the case of infantry so in that of artillery Ranjit Singh had to import both officers and gunners from outside the Punjab during the earlier years of the organization of this branch of his army service. The pay rolls of the first few years reveal that the bulk of the personnel of artillery consisted of Non-Punjabis, mostly the Poorbias. But the Maharaja was anxious to train his own countrymen as gunners. It was fortunate that the Sikhs did not evince any strong aversion to artillery, as they had done when they were enrolled and drilled as infantry men. They had already changed their ancestral bow and spear for the matchlock in quite recent times. The Maharaja, therefore, met with practically no opposition on the part of the Sikhs who required but little persuasion to become proficient in the use of guns. He imported a number of Europeans and employed them on liberal salaries for the purpose of instructing his countrymen.

*The European Officers of Ranjit Singh's Artillery.*—Of the Europeans whom the Maharaja took into his service at one time or another, the most conspicuous figure in the Artillery was Claude Auguste Court. Another, though not so brilliant, was Alexander Gardner. He was popular with his troops and was commonly known as Gardauna Sahib<sup>1</sup>.

Under the guidance of these and other officers, the Sikhs became excellent gunners, and the Maharaja's artillery became a highly organised and efficient arm of his military service. Sir C. Gough and Cunningham both bear testi-

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1. Ranjit Singh also gave stipends to his countrymen to acquire what little practical knowledge was available in India in those days. One of these men was Mian Qadir Bakhsh—grandfather of the late Mr. Justice Shah Din—whom the Maharaja had sent to Ludhiana. On his return home he wrote a work in Persian on Gunnery entitled *Miftah-ul-Qila*.



Col. Alexander Gardner  
(1801—1877)



mony to the fact that the Sikh guns were served with great rapidity and precision during the Anglo-Sikh wars.

*Organization.*—The *topkhana* or the artillery department was divided into different sections—section (i) comprising *topkhana Jinsi* or mixed batteries, viz, *yati* or those driven by bullocks, *aspi* or those driven by mules and horses, and *hoboth* or the Howitzer; section (ii) comprising *topkhana aspi* or purely horse batteries; and section (iii) comprising *Zamburas* and *Ghubaras* or camel swivels and mortars.

The organization and internal economy of a battery very much resembled that of an infantry battalion. The number of guns in a *jinsi* battery varied from ten to twenty-five and sometimes even more; while in a horse battery it ranged from six to ten pieces, the usual number being eight. A *derah Zamburakkhana* comprised about sixty swivels. The average strength of a ten-gun battery was two hundred and fifty men, including non-combatants. The command of a battery was held by an officer of the rank of Commandant assisted by an Adjutant and a Major. From an examination of the list of establishment of each battery, it appears that a battery was divided into sections of two guns each. We find that the number of *Jhandabardars* or flag-bearers and of the *gharyalis* or strikers of the hour-gong varied from four to five in a battery of eight to ten guns, although the number of the remaining staff of the establishment, i. e. beldars, mistris, saqqas, etc., was one for each gun.

For purposes of administration, however, each gun in a battery was treated as a sub-unit. It had about eight or nine men attached to it, who were placed under the charge of a *jamadar*, assisted by a *hawaldar* and a *naik*.

***Strength and Efficiency.***—The strength of the artillery at different periods of the Sikh rule stood as follows:

Year.	Strength.	No. of guns.		Monthly salary.	REMARKS.
		Guns.	Swivels.		
1875 (1818-19 A. D.) ...	834	22	190	5,840	
1885 (1828-29 A. D.) ...	3,778	130	280	28,390	Besides this number there were about one hundred pieces placed in the various forts of the kingdom.
1895 (1838-39 A. D.) ...	4,535	188	280	32,906	
1900 (1843-44 A. D.) ...	8,280	282	300	82,893	
1902 (1845-46 A. D.) ...	10,524	376	300	89,251	

As regards the efficiency which this arm of the Maharaja's military service had attained under his unremitting personal care and interest, we cannot do better than quote the testimony of certain British military officers, who had fairly good opportunities of personally witnessing the drill and manœuvres of the Sikh army and who may be taken to be competent judges of what they have described.

Lieutenant Barr, who accompanied Sir C. M. Wade with the Army of the Indus in January 1839, speaking of the battery attached to General Court's brigade, says:—

"On our arriving in front, they [gunners] saluted us, and the general [Court] then directed the native commandant, a fine soldier-like-looking man, handsomely accoutred, to put them through their drill. This they performed with great credit; their movements being executed with a celerity and precision that would have done honour to any army. The orders were given in French, and the system of gunnery used by that nation has also been adopted. At the conclusion of the exercises, we walked down line and inspected the ordnance. The two guns on the right of the battery were six-pounders and were the same that Lord William Bentinck had presented to Ranjit Singh at Ropur. The rest were cast by himself from their model, and appear almost equally good. The precise number of pieces

service. We then tried some of his fuzes, which are very good, and burn true ; and his portfires are also tolerable, but when compared with those in use with every other part of the Sikh army, admirable ; as with the latter, they are nothing but cases filled with pounded brimstone indifferently rammed down. All the shot was formed of beaten iron, and cost a rupee each ; and the majority of the shells were composed of pewter, which he told us answered uncommonly well. When it is considered that all we saw was the work of the General's own knowledge, and we reflect on the difficulties he has had to surmount, it is a matter almost of wonder to behold the perfection to which he has brought his artillery.

"The men dressed something like our own horse artillery, except that, instead of helmets, they wear red turbans (the jamadars' or officers' being of silk), which hang down so as to cover the back part of the neck ; white trousers, with long boots, black waist and cross belts ; and black leather scabbard with brass ornaments."

*Casting of Guns.*—I have not come across any descriptive account of the mode in which the guns were cast in the Sikh times. But the fact that Ranjit Singh had a considerable number of guns cast in his own foundry at Lahore and that these, so far as strength, finish and general appearance was concerned, were as good as those used in the British army of the East India Company seems to leave little doubt in our mind that the art of manufacturing guns was fairly advanced in the Punjab in the early nineteenth century.

The following which is taken bodily from my article in the *Journal of Indian History*, published in September 1922, will enable us to form an idea of the materials used in making a gun and the cost thereof.

[The figures relate to the casting of the gun named *Top Nikodarnali* (probably cast in a foundry at Nikodar in the Jullundur District) under the charge of Khalifa Nur-ud-Din and Qade Khan, September 1819—August 1820.]

	Rs.	A.	P.
(i) Charges of labourers	...	21	12 0
(ii) Charges of 4 skilled workmen @ Rs. 50 p. m.	...	200	0 0
(iii) Miscellaneous cash expenses	...	40	1 6
Carried forward	...	261	18 6

		Ra. A. P.	21 13 6
brought forward			
(i)	Cowdung ( <i>Upā</i> )	...	0 8 0
(ii)	Plaster ( <i>gachen</i> )	...	1 12 0
(iii)	Diet money of workmen ( <i>khurāk kārīgarān</i> )	...	4 0 0
(iv)	Sweeper ( <i>Halāk-khor</i> )	...	1 2 6
(v)	Iron rod ( <i>tar-āhān</i> )	...	1 5 0
(vi)	Eggs of fowls ( <i>baiza murgā</i> )	...	2 0 0
(vii)	Clarified butter ( <i>roghan zard</i> )	...	1 4 0
(viii)	Oil seeds for offerings ( <i>til siyāh barāi samādāq</i> )	...	0 8 0
(ix)	Incense ( <i>aspend-o-gūgal</i> )	...	0 8 0
(x)	Wheat flour ( <i>ārad khushka</i> )	...	2 8 0
(xi)	Diet money ( <i>khurāk mazdārān</i> )	...	1 0 0
(xii)	Oil ( <i>tel siyāh</i> )	...	2 8 0
(xiii)	Cloth for wax	...	0 12 0
(xiv)	Crude Sugar ( <i>qand siyāh</i> )	...	2 4 0
(xv)	Sweets ( <i>Shārris</i> )	...	1 4 0
(xvi)	Cloth for workmen ( <i>poshak kārīgarān</i> )	...	4 0 0
(xvii)	Offerings to saint ( <i>niyāt Pir Sahib</i> )...	...	11 4 0
			1 14 0
Total			40 1 6
(II)	Materials ( <i>jins</i> )	mds.	376 11 12
(i)	Copper (brass)	...	30 1 0
(ii)	Zinc ( <i>jīnā</i> )	...	20 0 12
(iii)	Borax ( <i>sokāga</i> )	...	1 10 0
(iv)	Firewood ( <i>khar sokhāns</i> )	...	325 0 0
			376 11 12
Grand totals—Cash		...	261 13 6
Materials—Maunds		...	376 11 12

The prices of these articles are not stated in the papers from which these figures are taken, but we gather from other documents, also found in the same bundle of records, that they must have cost approximately as follows:—

	Ra.	as.	p.	
Copper	...	2,1000	0 0	@ Ra. 70 per maund.
Zinc	...	820	0 0	@ Ra. 41 " "
Borax	...	14	0 0	@ Ra. 11 " "
Firewood	...	45	0 0	@ Rs. 14 for one hundred maunds.
Total	...	2,979	0 0	

Thus the total cost of this gun was approximately

Ra. 3,240.

*Average Annual Expenditure to maintain 6-gun battery.*—It may also be of interest to mention here that a careful examination of various papers connected with artillery extending over nearly ten years reveals an average annual expenditure of a gun for the pay of officers and men, and the upkeep of horses, etc., at Rs. 5,600. The annual expenditure for maintaining a troop of horse







artillery of six guns was approximately as follows :

(1) Furniture consisting of saddles and other trappings, tents and flags, etc. Rs. 3,000.

(2) Food of animals :

i. 104 Horses

ii. 52 Mules

iii. 250 Bullocks

(3) Pay of officers and men

19,000

12,000

Total

34,000

#### IV

### CAVALRY

*Cavalry—old type.*—With the exception of a few cavalry regiments which were put through a course of training on western lines by the Maharaja's French Officer, Jean Francois Allard, the main body of Ranjit Singh's cavalry (Ghorcharah Fauj) continued to form a distinct and independent branch of his army service. It was organised on the model of the old Khalsa army and followed their traditional methods of fighting.

*Reasons for retaining it.*—It might seem rather strange that Ranjit Singh should have tolerated the two systems to persist side by side, although in his own estimation the value of the irregular cavalry, as a military weapon, did not stand very high. A study of the political and social conditions, however, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, would reveal the Maharaja's shrewd common sense, an outcome of an intimate knowledge of the leanings and capacity of his people. The Sikh population of the Punjab was practically soldier to a man. The country under their possession at the time presented the appearance of a vast military camp, with a number of powerful Chiefs and Sardars, each having a large body of faithful retainers besides fairly good resources of men and material, at his command. The follower of a chief claimed a share in the spoils of conquest as a matter of right, and, in his corporate capacity, regarded himself as

an equally true representative of the Khalsa. Since Ranjit Singh did not consider his position quite secure, at least in the earlier years of his reign, it would have been far from prudent on his part not to respect popular prejudices and privileges. Having been able to retain the loyalty, ensure the contentment, and enlist the support of the entire Khalsa community, he saw no harm in allowing a portion of his military service to continue on the old system. These soldiers, he recognised, were not amenable to strict rules of discipline, but, being born horsemen, were always happier when engaged in an enterprise attended with difficulties and dangers. Bearing this fact in mind and realizing how he stood, he could ill afford to ignore this vast body of experienced cavalry.

*Dedicate Situation of Ranjit Singh.*—Moreover, the Khalsa were proud of their past. They remembered all their hard struggles and were not unnaturally ambitious of retaining their hard-won freedom. Ranjit Singh did not fail to realize his own limitations. His territory mostly lay in the Majha, or the Central Punjab, and was not very extensive. He was hemmed in on three sides by powerful Mohammedan chiefs. The valley of Kashmir and the lower hills were still in the grip of the Afghans. Between the rivers Jhelum and the Indus, sturdy warlike tribes, such as the Gakhars, the Awans, and the Tiwanas, had the country divided amongst themselves. On the north-western side of India, Peshawar was the centre of Afghan rule. The governors of the Derajat, Multan, and Bahawalpur still owned loose allegiance to the Kabul Government. In the event of a combination of these hostile elements against him, Ranjit Singh rightly thought that he could not rely for support upon his co-religionists with greater assurance than

upon the salaried or mercenary troops who comprised his *Fauj-i Ain*, or regular army.

*Classification of Cavalry.*—Ranjit Singh's history is not only one of valour but considerate strategy. When he began to subdue one Sikh chief after another, he employed great tact. He did not disband their forces but absorbed them lock stock and barrel into his own. At the same time, he recognized the wisdom of not abolishing the custom of granting military fiefs all at once. This he did so gradually that it was hardly perceptible at first, and in its place kept substituting the principle of assignments. In this way, in the course of time, he raised a regularly paid standing cavalry and allowed them to continue in their traditional way of the old Khalsa cavalry for some time. Later on he introduced new measures, and accordingly we find from the records of his Government that the cavalry of Ranjit Singh became divided into the following three classes, namely:—

(a) Regular Cavalry.

(b) Guorcharah Fauj.

(c) Jagirdari Fauj.

*Regular Cavalry.*—The regular cavalry, which had been trained and organised by General Allard,<sup>1</sup> was

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Francois Allard joined the service of the Maharaja along with his friend and companion-in-arms, General Ventura, early in March 1822. Ventura received the command of a body of infantry and Allard was commissioned to raise a corps of dragoons, who were to be disciplined and armed exactly on the same lines as a cavalry corps in Europe. Both were given liberal salaries of about Rs. 30,000 each per annum. To General Ventura, the Maharaja assigned for his residence the remarkable building known as the tomb of Anarkali, while an equally fine and commodious building was allotted to Allard. Between and near the residences of these officers, which were at a distance of about one mile from the city proper, were built military barracks together with a bazar where provisions for the soldiers were sold (known as *risalah* bazar). Outside the room used by the Chief Secretary to the Government Punjab, there stands a marble tablet with the words "Jean Baptiste Ventura, General in the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, erected this building in its original form and lived in it for many years. It became the British Residency in 1847, and was occupied by Henry Lawrence and John Lawrence as Residents in the Court of Lahore, and, after annexation of the Punjab, as members of the Board of Administration."

numerically the smallest part of the Maharaja's main cavalry forces. Of this arm of his service, there is but little to say, except that both of the Cuirassiers and the Dragoons were a fine body of men, in appearance and equipment no less than in drill and discipline.

**Strength and Expenditure.**—The following table compiled from the Records of the Sikh Government show the strength of the regular cavalry at different periods of the Sikh rule.

Sambat Year.	Strength.	Monthly Salary in rupees.
1876 (1819 A. D.)	750	11,723
1880 (1823 A. D.)	1,656	41,609
1885 (1828 A. D.)	4,315	1,03,970
1890 (1833 A. D.)	3,914	86,544
1895 (1838 A. D.)	4,090	90,375
1900 (1843 A. D.)	5,381	1,61,660
1902 (1845 A. D.)	6,235	1,95,925

*Ghorcharah Fauj: its history and character.*—The Ghorcharah Fauj had an interesting genesis. It would seem that the creation of this force was the result of a policy dictated partly by military necessity and partly by political expediency. As Ranjit Singh had no other claim but that of the sword to compel the allegiance of those whom he had subdued, he was natural-

[Contd. from p. 79].

The building—or rather the site of it, as the old building was demolished in 1915—occupied by General Allard is known as the Kapurthala House, as later on it was acquired by His Highness the Maharaja of Kapurthala. By the common people, however, it is called *Kuri Bagh* as it contains the tomb of the daughter of General Allard. The building is occupied at the present moment by the Fateh Chand College for Women.

ly anxious to keep the representatives of the several powerful families of the province near his court practically as hostages. By the bestowal of distinctions and other marks of favour, he created in them feelings of love and loyalty for himself and his successors. He used wonderful tact to secure their contentment and even gratitude, and he did all he could to compensate those whom he had, for one reason or another, dispossessed of their lands and properties. To those who were of peaceful disposition he granted small cash allowances, while the petty chieftains and their trained warriors were readily taken over and absorbed into the army. It is safe to say that the major portion of Ranjit Singh's irregular cavalry was the outcome of this conciliatory line of policy.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the troops of the Ramgarhia Misal and those of Sardar Milkha Singh Thehpuria of Rawalpindi were bodily taken over and formed two big divisions, known respectively as the Derah Ramgarhia and the Derah Pindiwala. Similarly, the troops of the sardars of the Nakkai and the Kanhaiya Misals, were absorbed into the corps commanded by Princes Kharak Singh and Sher Singh respectively, whereas the followers of other smaller chiefs were amalgamated *en bloc*, from time to time, with the divisions known as Derah Naulakha and the Derah Ardalyan.

*Ghorcharah Fauj: its organization.*—The rank and file of the Ghorcharah army were recruited from amongst those who had received such military training as they possessed in the old methods of warfare. They knew very little of the principles of modern organization or of the science of war, and, indeed, they honestly believed that the dash of a cavalry charge and the reckless courage combined with the momentum of a rapid pell-mell assault were better calculated to overpower an enemy than the

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1. A brief history of the various *derah* or regimental camps composing the *Ghorcharah Fauj* is given in my *Catalogue of the Khalsa Darbar Records*, vol. 1, pages 109-19.

even and slow fire from infantry ranks. On frequent occasions, in the course of conversation, they would try to bring this fact home to the mind of the Maharaja. The Maharaja for his own part was shrewd enough to realize the position and did not, therefore, consider it prudent or profitable to insist on the re-modelling of these troops on modern lines. They were allowed to retain their old organization and constitution with only slight modifications here and there. For instance, some foreign terms such as a "a commandant" and "a major" are occasionally met with in the pay rolls of even this branch of the service.

There was neither a fixed system of regimentation in its ranks, nor was the entire irregular force placed under any one man holding the chief command. Each Derah, or camp, formed a complete unit by itself and had on its regimental staff one Commander, with no specified rank, assisted by one subordinate officer. The clerical establishment consisted of a Vakil<sup>1</sup> (munshi), and an accountant (mutsaddi). The ensign (Nishanchi) and the chief drummer (dhaunsa nawaz) are also borne on the list of the Staff officers. To each Derah was attached one Granthi or reader of the Sikh scripture.

A Derah was composed of several subordinate groups called Misals. This term seems to have come into use some time in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and denoted the small groups or bands of horsemen into which the more daring Sikhs had organized themselves during their period of exile, to which a reference has already been made. Considering their origin and the circumstances in which they had to live, it was natural to

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1. Since these Derahs were subsequently placed, for purposes of administration, under one or the other chief of rank and position, the Vakil acted as the agent of the chief at the Court.



expect that these bands or associations would be composed of members of the same clan or of those who were otherwise more or less closely related to each other. Usually they followed the lead of the head of the clan or of one who happened to be the most daring member of the group. This practice persisted even afterwards when these small groups coalesced into one another and finally swelled into the great *Dal Khalsa*. Even in the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, almost the same mode of recruitment was largely followed so far as his irregular cavalry was concerned. The men joined the army not as individuals, but as a small band or group of men under the leadership of their local chief who would continue to act as 'company officer' even after the group had been incorporated in a particular Derah.

A Misal, therefore, like the company in a regiment, was a subordinate unit of a Derah, but there the resemblance ended. A Misal, for instance, had neither a fixed or uniform strength nor was it sub-divided into sections or squads. The strength of a Misal varied as much as from fifteen to seventy men, while in the case of very near members of the same family, such as brothers and cousins, even half a dozen men would sometimes form a Misal.

For purposes of administration and general control, the smaller Derahs were, in 1822, grouped into larger divisions, which were then placed under the charge of an officer of rank and distinction. Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia, the Sindhanwalia and the Attariwala Sardars, Misar Diwan Chand and Jarnadar Khushhal Singh, each commanded a division, the Maharaja himself being the generalissimo of the army.

This type of organization, it may be remarked, while recognising the natural pride of the men to fight under the immediate command of their own leader, who was, oftener than not, their own kinsman, and thus preserving the spirit of clannish union, did not deny to a misalदार opportunities for learning such lessons of co-operation as unity of command so frequently offers.

*Its composition.*—A study of the names and sub-castes of troopers as given in the pay rolls leaves an impression on one's mind that almost all the military classes of the Punjab were represented in this branch of the army. The Jat Sikhs of the Central Doabs, the Hindu Rajputs of Jammu and Kangra hills, and the Mohammedan Rajputs occupying the present Shalipur, Jhelum, and Gujar Khan tracts probably supplied the largest proportion of recruits. The Pathans, the Khattris, and Datta Brahmins also appear in the army lists, but the Rajputs and the Jat Sikhs easily formed the predominant element

There is also one other interesting point that deserves to be mentioned in connection with the composition of the irregular cavalry. Each subordinate group or misal was, as a matter of course, composed of members of one caste or clan, and in the event of a vacancy taking place no pains were spared to maintain the purity of the group, by inducing, if possible, a relation of the deceased or the retiring incumbent to enlist.

*Ghorcharah Fauj : its pay and strength.*—The pay and emoluments of the irregular cavalry were comparatively higher than those of the members of the regular army. In the beginning, the Maharajah, following the old traditional practice, paid these men in Jagirs to the value of rupees four to six hundred a year, the regiment of Ghorcharah Khas, the Jamwal Rajputs, and a portion of the regiment of orderlies being so paid. But gradually as

the numbers increased and the practice of cash payments became more common, the starting salary of a trooper ranged between rupees two hundred and fifty and three hundred a year. It may be remembered in this connection that the recruit was supposed, at any rate so far as the state was concerned, to furnish his own horse and bring his own arms and armour. This was in accordance with the time-honoured practice of the old Khalsa Cavalry, when any youth who possessed a horse and a sword could get himself enrolled under the banner of a chief. In actual practice, however, this rule was not very strictly observed. The recruit was given every facility by the State, and in case he could not provide his own horse and accoutrements, at the time of entering service, he was provided with the necessary equipment by the Government or sometimes by the chief in whose company he took service, and was allowed to make good the cost by easy instalments. The usual rates under the head of deductions were rupees one hundred for the horse, rupees sixteen to twenty for a matchlock, and rupees ten for a sword.

Table showing the strength and annual salary expenditure of their regular cavalry:—

Year.	Strength.	Annual salary.
1870 (1813 A. D.) ...	374	Rs. 1,65,117
1874 (1817 A. D.) ...	2,464	Rs. 2,78,318
1876 (1819 A. D.) ...	3,577	Rs. 11,13,782
1880 (1823 A. D.) ...	7,300	Rs. 22,45,000
1885 (1828 A. D.) ...	7 300	Rs. 21 94,000
1895 (1838 A. D.) ...	10,795	Rs. 31,68,714
1900 (1843 A. D.) ...	14,383	Rs. 44,18,840
1902 (1845 A. D.) ...	19,100	Rs. 58,27,597

*Jagirdari Fauj.*—In the years that followed Ranjit

Singh found the system of jagirs in juxtaposition to cash payments becoming almost a problem. As we know, the practice of granting jagirs had been entirely abolished, so we might as well dwell awhile in studying this time-honoured custom. A fairly large proportion of the State revenues was absorbed by these military chiefs and other jagirs granted to his principal Sardars and courtiers.<sup>1</sup> The number of men which these chieftains were expected to bring into the field amounted, at one time, to as much as twenty thousand well-equipped horsemen.

The Jagirdari cavalry was thus raised on the feudal principle, the grantee of a fief undertaking to furnish a certain number of efficient and well-equipped troopers whenever required by the State. The number of horse raised by each of the chiefs was, of course, chiefly determined by the value of their respective jagirs.

Ordinarily these chiefs and their men were permitted to live on their own jagirs. They were required to present themselves for a review of their troops once in the year on the day of the Dussehra festival when a general parade of the entire army was held either at Lahore or Amritsar. On such occasions, a strict muster of these troops was taken by the Maharaja in person, and the presence of every man from the highest officer down to the ordinary soldier was made obligatory. With a view to enforcing attendance on all, high and low at the annual inspections, and to reduce to the minimum the number of absentees, strict rules were laid down for the punishment of recalcitrants.

Further to guard against corruption and cheating, with the consequent weakening of an important arm of his military service, the Maharaja took effective measures

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1. Out of an income of nearly Rs. 3,00,00,000 about Rs. 75,00,000 was granted as jagir for military and other services.

to exercise a strict check and control over the retainers of his chiefs as well as their steeds. The terms of the grant of jagirs were so revised that, in addition to undertaking the maintenance of the stipulated number of well-equipped troopers, a grantee was also required to deposit in the archives of the State a descriptive roll of all the members of his contingent. At the time of annual inspections or when the contingents were called out for an expedition, the descriptive rolls were minutely examined with reference to the men actually produced for service and serious notice was taken of any discrepancies that were discovered. As regards their mounts, the practice of branding the horses of the retainers was introduced.

It may be pointed out in this connection that a breach of these rules was seldom allowed to go unpunished. Cases are not wanting where even the highest military officers who failed to fulfil the conditions of the grant suffered punishment. Even Sardar Hari Singh Nalva—a great general of Ranjit Singh—was, on one occasion, fined a sum of two lacs of rupees for not maintaining the stipulated number of men. (See page 379, *daftar ii. Umdut-ut-Tawarikh*, by Sohan Lal).

*Jagirdari Fauj: Its Strength.*—The number of Ranjit Singh's feudal horse cannot be accurately ascertained from the available records. The descriptive rolls of the army are not complete, whereas the record relating to the pay-rolls could not possibly have included the lists of the Jagirdari troops, as the management of these troops was left entirely to the chiefs themselves. The compilation of such a list from the revenue papers relating to the annual grant of jagirs, is a huge and complicated task requiring a long and patient search.

*Superior Social Status.*—Recruited and officered, as it was, mainly from amongst the relations and followers of

the once independent chiefs, the Ghorcharah army represented the better class of society. As such, it had a peculiar charm and attraction for the Sikh peasants, and it was not so much for a slightly higher pay that a man joined the Ghorcharah ranks as for the dignity attaching to this branch of the army.

The proud bearing of a Ghorcharah—when riding his noble steed with his long, tapering bamboo lance bending in the air and his silver-bossed shield rattling against his sword and pistol—won for him the admiration of every one who saw him. Baron Hugel, a Prussian traveller, who visited Ranjit Singh's court in 1836, describes this cavalry in the following terms :—

“ I requested leave to inspect them (the Ghorcharahs) and never beheld a finer nor a more remarkably striking body of men. Each one was dressed differently, and yet so much in the same fashion that they all looked in perfect keeping. The handsome Raja Suchet Singh (commander of one of the biggest divisions) was in a similar costume, and reminded me of the time when the fate of empires hung on the point of a lance, and when the individual whose bold heart beat fearlessly under his steel breast-plate was the sole founder of his fortunes. The strange troop before me was peculiarly Indian. The uniform consisted of a velvet coat or gaberdine, over which most of them wore a shirt of mail. Others had this shirt made to form a part of the tunic. A belt round the waist, richly embroidered in gold, supported the powder-horn, covered with cloth of gold, as well as the Persian *kabar* and the pistol which many of them carried in addition to those weapons. Some wore a steel helmet, inlaid with gold, and surmounted with *kulgi* or black heron's plume; others wore a cap of steel, worked like a cuirass in rings. The left arm is often covered from hand to the elbow with a steel cuff inlaid with gold. The round Sikh shield hangs on the back fastened with straps across the chest, a quiver at the right side and a bow slung at the back being carried as part of the equipment; a bag made in the belt holds the balls, and a tail bayonet, frequently ornamented with gold, held in the right hand when the man is on foot and carried over the shoulder when in the saddle, completes the dress.”

*Drill, Discipline and Code of Punishment.*—As drill and discipline has been observed more than once in these

1. P. 231. Baron Hugel's *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab*, translated by Major T. B. Jervis, F. R. S., London, 1845

pages. Ranjit Singh's one concern was to raise the efficiency of his infantry and artillery. During the earlier years of the introduction of these arms in his military service the Maharaja had set apart his morning hours to inspect the drill of his forces when he would often distribute gifts of money and other presents to those with whose work he was really pleased. His standing orders to the officers concerned were that they should regularly inspect the drill of their men. The Sikhs acquired considerable efficiency in European tactics of warfare. W. G. Osborne, Military Secretary to the Government of India, who had occasion to see the Sikh troops on parade in June 1838 writes as follows :—

"Agreeably to invitation, we repaired this morning [1st June, 1838] to meet the Maharaja and see some of his regular infantry upon their parade. We found about 2,000 men under arms and some foot artillery. They are a fine looking body of men, dressed in white jackets and trousers with black belts and pouches, and wear the yellow Sikh turban. They submit willingly to the same discipline and regulations as our own sepoys but have a prejudice against wearing a cap or shako and previous to their enlistment make an agreement that they shall not be required to do so or to shave.

"They work in three ranks and do everything by beat of drum according to the French fashion, are not what is called well set up, but beautifully steady on parade and fire with greater precision and regularity, both volleys and file firing, than any other body of troops I ever saw."

*Forms of punishment.*—The forms of punishment awarded for various kinds of offences such as, insubordination, breach of discipline, neglect of duty, etc., which one comes across recorded in official papers of the Sikh Government are : (i) *Dalel* or extra drill duty ; (ii) fine ; (iii) reduction in pay or rank ; (iv) imprisonment ; (v) *kath-marna* (stocks) ; (vi) mutilation of limb or organ ; (vii) fancy punishments such as blackening the face of the culprit and parading him round the town, stamping and branding the forehead and exile from his native town (*baran pathron bahir*).

The usual punishment for an ordinary breach of discipline was the infliction of a small fine. It was

however, not an uncommon thing for a sentence of imprisonment for a serious offence to be finally commuted into one of fine. A serious neglect of duty, for instance, the absence of a sentinel from his post at night (*pahra*) was punished by reduction in rank or the imposition of fine or by both.

*Absence of capital punishment.*—In this connection it is noteworthy that the penalty of death is conspicuous by its absence in the Sikh military code. ‘We punish but we will not take life,’ are significant words which have been put in the mouth of Ranjit Singh by a contemporary English writer in his book “The Adventurer.” This view is also supported by two incidents mentioned by Dr. Honighberger in his book “*Thirty-five Years in the East.*” He writes :

‘General Allard told me the Maharaja once reprimanded him [Avitabile for having executed some Mussalmans whom General Avitabile had ordered to be hung because they were of opinion, that, under the protection of a European Governor (Avitabile was appointed Governor of Wazirabad), they might be at liberty to eat beef. The opinion of Ranjit Singh was that he ought to have imprisoned the criminals and then allowed them to escape.’

Again on another page he mentions the case of a Nihang (Akali) Sikh who wanted to force his way into the Maharaja’s camp and being stopped by the sentinel on duty had struck him with sword and cut off his arm. In the opinion of Doctor Honighberger ‘such an offender deserved gallows, but the culprit was punished by the Maharaja with the loss of his ear, nose or hands with the same sabre with which he had so skilfully cut off the arm of the soldier on royal duty.’

*Trial by ordeal.*—There is an interesting case on record which shows that the trial by ordeal was not quite unknown. Unfortunately, the file of the case is incomplete and it is difficult to find out the nature of the offence, but the summary decision and the punishment awarded to the guilty may not be without interest. The



paper bears the heading *infisali muqadama qaidiyan paltan La Font farangi, i. e.*, 'the award in individual case of the under-trial prisoners of the battalion under La Font.' Out of the fourteen men who were tried, nine were dismissed (*bar tarf shudand* 9) three were imprisoned or sent to the lock-up again (*qaid ba dastur mandah*, 3). One man named Kahan Singh was punished with the loss of an ear; he was, besides, branded on the forehead and dismissed from service while the remaining one, Jamiat Singh, proved his innocence by plunging his hand into boiling oil which sustained no injury, was not only not punished and allowed to join his regiment but was promoted to the rank of a Naik.'

## VI

### PENSIONS, REWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

*Pensions.*—There does not seem to have been any definite age limit either for entering the Maharajas service or for compulsory retirement. So long as a man was considered to be physically fit for active duty, he continued to serve in the army. There are cases on record where men of sixty and even beyond are borne on the army pay rolls. Nor do we come across any manual of rules and orders governing the grant of pensions to the retiring, wounded or invalid soldiers of Ranjit Singh's army. But, from a number of recorded cases it is apparent that some kind of allowance was granted to those permanently disabled for active service and, at times, provision was also made for the dependents of the soldier who died on active duty. This allowance is

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1. کاهن سدهم سپاهی یک گوش برید و داغ اندرون پیشانی داده بر طرف شد.

جمعیت سنگم سپاهی کمپنی دوم دست در کزاهی انداخته سوخته نه شود. نایک گردید طلب خود خواهد یافت.

noticed, under two different names *i.e.*, *dharmarth* and *ingis*. *Dharmarth* literally means charity, and the origin and introduction of the word *ingis* I have not been able to trace. That this word denotes a sort of government allowance or pension is a fact and is still current in the rural areas of the Punjab. It may be that the practice of granting allowance to the disabled soldiers was borrowed from the English East India Company's troops and as such the term is only a Punjabised form of the word English.<sup>1</sup>

*Rewards.*—Ranjit Singh like all other great men had the gift of selecting right men for right situations. And he further understood and realised the principle too well that the award of a gift or the conferment of an honour or distinction for a meritorious service would not only be appreciated by the recipient for the particular occasion but will serve as an incentive to further loyal and faithful work. The Toshakhana papers of Ranjit Singh's Government as well as the court chronicles written by the official historian Sohan Lal, abound with references to the grant of *Khila'at* for distinguished services to the government by civil and military officers. The value and grade of a *Khila'at* was judged by the number, variety and quality of the pieces of garments comprising it. As a rule, an eleven-piece *khila'at* was regarded as of the first class and was given to high officials, although I have come across instances where a *khila'at* comprising fifteen and even twenty-two pieces together with jewelled ornaments and richly caparisoned animals like an elephant or a horse was also bestowed upon distinguished guests visiting the Darbar of the Maharaja.

The important garments included in a *khila'at* were :  
 (i) *doshala* (Kashmir shawl); (ii) a piece of *Kimkhwab* (brocade); (iii) a *dupatta* (scarf); (iv) *dastar* (turban);

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller treatment of the subject of pensions see my article No. IV on the Army of Ranjit Singh in the *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. V.

(v) pieces of *gulhadan* (a kind of striped silk cloth)  
(vi) a *rumal* (kerchief); (vi) *jamawar* (a kind of shawl  
cloth for a *chogha* or long coat); (viii) a *kamarband*  
(waistband).

Of the jewelled weapons and ornaments that often  
formed part of a *Khila'at*, the following may specially be  
mentioned: (i) *kara* (gold bracelet); (ii) *kantha* (gold  
necklace (iii) *kangan* (gold bangles); (iv) *mala marvarid*  
(a gold chain-set with pearls); (v) *bazuband* (gold  
armlet); (vi) *kulghi* (aigrette); (vii) *jigha* (a turban orna-  
ment); (viii) *Sarpech* (also a turban ornament);  
(ix) *shamsher murass'a* (sword with its handle inlaid  
with gold); (x) *kard* (a dagger with ornamented handle);  
(xi) *tabr* (a sort of battle-axe); *tarkash* (ornamented  
quiver for arrows).

It may also be mentioned in this connection that  
following the court etiquette and ceremonial of the  
Mughals, Ranjit Singh also introduced the practice of  
bestowing elephants, *Falki* or *Pinas* (palanquins) and  
*Naqarah* (kettle-drum) upon officials of very high rank as  
a mark of special favour. Such grants were, in fact,  
looked upon as a special privilege and a mark of the  
recipient's high social or official position and were wholly  
or partially resumed by the state whenever the official  
was brought under disgrace.

*Titles.*—Like the Mughals again, Maharaja Ranjit  
Singh adopted a fairly elaborate system of granting titles  
to deserving officials. The titles were, of course, suited  
to the profession, life and conduct of the man. The  
titles granted to military men were necessarily different  
from those bestowed upon persons of the civil department  
or those of the priestly class. Some of the military titles  
were: *Hibar-Jang* (the lion in fight), *Zafar-Jang*  
(victorious in war), *Samsam-ul-daulah* (Sharp sword of

the State), *Shujah-ud-daulah* (valour of the State), *Tahawur-panah* (asylum of bravery), etc.

If the military titles referred to qualities of bravery and courage, those of the civil department praised honesty, sagacity and industry; such as *Dayanat panah* (abode of honesty), *Firasat-dastgah* (sagacious), *Mashakhlat panah* (refuge of greatness), etc. Similarly ecclesiastical titles were based on qualities of spirituality, nobility of life and conduct, etc. For instance, the more important of those were: *Brahm-Murat* (image of divinity), *Ujjal didar* (of bright looks), *Nirmal-budh* (of pure intelligence), etc.

The titles of Diwan and Raja, it appears, were sparingly bestowed and were, perhaps, regarded as the highest titles given on the civil side.

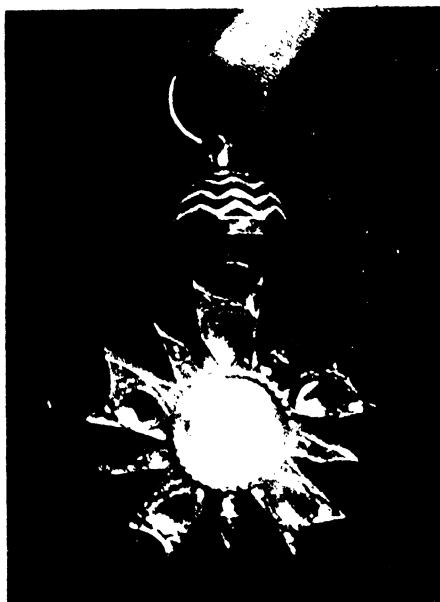
The titles of Sardar both for military and civil officers was considered one of considerable distinction and was almost always conferred upon Sikhs. Some of the greatest Sikh generals of Ranjit Singh's forces like Hari Singh Nalwa Gurmukh Singh Lamba, Dal Singh Naharna, etc., never got anything more than this title or *izaz-i-sardari*, as it was called. If at all, a couple of Persian or Hindi words expressive of a Sardar's exalted dignity or position were prefixed to this title, by way of *alqab*, in official correspondence, such as *ba-viqar azimulshan*, *'ali-iqtidar*. etc.

*Order<sup>1</sup> of Merit or Star of the Punjab*.—About two years before his death, or more exactly on the occasion of the marriage of his grandson, Prince Nau Nihal Singh

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1. The order and the medal which was the insignia of the order have all the appearance of being largely instituted after the style of the Legion de Honour instituted by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. Even some of the phraseology used in describing the Order appears to have been taken from the French original.





*Kaukab-i-Iqbal-i-Punjab*  
"Star of the Prosperity of the Punjab"

(March 1837), Maharaja Ranjit Singh instituted an Order of Merit after the fashion of western nations. The title of the Order was *Kaukab-i-Iqbal-i-Punjab* (Star of the Prosperity of the Punjab); and the Grand Master of the Order was Prince Nau Nihal Singh. It was represented by a large gold medal of three different classes depending upon the nature of the precious stones with which they were ornamented. These three classes corresponded to the three grades of the order which they represented. The following is a brief description of the three classes of the medals (*taghma*). It may be mentioned at once that all the three bore an effigy (*pratima*) of Ranjit Singh in bust in the centre on one side, while on the other side the names of the Maharaja was artistically engraved in the *minakari* work. The medals were provided with a silk riband of gold and scarlet colour (*Surkh-o-Zard*), and the recipients were expected to wear them round their neck (*dar gulu awezan khwahand bud*), so that the medal itself rested on the breast of the wearer. As the name indicates, all the three medals were in the shape of a star with ten rays radiating from the centre. Five of these rays were longer and other five somewhat smaller, and long and short rays alternated. The size of the medals of the first and second class was the same, measuring  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches (*yak girah*) along the largest diameter. I have not been able to come across any reference to the size of the medal of the third class, but I presume all the three medals were of equal size, the difference in the value and importance of the three medals being, as I have mentioned above, in the number and character of the precious stones set in them.

Medal of the First Class was ornamented with a diamond (*Murrasa ba almas*).

Medals of the Second Class had two precious stones

set in it, namely a diamond and an emerald (*almas-o-zumurrud*). Presumably these were smaller stones than the single stone set in a medal of the First Class.

Medal of the Third Class contained a single emerald set in it without any other kind of stone.

The admission to Order of the First Grade was limited to the members of the family of the Maharaja, and a small number of distinguished chiefs and noblemen who had given proof of their devotion and fidelity to the person of the Maharaja and his House. Order of the Second Grade was bestowed upon loyal courtiers, notable Sardars, governors of provinces, generals of the army and ambassadors or very high officials in political service. The Order of the Third Grade was open to (a) military officers of the rank of colonel, major or captain who had earned distinction for bravery, resourcefulness, alertness and faithfulness; (b) civil servants distinguished for ability and honesty, and (c) other persons enjoying confidence and worthy of greater confidence and honour.

It is worth mentioning that the admission to the Order was accompanied by an award of a title as well as an appropriate *Khila'at*. Thus an Order of the first grade was accompanied by the award of the title of the Raja and a *Khila'at* comprising a sword, a shield, a pair of gold bracelets, a golden chain set with pearls (*mala-maricarid*) and a *sarpech* for the turban. Similarly, admission to the second grade carried with it the title of Sardar together with a *Khila'at* consisting of a sword, a shield, and a pair of gold bracelets, while the title of *Bahadur* and *Khila'at* of a sword and a pair of gold bracelets were bestowed upon persons of the last grade of the Order.



## VII.

*General Remarks*—I have said little or nothing about military tactics and strategy of the regular army of the Ranjit Singh. But it may be remarked without much fear of contradiction that, used to a life of active fighting as the Sikhs were, they did not take long to learn and assimilate the western methods of military strategy. How well they mastered these tactics is best shown by their conduct during their wars with the British.

A student of Sikh history knows too well that a Sikh soldier had to face during these wars a host of difficulties and adverse circumstances. He had had no training whatsoever in the military traditions of his own race and the new training which he had received in military strategy was hardly a generation old. Again, those who were responsible for giving this training were no more in their midst. The European officers, almost to a man, were either discharged or had left the service of the Lahore Darbar. The Maharaja himself was no more to guide them out of their difficulties. The officers, both civil and military, who happened to be at the helm of affairs and were expected to give them lead were by no means capable. Nor was their conduct above suspicion. Opposed to these were the British armies so highly disciplined and trained and led and commanded by some of their best officers.

How well the Sikhs acquitted themselves during the various actions in which they were engaged in pitched fighting against the British has been told and retold both by the Indian and European historians. It will be, therefore, superfluous here to refer to it at any length. It will suffice to reiterate what General Gough had observed at the moment: "Never did a native army, having so relatively slight an advantage in number, fight a battle

with the British in which the issue was so doubtful as at Ferozshah, and if the victory was decisive, opinion remains divided as to what the result might have been if the Sikh troops had found commanders with sufficient capacity to give their qualities full opportunity."

Speaking of one of the actions during the Second Sikh War (January 1849) Lord Dalhousie observes in one of his Private Letters : " We have gained a victory, but, like that of the ancients, it is such an one that another such would ruin us."

Thus, the value of discipline and the European methods of fighting, introduced among his men by sagacious Ranjit Singh had borne their fruit, and if the Sikhs lost the day at Ferozshah, it was not for any lack of courage or skill on their part.

## CHAPTER V.

### CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

(BY DR. G. L. CHOPRA, M. A., Ph. D., BAR-AT-LAW,  
KEEPER OF RECORDS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB.)

#### I.

#### The Development of Departmental Organisation<sup>1</sup>

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as we know, succeeded to the chieftainship of the Sukkarchakkia Misal in the Sambat 1847 (1790 A. D.). The administration of the Misal was a simple affair for the energetic Sardar. Under such a domestic constitution, as the Misal implied, the affairs indeed were so simple that there was no need for establishing any elaborate *Daftar*. A few personal assistants like the *Dewan* (financial adviser), the *Toshakhania* (treasurer) and the *Munshis* (clerks) were all that were necessary.

Dewan Lakhpat Rai was the Dewan of the late Maha Singh, father of Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh, being ten years old when his father died, his mother Sardarni Raj Kaur, also called *Mai* Malwain, became regent during his minority. She was assisted by Dewan Lakhpat Rai, who is reputed to have acted with ability and enthusiasm.

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1. From the ' Report on the Examination of Documents Recently Discovered in the Fort at Lahore ' by Nand Lal Rajpal, M. A. [Punjab Government Records Office Publication.]

He, however, picked a quarrel with Sardar Dal Singh, the maternal uncle of Ranjit Singh's father. Ranjit Singh intervened and they were temporarily reconciled, and Dewan Lakhpat Rai continued in his post. But upon attaining the age of seventeen years, Ranjit Singh assumed in person the conduct of affairs.

Besides the Dewanship, there was the important post of the *Toshakhania*. This post was held by Misr Basti Ram who had followed his father and grandfather in the office. Misr Basti Ram had the help of Jassa Misr now and then as necessity arose. He had also under him Gurmukh Singh<sup>1</sup> appointed in the year 1780 A. D. Gurmukh Singh was the man who accompanied Ranjit Singh at the capture of Lahore in 1799 A. D. and was then made pay-master of the forces and put in charge of whatever treasure the Sukkerchakkia chief came to possess at Lahore.

For several years even after the occupation of Lahore Ranjit Singh had little leisure for the organisation of any civil establishment. He remained constantly busy in war and diplomacy except that he devoted his attention equally to the collection of money. He availed himself of many sources of taxation, direct and indirect, upon land, houses, imports and exports. Indeed his success in war and diplomacy depended largely on the augmentation of his financial resources. Thus in course of time the establishment and growth of the Finance and other departments and the institution of Seals were brought about by the necessities arising from territorial expansion.

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1. In the summer of 1780 A. D. as Sardar Maha Singh was passing through the little town of Kheora on his return from an expedition in the neighbourhood of Pind Dadan Khan, Gurmukh Singh, then a boy of eight years, was presented by his uncle Basti Ram, the *Toshakhania*. The Sardar was pleased with the bright eyes and intelligent looks of the boy and kept him with himself. Later in the same year Ranjit Singh was born, and Gurmukh Singh was appointed his companion.

The departmental organisation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Secretariat and the institution of the various Seals, and the circumlocutory arrangement, in particular, will indicate the degree of perfection attained by the Sikh Government.

*Sarishta-i-Hazur.*—The earliest existing seal of Ranjit Singh bears the Sambat 1856 (1800 A. D.)<sup>1</sup>. This would show that Ranjit Singh used his seal for the first time after the occupation of Lahore, that is, nine years after his succession to the leadership of the Sukkarchakkia confederacy, or four years after his personal assumption of power. He established a mint in 1801 A.D. But he took two years more to start the organisation of the *Hazur* department which may be dated back along with the appointment of Dewan Devi Das to 1218 Hijri, which corresponds to the Sambat 1860 or 1803 A. D. This view is based upon the discovery of a seal bearing the inscription "Az qirar-i-hukm-i-ashraf 1218" (1218 must be Hijri) under the caption "*Sabt Sarishta-i-Hazur shud.*" When pay orders were put up before the Maharaja for approval, they were thus sealed to denote that the order had been correctly rendered in writing.

*Daftar-i-Devi Das.*—The Daftar headed by Dewan Devi Das also was created not later than 1803 A. D., because, side by side with the seal of the "*Hazur*," appears the seal of Devi Das under the caption "*navishta shud*" (recorded). It is, therefore, abundantly clear that Devi Das must have been appointed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in or before 1803 A. D., and not towards the end of 1809 A. D. as stated in Griffin's history of the Chiefs in the Punjab.

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1. An impression of this seal may be seen in a photograph of the Seals of the Lahore Khalsa Darbar hung in the Record Office. The seals of the Maharaja on pay orders bear no Sambat at all.

The position of Dewan Devi Das would not necessarily be superior to that of his brother Dewan Bhawani Das because of the former's priority in entering service. As a matter of fact when Bhawani Das was appointed by the Darbar in 1808 A. D., Devi Das was just an associate, neither being subordinate to the other. The brothers always got on well together. Devi Das was a man of as great an ability and far greater integrity than his brother, though, being a man of retiring disposition, he never grew so prominent.

It was at about this time when, in consequence of the territorial expansion which had been going on since 1799 A. D., the State had gone nearly bankrupt and its revenue, amounting to thirty lacs of rupees per annum, had been mortgaged to Rama Nand, the rich banker of Amritsar, under whose control Misr Basti Ram, the *Toshakhania*, was transferred to work. Under these conditions, Devi Das must have worked very hard to make up the deficiency in the revenue.

*Naqal Daftar.*—There was another Daftar, known by the name of Naqal Daftar, which may be dated back to the same year as the establishment of the *Sarishta-i-Hazur*, i. e., Sambat 1860 (1803 A. D.). The reason for this is that this Copying Office would naturally be established along with the office for the original work. To say nothing of a state, ordinary private offices have necessarily Naqal sections attached to them from the very start.

*Sarishta-i-Dewani.*—The fourth Daftar, *Sarishta-i-Dewani*, was established in Sambat 1864, that is, four years after the appointment of Devi Das, or one year before the appointment of Bhawani Das. This Daftar is represented on the pay-orders by the seals with the inscription "Kirpa Ram, 1864" under the caption "*Sarishta-i-Dewani*."



DARBAR OF MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH





All this would go to show that the four Daftars had been established before the appointment of Bhawani Das in Sambat 1866.

*Sarishta-i-Bhawani Das.*—The fifth Daftar, “Sarishta” was organised in Sambat 1865 (1808 A. D.) and was headed by Bhawani Das, the finance minister himself, in evidence whereof are the seals of this Dewan bearing his name in Sambat 1865 under the caption “*Sabt Sarishta Shud.*” The Sambat 1865 corresponds to the year 1808 A. D. which agrees with the year of his appointment as known from other sources.

It may be noted here that the system of employing the Muslim era had, by then, been given up in favour of Bikrami. The earliest instance of the use of Bikrami is found in the seal “Kirpa Ram, 1864” under the caption “*Sabt Sarishta-i-Dewani.*”

Dewan Bhawani Das does not seem to have organised this fifth Daftar (Sarishta) until Sambat 1868, that is, three years after his appointment as Finance Minister. This view is supported by two pieces of evidence. One is that the old seal “Bhawani Das, 1865” is given up and the new seal bearing the inscription “Sabt Daftar 1868” used instead. Secondly, the “Dina Nath” series begins from Sambat 1868. Between Sambat 1865 when he was first appointed to organise the Daftars and Sambat 1868 when he actually brought the fiscal system on a sound footing, for the greater part he was employed by the Maharaja in organising the revenue assessment and collection in the newly conquered territories or in commanding military expeditions. It was not till Sambat 1868 that he returned to headquarters permanently and settled down to his new work in the finance department.

*The “Daftar” (General Secretariat).*—The sixth Daftar is simply known by this name. The relevant seal

pertaining to this Daftar bears the inscription "Sabt Daftar, 1868" without any caption, whereas the corresponding seal for the fifth Daftar has both the inscription and caption.

The general impression among historians of the Sikh period is that the departmental organisation was started in 1808 A. D. This, however, is not true. The records establish that at least four Daftars existed before this date and that though Dewan Bhawani Das might have set up his personal Daftar (*Sarishta*) in 1808 A. D., it was not till as late as 1811 A. D. that the "Daftar" (General Secretariat) was brought into existence. This Daftar seems to have been reorganised in the Sambat 1877 (1820 A. D.). This is evidenced by the new seals which were then brought into use. These new seals bear the inscription "Sabt Sarishta-i-Daftar. 1877." Finally, in Sambat 1885 (1828 A. D.) this Daftar was again remodelled, the fresh seals used bearing Sambat 1885.

*Daftar-i-Ganga Ram.*—The seventh Daftar originated in Sambat 1874 (1817 A. D.) and was headed by Ganga Sahai who probably was the same person as Ganga Ram. In order to assist Bhawani Das in his work of departmental organisation, Maharaja Ranjit Singh invited Ganga Ram<sup>1</sup> who was known as a man of ability and was recommended to the Maharaja by Bhai Lal Singh and Sardar Himmat Singh Jalwasia. Ganga Ram accepted the invitation and was accorded a cordial reception

1. Ganga Ram was the son of Pandit Kishan Dass who along with others migrated from Kashmir on account of persecution by the Muslim rulers. Till 1808 A.D. we find Ganga Ram serving in the employ of the Maharaja of Gwalior where he made himself conspicuous by his honesty and ability. When in 1809 General Ochterlony negotiating a treaty between the British Government and the Cis-Sutlej States, Ganga Ram, from his knowledge of the political history of the states, proved of invaluable help to the General,

on his arrival at Lahore. Here he was placed at the head of the military office and put in charge of the seals. He was made one of the principal pay-masters of the Irregulars, Bhawani Das being the head of the department. With the help of Bhawani Das, his chief, Ganga Ram introduced great improvements in the system of Military accounts.

Dewan Ganga Ram reorganised his Daftar in Sambat 1876 (1819 A. D.) and changed the Sambat in his seal accordingly.

Ganga Ram died in 1826 A. D. and was succeeded as Keeper of the Seals and in the military office by Dina Nath whom he had brought up most carefully and whose splendid abilities, later, shone to the extent that he was made Finance Minister after the death of Bhawani Dass in 1834 A. D. <sup>1</sup>

*Sarishta-i-Daftar.*—The eighth Daftar was organised in the Sambat 1875 (1818 A. D.), the year which is wrongly known to be one of wholesale reorganisation of Ranjit Singh's Daftars by Dewan Bhawani Dass. This Daftar was originally represented on the Parwanas by the seal "Sarishta-i-Daftar 1875" or "Hans Raj 1876" under the caption "Navishta shud." It seems that Hans Raj was in charge of this Daftar for some time after Sambat 1876.

<sup>1</sup>Dina Nath was son of Bakht Mal who, along with Ganga Ram and Lachhman Prashad, married three sisters. Dina Nath was invited by Ganga Ram and placed in the State Office. He distinguished himself by his intelligence and business-like habits, and first attracted the notice of Maharaja Ranjit Singh after the capture of Multan in 1818 A. D., when he efficiently prepared the list of those entitled to reward. The adjustment of confused accounts of the province of Multan brought him great credit.

In 1838 A. D. he received the title of Dewan. During the times of Maharaja Kharak Singh, Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh and Maharani Jindan, Dewan Dina Nath continued in office. Griffin offers an interesting sketch of his character and styles him the Talleyrand of the Punjab.

*Daftar Toshakhana-i-Khas.*—The ninth Daftar, Toshakhana-i-Khas, was organised in the Sambat 1875 (1818 A. D.) as shown by seals of this Daftar. The Toshakhana was originally in charge of Misr Basti Ram who was succeeded by Misr Beli Ram.

*The Tenth Daftar.*—This Daftar came into being in Sambat 1876 (1819 A. D.), originally headed by Shankar Dass. The Parwanas issued after the Sambat 1891 (1834 A. D.) bear the seal “Rattan Chand” in place of the seal “Shankar Dass, 1876.” The change in name implies that Shankar Dass was succeeded in office by Rattan Chand.

*Daftar-i-Shahzada.*—The eleventh Daftar, “Daftar-i-Shahzada” (Prince’s Department) seems, from the seals of its department on the Parwanas, to have originated in Sambat 1878 (1821 A. D.).

*Daftar-i-Darogha.*—The twelfth Daftar was the Daftar-i-Darogha. The Darogha was the head of the Octroi and Excise department. The seal of this Daftar bears inscription “Ram Dayal” and is affixed under the caption “Sabt Daftar-i-Darogha.”

*Daftar-i-Roznamcha.*—The thirteenth Daftar “Daftar-i-Roznamcha” was headed by Abdul Karim. The seal of Abdul Karim on the Parwanas bears some date which cannot be deciphered. It may be safely assumed, however, that this Daftar must have been organised in Sambat 1873 as the Roznamcha papers amongst the “Dina Nath” series begin from Sambat 1873. The “Daftar-i-Roznamcha” recorded daily credit and debit transactions.

*Daftar-i-Moharyani.*—The fourteenth Daftar was the “Daftar-i-Moharyani.” Its function was to affix the seals of the Maharaja and charge commissions for such affixation from the payee—the commission to be deducted from the amount ordered to be paid from the Toshakhana.

*Daftar-i-Khas*, or *Daftar-i-M'uala*.—The fifteenth Daftar was the Daftar-i-Khas or Daftar-i-M'uala organised in Sambat 1879 (1822 A. D.) and originally headed by Dewan Singh.

This in brief is a history of the inception and development of the Daftars. As time went on, some of these were abolished and a few amalgamated. The result was that, as Shahamat Ali tells us, towards the end of Ranjit Singh's reign there were only twelve Daftars in existence

### **The Circumlocutory Offices.**

A regular circumlocation office existed in Ranjit Singh's time. Not even a pie could be paid out of the state treasury except through a regular channel. It is worthy of note that the Maharaja evolved a more or less rigid and regular system which he consistently followed.

The pay-orders proceeded from the Maharaja in camp. The Munshis, whose duty was to write them, were kept in readiness; directly the Maharaja gave the order, the same was communicated to the Munshis through one or other of the reporters in attendance. It is noteworthy that no regular reporters were maintained and that this duty was discharged, without distinction of rank or status, by Raja Suchet Singh, Mian Dhian Singh, Ganda Singh Mehra, Rattan Singh Gadwai, Duni Mehra, Misr Ram Kishan, Devi Sahai, Misr Beli Ram, Qazi Niaz Ali, Bhai Kahan Singh, Sardara Farash, and others. The Maharaja's order was communicated in the Panjabi language, and such order made reference to the payment being made with or without cuts—the technical word used being "*kasar*" or "*bila kasar*". The Munshi wrote the order in Persian, clearly mentioning the sum and nature of the cut, if any, and its rate per cent. Three kinds of

cuts were referred to, namely "Kasar," "Kasar-i-Daftar" and "Kasar-i-Toshakhana." The Munshi did not sign his name but concluded the pay-order with the name and place of despatch. The pay-order embodied in itself details regarding the distribution of money, *viz.*, the names of persons amongst whom it was to be distributed and the sum allotted to each of them, the name of the person through whom the money was being sent, the purpose for which it was to be paid, and the name of the person through whom the pay-order was communicated from the Maharaja. Sometimes the pay-order referred to the amount of the budget sanctioned for particular kind of expenses. The Parwana having thus been concluded, the departmental seal of the Munshi who wrote it was affixed to its head. The inscription in this seal reads "Nawishta shud, 1883." The Parwana so sealed was presented to the Maharaja for approval. The Maharaja was able to understand the gist of whatever was read to him. This facility he had acquired both by reason of general shrewdness of character and through the habit of having read out to him books and papers in Persian, Hindi and Punjabi. He transacted business with readiness and precision. When the draft of his instructions regarding the pay-order, was submitted after being prepared in due form, he could judge at once whether it fully met his view. On approval, two seals, one small and the other large, with inscription "Akal Sahai Ranjit Singh" in Gurmukhi, under the same caption "Mulahiza shud" (examined) in Persian were affixed. Here it may be added that after the Sambat 1883, *i.e.* "1824 A. D.", the seal "Navishta shud" in Persian is superseded by the seal "Akal Sahai Daftar-i-Khas, 1881," in Gurmukhi. After Sambat 1885, *i.e.* "1828 A. D.," we find three more seals added on the face of the Parwana, all of them in the Persian script. They are inscribed as (1) "Akal

Sahai Mohar-i-Ashtám, 1885 " (by the grace of God, the seal of stamp, 1885); (2) " Akal Sahai Daftar-i-Toshakhana, 1885 " (by the grace of God, the seal of Toshakhana, 1885); and " Akal Sahai Daftar-i-Afwaj, 1885 " (by the grace of God, the Daftar of the Army, 1885). The first two seals may have a meaning in that the Parwana was to pass on to the Stamp Office for being stamped and to the Toshakhana for payment. But it is not clear why the Army Office should have been concerned in the matter.

From the Maharaja the Parwana went round the Daftars, starting from the Daftar "Sarishta-i-Hazur" where it was recorded and stamped with the seal "Az qirar-i-hukm-i-ashraf" under the caption "Sabt Sarishta-i-Hazur shud." From there, it passed to the Daftar of Devi Das where it was noted and stamped with the seal "Devi Das, 1218," under the caption "Navishta shud" (written). From the Daftar of Devi Das the Parwana was sent to the Daftar of his brother Bhawani Das, created in Sambat 1885 (1808 A. D.). After taking note of it, this Daftar affixed its seal with the inscription "Bhawani Das, 1865" under the caption "Sabt Sarishta shud." The Parwana was again passed on to the "Daftar" (General Secretariat) which was organized in Sambat 1868 and reorganized in Sambat 1877 (1820 A. D.). Here it was recorded and stamped with the seal "Sabt Daftar, 1868" under the caption "Qalmi shud" (penned). This done, it went to the Naqil Daftar (copying office) which, as already mentioned, was organized in Sambat 1860 (1803 A. D.). Here it was copied word for word. This fact together with the date of copying was recorded in a corner of the reverse of the Parwana. The caption and the date of copying were given on the Parwana artistically written. The date of copying is the same

the date on which the Parwana originated from the Maharaja, showing thereby that all the Daftars moved in camp with the Maharaja. From the copying office the Parwana went to the Daftar of Ganga Sahai for information and record. This is the same office which was organized in Sambat 1874 (1817 A. D.) and reorganized in Sambat 1876 (1819 A. D.). Ganga Sahai affixed the seal "Ganga Sahai, 1874" (1817 A. D.) or "Ganga Sahai, 1876" after the Sambat 1876 under the caption "Mutl'a shud" (informed). The next Daftar, to which the Parwana went, was organised in the Sambat 1875 (1818 A. D.). The seal "Sabt Sarishta 1875" was affixed under the caption "Navishta shud." After the Sambat 1876, the seal "Sabt Sarishta 1876" was superseded by the seal "Hans Raj, 1876" showing that before Sambat 1876 there was no prominent head of the Daftar. Hans Raj passed on the Parwana to the next Daftar organized in Sambat 1875 (1818 A. D.) and headed by Shankar Das. Here it was stamped with the seal "Shankar Das, 1875" under the caption "Itl'a Yaft" (informed). The Parwana issued before Sambat 1879 passed direct to the Toshakhana which was organized in Sambat 1875. Here was the Parwana filed and payment made. But later when the Circumlocation Office developed, other Daftars, some of them new and others fashioned out of those already existing, appeared. The first in the series, in Sambat 1885, was the Daftar-i-Dewani which it would be recalled, was originally organized in Sambat 1864, with Kirpa Ram at its head. The seal of this Daftar preceded that of the Daftar of the Maharaja, the "Sarishta-i-Hazur." Next in order came the Daftar-i-M'uala in Sambat 1879 with the seal "Sat Gur Sahai Khurm Rai" with the caption "Mandarj Daftar-i-M'uala shud" (recorded in the Supreme Office). On some Parwanas there is no mark of this



Daftar, but, in its stead, there is the seal of the Daftar-i-Khas (Special Office). This Daftar-i-Khas had appeared in Sambat 1880 with either of the seals "Akal Sahai Daftar-i-Khas. 1880" (by the favour of the Everlasting, the Special Office 1880) and "Akal Sahai Dewan Singh" under the caption "Tahrir Yaft." The seals of these Daftars preceded that of the Daftar-i-Dewani, in order of circumlocation. The third was the Daftar-i-Moharyana which came in Sambat 1891 with the seal "Akal Sahai Mohar Daftar-i-Mubarik 1879" under the caption "Mohar-in-Mutabiq-i-Amar-i-Ala shud" (this seal is inscribed according to the supreme command) or "Sabt Sarishta-i-Moharyani" recorded in the Office of Seals). The seal of this Daftar found a place between those of "Daftar-i-Mu'ala" and "Daftar-i-Dewani." The fourth was the Daftar-i-Roznamcha which came in Sambat 1878 with the seal "Abdul Karim." Between the Daftars of Shankar Das and Beli Ram came in two more Daftars in Sambat 1878, namely "Daftar-i-Roznamcha" with the seal "Abdul Karim" under the caption "Sabt Roznamcha" and "Daftar-i-Shahzada" with the seal "Sabt Sarishta-i-Shahzada, 1878" (recorded in the Office of the Prince, 1878).

On survey of the Parwanas from Sambat 1876 to Sambat 1889 it is observed that, as time went on, one or other of the various Daftars dropped out of the chain of circumlocation, till, towards the end of the Maharaja's reign, there is to be found just one seal, namely either that of "Kirpa Ram, 1864" or of "Har Sukh Rai," the Keeper of the Maharaja's private Signet.

## II.

### Financial Administration

Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself, as we know, was the centre of whole governmental system, and was assisted by a Chief Minister and a number of Dewans, Toshakhannas, and Munshis who administered different departments of the State. The accounts of his revenue receipts and of expenditure were at first kept by Rama Nand, a banker of Amritsar, who held the Oetroi of Amritsar and farmed the salt mines of Pind Dadan Khan. It was in 1808, when Bhowani Dass came into his service and was appointed the Finance Minister, that the State Treasury was properly organized. Dewan Bhawani Dass divided the financial transactions into the following Daftars:—

(i) *Daftar-i-Abwab-ul-Mal (Daftar-i-Maliyat).*

This department dealt with the accounts of the revenue receipts, and was sub-divided into:—

(a) *Jam'a Kharch-i- Taaluqat.*

(b) *Jam'u Kharch-i- Sairat.*

The *Taluqat* section comprised entries referring to the land revenue, while *Sairat* included all other sources of income, the most important being *Nazrana* (tributes and presents), *Zabti* (escheats and forfeitures), *Abkari* (excise), *Wajuhat-i-Moqarari* (registration fees), and *Chaukiyat* (customs and transit duties).

*Nazrana* was a tribute paid to the supreme ruler of a state on different occasions and under various circumstances by his subjects, specially by prominent vassals and dignitaries. Sometimes it was in the form of a fixed annual charge from a subordinate chieftain. Sometimes it was the price paid to the conqueror for the retention of a piece of territory by a defeated prince. Sums of

money and various kinds of valuables, occasionally paid to the Sikh ruler by his own officials, may be included in this category.

*Zabti* formed a source of considerable income to the Sikh ruler, who often punished his delinquent officials with fines or forfeitures of property, or both. Besides, in several cases, he withdrew grants of land from the descendants of his deceased Sardars. These were sometimes retained by the state; while sometimes they were regranted to others in lieu of cash payment.

*Abkari* included all charges made on the sale of opium, bhang, spirits and other drugs. The income derived from this source was comparatively insignificant.

*Wajuhat-i-Moqarari* included both the profits of justice and charges corresponding to the stamp duties of modern times. The receipts under this head were collected in different ways. First of all, certain charges were made for the redress of grievances by means of judicial decisions. Fines paid to atone for criminal acts provided another item which may be put under this head, for the sake of convenience. Then there were the proceeds from various charges levied on petitions addressed by the people either to the Sikh ruler or to one of his ministers. Lastly we may include the payments made for the affixation of the Royal Seals, on all kinds of private contracts.

As regards *Chaukiyat*, I find that as in every other Indian state there was a very comprehensive scale of duties which were levied, in this case, under as many as forty-eight different heads. An examination of the scale of charges shows, however, that no discrimination was made between articles of luxury and those which formed the necessities of life. The charges were generally made in cash. Steinbach, whose opinion should command

special respect on account of his long association with the government of Ranjit Singh, says: "Yet the duties, though levied at every ten or twelve miles, are light. To save themselves the trouble of constantly recurring payments, the merchants generally contract for the conveyance of a caravan of their goods from one point of the country to another, the party who takes charge of them paying all duties in the states through which they pass; should any chief, however, impose a vexatious tax, the conductor of the caravan has the option of changing the route, and conveying the goods through the possessions of one who has the power to protect, and the inclination to encourage the transit of traffic through his dominions."

(ii) *Daftar-i-Ahwal-ul-Tahsil.*

This was the second department organized by Dewan Bhaṛani Dass soon after his appointment in 1808, and was concerned with the records of accounts of income and expenditure sent by officials. These cashiers were called *Tahsildars*, the term being applied to any individual with whom the government money was deposited, or through whom it was expended. At first this department dealt with accounts of a varied nature, including incomes derived from different sources and expenses incurred in numerous ways. But when separate offices to record income and expenditure of different branches of the administration were set up, the work of this office became more limited.

(iii) *Daftar-i-Tauzihat.*

This Daftar attended to the accounts of the royal household, such as the expenses of the Zenana (ladies), presents and Khilaats (robes of honour), entertainments of guests, and *Toshakhana* (regalia).

(iv) *Daftar-i-Mawajib.*

In this office, the accounts of pay and other emolu-

ments in the various government departments, such as the army, the civil staff, the clerical establishment, and the menials were kept. This department was gradually divided into several branches to deal with the increasing volume of work.

(v) *Daftar-i-Roznamcha-i-Ikhrajat.*

This office was set up to register accounts of daily expenditure under various heads. Hence it dealt with miscellaneous items from this standpoint.

These *Daftars* passed through several changes concerning details of organisation in subsequent years. Each of them was subdivided into branches to cope with the administrative developments. Towards the end of Ranjit Singh's reign, there were twelve principal *Daftars* in existence at Lahore. Each of these was controlled by one or other of the prominent courtiers, and worked more or less under the personal direction of the ruler<sup>1</sup>.

### III

#### **Territorial Division and Local Government.**

For purposes of local administration, the Panjab was divided into four following *Subas* (provinces):—

1. Lahore.
2. Multan.
3. Kashmir,
4. Peshawar.

In addition to these, there were several hilly principalities owing allegiance to the Maharaja, and paying him annual tribute.

Each of the *Subas* was divided into *Parganas*, each *Pargana* into *Taluqas*, and every *Taluqa* was composed of

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1 *The Sikhs and Afghans*, by Shahamat Ali, p. 15.

50 to 100 *Mauzas*. This territorial division followed largely the system of the Mughals, and seems originally to have been based on considerations of administrative convenience, such as the tribal or professional affinity of the inhabitants, and the facility for collecting revenue and maintaining law and order.<sup>1</sup>

The administration of the Suba was entrusted to a *Nazim* (Governor) whose duties were analogous to those of the Lieutenant-Governor before the Reforms. He had under him a number of *Kardars* (officials). There was usually one *Kardar* to every T'aluqa, but, in certain cases, where it consisted of an exceptionally large number of villages, there were more than one.<sup>2</sup> Thus the *Kardars* widely differed in position and importance according to the extent of territory under their charge. In fact, the most important official in the sphere of local government was the *Kardar* rather than the *Nazim*. The *Nazim* doubtlessly occupied a much higher position than that of an average *Kardar*, but his functions were largely of an appellate character and of a more general nature. The *Kardar*, on the other hand, like an average civil servant of to-day, came into immediate contact with the people in their daily activities. The chief among his multifarious duties may be briefly summed up. He was—

- (1) A Revenue Collector and Supervisor of land settlement.
- (2) A Treasurer and Accountant.
- (3) A Judge and Magistrate.
- (4) An Excise and Customs Officer.

1. A Pargana roughly corresponded to a district, a T'aluqa to a Tehsil, and a Mauza to a village of modern Indian administration.

2. To every T'aluqa, at least one *Kotwal* (police officer) was attached. In large cities and important stations *Qil'adars* or *Faujdar*s (garrison officers) were stationed with a small force. These officials were responsible for the maintenance of law and order.

(5) A General Supervisor of the people on behalf of the Government.

It is true that there were—as there are to-day, though in a slightly different form—cases in which the *Kardars* or other officials were responsible for the oppression of the cultivators, but such cases were not the rule but only exceptions. Most of the contemporary writers praise the conduct of certain *Kardars* and *Nazims* very highly and hold the view that ‘their measures were a blessing to the peasantry.’ The author of the *Tarikh-i-Mulk-i-Hazara* describes in detail how the *regime* of Sardar Amar Singh Majithia, the Governor of Hazara, was of a great advantage to that district and was extremely popular. This is all the more important as Hazara was one of the districts on the frontier where the administration on the whole was a very difficult problem. Misar Rup Lal of Jullundur has been described as ‘an able and humane ruler, true to his word and engagements, loved by the cultivators and dreaded by evil doers. A better man could not have been chosen.’ ‘It is refreshing,’ says a writer, ‘to meet with a man like Misar Rup Lal, upright and just, whose name is to this day remembered by the people with respect and affection.’ The name of Dewan Sawan Mall of Multan needs no introduction to the students of history. Within a short time he succeeded in introducing into his *Suba* agricultural reforms of a far-reaching character, and thereby changing the whole appearance of the country.

On the authority of various European writers who have left us accounts of Misr Rup Lal, Sawan Mal, Amar Singh Majithia and Lehna Singh Majithia, we know that ample attention was paid by the local officials to the welfare of the people by means of remissions of revenue for failure of crops, advancement of *Taqavi* loans for

encouraging cultivation, security of tenure of lands, and systematic grading of revenue charges based on the fertility of the soil and means of irrigation.

#### IV

### Judicial Arrangements

The first point to be borne in mind is that there was no written system of laws in existence in the days of Ranjit Singh. Judicial decisions were made in accordance with customary principles. The procedure was direct and simple, there being no distinction between ordinary civil and criminal cases. The settlement of village disputes rested largely with the Panchayats. The word Panchayat means a Court of Five,<sup>1</sup> that being the usual number of men composing it. It consisted of the Panches or elders of the village. The qualifications necessary for its membership were the possession of land, and a certain amount of local influence and prestige. The Panchayat, in reality, was more often of the nature of an Arbitration Court than that of a state-appointed judicial tribunal. Hence its decisions were revised by the Kardars whenever they were rejected by either party. In the towns, justice was administered by the Kardars who also decided the more important cases within their Talaqas arising from disputes concerning matters of inheritance, boundaries of land,

1. Malcolm calls the Panchayat the "Court of Five", and says that "They are always chosen from the men of the best reputation," and that "this Court has a high character for justice," vide *Sketch*, pp. 127-28. For detailed information regarding the working of the Panchayats, see his *Memoirs of Central India*. The Council of Regency, established in the Punjab after the First Sikh War, regarded the administration of justice by the Panches as so satisfactory that they entrusted to them the task of drawing up a code of customary laws as regards marriage, inheritance and other similar topics. The institution of Panchayats was so popular that the people called it *Panch Men Parmeshwar* (the decision of the Panches has the sanction of God) and readily accepted its rulings. Vide *Lahore Political Diaries*, 1847-48, by Colonel Henry and Sir John Lawrence.



and payment of revenue. In the cities such cases were decided by the Nazims or by the more important Kardars, and sometimes separate officials were appointed to devote themselves exclusively to judicial work. These latter were known as *Adaltis* (Justices). A distinct Court was set up at the capital known as *Adalt-i-Ala*<sup>1</sup> (High Court). How this Court was constituted, who the judges were, or to what its jurisdiction extended is not known to history. Its name, however, suggests that it was probably an Appellate Court, analogous to a High Court of the present day. In addition to these local and central courts, judicial authority was delegated by the Sikh ruler to his prominent ministers, for deciding cases pertaining to their own respective departments. Finally the Sikh ruler himself held his Durbar at the Metropolis and heard appeals and petitions against the judgments of the *Kardars*, *Nazims*, *Adaltis* and ministers.

Civil cases were of a varied nature. First of all, there were cases of betrothals and matrimonial engagements, which were decided by the *Panchayats* in accordance with the generally accepted social conventions. Then there were breaches of contracts incidental to loans, sales on credit and the like; and in these decisions, great importance was attached to the sworn testimony of witnesses. In such matters the government of Ranjit Singh levied fees on the successful party; though contrary to the modern practice, such fees were levied after the judgments were announced. There were, again, numerous civil suits pertaining to the alienation of landed property among the rural population. Those were decided on the evidence obtained from the records which were regularly

1. Vide *Tarikh-i-Ranjit Singh* by Sohan Lal, f. 559. The author himself was appointed a clerk in this Court, but he says nothing of the cases that came before it.

kept in *Qazikhanas*<sup>1</sup> (local record offices) in charge of the *Nazims*. Those who succeeded in their cases paid the *Shukrana* (thanks-giving present). Where there was no *Prima facie* case for defence in a civil suit, the defendant suffered a fine for wasting the time of the Court by carrying on vexatious litigation. Thus the administration of justice was a source of considerable income to the State. Punishment for murder or other physical injuries was meted out to the offenders more often in the form of fines than of bodily suffering. Mutilation was employed only in exceptional cases. On the whole, it may be said that the vigour of punishment depended upon the nature of the crime. Nor should we forget the important bearing of the locality in which the crime was committed. For example, the crimes perpetrated in the turbulent province of Peshawar were punished more heavily than those committed in the Central Punjab. This is evident from the accounts of European travellers, who saw cases of mutilation on the frontiers more frequently than in the *Saba* of Lahore.

Though to all outward appearances, Ranjit Singh's judicial system was crude and simple—not more crude and simple than that prevailing in other Indian States yet in actual practice it eminently suited the social and political environment of the people of the Punjab. Under a system of administration in which the idea of the *separation of powers* was totally absent, one would expect to find instances of miscarriage of justice. Still the abuse of authority on the part of local officials was limited by

1. Towards the close of the 18th century, the *Qazikhanas* were established in most of the *Qazis* districts. They have been efficient

in the *Maharaja's* reign, the *Qazis* were *Qazis*. The method of appointing *Qazis* is stated

several considerations. First of all, the term of office of Ranjit Singh's officials depended on good behaviour. The consciousness that their dignity, prestige and social status, and even their private wealth and property, depended solely on the favour of their master, acted as a restraining influence on their arbitrary actions. Secondly, the Maharaja's frequent and unexpected tours introduced a real risk of complaints of bribery and corruption reaching his ears. Indeed such complaints often came to his notice on these occasions. Another factor contributing to the same result was the practice of deputing special justices to tour in different districts for the purpose of hearing complaints and deciding cases of particular importance. *Tarikh-i-Ranjit Singh* by Sohan Lal gives striking examples as to how Ranjit Singh issued strict orders to some *Jagirdars* to send the reports of their decisions to him regularly. In the *Risala-i-Sahib Numa* by Ganesh Das, the author mentions in detail how after 1823 Ranjit Singh devoted most of his time to visiting different districts and busying himself with the examination of decisions and hearing complaints against the corruption of officials. That the judicial processes in civil and criminal actions were not dilatory and expensive was another feature that was very agreeable to the rural and agricultural population of the Punjab. The greatest merit of the system lay, however, in its simplicity and in the absence of those legal intricacies and technicalities, which, if introduced among the simple Sikh peasantry, would have beset the path of justice with unavoidable difficulties. In this connection it is interesting to note the view entertained by a Sikh priest, and expressed to Malcolm in the course of a conversation. Malcolm says that this priest, with a typical patriotic prejudice, boasted of the equitable nature of the judicial system of the Sikhs, which he

considered to be much superior to that of the English. He described the latter as tedious, expensive and vexatious and advantageous only to clever rogues. Malcolm himself held the view that the Sikh system was "most congenial to the temper of the people."<sup>1</sup>

1. *Sketch*, pp. 126-128.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **TAXATION SYSTEM**

#### **Land Revenue and other Taxes**

(BY HARDIT SINGH DHILLON, M. A., PH. D.,

PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, KHALSA COLLEGE, AMRITSAR.)

Every State needs funds for carrying on its administration and performing the vital functions entrusted to it. Such funds are raised by means of a well-devised taxation system, under which all state subjects able to pay something are required to contribute their due share to the state treasury. Due to the complexity of the present-day economic organization of society, the taxation systems of modern states have grown to be very complicated, so that they can be safely entrusted only in the hands of experts. But such has not always been the case.

The taxation system prevailing in the Punjab during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign was the simplest of its kind. There were no elaborate budget estimates prepared in advance, as it is the case with modern states. The finances of the Sikh kingdom were regulated on the simplest basis of keeping the expenditure within the limit of revenue. If the revenue of the kingdom declined owing to some unexpected circumstances, the expenses of the realm were curtailed proportionately. No effort was made to meet such deficit by means of borrowing loans, but the simple method of asking the State employees to accept a voluntary cut was used.

*Fiscal and Administrative Division of the Kingdom.*—  
For purposes of collecting revenues of various kinds

and also for general administrative purposes the whole kingdom was divided into several Subas (Provinces), each of which was placed under the control of a Governor who was also known as a *Naeim*. Each Suba was sub-divided into several *Parganas* which can be roughly compared to the present districts. The *Pargana* was still further sub-divided into *Ta'aluqas* or *Tapas*, comparable to modern Tahsils, each consisting of fifty to hundred *Mauzas* (villages).

This division of the kingdom appears to have been borrowed from the Mughal period and was effected mainly for collecting revenue, administering justice and maintaining law and order.

The function of collecting land revenue and various other taxes was entrusted to a chain of officers who were held responsible for their respective jurisdictions. The most important official in this chain was the *Kardar*, whose fiscal duties corresponded to those of the modern Revenue Collector. His jurisdiction extended over an entire *Ta'aluqa* or a part of it if it was too large in size. In the task of collecting revenue he was assisted by *Mukuddams* (the village headmen), *Taticaris* who worked as surveyors and assessors of revenue, *Kanungos*, who were hereditary registrars, and *Chaudhries*, each of whom was responsible for realizing the revenue of several villages over which his jurisdiction extended.

### Land Revenue

Since times immemorial land revenue has constituted the most important source of revenue to the state exchequer in India. The same was true of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's kingdom. Out of a total revenue amounting to a little over three crores of rupees, just about two crores were contributed by the land revenue.<sup>1</sup> Such an important

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1. Shohamat AU. *The Sikhs and Afghans*, p. 23.

source of revenue needs a thorough and careful study of a student of finance.

*Methods of Assessment.*—The various methods of assessing land revenue prevailing in the Punjab during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's regime may be summarized as follows:—

1. *Batai System.*—Under this system the land revenue was assessed on the threshing floor after the harvest was gathered. This method was prevalent in the Punjab during the Mughal period, and the Maharaja also continued to use this method for a considerable period of his reign. Under this system the revenue was collected in kind, a certain portion of the crop being given up to the State officials in payment of land revenue.

The main difficulty of the system was that the amount of revenue could be estimated only after the harvest was over and the grain was present on the threshing floor. The State officials had to keep a strict watch during the harvest seasons in order to check any unfair methods being used by the cultivators for concealing the harvest yield. A large force of State employees was essential to keep watch over threshing floors during the harvest times. The system therefore, was not only inefficient but also expensive.

2. *Kankut System.*—Due to the inherent defects of *Batai* system, *Kankut* system was introduced. Under this system the revenue was appraised on the basis of standing crops, and cultivators were required to make payments in accordance with the terms of *Kankut*. The appraisal was made by taking a representative field of every crop and estimating its yield. Out of the total produce a certain portion was required to be paid to the State authorities in the form of land revenue. Under this system also the revenue continued to be paid in kind.

This system was an improvement over the *Batai* system in that it enabled the amount of revenue to be estimated a bit earlier and dispensed with the necessity of maintaining a large force for supervising the threshing floors.

3. *Cash Payment*.—Towards the close of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign "when the capacity of the several estates had become well known," a still further improvement was effected in the method of assessing land revenue. The *Kankut* system was replaced by a system of cash payment. This system, however, was not so strictly enforced; rather it was a wavering system, because either party could revert to the old system.<sup>1</sup>

4. *Mixed System*.—It was not uncommon to find a mixed system of assessment, under which the revenue was assessed both in kind and in cash. Certain standard crops were liable to be assessed on *Kankut* basis, while other crops whose produce could not be accurately estimated were assessed on cash basis. Therefore, crops such as sugar-cane, cotton, *charri*, tobacco, pepper, false-hemp, vegetables and the spring fodder crops were to pay cash rates.<sup>2</sup>

5. *Bigha Basis*.—In some parts of the kingdom the revenue was assessed on *bigha* basis. In this connection the authors of the Attock Gazetteer observe: "In the Sikh time the cultivators usually paid by what was called the *bigha* rate; the *kardar* and the appraisers of the crops would select a fair field and very fairly calculate the produce by the eye; a deduction of one-tenth would be made for the village servants, and half the rest taken as the Government share. The field would then be roughly

1. Report of Revised Settlement of the Jullundur District (1892), p. 151.

2. *Ibid.* See also Punjab Gazetteers, Vol. XIV A., Jullundur District and Kapurthala State (1904), p. 149



measured by a man's paces, or the area guessed—they can do this with unusual accuracy—the produce per *bigha* of this field was thus calculated as an average *bigha*; the *kardar* would afterwards visit each field of each owner, examine the standing crop and assess it as equal to so many average *bighas*...

"The number of *bighas* agreed upon was entered against each man, and as soon as the price of grain for the harvest was fixed, the value was calculated. The village money-lender had to advance the whole, or a large portion, of the amount to the *kardar*. The *kardar* then aided him in collecting the corn from tenants..."<sup>1</sup>

6. *Plough Basis*.—Land revenue was sometimes assessed on the plough basis<sup>2</sup>. Under this system fixed money rates were levied upon land. The system operated exactly like the *bigha* system, but it differed from the latter only in the sense that the unit of land taken for assessment purposes in this case was rather bigger. Instead of a *bigha*, amounting roughly to two-fifths of an acre, the unit under the plough system was the extent of land which could be easily cultivated by an average team of bullocks, i. e., about fifteen acres.

7. *Well Basis*.—Well was sometimes made the basis of revenue assessment. According to this system a lump sum was levied upon the land conveniently irrigated by one well. The land irrigated by an average well, therefore, constituted a unit for purposes of revenue assessment.

From the study of Settlement Reports of various districts of the Punjab it transpires that all these methods of assessing land revenue were concurrently employed in one part of the kingdom or another throughout the

1. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. XXIX A, 1907.

*Attock District Gazetteer*, p. 286. See also *Jhelum Gazetteer*, p. 186.

2. *Gujrat District Gazetteer* (1888-84), p. 99.

reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The *batai* system was more prevalent during the early period of his rule and was on its decline during the last years, whereas the cash payment method was less popular during the early years and special efforts were made to popularize it during the closing years of the Maharaja's rule, although it never won the approbation of all concerned.

*Principles of Assessment.*—The Government share of produce was determined on the basis of certain set principles. Before giving the details of these principles, it is essential to point out that the State (or ruler) in India has always recognized itself as the super-owner of all lands. Although the actual ownership of land is vested in the cultivators themselves, they can enjoy this privilege only so long as they continue to abide by the State regulations with respect to the payment of land revenue. As soon as they fail to fulfil this condition, they are liable to be ejected, and their lands can be given to others. This theory of land ownership has prevailed in India since ancient times and holds true even to the present day.

While studying the Government demand for land revenue during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time, we have to bear in mind the fact that it was made on the basis of State (super) ownership of land.

With respect to the Government share of land produce demanded in the form of revenue by the Maharaja's Government, the opinions of various writers differ. The confusion is caused by the lack of uniformity in the rate of assessment levied upon land in different parts of the kingdom. Generally speaking, however, the basic principles of assessment can be reduced to the following:—<sup>1</sup>

1. The most fertile and favourably situated lands

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<sup>1</sup> This information is collected from the Settlement Reports of various districts.

were assessed at 50 per cent of their gross produce.

2. The less fertile and unfavourably situated lands were assessed at a rate varying from two-thirds to one-third, and sometimes even one-fourth.

3. In the case of lands owned by Government officials who assisted in the task of revenue collection, i.e., *Mukaddams*, *Chaudhris*, etc., the assessment was comparatively low.

4. Sometimes the whole *Ta'aluqa* was leased to a *Kardar* on a fixed payment and the *Kardar* was allowed to make his own arrangements with the cultivators, mainly following the set principles of assessment.

It is evident from these principles that the cultivators were assessed according to their capacity to pay and Adam Smith's famous canon of taxation, i. e., Equality of Sacrifice, was effectively applied. The owner of the most productive land was required to depart with one-half of his gross produce, because he could easily afford to do so ; while his less fortunate brother was assessed at a lower rate and was thus compensated for the inferior productivity of his land.

*Collection and Remittance of Revenue.*—The land revenue was collected twice a year about a month or so after the harvests. The actual collection was made by *Mukaddams* with the help of *Chaudhris*. The local proceeds were remitted to the *Kardar*, the chief officer in charge of revenue collection, who deposited them in the Government District treasury. The *Kardar* was usually authorized to defray local expenses out of the general revenue proceeds, and was required to remit the balance to higher authorities. Remittances to Lahore were usually made by means of *hundis* drawn upon Amritsar bankers<sup>1</sup>.

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1. *Shanamat Ali*, op. cit. p. 22.

*Revenue Proceeds.*—The total amount of proceeds from land revenue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's kingdom is estimated differently at Rs. 1,24,03,920<sup>1</sup> and Rs. 1,96,57,172,<sup>2</sup> the former figure including also the income realized from tributes.

*Estimate of Ranjit Singh's Revenue Policy.*—The revenue policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has been adversely criticized by some writers. It has been alleged that "The Sikh Government took all they could extract from the cultivator, relaxing in favour of the headman who assisted them in the process."<sup>3</sup> It is further suggested that the Sikh ruler was so callous and devoid of feelings that he "took whatever he could and whenever he could get it",<sup>4</sup> so that there was neither any fixed assessment nor any fixed time for the payment of revenue. The assessment was so heavy, it is further alleged, that "the villagers had to bribe the appraising officers to take less."<sup>5</sup> In this connection Major Abbot, while speaking of Hazara District, is quoted to have stated that "the system here has been to over-assess the country and to bribe the *Maliks* into submission by petty grants of ploughs, mills arable land, etc."<sup>6</sup>

The policy is also criticized on the ground that local officers, especially the *Kardars*, were invested with too much authority in matters of revenue collection and that very scant supervision was exercised over their activities.<sup>7</sup> There was no fixed time, it is said, for auditing the

1. Prinsep, quoted by G. L. Chopra, *op. cit.*, Appendix IV, p. 238.

2. Shahamat Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

3. Gujrat District Gazetteer (1884), p. 99.

4. *The Punjab Gazetteers, Jullundur and Kapurthala State*, p. 249.

5. Douie, J. M., *The Punjab Settlement Manual*, p. 20.

6. Hazara District Gazetteer, p. 96.

7. *Gujranwala District Gazetteer* (1883-84), p. 70.

revenue accounts of local officials and therefore they enjoyed a free hand in exercising their caprice.<sup>1</sup>

In making a correct estimate of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's revenue policy, we have to take note of the fact that land revenue, in those days, was the mainstay of the Government, that there were very few other taxes yielding appreciable amount of revenue, and that the Sikh revenue system had inherited the legacy from Mughal system, under which the most common rate of assessment was one-half of the gross produce. Allowing due concession for these historical facts, we have ample testimony from reorganized authorities to show that the revenue policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was neither oppressive nor unsympathetic, nor devoid of any feelings for the tillers of the soil.

That the revenue policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not oppressive is abundantly clear from the fact that Kashmir, which was used to a system of heavy assessment, enjoyed a great relief under his administration. It is said that the revenue of Kashmir under Akbar amounted to Rs. 15,52,825 and that during the Pathan regime it rose to Rs. 60,00,000, but with the advent of the Sikh administration the amount was reduced to the low figure of Rs. 13,00,000 only.<sup>2</sup>

In connection with Kashmir it is further said : " We learn from Dewan Amar Nath that when Khushal Singh brought a sum of money from Kashmir in 1833, Ranjit expressed great surprise and told him that in view of the great famine in Kashmir there would have been no dereliction of duty if he had brought no money. He then sent to Kashmir thousands of asses with wheat, and made arrangements for the distribution

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1. *Kangra District Gazetteer* (1904), p. 225.

2. *Prem Singh Hoti, Hari Singh Nalwa*, p. 99.

of corn from the Masjids and the Mandirs.<sup>1</sup>

About revenue assessment in Jullundur it is said that "Misr Rup Lal's demand seems to have been usually moderate and equal, and to have included all legitimate extra dues"<sup>2</sup> and that "his rates were such that holders of his leases seldom hesitated at a later period to produce them before the British Settlement Officer—a sure sign that they would not object to pay his assessment."<sup>3</sup> Similar opinions are expressed about Dewan Sawan Mal's assessments in Multan.

During the times of famine or scarcity of production due to some natural calamity, the Sikh ruler was never found wanting in sympathy for the cultivators. Speaking of conditions prevailing in the Kangra District the authors of the Gazetteer observe: "Remissions were occasionally given under the authority of Lehna Singh [Majithia]. During the latter days of the Sikhs these remissions frequently recurred, and *were an absolute surrender of the revenue, and not merely suspensions to be subsequently realized.*"<sup>4</sup>

How deeply interested the Maharaja's Government was in the welfare of cultivators and the development of agriculture is apparent from the following remarks: "In spite of its faults, the system appears... ..to have wonderfully succeeded in promoting the extension of cultivation in a tract which, prior to the period of Sikh rule, was practically an uncultivated waste, inhabited only by pastoral and nomad tribes, but in 1849 contained 432,779 acres of cultivated area .....in one way or

1. *Zafarnama Ranjit Singh*, quoted by Sinha in his *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 136-37.

2. *Report of the Revised Settlement of Jullundur District*, p. 151.

3. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. XIV A, *Jullundur District and Kapurthala State* (1904), p. 251.

4. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. X A., *Kangra District*, p. 225.

another cultivation was widely extended, and the existence even of 'weak' communities devoted to agriculture marks a step in the right direction, and is an improvement, from an economic point of view, upon the purely pastoral era which preceded the advent of the Sikh *Kardar*. These are the facts which should not in simple justice be forgotten in judging the Sikh [revenue] system."<sup>1</sup>

With respect to the corruption prevailing among the lower ranks of administrative officials, we must make due allowance for the lack of efficient means of communication and transportation, as a result of which it was simply impossible for the Central Government to keep itself in so close a touch with the details of local administration as is possible in these days. But whenever any complaint about the corruption of a local official was received by the Maharaja, he never hesitated to take immediate steps to redress the legitimate grievances of his subjects. "In 1830 A. D. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, hearing of the grievous exactions of his officials, and of the unsatisfactory state of affairs, sent General Ventura to assess these and other tracts [in Attock District]. His assessments were fair and even light, but following on a period of much depression and overtaxation it was with difficulty that they were realized."...Informed "at last of increasing dissatisfaction Maharaja Ranjit Singh summoned the heads of tribes and villages to Lahore, treated them with hospitality and distinction, fixed comparatively light assessments, and sent them back to their homes, assured that what they had suffered was not at his hands, but was the work of his officials....."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. *Gazetteer of Gujranwala District* (1888-84), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. XXIX A (1907), *Attock District*, p. 232.

So conscious was Maharaja Ranjit Singh of dispensing justice to his subjects that even the trifling mistakes of Government officials, when brought to his notice, were not allowed to pass as a matter of course. In this connection we hear from Mr. Sinha : " M. Ventura was ordered to reach Peshawar with all possible haste to make M. Avitable return the *two hundred* rupees he had unjustly taken as a fine from the Khutrees of the place and rebuild at his expense, not exceeding Rs. 15,000, the houses of the people demolished by him."<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of the foregoing testimonies it can be safely asserted that the revenue policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was in no way oppressive, unsympathetic or devoid of feelings for the tillers of the soil. Rather, the policy was based on practical considerations, and the interests of all concerned were duly looked after. No effort was withheld from dispensing justice to all subjects of the Maharaja. He evinced so keen an interest in the welfare of cultivators that he used to issue special instructions even to military officers to carefully watch their men, while on march, against damaging the village crops.<sup>2</sup> The entire Government machinery was moved to effect all possible improvements in agriculture and industry of the kingdom so that the people might live in peace and prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

1. Sinha, N. K., *Ranjit Singh*, p. 137.

2. " Kharak Singh was ordered to proceed to Multan and take care that the cultivation along the way was not damaged by the people." (Political Proceedings, quoted by Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 136.)

3. On the basis of testimonies from distinguished writers, Dr. Chopra states : " On their authority, we know that .....ample attention was paid by the local officials to the welfare of the people by means of remissions of revenue for failure of crops, advancement of *Taqisi* loans for encouraging cultivation, security of tenure of lands, and systematic grading of revenue charges based on fertility of the soil and means of irrigation." (*op. cit.*, S. 136 F. N.)



### Other Taxes

As it has already been stated, land revenue contributed the greatest share to the Sikh Exchequer. However, the state derived some income from other sources as well. Various kinds of taxes were levied with a view to enabling all subjects to contribute their due share to the State treasury

The details of various taxes imposed upon the people by the Sikh ruler are as follows :—

1. *Customs and Excise*.—Next to land revenue, the important source of revenue to the Sikh Exchequer was customs and excise duties. The whole kingdom, like medieval European States, was dotted over innumerable custom barriers. Duties were imposed upon all articles irrespective of their origin or destination. The rates of duties were based on common-sense basis, no clear distinction being made between the articles of luxury and those of necessity. Such rates were, however, uniform throughout the kingdom.

The total amount of income realized from customs is estimated by Mr. Sinha at Rs 16,36,114,<sup>1</sup> while Sir Lepel Griffin estimates it at Rs.16,37,000<sup>2</sup> and Prinsep brings this figure to Rs. 19,00,600<sup>3</sup>.

2. *Jagirs*.—The Maharaja had granted *Jagirs* to various Sardars and notabilities for their gallantry on the battle-field or meritorious services in connection with the civil administration. These *Jagirs* were also a source of income to the State treasury, although nothing actually came to its coffers, because all of it was locally spent by the Sardars on the maintenance of their forces and the

1. Sinha, N.K., *op. cit.*, p. 135.

2. Griffin, L., *Ranjit Singh*, p. 145.

3. Quoted by Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

administration of their territories. The total amount of revenue from *Jagirs* amounted to Rs. 87,54,590 according to Shahamat Ali<sup>1</sup> and to Rs. 1,09,28,000 according to Mr. Prinsep<sup>2</sup>.

3. *Monopolies*.—Monopolies of all kinds were subjected to taxation by the State authorities. The manufacturing and sale of salt was the most important monopoly, bringing an annual income of Rs. 8,00,000<sup>3</sup>. The sale of intoxicating drugs, the distillation of spirits and the keeping of gambling houses were permitted, as at present, only under licenses issued by the State on payment of the required amount of tax.

4. *Moharana*.—Some income was realized from the working of judicial institutions and it went by the name of *Moharana*, which corresponds to the present-day revenue from judicial stamps. The annual income from *Moharana* is estimated at Rs. 5,77,000<sup>4</sup>.

5. *Abwabs*.—Several little cesses levied by the State and collected along with the land revenue were known as *Abwabs*. Ordinarily they varied from five to fifteen per cent. of the land revenue.

In Gujranwala District, the following charges were included in *Abwabs*<sup>5</sup> :—

Nazar	... Re. 1 per harvest from each well.
Farash Khana	... Re. 1 per village.
Top Khana	... From Re. 1 to Rs. 2 per village.
Holi	... " " "

6. *Professional Taxes*.—Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not slow in appreciating the truth of the fundamental principle of public finance that every earning subject of

1. Shahamat Ali, *op cit.*, p. 23.

2. Quoted by Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

3. Sinha, N. K., *op. cit.*, p. 135.

4. Prinsep, quoted by Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

5. *Gujranwala District Gazetteer* (1883-84), p. 71.

the State should be made to contribute to the State treasury according to his ability to pay. Therefore various professional men were assessed at nominal rates of taxes. 'The principal artizans, blacksmiths, weavers tanners, etc., were taxed at the rate of Re. 1 per house. The inferior workmen (*kamins*) had to pay Re. 0-8-0 per house. "Traders were also taxed from one rupee to two rupees per head."<sup>1</sup>

In the Settlement Report of Kangra District (1862-72), we find an interesting list of such levies, which went by the name of "Banwaziri," prevailing in that District. The following is its modified reproduction<sup>2</sup> :—

Article or profession assessed.	Amount of annual charges.
Gaddi shepherd's flock	Rs. 2 0 0 per 100 heads of sheep or goats.
Gujar herdman's buffalo	Re. 1 0 0 per large buffalo. 0 8 0 per small buffalo.
Landholder's buffalo or cow	0 4 0
Weaver	0 12 0 per loom.
Barber	0 12 0 per house.
Washerman	0 12 0 „ „
Potter	0 12 0 „ „
Blacksmith	0 12 0 „ „
Carpenter	0 12 0 „ „
Tailor	0 12 0 „ „
Tanner	1 0 0 per hide.
Village watchman	1 0 0
<i>Bharaee</i>	0 2 0 per house.
Garden land	1 0 0 „ „
Oilman	0 4 0 „ press.

1. *Gujranwala District Gazetteer* (1883-84), p. 71.

2. *Settlement Report, Kangra District* (1862-72) p. 88.

Water mills on a river	3 mds. of flour annually.
„ „ „ hill torrent	1½ „ „ „ „
„ „ „ canals	6 „ „ „ „

In addition to the foregoing taxes, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had devised some naive methods of taxing his people. One of these methods was the reversion of the *Jagirs* of his Sardars to the State after their death. The justice of this reversion lay in the fact that these *Jagirs* were granted for personal merits of the Sardars for their life-time. The Sardars were not granted the sole right of ownership. In fact the Maharaja, as super-owner, demanded a certain number of military recruits in addition to cash payments from his Sardars.

The principle of confiscation of *Jagirs* was applied with perfect uniformity. Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was the most beloved and respected general of the Maharaja and had won many a favour during his life-time, but after his death, the major portion of his *Jagir* was transferred to the State instead of being allowed to be inherited by his sons.

The estate of Sada Kaur, Maharaja's own mother-in-law, was also incorporated into the State property after her death, and similar steps were taken in connection with the *Jagirs* of Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Sardar Uttam Singh Majithia. Even Kharak Singh, the heir-apparent, had to share the same fate: he had to part with the lion's share of the cash his mother had left him.<sup>1</sup>

Another method used by the Maharaja for raising taxes was his simple device of asking the State employees to forego their salaries for a certain period. In 1825, when the resources of the royal treasury were

1. Chopra, G. L., *op. cit.*, pp. 208.

unduly exhausted, the Maharaja asked his French generals to give up their salaries for two months and also the pay of their regiments for the same time.<sup>1</sup>

On superficial examination this action of the Maharaja might appear to be unjust to the State employees, but we have to bear in mind the fact that State servants, during those days, were not subjected to any income-tax. In view of the fact that they were drawing quite reasonable salaries and some of them were enjoying big *Jagirs*, in addition to being the recipients of the Maharaja's occasional special *inams*, it is hard to see that the Maharaja committed any injustice in asking them to make a trifling sacrifice.

*Revenues of the Kingdom.*—No reliable statistics are available about the total amount of revenues of the Sikh kingdom. Due to the troubled conditions and political upheavals under which the Sikh kingdom was established, hardly any energy was available to be directed towards this useful task. The result is that for this important piece of information we have to depend on merely haphazard estimates of casual observers. Two such estimates are available.

Henry T. Prinsep, in his work on Ranjit Singh, gives the following estimate of the revenues of the Sikh kingdom:—<sup>2</sup>

<i>Source.</i>	<i>Annual Amount.</i>
Land Revenue and Tributes	Rs. 1,24,03,300
Customs	19,00,600
Moharana	5,77,000
Total	1,48,81,500

1. Chopra, p. 203-9.

2. *Origin of the Sikh Power*, p. 134.

According to Shahamat Ali, the total revenues of the Sikh kingdom stood as follows<sup>1</sup>—

<i>Source.</i>	<i>Annual Amount.</i>
Khalse	Rs. 1,96,57,172
Jagirs	87,54,590
Khirajdars	12,66,000
Custom duties	5,50,000
Total	<u>3,02,27,762</u>

These estimates indicate an incredible discrepancy between them as well as their defective nature. The estimate of Shahamat Ali, however, appears to be nearer the truth because it is based on personal information which he was in a position to collect, and gives the figures for the latest period (1838-39). His estimate of custom revenues is surprising as compared to that of Prinsep; it appears to be too low. But we have no other alternative than to accept these estimates for whatever worth they are.

*Expenditure.*—How were these revenues of the kingdom spent? Here again we suffer from lack of adequate information; Shahamat Ali is responsible for stating that Rs. 1,27,96,482 were annually spent on the maintenance of military forces.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the revenues were spent on civil administration.

There is no denying the fact that almost all revenues of the kingdom were spent within itself. Whatever the Government took from the people with one hand in the form of taxes, it handed them back with the other in the form of salaries to the State employees. With the exception of nominal savings of European officials which they were

1. Shahamat Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 25

fortunate in transporting to their mother countries, no money was drained out of the kingdom. Money merely changed hands within the country, and this is the explanation how commerce could flourish under apparently heavy taxation and agricultural development could go on with rapid strides even though the State demand varied from one-fourth to one-half of the gross produce.

*Conclusion.*—The taxation system of Maharaja Ranjit Singh may appear to be crude to a modern observer. But allowing a due concession for the conditions under which it had to be worked out, there is scarcely any justification for such an impression. The complexities of modern western science of public finance were not apprehended by the Indian rulers. They had to work on the Indian background and had to suit their taxation systems to local conditions. The same was true of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. His taxation system, with a few alterations here and there, followed the main lines of the Mughal system. The system as a whole was simple, just and intelligible to the common people.

The basic test of an efficient and equitable system of taxation is its effect upon the general welfare of the people. On this point we have simply to quote George Campbell, who, speaking of the rural communities and the treatment meted out to them at the hands of the Sikh Government, observes: "The communities were more perfect and vigorous than in any other part of the country, and were well treated by the Government."

## CHAPTER VII

i

### AGRICULTURE IN THE PUNJAB DURING THE MAHARAJA'S REIGN

(BY HARBANS SINGH, I. D. D. (ALLD.), POST-GRADUATE,  
LECTURER IN AGRICULTURE, KHALSA COLLEGE, AMRITSAR.)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule brought to the people of the Punjab the advantages of a uniform administration which are so very necessary for the peaceful cultivation of land. "He established a degree of peace and security, which the people of this province had not enjoyed for about a century. The result became visible in *the increased cultivation and growing commerce* of the Central Punjab."<sup>1</sup>

The Punjab has been rightly described as the land of peasant proprietors, and on the whole what is true to-day was equally true a century back. In those days there were very few towns and practically the entire population, excepting a very small percentage which depended on trade, was making its livelihood by tilling the soil. The Maharaja's rule having given immunity against foreign invasion, brought a sense of security to the minds of the cultivators and gave them a sense of relief after a century's great political upheavals. The condition of cultivation immediately improved and we find a testimony to that fact from the manuscript notes of an officer of the Bengal Army which he made from actual observations during his tour through the Punjab in 1809. He says, "I was much

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<sup>1</sup> *The Punjab as a Sovereign State* by Gulshan Lal Chopra, p. 224.



gratified with the general appearance of the country, then in a high stage of cultivation, affording satisfactory proof of the fertility of the soil and industry of the people."<sup>1</sup> One great factor which gave impetus to the betterment of agriculture was the Maharaja's sympathy for the cultivators. He encouraged the cultivation of land by exempting the cows and buffaloes belonging to the bonafide cultivators from the imposition of *Tirnee Tax* which was levied on owners who were only cattle-keepers and not cultivators. However, this distinction between cultivators and non-cultivators was not based on the incident of birth but on the actual profession followed; and as soon as the persons who were originally cattle-keepers became cultivators, their cows and buffaloes also were exempted from this impost. This exemption was granted as an inducement to bring more and more land under cultivation.<sup>2</sup>

The Punjab in the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was divided into four divisions or *Subas viz.*, Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar. Although the produce in these four divisions and the natural capabilities of production therein were greatly different, due to the climatic and physical differences, yet on the whole, the cultivated products were much the same throughout. Wheat, barley, sugarcane, maize, with some cotton, hemp, tobacco, pulses and different vegetables were generally grown all over the province. Lieutenant-Colonel G. B. Tremblay has given an interesting picture of the conditions of farming in his note of 1852 :

"The native methods of cultivation exhibit a good deal of industry, of which perhaps the best method is their mode of preparing the land. As many as six or seven

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1. *Tour to Lahore: The Asiatic Annual Register*, Vol. XI (1809).
  2. *Public Correspondence of the Administration for the Affairs of the Punjab*, Vol. I (1857), p. 109

ploughings are given before wheat or barley is sown; the ground is completely pulverised. Many a disparaging remark has been made on the native plough, its simplicity and lightness, and its merely 'scratching the ground'; but a little reflection will show that under the peculiar circumstances of climate and soil, it is probably the best.

"In England the object is to break up hard masses of mould or stiff clay, and to get rid of superfluous moisture, while here in light and tractable soil scarcely a clod can be seen, and to preserve in the sub-soil, the rain and moisture it imbibes at certain periods, is the cultivator's greatest care."

As to the different farming operations practised in those days, he says, "when the ground is in a dry open state, the drill is used in sowing, with the object of delivering the seed deep into the soil. A piece of flat, heavy wood (*Sohaya*) is then drawn over the furrows to smooth them and keep in the moisture.

"A good deal of trouble is also taken in hand-hoeing and weeding some of the crops, as sugarcane, maize, and the larger kinds of millets."<sup>1</sup>

All along the river beds to a distance of a few miles, intensive cultivation was done. Irrigation in south-western plains was provided by the inundation canals dug during the Maharaja's rule. Wells and *Jhalars* were also frequently seen on these canals to lift up water for irrigation. The Maharaja took particular care in promoting and improving artificial means of irrigation in those tracts where rain-fall was scanty and crop growing uncertain. Most of the canals were dug in the Multan and Muzaffargarh districts, which provided irrigation

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1. *Public Correspondence of the Administration for the Affairs of the Punjab*, Vol. I (1857), p. 197.

water to the Kharif crops during the inundation periods of the rivers Chenab and Sutlej.

Large tracts locally known as *Bars* towards the west of Lahore were all waste, with no irrigation resources. The plantation was very scarce and only thorny bushes and wild trees were the common feature of these tracts. Water level was very low and no wells could be dug to any use. The important feature of these tracts, which form the rich colonies of the present-day Punjab, was the rearing of cattle by the local inhabitants, mostly Mohammedans. They used to keep large herds of cattle and sheep, grazing was ample, and their livelihood entirely depended upon the sale of cattle and *ghee*. These cattle formed an important basis of the present-dairy breeds of *Sahirai* cows and *Nili* buffaloes. Baron Charles Hugel, while giving a description of Gujrat and its adjacent country, has mentioned that the place "seems to support a vast number of horned cattle. The flocks of sheep and goats also are numerous, the last growing to an enormous size. We can now perfectly understand a remark of Ctesias, that the Indian goats are as large as asses, an assertion which is quite correct."<sup>1</sup>

Wheat was the premier crop of the province. Different local types were cultivated in different localities, and although the different varieties used could not be classified under definite types, yet the most common of them were the general-purpose bearded varieties (*Triticum Vulgare*) suitable for all conditions, both irrigated and *barani*. The cultivation of the beardless types was generally resorted to in the irrigated tracts. On rich soils the *Wadanak* (*Triticum Durum*) was also met with. This type used to fetch a better price than the other

varieties when placed in the market. On the south-western tracts beyond Multan, dwarf wheat with rounded grain and small ears (*Triticum Compactum*) was cultivated. Lieutenant-Colonel G. B. Tremeneere in his "Note on the Present State of Agriculture in the Punjab," (1852), says that "The finest wheat I have seen in the Punjab is in the small valley of Boorhan, not far from Hussan Abdal."<sup>1</sup>

We give below a table showing the average produce per acre during those days for the different districts as compiled by Tremeneere, which will clearly show that the efficiency of cultivation was quite high at that time and on average the yield of grains per acre compared very favourably with the present-day average out-turns :—

*Produce in Maunds per Acre :—*

Districts	Wheat	Barley	Jowar	Maize
Ferozepore	20	18	12	22
Sheikhupura	20	25	6.5	10
Jhang	12	14	10	...
Lahore	10	10	...	...
Muzaffargarh	12	12	16	18

To improve the live-stock in the province, the Maharaja used to maintain a number of good draught stud bulls in different *Thanas*. Cattle fairs were held in the different localities for encouraging cattle breeding amongst the cultivators.

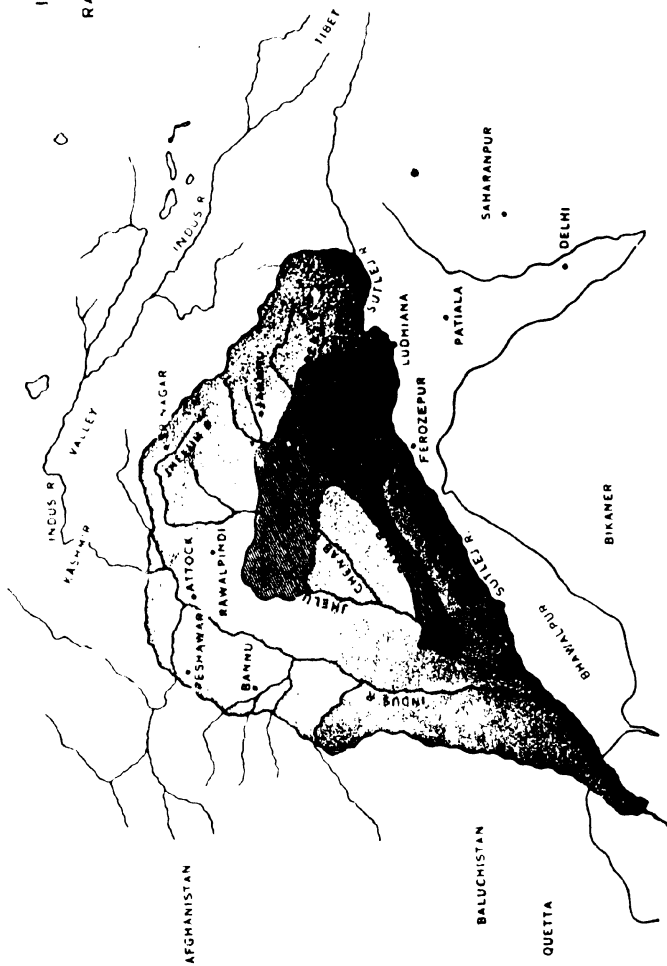
1. *Public Correspondence of the Administration for the Affairs of the Punjab*, Vol. I (1857), p. 223.

# PUNJAB

1839

INTENSIVE CULTIVATION

RANJIT SINGH'S TERRITORY





The Maharaja's keen interest in land and its cultivator is quite apparent from the fact that he took various sound steps to increase the resources of the peasants. He provided seasonal canal irrigation in the south-west, where successful crop cultivation was never certain. *Taqavi* loans were offered to the poor *Zamindars* to dig wells wherever possible for the cultivation of more valuable crops. Land revenue was charged according to the condition of the crop and the readiness with which the revenue was forthcoming, at fixed periods, was proof that the burden was light and there were apparent signs of contentment in every part of the country west of the Sutlej.<sup>1</sup> Remissions were granted on poor crops and no charge was made for the raising of fodder crops. The cultivators were assessed to the amount of one-half to one-fourth of the produce of their crops, which was paid in kind, money currency being very limited throughout the country. Although that was the general rate of assessment, yet every allowance was made to the cultivators for unfavourable seasons.<sup>2</sup> Thus we find that all such measures and the general political security provided by Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign gave a strong impetus for the improvement of agriculture.

<sup>1</sup>*The Present State of Agriculture in the Punjab* by Lieutenant-Colonel G. B. Tremenhère (1852), p. 195.

<sup>2</sup>*A Tour to Lahore : The Asiatic Annual Register*, Vol. XI (1809).

## IRRIGATION IN THE PUNJAB DURING THE MAHARAJA'S TIME

[BY GURDIT SINGH, B. SC. (WALES), LECTURER IN  
AGRICULTURE, KHALSA COLLEGE, AMRITSAR.]

Irrigation is not a science of the present century, nor did it come with the British rule, though we admit that the problems of irrigation have been tackled on more scientific lines during the British rule. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the first ruler of the Punjab who thought of utilizing the river water for irrigation purposes in the tracts where the rain-fall is very low, particularly in the Suba of Multan. This irrigation became so useful and convenient that it brought prosperity to the inhabitants of the provinces of Lahore and Multan. It is just over 120 years ago that the land of these provinces offered certain source of livelihood to the cultivator and there was always a certainty of revenue to the Maharaja's exchequer from these two provinces. At the same time he reduced the possibilities of famine to a great extent.

The approximate area under canal irrigation during his reign was 3,75,000 to 4,00,000 acres. The Land Revenue figures<sup>1</sup> show that at the end of his reign the area under canal irrigation had gone up to about 10,00,000 acres.

Before his time the rural population was mainly confined to low-lying areas along the rivers or sub-mountain areas where either well-irrigation was possible or rain-fall was sufficient.

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1. *Report of the Board of Administration ; Maharaja Ranjit Singh*  
by Prem Singh



There existed a canal before Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time known as the *Hasli* Canal, which had been dug during Akbar's reign for supplying water to the Shalamar Gardens at Lahore. This canal had become filled up by the end of the Mughal rule, and it is a well-known fact that the Shalamar Gardens at Lahore had to go without canal water for about 25 years towards the end of the 18th century. It was left at the mercy of the rain water, and the trees in the Shalamar Gardens did not bear fruit for years. The Maharaja had it reconstructed more or less on the old course in the earlies of the 19th century, and at the same time through the influence of two Udasis, another branch from it was brought from Madhopur down to Amritsar with the idea of supplying water to the holy tanks and the Ram Bagh<sup>1</sup> at Amritsar. The Sikhs of one village would take it to the next village and the people of this village had to dig it on to the next and so on. The people who dug this canal never demanded anything as remuneration, as it was for a sacred cause. Beyond Amritsar it was dug on remuneration basis on the assurance that whatever water would be left after the requirements of the holy tanks and the Ram Bagh would be given to those Zamindars, who had taken part in the digging of the canal.

Both the branches of the Hasli Canal were more or less perennial, whereas the others were inundation canals taken from the rivers Sutlej, Ravi, Chenab, Indus, etc.

The inundation canals which were taken from

1. This Garden, the summer residence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was named by him after the name of Guru Ram Das. He used to move down to Amritsar from Lahore in rainy season and used to stay here for nearly two months every year. This is the only Garden in the Punjab where the trees, which are only natural to other Provinces or sub-mountain areas are also found.

the Ravi were known as the Mian Channu Canal and the Sidhnai Canal. The canal which irrigated *Parganas* round about Mian Channu was filled up during the British rule. The Sidhnai Canal, taken from the river Ravi at a distance of about a quarter of a mile above the Chontras of Ram Chandra and Lachhman, has just been made perennial by the present Government. The length of both the branches of Hasli was over 100 miles each, whereas the length of the Mian Channu and Sidhnai canals was 35 and 44 miles respectively. All these canals were used for navigation purposes too.

The first nine out of the following sixteen canals were taken from the river Sutlej, whereas the latter seven were taken from the river Chenab :—

1. Wah Ganda Singhwala.<sup>1</sup>
2. Dewan Wah.
3. Sirdar Wah.
4. Mahmood Wah.
5. Bahawal Wah.
6. Sooltan Wah.
7. Kabul Wah.
8. Jum Wah Doobah.
9. Jum Wah—Kutub Wah.
10. Wali Mohd. Wah.
11. Shahpur.
12. Doorana Sunganah.
13. Sikandar Wah.
14. Goojuhala.
15. Bakht Wah.
16. Dhoondhoo.<sup>2</sup>

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1. This canal was taken about five miles above Ganda Singhwala. The traces of that canal can be seen even in these days. This was the only canal taken from the river Sutlej in the province of Lahore, whereas all other eight canals were taken from the River Sutlej in the province of Multan for supplying water to that region.

2. Detailed information regarding the last 10 canals is given in the table attached at the end of this chapter.

### Well Irrigation.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was liberal in the grant of Taqavi loans from the Government Treasury for the construction of wells. These loans were frequently advanced in the tracts known as the Doaba (Jullundur and Hoshiarpur districts), Riarki (district of Gurdaspur and Tehsils of Amritsar and Ajnala) and Darap (Sialkot district and part of Gujranwala district). By this scheme he brought these tracts under cultivation and, at the same time, he lessened the burden of population from low-lying areas of the river beds as the cultivators moved from the river-side to these central parts, because by the well irrigation the stability and maturity of crops became certain. The Land-Revenue Income of the Maharaja's Exchequer from these ilaqa also became sure and certain. The cultivation of sugar-cane became common on these wells. The Doaba was well known for the production of *Khand* and *Rab*, and Riarki was known for the production of superior quality of *Gur* and *Shakkar*. The ilaqa of Sialkot was known for the production of rice, etc. The cultivators of these tracts were better off than they ever had been before.

### Water Rates.

The majority of these canals were open from April to September, but some of them were open for longer periods. The main canals were the property of the Government, and the regulation and the distribution of water were directly controlled by it. Occasional grants were made by the Government for the purpose of re-excavating and improving the canals. Sawan Mal<sup>1</sup> showed greater liberality in this respect.

1. *Selection from the Public Correspondence for the Board of Administration.*

The cultivators used to irrigate their fields either by means of *Jhalars* or by *Kassis* from these canals. The *Jhallars* were more common than the *Kassis*, because the *Kassis* frequently caused breaches in the canals. The Government had to spend heavy sums every year on the repairing of these breaches. These frequent breaches deprived the cultivators at the tail of the supply of water, which meant a great loss to the Maharaja's Government in the form of remissions<sup>1</sup>

The water rate was derived from the cultivator of land under these *Jhalars* at a fixed rate. The *Jhallars* were held on lease at a fixed money assessment, and the extent of cultivation was limited usually to 25 bighas (10.33 acres). All in excess of that was charged according to the quality of the land. It was far cheaper for the cultivators to irrigate their lands from these *Jhalars* than from wells, and they invariably did so as long as the supply lasted. They always had their wells in reserve to save their crops in the event of water in their canals failing at an early period of the season; but this early failure was not common.

The maximum water rate which the Maharaja's government charged from the cultivators was Rs. 12 per *Jhalar* for the season.

The water tax was Re. 1 per well in the Rabi and Rs. 2 per well in the Kharif. The low rate of assessment was fixed on the supposition that the land would be irrigated by the well only, and the above demand, therefore, was a very fair one for such lands. The outstanding feature was that the Maharaja knew well the necessities and difficulties of the cultivators and he was the only ruler who

1. The Maharaja authorised his officers concerned to give cent. per cent. remission in such cases.

never charged any water tax or revenue for the green fodder crops.

The average amount of water rate realised from these sources in the district of Multan was from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 20,000 per annum. The district of Kaohi in Multan was more or less a waste-land before the Maharaja's regime. Sawan Mal excavated the canal Dewan Wah which passed through this district, and from 1830 onwards the district of Kachi yielded an average revenue of Rs. 50,000 per annum to his exchequer.<sup>1</sup>

The irrigation in the provinces of Multan and Lahore made the Revenue income stable.

1. *Selections from the Public Correspondence for the Board of Administration.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S RELATIONS WITH THE ENGLISH

(BY PROFESSOR SAYAD ABDUL QADIR, M. A.,

ISLAMIA COLLEGE, LAHORE.)

It was after Maharaja Ranjit Singh was firmly established on the throne of Lahore, that he first came into contact with the English. After Lord Wellesley had destroyed the power of Tipu Sultan, he tried to impose the Subsidiary System upon the Marathas. The Maratha Chiefs—Scindhia, Bhonsla and Holkar—strong as they were, refused to accept it. This was the beginning of the Second Maratha War (1802-1803). The English proved too strong for the combined armies of Scindhia and Bhonsla. The Maratha battalions, disciplined though they were by European Officers, were shattered. Scindhia was driven across the Chambal, and the Maratha Cantonments in Northern India—Agra, Aligarh, Muttra and Delhi—fell into the hands of the English. Holkar, whom jealousy and hatred of Scindhia had prevented from coming to the aid of his co-religionists in the late war, now decided to enter the lists against the English. Scindhia and Bhonsla had fought pitched battles and they were destroyed. Holkar took a leaf out of their book and decided to carry on guerilla warfare against his adversaries. Success attended his arms in the beginning and he was able to harrass and plunder British districts as he liked. But Lord Lake soon proved more than a

match for him. He took Holkar by surprise and inflicted heavy losses upon him in many an action. Finding resistance hopeless, he fled, with a hundred thousand men, to the Punjab to seek the aid of the Sikhs, accounts of whose bravery he had heard so often.

He came to Patiala, where he spent some months, trying in vain to win the support of the Phulkian States. The Malwa Sikhs were shrewd enough to see the hopelessness of his position and refused to render him any help. From Patiala Holkar came to Amritsar in October, 1805. Lest Ranjit Singh should join him, Lord Lake crossed the Sutlej with his army and encamped at Jalalabad on the bank of the Beas.

Ranjit Singh was then engaged in reducing the Sayal chief of Jhang. No sooner did he hear of the arrival of Holkar in the Punjab than he hastened to Amritsar and met the fugitive Maratha chief in that city. The Sikh ruler was more shrewd than even the Phulkian Rajas. He saw the futility of making an alliance with Holkar against the English. So he put him off with fine words. The more Jaswant Rao pressed the alliance upon him the more Ranjit Singh recoiled from it. "Ranjit," says Princep, "hastening back in person to Amritsar, met there the fugitive Maratha, with whom he had no easy part to play. Jaswant Rao threatened to continue his flight westward towards the Kabul dominions. Lord Lake, however, had arrived on the bank of the Beas and was prepared to follow, and it was neither convenient nor wise to permit operations of the kind that must ensue, to be carried on in the Punjab." Ranjit Singh had just begun his political career. His army was yet in a nebulous condition and he was conscious of its weakness as a fighting force when pitted against the English. "Though he would have proved a useful

auxiliary to either party, he was sensible of his inability to offer open resistance. In this state of things the relations he maintained with Jaswant Rao Holkar were friendly but not encouraging, and that chief being disappointed in the hope of persuading the Sikh nation to co-operate with him in hostility against the British yielded to the difficulties by which he was surrounded, and made his terms with Lord Lake, in a treaty concluded on the 24th December, 1805" (Princep).

A few days later (1st of January, 1806), Lord Lake made a supplementary agreement with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, by which the two Sikh Chiefs agreed to make Jaswant Rao quit Amritsar immediately, and never again to hold any kind of communication with him or assist him with troops. The British Government, on the other hand, promised never to enter the territories of the Sikh Chiefs nor form any plan which might be prejudicial to their interests. The chief interest of the treaty lies in the fact that it was the first transaction that Ranjit Singh had with the British Government, and it "brought him for the first time into personal contact with British political and military officers, and troops trained and disciplined on western lines." Having got rid of Holkar and Lord Lake, Ranjit Singh once again resumed his career of conquest that had so suddenly been interrupted by the arrival of Jaswant Rao at Amritsar.

### **Ranjit Singh Invades the Cis-Sutlej Territory**

Ranjit Singh was a very ambitious ruler. Success had attended every expedition that he had undertaken, and with every success his appetite for conquests had been whetted. In the beginning perhaps, he had no idea of setting himself up as the king (Maharaja) of all the



Sikhs, whether they lived on this or that side of the Sutlej. But subsequently he seems to have changed his mind and decided to set himself up as the **Maharaja** of all the Sikhs. It was with this end in view that in the course of two years that followed the withdrawal of Holkar from the Punjab, he led two expeditions into the Cis-Sutlej territory and compelled the chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Malerkotla, Kaithal, Shahabad, Ambala, Buria and Kalsi to pay tributes to him. These proceedings of his spread consternation all over the Cis-Sutlej territory and every chieftain began to feel that his State was not safe. No wonder then if Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, and Sardar Chet Singh, Dewan of Patiala, waited in a deputation upon Mr. Saton, Resident at Delhi, to seek the protection of British Government against the all-absorbing policy of Ranjit Singh.

#### **Sir Charles Metcalfe at Amritsar**

The task of the British Government was difficult in the extreme. It was called upon to pursue a contradictory policy towards Ranjit Singh. In the first instance, it attempted the difficult task of putting a check upon the policy of absorption that the ruler of Lahore had adopted towards the Cis-Sutlej chiefs. Secondly, in view of the threat of a Franco-Russian invasion of India, the British Government wished to enlist the support of Ranjit Singh in their cause. It wanted him to block the passage of European foes of England and shield the British territory in India from their encroachments. It was to effect this that Mr. (afterwards Sir) Charles Metcalfe was sent as an envoy to the court of the ruler of Lahore. As the Maharaja did not appear to be in a mood to listen to the pacific representations of a mere envoy, Colonel (afterwards Sir David) Ochterloney

was sent with a detachment of troops to take his position at Ludhiana, on the left bank of the Sutlej. Ochterloney's march to Ludhiana, we are told, was hailed by the people and chiefs as affording the promise of future protection and tranquillity, and they vied with one another in the display of their gratitude and satisfaction.

A two-fold problem now tormented the mind of Ranjit Singh. In the first place, he was required to abandon his claims to sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej territory. That meant that he was to remain content with the overlordship of only half the Sikh population, the Maujha and Doaba Sikhs. The other half, the Malwa Sikhs, must remain under the protection of the English.

Lastly, he must allow his country to be converted into a buffer between British India and the over-advancing Empire of the Russians. That meant that he must bear the brunt of the attack of the Russian legions, if they happened to appear on the bank of the Indus.

### **The Treaty of Amritsar, 1809**

These were bitter pills. But Ranjit Singh had to swallow them. He-foamed and fretted, but Metcalfe would not let him go. The Maharaja felt that though he might bluff, he must ultimately accept the trap that the British Government had laid for him. As Metcalfe was patiently and tactfully urging the view-point of the British Government upon the Maharaja, the state of affairs in Europe unexpectedly underwent a great change. The now-fangled friendship between Napoleon Bonaparte and the Czar of Russia, that had been cemented at Tilsit, speedily cooled down, and soon the two Emperors found themselves at the throat of each other. This removed the menace of Franco-Russian invasion of India, and in consequence the British Government's attitude also became a little stiff towards the Maharaja. The Maharaja

was not yet in a position to resist the English. His army was raw and undisciplined. His conquests were unconsolidated yet, and it was feared that taking advantage of his difficulties the half-conquered chieftains and tribes would break out into a rebellion against him.

Another danger also loomed large in the political horizon of the Punjab. Finding the Maharaja obdurate, the British Government was likely to extend its protection to the rulers of Kasur, Multan and Jhang as well. This made Ranjit Singh submit to the inevitable. Consequently, on the 25th March, 1809, in the city of Amritsar, Ranjit Singh wisely accepted the treaty that was henceforth to be known as the Treaty of Amritsar.

Some of the conditions of this Treaty were as follows:—

1. "Perpetual friendship shall subsist between the British Government and the State of Lahore. The latter shall be considered with respect to the former, to be on the footing of the most favoured power and the British Government will have no concern with the territory and the subjects of the Raja to the northward of the river Sutlej.

2. The Raja will never maintain in the territory, which he occupies on the left bank of the Sutlej, ~~more~~ troops than are necessary for the internal duties of the territory, nor commit or suffer any encroachment on the possessions of the chiefs in its vicinity.

3. In the event of a violation of any of the preceding articles, or of a departure from the rules of friendship on the part of either State, this treaty shall be considered to be null and void."

#### **Importance of the Treaty of Amritsar**

The Treaty of Amritsar is considered to be a landmark in the history of Ranjit Singh. It had both its

strong and weak points. Its weakness lay in the fact that it for ever put an end to the pretensions of Ranjit Singh to exclusive sovereignty over the entire population of the Sikhs living between the Jumna and the Indus. Henceforth he was to be the ruler of a considerable fragment of the Sikhs, but not of all the Sikhs. It was in fact tantamount to a confession of defeat on the part of Ranjit Singh in the game of diplomacy as well as of war. "To one friendship," says Cunningham, "the Maharaja remained ever constant, from one alliance he never sought to shake himself free. This was the friendly alliance with the British Government." And this was because the Maharaja was conscious of his own weakness and of the corresponding strength of the English.

But even after this Ranjit Singh never ceased to probe into the defences of the British Government for any possible points of weakness of which he might take advantage. In the early stages of the Nepal War (1816-18) the British Government suffered some reverses, and one of their generals, Gillespie, was killed. This raised the hopes of Ranjit Singh, and he, like so many other Indian Princes, began to feel that the British armies were not invincible after all. But he could never make up his mind to take advantage of this discovery of his. Some years later during the first Burmese War (1824-1826), the British armies suffered terribly in the jungles of Burma, as they had previously done in the hills of Nepal. Ranjit Singh chuckled with glee when he heard of it. But he was too wise and too cautious to think of ever taking advantage of the difficulties of the English. Some confirmation of it might be obtained from the following entry in the Diary of Osborne, who was on a visit to Lahore in connection with the Tripartite Treaty (1838) against Dost Mohammed Khan of Kabul.

"At the conclusion of the field day," says Osborne, "I accompanied Ranjit Singh for some distance on his usual morning excursion. He asked me if I had ever seen any Burmese troops: on my replying in the negative, he said, I have heard that they fight well, and beat your Sipahis. I told him that they fought well behind their stockades, but could not face us on a fair field." All his life Ranjit Singh never lost sight of the fact that in resources and man-power, the English had no equal, and that though, man to man, his soldiers may enjoy some kind of superiority, yet as a disciplined force and in general efficiency his army could not come up to the standard attained by the English. This was, in fact, the key-note of his relations with the British Government. It was because of this that when, in 1820, the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur made a piteous appeal to him for help, he turned a deaf ear to him. Similarly, four years later (1824), the Nepal Government sought his co-operation in a defensive alliance. But Ranjit Singh would not budge even an inch from the position that he had already taken up towards the British. In the following year, the English people attacked the fort of Bharatpore, and its Raja, in his distress, sought the help of Ranjit Singh. But the Maharaja acted with his usual sagacity and gave the same reply to him which he had given to the fugitive Holkar twenty years before. Ten years later, when urged by his Sardars to fight rather than submit to the English over the question of Shikarpur he retorted by asking, what had become of the fate of the two hundred thousand spears of the Marathas, which they had brought into the field against the English.

#### **Effects of the Treaty of Amritsar**

But the treaty of Amritsar was not without its advantages for Ranjit Singh. Though deprived of his

right to control the destinies of the entire Sikh nation, he had at least the satisfaction of having secured his eastern frontier. This proved to be of immense benefit to him. He could now leave his eastern frontier almost unprotected and transfer the whole of his army to make a gigantic effort to absorb within his dominions the Muslim kingdoms on his southern and western frontiers. Accordingly, he conquered Multan, Jhang, Kashmir, the Deras, (Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan), Peshawar and the plains of the Punjab, that is to say, the whole country from Lahore to the gates of the Khaibar Pass on the one hand, and from Lahore to Sindh on the other. If the English had remained hostile, or even unfriendly, Ranjit Singh would have been compelled to keep the major portion of his army on the line of the Sutlej, and thus impoverished in resources, he would have found it very difficult to master the country upto the Indus even, and the wars with the Pathans of the frontier, on which mainly rests the fame of the Maharaja as a great conqueror, would have remained unfought. It was because of this Treaty that the Sikhs were enabled not only to drive the Pathans across the Indus but also to carry fire and sword into their country as far as Jamrud. Some of the impetuous and more reckless spirits among them would have carried the war even into the heart of Afghanistan itself but for the restraint that was put upon their restless energy by the Maharaja. Thus when the English, after Metcalfe's successful diplomacy at Amritsar, were giving hard knocks to the Nepalese, extirpating the Pindaris, effecting the dissolution of the Maratha Confederacy (1817—1818), and teaching a lesson to the Burmese king to respect the representative of the King of England at Rangoon, (1824—1826), the Sikh ruler was re-organising his army and reducing the

country, to settle the destinies of which he had been given a free hand. No wonder then if Ranjit Singh, in the words of Cunningham, "became the master of the Panjab almost unheeded by the English" (Cunningham's History of the Sikhs, Page 180). The same ideas were in the mind of Captain Wade, the British Political Agent at Ludhiana, when, as Ranjit Singh was negotiating an alliance with the Nepal Government, he wrote in 1837, "Ranjit Singh has hitherto derived nothing but advantage from his alliance with us, while we have been engaged in consolidating our power in Hindustan, he has been extending his conquests throughout the Panjab and across the Indus, and as we are now beginning to prescribe limits to his power, which cannot be supposed he will regard with complacency, he is now more likely to encourage than to withdraw from alliance, which may hold out to him a hope of creating a balance of power."

### **The Gains of Ranjit Singh**

It will not, I believe, be out of place to consider another important aspect of the Treaty of Amritsar, which perhaps has never been appreciated before. As it has already been mentioned, more than once, Ranjit Singh cherished the desire of making himself the sole arbiter of the destiny of the entire Sikh population whether on this or on that side of the Sutlej. But Lord Minto, by his diplomatic intervention, managed to compel him to withdraw his army from all the conquests that he had made in the Cis-Sutlej territory, and recognise that they were under the control of the British Government. Thus the Phulkian Misal, which comprised the three kindred States of Patiala, Nabha and Jind, was saved and upto this time it retains its separate identity.

Having lost the right of interference in the affairs of the Cis-Sutlej States, Ranjit Singh now began to

devote his plethoric energy to the conquest and consolidation of the country on the Lahore side of the Sutlej, and in this project he was eminently successful. Not only did he reduce to submission the territories of the Sikh *Misals* in this part of the country, he even conquered the independent states of Multan, Jhang and Kashmir. He then crossed the river Indus, annexed the Deras, Bannu, Kohat and Peshawar and effectively humbled the pride of the Afghan, a feat which had never been accomplished by any Indian potentate before. At the time of his death in 1839, Ranjit Singh could rightly boast that he had welded the jarring and discordant elements in the Punjab into a strong, well-organised kingdom. But alas! this kingdom, which Ranjit Singh had taken so long to build, was not long-lived. As soon as the eyes of the Great Lion were closed in death, the English across the Sutlej, who had been waiting for the opportunity, took advantage of the discord among the Sikhs and by a single stroke of the brush painted, as had been apprehended by the Maharaja himself, the whole of the Punjab red.

Thus was the Punjab lost to the Sikhs, but Patiala, Nabha, and Jind were saved and they still form the backbone of the Sikhs in the Punjab and preserve the tradition of a ruling race among them. If the Government of Lord Minto had not intervened, Ranjit Singh would have taken under his own control the Cis-Sutlej territory as well as he did the rest of the Punjab, and in 1849 from the Jumna to the Khyber not one yellow speck would have been left with the possible exception of the territory of the Ahluwalia Raja of Kapurthala. Thus it may be said, the States of Patiala, Nabha and Jind in a way owe their existence to the fortunate intervention of the British Government in the affairs of Ranjit Singh in 1809.



### Ranjit Singh the Saviour of the Sikhs

The acceptance of the Treaty of Amritsar by Ranjit Singh was in fact a check on his ambition. He found that he had no alternative but to yield to the pressure, diplomatic and military, that was brought to bear upon him by Metcalfe and Ochterlony, and accepted the limitation that they wished to impose upon his power of expansion. In doing so he without doubt acted wisely. Thereby he saved his infant kingdom from premature annihilation. Secondly, by prolonging the life of the Sikh theocratic state for another forty years, he was able to lift his people from the position of political adventurers and free-lances and give them the status of an imperial race. But for Ranjit Singh the Sikhs would not have been what they are to-day—a virile and vigorous community, capable of accomplishing anything, however difficult, to which it sets its heart. The Phulkian States, which he willy nilly helped to save, are the reservoirs from which the life of the nation is constantly fed. They are a guarantee of the fact that the community in time of stress and trouble will not die for want of efficient leadership.

It will not perhaps be out of place to mention here the attitude that Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore, took under similar circumstances. He was the bravest of the brave and felt that an hour of freedom was more precious than a whole life of bondage. He could not persuade himself to barter his freedom for a whole kingdom. He is looked upon as a great hero and people go almost into hysterics, when they read how bravely and undaunted he stood, sword in hand, in the breach made by the guns of the enemy in the walls of Seringapatam. By dying fighting to the last he undoubtedly covered himself with undying fame and ever-

lasting glory. But Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab, perhaps was a more practical and far-seeing statesman. He was conscious of the handicaps that circumstances had placed upon his power, and he made the best of the bad bargain. He saved himself, his kingdom and his people from untimely death, while Tipu Sultan, perhaps wrongly, lost the opportunity of not only perpetuating his dynasty but also of establishing a second centre of Islamic culture and civilization in the South. With Mysore (in the South) and Oudh (in the North) in Muslim hands, the idea of Pakistan—the gospel of despair—would never have found favour with the Mussalmans.

### **The Question of Sind**

The rest of the story need not detain us long. By 1828 the English had become the undisputed masters of the whole of India. The same could be said about Ranjit Singh, in so far as the Punjab was concerned. The Maharaja, with the help of his European officers, had not only reorganised his army, but had also built up an extensive kingdom, which was at once the envy and terror of his Muslim neighbours. But it seems the English, in the course of time, had practically shaken off all fear of him, and even adopted an aggressive and provocative attitude towards him. Outwardly they were all courtesy and kindness to him and seemed even to go out of their way in their effort to win his good will. But in fact they aimed at encompassing his downfall by encircling the Punjab either by their own territory or by the territory of those who were subservient to their will and prepared to carry out their biddings in every matter. The Maharaja wished to add Sind also to his already extensive dominions. The Baloch rulers of that country were weak and their treasury was believed to be full of gold. Moreover, the conquest of that country was calculated to carry the frontiers of Ranjit Singh's

territory to the very doors of the Arabian Sea, from where the Maharaja could establish contact, political as well as commercial, with the outside world. Under these circumstances, it was not difficult to find an excuse for an attack upon Sind.

That country along with the Punjab and Multan had once belonged to Ahmed Shah Abdali and his descendants. Ranjit Singh had already succeeded to their patrimony of the Punjab and Multan. It was in the fitness of things that he should get Sind as well. But here, as in the case of the Phulkian states, he was forestalled by the English. Just as Lord William Bentinck was according a right royal reception to the Maharaja at Rupar (October, 1831) and converting in his honour the place into a veritable "Field of the Cloth of Gold", Lieutenant-Colonel Pottinger was on his way to Sind to propose what was ostensibly a commercial treaty to the rulers of that country. At last, after prolonged negotiations, Pottinger was able to impose his will upon the Amirs and compel them to sign a treaty (April, 1832), by which the river Indus was opened to the commerce of India and of Europe. Thus did the English, by lulling Ranjit Singh into sleep at Rupar, steal a march upon him, and brought Sind under their sphere of influence. The Treaty, of course, gave a few sleepless nights to the Maharaja, but he did not think it politic to raise even his voice of protest against the manner in which he had been hoodwinked by the Governor-General.

The Amirs of Sind had signed the Treaty with the English with great reluctance. They were not unconscious of its implications. They openly said now that the English had seen the river Indus, their country also must sooner or later fall into their hands. They would have been only too glad to surrender Shikarpore to Ranjit Singh.

only if they could persuade him to enter into a defensive alliance with them against the English. But Ranjit Singh knew the dangerous implications of the proposal and he would not swallow the bait.

### **The Question of Shikarpore**

Ranjit Singh had been balked of his prey (Sind), but he, too, would not let the English sit in peace and enjoy the fruits of their diplomacy undisturbed. Accordingly, in 1834, he returned to his schemes of the conquest of Shikarpore and Sind. The Maharaja seemed to have a peculiar fascination for Shikarpore. The city was a great emporium of trade and its merchants controlled the commerce of Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Persia and Central Asia. Thus if the city were to become a Sikh possession, a stream of gold from it was likely to flow into the coffers of the Maharaja. That was not all. It was also a place of great strategical importance. It commanded the Bolan Pass and the country beyond it—Afghanistan. From it the Sikh armies could easily march upon Quetta and Ghazni, and carry the war into the country of Dost Mohammed Khan and his Pathans, both objects of great detestation for the Maharaja. But the English would not let him have his own way. They stood between him and Shikarpore. The Maharaja was told that he could not be permitted to extend his power along the bank of the Indus, as that would jeopardize British commercial interests in that country. Ranjit Singh stood aghast at the demand the English made upon his patience. Shikarpore was situated on the Southern bank of the Sutlej and the Treaty of Amritsar (1809) permitted him to do whatever he liked with it. But the British Government would not listen to reason. Nor did an appeal to the provisions of the thirty-years-old Treaty have any effect upon it. The English people were intoxicated with power and they had no scruple to

ride rough-shod upon the sentiments of the Maharaja. Ranjit Singh was a far-sighted statesman. He knew the limitations that nature and circumstance had placed upon his power and he yielded to the inevitable. The Sikh claim to Shikarpore was given up and the British Government was permitted to have its own way in the matter. The proud Sikh Sardars more particularly Raja Dhian Singh, were angry. They brandished their swords and wished the Maharaja to fight the English in defence of his rights. But Ranjit Singh knew better. He silenced them by reminding them of the fate of the Maratha forces, which though well-disciplined and led by European officers, had disappeared before the might of England.

Soon afterwards the English people established a Protectorate over Sind, and, in 1838, the Amirs were compelled to receive a Resident in their country. The Maharaja did not raise even his voice of protest against these proceedings.

### **The Question of Ferozepore**

Ranjit Singh fared no better in the matter of Ferozepore. The British Government had, by various acts of omission and commission, recognised the sovereignty of the Maharaja over the Sikhs of the city. But the growing needs of the British Government to have places of strategic importance for the defence of their ever-expanding empire, and their desire to hem in the territory of the Maharaja by erecting a ring of forts all along the Punjab frontier, made them change their policy as regards Ferozepore even. "The capital Lahore," wrote Murray, "is distant only 40 miles with a single river to cross, fordable for six months in the year. The fort of Ferozepore, from every point of view, seems to be of the highest importance to the British Government, whether as a check on the growing ambition of Lahore or as a

fort of consequence." Accordingly, in 1835, the city was occupied by the English and converted into a military cantonment in 1838. It was as if a pistol were pointed at the temple of Ranjit Singh. But the Maharaja himself did not take any notice of the affair.

### The Tripartite Treaty

The English were not content with this only. They tried to impose restrictions on the expansion of Ranjit Singh's Empire westward even. This was not so much to prevent him from adding a few barren frontier rocks to his territory as to encircle him by British military posts from all sides. In 1837, a favourable opportunity offered itself to the English. The menace of a Russian invasion of India, which had, thirty years earlier, been removed by the rupture between Napoleon Bonaparte and the Czar of Russia, was revived. So it was considered necessary that Dost Mohammed Khan should be entrapped in the meshes of British protection and compelled to convert his country into a buffer state between Russia and the British Indian Empire. Alliances are a matter of bargain. The policy of give and take has to be adopted in negotiations. So Dost Mohammed Khan naturally demanded some consideration for the help that the British Government expected of him. Lord Auckland was then the Governor-General of India. He was as imperious as he was short-sighted. He believed in the eternal right of the British Government to demand help from their neighbours without promising them any service in return. The bargaining spirit of Dost Mohammed Khan annoyed him and he decided to chastise him for his pettifoggery. Shah Shuja, an ex-king of Kabul, then lived at Ludhiana as a stipendiary of the British Government. He was a discredited monarch and his people had cast him away. He had lived in exile for over thirty years. From his refuge at Ludhiana he had

several times made efforts to recover possession of his lost throne of Kabul. But Dost Mohammed Khan had not permitted his expeditions to fructify and he was always driven back into Hindustan. The British Government had fed him so long, as it is still feeding so many Afghan exiles in India, in the hope that he might have to be used some day as a petard to lift Dost Mohammed Khan from his throne. And now an opportunity offered itself. Dost Mohammed Khan was still obdurate and defiant. He refused to budge even an inch from his position. He would not do anything for the British Government unless the British Government agreed to do something for him in return. At last, it was decided to remove him from the throne and place Shah Shuja upon it. Shah Shuja was only too glad to accept the proposal. An agreement was accordingly made with him. He was to be taken to Kabul and inflicted upon the Pathans at the point of the sword.

But in this difficult task the help of Ranjit Singh was very necessary. Accordingly, the Maharaja was asked to put his seal to what is known as the Tripartite Treaty, so called because Shah Shuja, the British Government and Ranjit Singh were to be the signatories to it. At first, the Maharaja was unwilling to join. He resented British interference in the affairs of Afghanistan. He believed that he had the right of pre-emption upon that country. The English people were mere intruders. There was another reason why the Maharaja demurred: the establishment of British military posts at Kandahar, Ghazni, Kabul and Jalalabad meant that his own country was completely encircled from the western side. The Maharaja knew the dangers of this kind of encirclement. He was told that the expedition against Dost Mohammed Khan could not be abandoned. Even if he did not join it, a British army would be sent

to Kabul. With or without Ranjit Singh, Dost Mohammed Khan must be removed and Shah Shuja installed in his place upon the throne of Kabul. Ranjit Singh did not wish to be left out of the bargain. That was fraught with great dangers to his kindom. He too must have his finger in the pie of Afghanistan. It was dangerous to leave to the English alone the disposal of the crown of Afghanistan. He, therefore, agreed and signed the Tripartite Treaty.

This in brief is the story of the relations of Ranjit Singh with the British Government. A perusal of it would show that the British Government was not quite true to its undertakings of 1809. As time passed and its roots were firmly planted in the soil of India, it became more and more aggressive. Ranjit Singh was conscious of his own limitations. His resources were limited. So was his man-power. His stock of war material could not compare well with that of the English. A smile must have crept upon the lips of the British Officials, when towards the close of 1836, Ranjit Singh asked them for a supply of 1,100 muskets and 500 pistols. No wonder then if the Maharaja, instead of coming into clash with them, yielded almost on every point when pitted in the game of diplomacy against the English people. And in this lies his greatness as a statesman. Compromise is the soul of diplomacy. And by making compromises with the British Government before it was too late, he averted in his life-time what might have proved a fatal collision for him. It was no fault of his if within ten years of his death, his descendents as the result of circumstances over which perhaps they had no control, lost the empire, which the greatest of the Sikhs—Ranjit Singh—had built up with so much ingenuity, labour and expense.



# A NOTE ON THE POLICY OF MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH TOWARDS THE BRITISH

[BY PROF. GURMUKH NIHAL SINGH,  
BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY.]

## I

The military career of Ranjit Singh has shed lasting lustre on the name of the Khalsa and permanently established the worth of the Sikhs as a nation of warriors. His conquests of Kasur, Multan, Kashmir, Attock, the Daras and Peshawar will always remain memorable. Maharaja Ranjit Singh could have pushed his way further north, but he had the greatness and wisdom to respect the limits set by nature and not to attempt the conquest of Kabul or to go beyond Ladakh and invite a clash with the Chinese Empire. As a matter of fact, this ability to call a halt—thus far and no further—was one of the strongest traits of his character and distinguished him from other great military leaders, such as Napoleon.

Ranjit Singh has been criticised for his yielding attitude towards the British—for the failure of his diplomacy against them—who were following a policy of, what is being called to-day in Europe by Hitler, 'encirclement.' The British were carefully watching the rise of Ranjit Singh and they were anxious to confine his power within safe limits. They employed all the resources of their tried diplomacy, backed by their huge military strength, in circumscribing the field of his military activities and in preventing him from becoming the rallying centre of all the forces opposed

to the extension and permanence of British rule or from building up a system of balance of power in the country.

Ranjit Singh felt keenly the check imposed by the presence and might of the British on his ambitions, particularly in the Cis-Sutlej area and in Sind. As the successor of the Durrani on the one hand and of the Sarbat Khalsa on the other, he believed he had legitimate claim to the allegiance of the Amirs of Sind and of the Sikh chiefs of the Cis-Sutlej tract. And he had the grand design of uniting all the Sikhs—both of Majha and Malwa—into a single political union or nation. But he had a keen sense of the realities of the situation, and he realised the futility of flying in the face of unpleasant facts. It was not really weakness or cowardice which made Ranjit Singh accept the treaty of Amritsar of 1809 and to forego for ever his right to expansion in the Cis-Sutlej area, or to put up with the British refusal to admit his claim to Ferozepur in 1827, or not to proceed with the enforcement of his demands upon the Amirs of Sind in 1834 to 1836, or to become an unwilling partner to the Tripartite Treaty of 1838; it was the recognition of the logic of hard facts and of putting on as good a face as possible on the unpleasant aspects of the matter. Ranjit Singh was fully aware of the implications of British friendship and of the limitations it imposed upon him, but what were the alternatives open to him?

Two answers have been suggested.

First, that the Maharaja should have attempted a combination against the British and thus tried to establish a balance of power in India. He should have joined his forces with those of Holkar and given battle to the British in 1805.

It is now generally admitted that such a course would have ended Ranjit Singh's career before it had hardly begun. Holkar's power had already been broken and that of Ranjit Singh had not yet been effectively organised. Their combined forces would have been easily defeated by the British, and the rival Chieftains in the Punjab would have taken the opportunity to rise against Ranjit Singh and sought British protection as the Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs were doing at the time. Even after the Maharaja had consolidated the position and had built up a formidable army, it was not practical to form a rival combination against the British who had established their supremacy over the country by this time and brought a very large number of the Indian states under their paramount influence and subordinate union. A combination of Nagpur, Nepal and Lahore, with one or two other small states thrown in, would have proved utterly ineffective. Some of the Maharaja's critics have argued that towards the end of his life Ranjit Singh himself had begun to believe in the desirability of forming a rival combination. But even if this were true<sup>1</sup>, the proposition would not have become more feasible or effective. Only if Ranjit Singh's rise to power had come a score of years earlier, things would have been different. But that is another story altogether.

The second alternative suggested by the critics of the Maharaja is that he should have followed a bolder policy of resistance and faced the might of the British with courage and taken the consequences. After all the Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849. The Mana-

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1 The evidence given in support of this change of policy consists of the fact that in 1837 the Maharaja had received the Nepalese Mission with greater cordiality than on a former occasion, and that instead of sending away the wakil from Bikaner in 1839 the Maharaja had asked him to wait for consultation till he had recovered from his illness which proved fatal.

*raja* had foreseen this contingency, as is clear from his prophetic remark : '*Sab lal ho gaiga*' (All will become red).

But isn't this both a counsel of despair and folly? If acted upon, it would have proved disastrous. It would have deprived the Indian nation of a bright chapter in its history and the Khalsa its crowning glory.

It is not necessary to pursue this matter further. It is clear that the 'Lion of the Punjab' made the best of the bad job and used the British friendship to pursue his plans west of the Sutlej, and to consolidate his power and rule. And if his successors had followed only in his footsteps and kept firm control of the army and over the administration, the collapse of his empire would have been avoided and the western boundary of the British Empire in India might well have been the east bank of the Sutlej still, as fixed by the Treaty of 1809.

## CHAPTER IX

### MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH AND THE NORTH- WEST FRONTIER OF INDIA

[BY PROF. GULSHAN RAI, SANATAN DHARMA COLLEGE,  
LAHORE]

1. *The Scientific Frontier of India.* --The land frontier of India is about six thousand miles long. The first two thousand miles, along the eastern and northern borders of Burma, are formed by the difficult and inaccessible countries, through which pass the Meking and the Salween rivers, and by the dense and wild jungles of the Chinese province of Yunan, and the Tibetan province of Kham. During the historical period India has never been invaded from this side. The next two thousand miles, from the borders of Eastern Assam to the Pamirs, north of Gilgit, are formed by the mighty Himalayas, the abode of perpetual snows. No invasion of any consequence can take place from this side too. Nature has given to India a natural wall in the shape of Himalayas. The last two thousand miles, running from the Pamirs in the north, to the shores of the Persian Gulf, east of Mekran and Seistan, form the north-western frontier of India. Practically half the length of this frontier line, from the Pamirs to the Hazaras, north of Kandhar, is formed by the lofty mountain range of the Hindukush, which for the greater portion of the year is covered with snow. From the southern termination of the Hindukush to the shores of the Persian Gulf, India is separated from the Middle East by

the deserts of Seistan and Mekran. This Hindukush-Seistan-Mekran line has formed the north-eastern frontier of India from times immemorial. Whenever we in India have held this line under our control we have been immune from foreign invasions. We have been able to hold this line so long as the Central Government in India has been strong and powerful. The moment the Central Government has become weak, we have been unable to hold this natural scientific frontier line or the north-west, and then the foreign people in Central Asia, and in the Middle East, always attracted by the wealth and riches of India, have overwhelmed us. It seems the entire territory forming the drainage system of the river Indus, in fact all the lands through which the western tributaries of the Indus pass, form naturally a part of India. Able and far-seeing rulers of India have always realized the strategic importance of the Hindukush, Seistan and Mekran

2. *The Four Defence Lines of India in the North-West.*—If nature has given to India the scientific frontier of the Hindukush, Seistan and Mekran, in the north-west, it has also given her four natural lines of defence in this quarter. The first line of defence is of course the Hindukush and the deserts of Seistan and Mekran. Almost half of the Hindukush range of mountains, from the Pamirs to Chitral, are the frontiers of India even to-day. But then beyond Chitral, the Hindukush at the present moment passes on into the interior of modern Afghan territory, now an independent country, outside the influence of the Government of India. When we come to Seistan we find that this country is now within the territorial limits of three neighbouring powers, India, Afghanistan and Iran. North-eastern part of Seistan is

within Afghanistan, south-eastern part is within the Indian Province of Baluchistan, and western Seistan is within Iran. The desert country of Mekran is now divided between India and Iran. It seems the first line of our defence is now broken up into different sections. The first section, forming about half of the Hindukush, is in the hands of the Government of India. They lost control of the other half of the Hindukush after the 3rd Afghan War of 1919. But in Seistan and Mekran, the Government of India have gone beyond the ancient frontiers of India. In ancient times all parts of Seistan and Mekran were outside the territorial limits of India, but to-day some parts of these two countries are within the jurisdiction of the Government of India. In other words the districts of Jelalabad, Kafiristan, Kabul, Ghazni and Kandhar, which naturally form part of India, are to-day outside its confines, and portions of Seistan and Mekran, which do not belong to India, are within its modern limits. The chief military outposts of India, on the north-west are at Gilgit, Chitral and Quetta. Unless the Government of India is able to obtain military control over Kabul, Ghazni and Kandhar, our first line of defence cannot be completely under our control.

The second line of Indian defence on the north-west is formed by the Suleman range of hills. From near Chitral, they strike southwards from the Hindukush, and the present Durand line runs along the spurs of the Suleman, right up to the banks of the river Gomul, which form the southern borders of Waziristan. These Sulemans then run along the western boundaries of Dera Ghazi Khan district of the Punjab. The military posts of Landikotal, Parachinar, Miranzai, Razmak, Wana and

Fort Munro are along this second line of defence. The third line of defence is formed by the river Indus, and on its bank lie the military stations of Gilgit, Abbottabad, Nowshera, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Sukkur and Karachi. The fourth line of defence is formed by the Aravalli Hills, which contain the military stations of Abu, Ajmere and Delhi. It means that in between the Aravallis on the one hand, and the Hindukush and the deserts of Seistan and Mekran on the other, lie the lands where India can defend herself against foreign aggression. The defence of India requires that the lands watered by the Indus and its tributaries in the east as well as the west should be inhabited by those who are loyal and faithful to India, and who are patriotic Indians.

3. *Strategic Positions lost by the Mughals.*—So long as the Mughal Empire remained strong and powerful, and it held control over the natural and scientific frontiers of the Hindukush and the deserts of Seistan and Mekran, India was quite safe from foreign invasions. The earliest breach that was made in the first line of defence of the Hindukush-cum-Seistan-Makran was, when Shahjahan lost Kandhar to the Persians in the middle of the 17th century. From this time the present-day British districts of Loralai, Zhob, Quetta and Pishin, and the Afghan district of Kandhar passed into the hands of the Persians. But the Mughals still held the entire line of the Hindukush, upto a little north of Kandhar, and they could also defend their north-western frontier at Bolan Pass near Sibi. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Central Government became weak. The provincial governors became practically independent. Aurangzeb's grandson, Jahandar Shah was a thoroughly



worthless prince, and quite incompetent ruler. He was at the time of the death of Aurangzeb Governor of Multan and Sind. It was during his period of governorship that the zamindars in Multan and Sind began to carve out independent principalities. It was as early as 1697, in the life-time of Aurangzeb, that the foundations of the present State of Kelat were laid by a Bruhi chief in western Sind. It was about this time that the zamindari, which later on grew into the state of Bahawalpur, was formed in between the Sutlej and the old bed of the Ghaggar or Hakra, in the southern parts of Multan Province. The frontier on the side of Bolan Pass consequently became very weak. The persecution of the Rajputs in Rajputana, and of the Sikhs in the Provinces of Lahore and Delhi, and of the Jats in the Province of Agra, compelled the Rajputs, the Sikhs, and the Jats to rise in revolt against the Mughals. With the people in the Province of Lahore and in western Rajputana disaffected against Government, it could not be possible to strengthen the defences against the invaders from the north-west. When the Mughal forces were withdrawn from the territories round about the Sulemans, to meet the Maratha danger in the south, the north-western frontiers became absolutely undefended. It is therefore no matter for surprise that Nadir Shah, the Persian adventurer, after taking Kandhar, advanced without any resistance through the Provinces of Kabul and Lahore, and suddenly entered the Province of Delhi. The Mughal Emperor, Mohammed Shah *Rangila*, had no alternative but to cede in favour of Nadir Shah all territories west of the Indus. The result was that Kashmir which was at that time a part of Kabul Province, was left within the Mughal empire, but the whole of the present-day

Frontier Province, minus the district of Hazara, a portion of Multan province, consisting of the districts of Dera Ghazi Khan, Sibi, Sukkur and Jacobabad, and the whole of Sind west of the old bed of the Hakra, were lost to the Mughal Empire. The Mughals could now keep no control over any portion of the Hindukush and the Seistan line of defence; they lost control over the second line of defence of the Sulemans; and they were compelled to withdraw to the third line of defence formed by the Indus. The Indus river, which in the winter is fordable, cannot be said to be a natural frontier of India. The loss of the first two lines of defence threw open for the invaders the north-western gateways. The Mughals withdrew to the Indus line in 1739, they receded to the banks of the Sutlej in 1752, and in 1756 they were compelled to give up all the territories north of the old bed of the Saraswati river, near the historic battle-field of Kurukshetra. After this, Delhi, the capital of the empire, was too dangerously near the frontier. Under these circumstances India could no longer protect herself against foreign aggression. Unless the Abdalis, who now held undisputed sway from the Saraswati to the shores of the Caspian Sea in one direction, and from Kashmir to the shores of the Persian Gulf in the other, could be driven back again across the natural barriers of the Hindukush and Seistan, India could not become independent of the domination of Central Asian hordes. This task had to be done by some one in India. The Sikhs were living in between the Saraswati and the Jhelum. From 1708 they were carrying on a war of independence against the Mughals. It is they who were called upon to free the Indus region, so important to India from the strategic point of view, from the yoke of the Abdalis. A

Sikh Chief, Ala Singh, was recognised as an independent ruler of the territories of Sirhind, in 1762. In a few years, between 1762 and 1768, four Sikh confederacies were established in between the Saraswati and the Sutlej, and eight similar confederacies were formed in between the Sutlej and the Jhelum. The Abdalis were driven across the Jhelum. In the closing years of Ahmad Shah Abdali, even Multan was seized by the Sikhs.

4. *The Position of Abdali Emperor on the Rise of Ranjit Singh*—When Ahmad Shah Abdali died in 1773, the Abdali empire contained the territories of Kashmir, a portion of the Punjab, north of the Salt range, the present day Frontier Province, Sind, the whole of Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Seistan, and Khorasan. These territories continued to remain intact within the Abdali empire during the reign of Taimur Shah, the successor of Ahmad Shah Abdali. But when he died in 1793, this empire fell on evil days. The three brothers, Shah Mahmud, Shah Zaman, and Shah Shuja, the sons of Shah Taimur, began to fight among themselves for the empire. There started a sort of civil war among them. Shah Zaman was the first to come to the throne. At that time the Marathas on the one hand, and the different Muslim chiefs like the Nizam and Tipu Sultan on the other, were engaged in a life and death struggle in India. Even the Nawab Wazir of Oudh was feeling restive under the irksome yoke of the British East India Company. All these Muslim Chiefs in India looked up to the Abdalis for support. Shah Zaman received pressing invitations from them, and he too wanted to recover the Indian possessions of his grandfather Ahmad Shah. He marched into the Punjab. The Sikhs were too powerful for him east of the Jhelum, and the Persians were, too, now pressing against the Abdali empire in the west. It was

just about this psychological moment that Ranjit Singh rose to power. Shah Zaman had hardly set his foot on the land of the Sikhs, when he received the news that the Persians had invaded his dominions in the west. He hurried back, and Ranjit Singh became the master of Lahore. That was in 1799. During the next 40 years, from 1799 to 1839, while the Abdali princes and after them the Barakzai brothers, were fighting among themselves, it was the constant endeavour of Ranjit Singh to push forward the boundaries of his newly founded kingdom, and recover all those Indian territories which had been lost by the Mughals.

5. *The Original Aim of Ranjit Singh*—The first and the original object of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was to unite all the Sikhs under one common rule. This would have involved the union of all the territories between the Jhelum and the Saraswati on the one hand, and Jammu and Dipalpur on the other. This would have meant that the northern portion of the Mughal province of Delhi should be united with the Cis-Jhelum portions of the old province of Lahore. But this plan was frustrated by the changed policy of the British East India Company. In 1805 the policy of the British Government in India was not to advance westward beyond the Jumna. But the Napoleonic Wars in Europe changed all this. In 1807 Napoleon had come to some understanding with Czar Alexander of Russia, and it was feared that British possessions in India might be threatened overland from the north-west. It was felt that the Jumna was not a suitable frontier to defend. The military experts of the British Government held that for defence purposes the Sutlej was a better frontier than the Jumna. So the British Government decided to move forward the frontiers of their Indian dominions to the banks of the Sutlej.

The Sikh principalities between the Sutlej and the Saraswati could not be left outside the sphere of influence of the British Government in India. Under such circumstances Ranjit Singh could not be permitted to consolidate his power south of the Sutlej. So in 1809 an agreement was arrived at between the British Government and Ranjit Singh, whereby the Sutlej was fixed as the southern boundary line of the latter's kingdom. The dream of uniting all the Sikhs under one crown dissipated. But he got a free hand to extend his dominions at the expense of the now decaying Abdali empire.

6. *Ranjit Singh turns his attention towards the West—*  
After a limit was put to the expansion of Ranjit Singh's kingdom across the Sutlej, in the south, he turned his attention to the Punjab proper. At this time the affairs in the Abdali empire had assumed a very critical position. The two brothers, Shah Zaman and Shah Shuja, were soon after expelled from Kabul, and they had after wandering about for some years, finally taken up their residence at Ludhiana. After 1810 Shah Mahmud was the king of the Abdali empire. But he was an ease-loving prince. The entire administration had fallen into the hands of his Vazir, Fateh Mohammed Khan, of the Barakzai clan. But Fateh Mohammed Khan was murdered in 1818, and after this his numerous brothers, who were in charge of different provinces, became too powerful. All these brothers were constantly at war with one another. It was a very fine opportunity for Ranjit Singh to exploit this situation. By 1815, Ranjit Singh had consolidated his position in the old Mughal province of Lahore. He had conquered the hill territories of Jammu, and the other petty hill states like Rajouri, Mirpur, Bhimbar and Poonchh. south-west of Kashmir. He had also taken

possession of the territories of Jhang, Sahiwal, Bhera, and Khushab. By 1813-4 he had also extended his rule to the territories beyond the Salt range, right upto the banks of the Indus, and thus isolated Kashmir from the rest of the Abdali kingdom. In the extreme east he had subjugated the hill districts of Kangra and Kulu. In other words, he had by 1815 become master of the entire Mughal province of Lahore. After this he was free to conquer the Mughal provinces of Kabul, Multan and Sind.

7. *Conquests of Ranjit Singh in the Province of Multan.*—The Mughal Province of Multan consisted of the present Multan Division of the Punjab, plus Bahawalpur State, north of the dry bed of the river Hakra, plus the districts of Shikarpur and Jacobabad in Sind, and the districts of Sibi and Mari territory in Baluchistan. It was one of the functions of a Faujdar in Multan Province to defend the Bolan Pass, which in those days led to Kandhar Province, then ruled by the Persians. There was a zamindari of considerable size in southern parts of Multan Province between the Sutlej and Hakra rivers. This zamindar was in 1739 recognised Nawab of these territories by Nadir Shah. He was also given charge of the fort of Bhakkar near Sukkur. But he was soon displaced from Sukkur and Shikarpur, and his descendents were compelled to confine themselves to what is now known as Bahawalpur State. When the Abdalis acquired in 1752 the Cis-Indus portions of the Mughal Province of Multan, Bahawalpur continued to be recognised as a separate state, and a separate governor was appointed for the northern portions of the Province. This northern portion, constituting the present Multan Division of the Punjab was finally conquered by Ranjit Singh in 1813.

On the annexation of these territories to his kingdom, Ranjit Singh farmed out the southern portions, lying in between the Sutlej and the old bed of the Beas, to the Nawab of Bahawalpur. That tongue of land which lies in between the Indus and the Chenab, and which is now known by the name of Muzaffargarh district, was also farmed out to the Nawab of Bahawalpur. In 1820 Ranjit Singh conquered the district of Dera Ghazi Khan which was also put in charge of Nawab of Bahawalpur, and in 1821 he became master of the present districts of Mianwali and Dera Ismail Khan. Having thus crossed the Indus, he reached in this direction the Suleman range of hills. After this the only portion of the old Mughal Province of Multan which was not under Ranjit Singh was Sukkur and Shikarpur territory west of Bahawalpur State, and the district of Sibi, this side of the Bolan Pass. But in the meantime, the British East India Company was trying to open up the river Indus, through Sind, for their commerce. In a short time the Amirs of Sind were taken under their protection. Sukkur and Shikarpur, which were in olden times included in the Province of Multan, had now begun to be included in Sind. The State of Bahawalpur in southern Multan also became a protected state of the British Government. They checked the advance of Ranjit Singh in the direction of Shikarpur. Seeing that the Nawab of Bahawalpur had accepted the protection of the British Government, Ranjit Singh terminated his leasehold in the territory in between the Sutlej and the Beas, and in Muzaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan. The policy of the British Government prevented him from becoming master of the whole of the old Mughal Province of Multan. Out of the bigger Multan Province, he only obtained present Multan Division.

8. *Conquests of Ranjit Singh in the Mughal Province of Kabul.*—This old Province of Kabul consisted of Kashmir Province in the present Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, plus the modern Indian Province of North-Western Frontier, plus the eastern districts of Ghazni, Kabul, Jelalabad and Kafiristan in between the Hindukush and the Sulemans, and plus the territories of Kandhar, in between Seistan and the Sulemans. Khyber and Gomal Passes in those days were not on the frontier, but within the territories of Kabul Province. We have already stated that on the murder of Wazir Fateh Khan in 1818, the affairs of the Abdali Empire fell into a very bad condition indeed. The brothers of the late Wazir Fateh Khan all revolted. They were in charge of the different provinces of the kingdom. One of these brothers, Jabbar Khan, was in possession of Kashmir. Another brother Yar Mohammed Khan was the governor of Peshawar. Dost Mohammed Khan held Ghazni. Mohammed Azim Khan became master of Kabul, and Purdil Khan ruled at Kandhar. The Abdali Empire had now broken into pieces. The Mashed division of Khorasan had been lost to the Persians in 1802, during the first reign of Shah Mahmud, Badakhshan, Balkh and Herat Division of Khorasan also now became independent. Rawalpindi territory in between the Salt range and the Indus had been conquered by Ranjit Singh in 1813. He now conquered Kashmir in 1819. He took possession of the Deras in 1820 - 21, and he subdued Peshawar in 1823. On the death of Mohammed Azim Khan, Dost Mohammed Khan, who already held Ghazni, took possession of Kabul and Jelalabad. In 1834 he became master of Kandhar also. Thus Dost Mohammed Khan became master of the entire territory between the Sulemans and the Hindukush. In 1835



he assumed the title of *Amir-ul-Mominin*. After this he proposed to add Peshawar to his dominions. But this Division of the old Mughal Province of Kabul was now controlled by Ranjit Singh. A conflict arose between Dost Mohammed Khan and Ranjit Singh. While this contest was going on in the east, the Persians were trying to recover Herat Division of old Khorasan in the west. In 1837 Dost Mohammed Khan invaded Peshawar, but he was repulsed. He sought assistance from the British Government in India, but the latter refused to help him. He then proposed to obtain assistance from the Persians and the Russians. But the British Government did not like the intervention of Russia in the affairs of Afghanistan. This led to the well-known triple alliance between Great Britain, Ranjit Singh and Shah Shujah, who was at this time a refugee at Ludhiana.

9. *Ranjit Singh and the First Afghan War.*—In 1837 Dost Mohammed Khan was pressed on all sides by the neighbouring powers. Right up to 1739 there was no separate existence of Afghanistan. We have already stated above, that in this year, the trans-Indus portions of the three Indian Provinces of Kabul, Multan and Sind, were ceded by the Mughal Emperor Mohammed Shah *Rangila*, to Nadir Shah, who had just a few years back usurped the throne of Persia. It was on his death in 1747 that the three eastern Provinces of Persia, namely, Khorasan, Seistan and Mekran, together with the trans-Indus portions of the three Indian Provinces of Kabul, Multan and Sind, became independent under Ahmed Shah Abdali, who was one of the Generals of Nadir Shah. This Abdali Empire came into existence in 1747, and lasted in its full vigour till 1793. During this

period the Cis-Indus portion of the province of Kabul, including Kashmir, Cis-Indus portion of the Multan, the whole of the Province of Lahore, and Sirhind Division of the Province of Delhi had been added to the Abdali empire, but Sirhind and Lahore, south of the Salt range, had been completely lost, and Sind had become independent. During the internecine quarrels of the three brothers, Shah Mahmud, Shah Zaman and Shah Shujah, the Persians recovered greater portions of Mekran and Seistan, and also Mashed Division of Khorasan. After the overthrow in 1818 of the Saddozai dynasty founded by Ahmed Shah Abdali, Ranjit Singh in the east conquered Multan, Derajat and Kashmir, and finally Peshawar. It seemed the Abdali empire after a short existence was being crushed out of existence. Ranjit Singh in the east and the Persians in the west were both trying to reach again the old common natural frontier of the Hindkush and Seistan. Dost Mohammed Khan, who had succeeded in displacing the Saddozai rulers, and who had now laid foundations of the new Barakzai dynasty, was making frantic efforts to save the remnants of the Abdali empire. He was most anxious to obtain Peshawar, the winter capital of the kingdom. When he found that the British Government was not willing to help him in recovering Peshawar, he turned to Russia for help. Great Britain did not want the extension of Russian influence south of the Hindukush, and Ranjit Singh wanted to extend his dominions right upto the natural walls of the Hindukush, the ancient frontiers of India. The British Government and Ranjit Singh therefore both combined. Both wanted the throne of Kabul to be occupied by a person who could further the designs of each of them. Shah Shuja, who had once

been the ruler of Kabul, had since 1816 been a pensioner of the British Government. He could be trusted to be friendly to the British, and could be relied upon to keep Russian influence out of Afghanistan. Ranjit Singh had taken possession of Kashmir, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, the Deras and Multan on account of the weakness of the Saddozai kings. He knew Shah Shuja to be a weak personalty. If he could be put on the throne of Kabul, he knew he could continue the policy of adding Abdali provinces one after another, till he reached the natural barriers of the Hindukush. Dost Mohammed Khan, on the other hand, was a strong personality. With him on the throne of Kabul, the task of Ranjit Singh would have become more difficult of achievement. It is evident the tripartite treaty signed between the British Government of India, Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja, was more advantageous to the Sikh Maharaja. He readily became a party to the policy of Lord Auckland in declaring war against Dost Mohammed Khan. But man proposes and God disposes. The plans of the great Sikh Maharaja were upset by his sudden death in June 1839, a few months after the war broke out. The Sikh army after crossing the Khyber had reached Jalalabad, and the British army, after passing through the territories of Bahawalpur and Sind, and having crossed the Bolan Pass, had put Shah Shuja again on the throne at Kandhar, and reached Ghazni, when in June, 1839, Ranjit Singh died. The dream of Ranjit Singh remained unfulfilled. He had at the time of his death reached only the eastern slopes of the Sulemans. He was not destined to cross this range of hills and reach the Hindukush. His successors, the British, have made only a small advance. In 1880 the British Government had surpassed the wildest dreams of Ranjit Singh, in as

much as the foreign relations of the Amir of Afghanistan came in this year under their control. In 1907 Afghanistan was recognised by Russia to be under the sphere of influence of the British Government. This meant that the control of the British Government in India extended not only to the line of the Hindukush range of mountains, but even beyond it to the banks of the river Oxus in Central Asia. Before this in 1895 the boundary line between India and Afghanistan was demarcated, and the Government of India took the opportunity of fixing this boundary line not along the eastern slopes of the Sulmans, as was the case at the time of the death of Ranjit Singh, but along the top hills of this range. This was an advance on what had been attained by the Sikh king. It was fortunate that the Indian frontiers were fixed along these top hills, now called the Durrand Line, for in 1919, when, after 3rd Afghan War, Afghanistan became completely independent of the Government of India, the international frontier of India receded from the banks of the river Oxus on the other side of the Hindukush to the Durrand Line this side of the Hindukush. Had the Durrand Line not been fixed as the boundary line of India on the north-west, then Waziristan, Kurram, the Khyber and Mohmand territory would have to-day been within Afghanistan. Under such circumstances the defences on the north-west frontier would have been much weaker than they are to-day. But the fact cannot be denied that India cannot be completely secure against foreign aggression unless she obtains full control over the Hindukush.

10. *Realization of the Strategic Importance of the Hindukush by Ranjit Singh.* It seems Ranjit Singh fully realised the strategic importance of the Hindukush and of

the deserts of Seistan and Mekran. After consolidating his position in the old Provinces of Lahore and Multan, it is evident his plan was to conquer the Frontier provinces of Kabul and Sind. In Sind the advance of Ranjit Singh was checked by the British Government. After his death his weak successors could not carry out his policy in the direction of the Hindukush. But even had Ranjit Singh lived, it is very doubtful whether the British Government would have permitted him to extend his rule beyond the Khyber. It was the plan of Ranjit Singh and his officers to reach the natural barriers of the Hindukush, Seistan and Mekran, but it was the policy of the British Government to encircle his dominions either by British territories, or by lands ruled by princes under their protection. This encircling policy of the British Government may have been vaguely perceived by Ranjit Singh. It was not fully realized by him. Even if he did realize it, he was perhaps not in a position to thwart it. After his death this encircling policy of the British Government became quite clear to the Sikhs. This certainly exasperated them. But it is clear beyond doubt that Ranjit Singh was one of those Indian princes who was far sighted enough to understand clearly the strategic importance of the Hindukush. It remains to be seen how far his successors, the British Government, carry out his North-West Frontier Policy.

## **CHAPTER X.**

### **MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH AS A NATION BUILDER.**

[BY K. C. KHANNA, M. A., PH. D. (LONDON), F.R. HIST. S.,  
M.B.A.S., INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS, MULTAN DIVISION.]

The title of this chapter necessarily requires a certain amount of explanation and elucidation. Nation building is intimately connected with the building up of a national state. We shall therefore have to examine the conditions under which Maharaja Ranjit Singh had to work and the extent to which it was possible for him, in the circumstances of his time, to build up a nation. We shall then examine further whether the nation which he attempted to build up succeeded, and if so, to what extent, in building up a national state.

The word 'nation' stands for a large body of people whose interests, in the widest sense of the term, are common. It has been argued that a homogeneity of interests results in the building up of nations. A certain people belong to the same race, profess the same religion, speak the same language; there is every chance of their developing into a nation. This community of interests is obviously based on religious and cultural forces such as have been applied in earlier conditions of life. The scope of identity of interests has necessarily been widened in more modern times and it has been possible for two peoples belonging to different races, professing different faiths and speaking somewhat different languages to combine into

a single nation through the agency of common economic and even political interests. Experience has, however, shown that the fusion of such peoples into a single nation must be left to the spontaneous working of the different factors tending to bring about such a union. In other words, nations develop, they cannot be made. In the words of a well-known historian nationality is a plant of slow growth and any attempts to force its progress are destined to result in failure. The development of the national states of modern Europe amply bears out the above remarks.

It is now necessary for us to analyse the circumstances existing in the Punjab at the end of the 18th century to enable us to determine the extent to which Ranjit Singh could build up a nation. The Punjab, then as now, was inhabited by three principal communities, the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs. It is unnecessary to emphasise the racial and the linguistic differences, but we must take note of the religious and cultural differences that existed and which in any scheme of nation building were bound to demand considerable attention and to create many difficulties. The history of the eighteenth century in the Punjab is a history of the decline of the Mughal power. The Mughal governors of Lahore steadily lost in power. The break-up of the provincial authority necessarily resulted in establishment of scattered political centres in the various parts of the province. The foreign invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali helped forward the process of Mughal decay. Whereas these foreign invaders helped to destroy the Mughal authority, they did not seek to establish themselves either at Delhi or in the Punjab, with the result that the newer internal political forces made use of the opportunities

thus created. The Sikhs, whose previous history up to this time has been traced in a previous chapter, united to throw off the yoke of the foreigners and organised themselves as best as they could. Their various leaders asserted their independence, built fortresses in the villages and began to collect revenues from the land under their control. In spite of heavy suffering at the hands of the Abdali, they ousted the Governors of Sirhand and Lahore by 1764 and occupied the country from the Jumna to the Jhelum. Then began the Misal period. It might, however, be remarked here that in their desire for territorial expansion, the various Misals came into conflict with one another, but in the face of a common danger and in the pursuit of a common plan of action they all united. Once a year they all met at Amritsar to hold a common council for *Gurmatta* to decide their plan of action. Ranjit Singh took his rise from a Misal by no means the most important when he began his career, but he soon made his way at the expense of his rivals. In 1799 he occupied Lahore, assumed the title of 'Maharaja' and established a mint of his own. Hence forward his power was on the increase. It is not proposed to repeat here the details of his acquisitions, but it will be useful to remember that a careful chronological study of his attempts at conquests rather than results of conquests appears to contradict the view which some people hold that he had a settled plan of action, especially in the early years of his career. The principal landmarks in this connection are his treaty with the British of 1809 by which the Sutlej became the southern boundary of his kingdom, his conquest of Multan in 1818, of Kashmir in 1819, of extension beyond the Indus in 1821. In short in about thirty years Maharaja Ranjit Singh built an extensive kingdom for himself which comprised the whole



of the Punjab, north of the Sutlej, Kashmir, Peshawar and the Deras. It extended up to Leh and Iskardo in the north-east, Khyber in the north-west, Rajhan in the south-west.

The object of this rapid survey of the political history of the Punjab in these years has been to show the political process which was in action after the reign of Aurangzeb and the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs. The simultaneous finish of the careers of these two great personalities and leaders of India was one of the most startling coincidences of Indian History, and provided a natural and logical starting point for the history of the eighteenth century and after. It has been remarked above that the racial and other differences which existed amongst the three principal communities in the Punjab before the beginning of this epoch played but a minor *role* when compared with the cultural and religious differences which marked the directions in which things moved. It is unnecessary to prove that in the history of the world the cultural and religious forces have generally tended to strengthen and build up states which have in turn protected them. It is also true that with the growth of purely political interests of states their theocratic aspect has invariably suffered and retired into the background. We must therefore view the Misal period of Sikh history in the light of these remarks. The political factor was principally at work during these years, although it derived large strength from a community of religious interests and traditions. With the coming of Maharaja Ranjit Singh on the scene a great change appeared. The Misals or confederacies of the Sikhs which were loosely republican in character under the influence of the spirit of the Khalsa Commonwealth created by the Tenth Guru began to give way to a cohesive and growing

monarchical system under the leadership of the Maharaja. The more his power grew the more naturally he allowed the theocratic forces to retire into the background and take their proper place.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh could not have achieved his objective of forming a strong well-protected state in the Punjab if he had not based his power on a secular rather than religious basis from the very beginning. It was a difficult task requiring the diplomacy and foresight of a born leader of men, such as he was. We notice therefore that the process of secularization proceeded by stages as the political position allowed. To begin with, Ranjit Singh as a leader of a Sikh Misal had to contend against other Sikh Misals for the possession of territory and influence. He established his superiority before long and either destroyed his former rivals or turned them into subordinate allies as the occasion required. In these very early stages he was still more of a Sikh ruler than a national leader. It could not be otherwise. Most of his followers and helpers were naturally Sikhs. But the political factor was already perceptible, for if the religious factor counted for much, how else could one Sikh leader persuade his followers to fight against and destroy another? We have, however, already noticed that during the Misal period, whilst the Misals fought amongst themselves for superiority, they united against a common danger or in the pursuance of a common general plan of political advancement. It was not natural to expect that a great leader, such as Ranjit Singh fore-shadowed to be, should continue to regard other Sikh leaders as equals in a loose sort of democratic alliance. It is therefore we find that at the earliest opportunity he broke away from the old tradition, made Lahore his capital instead of the

sacred city of Amritsar and within a few years abolished the time-old institution of *Gurmatta*. Henceforth he continued to visit Amritsar on the occasion of Dusehra before launching one or other of his annual campaigns. But the decisions were principally taken by himself. Of course it was necessary for him to maintain the general belief that the progress of his cause was identical with the advancement of the Khalsa. He never lost an opportunity to deepen this impression which was necessary to maintain his position with his co-religionists, but in actual practice we find that the cause that prospered principally was that of Ranjit Singh's secular rule and not of the Khalsa Commonwealth. Secular rule and theocracy do not agree as political institutions. There can be no doubt in anybody's mind that Maharaja Ranjit Singh definitely laboured to bring the scattered power of the Sikh theocracy under his own control on which the strength and security of his state depended.

This political state, the growth of which has been rapidly outlined before, though Sikh in name on account of its circumstances, was really a secularized state which reconciled, protected and furthered diverse clashing interests of the different communities that lived under it. Maharaja Ranjit Singh attempted to bring the various peoples together in spite of their numerous differences. He protected the legitimate interests of every community and assured them by his deeds that they would all be able to live happily and to advance steadily under his rule. He brought them together by a community of political and economic interests which were strengthened, if anything, by geographical conditions also, and the net result of it was the creation of what might be called as a national state of the Punjabis.

It would be interesting to examine the principles followed by Ranjit Singh in creating such a national state of the Punjabis in spite of the fact that the different peoples living in the Punjab could not be considered to be a nation in the sense in which this term is commonly understood. It was a difficult enough task to build up such a state add to enable it to draw upon the loyalty and support of the different communities which formed its subjects. But Ranjit Singh achieved a large measure of success in this. In attempting this task he observed certain principles. He knew the art of selecting the right men for the work which he entrusted to them. In making this selection he was governed more by considerations of efficiency than of race or religion. A study of the personnel of his civil and military administration amply bears out this remark. He crossed all bounds of race and religion and selected Sikhs, Hindus, Kashmiri Pandits, Rajputs, Muslims and Europeans. It did not matter to the Maharaja that some of the men selected occupied low positions in life, for his penetrating eye saw talent and merit in them and the promise of successful careers. Realising the Maharaja's keenness on this point, the courtiers and sardars looked for promising relations and other people and presented them to the Maharaja for service, so that in course of time various parties grew up at the Durbar. They naturally competed among themselves for influence and power, but the great Maharaja's personality kept them all well under control. Ranjit Singh did not regard these parties among courtiers as a source of weakness. In the desire to serve him with distinction they vied with one another. By applying checks and counter-checks Ranjit Singh always managed to maintain a balance in his court, so that no single party could ever grow unduly

strong. There were the Sandhanwalias, his collaterals, the Majithias and other well-known Sikh Sardars, the Fakirs, the Misrs, the Bhais, the Dogras and last but not least the Europeans. Various contemporary writers have attempted to describe the order of importance held by these various groups, but such attempts, except in a very general sense, are apt to be misleading. However, one thing is probably quite true, and that is that, as a matter of policy, the Maharaja did not want to create unnecessary rivals from amongst his own co-religionists. He kept the the Sikh Sardars from occupying very high positions; even the army was not their close preserve. And he sought to make up this deficiency by employing talented people of all kinds and countries. The Sardars, who could lay claim to aristocratic descent amongst the Sikhs, were discouraged and Jamadar Khushal Singh from the United Provinces, the Fakirs from Bokhara, the Dogras from the hills and Europeans from all over were encouraged by responsible offices in the Civil and Military departments of state. It is unnecessary to go into the details of the careers of these men to show how successful the Maharaja proved to be in following this principle of favouring men of ability from all countries and how wise a selection he always made.

If we examine the chief factors in the evolution of the state built up by the Maharaja we find that the army naturally occupies the great importance. This army had increased in strength with the extension of the territories. The army was divided into the Regulars and the Irregulars. Of the three branches of the Irregular army, infantry, cavalry, artillery, the first, *i.e.*, the infantry had begun to receive the particular attention of the Maharaja from 1805 onwards. It is suggested that the visit

of Holkar to the Punjab in 1805 prompted the Maharaja to organise his Regular infantry on European lines and this desire was strengthened in 1809 when the Maharaja realised the British Military power. The Sikhs disliked serving as foot soldiers, and for many years the Maharaja enlisted Mohammedans, Gorkhas and Purbias who formed a considerable portion of his army. After the appointment of Generals Ventura and Allard in 1822 the whole Regular army was re-organised into brigades, each brigade having a preponderance of infantry. The Regular cavalry also made much advance since 1822, when General Allard took up its organisation in hand, but the Sikh Irregular cavalry, the *Ghorcharhas*, disliked serving in the Regular cavalry. After 1827 General Court transformed the Regular artillery into a strong weapon on the same lines as the infantry. The Irregular army consisted of cavalry, the *Ghorcharhas* who were averse to the discipline of a regular force, the *misaldari* forces or jagirdar levies which swelled the number of Irregular cavalry, were naturally ill-assorted, ill-equipped ill-managed, badly led and never maintained at proper strength. The *Ghorcharhas* were divided into *deras* and were paid in cash or given assignments of land. Having a stake in the country they naturally served the state with more patriotic motives than the paid soldiers of the Regular army. In fact they must be looked upon as descendants of the Khalsa Free-lances of the earlier period, and, in the years following the death of Ranjit Singh, they were in no small degree responsible for affecting the spirit of the Irregular army. It is quite clear from the above description that Maharaja Ranjit Singh deliberately built up his military strength on the basis of the Regular army which was not predominantly manned by the Sikhs as the Regular



General Allard  
(1785—1839)





army and that the personnel of the Regular army both in officers and men bears ample proof of the fact that the Maharaja recognised the merit and advantage of enlisting members of different communities in his army.

For purposes of civil government the country was divided into *subahas*, *parganas*, *ta'aluqas* and *maucas*. A *subah* was placed under a *nazim* and a *pargana*, more or less equivalent to a district, was placed under a *kardar* who should be regarded as fore-runner of the district officer of to-day. The *kardar* was helped by a *mutasaddi* and a *sandukchi* and a number of revenue officials like *qanungos*, *muqaddams*, *patwaris*, etc., who assisted in the business of assessing the land revenue. A study of the names of men who acted as *nazims* and *kardars* indicates the same thing as has been mentioned in regard to the army. Men from different communities were allowed to hold these offices according to their suitability in the areas to which they were appointed. They were selected on the basis of their ability to hold their charge and were required to observe the instructions of the Maharaja and the acknowledged practice of the area.

As the administration developed in its scope a proper finance department, *Daftar-i-malijat*, was evolved. The receipts were principally derived from the land revenue and miscellaneous sources of income which included *nazarana*, excise, customs, etc. There is nothing on record to prove that any particular community was required to pay at a higher rate. State dues were realised from members of all communities without favour or prejudice.

The general pattern of the administration was after the Mughal type and Persian terminology was freely adopted. In fact Persian continued to be the court

language. The object of the administration was not so much to introduce innovations as to regularise and put into order the existing customs and practices.

It is quite clear from the above that Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not govern to the disadvantage of a particular community; that in the management of the civil and military administration of his kingdom he gave opportunities to members of all communities, provided they were found fit to hold their charge; that ability, culture and education were the considerations on which men were selected; and that although the Maharaja was himself a Sikh and naturally held the Sikh scriptures, the Sikh places of worship and the Sikh men of learning like the Bhais in great esteem, yet he lavishly bestowed his gifts, in grants and jagirs, to the religious institutions and places belonging to all communities. In the conduct of his most important diplomatic affairs he seldom ranked any one higher than the Fakirs, particularly Fakir Aziz-ud-Din. There is one point, however, which needs explanation.

[One aspect of the Frontier policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has not been properly understood by writers on the subject. It is true that in the beginning the Maharaja had to adopt severe measures to put down the recalcitrant tribes whose occupation from the times immemorial had been to harass the passing travellers and to swoop down on the peaceful citizens on the Indian side of the Frontier. Their country had always been in an unsettled condition and had been treated as no man's land. (Even now it fares no better.) It had not been possible even for the Mughals to improve the character of these people. It was not practical for the Maharaja to turn them to peaceful avocations by persua-

sion or any milder measures. The same national policy could not be applied to them as to the people of the Punjab. He had to give them a dose of the same allopathic medicine as his predecessors had given to purge them of their evil tendencies and to teach them respect for law and order. But he soon learnt that wild measures can never cure a people of wildness. He, therefore, changed his method and adopted a homœopathic system of creating a feeling of fellowship and neighbourliness among the Pathans for their Indian victims. The Maharaja sent stalwart Sikhs with their families to settle in the Frontier districts in the midst of their erstwhile enemies. They founded cities like Haripur, Abbottabad, etc., and a number of *garhis*, in which they lived side by side with Pathans and cultivated with them the relationship of neighbours and friends. So harmonious were their dealings with each other that never was heard a complaint of interference with their religious or social liberties. Often when the Pathans came down for their periodical raids into the Punjab, they left their families into the care and custody of the domiciled Sikhs, who in the event of any death among the raiders would look to the upbringing of the fatherless children.—Teja Singh.]

The cumulative impression of the fore-going pages on our minds must inevitably be in favour of the fair and liberal administration of the Maharaja. Equal opportunities were offered to members of all communities and no special disabilities as a rule were levied on any particular community. We come across no particular expression of discontent on the part of any community against the rule of the Maharaja. In fact, considering the circumstances of the time, there was considerable enthusiasm

for it. We are aware of the drawbacks of his administration. In spite of the Maharaja's anxiety that his commoner subjects should be allowed to live in happiness and security, the aristocratic section of all communities enjoyed influence and advantages at the expense of the commoner people, and crime was not altogether rare. But these drawbacks were natural in the circumstances of the time. In fact, we have not still reached a time when it may be said that the economic and political interests of all sections of all communities have been completely harmonised, although we are steadily marching towards this goal. In the end, it may be remarked that the Maharaja definitely adopted steps in the conduct of his Government which gave his rule the appearance of being a national one, in so far as an attempt was made to reconcile the divergent interests of all communities. It may be said that in the spirit of his Government as also in the form of it, he followed in the footsteps of the secularized Mughal state in the best days of its glory.

The kind of national system of Government which he adopted could only be carried on in conditions of security and under the wise guidance of equally strong and sagacious rulers. The ultimate decline of such a good Government should not, however, detract limitlessly from its merits and virtues, and we are thankful that Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a hundred years before, showed us the way how we members of different communities with different cultural and religious traditions, can still live peacefully amongst ourselves so as ultimately to produce a happier, stronger and well-united Punjab, under a system of Government which has the strength and efficiency of a despotism coupled with the permanence of a constitutional system.

## CHAPTER XI

### CHARACTER OF MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND AS A RULER

[BY BABA PREM SINGH OF HOTI,

TRANSLATED BY

GURBACHAN SINGH, M. A., KHALSA COLLEGE, AMRITSAR.]

Since the earliest times the rulers of the Punjab have followed the policy that to rule successfully over the inflammable population of this province a firmer hand is needed than elsewhere. But when we study the administrative policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh we find it to be radically different from the policy of other rulers. He ruled over the Punjab for full forty years, from 1799 to 1839, but during this long period we do not find ever one instance of the Maharaja having awarded capital punishment. It is certainly very astonishing to find that for this long period he ruled successfully over the virile Punjabis without having recourse to repression. In this connection we shall quote the testimony of some of the Maharaja's contemporary writers who had observed his administration from close quarters. One of these was Captain Fane, Secretary to Sir Henry Fane, Commander-in-Chief of the British Indian Forces. He had come to the Punjab in 1837 to attend the wedding festivities of Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh. He has thus recorded his personal experiences, in his book, *Five Years in India* :-

"Ranjit among his subjects has the character generally of a kind and generous master, and one of the best princes that have ever reigned in India. As evidence of his being really a good and amiable man may be cited his kindness to children (two or three of whom he has crawling about the Durbar), and the fact of his never having, since he conquered the country, put a man to death for even the most heinous crimes. His exceeding kindness and good nature throughout our entire visit, to all in any

way attached to us, makes us believe that such is his real character. At all events it is certain, that, without the punishment of death this chief yet manages to keep his wild people in perfect subjection."

Another reason for the great popularity enjoyed by the Maharaja was that in conquering new territories he did not turn out their former rulers with ignominy but granted them big jagirs and considerable pensions for maintenance. These acts of benevolence were not confined to the Sikhs. To the Hindus and the Muslims he was, if anything, more generous. When, for example in 1809 he conquered Kasur from Nawab Kutub-ud-Din and incorporated it into the Sikh kingdom, he gave away the vast fief of Mamdot to the Nawab, which brought a revenue of 190,000 rupees a year.<sup>1</sup> In the same way when in 1818 he conquered the province of Multan and included it in the Sikh Kingdom, he granted a large jagir in Sharkpur and Naulakha to the Nawab's sons, Sarfaraz Khan, etc., which is still enjoyed by their descendants. In 1834 when Peshawar was again made by him part of the Punjab after conquest, he gave away as jagir to Sardar Sultan Mohammed Khan and other Barakzais the fertile tract of Hasht Nagar that brought in 3 lacs a year. Other examples could be mentioned in support of this aspect of his character.

Touching this noble characteristic of the Maharaja Sir Henry Lawrence writes that 'members of deposed ruling families may be seen in Delhi and Kabul in a state of penury, but in the Punjab there is not to be seen a single ruling family whose territories may have been conquered by Ranjit Singh, and which may have been left unprovided by him. Not only the Sikh ruling houses, but those of other faiths, too, were provided for by him with equal munificence ?

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<sup>1</sup> This jagir continues to be enjoyed by his descendants.

From these facts one is led to the conclusion that Ranjit Singh never thought of personal aggrandisement when effecting his conquests, but was always regardful of others, and not least of his fallen foes. Whenever he conquered a new territory, he distributed quite considerable portions of it among his followers and friends. In 1806 he conquered a large part of the Cis-Sutlej area, of which a considerable part was given away to his allies, on which Sir Lepel Griffin says that he gave away to Raja Bhag Singh of Jind 54 villages (including Ludhiana), yielding an annual revenue of 23,260 rupees: to Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha 38 villages (including Talwandi, Kot Basian and Jagraon), yielding a revenue of 30,040 rupees; to Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala 106 villages with a revenue of 40,505 rupees. In the same way he granted 37 villages to Sardar Gurdit Singh Ladwa bringing a revenue of 47,090 rupees, and to Sardar Wasawa Singh 10 villages assessed at 5,714 rupees.

The conqueror and administrator are two different types with separate characteristics, which are very rarely found in unison in one man. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had both characteristics in an equal degree. It was due mainly to his excellent administration that he never lost any conquered territory. Faqir Aziz-ud-Din once remarked: "From the shoeing of a horse to the robes of the Prime Minister everything was noted by the Maharaja." He was aware of the ability and qualities of every officer in his army, and he always entrusted them duties according to their capabilities. Sir Lepel Griffin says that one reason of the great success of Ranjit Singh was that he possessed the quality of judging truly the worth of a man.

He was always faithful to his word. He never turned from a resolve that he had once made. At the request of

Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra Maharaja Ranjit Singh went to Kangra to protect the Raja against Amar Singh Thapa, the Commander of the Nepalese Army. There also arrived Vakils from Amar Singh and presented to the Maharaja nazars of considerably greater value than Sansar Chand's, but he told them that not even mountains of gold would make him swerve from the promise he had made to Sansar Chand to protect him.<sup>1</sup> In this connection the elder Lawrence (Sir Henry) says, that he had never heard of any ruler, ancient or modern, who was so faithful to his word.

For his great munificence in giving away charity his people called the Maharaja "Paras" or philosopher's stone. Once he was passing through Lahore in state when an old woman came running breathlessly to him, holding a flat cake-pan in her hand. With great persistence she pushed her way through the crowd to where the Maharaja was, but was checked from going further by the guards. She raised a hue and cry when stopped thus, at which the Maharaja reined in his horse and said, "Old mother, speak what you want to say to me, and do it quickly." It is said the old woman went near the Maharaja and smeared the Maharaja's feet with the black of the cake-pan. The guards, at this disrespectful act, wanted to push her away, but the Maharaja stopped them and asked the woman what she meant by that act. The woman said with great fervour of faith : "Sire, people say our Maharaja is 'Paras', and the quality of 'Paras' is to turn iron into gold. I am a poor woman and want to turn my iron pan into gold to be a support in my old age." The Maharaja smiled at the woman's simplicity

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1. *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, by Kanhaiya Lal



and ordered the Keeper of the Royal Treasury to give the woman an equal weight of gold for her pan. This was soon done, and the old woman went home, blessing the Maharaja.

### Internal Administration

On examining old records we find that the Maharaja's system of administration of justice was simple but admirably suited to the needs of the time, which gave the people speedy justice. Important cases were decided through a vote of the Panchayat. In the ordinary towns policing was done by the Kotwal. There were few law-suits in those days, and these were disposed of in the case of Mohammedans in accordance with the Shariat, and in the case of the Hindus by a Panchayat.

Here are some examples of the fair and impartial justice imparted in the Maharaja's time. One story is that Sardar Hukman Singh Chimni was a brave general and a personal friend of the Maharaja. One Said Khan, of Kot Hasan Ali, was put by him to death without proper enquiry on the score of personal enmity. When the Maharaja came to know of the facts of this case, he imposed a fine of one hundred and twenty-five thousand rupees on the Sardar for this injustice, and the money was given to the members of Said Khan's family. And the Chimni Sardar was removed from office for some time.

Not only the Maharaja, but following his example, his Governors and officers too had developed a high sense of justice. Sir Lepel Griffin says in the *Punjab Chiefs* :

It is said that one day a peasant complained to him that some chief had destroyed his crop by turning his horses loose to graze in the field. Sawan Mal asked the man if he could point out the offender in the Dabar. The peasant pointed to Ram Das, the Diwan's eldest son. He admitted the

complaint to be just and Sawan Mal ordered him to be imprisoned. The injured man begged for his pardon, but for several days Ram Das remained in confinement ; and his spirit was so broken by this punishment that he fell ill and died shortly after his release.

When the Maharaja came to know of this act of justice of Sawan Mal, he was highly pleased with him, and granted him a further Jagir and honour. Besides his officers, the Maharaja was always impressing upon his sons the need of doing justice to the people. In the "Chronicle of Maharaja Ranjit Singh"<sup>1</sup> it is recorded: "14th Bhadon, Sambat 1893. His Royal Highness Kharak Singh left for a tour of Multan. His Majesty the Maharaja impressed upon him that on the way his army should not inflict any loss upon the peasantry."

There is another record as follows : "The Royal Army camped for some days in Rohtas, in return for which three thousand rupees of the land revenue were remitted to the cultivators of the place."

He had established hospitals for the use of the public, and they were all maintained by the State. Patients were treated free. These hospitals were manned by such able physicians and surgeons as Hakim Nur Din and Doctor Honighbergher.

The postal system was quite advanced according to the resources of the times. The post was carried from city to city on dromedaries and on horse-back. The officer-in-charge of this department was Dewan Rattan Chand Darhiwala, and he had received jagirs and robes of honour for his able administration of it.

### **The Sikh Rule was the People's Rule without Religious Discrimination**

In the days of the Maharaja, Muslims, Hindus and

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<sup>1</sup> *Roznamcha-i-Maharaja Ranjit Singh.*

others enjoyed equal rights. Even at the present time not even advanced democratic governments and organisations have been able to efface the discrimination between the Hindus and the Muslims as was done by the Maharaja. In making appointments to the Army Commands or Governorships or even the most responsible posts in the ministry he never discriminated between Hindus, Muslims, Christians, etc. Capability for the office was his sole guiding principle. The veracity of this statement is established on reading in the records the names of the Maharaja's Ministers, Generals, Governors and Administrators. Some of the names may be mentioned by way of illustration : Side by side with Sardar Hori Singh Nalwa, Sardar Sham Singh Atariwala, Sardar Amar Singh Majithia, Sardar Dhanna Singh Malwai, Sardar Nidhan Singh Panj-Hatha, etc., we find holding highly responsible posts men like Faqir Aziz-ud-Din, Khalifa Hakim Nur Din, General Illahi Bakhsh, Ghaus Khan and Malik Fateh Khan, who were held in as much honour by the Maharaja as the Sikh Officers. General Dewan Mohkam Chand, Governor Siwan Mal, General Diwan Chand, Raja Dina Nath and Dewan Ayudhya Prashad, the Lord Treasurer, held highly responsible posts. General Ventura, General Allard, Governor Avitabile, Doctor Honighberger and Gardner commanded great esteem in the Maharaja's court.<sup>1</sup>

Lala Khushal Chand writing of the Maharaja's freedom from bias says: "Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the last of the native rulers of the Punjab. It is said he was illiterate, but he exhibited a wisdom, prudence

<sup>1</sup>The salaries of these officers ranged from 2,500 rupees a month to 5,500 rupees. Vide Paymasters Office Records of Sikh Durbar.

and statesmanship above the highly educated administrators of our time. His example demonstrated at a time when India was being trampled under the heels of foreigners, and when foreigners regarded it as a field for luxury and exploitation, and when the honour, chivalry and all what is worth cherishing had been sold to the foreigners, that even in those decadent times the people of the Punjab and of India could manage their own affairs. The reign of peace that obtained in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time has not been seen in this land since."

So we see that Hindus, Sikhs Muslims and Christians all regarded the Sikh rule as their common rule.

### **A Misunderstanding Corrected**

Some people have tried without accurate historical knowledge to give the impression that damage was done to certain Muslim historical buildings in the Maharaja's time. But on investigation this charge is found to be baseless. Not only this, it is proved that thousands were spent every year for the preservation of such buildings.

The buildings of Jehangir and Shah Jehan, which before Ranjit Singh's time were in a delapidated condition, were repaired and cleaned in his time at great expense.<sup>1</sup>

Even a Mohammedan historian like Syed Mohammed Latif says that before Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore the Shalamar Gardens were in a very sad state of neglect. Its *baradaris* and baths were buried under mounds of earth. Its marble door and other precious stones were carried away in plunder. Maharaja Ranjit

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1. *Travels of Moorcroft.*

Singh at great expense repaired and beautified it along with Ali Mardan Khan's canal.<sup>1</sup>

### A Baseless Charge

One or two writers have alleged without enquiry that the *Baradari* now in the Hazuri Bagh used to be on the top of the dome of Jehangir's Mausoleum, and that Maharaja Ranjit Singh got it removed entire from there and put it up in the Hazuri Bagh.

On looking into the history of Jehangir's Mausoleum we come across the following facts, which clear up the whole matter :

(a) The first account which was written after making enquiries on the spot is contained in the *Travels* of the well-known tourist Moorcroft. He visited Jehangir's Mausoleum on May 15, 1820. In his *Travels* he says on this point: "The building was surmounted, it is said, by a dome, but it was taken off by Aurangzeb, that his grandfather's tomb might be exposed to the weather as a mark of his reprobation of the loose notions and licentious practices of Jehangir. Such is the story ; but more probably the building was never completed."

(b) After this Jehangir's Mausoleum was visited by Capt. Alexander Burnes on July 14, 1831. He says the tomb was previously surmounted by a dome. Bahadur Shah removed the top so that the rain and dew of divine mercy should fall on the tomb of his great grandfather Jehangir.<sup>2</sup>

(c) General Cunningham, the famous archæologist, after long research into the matter, concurred with Moor-

1. *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, by Syed Mohammed Latif.

2. *Travels in the Himalayan Province of Hindostan*.

3. *Travels into Bukhara*, by Burnes.

croft's statement in 1838 (See Third Report of the Curator of Ancient Monuments in India for the year 1833-84, Appendix J.P. CXIX.)

(d) Another traveller, named Captain Von Orlich, came to Lahore in January 1843. He writes thus about Jehangir's Mausoleum : "The white marble Sarcophagus with Arabic and Persian inscriptions stands in the centre under a dome which Bahadur Shah caused to be destroyed in order that the rain and dew might fall on the tomb of his ancestor."<sup>1</sup>

(e) In 1867 Maulvi Nur Ahmed Chishti wrote the following about this Mausoleum :

"In the beginning there was a marble cenotaph built over the dome, but Bahadur Shah, in accordance with the fatwa given by a Mulla, demolished the structure and bored a hole in the top of the dome, so that divine blessings should continue to rain over the tomb. Recently, when during heavy rains the lower edifice was in danger, Sardar Lehna Singh stopped the hole of the dome with wooden planks.<sup>2</sup> Further on this same writer says, "During the raids and revolutions of the days of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah, the precious marble of this Mausoleum was plundered by the Durrani."<sup>3</sup>

(f) Messrs. Thornton and J. S. Kipling also support the above view in their book about Lahore.<sup>3</sup>

(g) At a later date Rai Bahadur Kanhaiya Lal, Executive Engineer, published his "*Tarikh-i-Lahore*." His statement about this matter is this: "The tomb proper was roofed. At first the roof was of marble, and on top

1. *Travels in India*, trans. by H.E. Lloyd.

2. *Tahqiqat-i-Chishti*, by Maulvi Nur Ahmed,

3. "*Lahore*" (Government Secretariat Press, Lahore 1878).

of the roof, too there was a marble cenotaph. The roof was covered with huge marble blocks, but it is not known who removed them and when. The upper cenotaph, too, was demolished. Some people say that in the reign of the Emperor Mohammed Shah some Mullah gave the fatwa that a grave that did not receive the rain on it would be deprived of divine blessings. The Emperor at this removed the roof and uncovered the tombstone.<sup>1</sup>

(h) Syed Mohammed Latif published his "*History of Lahore*" in 1892. He says on the basis of "*Amal-i-Salih*" of Mohammed Salih Kambo, "No edifice was ever created over the dome of Jehangir's tomb. There has been a hole on top since very long."

From the authorities cited above—Moorcroft, Burnes, Cunningham, Von Orlich and Thornton—it is proved that the edifice that existed over the dome of Jehangir's tomb was demolished either by Aurangzeb or Bahadur Shah. Maulvi Nur Ahmed Chishti, Thornton, and Kipling write that the precious marble and the lattice-doors of the main building were carried away by Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Durrani.

### His Love of Religion

The Maharaja was in the habit of rising early from his childhood. After bathing he said the morning prayers, and after being equipped with arms he would present himself before the Holy Guru Granth, and with great concentration of mind he would hear the *Kirtan* and recitation of the *Bani*. The chamber above the Shish Mahal, which had been decorated with costly carpets and shawls, was reserved for the Holy Guru

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1. *Tuzikh-i-Lahore*, by Kanhaiya Lal

Granth. After hearing *Kirtan*, the Maharaja would place over his eyes and forehead the 'marvellous Kalghi' of Guru Gobind Singh, which was hung with clusters of rich pearls. After this he would sit down to transact the business of the day. This routine he followed throughout his life. Prinsep writes that Maharaja Ranjit Singh had ardent faith in the Sikh religion. To impress upon the minds of the readers the extent of his devotion to religion we shall cite a few examples of it.

Every ruler issues coins bearing his own name. This is the approved and customary tradition. It will be unique indeed to find a ruler so enamoured of some other being as to waive the right of issuing coins in his own name in favour of the name of that being. It is a supreme proof of his love of religion that the Maharaja issued the "Nanak Shahi" rupee and the "Nanak Shahi" *mohar*. On one side of these coins was Guru Nanak's figure and on the other the year of striking the coin.<sup>2</sup> Not only this, but whatever the Maharaja held most dear, he dedicated to the Gurus. The beautiful Garden, which he laid out in Amritsar, he named *Ram Bagh* after the fourth Guru, Ram Das.

The fort at Amritsar in strength and beauty was one of the first of its kind. Many courtiers wished to name it Ranjit Garh, after the Maharaja's own name, and the court poets had also celebrated the name in their verses so that they might be carved on the Fort Gate.

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<sup>1</sup> This precious relic of Guru Gobind Singh had been purchased by the Maharaja at a cost of 125,000 rupees from the grandsons of Bhai Sant Singh, a Sikh Martyr, and the sons of Bhai Hara Singh who first lived in Patti and had later migrated to Peshawar. About this Kalghie Lady Logan says on page 80 of her book that when her husband Dr. Login took charge of the Royal Treasury, this 'Kulgee plume' of Guru Gobind Singh was in the collection. (From Lady Logan's Recollections).

<sup>2</sup> Specimens of these coins can be seen in the Lahore Museum.



But just when the reading of the Holy Guru Granth was ceremonially over and the naming ceremony of the Fort was to be performed, the Maharaja had such a powerful wave of the love of the Guru that he rose in the huge congregation and announced his decision to name the fort Gobind Garh after the name of Guru Gobind Singh, which name the fort bears to this day.

In 1826 the Nizam sent a very costly canopy to the Maharaja by way of strengthening the bonds of friendship between the two rulers. It was put up on silver poles on the day of the Basant Durbar (Spring Festival Levee) of that year. When the Maharaja came into the Durbar and saw the splendour of the canopy, he felt such a mighty wave of the Guru's love that he at once came away from beneath the canopy, and the courtiers did the same. The first words that the Maharaja was heard to utter at this time were that this canopy was so majestic that it was fit only to cover the head of Guru Ram Das, and should be put up in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. The canopy was immediately then dispatched to Amritsar with its accessories, and is still to be seen in the Toshakhana of the Golden Temple.

General Gordon writes that the Maharaja regarded all his victories as favours bestowed upon him by the Guru and the Khalsa. Whenever he won a victory in the field, he said these words, "This victory is granted to me by the True Guru." He so often used to say, "The Guru's hand of protection is over Ranjit Singh's head."

### **His yearning to see the Guru**

It was an ardent desire of his heart to meet an aged Sikh who might have seen Guru Govind Singh with his own eyes. After long search such an old Sikh, whose age was more than a hundred years, was discovered, and was

brought to the Maharaja. The Maharaja was overjoyed to see this Sikh. The Maharaja ran out towards him in a frenzy of yearning, and many times kissed his eyes, and was uttering the words, "Blessed art thou, O noble Sikh, who wast so fortunate as to cast thy eyes on the Holy Guru's face." A number of times did he smear his own forehead with the dust of the Sikh's feet, and made peregrinations round him out of reverence. He kept this Sikh for a long time with himself, and daily heard from his lips the stories of the Guru. In the end he was sent back with rich gifts.

He had great love for giving Amrit or Sikh baptism to others. For Sikhs his order was that before entering state service in the Army or on the administrative side they must take Amrit. In the British Army, too, Sikhs are recruited according to this tradition set up by the Maharaja.

### **Respect for other Religions.**

His regard for the religious feelings of the Hindus and Muslims was not less than his love for his own religion. When in 1799 the Maharaja took Lahore, it was found that the Sunehri Masjid (golden mosque), which had been built by Nawab Bhikhari Khan in the Kashmiri Bazar, had since the day of the Misals been in the hands of Sikhs. The Mussalmans of Lahore came to him with the request that the mosque be restored to them. This knotty problem the Maharaja solved with great tact by persuading the Sikhs to hand it over to the Mussalmans, and also won the hearts of his Muslim subjects.<sup>1</sup>

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1. *History of Lahore*, by Syed Mohd. Latif.

When in 1818 Multan was annexed to the Sikh kingdom, the Maharaja, to keep up the traditions of a free kitchen at the Tomb of Pir Bahawal Haq and its character of a popular place of pilgrimage, assigned to it a permanent jagir of 3,500 rupees a year.<sup>1</sup>

In 1821 the Tomb of Hazrat Shah Balawal was damaged by the floods of the Ravi, and there was a danger of its being washed away by the waters. To protect it the Maharaja put up a bund at great expense in the Ravi, but when this did not stop the floods, he had the coffin of the saint removed from there and interred it where the tomb of the saint now is. This building cost several thousands, and the expense was incurred purely for this motive that the feelings of his Muslim subjects may be respected.<sup>2</sup>

To preserve Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh and Mauj-i-Darya, these tombs were repaired at the request of the Muslims at great cost, and jagirs were assigned for their maintenance.<sup>3</sup>

In 1834, at the time of the invasion of Peshawar, he sent an order to Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa that he should protect from plunder and arson the great ancient religious library of Hazrat Omar Sahib.

In war time the Maharaja's standing orders to his officers were that the religious places and holy books of the enemy, or their women must not be shown any disrespect, and strict attention be paid to this order. The protection of children was especially enjoined upon the Army. When in 1838 the British and the Sikh Armies jointly invaded Afghanistan, the Maharaja in view of the

1. *The Punjab Chiefs*, by Sir Lepel Griffin.
2. *History of Lahore*, by Syed Mohd. Latif.
3. *History of Lahore*, by Syed Mohd. Latif.

susceptibilities of his Hindu subjects made it a part of the tripartite treaty between himself, the British and Shah Shuja, that the Sandalwood Gates of Somnath that had been carried away in 1024 by Mahmud to Ghazni should be sent back to India. It would be a long story indeed to mention the cases of all Hindu temples that had jagirs and free lands attached to them by the Maharaja. To cut the story short, it may be said that never before had the Punjab got a king so tolerant and so much full of wide nationalistic views as Ranjit Singh. The civil and religious rights of all were safe under him, and the rich and the powerful were not allowed to crush the poor and the weak.

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE MAHARAJA

(BY PROF. GURMUKH NIHAL SINGH, BENARES)

### I

Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled the Punjab for full forty years, during which period he was engaged all the time in the work of conquest and consolidation.

The greatest merit of his rule was its national character. Although he regarded himself merely the agent of the Khalsa, (he used to call himself 'the drum of the Khalsa', after the famous '*Ranjit Nagara*' of Guru Gobind Singh) yet he ruled as a true Indian, without making any distinction between his Muslim, Hindu and Sikh subjects. He appointed Muslims and Hindus to the highest civil and military positions in the state and he selected his officials on the basis of fitness. As a matter of fact the Maharaja had a valuable gift of selecting the right man for each post and in utilising the services of all those who had talent irrespective of their nationality and community.

The Maharaja's policy of treating his Muslim, Hindu and Sikh subjects alike won him the respect and affection of all his people. When he fell ill in 1828, the Moham-medans offered prayers for his recovery in the mosques.

Secondly, he followed the policy of delegation of authority in his administration. His kingdom was divided into districts, at the head of each of which he appointed a governor in whom he reposed full confidence and to whom he delegated adequate authority, reserving to himself the right to hear complaints and of issuing final orders in cases referred to him. The chief checks on the powers of the governors were financial control and the

liability to recall, removal and degradation. In the administration of the Maharaja there was complete centralisation of finance, which was properly organized after 1808 by Bhowani Das.

Thirdly, he left considerable power in the hands of the heads of the nobility in the various parts of his kingdom. But he took care that they should not become too strong and a source of trouble to the state. It was only in the latter part of his reign that he was not able to keep a strict watch, and the result was the accumulation of too much power in the hands of the three Jammu brothers—Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh—which proved so harmful to the state after his death. In this connection mention may be made of his practice of seizing the estates of his officials when they died leaving sufficient for the maintenance of the family. This prevented the creation of a new hereditary wealthy class and and the return of the gains legitimate and illicit, to the state.

Fourthly, the state took its share of the produce of the land, which was roughly one-half of the gross produce. According to Prof. Sinha "the public demand may be said to have varied between two-fifths and one-third of the gross produce."<sup>1</sup> English writers have exaggerated the burden of the land tax on the agricultural population during the rule of the Maharaja, but they have not made sufficient allowances for the system of reliefs and remissions made in times of need and for the help provided by the employment in the Army. "Many a village paid half its revenue from the earnings of these military men."<sup>2</sup>

1. N. K. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh* : p. 134.

2. *Ibid.* p. 138.

The administration of justice was based on custom and caprice of the local officials and chiefs, but was checked by the personal supervision of the Maharaja, who toured extensively and heard appeals and rebuked the governors if there were too many appeals and complaints. Fines were the chief form of punishment. Imprisonment was unknown and capital punishments were rare except in the north-west frontier districts of Peshawar and Hazara. Crime decreased remarkably and "on the testimony of Hugel we can assert that the Punjab was even safer than Hindustan, then under British Sovereignty."<sup>1</sup>

## II

This is a remarkable achievement, especially when it is borne in mind that conditions prior to the Maharaja's rule were abnormally bad, when robbery had become the regular profession of many men. European travellers during Ranjit Singh's regime have paid high compliments to the system of civil government established by the Maharaja. This is what Burnes writes in his *Travels* : "In a territory compactly situated, he had applied himself to those improvements which spring only from great minds, and here we find despotism without its rigours, a despot without cruelty and a system of government far beyond the native institutions of the east."<sup>1</sup> And Lawrence remarks : "It gave hope to all, roused emulation, brought out the energies of the employees and prevented their hanging on as excrescences and nuisances. As a military despotism the government is a mild one and as a federal union, hastily patched up into a monarchy, it is strong and efficient."<sup>2</sup> Prof. Sinha adds : "Life and property were secure. The towns like Lahore and Amritsar had

1. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh* p. 140.

2. Sinha *Ranjit Singh* p. 144 145

certainly increased in wealth ; manufactures and trade were more thriving and the people were not at all over-anxious to migrate to British territories."<sup>1</sup>

And it must be remembered that all this was accomplished without disarming the population as the British government did later. It is true that the power centred in the person of the Maharaja and his army was his greatest asset, yet the resolutions of the Khalsa continued to have force and were respected by the Maharaja himself.

### III

Ranjit Singh, although illiterate was a very well-informed person. He possessed great curiosity and had a wonderful capacity for extracting information from his visitors and officials. He was very fond of conversing with outsiders and learning from them about the manners, customs and institutions of foreign lands. He studied with great assiduity the organisation and training of the European army which made it so efficient in war. And he set to work to create for his state an army on the same lines. It is universally recognised that the greatest constructive achievement of Ranjit Singh was his magnificent Sikh Army-brave, well-trained and disciplined, skilled, smart and efficient-an army of which any state may be justly proud.

The Sikh soldier before Ranjit Singh was a horseman and the strength of the Sikh force lay in its cavalry. But very early in his career the Maharaja realised the value of infantry and he gradually changed the entire organisation of the Khalsa Army. "The cavalry ceased to be the most important arm, and the infantry became the favourite service."<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja employed Euro-

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1. Sinka : *Ranjit Singh*, 145.

2. Lepel Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 133-134.



pean officers, French, Italian and English, to train the Sikh army on the European system.

Enlistment was entirely voluntary and there was no difficulty in obtaining recruits. Army service was very popular. The army was officered by Indians themselves, the European trainers were not given the supreme command and the Sikhs produced capable and famous generals such as Hari Singh Nalwa, Fateh Singh Kalianwala, Nihal Singh Atariwala, the Sindhanwalla brothers, Budh Singh and Attar Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwala. Among the Hindu commanders the most capable were Diwan Muhkam Chand, Ram Dayal and Misr Dewan Chand.

## THE MAHARAJA'S LOVE FOR HORSES

[HARBANS SINGH, I. D. D. (ALLD.)]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's passion for horses had passed into a proverb in the East.<sup>1</sup> He had a large number of horses for personal use, and the sight of his favourite horses would never fail to attract the eyes of the visitors to his Capital. Thus invariably we find the mention of these animals in the accounts of various foreign travellers who visited the Punjab during the time of the Maharaja. The Austrian traveller Baron Charles Hugel who visited the Punjab in 1835 has given us an interesting account: "But what particularly attracted me was the sight of the Maharaja's favourite horses, drawn up between the tents and the troops, twenty-five or thirty in number. The breed in the Punjab is very peculiar and not unlike that of Spain, but with straight noses. The animals are large and their movements are very gentle; they may be trained to execute the most graceful curvetting, and the Sikhs value them according to their proficiency in their movements." As to the appearance of those horses he notes that "these animals present a beautiful appearance, with their small bones, flowing mane and tail, and their proud and fiery action and lofty heads. The bridle, saddle and other ornaments of these creatures are most costly. The first is overlaid with gold or enamel, and at the top of the head, or else on either side, waves a plume of heron's feathers; strings of jewels are hung round the neck under which are the *Sulimans* or Onyx stones. The saddle is also of enamel or gold, covered with precious stones, the pommel being particularly rich. The housings are of Kashmir Shawls, fringed with gold; the crupper and martingale ornamented very high-

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1. *Races in Kashmir and Punjab*, by Baron Ch. Hugel (1835). v. 301

ly and on each side of the favourite hangs the tail of the Tibetan yak, dyed of various hues."<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja used to purchase horses worth about rupees twenty-five thousand every year. One thousand horses were specially reserved for the personal use of the Maharaja. Not a few of them were thorough-bred Arab horses. There were some which belonged to the Persian breed. *Gohar bar*, *Sufaid pari* and *Laili* were his best favourites. There are many anecdotes which show that the Maharaja himself was a great rider of his time.<sup>2</sup>

The Hon'ble Miss Eden has given us a characteristic description of the Maharaja's horses: "The jewelled trappings of the horses were of the most costly description, the jewels being chiefly emeralds of immense size and value and fastened on the front of the saddle. The jewels and ornaments were said to have been worth above £3,00,000. The Maharaja was passionately fond of horses and he would make war on a province to procure the surrender of any which were reputed of peculiarly pure breed. He kept them, highly fed, in large numbers, and was almost in the daily habit of inspecting them; adorning them, on occasions of particular display, with the finest jewels of his Treasury, including the celebrated large diamond, called *Koh-i-Noor* or Mountain of Light."<sup>3</sup>

The Maharaja, as a true soldier, knew the value of a good horse. He was ready to pay any price for a really good steed. The celebrated horse *Laili*, having been the

1. *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab*, by Baron Ch. Hugel (1835), p. 301.

2. *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, by Sita Ram Kohli (1933), Page 301.

3. *Portraits of the Princes and People of India*, by the Hon'ble Miss Eden (1844), P. 14.

cause of several wars, cost the Maharaja no less than sixty thousand rupees and a loss of about 12,000 soldiers. This horse was the finest horse belonging to the Maharaja. It has been described to be of dark grey colour, with black eyes. The history of *Laili* is equally interesting. It was originally the property of Yar Mohammad Khan of Peshawar, and the Maharaja made the delivery of this animal to him one of conditions of peace, but it seems that Yar Mohammed Khan evaded the fulfilment of this condition by sending different horses under the name of *Laili*. On his death, his brother Sultan Mohammed Khan was placed in possession of Peshawar, but on condition that *Laili* would be presented to the Maharaja. This was done after a great deal of hesitation, and that only when General Ventura pronounced Sultan Mohammed a prisoner for his breach of promise.

The Maharaja was very fond of his fine stud and used to take personal interest in his horses. We find such a mention in the manuscript notes of an officer of the Bengal Army who visited the Maharaja in 1809: "I again visited the Rajah Ranjit Singh whom I found in the lower apartment of the Palace. There were two beautiful Punjabi horses, picketted close to him, saddled, bridled and all ready to be mounted. In many other parts of that elegant building were also picketted several other horses."<sup>1</sup>

Such and several other writings of the various travellers, who have left records of their actual observations during their visits to the Maharaja, show that he was not only fond of horses, but also evinced very keen and discriminating judgment in their selection.

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1. *Tour to Lahore : The Asiatic Annual Register*, Vol. XI (1809).

## CHAPTER XII

### MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH AS OTHERS SAW HIM

(GLEANED BY GANDA SINGH)

**Henry T. Prinsep.**—The territorial possession of Ranjit Singh comprise now [1834] the entire fork of the Punjab as bounded by the Indus and Sutlej, the two extreme rivers. He holds, besides Kashmere, the entire hill country to the snowy range and even Ludak beyond the Himalayas, for though many of the Rajahs of this tract still remain in their possessions, they have been reduced to the character of subjects, paying tribute equal to their utmost means; and contributing men to the armies of Lahore whenever called upon. Besides this extensive country, Ranjit Singh has about 45 Talooks entire, or in share with others, on the British side of the Sutlej; and west-ward of the Indus he holds Khyrabad, Akora and Peshawar, Dera Ghazi Khan, which has been farmed to the Nawab of Bahawalpore, and Dera Ismail Khan assigned to Hafiz Ahmed Khan of Munkhera as before related. He also levies tributes from the Balooch chiefs of Tonk and Sagur to the Southward.—*Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maha-Raja Runjeet Singh*, 1834.

**Victor Jacquemont.**—The Punjab and its inhabitants please me much. Perhaps you will say that it is because I see them through a shower of gold; but the unsophisticated Sikhs of this country have a simplicity and open honesty of manner

which a European relishes the more after two year's residence or travelling in India. The Sikhs are a good sort of people but no conjurors.

His [Ranjit Singh's] conversation is like a nightmare. He is almost the first inquisitive Indian I have seen ; and his curiosity balances the apathy of the whole of his nation. He asked a hundred thousand questions to me about India, the British, Europe, Bonaparte, this world in general and the next, hell, paradise, the soul, God, the devil and a myriad of others of the same kind.—*Letters from India. 1834*

**Sir Alexander Burnes** —I never quitted the presence of a native of India with such impressions as I left this man. Without education and without a guide he conducts all the affairs of his kingdom with surprising energy and vigour, and yet he wields his power with a consideration quite unprecedented in an Indian prince.—*Travels into Bukhara, etc., 1834.*

**Hon'ble W. G Osborne.** —He was one of that order of minds which seem destined by nature to win their ways to distinction and achieve greatness. His courage was of that cool and calculating sort, which courted no unnecessary danger and shunned none which his purposes made it expedient to encounter, and he always observed a just proportion between his efforts and his objects.

With an accurate and retentive memory and with great fertility, both invention and resource, he was an excellent man of business.

His success and especially the consolidation of his power are in great measure attributable to the soundness of his views and the practicable nature of his plans. He never exhausted his strength in wild and hazardous enter-

prises, but restraining his ambition within the limits of a reasonable probability, they were not only so well timed and skilfully arranged as generally to ensure success, but failure (in the rare instances when they did fail), never seriously shook his stability or impaired his resources.

He was a devout believer in the doctrines and a punctual observer of the ceremonies, of his religion. The *Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikhs, was constantly read to him and he must have been familiar with the moral precepts inculcated.

He rules with a rod of iron, it is true, but in justice to him it must be stated, that except in actual open warfare he has never been known to take life, though his own has been attempted more than once, and his reign will be found free from any striking acts of cruelty and oppression than those of many more civilized monarchs.

He is very proud of the efficiency and admirable condition of his artillery, and justly so, for no native power has yet possessed so large and well disciplined a corps.—

*The Court and Camp of Runjeet Singh, 1840.*

**Barron Charles Hugel.**—Never perhaps was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality; when we consider the country and the uncivilized people with whom he had to deal, his mild Government must be regarded with feelings of astonishment.— *Travels in Kashmere and the Punjab, 1815.*

**Capt. Leopold Von Orlich.**—With all the magnificence which prevailed at his court, he was himself very simple in his attire, and wore but few ornaments, but he loved to see show and splendour in everything about him. In battle, he was always seen at the head of his troops and foremost

in combat ; he twice crossed the Indus with his cavalry, in the face of the enemy, and gained the victory. In energy of will and endurance he was unequalled by any of his people. The want of education was covered by the splendid mental powers with which nature had endowed him, and prudence and knowledge of mankind enabled him to maintain himself in his high station.

By means of excessive liberality he attached faithful servants and brave warriors to himself.—*Travels in India*, 1845.

**Captain W. Murray.**—It is no uncommon practice of Ranjeet Singh, when he contemplates any serious undertaking to direct two slips of paper to be placed on the *Giranth Sahib* or Sacred Volume of the Sikhs. On one is written his wish and on the other the reverse. A little boy is then brought in and told to bring one of the slips, and whichever it may happen to be, His Highness is as satisfied as if it were a voice from heaven.—*History of the Punjab*, 1846.

**Lt.-Col. Steinbach.**—The treasure [of Maharajah Ranjeet Singh] may be estimated to have amounted at his decease to about eight crores of rupees in cash, or the same number of millions of pounds sterling, with jewels, shawls, horses, elephants, etc., and several millions more, although much has been abstracted from the royal treasury during the constant succession of troubles ; it is doubtful if any Court in Europe possesses such valuable jewels as the Court of Lahore. Some idea of the vast property accumulated by Ranjeet Singh may be formed from the circumstance of no less than thirteen hundred various kinds of bridles, massively ornamented with gold and silver, some of them even with diamonds, being found in the royal treasury.—*The Punjab*, 1846.



**M. Mohan Lall.**—*January 18th, 1832.* By the desire of the Maharajah Ranjit Singh, we paid a visit to His Highness in the afternoon, in a garden near the Durgah of Shah Belaval. The tent in which he held his Darbar was as if it had been the tent of an angel, and not of man ... He governs his kingdom without any minister and counsellor ... The established religion of Lahore is Sikh or Khalsa ... Lahore is governed in an absolute manner. The present king, Ranjit Singh, has passed a law that the noses and ears of thieves shall be cut off.—*Travels in the Punjab, etc.*, 1846.

**Major H. M. Lawrence.**—And further, I may say, that as long as I remained in the service [of Ranjit Singh] I at least found in it less of slavery than, perhaps, in any European army, and that I was less likely to have to act against my conscience than if serving with more civilized powers.—*Adventures of an Officer in the Punjab*, 1846.

**Capt. Murray.**—Ranjeet Singh has been likened to Mehemet Ali and to Napoleon. Mr. Jacquemont terms him "a Bonaparte in miniature". There are some points in which he resembles both; but estimating his character with reference to his circumstances and position, he is perhaps, a more remarkable man than either.

It is difficult to suppress admiration in contemplating the career of such a man, who, with so many disadvantages, succeeded, with so few crimes, in elevating himself from a simple Sardar to be the sovereign of a large kingdom, including Hindus and Mohammadans, as well as Sikhs, the only state in India not substantially under British dominion.

With great natural intelligence and a wonderfully quick apprehension, his memory was excellent and stored with minute, as well as important, circumstances. He

audited all the revenue accounts, and the tenacity of his memory enabled him to follow the most complicated statements.

There was no ferocity in his disposition and he never punished a criminal with death even under circumstances of aggravated offence. Humanity indeed, or rather a tenderdness for life, was a trait in the character of Ranjeet Singh. There is no instance of his having wantonly imbrued his hands in blood.

**Dr. W. L. McGregor.**—His smile is pleasing and his manner of address easy and unembarrassed on all occasions. He never appears at a loss for words to express his ideas, which are quickly formed on any subject. When discoursing, he appears at once to grasp the whole bearings of the subject, and his reasoning powers and discriminating acumen are of the highest order.

In his youth, Runjeet was remarkably active, an excellent horseman, and well skilled in everything connected with military feats. He was ever the foremost in battle and the last in retreat. There is no instance of his being embarrassed or evincing anything like fear, on record.

Should the affairs of the State require his attention, Runjeet is ready at all times during the day and night, and it is not unusual for him to order his Secretary and Prime Minister to carry the designs on which he has been meditating during the night, into execution before day-break.

When we consider the position which Runjeet now holds, as the absolute sovereign of several States, which formerly owned distinct rulers, and all of them reduced into subjection by himself, it is evident that he is no common character, but possessed of powers of mind rarely met with, either in the eastern or western world.

As the Sovereign of the Sikhs who follow the religious tenets of Nanak, modified by Guru Govind Singh, it is politic on his part to support this religion which he does in the most munificent manner.—*The History of the Sikhs*, 1846.

**Capt. G. Carmichael Smyth.**—Having learned the value of discipline, he was seized with the desire to possess a disciplined army, and, as is well known, was not content with idly desiring it, but using all means available for effecting his purpose, at length saw himself at the head of a force such as no eastern power had ever before possessed.—*The Reigning Family of Lahore*, 1847.

**Capt. J. D. Cunningham.**—Ranjit Singh found the Punjab a waning confederacy, a prey to the factions of its chiefs, pressed by the Afghans and the Mahrattas and ready to submit to English supremacy. He consolidated the numerous petty states into a kingdom, he wrested from Kabul the fairest of its provinces, and he gave the potent English no cause for interference. He found the military array of his country a mass of horsemen, brave indeed, but ignorant of war as an art, and he left it mustering fifty thousand disciplined soldiers, fifty thousand well-armed yeomanry and militia, and more than three hundred pieces of cannon for the field. His rule was founded on the feelings of a people, but it involved the joint action of necessary principles of military order and territorial extension.—*History of the Sikhs*, 1849.

**John C. Marshman.**—He possessed the same grand creative genius as Sevajee and Hyder Ali ... It was his extraordinary talent alone which reared the edifice of Sikh greatness, and if he had not been hemmed in by the irresistible power of the Company he would undoubtedly have established a new and magnificent empire in Hindoostan. He succeeded to the leadership of his tribe at the early age of

seventeen, when the Punjab was distracted by the conflicts of its various independent chieftains. He left it a compact and powerful kingdom, strengthened by the annexation of some of the richest provinces of the Dooranian empire.... By indefatigable exertions, by the adoption of every improvement he could hear of, and by incessant and successful expeditions, he succeeded in creating an army 80,000 strong with 300 pieces of cannon, superior in discipline, colour and equipment to any force which had ever been in India under native colours.—*History of India*, 1874.

**Col. G. B. Malleson.**—But eight summers had formed the character of Ranjit Singh. A true follower of Guru Gobind Singh, he hated the Afghan invaders with an intensity inspired by the conviction, that they were the determined enemies of the freedom and the toleration which were the watchward of his tribe ... Meanwhile Ranjit Singh had applied himself zealously to the task of consolidating his dominions, of giving unity to diverse and scattered elements, of welding the increasing Sikh nation into a well-ordered commonwealth.

Strong of body, active, intelligent, unfettered by the bonds of caste-prejudice, full of courage and gifted with a wonderful stamina, accustomed to live on flesh or dispense with it, the Sikh has the making of the finest soldier in the world.—*Decisive Battle of India*, 1888.

**Syed Muhammad Latif.**—He entertained great respect for learning and learned men. His Secretaries were in perpetual attendance on him, and he had the papers read out to him in Persian, Punjabi or Hindi, and he saw that his orders were drawn up in due form and that the drafts met his views.

His appearance was prepossessing, his manner and address were delightful, and his features were full of animation and expression. His remaining eye was large,

quick and searching and its fire and brilliancy displayed at once the great acuteness and energy of mind of its owner.

He possessed lively imagination and his habits were genial and quite unreserved. He was not a bigot, but he performed his religious observances regularly, heard the Granth every day at the appointed time, and munificently rewarded the Gurus, Bhais and Bawas who helped him in the performance of religious ceremonies.

In his youth he was remarkably active and an excellent horseman and sportsman, well skilled in military feats.

Ranjit Singh remoulded the political condition of the Sikhs and consolidated numerous dismembered petty states into a kingdom.—*History of the Punjab*, 1891.

**Capt. R. T. Crowther.**—One master-hand, however, was destined to confine the several confederacies into one power in the person of Ranjit Singh. .... He had united by the force of personal character, the military ardour of a sect with their religious enthusiasm, and formed an Empire.—*Memorandum on the Sikhs*, 1894.

**Sir C. Gough and A. Innes.**—

Ranjit Singh possessed precisely the necessary qualities. His prowess in battle was beyond question ; the vigour and shrewdness of his judgment were conspicuous ; his promptitude of action was obvious. And he struck a note to which the heart of the Sikhs vibrated, by proclaiming himself always as the servant of Guru Govind Singh and acting always in the name of Gobind and to the glory of the Khalsa.

Ranjit Singh possessed, in a very high degree, one particular kingly quality not usually conspicuous in oriental monarchs : he always knew exactly how far he could go, however large and far-reaching his ultimate designs might be, his immediate measures were always practicable

The progress of his arms was steady and stubborn ; but each step was a part of his large design, and he made each step secure before he took the next, never challenging an enemy till he felt that the chances of a contest would be in his favour.—*The Sikhs and Sikh Wars, 1899.*

**Alex Gardner.**—

The Maharaja was indeed one of those master-minds which only require opportunity to change the face of the globe. Ranjit Singh made a great and powerful nation from the disunited confederacies of the Sikhs and would have carried his conquests to Delhi or even farther, had it not been for the stimulous rise and consolidation of the British Empire in India. *Soldier and Traveller—Memoirs of Alex Gardner 1898.*

**Captain A. H. Bingley.**—Ranjit was a man of strong will and immense energy ... of great acuteness in acquiring knowledge that would be of practical use to him. He soon united all the separate confederacies of Sikhs under his own control, and thus acquired a general authority over all the Sikhs of the Punjab.

During the Maharaja's reign, enlistment in regular army, or Khalsa Fauj, was entirely voluntary, but there was never any difficulty in obtaining recruits, the infantry, especially, being composed of the handsomest and strongest youngmen. His battalions were a formidable body of troops, well disciplined and steady. Their endurance was remarkable and it was not unusual for whole regiments to make 30-miles marches often for days at a time:—

*The Sikhs, 1918.*

**General John Gordon**—Though a man of immense ambition, he was gifted with a far-sightedness that few Indian rulers have possessed.

Ranjit Singh was a unique personality among the rude

Jats of these times. Deficient in physical characteristics that win respect from barbarians, yet by his personal bravery, ability, and address he drew all around him to his wishes. ... As a soldier, though he sacrificed his men with prodigality to win the day, yet he was carefully economical of their lives. They were devotedly attached to him, all feeling under his command the exhilarating effects of confident success. Generous to the vanquished, it never being his policy to reduce anyone to desperation.

... ..

He managed better than others more learned to transact the current duties of his State by means of his retentive memory, quickness of mind, and keen observation. The evolution of a monarchy was irresistible under his masterful action.

He was at home in the saddle in camp among his soldiers, taking his meals in their presence.

... ..

Possessing great powers of endurance, he was given to long journeys on horseback, surprise visits to distant parts of his dominions enabling him to check his Governors in their reports as to revenue and other matters.

His Court was brilliant with oriental pageantry, but personally he was free from pomp and show, and so scrupulously simple in his dress among his gorgeously clad Sardars as to be distinguished among the distinguished.

... ..

He was a great man of action and a good ruler for his time, his Government ... being then the only one suited to control the diverse and turbulent elements in the Punjab. Under his strong hand such order and security reigned there as had never been known before. —

*The Sikhs*, 1904,

## CONCLUSION

(BY SIB JOGENDRA SINGH)

It was not without reason that Maharaja Ranjit Singh gained the title of the "Lion of the Punjab". He was irresistible in attack. He was in his teens when his father Sardar Maha Singh passed away, leaving behind him a small band of soldiers and chiefship of a small territory. Boy Ranjit Singh was called upon not only to retain the position which his father had won, but at this tender age to prepare himself for his future greatness, under circumstances which permitted no slackness of effort. He was greatly helped by his mother. It is remarkable that in that period of our history, Sikh ladies led armies in the battlefield and played a conspicuous part in administering their estates.

It seemed as if fates were waiting to dower him with power. He began with small expeditions and was able to swoop down on Lahore, and became master of the capital of the Punjab. The province was under the sway of 12 Misals of the Khalsa, each under its own leader, more or less chosen by its followers. It was given to young Ranjit Singh to unify the Misals by persuasion, and when persuasion failed, by coercion, to exert the collective strength of the Khalsa. It was this union of the people that enabled him to carry his arms to Jamrud and Khyber on one side and boundaries of Tibet and Sind on the other.

It also enabled Maharaja Ranjit Singh to consolidate his conquests by establishing good government, which the Misals could not envisage. Communal and minority



claims were never raised against his Government. All communities had their share in the administration, and were contented. They enjoyed the fruits of their labour in peace. Justice was meted out in a simple and effective manner. The village Panchayats decided most of the disputes and personal law of various communities and tribes prevailed.

The land tax was the main source of revenue. From all sources the Maharaja received about 3½ crores, and almost the whole amount, in one way or another, found its way to those who contributed it in taxes. The army consisting of about 1½ lac soldiers absorbed half the revenue. Above all, he believed in the principle of "wand chhakna", sharing what he had with others, and he showered gifts on rich and poor alike.

The present day land revenue system ignores that it is the people who pay the revenue. It is impossible to enforce the same standard in areas which are heavily populated and where holdings are as small as 2 acres as in areas where a unit of holdings is about 25 acres.

It can be asserted that economic condition of the mass of people has not substantially improved during the last hundred years. No proof is needed in support of this assertion. The mud walls of the village and lack of even clothes and shoes reveal that it could at no time be worse. Indeed it is imaginable that people were more contented and happy when the calls on their purse were few, than now when the purse is empty and the calls are many.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was high-minded, humble, generous and forgiving. He considered himself as a servant of the Panth and was known as *Singh Sahib*, a title which he prized more than that of *Maharaja*. He had not much literary equipment, but his mind was well

informed, and his intellect flashed like a sunbeam on most difficult problems of administration and strategy which confronted him.

It was given to him to consolidate the power of the Khalsa. It was his to prove that in unity lies strength. It was his to point the path of glory and prepare the Khalsa for its predestined mission to stand sentinel at the gate of India, as the guardian of the liberties of the people of the Punjab, nay the whole of India.

It is tragic that no male member of our beloved sovereign survives. Maharaja Duleep Singh died in exile and his two sons are also gone. His daughter Bamba Duleep Singh has the indomitable courage of her grandfather and is passing her days far from the land of her forefathers. She has not the means to maintain the dignity of her position in her motherland. Her younger sisters lead a quiet life in England and with them will pass the line of the "Lion of the Punjab".

The Lion of the Punjab, however, symbolised the power of the Khalsa. The great Maharaja is gone but the Khalsa lives. When the last Guru's four sons gave their lives for the faith of their father to illuminate the path of sacrifice, the Guru exclaimed, "What matters if my four sons are gone. May these thousands live for the glory of the Khalsa"; so we might say to-day, if the Khalsa was united and the spirit of sacrifice animated every individual Sikh.

Sri Krishna in his Bhagwat Gita preached war against tyranny. He laid it down that it was the duty of the warrior classes to uphold truth and defend the defenceless. Guru Govind Singh Sahib who loved Muslims as much as the Hindus, raised the flag of independence to create a body of men, consecrating their

lives to the service of their motherland and lifting it out of subjection. He held it was bad to be subject, both for the ruler and the ruled. It was he who showed the way to freedom and exploded the myth of non-violence, which Budha preached and which robbed India of its power to defend its freedom. The path of *Ahinsa* is the path of liberation, but it is a path which few can follow. What is given to the Khalsa is to live without fear and without hate, and to overcome fear and hate with force, if they manifest themselves in violence.

In celebrating the centenary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, let us resolve to work for the consolidation of our strength. To-day again the Khalsa is called upon to unite, to stand firm under the banner of the Gurus, helping others, without losing their own identity. This is what the life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has to teach us. We must determine to make a greater freedom and larger happiness more universally possible.

The Maharaja was the first Sikh ruler who was gifted with the power of leading the Khalsas. A befitting tribute to his memory will be to close our ranks with a firm resolve to make the name of the Khalsa resplendent in new times which are likely to call on all our resources. The spirit of Sikhism is our life-breath and realisation of brotherhood is our strength.

## GENEOLOGICAL TABLE



## APPENDIX II

### MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S FAMILY

(BY GANDA SINGH)

#### **Maharaja Kharak Singh and Nau-Nihal Singh.**

On the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his eldest son Kharak Singh came to the throne, with Raja Dhian Singh Dogra as his Wazir.

In spite of all his professions of loyalty, Dhian Singh secretly conspired for the subversion of the Punjab Empire by establishing his brothers' control over the hill-territories, and grabbing the crown of Ranjit Singh for his son Hira Singh. It was with this scheme in view that so many murders were brought about directly or indirectly by the Dogra brothers Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh.<sup>1</sup>

False rumours were set afloat that 'Kurruk Singh, with Cheyt Singh [a friend and adviser of Kharak Singh] and his other admirers, had leagued with the British, and was ready to acknowledge their power, to place himself under their protection, to pay six annas in every rupee of revenue for the expenses incurred by this act, and that all the Seik troops should then be disbanded and the Sardars done away with,' Gulab Singh conveyed all this through different agencies to Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh, the son of Kharak Singh, at Peshawar, 'and produced forged letters bearing the signatures of Kurruk Singh and Cheyt Singh in proof of their charge.' This exasperated the youthful Prince. On his arrival at Lahore he

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1. Pearce, *Col. Alexander Gardner*, p. 213.

2. Smyth, *Resigning Family of Lahore*, p. 28.

was easily entrapped by Dhian Singh to agree to the murder of Sardar Chet Singh and to take from his father the rein of government into his own hands, to "secure the country from the power of the Feringhees." But Nau-Nihal Singh soon appears to have seen through the game—though he could not completely get out of the Dogra machinations—and took some measures to curb the power of the Dogras. But it was too late. In the meantime his father Kharak Singh had been poisoned by slow doses of white lead and corrosive sublimate and he died on 5 November, 1840. On the following morning when the young Prince (the new Maharaja) Nau-Nihal Singh was returning from the crematory—where his father's body was still burning—the beams, stones and tiles of the archway, through which he was passing, fell from above, as prearranged by Dhian Singh, and he was struck to the ground. Slightly wounded though he was, he was hurriedly removed to his apartments in the fort in a *palki* which, as it would seem, was kept ready for the purpose, and the gates were all closed. Nobody was allowed to see him. "In vain did the mother of Nau-Nihal Singh, in a paroxysm of rage and anxiety come and beat the fort gates with her own hands ;" says Smyth, "admittance into the fort there was none, still less into the Prince's apartment. None of the female inmates, not even his wives, were suffered to see him." In the fort the young Nau-Nihal Singh was mercilessly done to death, and thus the father and the son were removed from the scene in the short period of two days,

#### **Maharaja Sher Singh**

Kanwar Sher Singh, the second son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, had in the meantime been sent for from Mukerian. But on his arrival at Lahore, he found Mai Chand Kaur, widow of Maharaja Kharak Singh and



Maharaja Sher Singh  
(1806—43)





mother of Nau-Nihal Singh, set up as a claimant to the throne by Gulab Singh, the brother of Dhian Singh. Sher Singh had, therefore, to go back. He came to Lahore again in January 1842 when a favourable opportunity offered itself, and became the Maharaja. But he could not for long continue with amity with the intriguing Minister Dhian Singh. The Maharaja was concerting measures to get rid of him, but the tables were turned on himself and Sher Singh fell a victim to a shot from a double-barrelled gun of Sardar Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia on 15 September, 1843. Dhian Singh also met the same fate the same day.

### **Maharaja Duleep Singh**

Prince Duleep Singh, the six-year old son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was now proclaimed the Maharaja, with Hira Singh son of Dhian Singh as his Wazir. Maharani Jind Kaur (popularly known as *Mai Jindan*), the mother of the Maharaja, became his regent. At this time Kanwars Kashmira Singh and Peshaura Singh, brothers of the new Maharaja, raised an insurrection against him, but it ended in failure.

The raw youth Hira Singh was under the dominating influence of his *tantric* preceptor Pundit Jallah, whose overbearing attitude towards the Sikh Sardars soon rendered him obnoxious. The arrogance of Jallha knew no bounds, and he often used expressions of disrespect even towards the Queen-mother and treated her brother with great contempt. All this was very distasteful to the Khalsa Army. Hira Singh and Jallha perceived that their rule was at an end. On 21 December, 1844, they secretly endeavoured to fly away from the capital with whatever treasure they could carry, but they were overtaken by the army and slain before they could reach Jammu

Jawahir Singh, the brother of the Maharani, now became Prime Minister, with his friend Lal Singh Brahmin as his adviser. The army had by this time become all powerful and their *Panches* guided the destinies of the Empire. Jawahar Singh was alleged to have been responsible for the murder of Prince Peshaura Singh at Attock, and he was condemned to death on 21 September 1845.

There were now three candidates for the Prime Ministership—Gulab Singh, Tej Singh and Lal Singh. The decision was made by drawing a lot. It fell to Lal Singh who became the Prime Minister, with Tej Singh, a Poorbia soldier of fortune, as the Commander-in-Chief of the army.

It is not proposed to enter here into the details of the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-46 and 1848-49. It is enough to say that the Empire fell before the premeditated designs and superior diplomacy of the agents of the East India Company conducted by that well-known annexationist Lord Dalhousie. Maharani Jind Kaur had been exiled to Fort Chunar from where she had escaped in disguise to Nepal. After the annexation of the Punjab, the young Maharaja Duleep Singh was removed in 1850 to Fatehgarh (U. P.), where he was converted to Christianity on 8 March, 1853. In 1854 he went to England where he spent practically the whole of his remaining life. He came to India twice; once in 1861 to take his mother to England and a second time in 1863 to cremate her dead body on the Indian soil.

In the eighties of the last century his differences with the British Government increased. But as his debtors, as he called the Government, were also his judges, no reconciliation could be effected. In disgust he disposed of his property in England and left for India. But he was detained at Aden in April 1886, and was ordered to go



Maharaja Duleep Singh  
(1837-1893)

*Presented by  
S. Ragbir Singh Sandhawalia..*



back. It was during his short stay at Aden that Maharaja Duleep Singh received the *Pahul* and was reconverted to Sikhism.<sup>1</sup> On his return to Europe he spent his last days mostly on the continent and died in Paris in 1893. He left behind him two sons and three daughters, of whom only Princesses Bamba and Sophia survive.

Besides Kharak Singh, Sher Singh and Duleep Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had also the following sons :-

1. Isher Singh, born of Maharani Mahtab Kaur in 1804. He died when only a child of a year and a half.
2. Tara Singh, a twin-brother of Maharaja Sher Singh, born of Maharani Mehtab Kaur. He died at Dasuya (Hoshiarpur) in 1859.
3. Kashmira Singh, born of Rani Daya Kaur in 1819. He was killed in 1843 with Baba Bir Singh of Naurangabad and Sardar Atar Singh Sandhanwalia during the siege laid by the army sent by Raja Hira Singh.
4. Peshaura Singh was a brother of Kashmira Singh, born of Rani Daya Kaur. He was murdered by Fateh Khan Tiwana, by the orders, it is alleged, of Sardar Jawahir Singh Wazir in 1844.
5. Multana Singh born of Rani Ratan Kaur in 1819. He died in 1846.

## ii

### THE MAHARAJA'S WIVES

1. Maharani Mahtab Kaur, daughter of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh Kanhaiya and Mai Sada Kaur. She was the mother of three sons, Ishar Singh,

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1. That he was reconverted to Sikhism is evident from his letter in one of which he says, "I was arrested at Aden without a warrant, one having been issued since I re-embraced Sikhism while staying at Aden." This fact is also referred to in the telegrams of the British Agent at Aden to the Government of India. See also the letters of the Maharaja given in Appendix III.

**Maharaja Sher Singh and Kanwar Tara Singh.**

2. **Rani Raj Kaur** (also called **Datar Kaur**, and popularly known as **Mai Nakain**) sister of **Sardar Gyan Singh** of **Satghara**. She was the mother of **Maharaja Kharak Singh**.
3. **Rani Rup Kaur** daughter of **Sardar Jai Singh Lamba** of **Kot Said Mahmud** near **Amritsar**.
4. **Rani Lachhmi** daughter of **Sardar Desa Singh Vad-pagga Sandhu** of **Jogki Khan** in **Gujranwala** district.
5. **Rani Mehtab Devi**, (also called **Rani Katauchan** and popularly known as **Gadan**), the daughter of **Raja Sansar Chand Katauch** of **Kangra**.
6. **Rani Raj Banso**, a sister of **Mehtab Devi** and daughter of **Raja Sansar Chand**.
7. **Rani Raj Devi** (also called **Bannat** ?), daughter of **Mian Padam Singh**.
8. **Rani Har Devi**, daughter of **Chaudhri Ram Saleria Rajput** of **Atalgarh (Gurdaspur)**.
9. **Rani Davno**, daughter of **Sand Bhari, Bhari Chib**, of **Dava-Vatala (Jammu)**.
10. **Rani Moran**, a **Muhammadan** dancing girl of **Lahore**. She was married to the **Maharaja** in **1802**. She accompanied him on his visit to **Hardwar**.
11. **Rani Gul Begam** of **Amritsar**, married in **1833**. She died in **1863**.
12. **Rani Ram Devi**, daughter of **Sardar Gurmukh Singh** of **Gujranwala**.
13. **Rani Devi**, daughter of **Wazir Nakuda** of **Jaswan (Hoshiarpur)**.



Maharani Jind Kaur  
(1816-63)





14. Rani Ratan Kaur, widow of Sardar Sahib Singh of Gujrat. She gave birth to Kanwar Multana Singh.
15. Rani Daya Kaur, widow of Sardar Sahib Singh of Gujrat and mother of Kanwars Kashmira Singh and Peshaura Singh.
16. Rani Chand Kaur, daughter of Sardar Jai Singh of Chain Pur (Amritsar).
17. Rani Mahtab Kaur, daughter of Chaudhri Sujan Singh of Malla (Gurdaspur).
18. Rani Saman Kaur daughter of Sardar Suba Singh Malwai.
19. Rani Gulab Kaur, daughter of a Zamindar of Jagdeo (Amritsar).
20. Maharani Jind Kaur (Popularly known as Rani or *Mai* (Jindan) daughter of Sardar Manna Singh Aulakh. She was the mother of Maharaja Duleep Singh.

### APPENDIX III

#### LETTERS OF MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH

##### I

ELVEDEN HALL,  
HETFORD,  
SUFFOLK.

My dear Sirdar Sant Singh,

I am very pleased to receive your letter. I thank you very much for offering me your kind services but there is nothing that I require. As the British Government refuse to do me justice, therefore, I shall leave England on the 16th of December next and take up my residence quietly at Delhi for I am poor now.

I am very pleased to find in you a relative of my dear late mother.

As you are aware by this time that I have rejoined the faith of my ancestors,<sup>1</sup> I salute you with Wah Gooroo jee dee Futteh and remain,

Your affectionate relative,  
DULEEP SINGH

Oct. 7th 1885.

1. The formal initiation ceremony re-converting the Maharaja into a Sikh took place at Aden, where he was detained on his way to India in April, 1886. His faith in christianity had been shaken long before. But according to *Lady Logan's Recollection*, on 23rd August, 1884, some eighteen months before the day of the above letter, he announced his intention to leave for india "as he could not otherwise undergo all the rites of re-initiation as a Sikh."

Facsimile of Maharaja Duleep Singh's Letter



Elveden Hall  
Thetford  
Suffolk

My dear Sardar Sant Singh

I am very pleased to receive your letter. I thank you very much for offering <sup>me</sup> your kind services but there is nothing that I require. As the British Government refuse to do any further ~~and~~ transfer I shall leave England on the 16 of December next and take up my residence quietly at Delhi for I am poor now.

I am very pleased to find in you

a relative of my dear late mother

As you are <sup>aware</sup> by this time that I have expressed the wish of my ancestors I salute you with Wah! Joon  
jee de Fitch and run ams

your Affectionate relative

Duleep Singh

Oct 7 - 1885



Facsimile of Maharaja Duleep Singh's Letter

CARLTON CLUB.

PALL MALL S.W.

My dear Sirdar ji

Wah! Goroosie dee Fattets.

I am very pleased to receive your letter but I advise you not to come near me without permission of Government as you might get into trouble with the authorities.

I intend to leave England with my family on the 31 of this month but it is possible a little longer delay may occur.

I need not tell you how pleased I shall be if the Government permits you to be present at my wedding. Could I think I trust my Cousin Thakur Singh Sirdar Sahib will administer to me.

I am now waiting to return to India although Government

are afraid to let me visit  
in the North western Province  
and desire me to ~~remain~~ live  
at Ootakamund but I put  
my facts entirely in ~~the~~ Sutyam  
who now that I turn to him for  
protection I know will not  
forsake me

Your sincere friend & well wisher

Dalip Singh  
Bhaknigah

March 9. 1886.

## II

CARLTON CLUB.  
PAUL MALL, S. W.

My dear Sirdar Jee,

Wah Gooroo jee dee Futteh.

I am very pleased to receive your letter, but I advise you not to come near me without permission of Government as you might get into trouble with the authorities.

I intend to leave England with my family on the 31st of this month, but it is possible a little longer delay may occur.

I need not tell you how pleased I shall be (if the Government permits) for you to be present at my receiving "Powhl" which I trust my cousin Thaker Singh Sindanwalia will administer to me.

I am now longing to return to India although Government are afraid to let me reside in the North Western Provinces and desire me to live at Ootakamund but I put my faith entirely in Sutgooroo who now that I turn to him for forgiveness I know will not forsake me.

Your sincere friend and welwisher  
DULEEP SINGH  
MAHARAJAH

March 9th, 1886.

My beloved Countrymen,

It was not my intention ever to return to reside in India, but Sutgooroo, who governs all destiny, and is more powerful than I, his erring creature, has caused circumstances to be so brought about that, against my will, I am compelled to quit England, in order to occupy a humble sphere in India. I submit to His Will; being persuaded that whatever is for the best will happen.

I now, therefore, beg forgiveness of you, Khalsa Jee, or the Pure, for having forsaken the faith of my ancestors for a foreign religion; but I was very young when I embraced Christianity.

It is my fond desire on reaching Bombay to take the *Pahul* again, and I sincerely hope for your prayers to the Sutgooroo on that solemn occasion.

I am compelled to write this to you because I am not permitted to visit you in the Punjab, as I had much hoped to do.

Truly a noble reward for my unwavering loyalty to the Empress of India! But Sutgooroo's will be done.

With Wah Gooroo jee ki Futteh,

I remain,

My beloved Countrymen,

Your own flesh and blood,

[London,  
25 March, 1786.]

DULEEP SINGH

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1. The *Tribune*, Lahore, Saturday, April 17, 1886, p. 6—7, Cols : 3, 1.



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