

LIFE AND TIMES OF RANJIT SINGH

A Saga of Benevolent Despotism

BY

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BIKRAMA JIT HASRAT

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FOREWORD

There are three watersheds in the broad sweep of South Asian history : the coming of the Aryans, the Muslim invasion and the advent of the British. Two of these were crucial for the emergence and development of the Sikh faith and community, and largely account for their unique characteristics, vitality and survival up to present times.

The Sikh faith, founded by Guru Nanak (1496—1538), grew out of Hinduism. It was a reaction against both the presence of Islam in northern India and the formalism of Hinduism which seemed unable to cope with treacherous times when lawlessness and insecurity were rife.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the distinctive doctrine and characteristics of Sikhism had become embodied in a community whose unhappy relations with the Muslims had generated a militarist strain. Guru Gobind gave the name of Singh ("lion" or "champion") to his followers to signify that henceforth all should be soldiers. This was appropriate, for by the end of the eighteenth century the Mughal empire was disintegrating and its successors, including the Marathas and the British, vied with each other for power.

It was at this crucial nexus of time that Ranjit Singh was born, in 1780, in due course emerging as the leader of the Sikhs. That the religious and military vitality of the Sikhs survived the fragmentation of the Mughal empire is in no small measure due to this dynamic person. Quick to learn from others (especially from the British, whose disciplined infantry he admired) Ranjit Singh embarked on a policy of expansion, absorbing the principalities of his fellow Sikhs and Muslim enemies : the Punjab, Kashmir and Multan fell and the Afghans of the Peshawar Valley and trans-Indus plains acknowledged his rule. Statesman and soldier, by 1823 he ruled over a formidable empire which had been created by the best-armed military machine in Indian history.

But Ranjit Singh never achieved his aim of further enlarging his territory by conquering the Cis-Sutlej states. As early as 1808 the British prevented him from doing so. The British presence had been confirmed by the middle of 18th century ; they were to stay and thenceforth successfully proved themselves the most powerful of the successor states to the Mughal Empire. By 1818 they had achieved the reintegration of the subcontinent. Ranjit Singh instinctively realised the danger posed by the British ; however, there was no showdown in his day. He chose

restraint rather than confrontation and the outcome of the Anglo-Sikh wars after his death is a commentary on the wisdom of that decision.

Ranjit Singh was, in a sense, the victim of lost opportunities over which he had no control. It is doubtful if even he, with all the military skills at his disposal, could have withstood the increasing strength of Britain, with her massive resources of men, money and technology. There is room for toying with the idea that this great leader was born too late in the history of India to realise his full potential. Who knows what that history would have been if fate had presented him with an earlier opportunity to carve out an empire which conceivably might have delayed the British advance.

Ranjit Singh provocatively retains his charisma for the historian. In this new biography, Professor Bikrama Jit Hasrat, a well known authority on Sikh history, critically reappraises his achievements with a fresh eye, reminding us that genius has many facets. Professor Hasrat's work also takes note of the diplomacy and politics of the great Maharaja, as also the social, economic and religious conditions of the Punjab under Sikh rule.

*24 March, 1976
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P R E F A C E

The SUGGESTION for the compilation of a new biography of the great Maharaja emanated from the grand old man of Divinity, the late Dr. C. C. Davies of Oxford many years ago when the present writer was engaged in the examination of British records and private papers on Sikh history in England. Since then his multifarious professional engagements in India and abroad allowed him scant leisure to attend to this fascinating project, but when late in 1970 both the *Anglo-Sikh Relations* and the *Punjab Papers* had been published and research exercises on the *History of Nepal* were over, the work was ultimately undertaken. Materials already acquired in microfilm and photo-copies from the India Office, the British Museum, the Scottish Records Office Edinburgh, and the Public Records Offices in London, New Delhi and Lahore began to be re-examined. Also the local histories of Sohal Lal, Bute Shah, Kanahaya Lal, Amar Nath, Mufti, Khushwaqt Rai, Kirpa Ram, Ganesh Das and others began to be reassessed. In particular, the regional histories of Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar and the trans-Indus region along with the local *Akhhārāt* and *Roznāmchās* came under a closer scrutiny. Corroborative evidence was sought from the contemporary British and European chronicles of the time—those of Murray, Prinsep, Malcolm, Wade, Fane, Hugel, Vigne, Jacquemont, Honigberger, Smyth, Mohan Lal, Shahamat Ali and others. Further visits to England became necessary for a re-assessment of the private papers of Wellesley, Bentinck, Auckland, Ellenborough and others.

It soon became evident that of all the Oriental potentates who enshrine Indian historical annals, none could parallel Ranjit Singh in having aroused a much greater interest of the contemporary local and foreign chroniclers to record the annals of his times. A vast mass of historical, biographical and legendary literature recording the Maharaja's personality and character, his campaigns and conquests, and his polity and administration had grown up during his lifetime, which could also be utilised advantageously in reconstructing the later political history of the Sikhs. The dense jungle of public correspondence, the matter-of-fact narratives of local Persian histories, the perfunctory periodical accounts of the *Akhhārāt* and the *Roznāmchās*, the strictly sober or highly prejudiced narratives of the contemporary European writers, provide us a mixed fare. The British records, massive both in volume and content, notwithstanding their prejudicial tenor, provide us extensive information. Persian chronicles of the time are rather matter-of-fact narratives of Ranjit Singh's reign, though the *Akhhārāt* and the *Roznāmchās* furnish us a fleeting glimpse of what was happening in the Kingdom and its far-flung *subahs*. Contemporary European writers' narratives vary from highly sober to highly prejudiced :

epitomes of fact or fiction, truth or hearsay, the latter replete with unheard of scandals and current bazar gossip. It, however, seems that both these worthy and frivolous writers were fascinated by the Maharaja's personality, his meteoric rise to political power, the majesty and brilliance of his Court, and the energy and acumen of a master-mind, who though utterly unlettered, had carved out a mighty kingdom and set into motion the wheels of an unusual administrative system, sustained by a colossal military machine of which he was the sole master. George Forster who in 1783 foresaw the rise of such a master-mind out of the shambles of the Sikh Misals characteristically observed : "We may see some ambitious Chief, led on by his genius and success, absorbing the power of his ancestors, display, from the ruins of their commonwealth, the standard of monarchy."

This divergent mass of source-material on Ranjit Singh is singularly hazy and contradictory and not too often repetitive ; at any rate, the clear image of the great Maharaja does not emerge out of it. Its dispassionate analysis, however, it was hoped, would clear some of the mist which still hangs over the man and his times. Ranjit Singh possessed almost all the common vices of an Oriental despot : these could perhaps be counter-balanced by his greater accomplishments—his orderly precision in public and private life, his enormous military prowess, his diplomatic behaviour, his war and peace aims, and above all, his inherent sense of expedient moderation, efficiently ruthless though tempered with a highly sensitive humane nature. An attempt has been made in this work to bring out a reasonably correct image of Ranjit Singh and his times. How far the present writer has succeeded in this endeavour, it is not for him to judge. Griffin has aptly summed up Ranjit Singh's character : "He was a born ruler, with the natural genius of command. Men obeyed him by instinct and because they had no power to disobey. The control which he exercised, even in the closing years of his life, over the whole Sikh people, nobles, priests and people, was the measure of his success."

One rather baneful aspect of our present day regional historical research is too often to make mountains of molehills. Work on smaller horizons beclouds the larger historical perspectives tending towards a restricted parochial approach, more so, because our medieval Indian historiographers living mostly on the breath of Court patronage, were generally oblivious of the socio-economic and religious currents and cross-currents of the time, and for obvious reasons they eschewed inconvenient or unpalatable subjects and confined themselves to bare narration of events. Present day historical research on the Punjab suffers from numerous maladies, particularly of a *laudator temporis acti* nature, and of chewing the cud all over again.

Avoidance of such pitfalls, therefore, becomes essential for a proper re-evaluation of the basic source-materials of regional history. Normal standards of a biographical narrative cannot be strictly adhered to, though a chronological

pattern of events could be maintained. Thus in the present work the opening chapters furnish an account of the rise of Ranjit Singh to political power till the treaty of Amritsar (*Chapters 2-4*). Sikh conquest of Multan and Kashmir with vagaries of administrative system in both the *subahs* are then discussed (*Chapter 5*). Sikh-Afghan relations and the conquest of Peshawar and the trans-Indus region and system of administration set up are thereafter detailed (*Chapter 6*). How Ranjit Singh's designs on Sind were thwarted by British diplomacy are described next (*Chapter 7*). Russophobia, the resuscitation of the ex-king Shah Shuja to the *masnad* at Kabul, the tripartite treaty and the Sikh co-operation in the British operations in the disastrous Afghan Campaign are discussed (*Chapter 8*). *Chapter 9* provides fresh information on the ailments, last days and the death of the Maharaja.

The character of the Maharaja in all its contradictory aspects, his pastimes, habits, treatment of foreigners and his extraordinary candid dialogues with them are described (*Chapter 10*). This is followed by an account of the family of the Maharaja (*Chapter 11*)—Kharak Singh, Naunihal Singh, Mā'i Chand Kaur, Sher Singh, Peshawara Singh, rānī Jindan and Dalip Singh with their characteristic role in Sikh history. These admissible digressions are full of fresh valuable information. Men around the Maharaja form the subject matter of the next Chapter. Ranjit Singh's personalised administration and power was principally sustained by persons whom he himself chose and raised to political power. Thus the historical role of the Jammu brothers and the strong-arms of the Kingdom—the Āhlūwālās, the Majithiās, the Attārīwālās, the Kalianwālās and many others who surrounded his throne, is furnished in a compact brief narrative. An account of the *Firangi* officers at the Court of Ranjit Singh and the so-called impact of European discipline on the Khālśa Army forms the subject of the next Chapter. *Chapters 14 and 15* deal with the genius, structure and working of Ranjit Singh's Administration and his Army. Ranjit Singh's diplomacy, internal and external policy and foreign relations are then described in some detail (*Chapter 16*). Social, economic and religious conditions in the Punjab are then detailed (*Chapter 17*). *Chapter 18* deals with Literature, Folklore and Art in the Punjab under the Sikhs.

The work would have been published earlier had the present writer been not involved simultaneously in two other historical projects—one on Bhutan and the other on a specific phase of Indian Civilisation. Yet the divergencies of the subjects offered a challenge which irrespective of assiduous work and travel, could only add to his enthusiasm. However, all is well that ends well, and the present writer is thankful to all friends, known and unknown, who have helped in the accomplishment of the task.

3 June, 1976

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ABBREVIATIONS

Auckland—Auckland's Private Papers in the British Museum.

BISL (I) *Bengal and India Secret Letters* in the India Office Library (Commonwealth Relations Office).

(BM) Manuscript Records in the British Museum.

BPC (I) *Bengal Political Consultations* Series of Manuscript Records in the India Office Library (C.R.O.).

BSPC (I) *Bengal Secret and Political Consultations* Series of Manuscript Records in the India Office Library (C.R.O.).

Broughton (BM) *Broughton Papers* in the British Museum.

C Consultation No. (always preceded by the date of Consultation).

Dal. Mun. *Dalhousie Muniments* in the Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh.

CHP Coulston House *Dalhousie Papers*.

(EP) *Ellenborough Papers* in the Public Records Office, London.

HMS (I) *Home Miscellaneous Series* of Manuscript Records in the India Office Library (C.R.O.).

(I) Manuscript Records in the India Office Library (C.R.O.).

IPC (I) *India Political Consultations* Series of Manuscript Records in the India Office Library (C.R.O.).

ISP (I) *India Secret Proceedings* Series of Manuscript Records in the India Office Library (C.R.O.).

LPD *Lahore Political Diaries*.

NAI National Archives of India.

(P) Manuscript Records in the Punjab Government Records Office, Lahore.

(PP) *Parliamentary Papers*.

PRO Manuscript Records in the Public Records Office, London.

PRC *Poona Residency Correspondence*.

PSA Punjab State Archives, Patiala.

UT The *Umdat-ut-Tawārīkh*—the Official Diary (Persian) of the Lahore Darbār.

VAM Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

(WD) *Wellesley Despatches* (Martin).

(WP) *Wellesley Papers*—Series II in the British Museum.

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INTRODUCTORY: A NARRATIVE OF SOURCES

1. Local Chronicles

THE MOST IMPORTANT local history of the period is that of Sohan Lal Suri known as the '*Umdat-ut-Tawārīkh*', a contemporary, authoritative and official chronicle of the history of the Sikhs, from Guru Nanak to the final extinction of the Sikhs State in 1849, when the Kingdom of the Punjab was annexed by Lord Dalhousie. It is a stupendous work of about 7,000 pages completed in forty years. Sohan Lal served the Sikh Darbār as a *vakīl* and *munshī* and his account is based on personal observations and early contemporary works on the history of the Punjab. The chronicle was published at Lahore between the years 1885-89. Its *Daftar II* deals with an account of the rise of the Śukerchakiās, the events of the reign of Charat Singh and Mahan Singh, and a chronicle of the Court of Ranjit Singh upto the year 1830. *Daftar III* entitled as the *Roznāmcha'i Mahārāja Ranjit Singh* in five parts, deals with the events of the reign of the Sikh sovereign from the year 1831 (Māgh 1887, Bikramī Samvat) to his death on 27 June, 1839 (15 Hār 1896, Bikramī Samvat).

Sohan Lal appears to be a conservative *munshī*, well-versed in the Persian language. His record of events is faithful and a coherent chronicle of the happenings in all parts of the Kingdom. The '*Umdat-ut-Tawārīkh*' is quite dependable; but following in general the pattern set by official Muhammadan chroniclers of the Mughals, Sohan Lal merely records the events without being cognizant of the cross-currents of the time and the people, or the social and economic conditions in the Punjab. His chronicle is balanced and profuse. Murray, Wade, Prinsep and Cunningham found no fault with it, and have used it extensively. It generally does not suffer from Court influence, but has a subservient tendency to skip over or keep mum over inconvenient and distasteful transactions. It is a poor representation of the official Sikh point of view with an obvious reserve. We have no positive information whether Sohan Lal had access to the official Lahore State Papers, or he merely wrote from hearsay or personal observation. He is eulogistic towards the Sikhs, profusely vituperative towards the Afghans, and not too unfriendly towards the British.

Ganesh Dass', *Risala'i Šāhib Numā'*, *Tārīkh-i-Panjāb* (BM, MS. No. 1693) and its supplement, the *Chahar Gulshan-i-Panjāb*, and the *Chirāgh-i-Panjāb* (I)

Rieu, iii, 952b) furnishes us with an account of Ranjit Singh's reign till the annexation of the Punjab by Lord Dalhousie in 1849.

Khushwaqt Rai's *Tawārikh-i-Sikhkhān* (BM, Or. 187) written at the instance of Colonel David Ochterlony ends with the year 1811 A. D. It is an excellent contemporary source of information of the early transactions of Ranjit Singh's reign, but it is obviously marred by a pro-British bias.

Kanahaya Lal's *Zafarnāma'i Ranjīt Singh*, (Lahore, 1876), contains a bare account of the reign of the Maharaja. Dīwān Amar Nath's history of the same name, (Lahore, 1828), however, is a contemporary work of considerable importance. The author was the son of Dīwān Dina Nath, the Finance Minister of Ranjit Singh, and for sometime, he himself was employed as a paymaster of the irregular cavalry forces. His account ending with the year 1836, is first-hand and authoritative, and a very important source of information on the life, times and events of the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Ali-ud-Din Mufti's *‘Ibratnāma*, (I. Ethe No. 504), is good on the geographical details, statistics and history of the Punjab. It contains an account of the manners and customs of the Sikhs, and a description of the Court officials under Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Ghulam Muhiuddin Bute Shah's *Tawārikh-i-Panjab*, (BM, Or. 1623 ; Ethe, No. 503) is an impressive historical work on the Punjab. For our period, it gives an account of Charat Singh and Mahan Singh, occupation of Lahore by Ranjit Singh, Holkar's intrusion into the Panjab and his expulsion, Ranjit Singh's conquests, and his relations with Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk. The narrative ends with the death of the Maharaja.

Of great interest is Kirpa Ram's *Gulābnāma*, (Srinagar, Samvat Bk. 1932) which reviews in general Ranjit Singh's various expeditions to Kashmir, and its ultimate conquest. It indirectly deals with the Sikh-Afghan wars, particularly the battle of Jamrud, and the death of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā.

A quite useful work is the statistical history of Kashmir entitled the *Tārīkh-i-Kalān* (Punjab State Archives, Patiala), compiled for its mild and conscientious governor Mian Singh (1834-1841), which furnishes us with a detailed account of the Sikh land revenue and judicial administration of Kashmir:

The bane of the local Persian histories, however, is their individual bias and one-sidedness, which mars their otherwise excellent historical value. They feebly follow the pattern set up by the Indo-Muslim historians—Abul Fazal and Abdul Hamid Lahori in the Mughal times, imitate the ornate literary style of those inimitable masters, lacking their finesse and historical approach. Their accounts abound in prolixities and redundancies and produce a narrative of events mixed up with facts and fiction derived from hearsay or imagination.

Except for recording the events of the time, they provide scanty information on the social and economic conditions of the people, or of the policy, purpose and diplomacy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

2. Punjab *Akhbārāt* and *Roznāmchas*

Apart from Sohan Lal Suri's monumental *Roznāmcha*, various collections of the *Akhbārāt* of the *Deorhī* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, of specified period, provide useful information of the day today events of the Sikh Darbār. One *Roznāmcha* entitled the *Akhbārāt-i-Deorhī'i Mahārājā Ranjīt Singh*, for the year 1825, is preserved in the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Three sets of the *Akhbārāt*, recording the day today events of the Lahore Darbār, of different periods, are preserved in the Punjab State Archives Library, Patiala (Nos. M-352, M-340, and M-412). In 1935, H. L. O. Garrett and G. L. Chopra published an English translation of the *Akhbārāt* of Ranjit Singh's Court for the years 1810-1817, under the title : *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh* (Lahore, 1935). Selections from the *Punjab Akhbārāt etc. 1839-1940* were translated into English by Ganda Singh under the title : *The Punjab in 1839-40* (Patiala/Amritsar, 1952). Numerous local collections of the *Akhbārāt* and the *Roznāmchas* furnishing information about the far-flung administrative divisions under the Sikh rule, as for instance, the *Akhbārāt-i-Lāhore-o-Multān*, the *Akhbārāt-i-Peshāwar*, the *Akhbārāt-i-Ludhiāna*, the *Akhbārāt-i-Singhān* (containing news of Ranjit Singh's provincial administration), exist and furnish positive information as to what was happening in the different regions of Ranjit Singh's Kingdom.

However, these *Akhbārāt*, if official, suffer from Court influence. If compiled privately, they reflect the personal bias or the prejudice of the writer or the provincial *Nāzim*, under whose patronage they were compiled. However, if examined with cautious reserve, they would yield information about the political, social and economic conditions of the Punjab under Ranjit Singh. As for instance, the *Punjab Akhbārāt 1839-40*¹, furnish intelligence from Lahore, Peshawar, Kashmir, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Dera Ismail Khan, (p. 50 etc.), events and transactions at the Court, particularly the Maharaja's last illness and death (p. 65 *et seq.*), the transactions of the *firangī* officers-Ventura, Court, Avitabile and Steinbach (p. 217, 239 etc.), an account of the Sikh dāk couriers (p. 26), the Lahore arsenal (p. 272), and the existence of a State Library under the charge of Munshī Khushwaqt Rai at the Lahore *Toshakhana* (p. 104). Another set of the *Akhbārāt* for the year 1825² furnishes quite interesting details on the

¹ Published under the title : *The Punjab in 1839-40* (ed. and trans. by Ganda Singh), Amritsar/Patiala, 1952.

² In the National Archives of India, New Delhi, under the title : the *Akhbārāt-i-Deorhī'i Mahārājā Ranjīt Singh*.

mode of receiving *nazarānas* by the Maharaja and collection of the arrears of revenue by his officials (*fol. 1*), the grant of *ijāras* or farming out town-duties (*fol. 489-90*), the charities of the Maharaja (*fol. 489*), his *tuladān* or being weighed against food-grains on the day of *amāvas* (*fol. 2*), and the celebrations of the *Holi* festival at the Darbār, in the riotous revelleries of which the Maharaja himself participates with gusto (*fol. 18-22*).

3. Contemporary writers

Foreign accounts of the Kingdom of Ranjit Singh, however, are of a different character. These could be broadly classified into two distinct categories *viz.*, those written by British officials or functionaries of the Ludhiana Agency—Murray, Wade, Macgregor, Lawrence, Prinsep, Clerk, Richmond, Nicholson, Edwardes, Broadfoot, Osborne, Fane, Smyth, Cunningham and others, who wrote official despatches and found time, either by official encouragement or private urge, to chronicle the stirring events happening in the powerful neighbouring Kingdom, with which they had official association on behalf of their government. The second category is that of British and foreign travellers, who visited the Punjab and have recorded their impressions in an absolute independent though in not too unbiassed manner.

Earlier foreign accounts of the Sikhs are those of George Forster : *A Journey from Bengal to England*, (London, 1798, 2 Vols.), who predicted that the Sikhs would ultimately extinguish Afghan supremacy in northern India ; of W. Francklin : *The Military Memoirs of George Thomas*, (Calcutta, 1803), wherein he gives a fulsome account of the Sikh Misals in the Mālwa region against whom the European adventurer took up arms. Francklin also dilates upon the possessions of the Sikhs and their future. Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, (London, 1812) is the first informative publication on the history, religion and manners of the Sikhs. Murray, Prinsep, Wade and Cunningham based their observations on Indian records and local histories. Masson, Honigberger, Moorcroft, Hugel, Jacquemont, Shahamat Ali and Mohan Lal wrote their accounts from personal experience and give description of the Punjab under Ranjit Singh with the chief characteristics of his government, policy, and administration and, to some extent, throw light on the social and economic conditions of the people. Shahamat Ali : *The Sikhs and the Afghans* (London, 1847) and Mohan Lal : *Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan etc.* (Calcutta, 1834), although commissioned by their British masters, have left us excellent accounts of their impressions on the life and times of Ranjit Singh at the full zenith of his power.

British officials who wielded their pen both officially and in private capacity are well known. Henry Prinsep's work : *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, (Calcutta, 1834) is a lucid, sketchy but informative narrative from 1742 to 1831. It is also apparently authoritative on the rise of the Sikhs in the

Punjab based on early local histories and official Indian records. He gives an account of the character and policy of Ranjit Singh, mode of his government and revenues, and the strength of his army. His general observations on the manners and customs of the Sikhs were a guide-line for further research for the writers on the subject who wrote after him.

Murray's two volumes on the *History of the Punjab*, (London, 1842) are chronological, authoritative and full of details; part of the first volume was exclusively based on the history written earlier by Prinsep, and the period from 1832 onwards was compiled from Indian records and other sources. The second volume deals with the main events of Ranjit Singh's reign and ends with the Suttlej campaigns.

Major Lawrence's rambling and non-descript narrative written under the pseudonym of Bellasis: *Some passages in the Life of an Adventurer in the Punjab*, (2 Vols., London, 1846) is half fact and half fiction. He provides information of an extraordinarily fascinating character on the life and government of Ranjit Singh. His playful exercises or digressions on Sikh history are, however, mixed up with fulsome bazar scandals and gossip.

Another work of extraordinary character is that of Major Carmichael Smyth of the Bengal Light Infantry: *History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, (London, 1847). It contains a hastily compiled, sketchy and brief history of Ranjit Singh; a *Genealogical History of the Jammu Family, the Lords of the Hills*, which obviously is a translation of some Persian chronicle; and an obviously fictitious *Secret History of the Lahore Darbar*, replete with almost unheard of scandals and concoctions based on savoury bazar gossip. Smyth was publicly reprimanded by the Indian Government for his "infamous book" when in 1849 it was brought to the notice of British authorities.

Dr. W. L. Macgregor's *History of the Sikhs* (2 Vols., London, 1842) is an outstanding work drawn mainly from Prinsep, Murray, Wade and a second-hand translation of Ahmad Shah Batalvi's local history, the *Tawārīkh-i-Hind*. It is a useful and informative work, and includes in original a Paper drawn up in 1838 on the Court of Ranjit Singh and presented to Lord Auckland (i, p. 202-266). The latter is a first-hand contemporary account full of observations on the character and policy of the Maharaja.

Captain William G. Osborne, Lord Auckland's Military Secretary, who accompanied Sir William Macnaghten in May 1838 to Lahore and also Auckland in December of the same year to his meeting with Ranjit Singh at Ferozepur, though otherwise unconnected with the Sikhs in any official capacity, has furnished us with one of the finest first-hand accounts of the Maharaja and his Court in his *Journal—Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*, London, 1840. His

Journal is a masterpiece of style and conciseness of narrative, replete with observations on the Maharaja, the Sikh Court, and the notable Sardars. Few contemporary British writers, who had the privilege of observing Ranjit Singh at close quarters, have given us a more lucid narrative of the kingdom at its full zenith and glory than Captain William Osborne. He describes the brilliancy and grandeur of the Sikh Court, the magnificence of the royal nobility, the mighty array of Ranjit Singh's army, and the energy and politics of the one master-mind, who directed and controlled it. Ranjit Singh, Osborne observes, was one of that order of minds which seem destined by nature to win their way to distinction, and achieve greatness. Osborne was also an excellent artist ; his *Journal* is illustrated with 16 lithograph portraitures drawn by him in the superb style and elaborate setting of contemporary Sikh art.

Another contemporary account of the life and times of Ranjit Singh is given by Dr. Murray, a physician attached to 4th Native Infantry, summoned to Lahore in 1826, when the Maharaja suffered a stroke of paralysis. Dr. Murray's despatches from Lahore (*BPC(I), Range, 125, Vols. 15-21*) provide us with the most refreshing observations on the personal habits of the Maharaja, the grandeur and brilliancy of his Court, his politics, and his colossal army. He describes Ranjit Singh as active, gay and sportive. It was difficult to persuade him to accept medical treatment ; Ranjit Singh had marked hypochondriac tendencies. He also noticed that excessive use of liquor and debaucheries had brought a premature impotency in Ranjit Singh. He is full of praise of the *Khālsa* army, Ranjit Singh's fondness for his *firangī* officers and the *Francesa Campo* (-16 January, 1827, No. 13). He also observes that the Maharaja mixed up his regiments to prevent mutinees, but his troops were always in arrears of pay. He regularly inspected his troop battalions ; entertainment being provided by his gay and pretty warriors of the *Zenana Corps* (-12 June, 1827. No. 168). He personally supervised and transacted all State business : "Everything however trivial connected with his affairs is communicated to the Raja and he issues orders and instructions promptly, regarding the measures which he wishes to be pursued" (-23 March, 1827. No. 28).

4. Hightone of superiority

These accounts, by British and foreign writers, except in rare cases, exhibit a hightone of Occidental superiority, a tinge of imperialistic arrogance, and a candid intolerance towards local political, social and religious beliefs and customs in the Punjab. The existence of a powerful, militant though friendly ally across the Sutlej irked their political vanity, but the magnificence and brilliancy of Ranjit Singh's Court dazzled their imagination and his genial personality disarmed their antagonistic postures. These worthy gentlemen, notwithstanding the official restraints, have given a good account of themselves. Wade,

Cunningham and Henry Lawrence, however, have made ample amends for the remisses of other British political functionaries who wrote from an obsession of political superiority.

Claude Wade remained at Ludhiana for almost 17 years, and in his relations with the Lahore Darbār, he balanced the interests of the two States in such a manner that in due course of time he became a personal friend of Ranjit Singh, who valued his advice and counsel in political matters. Thus, he advised his government to adopt a policy of judicious settlement of various territorial disputes with the Lahore Government ; arranged the Rupa Meeting between the Maharaja and Lord William Bentinck, and persuaded Ranjit Singh to participate in the Indus Navigation Scheme. The success of British diplomacy in Sind, and Sikh co-operation in the operations of the Khyber, was due to his influence with Ranjit Singh. Wade was a keen observer of the Sikh Court and politics. His voluminous official despatches and works : *A Narrative of Services, Military and Political, 1804-1844* (1847), and *Our Relations with the Punjab* (London, 1823), contain close observations on the life and times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Wade describes Ranjit Singh of diminutive in stature, and of emaciated constitution but possessing an animated personality : "In conversation, the Maharaja's manner was rugged, marked by a puerile curiosity." He describes the brilliancy and the splendour of his Court. Though illiterate, he observes, Ranjit Singh, possessed insatiable curiosity, and never missed an opportunity of acquiring knowledge. He was an able and shrewd administrator, with considerable knowledge of finance, who paid special attention to the welfare of his subjects. His love for power was insatiable, and he would employ every sort of means to extend it.¹

Amongst all the British writers of the history of the Sikhs, Captain Joseph D. Cunningham occupies a unique place. He is described as a "perfect Sikh"² for his dispassionate and unbiassed account of the Sikhs. As a historian of the Sikhs his castigation of British policy based on the despatches of the Secret Department resulted in a personal tragedy for him. And although Wade, Prinsep, Murray and others had all used governmental records in their works without earning a reprimand from their superiors, Cunningham had incurred the displeasure of Lord Broughton and Earl of Dalhousie for bringing to light the suppressed documents in the *Blue Book* presented to Parliament in 1849.³ For

¹ Vide. particularly, Wade's despatches to Government, of 1 August, 1827 ; 25 and 31 May, 1831, and 5 December 1832 (P).

² Hardinge to Ellenborough, 21 June, 1846-(EP) PRO 30/12(21/7).

³ Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 21 April, 1849-*Dal. Mun.* 6 (55-58), Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh.

his "good-for-nothing book"¹ he was deemed a dangerous functionary at the Sutlej frontier and removed to Bhopal as Resident, and later, dismissed from government service on charges of "abuse of trust." His *History of the Sikhs*, (London, 1847) has, however, despite malicious castigations, survived and is considered even today the most authoritative work on Sikh history.

5. British travellers

Notable among the official British travellers are Charles Masson : *Narrative of Various Journeys in Baluchistan, Afghanistan and the Punjab*, (3 Vols., London, 1842) and Alexander Burnes : *Travels into Bokhara* (London, 1834). Masson's *Narrative* gives us a first-hand account of Ranjit Singh's reign, particularly his provincial administration of Peshawar (i, p. 132 ff.), of Multan (i, p. 395 ff.), of his conquests (i. p. 426 ff.) and of his general character. His observations are, however, tainted with an anti-Sikh tenor although his description of the Sikh-Afghan affairs—the tumult raised by the *jehād* of the Wahābī fanatic Sayed Ahmad in the Kingdom of the Punjab, the battle of Jamrud (vol. ii) is authentic and realistic. Apart from Burnes' *Travels into Bokhara*, which gives an account of his visit to Lahore in 1831, his *Reports and Papers, Political, Geographical and Commercial* (Calcutta, 1839) contain materials of interest for us, as for instance, *On the Political Power of the Sikhs beyond the Indus* (8 September, 1837); *On the Trade of the Upper Indus or the Derajat*, and a condensation of R. Leech's *Report on the Commerce of Multan*.

Henry Fane : *Five Years in India*, (2 Vols. London, 1842) gives a vivid description of the British Commander-in-Chief's visit to Lahore on the occasion of Kanwar Naunihal Singh's marriage in March 1837. The Maharaja had several meetings with the British Army Chief, and Fane also describes the extraordinary strength and discipline of Ranjit Singh's army. Fane in his sarcastic manner describes the ceremonies attendant on Kanwar Naunihal Singh's marriage and the unequalled splendour of the Maharaja's Court. However, he was quite oblivious of the social and economic conditions of the people of the Punjab whom he had no occasion to meet. William Barr's *Journal of a March from Delhi to Peshawar*, (London, 1844), is an eye-witness account of the state of affairs in the Punjab during the last days of Ranjit Singh's rule. It describes the part played by the Sikhs in the ill-conceived, ill-equipped British campaign in Afghanistan.

6. Foreign travellers

Of the noted contemporary travellers in the Punjab who wrote from personal observations of the political events in the Punjab, the character and

¹ *Ibid.*

habits of its ruler, and the splendour of his Court and Army are Honigberger, Moorcroft, Hugel, Jacquemont, Vigne, Wolff, Shahamat Ali and Mohan Lal.

Dr. John Martin Honigberger's *Thirty-Five years in the East*, (London, 1852), contains a record of his experiences as a Court Physician and Ordnance Officer in charge of gun-powder factory at Lahore (1835-1850). He has drawn historical sketches relating to the Punjab and Kashmir, and his experiments with medical science are intermixed with his observations on the political scene of the Lahore Kingdom under Ranjit Singh, and details of the Darbār politics after the Maharaja's death till 1849. After a short visit to Europe, he returned to Lahore in the spring of 1839, and resumed his post as Physician to the Court and Superintendent of the gun-manufactory. He describes the last hours of the Maharaja and attended his obsequies of which he has given a stirring account. He was dismissed from Lahore service along with other European officers by the Jalla regime in 1844.

Honigberger observes that the Maharaja's ungainly appearance was counterbalanced by his talents and an extraordinary memory: "The prominent trait of his character was, that he rarely did what was required of him, and acted often contrary to what he said. In general, no one was informed of the place to which he intended to go, nor the time appointed by the astrologers for his departure." (p. 56). He observes on the dark side of his character, which according to him was his extreme devotedness to sensuality, spirits and opium, by which he shortened his life (*ibid*). The Maharaja was fond of duck-shooting (p. 52), his marriage with a Muhammadan courtesan Gulbahar showed that he cared little for public opinion (p. 57), and that the inhabitants of the Punjab practiced animal-magnetism called *jārā* or *mantar*, by which evil spirits causing various diseases were driven away (p. 149).

7. Moorcroft and Jacquemont¹

Both William Moorcroft: *Travels*, (2 Vols., London, 1841), a British veterinary surgeon who visited Lahore in May 1819, and V. Jacquemont: *Letters from India, 1829-1832*, (London, 1834), and *Journal—The Punjab A Hundred Years ago* (Punjab Government Record Office Monograph No. 18, 1834), give us a vividly candid and warmly sympathetic description of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and of life at his Court. Baron Charles Hugel: *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab, containing a particular account of the government and character of the Sikhs*, (London, 1845), who visited the Court of Ranjit Singh in 1835, was a diligent and faithful observer. As a traveller in the Punjab and Kashmir,

¹ For a detailed account of these two important visitors to the Punjab under Ranjit Singh, *vide*. Chapter 10 (Sub-sections 13 and 15) *infra*.

he had acquainted himself well with the narratives of the early travellers—Bernier (1667), Forster (1783), Moorcroft (1820), Jacquemont (1831) and Wolff (1832); and the extant Persian authorities, particularly on Kashmir and the Sikhs, but he wrote his diffusive narrative from personal observations. He has given us a dispassionately interesting account of the Punjab, and its capital Lahore; of the military style of the Sikh ruler, and political and geographical observations on the kingdom founded by Ranjit Singh. Of special interest are his notices on Ranjit Singh's household, the impoverished state of the *subāh'i Kashmīr*, the festivals held at the Darbar, toleration of slave trade in the Kingdom, and Ranjit Singh's policy, politics and favourites. He has drawn copiously from Murray's account of political events, and the revenue and resources of the Punjab under Ranjit Singh. Hugel's interviews with the Maharaja are of great interest exhibiting the naive curiosity of the Sikh ruler. The Maharaja offered the German traveller a lucrative job which Hugel declined (p. 296).

8. British *munshīs*

Both Shahamat Ali and Mohan Lal were the product of the Delhi English College established by Lord Amherst's Government in 1827. Both were officials of the British Government sent on assignments abroad and have left us excellent accounts of their travels. Munshī Shahamat Ali's work: *The Sikhs and the Afghans*, (London, 1847) is a narrative of an assignment with Colonel Claude Wade, who conducted Shah Shuja's eldest son, Shahzada Taimur with the subsidiary force across the Punjab and the Khyber Pass to Kabul in 1838. He was in attendance on Lord Auckland when he visited Lahore and Amritsar in December 1838, and has given us a first-hand account of Ranjit Singh's administration, revenue, army and the principal ministers and officers of the State. He gives a brief description of the character and conduct of the business of the Government, the strength, organisation and expense of the Khālśa army; the revenues of the Maharaja's kingdom; the administration of the provincial *nāzims* and *kārdārs*, the personal habits of the Maharaja and a short list of Sikh and European officers of the State.

Munshī Shahamat Ali's account is unbiassed in the description of the Sikhs. His *Journal* is of special interest for a brief historical and topographical description of the towns and forts in his journey *en route* to Peshawar-Wazirabad Gujranwala, Gujrat, Jehlum, Rohtas, Rawalpindi, Akora and Peshawar. He describes the Punjab rivers, its salt mines, flora and fauna, agricultural products and commerce of the northern part of the Kingdom. His description of Peshawar, its historical background, climate, production, population and its administration under the Sikh governor General Avitabile is full of contemporary interest, vividness and accuracy.

Munshī Mohan Lal accompanied Alexander Burnes as a Persian Secretary in 1831 on his journey to Afghanistan, Bokhara and Persia. In 1835 he was

appointed British agent at Kabul. His *Journal : Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan etc.*, (Calcutta, 1834) deals with his journey from Delhi to Peshawar in 1831 and in 1835. His description of the country and the peoples of the Punjab testifies to his keen observation of the social, economic and political conditions of the times. He in particular refers to the trade and commerce between the Lahore kingdom and the adjacent countries, the statistics of internal trade and its barriers, custom duties, trade routes and mode of transport of the Punjab supplied by him are first-hand and authentic. Mohan Lal travelled extensively in the south of the Punjab and Sind, in the north from Peshawar into the Khyber country. As a contemporary record of political, social and economic matters, his *Journal* is of great value in assessing the life and times of Ranjit Singh, (1831-39).

9. *Khālsa Darbār Records*

The *Khālsa Darbār Records* are a veritable mine of information on the life and times of Ranjit Singh. Since the publication of a *Catalogue* in 1919 of these records by Sita Ram Kohli, the scholars of Sikh history, except for applauding them half-heartedly, have done nothing to classify, examine and determine their importance. These run to over 100,000 files both at Lahore and Patiala, resting their vast mass of information in disarray and topsy-turvyness. The earlier misconceived opinion of modern Sikh historians that the Lahore State Papers were destroyed during 1846-1849 by the British, can no longer be substantiated. These records throw considerable light not only on the social and economic life of the people of the Punjab, but also on the administrative structure, revenue and land administration under the Sikhs. Much could be learned about the financial resources, army, judicial administration, policy, endowments, grants of Maharaja Ranjit Singh from this source.

It is hightime that scholars of Sikh history should assess their value, at least those of the *Khālsa Darbār Records* which are extant in the Punjab State Archives, Patiala. They would substantiate foreign materials, for what they are worth, by producing an official and authoritative account and solve many problems of the later history of the Sikhs.

10. Indian Records

The vast mass of Indian records on the later history of the Sikhs, particularly, from the rise of Ranjit Singh to the final extinction of the Kingdom of Punjab (1799-1849) are the Records of Delhi Residency and Ludhiana Agency (1804-1840), Secret Letters from Fort William to the Secret Committee, and private papers.

The bulk of Ludhiana Political Agency (1806-1849) and Delhi Residency (1804-1810) transactions is apparent from the ten volumes of Press Lists of the

Old Records in the Punjab Civil Secretariate. These records mostly deal with Anglo-Sikh political and diplomatic relations; the transactions of the Lahore Darbār and British reactions towards it, and notwithstanding their bias, digressions, irrelevancies and one-sidedness, they form our basic contemporary source of information on the later history of the Sikhs. Able and vigilant British political officers—Ochterlony, Murray, Prinsep, Wade, Clerk, Macgregor, Mackeson, Cunningham, Nicholson, Richmond, and Broadfoot, who penned these despatches are all so well known in Sikh history. Earlier records of the Ludhiana Agency and Delhi Residency (*Books 2-12*) deal with the British punitive expedition against the Sikhs following the Doab depredations (1804), Lake's transactions in the Cis-Sutlej region (1805-06); Holkar's intrusion into the Punjab (1805), Minto-Ranjit Singh correspondence (1808); correspondence relating to the Metcalfe Mission (1808-09) and the treaty of Amritsar (1809), and the despatches of Edmonstone, Ochterlony, Seton, Carey and others on sundry Anglo-Sikh transactions (1809-1812).

The later records of the Ludhiana Agency 1812-1849 (*Books 28-150*) contain detailed, varied but comprehensive information pertaining to Anglo-Sikh-Afghan Affairs (*Books 92, 95, 97, 99, 100 and 105*), the Indus and Sutlej Navigation Scheme (*Books 90, 95, 105, and 138*), Anglo-Sikh-Sindhian Affairs (*Books 103, 107, 108 and 109*), the duties and functions of the Ludhiana Agency (*Books 94, 95 and 115*), the adjustment of Anglo-Sikh territorial disputes (*Books 76, 93, 94, 115 and 149*) etc. A scholar working on the later political history of the Sikhs must, therefore, wade through this jungle of correspondence. However, these records are well classified and catalogued. Part of this mass of correspondence was published by the Punjab Government Records Office, Lahore in nine volumes (*vide. Bib. 7, infra*); part of it was utilised by writers on Punjab history in specialised monographs (*Ibid*).

The *Ludhiana Agency Records* were obviously used by Wade and Murray in their reports, which were consolidated by Prinsep, in May 1834, for Lord William Bentinck. Wade's account is sketchy though authoritative. With consummate tact, he is restrained in the discussion of contemporary controversial political problems between the Sikhs and his government. Murray is anti-Sikh, inaccurate and replete with scandals and gossip. As a political assistant at Ludhiana, Cunningham had access to the Agency papers, which he has used in his *History of the Sikhs* (London, 1849). His *Narrative of the Political Conditions and Military Resources of the Punjab* in the *India Secret Proceedings* (I. 28 March, 1845-Nos. 55 and 66), a truthful and informative document, deserves publication. Cunningham also served on Gough's Staff and was Hardinge's *aide-de-camp* during the first Anglo-Sikh war. For his candid strictures on British policy, he was dismissed from the Political Department in 1849.¹ In March 1846, Hardinge

¹ For this most dismal and tragic episode when a historian is sacrificed to the whims of

considered him "a perfect Sikh" (EP-PRO 30/12-21/7). After the first Sikh War, his presence at the N. W. Frontier was deemed too dangerous (*ibid*), which led to his transfer to Bhopal. But for his removal from Ludhiana, he would have given us the inside story of the Peace Settlement (1846-1848), and the so-called second Sikh War.

The despatches of the Ludhiana Agency and Delhi Residency (1804-1810) are all to be found in the India office records, *viz.*, the *Bengal Secret and Political Consultations* (1800-1834), the *India Secret Proceedings* (1834-1856) and the *Bengal Political Consultations* (1827-1837) in the Commonwealth Relations Office, London. So are the records of the Ludhiana Agency (1916-1840), in particular, the correspondence on the Indus and the Sutlej Navigation; the Ludhiana Agency, its duties and functions; the territorial claims of the Lahore Government; the Anglo-Sikh-Afghan affairs, and the various British missions to the Court of Ranjit Singh. BSPC(I) is our primary source of information on Anglo-Sikh affairs till 1809. Additional information can be obtained from a curious mixture of chronological disarray in the India Office—the *Home Miscellaneous Series*. An extremely poor selection of documents, entitled the *Poona Residency Correspondence*, fills the gap of the period prior to 1800. It is necessary to give some details of the above series of records so obviously useful for the scholars of later history of the Sikhs.

(a) *Bengal Secret and Political Consultations* (1800-1834) in the India Office Library, London. Correspondence and despatches of the years 1804-1809, contained generally intermittently in volumes 124 to 217 relate to the early British transactions in the Cis-Sutlej region—the despatches of Ochterlony and Lake's correspondence with the Mālwa Sikh Sardars, general principles of British policy in the trans-Jumna region, and Ochterlony's report on Sikh country. The correspondence of the year 1806 contains despatches relating to the transactions of Holkar, and the first Anglo-Sikh treaty (1806); that of the year 1807 contains reports on Ranjit Singh's first two Mālwa expeditions; that of the year 1808-09 contain an account of the mission of the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs to the Delhi Residency soliciting British protection against Ranjit Singh's ambitions of aggrandizement; Metcalfe's ninety-five despatches from the Lahore Darbār, some of which are missing in the Ludhiana Agency records, are found there in full. The correspondence on the Punjab and Sikh affairs fades out in these records till 1830, perhaps for some reasons of reclassification, but we find Anglo-Sikh transactions fully covered in another series of records named the *Bengal Political Consultations* (Range 125-126, Vols. 15, 23, 33; 30-32) as for instance, Dr. Murray's voluminous and informative despatches from Lahore in 1827, and full accounts of the various goodwill missions between the Sikh Darbār and the British

politicians, *vide.* generally, the *Dal. Mun.*, particularly Hobhouse to Dalhousie (Private) 21 April, 1849, and Dalhousie-15 June and 6 September, 1849.

Government during the years 1827-1831, including the details of Lord William Bentinck's momentous meeting with Ranjit Singh at Rupar in October 1831. However, the BSPC(I) series again opens up in 1830 and continues till 1834, and contains in full the despatches of Alexander Burnes from Kabul, of Pottinger from Sind, and Wade from Ludhiana and Lahore.

(b) *India Secret Proceedings (1834-1856)*. It appears that in 1834, India Office decided to discontinue the BSPC and reclassify Indian records under a new Series entitled the *India Secret Proceedings*, which forms one of the most important repositories of records concerning the political history of the Sikhs in all its aspects, from the mid-thirties down to the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. The volumes for the year 1834-37 give in full the despatches relating to Anglo-Sikh-Sindhian affairs, and Lord William Bentinck's Indus Navigation Scheme ; and the records for the year 1838 contain an account of Lord Auckland's vacillating policy of pleasing both the Sikhs and the Afghans at the same time, and various schemes for the resuscitation of Saddozai power in Afghanistan. The despatches of Sir William Macnaghten from the Maharaja's Court at Lahore and of the signing of the Tripartite treaty are given in full. The records of the year 1839 relate to the Sikh co-operation in the military operations of the Khyber and British concern at the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. All despatches of Col. Claude Wade, on Special duty at Peshawar, and Clerk's momentous reports from Lahore on the political state of affairs in the Punjab, soon after the Maharaja's death, are recorded.

In so far as the period of political turmoil which overtook the Kingdom of Ranjit Singh after the demise of Kharak Singh and Naunihal Singh, the *India Secret Proceedings* provide the most comprehensive, though one-sided data in the despatches of Wade, Mackeson, Macnaghten, Clerk, Richmond, Braodfoot and Lawrence on all political events. These describe in detail the furtive Anglo-Sikh operations in the Valley of Peshawar and in the Yusafzai territory across the Sikh borders, the return of the Army of Retribution from Kabul, and the withdrawal of British garrison after destroying the fortifications of Jalalabad before the Sikhs could take possession of it. From 1843 onwards, the *Lahore Intelligence Reports* dilate fully on the political events at Lahore—the assassination of Maharaja Sher Singh, the *wazārats* of Jawahir Singh and Hira Singh, the rise of the army *pañchāyats* of the *Khālśa*, statistical data on the strength and dispositions of the Sikh Army, and the gradual drift of both the English and the Sikhs towards hostilities. The *India Secret Proceedings* contain almost all the despatches, documents and papers relating to both the Sikh Wars and the annexation of the Punjab.

(c) *Bengal and India Secret Letters*. The two Series of *Secret Letters Received from India and Bengal, 1778-1859, and 1817-1857* in the India Office, supplement each other. These series are, unfortunately, not available in the

Indian archival collections either at Calcutta or New Delhi. The first series (*Vol. 3. 1798-1800*) contains information regarding Wellesley's policy towards the Sikhs, Shah Zaman's threat and the first British mission to the Sikh country. Earlier letters detail fully Metcalfe's mission to Lahore and the Anglo-Sikh treaty (1809-25 October ; 15 December); the supposed Sikh-Maratha intrigues (1810-26 January); Amherst Government's relations with Lahore (1824-1 November). Other important documents included in the *Enclosures* to this Series are Metcalfe's *Minute* on British Policy towards Sind (1830-25 October), Trevelyan's Report on the Navigation of the Indus (1831-19 November), Burnes' *Geographical and Military Memoir on Sind* (1831-3 August), Bentinck's *Indus Navigation Scheme* and the *Rupar Meeting* with Ranjit Singh (1831-6 May). Secret Letters of the later period deal fully with Auckland's policy towards Kabul and Lahore (1838-13 August), Punjab affairs and Lahore co-operation during the first Anglo-Afghan War (1841-22 December ; 1842-19 October). Various letters of the years 1842-1844 depict fully the state of affairs at Lahore, and the supposed military anarchy in the Punjab. Events leading to the first Sikh War, and details of military operations at Ferozeshah and Mudki etc. are given in the Secret Letters of 1846 (2 July, 7 August ; 6, 18 November ; and 2, 4 and 31 December); and those of Baddowal, Aliwal and Sobraon are described in the Secret Letters of 1846 (1, 3 and 19 January ; 1 and 19 February ; and 19 March). Later events, viz., Lal Singh's administration and his eventual banishment, the Multan Revolt, the Hazara rebellion, and military operations of the invasion of the Punjab, are given in the Secret Letters of the years 1846-1849.

Though the Secret Letters contain information of the utmost importance, yet to study them exclusive of their relevant enclosures, is highly misleading and dangerous. Some of the important Secret Letters dealing with British policy before and after the Sikh Wars, have been suppressed in the *Blue Books-XXXI, 1846 ; XLI, 1847 and XLI, 1849*.

(d) *Home Miscellaneous Series* of records in the India Office Library is not arranged chronologically, but a few volumes in this series contain despatches and documents relative to Sikh affairs. It appears that early in 1808, Mathews, a Deputy Commissary of Ordnance at Fatehpur, visited Lahore and received Ranjit Singh's hospitality. However, somehow or other, Mathews got himself involved in local intrigues, particularly with the Maharaja's estranged wife Mehtab Kaur, who made him direct propositions for British aid to subvert Ranjit Singh's power (*Vol. 292 : No. 21. fol. 97-126*). For his reprehensible conduct Mathews was recalled by the British government. Amongst other informative documents in the series are Metcalfe's *Memoir on the Countries West of the Jumna* written in 1805-06 (*Vol. 506 A : No. 23*), the Secret Committee's *Memorandum on Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore, 1808-09* (*Vol. 511 : No. 80*); the supposed Sikh-Maratha intrigues against the British in 1809-10 (*Vol. 592 : Nos. 16-25*,

33-44) ; Minto-Ranjit Singh Correspondence, and despatches of Ochterlony and Seton on matters of British policy towards Ranjit Singh and the Sikhs (*Vol. 593: Nos. 15-24*). Volumes 592-93 contain correspondence between the Ludhiana Agency, the Delhi Residency and Fort William on the pros and cons of terms of protection offered to the Cis-Sutlej States and its relative effects on the kingdom of Lahore ; while Volume 650 (*No. 8*) contains correspondence of the Gurkha General Amar Singh Thapa soliciting British aid against Ranjit Singh.

(e) *Poona Residency Correspondence*—Selections from the Maratha records—Vol. VIII (1794-1799), Vol. IX (1800-1803), and Vol. XI (1804-1809), contain the despatches of the British Resident with Sindhia pertaining to the early British transactions with the Cis-Sutlej region and the Sikhs. The information supplied by these series is rather unauthoritative and conjectural, as for instance, Resident Close informs the Marquess of Wellesley that the Śukerchakiā Chief Ranjit Singh was an Afghan satrap, in which capacity he had received a *khill'at* from Shah Zaman of Kabul (*IX, 7, 17 B*); and that the Afghan invader would soon coalesce with the Sikh confederacies, particularly Ranjit Singh and march on Delhi (*ibid. 21 A*). However, the correspondence furnishes full details of the mission of Mir Yusuf Ali Khan despatched by Wellesley in 1800 to the Mālwa Sikh Chiefs and Ranjit Singh for weaning the Sikhs away from the “nefarious designs” of Shah Zaman (*IX, 17 B, 240 A, 242 BCD*). It appears that Perron, the all-powerful Maratha deputy at Delhi, endeavoured to discredit the British mission while at Ranjit Singh's Court, but without any success (*IX, 240*). The correspondence of Ranjit Singh with Close shows that he treated the British emissary Yusuf Ali Khan with due attention, denied any alleged connection with the Afghans, and evinced a keen desire for British friendship (*IX, 24A-Enclosure, and 273 B*).

(f) *Wellesley Papers*. The vast mass of *Wellesley Papers* in the British Museum contains a few volumes (MS. 37274-75, 37282-84) of the Marquis' private correspondence with Henry Dundas, the President of Board of Control, dealing with the early British policy towards the Cis-Sutlej region and the Sikhs. This correspondence pertains to the so-called Afghan threat to British India in the closing decade of the 18th century, when Ranjit Singh had come into political power in the Punjab, and Shah Zaman's third invasion of the Punjab and occupation of Lahore in 1798 had sorely disturbed the mental equilibrium of British statesmen both at Cannon Row and Fort William.¹ It was fondly believed that the Sikh confederacies in the Punjab would coalesce with the Afghan invader and overthrow British power in India. The imaginary Afghan-Sikh combination would deliver the imbecile Mughal emperor Shah Alam from Maratha thraldom

¹ Besides, *vide. Blue Book-XV (II)*, Craig's *Memoir on the apprehended invasion of Zaman Shah*.

at Delhi, and then Shah Zaman would march on Oudh (*Wellesley to Dundas, 23 February, 6 July and 24 December, 1798*). In 1799, Wellesley decided to depute a British mission under Mir Yusuf Ali Khan to the Sikh country to thwart the so-called Afghan designs on India (*1799 : 9 October*).

Strangely enough, the British seem to have little knowledge of the Sikhs and the Punjab at this time. Ranjit Singh is little known in early British records, and the Sikhs, deemed as disunited and distracted, without a chance of their forming a barrier against an Afghan invasion of India (*1798 : 23 February*). These papers, which include Marquess of Wellesley's despatches to the Board of Control and the Court of Directors mostly deal with the so-called Afghan threat to India and its consequent repercussions on both the Mālwa and Māñjha regions, where the Sikhs had come into power. It is, however, clear that Wellesley unduly magnified the threat to assemble the army of Bengal on the frontier of Oudh to force the Nawab Vazier to accept the treaty of 1801 (*to Court of Directors WD. i. (No. CXXXIV)*).

(g) *Auckland Papers*. Two sets of Lord Auckland's private letters—the *first* (BM-Add. 37689-94) in six bound volumes, and the *second* (BM-Broughton MSS. 36473-74) in two bound volumes in the British Museum, furnish us much more positive information on Anglo-Sikh affairs (1835-1841) than that which is supplied by public records or *Blue Books* (1839, XI, XXV (30) : 1843 (3), (13) and (17)). The former set contains Auckland's correspondence and official and demi-official despatches relating to the events leading to the first Afghan War, *news-letters* from Lahore, correspondence relative to the tripartite treaty, the Sikh-Sindhian affairs, and the private correspondence of some of the British functionaries at the Ludhiana Political Agency and others—Ellis, Mac Neil, Macnaghten, Burnes and Wade etc. In particular, these papers contain the despatches of Clerk from Lahore, and Wade from Peshawar.

MS. Volumes 36473-36474 in the *Broughton Papers* (BM), contain Lord Auckland's private correspondence with Sir John Hobhouse, the President of the Board of Control from 1835-1841. *Volume 36473* contains correspondence relating to the supposed Russo-Persian threat to India, and Fort William's measures to counteract it ; the Sikh-Afghan dispute and Ranjit Singh's war and peace aims ; Sikh designs on Sind, and British reactions to it ; Sir Henry Fane's visit to Lahore ; power and politics of Ranjit Singh ; and various schemes for the subversion of Dost Muhammad's power, and the resuscitation of Saddozai power in Afghanistan. *Volume 36474* contains, in general, correspondence relative to the pressure of Sikh power on Afghanistan ; death of Ranjit Singh and Sher Singh's overtures to the British Government ; the death of Kharak Singh and Nauniha! Singh ; Clerk's reports from Lahore ; and the rôle of the Sikhs in the operations of the Khyber.

These papers disclose British distrust of Ranjit Singh's military power : "Runjeet Singh talks to us as if he wished for universal peace and that some of the people about him would goad him on to a universal war. His army is still looking at the hills of Afghanistan"—(26 May, 1837, fol. 155). Ranjit Singh, on the other hand, was highly suspicious of the British, particularly of Burnes' negotiations at Kabul—that he would appease the Afghans at the cost of the Sikhs by making him give up Peshawar—(13 February, 1838, fol. 225). It is also clear, that the fear of Sikh power ultimately led to their exclusion from direct military operations in Afghanistan as envisaged in the tripartite treaty. Compared to the 70 regiments of the Sikh army, the British had two or three regiments scarcely mustering 500 men each on the Sutlej (17 June, 1838, fol. 264a), and it was feared that should the Sikh armies move into Afghanistan in support of Shah Shuja, they would ensure its direct subjection to Sikh rule, and the ex-Shah would become an instrument Sikh ambition (9 December, 1838, fol. 363b). Soon after the Ferozepur meeting towards the end of November 1838, with Ranjit Singh, when the Maharaja gave Lord Auckland assurances of Sikh co-operation in the intended operations in Afghanistan, he observed : "I shall be little anxious upon them, when his thirty or forty battalions shall be in array"—(*ibid.* fol. 361a).

George Russell Clerk's reports from Lahore contain fascinating observations on the Sikh Court, persons and politics. He found Ranjit Singh ailing, feeble and nearly speechless, but full of animation and friendship (1 April, 1839). In October 1839, he reported that Naunihal Singh—Dhian Singh coalition made little progress and that the Maharaja had found a new favourite in his brother-in-law, Chet Singh, whom he wished to appoint as his principal minister. On a direct hint from Clerk how to resolve the situation, Chet Singh was murdered in cold blood by Dhian Singh with the connivance of the prince, and the unfortunate Maharaja placed in virtual confinement (*Clerk's second report*, fol. 163b ff). On 4 February 1841, Clerk reported that due to the uncontrolled military anarchy at Lahore, Maharaja Sher Singh should not be allowed to fight his battles alone ; that a British force should march to Lahore to restore order and establish Sher Singh's authority (*Clerk's fourth report*, fol. 450b ff). Auckland readily agreed to the proposal, provided Sher Singh accepted the offer : "all on the left of the Sutlej should be exclusively British, all on the right of Indus exclusively Afghan" (*to Clerk*, 15 February, 1841 fol. 454a).

CHAPTER 2

THE RISE OF THE ŚUKERCHAKIĀS

1. Genealogy of Ranjit Singh

RANJIT SINGH WAS BORN on November 2, 1780 at Gujranwala. A recent controversy seems to have arisen about the exact date and place of his birth, but from all accounts, the above statement with regard to both is generally accepted.¹ His ancestors belonged to Jāt Sānsī tribe² of the village of Śukerchak near Gujranwala. The little known genealogy of the Śukerchakiās is recorded thus : Ranjit Singh's ancestors were descended from (1) Kālū, a Jāt of Pindi Bhattian, who had migrated in 1470 A.D. to Village Sānsrī, 5 miles from Amritsar. He died in the year 1488 A.D. His son (2) Jādūman having been adopted by the Sānsīs who numerously resided in the village, grew up in the nomadic ways of life, married a Sānsī women, and was killed in the year 1515 A.D. in a plundering raid in which he had accompanied the Sānsīs. His son (3) Galeb became the leader of the Sānsīs and a notorious cattle-thief. He died in the year 1549. His son (4) Kiddū was the first of the family who left Sansrī and migrated to the village of Śukerchak near Gujranwala. He gave up the

¹ See, generally on the subject, Pyne—*A short History of the Sikhs*, London, 1915 ; Latif—*History of the Panjab*, Calcutta, 1891 ; Griffin—*Ranjit Singh*, Oxford, 1905 ; Cunningham—*History of the Sikhs*, Oxford, 1849 ; Smyth—*A History of the Reigning family of Lahore*, London, 1849 ; Prinsep—*Origin of the Sikh Power etc.*, Calcutta, 1834, and others. The official account of the Darbār Diarist Sohan Lal Suri—the '*Umadat-ut-Twārikh*', and other local Persian histories, viz. Bute Shah—*Tārīkh-i-Panjāb* ; Kanahaya Lal—*Ranjitsingh-nāma* etc. add little to our information.

² Rose—*A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab etc.* Lahore, 1919, iii. p. 392 ff. describes the Sānsīs as a criminal tribe and the vagrants of the Central Punjab who migrated originally from Marwar and Ajmer where they abound in large numbers. They have some curious connection with the Jāt tribes of the Central Punjab—Ludhiana, Karnal and Gujrat. Sānsīs of mixed origin are found in Sialkot, Gujranwala and various parts of the Eastern Punjab. The district of Raja Sansi, a few miles from Amritsar is described as the ancestral home of the Sindhiānwālā family. Gujranwala Sānsīs are the off-shoot of the Bhatti clan. "The rank and influence of the Sandhanwalia family," observes Rose "who belong to this tribe, and the renown of their representative the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh, have given lasting political notoriety to the Sānsīs." *Ibid.* p.379.

criminal habits of the Sānsīs and settled on a piece of land there which he had acquired after selling a stolen herd of cattle inherited from his father. He died in the year 1578 A.D. ; and one of his sons (5) Rājdev adopted the profession of a grocer and village money-lender. He died in the year 1620 A.D. ; and his son (6) Takhat Mal continued the business of the grocery-shop and bought some land. He died in the year 1653 A.D. One of his sons named Bālū became a dacoit, and the other named (7) Bārā, a mendicant of religious temperament was desirous of receiving the *pahul* (initiation into the faith) and of becoming a Sikh, but before he could fulfil his wish, he died in the year 1679 A.D.

His son (8) Budh Singh carried out the behest of his father. He is said to have received the *pahul* from the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, and on uncorroborative evidence, is said to have taken service under him. Carmichael Smyth describes Budh Singh as having connected himself with a gang of predatory Sikhs and Sānsīs and "won for himself the reputation of the boldest and the most successful free-booter in the country."¹ He acquired fame as an adroit cattle-lifter ; rode his legendary piebald mare Dessee, and there are many a tale of his intrepid courage, of his ready wit, and of his generosity towards the poor. Tradition records that he swam across the river Jehlum fifty times on his piebald mare. He died in the year 1716 A.D.

(9) Nodh Singh, the son of Budh Singh raised the fortunes of the family, first by marrying into a rich Sānsī Jāt family of Majithiā and secondly by raising a small *garhi* (a mudfort) in the village of Śukerchak and enlisting a small force to guard it from the Afghan marauders. Nodh Singh was both adventurous and ambitious. He forsook the occupation of farming and took to cattle-thieving which was an honourable profession at that time. He turned a regular *thārvī* or a highway robber. He soon became notorious throughout the country "from Rawalpindi to the banks of the Sutlej." For some time he was along with other Sikh Sardars active as a *thārvī*, but later about the year 1721, he joined the Fyzulpuriā Misal under Kapur Singh, and enriched himself considerably by plundering successively the Durrani invader Ahmad Shah. In the year 1742, he died of a gunshot wound received in a battle with the Afghans.

2. Charat Singh

Nodh Singh's eldest son (10) Charat Singh, born in the year 1721 A.D. was a dashing and ambitious soldier of fortune. He strengthened his ties with the Fyzulpuriā Misal, fortified the Śukerchak *garhi*, raised more soldiers to fight the Afghans, and organised on a large scale plundering raids which had become a common feature of glory and adventure in those stormy times. Very soon, Charat Singh took possession of the surrounding villages, and with the addition

¹ *History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, London, 1849, p. 4-5.

of new territories, he assumed the title of the Chief of the Śukerchakiā Misal, which was destined to play a significant role in the political history of northern India. We can neither accept the testimony of Court's Chronicle that the Śukerchakiā Misal under Charat Singh had a force of over 10,000 horse,¹ nor Gordon's statement that he succeeded to the patrimony of "three ploughs and a well"—representing thirty acres of land,² but it is evident that by 1756 A.D. he had acquired considerable power and influence enabling him to marry the daughter of Amir Singh,³ an old but wealthy and powerful feudal baron who originally belonged to the Fyzulpuria Misal and held a considerable force and territories in the neighbourhood of Gujranwala.

Matrimonial alliance with a rich and influential family gave an impetus to Charat Singh's ambitious character. In 1758, the young Śukerchakiā chief conquered Sialkot. Three years later, the adventurous career of Charat Singh began. He fell upon the Mughal fortress of Eminabad with his small force, killed its commandant, carried away large booty, and retired to a newly-built small fortress within the town of Gujranwala. This aroused the wrath of the imperial governor of Lahore, Khwaja Obeid, who immediately sent a force 2,000 strong under the command of Bahadur Khan and Afzal Khan for his chastisement. The Lahore force invested Gujranwala, and Amir Singh being very old, left the defence of the town to his son-in-law. In a pitched battle fought near Gujranwala, Charat Singh completely routed the imperial force and captured a large booty and military stores.⁴

The rout of the imperial force emboldened Charat Singh to embark upon a series of campaigns against the poorly garrisoned Afghan fortresses which stud-ded the immediate vicinity of the Śukerchakiā territories. He joined in plundering raids with the other adventurous Sikh chiefs, recruited more men in his army, and within a year occupied the important town of Wazirabad. When in the year 1762, the Durrani invader Ahmad Shah with his Afghan hordes made his appearance in the Punjab, Charat Singh prudently sent his family and valuables to Jammu, without coming into contact with the main body of Abdali's troops, followed up his rear, and captured the fortress of Rohtas, and took possession of the country north of the river Jehlum—Chakwal and Pind Dadan Khan. Thereafter,

¹ Court, *Sikhhkan De Raj Di Vithiya*, Lahore, 1888, p. 64.

² *The Sikhs*, London, 1904, p. 81.

³ Amir Singh originally had joined the Fyzulpuria Misal from which he had severed his connection and had become a notorious robber. He was 100 years old when he embraced Sikhism. According to Latif (p. 339) "his depredations extended from the banks of the Jehlum to the walls of Delhi having acquired large territorial possessions in Gujranwala, he was looked upon as the Chief man of the district."

⁴ Latif, p. 339; Smyth, p. 8-9 etc.

for about a decade he rested, trying to assuage the jealousy of the Sikh Sardars, who made vain attempts to counteract by intrigue and treachery the Śukerchakiā bid to political power in the region.

In 1774, Charat Singh stirred again. A premature succession feud had been raging in the hills of Jammu, whose rājā Ranjit Deo, a weak ruler and a person of diminutive intellect, had raised a storm. In order to settle the family feud, which aimed at the exclusion from succession of his eldest son Brij Raj Deo, in favour of the younger one Dalel Singh, he solicited the aid of the powerful Bhangīs besides having on his side the hill rājās of Chamba, Nurpur and Kangra. Brij Raj Deo revolted; he invited Charat Singh to come to his aid, promising in the event of the deposition of his father, a yearly tribute to the Śukerchakiās. Charat Singh found the opportunity too good to be missed. He formed a combination with Jai Singh Kanahayā and the allied forces marched on Jammu to assist the eldest son. But the battle in which the Bhangīs and hill rajas were pitted against the Śukerchakiās and the Kanahayās, was indecisive; the issue remained unsettled but Charat Singh was accidentally killed by the bursting of his own matchlock.

3. Maha Singh

Charat Singh died at the age of 45 years, leaving behind his eldest son (11) Maha Singh barely 10 years old to succeed him. He was a brave warrior and an alliance maker. He finally forsook the detestable profession of a *tharvī* or a common free-booter, and became formally the head of the Śukerchakiā Misal. His small principality included Gujranwala and its suburbs, Eminabad, Rohtas, Chakwal, Dhanni, Jalalpur and Pind Dadan Khan which brought him an estimated annual revenue of 300,000 rupees. The smaller sardars of the region accepted his suzerainty and offered him *nazarāna* and the rival confederacies, the Bhangīs, the Ramgarhiās, the Āhlūwāliās and the Kanahayās became extremely jealous of him. But the seeds the greatness of the Śukerchakiās had been sown. He laid the foundation of the yet smallest and insignificant confederacy, which in the course of a few decades, was destined to overthrow all other political rivals.

The minority of Maha Singh induced some of the subordinate sardars, instigated by Ganda Singh of the Bhangī Misal to overthrow Śukerchakiā allegiance, but Charat Singh's widow, Mā'i Desan—"a resolute and courageous woman" acted with fortitude and promptly confiscated the lands of the rebellious chiefs and nipped the mischief in the bud. She acted as regent, and with the help of a Brahman named Jairam, her alleged paramour, managed the affairs of the principality. The fortress of Gujranwala ravaged by Abdali's army a year earlier was rebuilt and named *Maha Singh Garhi*. She struck back at the Bhangīs, and by her machinations, Jodh Singh Bhangī was assassinated in the year 1775 A. D.

The same year she arranged the marriage of her son Maha Singh with the daughter of Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind.

4. His military exploits

In 1779 A. D. Maha Singh took over the affairs of the government in his own hands. He had inherited from his enterprising father an ambitious spirit of adventure, aggrandisement, and military skill. The waning power of the Bhangīs, since their expulsion from Multan in 1779 by Taimur Shah, had broken up their principalities, and the warring brothers had divided up the territory. Maha Singh, finding confusion in their ranks, pillaged their territories. He took possession of Isa Khel, Musa Khel, attacked Pindi Bhattian and Jhang. A feud having arisen between Sahib Singh of Gujrat and his brother Sukha Singh, Maha Singh sowed further the seeds of discord amongst the brothers by promising Sahib Singh succour ; but when Gujjar Singh, their father marched from Lahore, and invested Gujrat to bring his rebel son to obedience, Maha Singh left him alone and instead marched towards Kotli, near Sialkot, and exacted a tribute from the town which was renowned for the manufacture of arms. On his return, he formed an alliance with the powerful Kanahayā Chief Jai Singh¹ for the conquest of Rasalnagar ruled by Pir Muhammad Chatha, an oppressive and bigoted Chief, whose territories extended on the eastern side of the river Chenab. The fortress was besieged by a combined force of the Śukerchakiās and the Kanahayās 6,000 strong. The siege lasted 4 months, when after suffering great privations of stores and provisions, Pir Muhammad capitulated on the condition of safe conduct for himself and his family. But the victorious Chiefs resorted to treachery ; the harassed Muslim Chief was put in irons and his sons tied to the mouth of cannon and blown up.²

The Śukerchakia victory at Rasalnagar struck a heavy blow on the waning power of the Bhangīs, for Pir Muhammad was their nominal tributary ; it also resounded far and wide among the territories of the warring confederacies. Maha Singh's fame as a warrior spread ; smaller sardars in the region began to show him deference and came with offers of allegiance. Rasalnagar was renamed

¹ Jai Singh Kanahayā was the most powerful Chief amongst the various Misals. He is said to have possessed a force 8,000 horse strong (Prinsep, p. 24); he had waged war against the Bhangīs, contrived successfully to expel Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā from the Punjab by over-running his possessions. His conquests also included Nurpur, Hajipur, Mukerian and the hill fortress of Kangra, which he obtained by treachery. Charat Singh's early alliance with the powerful Kanahayā Chief was quite helpful to him. His son Maha Singh became a protégé of Jai Singh, and it is evident from contemporary sources that during his minority immediately after Charat Singh's death, Jai Singh took Maha Singh under his tutelage. Maha Singh later fell out with Jai Singh.

² Smyth (p. 10), however, claims the Chatha Chief was Ghulam Muhammad, who was slain in the battle and his only son was captured and blown up from a gun.

as Ramnagar and Sardar Dal Singh was appointed as its governor. The famous Bhangī cannon *Zamzam* of Ahmad Shah Abdali fell into Šukerchakiā hands.

On November 2, 1780 was born to Mā'i Malwan a son, who was named Ranjit Singh. Maha Singh celebrated the occasion with great rejoicings and festivities. Brahmans were fed, alms given to the poor, and offerings were sent to the temples and religious shrines.

5. March on Jammu

The pre-eminence of Maha Singh was now accepted by the smaller chiefs, but his alliance with the Kanahayās proved abortive. Brij Raj Deo, the new ruler of Jammu, whose territories were constantly being ravaged by the Bhangīs, applied for help to the Kanahayās who readily agreed. Both Jai Singh and his brother Haqiqat Singh marched to his succour, but instead of recovering his territories from the Bhangīs, deserted him and joined his enemies. The beleaguered hill rājā not only lost more territory, but Jammu itself was invested by the Sikhs, and Brij Raj Deo purchased immunity by agreeing to pay to the Kanahayās an annual tribute of 300,000 rupees. But although promised under duress, the tribute was never paid, and the Kanahayā Chief Haqiqat Singh resolved to recover it by force. Maha Singh who had previously exchanged turbans with the hill rājā, was invited by Haqiqat Singh Kanahayā to join in the invasion of Jammu, it being agreed, that they would equally share the spoils.

Jammu offered a rich prize to Maha Singh. It was a rich and prosperous town in the safety of the hills, where many affluent merchants of the Punjab had taken refuge from the turmoils of the plains and had set up a thriving trade with Kashmir and the plains of the Punjab. Maha Singh resorted to double treachery ; he threw to the winds the solemn bond of fraternity into which he had entered with Brij Raj Deo, and he had no intention of sharing the rich spoils of Jammu with the Kanahayās. He marched instantly on Jammu and reached the outskirts of the capital ; the Kanahayā force under Haqiqat Singh had marched through the Zaffarwal route but could not arrive in time. Brij Raj Deo fled to the safety of the Trikota Devi mountain on the approach of Maha Singh's force, leaving behind the capital undefended. Maha Singh plundered the town, exacted a large idemnity from the people, stripped the palace and the treasury of everything of value, and when Haqiqat Singh arrived at the scene, refused to share the spoils with him. The Kanahayā Sardar left the hills empty-handed in disgust, and shortly afterwards, he died.

6. Estrangement with Kanahayās

Maha Singh's treachery permanently estranged the Sukerchakiās with Jai Singh, the powerful Kanahayā Chief, who swore to destroy the Šukerchakias. However, in 1784 A. D. Maha Singh made an attempt to assuage the wrath of

the Kanahayā Chief at Amritsar, wither he had gone to perform his ablutions at the sacred tank. Jai Singh scornfully rejected the offer of conciliation : "The old Chief received him with marked coolness and displeasure, so much so that Maha Singh assuming the demeanour of an inferior approached with a tray of sweatmeats in his hands, and begged to be acquainted with the cause he had given for offence, professing his sense of filial obligation and attachment to Jai Singh, and offering any atonement in his power. Jai Singh was stretched at length on his couch, and drawing his sheet over him called out loudly and rudely, that he desired to hear no more of the Bhagtia's (dancing boy's) conversation."¹

Maha Singh bore the galling insult with calm indignation. He left Amritsar in hurry, and rode back to Gujranwala swearing to destroy the insolent but powerful Kanahayā Chief. He was still not very powerful and no match for a Bhangī-Kanahayā combination. But breach with the Kanahayās had been effected and he cast eyes for allies to counteract the approaching danger. At this time, Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā,² who had been driven out of his possessions by the Kanahayās and the Āhlūwālīs across the Sutlej, had earned name as a desperado by his adventurous ravages in Hariyana, and the rich lands of the Jumna and the Ganges. Maha Singh sent him urgent messages to return to the Punjab and recover his lost possessions. Instantly Jassa Singh came back with a large force, and near Patiala a Kanahayā force sent by Jai Singh to bar his progress, was defeated and he joined Maha Singh.

While Maha Singh was thus preparing himself for a contest with Jai Singh, the Kanahayās attacked his possessions. Jandiala and Rasulpur were attached and pillaged ; but in a fiercely contested battle at Majithiā, Maha Singh routed the Kanahayā force and drove them across the Beas.

7. The battle of Batala (1783)

Maha Singh now decided to strike back effectively at Jai Singh. Coalition with Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā had given him strength and confidence and in

¹ Prinsep, (Second Impression, 1970) p. 34-35.

² Amongst the warring confederacies of the time, Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā had occupied quite a prominent position. A daring and intrepid soldier, he had waged a relentless war against the Afghans and had fought the Lahore Governor Khwaja Obied on the side of the Śukerchakiās when he invested Gujranwala in 1777. In conjunction with the Kanahayās, he had ravaged the country in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts after Ahmad Shah Abdali's retreat in 1759. His conquests included those of Batala, Kalanaur and Ram Rauni. In the hills, the Katoch and other smaller rajas paid him tribute. The entire area between the rivers Sutlej and Beas and a part of the Jullundur Doab remained in his possession till he fell out with the Kanahayās, who ousted him from Batala and Kalanaur and drove him across the Sutlej. He fled to Hissar, where after raising a large body of irregular horse, he became a soldier of fortune. His depredations extended to gates of Delhi and its suburbs, and he acquired fame as a free-booter.

1783 A.D., he also invited the Katoch Chief Sansar Chand, a victim of Kanahaya treachery over Kot Kangra, to join them in their invasion of Batala, which had previously belonged to the Rāngarhiās. The forces of the confederates marched on Batala and a few miles from that place at Achal, Jai Singh and his son Gurbakhsh Singh with their allies were ready to meet them. A fierce battle ensued in which Gurbakhsh Singh was slain. The death of his son broke the heart of old Jai Singh; he surrendered the town and fled to Pathankot, leaving behind his daughter-in-law Sada Kaur to effect her escape as best as she could. She fled to Saiyan. Batala was restored to Jassa Singh Rāngarhiā who took possession of the city.

War was now carried on in the hills by Sansar Chand Katoch to wrest from the Kanahayās the fortress of Kangra. He siezed Hajipur and Mukerian, invested Akalgarh and continued to harass Jai Singh's forces in the hills. Ultimately peace was patched up between the two, Jai Singh agreeing to surrender Kot Kangra to Sansar Chand and the latter vacated Hajipur and Mukerian.

Meanwhile rānī Sada Kaur had contrived to arrange the betrothal of her daughter Mehatab Kaur with minor Ranjit Singh.¹ The contract of alliance brought the Kanahayā-Šukerchakiā feud to a close, and as would be seen, it helped Ranjit Singh to rise to political power in the Punjab. Reconciled with Jai Singh, the old confederates, Maha Singh and Sansar Chand marched again to Batala to put the Kanahayās in possession of it. Jassa Singh, however, was strongly entrenched in the town, which was besieged by the invaders; he foiled the attempts of the besiegers to take possession of the town.

Reconciliation with the Kanahayās had left Maha Singh free to settle the score with his old enemy Sahib Singh of Gujrat, who had some years previously married his sister. The old Bhangī Sardar Gujjar Singh having died in 1788, his two sons Sahib Singh and Fateh Singh quarrelled over the distribution of some his possessions. Maha Singh sided with Fateh Singh and fanned the flame of hatred between the brothers till at last in the year 1792 they met at Sodhra to settle the issue by force of arms. Gujrat was invested by the allies and the outlying fortress of Sodhra, where Sahib Singh had shut himself up, besieged for 3 months. It was during the siege that Maha Singh was taken ill and brought back to Gujranwala, where he died soon afterwards.

¹ Some writers hint that the demand of the hand of Gurbakhsh Singh's daughter was imposed as a penalty on the crest-fallen Jai Singh. (See generally, Latif, p. 344; Pyne, p. 69, etc.). Macgregor (p. 142-44), however, observes that Sada Kaur, the widow of Gurbakhsh Singh brought about the alliance between the two warring Misals at Jawala Mukhi when Sansar Chand Katoch invested the fortress of Kangra then in possession of the Kanahayās. The marriage of Ranjit Singh to Mehtab Kaur took place five years later, after Maha Singh's death in 1792, at Batala.

8. Character of Maha Singh

Maha Singh died young at the age of 27. He was brave, ambitious and an intrepid warrior, who by his military exploits had enlarged his dominions and had established the eminence of the Śukerchakiā Misal among the rival Māñjha confederacies. He was the first of the Sikh Sardars who thought of the rudimentaries of administration and government in his newly conquered territories. He appointed a *dīwān* (minister) to look after everyday administration. He had also built up a small force of 2,500 horse which did not live on the *pattidārī* (division of spoils) system. There were no equal associates in the Śukerchakiā Misal. All conquests, all booty reverted to the Chief; exactions, fines and tributes were taken in his name, who was free to do with it what pleased him. Thus in a way, he sowed the seeds of an individualistic state as distinguished from the confederate system of the old Misals which struck a deadly blow on the waning prevalent modes of stateship.

Amongst the rude barons of the Māñjha, Maha Singh was a paragon of ambition, bravery and unscrupulousness and the stigma of being a matricide undeservedly mars his good name. Carmichael Smyth and others narrate a cock-and-bull story¹ that Maha Singh put his own mother to death on account of her criminal intimacy with one Hakikat Singh. Taunted by one Khuda Dad Khan, a person of note at Jalalabad near Gujrat, who had killed his own mother for a similar misdemeanour, Maha Singh determined to wash out the alleged disgrace with his mother's blood. Sometimes afterwards, he found his mother carousing with Hakikat Singh and others. He contemptuously dismissed the alleged paramour and shot dead his mother with his own matchlock. Hakikat Singh fled to his estate near Wazirabad. There is, however, no conclusive evidence of the correctness of this story.

A story on a similar pattern, probably concocted, is narrated about Ranjit Singh. The young Śukerchakiā chief having suspected his mother of having indecent relations with one Laiq Misser, one fine morning surprised them both in his mother's chamber. The chicken-hearted lover escaped well in time, leaving behind his mistress to be slain in cold blood by his enraged son. Laiq Misser is described as having fled to Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law, *rānī* Sada Kaur for protection, who, however, delivered him up to the vengeance of his son-in-law, who put him to death.² Smyth's savoury concoctions based on bazar gossip, which he has collected in what he calls a *Secret History of the Lahore Darbar*, are hardly creditable.

¹ *History of the Reigning family of Lahore*, London, 1849, p. 10-11; Latif, p. 345; Prinsep, p. 38.

² Latif, p. 347; Smyth, p. 14-15; Prinsep, p. 38 etc.

Latif, who has followed *verbatim* Smyth's version, reports the same story but adds additional gossip by alleging that Dīwān Lakhpat Rai was the only known paramour of Mā'ī Malwan.¹ Ranjit Singh got rid of him by sending him on an expedition to Kitās, where he had him put to death. Malcolm, Murray and Prinsep all refer to the profligate character of Malwan as having many paramours admitted to her favours, and that Dal Singh at Ranjit Singh's orders put her to death by poison, although Smyth categorically reaffirms that Ranjit Singh put her to death with his own hands and that he had seen pictures *representing it thus* sold at Lahore!² The matter of the death of Lakhpat Rai should present no problem keeping in view the fact that Dal Singh, Ranjit Singh's father's maternal uncle had long borne ill-will towards Dīwān Lakhpat Rai. He had him despatched to the Kitās expedition, where he was slain in an affray with the zamindars, not without suspicious contrivance.³

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 347.

² Smyth *op. cit.*, *Appendix: Note*, p. vii, which refers to the above is probably not by Gardner who signs as Editor.

³ Latif, p. 347 ; Prinsep, p. 38-9 and *Note*.

CHAPTER 3

ON THE ROAD TO POLITICAL SUPREMACY

1. Decline of Misals

IT WOULD BE relevant at this place to review briefly the political conditions in the Punjab at Maha Singh's death in 1792. The Sikh Misals, which had dislodged the Afghans from supremacy in northern India during the last four decades and had gained political ascendancy, were now, when the threat of foreign invasion had receded, busy waging war against each other. The once powerful Bhangīs, who had ruled the centre of the Punjab—Lahore and Amritsar, and had carried the Khālsa arms north and south, now lay prone and inept, their past glory faded and their kingdom shattered to pieces. The confederacy had collapsed on account of the weak and inefficient offspring of the last rulers, Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh. The Rāmgarhiās were at war with the Kanahayās, who had wrested Batala, Kalanaur and the whole country to the south of the Sutlej from them. Since the death of its warrior chief Ram Singh in 1781, the Nakā'īs who held the territory of Chunian, Kasur, Sharkpur and Kamalia, yielding an annual revenue of over 9,00,000 rupees, had declined in power. The Dalewāllās, the Nishānwālās, the Fyzulpuriās, the Karorsinghiās and the Shahīds had become non-entities. The steady decline of the once powerful Misals in the Māñjha region paved the way for the rise of the Śukerchakiās in the Punjab.

Of the remaining politically effective Misals in the region were the Kanahayās and the Āhlūwāliās, both in alliance with the Śukerchakiās, the former in matrimony and the latter in friendship. The Kanahayās had acquired considerable power and influence under Jai Singh and their possessions had become extensive both in the hills and the plains. But they soon came into clash with the Rāmgarhiās, and in a fierce battle fought at Batala, in which Gurbakhsh Singh, the son of Jai Singh was slain, the Rāmgarhiās ousted the Kanahayā Chief from the town, who fled to Pathankot, leaving behind the widow of his son to fend for herself. But the city was taken possession of by the force sent by Jassa Singh, the Rāmgarhiā Chief, and the widow fled to Saiyan.

The decline of the Misal was thus set in and the Kanahayās were beset with difficulties. At this moment rājā Sansar Chand Katoch, who had never reconciled himself with the loss of Kot Kangra, which the Kanahayās had wrested from him, declared an intermittent war on Jai Singh. He siezed Hajipur,

Mukerian and Atulgarh and seriously threatened Kanahayā possessions in the hills. Rāni Sada Kaur patched up a matrimonial alliance with the Śukerchakiās by proposing marriage of her daughter Mehtab Kaur with minor Ranjit Singh, and Jai Singh hastily came to terms with Sansar Chand after a 3 years' war. An agreement between the two was arrived at: the Kanahayās agreed to give up Kot Kangra in return for Hajipur and Mukerian and a promise from the hill Chief of assistance against the Rāmgarhiās.

Thus assured, Jai Singh marched on Batala to give battle to the Rāmgarhiās. He was accompanied by Maha Singh Śukerchakiā, rājā Sansar Chand of Kangra, and the hill Chiefs of Chamba and Nurpur. The confederates laid siege to Batala, which lasted over three weeks. Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā was strongly entrenched within the fortress, and the confederate forces failed to dislodge him, and finally dispersed. The Kanahayā-Rāmgarhiā feud continued for some years, when ultimately Jai Singh took possession of Batala and drove Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā to the Cis-Sutlej region.

The Ahlūwālīā Misal, with an overall strength of 3,000 horse and extensive territories and influence in the Jullundur Doab on both sides of the Sutlej, had since the glorious days of their illustrious forebear Jassa Kalāl, was now ruled by his brother Bhag Singh. He was succeeded by Fateh Singh, who became a great friend of Ranjit Singh and helped the Śukerchakiā Misal rise to political power in the Punjab.

2. Cis-Sutlej region

In the Cis-Sutlej region, the Phulkiān Misal—Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal formed the dominant political power. Besides the region was studded with small, often unviable, petty states. Karnal was held by Gajpat Singh (1,500 horse), Thanisar by Bhanga Singh (750 horse) Sirhind by Jassa Singh Thoka (1,500 horse) Shahabad by Karam Singh (750 horse), Khanna by Soudh Singh (225 horse), Buria by Hari Singh (750 horse), Sikandra by Diwan Singh (750 horse), Garhi Kotha by Hakumat Singh (150 horse), Mani Majra by Bhagat Singh (375 horse), Kharar by Dhanna Singh (1,500 horse), Fattehabad by Sahib Singh (4,500 horse), Nurmahal by Baghel Singh (750 horse), Nakodar by Tara Singh Gheba (2,250 horse) and Garh Shankar by Kasail Singh (150 horse).¹

¹ Browne—*India Tracts*, II, provides interesting statistics of the break up of Sikh armed strength in the Punjab as under: Cis-Sutlej region: 24,300; Bist Jullundur: 13,700; Māñjha region—Bari Doab: 30,200, Rechna Doab: 20,000; Others: 10,000. Total: 98,200. Browne's estimates of 1738 of the armed strength of the Sikh Misals are in sharp contrast with the earlier estimates of Forster (1783) and Francklin who compute them as 3,00,000 and 2,50,000 respectively. But 10 years later, their strength had dwindled to 65,000 horse (*vide. Military Memoirs of George Thomas*, Calcutta, 1803, p. 274). That the decline of the Misals had set in during the closing decades of the 18th century is evidenced by George Thomas and Francklin's

In the Cis-Sutlej region there were over 40 states big and small with an approximate revenue of about 45,00,000 rupees and an armed strength of about 25,000 horse. Patiala, the largest state in the region had an annual revenue of 6,10,000 rupees and its military strength amounted to 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 infantry. The annual revenue and military strength of other important states were as follows : Kaithal- 2,25,000 rupees, cavalry 600. Nabha- 1,50,000 rupees, cavalry 400. Jind- 1,25,000 rupees, cavalry 600. Malerkotla- 40,000 rupees, cavalry 400, Ladwa- 1,50,000 rupees, cavalry 1,000. The largest force (2,000) was that maintained by Patiala and the smallest by Bundi (150), Dakhari (40) and Talwandi Majooke (25).¹

The Phulkiān Misal had extensive territories in the Mālwa and Sirhind and was the most dominant and politically influential. But the decline of the Misal System had branched up the house into four separate states—Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal, whose mutual jealousies kept them often at loggerheads with each other. The Nishānwālās, the Nihangs, the Karorsinghiās had become weak and politically ineffective. Besides the Phulkiāns other petty states were Ladwa, Buria, Thanisar, Malerkotla, Karnal, Ambala and Kunjpura.

3. Politics of the region

Patiala was ruled by Sahib Singh whose imbecility and misgovernment had led to the prevalence of anarchical conditions within his extensive territories. The rājā of Jind, Bhag Singh, a shrewd political opportunist dabbled in all political affairs of the region. His influence was quite well established both in the Māñjha and the Mālwa countries. He was the maternal uncle of Ranjit Singh. Nabha was governed by Jaswant Singh, a sober and intelligent man. Bhā'i Lal Singh, the ruler of Kaithal was a cunning politician with shifting loyalties. Kunjpura was governed by a Pathan dynasty where a succession feud was raging. The second Pathan state of Malerkotla was ruled by Ataullah Khan whose revenues were meagre and army small.²

Two external forces threatened the Cis-Sutlej region during the closing decades of the 18th century. The Maratha Deputy Perron was determined to

account (*vide*, particularly *Life of Shah Alam*, Allahabad, 1951. p. 75n.). Further reduction occurred with the rise of the Sukerchakiā Misal to political power in the Punjab. Lieutenant White, who surveyed the country between the Jumna and the Sutlej in 1809, computed the revenues of the region at 42,47,922 rupees and military forces at 24,959 (White to Seton, 7 October, 1809—(P) 2:148). Ochterlony's Statement of the revenue and military resources of the Sikh States between the Jumna and the Sutlej estimates the revenue at 25,84,000 rupees and military strength at 12,850 horse. (See, Ochterlony to Edmonstone 17 March, 1809—BSPC(I) 25 July, 1809, C3).

¹ BSPC(I) 29 July, 1809, C3 and C4.

² For a detailed account of the politics of the Cis-Sutlej region, see *infra*, Chapter 4.

advance Maratha influence beyond the Jumna, and the Cis-Sutlej Sardars, who were being harassed by the English adventurer George Thomas, choosing the lesser evil, sent a deputation to Perron at Delhi seeking protection from the ravages of Thomas. Perron readily agreed to help them; he sent a force under Louis Bourquin to expel Thomas from their territories, but imposed Maratha paramountcy over the Sikh country subjecting the Sikh Chiefs to heavy exactions, which amounted almost to 1/3rd of their revenues.¹

While the Sikh Chiefs groaned under the heavy exactions by the Maratha Deputy, the influence exercised by him in the Cis-Sutlej region was ephemeral; it did not exceed beyond a vague acknowledgement of supremacy by the Sikh Chiefs. The end of Maratha dominance came when Louis Bourquin was defeated by Lord Lake under the walls of Delhi on 11 September, 1803. On 1 November, the Marathas suffered another defeat at Laswari and the treaty of Surjiarjangaon ended their influence in northern India.²

4. Early Life of Ranjit Singh

Ranjit Singh was born under these political conditions of decadence of the Māñjha and Mālwa Misals. The local bard sang :

Behold Sardar Maha Singh
Was small in power,
But when Ranjit Singh was born
He became mighty in a few days.
Much territory and wealth came into his power,
And in a short time, God showed him many sorts of pleasures.
All the Punjab became subservient to him;
Whosoever obeyed him not, was destroyed;
Various kinds of things were done by him
And he got the kingdom into his hand.
No one saw his back.

Ranjit Singh was 12 years old when his father died. Of his childhood or early life we know practically nothing. He was brought up without any formal education and grew up totally illiterate. Early in infancy he was struck down by small-pox, which disease left him with a disfigured face and the loss of an eye.³ Short-statured and ugly in appearance, he was strong and active bodily, and extremely fond of horse riding, swordsmanship and other manly sports. A story is often told how he worsted Hashmat Khan Chatha's attempt to assassinate him. The youthful prince struck him down with a single blow of the sword.⁴ He was fond of swimming excursions and hunting, and it appears that during his child-

¹ See generally, the *Poona Residency Correspondence*, ix, No. 39-40; Seton to Edmonstone, 3 April, 1808, C1, para 4; Griffin, p. 383 ff; *Panjab States Gazetteers*, XVIIA, p. 342 etc.

² See Chapter 4 (Sec 12-13), *infra*.

³ U I, p. 25.

⁴ Latif, *History of the Panjab*, Calcutta, 1891, p. 348.

hood he accompanied his father to his military expeditions. From Amir Singh Brahman he received training in musketry ; from his father he learnt the art of war. He grew up a soldier from his boyhood, although the corrupt influences of a petty oriental court attracted him towards the usual vices of debauchery and excessive drinking. "Yet," observes contemporary Macgregor, "in his youth Runjeet was remarkably active, and excellent horseman, and well skilled in everything connected with military feats. He was ever foremost in battle and the last in retreat ; there is no instance of his being ever embarrassed, or evincing anything like fear, on record."¹

5. Physical appearance

We have many extraordinarily divergent accounts of the physical appearance of Ranjit Singh by various foreign observers. Lord Auckland's sister Emily Eden describes him : "exactly like an old mouse, with grey whiskers and one eye."² Baron Hugel describes him as short and mean-looking, the most ugly man that he had seen throughout the Punjab. His face pock-marked, skin greyish brown, skinny lips, a head sunken on his broad shoulders but, he adds : "as soon as he mounts his horse and with his black shield at his back puts him on his mettle, his whole form seems animated by the spirit within, and assumes a certain grace of which no body believes it susceptible."³ Griffin notwithstanding the unprepossessing figure and short stature calls him "the *beau ideal* of a soldier, strong, spare, active, courageous and enduring."⁴ Osborne is struck with the plainness and intelligence of the ill-looking countenance of Ranjit Singh and the restless wandering of his single fiery eye. However, he admits, that the rather unusual short stature, and the apparent weakness disappears when he is on horseback.⁵ Khushwant Singh records the current gossip regarding the ungainliness of Ranjit Singh. His Muslim concubine Mowran once asked the Maharaja where he was when God was distributing beauty. To this he wittily replied that he had gone to find his kingdom.⁶ Many other anecdotes are current. Once the Shah of Persia sent him his portrait requesting Ranjit Singh for a like favour. Ranjit Singh at the advice of Faqir Aziz-u-Din had his portrait drawn by the artist riding a horse and aiming a musket with the blind eye closed. Faqir Aziz-ud Din once on a visit to the Ludhiana Agency was jocularly asked

¹ *History of the Sikhs*, London, 1846, i, p. 215 sq.

² *Up the Country*, London, 1866, i, p. 320.

³ *Travels* (Jervis' translation), Patiala, 1970. p. 380.

⁴ *Ranjit Singh*, p. 89.

⁵ *Journal* under date 29 May, 1838.

⁶ *Ranjit Singh*, London, 1962, p. 7.

as to which of the eyes of the Maharaja was blind. "The awe and grandeur of His Majesty is such," he replied, "that no one dares look the noble Sarkār in the face."

6. The triumvirate

Maha Singh had bequeathed to his minor son a sizeable kingdom and plenty of troubles. Although the battle of Batala had established Śukerchakiā supremacy over the Kanahayās, the score with the Bhangīs had yet to be settled. The Rāmgarhiās under Jassa Singh had regained power; the Bhangīs still held the important towns of Lahore, Amritsar and Gujrat; the principality of Wazirabad was under Jodh Singh and Kasur was held by the Afghan Nawab Nizam-ud-Din. The Sikh Confederacies riven with mutual jealousies were inimical towards the growth of Śukerchakiā power. The death of Jai Singh Kanahayā in 1793 had brought the affairs of the Misal under rānī Sada Kaur, who after having deprived the remaining sons of Jai Singh a share in the kingdom, had assumed the rôle of a guardian of Ranjit Singh as his mother-in-law. She was a woman of determination and courage and "one of the most artful and ambitious of her sex that figured in Sikh history."¹

Sada Kaur exercised considerable influence over her minor son-in-law; she combined the affairs of the two confederacies in a way that contributed much towards Ranjit Singh's rise to political power in the Punjab. For a while the affairs of the state remained out of the hands of the minor prince. Mā'ī Malwan, Ranjit Singh's mother became the regent, Diwān Lakhpat Rai the principal minister, and Sardar Dal Singh, Mahan Singh's maternal uncle, the guide and adviser in all matters. The triumvirate rule, however, did not last long. The court was beset with internal dissensions and intrigue. Malwan tried to counteract Sada Kaur's influence by arranging a second marriage of her minor son with Raj Kanwar, the daughter of the Nakā'ī Chief Khazan Singh. Diwān Lakhpat Rai, the minister did not pull on well with Dal Singh, the principal adviser of the regent. The regent's open intimacy with the minister and her dissolute character was resented by the people surrounding the throne.²

The period of Ranjit Singh's tutelage under the triumvirate regency cannot be ascertained with certainty, although it is generally accepted that at the age of 15 he determined to become his own master. According to Murray, the young prince dismissed the Diwan and caused her own mother to be assassinated for her dissolute character.³ We have the account of the Official Lahore

¹ Latif, p. 346.

² See generally on the subject, UT, ii, p. 31-32 and 37 ff.; Prinsep, p. 47; Latif, p. 346; Osborne p. 10; Griffin, p. 162 etc.

³ *The Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab etc.*, Calcutta, 1834, p. 39 f.n.

Darist that soon after the death of his father, Ranjit Singh appointed Lakhpat Rai as his own *dīwān* and Dal Singh as his principal adviser. The Qādirī saint Ghulam Mohyiuddin predicted at his accession that the young Sukerchakiā Chief would rise to political power in the Punjab.¹ Be that as it may, it is evident that Ranjit Singh became his own master in 1795. Dal Singh still remained his principal adviser and with the help of rānī Sada Kaur, he consolidated his position.

7. Ideological setback

It is easier to understand the rise of Ranjit Singh to political power in the Punjab. The recurrent Durrani invasions, which had a few years earlier convulsed the core of political life of the Punjab, had spent up their force. The Sikh confederacies which had arisen on the collapse of Afghan power in northern India, were cutting each other's throat. The Misal system born out of a sense of national unity to combat foreign aggression had foundered on the rock of personal ambition and lust for power. The carving out of separate principalities by the powerful Bhangīs, the Rāmgarhiās, the Āhlūwālīās and the Phulkians had struck a blow at the mystic ideal of the Commonwealth of Guru Gobind Singh. With the disappearance of the Afghan threat, the principal confederacies began to act independently. The unity of action or concerted will in the name of the *Khālsa* had become a thing of the past. The *Sarbat Khālsa* or a general congregation of the Sikhs still met twice a year, and the Sardars assembled at Amritsar on the Baisakhī and the Dīwālī festivals, and the *Gurmattas* or special councils were held, but the concert and unity of action was no longer there in the deliberations of the *Khālsa*. Mutual bickerings and animosities vitiated such gatherings; rivalries and jealousies of the Sardars against one another were neither forgiven nor forgotten. There were no common predatory enterprises; no marching of the joint forces of the Misals against a common foe, but against each other. No partition of lands, town and villages took place; no collection of the *rākhī*, no distribution of the spoils amongst the *Sarkardārs*, the *pattīs* or distribution of the spoils amongst those who had taken part in the expeditions. The *Dal Khālsa*, which had given cohesion and unity of action to various components of the Commonwealth, no longer existed. A selfish concept of individualistic statehood and personalised army had grown amongst the Misaldars, who had carved out their own petty kingdoms and formed opportunistic alliances for their own benefit in order to prey upon each other's territories. Such was the state of affairs of the Sikh Misals. The once powerful Bhangīs, who had occupied the important towns of Lahore and Amritsar, had carried their arms to Jhang, Multan and Bahawalpur in the south, had swept over the north as far as Jammu and Rawalpindi, were finally defeated by Taimur Shah in 1779 in a decisive battle at Multan.

¹ UT, II, *ut supra*.

Their decline had set in : from thence on they became weak, dissipated and spent up.

8. Collapse of Durrani empire

Interwoven with the rise and fall of the Sikh Misals was the sudden and catastrophic end of the Durrani empire in India. The edifice of Ahmad Shah Abdali's kingdom in India crumbled simultaneously with the dismemberment of Afghanistan towards the closing decades of the 18th century. Peshawar and Kashmir, though under nominal suzerainty of Kabul, had become virtually independent kingdoms under the Barakzais: Attock was usurped by the Wazirkhels. Jhang was taken possession of by the Sials, and Kasur by the Pathans. The Derajat including Bahawalpur came under the sway of the Daudpotas. Multan threw off the Afghan Yoke and became independent under Nawab Muzaffar Khan Saddozai. The Afghan satraps of Daera, Mankera, Hot, Bannu and Tank set up their semi-independent principalities following the political upheavals in Afghanistan. Further south in Sind, the Talpurian Amirs had set up three independent states of Hyderabad, Khairpur and Mirpur virtually independent of Afghan authority. The Durrani empire in northern India lay in ruins.

9. Its political background

Since their cession to Ahmad Shah Durrani by the emperor of Delhi in 1757, the provinces of the Punjab and Sind had remained in the hands of Afghan governors, who had to contend with the rising power of the Sikhs in the Punjab. Taimur Shah, who was left in charge of these provinces ineffectually curbed the depredations of the Sikhs by expelling them from Amritsar and having the fortress of Ram Rauni levelled to the ground. But the combined Sikh confederates signally defeated the young Afghan prince and his minister Jahan Khan. The Afghans retired in hurry, and the Sikhs took possession of Lahore in 1758. Their leader Jassa Kalāl proclaimed the sovereignty of the *Khalsa* in the province and struck coins commemorating the victory over the Afghans :

*Sikka zad bar jahān ba fazl-i-Akāl,
Mulk-i-Ahmad girifta Jassā Kalāl.*

The death of Ahmad Shah in June 1773 brought about a steady decline of Afghan authority in the Punjab. When Taimur Shah ascended the *masnad* at Kabul, the powerful Sikh confederacies had firmly established themselves as far as Saharanpur in the east, Multan in the south, Attock in the west, and Kangra and Jammu in the north. The new master of Afghanistan made numerous attempts to dislodge the Sikhs from political power in the Punjab. In 1779, an expedition was sent against Multan and Taimur Shah after defeating the Bhangīs, re-established Afghan authority in the province. The Bhangī Sardars Sobha Singh and Lehna Singh, who had been driven out of Lahore in 1767 by the Durrani invader's final descent in the Punjab, had soon afterwards reoccupied it. They remained in

possession of the province undisturbed for about two decades of Taimur Shah's rule till 1793, when Shah Zaman, who had succeeded to the throne of Kabul, vainly dreamt of recovering the Punjab from the Sikhs. He made an abortive attempt in 1793 to invade the Punjab; from Hasan Abdal he sent an army of 7,000 horse under the command of his general Ahmad Khan Shahnachi, but his force was routed by the Sikhs. Two years later, Shah Zaman again appeared at Peshawar. A large Afghan force took possession of the fortress of Rohtas, but the Shah hastened back to Kabul on hearing the news of the Persians having invaded Khurasan.

10. Shah Zaman's third invasion

During his third invasion in 1796-97, Shah Zaman occupied Lahore. He had been urged by the hard-pressed Rohilla Chief Ghulam Muhammad and Nawab Asif-ud-Daula, the Oudh Vazier to invade India. In November 1796, the Shah marched at the head of 30,000 men and reached unhindered the precincts of Lahore and set up his camp on the banks of the river Ravi, near Jahangir's mausoleum. The Bhangī sardars left the town in hurry, and the Shah's troops occupied the town on 3 January, 1797.

The Durrani reoccupation of Lahore in 1797 rallied round the visionary Shah Zaman, the Muslim rabble in the Punjab. The Shah ordered illuminations of the town for three successive nights, and proclamations were issued that the infidel Sikhs and the Marathas would receive no quarter. *Jezia* was reimposed on all non-Muslims, large columns of Afghan horse chased the Sikhs, and in the vicinity of Lahore acts of incendiarism, destruction of crops and cattle took place. Some of the Sikh Sardars tendered their submission. The Nawab of Kasur and other petty Muslim rulers hailed the Shah a Ghāzī. Shah Alam, the blind and imbecile emperor of Delhi sent him frantic appeals to deliver him from Maratha thralldom. The Shah also received messages from Tipu Sultan and Sindhia assuring him help if he invaded India. But all these grandiloquent schemes were cut short by the disturbing news of the rebellion of his brother Shah Mahmud at Herat. Shah Zaman left for Kabul in haste, leaving behind his deputies with a force of 7,000 horse to settle the country as best as they could.

And yet Shah Zaman's invasion had failed to dislodge the Sikh confederacies from their established position in the Punjab. The Bhangī Sardars Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh came out of their hiding and reoccupied Lahore. A Śukerchakiā-Bhangī coalition defeated the Shah's deputy and drove the remnants of the Afghan force across the river Jhelum.¹

The Shah's third invasion in October 1798, and the Afghan reoccupation of Lahore had interesting repercussions at Fort William. The Shah had informed

¹ PRC, viii, 7.

the Marquis of Wellesley of his intention of invading India demanding the services of the East India Company and the Nawab Vazier of Oudh in the execution of his "romantic designs."¹ The Shah had neither the resources nor the capacity to invade India, much less to break the power of the Sikhs in the Punjab, but the Marquis of Wellesley designedly magnified the threat to assemble the Army of Bengal on the Oudh frontier to force a treaty on the Nawab Vazier.²

11. British Mission to Lahore

Under the unduly exaggerated Afghan threat to India, Wellesley's Government took several measures. Imagination of those in authority at Whitehall and Fort William transcended the realms of reality. In London it was considered possible that Shah Zaman would combine with the French, Tipu Sultan, the Marathas and the Sikhs.³ One of the political measures to thwart the Shah and his imaginary allies was Wellesley's mission to the Mālwa Sikh country and the Court of Ranjit Singh in 1800. Mr. Collins, the British Resident with Sindhia selected a Muhammadan of talent, Mir Yusuf Ali Khan for the purpose, and furnished him with *Kharīṭas* for Ranjit Singh of Lahore and other principal Sikh chiefs of Mālwa and Māñjha. But except for establishing with the Sikhs a vague sort of preliminary contact, Yusuf Ali Khan's mission attained practically nothing.⁴ By the time he arrived at Lahore, the supposed Afghan threat to India had practically receded. The visionary Shah on his return to Kabul was soon involved in the throes of civil war; he was deposed and blinded by his brother Shah Mahmud.

12. Fallacy of a bestowal

A sequel to Shah Zaman's last invasion is the alleged bestowal of the *nizāmat* of Lahore on young Śukerchakiā Chief Ranjit Singh as a reward for the services rendered in restoring to the Afghan Shah, the heavy artillery which had become embedded in the flooded river Jehlum in his hasty retreat in February 1799. Both the local chronicles and contemporary writers have repeated the story *ad nauseam*,⁵ which seems neither feasible nor warranted by facts.

¹ For correspondence on the subject and the feigned gullibility of the Government of India, see particularly, the *Wellesley Papers* (BM)-Correspondence with Henry Dundas during the year 1798; the *Wellesley Despatches* (Martin), i, Appendix E: *Memoir on the probable invasion of Zaman Shah etc.*

² Governor-General to Secret Committee, 23 April, 1800-BISL(I), Vol. 3.

³ Wellesley to Dundas, 6 July, 1800-WD, i, xxii.

⁴ For a detailed account of Yusuf Ali Khan's mission, *vide* the present author's *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, Hoshiarpur, 1968, p. 33 sq.

⁵ See generally on the subject, the local histories of Bute Shah (BM) MS Or. 1623, fol. 315 ff; Khushwaqt Rai (BM) MS, Or. 187, fol. 138 ff; Mufti (I) MS. E 504, fol. 219 sq. Also see Cunningham, p. 120; Elphinstone, ii, p. 317; Latif, p. 346; Griffin, *Ranjit Singh* (Oxford, 1893), p. 161, and others.

There is hardly any concrete evidence that Ranjit Singh had made any overtures to the Afghan king prior to his occupation of Lahore, although it is reported that Shah Zaman tried to win him over to his interests by sending him a rich *khill'at* from Kabul.¹ Nor can we give credence to the report that Ranjit Singh sent his deputy to do homage to the Shah along with some of the Sardars of the Punjab when he reoccupied Lahore.² No friendly contact appears to have been established between the two as is claimed by Cunningham,³ Elphinstone,⁴ and Latif.⁵ The Lahore Diarist, on the other hand, asserts that Ranjit Singh treated the Shah's demands for submission with contempt and with the answer that he would get them on the field of battle. He further boasts that the young *Šukerchakiā* Chief had challenged the Shah to a personal duel.⁶ Ranjit Singh rode up to Lahore and said to the Shah: "O grandson of Abdali, come down and measure swords with the grandson of Charat Singh!" All this spirit of youthful bravado appears unfeasible.

But it is evident that during the last Afghan invasion Ranjit Singh did not remain inactive. The Sikhs harried the Afghan camp at Lahore, and a large body of troops congregated at Amritsar to bar the Shah's passage on his vaunted march on Delhi. A coalition was formed with various Sikh sardars to stem the progress of the Shah, and Ranjit Singh had crossed the Sutlej with his forces and had reduced adjacent territories. He had made inroads into Sirhind, but after the Shah's departure, he returned and followed the retreating Afghan army upto the Attock.⁷

The Shah's withdrawal gave an opportunity to the Sikhs to obliterate all semblance of Afghan authority between the Ravi and the Jehlum. Ranjit Singh combined with Sahib Singh of Gujrat and Milkha Singh Pindiwala and a large Sikh force swelled by the Sikhs, who had come out of the hiding, fell upon the Afghan garrison while Shah Zaman was still in the vicinity of the Khyber Pass. The Afghan forces fled towards north after having been routed by the Sikhs leaving behind at Gujrat their dead including the Afghan deputy.⁸

13. Occupation of Lahore

The city of Lahore at this time had the misfortune of being ruled by

¹ *Ibid.*

² Hugel, *Travels*, p. 257.

³ p. 120.

⁴ *Kingdom of Cabul*, ii, p. 317.

⁵ p. 305.

⁶ UT, II, p. 39.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 34 ff.

⁸ *Ibid.* Sohan Lal records that the number of Sikh forces assembled from all quarters amounted to 31,000.

three profligate, inept and grasping Bhangī Sardars—Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh. Besides, two opulent and influential Muhammadan Chaudhries, Mian Ashiq Muhammad and Mian Mukkam Din wielded great power in the city. The misrule of the triumvirate Sardars, who governed different parts of the city was a caricature : people groaned under oppression, taxes and extortions. A quarrel having arisen between the son-in-law of one of the Chaudhries with the Khattris of the town, the latter had him held on charges of conspiracy and sedition and thrown into prison at the orders of the Bhangī Sardar Chet Singh. The Chaudhries having failed to get redress from the Bhangīs, swore vengeance upon Chet Singh. A conspiracy was hatched up, and it was decided by the citizens to throw off the arrogant and oppressive Bhangī misrule by inviting Ranjit Singh and rānī Sada Kaur to come and occupy the town of Lahore.

Latif has summarised the details of conspiracy recorded by local historians in which all the leading citizens of Lahore—Muslim, Sikh and Hindus joined up.¹ In an application addressed to the Śukerchakiā Chief they magnified the oppressive rule of the Bhangīs who were without adequate means to protect the citadel. They lived on the people, were cruel, oppressive and detestable. Anarchy reigned supreme in the town, which presented the appearance of a deserted place with streets depopulated, its suburbs completely devastated, and the rulers habitually carousing and plundering the citizens to feast themselves.

Ranjit Singh was at Rasalnagar when the emissary of the Lahore conspirators arrived with this information. He listened to their tale of woe without demur, appeared non-committal, but sent one of his agents to Lahore to open up negotiations with the conspirators, and himself marched to Amritsar with his meagre force on the pretence of visiting the Golden Temple. He sent frantic messages to his mother-in-law to join him with all her forces. Smyth records that the combined forces amounted to 5,000 men, and from Amritsar Ranjit Singh marched on Lahore, and on 6 July, 1799 at the Shalamar Gardens he met the main conspirators, who assured him that both the Shahalmi and Lahori Gates would be thrown open to his forces the next morning.

On 7 July Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore. Rapidly marching with a picked body of 1000 troops, he entered the town through the Lahori Gate. Another column of his troops, 3,000 strong entered through the Shahalmi Gate, and before the Bhangī Sardars had any inkling of it, part of the citadel was occupied without any opposition. On hearing the news, two of the Bhangī Sardars Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh fled and left the town in panic, leaving behind Chet Singh to fend for himself. The invading force set up headquarters in the Baradari of Wazir Khan, and Chet Singh shut himself up in the Hazuri Bagh with

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 342.

a garrison force of 500 men. Ranjit Singh's cavalry surrounded the Hazuri Bagh, but after some desultory firing, the fort was surrendered, and the Bhangī Sardar was allowed to leave the city with his family. Strict orders were issued to the troops not to plunder the town or molest the citizens. Within a few days normalcy was restored to the city.

The occupation of the city of Lahore by the young Śukerchakiā Chief is a landmark in the history of the Sikhs. It wiped out the remnants of the once powerful Bhangī Misal, created awe and respect in the minds of the Māñjha Sardars, and provided to Ranjit Singh a historic capital, the possession of which was necessary for prestige and power to any master of the Punjab. It thus laid the foundation of a sovereign Sikh monarchy in the Punjab.

14. Battle without action (1800)

The recession of Afghan threat and Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore at once brought to surface the mutual jealousies and recriminations of the leading Sikh Chiefs. The weathercock unity which had earlier coalesced them to resist the Afghan invader evaporated like the mist. The elderly Sikh Chiefs—Sahib Singh Bhangī of Gujrat, Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā, Jodh Singh of Wazirabad and Gulab Singh Bhangī of Amritsar combined together to wrest Lahore from its new master. They were joined by Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur, an aspirant for the Subedārī of Lahore, whose supplications for the same had met with little encouragement from the Afghan Shah. The so-called confederate leaders marched with their individual forces, and early in 1800 converged on Lahore. They encamped at Bhasin, barely 10 miles from Lahore, where Ranjit Singh reinforced by the Kanahayā force advanced to meet them. But the allies lacked unity and no concerted action could be planned. The old leader of the confederates, Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā did not turn up feigning illness; and Gulab Singh Bhangī, the new leader, was more inclined to spend his time carousing amongst his numerous concubines whom he had brought along. The antagonists faced each other half-heartedly in opposite camps and no battle was fought for almost two months. Gulab Singh Bhangī died of excessive drinking, the presence of an Afghan ally caused distrust and suspicion, and the confederate forces broke up and dispersed without any action. Meanwhile, a detachment of the Kanahayā force under the command of the resolute rānī Sada Kaur, in a swift and lightning action had routed the Rāmgarhiās at Batala. The Māñjha Misals, or whatever was left of them, had thus shown their inaptitude and weakness to dislodge Ranjit Singh, whose supremacy in the region now appeared to all and sundry as having been firmly established.

Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore triumphantly and was received by the people of the town with great honour and felicitations. The army which had

remained inactive at Bhasin now marched towards Jammu to settle the old score. Mirowal, Narowal and Jassuwal were reduced and made tributaries, and the rājā of Jammu escaped the wrath of the Sikh army by ready submission and a payment of 20,000 rupees and presents. The young master of Lahore then marched on Sialkot. The town was reduced, and Dal Singh, Ranjit Singh's father's maternal uncle, put in chains. At the fortress of Akalgarh, Dal Singh's wife assisted by Sahib Singh Bhangī of Gujrat resisted valiantly and the siege had to be raised, but the fort of Dilawargarh ruled by Kesar Singh Sodhi was stormed and reduced and the chief pensioned off.

15. Coronation of Ranjit Singh

Towards the close of the year 1800, Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore. The same year Kharak Singh was born and the British envoy Mir Yusuf Ali Khan was received by him. On 12 April, 1801, on the auspicious day of the Baisākhī festival, Ranjit Singh was crowned as the Maharaja of Lahore. The coronation took place amidst great festivities and public rejoicings, proclaiming the investiture of sovereignty in the *Sarkār Khālsa*, a commemorative coin termed *Nānakshāhī* was struck at the newly established mint at Lahore with the inscription :

*Degh-o-Tegh-o-Fateh-o-Nusrat be-darang,
Yāft az Nānak Guru Gobind Singh.*

The Chiefs and Sardars offered *nazars* in allegiance and received *khilla'ts*. Charities were established, and important offices of government assigned to various persons. Orders were issued to reinforce the citadel walls with a moat, and the fort suitably garrisoned. The city of Lahore after three decades of anarchy and misrule of the Bhangis needed peace and restoration of normal life. To propitiate the Muhammadan subjects, it was decided not to interfere in their public and private law. Courts presided over by the *Qāzīs* and the *Muftīs* were confirmed. Imam Bakhsh was named as the *Kotwāl* or Chief of Police of the town, and prominent citizens of the localities designated *chaudhrīs*, responsible for the maintenance of law and peace in their zones. With these rudimentary measures of public administration, a sense of security and well being came back to the people of the town and soon normalcy of trade and civic life returned.

The assumption of royalty by Ranjit Singh, however, was a vital step towards the establishment of a sovereign political power in the Punjab. The Maharaja styled himself as the *Sarkār Khālsa*, a servant of the Commonwealth of Gobind, disdained to wear a crown, or adopt oriental ostentation in personal apparel. The step was a wise one : it fostered a sense of unity among the Sikhs, calmed down the aspirations of other Misaldārs for a claim of sovereignty over the Sikhs, and gave Ranjit Singh a legal right to that claim.

A semblance of administrative order having been restored in the capital, steps were taken to organise the collection of revenue and taxation. No change in the agricultural and revenue system could be envisaged; the old system of the *ta'ulqa* or villages incharge of a *muqqadam*, a *chaudhari*, a *qānūngo*, so well established in the Punjab for centuries, was continued. The farming out of the land either on a payment of lumpsum yearly amount or on terms of military service started to function. One-half of the produce of the cultivator or *mālik-i-adnā'* was claimed as the Sarkār's share who was the *mālik-i-a'lā'*. No uniform method of assessment could be established, but rudimentary rules based on the prevalent customs and practices in the locality were adopted. The well established laws to govern forced labour, the rights of the cultivators and the *jāgirdārs* both towards the title and the ownership of land were reaffirmed. These measures, however, were neither reforms nor innovations, but customary adoptions of a benevolent ruler to save their subjects from the extortionate demands of the petty revenue officials.

2. EARLY EXPEDITIONS

16. Kasur

The succeeding few years are marked with energetic military activity. An expedition sent in 1801 against the Pathan Nawab Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur, who had joined the Sikh confederates at Bhasin, fizzled out because of the stubborn resistance offered by the fortress garrison. Soon afterwards, the Nawab joined hands with Sahib Singh Bhangī of Gujrat and both openly revolted. The Maharaja himself marched on Gujrat, and another force under Sardar Fateh Singh Kālānwālā was sent against Kasur. Sahib Singh Bhangī was soon reduced to submission, and Gujrat became a tributary of Lahore. At Kasur, the Nawab followed suit: he agreed to acknowledge Lahore suzerainty, paid a *nazarāna*, and sent hostages to the Maharaja's Court as guarantee of future good behaviour.

But in 1802, the Nawab again invited trouble by making predatory raids in the Lahore territory. A Sikh force marched under Sardar Fateh Singh Āhlūwālā to curb the activities of Nawab Nizam-ud-Din who had violated the solemn agreement by raising mercenaries and free-lancers from the frontier tribes to pillage villages across the border. The Maharaja himself followed with a strong body of troops to chastise the Pathan ruler. The city of Kasur was thoroughly sacked and plundered, and the Nawab finding himself unable to resist, surrendered the fort. He paid a heavy idemnity, offered submission, and was reinstated to his possessions as a Lahore tributary. A few months later Nizam-ud-Din was assassinated, and his brother Qutb-ud-Din, who succeeded himself assumed a tone of defiance. Instantly a contingent of Lahore army was sent against him. But the new ruler of Kasur, a foolhardy usurper, who had

a hand in the murder of his brother, determined to resist. He shut himself up in the fort, but after a siege of several months he agreed to submit and pay a heavy war indemnity.

In 1807, Kasur was finally conquered and annexed to the dominion of Lahore. Qutb-ud-Din having revolted again, a Sikh force under the command of Sardar Jodh Singh Rāmgarhiā invaded the city. It laid siege to the fortress, and the soldiery ravaged the surrounding country. After a short resistance Qutb-ud-Din surrendered. The territory was taken possession of and the Nawab having been deposed was granted a jāgīr at Mamdot. Thus the small Pathan state in the heart of the Punjab was wiped out.

17. Kangra

In the Lower Himalayas a new power had risen amongst the petty hill barons. Rājā Sansar Chand, grandson of Ghumand Chand Katoch, and an able and ambitious chief, who had taken possession of the strong and impregnable fortress of Kangra from the Kanahayās in 1785, had gradually brought the petty hills chiefs under subjection. He had set up a noble Rajput dynasty with his capital at Nadaun. Having become the master of the strong fortress, he arrogated to himself the paramount authority in the hills and systematically rendered the chiefs of the surrounding hills as his tributaries. For almost a decade and a half Sansar Chand's power remained supreme and the petty barons of the hills attended his Court and furnished him contingents for his military campaigns. Having heard of the fame of the English and afraid of the power of the Sikhs, Sansar Chand was in friendly correspondence with the former. He coveted the fertile plains at the foot of the hills—Hoshiarpur and Bijwara with ambitions to extend his influence in the Jullundur Doab. In 1801, he had made encroachments on the possessions of rānī Sada Kaur in the suburbs of Batala. A force was at once sent under Sardar Fateh Singh Āhlūwālīā to expel the Kangra functionaries from the occupied villages. The Maharaja himself arrived at Batala with a strong force. Nurpur was occupied and Naushera seized and Sansar Chand hastily retreated towards the hills. In 1803, he descended again in the Bari Doab, but was repelled by the Sikh forces. Two years later, he invaded the hill state of Kalhur, and seized the parganna of Bati from its rājā. The rājā of Kalhur invoked the aid of the Gurkhas, who had overrun the hills between the Gora and the Sutlej.

In April 1801, Ranjit Singh exchanged turbans with Sardar Fateh Singh Āhlūwālīā at Taran Taran, thus entering into bonds of friendship and alliance with the powerful Misal of the Āhlūwālīās. Fateh Singh was a powerful Sardar, having territories on both sides of the Sutlej, and the alliance proved very beneficial to Ranjit Singh, who utilised his services in his early conquests.

The chastisement of Sansar Chand having been effected, Ranjit Singh reduced the fort of Sujangarh, the petty chiefs Budh Singh and Sangat Singh having offered their submission. The villages of Dharamkot, Sukalgarh and Bahrapur were seized and Pindi Bhattian and the fortress of Band were subjugated. These were granted as jāgīr to Sardar Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā.

In 1802, Daska and Chiniot were conquered. Phagwara was taken possession of from the widow of Chuharmal and added to the territories of Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā. The same year an expedition was sent against Sansar Chand of Kangra, whose forces were expelled from Hoshiarpur and Bijwara.

18. Conquest of Amritsar

In December of the same year, the remnants of the Bhangī Misal were wiped out. Joining his forces with those of Sardar Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā, Ranjit Singh marched on Amritsar, where rānī Sukhan, Gulab Singh's widow ruled as regent of her minor son Gurdit Singh. The city was invested from two sides, but the resistance offered proved to be nominal : heavy cannonade battered the gates, and the fort of Lobgarh was occupied. The minor Bhangī chief was assigned a small jāgīr and dismissed. The conquest of Amritsar, the second important city in the Punjab and a centre of great commercial activity, completed the first round of conquests of Ranjit Singh and the extension of his political power in the Punjab.

19. An interlude of love (1802)

Amongst the follies of his youth, perhaps, was Ranjit Singh's marriage with Moran, a Muhammadan prostitute of Amritsar in 1802. He had been struck with the courtesan's charms and fallen in love with her. He became so much infatuated with her that disregarding public decorum he was on occasions seen in the bazars of Lahore in an inebriated state riding an elephant along with her.¹ His marriage with Moran outraged and shocked Sikh public opinion, and according to local tradition, the priests of the *Akal Takht* summoned him to the Golden Temple. The Maharaja repaired thither with all apparent humility ; his munificent offerings were summarily refused by the Five Beloveds, who presided over the arraignment and trial of the Maharaja for serious misconduct and flouting the cannons of the Faith. He was sentenced to be flogged publicly. Ranjit Singh pleaded guilty, and with folded hands accepted the punishment. The

¹ Speaking of Ranjit Singh and Moran, the German traveller Hugel (p. 383-4) observes that the Maharaja had as little scruple as any other Sardar of the Punjab to appear openly drunk, and exhibited himself in the streets of Lahore with several females riding on an elephant ; while the people thought none the worse of him, and set it down as his manner of celebrating the Holi festival.

Council of the Five Beloveds was gratified at the submission of the Maharaja ; it took a lenient view of the matter, and the Maharaja got off after paying a fine of 1,25,000 rupees in propitiation of his sin.

Although Moran exercised insignificant political influence in State affairs, in 1803 she persuaded the Maharaja to commemorate their love by striking a new coin. These coins minted at Lahore during the Samvat 1860-66 (A.D. 1803-1809) bear on the reverse the effigy of a dancing girl and the word *mor* in the shape of the tail of a peacock imprinted on them. They were called the *Morānshahī* rupees as distinguished from the *Nānakshahī* rupees and remained current till Samvat 1884 (A.D. 1827).¹

Moran's influence over the Maharaja, however, was short-lived. Metcalfe who visited Lahore in 1809, observes that the town of Amritsar was in a state of uproar in January 1809, because the Muslim concubine of Ranjit Singh named Moran had converted a Hindu to her faith.² The Maharaja soon got tired of his first love, and two years later, sent Moran away from the palace to Pathankot, where she was reportedly still living in 1835.³

20. Jhang

In 1803, Ranjit Singh declared war on Ahmad Khan Si'āl of Jhang, who while acknowledging Afghan supremacy, had refused to pay tribute to the Sikhs. A strong force under the Maharaja and Sardar Fateh Singh Āhlūwālīā marched on Jhang. Ahmad Khan Si'āl had collected a large number of Muslim tribes to resist the invader. The city was surrounded and for three days intermittent actions took place. On the fourth day, the town was taken, Ahmad Khan having fled to Multan. Large booty fell into the victor's hands and the troops ransacked and plundered the town indiscriminately. Ultimately, Ahmad Khan agreed to pay an annual tribute of 60,000 rupees and accepted Lahore suzerainty and was reinstated. The tribute was raised to 1,200,00 rupees two years later. The reduction of Jhang having been completed, the Maharaja realised tributes from the Bukhari Sayyeds of Uch and the Balauchs of Sahiwal and Garh Maharaja. He thereafter returned to Lahore.

21. Jammu, Bhimber, Rajouri and Kotla

(a). Jammu

Since the death of Ranjit Deo in 1780, the territory of Jammu and its dependencies was a fond object of acquisition by the Sikhs. Ranjit Deo was a

¹ For details of the Sikh Coins, in particular, those issued by Ranjit Singh, *vide*. Chopra, *Punjab as a Sovereign State* Appendix No. VI.

² Metcalfe-Despatch No. 44-BSPC (1) 30 January, 1809 ; No. 46, *op. cit.* 6 February, 1809, C92

³ Hugel, *Travels*, p. 384.

wise and just monarch. During the successive Afghan invasions and the unsettled state of the Punjab, numerous affluent families and tradesmen of the plains had taken refuge in Jammu. By 1775, its population had increased to 1,50,000 souls, and it had become a wealthy and flourishing town, and numerous wealthy merchants of the Punjab had settled there. Ranjit Deo was succeeded by Brijraj Deo, who warded off a Śukerchakiā-Kanahayā combination by paying to the Sikhs a *nazarāna* of 60,000 rupees. Soon after Brijraj Deo's death, his minor son Sampuran Singh succeeded him at Jasrota ; while Mi'ān Mota acted as regent. The minor raja died 2 years later after an attack of small-pox, and a succession feud arose, but ultimately Cheit Singh, a nephew of Ranjit Deo, took possession of the *gaddī*.¹

With Cheit Singh's accession the former territories of Jammu disintegrated. Anarchy followed due to dissensions and misgovernment. In 1806, Ranjit Singh sent a body of cavalry to take possession of Jammu ; but the Sikh intruders into the hills returned with a *nazarāna* and could effect little else. In 1807, the Sikhs again invaded Jammu under the command of Misser Dewan Chand, but the hill chiefs rallied to the call of the Jammu rājā and a strong opposition and heavy bribes bought off the invaders. Two years latter, in 1809, Jay Singh the Rajput ruler of Jammu died, and Ranjit Singh despatched a strong force under Diwān Bhowani Das to take possession of Jammu. The town was invested, and the family of the deceased rājā fled across the Suttlej. The Sikhs quietly took possession of the hill state, its capital, and government. Jamādār Khushal Singh was appointed its first governor, but the conditions in the hills were so distracted due to the depredations of a hill rajput named Didu that the Sikhs found it difficult to realise the revenue. Ranjit Singh's mind was filled with a distrust for Khushal Singh and Gulab Singh obtained a *jāgīr* of 40,000 rupees near Jammu and Bhimber. In 1818, Gulab Singh was made the Rājā of Jammu paying an annual tribute of 4,00,000 rupees to the State of Lahore.

(b) Bhimber, Rajouri and Kotla

The conquest of the hill states of Bhimber and Rajouri were indeed the preliminary steps to the invasion of Kashmir. In 1811, a strong contingent marched under Sardar Desa Singh Majithiā to conquer the fortress of Kotla, lying midway between Nurpur and Kangra, then in possession of rājā Dhian Singh. The fort was conquered and annexed. About this time raja Sultan Khan of Bhimber had incurred the wrath of the Maharaja for aligning himself with Sahib Singh of Gujrat, after the conquest of which he was summoned to the Court. On

¹ For details of the Jammu family and its earlier history, *vide*. A *Genealogical History of the Jammu family* in Carmichael Smith's—*A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, London, 1817 ; Kirpa Ram's *Gulāb Nāma*, Srinagar, B. S. 1932 ; also, Richmond's *Memoir on Jammu Rajas* (EP) PRO 30/12 (60).

his refusal to become a tributary of Lahore, two battalions under the command of Faqir Aziz-ud-Din were despatched to invade his territory. The Sikh forces were defeated and dispersed by the valiant raja, and this brought against him a much larger force under Dīwān Muhkam Chand. The Lahore contingent of 5,000 horse invested the fort, and Sultan Khan after nominal resistance agreed to pay a tribute of 40,000 rupees, and Ismail Khan of the same family was put in possession of a part of Bhimber territory. In 1812, however, Ismail Khan was assassinated by Sultan Khan, and Dīwān Muhkam Chand and Bhā'ī Ram Singh were sent with four battalions of infantry with a siege-train to bring to submission the Bhimber Chief. But treachery was resorted to by the Lahore commanders, who after an inconclusive battle had opened up negotiations. Sultan Khan was persuaded to accompany them to Lahore with the assurance that no harm would come to him or his territories. But on arrival at Lahore, he was at first petted and feasted, and later put in chains, and his territory was annexed.

Bhā'ī Ram Singh who had completed the reduction of Jammu and Akhnur, made incursions in 1812 into the territory of Rajouri, then in possession of Agar Khan. Timely assistance from Ata Muhammad Khan of Kashmir and the Rājā of Punch saved the situation, and the Lahore toops withdrew. Early next year, Ram Singh again attacked Rajouri; Agar Khan fled, but was soon after restored to the territory as a tributary of the Lahore Government.

3. THE LIQUIDATION OF THE MISALS

22. The Bhangis

The capture of Lahore and Amritsar had virtually liquidated the Bhangi confederacy; but Sahib Singh Bhangī of Gujrat, who had since lost his earlier enterprise and vigour, and had debased himself with excessive drinking and profligacy, stirred again and revolted. Ranjit Singh himself marched to Gujrat in 1801, and the fortress was besieged, Sahib Singh having shut himself up in it. An engagement took place, but the refractory Sardar having realised his foolhardiness against heavy odds, paid a *nazarāna* and promised submission for the future.

But within a few months Sahib Singh broke his promise. Encouraged by Dal Singh of Akalgarh, a close associate of Ranjit Singh's father Maha Singh, and Sardar Jodh Singh of Wazirabad, he raised an army for a march on Lahore to challenge Śukarchakiā authority. Ranjit Singh, however, forestalled the confederates: he took recourse to strategem by inviting Dal Singh to Lahore with the lure of joint conquests and the sharing of spoils; and when the Chief arrived at the capital, he was apparently received with all honours, but the same night he was quietly put in chains. Jodh Singh was won over by cajolery: by promises of all sorts of favours he was weaned away from supporting Sahib Singh's misadventure. Thereafter Ranjit Singh invested Akalgarh, where Dal Singh's *rānī*, a

woman of virtue and fortitude, defied the invader's attempts to conquer the fortress. The Lahore troops ultimately withdrew, and marched on Gujrat, where Sahib Singh had collected a large force. For three days a fierce battle continued between the two forces, till at last, Sahib Singh sought safety within the walls of the fort, which was immediately besieged and the Lahore cannons opened up a deadly fire. But the intercession of saintly Sahib Singh Bedi saved Sahib Singh from destruction. Peace was arranged with grace and the Lahore commanders after receiving a war indemnity, retired.

Meanwhile, Dal Singh of Akalgarh, who had been released under the agreement arranged by the venerable Bedi saint, died. On the pretext of offering condolences to the widow, Ranjit Singh arrived at Akalgarh with a force; the widow was treacherously put in confinement, and the town was taken possession of. By 1806, all the Bhangī territories were in the possession of the Maharaja. Lahore, Amritsar, Sialkot, Chiniot had been seized; Gujranwala and Jalalabad were captured from Sahib Singh, who himself was granted a *jāgīr* of a few villages, where he spent his last years. After his death all the territories of the Bhangī Misal stood merged in the kingdom of Ranjit Singh.

23. The Rāmgarhiās

The ambitious and intrepid Jassa Singh Rāmgarhiā, who in the height of power had waged war on the Afghans in coalition with the Kanahayās, and had extended his possessions to the whole of the country between the Sutlej and the Beas, was now old and an emaciated symbol of his past glory. War with the Kanahayās had deprived him of Batala and Kalanaur; since his return from an adventurous career of free-booting in the wastelands of Hariyana and across the Jumna, he had recovered part of the Rāmgarhiā territories. But he had lost all grit and energy, and having frittered away his territories to his kinsmen, he lived in peace. In 1808, Ranjit Singh took possession of the territories which Jassa Singh had portioned out to his nephews Diwan Singh and Bir Singh; the same year, he besieged and captured the fortress of Ramgarh and all the Rāmgarhiā forts were destroyed.¹ On the death of Jassa Singh, his son, Jodh Singh—"a man of no activity and unfit to govern" found it convenient to enter the Maharaja's service. Thus ended the powerful Rāmgarhiā Misal, and all its territories were absorbed into the kingdom of Lahore.

24. The Āhlūwālīās

To the Āhlūwālīā confederacy, Ranjit Singh extended the hand of peace and friendship. Jassa Kalāl, whose name had struck terror far and wide in the

¹ Macgregor, i, p. 137.

Sikh country and who was the life and soul of the *Dal Khālsa*, died at Amritsar in 1783. Since he had left no male issue, he was succeeded by his cousin Bhag Singh as the head of the *Āhlūwālīā*, confederacy. After an uneventful reign, he died in 1801, and was succeeded by his son Fateh Singh *Āhlūwālīā*, a shrewd and ambitious Chief, who entered into a fraternal bond of friendship with Ranjit Singh by exchanging turbans with him. The alliance with Fateh Singh helped Ranjit Singh in his early rise to power, for the *Āhlūwālīā* Chief accompanied the Maharaja in his expeditions to Kasur, to Jhang and in his first Malwā campaign across the Sutlej in 1806. The same year when the Maratha Chief Holkar visited the Punjab, Fateh Singh acted as the plenipotentiary of the Maharaja and signed along with him the treaty of friendship with the English.

25. The Nakā'ī and the Kanahayā Misals

The Nakā'ī Misal was liquidated in 1810, irrespective of the fact that Ranjit Singh had married Raj Kaur, daughter of Sardar Khazan Singh of the Nakā'ī family. The Misal held possessions south-west of Lahore. In 1807, Gian Singh, its Chief died, and Ranjit Singh seized all his possessions, and Kahan Singh, the lawful successor was assigned a *jāgīr* near Bharwal. The Fyzulpurīā Misal likewise fell when Ranjit Singh seized whole of its territory in the Jullundur Doab.

The turn of the Kanahayā Misal also came though a little late. Rānī Sada Kaur, the head of the Misal and the Maharaja's mother-in-law, who had helped the Maharaja climb to political power in the Punjab, reported that her daughter Mehtab Kaur had given birth to male twins—Sher Singh and Tara Singh, but the Maharaja refused to recognise them as his sons. In 1813, Mehtab Kaur died and Ranjit Singh took possession of Adinanagar, Sujanpur and Hajipur. In 1811, Ranjit Singh had marched on Batala and occupied the capital of the Kanahayās and also the city of Mukerian. A Lahore governor of Batala was appointed and the mother-in-law rānī Sada Kaur's power considerably reduced.

26. Conquest of Jullunder Doab

The trans-Sutlej Misals having been liquidated, Ranjit Singh turned his attention towards the Cis-Sutlej Misals. Soon after the expulsion of Holkar from the Punjab, he crossed the Sutlej. The *Dallewālā* confederacy was one of the powerful Misals having extensive territories in parts of Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur, Ludhiana and Ambala districts. Its leader Tara Singh Ghaibā, a man of great ability and courage, who had made extensive additions to territorial acquisitions for the last 40 years, was now an old man of 90. He died in the year 1807. He was an associate of Ranjit Singh in his second Malwā campaign. The funeral rites of the old ally were not yet over when all the *Dallewālā* possessions in the Jullundur Doab were occupied by the Lahore forces.

Territories worth 6,38,483 rupees annually were assigned to Sardar Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā, and worth 6,42,611 rupees to Dīwān Muhkam Chand. Thus in 1808, almost all the Dallewālā possessions in the Jullundur Doab passed on to the Lahore Kingdom; the Karorsinghiā possessions in 1809-10, the Fyzulpuriās during the same period, and in 1816 the Rāmgarhiās were further despoiled. Thus gradually all the possessions of the trans-Sutlej Misals in the Jullundur Doab were gradually absorbed by the Lahore Government.

It would be relevant at this place to give a brief description of the Sikh administration of the fertile Jullundur Doab, an experiment in settlement not followed elsewhere by Ranjit Singh.

27. The Doab Administration

The Sikh Administration of the Jullundur Doab was a dual one. Most of the despoiled Sikh Chiefs along with the new assignees were allowed to retain large estates. Sardar Fateh Singh held Tallawun, Sultanpur, Badshahpur and Hadiabad. Budh Singh Fyzulpuriā held estates in Jullundur; Godh Singh Ranigurria was assigned estates in Jullundur, Miani, Rahimabad and Akbarabad; Charat Singh Ahlūwālīā held Nurmahal; and Dīwān Muhkam Chand held Darduck, Rahon and Nakodar. These grants were made on strictly feudal terms, the grantee was never supposed to acquire a proprietary title. He furnished a fixed number of troops to the State, was not required to reside in his feudal demense, and the State had the right to resume the estate at his death or even earlier for any reasons whatsoever.

The rest of the country was farmed out to a *nāzim* on payment of a specific amount of revenue to the government. The first governor of the Jullundur Doab was Dīwān Muhkam Chand, and on his death in 1814, his son Moti Ram was appointed to the *nizāmat* till 1819, when his son Kirpa Ram became governor. In 1831, Shaikh Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din was appointed, whose rule proved to be extremely rapacious and oppressive. He was replaced by Misser Rup Lal, who is described as an able and humane ruler. "Among the long roll of Sikh governors," observes Temple in the *Settlement Report of Jullundur District*, "who, as a rule, considered the people under them for their private profit, it is refreshing to meet with a man like Misser Rup Lal, upright and just and whose name is to this day remembered by the people with respect and affection."

Previously the villagers corrupted the tax collectors and appraising officers. Half of the revenue collected in kind never reached the government's granaries; the *kārdārs* embezzelled State dues, and extra burdens were levied on all imaginable pretences. The galling feudal aids, forced loans and purveyances left very little with the cultivators to sustain themselves and their families.

During his 7 years' tenure of office, Misser Rup Lal introduced fiscal and revenue reforms. A *Chaudharī* was placed over a *ta'ulqa* or *tappa* and his duties were similar to that of a *kārdār*. In each village there was a *muqqadam*; the office of the *kānūngo* was made hereditary. Land revenue was reduced by 25% and in it were compounded all the extra burdens and cesses which the agriculturist had to pay. These measures gave relief to the cultivators, and to a certain extent, reduced the chances of corruption by revenue officials.

4. SIKH ADVANCE IN THE HILLS

28. Sansar Chand and the Gurkhas

In the hills, the ambitious Sansar Chand Katoch soon got involved for a struggle for survival with the Gurkhas, whose aggressive upsurge for aggrandizement knew no limits. Since the death of the valiant founder of the present ruling dynasty of Nepal Prithvīnārāya Shāh in 1771, his successors had subjugated the sub-Himalayan region from the borders of Sikkim to that of Kashmir. They had extended their frontiers to the Mechi river in the east by annexing the territories of the Kiratas and the Limbus; in the west all the rajput states designated as the *Bāīsī* and the *Chaubīsī* had either been conquered or made feudatories. Doti, Kumaon and Almora, Garhwal and Srinagar had fallen to the Gurkha arms. By 1804, the Gurkhas had penetrated the petty Simla hill states. Amar Singh Thapa, one of the ablest Nepalese generals, had swept the Himalayan foothills and had established Nepalese supremacy over Chamba, Nurpur, Kotla, Jasrota, Basohli, Jaswan, Mandi, Suket and Kulu. He now knocked at the gates of Kot Kangra, which but for the timely intervention of the Sikhs, would have fallen to the Gurkha arms. Ranjit Singh had already ousted Sansar Chand from Hoshiarpur and Bijwara; the disaffected hill chiefs, whom the Katoch *rājā* had oppressed systematically and brought under subjugation, applied to the Gurkha commander for relief from the thraldom of Sansar Chand. In May 1806, their combined forces defeated Sansar Chand at Mahal Mori. Amar Singh now advanced on Kot Kangra and laid siege to it.

For three year since the Katoch reverse at Mahal Mori, the fertile valley of Kangra remained a scene of struggle for power between Sansar Chand and the Gurkhas. The country was despoiled, the hill Chiefs threw off the Katoch yoke, and joined the Gurkhas. "Not a blade of cultivation was to be seen; grass grew up in the towns, and tigresses whelped in the streets of Nadaun."¹

29. Sansar Chand's duplicity

Sansar Chand thus brought to bay, sent frantic appeals to Ranjit Singh, who was looking forward for an opportunity to take possession of the fortress

¹ *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, Lahore, 1904, p. 35.

of Kangra. He demanded the cession of the fort as the price of driving the Gurkhas out of Katoch country. Sansar Chand agreed to this, and as a guarantee of good faith, delivered his son Anirudh Chand as hostage. At the same time, he entered into negotiations with Amar Singh Thapa, promising him the surrender of the fort. Hoping that the Sikhs and the Gurkhas would destroy each other in the ensuing clash of arms, he shut himself up in the well-provisioned fortress, ready for a long siege.

On hearing of the duplicity of Sansar Chand, Ranjit Singh put under surveillance the hostage son, and mustered a large army at Jawala Mukhi which included that of his mother-in-law rānī Sada Kaur and other Sardars. After a fierce engagement Amar Singh Thapa was forced to raise the siege of Kangra, and retired hastily to the fort of Malakra, the Sikhs pursuing him thither, besieged the fortress. Hard-pressed, the Gurkha commander, whose communications were now completely cut off and his army having suffered from sickness, opened negotiations for peace. He paid a *nazarāna* of 100,000 rupees, and agreed to leave the country, abandoning his conquests on the right side of the river Sutlej.¹

30. Subjugation of the hills

With the Gurkhas cleared out of the Kangra Valley, the Sikhs demanded entrance into the fort. The Katoch Chief foiled by his own duplicity demurred, but was powerless to stop the Lahore forces from occupying the fort. On 24 August, 1809, the Maharaja made a triumphal entry into the citadel, and Desa Singh Majithiā was appointed the governor of Kangra and the adjoining hill states. Sansar Chand became a tributary of the Sikhs, paying annually 200,000 rupees— $\frac{1}{4}$ th of the total revenues of his remaining possessions.²

The fall of Kot Kangra was a signal for the end of Katoch domination in the hills. In 1811, the fort of Kotila fell to the Sikh arms ; in 1813, Desa Singh

¹ It is evident that during the negotiations, the Nepalese commander had proposed to the Maharaja a joint enterprise against the Rajputs of the hills, offering the fortress of Kangra as the Sikh share of the spoil. (*Vide.* Wade to Government, 1 July, 1831—BPC(I), Vol. 30, C3, para 7). After his expulsion from Malakra, Amar Singh opened up negotiations with David Ochterlony, proposing a joint march to the Indus after overcoming the resistance of the Sikhs. (*Vide.* Ochterlony to Lushington, 16 December, 1809—(P) 2 : 160). These overtures did not find favour with those in authority at Fort William, and Ranjit Singh, who had already signed the treaty of Amritsar with the British, was permitted to cross the Sutlej and attack the Gurkhas—*Vide.* Ochterlony to Government, 22 December, 1809—(P) 3 : 58 ; Edmonstone to Ochterlony, 4 October, 1811—(P) 7 : 37.

² Sansar Chand, however, continued to intrigue against the Sikhs. He made numerous vain attempts to seek British protection, through whose good offices he endeavoured also to gain back the possession of the fortress of Kangra. See generally, (P)—2 : 160 ; 6 : 27, 37 and 10, 28, 38.

Majithiā annexed the territories of rājā Bhup Singh of Haripur. In 1815, for disobedience of his orders to attend on the Maharaja at Sialkot, both the rājās of Nurpur and Jaswan were ousted from their territories. In 1818, the rājā of Datarpur surrendered his territories and became a Lahore jāgīrdār. Siba escaped the same fate because of rājā Dhian Singh's intercession who was married in the family of the hill rājā, but all the same, he had to surrender his principal fort and became a tributary. Then came the turn of Kotlehr. In 1825 the Sikhs laid siege to the place; the fortress was surrendered and the rājā accepted a *jāgīr* of 10,000 rupees. The petty hill chieftains who agreed to pay tribute to Lahore were Chamba, Nurpur, Kotla, Shahpur, Jasrota, Bosali, Mankot, Jaswan, Siba, Kulhor, Mandi, Suket, Kulu and Datarpur.

31. The end of the Katochs

William Moorcraft, who visited Kangra in 1823, met rājā Sansar Chand in his reduced circumstances: "Rājā Sansar Chand is a tall, well-formed man, about sixty. His son Rai Anirudh Singh has a very handsome face and ruddy complexion, but is remarkably corpulent...He is now poor, and in danger of being wholly subjected to Ranjit Singh. His misfortunes are mainly owing to himself and his decline presents a remarkable contrast to the rise of his neighbour, and now paramount lord, Ranjit Singh."¹

Till his death in 1824, rājā Sansar Chand lived at Nadaun as an obsequious tributary of Lahore. He was succeeded by his son, Anirudh Chand, on payment of 1,00,000 rupees as the fee for investiture.² In 1828, the Katoch Chief visited Lahore and Ranjit Singh demanded the hand of his sister in marriage for his favourite rājā Hira Singh, son of rājā Dhian Singh. The Rajput Chief pretended to agree, but on returning to the safety of hills, he refused to submit to the disgrace of marrying the Katoch princess to the rajputs of Jammu. Afraid of the wrath of the Maharaja, which his defiance of the royal command would soon bring upon his head, he crossed the Sutlej with his family and retainers and sought British protection. At Hardwar, where he had taken refuge, he married the princess, his sister to the rājā of Garhwal. The same year he died, and the Maharaja sequestered all Katoch possessions. Nadaun was annexed and the hill forts of Tirah, Riah and Palhiar were reduced. A brother of Anirudh Chand and other legitimate heirs of the Katoch family were assigned suitable *jāgīrs*. The Maharaja himself married two of the daughters of rājā Sansar Chand at Jawala Mukhi with all the nuptial ceremonies, and carried them off to Lahore.³

¹ *Travels*, p. 75-76. Moorcraft observes that he was met at Nadaun by an Irish military deserter named O'Brien, who had found service with the rājā. He had established a manufactory of small arms and trained an infantry corps of 1,400 men for rājā Sansar Chand.

² Prinsep, p. 111-12.

³ See generally, Latif, p. 441; Cunningham p. 168. One of them called rānī Katochan

32. Sikh administration of Kangra

Sikh rule in the hill districts differed, somewhat in detail, if not in the general pattern of administration. Desa Singh Majithiā, and after him, his son Lehna Singh Majithiā were designated as the governors of the hill country lying between the rivers Ravi and Sutlej, which included Mangra, Chamba, Nurpur, Mandi, Kulu, Datarpur and other hill tributaries in the region. Both of them, however, did not reside permanently in the hills. The government in the hills, therefore, was carried on by the *nāzim's* deputy and his *kārdars*. The *nāzim* was to collect all revenues from the districts and after meeting fiscal, military and miscellaneous charges of administration, the balance was paid to the State periodically or whenever a demand for rendering the accounts was ordered from Lahore.

Yet, comparatively the Sikh administration in the hills of Kangra was a mild one ; at least, it could not be termed as oppressive. The customary laws of the people were not interfered with and the mode of assessment and collection of revenue remained unchanged. The Kangra Valley, from times in antiquity by usage, had a system of governmental share of produce fixed permanently, and the Sikhs found it convenient not to change it. The state share was 1/2 of the produce on good land, and 2/5th, 1/3rd or 1/4th on inferior lands. Crown land was farmed out and usually the *banwazīrī* or the extra cesses¹ prevalent in the past were also leased out.

5. MARRIAGE OF KHARAK SINGH (1812)

33. Royal nuptials

In February 1812, the marriage of the eldest son of the Maharaja, prince Kharak Singh was celebrated with Chand Kaur, a daughter of Sardar Jaimal Singh Kanahayā of Fatehgarh, a victim of Maharaja's aggression a few years earlier, and whose territories in Gurdaspur region had been annexed to the Lahore Kingdom. The royal nuptials were celebrated with great splendour and much extravagance.² From across the Cis-Sutlej arrived the *rājās* of Nabha, Jind,

at the time of Ranjit Singh's death was cremated alive with the Maharaja, *vide*. UT, III (v), p. 155 *et seq.*

¹ These extra cesses, relics of the past, were prevalent in all the *subahs* during the Sikh rule under different names. In the Kangra hills, they were called the *banwazīrīs* or cesses on professions and callings. A shepherd, as for instance, paid 2 rupees per 100 head of sheep, a herdsman 1 rupee per buffalo, a weaver 12 annas per loom, a barber, a washerman, a potter, a blacksmith, a tailor, a carpenter 12 annas per house. Shopkeepers paid 1½ rupees per shop ; water mills on rivers paid 3 maund of flour, and those on irrigation canals 6 maunds of flour.

² *Authortites* : Sohan Lal-UT, III, p. 126 *sq.* ; Murray, ii, p. 1 ff ; Latif, p 391 ff ; Ochterlony to Government, 23 January, 27 February, 1812-(P) 12 : 39, 42.

Kaithal and other Sardars ; representatives of the Amir of Kabul, the Nawab of Multan, and the Afghan governor of Kashmir also arrived. Colonel David Ochterlony attended on behalf of the British Government. Rānī Sada Kaur, the Maharaja's mother-in-law was conspicuous by her absence, because Ranjit Singh still refused to acknowledge publicly his two sons, Sher Singh and Tara Singh reputed to be born to the rānī's daughter Mehtab Kaur in 1807.¹

A magnificent procession of guests of the bridegroom's party left Lahore with gaily dressed troops, elephants and royal entourage, and fetched the bride with dowry worth the price of a kingdom. Ochterlony who attended the marriage, has given an account of the marriage as also of the Court and politics at Lahore. He was received by the Maharaja with courtesy and marked distinction who met him on several occasions and had long talks with him. The British official observes that the suspicion and distrust of the British power by the Sikh ruler, which notably obsessed Charles Metcalfe during his mission in 1808-9, was no longer there. Ranjit Singh showed him his trained battalions, and despite the remonstrations of his commanders and Sardars, exhibited to him the fortifications of the Lahore fort.

34. Ochterlony Reports

David Ochterlony was an able and intelligent officer of the Company, who flounced about wild suggestions, and occasionally floundered by a misconceived sense of authority never delegated to him. As the Resident at Delhi in 1804-5, he had suggested to his Government that the whole country up to the banks of the river Sutlej be annexed to the British Crown ; that there existed a remote sense of engagement with Ranjit Singh, and that British paramountcy should at least be established over the Cis-Sutlej region.² His suggestions at that time were dubbed as wild, futile and chimerical, and no notice was taken of them.

¹ Ranjit Singh never publicly recognised his two sons, Tara Singh and Sher Singh as legitimate, partly because Mehtab Kaur was barren, and partly to set off the machinations of rānī Sada Kaur, who aimed to control the affairs of the State through the twins as heirs to Ranjit Singh. Mehtab Kaur is reportedly to have given birth to a daughter. Tara Singh was the son of a *julāhā* (weaver) and Sher Singh that of a *tarkhān* (carpenter). Tara Singh remained a non-discript figure historically till his death in 1859 ; but Sher Singh, though virtually accepted as a *kanwar* in 1820 to offset the intrigue of rānī Sada Kaur, who was ordered to assign half of her estates for the maintenance of her grandsons. On her refusal to comply with the royal order, she was seized and imprisoned the same year. In this manner, Ranjit Singh deprived her ambitious mother-in-law of all of her extensive possessions.

² *Vide.* generally, Ochterlony's despatches to Government, 7 and 20 November, 1804-BSPC(I) 31 January, 1805 ; Ochterlony to Lord Wellesley, 8, 15 and 25 December, 1805-BSPC(I) 31 January, 1806.

However, censured for transgressions of authority, as he did in 1809 for double negotiations with the secret agents of Ranjit Singh while Metcalfe was the accredited British Agent at Lahore, he was nearly dismissed.¹ At the same time, Ochterlony had compiled in 1809 a very valuable and informative Report on the revenue and military resources of the Sikh States between the Jumna and the Sutlej,² which formed the basis of British policy towards the protected Cis-Sutlej States.³

Ochterlony's second report to his Government on his return to Ludhiana after attending the marriage of prince Kharak Singh contains very interesting observations on Ranjit Singh's power, policy and politics. He found the Maharaja quite depressed at his failure at Multan, and his mind made up for conquering Kashmir. Ranjit Singh's ambition, he reported, was unbounded as his rapacity. He possessed quite a formidable army: "The Sikh Chiefs were quite subservient to him ; discontented but powerless to rise against him. This was due to the Maharaja's confidence that the British would not interfere...If Runjeet's opinions are decisively formed on any one subject, they are on his utter inability to contend with British arms ; but the more firm this belief, the more he is inclined to doubt the pacific intentions of the British Government, whose forbearance to him is incomprehensible."⁴

35. Kharak Singh's incapacity

Four years later, in 1816, the Maharaja decided to install prince Kharak Singh as heir-apparent to the throne of Punjab. A grand Darbār was held at Lahore, at which the pronouncement was made and rajas, princes, sardars and feudatories offered *nazars* in token of allegiance to Kharak Singh. But the choice hardly evoked any response from all those who knew the prince. From his early childhood Kharak Singh had shown little promise either as a soldier or a statesman. He had not come up to the expectations of his father. He was a weakling, a careless and inept youth, deficient in intellect and quite an unimpressive personality. The doting father had heaped upon him honours, territories and *jagirs* in the hope that these would create in him an enthusiasm

¹ Worseley (Adjutant-General) to Thornhill (Military Secretary) 14 April, 1809-HMS(I), Vol. 594, No. 15 ; Edmonstone to Ochterlony, 29 April, 1809-HMS(I), Vol. 595, No. 8, fol. 73-98.

² For the *Report on the Sikh Country and Statement of Ranjit Singh's Conquests and Grants*, vide. BSPC(I) 29 July, 1809, C3 and C4.

³ Edmonstone to Ochterlony, 10 April, 1809-HMS(I), Vol. 594. No. 32, para 2-11.

⁴ Ochterlony to Government, 27 February, 1812-(P) 12 : 42, paras 8-11.

for state affairs. In the management of his estates Kharak Singh had recently exhibited lack of interest and incapacity by leaving the management entirely in the hands of his *dīwān* Bhā'i Ram Singh, whose notoriety of intimacy with the mother of the prince was scandalising the Court. The fiefs of the prince were ill-managed, and there was evidence of defalcations and misappropriations. The Jāgīrdārī force, which the prince was required to maintain was found deficient and ill-equipped. The Maharaja at first remonstrated with Kharak Singh, but discerning his lack of interest and indecision to shake off the influence of his *dīwān* and his dissolute mother, Bhā'i Ram Singh was summarily dismissed and put in confinement.¹ He was fined 5,00,000 rupees and ordered to render a full account of his stewardship.²

¹ Hugel, p. 335 ; Latif, p. 408-9.

² Murray, ii, p. 35 sq. Bhowani Dass was appointed as the *dīwān* of the prince to mend the disorganised state of the prince's *jāgīr*, and the mother of the prince was removed to Sheikhupura.

CHAPTER 4

NEW HORIZONS : THE MĀLWA CAMPAIGNS

1. A conglomeration

THE BATTLE OF BHASIN had exposed to the new Maharaja of Lahore the inherent weakness of the Misal system. Holkar's misadventure into the Punjab in 1805 had brought him into contact with the English, whom he found later disinclined as a matter of policy to interfere in the Sikh region, which extended beyond the river Jumna. In the Māñjha, the process of complete liquidation of the Misals had been set in. Alliances had been firmly established with the Kanahayās and the Ahlūwālīs who had been of great help in an early bid for political supremacy. And although the Afghan power had yet to be completely wiped out both in the north and the south, a stroke of fortune involved Ranjit Singh in the unsteady politics of the Cis-Sutlej region, where also, the cohesive force of the Misal system was in shambles. The once powerful Phulkiān house stood disunited and sorely divided.

In the opening decade of the 19th century, the Cis-Sutlej region was a conglomeration of large as well as small states, torn by internal strife, and also in an acute state of disturbance. Political uncertainty had been generated in the region by the impending Anglo-Maratha struggle, the ravages of the Irish adventurer George Thomas, who had carved out for himself a kingdom at Hansi in the wastelands of Hariyāna, and more so on account of the opportunism and disunity of the Sikh Sardars among themselves. At this time, the Jumna-Sutlej region was principally in the possession of four fast-decaying Misals—the Phulkiān, the Karorsinghiās, the Nishānwālās and the Nihāngs besides the petty Sikh states of Ladwa, Buria and Thanisar. The two solitary Muhammadan States of Malerkotla and Kunjpura existed precariously along with the numerous territorial possessions of a Muhammadan Rajput Rai Ilyas—Raikot, Ludhiana, Talwandi and Jagraon. The rest of the region was studded with minor Sikh Chiefships like their counterparts in the Māñjha region, a product of the Misal system now on the wane. The petty Sikh Chiefs clung to their possessions, weak and with little military strength, floating like rudderless vessels in a stormy sea. Prominent among them were : Karam Singh of the Shahid Misal, who held possession of the country round Rania, Damdama Sahib and Jaroli ; Hari Singh of Sailba and Rupa ; Gharib Dass of Manimajra ; Gurdit Singh of Ladwa ; and

Gurbakhsh Singh of Ambala. Tara Singh Ghebā, a Dallehwal chief held the greater portion of the Upper Jullundur Doab, and Dharamkot and Fatehabad in the Ferozepore region. Phagwara was in the possession of Rānī Rajinder Kaur, a widow related to the Patiala family. Budh Singh Fyzulpuriā owned the north-western portion of Ambala district. The Buria Sardars Rai Singh and Bhag Singh jointly owned part of Jagadhari and Dyalghar and the fortress of Buria. The Kalsia Chiefs had their principal possessions between the Jumna and Markanda rivers south of the Buria territory—Chichrauli, Bilaspur, Ramgarh and Mustafabad. Charat Singh possessed Lidhran and Khar.

In the Hariyāna region the Bhatti Chiefs, Muhammad Amin Khan and Muhammad Hasau Khan held Fatehabad, Sirsa and the strong citadel of Bhatnir. Apa Khandi Rao, a Maratha Chief held Jhajjar, Dadri and Narnaul, who had assigned the district of Jhajjar as *jāgīr* to George Thomas, a British military deserter, who had been in his service. Thomas had earlier served Begum Samru in dual capacity of a paramour and a military adviser. In 1792 he forsook her and took up a post in the army of the Maratha Chief. He fortified Jhajjar and named it Georgegarh, but soon afterwards he shook off the Maratha yoke. He raised an army and occupied Hansi and Hissar as an independent ruler.¹

2. Cis-Sutlej Scene

Towards the close of the eighteenth century, when the final decay of the Mughal empire had set in, the Jumna-Sutlej region had become a scene of confusion and anarchy. The collapse of the Maratha army at Panipat in 1761 at the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali had thrown the Maratha confederacy into utter confusion. The Cis-Sutlej Chiefs who had consolidated earlier their petty kingdoms in the region, were now quarrelling among themselves. In 1789, the powerful and intrepid Diwān Nanumal of Patiala had solicited the aid of Maratha Chief Dhara Rao, primarily to consolidate his own power. Dhara Rao who marched to his aid, attended by the disaffected Sikh Sardars of the trans-Jumna region, subjugated the entire Karnal-Thanisar area; and on arrival at Patiala, he exacted

¹ See generally, Francklin—*The Military Memoirs of George Thomas*, Calcutta, 1803; Grey—*European Adventurers of Northern India*, 1785-1849, Lahore, 1929, p. 34-58; Griffin—*The Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 75 ff. etc. According to these authorities, Thomas had fortified Hansi, and raised 8 regiments of infantry, 1000 horse and acquired 50 guns. In 1801 he struck his own coin bearing his initials. According to Grey (p. 44), Thomas established a benevolently administered military autocracy, and "by tactful and generous treatment of the surviving inhabitants, induced those who had fled to return to the town and district and resume their ordinary avocations. He drew up a code for civil administration and law, apportioning the revenue into moieties for civil and military, allotting the latter for salaries, administration expenses, and pay and pension for the troops. He built court-houses, established arsenals and munition factories, in which were manufactured arms, equipment, ammunition, powder and even cannon."

a ransom of 2,00,000 rupees from Nanumal, received tributes from Kaithal and Ambala, but was mercifully induced to return to Delhi. The Marathas again gained an ephemeral political ascendancy in northern India when Mahdavi Sindhia after rescuing the blind Mughal emperor Shah Alam from the harassments and indignities of the Rohilla tyrant Ghulam Qadir, replaced him on the throne. Mahdavi Sindhia then assumed the role of a king-maker and the emperor's saviour and guardian, and set about the subjugation of the trans-Jumna region to the authority of the tottering Mughal throne. A strong Maratha force ravaged the country and arrived in the vicinity of Patiala, where a feud was raging between Dīwān Nanumal and rānī Rajinder Kaur. Tributes and *nazarānas* were demanded, but there was no money in the treasury, and the Maratha force took possession of the fortress of Bahadurgarh for a short while. Rānī Rajinder Kaur was constrained to pay a visit to Sindhia at Muttra to arrange payment of the *nazarāna*.

3. Patiala

Patiala, the most powerful state in the region was at this time ruled by a weak and imbecile ruler Sahib Singh, who had succeeded to the *gaddi* after the death of rājā Amar Singh in 1781. Amar Singh was the strongman of the Patiala branch of the Phulkiān family. He was a brave soldier and a wise statesman. In 1767, Ahmad Shah Abdali confirmed him to the governorship of Sirhind already bestowed upon his grandfather Ala Singh five years earlier with the additional robe of honour and the title of *rājā'i-rājān*. He had subjugated Payal and Isru in 1766, had entered into a treaty of peace with Ataulah Khan of Malerkotla, wrested the garden town of Pinjour from the Chief of Manimajra, and had led expeditions to Kot Kapura, the Bhatti country and Govindgarh in 1771. He had established the supremacy of Patiala in the Mālwa region but had died at an early age of 35 of dropsy and drunkenness. "If Rājā Amar Singh had lived," observes Griffin, "or had been succeeded by rulers as able as himself, the Cis-Sutlej states might have been welded into one kingdom, and their independence might have been preserved, both against the Lahore monarchy on the one hand, and the British Government on the other. After his death, the leadership of the Cis-Sutlej passed from the feeble hands of Patiala."¹

Sahib Singh was a minor 6 years old when he succeeded to the *masnad*, and the government passed into the hands of an Aggarwal bania upstart of Sunam, Nanumal, whose long association with the ruling house of Patiala as a

¹ *Rajas of the Punjab*, op. cit., p. 50 ff. Commenting on the character of Amar Singh, Griffin observes, that he made Patiala the most powerful State between the Jumna and the Sutlej. He "was a fine specimen of a barbarian—rude, courageous, impulsive, generous and ignorant. He had a quick intelligence and a strong arm, and his success was well deserved."

minister had made him extremely arrogant and wilful. Nanumal was all powerful, and due to his high-handedness and transgressions, a spate of revolts took place in the Patiala territory—Bhowanigarh, Kot Sumer, Bhike and other places. It was due to him that the credit of Patiala sovereignty had sunk to a low ebb in the Cis-Sutlej affairs during the minority of Sahib Singh.

Nanumal designedly kept the minor prince away from state affairs ; he grew up a weakling and a sop, well acquainted with palatial vices and a flair for intrigue. Nanumal ran the administration as he willed, first with the help of rānī Rajinder Kaur, a cousin of Amar Singh and a woman of courage, sagacity and perseverance ; and later, with the assistance of rānī Aus Kaur, his wife and Sahib Kaur his sister. The death in 1792 of Nanumal freed rājā Sahib Singh from the thralldom of the *zenāna* and the tyrannical minister, but the court intrigues and the enmity of the sister states of Nabha, Jind and Kaithal sapped his will to act. Mal-administration had sorely depleted the resources of the State which had once stood at 8,36,100 rupees per annum. The week-mindedness and imbecility of Sahib Singh had created political imbalance in the Mālwa region necessitating the Phulkiān Sardars to seek succour first from the Maratha deputy Perron against the ravages of George Thomas, and then solicit protection from the British against the Maharaja of Lahore.

4. Nabha

Nabha was at this time ruled by rājā Jaswant Singh, a sober and intelligent man, "the nearest approach to the civilised among the whole set of rude barons."¹ Jaswant Singh was a deadly enemy of his Patiala cousin, and both the states were in a constant state of jealousy and friction. Nabha had an annual revenue of 1,50,000 rupees and a force of 400 horse. Although Ochterlony was highly impressed by his superior manner, management and understanding, Jaswant Singh was not the man who would let the sleeping dogs lie. Griffin observes that he was unscrupulous and grasping like any other Chief.²

5. Jind

Jind ruled by Ranjit Singh's maternal uncle rājā Bhag Singh, had an annual revenue of 1,25,000 rupees and a force of 600 horse. Bhag Singh was a clever and cunning opportunist ; he ran both with the hare and the hound. He had no fixed loyalties ; and as a meddler in all political affairs in the Mālwa region, he was considered as the wise man of the country. He kept himself

¹ Griffin, *op. cit.* p. 336.

² Ochterlony to Moncton, 19 May, 1810 ; Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 387 : "He was no worse than others, but, at this time, there was no single Chief in the Cis-Sutlej territory who appeared to have any idea of right distinct from his own personal interest, and the consideration that his object could only be attained by violence or fraud gave him no concern."

informed of every move on the chess-board of power and politics, and changed sides without any scruple. Thus he fought against the Marathas in 1794 when they invaded Patiala territory; sought Maratha aid against Thomas in 1799 after he had invaded Jind and Safaidon; made friends with the English in 1803 by joining Lake's force against the Marathas, whom he again assisted in 1805 by persuading Ranjit Singh to expel Holkar from his territories. As a confirmed opportunist he collected grants both from the English and Ranjit Singh. He was foremost in leading a Cis-Sutlej Chiefs' deputation to the British Resident at Delhi in 1808 against Ranjit Singh from whom he had accepted grants of 90 villages in the *pargannas* of Ludhiana, Sirhind and the *ta'aluqas* of Jandiala, Kot, Jagraon, Busia and Ghumgrana, a year earlier; and after the failure of the Cis-Sutlej Sikh mission, he came back readily wooing the Maharaja of Lahore. Shortly afterwards, he deserted Ranjit Singh, and joined Colonel Ochterlony with his force, when the British commander marched to Ludhiana to force British terms on Ranjit Singh, in the vain hope that the British would exchange to his advantage Karnal with Ludhiana. As a typical opportunist Sikh Chief of the Cis-Sutlej region, he had the lone distinction of being unparalleled.

6. Kaithal

Kaithal, a distant off-shoot of the Phulkiān house, was ruled by Bhā'i Lal Singh who was a cunning fox, unfathomable and slippery like an eel. He was a great friend of the Jind rājā, over whom he exercised great influence, and like him, "he was a remarkably acute man, and saw clearly which would eventually prove the winning side." The revenues of Kaithal amounted to 2,25,000 rupees and it possessed a force of 600 horse.

7. Malerkotla

Malerkotla possessed an annual income of 40,000 rupees and a cavalry strength of 400 horse. It was ruled by an Afghan Chief Ataullah Khan. In 1794, Sahib Singh Bedi, "a man, half fanatic and half imposter" proclaimed a holy war against the Malerkotla Afghans. Tara Singh Ghebā, Bhagel Singh and Bhangra Singh of Thanisar and other petty Cis-Sutlej Chiefs joined him in the hope of a rich plunder. Ataullah Khan was defeated, but a strong Patiala force reached Amargarh in time to save the situation. The holy fanatic was bought off and he withdrew across the Sutlej.

8. Raikot

In 1798, Sahib Singh Bedi fell upon Raikot with 7,000 Sikhs. The Muhammadan Rajput, Rai Ilyas, who held considerable territory which included Raikot, Jagraon, Ludhiana and the neighbouring country, held on most gallantly till a strong force sent by the rājās of Patiala, Jind, Kaithal and Kalsia to ward

off the intrusion of the religious fanatic into the Cis-Sutlej region, arrived at Ludhiana. The Bedi fled, and his Sikh associates deserted him, but the Phulkiān Sardars who had come to the aid of Rai Ilyas, helped themselves to the recovered territory. Sahib Singh Bedi, however, continued to harass Rai Ilyas of Raikot ; he took possession, soon after, of Mansur, of the fortress of Naobat and Doghari. He besieged the town and fort of Ludhiana. Rai Ilyas had learnt his lesson ; he had paid a heavy price in seeking the half-hearted and exacting assistance of the Sikh Chiefs, who had earlier usurped the recovered territory. He was now in desperation and sought the aid of George Thomas, the *firangī rājā* of Hansi. Thomas, who was at this time extending his territories in Hariyāna, came readily with a strong force to the Cis-Sutlej region. But as soon as he arrived in the vicinity of Ludhiana, Sahib Singh Bedi raised the siege and disgracefully fled across the Sutlej.

9. Mālwa politics

In the year 1797, George Thomas made an unsuccessful overture to the Mālwa Chiefs for a concerted action against the Marathas in order to end their waning influence in northern India. The Sardars had temporarily forsaken their mutual jealousies to meet the impending invasion of Shah Zaman, who had reached Lahore and his rumoured advance across the Sutlej threatened their independence. Thomas found the diversion of their force towards north too good an opportunity to miss. He determined to extend his territory in the Mālwa region, and laid siege to Jind ; but the combined forces of Patiala, Kaithal, Jind, Ladwa and Thanisar hastily converged on Jind, and drove him away. Thomas' withdrawal, however, was a feint ; he surprised the Sikh camp in a night attack and completely defeated them, and imposed upon them terms of peace and friendship. In 1799, however, he again invaded the Mālwa region. He fought an indecisive battle with the Sikhs at Dibrah, pillaged Bhowanigarh, Sunam, Narangwal and ultimately invaded Kaithal and Safaidon, capturing the latter town. Bhag Singh's forces arrived in time to assist Bhā'ī Lal Singh at Safaidon, and the rājā of Jind defeated George Thomas and drove him out of the town. Thomas retired in disgrace towards Hansi, pillaging towns and villages on his way.

10. Perron and Thomas

The Phulkiān Sardars being distressed by the periodical depredations of George Thomas, invoked the aid of General Perron, the Maratha deputy at Delhi, who had succeeded Comte de Boigne, and was responsible for Daulat Rao Sindhia's affairs in northern India. In 1801, a delegation comprising of rājā Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhā'ī Lal Singh of Kaithal, and Chain Singh, the Dīwān of rājā of Patiala arrived at Delhi to solicit Maratha aid against the ravages of George Thomas. Perron, who was already alarmed at Thomas' activities in the

region which he fondly considered a Maratha reserve, was willing to avail of the opportunity of extending Maratha influence in the Mālwa region. An offer of protection involving Maratha paramountcy over the entire region to the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs was made and accepted. A force 12,000 strong under Louis Bourquin, joined by contingents of Jind and Kaithal arrived at Chinagarh, and Thomas was compelled to retire to Hansi, where he was surrounded by the allied forces. The siege of Hansi lasted for some time, and Bourquin received further reinforcements from Delhi swelling his force to 20,000 men of all arms. Thomas found himself in dire straits. Bourquin asked him to surrender offering him a position in Sindhia's army with a monthly subsidy of 30,000 rupees for his troops, provided he relinquished his tiny kingdom and other territorial acquisitions.

George Thomas, however, decided to fight it out. He had a force of 10,000 men and 500 horse ; and when outnumbered, he drew them off by marching off north to wipe out first the Jind and Kaithal detachments. Arriving at Georgegarh, he drove out a detachment of Bourquin's troops from the town, and firmly entrenched himself there, flanked by the fortress on his right, and hills and dunes of sand on his left. The whole of Bourquin's army swiftly came after him. Here the final battle was fought. The Maratha guns opened up ; but the cannonade of the defenders with its effective fire blew up twenty-five tumbrils, and 4,000 men of Bourquin's force lost their lives. Yet the battle proved to be of unequal numbers. Sorely depleted, the beleaguered force of George Thomas retired to Hansi, and on 1 January laid down arms. George Thomas was allowed to retire to British territory. He died at Bahrampur in August 1802 at the age of 46.¹

11. Maratha exactions

The Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs, who had solicited Maratha aid to rescue them from the ravages of Thomas soon groaned under the heavy tribute and exactions imposed upon them by Perron. Acceptance of Maratha suzerainty and the defeat of their oppressor Thomas had not brought them the expected territorial or financial gains ; on the other hand, a tribute equivalent to 1/3rd of their annual revenues was imposed upon them.² The rājā of Patiala who had glee-

¹ *Authorities* : Grey, *European Adventurers of Northern India*, p. 34 et seq. ; Compton Herbert, *European Military Adventurers, 1784-1803*, p. 192 ff ; Fraser, *Life of James Skinner*, i, p. 224ff ; Francklin, *Military Memoirs of George Thomas*, Calcutta, 1803 ; *Punjab States Gazetteers*, xvii-A, p. 342 et seq. ; Seton to Edmonstone, 3,13, April, 1808-BSPC(I) C1,C8-9 ; PRC, ix, Nos. 39-40 ; Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 82 ff ; etc.

² PRC, ix, Nos. 39-40. For obvious reasons, the Phulkiān Sardars concealed their actual resources to escape lightly the excessive Maratha demands.

fully exchanged turbans with General Perron found to his dismay, that without any territorial awards or gains he was subjected to an annual tribute of 38,250 rupees, notwithstanding the false return of his revenue which he represented to be 1,14,750 rupees. Jind was subjected to a tribute of 7,250 rupees against a fake return of its total annual revenue of 21,750 rupees. Similarly, Nabha 9,500 rupees against its revenue of 28,500 rupees, and Kaithal 15,000 rupees against an annual revenue of 45,000 rupees. Moreover, the Sikh tributaries of the Marathas were "merely tolerated as dependents or servants" subservient to Daulat Rao's will and command.¹

12. Perron and Ranjit Singh

Little credence should be given to the fantastic theory that Perron's ambitions transcended the Sutlej and extended to Lahore and Multan, or, for that matter, he contemplated a treaty with Ranjit Singh of Lahore.² A confidential agent named Sadasukh was sent by him to rājā Bhag Singh of Jind to broach the matter with his nephew. Bhag Singh is said to have agreed to act as an intermediary provided Ranjit Singh was allowed complete authority in the territories of Lahore and Māñjha.³ It is however, doubtful whether anything came out of the supposed negotiations, or any treaty of alliance was signed between Perron and Ranjit Singh. David Ochterlony, the British Resident at Delhi, writing to Marquis Wellesley on 7 December, 1804 claims on the authority of Perron's confidential servants that a secret treaty between their master and Ranjit Singh had been entered into at a place near Karnal. This mythical agreement was based on reciprocal military assistance and vague financial arrangements. Ranjit Singh was to help the Maratha deputy with his horsemen in the subjugation of the country in the Jumna-Sutlej region, and Perron would provide the Sikh ruler with a force for the conquest of the territory south of the river Sutlej.⁴ It would seem that Ochterlony's information was based on flimsy reports. That no such meeting took place between the Frenchman and the ruler of the Sikhs is evidenced by the fact that Sohan Lal Suri does not say a word about it. That Ranjit Singh was too shrewd to enter into an unremunerative alliance with the Marathas is proved by the fact that he informed the British Government of the overtures, if any, made by Perron.⁵

¹ *Ibid.*

² Ochterlony to Wellesley, 7 December, 1804-BSPC (I) 31 January, 1805, C230.

³ PRC, ix. Nos. 34, 46A.

⁴ BSPC(I) 31 January, 1805, C230, para 3.

⁵ Wellesley to Lake, 2 August, 1803-BSPC(I) 2 March, 1804, C11, para 5.

13. End of Maratha dominance

For a short while, the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs suffered the indignities and humiliations imposed upon them by the Marathas. Actuated by self interest and sheer opportunism they received nothing as the price for their subservience. With the exception of Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, and Bhanga Singh of Thanisar, most of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs stood cautiously aloof during the Anglo-Maratha struggle in 1803 ; but the defeat of Bourquin's army at Delhi on 11 September, 1803 by General Lake and another Maratha reverse at Laswari was a signal for the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs to change sides. By the treaty of Surjiarjangaon, Sindhia ceded to the British, Delhi, Agra, Sirsa, Hansi, Hissar and Rohtak, and the sun of Maratha glory finally set in northern India. The British occupation of Delhi in September 1803 induced the Phulkiān Chiefs to turn their allegiance towards them with the hope of protection, and perhaps, little earned rewards. Sahib Singh of Patiala sent offers of help ; Bhag Singh of Jind and Bhā'i Lal Singh of Kaithal joined the camp of Colonel Burn at Panipat. Rājā Jaswant Singh of Nabha was most eager to show his attachment to the British Government.¹ Their opportunism was apparent from the fact that Bhā'i Lal Singh of Kaithal who had come to assist the Marathas with 2,000 horse, agreed most willingly to join the British army unconditionally ;² and so were the other Sardars most willing to align themselves in allegiance with the winning side.

14. Attitude of Sardar⁶

During the Doab disturbances in 1804-05, when instigated by Jaswant Rao Holkar, and the Rohilla Chief Amir Khan, the Sikhs led by Rai Singh of Jagadhri, Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, Sher Singh of Buria, Jodh Singh of Kalsia, Mehtab Singh of Thanisar and Karam Singh Shahīdī had made depredations in the western portion of the Jumna, and a British punitive expedition under Lt. Col. Burn and detachments under Birch and Skinner defeated them at Saharanpur, the conduct of Jind and Kaithal Sardars was hesitating and dilatory.³ Their intention was to arrange matters for their own interest before taking any active part against the Sikhs who were ravaging the Doab. As a price for their assistance they demanded the *sanads* both of Karnal and Jinjanna, and also the territories of the Ladwa Chief Gurdit Singh.⁴

¹ Lake to Wellesley, 22 September, 1804-BSPC(I) 2 March, 1804, CII8.

² *Ibid.* 6 September, 1803, *op. cit.* C76 (Enclosure).

³ For public correspondence on the subject, *vide*. Ochterlony to Wellesley, 7, 15 December, 1804-BSPC(I) January, 1805, C236 (Annexure) ; Burn to Ochterlony, 4 March, 12 June, 1804-(P) 2 : 2, 7 etc.

⁴ Ochterlony to Lake, 2 December, 1804, *op. cit.* C239, para 2.

With the end of the expedition and the general amnesty proclaimed by General Lake in March 1805, Bhag Singh and Lal Singh had accomplished the ruin of the Ladwa Chief in the hope that they would receive his territories as grant from the British Government. However, the British occupied Karnal and Jinjanna and satisfied both the Chiefs by granting them the *sanads* for the estates of Khar Khodak, Faridpur, Gohana and Barsat as rewards for their services.

15. Ranjit Singh's transactions

During all this time, Ranjit Singh was not sitting idle. The Cis-Sutlej Sardars were occupied elsewhere and he was reported to be daily increasing his cavalry with a view to subdue all the Chiefs on the other side of the Sutlej.¹ The British had considered him far too distant to ask for his help in the Doab depredations. On 18 December, 1804 intelligence was received that he had crossed the Sutlej with a considerable force to take possession of Ludhiana. Holkar was sending him repeated invitations to come further south, and the Resident at Delhi at one time thought, that he might be tempted to do so thinking that the British possessions were vulnerable.² Sahib Singh of Patiala was getting nervous at his approach, for, on 8 December, the Lahore ruler had taken possession of Phagwara. He sent frantic appeals to the Resident at Delhi for assistance, for he was afraid of an open rupture with the Maharaja.³ On 14 December, the Patiala news-writer confirmed the Rājā's alarm and informed the Resident that it was the intention of Ranjit Singh to take possession of Sahib Singh's country. Sahib Singh was sending a *vakīl* to obtain the aid of the British Government.⁴ The British took no notice of these supplications, for Sahib Singh was considered "very weak in judgement if not mad,"⁵ and the Government did not want to quarrel with Ranjit Singh on his account.

Since his occupation of Lahore (1799), the Maharaja having crowned himself at Lahore, was hectically busy subjugating the Māñjha region. He had invaded Kasur, Akalgarh and Gujrat ; he had conquered Amritsar in 1802, reduced Nurpur after defeating rājā Sansar Chand, had taken possession of Pindi Bhatian, Pothwar and Dhann ; occupied Daska, Chiniot and Phagwara. He had established a military post at Bijwara and Hoshiarpur, invaded Jhang, Multan, made a fourth invasion of Kasur, had seized Uch, Sahiwal and Garh Maharaja.

¹ Ochterlony to C-in-C, 7 December, 1804-BSPC(I) 31 January, 1805, C230.

² Ochterlony to Government, 18 December, 1804, *op. cit.* C258.

³ Ochterlony to Lake, 20 December, 1804, *op. cit.* C239-(Enclosure from Sahib Singh).

⁴ *Patiala Intelligence* (14 December, 1804)-Enclosure from Ochterlony to Government, 20 December, 1804-*op. cit.* C240.

⁵ Ochterlony to Lake, 20 December, 1804, *op. cit.* C239.

A second expedition against Multan was sent in 1805, and by this time, Ranjit Singh had subdued all the Muhammadan Chiefs between the Chenab and the Indus and had liquidated or won over the Mañjha Sikh Misals. He had considerably increased his territories and military resources. In a general review of his troops held towards the end of 1804, we find that he possessed 9,000 horse and troops under his regular commanders, and over 31,000 *Jagirdārī* horse of his tributaries and subject states¹.

16. Holkar's Intrusion, 1805

Early in October, 1805 while the Maharaja was busy reducing Jhang and other petty chieftains possessing territories between the rivers Chenab and the Indus, news arrived that Jaswant Rao Holkar and his Rohilla ally Amir Khan had entered the Punjab.² Routed by Lake and Fraser at Fatehgarh and Dig in the December of the previous year, the hard-pressed Maratha Chief had fled northwards with the fond hope of obtaining succour from the Sikhs against his English adversaries, which the Sardars of Ladwa and Kalsia had assured him, would be readily forthcoming. Holkar arrived at Patiala, met the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs who sympathised with his adverse fortune, but he failed to win them over to his side. His transactions at Patiala were reported to the British Resident at Delhi by rājā Bhag Singh of Jind, and Bhā'i Lal Singh of Kaithal. Meanwhile, Lord Lake's army was in hot pursuit of the Maratha refugee; the news of the arrival of the British force at Karnal created consternation at Patiala, and Holkar hastily collected a few exactions and assurances of Sikh sympathy to his cause, and leaving Patiala entered the Jullundur Doab. He finally arrived at Amritsar with the remnants of his army. Lake met the leading Sikh Chiefs at Patiala, and in company with them left for Ludhiana; he ultimately halted on the bank of the river Beas.

Ranjit Singh met Holkar at Amritsar with cordiality but also with suspicious reserve. Apparently he was extremely hospitable and sympathetic; he called his Sardars and generals to Amritsar, showed the Maratha Chief his

¹ Latif, (p. 361) has supplied us with the names of his regular army commanders : Desa Singh Majithiā (400 horse), Hari Singh Nalwā (800 horse and foot), Hukam Singh Chimni (200 horse), Ghauns Khan (2000 horse and troops), Raushan Khan (2000 *Nujibs*) Baj Singh (500 horse and foot), Milkha Singh (700 horse), Kurba Singh (1000 horse and foot), Nihal Singh Attariwālā (500 horse). Total 9,000 horse and foot. His *jagirdārī* troops comprised of as under : Various Sardars subdued : 10,000 troops ; Kanahayās, 5,000 troops ; the Naki'ās, 4,000 troops ; hill rājās, 5000 troops and the Sardars of the Doaba, 7,000 troops.

² *Authorities* : For Holkar's intrusion into the Punjab, see generally, UT, II, p. 57 ff ; *The Punjab States Gazetteer*, XVIIA, p. 47 sq. ; Prinsep, p. 57 ; Griffin, p. 170 ; Latif p 362 ff, Elphinstone, ii, p. 325 ; Cunningham, p. 128 and others. For public correspondence, *vide*, despatches of Lake-(P) 2 : 1, Burn-(P) 2 : 57 and Wade-PC(I) 12 October, 1827, C3, para 48 etc.

battalions and took him to the Golden Temple. He discussed with Holkar various matters of finance and military organisation. A *Gurmatta* was convened to take a decision whether the Maharaja should interpose between the British Government and the Maratha Chief, or take a contrary course of aligning with Holkar to fight the British.

The Maharaja's mind was in a state of acute indecision. He had tacitly promised Holkar all support, but finally, he decided to take an augury from the holy Book. This is what he told Wade in 1827 : "I will tell you a story. Holkar pressed by the British solicited my assistance and made temporary offers to secure my co-operation. Uncertain as to what part I should take, I resorted to a measure I have often adopted to determine my decision in doubtful cases. I took two slips of paper and writing on one the proposition of Holkar and on other whether I should preserve peace with the British, I put them into the leaves of the *Granth*, and desired a boy of innocent years to bring one of the papers to me. He brought that one on which the last was written and I acted accordingly."¹

Having made up his mind with the help of the divine injunction, the Maharaja continues : "Vexed at my refusal to help him, Holkar began to reproach the Sikhs as worthless and spiritless set of people saying, 'I have heard a great deal of your enterprise but find on coming among you, you have none. If you won't join me against the British, I shall go to the Afghans and seek the aid of foreigners.' To which I said, 'You talk tauntingly of the Sikhs, yet here you are with an army of 1,00,000 men flying before the troops of Lord Lake which hardly exceed 5,000.' He made no reply."²

Apart from the reason offered by Ranjit Singh for his refusal to assist Holkar, it must have been obvious to him that it would be futile and perilous for him to back a losing horse. Moreover, rājā Bhag Singh of Jind arrived from the British Camp to persuade his nephew to desist from adopting a disastrous policy which would bring him into conflict with the powerful British. The Maharaja took the wisest course and saved his infant kingdom from certain destruction by declining to assist Holkar. According to the Lahore Diarist, however, the Maharaja's decision was disagreeable to the Sardars and generals, who murmured among themselves that their royal master had broken faith, and

¹ Wade to Metcalfe, 1 August, 1827-BPC(I) 12 October, 1827. Vol. 33 (125), No. 3. See also UT, II, p. 60.

² *Ibid.* para 48. It is probably an exaggeration that Holkar had brought to the Punjab an army of 1,00,000 men. The remnants of the Maratha force are variously estimated by historians between 40,000-200,000 men. A modest estimate, however, is that of Latif (p. 362) that the Maratha Chief reached the neighbourhood of Amritsar at the head of 15,000 men.

had allied himself with the hated *firangis*, who were the enemies of the faith.¹

The last of the *Gurmatta* described above having empowered the Sikh monarch that he should interpose between Holkar and the British Government, Sardar Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā and Rājā Bhag Singh were sent to the Camp of the British Commander-in-Chief. Their negotiations ultimately resulted in the first Anglo-Sikh treaty of friendship, signed on 1 January, 1806, by Sardar Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā for himself and as a plenipotentiary on the part of Ranjit Singh, and Lieutenant-Colonel John Malcolm on behalf of the Governor-General. The Treaty provided the expulsion of Jaswant Rao Holkar's force to a distance of 30 *kos* from Amritsar, and that the Sikh Chiefs would hold no further connection with the Maratha Chief or assist or aid him in any manner. The British Government, in return, bound itself not to enter the territories of the Sikh Chiefs as long as they abstained from intercourse with its enemies.²

2. THE MĀLWA CAMPAIGNS

17. First Mālwa Campaign

The unwelcome Maratha guest having been disposed of, time was now ripe for the Maharaja of Lahore to subdue the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs, and soon an opportunity provided him with a plea for intrusion into the Cis-Sutlej region. It so happened that rājā Sahib Singh of Patiala fell out with his sister rānī Sahib Kaur, whom he had appointed his Chief Minister in 1793 when Dīwān Nanumal was deprived of all power and property a year earlier. Sahib Kaur was an able and brave woman, but her influence over her brother excited the jealousy of his wife rānī Aus Kaur, also a clever and ambitious woman, who wanted all power for herself. A conspiracy hatched up by rānī Aus Kaur and her court favourites deprived Sahib Kaur of all position and power and she was put in confinement in the Patiala fort. Aus Kaur then quarrelled with her imbecile husband. In 1806, the dispute took a sharp turn over the possession of the village Doladhi, barely 1½ miles from the town of Nabha, when rānī Aus Kaur sent troops against rājā Jaswant Singh of Nabha and his ally rājā Bhag Singh of Jind. The Patiala forces supported by contingents of Kaithal and Thanisar, defeated the rājā of Nabha at Nirwana. Finding himself

¹ UT, II, p. 57-60. It is also reported that Ranjit Singh visited Lake's Camp in disguise and that he was highly impressed by the sight of disciplined British troops.

² The British official *Report on Countries West of the Jumna*-(HMS(1), Vol. 506A, fol. 1-23) refers to the vagueness of this "friendly alliance" and dismisses it as having no political significance in the establishment of an intimate connection between the British Government and the Sikhs.

and his ally at a discredit, *rājā* Bhag Singh invited Ranjit Singh to mediate in the Nabha-Patiala dispute which had disturbed the peace of the Mālwa region.¹

Ranjit Singh readily accepted the invitation. He crossed the Sutlej with a large force on 26 July, 1806 accompanied by his principal Sardars. He took possession of the disputed village Doladhi and after restoring it to *rājā* Jaswant Singh of Nabha and levying an idemnity on Sahib Singh of Patiala, marched northwards. In a swift and sweeping campaign in which the Cis-Sutlej Sardars—Jaswant Singh of Nabha, Bhag Singh of Jind, Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, Fateh Singh *Āhlūwālīā*, Basawa Singh and Bhagel Singh of Thanisar, and Garbha Singh and others—followed in his train.² The Sikh Chiefs swore fealty to the Maharaja of Lahore, offered him the customary *nazarāna*, and in the hope of receiving rich spoil acknowledged him their supreme lord and master.³ Ranjit Singh discovered that the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs were disunited and torn by mutual jealousies; they were most willing to accept him as a sovereign of all the Sikhs.

The Maharaja then marched to Raikot to despoil and oust the Muhammadan Rajput family long in possession of Ludhiana, Jandiala, Jagraon, Talwandi and the neighbouring districts. The widows of Rai Ilyas were dismissed with a small *jāgīr* for their maintenance, and the whole territory was taken possession of by the Lahore forces.

Flustered by an unopposed march over the Cis-Sutlej region and highly flattered by the subservience of its Chiefs, Ranjit Singh readily distributed his conquests to them. His maternal uncle *rājā* Bhag Singh of Jind received the districts of Ludhiana, Jandiala, Jagraon and Basia, yielding an annual revenue of 23,260 rupees. Gurdit Singh of Ladwa was granted Baddowal, and 32 villages of Jagraon with an annual revenue of 23,540. *Rājā* Jaswant Singh of Nabha received 31 villages in Kot Basia, Talwandi and Jagraon with an annual revenue of 26,690 rupees. Sardar Fateh Singh *Āhlūwālīā* and *Dīwān* Muhkam Chand were the major beneficiaries—the former obtained 106 villages in Dhaka, Kot Basia, Jagraon, and Talwandi worth 40,505 annually; and the latter 71 villages in the same districts worth 33,945 rupees annually. Among the minor beneficiaries were Sardar Basawa Singh and Sardar Bhanga Singh. The *ta'aluqa* of Ghumgrana seized during the campaign was parcelled out between *rājā* Jaswant Singh of Nabha and Sardar Gurdit Singh of Ladwa.⁴

¹ Marshall to Seton, 3 November, 1806-(P) 2 : 63 : Ball to Seton, 4 November, 1806 and Dick to Seton (same date)-(P) 2 : 64, 66.

² Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 86.

³ Seton to Edmonstone, 30 October, 1806-BSPC(I) 20 November, 1806, CI ; UT, II, p. 60 sq. The official Lahore Diarist furnishes a full account of the first Mālwa Campaign.

⁴ *Statement of Conquests and Grants of Rajah Runjeet Singh in the Year 1806-1807-1808*-Ochterlony to Edmonstone-BSPC(I) 29 July, 1809, C3-4.

18 Second Mālwa Campaign

Meanwhile in 1807 the breach between *rānī* Aus Kaur of Patiala and her spouse widened into open hostility in which court officials took sides. Lawlessness and confusion became rampant;¹ and ultimately, the artful and ambitious *rānī* prompted by her party at the court and *rājā* Bhag Singh and *rājā* Jaswant Singh, again invited Ranjit Singh to intercede on her behalf and that of her infant son Karam Singh with *rājā* Sahib Singh. To this the Maharaja readily agreed. He crossed the Sutlej with a large army, and accompanied by *Dīwān* Mukkam Chand, Sardar Fateh Singh *Āhlūwālīā* and Sardar Garbha Singh, he arrived at Patiala in the month of September, 1807. He settled the dispute arbitrarily,² and collected a large sum of money and jewels and a brass gun as his reward from *rānī* Aus Kaur. He then marched towards Naraingarh and attacked the territories of Sardar Kishan Singh, which were taken possession of after some resistance. He then siezed the territories of the *Dallewāla* Chief in the Doab; wiped out the *Nishanwāla* Misal by occupying their territories. The fortress of and estate of Ghumgrana, Morinda in Sirhind were conquered. Zira was occupied, and Kot Kapura owned by the Buria family was taken possession of; and finally Dharamkot belonging to the deceased Tara Singh Ghebā was siezed.

19. Distribution of spoils

What the chroniclers of the time fail to record is the fact that Ranjit Singh had reaped a rich harvest from his two Mālwa expeditions. He had conquered an area worth an annual revenue of 400,518 rupees comprising of the *pargannas* of Ludhiana, and part of Rahimabad, Sirhind, Tahara, Burna, Pyub and Rahoo, and the *ta'aluqas* of Ghumgrana, Shergarh, Dharamkot, Jagraon, Jhandput, Kot, Chandpur, Talwandi and Dhannuar. The Maharaja, however, retained very little of these conquered territories. The spoils were distributed to his own followers and the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs as under: (1) *Rājā* Bhag Singh of Jind was granted 90 villages, yielding an annual revenue of 41,700 rupees in the *pargannas* of Ludhiana, Sirhind, and the *ta'aluqas* of Jandiala, Kot Jagraon, Busia, Talwandi and Jagraon. (2) *Rājā* Jaswant Singh of Nabha

¹ It was at this time that Lieutenant White, who was deputed to survey the Sikh country by the British Government and under authority of *rājā* Sahib Singh, was attacked by the partisans of *rānī* Aus Kaur and expelled to the British territory, *vide*. White to Seton, 8 July, 1807-(P) 2: 7. For White's Survey, see *infra*, sub-heads 32-34.

² UT II, p. 65-66. Ranjit Singh ordered the settlement of an estate worth 50,000 rupees annually comprising of the territory of Banur, Manimajra, Sanaur, Surali, Bissoli and Miranthal for the maintenance of the *rānī* and her son Karam Singh.

received 38 villages, yielding an annual revenue of 30,040 rupees in the *ta'aluqas* of Kot, Talwandi, Basia and Jagraon. (3) Sardar Fateh Singh *Āhlūwālīā* was granted 106 villages in the *ta'aluqas* of Dhaka, Kot, Basia, Jagraon and Talwandi yielding an annual revenue of 40,505 rupees. (4) Sardar Gurdit Singh of Ladwa received 32 villages in the *ta'aluqas* of Baddowal, Jagraon and Ghumgrana. (5) Diwān Muhkam Chand, the Maharaja's favourite general was assigned 102 villages in the *ta'aluqas* of Zira, Kotkapura, Dharamkot worth 68,900 rupees annually. (6) Sardar Garbha Singh obtained 62 villages yielding an annual revenue of 22,634 rupees in the *ta'aluqa* of Dharamkot. (7) Sardar Karam Singh Nagla obtained 36 villages in the *ta'aluqa* of Ghumgrana worth 23,415 rupees annually. (8) Smaller beneficiaries were : Basant Singh who received territory worth 6,914 rupees annually ; Sardar Jodh Singh Runsia, territory worth 42,000 rupees annually ; Sardar Attar Singh, 4,010 rupees ; Sardar Jodh Singh Kalsia 10,000 rupees and Sardar Basant Singh 5,714 rupees.¹

In March, 1808, Diwān Muhkam Chand, the Maharaja's general, captured Patoki and part of Wadni which was assigned to *rānī* Sada Kaur, the Maharaja's mother-in-law for an annual payment of 15,000 rupees.

20. Political repercussions

The political impact of these two Mālwa expeditions was instantaneous. It convulsed the Cis-Sutlej region and shook up the internal politics and loyalties of the Sardars of Mālwa and Sirhind. The Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs basked in the sunshine of the Maharaja's favour ; they had no hesitation in accepting him as the overlord of all the Sikhs, and were most eager to receive the Maharaja's munificent grants of the conquered territories made to them on specific conditions, offering him the customary *nazarāna* as a token of allegiance, and following him in his train.² The distribution of spoils was the shrewd Maharaja's investment to earn the goodwill of the major Chiefs till the time of their ultimate subjugation. He found them weak, and the region torn by internal strife and mutual jealousies ; none able to resist the force of his arms. He had accepted fealty from the principal Chiefs of the region ; the Chiefs of Malerkotla, Kaithal, Buria, Shahabad, Kalsia, and the *rānī* of Ambala offered to pay him tribute. He had virtually established a *de facto* suzerainty of the Lahore Government over the entire Sikh country.

¹ *Statement of Conquests and Grants of Rajah Ranjit Singh, 1806-1807-1808 ut supra. See also Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, Appendix A ; and the Rajas of the Punjab, p. 86 ff.*

² Murray to Metcalfe, 8 January, 1826-(P)72 : 474. Clerk to Metcalfe, 10 November, 1835-(P) 81 : 130. The conditions of Ranjit Singh's grants to the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs came up for consideration when the question for the adjustment of the territories arose between the States concerned and the Lahore Government.

But the apparent subservience of the Chiefs of Mālwa and Sirhind was deceptive. They kotowed to him, fearful of his actual presence with his armed might in the region, but as soon as his back was turned, they had second thoughts about their benefactor. The Cis-Sutlej and the Phulkiān Chiefs perceived clearly that the military strength of Ranjit Singh would ultimately lead to his virtual dominance of the region and their extinction or subservience to the new and aggressive commonwealth of Lahore. This fear united them momentarily to take counsel and formulate a united action. At a secret meeting held at Samana, the Chiefs decided to send a deputation to Delhi in March 1808 to solicit British aid and protection against the master of Lahore.¹ The attempt was, however, a leap in the dark. Archibald Seton, on instructions from his Government, told them that their fears were unfounded, that the British Government had no reason to quarrel with Ranjit Singh, and that it was impossible that the Maharaja of Lahore had any ambitious views on their territories.²

As a matter of policy, the British Government, at this time, was averse to enter into any arrangements with the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs, by which it would be pledged to guarantee their possessions. It put them off with an evasive answer.³ Disappointed and sorely discouraged, the Cis-Sutlej Sardars on their return from Delhi at once went to Lahore to woo the Maharaja who had full information of their treacherous conduct at Delhi.⁴ Those whom Metcalfe found hovering round the Maharaja in 1808 were rājā Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhā'i Lal Singh of Kaithal, Sardar Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, while the rājā of Patiala and the Chiefs of Thanisar, Basia and others had sent their *vakīls*.⁵

21. Third Mālwa Campaign

It is clear that by the autumn of 1808, Ranjit Singh had made up his mind to subjugate the entire Cis-Sutlej region. He had conquered with success a large portion of the Punjab proper and had subjugated or had won over the principal Chiefs of the Māñjha region. Sardars Fateh Singh Āhlūwālīā and Jodh Singh Rāmgarhiā had been won over; and the Mālwa Chiefs had sworn fealty

¹ For very interesting details of the Cis-Sutlej deputation to Delhi, and the secret meeting at Samana. *vide. generally, Anglo-Sikh Relations, 1799-1849, p. 53 et seq.*; UT, III, p. 79, *ff* and public correspondence in BSPC(I), 18 April, 1808, C8-9. The deputation to Delhi consisted of rājā Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhā'i Lal Singh of Kaithal, the diwān of Patiala, and the Chiefs of Jagadhari and Radhour.

² Seton to Edmonstone, 3 and 13 April, 1808-BSPC(I) 18 April and May 2, 1808, C8 and 18.

³ Seton to Edmonstone, 2 May, 1808-BSPC(I) 2 May, 1808 C17-18.

⁴ Metcalfe's despatch dated 1 October, 1808.

⁵ *Ibid.*

to him as a sovereign of all the Sikhs. But for the unfortunate Metcalfe mission and the subsequent British interest in the region described hereinafter his dream of uniting all the Sikhs under his supremacy would have been accomplished.

The third Mālwa expedition, however, was a step hastily undertaken to impress the British envoy with his military might and to exhibit to him that all the Sikh Chiefs of the region were his friends and allies. In both these objectives he failed. Therefore, while Metcalfe was arguing with him the pros and cons of a defensive alliance to ward off the supposed French invasion of India, he crossed the Sutlej again on 1 October, 1808 and captured Faridkot, a Patiala territory. Metcalfe who followed him, observed in a despatch that no Cis-Sutlej Chief had either the will or means to resist his arms.¹ After a short halt at Khai and Faridkot, he marched on Malerkotla subjecting the Pathan Chief Ataullah Khan to a levy of 1,00,000 rupees.² He then seized Ambala from rānī Dia Kaur depriving her of all jewels and valuables. He fell upon Shahabad, occupied it, but after exacting a heavy fine from the sons of Sardar Karam Singh, restored it to them. After reducing Faridkot, Saniwal, Jhandbar, Bairampur, Dhari and Chandpur, he desired a meeting with Sahib Singh of Patiala, whom he summoned to Lakhnour, south of the Sutlej. Sahib Singh's recalcitrance to accept Ranjit Singh as the supreme lord of all the Sikhs was based on his own imbecility which had received no territorial grants from the Maharaja from his late conquests, and the fear that he would be the principal loser, should Ranjit Singh dominate the Cis-Sutlej region. He had a solitary ally in his views, Sardar Bhanga Singh of Thanisar. A detachment of Lahore army had siezed Thanisar and other territories of Bhanga Singh, but as an act of mollification these were ordered to be restored to him.

Sahib Singh was in sheer terror, and with mental reservations he came to Lakhnour. Ranjit Singh was desirous of winning him as an ally and friend in his future schemes of conquests. He showed him all kindness, embraced him as a brother and exchanged turbans with him as a token of "eternal brotherhood." He assured Sahib Singh that "he had no friends but his friends, and no enemies but his enemies."³

The territorial acquisitions of the third Mālwa campaign amounting to a yearly yield of 50,000 rupees were granted to general Dīwān Muhkam Chand. On 4 December, 1808, the Maharaja returned to Amritsar, where two days later

¹ Metcalfe to Edmonstone, No. 23-BSPC(I) 24 October, 1808, C69.

² *Ibid.* No 30-BSPC(I) 14 November, 1808, C14.

³ Seton to Government, 7 December, 1808 ; Metcalfe's despatch dated 9 December, 1808, *op. cit.*

the British envoy informed him that the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs had been taken under British protection.¹

22. British reaction

Ranjit Singh's Mālwa expeditions had created sharp reactions both in the Cis-Sutlej region and at Fort William. The Cis-Sutlej Sardars who had most willingly accepted the spoils of the campaigns now stood in mortal fear of him. Sahib Singh who had received no territorial grants from the Maharaja and was compelled to enact the farce of brotherhood at Lakhnour, reported to the Resident at Delhi that Ranjit Singh was an ambitious, oppressive and tyrannical power who had an eye on his possessions. Only the fear of violence, he reported, had induced him to enter into a bond of temporary convenience with him.² He greeted Metcalfe with profuse demonstrations of joy on his arrival at Patiala, surrendering the keys of the town for restoration to him as a gift from the British Government.³ He exhibited a "childish delight" on the arrival of the British force commanded by Colonel Ochterlony at Patiala, and in all servility made excuses for his recent professions of amity with Ranjit Singh, promising all assistance to him as directed by the British Resident at Delhi.⁴

Rājā Bhag Singh of Jind speedily arrived at Ochterlony's Camp at Dadupur to assure the British commander of his co-operation and that of every other Sikh Chief. Quite innocently he endeavoured to assume the rôle of a mediator in order to effect a rapprochement between the English and Ranjit Singh. He excused his nephew's conduct alleging that his selfish counsellors were endeavouring to involve him in a war with the British Government.⁵ He was, however, taken aback by Ochterlony's terse observation that the British Government would require the Maharaja to surrender all his recent conquests, and that Bhag Singh would have to restitute all territories which Ranjit Singh had conferred upon him during his late expeditions.⁶

The Kaithal Chief Bhā'ī Lal Singh stood aloof, watching with utmost interest the antics of Bhag Singh. Rājā Jaswant Singh of Nabha, who had remained a firm ally of Ranjit Singh during his expeditions in the Cis-Sutlej territory, and had received considerable grants of the conquered territories,

¹ Government to Metcalfe, 31 October, 1808; Metcalfe to Ranjit Singh, 12 December, 1808-BSPC(1) 2 January, 1809, C93.

² Seton to Government, 7 December, 1808-(P)3 : 1 (Enclosure)

³ Metcalfe-despatch No. 8, BSPC(1) 19 September, 1803, C41.

⁴ Seton to Rājā Bhag Singh and Rājā Sahib Singh, BSPC(1) 9 February, 1809, C42.

⁵ Ochterlony to Edmonstone, 20 January, 1809-BSPC(1) 13 February, 1809, C18, para 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

was ready to change sides. He readily turned to the British proclaiming along with the other Sardars that "Ranjit Singh's friendship was only one degree less dangerous than his enmity."¹ He received Colonel Ochterlony with the utmost cordiality, and desired to be taken under British protection.²

Colonel Ochterlony held a general meeting of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs at Patiala, and received a profusion of goodwill from all of them ; but he was not impressed by their general affability and opportunistic subservience. On arrival at Malerkotla on 8 February, 1809, Colonel Ochterlony heard the complaints of the Pathan Nawab of Malerkotla against the high-handedness of Ranjit Singh in subjecting him to a heavy contribution. Ochterlony reinstated the Chief to his former authority, directing the Chiefs of Patiala, Nabha and Jind to remove their police posts from Malerkotla territory.³

Thus almost all the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs had forsaken the Maharaja of Lahore in self-interest. The unforeseen turn in Cis-Sutlej politics had aroused their opportunism. They viewed the advance of the British force to the Sutlej with consternation and relief ; they were anxious to join the British, but would not declare themselves openly for fear of the Lahore Government. In January 1809, the Maharaja had summoned them all to Amritsar. Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhā'i Lal Singh of Kaithal, Jodh Singh of Kalsia, Bhagwan Singh of Buria, Bhangra Singh of Thanisar, and the Patiala Diwān had repaired thither, but most of them expressed satisfaction that the British Government would assume protection over the country. They had all sent assurances that in the event of hostilities they would desert Ranjit Singh and join the British.⁴

23. Clouds of war

Clouds of war seemed to gather on the Cis-Sutlej horizon. On 10 January, 1809, the Maharaja arrived at Amritsar ; the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs naively assured him of their help in his countermeasures to stop the advance of the British force. Metcalfe reported that they still respected the energy of Ranjit Singh's character and power ; fear of the Maharaja's resentment and revenge would make them appear on his side until the war took a decisive turn. The Chiefs, he observed, would stand neutral until he had been defeated and then would join the British.⁵ Ranjit Singh, however, relied little on their assurances. He treated them with attention and kindness, making large promises, and

¹ Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 385.

² Ochterlony to Government, 9 February, 1809-BSPC(I) 26 February, 1809, C40.

³ Ochterlony to Government. 9 February, 1809, *ut supra*.

⁴ *Ibid.* 16, 18 January, 1809-BSPC(I) 6 February, 1809, C50-51.

⁵ Metcalfe's despatch No. 64, 29 January, 1809-BSPC(I).

proceeded to make his own preparations of war.¹ But for the covert perfidy and opportunism of the Cis-Sutlej Sardars he had every hope of attaining his cherished design of subjugating the whole country between the Sutlej and the Jamna to his authority. Accordingly, Dīwān Muhkam Chand, who had gone with a large force to the Kangra hills to assist rājā Sansar Chand against the Gurkhas, was recalled, and ordered to proceed to Phillour, on the banks of the Sutlej, opposite the town of Ludhiana.² It was rumoured that Ambala would be reinforced. The new fortress of Govindgarh was strengthened and guns brought from Lahore were mounted on its walls. On 12 January, Metcalfe reported from Amritsar: "The Rājā's military preparations have been carried on with the utmost possible activity. They consist in assembling troops from all quarters, in collecting ammunition and military stores, and hastening the completion of storing, and mounting guns, in the new fort at this place."³ War with Ranjit Singh, he observed on 18 January, had become inevitable; that he would cross the Sutlej with his army to oppose the advance of the British force. On 26 January, he further confirmed his views that the Maharaja had collected an army sufficient to oppose the British and had nominally taken the field. He suggested to the Commander-in-Chief to invade the Punjab.⁴

The Cis-Sutlej Chiefs continued to play the game of duplicity. "It appears nevertheless," wrote Seton in January 1809 to Government, "that Ranjit Singh is intriguing, and by insidious messages, endeavouring to inspire them with a fear of the British Government, and to instil into them a confidence in himself. From the greater part of these Chiefs I continue to receive most unequivocal assurances of attachment, more especially from Bhye Laul Singh, who is now with Ranjit Singh. Rājā Bhag Singh, although one of the first who originally claimed our protection, may nonetheless feel himself embarrassed how to act, from being the uncle of Ranjit. He is a good man, but without ability; and is generally led by Bhye Laul Singh. He has left Patiala, and is on his way to Karnal. I think it likely that he may be bearer of some proposals from Ranjit Singh, who, from his having the character of standing well with the British Government, may perhaps be using him as a go-between."⁵

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Lahore News-letter*, 12 January, 1809; Seton to Edmonstone, 18 January, 1809-BSPC (I) 6 February, 1809, C48.

³ Metcalfe's despatch No. 50-BSPC (I) 13 March, 1809, C45.

⁴ Metcalfe's despatches No. 60 and 63-BSPC (I) 13 March, 1809.

⁵ Seton to Carey, 14 January, 1809—(P) 4: 67. As a matter-of fact, rājā Bhag Singh did adopt his accustomed role of a mediator, soon after, by introducing a confidential agent of the Maharaja at Patiala to Colonel Ochterlony for secret negotiations. A few days later more agents arrived at Ochterlony's camp at Malerkotla (*vide. Notes of Conversation-*

The Maharaja, however, was forestalled in the acknowledgement of his right to sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej States, which he stressed so overwhelmingly in his negotiations with Metcalfe. His preparations of war were perhaps a feint to counteract the British arguments of force supporting Metcalfe's negotiations at Lahore. But his policy was eminently wise and his diplomacy expedient. He signed the treaty of Amritsar after a long passage of arms with the British envoy, and the display of his military will to support his argument; his political shrewdness gained him all the advantages of friendship with the British Government.

It is, however, necessary at this place to give a brief account of the political background of the events preceding the signing of the Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1809.

3. THE TREATY OF AMRITSAR

24. Francophobia

Metcalfe's Mission to the Court of Ranjit Singh was the outcome of a supposed threat of a French invasion of India. Since Lord Minto's arrival in India in July 1807, reports of French intrigues in Persia sent by Sir John Malcolm, the British Ambassador in Persia had alarmed the Indian Government.¹ Malcolm reported to the Home Government the shady dealings of the French embassy in Tehran, the growth of an unhealthy influence inimical to British interests over the imbecile Shah of Persia, and the proposed march of the French armies through the Asia Minor and Persia. The Home Government believed these reports and the French menace as a positive threat to the safety of British possessions in India. In September 1807, the Secret Committee directed the Indian Government to take immediate steps to counteract the supposed menace.²

Enclosure in Ochterlony to Edmonstone-BSPC (1) 27 February, 1809, para 1). Ochterlony's conduct in dealing with the secret agents of Ranjit Singh while Metcalfe, the accredited British envoy was at Lahore, earned him a sharp censure for unauthorised double-negotiations from his Government and almost his dismissal.

¹ For Malcolm's despatches to the Government of India, *vide*. BSPC(1) 15 and 19 August, 1808. Vol. 203, C1-C12; C26-C35.

² For the reaction of the Home Government to the so-called French menace to British possessions in India, and the Government of India's easy susceptibility to a French invasion of India, see generally, Secret Committee's *Memorandum* (No. 80)-HMS(1), Vol. 511, fol. 33 sq.; Lord Minto's *Minute* dated 17 June, 1808-BSPC(1) 20 June, 1808 C2; Edmonstone to Resident Delhi and Metcalfe, 20 June, 1808-BSPC(1), *op. cit.* C3 and C4; and Metcalfe's *Personal Memoranda* (no date), Kaye, *Life and Correspondence of Charles, Lord Metcalfe*, i., p. 249 ff. For a more detailed study of the subject, *vide*. the present writer's *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, Hoshiarpur, 1968, p. 65-81.

These reports were a handful of mist. They were also grossly inaccurate, imaginary and vague. Neither Whitehall nor Fort William could specify the mode and manner in which the nefarious French designs would blossom forth in India. Francophobia generated by the treaty of Tilsit in 1807 progressively increased and gripped the imagination of those in authority in India. Surmises grew as to whether the French would aid the Shah of Persia to overrun Afghanistan, and subsequently invade India, by a march through the Khyber Pass to the Punjab and thence towards the Jumna, or they would launch an invasion against British India by the southern route of Sind and Gujrat. That the Government of India considered these schemes of the "French Usurper" as highly impracticable is evident from Lord Minto's despatches to the Secret Committee,¹ yet the matter brought about a sudden change in the foreign policy of the Government of India towards the Cis Sutlej region.

25. Reversal of Policy

Since Lord Wellesley's aggressive policy of expensive wars, the Government of India had been asked by the Home Government to maintain a non-expansionist economy. Cornwallis and Barlow were therefore content to have a secure and tranquil possession of the Company's territories in the Doab and the right bank of the river Jumna, as laid down in the Lumsden's Minute of 1804.² Under the stress of this idle terror, however, Lord Minto under orders from the Home Government had decided the reversal of policy of non-interference beyond the Jumna and to seek alliances beyond the river Indus—in Afghanistan and Persia, and at Lahore and in Sind. It was decided to send diplomatic missions to these countries "to throw up barriers" against the Napoleonic expeditions which threatened the security of the Company's Indian possessions. For this purpose Mountstuart Elphinstone was sent to Kabul and Charles Metcalfe to Lahore.

Lord Minto justified to the Home Government the reversal of the Company's policy of non-interference on various grounds. *First*, the urgent need to form defensive engagements with Lahore, Kabul, Tehran and Sind in order to bar the progress of the French army in its projected invasion of India.

¹ See *Secret Letters*- 2 February, 31 March and 26 September, 1808-BISL(1).

² Chief Secretary Lumsden's *Minute* (Government to Ochterlony, 13 January, 1805-BSPC(1) 31 January, 1805, C243) on which the policy of the Government of India was based was a curious document, proposing the limitation of British frontiers exclusively beyond the Jumna river. It eschewed any British connection sought by the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs as being impracticable, contrary to the principles of Public Law, and against the fundamental maxims of the British Government.

Secondly, to afford some sort of protection to the Cis-Sutlej States, so far denied to them, from the steady encroachments of Ranjit Singh, who had twice intruded in their territories between the river Sutlej and the Jumna. The denial of British protection to the Cis-Sutlej States, he observed, had encouraged Ranjit Singh to make successive inroads into the region.¹

26. Metcalfe Mission

On 28 July, 1808, Charles Metcalfe, the young British envoy left Delhi to engage the ruler of Lahore in a defensive alliance against the French invasion of India. He met Ranjit Singh on 12 September at Kasur where the Maharaja was encamped.

Details of Anglo-Sikh diplomacy and the protracted negotiations entailed have been fully narrated by the present author elsewhere², but it would be necessary to summarise them here. Metcalfe explained to the Maharaja the threat of a French army soon approaching India. He was requested to cooperate with the British in his own interests and consent to the march of a British force through the Punjab. He was also requested to allow the passage of Elphinstone's mission to Kabul for the same purpose. These proposals were met with jealousy and suspicion by Ranjit Singh. He considered the French menace far too remote to be real; he was strongly opposed to the intended British mission to Kabul; and he suspected that Metcalfe had come to the Punjab on some spying mission, and that it was a cloak to cover up British designs on his territories. He, however, shrewdly assented in general terms to the proposition of the British envoy for a treaty of alliance, but made specific demands. He demanded that the British Government should first acknowledge him as the lord-paramount of the Sikh nation, accept his suzerainty over the Sutlej-Jumna region, and assure him of non-interference in his aggressive designs against the territories subject to Afghan rule.³

Obviously, the British envoy had no authority to concede these demands. On 26 September suddenly Ranjit Singh moved off with his armies towards the Beas, directing Metcalfe to follow. He then proceeded on his third Mālwa expedition already described. It is evident that this expedition was undertaken to substantiate his claim as the overlord of the Cis-Sutlej region. Metcalfe found

¹ Minto's *Secret Letter*, 31 March, 1808-BISL(I), Vol. 10.

² See *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, *ut supra*, p. 70 ff.

³ See generally, Metcalfe's despatches No. 19-BSPC(I) 17 October, 1808, C18; No. 16, *op. cit.* C12; No. 23, *op. cit.* 7 November, 1808, C18; No. 35, *op. cit.* 28 November, 1808, C4; Governor-General to Secret Committee, 15 December, 1803-BISL(I), Vol. 10, fol. 377 sq., paras 6-7 etc.

the Chiefs of the Sikh country in attendance on him, willing to accept his suzerainty, and to receive in submission his grants of the newly-conquered territories.¹

27. Momentous decision

Meanwhile, in Europe the political situation had eased. Napoleon's involvement in the Peninsular War and the treaty of Dardnelles had cleared the diplomatic fog and the so-called Franco-Persian threat to India had receded to the background. The objective of Metcalfe's Mission having become obsolete, there appeared no ostensible reason for further negotiations with Ranjit Singh. However, Metcalfe's earlier reports about Ranjit Singh's third incursion across the Sutlej had created a sharp reaction at Calcutta, and a claim to British paramountcy over the Cis-Sutlej region had been examined by the Governor-General-in-Council and a policy of active intervention in the affairs of Cis-Sutlej States had been resolved upon. It was realised that British interests could be best promoted by the reduction, if not the entire subversion of Ranjit Singh's power.²

This momentous decision was taken by the Government of India early in October 1808. Lord Minto in his despatches had convinced the Home Government that even without reference to the French menace the approximation of Ranjit Singh's aggressive militarism and his domination of the region between the Sutlej and the Jumna would disturb the security of British possessions.³ Ranjit Singh, he pointed out, was a formidable military despot, whose ambitions knew no bounds, and yet he was aware of the power of the British Government, and he would not afford a rapture with it. It would, therefore, be full of advantage to depart from the principle of the limitation of the Company's frontier at the Jumna and prevent Ranjit Singh from extending his dominations.⁴

Consequently, it was decided to extend British protection to the states south of the Sutlej and demand from the Maharaja the immediate withdrawal of Lahore armies to the other side of the river. Ranjit Singh was required to relinquish all pretensions of sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej states and to surrender all conquests made subsequent to the arrival of the British mission.⁵

¹ Curiously in his report to the Government-(Despatch No. 35. BSPC(I) 28 October, 1808, C4) Metcalfe recommended that the British Government should acknowledge Ranjit Singh's sovereignty over the whole Sikh country; for, he observed, Ranjit Singh had already become the overlord of the region between the Sutlej and the Jumna and that his successive conquests tended towards a complete subjugation of the entire area.

² Governor-General to Secret Committee, 15 December, 1808-BISL(I), Vol. 10.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* 26 December, 1808-BISL(I), Vol. 10, fol. 377 ff.

⁵ Edmonstone to Metcalfe, 31 October, 1808; Metcalfe to Ranjit Singh, 12 December, 1808-BSPC(I) 2 January, 1809, C3.

The Home Government readily approved the Governor-General's course of action.¹ To enforce this decision a detachment of British troops (2,986 men) under Lieutenant-Colonel Ochterlony, the Garrison Commander of Allahabad was ordered to advance immediately and occupy a fort on the river Sutlej. At the same time, another force (5,740 men) under General St. Leger advanced to support him.²

28. Counter-measures

On 12 December, 1808 at Amritsar Metcalfe delivered to the Maharaja an ultimatum embodying these demands. Ranjit Singh took the demands in a composed manner ; he immediately left Amritsar and repaired to Lahore to take counsel from his ministers. Counter-measures to stop the British advance to the Sutlej were set in motion. Lahore forces marched to Phillour to reinforce the Ambala garrison. Cis-Sutlej Chiefs were frantically summoned to Amritsar, where at the newly constructed fortress of Govindgarh troops were assembled from all quarters, and guns were hastily mounted on the ramparts. Metcalfe reported on 18 January that the Maharaja of Lahore was making every preparation for war and that he would cross the Sutlej to oppose Ochterlony's force.³

From all appearances all seemed ready for war. The negotiations were held in abeyance. Dīwān Muhkam Chand, the Maharaja's valiant general was recalled from Kangra and with large reinforcements was posted at Phillour. But the clash of arms did not take place on account of two reasons.⁴ *First*, the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs welcomed the arrival of Ochterlony's force in Mālwa and Sirhind with enthusiastic joy, and it seemed obvious that these recipients of numerous grants of recently conquered territories from the Maharaja would desert him in his hour of need. *Secondly*, rājā Bhag Singh of Jind, the maternal uncle of Ranjit Singh mediated and endeavoured to effect a rapprochement

¹ Secret Committee (Memorandum No. 80)-HMS(I), Vol. 511, fol. 33 ff.

² Commander-in-Chief to Governor-General, 17 December, 1808-BSPC(I) 23 January, 1809, C55, para 5 and C56, *op. cit.*

³ Metcalfe-Despatch No. 93-BSPC(I) 13 March, 1809.

⁴ At about this period of tension, although quite unconnected with it, happened the attack of the Akālīs on the escort of the British mission at Amritsar. It so happened that in an attempt to stop the procession of the Hindustānī Muhammadan sepoy in celebration of Muharram, the Akālīs led by the fanatic Phula Singh attacked them, but after a fierce struggle, the handful of British Indian sepoy worsted them. Ranjit Singh, who witnessed the contest from the fortress of Gobindgarh, was impressed. "The outrage was," observes Latif, "of course, an outburst of Sikh fanaticism, and had no political significance, nor had the Maharaja anything to do with it; but it taught the Maharaja the value of British discipline, and from that moment, the Sikh monarch used every means in his power to introduce such discipline into his own army." p. 378-9.

between Ranjit Singh and the British ; and when he was told by Ochterlony that the British Government was firmly determined to require the restitution of all conquests in the Cis-Sutlej region during his late expedition, he observed that the Maharaja of Lahore was anxious to avoid war though his suspicious nature and bad counsellors were not unlikely to involve him in one.¹

29. British advance

The British detachment arrived at Ludhiana on 18 February, 1809, where Ochterlony established a military post. Bhag Singh of Jind was allowed a paltry compensation of 500 rupees per mensem for its temporary occupation.² Ten days earlier an *Ittilāhnāma* (Proclamation) announced to the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs of the arrival of a British force on the frontiers of Ranjit Singh to confirm friendship with the State of Lahore. It further announced that the Maharaja had agreed to evacuate all Lahore posts recently occupied and to withdraw all Sikh forces at Phillour to the other side of the river Sutlej. Non-compliance with these stipulations by the Maharaja would be regarded as an unfriendly act and the British army "shall commence every mode of defence."³

The Proclamation of 9 February, 1809 was the last straw which broke the camel's back. The advance of British detachments under General St. Leger and Colonel Ochterlony had considerable effect on the wavering Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs who withdrew their loyalty and professions of friendship with the Maharaja one by one. Thus the desertion of Cis-Sutlej Chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kaithal, Kalsia, Ladwa, Thanisar and Buria, who realised the advantages of British protection, greatly disheartened the Maharaja. He prudently agreed to withdraw his troops to the right bank of the Sutlej, abandon all claims of sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs, and restore all conquests made by him during the third Mālwa expedition.

30. Treaty of Amritsar

Further negotiations with the Maharaja led to the signing of the treaty of Amritsar on 25 April, 1809 which stipulated : (1) that perpetual friendship will subsist between the British Government and the State of Lahore ; (2) that the British shall have no concern with the territories and subjects of the Maharaja to the north of the river Sutlej ; (3) that the State of Lahore shall not commit any encroachments on the possessions of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs, nor to maintain

¹ Ochterlony to Edmonstone, 20 January, 1809-BSPC(1) 13 February, 1809, C18, para 2.

² Government to Ochterlony 3 June, 1809-HMS(1), Vol 595 ; Government to Seton, 3 June, 1809, *op. cit.* No. 29.

³ Proclamation dated 9 February, 1809-Ochterlony to Edmonstone, 9 February, 1809-BSPC(1) 27 February, 1809, C39.

in its territories more troops than were necessary for internal duties ; and (4) any violation of these stipulations shall render the treaty null and void.¹

The treaty shattered Ranjit Singh's dream of establishing Sikh supremacy over the territories between the Jumna and the Sutlej. The extension of his power beyond the river Sutlej was prevented, and the limits of his possessions defined and fixed at a distance from the British frontier. The British frontier jumped from the Jumna to the Sutlej ; British suzerainty was established over the region ; and the protection granted to the Cis-Sutlej States saved them from Ranjit Singh's encroachments and ultimate absorption into his dominions. The establishment of peace and friendship between the two States brought them into closer relations allowing Ranjit Singh to pursue a course of conquests in the north and beyond the river Indus unhampered, and the consolidation of his power in the central and southern Punjab.

POWER AND RESOURCES OF THE SIKH COUNTRY

31- Survey of the region

In May 1807, Lieutenant F. S. White, a British Surveyor, on instructions from his government surveyed the Sikh country from the banks of the Jumna to the Sutlej.² He travelled through Hariyāna and Kaithal to the town of Munak, where an outrage was committed on his party by the inhabitants of a town in Patiala territory.³ White travelled throughout the Cis-Sutlej territory, and although the Sikh Chiefs afforded him help in his task, he was generally looked down upon as an interloper and a nosy spy, whose uncalled for probe into the affairs of their country deemed to bode evil. In 1809, White's escort of 80 troopers was attacked again at Pattoki by Akālī Phula Singh, but the timely assistance of the rājās of Jind, Nabha and Kaithal saved the situation.⁴ After the outrage, Phula Singh repaired to Amritsar and strong protestations were made by the British Government to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs. The Sardars tacitly declared him a bandit, debarring him from

¹ For the treaty *vide*. Aichison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, ix, p. 23.

² Two more accounts of the Sikh country, prepared about the same time, are available to us. The first relates to the Chiefs possessing territory between the Sutlej and Beas rivers of the Jullundur Doab and its resources, compiled in 1808 from old documents pertaining to the year 1750 A.D. The resources of the region are estimated at 28,92,615 rupees, and military strength-cavalry, 14,490 and infantry 2,500. (*Vide*. Griffin, *the Rajas of the Punjab*, Appendix B). Another *Statement of the Power and Resources of the Sikhs between the Sutlej and the Jumna*, drawn up in 1808 estimates the revenue at 25,84,000 and military strength-11,450 horse and 1,400 infantry. (*Ibid*. Appendix C).

³ White to Seton, 8 July, 1807-(P) 2 : 71.

⁴ *Ibid*. 24, 25 December, 1809, *op. cit*.

entering into their territories ; Ranjit Singh diplomatically banished him from his kingdom,¹ but later appointed him as the commander of the Akālī troops in Lahore service. No one in the Mālwa and the Māñjah region welcomed the transactions of a *firangī* officer going about with an armed escort, probing into the intimate details of their government and its resources.²

32. A free-lance's visit

Since the late visit of Mir Yusuf Ali Khan in 1800, the Sikh country had been visited by one Captain Mathews—"an expansive free-lance on half pay and travelling for amusement." Mathews was a Deputy Commissary of Ordnance at Fatehgarh and since the arousal of British interest in the region by Lord Minto's Government, he was permitted to travel in the Punjab and Kashmir in private capacity to obtain information which would be useful to British interests. We do not know of Mathews' transactions in the Cis-Sutlej region, but when he arrived at Lahore, he was treated with great attention by the inhabitants of Lahore and with hospitality by its ruler.³ The so-called *firangī* free-lance, however, abused Sikh hospitality by getting himself involved in local intrigues, particularly with the Maharaja's first wife, Mehtab Kaur, who had made him distinct propositions for British aid in subverting Ranjit Singh's power.⁴

White's *Survey of the Sikh country* is of considerable value, irrespective of its being compiled in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. His *Statement of Possessions, Military Force and Revenue of the Sikh Chieftains South of the Sutlej*, is a first-hand elaborate statistical account of the subject acquired by personal investigation at a considerable hazard. That his statistics are in sharp contrast with those of Ochterlony's *Report on the Cis-Sutlej Country*,⁵ compiled about the same time, is due to the fact that in computing the revenue resources of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs he has included those of their dependants and petty allies and tributaries. In preparing a detailed statement of the revenue and military establishments of the Sikh States between the Jumna and the Sutlej both applied themselves with great assiduity to the task of personal investigations and enquiries—Ochterlony for about 3 months, and White for about 3 years. Another difference in approach is that Ochterlony's *Report* is encumbered with

¹ Ochterlony to Lushington, 30 January, 1810-(P) 10 : 49.

² *Ibid.* 8 May, 1810-(P) 10 : 61.

³ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 13 September, 1808-BISL (I) Vol. 11.

⁴ For Mathews' reprehensible transactions, see his private correspondence with C. F. Falgan, Acting Adjutant-General-Bengal Secret Enclosures, 15 September, 1803-HMS (I), Vol. 292, No. 21, fol. 97-126.

⁵ PSPC(1) 29 July, 1809, C3-4. See also *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, Hoshiarpur, 1968, p. 99 et. seq.

suggestions and observations on policy matters, which White's *Statement* scrupulously avoids by laying more stress on statistical information.

33. Resources and military strength

Briefly, White's *Statement* surveys the resources and military strength of the Sikh Chiefs and their dependants in the opening decade of the 19th century. It approximates the total annual revenues of Sikh Chieftains between the Jumna and the Sutlej at 29,15,472 rupees, and their total armed strength at 17,959 horse and foot. This excludes the revenue and military strength of the Chiefs who were subject to Ranjit Singh—their revenue is estimated at 13,32,500 rupees and military strength 7,000 horse and men.

The break-up is as under : (1) Rājā Sahib Singh of Patiala and his dependants had an annual revenue of 8,36,100 rupees and a military strength of 2,500 horse, 2,200 foot with a considerable number of guns of various calibre. Town duties of Patiala brought an annual revenue of 27,000 rupees. (2) Bhā'i Lal Singh of Kaithal and his dependants had an annual revenue of 3,61,564 rupees and military strength of 900 horse and 2,000 foot. Town duties of Kaithal amounted to 28,500 rupees. (3) Rājā Bhag Singh of Jind and his dependants had an annual revenue of 2,77,000 rupees and an armed strength of 800 horse and 200 foot. Town duties of Jind amounted to 1800 rupees annually. (4) Rājā Jaswant Singh of Nabha had an annual revenue of 2,04,700 rupees, and a military strength of 600 horse and 600 foot with 12 guns of medium calibre. Town duties of Nabha amounted to 19,700 rupees annually. (5) Gurdit Singh of Ladwa and his dependants had an annual revenue of 2,17,550 rupees and a military strength of 1,530 horse, 400 foot and 6 guns of medium calibre. (6) Bhanga Singh of Thanisar had a revenue of 1,20,000 rupees, 400 horse and 150 foot with 4 small guns. (7) Karam Singh of Shahabad had an annual revenue of 65,000 rupees, 250 horse and 150 foot. (8) Rāni Daya Kaur of Ambala had an annual revenue of 1,00,000 rupees, 400 horse and 150 foot. (9) Bhagwan Singh of Buria and his dependants had an annual revenue of 2,17,000 rupees, 330 horse, and 495 foot. (10) Dolchi Singh of Ridour had an annual revenue of 76,900 rupees, 184 horse and 120 foot. (11) Gopal Singh of Manimajara had an annual revenue of 79,000 rupees, 200 horse, 300 foot and 4 guns. (12) Nawab Ataullah Khan of Malerkotla had an annual revenue of 40,000 rupees, and 400 horse. (13) Nawab Rehmat Khan of Kunjpura had an annual revenue of 89,000 rupees, 20 horse and 600 foot. (14) The petty chieftains of Cheloch, Munsaully, Karoh, Mandoh etc. had an annual revenue of 3,00,000 rupees and a combined military strength of 600 troopers.

34. Dependants of Ranjit Singh

The Chiefs subject to the Kingdom of Lahore were : (1) Jodh Singh of Kalsia—revenue 2,57,000 rupees, military strength 1,535 horse, 850 foot. (2) Sardar

Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā—revenue 1,76,000 rupees, military strength 1,000 horse, 400 foot. (3) Jawahir Singh of Jutwar—revenue 77,000 rupees, military strength 3 guns, 250 horse and 400 foot. (4) Karam Singh Shahīd and others—revenue 72,000 rupees, 130 horse and 100 foot. (5) Bhup Singh and Deva Singh of Rupar—revenue 53,000 rupees, military strength not known. (6) Dīwān Muhkam Chand and other Sardars dependant on Ranjit Singh—revenue 2,89,200 rupees, military strength unspecified. (7) Gujjar Singh and others of Makhawal—revenue 77,600, military strength unspecified. (8) Gujjar Singh and others of Khumanu—revenue 25,000. (9) Dharam Singh of Khar—revenue 20,000. (10) Ram Singh of Plasian—revenue 32,000. (11) Attar Singh of Dharamkot—revenue 40,000. (12) Charat Singh and other petty chiefs of Machiwara, Ramgarh etc.—revenue 1,20,000. (13) Dhanna Singh of Ferozepur—revenue 40,000. (14) Gulab Singh of Faridkot—revenue 35,000. In all White's *Survey* records the names of 23 Cis-Sutlej Chieftains who were dependants or tributaries of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and their territories were left undisturbed. Total amount of revenue of the country between Delhi and the Sutlej, exclusive of the British possessions, was estimated at 42,47,922 rupees, and military strength 24,959 horse and foot.

CHAPTER 5

SIKH CONQUEST AND ADMINISTRATION OF MULTAN AND KASHMIR

1. Multan

IN THE SOUTH, the province of Multan occupied a strategic area.¹ Rich in fertile lands and agricultural products, it served as an *entrepot* of trade and commerce for the Punjab, Sind, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Well-cultivated and well-watered from wells and a chain of irrigation canals, it produced wheat, millet, cotton, and indigo. It was famous for silk and cotton fabrics, shawls and lungis, and borocades and tissues. The province of Multan had formed a part of the Mughal empire, and had come into the possession of the Afghans in 1752. It was governed as a part of Ahmad Shah Abdali's Indian empire since the cession of the Punjab and Sind by the Mughal emperor to the Durrani invader in 1757.

A decade later, Jhanda Singh, the valiant Chief of the Bhangī Misal had carried Sikh arms to Multan. He failed in his attempt to drive out the Durrani satrap Shuja Khan Saddozai from Multan, and Mubarak Khan, his Daudpota ally from Bahawalpur. After an indecisive battle fought on the banks of the Sutlej, a vague understanding was arrived at between the Bhangīs and the Saddozai Nawab that the holy town of Pakpattan would demarcate the boundary of their territories and ambitions. But the Bhangīs broke the truce soon after, and another vain attempt was made to capture Multan in 1771. Early next year, however, a feud arose between Shuja Khan Saddozai and Haji Sharif Beg, the two contestants for the Afghan governorship of Multan; and Haji Sharif Beg invited the Bhangīs to come to his aid. Jhanda Singh marched on Multan with a large force along with his brother Ganda Singh, and in a fiercely contested battle routed Nawab Shuja Khan Saddozai and his ally, the Nawab of Bahawalpur. The Bhangīs seized the fortress, the defeated Nawab having sought refuge at Shujabad; but they were disinclined to hand over the territory to Haji Sharif

¹ Authorities: *Multan District Gazetteer*, Lahore, 1927; Yusuf Gardezi, *Hālāt-i-Multān* (MS. in Punjab Public Library, Lahore); Kanahaya Lal, *Ranjitnāma*, Lahore, 1870. the 'Umdat-ut-Tawārikh' Daftar II; Ghulam Jilani, *Jang-i-Multān*, Ganesh Das, *Jang-i-Multān wa Peshāwar*; Hukam Chand, *Tawārikh-i-Zillāh'i Multān*, Lahore, 1884 etc. See also, Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Kabul*, 1839, i; Masson, *Travels*, London, 1842, i; Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, London, 1834, i. For British records see generally, the despatches of Ochterlony and Edmonstone—(P) 6 : 54, 67 etc.

Beg. They proclaimed Multan as a *Khālsa* territory, and Haji Sharif Beg was driven out of it to find asylum in his jāgīr at Tulumba. The Bhangis then parcelled out the town between themselves. A part of the city was assigned to Lehna Singh, the Bhangī general and Diwan Singh Chacchowalia was appointed the commander of the fort, which was garrisoned with Sikh troops.

The Bhangī rule of Multan lasted exactly seven years. They had formed out the country to the Daudpotas of Bahawalpur ; they had neither the time nor capacity to set up an administration in Multan. Jhanda Singh was involved in constant wars and internal feuds of the warring Misals. He subdued Jhang, Mankera and Kala Bagh, but was foiled in his attempt to overrun Shujabad. Soon afterwards, he was assassinated when embroiled in a war with the Kanahayās and the Śukerchakiās at Jammu whither he had marched to settle the issue of succession to the chiefship.

The news of the capture of Multan by the infidel Sikhs had shocked Kabul, but the death of Ahmad Shah in June 1773, and the succession of Taimur Shah to the *masnad* at Kabul with his resultant embroilment in domestic feuds, prevented the Afghans to reclaim their lost territories in the Punjab from the Sikhs. Meanwhile Shuja Khan died in 1776 at Shujabad, and his son Muzaffar Khan succeeded him. But in 1779, Taimur Shah having secured his position at Kabul, crossed the river Indus with an Afghan host of 18,000 which was swelled by the cries of *Jehād* to over 25,000 at Peshawar. He quickly overran Dera Ghazi Khan, routed a Sikh force at Shujabad, and besieged the fortress of Multan. The Sikh garrison surrendered and was allowed to leave unmolested. The victorious Amir of Kabul installed Muzaffar Khan as his deputy at Multan, overran Bahawalpur and Sind, the rulers of which were again brought into subjection as the tributaries of Kabul, and thereafter he returned to Afghanistan.

2. Nawab Muzaffar Khan

Thus Multan again reverted to the position of a province of the Durrani empire till the death of Taimur Shah in 1792. Nawab Muzaffar Khan continued to acknowledge the nominal Afghan suzerainty till Wazir Fateh Khan, the all-powerful minister of Amir Shah Mahmud of Kabul desired to replace him by one of his nominees ; but Muzaffar Khan stoutly resisted the attempt, and Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, who had regained ascendancy in eastern Afghanistan, after being foiled in an attempt to oust the Nawab from the fortress in 1803 tacitly supported Nawab Muzaffar Khan and confirmed him to the governorship.

Mountstuart Elphinstone who visited the Nawab in 1808, gives a vivid description of Multan and its administration under Muzaffar Khan. The city, he observes, stood 4 miles from the left of the river Chenab ; it was surrounded

by a wall between forty and fifty feet high. The country was pleasing and fertile, and the land was flat and soil excellent, but "a large portion of the villages were in ruins, and there were signs of a well-cultivated country going to decay." He describes its canals and methods of irrigation. Elphinstone met Nawab Muzaffar Khan and comments on his government. "Nothing could be worse than the government; all sorts of direct exactions were aggravated by monopolies, rapacious ungovernable troops, and every other kind of abuse."¹ The army of the Nawab at this time was estimated 2,000 strong with 20 guns, but 10,000 militia could in time of emergency be called out.

3. Ranjit Singh's ambitions

Ranjit Singh made two abortive attempts to wrest Multan from Nawab Muzaffar Khan in 1802 and 1806. In 1802, he appeared in the Nawab's dominions with a strong force, and Muzaffar Khan's emissaries met him 30 *kos* away from the city and purchased immunity by offering a *nazarāna* and a promise of tribute. There is no corroborative evidence supporting local histories of Kanahaya Lal, *Ranjitnāma*² and of Dewan Amarnath, *Zafarnāma'i Ranjīt Singh*³ that a battle was fought between the troops of Nawab Muzaffar Khan and Ranjit Singh and that the town was ransacked by the Sikhs. The second Sikh attempt on Multan did not materialise, and the forces sent for its reduction after accepting a present of 70,000 rupees were recalled because of Holkar's irruption into the Punjab.

In 1807, however, a punitive expedition was sent against the Nawab, who had refused to pay the tribute, had conspired with Nawab Qutb-ud-Din Khan of Kasur, and had given asylum to Ahmad Khan Siāl of Jhang, who after having been defeated by Ranjit Singh, had taken shelter there. But the Sikhs could neither capture the city nor storm the fortress. Ranjit Singh was glad to accept an indemnity of 70,000 rupees; and after having come to terms with the Daudpota Nawab of Bahawalpur, he returned to his capital.

4. Fourth Invasion of Multan (1810)

Early in the year 1810, the Maharaja had met Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, the ex-king of Kabul at Attock and discussed with him the possibility of the latter's recovering the provinces of Kashmir and Multan. But Shah Shuja was suspicious of the Sikh designs and did not come to any understanding with Ranjit Singh.⁴ However, Ranjit Singh took advantage of his meeting with the ex-king,

¹ *An Account of the Kingdom of Kabul*, 1839, i. p. 23, 27-28.

² Lahore, 1870.

³ Lahore, 1928.

⁴ Seton to Swinston, 15 March, 1810-(P) 3 : 74.

and issued an ultimatum to the Saddozai Nawab in the name of Shah Shuja to hand over the province of Multan to him. This seriously alarmed Muzaffar Khan ; he procrastinated with the promise of a substantial subsidy but made hectic preparations for the defence of the fortress. In February, Ranjit Singh marched with a considerable force on Multan reaching there on the 24th of the month. He took possession of the city, and laid seige to the citadel. Ranjit Singh called upon the chiefs of Leiah, Bhakkar and Kauchi and the Nawab of Bahawalpur to join him. The former chiefs paid a collective ransom of 1,20,000 rupees, and the Daudpota Nawab's offer of 1,00,000 rupees having been turned down by Ranjit Singh, he furnished a contingent of 500 horse. At the same time, a contingent of Sikh troops under Diwān Muhkam Chand invested the fortress of Shujabad, 20 miles from Multan.¹ The memorable siege of Multan commenced on 25 February, and lasted for about 2 months till 19 April, 1810. But the heavy Sikh cannonade for several days and successive assaults of the Lahore troops made little impression on the besieged within the fortress. The famous 80-pounder Bhangī cannon *zamzama* was brought from Lahore, but it failed to discharge its deadly shells. The Sikh artillery having proved ineffective to batter the walls, resort was taken to mining, but the defenders replied with countermining, which blew up a Sikh battery commanded by Atter Singh Dhari, who was killed along with his men. There was consternation and panic in the Sikh Camp and it became obvious that the siege would be protracted and the provisions would run out. Meanwhile the force sent under Diwān Muhkam Chand to Shujabad had been repulsed with heavy casualties.

Latif describes the siege : "Ranjit Singh made the most solemn and lavish promises to the chiefs who should distinguish themselves in the action by the earliest effective advance. He personally reconnoitred the enemy's position, examined his posts and fixed his own, marking out spots for the batteries, and assigning lines of approach to the different chiefs, whose sense of duty to their countrymen was appealed to with vehemence. Extensive transport arrangements were made both by land and water from Lahore and Amritsar and the whole resources of the county were unreservedly placed at the disposal of the military authorities to secure the much-coveted possession. The famous Bhangī cannon *zamzama* was brought from Lahore to batter down the walls of the fort ; but it made little impression on the besiegers."²

The fierce and valiant resistance offered by the defenders of the impregnable fortress of Multan³ convinced Ranjit Singh that discretion was the

¹ Seton to Government, 22 March, 1910-(P)3 : 76.

² P. 486. For other accounts of the siege, see generally, Seton to Edmonstone, 15, 16, 24, 28 March, 1810-(P)3 : 74, 75, 77 and 78 ; also (P)3 : 80-82.

³ The citadel of Multan is described impregnable and reportedly of great strength and antiquity. Its modern structure was raised in 1640 A. D. by prince Murad

better part of valour, and he now accepted the previous offer of Muzaffar Khan of an annual tribute of 2,50,000 rupees, 20 horses, and a contingent of troops to be placed at the disposal of the Maharaja at the time of war. But the tribute of 30,000 rupees could only be paid, and the dissipated ruler of Lahore gracefully agreed to accept Abubakar Khan, a brother-in-law of the Nawab, as a hostage for the payment of the balance.

The successive failures of the Sikhs to conquer Multan had cast a gloom at Lahore. David Ochterlony, who visited Lahore two years later on the occasion of prince Kharak Singh's marriage, found the Maharaja depressed at his failure to occupy Multan which he so much coveted to conquer.¹ In the meantime, Nawab Muzaffar Khan had complained of the Sikh designs to the British Government and had sought its assistance to save the his kingdom.² To counteract the Saddozai Nawab's move, Ranjit Singh made a ludicrous proposal to the British Agent at Ludhiana for a joint conquest of Multan. The move for co-operation in the Sikh ambitions towards Multan was, however, rejected by Fort William.³

5. Preparations for final assault

Two further half-hearted attacks were made to occupy Multan in 1816 and 1817. But the citadel defied the Sikhs, and Diwān Bhowani Dass, the Lahore commander returned to the capital after receiving a paltry *nazarāna*. It became now evident to Ranjit Singh that the reduction of the fort and the subjugation of the Saddozais would require military preparations on a much larger scale. Orders were, therefore, issued late in 1817 for a full scale campaign. Troops were collected in strength, the transport system reorganised, the line of communication studded with depots of military stores and provisions. The Nawab's *vakils* were told that complete surrender and cession of the fort were

Bakhash, son of emperor Shah Jahan, although Sir Alexander Cunningham's researches date the original fort having been constructed earlier in 7th or 8th century B. C. (*Arch. Survey Reports*, v, p. 127 ff), and it is certain that Alexander the Great conquered it in 326 B. C. as did the Arab invader Muhammad bin Qasim capture it in 702 A. D. Its original circuit is described by Cunningham to be 6,600 feet or 1½ miles. It is constructed irregularly on a mound of earth, its walls are 6 feet thick, rising to 40 feet in height. It had 30 towers, and was well secured by a deep trench, and a gateway, approached by a draw-bridge. There were two flanking towers and four gates to it, all protected by projecting spikes to prevent their being battered by elephants. The interior of the fort was filled with houses, mosques and coupolas. See generally, Elphinstone, *Kabul*, i, p. 27-28; Masson, *Travels*, i, p. 394 ff; Burnes, *Travels in Bokhara etc.* p. 94 et seq.

¹ Ochterlony to Edmonstone, 23 January, 1812-(P) 12 : 39 ; UT, ii, p. 122 ff.

² See particularly, Edmonstone to Ochterlony, 28 December, 1810-(P) 6 : 67.

³ Edmonstone to Ochterlony, 25 September, 1810-(P) 6 ; 54.

the pre-requisites for any negotiations.¹ A force 20,000 strong under Misser Dewan Chand and prince Kharak Singh with a strong wing of artillery and accompanied by a contingent of fanatic Akālīs under Phula Singh proceeded towards Multan in January 1818.

6. Conquest of Multan (1818)

Early in February, the Sikh forces occupied Muzaffargarh and Khangarh. The Nawab having failed to buy off the Lahore commanders with the offer of tribute, aroused the Muslim population of the adjoining districts with a war-cry of *jehād* against the Sikh infidels, and sent frantic appeals to Afghanistan for succour. But although the city of Multan was occupied by the Sikhs, the citadel defied the besiegers for about 4 months. The beleaguered Afghan garrison 2,000 strong resisted with redoubtable courage and endurance; the Sikh cannon made breaches in the thick mud-and-brick walls of the fortress, across the wide moat which surrounded it, but the Ghāzīs soon filled them up. The bombardment proved ineffective. Offers of a *jāgīr* and safe conduct made to the Nawab were spurned with derision. In April reinforcements from Lahore arrived under Jamādār Khushal Singh along with the 80-pounder cannon *zamzama*.

The storming of the fortress continued till 2 June, when Ilahi Bakhsh's artillery effected two wide breaches. In various assaults the Sikhs crossed the moat, but were mowed down by the Ghāzī musketry behind mud and mounds sustaining a loss of 1800 men. The valiant Afghan defenders were now reduced to 400 men of all arms, but they refused to surrender or ask for quarter. It was, however, evident that they would not be able to resist much longer. On the night of 2 June, a party of Akālī fanatics under Sadhu Singh surprised the defenders by rushing through one of the breaches at the Khizri Gate. The Sikh infantry soon followed. Griffin describes the final scene: "Here the old Nawab, with his eight sons and all that remained of his garrison, stood sword in hand, resolved to fight to the death. So many fell beneath the keen Afghan swords and the Sikhs drew back and opened fire, on the little party with their matchlocks. 'Come on like men,' shouted the Afghans, 'and let us fall in fair fight.' But this was an invitation which the Sikhs did not care to accept. There died the white-bearded Muzaffar Khan, scorning to accept quarter, and five of his sons. The sixth was wounded severely in the face, and two accepted quarter and were saved. Few of the garrison escaped with their lives, and the whole city was given to plunder."²

¹ On the subject, see generally, UT, II, p. 211 *et seq*; *The Multan District Gazetteer*; Ganesh Dass *Jung-i-Multān, Peshāwar* and Ghulam Jilani's *Jung-i-Multān*, also Munshi Hukam Chand's *Tawārikh-i-Zillāh'i Multān*, Lahore, 1884 etc.

² *Ranjit Singh*, p. 186-187.

Latif describes graphically the sack of Multan : "The city and fort were now given up to be plundered by the Sikh troops : great were the ravages committed by the Sikhs on this occasion. About 400 to 500 houses in the fort were razed to the ground and their owners deprived of all they had. The precious stones, jewellery, shawls and other valuables belonging to the Nawab were confiscated to the State and kept carefully packed by Diwān Ram Diyal, for the inspection of the Maharaja. The arms were all carried away. In the town many houses were set on fire, and nothing was left with the inhabitants that was worth having. Hundreds were stripped of their clothes. Outrages were committed on the women, many of whom committed suicide by drowning themselves in the wells or otherwise putting an end to their lives, in order to save themselves from dishonour. Hundreds were killed in the sack of the city ; and indeed there was hardly a soul who escaped both loss and violence. So great, in short, were the horrors inflicted upon the unfortunate inhabitants that the terrible incidents attendants on the sack of Multan are recollected to this day, and still not unfrequently form the topics of conversation."¹

The Sikh victors of Multan having occupied the citadel, officers and men ransacked the town. 20,00,000 rupees worth of booty was taken by the soldiery from the wealthy town, but a stern warning by the Maharaja with a penalty of death for not restoring the spoil to the State, disgorged merely 5,00,000 rupees worth of the plunder.² The conquest of Multan by the Sikhs in 1818 sounded the death-knell of the waning Afghan influence in southern Punjab. It gave to Ranjit Singh possession of a substantially rich province yielding an annual revenue of 7,00,000 rupees, a commercial centre of great advantage, and a city strategically commanding a vital military position. Multan was a gateway to Sind, and its conquest ultimately brought the submission of the Derajat and the Daudpotas of Bahawalpur.

7. Multan under Sikh rule

For some time after the Sikh conquest of Multan, conditions were highly unsettled. People of the city had been wantonly despoiled by the Sikh soldiery ; the farmers had left the fields, and the population had left the town ; the weavers and silk manufacturers had ceased their activities, and trade was at standstill. But with the appointment of a Lahore governor Sukh Dayal in 1818, there

¹ *History of the Punjab*, Calcutta, 1891, p. 412.

² In 1822 Ranjit Singh ruefully told traveller William Moorcraft (*Travels*, p. 61) that at the time of its conquest the wealth of the city was estimated at 4 crores of rupees. The Sikh officers, he said, did not restrain the soldiers from plunder after the fall of the town, but very little of the booty came to his share, even though the soldiery was made to disgorge part of it.

were signs of the normalcy ; but the revenue could not be collected and the Maharaja removed the governor and imprisoned him on charges of misappropriation of State dues. The country was then farmed out to Sham Singh for an annual sum of 6,50,000 rupees. He and his successor Badan Hazari failed to render account and were dismissed soon after. In 1821, Multan was farmed out to Diwān Sawan Mal, who proved to be one of its most efficient administrators and a beneficent ruler for almost a quarter of a century.

Sawan Mal's administration in Multan was in sharp contrast with that of the *subahs* of Peshawar and Kashmir. He introduced fiscal and judicial reforms, and with a firm hand curbed the turbulent tendencies of the refractory zamīndārs in such a manner that peace and prosperity came to the province. He improved the lot of the cultivators by giving them relief from the pressure of exorbitant exactions. Under the Saddozai Nawabs cultivation had decreased, lands were deserted, and an improverished class of proprietors had grown up. Sawan Mal introduced land reforms which without disturbing the proprietary rights of the zamīndārs encouraged the *Chakdārs* and the *Siilundārs*—the real cultivators of the soil, to reclaim and improve the land and dig wells in the uncultivated portions of the land. The system saved them from the thralldom of the zamīndār. The actual cultivator could not be ejected from the land provided he paid to the zamīndār his share of the produce, thus giving him an interest in the improvement of the soil. The government share was kept at the lowest—usually 1/3rd of the produce. On certain cash crops, such as sugar and indigo, it was further reduced to 1/6th. State share could be paid either in cash or in kind at current market rates. *Pattās* were granted to individuals for the cultivation of wells—25 *bighas* of land, and numerous fees and cesses, the *zābiṭah* the *torānī* and *sharāfī* were retained in less irksome form. Gradually the *Chakdars* became hereditary cultivators, and paid revenue direct to the State, thus acquiring permanent rights in the land in the village, which they could alienate without the consent of the proprietor. Sawan Mal's agricultural reforms in the *subah* of Multan, which included the districts of Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Leiah and Jhang, were based on the principle of lower taxes, better facilities for cultivator to get adequate price for his produce, and a regular supply of water to his fields.

8. Land Revenue System

The system of land revenue assessment prevalent under the Sikhs in the *subah* of Multan was on the basis of governmental share either in cash or kind of the gross produce. It was classified under four heads, viz., (1) *Jinsī* or *Batā'ī*, the standard method of a share in the crop at a rate which varied according to the condition of the soil. It averaged between 1/4th to 1/3rd of the gross produce.

(2) *Naqdī-Jinsī*, or cash kind assessment, by which the landlord purchased the government share at fixed rate. (3) *Zabṭī* or cash assesment per acre on certain crops. (4) *Qarārī* or cash lumpsum assessment, where the landholder had himself provided means of cultivation or wells without State help, a fixed assessment in money appraised under a deed, which stipulated the governmental share usually at 12 rupees per well.

But although the assessment in Multan was considerably reasonable, both the landlord and the cultivator were saddled with extra burdens in their bewildering numbers. A cess called the *malbā* or fee for the renewal of lease was payable on certain conditions; the *moghala* or royalty on all cash-crops sold; the *shukrānā* or thanksgiving; *chārī* or pasturage cess. Other cesses equivalent to graft or extortions levied for the upkeep of revenue and military officials had the picturesque but irksome names—the *lawāzima* or essentials, the *qanūngoi*, *kharch-i-dabīr wa dārogha wa diwānī*, *begār wa shikār* etc.

9. Network of canals

Multan was studded with a system of old and new canals as under :

(1) The *Dīwānwāh*, a canal 35 miles in length, irrigating Lodhran, Khai and Mailsi, was an old disused canal re-excavated by Mustfa Khan under Sawan Mal. It was navigable for boats upto 40 miles from Multan. (2) The *Sardār wāh*, 38 miles in length, irrigating Kehrur and Sardarwāh. It was navigable for about 25 miles along the highway from Multan to Bahawalpur. (3) The *Muhammadwāh*, a canal having a length of 30 miles, irrigating Kehrur. It was navigable for 12 miles from its mouth at Shahpur Jussa. (4) The *Bahāwalwāh*, length 30 miles, irrigated Mailsi and Kehrur. It was navigable for about 15 miles from its mouth. (5) The *Sultānwāh*, length 25 miles. It was a branch of the *Bahāwalwāh*, which irrigated Mailsi and Kehrur, and was navigable for about 3 miles. (6) The *Qabūlwāh*, length 20 miles. It irrigated Mailsi and was navigable for 3 miles. (7) The *Jamwāh*, length 30 miles. It irrigated Mailsi and was navigable for 8 miles from its mouth at Ni'amat Ali. (8) The *Jām wāh* and the *Qutubwāh*, length 30 miles. It irrigated Mailsi and was navigable for about 10 miles. (9) *Canal Walī Muhammad*, length 30 miles. It irrigated Multan and its environments, and was navigable beyond Suraj Kund. (10) The *Shāhpur Canal*, length 12 miles. It irrigated Multan. (11) The *Doorāna Canal*, length 10 miles. It irrigated Multan and Sitlamarhi. (12) The *Sikandarwāh*, length 30 miles. It irrigated Multan and its suburbs and was navigable for 15 miles. (13) The *Gujhala Canal*, length 12 miles. It irrigated Shujabad and was partly navigable. (14) The *Bakhtwāh*, length 12 miles. It irrigated Shujabad and was navigable for about 8 miles. (15) The *Dhundhu Canal*, length 16 miles. It irrigated Shujabad and was navigable for about 8 miles.¹

¹ H. James—*Canals of the Mooltan District*. No. 1, dated 29 November, 1849—

10. Sawan Mal : a beneficent ruler

Sawan Mal knew the country of Multan and its dependencies very well. He replaced the disorganised government of the Pathans by a system of rule conducted on principles which benefitted both the State and the people. The revenue arrangements with their local and individual character were not touched ; he simply centralised the administration, dispensed with the corrupt *kardars*, and gave personal attention to all business of the State. He held regular *darbar*, and dispensed justice to all and sundry without any reservations of caste and creed. "He was thus able," observes Sir Edward Maclagen, "in a remarkable way to make this district, the most contented in India, and yet at the same time, to make it yield every rupee of income that could be squeezed from it, and this result he achieved by a combination of strict justice with minute revenue management. He was constant and methodical in his *kutcherry* hours, and minute in his supervision, especially over matters of accounts ... In his judicial work he was strict and impartial ... so too in his revenue administration ... he carried out the ideas of land nationalisation to great lengths. His main principle was that if the land was culturable and the owner did not cultivate it, another cultivator should be put in by the State, and the owner recouped by a small due or not according to circumstances. Each village was assessed in the way that gave the largest return to government, but whenever possible that way was the most suitable to the cultivators. If a man had not capital to build a well or to buy oxen, the State at once supplied the capital and recouped as best as it could, not according to any system but by taking as much from the owner each year as he could spare without injury to the cultivation. The canals were diligently cleared out, the zealous zamindars being encouraged by rewards and honours, and the remiss being severally punished. The Hindu who wanted to invest money in land was given uncultivated land to reclaim, and when he reclaimed it was made to pay full annual revenue for it. Useless expenditure on *jāgirs* and *mu'afis* was reduced to a minimum, and everything able to yield revenue was made to yield it. And yet, the people, tired after long harassments and pleased with substantial justice they received, were kept happy and contented as they have probably never been before or since."¹

11. People, Trade and Commerce

In 1827, Multan had a population between 40,000-45,000 with 8,000-9000 houses, the area within the walls completely built over.² Alexander Burnes who

Selections from Public Correspondence of the Administration for the affairs of the Punjab.
Vol. 1, Lahore, 1857.

¹ *Gazetteer of Multan District*, Lahore, 1927, p. 49-50.

² *Masson, Journeys etc.* i, p. 394 ff.

visited Multan a few years later in 1831, describes the circumference of the city upwards of three miles, surrounded by a dilapidated wall overlooking the fortress. It had a population of 60,000 souls; 2/3rd Muhammadans, and 1/3rd Hindus. The fort was garrisoned by 500 Sikh troops.¹ Masson who was in Multan in 1827 describes its citadel, its commerce, shrines and ruins. He describes that the citadel and its defences were elaborate, but the Sikhs had not taken the trouble to repair the breaches of the siege, consequently these were in a much dilapidated state. It was also poorly garrisoned. Its trade had fallen since the Sikhs took it over from the Pathan Nawabs, but : "there are still numerous bankers, and manufacturers of silk and cotton goods. Its fabrics of shawls and lungis are deservedly esteemed, and its borocades and tissues compete with that of Bahawalpur."²

Among the Muhammadans, the Pathans were still the largest landowners in the villages. Under the Sikh rule, Sawan Mal's policy of reclamation of land had brought the affluent Hindu Bhāti'ās of the lower Indus into the province. They acquired land and proved successful agriculturists. The Arorās or the Kirār were predominant everywhere in business and moneylending. Muhammadan races inhabiting this part of the kingdom were the Sayyeds, the Gilānīs, the Gardezīs, the Quraishīs, the Pathāns, the Mughals, the Baluchīs, the Arā'īns, the Jāts and the Rājputs. The Muhammadan Jāt was the backbone of agriculture in the province. Among the inferior Muhammadan tribes, the Labānās, the Mahātams, the Jhabals and the Kehāls were numerous, most of them engaged in agricultural pursuits. Others like the Mochīs, the Kutānās, the Pā'olīs and the Telīs and the Qaṣṣābs of the menial castes among the Muhammadans, followed their respective professions besides supplementing their livelihood as tenants or farm servants.

12. Commerce and duties

We have some account of the trade activities of Multan in 1835. Multan produced silks which were of high quality and popular in Sind, the Punjab and India. Its main productions were khes, gulbadans, taimūrshābīs, chintzes, lungīs and carpets. Ranjit Singh in a way encouraged their manufacture by giving at his Court the cloth manufactured at Multan. They were worn as sashes and scarfs by all the Sikh Sardars. The principal marts of the country of Multan were : Amritsar, Bahawalpur, Khairpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan and Mithankot, which had communications with the merchants of Shikarpur, Kandahar, Herat, Bokhara, Peshawar, Kabul, Sind and India. Merchants of Shikarpur especially the Lohanis resident at

¹ *Travels in Bokhara etc.*, p. 94 seq.

² *Journeys etc.*, opt. cit.

Multan carried on lucrative trade with Central Asia. Multan imported silk from Bokhara in Turkistan at the rate of 2837.8 rupees per camel load of $6\frac{1}{2}$ maunds brought by the Lohanis via Kabul and Ghazni. Silk articles were mostly exported to Amritsar; silk cloth, chintzes and indigo worth 5,50,000 rupees were exported to Khorasan and Turkistan; the export figures for Sind are 20,000 rupees; India 50,000 rupees and Amritsar 20,000 rupees.¹

From Afghanistan, Multan imported silk, fruit, assafoetida, vinegar and candiments; from Amritsar English cloth, haldi, ginger and copper ware; from India cloth, lakh, copper and brass pots; from Shikarpur pearls; and from Dera Ghazi Khan opium, snuff, butter and oil. Mohan Lal describes the exorbitant custom charges in the Punjab and observes that the merchants received no encouragement from the government. A schedule of custom duties prevalent in 1835 is also available: Silk exported-8 annas per seer, while silk sold in the town-12 annas per seer; Indigo- $6\frac{1}{2}$ rupees per maund; English cloth-7%; Broad cloth-10 annas per yard; Spices-8%; Cotton-1.5.0 per maund; Fruit and raisins from Kabul-5-6 rupees per camel-load; horses-5 rupees each; and camels-2 rupees each.² An indigenous system of insurance of merchandise called the *hunda* was current for silk trade between Multan and Amritsar. It amounted to 50 rupees per maund which included the freight but the custom duties were payable by the owner of the cargo.³

13. Vigne's account

Godfrey Vigne, who visited Multan at the zenith of Sawan Mal's rule in 1836, observes that he met the governor: "Ranjit Singh has been heard to say that he was one of the best officers in his service."⁴ He observes that Multan was famous for its silk manufactures, 700 maunds of silk was imported to Multan every year from Bokhara and Turkistan. Vigne's description of the people of the country of Multan and their social behaviour at the festival of Baisakhi is picturesque. He says: "I rode to the river about three miles distant. The country which intervenes between the city and its banks was looking very green and picturesque, considering it is entirely flat; a great deal of land was under cultivation and bearing very fine crops of wheat. Well planted gardens were always in sight; and date and palm trees standing singly or in groups were frequently seen amongst the numerous topes or clumps of mulberry, mango, banian, peepul and acacia trees. By the roadside were the venders of wreaths

1 Mohan Lal, *Travels in Punjab, Afghanistan, etc.* Patiala, 1971, p. 391 ff.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid* p. 393.

4 *A Personal Narrative of a Visit to Ghazni etc.*, London, 1840, p. 14.

and fans made from the flags that grew on the water's edge. In the afternoon there was a fair in the Bagh Ali Akbar, a garden with a shrine of a fakir of that name. I saw the Multanis returning, every species of conveyance had, of course, been put in requisition: horses, mules, donkeys carrying one or two persons; camels each bearing seven or eight women and children, disposed on either sides in trucks; and unlicensed bullock carts, with cargoes of giggling dancing girls. The number of persons who will stow themselves in these vehicles is quite astounding; all were in their holiday dresses. The Hindu was to be distinguished by his castemark on his forehead, his rose-coloured turban, and red flowing trousers. The Multan Mussalman usually wore white dress of the same kind of pattern. The Sikh, generally a Sepahi, was recognised by his sword, matchlock and accoutrements, his scanty turban, his earrings, his would-be-knee-breeches, or his close-fitting, ill-used trousers."¹

2. CONQUEST OF KASHMIR

14. A disastrous expedition (1814)

The fiasco of Sikh co-operation with the Afghans against Kashmir in 1812 had exhibited to Ranjit Singh the weakness of the Muhammadan hill Chiefs of Bhimber and Rajouri, both of which commanded the approaches of the Pir Panjal range of hills. Preliminary to an invasion of the Valley, a Sikh force had already occupied these two places and driven out their chiefs to seek refuge with Ata Muhammad Khan, the governor of Kashmir.² Ranjit Singh now made full preparations for a large scale invasion of Kashmir. On 6 June, 1814, the Maharaja reached Bhimber on the banks of the river Jehlum. Contributions of 20,000 rupees had been levied on the hill *rājās* surrounding the districts of Nurpur and Jesrota; the *rājā* of Punch, Ruhullah Khan, was asked to co-operate in the operations, and on his refusal to do so, a detachment sent under Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwālā and Dīwān Ram Dayal overcame the armed resistance offered by him at Thatba, five *kos* from Rajouri. The Bahram Kalla pass was seized. Two divisions of the Sikh army then marched on Kashmir; the main army commanded by Ranjit Singh proceeded by the Punch route towards the Toshu Maidan Pass, while another under Ram Dayal and Sardar Dal Singh by a diversionary route through Baramula towards Supin inside the Kashmir Valley.

But the progress of the expedition was severely retarded on account of heavy rains. The Pir Panjal was still snow-covered; Sikh troops began to suffer from wet and cold, and the line of supply could not be maintained. Further

¹ *Ibid.*

² Murray, p. 7-8; Latif, p. 394.

operations were, therefore, suspended temporarily. However, towards the end of the month, the division commanded by the Maharaja arrived at Punch, which town had been evacuated. Here the Sikh force halted, and after the replenishment of supplies, moved towards Mandi, arriving at Toshu Maidan on 18 July, where Ata Muhammad Khan, the Kashmir governor, with his forces was encamped to bar the advance of the Sikh army.¹

Meanwhile, intelligence had been received that the force under Ram Dayal and Dal Singh after ascending the Pir Panjal Pass had occupied Haripur and was advancing on Supin, whither the defeated Kashmir force had retired. The Sikhs assaulted the well-defended town but failed to dislodge the defenders led by the Afghan commander Shakur Khan. Meanwhile Azim Khan's cavalry appeared on the scene. In a battle fought in a snow-storm and heavy rains, the Lahore troops were utterly routed. Reinforcements sent under Ram Singh Bhaya, hearing the news of disaster at Supin halted at Baramula. The defeated Sikh force fell back towards the Pir Panjal with heavy loss of men and materials.

At this critical juncture, Azim Khan opened offensive against the main Sikh army under the Maharaja at Toshu Maidan. The Sikh army, hard-pressed by lack of provisions and discomfited by rain and sickness, retired to Mandi, which town was set on fire. With the Afghan host in hot pursuit, Ranjit Singh endeavoured to reorganise his army demoralised by torrential rains. The roads were all under water; the soldiers began to desert or were cut down by the hill tribes and all baggage was lost. The remnants of the Sikh army fell back on Punch, but the retreat was conducted so irregularly and in such disorder, that it became a disgraceful flight.² Under the stress of pursuit and terror of snow, cold and rains, the Maharaja forced his way back to Bhimber, when he decided to leave Camp and return to Lahore; and accompanied by a few attendants, he arrived at the capital on 12 August, 1814.

Thus ended in disaster and shame the Kashmir expedition of 1814. The force under Diwan Ram Dayal and Sardar Dal Singh was completely surrounded by the Afghan troops. Its retreat and supplies having been completely cut off, it faced immediate annihilation. However, Azim Khan allowed it safe conduct to the Sikh frontier, on account of his professed friendship with Diwan Mukham Chand, the grandfather of the Sikh commander.³

¹ Murray, p. 7-8; Latif, p. 394.

² Ochterlony to Adams, 13 August, 1814-(P) 13: 78 and 195.

³ Murray, p. 29; Latif p. 405 etc.

The failure of the Lahore expedition shook up the Sikh sway in the hill region. Towards the close of the year, the Muslim Chiefs of Bhimber and Rajouri broke out in open revolt; the *rājās* of Punch and Nurpur began assuming an independent tone. The reputation lost by the Sikhs could only be retrieved by successive punitive expeditions sent from Lahore during the next four years.

15. Conquest of Kashmir (1819)

Multan fell in 1818, but the disastrous setback suffered by the Lahore forces in the Valley of Kashmir in 1814 rankled in the mind of the Maharaja for five years. Early in 1819, expeditions under Sardar Desa Singh Majithiā having subdued the hill Chiefs, Bir Dhar, a minister of Jabbar Khan, the Afghan governor of Kashmir deserted his master and sought asylum with Ranjit Singh at Lahore. Bir Dhar disclosed to the Maharaja that Muhammad Azim Khan having gone away to Kabul with his best forces, the Valley of Kashmir was unprotected at that time. The *locum tenens* Jabbar Khan had no adequate means to defend the province should the Sikhs invade it. Acting on this intelligence, Ranjit Singh ordered that preparations for the invasion of Kashmir be set on foot. Misser Diwan Chand, the Sikh conqueror of Multan was nominated to command the main army, 12,000 strong. Another division of the army was placed under the command of Prince Kharak Singh to support Misser Diwan Chand. The Maharaja himself stayed at Wazirabad with the third division as reserve and to supervise the flow of supplies and ammunition to the army, which advanced from Lahore early in April 1819. Accompanied by *rājā* Sultan Muhammad Khan of Bhimber, who had been released from captivity after 7 years, Misser Diwan Chand reached Bhimber in May and within a fortnight occupied Rajouri and Punch, and secured all the passes in the Pir Panjal region. The road over Pir Panjal now lay open to the Sikh forces, who advancing rapidly descended into the Valley and halted at Sarai Ali.

Meanwhile Prince Kharak Singh's division advanced towards Surdi Thana, and the Maharaja with the third division came upto Bhimber. Jabbar Khan, the acting governor of Kashmir had taken up a position at Supin towards which the entire Sikh force advanced, and in a battle fought on 5 July, the Kashmir forces were utterly routed and fled across the mountains.

The Valley of Kashmir now lay at the mercy of the victorious Sikh army. A triumphal entry of the city was made, and the surrounding forts of Shergarh and Azimgarh surrendered. The Maharaja announced the annexation of Kashmir to his Kingdom, appointed Diwān Moti Ram, son of Diwān Muhkam Chand as its first governor and Diwān Devi Dass to be in charge of the settlement of the country. Then he returned to Lahore to celebrate the victory of his arms¹.

¹ Murray to Ochterlony, 15 July, 1819-(P)29 : 157 ; Latif, p. 417 ff., Murray, p. 50 ff.

The conquest of Kashmir added an annual revenue of 40,00,000 rupees to the Kingdom of Lahore and brought under Sikh rule an extensive area inhabited by varied races, Aryans and Turanians in the Valley and its loftier mountains. It raised the prestige of the Maharaja and the majesty of his power at Leh, Lhasa and beyond the Karakoram mountains. It struck a heavy blow at the waning Afghan satrapies in northern India, the only one left now was Peshawar.

16. Kashmir Statistics

Kashmir was a rich prize with its trade routes, its vegetable and forest products and its valuable shawl trade and direct trade route to Tibet. Moorcroft and other travellers who visited the Valley furnish us with a detailed account of the administration of Kashmir under the Sikhs, its races and population, revenue, agricultural products and manufactures. The varied races, Aryan and Turanian inhabiting the Valley of Kashmir and its loftier mountains were widely different in origin. Dogra rajputs were Hindus, Chibhalis, Kashmiris and Dards were all Muhammadans. There were also Afghans and Brahmans in the Valley. The Turanian races—the Baltis were Muhammadans, and the Ladakhis and the Champas were Buddhists, all of Tibetan origin. During the Sikh rule, a few Sikh colonies were formed in the Jhelum Valley. Kashmiri Hindus and Brahmans were mostly traders and government officials.

Food and vegetable products. Rice or *shali* was the staple crop of Kashmir. In the Valley the staple food of the inhabitants was rice, fish, meat, vegetables and *nudru* or the root of the lotus plant. The common food of the Ladakhis was barley meal and broth of turnips. They drank tea and were exceedingly fond of *chang*, a spirituous liquor made from barley and wheat flour. The Baltis who were Muhammadanised Tibetans, were of the same stock as the Ladakhis, generally ate grains and the higher classes amongst them could afford drinking tea and *chang*.

In the Valley of Kashmir vegetables and fruit grew in abundant luxuriance. The cultivation in the Valley though irrigated by canals, was in small part dependent on rains. In Ladakh, the *zhing* or all cultivated land was generally watered by small streams. Kashmir was rich in forest products. It produced the Himalayan cedar or *deodar* of the highest quality, which was felled and logs cut into length and floated down the river Akhnur, from thence to Wazirabad and into the Punjab. Kashmir supplied the Kingdom all its requirements of timber. It had abundant forest wealth—pine, called *yar* in Kashmir, firs, yew, oak, elm, cypress, *churan*, poplar, ash, acacia, willow and

sandal-wood. Walnut, cherry, apricot, apple, pear, peach, orange, guava, almond, slive and vines were the main varieties of fruit trees which enriched the Valley.

Paper of excellent quality was made of the plantain tree ; twenty varieties of grapes are said to have existed in Kashmir according to Moorcroft who visited the Valley in 1821, from which was brewed wine, vinegar and brandy. Other important varieties of vegetable and fruit were : strawberry, currant (*basho*), raspberry, tobacco, hemp, wild indigo, saffron and crocus. Saffron which was used as condiment and medicine, was produced in the light ferruginous clay soil of Pampur in a limited area. It required neither irrigation nor manure, and for its value both in the Punjab and India, it was brought to Srinagar and exported.

17. Shawl Trade

A very prosperous commerce existed between Kashmir and Tibet through the Shia merchants of Persian extraction, who were resident at Leh in Ladakh. According to statistics furnished by Jacquemont (1834),¹ Kashmir imported from Tibet annually 60,000 seers of raw wool and woven woollen cloth, tea, procelain, gold and silver ingots, musk, dried fruit especially plums from Kashgar. It exported to Tibet grain, cotton cloth, iron and spices.

The capital of Kashmir, Srinagar had a numerous population of 8,00 000, out of which 1,20,000 were engaged in the trade of shawl manufacture, the annual value of which in the year 1822-23 amounted to 35,00,000 rupees, yielding to the State custom and stamp duties averaging 12,00,000 rupees.² The stamp duty on every shawl manufactured was 26%, and a considerable revenue was raised by imposing duties on the import of wool. The shawl-wool was also imported from the western districts of Lhasa and Ladakh, from Yardkand and Khotan, brought chiefly by Mongol merchants, who exchanged it for manufactured shawl-goods. Kashmir shawl-goods were exported to Turkey, Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, India and Chinese Turkistan. Kashmir produced a large variety of the finest qualities of embroident shawls ; some of varieties were expensive viz., *Dhourdar* price averaging between 200-2200 rupees per pair, *Choutahidar* price between 300-1500 rupees, *Thaldar* or net-work priced between 500-1700 rupees, *Kaddar* priced between 300-2000 rupees, and *Chaporast* priced between 300-7000 rupees per pair. Finer qualities of shawls averaged prices between 300 to 7,000 rupees. Kashmiri workmen were also famous for the fabrication of gun and pistol barrels and manufacture of sword blades. Leather-goods, pen-cases, paintings and paper were other important items of Kashmir industry.³

¹ *Journal*, p. 84.

² Moorcroft, p. 345 ff ; Jacquemont, p. 79.

³ *Ibid.*

3. SIKH MISRULE IN KASHMIR

18. System of Government

The Sikh rule in Kashmir is described as highly oppressive and rapacious. The whole province was divided into 36 pargannas and farmed out for approximately 40,00,000 rupees. Successive governors appointed—Moti Ram in 1819, Hari Singh in 1820, Gurmukh Singh in 1821, Dīwān Kirpa Ram (1824-30), Prince Sher Singh in 1831, and Mian Singh (1831-41) subjected the country to a system of taxation which broke the back of the peasantry and working classes. Moorcroft who visited Kashmir two years after its conquest, during the *nizāmat* of Sardar Gurmukh Singh describes the condition of the people: "Everywhere, however, the people are in the most abject condition: exorbitantly taxed by the Sikh Government, and subjected to every kind of extortion and oppression by its officers. The consequences of the system are, the general depopulation of the country: not more than one-sixteenth of the cultivable surface is in cultivation, and the inhabitants, starving at home, are driven in great numbers to the plains of Hindustan. In the like manner, the people of the city are rapidly thinning, though less from emigration, than poverty and disease; the prevalence of the latter in its most aggravated form was fearfully extensive."¹

Poverty and disease were aggravated by a highly obnoxious system of taxation, land revenue, and notwithstanding the fact, that it was not initiated by the Sikhs. In Kashmir from antiquity all land belonged to the State and the tenant had no rights. Under the Hindu *rājās* the state took 1/6th of the gross produce; under the Afghan rule, the state share of *shali*(rice) was 5/8th. The Sikhs took whatever they could from the cultivators; 5/6th of the crop was taken away as State share besides numerous cesses such as *tambol*, *mandirī*, *rasūm-i-daftār* etc. A system of *traks* was introduced in the division of crops which augmented the State's portion by 6 seers over and above its fixed share.² Every trade and profession was taxed. The shawl trade, the main occupation of 1/6th of the population of Srinagar, was its main target. Apart from a duty of 26% on each shawl, a charge was levied upon every shop or workshop connected with the trade. All other professions from the lowest to the highest were taxed. "Butchers, bakers, boatmen, venders of fuel, public notaries, scavengers, prostitutes, all pay a sort of protection tax," observes Moorcroft, "and even

¹ *Travels*, p. 344 ff.

² Other accounts relate that the Sikhs took $\frac{1}{3}$ share of the *kharīf* crop and in addition 4 *traks* (24 seers) per *kharwar* (96 seers). The shares of revenue officials—the *patwarī*, and the *qanūngo* being 3 seers per *kharwar*; *nazarana* 2%, *tambol* 2% and with additional local burdens, not less than $\frac{1}{4}$ th of the gross produce was taken away from the cultivator.

the Kotwal, or Chief Officer of Justice, pays a large gratuity of thirty-thousand rupees for his appointment, being left to reimburse himself as he may.”¹

In no part of the kingdom of Ranjit Singh, the local administration was so chaotic, rapacious and extortionist as in Kashmir. The system of farming out the revenues to the highest bidder so successful under Sawan Mal in Multan, miserably failed in Kashmir on account of the incompetency and avariciousness of the successive indifferent governors and their opportunistic setellites. Here as well as elsewhere, land revenue, innumerable taxes and town duties were farmed out to single individuals, but neither the *nāzim* nor the Darbār possessed any means to check the extortions of corrupt officials. The revenue farmer employed a horde of *kārdārs* and tax-collectors, who took away what they willed from the cultivator. Kashmir was a paradise for the corrupt *nāzims* and *kārdārs*. Of all the *kārdārs*—that corrupt paragon of oppressive authority, who plied his trade with caution and hesitancy in the plains of Punjab, in Kashmir is painted as a rapacious tax-collector. He stole state revenues for himself on a much larger scale : “He is always a Hindu Babu or a Pandit. He eats a chicken daily at the expense of his charges who rear plenty but rarely eat any of them. He seizes all their crops, leaving them what is barely necessary for subsistence, sometimes less. He is a man of abominable character and is loathed by the peasants who are all Mohammadans.”²

Moti Ram and Hari Singh the first two governors did not enjoy much popularity ; they had no acquaintance with the problems of Kashmir, and except for the collection of revenue with inadequate means at their disposal, they adopted inhuman and harsh measures ; but so impoverished was the country, and so indigent the people, that they could hardly satisfy their own avarice or that of the State requiring them to send a fixed revenue of 40,00,000 rupees annually. After a short rule by Gurmukh Singh, in 1824 Diwān Kirpa Ram took charge of the *subāh*. Kirpa Ram was an efficient but easy-going official of the State ; he took measures for the regular payment of the Lahore dues of 40,00,000 rupees, out of which, he was allowed to retain 2,00,000 rupees for the maintenance of troops in Kashmir. His popularity at Lahore was dependent on his punctual payment of State dues every year, which excited the jealousy of rājā Dhian Singh, the all-powerful minister of Ranjit Singh. In 1830 he was recalled to Lahore on charges of corruption and imprisoned. He disgorged 15,00,000 rupees as the price of his release. “Of all the Sikh governors of Kashmir, Kirpa Ram gave the people the least cause of complaint,” observes Jacquemont,

¹ Moorcroft, *Travels*, p. 345.

² Jacquemont, *Journal*, p. 80.

"yet the news of his disgrace was a signal of public rejoicings. It was justified : for the least oppressive of the governors is a cruel tyrant."¹

19. *Nizāmat of Sher Singh*

So much perturbed was the Maharaja by the sad state of affairs in Kashmir, that while talking to Alexander Burnes in 1831 he observed that his government had received 36,00,000 rupees as revenue, but his officials were highly incompetent and corrupt: "All the people," he observed, "I send to Kashmir turn out to be *harāmzādas* (rascals); there is too much pleasure and enjoyment in that country. I must either send one of my sons there, or go myself."² Accordingly, in 1831 Kanwar Sher Singh was appointed to the *nizāmat* of Kashmir. But Sher Singh's rule in Kashmir may be likened to a parody. He grossly neglected his charge and a famine overtook the country. People died of starvation and fled to the plains of the Punjab.³ According to the Lahore Diarist, Sher Singh had reported to the Maharaja the sad state of affairs: that the revenue could not be collected and defalcation and loss of State dues was taking place on a very large scale. The Maharaja then despatched a committee of the three court officials—Jamādār Khushal Singh, Shaikh Ghulam Mohyi-ud-din and Bhāī Gurmukh Singh to Srinagar to assist prince Sher Singh in the administration of the province and collection of the revenue.

The Committee of "the three" superimposed upon the authority of Nāzim Sher Singh proceeded in an extraordinary manner of spoliation. Sohan Lal records what these "three pillars of the kingdom" did immediately on their arrival in "the paradise-like Kashmir." "No sooner had they reached there than they began to treat the inhabitants and all the *kārdars* in a tyrannical and ruthless manner and lit up high flames of the fire of wrath and anger against them. They put in prison all the *kārdars* of Kanwar Sher Singh and began to realise *nazarānas* from them by keeping the list of exactions before them. Pandit Suraj Bhan Rs. 1,90,000; Munshi Tilok Chand Pandit Rs. 75,000; Himmat Pandit Fotedār Rs. 25,000; Pandit Kaul Bhan Rs. 35,000; Shankar Pandit Kootra Rs. 15,000; Shaikh Jalal-ud-Din, a resident of Daghsal Rs. 75,000; Jamādār residing in Dawa Faroshan Rs. 50,000; Chandarbat *Sarishtadar* of Daghsal Rs. 25,000; *Qanūngoes of Pargannas* Rs. 56,000; Kārdars of Kanwar Sher Singh Rs. 85,000; Kārdars of the mufussil Rs. 95,000. All the fine things

¹ *Ibid.* p. 81.

² Quoted by Latif p. 448.

³ UT, III (ii). p. 170 describes the famine of 1833: "a great famine broke out in Kashmir and its residents became refugees and exiles from their houses and died in large numbers by exposure on roads."

consisting of utensils made of gold, silver and crystal, articles of jewellery, Pashmina tents specially made to order with gold and silver poles, which were contained in the *Toshakhāna* of Kanwar Sher Singh worth 7 Lakhs, were at once taken into possession by them.”¹ The oppressive policy of the Committee lasted barely 3 months. It so annoyed the Maharaja that Sher Singh was recalled and Colonel Mian Singh was appointed in his place.

20. Rule of Mian Singh

The mal-administration of the successive inept governors had practically ruined the economy of the country. Oppressive *kārdārs* had rackrented the peasantry; extortions were the order of the day; the judges and Qāzis took open graft with impunity, and soldiery was let loose in the countryside to assist the *kārdārs* in the realisation of revenue. Jacquemont describes the method employed by the *kārdār* of Koteli by advising him to find better means than hanging of making the cultivators pay their revenue. “Impossible,” said he, “the rascals hang on to their money so tight that you can thrash them for ever without their disgorging. The rope is the only thing that frightens them.”² He saw several corpses hanging on the neighbouring trees, while crowds of crows were tearing them to pieces. The same contemporary eyewitness who observed the state of affairs in Kashmir at the time, calls the Sikh governor as one tyrant instead of a thousand. “But according to the Kashmiris,” he comments, “the best of the Sikh is bad. The latter who have rendered themselves odious to the people by their exactions and their violence, do not hesitate at the same time to interfere with their religious observances, punishing with death the slayer of a bullock or a cow. A homicide is rarely put to death. If he is rich, he pays compensation, if he is poor, he loses his nose and ears. Otherwise punishment is rare, because serious crime, including the slaying of kine, is never heard of.”³

The rule of Colonel Mian Singh lasted till 1841 when he was assassinated by the soldiery. He took up the administration of the country ruined by famine, floods and oppression. The population of the Valley of Kashmir which was 8,00,000 twenty years before, in 1835 had dwindled to 2,00,000 on account of fearful dispensations of earthquakes, pestilence and famine.⁴ The oppression of Sikh rule had weighed heavily on the people. Villages had been abandoned by their inhabitants and more land had gone out of cultivation. The inhabitants fled towards Kabul, into the plains of the Punjab, or in the hills in

¹ Ibid.

² *Journal*, p. 65.

³ Ibid. p. 70-71.

⁴ See particularly, the *District Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, p. 465; Vigne, G. T. *Travels in Kashmir etc.*, 2 Vols; Below, *Kashmir and Kashghar*; Drew, *Jammu and Kashmir Territories etc.*

search of less tyrannous masters.¹ Baron Charles Hugel, who visited Kashmir during Mian Singh's rule, observes that its prosperity and trade were no longer in evidence : "Kashmir has lost its charms as a desirable acquisition ; though it may still be made an important and valuable province. Its riches are all departed, and invaders, such as those adverted to, go in quest of wealth rather than new and productive territories."² Mian Singh is described by Baron Von Hugel, who met him in 1835 at Srinagar : "He is a thickset unwieldy figure, and though still in the prime of life, his dissolute way of living has given him the appearance of an old man : his hair was white as silver. To judge by his countenance, one would pronounce him good-natured ; but, in many respects, he is not the governor required in the present critical state of Kashmir."³

Yet, by comparison Mian Singh was a mild, temperate and a conscientious governor. His contract had been reduced to 26,00,000 rupees annually ;⁴ he ordered a fresh settlement of the land⁵ and introduced minor reforms in the country, but due to the impoverished conditions prevailing in the country, revenue could never be collected in time, and charges of embezzlement were frequently levied against him from Lahore.⁶ But the bane of Kashmir administration continued to be the farming out of provincial revenues and taxes to the Kashmiri Pandits of Srinagar. They extorted from the cultivators a far larger sum than due from them. If they paid the farm rent regularly, the government did not interfere with them. Throughout Kashmir posts were established to collect the customs. These posts constituted a chain of espionage system through which intelligence was collected and carried to the police organisation set up in Srinagar.⁷

21. Dogra transactions in Ladakh

In November, 1834, Mian Singh reported to the Lahore Darbār, the activities of Gulab Singh's deputy Zorawar Singh in Ladakh. The Ladakhis customarily paid a tribute to the governor of Kashmir, which Mian Singh reported was not forthcoming and that the trade in shawl-wool was being

¹ Hugel, *Travels*, p. 123.

² *Ibid.* p. 115.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ UT, III (ii), p. 270.

⁵ Mian Singh was also a man of letters, as is evidenced by the compilation at his orders of *Tārīkh-i-Kashmīr*, a voluminous *Settlement Report* and a historical work with a social and economic background, of his time and rule in Kashmir. The manuscript is extremely rare, and a copy each of which is preserved in Kashmir State Library and Punjab State Archives, Patiala.

⁶ UT, III (iii), p. 451.

⁷ Jacquemont, *Journal*, p. 73.

diverted to Jammu.¹ Since the consolidation his of power in the newly conquered province of Kishtwar, ambitions of Gulab Singh, the rājā of Jammu had erupted in an invasion of Ladakh. The force commanded by Zorawar Singh, the Dogra commander, entered the Bhotkal pass and built a fort at Suru. The Ladakhis opposed the Dogras at Pashkyum, but were defeated; a few days later, the Ladakhi Chief sustained another defeat at the fortress of Sod and surrendered. In the meantime, the Kahlon of Leh having organised a strong force attacked Zorawar Singh, who retreated to Kortze. A battle was fought soon after, and the Kahlon sustained defeat and was taken prisoner. Zorawar Singh then advanced to Leh, and in 1835 forced upon the Ladakhis terms which included a war indemnity of 50,000 rupees and payment of annual tribute of 20,000 rupees to Gulab Singh. Zorawar Singh deposed the ruler and bestowed the kingdom on his rebellious minister leaving a garrison of Dogra troops behind to sustain him.²

All this had happened without the cognizance of the Maharaja or the Lahore Darbār. Dhian Singh connived to keep away the news-letters received from the governor of Kashmir reporting the mad adventures of the Dogra deputy in Ladakh and that the ambitions of the Jammu brothers in the northern slopes of the Himalayas had not only stopped the tribute from Ladakh but also hampered the regular supply of shawl-wool to Kashmir.³

Mian Singh counteracted the extension of Dogra power in Ladakh by instigating an isurrection at Leh. Zorawar Singh again marched into the Valley, quelled the revolt, and set up the Kahlon of Banka as a ruler and tributary of the Dogras. A year later, in 1838, a general Ladakhi insurrection took place, and the Dogra garrisons were beleaguered in forts. Reinforcements under Zorawar Singh arrived promptly, but due to the flooded state of the country nothing materialised. In 1839, however, Zorawar Singh re-entered Ladakh with a force of 5,000 men, for the purpose of seizing the Kahlons of Bank and Basgo, who had raised the storm against the gyalpo helped by the Muhammadan ruler of Baltistan. Zorawar Singh left a garrison at Iskardu, and in 1840 invaded Baltistan and took its ruler as prisoner. The territory was completely ravaged.

It is surprising that the spirit of aggrandizement shown by the Jammu deputy in the Himalayan region, except for causing some misgivings in the mind of the Maharaja who was ailing, did not stir up any reaction at

¹ UT, III (ii), p. 225-6.

² See generally, Macnaghten to Wade, 22 November, 1837-(P) 119 : 79 ; 10 March, 1838-(P) 121 : 23 ; Tapp to Wade, 31 October, 1837-(P) 109 : 17 ; Mackeson to Wade, 10 April, 1838-(P) 110 : 13.

³ UT, III (ii), p. 225 ; Wade to Government, 27 January, 1835 (P) etc.

Lahore. But when Zorawar Singh occupied Garo and Iskardu, he clashed with British interests. It was pointed out to the Lahore Government that the forward movement of the Jammu rājās to monopolise the shawl and wool trade with Chinese Tibet through Ladakh retarded the progress of free trade between British India and the countries beyond the frontier.¹

22. *Postscript on Ladakh*

Ladakh was a *de jure* Sikh possession, although subservient to the Dogras of Jammu. William Moorcroft who stayed in Ladakh for 2 years (1820-1822), has furnished us with an interesting account of the country, its people, their manners and customs, and their trade relations with Kashmir and the Punjab. The country of Ladakh was bounded on the north-west by the mountains which divide it from the Chinese province of Khoten, on the south-east by Rodokh and other dependencies of Tibet. In the north it was bounded by the Karakoram mountains and in the south-west by Kashmir and its dependencies. Its capital Leh lay at an elevation of 11,000 feet ; its principal rivers were the Sinh-kha-bab and the Shayuk, both flowing north-west of Ladakh and joining at Khaflun to form the Indus Proper.

The population of Ladakh was of Tibetan origin, but a very considerable number of Kashmiris were domesticated at Leh, and a mixed race had originated from them and the women of the country, termed Argands. It had some Turin merchants, and in the lands of Chushut, a colony of Balti Muhammadians was established. Its population was estimated between 1,50,000-1,80,000 of which 2/3rd atleast were females. The Ladakhis were, in general, a mild and timid people, honest and moral, although corrupted by the dissolute Kashmiris. They were Buddhists and their religious belief and practice "seemed a strange mixture of metaphysic, mysticism, morality, fortune-telling, juggling and idolatry. The doctrine of metaphysics is curiously blended with tenets and precepts very similar to Christianity and with the worship of grotesque divinities. The Lamas recognise a sort of trinity, or a triad consisting of a paramount deity, a prophet and a book, and the people are exhorted to truth, chastity, resignation, and mutual forbearance and goodwill."²

The Ladakhis had paid in the past an annual tribute to the Afghan governors of Kashmir and since its conquest by the Sikhs in 1819, a similar

¹ For public correspondence on the subject, *vide*. ISP(I) 16 August, 1841, Nos. 39, 96 ; 6 September, 1841, Nos. 42-44 and 13 September, *op. cit.* No. 65.

² Moorcroft, *Travels*, p. 203.

demand was made upon them. They also paid an annual tribute disguised under the name of a present to the Government of Lhasa. Moorcroft found the government of Ladakh a simple despotism modified by the influence of heirarchy. The ruler, a Lama was a person of little power and could be deposed or elevated at pleasure ; his successor in the former case being a member of the reigning family. He was assisted by the *Kahlun* or his principal minister and very powerful, the *Lam-pa* or deputy, who was the civil and military governor of Leh, and a few other officials. There was no regular army, but in times of emergency, the peasantry served as soldiers with scant weapons—cavalry furnished with bows and arrows, the infantry having “but one matchlock for ten men, and one sword for six.”¹

¹ *Ibid.* p. 200.

CHAPTER 6

THE SIKHS AND THE AFGHANS

1. Tribulations of Shah Shuja

LATE IN 1809, Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, the Amir of Afghanistan was overthrown by his half-brother Shah Mahmud, who with the assistance of the Barakzai Vazier Fateh Khan had toppled the weak, corrupt and unpopular Saddozai regime. Shah Shuja's position in Afghanistan had been shaky for some time and he had held his court at Peshawar in the hope of re-establishing himself at the *masnad* at Kabul. In February 1810, he met Ranjit Singh at Khushab, and although fulsome compliments had been exchanged between the two and vague promises of succour held out by the Sikh ruler to the ex-Shah, nothing tangible had come out of the meeting. The ex-Shah hurriedly left for Peshawar, where tribal chiefs had taken up the Saddozai cause. With their help Shah Shuja was able to assemble a considerable force, and with the help of Ata Muhammad Khan, the governor of Kashmir, he made an attempt to recover his kingdom. He defeated and turned out Shah Mahmud from Afghanistan, who took refuge in the fortress of Attock. Shuja-ul-Mulk returned to Peshawar, but in September 1810, Muhammad Azim Khan, the brother of Vazier Fateh Khan defeated him. The ex-king then fled southwards, and after an unsuccessful attempt to win over Nawab Muzaffar Khan, the governor of Multan, returned northwards and after unsuccessful battles with his adversary Shah Mahmud, two years later, Jahan Dad Khan, the governor of Attock seized him in Peshawar and sent him as prisoner to Kashmir.

Then the tribulations of the unfortunate prince began. In February 1811, Ranjit Singh had met Shah Mahmud, who had crossed the Indus with an Afghan host of 12,000 horse to punish Ata Muhammad Khan, the governor of Kashmir for aiding Shah Shuja. A meeting between the Maharaja of Lahore and the Amir of Kabul took place, but nothing of consequence transpired. In November 1811, Shah Zaman who had been blinded and dethroned crossed the Indus to seek refuge with the Sikh ruler. The families of both the exiled monarchs repaired to the capital the following year. These were well received by the Maharaja, and Shah Shuja's principal wife was assured that her husband would be liberated and made the king of Kashmir provided the diamond *Koh-i-Nur* be made over to the Maharaja. To this the distressed lady had agreed. Meanwhile in 1812, Vazier Fateh Khan Barakzai with a large army crossed the Indus

to chastise his brothers Ata Muhammad Khan of Kashmir and Jahan Dad Khan of Attock and bring under Afghan suzerainty both Peshawar and Kashmir. Apprehensive of the creeping Sikh arms around Attock and beyond it, Fateh Khan solicited the Maharaja's co-operation in reducing Kashmir. An emissary from the Kabul Vazier arrived at Lahore with presents. The Maharaja agreed to greet the Afghan intruder on the banks of the Jehlum, where it was agreed that in return for Sikh assistance, the Lahore Government would receive 1/3rd of the Kashmir spoil. The Lahore commander Diwān Muhkam Chand with 12,000 troops reached Pir Panjal but was held up by snow and inclement weather. The Afghan troops had marched unhindered to Kashmir and conquered the Valley without any resistance, but Fateh Khan refused to share the spoils when at last Muhkam Chand arrived at the capital. In the confusion Shah Shuja escaped from captivity and came over to the Sikh camp. The Sikh commander returned empty-handed to Lahore and Shah Shuja accompanied him.

2. Battle of Haidru (1813)

The perfidy of the Kabul Vazier having aroused the wrath of the Maharaja, a force under Dia Singh occupied Attock with the connivance of its governor Jahandad Khan, who was offered a *jāgīr*. Fateh Khan hastened towards Attock having put Kashmir under the charge of his brother Muhammad Azim Khan. He accused the Maharaja of gross treachery and demanded the evacuation of the fort. Reinforcements under Diwān Devi Das and Faqir Aziz-ud-Din arrived, followed by a strong force under Diwān Muhkam Chand. Parleys, stalemates and skirmishes ensued, but the Sikhs outnumbered the Afghans and Diwān Muhkam Chand defeated the Afghans under Dost Muhammad Khan in a severely contested battle at Haidru fought on 13 July, 1813 on the banks of the Indus, a few miles from the fortress of Attock. Fateh Khan returned to Kabul after having appointed his brother Yar Muhammad Khan as governor of Peshawar and its dependencies.

3. The *Koh-i-Nūr* Diamond

The colourful story of how the wily ruler of Lahore wrested the famous *Koh-i-Nūr* "the mountain of light" diamond from the Afghan ex-His Majesty has been told by many writers with its pathos and compassions.¹ The diamond of 1½" × 1" dimension and of dazzling beauty and elegance is described to have originally belonged to the Pandavas of the epic age; and in the course of generations of history it came in possession of the Mughals, and Tavernier describes it

¹ See generally, Bute Shah—*Tawārīkh-i-Punjab* (BM, Or, 1623), fol. 215-22; Shah Shuja's autobiographical account—*Wāqī'āt-i-Shāh Shuja'* (Ludhiana, 1864), p. 82 ff; Prinsep, p. 67-78; Murray, ii, p. 12 et seq.; Latif, p. 398-400 etc.

adorning Shah Jahan's celebrated Peacock Throne. Nadir Shah took possession of it, and after his assassination, it was passed on to Ahmad Shah Abdali. Shah Shuja had brought it to India on his expulsion from his native country.

The ex-Shah's principal wife having promised it to Ranjit Singh for helping the cause of her husband, a demand for its surrender was made immediately on Shah Shuja's arrival at Lahore. Shah Shuja was offered a large sum of money and a *jāgīr*, but he denied that he had the diamond with him. Guards were placed around the Mubarak Haveli, the residence of the royal family; severities of surveillance, of denial of food and provisions were imposed, and strict control on communications from outside was ordered. Letters were forged and intercepted and the ex-Shah accused of inviting the Afghans to destroy the Sikh infidels. The increase in sufferings of the ex-Shah and indignities imposed on his family continued for over two months, when wearied out by ill-treatment, he consented to deliver the diamond. Ranjit Singh visited the Shah and took possession of it on 13 June, 1813. He had it set in an emerald and used to wear it on his arm.

The abject surrender of the *Koh-i-Nūr*, however, did not end the tribulations of the Shah. Ranjit Singh considered him neither friend nor foe. A nefarious plot was hatched, which allegedly implicated Shah Shuja in having invited Muhammad Azim Khan of Kashmir and Fateh Khan, the Kabul Vazier to arrange the assassination of the Maharaja. Nothing however came out of it except the maltreatment of Sher Muhammad Kazi, one of the staunch adherents of the ex-Shah. Further indignities on the Shah followed. Ranjit Singh took Shah Shuja in his train to Attock when the Kabul Vazier Fateh Khan was at Peshawar. A scamp from the Shah's followers reported that he still possessed a considerable amount of jewels and demand for their surrender was accompanied by search in the female apartments of the Shah's numerous harem. Jewels and all valuables were thus taken away from the Begums and the Mubarak Haveli was placed under strict surveillance.

The disgraceful extortions of the ruler of Lahore made it impossible for Shah Shuja to remain with safety any longer with his oppressor. The ladies of the royal family first made good their escape in disguise with the connivance of bribed guards and a merchant of Amritsar named Balak Ram. On receipt of this information, orders were given to seize the Shah's property with the bankers of Lahore and Amritsar, a column of artillery moved up to the Mubarak Haveli, threatening to blow up everything if the Shah persisted in refusing to disclose the whereabouts of his harem. In April 1815, Shah Shuja escaped in disguise though a breach made in the wall of the house, and made his exit out of the city through the drain and by swimming across the Ravi. Bedraggled, and without any belongings, he reached Sialkot and thence fled to Jammu. With the help of the

petty chief of Kishtwar, he assembled some troops for a vain bid to take possession of Kashmir. On its failure, he left for Ludhiana through the circuitous hill route of Kangra and Kulu, and after suffering great hardships, arrived there in September 1816.¹ On arrival at Ludhiana, he sought British protection and an annual maintenance of 50,000 rupees was fixed for him and his family. Soon afterwards, his blind brother Shah Zaman also repaired to Ludhiana and a separate maintenance of 24,000 rupees was assigned to him.²

CONQUEST OF PESHAWAR

4. Its occupation

In August 1818, the all-powerful Kabul Vazier Fateh Khan fell by treachery and ingratitude. The imperious son of the imbecile sovereign Shah Mahmud, the young prince Kamran had him seized, put out his eyes, and had him assassinated. The able minister had with energy and tact kept together the fast disintegrating fabric of the kingdom of Afghanistan, but his death soon brought the division of the kingdom. The horde of powerful Barakzai brothers cried for vengeance. Muhammad Azim Khan, the governor of Kashmir, on hearing of the dastardly act, left the Valley, and marched with a strong force towards Kabul to punish the perpetrators of the crime. Kashmir was left in charge of his younger brother Jabbar Khan. He defeated Kamran and proclaimed Ayub Khan, the son of Taimur Shah as the sovereign. Shah Mahmud fled to Herat, and the Barakzai brothers parcelled out the provinces amongst themselves.

The news of political convulsions in Afghanistan created stir and excitement at Lahore. The Khattaks had revolted and there was tribal ferment across the Indus. Ranjit Singh, therefore, marched with his armies reaching Attock in October; he swiftly occupied the fortress of Jahangira and Khairabad, brought to submission the Khattak chief Feroz Khan, and then advanced on Peshawar without any opposition. Peshawar was occupied by the Sikh forces on 20 November 1818; Yar Muhammad Khan, its governor, fled across the Khyber to Yusafzai territory.

But to the Sikhs, the fall of Peshawar was neither a windfall nor from political and military considerations it could be retained permanently without a

¹ The autobiography of the ex-king of Kabul (entitled *Tārīkh-i-Shāh Shuja.* (BM) MS. No. Or. 1796) gives a detailed account of the sufferings of Shah Shuja. See also Murray, ii, p.21-22; Cunningham, p. 138-39; Prinsep, p. 81-82 and Latif, p. 401-2.

² For correspondence on the subject, see generally, Government to Ochterlony, 20 August, 1815 and 21 and 28 September, 1816-(P).

strong garrison. Ranjit Singh appointed Jahan Dad Khan of Attock as its governor; the town was neither plundered nor given to pillage, and a *nazarāna* of 25,000 rupees taken from the leading citizens. After staying for three days, he marched back to Lahore carrying away 14 heavy Afghan guns from Peshawar, leaving behind the hapless governor without any garrison force or means of defence. The Sikh forces had hardly reached Lahore, when Yar Muhammad Khan recovered it and Jahan Dad Khan, who had neither the means nor the will to defend it, fled southwards.

But although Peshawar was gained and lost, the Maharaja took measures to wipe out smaller Afghan dependencies of Darband and Mankera (1821); Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan (1822); Bannu, Tank, and the surrounding districts. Thus not only a territory with an annual revenue of 5,00,000 rupees was added to the Sikh dominion, but also the Sikh arms were firmly planted in trans-Indus Afghan territory.

Meanwhile, Dost Muhammad Khan, one of the Barakzai brothers, then quite unknown but destined to become the ruler of the divided kingdom and fomentor of internal and external convulsions, offered to the Sikhs an annual tribute of 1,00,000 rupees for being put in possession of Peshawar. The Barakzai emissaries who had arrived at Lahore were given an assurance of the acceptance of the offer, but a Lahore force 12,000 strong under prince Kharak Singh and Misser Diwan Chand was ordered to cross the Indus to enforce the proffered terms. The Barakzais reoccupied Peshawar, but paid only half the stipulated tribute supplemented by the present of a lone horse, and the Sikh troops returned to Lahore.

5. The battle of Naushera (1823)

Having taken a muster of the *jāgirdārī* troops at Rohtas in the Autumn of 1822, Ranjit Singh marched north towards Rawalpindi, from which place Faqir Aziz-ud-Din was despatched to Peshawar to collect the tribute from its governor, Yar Muhammad Khan. Muhammad Azim Khan had meanwhile succeeded to power in Afghanistan, and the various Barakzai brothers had parcelled out the trans-Indus Afghan territories, acknowledging, however, the nominal suzerainty of Kabul. Yar Muhammad Khan, who had been installed as governor of Peshawar by Kabul, hesitated to comply with the Sikh demands, but ultimately yielded by sending to Lahore a tribute of a few horses.¹ The fact of his having

¹ Other accounts say that Yar Muhammad Khan sent to the Lahore Darbar 40,000 rupees as tribute of submission with a promise of further annual tribute of 20,000 rupees, *vide*. *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh*, 1822 (i). For the details of the battle of Naushera, see generally, Munshi Gopal Das—*Tārīkh-i-Peshawar*, (Lahore, 1874) p. 303-23; Muhammad Hayat Khan—

made Peshawar a tributary of the Sikhs so much outraged Afghan pride that Muhammad Azim Khan marched with a strong force from Kabul to Peshawar. The cry of *jehād* or holy war having been raised against the Sikh infidels, thousands of Afghan tribesmen joined for loot and plunder. On 27 January, 1823 he approached Peshawar, and Yar Muhammad Khan fled into Yusafzai territory.

On hearing the news, the Maharaja sent two strong armies to contest the Afghans. A force of cavalry under prince Sher Singh crossed the Attock immediately. Another strong body of troops under Dīwān Kirpa Ram, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā and Sardar Attar Singh invested the fortress of Jahangira. After a short and swift engagement, the Afghans were expelled from the fort and fled towards the hills. The Afghan reverse did not dishearten Muhammad Azim Khan who was encamped at Peshawar. The cry of *Jehād* resounded the Valley of Peshawar inflaming the religious zeal and enthusiasm of the tribal people—the Afridis, the Yusafzais, the Khattaks and tribesmen from Swat and Bunner—who swarmed from the surrounding hills in large numbers. An immediate contest of arms between the Sikhs and the Afghans seemed inevitable.

The Sikh ruler mobilised his entire army on the banks of the Ravi. A column under prince Kharak Singh and another under Misser Diwan Chand rapidly marching north converged on Naushera, midway between Attock and Peshawar, where the Afghan host had assembled. Ranjit Singh himself followed the advanced columns with a cavalry force 15,000 strong. The army of the Sikhs is variously estimated between 20,000-25,000 men of all arms; the Afghan troops and the *mujtahids* are estimated about equal in strength. The irregular Afghan militia was in position at Naushera; it was joined by a considerable force under the son of the Khattak chief Feroz Khan. They styled themselves as the *Ghāzīs* waging a holy war against the infidels. Against them a furious charge was commenced by the equally fanatical *Akālīs* under Phula Singh. In the desperate battle and hand-to-hand fight all the *Akālīs* including their leader were slain.

Then a contingent of troops from Kharak Singh's column advanced, but the *Ghāzīs* stood like a rock; half of the Afghans were slaughtered, but the rest could not be dislodged from their position on the high ground. The *ghorcharās* were ordered to charge and break up the Afghan ranks. On came the daredevil Sikh horsemen supported by the Gurkhas and the Nujeebs after them. But all was in vain. The *Ghāzīs*, 5,000 strong fought well against the whole Sikh army

Hayat-i-Afghānī, (Wah, 1862-65) p. 304-29; Bute Shah, *op. cit.* fol. 215 ff; *UT*, II, p. 30 ff.; Latif, p. 429-30; Cunningham, p. 145-6; Macgregor, ii, p. 192-94; Ganesh Das *Fateh-nāma Guru Khālsajīkā*, p. 149 *et seq.*; Kaye : *History of Afghanistan*, i, p. 117 ff. etc.

and over 2,000 men of the Sikh army perished in the fierce contest. As dusk fell, the lengthening shadows of the nightfall enveloped the field of battle; the remnants of the Afghan troops fought their way out of the Sikh posts and fled to the safety of the hills.

Muhammad Azim Khan, who had raised the storm of *jehād*, had all the while stood aloof from the contest 5 miles east of Peshawar, at Chamkawa, where across the river, the force under Sher Singh and Hari Singh Nalwā held him at bay. The rout of the *Ghāzīs* at Naushera and the dispersal of the Afghan troops without orders hastened Muhammad Azim Khan's departure towards the hills of Afghanistan in utter disgrace. He died, soon afterwards, a broken-hearted man.

The Sikh victory at Naushera sounded the deathknell of Afghan supremacy beyond the river Indus. On 17 March the victorious Sikh army entered Peshawar. The city was given to plunder; and the soldiery advancing to the Khyber Pass burnt and destroyed everything with the wildness of barbarians. The Maharaja was well content to keep Peshawar as a tributary of Lahore. Yar Muhammad Khan was reappointed as its governor, but the province was divided into 5 districts and given over on nominal tribute to the Sikh Barakzais—Yar Muhammad, Sultan Muhammad, Sayyed Muhammad, Samad Khan and Pir Muhammad Khan.

6. Death of Phula Singh

On the battlefield of Noushera fell the valiant Akālī leader Phula Singh, the hero of Multan and Kashmir. His career and connection with Ranjit Singh deserves a brief description. Phula Singh was the son of a poor Akālī attendant at the Akāl Bunga at Amritsar, and had won notriety as the leader of attack on Matcalfe's Muhammadan escort in 1809. A typically bold, arrogant and desperate Akālī, he demanded vengeance on the hated *fīrangī* from the Maharaja failing which he threatened to take the Maharaja's life. Phula Singh then organised a band of 400 Akālīs and started the career of a free-booter, plundering the rich but sparing the poor.¹ His fame spread throughout the Punjab and his band of followers swelled to 4,000. His name became an object of dread; he openly levied exactions even on powerful Sardars and officials of the Court. The Maharaja adopted a policy of reconciliation and forbearance towards Phula Singh's Akālīs, but ultimately took them into his service converting their desperate and impetuous character to his own advantage. The

¹ For the exploits and depredations of Phula Singh, *vide*. generally, Seton to Ochterlony, 24 January, 23 February and 26 April, 1810-(P) 16 : 53, 59, and 65; Birch to Matcalfe, 1, 16 and 18 February, 1817-(P) 62 : 35, 42 and 44.

Akālīs, however, with their courage and rapacity were immune from the rigorous military discipline of the regular army. They distinguished themselves in the final capture of Multan in 1818 and Kashmir in 1919.

Yet nothing could match the bravery, daring and courage of Phula Singh and his band of 500 Akālīs at Noushera. Several unsuccessful assaults had been made to dislodge the Afghans from the hill of Teri, and the Sikh army was seriously threatened. Phula Singh with his band of desperados moved along the foot of the hill. A musket ball struck him down from his horse, but he soon reappeared on an elephant leading the charge. The Afghans rushed down the hill and fell on the Akālīs, who dismounted from their horses for a hand-to-hand fight. 1,500 Afghan horse surrounded them, and the war cries of *Sat Sri Akāl* and *Allāh-o-Akbar* resounded the battlefield. Another musket ball hit Phula Singh, who amidst the volleys of the destructive matchlock fire of the enemy, led his followers and captured the hill. Phula Singh and all his followers were slaughtered in the battle for the hill of Teri.

Ranjit Singh remembered the gallantry of the Akālīs and to commemorate Phula Singh's memory, a *smādh* was erected over his last remains at Naushera on the banks of the Kabul river.

7. Dismemberment of Afghanistan

By 1823, Abdali's north Indian empire lay in ruins. The Sikhs after the battle of Naushera had practically wiped out Afghan supremacy between the Indus and the Valley of Peshawar. In Afghanistan itself, the Barakzai brothers began a scramble for power. Habibullah Khan, the youthful son of Muhammad Azim Khan was unable to retain the kingdom as a whole. Sher Dil Khan, his uncle established himself as an independent ruler of Kandahar. Dost Muhammad Khan wrested the *masnad* at Kabul. The Chief of Bukhara annexed Balakh; Herat was in the possession of Kamran, the ousted son of Shah Mahmud. Peshawar was held by the Barakzai brothers as tributaries of Lahore. Sind had thrown off the Afghan yoke. Kashmir was conquered by the Sikhs in 1819, Multan in 1818, the Derajat in 1821, Attock in 1813 and Rawalpindi in 1820.

By 1826 the dismemberment of the Durrani empire was complete. Kabul and its dependencies of Ghazni and Jalalabad had become a separate kingdom. Kandahar began to be ruled jointly by three brothers Kohin Dil, Rustam Dil and Mihr Dil after the death of the fourth brother Sher Dil. Prince Kamran of Herat afraid of being ousted by the Barakzai brothers, hobnobbed with Persia and became its tributary.

The political confusion in Afghanistan had enabled the Sikhs to gradually take possession of Afghan provinces in northern India. The reduction of Peshawar as a dependency of the Sikhs was a wise move. Kashmir had been occupied and Multan annexed. Since the death of Muhammad Azim Khan, the strong unifying hand of the Barakzai family, the glory and determination of the Afghan race as empire builders had departed. For some time, the provinces of Kabul, Kandahar and Peshawar had retained the semblance of a loose cohesion, but with the defection of the Peshawar Barakzais and their becoming the tributaries of the Sikhs, the unity of the Barakzai family as rulers of an empire was gone. However, the Peshawar Barakzais were not fully trusted by the Lahore Government, and nominal tribute was paid to the Sikhs under duress and threat of expulsion. For about 4 years this unsatisfactory arrangement continued, when in 1827 all north was set ablaze with the cries of *jihad* for the blood of the Sikhs.

8. The "wicked Khalifa"

The cause of all this tumultuous upsurge of Muslim fanaticism was one Sayyed Ahmad, a Muslim fanatic and a self-styled reformer and prophet of hate, who proclaimed the doctrine for the purity of *'imān* or faith for his co-religionists in India against the corruption which had seeped into Muslim belief and worship. Sayyed Ahmad was originally a resident of Bareilly and a mercenary in the service of the Rohilla Chief Amir Khan, whose service he quitted after the latter's downfall. He then turned an adventurer and a religious enthusiast, visited Mecca, and on his return proclaimed himself a reformer preaching a hotch-potch of the Wahābī doctrines which he had picked up abroad. He wrote a treatise entitled the *Taqwīyat-ul-Islām*, which enunciated his doctrine of hate against non-Muslims; gathered around himself a motely crowd of religious fanatics, and in 1828 moved towards the North-West frontier. Amongst his converts were the Nawab of Tonk and the Talpurian Amirs of Sind, whose territories he had lately visited. From Sind he repaired to Kandahar, and thence having crossed the Kabul river, he entered the turbulent Yusafzai hills. Here he raised the standard of *jihad* against the Sikh infidels, who he proclaimed, must be utterly annihilated. His doctrine of hatred readily found favour with the Yusafzais and other frontier tribes, who were smarting against the humiliation suffered by the Afghans at the hands of the Sikhs, but more particularly because their regular plundering incursions across the Indus had been effectively stopped. The virulence of their hatred was also directed against the Peshawar Barakzais, who had been denounced as treacherous by becoming the Sikh tributaries.

In 1827, Sayyed Ahmad moved from Panjtar with his ill-equipped levies and fell upon Akora, near Attock, where a strong detachment of Sikh force under

Budh Singh Sindhiānwāla repulsed him. A large number of his adherents were slain and Sayyed Ahmad again retired to the hills. Sayyed Ahmad continued to sow seeds of dissension and discord for almost 2 years amongst the culpable Afghan tribes. Yar Muhammad Khan, the harassed governor of Peshawar after having made an unsuccessful attempt to poison the turbulent fanatic made overtures to the Yusafzais. Sayyed Ahmad wrecked vengeance on him by investing Peshawar with a strong force. The hapless governor came out of the city to oppose him, but he died of the wounds sustained in action; but the Ghāzīs were prevented from taking possession of Peshawar by the timely arrival of a Lahore force under General Ventura and prince Sher Singh, who had come to take possession of the renowned horse Leili from Yar Muhammad Khan at the orders of the Maharaja. But although the Muslim fanatic had retired hastily with his *Ghāzīs* on the approach of Ventura's force in Peshawar, and the Lahore general departed with the horse which was so much coveted by the Sikh ruler,¹ Peshawar was again left without adequate defence under Sultan Muhammad Khan Barakzai, who was appointed governor in place of his brother Yar Muhammad.

For a while Sayyed Ahmad laid low extending his doctrine of hate in the Valley of Kashmir and the surrounding hills with a dominant Muslim population; the Maharaja was reported consulting his astrologers for the chances of victory over the "wicked Khalifa."² In June 1830, a force commanded by Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā and Allard drove him across the river Indus, but soon after he fell on Peshawar, defeated the Lahore governor, and occupied it. The Ghāzīs proclaimed Sayyed Ahmad a *Khalīfat-ul-Musalmīn* or a Caliph and he installed himself as the ruler and struck coins with the high-sounding inscription: *Ahmad the Just, Defender of the Faith, the glitter of whose sword scattereth destruction among infidels.*

But the rule of the religious upstart was short lived. His ill-conceived reforms and innovations in the administration of justice according to the doctrines propounded by him aroused the opposition of the Sunni Mullahs of Peshawar. He imposed a tithe on the peasants and issued a decree bestowing all Afghan marriageable maidens on his uncouth Indian followers, which created a wild storm. His Yusafzai and other tribal adherents instantly denounced him as an imposter and an adventurer and clamoured for his expulsion

¹ See generally, Cunningham, p. 170-71; Murray, ii, 88-89; Latif, p. 441, and Macgregor p. 197 for Ranjit Singh's passion for the horse. Yar Muhammad Khan had previously promised to deliver the horse to the Maharaja, but later evaded its delivery declaring that Leili was dead.

² UT, III (i), p. 30.

from the region. Sayyed Ahmad opened up negotiations in November 1830 with Sultan Muhammad Khan, hastily surrendered Peshawar to him on a promise of tribute, and fled across the Indus.

9. End of "the wicked Khalifa"

Meanwhile, a strong force under the Maharaja crossed the Attock to chastise the fanatic reformer, but as the Sikhs approached Peshawar, Sayyed Ahmad fled towards the hills. On the return of the Maharaja to Lahore, he reappeared at Peshawar, levied a *nazarana* of 3,000 rupees on its supine governor, and returned to the hill fastnesses again. But the Yusafzais were now fed up with his pseudo doctrines and provocative and uncustomary reforms, which curbed the liberty of the wild mountaineers and deprived the ecclesiasts of their remunerative occupation. All Peshawar revolted against him. The Mullahs denounced him as a heretic and expelled him from the Yusafzai hills to seek refuge in the region surrounding the Valley of Kashmir, where he had some influence. There, for some time, he continued fomenting trouble with the help of the chief of Muzaffarabad. In May 1831, a Sikh force under prince Sher Singh overtook him, and in a short action at Balakot, he was slain along with his few adherents.

Alexander Gardner describes the action at Balakot and the end of the Khalifa: "Syed Ahmad and the *Maulavi*, surrounded by his surviving Indian followers, were fighting desperately hand to hand with the equally fanatical Akalis of the Sikh army. They had been taken by surprise and isolated from the main body of the Syed's forces, which fought very badly without their leader. Even as I caught sight of the Syed and the *maulavi* they fell pierced by a hundred weapons. Those around them were slain to a man and the main body dispersed in every direction ... I saw literally within a few yards of the Syed when he fell, but I did not see the angel descend and carry him off to Paradise, although many of his followers remember afterwards that they had seen it distinctly enough."¹ The news of the victory over "the wicked Khalifa" was well received at Lahore and orders were issued to the *Kardars* of Lahore, Multan, Kashmir, and Attock to celebrate the occasion by illuminations and discharge of guns.²

10. Machinations of Dost Muhammad

The final liquidation of Sayyed Ahmad made it apparent to the Lahore Darbār that Peshawar must ultimately be annexed, although no immediate solution of the problem could be evolved. The nominal Barakzai tributaries

¹ *Memories of Alexander Gardner*, London, 1898, p. 171-72.

² UT, III (i), p. 32.

continued to rule it on behalf of the Lahore Government. Dost Muhammad Khan, the ablest of the Barakzai brothers, had in the meantime, taken possession of Kabul, Ghazni and Jalalabad. But although the Barakzai family was still torn asunder by internal jealousies and individual ambitions, the new master of Kabul desired to re-establish his control over the Afghan dependencies. Obsessed with a desire to possess Peshawar, which had virtually passed under the Sikh control, and fearful of the Persian designs on Afghanistan, he sought British help against both. He asked for British help for the restoration of Peshawar to him, declaring his intention of leading a *jehād* against the Sikh infidels, and promising to stop Persian influence in Herat and counteract Russian influence in Afghanistan.¹ Massan, the British news-writer in Kabul, and Wade, the British Political Agent at Ludhiana both pressed upon their government to accept Dost Muhammad's offer, but the Indian Government refused to meddle in the Sikh-Afghan dispute.² At the same time, the Peshawar Barakzais Sultan Muhammad Khan and Jabbar Khan were afraid of Dost Muhammad's designs and the wrath of the Yusafzais for holding Peshawar as tributaries of the Sikhs ; they made secret overtures to the British, but the British declined to accept them.³

Meanwhile, Shuja-ul-Mulk, the deposed monarch of Kabul, whom the reverses of fortune had reduced a stipendary of the British at Ludhiana, had never given up the hope of the recovery of his lost kingdom. In 1826, Ranjit Singh had opened up correspondence with him luring him to regain his throne with the Sikh help.⁴ It is not known whether the Maharaja's solicitude for the victim of his former oppression was in atonement of his past conduct or to use the ex-Shah as a stooge in his forthcoming struggle with the Afghans. Shah Shuja did not accept the Sikh bait for fear of British disapproval and termination of his asylum at Ludhiana.⁵ In July 1827, he sent a deputation to the Governor-General at Simla submitting that he was determined to make an attempt at the recovery of his lost dominions with the help of the Sikhs. He was informed that the British Government would not object to his entering into an alliance with Ranjit Singh or with the Afghan Chiefs favourable to his cause, but the relinquishment of their protection would not place the Government of India under any obligation to renew it in case of a failure.⁶

¹ Wade to Macnaghten, 4 January, 1835-(P) 141 : 1.

² Macnaghten to Wade, 20 April, 1835-(P) 118 : 25.

³ See particularly, Wade to Government, 19 May and 9 July, 1832 ; 9 March, 1834 ; and Government to Wade, 27th February, 1833.

⁴ Wade to Metcalfe, 25 July, 1826-(P) 95 : 29.

⁵ Wade told him that the British Government could not give him any advice in the matter, and that he should make his own decision in quitting Ludhiana.

⁶ Asstt. Delhi Residency to Wade, 7 July, 1827-(P) 115 : 19.

11. Shah Shuja solicits Sikh aid

The rejoinder dampened the ex-Shah's spirits, but he continued in his endeavours to woo the Sikh ruler. In March 1829, he proposed to the Maharaja that in lieu of the help received for regaining the possession of Kabul and Peshawar, he would pay to the Maharaja 1,00,000 rupees and presents of horses.¹ The British Government on becoming cognizant of it, repeated the same warning to him.² It was thought that Ranjit Singh by entertaining such proposals was trying to amuse himself at the expense of the Shah.³ In August 1831, Shah Shuja made another proposal—this time surrendering his claim on Peshawar and its dependencies to the Sikhs and beseeching help in re-establishing himself at Kabul.⁴

The Lahore Diarist records in some detail the reactions of the Lahore Darbār to the Shah's proposals. Ranjit Singh agreed to enter into negotiations with the ex-king on such excessive and extravagant terms that the Shah withdrew his hasty overtures. Briefly, the Maharaja of Lahore envisaged the Shah's relinquishment of his claims on the former Afghan possessions of Shikarpur, Mankera, Kachhi, Multan, and the Derajat; payment of the expenditure on the Sikh troops accompanying the Shah on his expedition to Kabul; a yearly *nazarāna* of 101 horses to the Maharaja, prohibition of killing kine at any time in Afghanistan; non-molestation of all the Brahmans and Khatri residents at Kabul; the return of sandal-wood portals of the temple of Jagannath then at Ghazni; and the attendance at the Lahore Court of one of the sons of the Shah with 500 horse.⁵

These astonishing proposals were met with distinct bewilderment by the ex-Shah. He considered the stipulations of the proposed treaty as highly humiliating and disgraceful. Although he agreed to the political terms of the proposals, he stoutly rejected some which he considered derogatory. The attendance of a Shahzada, he said, would be tantamount to retaining a royal Afghan hostage at the Sikh Court. The demand for prohibition of killing kine in Muhammadan countries would be unjust and inexpedient on political grounds, and the surrender of the gates of Somnath would be an eternal national disgrace for the Amir of Afghanistan.⁶

¹ UT, II, p. 338.

² For correspondence on the subject, *vide*. Wade to Government, 2, 3 May, 1829-(P) 97: 81, 87; Government to Wade, 19 May and 12 June, 1829-(P) 15: 59, 62.

³ Wade—29 September, 1830-(P) 98: 120.

⁴ UT, III (i), p. 69.

⁵ UT, III (i), p. 71-72.

⁶ (PP) 1838, Nos. 2-4.

Being despaired of securing Sikh help on reasonable terms, Shah Shuja turned towards the British taking advantage of the Persian threat to Herat, then in possession of Kamran. He proposed an expedition with British help to rescue Afghanistan from the unpopular and tyrannical rule of the Barakzai usurper Dost Muhammad Khan, whose favourable disposition towards Shah Abbas of Persia posed a threat to all peace loving nations. In return he promised friendly relations with the British and the reception of a British agent in Afghanistan.¹

12. Marches on Sind

Meanwhile the Shah received offers of help from the Talpurian Amirs of Sind, who were afraid of Ranjit Singh's designs on Shikarpur. They promised him help in his project of invading Afghanistan on the condition that he would relinquish his claim on Shikarpur and acknowledge their independence. To this the Shah agreed.² At about the same time, several Afghan and Balauch chiefs sent him messages of loyalty and help if he would invade Kandahar. Thus encouraged, the Shah opened up negotiations with Ranjit Singh for help in his proposed expedition. Ranjit Singh offered to give him pecuniary aid provided he delivered Shikarpur to him and divide the territories of the Talpurian Amirs with him.³

The Shah had neither money nor resources to organise such an expedition. He begged from the British a loan for his expedition, an assurance of protection for his family at Ludhiana during his absence, and British military advisers to accompany him to Afghanistan.⁴ Lord William Bentinck told him that the British Government would remain perfectly neutral towards all parties in Afghanistan, that no financial or military help except the advance of his half-yearly maintenance allowance (16,000 rupees) could be given to him, and that his family during his absence would not be abandoned to destitution.⁵ As a matter of diplomacy, British indifference towards the Shah's expedition was complete. Shah Shuja, therefore, compelled by stringent circumstances, turned to Ranjit Singh, and on 12 March, 1833, entered into a treaty with the Sikhs for uncertain pecuniary and military aid, surrendering all claims to the territory north of the Indus, occupied by the Sikhs. The most obnoxious terms of the draft of 1831, proposed by Ranjit Singh were tacitly dropped, and Shikarpur and the Sindhian territories on the right bank of the Indus, which

¹ Macnaghten to Wade, 19 October, 1832-(P) 116 : 35.

² Mackeson to Wade, 12 October, 1831-(P) 103 : 23 ; Macnaghten to Wade, 20 September, 1832-(P) 116 : 29.

³ Wade to Macnaghten, 27 March and 9 April, 1833-(P) 139 : 17, 19.

⁴ Shah Shuja to Lord William Bentinck, 20 September, 1832-(PP) XL, 1839, No. 7.

⁵ Lord William Bentinck to Shah Shuja, *op. cit.*, No. 9.

the Sikh ruler coveted, were strangely left to the arbitration of the British Government. Reinforced with the vague assurances of Sikh help, Shah Shuja with his slender resources began recruiting an army. We do not know what pecuniary assistance was rendered to him by Ranjit Singh, although Sohan Lal records that a sum of 1,25,000 rupees was recommended to be given to him.¹ Dīwān Sawan Mal, the governor of Multan was ordered to depute a news-writer to stay with the army of the Shah and keep posted the Lahore Darbar with the news.²

The Shah marched on Shikarpur with his newly-raised force of Hindustāni mercenaries of two battalions commanded by a soldier of fortune named Campbell, and by the time he reached Sind in September 1833, his army had swelled to 10,000 men of all ranks. The Amirs put him in temporary possession of Shikarpur and promised him a subsidy of 50,000 rupees. Here he recruited more men and put them under training under his officers, but he flatly refused to evacuate the town. *Vakils* of the Barakzai Sardars of Kandahar impressed upon the Talpurian Amirs of the impolicy of inviting such a dangerous guest in the country of Sind jeopardising their own interests. The Sindhian Amirs unnerved by the dismal prospect decided to use force; but in the battle fought soon after, they were defeated by the Shah, who now announced that Shikarpur and its dependencies belonged to him. He browbeat the Talpurians into signing a treaty with him which made incumbent upon them to replenish his military stores and ammunition, and pay him a war contribution of 5,00,000 rupees towards his expedition to Kandahar.

13. Defeated at Kandahar

In March 1834, the Shah set out on his expedition. He marched confidently towards the Valley of Pishin, where the Kandahar Chiefs had collected a host of 81,000 horse to stem the onward advance of the Shah's army. But as the Shah's force approached the Valley, the mercenary troopers and tribesmen whom the Kandahar Chiefs had collected, scattered like autumn leaves in a windstrom. Large scale desertions took place, and Kohin Dil Khan retired to Kandahar. Dost Muhammad Khan at this time was beset with the intrigues of his brothers; he made fervent appeals to his renegade brothers at Peshawar to forsake the Sikhs and join him, made a last minute offer of an alliance to the British and invited the king of Bokhara and the ruler of Kunduz to enter into a treaty of friendship with him. The Kandahar Chiefs bewailed for succour; and ultimately

¹ UT, III (ii), p. 163.

² *Ibid.* p. 182.

prince Muhammad Akbar Khan left Kabul with 2,000 horse and 4 cannons to fight the Shah.¹

Muhammad Akbar Khan joined forces with the Kandahar Chiefs—Kohin Dil Khan, Mihr Dil Khan and Rahim Dil Khan on 30 June, 1834 at Qila Azim Khan about 5 miles from Mandahar. In the battle which was fought the next morning, Shah Shuja was defeated, the Durrani Chiefs having defeated him a little earlier. All seemed lost, and the Shah fled to Herat leaving behind his ammunition, guns and stores. After aimlessly wandering in Ladakh to receive succour from the Shah of Persia, he ultimately returned to Shikarpur in January 1835, where he hopelessly abandoned all claims to Shikarpur and Sind. Soon afterwards he returned to Ludhiana.²

14. Dost Muhammad's bluster

The ignominious defeat of the Saddozai ex-king saved the kingdom of Afghanistan from further disintegration; but the Afghan pre-occupation at Kandahar gave an opportunity to the Sikhs to occupy Peshawar on 6 May, 1834. The three Barakzai brothers, Sultan Muhammad Khan, Pir Muhammad Khan, and Syed Muhammad Khan, soon after became vassals of the Lahore Government. Dost Muhammad's elation at the victory at Kandahar was momentary; the loss of Peshawar and the defection of his brothers turned it into chagrin. Flushed with victory, he instantly wrote to Ranjit Singh threatening him with fire and sword if Peshawar was not instantly handed over to him. An army of crusaders, he said, would come to fight unto death, and would create a tumult the like of which would put to shame even the scene of resurrection.³ The Maharaja called off Dost Muhammad's bluster by moving more troops towards north. He wrote back that the Amir was welcome to cross swords with him and that he would get an adequate reply in the field of battle.⁴

It is evident that Dost Muhammad Khan was not in a position to carry out his threat immediately. He blew hot and cold, levied heavy exactions and extortions on his subjects to replenish resources for the expedition,

¹ UT, III (ii), p. 163. See generally, Mohan Lal, *Life of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan*, i, p. 157 ff.; Sykes, *A History of Afghanistan*, i; Kanahaya Lal, (*Ranjitsinghnāma*); Latif, p. 463 sq.; Ferrier, p. 200 sq. For British records see particularly, Mackeson—18 January and 12 March, 1834-(P) 105 : 29, 53; Wade—1 February, 5 March and 1 April, 1834-(P) 140 : 6, 14, 25; (PP) XL, 1839-*Extracts relative to the expedition of Shah Shooja-ool-Moolk into Afghanistan*, 1833-34.

² UT, III (ii) p. 182.

³ UT, III (ii), p. 216; Wade—15 June, 1834-(P) 140 : 46. See also *Ranjitsinghnāma* by Kanahaya Lal, p. 435 et seq.

⁴ Wade—7 August, 1834-(P) 140 : 65.

and looked about for friends and foes. The Amirs of Sind ignored his *farmān* for a subsidy for the crusade and so did the Chief of Kunduz. The Kandahar Chiefs who had been rescued from the threat of extinction, procrastinated to join his adventure. He adopted the grandiloquent title of the *Amīr-ul-Muminīn* in the style of the Caliphs of Baghdad, transformed himself into a *Ghazī*, and proclaimed a *jehād* or holy war against the Sikhs. But the trickle of martyrs and religious fanatics into the ranks of his army was not encouraging. The *bait-ul-māl* or the treasury at Kabul was almost empty; the merchants at Kabul were squeezed dry, the district governors spoiled both the rich and the poor, and in this manner he could collect 12,00,000 rupees for his expedition.

But the Sikhs had by this time built up the defence of the N. W. Frontier. Garrisons had moved up to Peshawar; Gulab Singh and General Avitabile had been despatched to Kohat and Hari Singh Nalwā had ruthlessly stemmed out all chances of insurrection in the Valley. A chain of outposts all along the Khyber Pass had been established. The Maharaja had moved up to Attock and 25 battalions of the Sikh army with guns of heavy calibre had moved north.

15. Annexation of Peshawar

Fearful of Dost Muhammad's determination to wrest Peshawar from the Sikh Barakzais who had neither the strength nor the will to retain it, Ranjit Singh had made up his mind in the Spring of 1834 to annex it to his own dominions. A strong force under prince Naunihal Singh and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā accompanied by Generals Ventura and Court marched northwards. The Barakzai brothers, Sultan Muhammad Khan, Pir Muhammad Khan, and their nephew Giath Khan readily paid the excessive tribute demanded from them, but sent their family and heavy guns across the river Kabul to Michni in the Yusafzai hills. A peremptory order was conveyed to them to evacuate Peshawar. The Sikh armies surrounded the city, occupied Bala Hissar, and after desultory fighting in the suburbs, occupied Peshawar on 6 May, 1834. Pir Muhammad Khan fled to Kohat and other Afghan Sardars repaired to Takkal and Shekhan.¹

The Sikh occupation of Peshawar resulted in a hectic activity for its defence immediately. Reinforcements were sent to Attock under prince Kashmira Singh; Gulab Singh and Tej Singh with strong detachments of infantry and cavalry arrived at Peshawar; and the Maharaja himself reached Rohtas with strong contingents and heavy guns. There were strong rumours of an Afghan invasion of Peshawar.

16. *Jehād* against "the infidels"

Having made another futile attempt to woo the British² for assistance in

¹ Wade to Macnaghten, 19 May and 17 June, 1834-(P) 140 : 37, 47.

² See generally, Wade to Macnaghten, 7 June, 1835-(P) 142 : 36 ; 11 July, 1835-(P) 142 : 45 ; 19 July, 1836-(P) 142 : 48,

the recovery of Peshawar, Dost Muhammad Khan opened up desultory negotiations with the Shah of Persia, and ultimately raised the cry of *jehād* against the Sikh infidels who had usurped Peshawar. Afghan tribesmen gathered in large numbers at Jalalabad. Sultan Muhammad Khan with his troops had joined up with his brother, and Dost Muhammad Khan with a body of large Afghan irregulars marched across the Khyber and took up position around the Valley of Peshawar at Shekhan. On hearing the news of the arrival of the Afghan host, Ranjit Singh moved up to Peshawar. Thirty-five battalions of regular Sikh infantry, and numerous cavalry were arranged in battle array in horse-shoe manner around the city. A battle seemed imminent, but negotiations were opened up by the Maharaja by the despatch of Faqir Aziz-ul-Din and Mr. Harlan to the Amir's camp. Dost Muhammad finding his antagonists superior in numbers to his irregulars, was willing to modify his crusade for a consideration and the promise that his brother Sultan Muhammad Khan should be put in possession of half of Peshawar. But he resorted to treachery and put under detention the Sikh emissaries, and Sultan Muhammad Khan in whose custody the hostages were given, double-crossed him ; he deserted him and arrived in the Maharaja's camp along with the prisoners. Dost Muhammad Khan left the defiles of the Khyber in disgust and shame and retreated to Kabul. The *Ghāzī's* boast to the tribesmen that the fly would extirpate the elephant had misfired.

It was, however, clear to Ranjit Singh that Peshawar could only be retained by taking adequate measures for its defence. The Maharaja ordered that a new fort be constructed at Peshawar. Hari Singh Nalwā, one of the ablest Sikh generals was put in charge of the province. Measures were taken to consolidate Sikh power by strongly garrisoning the forts on the frontier. General Avitabile took charge of the military administration. The Barakzai brothers Sultan Muhammad Khan and Pir Muhammad were assigned *jāgīrs* in the region to avoid further trouble.

17. Battle of Jamrud (1837)

The rule of Hari Singh Nalwā in the Peshawar area can be described as that of dagger and sword. He curbed the insurrectionary tendency of the wild tribesmen by the simple expedient of extermination. A man of extremist views, he was diabolical in his hatred of the Afghans whom he described as cowards, and overtly aired his determination of carrying the Sikh arms to the heart of Kabul and annexing the kingdom of Afghanistan. In 1837 Hari Singh Nalwā seized the fortress of Bala Hissar in the mouth of the Khyber Pass. A strong fortress began to be constructed at Jamrud, and the Afghans apprehended that their dangerous neighbours would make an inroad beyond the formidable defile. The Amir of Kabul, therefore, resolved to put a stop to any further advance of the Sikhs into the tribal area. A force 8,000-10,000 strong with 50 cannon under

prince Akbar Khan and Abdus Samad Khan proceeded towards the Khyber to dislodge the Sikhs from Jamrud.¹ Fierce Afghan tribesmen fired by religious fanaticism swelled that number to 20,000 horse and foot.

As the Afghan host filed past the Khyber defiles and surrounded Jamrud in a five-pronged attack, the Sikhs were ready to receive them in their entrenched positions at Jamrud. The infantrymen came out to meet their foe. The fierce contest commenced on 30 April, 1837 with cannonade on both sides; the Sikh commander Hari Singh Nalwā who was ailing, came out to lead his men. The Afghans failed to dislodge the Sikhs although successive onslaughts of their horsemen under cover of their artillery threw them in confusion. They reformed their ranks, but the fort was reduced to rabble and the four columns of the Afghan army were worsted with heavy loss. The *Ghāzīs* fled from the field in utter dismay, leaving behind their fifth column under prince Afzal Khan with 2,000 horse commanding a position of advantage on an eminence. Hari Singh Nalwā lead the assault on this column and drove Afzal Khan from his position. The Afghan commander fled in confusion leaving behind his dead and wounded and 14 guns. The retreat of the Afghans was accompanied by great slaughter and carnage; but the tide was soon turned by the arrival of Afghan reinforcements under Shams-ud-Din Khan. The runaway Afghan column of Jabbar Khan and Shuja-ud-Daula trickled back and joined them for the final fray. The reinforced *Ghāzīs* recaptured their guns, and the Sikhs retired behind the shattered walls of Jamrud.

18. An eye-witness account

Alexander Gardner describes the mobilisation of forces on both sides. At Peshawar, Dost Muhammad Khan had an army of 50,000 troops with 60,000-80,000 irregular *Ghāzīs* supplementing it. Ranjit Singh had moved the whole of the Sikh army towards Peshawar: "The *Francese Compo* or the French division of the Sikh army, then personally commanded by the four French and Italian generals—Messieurs Allard, Ventura, Avitabile and Court, and having a strength of 20,000 to 22,000 men, marched towards Hastnagar, and thence slowly and cautiously made its way westwards and southwards with the object of turning the left flank of Dost's army; while the remainder of the Sikh army commanded by Ranjit Singh himself and 60,000 to 80,000 strong, horse and foot, threatened Dost Muhammad's centre and right flank."²

The battle for Peshawar is described by Gardner as "one month's sparing, coquetting and skirmishing."³ Heavy cannonading and skirmishing took

¹ For an account of the battle of Jamrud, see generally, UT, III (iv), p. 393 *et seq*; Wade to Macnaghten, 18 May, 1837-(P) 143: 7.

² Pearce, *Memories of Alexander Gardner*, London, 1898, p. 184-85.

³ *Ibid.* p. 187.

place along the whole front. The Afghan position being on rising ground, their every movement was visible. The entire Sikh army with the French division was ready to make an advance and a simultaneous attack on the Afghan position. A general advance and attack along the whole Afghan line was to commence at 4 o'clock in the morning. But: "In fact, Dost Muhammad, with all his troops and *Ghazis*, had retreated during the night into the Khaiber, and when day broke out not even a single tent or Afghan was to be seen."¹

The battle of Jamrud, so fiercely contested, was however indecisive. Both the antagonists claimed victory, but neither had won it. The Afghans had failed to capture either Jamrud or recover Peshawar and their motely crowds of frontier tribesmen soon dispersed beyond the barren defiles of the Khyber. The Sikhs had lost their valiant and brave commander Hari Singh Nalwā and had suffered enormous casualties.

The death of Hari Singh Nalwā had cast gloom at Lahore. He was one of the ablest generals of Ranjit Singh. As an administrator, he was ruthless and much feared by the Afghans. As a civil administrator, his methods were totalitarian and highly excessive, and for his severities as governor of Kashmir, in December 1820, the Maharaja had recalled him. When appointed governor of Peshawar, he adopted the same methods. He abolished the *jeziya* on the Hindus, imposed a tax on all Muslims, and constructed a chain of forts on the turbulent frontier to stop the frequent predatory incursions of Afghans into India. Tradition ascribes to him to have struck his own coin in Peshawar with the approval of the Maharaja. With his death passed away a great stalwart in Sikh history, and one of the ablest generals of the Sikh Government who had contributed much to the extension and consolidation of Ranjit Singh's empire.

2. PESHAWAR UNDER SIKH RULE

19 People, manners and customs

The *Subāh'i Peshawar* and its dependencies had a population of about 47% of Pathan descent—the *Khattaks*, the *Yusafzais*, the *Muhammadzais* etc. The *Khattaks*, a tribe described as industrious and fair cultivators, were predominantly settled in the Khattak country, from the south of the Kabul river and on the lowlands on the Indus to Noushera. They were a bold and fanatical people, who never liked Sikh rule. When the Sikhs gained a footing on the right bank of the Indus and subdued them, they perforce paid them an annual revenue. The *Yusafzais* were the largest of the Peshawar tribes. They were extremely warlike and independent having settlements on both sides of the river Indus. In

¹ *Ibid*,

the plains their territories extended as far as Kashgar, Swat and Bunner. The Sikhs could never effectually subdue this tribe ; they never paid any revenue to the Lahore Darbār, but for keeping the peace of the country allowances were settled on them and they were a constant source of trouble to the Sikh Governor of Peshawar. The *Muhammadzaïs* inhabited the district of Hashtnagar, with its mixed population, north-east of Peshawar. The *Gigianīs* had settlements south of Hashtnagar divided into 6 *tappāhs* ; they stood in open rebellion with the Sikh regime at Peshawar as their lands had been assigned as *jāgīr* to the Sikh Barakzais reducing them to the positions of tenants. The *Mohmands*, another warlike and turbulent tribe, occupied *tappāhs* between the right bank of the Bara stream and the Afridi hills. The *Khalils* occupying 6 *tappāhs* situated on the Bara to the west and on the Kabul river to the north-west were great antagonists of the Sikhs. Their principal town was Takal, whose *arbābs* had to be constantly bribed to keep peace by the Lahore Government. They were also assigned a *jāgīr* by the Lahore Darbār. The *Dā'udzaïs* were divided into 5 *tappāhs* and inhabited the country between the *Khalils* and the Doaba. In the city of Peshawar various Afghans and persons of sub-tribes and clans resided. A mixed population of other tribes and a few Hindus and Sikhs resided in the city.¹

The Sikh rule, notwithstanding its rigidity and oppression, failed to bring the restive and turbulent Afghan tribes to complete obedience and subjection. In the country south of the Kabul river, however, the clansmen were brought to a subordinate position. The Afghans kept their patriarchal institutions and love for individual freedom. The harsh Sikh rule could only momentarily blunt the sharp edge of chief Afghan characteristics but could not obliterate them. Like the Sikh, the Pathan had two occupations—cultivation of land and soldiery. The Sikh rule was merely confined to the Valley of Peshawar ; it could barely touch the internal clannish administration based on individualistic democracy. The tribesman in each *Khel* looked to his own *Arbab*, *Malik* or *Khan* or the Council of Elders or the *Jirgāh* for guidance in matters of common interest and not to the ruling authority at Peshawar. As such he was ever ready to take up arms when called upon by his Chief against the infidel Sikhs.

The chief characteristics of the Afghan tribes being clannish jealousy and an intense hatred of the foreigner. The Sikh *Jāgīrdārs* or their Afghan assignees rack-rented the people ; their exactions broke the back of the peasantry, but their hold on the loyalty of the people was almost nominal. When the Sikhs

¹ *Authorities* : See generally, the *District Gazetteer of Peshawar*, III, p. 123-188 ; Hastings, *Settlement Report of Peshawar District* ; UT, *Daftar* III ; Ibbeston, *Memorandum on Panjab Ethnology* (1892) and *Panjab Castes* (1916) ; Shahamat Ali, *the Sikhs and the Afghans*, p. 258-281 ; Bellow, *Yusafzai Assessment Report* (1895) etc.

took possession of Peshawar, Najaf Khan Khattak, a tributary of the Barakzai Sardars fled to Jahangira fortress which he had raised. The Sikhs assigned all the Khattak villages as a *jāgīr* to whomsoever would keep the Attock road open.

20. Policy of Hari Singh Nalwā

Internal feuds so inherently common amongst the Afghan tribes allowed the Sikh officials in the province to array family against family and tribe against tribe, and cash rewards, land assignments, exemptions from land revenue won the uncertain loyalty of a number of important chieftains, but they could not be trusted upon. The Afghan tribes hated the Sikhs and considered them as a common danger ; and if a cry of *jehād* was raised against them, all would forget their clannish feuds and unite instantly to extirpate the infidels.

The policy followed by Ranjit Singh with regard to Peshawar and the trans-Indus region since the decisive Sikh victory over the Afghans at Noushera in 1823 was that of drift and indecision. Even after the final liquidation of the fanatic Syed Ahmad by prince Sher Singh at Balakot in May 1831, Peshawar was not annexed to the Kingdom. It was perhaps prudently realised at Lahore that although the spell of Afghan supremacy was broken in northern India, the region predominantly populated by turbulent and warlike Muhammadan tribes could not be securely held unless a large Sikh army was permanently stationed there. A force 12,000 strong was left at Peshawar under Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā to quell any signs of turbulence and to realise the revenue. The terror of the name of the *Khālsa* resounded in the Valley. The Sikh soldiery created havoc in Afghan settlements in the country. Part of the city of Peshawar was burnt, the residence of the Barakzai governors at Bala Hisar was raised to the ground, and reign of pillage, incendiarism, and extortion let loose in the countryside. The government was left in hands of pro-Sikh Barakzai Sardars—Sultan Muhammad Khan and Pir Muhammad Khan subject to the payment of an annual tribute. The gross revenues of Peshawar in 1832 approximated 10,00,000 rupees, but it could only be collected by sending an army periodically for its realisation. The approach of a Sikh host was a signal for the people of Peshawar to flee from their homes taking away with them their valuables and property. The country and its neighbourhood lay at the mercy of the Sikh soldiery, who pillaged and destroyed everything. "The system undoubtedly kept the population in a depressed state, and deterred the Sardars from rising against the yoke they felt so irksome."¹

Hari Singh Nalwā knew how to match his hatred of the Afghans against their hatred of the Sikhs. He set up a rule of tyrannical oppression in

¹ *Peshawar District Gazetteer*, p. 67.

the Peshawar Valley, Arbitrary tributes were levied on the Yusafzais—a cess of 4 rupees per house which could be collected in cash or in kind and for the realisation of which personal effects of the people could be appropriated. “There is scarce a village,” records the Peshawar Gazetteer, “from the head of the Lundkhwār Valley to the Indus, which was not burnt and plundered by this celebrated commander. In such awe were his visitations held that his name was used by mothers as a term of affright to hush their unruly children.”¹

For several years this policy of depredation was followed by the Lahore Government. It was expensive and unremunerative. Except for recovering part of the revenue, the reign of terror let loose by Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā did not much contribute either in the settlement of the Peshawar region or the trans-Indus territories or in the establishment of Sikh rule on a permanent basis. Hari Singh continued in charge of the administration of Peshawar till his death in 1837. He was a brave and skillful soldier and he strengthened Sikh position by garrisoning the frontier forts. He built a new fort on the site of Bala Hisar, placed strong garrisons in the fortresses of Attock and Jhangira, and on the mouth of the Khyber after occupying Jamrud in 1836, he built a new fort and garrisoned it strongly.

21. New System of Government

The doubtful Sikh victory at Jamrud in 1837 had made it clear to Ranjit Singh that policy of hatred and repression in the northwestern frontier so far pursued had failed in its objective. The Afghan invaders had been driven across the Khyber Pass and the Sikhs had become the masters of the Valley. In order to remedy the expense and embroilment of the Lahore Government in tribal affairs, the Valley of Peshawar was parcelled out to the Sikh Barakzais in *jāgirs*, and Peshawar was placed under General Avitabile as its new governor. To Sayed Muhammad Khan was assigned the turbulent *Muhamadzai* district of Hashtnagar, to Pir Muhammad Khan was assigned the Doaba of restless *Mohmands*, while Sultan Muhammad Khan received Kohat and Hangu. Large tracts of areas were assigned to the *arbābs* or local chieftains on the Khalil and lower Mohmand frontier. A strong garrison was placed in the newly-constructed fortress of Shabkadar; and the *tappāhs* near Peshawar and the city itself were placed under the administration of the Sikh governor Avitabile. But in the Yusafzai districts, where the tribes had not been completely subdued, the revenue continued to be collected *vi et armis*: periodically Sikh brigades would march into the vicinity of the mountains and realise what they could.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 70.

Yet the new system of government did not make up the frequent deficiency of revenue arrears, though it saved the Lahore Government from the expense and odium of permanently stationing its troops in an extremely hostile region. The assignments on such a large scale to the Barakzai Sardars and the *arbābs* further depleted the diminishing revenues, which were now almost absorbed in meeting the expenditure of local government. The income of the country of Peshawar, as for instance, in 1837 in the detailed entries of the *Daftar-i-Mu'ala* from village to village, amounted to 8,35,000 rupees, but only a fraction of it trickled into the Khālṣa exchequer at Lahore.¹

22. Administration of trans-Indus districts

The administration of the western frontier districts of the Punjab designated as the Derajat was divided into two distinct regions. It had three principal districts, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Fateh Khan. For all administrative purposes, the district of Dera Ghazi Khan was farmed out to Dīwān Sawan Mal of Multan. Dera Ismail Khan in which was submerged the district of Dera Fateh Khan was ruled direct by a Lahore *Nāzim*. This included the trans-Indus territories of Bannu, Marwat, Isakhel, Darband and Girāng or Dera Fetah Khan, where the Sikhs had built a strong fortress. The region was inhabited by various Afghan tribes and the Bunnuchis who are described as "bad specimens of the Afghans." They claimed their descent from the Afghans whose yoke they had thrown off by 1822. They were unwilling to pay any tribute to Kabul, and they were resolute enough not to pay it willingly to the Sikhs. They hardly paid any attention to the royal orders from Lahore. These trans-Indus regions were never firmly held by the Lahore Government, and such was their turbulent character that the *Nāzim* and *Kardars* had a precarious hold on their loyalty. The revenue was allowed to fall in arrears for 2 or 3 years, and when it became worth-collecting, a force was sent to recover it. The Valley of Bannu, for instance, had never been conquered or occupied by the Sikhs, who, however, considered it a part of the kingdom of Lahore. Its total revenue was estimated at 60,000 rupees per annum, and when the Sikh force overran the country of these aggressive and warlike people, the expenses of the troops could hardly be defrayed by the amount of the revenue realised. Every two or three years a Sikh force would descend upon them, burn and destroy their harvests and houses and carry their personal effects and drive away their cattle. On their approach the inhabitants ran away to the hills to avoid payment of revenue and the threat of building a garrisoned Sikh fort and stationing of a *Kardar* had little effect on them.²

¹ UT, III (iv), p. 445.

² Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, London, 1851, p. 76 ff.

Alexander Gardner describes the mode of collection of revenue from the trans-Indus districts of the Derajat and Bannu in 1832: "In the course of few months we managed to cut down, burn, and destroy all the grain crops, and to level and destroy the forts, villages, gardens, fruit trees, orchards etc. of all the most refractory, and of those who refused to pay their fixed annual stipend and revenues."¹

23. Society and condition of the People

The Valley of Peshawar was verdant and fertile and full of exuberant crops, notwithstanding the local Pashtu saying about Peshawar: "the heat, the scorpions and the flies of Peshawar are so bad that it may be likened to the eye of hell." It was protected by natural boundaries—in the west by the Khyber range, in the east by the river Indus; in the north by the highlands of Kashghar and in the south it was bounded by Bangish. The crops of the Valley of Peshawar are wheat, barley, Indian corn, rice, cotton, sugarcane and *san* or flax. Mohan Lal who visited Peshawar in 1834 while it was being ruled by the Barakzai Sardars as tributaries of the Sikhs, gives its population as 80,000 mostly Afghans of Indian origin. Surrounded by mountains on three sides, he says, it was endowed with luxuriance of tropical verdure and soil of the Valley was rich and fertile: "no part of the Punjab can equal the cultivated districts of Peshawar in beautiful scenery. The agreeable avenues and handsome houses extend not only over suburbs, but also over the whole of the gardens which surround the city and are adorned with richest verdure ... grapes, figs, pomegranates, peas, apples, melons, oranges, peaches &c. are produced here."²

Mohan Lal describes the government and the character of Sultan Muhammad Khan. He observes that the Barakzai Sardars, ruled Peshawar with cruelty and fierceness: "The government of Peshawar is administered by petty sardars, who do not know the name of justice and are fond of luxury. They possess a few battalions, composed of foot and horse soldiers, who use spears, swords and guns in the battle. They fight openly and fiercely."³ He draws a pen-picture of its governor: "Sultan Muhammad Khan, the present governor of Peshawar, commonly called Sardar, is a man of middle stature. He is past the meridian of life, and is fond of pleasure. He is notorious for his lewdness, and is always surrounded by females, married and unmarried. He is careless of his country and government and always employed in adorning himself with splendid and precious robes, on account of which he is called Sultān Bibi (or lady) by Dost Muhammad Khan, the ruler of Kabul."⁴

¹ Pearse, *Memories of Gardner*, op. cit. p. 184.

² *Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan, Turkistan etc.* (Reprint, 1971), p. 43.

³ *Ibid.* p. 41 et seq.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 44.

Generally speaking, the Sikh rule in the Valley of Peshawar could not change the traditional pattern of Afghan life both in the towns and the villages. The acknowledged heads of the clans, the *Arbābs*, the *Khāns*, and the *Maliks* controlled the tribes through their national institution, the *Jirgah*, or the Council of Elders through which the general wishes of the community were ascertained. They could call the tribes to arm and take the field. In villages the Afghan community had its own trade-guild and workmen. Each had its traditional gardeners, tanners, shepherds, weavers, sweepers, cotton dressers, barbers, oilmen and potters. They lived on their trade, and if they possessed land, they had no proprietary rights in the soil.

Amongst the highly superstitious and fanatical Afghan population in the north, the Sayyeds occupied a position of prominence on account of their holy descent. They were recipients of all alms, offerings and gifts by virtue of their reputed sanctity. The *Hindkis*, probably all of Indian origin were settled in the Yusafzai area. The *Gujars* and *Awāns* were traders and money-lenders. A few Kashmiri residents at Peshawar worked as mechanics, artificers and petty traders.

At the lowest rung of the social ladder in northern Afghan districts were the *māris* or the slaves, the former captives of war or slaves bought in open markets of Kabul or Bukhara. Men were servants of the household or in the field, loyal and faithful to their masters ; women or *winzāt* served as concubines or housemaids. Slavery was common and widely practiced ; the *Khāns*, the *Maliks* and the *Arbābs* possessed them according to their possessions or capacity. The Afghans as a race were highly superstitious and worshippers of *pīrs*, who were given hereditary rights and privileges in the soil. The Hindus—Brahmans, Khattris and Aroras settled in Peshawar, mostly carried on local trade and were money-lenders in the villages ; in towns particularly at Peshawar a wealthy and influential non-Muslim commercial class grew up. Amidst the fanatical Muhammadan population, they lived a life of peace and followed their religious practices under a tacit guarantee of protection.

CHAPTER 7

SIND

1. British relations

THE CONQUEST OF MULTAN in 1818 and the subsequent subjugation of the Daudpotas of Bahawalpur had virtually extended Sikh influence to the borders of Sind, a kingdom then governed by the three Talpurian Amirs of Hyderabad, Khairpur and Mirpur. Although the Talpurians acknowledged nominal Afghan supremacy, they had stopped paying tribute and were virtually independent. Both financially and militarily they were weak, but followed a policy of isolation and an extreme sense of suspicion towards any foreign interference.

British relations with Sind date back to 1758 when the Kalhoras, of the Baluch tribe, nominally under the suzerainty of Afghanistan, ruled that country. Ghulam Ali Khan Kalhora, the ruler of Sind, in that year, desirous of cultivating friendship with the East India Company, allowed an English merchant, Mr. Sumption, trade privileges, which included the establishment of factories and permission to reside in Sind.¹ Three years later, the East India Company deputed Mr. Erskine to Hyderabad to act as their commercial agent and some vague sort of commercial relations continued between the East India Company and Sind till 1775, when on the death of Ghulam Ali Khan Kalhora, his successor Sarfraz Ali Khan Kalhora ordered the closure of British factories in Sind and the withdrawal of the British Agent.

For about a quarter of a century thereafter there appears to be no record of the resumption of Anglo-Sindhian commercial relations, but in 1798, Lord Wellesley's Government deputed a Bombay Civil Servant named Nathan Crowe to negotiate with the Talpurian Amirs, who had since supplanted the Kalhoras as the rulers of Sind. The Talpurians belonged to a fanatical Baluch tribe; they had parcelled out the country of Sind into three separate territories—Hyderabad, Khairpur and Mirpur. Three brothers, Mir Fateh Ali, Ghulam Ali and Murad Ali conjointly ruled Hyderabad, the biggest and the most important portion of Sind; while the rest of the country was in the possession of their uncles and cousins. Crowe obtained from Mir Fateh Ali certain commercial concessions and he remained in Hyderabad as a British Agent, but two years later, in 1800, he was unceremoni-

¹ Aitchison, viii, p. 304 sq.

ously expelled from the country on account of the jealousy and mistrust of the local traders.¹

In 1808 Lord Minto's government sent diplomatic missions to Afghanistan, Persia, Lahore and Sind to counteract the so-called French threat to India. Captain David Seton arrived at the court of Hyderabad, and without any authority concluded a defensive and offensive treaty with the Amirs, which obviously could not be ratified by the British Government.² The British emissary was recalled, and Nicholas Smith, who was sent in his stead concluded another treaty with Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur in August 1809, by which the Sindhians bound themselves not to allow any one of "the tribe of the French" to settle in their country.³ For about a decade the treaty of 1809 remained a dead letter; but with the occupation of Cutch in 1819 by the British, the Indian borders having become contiguous with Sind, and the depredations of the Khosas and other Baluch tribes within the British territories from across the Sindhian borders necessitated the revision of the almost defunct treaty. In November 1820 a new treaty signed provided that the Sindhian Amirs would restrain the Khosa and Baluch tribes' depredatory incursions into British territories. This treaty proved totally ineffective and in 1825 the British made a military demonstration on their side of the borders of Cutch to overawe the Amirs for neglecting to observe the terms of the treaty.

2. Sikh designs

With the Sikhs, the Talpurian Amirs, since the Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1809, had for some time, relations of uneasiness and distrust. They made abortive attempts to woo Ranjit Singh in entering into a defensive alliance with them in the event of an attack by the British on their territories.⁴ Ranjit Singh put off the Sindhian *vaki's* who had arrived at the Court with petty *khila'ats*. The conquest of Multan in 1818, and the subsequent subjugation of the Daudpotas of Bahawalpur had virtually extended the Sikh influence to the borders of Sind. The Talpurian Amirs of Hyderabad, Khairpur and Mirpur were considerably alarmed by the proximity of a militant neighbour, for, the Sikhs made it apparent that the Khālsa arms would soon penetrate Sind and occupy Shikarpur, a rich commercial town and a flourishing centre of trade. Border disputes arose between the Sikhs and the Talpurians and the Sindhian *vaki's* shuttled back and forth to Lahore but they failed to get adjustment of their territorial disputes. Added to these were the constant depredatory intrusions of the Mazari and other Baluch tribes from across the

¹ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 15 December, 1808-BISL (I).

² *Correspondence relative to Sind*, (PP) XXXIV. No. 1.

³ *Ibid.* Nos. 2 and 3, Art. 4 and 3 respectively.

⁴ Resident Delhi to Government, 26 October, 1809-(P) 3 : 59.

undefined borders of Sind into the Sikh territory of Multan. To quell their unlawful activities, the Maharaja himself led an expedition in 1823. He subdued the depredatory tribes, collected tributes from them, and charged the Amirs of conniving at the unlawful activities of their turbulent subjects.¹

The successful Sikh expedition to the Sindhian borders made Ranjit Singh realise the rich prize that Sind offered to him in the south. Shikarpur, the rich commercial town was strategically a key to Sind.² The British, he found, were not politically interested in it. The Talpurian Amirs, weak and isolationists, kept up the pretence of acknowledging nominal Afghan supremacy, but they were practically independent. They were self-willed and obstinate, but had little means to contend with Sikh arms, should the tide of Sikh expansion towards south engulf them. Consequently, the Maharaja made up his mind to subjugate Sind. Soon after, he made a claim of Sikh supremacy over Sind on the ground that having virtually conquered all Afghan possessions in northern India, all nominal tributaries of Kabul should owe allegiance to Lahore and pay tribute to his government. The Amirs, it was contended, had usurped Shikarpur and Sind; whereas the Lahore Government had succeeded to the right of suzerainty by overthrowing Afghan power in northern India.³ To enforce this argument of force, troops were sent to the borders of Sind ostensibly for the purpose of taking possession of Shikarpur.

The Sikh designs on Sind were the logical consequence of their expansion towards the south. Wade's numerous reports notice Ranjit Singh's aggression on the territories of Bahawalpur; the Lahore news-writers confirmed that the Maharaja was holding frequent discussions with his French generals on the best means of invading Sind.⁴

That the Maharaja had made up his mind to subjugate Sind is evident from the fact that he had demanded tribute from the Talpurian Amirs in 1823; a year later, the Sikh frontiers were extended to Tatta Bhakar—the Daudpotas of Bahawalpur having accepted Sikh supremacy. From 1825 onwards, Sind and Shikarpur had become the fixed objective of Sikh expansion southwards.⁵ The tumult created by the Wahābī fanatic Sayyed Ahmad on the northern frontier prevented Ranjit

¹ Wade to government, 7 August, 1823-(P) 94: 11; also *ibid.* 7 and 11 September, 1823-(P) 94: 17, 18.

² Governor-General to Secret Committee, 26 November, 1836-BISL (1). Vol. 23

³ This claim was made a few years after the conquest of Multan as the public correspondence of the time reveals. See generally, Wade to Government, 24 August, 1823-(P) 94: 15; also *ibid.* 18 May, 1831-(P) 137: 8.

⁴ Wade to Government, 7 September, 1823-(P) 94: 17; Wade to Resident Delhi, 11 August, 1823-(P) 96: 113.

⁵ *Vide.* Wade's correspondence during the years 1824-23—(P) 94: 11; 24: 5; 72: 443 and 75: 171.

Singh to settle the issue finally with the Talpurians but when by 1831, the fanatic had been liquidated, he was disappointed to find his claim on Sind seriously challenged by the British, whose calculated supineness had earlier encouraged him to intimidate the Sindhian Amirs. However, the peremptory demand for annual tribute made in 1825 alarmed the Sindhian Amirs, whose *vakīls* arrived at Lahore to plead for its exemption¹.

Sind was thus sandwiched between two powerful imperialistic neighbours—the British and the Sikhs. In the early twenties, however, the British did not consider Sind of any commercial or political advantage, and Ranjit Singh exerted his influence on the Sindhian Amirs by threats and cajolery. In 1831, he expressed his desire to conquer Sind while in conversation with the French traveller Jacquemont :²

The Maharaja : What country should I first think of conquering ?

Jacquemont : Tibet.

The Maharaja : Have you been to Tibet ?

Jacquemont : Your Majesty need only send a regiment of the Gurkhas. But the country is so poor that a thousand men would find nothing to eat there.

The Maharaja : What would be the good of my taking such a country ? It is rich countries that I want. Could I not take Sind ; it is said to be very rich. But what would the British say ?

3. Burnes' Mission

By 1830 the British began to evince interest in Sind and the countries beyond the Indus. Burnes' supurious mission up the river Indus in 1830 and Bentinck's Indus Navigation Scheme appear to be a link in the chain of events by which the British endeavoured to bar Sikh advance towards the south. Burnes' mission was in reality aimed at obtaining information about the navigability of the river Indus and the territories of the Sindhian Amirs. It is of special interest for it gives detailed information on the geographical and political conditions in Sind exposing the possibility of British interference in Sind as opposed to the Sikh designs.³ His report discloses that the river Indus was suitable for navigation and commerce. It had a uniform depth and a moderate current. From the ocean to its junction with the united streams of the Punjab, it ran exclusively within the territories of Hyderabad and Khairpur, who were amenable to afford all facilities of transportation of commerce coming from eastward, as well as by the great land route from Palee to

¹ Murray to Resident Delhi, 8 November, 1825-(P) 72 : 424.

² Jacquemont : Journal, p. 39.

³ *A Geographical and Military Memoir on the Indus and its tributary rivers from the sea to Lahore*—BISL(I) 3 August, 1831 (Series II) ; see also Wade to Pottinger, 22 October, 1831—(P) 98 : 101.

Shikarpur, the great emporium of trade. He had suggested that free navigation of the Indus north of Sind to Attock and of the other Punjab rivers would be of general advantage to Ranjit Singh's dominions commercially.

Burnes' *Geographical and Military Memoir* was the basis of British policy towards Sind. Politically, the Amirs of Sind were cunning and isolationists, though the threat of Sikh invasion of their territories had compelled them to be agreeable to enter into an alliance with the British Government. He reported that Murad Ali, the Chief of Hyderabad was a prince of distrustful nature, who considered the best means of preserving the sanctity of his possessions by the exclusion of all foreigners. He was a self-willed and an ignorant bigot, into whose territories flowed the river Indus for 150 miles, and he also controlled the mouth of the river, which he could seal off at will. Hyderabad was practically defenseless against the designs of Ranjit Singh, but, Burnes suggested, a promise to ensure its independence, and a defensive alliance against the Sikh ruler with an annual pecuniary arrangement, would break down the barriers of Murad Ali's stout resistance to the scheme of the navigation of the Indus. Moreover, the projected marriage between the second son of Murad Ali with a princess of Persia was dangerous : it appeared to have been suggested by Russian intrigue for future political mischief towards the Company's Indian empire.

Rustam Ali, the Chief of Khairpur was anxious to form an alliance with the British, and Burnes concluded, that in return he would agree to any proposed navigation of that part of the river flowing within his territory. The third Chief, the Mir of Mirpur, whose territory did not lie upon the Indus nor was there any commercial route through it to that river, had expressed desire to place himself under British protection ; but being distrustful of the Mir of Hyderabad, had desired that his proposition, if not agreed to, should be kept secret.

Burnes' conclusions on the navigability of the Indus confirmed William Moorcroft's observations of a decade earlier, when he hinted that boats of considerable size could carry cargoes to the markets of Central Asia through that river.¹ The Government took notice of Moorcroft's report in 1819, but neither the trend of Indian nor Central Asian politics, at that time, necessitated the imposition of British influence on the countries beyond the Indus. However, in the early thirties, for several reasons, British interest in the river Indus grew out of European politics and of Ranjit Singh's designs on Sind. Burnes' mission had suggested a positive course of action to the British Government. First was the ever enlarging phantom of Russian encroachments in Persia soon after the conclusion of the disgraceful treaty

¹ *Travels*, ii, p. 338.

of Turkomanchi of February 1828, which made Persian foreign policy entirely subservient to Russia. The Russo-Persian threat to Khorasan and Harat was viewed by British statesmen both in England and India as dangerous to the security of British India. To counteract it, it was considered necessary to extend British influence in Sind and the countries beyond the Indus.

Under these circumstances was born the Utopian scheme of the Navigation of the Indus envisaging the opening up of the river Indus to commercial navigation. Treaties had to be signed with the three main participants in the scheme—the Sindhian Amirs, the Nawab of Bahawalpur and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The advantages offered by the river Indus, Lord William Bentinck informed the Home Government, were both political and military. If an occasion should ever arise for providing for the defence of India against an invasion from the West, facilities offered by the stream for transport of goods and navigation could be made use of.¹ The scheme would kill two birds with one stone : it would establish British influence in Sind, and forestall Sikh advance in the direction of Shikarpur and further south.

About this time, Wade had pointed out to his government that the Maharaja exercised powerful influence in Sind, and that if any negotiations with the Sindhian Amirs were necessary to gain British political objectives, the Maharaja's co-operation should be sought as an ally so that Anglo-Sikh interests may not come into clash with each other.² Intelligence had been received that Sikh forces were in occupation of all the territories of Bahawalpur west of the river Indus, and that with the tract between the Indus and the Sutlej in their hands, the territories of Khairpur and Sind lay open to Sikh aggression.³ On 19 October, 1831, Bentinck informed the Secret Committee of the political and military advantages of an intimate connection with Sind. It would, he said, provide for the defence of India from an invasion from the West and safeguard Indian frontier in that direction by connecting Sind with British India. Ranjit Singh can then be confronted with a *fait accompli*.⁴ The Maharaja had little inkling of this double-dealing though he exhibited anxiety with regard to British reaction against his designs on Sind.

4. The Rupar Meeting

Opinions do not differ that Lord William Bentinck's meeting with Maharaja Ranjit Singh in October 1831 was a camouflage to cover British negotiations with

¹ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 19 November, 1831-BISL(I). Vol. 21, paras 23-24.

² Wade to Prinsep, 19 October, 1831-(P) 137 : 34.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Secret Letter*, 19 October, 1831-BISL(I). Vol. 21.

the Sindhian Amirs and to forestall the Sikh advance on Shikarpur and Sind.¹ Early in the year a complimentary mission had been sent by the Lahore Darbār to the Indian Governor-General at Simla. The mission consisted of Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din, Dīwān Moti Ram and Sardar Hari Singh. Lord William Bentinck received the mission with consideration and messages of goodwill and presents were exchanged.² Soon afterwards, Captain Wade was directed by the Governor-General to proceed to Lahore to ascertain indirectly whether it would be agreeable for the Sikh ruler to meet the Governor-General.³ Wade arrived at Adinanagar on 22 May, where the Maharaja was in camp. He assured the Maharaja of the British Government's desire for continued friendship and perpetual affection for him and explained why the Governor-General was prevented from sending a return goodwill mission to his Court. He, however, hinted at His Lordship's desire for a personal meeting with the Maharaja, tacitly observing that the matter should emanate from the latter. The Maharaja expressed sentiments of friendship and goodwill, but did not commit himself to the suggestion.

Three months later, Alexander Burnes had travelled up the river Indus with a present of five horses and a coach from the king of England for Ranjit Singh. Wade was directed to attend the presentation ceremony at Lahore. It was on this visit to Lahore in July 1831 that Wade arranged a meeting between Ranjit Singh and William Bentinck. During the discussions Ranjit Singh resisted the suggestion put by the British emissary that the Maharaja should pay the Governor-General the first visit ; but ultimately, he conceded the point with great reluctance. The meeting was scheduled to take place at Rupar on 26 October, 1831.

¹ It is also clear from the public correspondence of the time that the Sikh ruler's objective in coming to meet Lord William Bentinck was to ascertain the views of the British Government before beginning military operations against Shikarpur and Sind. The Lahore forces under General Ventura, after having occupied all the Daudpota territories west of the river Indus, stood poised for the invasion of Sind. Bentinck neither discussed nor alluded to the matter in the apparently affable interviews with the Maharaja. On 22 October, he had issued instructions to Henry Pottinger, the British Resident at Cutch, to proceed to the Court of the Sindhian Amirs for negotiating a treaty with them. The Maharaja's apprehension was apparent from the fact that he invited two officials of the Governor-General's party to his Camp and put tacit questions with respect to Sind. He expressed a desire to open negotiations with the British Government with regard to his relations with Sind. He had brought the Sindhian *vakil*s to Rupar. Sind, he said, was a rich country without a standing army. He also hinted at a joint Anglo-Sikh enterprise in Sind. Nothing tangible, however, transpired. Bentinck did not disclose his mind, and to lull the apprehensions of the Maharaja, gave him a written assurance for the continuation of "relations of friendship." See generally, (PP)-XXXI, 1843, and particularly, *Secret Letter*, dated 19 November, 1831-BISL (I), Vol. 21, paras 24, 42-43.

² Wade to Government, 7 May, 1831-(P) 93 : 163.

³ Government to Wade, 28 April, 1831-(P) 115 : 76.

Various official and non-official accounts of the oriental pageantry and European ostentation which attended the meeting are extant.¹ A bridge of flat-bottomed ferry boats had been constructed over the river Sutlej, and in the Maharaja's Camp on the opposite side, a silver pavilion had been raised in the open land for parade, by the side of which were the royal tents of deep red with marquees of yellow silk and satin. The Maharaja's entourage consisted of his principal ministers, the rulers of Jind, Ladwa and Kaithal; the heir-apparent Kharak Singh and other princes; the Dogra Rājās, the Attārīwālā Sardars, the Majithiās, the Sindhiānwālās and Kalliānwālās, and M. Allard and M. Court—in all over 100 notables and grandees of the Darbār. 16,000 of his select cavalry and 6,000 trained infantry were in attendance. The Governor-General was accompanied by his principal secretaries and military officials—60 in all²—the Commander-in-Chief, Adam, Ramsay, Prinsep, Burnes, Conolly, Wade and Murray. The military escort consisted of 2 squadrons of European Lancers, a mounted band of H.M. 16 Lancers, an European regiment, two battalions of Native Infantry, eight guns of horse artillery, and two squadrons of Skinner's Irregular Horse.³

On the morning of 26 October, the Maharaja worshipped the horse and the sword⁴ and crossed the bridge riding a gold-caprisoned elephant. A contingent of 3,000 *ghorcharās* wearing saffron-coloured silk tunics and Allard's regiment of dragoons had preceded him. Across the bridge, Lord William Bentinck, also mounted on an elephant awaited his arrival. British troops lined on either side of the road. At the end of the line, the Maharaja stood up on his elephant and went over to the elephant of the Governor-General. "It could be said," observes the official Court Diarist picturesquely, "that a union took place of the two auspicious stars in the Zodaic sign of Pisces."⁵ The ruler of the Punjab was then conducted to the reception canopy, where after introductions, a reciprocal *sarwārna* of 1,100 gold ducates was made on either side. Presents and robes of honour were carried on 200 trays. 51 suits of garments, ornaments, two horses with gold saddles, and one elephant with red velvet trappings were then presented to the Maharaja. Then Lord William Bentinck took Ranjit Singh by hand and led him to his Camp where musicians and dancers entertained them. Thereafter, the Maharaja took leave and showed his lordship his horses and crossed the river Sutlej in a canopied boat.

¹ See particularly, UT, III (i) p. 83 sq.; Prinsep (1970 Reprint), p. 126-133; Fraser, *Military Memoirs of Lieut. Col. James Skinner*, London, 1851, Vol. I; and Macgregor, i, p. 109 ff. For public records on the subject, *vide* Wade and Prinsep's correspondence, (P) 115 : 14, 83, 89 and 137 : 14, 17, 21, 29, 31, and 33.

² UT, III (i), p. 90.

³ Prinsep, p. 127.

⁴ UT, III (i), p. 81.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 92.

On the following day, Lord William Bentinck paid the return visit. He was escorted by Prince Kharak Singh to the Maharaja's Camp. In the royal tent, the Sardars of the Court and civil and military officials presented *nazars* of Dutch gold sequins and the Maharaja presented to the Governor-General 43 pieces of robes of honour, 7 articles of jewellery, 2 bejewelled Afghan swords, some Persian guns with golden carvings, numerous *pashmīna* articles and an elephant with a silver *howda*. He also put a pearl necklace around the neck of His Lordship.

During the following four days parades and reviews of troops were held on either side.¹ Ranjit Singh made searching enquiries about British infantry manoeuvres and formations, exhibitions of artillery practices with grape and spherical shot, firing on a *chatar* or umbrella with one of the 6-pounders, and feats of horsemanship and dexterity were witnessed. On the day of leave-taking (31 October), Lord William Bentinck presented to the Maharaja two 9-pounder horse artillery guns.² Of Ranjit Singh's skill in military affairs an eye-witness observes: "In every way Runjeet proved himself to be a far superior soldier to any other native. He seemed as if gifted with the intelligence of an English Field Marshal and, in fact, he moved about as if he was himself in command of the troops."³

Both the Lahore Diarist and the British records are silent as to what transpired behind the apparent display of affability and entertainment on both sides. But Ranjit Singh was uneasy, as except for a written assurance of perpetual friendship couched in general terms, no understanding could be arrived at with regard to Sind. "Vague accounts have reached him of some designs with regard to that country;" comments Cunningham, "he plainly hinted his own schemes, and observed the Amirs had no efficient troops, and that they could not be well disposed towards the English, as they had thrown difficulties in the way of Lieut. Burnes' progress. But the Governor-General would not divulge to his inquiring guest and ally the tenor of propositions already on their way to the chiefs of Sind."⁴

¹ Interesting side-lights of the Ruper Meeting were the exhibition parade of the Maharaja's *zenāna* platoon before the August presence singing: "Hail! pearl-bedecked bridegroom," the Maharaja pointing out the Commandant, Subedār, Jamādār and the Chobdārs of his colourful dancers; the *sarwārna* of 1,100 gold ducats by Ranjit Singh over the Governor-General and the same by Lord William Bentinck over the Maharaja (UT, III (i), p. 81 and 92) A prostitute from the British Camp presented herself before the Maharaja claiming to be the daughter of Birch (*ibid.* p. 93) and the Maharaja having sent her to the Farāshkhāna at Lahore; the emergence of Begum Samru staying 12 *kos* behind the British Camp desirous of an interview with the Maharaja (*ibid.* p. 90). During the parade of Allard's cavalry on the 28th, an Akālī fanatic with a drawn sword rushed towards the Maharaja in an attempt to assassinate him. He was, however, overpowered by orderlies and beaten black and blue (*ibid.* p. 93).

² Prinsep, p. 131.

³ Skinner, diary dated 26-30 October.

⁴ Cunningham, p. 174.

Consequently, although no direct discussions took place on Sind, Ranjit Singh had tacitly desired a written assurance from the Governor-General for the continuation of "eternal relations of friendship." "Although fully aware of this design," Bentinck reported to the Secret Committee, "I did not scruple to give the desired document, omitting, however, the declaration that our friends and enemies were to be one and the same, on the ground, that the relations between the two Governments would scarcely warrant such a pledge. The anxiety shown by His Highness for the introduction of this assurance and the reason assigned for it, are amongst the characteristic circumstances which attended the interview."¹

5. Pottinger's Mission

With a double objective in view, Henry Pottinger, the British Resident in Cutch proceeded to Hyderabad in October 1831 to convince the Amirs of Sind of political and commercial advantages of the opening up to navigation those parts of the river Indus which ran through their territories. The Talpurians however were neither convinced of the advantages of commerce nor of the friendly intentions of the British in offering to protect them from the evil designs of Ranjit Singh. The transactions of Henry Pottinger in Sind are vividly detailed by Lord William Bentinck in his Secret Letter to the Secret Committee dated 2 July, 1832. Amir Murad Ali was averse to forming any connection with the British but after protracted evasions and refusals by the Amirs and persuasions and threats by Pottinger, he was ultimately successful in brow-beating the Amirs into signing separate treaties.² These *inter alia* allowed the merchants of India passage by the river, facilities for transportations of the goods and merchandise, and the levy of just and reasonable duties. The treaties further forbade the employment of armed vessals or boats on the Indus, or the transportation of military stores either by the river or by road ; no English merchant could settle in Sind.³

Ranjit Singh was informed about Pottinger's mission in January 1832, when Wade saw the Maharaja at Lahore. He was told that his participation in the scheme would enhance his revenues, and that by making the Indus and Sutlej a channel of commerce advantages would accrue to all concerned.⁴ The Maharaja appeared sceptical about the whole scheme and he readily agreed to participate in it, but he wanted an assurance that it would not be extended to the other rivers of the Punjab and that it would in no way interfere with his treaty of 1809 with the British Government.⁵

¹ Secret Letter, 19 November, 1831-BISL (I) No. 21. For the text of the Assurance of October 1831, see Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Calcutta, 1892. Vol. IX, No. IX p. 24.

² Governor-General to Secret Committee, 2 July, 1832-BISL (I). Vol. 22, fol 132-227.

³ For treaties with Hyderabad and Khairpur vide. (PP) XXXIV, 1843. Nos. 3-4.

⁴ Lord William Bentinck to Maharaja Ranjeet Singh-BSPC(I) 13 January, 1832, C5.

⁵ Wade to Prinsep, 3 February, 1832 (Enclosure); also Governor-General to Secret Committee, 2 July, 1832, *ut supra*.

The Maharaja's concurrence having been obtained, steps were taken to obtain geographical and statistical data of the country through which the river passed.¹ A Tariff Report prepared by Mr. Trevelyan proposed a custom duty ranging from 5% to 12½% on various articles of commerce. A treaty was signed with Ranjit Singh on 24 December, 1832 embodying the tariff and transit duties and the mode of their collection by nominated officials of the participating states. A British agent was appointed at Mithankot to help and supervise the flow of commerce.

But the Indus Navigation Scheme was doomed to failure. It proved commercially unprofitable to the traders and the participating states found the revenues accrued from it meagre and below their expectations. Various alterations made in it failed to attract traders from Balakh, Bukhara, Kabul and Turkistan to bring their wares to Sind. Proposals to establish an entrepôt on the Indus and to hold annual fairs on the model of Leipzig and Novogrod at Mithankot, Thatta or Shikarpur fizzled out. The *ad valorem* duty which replaced an unvariable fixed toll on the average capacity of the boats, proved all the more cumbersome. Mackeson, the nominated British Agent for the Navigation of the Indus and the Sutlej stationed at Mithankot, and another British agent posted at Harike reported the difficulties of the supervision and collection of the tolls due to different states and the ever-mounting disputes amongst the participating states concerning them.

The participating states afforded half-hearted co-operation in the scheme due to their fears of political interference in their territories. None except the Nawab of Bahawalpur had joined it willingly. The Amirs vehemently opposed the stationing of a British agent in Sind; they had been threatened with the use of force and blockade of their ports unless they co-operated fully in the scheme.² Ranjit Singh soon realised that the Indus Navigation Scheme was a cover to extend British influence in Sind and a subtle counterpoise to his schemes of expansion in the south. He, however, co-operated willingly in the vain hope that at least his political grievances against the Talpurians would be solved by British mediation; that at any rate, they would not object to his taking possession of Shikarpur.

British commercial treaties of 1832 with the Sindhian Amirs were a prelude to further political pressure on them for their ratification. Burnes, Pottinger, Wade and Mackeson—who acted as British emissaries for about 2 years at intervals, ultimately convinced the Amirs of the danger from their northern neighbour. The advance of Sikh power in Sind, they were told, would wipe out their existence as independent rulers. It must be prevented by supplanting British influence in their territories.

¹ Macnaghten to Wade, 19 September, 1832-BSPC (I) 1 October, 1832, C 19.

² Wade to Mackeson, 17 August, 1835-(P) 102 : 50.

Thus till 1834, British political objectives in Sind under the uncanny commercial garb of the Indus Navigation Scheme had served a useful purpose. These objectives may well be described as fundamentally unprincipled. The obvious failure of the Indus Navigation Scheme synchronized with a new supposed crisis—the threat of Russo-Persian intrigues towards the security of Indian possessions of the East India Company. The Sikhs and the Sindhians were at peace; or at least, Ranjit Singh had desisted from making any encroachments either on Shikarpur or Sind. In 1836, Lord Auckland decided to discard the policy of his predecessor; he realised that the supposed Russo-Persian threat to India's north-western frontiers required a new approach to the problem. To safeguard British interests it was essential not only to prevent the extension of Ranjit Singh's power along the whole course of the Indus, but also to extend British influence in Sind.

6. The Mazari depredations

Meanwhile, the Sikh-Sindhian relations further deteriorated on account of the depredations of the Mazaris and the Bughtis, turbulent Baluch tribes,¹ who inhabited an undefined territory of about 100 *kos* between Kot Mithan and Amarkot within the borders of Sind.² With Rojhan as the principal town of the Mazaris, its Chief Behram Khan, a daring brigand, habitually made depredatory incursions into the Sikh territory across the border. Their disturbances and mischief were reported to the Lahore Darbār.³ In 1836, Behram Khan raided Mithankot, and the Sikh Government had reason to believe that he had been encouraged by the Talpurian Amirs. Troops were provided for Diwān Sawan Mal, the governor of Multan with orders to exterminate the Mazaris and annex their territory. A formidable force marched under Prince Kharak Singh and General Ventura from Multan; it occupied Rojhan and besieged Ken, their second important town.⁴ Sawan Mal reported that a Sindhian garrison had been in occupation of the town showing strong resistance to the Sikh forces.⁵

The positive evidence that the Talpurians had incited the Mazaris and helped them to ravage the territory of the Sikhs prompted Ranjit Singh to take drastic steps against both of them. Rojhan was occupied, and Behram Khan made

¹ The Mazaris and the Bughtis were the organised Baluch *tumans*, who inhabited the angle between the frontiers of the Punjab and Upper Sind. The Mazaris, divided into various clans held the territory from the Sindhian frontier as far as Amarkot and the Pitok Pass. The Bughtis had their headquarters at Syahaf and Bughti Dera. Both were free-booters.

² UT, III (i), p. 125.

³ *Ibid.* III (iii), p. 314: "Dewan Sawan Mal had no troops with him," records the Official Lahore Diarist, "and disturbance and mischief by the Mazari tribes and others were rampant and spreading."

⁴ UT, III (iii), p. 331; Wade to Macnaghten—(P) 142: 49, 58 and 70.

⁵ Wade to Macnaghten, 13 December, 1836—(P) 142: 102 (enclosure).

a tributary of the Lahore Government.¹ The Sindhian *yakils* at the Court of Lahore were put under surveillance ; Sind was declared to be a tributary of Lahore, and the Amirs were asked to cede Shikarpur and pay a tribute of 12,00,000 rupees to the Maharaja. To enforce the compliance of these demands, Sikh forces under Prince Kharak Singh were augmented to 8,000 men, 4,000 horse and 4 guns. Rukhan, a small outpost in Khairpur was immediately occupied.²

The Talpurian Amirs began mobilizing their resources to meet the impending Sikh onslaught. They collected an army of 10,000 horse and 45 guns. They invoked the help of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan of Kabul, solicited British mediation, and finally realising that they were incapable of offering any serious resistance to the Sikhs, began haggling with Dewan Sawan Mal about the payment of a *nazarāna* of 2,00,000 rupees for the withdrawal of Sikh troops from Rojhan.³

7. British mediation

The Sindhian appeal to the British for mediation in their quarrel with the Sikhs evoked instantaneous response from Lord Auckland's government. It was realised at Fort William that the Sikh-Talpurian dispute offered an excellent opportunity for gaining British supremacy in Sind.⁴ Late in November 1836, Henry Pottinger reached Hyderabad to tell the Amirs that the danger posed by the Sikhs would lead to the extinction of their kingdoms, and that to ward it off effectively they should effect a closer union with the British Government.⁵ The Talpurians, who had so far refused to swallow the British bait, were assured, that the British Government would exert its influence with the Maharaja for the abandonment of his designs of aggression on Shikarpur and Sind.⁶ In return, the Amirs should accept the British terms : a British force be stationed in Sind, a British Agent should reside at Hyderabad, and in future the Sindhians should negotiate with the Lahore Government through the British Agent.⁷ Auckland wrote to the Home Government on 7 October : "I grudge this enormous boon to Sind. No State

¹ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 23 November, 1836-BISL (I).

² *Vide.* generally. UT, III (iii), p. 346, 353 ; Wade—15 October, 1836-(P) 142 : 73 ; Mackeson—23 October, 1836-(P) 107 : 25 ; Governor-General to Secret Committee, 28 November, 1836, *ut supra*.

³ Mackeson to Wade, 7 November, 1836-(P) 107 : 29 ; Wade to Macnaghten, 13 September, 1836-(P) 140 : 66 ; UT, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

⁴ Macnaghten to Wade, 26 September, 1836-(P) 107 : 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 October, 1837-(P) 119 : 60.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 September, 1836.

deserved less of us and we are gratuitously conferring on it the greatest probable benefit, protecting it against the only enemy that it has to fear.”¹

The treaties ultimately signed with the Sindhian Amirs embodied the above terms, but in the meantime Ranjit Singh had been persuaded to stop the immediate advance of Sikh forces on Shikarpur. Wade proceeded to Lahore to make a friendly remonstrance to the Maharaja that the British Government, while adhering to its pledges and treaty obligations with the Lahore Government had taken a serious view of the Sikh designs on Sind ; that the Amirs of Sind had placed themselves under British protection, and that the British Government was prepared to redress the real wrongs of the Lahore Government by mediation.

Thus both Shikarpur and Sind were saved from Sikh occupation, although it was realised at Fort William that in these transactions the Sikh ruler was not given a fair deal.² Opinions differ as to why Ranjit Singh readily acquiesced to the arguments of British pressure in his designs on Sind. He promised to abstain from further aggressions upon Sind, accepted the proffered British mediation in his differences with the Amirs, allowed Alexander Burnes to proceed up the Indus to Attock, and readily supported British proposals for the promotion of commerce of the Indus and the Sutlej.³ In short, Ranjit Singh had no desire to quarrel with the British on the issue of Sind ; he was too sensible of the benefit of a long-standing friendship, and acceded to British wishes though with some sulking.⁴

¹ To Hobhouse—*The Punjab Papers*, p. 14.

² Writing to the Home Government on 7 October, 1836, Lord Auckland admits that British interference in Sind was highly unjustified : “As long as it suited our purpose, we maintained that the treaty made the Sultage, even when it became merged in the Indus, the bar to Ranjit Singh’s progress on this side. On that account when he took the territories of the Nawab of Bahawalpur, and that State was not in contemplation when the treaty with Ranjit Singh, for the protection of the Sikhs on this side of the Sutlege was made. Are we at liberty to put one construction of the treaty at one time, and another at another as it suits our convenience ? If not, we can hardly say that we have any right to interfere between Runjeet Singh and Sind.” ...To Hobhouse, Broughton (BM), 36473, fol. 92 ff. As a matter of fact, Ranjit Singh had challenged the right of the British Government under the treaty of 1809 to hold intercourse with the countries west of the Indus, or at least, to prevent him from extending his dominion in that direction. He claimed that Shikarpur was a dependency of Peshawar and that the Amirs who held that place, were his tributaries ; that Shah Shuja had ceded half of it to him in 1832 in return for a payment of 1,25,000 rupees. *Vide. Wade to Macnaghten*, 5 October, 1836—ISP(I) 24 October, 1836. No. 4.

³ Auckland to Hobhouse (Private), 7 October, 1836—Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 101.

⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 8

THE LAST PHASE : THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR

1. Russophobia

FROM ALL ACCOUNTS IT APPEARS that towards the close of his reign the health of the Maharaja had broken down, yet the vigour and determination he exhibited in the last of his major dealings with the British amazed all political observers. Clouds of Russian intrigues hovered over Central Asia ; and the steady increase of Russian influence over Persia and Afghanistan haunted British statesmen both in India and England. Actually, Russophobia which erupted at Fort William in 1836 was the product of British foreign policy of earlier decades which had allowed Russia to intrude unhampered into Persian territory, annex Georgia and Armenia, and subject it to the treaty of Gulistan in 1813, which virtually transformed the Caspian into a Russian lake. An Anglo-Persian treaty signed in 1814 to aid Persia against foreign aggression proved ineffective ; at any rate, the British Government fought shy of rendering assistance to the hard-pressed Fateh Ali Shah of Persia, when the Czar's armies dictated to him the disgraceful terms of the treaty of Turkomanchi in 1828.¹

Canning's Central Asian policy allowed Russia to gain diplomatic victories in Persia ; and a British scheme for the establishment of a new Euphrates route to India was thwarted. In India, at the same time, Lord William Bentinck's Utopean efforts to gain British political preponderance in the trans-Indus regions by the Indus Navigation Scheme seemed to be fizzling out. It had displeased every one.

¹ *Authorities* : On the subject, see particularly, Lord Palmerston Papers on the attitude of Russia in Persia and Afghanistan—*Broughton Papers* (British Museum), Vol. XIV, fol. 279-332. Auckland's private papers, particularly his correspondence with Sir John Hobhouse—*Broughton Papers* (BM) MS. 36473, discloses how the Russo-Persian threat effected the Government of India ; and the measures to counteract it which were adopted by it, can be read in the subsequent volume (MS. 36474). The Blue Books or Papers relating to Afghanistan—(PP) XL, 1839 ; XXXVIII(3), (13), (17), XXV(30), 1843 and XXV (7), 1859 contain in substance the correspondence of Ellis and Mac Neill from Tehran, of the Home Government, and of the Government of India. For further printed sources, generally see, Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East* (1875) ; Boulger, *England and Russia in Central Asia*, 2 Vols., 1879 ; Marvin, *The Russians at the Gates of Herat*, 1885 ; Kaye, *History of War in Afghanistan*, 2 Vols., 1874 ; Sykes, *A History of Afghanistan*, 2 Vols., 1940 ; Durand, *The First Afghan War and its Causes*, 2 Vols., 1883 ; Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 1853 ; and Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements etc.* (Volumes dealing with Persia and Afghanistan).

Ranjit Singh felt sore, objecting half-heartedly to the embargo placed on his advance on Sind and Shikarpur. The Sindhian Amirs cajoled and angry at Pottinger's tactics to browbeat them into joining the Indus Navigation Scheme, sulkily signed the obnoxious treaty. Dost Muhammad Khan, the Amir of Kabul, had plentiful grouses against the Indian Government. He held it responsible for encouraging the pretender Shah Shuja in a bid to recover his lost throne in 1834. His frantic appeals to Lord William Bentinck for protection against Sikh aggression on Afghan possessions in India had evoked no positive response.

It is evident that the Government of India had realised in 1835, if not earlier, the possibility of the Russian advance to the Indus, and that Afghanistan could serve as a buffer between India and Persia. Lord William Bentinck was largely influenced by the danger posed by Russia from the numerous reports of Ellis, Mac Neill, Wade, Masson, Burnes and others. Wade was of the view that Shah Muhammad of Persia was completely under Russian influence and aimed at the conquest of Herat. To counteract it, the British Government should by supporting Dost Muhammad Khan extend its influence in Afghanistan by whatever instrument it could.¹ To placate the Afghan Amir, an attempt should be made to settle the Sikh-Afghan dispute.² Dost Muhammad should be recognised as the only lawful sovereign of Afghanistan, and the Maharaja should be tactfully asked to settle his differences with the Afghans.

Ellis, the Ambassador in Persia, wrote that irrespective of his warnings, the Persian Government was bent upon extensive schemes of conquests towards Afghanistan, Herat, Kandahar, and Balauchistan, and that any progress towards the proposed aggression would tantamount to the advancement of Russian armies to the very gates of the British Empire in India.³ Burnes supported this view and regarded it as the first stage in the invasion of India.⁴

Lord William Bentinck in his Minute of 13 March, 1835 to the Home Government pointed out the growing Russian influence over Persia. Herat was the key to Kabul, and a combined Russo-Persian campaign against it a possibility, and in that event the buffer state of Afghanistan would make virtue out of necessity by joining Russia, receiving in reward for its co-operation, the promise of restoration of Afghan provinces wrested from it by the Sikhs. Bentinck visualised the "encroaching spirit of a vast autocracy," he believed that if Herat fell, from that point Russia

¹ (PP) XL, 1839—Wade, 13 February, 1839 ; also (P) 141 : 9.

² UT, III (iv), p. 545 sq.

³ *Vide*. Ellis' despatches to Lord Palmerston, dated 13 November and 24 December, 1835—(PP) 1859, XXV (7), Nos. 11 and 12. See also *Broughton Papers* (BM), Vol. XIV, fol. 279 ff.

⁴ (PP), *op. cit.* Burnes-20 October, 1837.

would proclaim a crusade against India, and in all probability, a Russian force 20,000 strong could reach the Indus.¹

2. Auckland's view

Meanwhile both Mac Neill and Ellis from Tehran had warned the Home Government of the growing Russian influence in Persia and Dost Muhammad Khan's overtures to the Shah for aid which would afford him protection from the Sikhs. Early in 1836, when the new Governor-General Lord Auckland arrived in India, he found the Central Asian politics moving under European diplomatic pressures in a haze of confusion. He had gauged correctly Lord Palmerston's active mistrust of the eastern policy of Russia. He, therefore, adopted a policy which aimed at cultivating alliances all round. Auckland did not accept Ellis' suggestions that the British detachment in Persia should be withdrawn; he considered him unduly apprehensive of a Persian invasion of Herat, and of the weight of increasing Russian influence in that quarter.² He suggested an alliance with Dost Muhammad Khan of Afghanistan to neutralise the supposed threat. Outlining his policy to the Home Government, he wrote in a private despatch: "I believe Herat to be stronger than it was, and with the Turcomans to be more than a match for Persian aggression, I trust that the position of Mac Neill is improved, though unless Muhammad Shah learns to think a little more of home and a little less of foreign conquest all the money and pains, which we have expended upon him will be wasted. To Dost Muhammad of Kabul I can only speak of words of friendship and offer facilities of commercial intercourse and readiness to mediate if contending parties ask for mediation. In his pressing need, he has courted Russia, and he has courted us, but it would be madness in us, though we may wish to see his independence assured, to quarrel with the Sikhs for him. An errant, self-constituted Afghan Ambassador is now at Calcutta sent to us by Ellis. I mistrust him. But we treat him kindly."³

3. Burnes' Mission

Thus the spectre of Russian advance to the river Indus in the wake of Persian aggression on Herat, the Sikh-Afghan enmity, and Dost Muhammad's overtures towards Russia prompted Lord Auckland to initiate an uncertain policy, the first step of which was the despatch of Alexander Burnes to Afghanistan on an apparently commercial mission in 1837. The main purpose of Burnes' mission was to convince Dost Muhammad Khan of the advantages to Afghanistan from the Indus Navigation Scheme, and to dissuade him from getting involved in any alliance with either Russia or Persia. He should come to an agreement with Ranjit

¹ Governor-General's Minute, 13 March, 1835-reproduced in Boulger, p. 174 ff.

² Auckland to Hobhouse (Private) 28 May, 1836—Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 54.

³ *Ibid.* 9 April, 1837, *op. cit.*, fol. 138 ff.

Singh for which an arrangement could be made through British mediation. To these propositions Dost Muhammad seemed amenable ; but he complained that the war with the Sikhs was a great impediment to his country's co-operation in the Indus Navigation commercial venture. He admitted that recent hostilities with Ranjit Singh had sorely depleted his resources and dissipated his finances, and that the Afghan strength as compared to that of Ranjit Singh approximated 1/10th at the time.¹ He also asked for British intervention for the restoration of Peshawar to the Afghans, on the analogy of the restitution of Shikarpur to the Sindhian Amirs. The British emissary denied that he had any authority to meddle in political affairs, arguing disinterestedly that Shikarpur belonged to the Amirs of Sind, while Peshawar had been conquered by the Sikhs by sword, and was in their lawful possession. Consequently, the British Government could not compel Ranjit Singh to hand it over to the Afghans.² From further talks it became apparent to Burnes that Dost Muhammad was even willing to accept the gift of Peshawar as a tributary of Ranjit Singh.³ He did not accept Burnes' suggestion that Peshawar could be restored to his Barakzai brother Sultan Muhammad Khan, which he characterised would be the same thing as being under Ranjit Singh.

Burnes' *Report* on the political state of Kabul⁴ at this time is of considerable import in shaping British policy towards the Sikhs and the Afghans. Dost Muhammad Khan, the Amir of Kabul, he reported, was a man of considerable power but limited means. His territory extended from Bumeau to the mountains of Khyber. The eastern portion of the kingdom—Jalalabad was apportioned to his various sons. Kandahar was ruled by one of the Barakzai brothers. Herat was in the possession of the Saddozai Kamran, whose enmity towards the Amir of Kabul was too well known.

Commenting upon the resources of Dost Muhammad Khan, he described him a much worried man. He had 45 serviceable guns and a force of 2,500 infantry, and 12,000 horse, out of which only 3,000 received regular pay. With adequate financial resources he could increase his military power, but these he had none. Increase in duties and taxes, resumption of *jāgīrs*, loans, exactions and fines were the only recourse through which he generally increased his power and financial resources. But these methods were extremely unpopular. Politically, reported Burnes, Dost Muhammad Khan was too weak to play any vital role in Central Asian politics. At home his increasing power had brought him cares and anxieties. He had to assuage the natural jealousies and inveterate hatreds of the tribal Chiefs including members

¹ Burnes to Wade, 5 October, 1837-(P) 108 : 39.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Burnes to Macnaghten, 3 December, 1837-(P) 108 : 59.

of the Barakzai family by dividing his power, but in foreign policy Kandahar and Herat followed an independent course. One common Afghan focal point was a combination of all tribal elements against the Sikhs who had taken possession of the rich Afghan Indian provinces, but the impossibility of wresting them from Ranjit Singh, who possessed superior military power, precluded any chance of cohesion of all Afghan forces. Dost Muhammad Khan, therefore, in desperation had turned to solicit British aid in recovering Peshawar ; and at the same time, turned towards Russia and Persia with the same objective in view.

Burnes found Dost Muhammad Khan an individual with a sense of forbearance, equity and justice ; but extremely cautious and suspicious amounting almost to infirmity. Burnes' conclusions were that if the limited resources of the Amir of Kabul were somehow enhanced, he would gain more popularity and his somewhat consolidated territories could be saved from dismemberment.

4. Wade's Suggestions

On 19 November, 1837, a Russian envoy Captain Vikowitch arrived at Kabul bearing letters from the Czar of Russia and the Shah of Persia to Dost Muhammad Khan, promising him pecuniary assistance against the Sikhs.¹ Burnes had advised the Government of India to sustain Dost Muhammad Khan by offering him substantial pecuniary aid, resolving his differences with Ranjit Singh through British mediation, and persuading Ranjit Singh to agree to the restitution of Peshawar to the Afghans. Wade commented freely on Burnes' despatches to the Government of India which had to be submitted through the N. W. Frontier Agency at Ludhiana. He advised Lord Auckland not to bolster up the weak Barakzai Amir of Kabul with pecuniary assistance, who in his dire need was courting Russia against British interests. Any attempt to consolidate his weak government, Wade observed, would annoy both the Sindhians and the Sikhs and would loosen the solid foundations of British relations of amity and friendship on the frontiers of the Sutlej and the Indus. Should Persia occupy Herat with Russian aid, Kabul and Kandahar would toe the line with British enemies, and British Central Asian policy would meet with a disaster. The Sikhs, and to a certain extent, the Sindhians were British allies and friends, and a British alliance with the Afghans on equal terms would be politically unpalatable to them. It would suffice to convince Dost Muhammad that the British Government could engage to use its good offices with Ranjit Singh to settle the Sikh-Afghan dispute on a formal pledge by the Amir to relinquish all connection with the powers westward (Russia and Persia). The price of Afghan acquiescence should be the offer of British mediation to settle their dispute with the Sikhs.²

¹ Wade to Government, 13 January, 1938-(P) 145 : 20.

² *Ibid.*

5. Fort William's reaction

The Government of India considered these diametrically opposite views of its principal functionaries so well qualified to speak on the subject. It was in a quandary as the political mess thickened, awaiting events with crossed fingers. It believed that the fall of Herat would ensure the Russian domination of Persia and Afghanistan. The failure of the Shah's expedition to Herat would, on the other hand, increase further Russian influence at Tehran. The increase of Russophobia at Fort William was phenomenal. Ellis continued to harp on the Russian advance westwards. Mac Neill's endeavours to interpose between Persia and Herat had fizzled out. Rumours about the infiltration of Russian secret agents into India gained currency. The Bombay Government reported that Armenian priesthood in India was operating on behalf of Russia, and the Persian Gulf Residency recommended measures regarding their selection and ordination in India.¹ With the arrival of the Czarist agents at Kabul and Tehran, it was strongly rumoured that they were on way to Lahore. Ranjit Singh entered into the spirit by prohibiting the entry of the imaginary Russian emissary into his dominions. Russian influence, it was believed, was gradually creeping closer to the Company's frontiers on the Sutlej.

The cumulative effect of these rumours heightened by the despatches of Ellis, Mac Neill and others on the minds of British officials in India increased their bafflement. On 13 January, 1838, Lord Auckland wrote in a private despatch to the President of the Board : "The mess is at present thickest and we must wait for events. The fall of Herat would bring western influence nearer to us than would be desired, and on the other hand, the failure of the expedition will very much weaken the Shah's position in his own country, and of the two results this is the one which I would fear very much the least. I have written at length to Mac Neill remarking the untowardness of our diplomatic relations with powers that lie between him and me. With Runjeet Singh with whom we must continue our friendship and alliance, whilst we restrain his active spirit ; with Dost Muhammad whose very nature is that of ambition and intrigue, and on whom we should impress the necessity of humility and peace ; with Candahar weak and cajoling with all parties ; with Herat in danger of falling, and if it should not fall, prepared to attack every neighbour ; and with Persia whom we should see strong in every direction and weak towards East, and which is yet led by Russia to hazard all her resources in the direction which must be injurious either to us or to herself. Upon all that is passing, we can indeed have but imperfect influence, and when we can have any, a few weeks will show, and in the meantime, you will see that I have thought myself obliged to check Burnes' too active imprudence."²

¹ On Russophobia at Fort William, see generally, Burnes to Macnaghten, 8 December, 1837-(P) 103 : 63 ; Macnaghten to Wade, 27 August, 1838-(P) 121 : 27 (Enclosure) ; Auckland to Hobhouse, 3 May, 3 June, 1838-Broughton (BM), *op. cit.* fol. 244b and 252b.

² Auckland to Hobhouse (Private), 13 January, 1838-Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 225 ff.

6. Failure of Burnes' mission

Burnes' mission to Kabul was a complete failure. His endeavour to counteract Russo-Persian influence at Kabul by a promise to Dost Muhammad Khan of the restoration of Peshawar to him at a no distance date, also had no effect. He recommended to the Government of India that Peshawar must be ceded to Dost Muhammad, who if freed from the fear of the Sikhs, would be able to consolidate his position in Afghanistan. The kingdom of the Punjab, he asserted, would soon crumble to pieces after the death of the ailing Maharaja. The Afghans, he claimed, would be the natural successors to his northern domains. The British Government should consolidate Dost Muhammad's power in Afghanistan ; and if properly subsidised, he could be detached from the baneful Russo-Persian influence. At all costs, he should be protected from Sikh attacks and Peshawar should be restored to him.¹

7. Ranjit Singh's suspicions

It would be of interest to recapitulate here as to how the pressure of Sikh power had compelled Dost Muhammad Khan to seek alliances all round—Russia, Persia and the British Government. In the spring of 1835, Ranjit Singh's armies swarmed around Peshawar to stop the Barakzai advance on it. No battle took place, but both the Maharaja and the Amir met on 11 May at the mouth of the Khyber to settle the issue peacefully. The Sikhs however worsted the Afghans in the negotiations, and the Afghan delegation prudently retired after the defection of the Amir's brother Sultan Muhammad Khan, who came over to the Sikh side with his entire force.² If the pressure of Sikh power compelled Dost Muhammad Khan to make further overtures for a British mediation in his dispute with the Lahore Government, the British Agent at the Sutlej was even at this time convinced that Ranjit Singh would not give up Peshawar so easily. As intelligence began to come in that the Lahore Government was fortifying its northern provinces—a large force of 80,000 men having been stationed in the Peshawar area, Wade predicted in July 1836, that within a year the Sikhs would be at the gates of Ghazni.³ Auckland wrote to the Home Government of his impressions of the Sikh-Afghan dispute : "Runjeet Singh talks to us as if he wished for a universal peace and that some people about him would goad him on to a universal war. His army is still looking on the hills of Afghanistan. He assured Wade that this shall not be, but I will not pledge myself that it will not be."⁴

¹ Burnes to Macnaghten, 3 December, 1837-(P) 108 : 53.

² Wade to Macnaghten, 19 May, 1835-(P) 141 : 44.

³ *Ibid.* 13 July, 1836-(P) 142 : 46.

⁴ Auckland to Hobhouse (Private) 26 May, 1837-Broughton (BM), *op. cit.* fol. 138 ff.

Burnes' mission to Kabul had aroused the suspicions of Ranjit Singh. Wade was sent to Lahore to assure the Maharaja of the commercial character of the mission, and that the British Government was prepared to mediate his differences with Dost Muhammad Khan. Ranjit Singh felt dissatisfied. He observed that if the British mission was strictly a commercial one, why did Burnes linger on at the Amir's Court? These suspicions were further augmented by Wade's continued hints that the Maharaja should abandon his hostile designs against the Afghans,¹ and that he should give up Peshawar as it was not worth retaining at such an enormous cost in men and money.²

8. The Sikhs *vis-à-vis* the Afghans

Ranjit Singh was, therefore, highly suspicious of British intentions, particularly of the real objective of Burnes' transactions at Kabul, which had been concealed from him. During his talks with Wade, however, he remained taciturn and behaved well. "Indian measures," admitted Auckland, "might have influence upon European politics, and particularly my relations with Runjeet Singh, over whose head, I have had to deal with Dost Muhammad, and who has always smothered the distrust with which he has viewed my endeavours to establish peace between him and the Afghans. I know there are those who had me press him to let loose his dogs of war, and who believe that from Cabul, he could have influenced the fate of Herat. But I doubt so; Runjeet Singh would ill afford to leave his turbulent provinces."³

Burnes' failure at Kabul and Dost Muhammad's leanings towards Russia and Persia convinced the Government of India that it was essential to organise resistance to Persia east of Afghanistan. "Dost Muhammad is a Kapilbash westwards," Auckland commented, "and his objectives eastwards from which he will not depart, are such as cannot be supported by us, except by placing ourselves in direct hostility to Runjeet Singh."⁴

It must, however, be not forgotten that the British decision to retain Ranjit Singh as an ally and to destroy Dost Muhammad Khan through the medium of the Sikhs was arrived at due to the conviction that the Sikhs possessed a superior military power than the Afghans. Burnes was allowed to linger on at Kabul, in the hope, that he might at least secure the neutrality of Saddozai Kandahar and other tribal elements opposed to Dost Muhammad Khan. It was surmised that the Sikhs could easily overrun the hills of Afghanistan, and that they might even capture Kabul; although

¹ Wade to Macnaghten, 9 July, 1837-(P) 143 : 26.

² UT, III (iii), p. 4.

³ Auckland to Hobhouse (Private) 3 May, 1838, *op. cit.* fol. 243b.

⁴ *Ibid.* 17 June, 1838, fol. 262 ff.

its permanent retention, as in the case of Peshawar, might prove too costly for them. Conversely, Kabul could be held far more easily by them than Peshawar. From the Afghan capital they could eliminate all hostile encouragement to their interests towards Peshawar, which the Khyberis and the Yusufzais habitually obtained from Afghanistan. Once Kabul was reduced, Peshawar area would become safe for the Sikhs and the tribal people subside into peaceful subjects of the Lahore Government. But the Afghans, it was argued further, were equally brave and far more fanatical than the Sikhs. It was unlikely that they would endure Sikh rule and its religious intolerance without the permanent stationing of a large Sikh army in Afghanistan to keep them down.¹

With these wishful confabulations at Fort William, it appears clear, that the Government of India was drifting into a war with Afghanistan. Ranjit Singh had no serious designs of annexing Kabul to his dominions. He was ailing, and it is doubtful that he could have been persuaded to invade Afghanistan. Schemes for the subversion of the power of Dost Muhammad Khan, however, continued to be weighed and assessed at Calcutta. It was soon realised that Sikh military intervention in Afghanistan would be equivalent to the establishment of Sikh power at Kabul; and with the victorious Sikh armies intervening between the Sutlej and the Khyber Pass, British influence in Afghanistan would be subservient to Sikh political aims. The direct employment of the Sikhs in the destruction of Dost Muhammad Khan, though the best means of doing so, had the hazard of making the Sikhs masters of that country. The plan of establishing the Peshawar Barakzai, Sultan Muhammad Khan, a brother of Dost Muhammad Khan, on the throne of Kabul was considered equally unsound, as he was a Lahore tributary and possessed neither any influence in Afghanistan nor the capacity to act except as an instrument of Sikh ambition.²

9. Scheme to restore Shah Shuja

Ultimate choice of the Government of India fell on Shah Shuja, the exiled monarch of Afghanistan then residing as a British stipendary at Ludhiana. The suggestion that Shah Shuja, the Ludhiana pensioner should replace Amir Dost Muhammad Khan at the *masnad* at Kabul had originated with Claude Wade, the Ludhiana Political Assistant in 1836.³ Wade had suggested the establishment of a confederacy of states on the Indus to counteract any threat of hostilities from the West. He was of the opinion that Maharaja Ranjit Singh's determination to obliterate all Afghan authority in the trans-Indus region and his quarrel with Dost

¹ This brief analysis of British policy is based upon Auckland's Enclosures in his private letters to the Home Government during the year 1838. *Vide.* the present writer's *The Punjab Papers*, Hoshiarpur, 1970-(xix, p. 24-25).

² *Ibid.* p. 25.

³ Wade to Macnaghten, 7 June, 1836-(P) 142 : 36.

Muhammad Khan would soon enable him to reach Ghazni and knock at the gates of Kabul, thus enabling him to fulfil the prophecy of the Gurus and the recovery of the sandal-wood portals of the temple of Somnath.¹ The British Government, he suggested, should, as a matter of policy, consider the restoration of Shah Shuja to the throne of Kabul with Ranjit Singh's help. In this way, the sphere of British influence would extend to Afghanistan and enable it to counteract any hostile designs of either Russia or Persia.

Sir William Macnaghten, Secretary to Government at Fort William, improved upon Wade's idea in a scheme of his own. This envisaged the subversion of Dost Muhammad's power and the restoration of Shah Shuja to the throne of Afghanistan as "a subsidized monarch" with the military strength of Ranjit Singh, the outstanding Sikh-Afghan dispute regarding Peshawar, Kashmir, and Sind being settled through British mediation. Macnaghten's proposals aimed at the revival of the secret and defunct Sikh-Afghan Agreement of 1833, which was to be the sheet-anchor of British policy in Afghanistan.

Burnes supported the suggestion of the restoration of Shah Shuja and dethronement of Dost Muhammad Khan by direct British military action in concert with the Sikhs playing a subsidiary role.² The Sikh-Afghan enmity, he pointed out, would seriously hamper the endeavours of the ex-king to enter Afghanistan with the help of Sikh forces. The Maharaja's military help to Shah Shuja should be limited to the provision of a subsidiary force which have no Sikh in its ranks. From Peshawar, Burnes observed, with the co-operation of the British and the Sikhs, the Shah would have only to appeal to the Khyberies and tribesmen of Afghanistan, and with a little distribution of ready money, he would find himself the real king of Afghanistan within a couple of months.³

10. Macnaghten's Mission

On these various suggestions, the Government of India based its final decision to resuscitate Shah Shuja with the help of Ranjit Singh, which ultimately culminated in the British disaster in the first Afghan War. In pursuance of these aims, in May 1838, Lord Auckland decided to send a British mission to Lahore to inform Ranjit Singh of the possible advance of the Russian forces to the Indus and the invasion of Kandahar by the Persians. In that eventuality, it was to be pointed out, the British Government might be forced to take up measures, the first of which would be the advance of a military force to the Indus. The restoration of Shah Shuja was to be left open to discussions.⁴

¹ *Ibid.* 13 July, 1836-(P) 142 : 46.

² *Broughton Papers* (BM) 36473-Auckland to Hobhouse (Private) 17 June, 1837, fol. 244b.

³ *Ibid.* fol. 265a.

⁴ *Ibid.* fol. 253a.

The British Mission to the Court of Ranjit Singh was headed by Sir William Macnaghten. It included Captain Claude Wade, Political Agent at Ludhiana; Captain W. G. Osborne, Military Secretary to the Governor-General; Captain G. Macgregor, Aid-de-Camp to the Governor-General and Dr. Drummond, Surgeon to the Governor-General.¹ The British mission arrived at Adinanagar, the summer resort of the Maharaja, on 30 May, 1838. Its movement from Simla and the lavish reception accorded to it *en route* at Rupar, Kotgarh, Hoshiarpur, Mukerian and at the Maharaja's Camp, is fully covered by Macnaghten's despatches and Osborne's Journal.² On 31 May, a preliminary meeting took place. The Maharaja asked for news of Herat and the Afghan-Persian alliance and its connection with Russia and whether a Russian invasion of India was feasible.³

11. A muddled briefing

The correspondence relating to Macnaghten's mission exposes fully the confused thinking at Fort William which resulted from Russophobia, a wish to annihilate Dost Muhammad, and to excite Ranjit Singh's ambition to intrude into the affairs of Afghanistan. Macnaghten was instructed to explain to the Maharaja, the modified character of Burnes' mission, pointing out to him the recalcitrance of Dost Muhammad to accept the tender of British good offices for the settlement of Sikh-Afghan dispute, except on terms prejudicial to the Lahore Government. The British offer of mediation never countenanced any terms to the Afghans, which were detrimental to the interests of the Sikhs.⁴ With the Persian siege of Herat, Russian agents were seeking alliances with Kandahar and Kabul. The Indian Government had resolved not to tolerate any Persian or Russian interference in the differences between the Sikh Government and the Kabul ruler.

Two alternative proposals were to be offered to Ranjit Singh. The first, envisaged a British recognition of the now defunct treaty of 1833 between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja. The proposal allowed the advance of Sikh forces to Kabul, and also the occupation of Shikarpur by the Shah with a levy of mercenaries and arms purchased with British money and accompanied by a division of the British army. An opportunity would thus be provided to secure for the Maharaja, his customary tributes from the Sindhian Amirs. A general defensive alliance on these terms could be entered into between the English and the Sikhs.

¹ The foregoing details of the Macnaghten's Mission and the Tripartite Treaty in substance have been summarised from the present writer's paper: *British Political Missions to the Court of Ranjit Singh, Punjab University Research Bulletin (Arts)*, XXXIII (1962).

² Macnaghten to Torrens, 17 and 27 May, 1838-ISP (I) 17 October, 1938. Nos. 85 and 90. *The Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh* (Cal. 1952), p. 21-35.

³ Macnaghten to Torrens, 31 May, 1838-ISP (I) 17 October, 1838. No. 99.

⁴ Torrens to Macnaghten, 5 May, 1838-(P) 122 : 2, paras 2-4.

The second proposal allowed a free hand to Ranjit Singh to take independent action against Dost Muhammad ; but in that event, it was to be pointed out that the Sikhs might court defeat by the combined armies of Persia and Afghanistan. The British Government, in any case, would not allow Shah Shuja to be used as an instrument in the occupation of Kabul by the Sikhs.¹

It is, however, clear that the Government of India had no clear perception of the matter. It had no clear idea of the manner in which Shah Shuja was to be restored to the throne of Afghanistan. The bombastic justification by the Governor-General in his otherwise well-drafted manifesto issued in the autumn of 1838, and his report to the Secret Committee on 13 August, 1838, were both the result of an after-thought. As a matter of fact, Burnes' failure at Kabul had so much shaken Auckland's confidence in the utility of "commercial missions" of his predecessor, that the political one now being sent to Lahore carried two vaguely ludicrous proposals. That the Maharaja would accept one of them was considered certain, but no one could foretell which one it would be ! For the last few years, Ranjit Singh had watched the trend of British diplomacy in the south. It was now encroaching in the north to achieve something far more substantial than in Sind. In 1838, he realised that his relations with the English were merely one-sided as the Sikhs had always to yield to political pressure exerted by the Government of India. To allay these suspicions, Macnaghten was particularly directed to impress the Maharaja in this ridiculous manner : "You may remark that the Governor-General had no appetite for war and conquest, that the boundaries of the East Indian Empire have seemed to him amply extensive and that he would rather conquer the jungle with the plough, plant villages where tigers have possessions, and spread commerce and navigation upon waters which hitherto have been barren, than take an inch of territory from his neighbours or sanction the march of armies for the acquisition of kingdoms !"²

12. Discussions at Adinanagar

On 3 June, Macnaghten delivered the Governor-General's letter and began discussions in the inner chamber of the Maharaja's court, where the principal Lahore Darbār ministers were also present. Besides the British envoy, Osborne, Wade, Macgregor attended the conference.³ Surveying the main events connected with Burnes' mission to Kabul, Macnaghten assured the Maharaja that the former's recall by the Governor-General was, due to the fact, that in exchange for abandoning his connection with Russia and Persia, the Amir had demanded Peshawar, which be-

¹ *Ibid.* para 5.

² *Ibid.* para 9.

³ Macnaghten to Torrens, 30 June, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 99 ; UT, III, p. 530ff.

longed to the Lahore Government.¹ To substantiate the truth of this statement, he offered to produce the correspondence between the Governor-General and Dost Muhammad for the inspection of the Maharaja. He then unfolded both the proposals for the restoration of Shah Shuja with their intricate details.

The Maharaja and his Council agreed at once to accept the proposals for the restoration of Shah Shuja, with the observation that the British recognition of the treaty of 1833 would be "like adding sugar to milk." Enquiries were, however, made as to how many British officers would be lent to the Shah, and what forces the British Government would be able to send towards the Indus. The alternative proposal, suggesting an independent course of action, evinced no response from Ranjit Singh. He seemed quite willing to co-operate in a combined plan of operations, but refused to march on Kabul alone.

Early next morning, two of the royal ministers conveyed to the envoy, the Maharaja's doubts as to the success of the proposals. His own troops, he feared, might sustain a reverse when faced with the united forces of the Russians, the Persians, and the Afghans. The British forces would be too distant to come to his support. Macnaghten endeavoured to assure him that the Shah's levies would be trained by British officers, and that, defeat was out of the question.² The Sikh forces would move cautiously under the advice of British officers. The Russian troops, he said, were not likely to be used in Afghanistan. But the reply failed to

¹ Macnaghten relates that before the conference began, the Maharaja quietly asked him: "What is the difference between Persia and England?" The envoy felt a bit embarrassed but answered as best as he could. (Macnaghten to Torrens, 30 June, 1838, *op. cit.*). Osborne's *Journal* under 1 June, 1838 records the Maharaja's enquiries in the following manner:

"How many troops have you got in this country altogether?"

"About two hundred thousand."

"So I have been told; but you could not bring that number into the field at once, or at any rate at one place."

"Certainly not; it is unnecessary. Twenty, or at the most thirty thousand British troops could march from one end of India to the other, and no power in the country could stop them."

"You are fine fellows; how many Frenchmen can an Englishman beat?"

"At school in England, the boys are taught to consider themselves equal to three Frenchmen."

"And how many Russians?"

"The French beat the Russians and we beat the French."

"If the Russians cross the Indus what force could you bring against them?"

"Quite enough to drive them back with Your Highness as our ally."

"Wāh! Wāh! so we will."

² *Ibid.* 5 June, 1838-ISP (I) 17 October, 1138. No. 105.

convince the Maharaja, who desired active British military participation in the operations. In short, in refusing to act alone, Ranjit Singh had a better appreciation of the situation and military difficulties than Macnaghten.

13. Sikh Demands

While the members of the British mission were trying to convince the Lahore ministers of the benefits which the Sikhs would derive from the revival of their ruler's formal alliance with Shah Shuja, on the terms now suggested, on 8 June the wily Maharaja sent to Macnaghten a paper containing his views in the event of his agreeing to help in the restoration of the Shah.¹ He now desired to be paid for his services. Among other things, he required a British guarantee of the Shah's conduct after his restoration to the throne; an adequate share in the proposed levy of 20,00,000 rupees from the Sindhian Amirs, and a reward for services in a fixed and perpetual manner in the kingdom of Kabul, *viz.*, the cession of the district of Jalalabad with its dependencies to the Sikhs.²

Auckland fully approved of Macnaghten's reply to the Maharaja.³ On the first point, he was told that a clause to this effect would be included in the treaty. The second demand was made a matter of reference to the Governor-General, and Macnaghten recommended, that if conceded, the amount might be set against the expenses of Lahore forces in the contemplated expedition. The envoy felt annoyed at the third demand. He reported that Ranjit Singh over-estimated the value of services to be rendered by his troops.⁴ To the Maharaja he sent a curt answer that the intention of the British Government in the proposed scheme was limited to the advance of Lahore troops merely as a demonstration against Dost Muhammad and not that they should attempt to conquer Kabul.⁵ On the cession of Jalalabad to the Sikhs, he observed, that without giving offence, he had endeavoured to convey to the Maharaja that such a proposition could never be listened to by the British Government.⁶ On further insistence by the Maharaja on this point, he had to be more explicit. He informed him that such a proposition seemed to be at variance

¹ *Ibid.* 11 June, 1838, *op. cit.*, No. 111.

² *Ibid.* Annexure, paras 1-10. The cession of Jalalabad is demanded in this manner: "As in the instance of a fine horse who makes a fair bound, his rider encourages him by patting his neck with the hands of affection—the horse acquiring courage by the caresses of his rider, redoubles his exertions, in this manner from the possession of Jalalabad, the Khālsajī will be highly pleased...and the whole Sikh nation both far and near will rejoice at the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Satgurus."

³ Torrens to Macnaghten, 18 June, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 115.

⁴ Macnaghten to Torrens, 11 June, 1838, *ut supra*.

⁵ *Ibid.* 18 June, 1838, (Annexure), para 4, *op. cit.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 11 June, 1838, *ut. supra*.

with the objects contemplated by the allies. The British Government could never agree to it.¹

Meanwhile, the summer heat had become unbearable at Adinanagar and the Maharaja returned to Lahore, where negotiations were resumed by Mackeson on 20 June. At this stage Burnes joined the mission, and an attempt was made by the Lahore ministers to secure his mediation over the head of the envoy, in the hope, that the Maharaja might obtain what he desired. The Government disapproved of these proceedings and Burnes was directed not to listen to any such overtures.² In his numerous interviews with the Maharaja and his Council, Mackeson showed consummate skill. He was told by the ministers that the Maharaja was highly sceptical of the advantages which would be secured to him by the confirmation of treaty with the exiled Afghan King ;³ that as a gesture of goodwill, the British Government should agree to the surrender of both Jalalabad and Shikarpur to him.⁴

To these proposals neither Mackeson nor Macnaghten could agree. The envoy endeavoured to impress upon the Maharaja's mind the benefits he would derive from the treaty and that the British Government sought neither territorial nor monetary advantages out of the entire scheme. Ranjit Singh seemed to yield a little, but he pretended that the Shah had offered him in 1833, an annual tribute of 500,000 rupees as price of his restoration. If he was not allowed to take possession of Jalalabad, at least, he should be permitted to exact this tribute from the Shah after his restoration to Kabul.⁵ Further, the envoy was informed that Sultan Muhammad Khan, the Peshawar Barakzai, had agreed to put the Lahore forces in

¹ In 1842, however, Lord Ellenborough's Government made a proposal for the delivery of Jalalabad to the Sikhs on its evacuation by General Pollock. The necessity had arisen to secure Sikh co-operation in the Khyber Pass and also to ensure the diversion of large Lahore armies towards Afghanistan from the Chinese Tibet, where they were employed in aggressive wars. Sher Singh agreed to accept the fort and the district of Jalalabad after the British evacuation of Afghanistan, but it appeared doubtful whether he could retain it without permanently garrisoning the place with Sikh troops. He, therefore, procrastinated ; solicited a specific British engagement to aid him with men and money. The whole affair, however, ended in a fiasco due to the incompetency of Sher Singh. He moved a force of 5,000 Sikh soldiers through the Khyber, and encamped near Jalalabad, but General Pollock did not receive orders to hand it over to Sikhs ; he destroyed the fortifications of Jalalabad and retired. Thus partly by misadventure and partly by the incapacity of Sher Singh, the Sikhs lost their only opportunity of fulfilling the prophecy of the Gurus.

² Torrens to Macnaghten, 28 June, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 126.

³ Macnaghten to Torrens, 20 June, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 124.

⁴ Mackeson's *Memorandum* (Enclosure in) Macnaghten to Torrens, 23 June, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 127.

⁵ Macnaghten to Torrens, 23 June, 1838, *ut supra*.

possession of Kabul for a sum of 100,000 rupees and 10,000 horse.¹ Mackeson shrewdly hinted that although the stipulation for annual tribute would give mercenary character to the treaty, the wishes of the Lahore Government would be conveyed to the Governor-General. Osborne cryptically observes in his *Journal* for the 19 June : "The old lion had turned sulky, and refuses to sign the treaty, wishing to stipulate all sorts of concessions which cannot be granted, and thus reference to headquarters is rendered necessary."²

14. Tribute or "subsidy"

The question which had to be answered was whether the Shah's payment to the Sikhs was to be regarded as a tribute or subsidy. A compromise was arrived at by Macnaghten, with an argument, that the payment could be regarded as a subsidy only if the military aid rendered by the Sikhs was on a reciprocal basis.³ Ranjit Singh was, therefore, told that if a Muhammadan (not Sikh) force of not less than 5,000 strong could be maintained at Peshawar, the Shah could be persuaded to pay him an annual tribute of 2,00,000 rupees, for the punctual payment of which, the British Government would hold itself responsible.⁴ The Maharaja observed that the reciprocity of obligation was ridiculously nominal, and Macnaghten agreed that it was so. It was also pointed out to the envoy that to maintain 5,000 troops at such a nominal payment was a hard obligation.⁵ Macnaghten also realised the unreasonableness of the amount in proportion to the aid to be given to the Shah. A suggestion was, therefore, made that the sum of 2,00,000 rupees annually should be paid by the Shah irrespective of the consideration whether the latter required military aid or not. Further, the Shah's requisition for Lahore troops could be subjected to a prior British approval. It was realised that such a price for the surrender of Ranjit Singh's claims on Jalalabad and Shikarpur was too cheap both for the British Government and the Shah.⁶

In subjecting the revenues of Afghanistan to a perpetual subsidy of 2,00,000 rupees, to be paid annually to the Sikhs, no one thought of the Afghan pride. Auckland merely considered the proposition as of immediate pecuniary advantage to the Maharaja—highly pleasing to the Sikhs and displeasing to the Afghans.⁷ Later, however, he reported to the Secret Committee, that it was inconsistent with the dignity of the Shah, but that it could be regarded as an annual subsidy in exchange for Ranjit Singh's aid at any time the Shah might require.⁸

¹ *Ibid.* para 3.

² *The Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*, p. 55.

³ Macnaghten to Torrens, 23 June, 1838, *ut supra*.

⁴ *Ibid.* (Rough draft of the treaty : art. 14).

⁵ *Ibid.* 26 June, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 132.

⁶ *Ibid.* 23 June, 1838, *ut supra*.

⁷ Torrens to Macnaghten, 2 July, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 131.

⁸ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 13 August, 1838-BISL(I). Vol. 23.

The Shah, when informed of it by Macnaghten on 15 July at Ludhiana, observed that it would be derogatory to his reputation as Amir of Afghanistan to pay a tribute to the Sikhs ; that it would tarnish the fair name of the British Government along with his own.¹ The revenues of Afghanistan, he pointed out, were meagre ; the "subsidy," therefore, should be made conditional and proportionate to the occasion when he actually made use of the Sikh troops. Macnaghten tried to convince him that the "subsidy" was, in fact, "a remuneration for services," and could not be considered as payment of tribute ; that the Shah's honour and prestige could not be involved in the arrangement ; and above all, that was the only possible way of saving Jalalabad and Shikarpur from Ranjit Singh and "the ambition and prejudices of his bigoted people and soldiers." The Shah had no choice in the matter. He murmured about the reduced resources of Kabul, hoped for British support in this respect, and consented "to content himself with what now remained of the disjointed kingdom of Afghanistan."²

15. The Tripartite Treaty

After a lot of haggling, the Maharaja signed the treaty on 26 June, 1838. Apart from its vagueness and curiously ambiguous wordings, it had the lone distinction of being a document executed in the annals of British rule in India where the second party (Shah Shuja) had no knowledge of its contents. It was designated as a treaty of alliance and friendship between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, with the approbation of, and in concert with the British Government. It envisaged the restoration of Shah Shuja to Kabul and Kandahar without specifying in what manner it would be accomplished. The Shah disclaimed all titles on the part of himself and his heirs and successors to the former Afghan possessions then in occupation of the Sikhs. Each party would address the other on terms of equality, and would exchange annually presents and gifts in token of friendship. Both the parties would assist each other with troops in time of need ; the Shah would pay to the Maharaja a sum of 2,00,000 rupees from the date on which the Sikh troops may be despatched for the purpose of reinstating him in Kabul, the British Government holding itself responsible for the punctual payment of the above sum annually. Shah Shuja agreed to relinquish all claims on Shikarpur in consideration of payment to him of a determined amount, out of which 15,00,000 rupees would be made over by him to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. And lastly, the Shah when restored to his throne would bind himself to refrain from entering into negotiations with any foreign power without the consent of the British and Sikh Governments.

¹ Macnaghten to Torrens (Enclosure : Memo of interview with Shah Shuja), 17 July, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 144. "In this world," the Shah observed ruefully, "a good name deserved to be prized ; that half a loaf with the possession of a good name was better than abundance without it." (*ibid.* para 10).

² *Ibid.* paras 10-13.

16. Ex-Shah's reactions

The treaty having been signed by Ranjit Singh, Macnaghten's work at Lahore was completed. He was now directed to proceed to Ludhiana to "exhibit" the draft of the treaty to the ex-king and discuss with him the measures, which would be founded upon it.¹ The Shah's concurrence to the *fait accompli* was taken for granted. The mission reached Ludhiana on 15 July and Macnaghten had an interview with the Shah the same evening. Osborne's account of the appearance of the Shah is too graphic to be omitted. "The envoys seem to have been struck," he observes, "with the majestic appearance of the old pretender, especially with the flowing honours of a black beard descending to his waist, always the most cherished appendage of oriental dignity. He had lived for twenty years in undisturbed seclusion, consoling himself for the loss of his kingdom in a domestic circle of six hundred wives, but always 'sighing his soul' towards the mountains and the valleys of Afghanistan, and patiently awaiting his *kismet* or fate, which was to restore him to his thorne."²

Macnaghten told the Shah that the British Government had decided to restore him to his throne. A plan, based on the Sikh-Afghan treaty of 1833, had been concerted with the Maharaja and needed his concurrence. Shah Shuja's reaction to the treaty of 1833 was sharp, and he refused to consent to the stipulated surrender of Afghan territory to the Maharaja. He exhibited surprise at the mention of Peshawar and Shikarpur in the treaty, and wondered, how the Amirs of Sind would consent to the sum of money required from them. He further failed to understand article 13 of the treaty which pertained to the subsidized troops.³

Eventually, he agreed to everything but not before submitting on 17 July, a paper containing 8 points, on which he desired satisfaction. Briefly, he demanded an assurance of non-interference with his authority in Afghanistan ; no hinderance in the consolidation and extension of his kingdom to its proper limits—Balkh, Seistan, Baluchistan and the dependencies of Kabul and Kandahar ; and the abrogation of the clause requiring monetary payments to Ranjit Singh, which would be construed by his neighbours as a payment of tribute by the Afghans to the Sikhs. Finally, he demanded the restitution of Shikarpur to Kabul. Macnaghten assured him that with the exception of the last two, his wishes would be scrupulously attended to by the British Government.⁴

¹ Torrens to Macnaghten, 2 July, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 131.

² *Journal*, p. 75 ff.

³ Macnaghten to Torrens, 15 July, 1838(Enclosure)-ISP (I), *op. cit.*

⁴ *Ibid.* 17 July, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838. No. 144.

In making these demands, the old Shah was evidently safeguarding his own prestige in the eyes of his own people. The Afghan tribes, he argued, if they found out that he was a mere puppet of the British and no longer a source of power and reward, would soon desert him and return to their homes. The Afghans, he said, as a people hated foreign interference of any kind. In this estimation of his own people, the Government of India was to find out later, the Shah was correct.

17. Observations on policy

Auckland's policy both towards the Sikhs and Afghans, and in particular, his attempt to resuscitate Saddozai power in Afghanistan with Sikh help, has been subjected to severe strictures.¹ His measure of an unnatural Sikh-Afghan rapprochement has often been described as "sufficiently moderate if not sufficiently unjust." It appeared to Auckland, observes Kaye, to be most expedient to construct an alliance between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja for the recovery of the dominions of the latter; England was to remain in the background jingling the money bag.² Colvin cryptically observes: "that the beak of appetite of Ranjit Singh was once again tempted by the fruit of conquest and the berries of ravanche."³ Both these observations are, however, grossly inaccurate. In the first place, as it was soon discovered, the Sikh ruler was too shrewd to act as a British stooge in the restoration of the throne of Kabul; he had neither the will nor the military resources to embark upon the conquest of Afghanistan. The Tripartite treaty was no doubt "morally unjust" and "politically inexpedient"—"the first stage in the course of a high-handed robbery pursued under pretexts apparently false,"⁴ yet it is extremely doubtful that the Indian Government desired to make "the paralytic Ranjit Singh as the sheet-anchor of British policy."⁵ It must, however, be not forgotten that Auckland realised the power of the Sikhs in the Punjab, and it is highly questionable that the Indian Government would have proceeded to restore Shah Shuja to the throne of Afghanistan without the concurrence of Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja, undoubtedly, assented to the modification of the Sikh-Afghan treaty of 1833 under political pressure, yet he could foresee its benefits.

At the same time, with a judicious sense of guilt in debarring Ranjit Singh's advance on Sind, Auckland placated the Maharaja to the fullest limit possible. He was averse to any Sikh participation in any military operations in Afghanistan; it

¹ On the subject, see generally, Kaye-p. 318 sq.; Colvin-p. 108 ff.; Trotter-p. 43 ff.; Sykes-i, etc.

² *History of War in Afghanistan*, i, p. 18-20.

³ *Sir Auckland Colvin*, p. 108.

⁴ Trotter, p. 59.

⁵ Sykes, i, 397.

would be an extremely dangerous procedure, as any movement of Sikh forces beyond the Khyber would have been prejudicial to the interests of Shah Shuja. At any rate, he never intended to allow them to move their armies beyond the Khyber. "Yet I must confess, I should lament," he wrote to Hobhouse immediately after the momentous decision, "if the Seik forces were too conspicuously employed in his restoration, for, the less the Seiks and the Afghans were mixed together, I think better for both the parties"¹

18. Vagaries and anomalies

Yet the inconsistencies of the Government of India which drifted it into the disaster of the first Anglo-Afghan War cannot be explained. Auckland's Minute of 12 May, 1838 bemoans the failure of Burnes' mission and the aggravated menace from the west and hints at undertaking a bold venture to sweep away the protagonists of turmoil in Afghanistan.² It emphasises the value of acting in close harmony with Ranjit Singh, who might venture to aid Shah Shuja in regaining his throne with British help. It envisages the organisation of resistance to Persia in the east of Afghanistan with Sikh help. On 22 May, Auckland informed the Secret Committee that the emergency of affairs might compel him to act,³ in what manner he could not specify and hinted vaguely : "the future events are in the womb of time."⁴ It was after he had signed the treaty with Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja that he informed the Home Government on 13 August, 1838 that he had determined to give direct and powerful assistance to Shah Shuja in his enterprise.⁵

Auckland's October Manifesto,⁶ obviously an after-thought, was half-fact and half-fiction. It is full of pious platitudes for British policy towards Afghanistan. Dost Muhammad Khan, the Barakzai usurper, who from internal disunion and unpopularity, was ill-fitted to be a useful ally to the British Government in warding off the danger to national defence. He was embroiled in foreign intrigue which was highly prejudicial to British interests. Imbecile and weak to resist the pressure of Sikh power in the north, he had been blowing hot and cold, and playing fast and loose, ready to crouch to Russia and Persia or cringe to the British Government whosoever was willing to sustain his position in Afghanistan. To subvert his power in Afghanistan had, therefore, become an essential part of British-Indian foreign policy. The claims of Shah Shuja'-ul-Mulk, "whose popularity in Afghanistan has been

¹ Enclosures in letters from Auckland to Hobhouse in the year 1838-Broughton(BM) 36473, Extract No. fol. 375a.

² (PP) XI, 1839.

³ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 23 May, 1838-BISL(I).

⁴ Auckland to Hobhouse (Private) 3 May, 1838-Broughton (BM), *op. cit.*

⁵ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 13 August, 1838-BISL(I).

⁶ IPC(I) 30 January, 1839, C 10.

proved" are obvious. If restored to Afghan throne, he would resist aggression, establish tranquillity, and would not range himself and the Afghan nation in subservience to hostile foreign powers.

However, the Sikh role in the restoration of the Shah was mentioned in the Manifesto in a cautious and half-hearted manner with a casual reference that Ranjit Singh would become a party to the contemplated operations. It contained the ludicrous assertion that the Campaign would promote commerce, gain the British due dignity in Central Asia, restore tranquillity on the most important frontier of India, and raise a lasting barrier against hostile intrigue and encroachment.

19. Duplicity and hush-hush

Secrecy and hush-hush was maintained by the Government of India towards its allies and friends in the entire preliminary confused arrangements. Ranjit Singh was designedly kept in ignorance of Burnes' haggling with Dost Muhammad Khan at Kabul; Shah Shuja had no inkling of the British schemes for his restoration until Ranjit Singh had signed the treaty; and the Home Government was kept guessing the ultimate policy of the Government of India till August 1838 as to what part it was going to play in the Afghan venture. The most amazing aspect of the whole affair was the entire change in the scheme of operations soon after the signing of the treaty with Ranjit Singh. Drift and indecision marred the entire procedure till it was decided not to employ Sikh forces beyond the Khyber as is evidenced from Auckland's private enclosures¹ as well as his instructions to Wade at Peshawar.²

20. Sikh gains

Notwithstanding his failing health, Ranjit Singh had exhibited extraordinary vigour in the conduct of negotiations. He had no reason to be dissatisfied with the final outcome. With simple Jat commonsense, he had realised the immediate advantages to be gained by agreeing to a proposition, in which his liability was limited. He had refused to act alone, for the reason, that he had neither any intention nor the means to conquer Kabul. He clearly perceived that even if the Indian Government avoided the responsibility, it would ultimately come forward to claim the credit. As a measure of solving the Sikh-Afghan problem, the replacement of the irksome Barakzai at Kabul by the former victim of his high-handedness, the Saddozai weakling, was highly agreeable to him. The events following the Shah's restoration, and the calamity of the first Afghan War, has engendered so much anger and excitement against Auckland's policy, that one is liable to over-

¹ Broughton Papers (BM) 36473, fol. 375a sq.

² ISP(1) 17 July, 1839. No. 38.

look as to what political advantages the Sikhs would have acquired, should the fate had allowed Ranjit Singh to live, say for a decade more.

In the settlement of the long-standing Sikh-Afghan dispute, the British Government guaranteed the terms of the treaty. It confirmed to the Sikh Kingdom in perpetuity, the former Afghan possessions of Kashmir, Attock and Hazara ; the territories lying on the either bank of the Indus ; Peshawar and the Yusafzai dependencies up to the Khyber ; Bannu, Tank, Kalabagh and other dependent Waziri districts ; the Derajat and the rich province of Multan. The Afghans agreed to consider these territories as forming part of the State of Lahore.¹ For relinquishing its claim on Shikarpur, the Lahore Government was to receive a sum of 15,00,000 rupees.² Finally, both the British and Sikh Governments would jointly control the foreign relations of Afghanistan.³ For all this and a further payment of 2,00,000 rupees annually to it by the Afghans, the Lahore Government was merely required to maintain a Muhammadan auxiliary force of not less than 5,000 men for the Shah's aid after his restoration, whenever the British Government deemed that aid necessary.⁴

The treaty having been signed, Auckland informed the Secret Committee of his achievement on 13 August, 1838 : "When I resolved upon entering into negotiations with Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, based upon the design of restoring Shah Shooja ool Molk," he wrote with a sense of self-gratification, "the state of relations with other powers was anything but satisfactory. To westward, there was every appearance of an extensive and formidable combination against our Rule. It was doubtful whether we should not be forced into a war both with Ava and Nepal.... In short, in almost every direction, we seemed to be surrounded by undisguised foes and doubtful friends."⁵ The British alliance with Ranjit Singh, he further observed, would damp the spirit of disaffection all over India, frustrate the views of their enemies, bring favourable results with Nepal and would arrest the progress of Russian and Persian intrigues. The treaty, he added, would give the British Government much greater influence over the affairs of the Punjab. Some of the terms appeared objectionable ;⁶ but these were not likely to endure, for,

¹ For treaty, see Macnaghten to Torrens, 26 June, 1838-ISP (I) 17 October, 1838. No. 132 (Art. 1.).

² *Ibid.* Art. 4 and 16.

³ *Ibid.* Art. 14

⁴ *Ibid.* Art. 15.

⁵ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 13 August, 1838-BISL (I), Vol. I. No. 18, paras 49-59.

⁶ Auckland was perhaps referring to the proposed levy of 20,00,000 rupees on the Sindhians, out of which 15,00,000 were to be paid to Ranjit Singh. He defended the imposition of the levy on Sind. It was, he said, neither harsh nor unjust : "There had been no usurpation more flagrant than that of Shikarpur by Sindh, and it was not unreasonable that we should

the Maharaja was weak and dying, and it was improbable that on his death any single individual would succeed to the undisputed and entire possession of power which the genius had raised up."¹

21. Distrust of Sikhs

All was now set for Shah Shuja's enterprise into Afghanistan. "The faggots are laid," wrote the Shah's friends beyond the Khyber, "it requires but the torch of the British Government to light them."² The treaty had not provided for the presence of large foreign armies in the Punjab, nor had it envisaged the transformation of the State of Lahore into a common highway for the movement of British troops and supplies towards the Khyber. Practical impediments in the way of direct Sikh participation against the Afghans were abundant. The foremost among these was their intense hatred of each other. Then there was the British mistrust of the Sikhs as doubtful allies in any combined military operations, supplemented by the weakness of the British military strength on the Sutlej. Compared to the Sikh army of 70 regiments with 700 pieces of artillery, the British had two or three regiments, scarcely mustering 500 men each.³ It was also feared that the Sikhs might take upon themselves to advance in support of the Shah; and should they force the Khyber, they would ensure that their own objects were achieved and see those of the British defeated. The Sikh-Afghan enmity appeared irreconcilable. Auckland decided that without giving any umbarge to Ranjit Singh, Shah Shuja must not be allowed to become an instrument of Sikh ambition.⁴

For these reasons, the Government of India's entire plan had to undergo a complete transformation. It was decided to give direct and powerful assistance to Shah Shuja's enterprise, to keep the Sikh armies on this side of the Khyber, to march the main army—called the Army of the Indus, under Sir John Keane to Kandahar via Shikarpur.⁵ The alteration of the route of Shah Shuja's march eliminated the danger of collision with the Sikhs, within whose territory, it was considered, that the British Government would not be able to render direct aid with freedom. Diversionary to the main operations, a subsidiary force raised by

make our guarantee to the Amirs conditioned upon some satisfaction given by them to those who assert a claim to the usurped districts." Auckland to Hobhouse, 9 February, 1839. Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 224b.

¹ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 13 August, 1838, *ut supra*, paras 52-53.

² Auckland to Hobhouse, 17 June, 1838 (Private) — Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 264a.

³ *Ibid.* 9 December, 1838, *op. cit.*, fol. 363b.

⁴ *Ibid.* 28 June, 1838, *op. cit.* 279a.

⁵ Torrens to Wade, 29 December, 1838-*ISB(I)* 20 March, 1839. No. 79.

British money and nominally under Shah Shuja's eldest son but really commanded by Wade, was to proceed towards the Khyber through the Punjab.¹

22. The Ferozepur Meeting

When these arrangements were complete, towards the end of November 1838, Lord Auckland thought it necessary to meet Ranjit Singh mainly to ensure the Maharaja's concurrence to the passage of British troops through the Punjab to Afghanistan. The meeting took place at Ferozepur on 29 November. This was the last public appearance of the ailing Maharaja. Oriental splendour and Eastern hospitality exhibited by Ranjit Singh was equally matched by the magnificent display of British power. Compliments of amity and friendship in profusion were paid, and presents of great value exchanged. Ranjit Singh held a parade of 20,000 troops in honour of the foreign dignitary, and he reviewed the British Army of Indus amounting to 13,000 troops assembled on the other side of the river. The old and ailing Maharaja stumbled and fell over some of the spherical cases piled up while inspecting the British gifts of batteries and howitzers, which was considered by the royal astrologers as a bad omen. Again at Lahore whither the Maharaja had invited his distinguished guests, while entertaining them to a drinking party, he had a stroke of apoplexy which showed his bodily infirmities.²

In the discussion of political matters, however, the Governor-General found it difficult to keep on friendly terms both with the Sikhs and the Afghans. Yet, a plan for the Sikh army in the ensuing campaign which would avoid a collision with the Afghans, was arrived at. It was a delicate matter to insist that the Sikhs should not cross the Khyber and that nothing should be done by a Sikh soldier except with the advice of British Political Agent. On this point the Maharaja's professions appeared rational to the Governor-General, but he commented : "I shall be little anxious upon them, when his thirty or forty battalions shall be in array."³ Auckland suggested to the Maharaja the necessity of the return of the British army from Kabul through the Punjab, which aroused the suspicions of the Sikh ruler. Passages were read out to the Governor-General showing that the British Government was bound not to interfere on the Sikh side of the Sutlej. Auckland listened to the recital with good humour, and the matter was settled amicably on the condition that the free passage of troops would not form a precedent for the future.⁴ Auckland

¹ Auckland—*Broughton Papers*, *op. cit.*, fol. 413b.

² Murray(ii, p. 150 *sq.*), Steinbach (p. 104 *ff.*), Osborne (p. 189 *ff.*) and others have furnished a detailed description of the Ferozepur Meeting. Auckland's personal account of the meeting is given in the *Broughton Papers* (BM) 36473, fol. 361a *ff.*

³ Auckland—*Broughton* (BM) *ut supra*.

⁴ *Ibid.* 2 January, 1839, *op. cit.*, fol. 411b.

also visited the Golden Temple, and had a glimpse of the royal treasure in the vaults of the fortress of Govindgarh estimated at £ 12,000,000 Sterling.¹

Auckland gives clearance to Ranjit Singh. His friendly feelings for the British and sentiments of goodwill impressed him, as also the vigour of his constitution which had survived the paralytic stroke. But the life of the Maharaja was drawing to a close, and although he had lost the power of speech, his other faculties were in tact. Ranjit Singh's illness during the last days of Auckland's visit had thrown a langour, but he left the old man with a strong impression of his sagacity and shrewdness. "All that was asked," he wrote, "was cheerfully acquiesced in, and if well adhered to, it will be of great importance."²

23. March to Peshawar

Early in January 1839, a contingent of Shah Shuja's army, commanded by his son Shahzada Taimur, and accompanied by Wade and other British officers, arrived at Lahore on its march to Peshawar. Wade's deputation to Peshawar placed upon him the duty of supervising all military operations for the Shah in that direction.³ Shahzada Taimur's contingent consisted of 4,000 ill-equipped levies raised with the help of an initial British grant of 10,000 rupees; his own subsistence allowance, supplemented by *zafats* or presents of money, was fixed at Rs. 500 a month.⁴ Lord who had preceded the contingent to Peshawar, with the concurrence of the Lahore Darbār to win over the Khyberis, had kept Wade informed of the tribal reactions. On 31 January, he wrote that Dost Muhammad was inciting the tribes to a *jehad* (religious war) against the English and the Sikhs. Sultan Muhammad Khan, the Peshawar Barakzai was also persuading them to eschew the cause of Shah Shuja. He suggested that the Khyberis might be induced to renounce their allegiance to Dost Muhammad through "pecuniary advances."⁵

24. A bizarre situation

At Peshawar Wade found that the Afghans and the Khyberis were acutely suspicious of the Sikh participation in the Shah's restoration. He reported that unless the Sikhs were restrained from any offensive action, the Afghan national feelings would be aroused. To the tribal Chiefs he had to give an assurance that the Sikhs would not cross their boundary, as according to the treaty, they were not required to do so. If they did, it would be resented both by the British Government

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Torrens to Wade, 29 December, 1838—ISP (I) 20 March, 1839. No. 79.

⁴ *Ibid.* 31 January, 1839—ISP (I) 24 April, 1839. No. 19.

⁵ Wade to Torrens, 6 January, 1839—ISP (I) 26 June, 1839. Nos. 82-83.

and the Shah.¹ Wade's task at Peshawar was therefore quite unenviable. He demanded urgent help from the Sikhs, denying to the tribal Chiefs of having done so. He had to please both the Sikhs and the Afghans, and it required an effort to keep at a low ebb their mutual hatred of each other. Sikh-Afghan enmity limited his endeavours, and operations in the Peshawar area had to be conducted with great caution.²

Lieutenant William Barr, who commanded an artillery detachment at Peshawar, has analysed Wade's predicament in a very objective manner. The Shahzada's contingent, he observes, was composed of Afghan mercenaries of uncertain loyalties. The Shahzada was himself marching against the Afghans supported by foreigners and aided by the Sikhs. No one could, therefore, predict what his levies would do in case of a reverse or when they were within the tribal area. There were no doubts of the co-operation of the Sikhs, but their hatred of the Afghans was tenfold greater than their aversion to the British. Wade was to march upon Kabul with 2,000 Afghan riff-raff, a handful of British sepoy and Indian regulars, against the numerous Khyberis and Afridis amounting to more than 25,000.³

Meanwhile, the ailing Maharaja at Lahore was making all efforts to co-operate and help the British at Peshawar. Preparations for the conduct of operations assigned to him had been set in motion as early as October, 1838.⁴ The Maharaja had ordered Kanwar Kharak Singh, Rājā Dhian Singh and Jamadār Khushal Singh to join Colonel Wade at Peshawar.⁵ Tej Singh had marched with his troops and a train of artillery northwards, and Rājā Gulab Singh was under orders 'to proceed thither on arrival from Jammu. Fateh-ud-Din Khan of Kasur was also directed to join his forces with that of the Shahzada. "The Maharaja," the *Lahore Akhbār* reported, "is sending his armies to the assistance of Colonel Wade, for, the Khyber Afghans are daily swarming in numbers."⁶ A Muslim contingent of 6,146 men with 16 guns and 140 pieces of artillery, commanded by Colonel Sheikh Bassawan, arrived at Peshawar on 7 May, in time to join in the celebrations at the news of the fall of Kandahar.⁷

25. British complaints

British complaints and resentment against the delay and evasiveness of the Lahore Darbār in fulfilling the terms of the treaty were not only exaggerated but

¹ *Ibid.* 3 April, 1839—ISP(I) 3 July, 1839. No. 39.

² Auckland to Hobhouse (Private). 1 April, 1839—Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 450b ff.

³ *Journal of March from Delhi to Peshawar and thence to Kabul etc.*, p. 319 sq.

⁴ Wade to Macnaghten (Enclosure from Ranjit Singh) 3 October, 1838—ISP (I) 10 April, 1839. No. 10.

⁵ *Lahore Akhbār*, 16 March, 1839—Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 310b.

⁶ *Ibid.* 10 March, *op. cit.*, fol. 460b.

⁷ Wade to Maddock, 13 May, 1839—(P) 142 : 92.

also unreasonable.¹ Wade found the position critical at Peshawar. He had to restrain himself from accepting too much from the Sikhs, and too little from the Afghans. Open readiness to accept Sikh help would alienate the Khyberis and the Yusafzais and create suspicion amongst the Afghan elements sympathetic to the Shah's cause across the Khyber. Thus he grew nervous as a Sikh army commanded by Kanwar Naunihal Singh, the Maharaja's grandson, advanced to help the Shahzada at Peshawar. Wade had sent a frantic demand that it should not proceed beyond Attock.²

Yet, amidst the profusion of complaints it was evident that without Sikh help the miserable and ill-equipped contingent of the Shahzada would not be able to sustain itself at Peshawar much less force the Khyber Pass. As the clamour of British resentment grew, the Sikh Government increased its co-operation. Funds were advanced, and the local officials at Peshawar helped in creating disaffection among the tribes by the despatch of emissaries to incite them against Dost Muhammad Khan.³ The Sikh army had been halted at Attock, and prince Naunihal Singh exhibited zeal in the procurement of intelligence and the establishment of communication with Mackeson and Macnaghten. Proclamations were issued forbidding Lahore subjects to correspond with the enemy; Lahore officials helped Wade in making plans for the attack on Ali Masjid and reconnoitring the area.⁴ The Yusafzais had tendered offers of help; the Khyberis and the Mohmands, the only tribes capable of resisting the Shahzada's advance had been placated by General Avitabile, the Governor of Peshawar;⁵ and the Peshawar Barakzais had taken a pledge of loyalty to the Lahore Government.⁶ It is certain that without the active co-operation and help of the Sikhs, the Shahzada's expeditionary force would have failed to achieve its objectives.

Meanwhile, reports arrived from Lahore that the life of the ailing Maharaja was drawing to an end.

¹ *Postscript* to Auckland to Hobhouse, 1 April, 1839-Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 450 ff.

² Wade to Maddock, 3 April, 1839-ISP (I) 3 July, 1839. No. 19.

³ *Ibid.* 13 May, 1839-(P) 147 : 92.

⁴ *Ibid.* 27 April, 1839-ISP (I) 27 July, 1839. No. 35.

⁵ *Ibid.* 26 March, 1839-ISP (I) 26 June, 1839. No. 110.

⁶ *Ibid.* 5 April, 1839-ISP (I) 3 July, 1839. No. 21A.

CHAPTER 9

DEATH OF RANJIT SINGH

1. Ailments

DESPITE his frail frame Ranjit Singh possessed a remarkable constitution. He was fond of manly exercises—riding, hunting, and a daily constitutional even in illness.¹ It is the general opinion of contemporary observers that excessive hard work, and constant physical exposure to the rigour of endless campaigns sapped the energetic vitality of his constitution. To these may be added his drunkenness, addiction to opium, resort to highly potent but harmful medications to sustain him in his debaucheries.² These excesses and fatigues of war and pleasure aged him before his time. In his late forties, he is described a worn out, broken down, old man.³

Ranjit Singh's first recorded illness was in 1806. On his return from a holy dip in the tank of Katas, he was seized with a loathsome disease, "brought on by his own indiscretion, which obliged him to remain at the village of Meanee, on the bank of the Jehlum until he recovered."⁴ We have no idea of the ailment of the Maharaja. Barring minor ailments which are dutifully recorded by the Lahore Diarist, Ranjit Singh fell seriously ill in 1826. Paralysis had struck him, and at his request Dr. Murray of the Native Infantry was sent to Lahore for his treatment. Murray found it rather difficult during his 8 months' stay to persuade the Maharaja to accept his treatment.⁵

The Maharaja is also described as a hypochondriac by some of the foreign physicians who visited him. One of his habits was a marked dislike for the use of medicine, except when prescribed by his favourite physician Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din. He had much respect for European doctors⁶ sent to attend on him, but he would persistently ignore their advice and refuse to be treated by them. "He invariably consults every medical man, he meets with," observes Osborne, "and almost inva-

¹ Macgregor, i, p. 222 ; Prinsep, p. 143 etc.

² Griffin, p. 88.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Macgregor, i, p. 157.

⁵ For Dr. Murray's despatches from Lahore *vide*. BPC(I) Range 125, Vols. 15-21.

⁶ He observed to Dr. Macgregor, in 1834 : "The English doctors, would I believe bring people back from the grave."—i, p. 277.

riably neglects their advice. Their medicine is always given to some of the Sardars, who are forced to swallow it in his presence, and are then shut up that he may be able to judge its effects.”¹

2. The second seizure

In 1834, Ranjit Singh had another paralytic seizure. Dr. Macgregor was called in from Ludhiana for treatment. He found him with a ruined constitution as the effect of a temporary state of illness.² He became hesitant in speech, his eye became listless as if the sight was quite gone, and he could hardly mount a horse. Dr. Macgregor forbade him the use of liquor, and at his suggestion, the Maharaja agreed to be treated by electricity and galvanism.³ Amongst Ranjit Singh's numerous ailments was his premature impotence noticed by Dr. Murray in 1826, and confirmed by Victor Jacquemont in 1831 after he had discussed the symptoms with Dr. Murray, brought on by excessive debaucheries. This, observes Jacquemont, had deprived him of all pleasures, a loss to which he was by no means resigned : “Modesty makes him complain of his stomach only, but I and everyone else knew what he meant by that.”⁴ Expert medical opinion was that the Maharaja's “stomach ailment” was due to his excessive use of spirits taken in ruinous draughts : “his stomach can no longer stand spirits ; he can barely take a little opium, and the impossibility of getting drunk without being ill.”⁵

3. Galvanic treatment

Dr. Macgregor gives a detailed account of the treatment of the Maharaja by electricity and galvanism. A few years earlier, Dr. Harlan, the adventurer in the employ of the Maharaja, had suggested a similar cure demanding from him 1,00,000 rupees as the price of treatment. Harlan's effrontery had so much displeased Ranjit Singh that he ordered him to be stripped of the governorship of Wazirabad and driven away from his Kingdom.⁶ Acting, however, on Harlan's suggestion, Ranjit Singh had expressed a wish to the British Government that the services of a British doctor competent in the application of galvanism to his emaciated body should be placed at his disposal. Dr. Macgregor was deputed to the Court towards the end of 1836 for this purpose, along with the electrical apparatus supplied by the Agra depot. On the appointed day, the Maharaja seemed disinclined to undergo the treatment fearing that the shock might have fatal consequences. The Maharaja's ministers

¹ *Journal* under date 3 June, 1838.

² Hugel, *Travels*, p. 297.

³ Macgregor, i, p. 274.

⁴ Jacquemont—*Journal of Travels in N. India and Kashmir*, p. 41.

⁵ *Ibid.* ; see also Hugel, p. 297-8

⁶ *Grey-European Adventurers in Northern India*, Lahore, 1929, p. 260.

including rājā Dhian Singh, Jamadār Khushal Singh and others received the experimental shocks to assure him. He remained under the treatment of electric shocks to stimulate his feeble frame for a few days, but the treatment was given up due to the sceptical attitude of the Maharaja regarding its efficacy.¹

4. Third stroke

On 21 December, 1838 during Lord Auckland's visit to Lahore, Ranjit Singh had another stroke due to excessive drinking while entertaining his august guest. Murray describes the incident : "Runjeet insisted that his lordship should take his part in drinking, requesting each time that he should drain the cup of fiery liquid he presented to the dregs. The excess committed by the Maharaja on this occasion,— he had been prevailed upon by his English medical attendant to live abstemiously,— produced a severe fit of apoplexy, and when Lord Auckland took leave of him, he was lying on his couch, scarcely able to articulate."²

The paralytic seizure of December 1838 almost killed the Maharaja. For days he struggled with death, his power of speech totally gone, his eyesight dimmed, though he extraordinarily retained his other faculties. "A curious and interesting sight it was now," observes Lawrence, "to behold the fast decaying monarch, his mind still alive, by signs giving orders ; still receiving reports, and assisted by the faithful Uzeez-ud-deen, almost as usual, attending to affairs of state. By a slight turn of his hand to the south, he would inquire the news of the British frontier ; by a similar turn to the west, he would demand tidings from the invading army ; and most anxious was he for intelligence from Afghanistan ..."³

5. His last days

Though the Maharaja rallied from the illness for a short while, yet it was evident to every one that his life was drawing to an end. In May 1839, George Russell Clerk found him feeble and nearly speechless, but full of animation and friendship. To the Government he reported confidentially, that although the Maharaja was not as ill as it had been represented, others had begun to rule in his name, and that procedure had started to effect the efficiency of his government.⁴

On 22 June, 1839 he had another stroke attended by dropsy and fever. A British physician Dr. Steele was rushed from Ludhiana to attend on him. Immedi-

¹ Macgregor, i, p. 276.

² Murray, ii, p. 158-59.

³ *Calcutta Review*, No. 2, p. 476.

⁴ Clerk to Maddock, 13 May, 1839-(P) 104 : 86 ; Auckland to Hobhouse (Private), 25 May, 1839-Broughton (BM) 36474, fol. 96.

ately after the seizure, Ranjit Singh fell senseless and the royal physicians saw the approaching end. The gates of the fort and Hazuribagh were ordered to be closed ; the custodians of the fortress of Gobindgarh, where the royal treasures and jewels were stored, were alerted to be vigilant, and a bier costing 10,00,000 rupees was ordered to be got ready.

At dawn of Sunday, 23 June, the Maharaja revived and hopes of all grew high that he would live. *Saṁkalps* were performed and charities to the tune 20,00,000 rupees were distributed on the following two days. Cows with gilded horns, elephants with gold and silver *howdahs*, horses with satin trappings, jewels, ornaments, money and clothes were given to the poor and Brahmans. Conscious of the approaching end, three days earlier, Ranjit Singh had ordered all his ministers and Court nobles to assemble in his presence, and caused them all to take oath of allegiance to the heir-apparent Kharak Singh.¹ The same day a proclamation to that effect was issued, and Kharak Singh inspected the morning parade and took *nazars* from ministers and the commandants of the troops.² Rājā Dhian Singh was appointed the principal minister and the *nāib-ul-saltanat* (deputy in the kingdom). But although all seemed well, drowsiness and restlessness still overpowered the Maharaja, and towards noon the same day (23 June), he woke up and took some medicine. He remained awake the whole night, but on 24 June he had a second attack.³

6. Antics of Sher Singh

The night of 24 June was passed in extreme anxiety. The Maharaja was surrounded during the last three days by all of his favourite ministers and counsellors—the Bhā'īs, Ram Singh, Gurmukh Singh and Gobind Ram ; rājā Dhian Singh and Hira Singh, Misser Beli Ram, Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din, rājā Dina Nath, Jamadār Khushal Singh, and of course by Kanwar Kharak Singh. Kanwar Naunihal Singh, rājā Gulab Singh and other eminent Sardars were at Peshawar in connection with the British expedition to Afghanistan. Kanwar Sher Singh was reportedly at Batala, but on hearing the news of the illness of the Maharaja, he had secretly hastened to Amritsar with the ostensible objective of taking possession of the fortress of Gobindgarh and the royal treasures it contained.⁴ Finding the treasure well-guarded and fort well-garrisoned, he immediately returned to Batala.

¹ Steinbach, p. 15.

² *Punjab Akhbār*, 22 August, 1839-Secret Consultations (I) 1 July, 1839 : *Translation of letters describing the last hours of Runjeet Singh*.

³ *Ibid.* ; also UT, III (v), p. 153 ff.

⁴ Wade to Maddock, 2 July, 1839-(P) 147 III : 116

On 24 June, Kharak Singh wrote to Sher Singh to repair to Lahore, but the latter was afraid that he would be seized by the heir-apparent and the minister Dhian Singh, and required security from Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din and Bhā'ī Gobind Ram.¹ He did not come to see his dying father and fear of life kept him away from Lahore even to join the last funeral rites of the Maharaja. He ultimately arrived at Lahore on 9 July, 1839, after making a vain bid for support from the British.²

The Maharaja awoke from torpor around 2 p.m. on 24 June, when some nourishment was given to him, but soon after he fell into coma. Vapours overpowered him and the royal physicians watched in utter dismay the struggle for life and death going on in the frail body of the old man. During the short interval of consciousness, the Maharaja entrusted the reins of full government to prince Kharak Singh.³

All shops and city gates were shut up ; officers at the *ghāts* were issued orders to keep boats on the western bank of the Sutlej. Ten battalions of troops stationed at Lahore guarded the city and the fort. Another battalion was detached to Amritsar to guard the city, the treasure and the fort of Gobindgarh.⁴

7. *Koh-i-Nūr* saṃkalp-ed

The Maharaja remained in coma till the early morning of 26 June, when he regained consciousness. He refused to take any more medicine, made a *saṃkalp* of 8,00,000 rupees, and ordered that the famous diamond *Koh-i-Nūr* be sent to the temple of Jagannath.⁵ This last wish of the dying Maharaja was never carried out. The Lahore Diarist Sohan Lal reports how the matter was evaded : "By a sign the Sarkār pointed out that soon its (the diamond's) *saṃkalp* should be made and it should be sent over to Shri Jagannath ji. Bhā'ī Gobind Ram further said that the Sarkār had ordered Rājā Dhian Singh to do so ; but Rājā Dhian Singh stated that Kanwar Kharak Singh be ordered to do that. Thereupon the order had been issued to Kanwar Kharak Singh, who stated that it was with Misser Beli Ram. After that Jamadār Khushal Singh spoke to Misser Beli Ram for its presentation ; but he began

¹ *Punjab Akhbār* 26 June, 1839, *op. cit.*, C 18 August.

² Torrens to Clerk, 12 July, 1839-(P) 123 II : 63 ; Clerk to Torrens, 14 July, 1839-(P) 104 : 119. During all this time, Sher Singh had been making secret endeavours to seek British advice and support to his claim to the throne. He however found little to encourage him. His movements were closely watched by the Lahore Darbār—*Punjab Akhbār*, 5 July, 1839, *op. cit.*

³ UT, III (v), p. 153 ff.

⁴ *Punjab Akhbār*, 27 June, 1839 *op. cit.* ; also UT, *op. cit.*

⁵ *Ibid.* UT, III (v), *ut supra*.

to put forward excuses and replied that it was in Amritsar.”¹ A discussion between the Chiefs arose about it within the hearing of the dying Maharaja, who produced wrinkles on his forehead on hearing Jamadār Khushal Singh’s remarks that all the wealth and property of the State belonged to Kanwar Kharak Singh.²

While the lamp of life flickered in the bed chamber of the *Musamanburj*, the royal household was in gloom ; the *rānīs* had not touched food for three days, and the ministers, court nobles, Sardars and officials sat in anguish and consternation awaiting the final hour.³ On the evening of 26 June, all mighty and lowly being anxious for the continued enjoyment of their fiefs and estates held a council. Sitting in the presence of the dying Maharaja they made mutual concord. “*Dīwān Dina Nath* observed,” reports the *Punjab Akhbār* of 26 June, “that all the Sardars should now have their respective possessions granted by the Maharaja confirmed by Kanwar Kharak Singh. A document was drawn up by Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din to be authenticated by Kanwar Kharak Singh.”

8. Last charities

During the last three days, pious gifts, alms, charities and religious endowments made by the Maharaja on an extensive scale, are computed to over 100,00,000 rupees. “Jagirs were assigned to temples” ; observes Murray, “his elephants, even his beloved horses, were parted with ; steeds with jewelled saddles, cows with gilded horns, golden chairs and golden bedsteads, were sent to propitiate the various deities ; his pearls, even the jewels which had recently been presented to him by the representative of the British nation, were bartered for even a chance of a few additional moments.”⁴ *Samkalps* continued to be performed and gifts bestowed throughout the day of 27 June, when the Maharaja had a succession of fainting fits. Besides his bed stood Kanwar Kharak Singh, *rājā* Dhian Singh, Jamadār Khushal Singh, *rājā* Suchet Singh, *rājā* Hira Singh, Sardar Ajit Singh Sindhiānwālā, *Dīwān Dina Nath*, the *Bhā’īs*, Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din and others. A total of 45,00,000 rupees in cash, gold and silver, were distributed in charity on his last day. In the late afternoon, his pulse became faint, the solitary eye lost its gleam, and it became evident that his time had come. That listless body was placed on the floor, his head was washed with the holy water of the Ganges and curd, and he was dressed in new clothes for his last journey. Ranjit Singh breathed his last at about 7 p.m. “When the day had passed three quarters and three hours,” records the Lahore Diarist, “he bade farewell to this mortal world and got transferred to the everlasting universe.”⁵

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Punjab Akhbār*, 26 June, 1839, *op. cit.*

⁴ ii, p. 164.

⁵ UT, III (v), p. 153 ff.

Thus died in peace and attended by his principal Chiefs, who had loved him and served him to the last moment, the great Maharaja of the Punjab. The gates of the fort were ordered by rājā Dhian Singh to be closed, and the news of the death not made public till arrangements for the funeral obsequies were made. Mī'an Labh Singh kept the vigil besides the dead body. The Brahmans kept chanting the *mantras* from the holy books, and the Bhā'īs remained busy reciting the *Ādī Granth* throughout the night.¹

Late at night, the Sardars held a meeting and were unanimous that no confidence could be placed in Kanwar Kharak Singh with regard to the continuance of the *jāgīrs* granted to them by the late Maharaja. It was decided to propose a draft of a confirmatory deed that the estates granted to them by the late Maharaja should remain in tact. Should the Kanwar refuse, they should act in concert.²

Rājā Dhian Singh, who had stood aloof from these resolutions, surprised every one the next morning. He declared that he would burn himself alive with his departed master. Kanwar Kharak Singh and the Sardars threw their turbans at his feet to dissuade him, bemoaning that without him the affairs of the State would be deranged. It was not until after some hours passed in thus beseeching him that they could prevail upon him to abandon his resolution.³

9. The Last Journey

Early on the morning of 28 June, the Sardars and the ministers approached the new Maharaja and all of them swore by the *Granth* loyalty to him, who with rājā Dhian Singh standing by his side swore that the grants conferred upon them by his father would be continued to them.⁴

Meanwhile, preparations for the funeral obsequies of the late Maharaja had been completed. The body of Ranjit Singh was bathed with fragrant waters and enclothed with rich ornaments. A decorated sandal-wood bier, wrought with gold and silver, in the form of a ship with sails of embroidered silk was prepared overnight to carry the mortal remains on his last journey. Four of the principal wives—rānī Kundan called Gudan, rānī Hardevi, rānī Raj Kanwar, and rānī Banali, along with seven slave-girls, had resolved to burn themselves on the funeral pyre.

We have a few eye-witness accounts of the funeral obsequies of Ranjit Singh. Dr. Martin Honigberger and Lieut. Colonel Steinbach both attended the royal

¹ *Ibid.*

² *News relative to the Court : Punjab Akhbār*, 27 June, 1839, *op. cit.*

³ *Punjab Akhbār*, 28 June, 1839, *op. cit.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

funeral and cremation. Honigberger's description is vivid : "The four ranees came out of the *zenana* on foot and unveiled for the first time of their lives. They distributed their ornaments and jewels while accompanying the funeral train in open palanquins, their seven slave-girls followed them on foot. The bier was constructed in the shape of a ship ; the sails and flags of the vessal were made of rich golden and silk stuff. The costly ornaments of richly decorated bier were given to the mob. The Brahmans chanted their mantras from the Vedas ; the Sikh priests from their holy Granth and the Muhammadans saying *Yā Allāh, Yā Allāh*... ..The prayers lasted about an hour. Then the royal body was respectfully placed in the middle of the pile. After that the ranees ascended the fatal ladder, one by one, according to their rank, the slaves followed, and the minister showed himself very officious in affording them assistance. The ranees placed themselves at the head of the royal body, and the slaves close to its feet. There they crowded, remaining in silent expectation for the fatal moment, when a thick mat of reeds being brought, with which the whole was covered. Oil was then poured over the mat, the minister and Sardars descended, and the pile was lighted at each corner. In a few moments, the deplorable victims of an abominable and fantastic ceremony had ceased to exit."¹

10. Dhian Singh's hypocrisy

Both Honigberger² and the Lahore news-writer³ confirm that *rājā* Dhian Singh attempted four times to jump into the burning pile, but was withheld by the multitude. There are different views regarding Dhian Singh's attempt at self-immolation in the funeral pyre. Steinbach characterises the intended act of self-devotion without any motive of hypocrisy (*see below*), while Carmichael Smyth doubts its sincerity. "Very few in the Punjab," he observes, "if any, who were acquainted with the character of *Rājā* Dehan Singh, ever doubted the hypocrisy of this act, and it indeed far from being the general opinion, that he fully intended to burn himself with the body of Runjeet. His motive for playing this farce, was any thing but misunderstood, by all those who knew him."⁴

11. Steinbach's account

Steinbach's account of the final obsequies is slightly different : "A street of a double line of infantry having been formed, the procession proceeded at a slow pace to its destination, only a quarter of mile distant, and within the precincts of the palace. The corpse of the late Maharaja, placed upon a splendid gilt car, constructed in the form of ship, with sails of gilt cloth to waft him (according to native

¹ *Thirty Five Years in the East*, London, 1852, p. 99-100.

² *Ibid.* p. 97.

³ *Punjab Akhbār*, 28 June, 1839, *op. cit.*

⁴ *History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, London, 1847. Note-Appendix, p. xiii.

superstition) into paradise, was borne upon the shoulders of soldiers, preceded by native musicians, playing their wild and melancholy airs. His four queens, dressed in the most sumptuous apparel, then followed, each in a separate gilt chair, borne upon the shoulders of their attendants ; the female slaves following on foot. Before each of the queen was carried a large mirror, and gilt parasol, the emblems of their rank. After them came the successor to the throne, the Maharaja Kurruck Singh, attended by the whole of the Sikh Sardars, bare-footed, and clothed in white ; none but persons of noble rank being permitted to join the procession. To the last moment of this terrible sacrifice, the queens exhibited the most perfect equanimity; far from evincing any dread of the terrible death which awaited them, they appeared in a high state of excitement, and ascended the funeral pile with alacrity. The slaves appeared perfectly resigned, but less enthusiastic. The body of the Maharaja having been placed upon the pile, the queens seated themselves around it, when the whole were covered with a canopy of the most costly Kashmir Shawls. The Maharaja Kurruck Singh then taking a lighted torch, pronounced a short prayer, set fire to the pile, and in an instant the whole mass, being composed of very ignitable material, was in flames. The noise from the *tom toms* (drums) and the shouts of the spectators immediately drowned any exclamation from the wretched victims. It was with some difficulty that the Rājā Dhyan Singh (Runjeet's minister), under strong excitement, was prevented from throwing himself into the flames. Considerable doubt has been thrown over the sincerity of this intended act of self-devotion ; but the general opinion was that he fully intended it from the apparent absence of any motive for hypocrisy. The ashes of the founder of the Sikh dynasty were afterwards collected together and thrown into the Ganges in conformity with the religious custom of the country.”¹

12. Other versions

The accounts furnished by the Lahore Diarist and the news-writer from Lahore are substantially similar : “The four Ranees clad in their richest apparel and jewels, worth many lakhs of rupees, accompanied the procession bestowing now and then some portion of the jewels and ornaments to the singers and Brahmans. Having arrived at the funeral pile made of sandal-wood, the corpse was placed on it ; Ranee Koondun sat down by its side and placed the head of the deceased on her lap, while the other Ranees with seven slave-girls seated themselves around with every mark of satisfaction on their countenances. At 10 o'clock, the time fixed by the Brahmans, Koonwur Kurruk Singh set fire to the pile, and the Ruler of the Punjab, with four Ranees and seven slave-girls was reduced to ashes.”²

The official Lahore Diarist ends with a rueful note : “A small cloud appeared in the sky over the burning pile, and having shed a few tears, cleared away.”

¹ *The Punjab*, London, 1845, p. 17-19.

² *Punjab Akhbār*, 28 June, 1839, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 10

THE MAHARAJA OF THE SIKHS

1. Physical appearance

FROM ALL accounts it is clear that Ranjit Singh's physical appearance was not prepossessing.¹ He was short statured,² of swarthy complexion ; his face was pock-marked, and the loss of one eye gave him an appearance of ungainliness at first sight, yet his countenance with flowing beard was full of animation and a genial expression. He was possessed of great bodily vigour and activity, his constitution toughened by the exercise of riding and his fondness for sportly activities. He was constantly on horseback inspecting his troops. Macgregor gives a fine description of the physical appearance of the Maharaja : "To look at the man, little of the hero can be discovered ; he is small in stature ; and his face, disfigured with small-pox, and deprived of the left eye from the same cause, it is not much indebted to nature for its external beauty. His remaining eye is very large ; and there is fire and brilliancy about it, when he becomes animated, which at once discover the energetic mind and discriminating character of its owner. His smile is pleasing, and the 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

¹ We have numerous accounts of those who saw him at close quarters : Osborne (p. 32) describes him ill-looking at first sight ; the restless wandering of his single fiery eye expressed uncommon intellect and acuteness. He did not possess the tallness of a Jat Sikh of the Punjab, had a habitual stoop, and was weak and infirm in legs, but when he would mount a horse, he would be transformed and all infirmities vanished. Baron Charles Hugel (p. 289) testifies to his striking and awesome appearance. He is described as positively most ugly and repulsive. His head is square and large forehead remarkably broad, though his arms and hands were quite shrunk. "When he seats himself in a common English arm-chair, with his feet down under him," he observes, "the position is particularly unfavourable to him ; but as soon as he mounts a horse with his black shield at his back, puts him on his mettle, his whole form seems animated by the spirit within him, and assumes a certain grace of which no body could believe it susceptible." (*Ibid.* p. 330-1). Jacquemont (*Journal*, p. 36) describes him a thin little man with an expression which showed "nobility of thought, shrewdness and penetration."

² His short stature and infirm legs prevented him even in his youth to ride a horse by himself without the help of an attendant, who would help him mount on his shoulders, and thence he would put his right foot into the stirrup, and would climb on the horse by putting his left foot over the head of the attendant.

atonce grasped 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 every thing connected with military feats. He was ever foremost in battle, and the last to retreat ; there is no instance of his being even embarrassed, or evincing anything like fear, on record. His whole life has been spent in warfare, and he even now prefers a tent, or any temporary residence, to the gilded palace.”¹

2. Education

Ranjit Singh was the product of his own times. Born in the time of rude and warlike Sikh confederacies, when formal education and refinement in the upbringing of a princeling was at a discount, he was brought up totally illiterate. Those were the days of chivalry and licentiousness, of despotism and rule by force, and love for manly sports, and warlike qualities were considered adequate attainments for a prince. Ranjit Singh possessed all these qualities. From his childhood he learnt the essentials of horse-riding, swimming, hunting, swordsmanship and musketry practice, and he grew up a fine soldier and his energies were directed towards war and conquest. Although unencumbered by formal education, he respected learned men and their knowledge endeavouring to acquire as much as he could in his own way. His destiny had denied him a formal education ; but his illiteracy was counterbalanced by a sharp inquisitive mind and a subtle genius and intuition with which he mastered statecraft and conducted official business. He would listen to a paper or document read out to him, comprehend it with dexterity, and issue immediate verbatim orders for a draft of reply. With amazing acuteness, his ministers and secretaries understood him well. A final draft presented to him was soon after corrected and altered by him orally.

So sharp was his intellect and so prodigiously retentive his lively and imaginative mind, that at times he appeared almost a freak. His quick comprehension stored everything worth storing in its minutest details. He would personally audit the accounts of numerous *daftars*, would brush aside the complicated revenue statements labouriously prepared by his officials, and by subtle and rough calculations arrive at nearly correct estimates. His prodigious mind registered everything ; his one eye was blatantly quick and searching, and nothing of importance escaped his royal notice. In his annual circuits through the country, observes Murray, Ranjit Singh kept in his mind a register of what he had seen. His disposition, at the same time was watchful, and his eye quick and searching, so that nothing escaped his observation ; while the perspicacity displayed in his observation of character,

¹ *History of the Sikhs*, London, 1846, i, p. 215-16.

and in tracing the motives of others' action, gave him a command and influence over all who approached him, which was instrumental to his rapid rise.¹

3. Annual circuits

It was characteristic of Ranjit Singh to keep himself well informed of what was happening in his Kingdom. For that purpose he made annual circuits of his Kingdom to places all over the country. "The annual circuits that the Maharaja makes through the country give him the opportunity of seeing almost every village," observes Lawrence,² "and his extraordinary memory keeps a register of what he has seen ; so that when asked for grants of land, he gives with his eyes more open than those of granters usually are. He detests complaints, and usually stipulates with his farmers that none are to reach his ear ; yet, as he frequently travels, and is seen daily, some poor wretch or other frequently attracts his notice, and makes a complaint. Ranjit's eye is, therefore, now and then opened to what is going on."

4. A naive curiosity

The unlettered sovereign of the Sikhs possessed an unabated eagerness for information and instruction from all those who came into contact with him. He was interested in everything and anything—in horses and kings, in divinity and licentiousness, in politics and treachery, and in goodness and evil. With foreign visitors and travellers he was particularly communicative and familiar. Towards the European adventurers who came to seek fortune at his Court, he was suspicious, terse, exacting and generous.

Major Lawrence narrates this characteristic of Ranjit Singh when Colonel Bellasis seeking service was summoned to the Darbār for an interview. After enquiries as to his antecedents, birth, parentage and age, the Maharaja flooded him with the questions what he knew, what he could do, and what he wanted, all in one breath. When Bellasis replied that he could do anything and was ignorant of nothing, the Maharaja asked : "Can you build a fort ? Can you cure a long-standing disease ? Can you cast a gun ? Can you shoe a horse ? Can you mend my watch, which has stopped ?"³

To his foreign visitors and European travellers visiting his Court the Maharaja was wont to talk about armies and their discipline, his own *vis à vis* the European. He paraded before them his picked regiments, and the armed strength of the Khālśa army and put them all sorts of questions. "I have spent a couple of hours on several occasions," observes the French naturalist Jacquemont, "conversing with

¹ Murray, *History of the Punjab*, London, 1847, ii, p. 177.

² *Adventures of an Officer in the Punjaub*, London, 1846, i, p. 31 ff.

³ *Ibid.* i, p. 20 ff.

Ranjit *de omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis*. His conversation is a nightmare. He is almost the first inquisitive Indian I have seen, but his curiosity makes up for apathy for his whole nation. He asked me a hundred thousand questions about India, the English, Europe, Bonaparte, this world in general and the other one, hell and paradise, the soul, God, the devil, and a thousand things besides."¹

Fane, Osborne and Hugel testify to this instinctive curiosity of the Maharaja. Fane observes that during the visit of the British Commander-in-Chief the Maharaja never ceased asking questions from the moment he entered. He enquired about the strength of the Indian army, the relative power of Persia and Russia, and many other questions, put with the greatest acuteness, and many of them difficult to answer.²

Even while inspecting troops, Ranjit Singh continued to put Baron Von Hugel an endless stream of questions about the military resources of Austria, France and England, and the number of disposable troops kept up by the different states of Europe. He questioned him about the objects of his travels, wished to know what experiences he had gained in his journeys, whether he carried any life-preserving medicine to protect him from dangers, and what was the surest means of being victorious over an army.³ He asked Hugel's opinion regarding his numerous battalions on parade: "Tell me what you think of them? What do you think of my troops compared with those of the East India Company? Do you believe that my troops could stand against a body of Russians?"⁴ Vigne was harassed with the extraordinary question: "Do you understand how to restore a country which is much impoverished? Do you understand how to govern a country? What would you do in Kashmir to make it more prosperous?"⁵

Osborne complains that most of his time at Lahore was principally occupied in answering Ranjit Singh's innumerable questions, but without satisfying his insatiable curiosity. It was hardly possible to give an idea of the ceaseless rapidity with which the questions flowed, or the infinite variety of subjects which they embraced: "Do you drink wine? How much? Did you taste the wine I sent you yesterday? Does Lord Auckland drink wine? Does he drink in the morning? How many glasses?"⁶ The following dialogue exhibits the naive curiosity and political shrewdness of the Maharaja:

¹ *Letters from India, 1829-1832*, London, 1834, p. 280 ff.; see also his *Journal*, p. 40-41 wherein Jacquemont enumerates various dialogues he had with the Maharaja on diverse subjects.

² *Five Years in India*, London, 1842, i, p. 80.

³ *Travels* (Jervis' translation), London, 1845, (Reprint, 1970, Patiala) p. 290.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 332.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 327.

⁶ *Journal*, under date 4 June, 1838.

The Maharaja : How many troops have you got in this country altogether ?

Osborne : About two hundred thousand.

The Maharaja : So I have been told ; but you could not bring that number into the field at once, or at any one place ?

Osborne : Certainly not ; it is unnecessary. Twenty, or at the most thirty thousand British troops could march from one end of India to the other, and no power in the country could stop them.

The Maharaja : You are fine fellows ; how many Frenchmen can an Englishman beat ?

Osborne : At school in England, the boys are always taught to consider themselves equal to three Frenchmen.

The Maharaja : How many Russians ?

Osborne : The French beat the Russians, and we beat the French.

The Maharaja : If the Russians cross the Indus, what force could you bring against them ?

Osborne : Quite enough to drive them back, with your Highness for an ally.

The Maharaja : *Wah ! Wah !* So we will.

About the Russian armed strength against which Macnaghten's Mission had come to solicit Sikh aid, the Maharaja put the queries : "What number of troops the Emperor of Russia keep in his pay ? Are they good soldiers ? Can the English beat them ? What number of men could they bring across the Indus ? What would you do if they were actually to attempt an invasion ? Do you wish them to come ? Have they much money ? Then there would be nothing but fighting : no plunder. Perhaps it would be better if they do not come at all."¹

Referring to his Amazons or the *Zenana* platoons which he always proudly exhibited before his foreign guests, the Maharaja made his oft-repeated banter that they gave him more trouble than all the rest of his army put together. He then asked :

The Maharaja : How do you manage them at home ?

Osborne : We have nothing of the sort with us.

The Maharaja : I hope that Lord Auckland will think them in good order, and I trust that he would like to see them.

Osborne : No doubt.

The Maharaja : I have got some beautiful recruits from Kashmir on their road, and I will have it perfect before his visit ; but they are difficult to manage. Is Lord Auckland married ?

Osborne : No.

The Maharaja : What ! he has no wives at all ?

Osborne : None.

The Maharaja : Why don't he marry ?

Osborne : I don't know.

The Maharaja : Why don't you marry ?

Osborne : I can't afford it.

The Maharaja : Why not ? Are English wives very expensive ?

Osborne : Yes ; very.

¹ *Journal*, under date 28 June, 1838.

The Maharaja : I wanted one myself some time ago, and wrote to the government about it, but they did not send me one ... Ah ! I often wish for one !¹

5. Steam-boat

For his pleasure trips on the Ravi, the Maharaja ordered General Ventura and Colonel Gardner to construct a steam-boat. The Maharaja, observes Gardner, was under the impression that a foreigner could do almost anything. A poorly constructed paddle-boat at a cost of 40,000 rupees, with fore and aft cabins and port-holes for swivel-guns was accordingly constructed and launched in the Ravi. It moved up the river without sails or oars. The Maharaja used it for picnics and held drinking parties with cabins full of his *nāutch* girls.²

6. Pastimes and pleasures

Like all overstressed Oriental monarchs, Ranjit Singh relaxed in various ways when he had time. He was quite fond of hunting and occasionally went out quail-hunting and duck-shooting, in royal style on elephants, followed by magnificently dressed horsemen and Sikh regulars beating drums and horns to start the game. He was quite fond of drinking and a jolly liver. His drinking parties and *nāutch* girls have been commented upon by the foreign visitors to his Court though rather adversely. Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din furnished a recipe of the brandy which was specially brewed for the Maharaja. In this were the strongest sauces compounded from all kinds of animal flesh, pearls and jewels, musk, opium, plants and herbs of various kinds, all intermingled to form spirits— “a devil’s drink.”³ The Maharaja partook of this brandy copiously ; pressed large potions of this ruinous concoction on his guests at his drinking parties. Another kind of wine termed as “liquid fire” or the *atish-i-sayyāl*, extracted from raisins, mixed with a quantity of pearls ground to powder, was served at his drinking bouts, where the only food allowed was fat quails stuffed with all sorts of spices.⁴

A favourite topic of Ranjit Singh, observes Emily Eden, was constant praise of drinking. He said he understood that there were books which contained objection to drunkenness, and he thought it better that there should be no books at all, than they should contain such foolish notions.”⁵ Ranjit Singh treated his foreign guests with hospitality, good humour and genial high spirits ; he generally invited them to his drinking parties so well enlivened by his *nāutch* girls. The favourite

¹ *Ibid.*, under dated 8 July, 1838.

² *Memories of Alexander Gardner*, p. 202 ff.

³ Hugel, *Travels*, p. 298.

⁴ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁵ *Up the Country*, London, 1866, p. 208.

drink of the Maharaja was then served to them. It was a noxious potent potion which floored many a brave souls. Osborne, who had brought cases of port, claret, hock and champagne for the Maharaja from Lord Auckland, found that only whisky was approved by him, the others he found effeminate.¹ He describes the fun at Ranjit Singh's drinking parties : "During the potions, he generally orders the attendance of all his dancing girls, whom he forces to drink wine, and when he thinks them sufficiently excited, use all his power to set them by the ears, the result of which is a general action, in the course of which they tear one another almost to pieces. They pull one another's nose and ear-rings by main force, and sometimes even more serious accidents occur ; Runjeet sitting by encouraging them with the greatest delight, and exclaiming to his guests, '*Burra tomacha, burra tomacha*' (good fun)."²

The dancing girls of the Maharaja have been amply described by many foreign visitors to the Court. Macgregor observes that like other oriental monarchs, Ranjit Singh kept a large establishment of *nautch* girls and lavished large sums of money upon them. At the royal parties and exclusive private entertainments confined to himself and his favourites, the dancing girls generally wore military costume, and armed with bows and arrows, the Maharaja styled them as his body-guard. He confessed that his female body-guard were the most troublesome portion of his troops.³ At the *Basant* festival, according to Hugel, the dancing girls were introduced in yellow dress, and the Maharaja bestowed upon them all the money which had been presented to him in the Court on the occasion.⁴ "When employed in dancing and singing," Macgregor observes, "Runjeet, it is said, sometimes amuses himself by giving them spirituous liquors until they have drank to excess, when they commence quarelling, and tear each other's hair, much to his delight. He encourages the sport by every means in his power, and showers rupees without number among the combatants. On such occasions, the Maharaja was perfectly happy ; he forgot the affairs of the state and gave himself entirely to festivity."⁵

In his youth, according to some observers, and when in the enjoyment of good health, Ranjit Singh and his favourites used to indulge in wine-drinking excessively, although such occasions became rare as his health broke down by a stroke of paralysis and excesses and fatigues of his early life.⁶ In his moral

¹ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

² *Ibid.*

³ *History of the Sikhs*, i. p. 224 ff.

⁴ Hugel, *Travels*, p. 340.

⁵ Macgregor, *op. cit.*, i. p. 225. See also Hugel, p. 298 ; Jacquemont, *Journal*, p. 54 etc.

⁶ Macgregor, p. 225. Griffin, however, observes : "Hard work, the exposure of numerous campaigns, drunkenness and debauchery aged him before his time, and left him at fifty a worn-out broken down, old man." p. 88.

failings, too, Ranjit Singh, kept above the commonplace ethical traditions of the time. He had the unusual share of weaknesses and vices common to all oriental potentates, but his greatness cannot be diminished or effected by their evaluation from modern standards.

7. A humane despot

Almost all foreign travellers to the Maharaja's Court observe an inherent quality of kindness in the despotic ruthlessness of Ranjit Singh. Macgregor, as for instance, describes him extremely humane and kind. In his hours of leisure, the Maharaja found time to feed tame pigeons and domestic fowls with his own hands. He was also fond of children.¹ "He was an exception to Oriental monarchs," he observes, "and never wantonly inflicted either capital punishment or mutilation. His determined character often prompted him to take such decisive measures, as the urgency of the case demanded, but imprisonment, with confiscation of property, was the usual means he employed, when he wished to bring any of his refractory subjects to a proper sense of their duty, as well as obtain any other object he had in view."²

Baron Charles Hugel, the German traveller, who visited the Punjab in 1835, comments on this chief characteristic of Ranjit Singh. Though extremely despotic and ruthless, he observes, the Maharaja was not wanton ; he was always unwilling to inflict the punishment of death and knew not how to reconcile mildness with the just reward due to crime.³ He always treated his fallen foes with deliberate kindness, and seldom wantonly imbrued his hands in blood : "Never perhaps was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality."⁴ Edward Fane, who accompanied the British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Fane to Lahore in 1837, highlights Ranjit Singh's humane character and his generosity, his kindness to children, and the fact that during his whole life he had never put a man to death for even the most heinous crime. "His exceeding kindness and good nature," he observes, "throughout our entire visit, 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, substituting an occasional cutting off of noses and ears, and more often a sound bestinadoin ; by which means his country is kept in perfect order, his revenue is paid, and he himself is supposed to have collected an enormous treasure."⁵

¹ *History of the Sikhs*, London, 1846, i, p. 281.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Travels*, (Jervis' Translation), London, 1845, p. 317.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 382.

⁵ Fane, H. E. *Five Years in India*, London, 1842, i, p. 95-96.

8. Virtues and Vices

Jacquemont's observations that although the Orientals are debauched, they have some shame about it ; but that Ranjit Singh's excesses were shameless, seem to have little truth in them. He refers to the idle prattle that Ranjit Singh publicly consorted with the women of bazar, whose patron and protector, he alleges, he was.¹ The fact that his grey beard had a number of catamites, he adds, was nothing shocking to his country. Ranjit Singh got infatuated with one of the courtesans (Mowran) that the inhabitants of Lahore saw him a hundred times in those days sitting with her on an elephant, and toying with her as though in the *zenana*, and that too in broad daylight, surrounded by a large escort, and talking and laughing with them all the time.² Ranjit Singh did get infatuated with a Muhammadan prostitute of Amritsar in 1802, but he married her.³ But the bazar gossip concerning the romance or at the most a folly of youth picked up after almost 3 decades by Hugel, Carmichael Smyth, Osborne and Jacquemont is grotesquely incredible.

Similarly, the story of the dancing girl Lotus, narrated with so much relish by Osborne,⁴ seems nothing but imaginary behind-the-scene scandals generally floating about an oriental Court. Lotus, was a beautiful damsel received in tribute from Kashmir in 1836 and the Maharaja fell violently in love with her, and fancied that his affection was as violently returned. One evening while she was dancing before the Maharaja he observed to Monsieur Ventura of the attachment of the girl to him. The Italian, however, appeared incredulous at the old lion's powers of attraction which made Ranjit Singh highly indignant. He defied him to seduce her, if he could. The challenge was accepted by Ventura who laid aside the impropriety of attempting to rival his sovereign. Osborne narrates the end of the tale in his inimitable style : "Scarce had eight-and forty hours elapsed, ere the hoary old Lion of Lahore was aroused from his happy dreams of love and affection by the intelligence that his guard were faithless, his harem violated, and himself deserted, and that the lovely Louts had, nothing loth, been transplanted from her royal lover's garden to the Italian's where she was then blooming in all her native beauty."

The dark insinuations of fornication and pederasty made by some of the foreign observers against Ranjit Singh may also be regarded as frivolous if not

¹ *Journal*, p. 54 ff.

² "This women," Jacquemont narrates the savoury bazar gossip picked up almost after three decades, "who had such influence over the Rajah, smoked in his presence in his *howdah*, and he even assisted her to light her *hookah*, probably the most outrageous exhibition he has made in Lahore" (*ibid.* p. 55).

³ *Vide. supra*, p. 45-6.

⁴ *Journal*, under date 29 May, 1838.

malicious tissues of lies. Lawrence hints that both Dhian Singh and Jamadār Khushal Singh who had joined the Maharaja's service as handsome and youthful lads obtained the highest confidence of the Maharaja not by the most respectful road. "I believe," he observes, "that there is little doubt that it was as ministers of Runjeet Singh's debaucheries that they both first obtained favour."¹ Both Carmichael Smyth and W. G. Osborne makes veiled hints with regard to Ranjit Singh's affection for Hira Singh. Hira Singh, observes Smyth, was effeminate, an over-petted and light-headed youth, a great favourite of the Maharaja. He was brought up as a lap-dog of Runjeet and his dissolute associates.² Osborne is astonished to find the youthful Hira Singh a great favourite with Ranjit Singh. Hira Singh, he observes, was a strikingly handsome, though rather effeminate in appearance. He was magnificently dressed, and almost entirely covered from waist upwards with strings of pearls, diamonds, emeralds and rubies. He was the only individual who ever ventured to address Ranjit Singh without being spoken to and whilst his father stood behind his master's chair, and never presumed to answer him with unclasped hands, the boy did not hesitate to interrupt and contradict him in the rudest manner: "His influence over Ranjit is extraordinary; and though acquired in a manner which in any other country would render him infamous for ever, here he is universally looked up to and respected."³ All such insinuations are, of course, nonsense.

9. *Tulādāns, saṃkalps and charities*

Though often described a broadminded sceptic, the Maharaja kept his peace with God. He listened to the holy *Granth* for two hours each day, and sought his salvation by generous grants of money and lands to religious shrines, Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim. The Official Lahore Diarist records his regular munificent gifts of money to all Sikh shrines—Śrī Darbār Sāhib, the Akāl Bunga, the Shahīd Bunga, the Dera Sāhib, Taran Taran Sāhib, Damdama Sāhib, Fatehgarh Sāhib, Muktsar Sāhib, Khadūr Sāhib, Kartārpur Sāhib, Thamb Sāhib, Bā'olī Govindwal, Anandpur Sāhib and others.⁴ On the *Śankrāntī* day every month, the Maharaja visited Amritsar and offered *ardās* in thanksgiving at the Darbār Sāhib. Then a *tuladān* was performed, and money, gold, silver, elephants, cows, horses, and buffalos were given in charity.⁵ A *tuladān* also took place on every *amāvas* day, when the Maharaja was weighed against different kinds of grains, followed by distribution of charities to the Brahmans. On the Baisākh *Śankrāntī* day and other national festivals *saṃkalps* were performed and horses, elephants

¹ *Adventures of an Officer in the Punjab*, London, 1846, p. 33.

² *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, London, 1847, p. 262 ff.

³ *Journal*, under date 29 May, 1838.

⁴ UT, III(ii), p. 195.

⁵ *Ibid.*

gold bangles, gold and silver pitchers, cows and buffaloes and many other things were given to the needy and the poor.¹ On the *Diwālī* day, a great *tuladan* was held when the Maharaja was weighed in gold, which was distributed among the needy and the deserving.² On the *Dusserah* day, the Maharaja worshipped the sword and horse,³ the Sardars presented to him horses with gold saddles, large sums of money and gold ducats, and he distributed gold and silver coins in charity.

The Maharaja took regular annual trips for a holy dip in the Kitas. The sacred temples of Jawālājī and Kāngrājī were the objects of Ranjit Singh's special veneration. Baron Von Hugel, who visited the temple of Jawālāmūkhī in Kangra in 1835, observes that originally the temple of "eternal flame," was dedicated to Buddhist worship, but during Ranjit Singh's time it was the established object of worship of both the Hindus and the Sikhs. "The golden roof of both the large and small buildings are most tastefully and richly executed," he remarks, "and were the gifts of Ranjit Singh in testimony of his gratitude to the Devi goddess to whom he ascribed his recovery from a dangerous illness twelve years ago."⁴

The temple of Śrī Jawālājī was on the active list of Ranjit Singh's religious grants and endowments. The Official Lahore Diarist records that in August 1835 the Maharaja presented the temple two golden umbrellas;⁵ the royal princes and Court nobles visited it; in time of illness of the Maharaja, *prayogas* were performed in the temple for his recovery and health.⁶ During his last illness, the Maharaja ordered Kanwar Naunihal Singh to proceed to Jawālājī and Kāngrājī "to make prostrations there in a very pathetic and helpless manner, make *ardas* there for the health and disposition of the *Sarkār*, and perform the *Hom*, the *Shantī-prayoga* and the *Yajña*."⁷

10. Of horses and elephants

"The Maharaja told me," observes Von Hugel, "that he had 101 elephants, the same number that attends the Governor-General whenever he travels; 1,000 saddle horses for his own use, 27,000 for his infantry; for troops in armour 15,000; for the cavalry 27,000; apprehending that I might not have fully understood him,

¹ *Ibid.* III (ii), p. 204; III (v), p. 98.

² *Ibid.* III (ii), p. 269.

³ *Ibid.* III (iv), p. 8.

⁴ *Travels*, p. 45.

⁵ UT, III (ii), p. 263.

⁶ *Ibid.* III (v), p. 627.

⁷ *Ibid.* III (v), p. 107.

he went over his story again, which I learnt afterwards was strictly correct.”¹ Describing a parade of the elephants, he writes : “Thirty elephants, gaily dressed out, now passed by. The largest, an animal of immense size now passed by, and named Sirdarji, had been lately sent by the King of Nepal, and was ornamented with a splendred gilt *howdah* and crimson velvet cushions. Red velvet housings fell as low as his knees, trimmed with a golden border and fringe. The long tusks were cut at the end, as is the case with all tame elephants ; but this deficiency was supplied by tops of silver gilt, united by a golden chain. Round his ankles were heavy gold bangles, such as the Hindus wear, curiously wrought. Price of this elephant’s ornaments, according to the Maharaja’s account was 1,30,000 florins.”²

Ranjit Singh’s love for horses was proverbial. His provincial satraps, feudatories sent him horses as tributes and token of goodwill ; foreign governments sent him gifts of horses. William Moorcroft, who saw the Maharaja’s stud in 1823 was quite impressed by it. They were well exercised, had rich bridles, saddles and housing. Amongst them were horses from Persia and Bokhara, and the Maharaja requested him to purchase for him some horses at Bokhara.³

11. Price of a kingdom

Stud was his favourite theme of conversation with the foreign visitors. He displayed to them his fine gold and silver caprisoned horses.⁴ The favourite horses of the Maharaja always stood ready near his camp. Their saddles were covered with velvet cushions, inset with emeralds and gems, bridles overlaid with gold strings of jewels round their neck, a plume of heron’s feathers at the top of the heads, pommels rich and housings of rich Kashmir shawls, they presented a magnificent appearance.

Many stories are current about the famous steed Leili, for the acquisition of which Ranjit Singh sent an army to Peshawar and was prepared to squander a fortune.⁵ Leili was a horse renowned for its breed and elegance throughout the

¹ *Travels* (Jervis trans. reprint, Patiala, 1970), p. 305.

² *Ibid*, £ 13,000.

³ *Travels*, p.60. The *Akhbārāt-i-Deorhī’i Mahārāja Ranjīt Singh* (NAI), for the year 1825 (fol. 6) detail a very interesting story about the purchase of 220 horses of Turkish breed which the traders from Kabul had brought to Lahore. The Maharaja haggled with the traders about the price, offered them a smaller amount, and on their refusal they were given a severe beating and forced to part with the horses at the price offered to them !

⁴ Steinbach (*The Punjab*, p. 17) observes : “Some idea of the vast property accumulated by Runjeet 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.”

⁵ See generally, Macgregor, ii, p. 192 ; Griffin, p. 102 ff ; Murray, ii, p. 88 and others.

Punjab. It was owned by Yar Muhammad Khan Barakzai, the governor of Peshawar. In 1826, a demand for its surrender was made by the Maharaja, and on his refusal a Sikh army under General Budh Singh Sindhiānwālā marched to Peshawar to take possession of it and also to quell the *jehād* raised by the fanatic Sayyed Ahmad in the Valley. It was reported that the horse had died and Budh Singh after defeating Sayyed Ahmad returned to Lahore. Another expedition under Prince Kharak Singh and General Ventura was sent in 1829 with orders to seize the horse and depose Yar Muhammad Khan if he still refused to make a present of the horse to the Maharaja. Yar Muhammad fled to the hills and joining hands with Sayyed Ahmad returned to Peshawar, and drove away the new Sikh governor, Sultan Muhammad Khan, whom the Prince had installed. In the battle that followed Yar Muhammad was killed in action; Sayyed Ahmad was again driven away from Peshawar and Sultan Muhammad, who was reinstalled as governor, failed to comply with the royal order for the surrender of Leili. Ventura arrested him, and in this way, the Barakzai Chief parted with the horse. Hugel was told by the Maharaja that Leili had cost him 60,00,000 rupees and 12,000 soldiers.¹ He describes the horse: "It is the finest horse belonging to the Maharaja and I could not help mounting a steed which had cost six million florins. The bridle and saddle was splendid and round his knees he had gold bangles: he is dark grey, with black legs, thirteen years old and full sixteen hands high. I have heard that at Rupar Ranjit Singh showed a brown horse as Leili, but General Ventura assured me that this was the true Leili."²

12. Treatment of foreign visitors

Ranjit Singh treated all foreign visitors to his Court with civility, cordiality and hospitality. We have the accounts of Moorcroft, Wade, Hugel, Mohan Lal, Jacquemont, Shahmat Ali, Fane and others to testify it. On arrival they were met by the reception officers specially appointed, their lodgings were fixed according to their position, and funds both in cash and kind provided for their maintenance. The official Lahore Diarist gives a fulsome account of these visits. When in March 1831, Victor Jacquemont arrived at Lahore: "a royal order was issued to all the dancing girls of Lahore to put on male garments, hold swords and bows in their hands, and be decorated with other arms as well and then to present themselves at the *Deorhi* of the Maharaja on elephants and horses in perfect smartness and with grace, before the arrival of Jacquemont *Sahib*."³ On the arrival of the visitor, the Maharaja embraced him and showed him the parade of

¹ *Travels*, p. 333.

² *Ibid.* p. 334.

³ "The *Sahib*," observes Sohan Lal, "felt very pleased at the sight of the bewitching phenomenon." UT, III (i), p. 14-16.

his platoons and horsemen. He further ordered the Bhā'ī Sāhibs to engage him in discussion on the relative cannons of Greek medicine with the English one.¹

Von Hugel observes that during his stay the Maharaja made his residence as agreeable as possible. Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din, the minister for foreign affairs and confidential secretary, came from the Maharaja to welcome him : "fifty bearers made their appearance with presents of fruit and sweetmeats, a bottle of his own wine, and a bag with 700 rupees."² Hugel stayed at General Ventura's palatial residence and an allowance of 6,000 rupees per month was fixed as his maintenance.³ William Moorcroft, Osborne, Mohan Lal, Shahamat Ali and others who visited the Court, are full of praises of the Maharaja for the treatment they received. So with the smaller fry ; but the full force of Sikh Darbār's splendour and hospitality was apparent from the Maharaja's reception of Lord William Bentinck at Rupar, of Lord Auckland at Ferozepur, and on Sir Henry Fane's visit to Lahore on the occasion of the marriage of Kanwar Naunihal Singh.

13. William Moorcroft's visit (1820)

William Moorcroft, a veterinary officer of the East India Company, set off on his travels to Ladakh and Kashmir in 1819. He arrived at Lahore in May of that year. His main objective was to secure facilities for his journey to Ladakh and Tibet and to propose to the Maharaja for the establishment of fixed scales of duties for the admission of British merchandise into his territories. Ranjit Singh showed him every consideration, provided him facilities for travel to Kashmir and Ladakh, but postponed the consideration of the proposals of fixed duties on British merchandise to some other time.

Moorcroft's account of his visit is quite interesting and provides us contemporary information on the state of affairs in the Punjab and Kashmir.⁴ He had several interviews with the Maharaja and discussed with him without reserve a variety of topics. He mentions Ranjit Singh's passion for horses,⁵ the Multan campaign, and Ranjit Singh's visit in disguise to Lord Lake's Camp at the time of Holkar's intrusion in the Punjab. He describes the city of Lahore as being surrounded by a brick wall, about 30 feet high, extending for about 7 miles. The Maharaja, he

¹ *Ibid.* p. 17.

² Hugel, p. 259-60.

³ *Ibid.* p. 293.

⁴ *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindostan and the Punjab etc.* 2 Vols. London, 1841.

⁵ *Ibid.* (p. 60, 1970 Ed.) "One of his favourite theme was his stud. He told me that most of his horses were presents from his tributaries and zamindars, and that he not unfrequently requited the donor of a superior animal with a village or a Jagir.....Ranjit proposed to me through Mir Isset Ullah to purchase some horses for him at Bokhara."

observes, resides within the fort, in a palace called the Saman Burj, which was of many stories. Several of the old buildings in the fort were in ruins and had been repaired and altered without good feeling and taste. The great square and buildings of the principal mosque, he noticed, had been converted into a place of exercise for the infantry.

The circumference of Lahore in 1820 was about 12 *kos*. It was a populous city with narrow streets and bazars. He saw no building of any size or significance except the mosque of Wazir Khan. His other observations of interest are the manufacture of shawls at Kashmir and Amritsar, the latter he found of inferior quality, the wool of which was imported from Tibet and Bukhara. He gives a description of Sikh religious establishments, an account of Kangra and Europeans in the service of Rājā Sansar Chand ; and of the hill territories under Lahore—their products, habits and superstitions of the people and the frequency of the rite of *sati* prevalent there.

There is no corroborative evidence that while in Ladakh, Moorcroft drew up and signed, in the name of the East India Company, a formal treaty with the Rājā of Ladakh, although he was the channel of communication from the Rājā to his own government tendering his offer of allegiance to the British Government.¹ He died of fever while journeying from Balakh to Andkhui.²

14. Visit of Dr. Murray (1826-27)

In 1826, Dr. Murray a British physician attached to 4th Native Infantry was deputed by the British Government to treat the Maharaja, when the latter suffered a stroke of paralysis. Durings his 8 months' stay at Lahore, Murray found it difficult to persuade the Maharaja afflicted with highly hypochondrical tendencies to accept his treatment, but his numerous despatches to the Ludhiana Agency provide interesting observations on the Sikh Court and the persons around the Maharaja.³ He found Ranjit Singh very fond of his *firangi* officers and the *Francesca Campo*, the former he purposely kept out of Murray's way.⁴ The Maharaja was very regular in the inspection of his troop battalions. Dr. Murray is full of praise of the Sikh

¹ There is no evidence that Moorcroft dabbled in politics, although according to Cunningham (p. 150), he was in possession of a letter from the Russian Minister Prince Nesselrode, recommending a merchant to the good offices of Ranjit Singh. He however entered into a commercial engagement with the Khalun at Leh on behalf of the British merchants at Calcutta. *Vide, Travels.*, p. 153.

² Wade to Metcalfe, 10 November, 1825 (P) 94 : 108.

³ For Dr. Murray's despatches from Lahore *vide*. BPC (I) Range 125, Vols. 15-21, particularly of 11 January, 1827, C 16 ; 23 February, C 20, 23 ; 2 March, C 68 ; 16 March, C 13, 28 ; 30 March, C 32 36 ; 20 April, C 5, 7 ; and 1 June, 1827, C 17.

⁴ Murray to Wade, 23 February, 1827, C 16, *ut supra*.

army : "The dragoons trained by Ventura a young looking man apparently about 33 years of age, very neat in person and dress, and gentlemanly in his conversation and manners were drawn up. They were well-mounted and had a martial appearance. The Maharaja told me that these cavalry corps could also perform the functions of infantry-men in additon, that he paid each man 26 rupees a month, and that they provided themselves with everything and the State made an extra recompense if their horses were killed."¹ He also found that the Maharaja mixed up men in his regiments to prevent mutinies, but generally, the troops were not paid regularly : "Within the last days two or three months' pay had been issued to the Rājā's troops, but they are still five months in arrears and great dissatisfaction prevails."² During his conversations, the Maharaja made numerous enquiries about the Barrackpur mutiny, the composition of a British European regiment and the siege of Bharatpur.³ During the later part of Dr. Murray's visit, Ranjit Singh showed signs of uneasiness at Lord Amherst's visit to the Northern Provinces and evinced a desire to meet the Governor-General. Murray advised him to send a goodwill mission to Lord Amherst at Simla. Consequently a Sikh mission led by Dīwān Moti Ram arrived at Simla in April 1827, and among the presents sent by the Maharaja was a handsome tent made of shawls for King George IV.⁴

Dr Murray describes Ranjit Singh a man with an extraordinary vigorous mind and of regular habits, who was most assiduous in attending to all State business in its minutest details personally : "Even when ill, Ranjit Singh always invariably took an airing. He had a roomy tonjaun panelled on all sides and glazed. After his morning airing or ride, he would hold his Darbar usually between 9 and 10 o'clock and transacted State business till 1 p. m."⁵

Murray's description of the Maharaja's *Zenana Corps* is most illustrative : "While the Battalions were manoeuvring, there arrived about one hundred and fifty dancing girls on elephants, belonging to the Raja, and dismounting at a little distance, came forward and sat down in a semi-circle in front of the Raja on a carpet spread for the purpose. They all were richly dressed, and wore very expensive gold and silver ornaments. They were also armed, most of them with bows and arrows, and a few with spears, swords, and shields of a diminutive size. Two of the leaders went up and made *nazars* to the Raja of a few rupees which he took. The whole presented a striking and novel appearance. The Raja with a look

¹ *Ibid.* 16 January, 1827-BPC (I) 16 March, 1827. No. 13.

² *Ibid.* 4 January, 1827-BPC (I) 23 February, 1827. No. 23.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Wade to Metcalfe, 1 August, 1828-BPC(I) 12 October, 1827, C3.

⁵ Murray to Wade, 15 February, 1827-BPC(I) 23 March, 1827. No. 28.

expressive of great satisfaction directed my attention towards them frequently and I signified to him how much gratified I was by the novelty of the spectacle.”¹

RANJIT SINGH AND HIS TIMES

15. Visit of Jacquemont (1831)

Of all the foreign visitors to the Court of Lahore, who came after William Moorcroft, the name of Victor Jacquemont, the French naturalist who was commissioned by the French Natural History Museum to study and investigate the botany and geology of India in 1829, stands out unique. He was a reputed scientist and a writer, and his *Letters from India*,² were so popular that they were included in the curricula of schools in France. While in India he kept a *Journal* which partly included his impressions of visit to the Punjab and Kashmir.³ It gives an excellent account of the Punjab and Kashmir under Ranjit Singh. Jacquemont was an astute observer, and he remained in the Kingdom for about 10 months, and his *Journal* provides fresh information on many aspects of the life and times of Ranjit Singh and the men around him. He held many intimate conversations with the Maharaja whom he describes: “He is a thin little man with an attractive face, though he has lost one eye from small pox. His right eye which remains is very large, his nose is fine and slightly turned up, his mouth firm, his teeth excellent. He wears slight moustaches which he twists incessantly with his fingers and a long thin white beard which falls to his chest. His expression shows nobility of thought, shrewdness and penetration and these indications are correct.”⁴

16. The Maharaja

Ranjit Singh, Jacquemont noticed, wore simple dress of white Kashmir tissue, a little turban of white *muslin* rather carelessly tied, and a long tunic like French riding-cloak with a little cape falling over his shoulders. He wore large round pearl ear-rings set in gold, a collar of pearls and ruby bracelets hidden under his sleeves. He always carried a gold hilt sword encrusted with diamonds and emeralds.⁵ Giving a brief description of Ranjit Singh's rise to power, his government and the people, he observes him a Jat by descent who had taken no other

¹ *Ibid.* 12 January 1827, *op. cit.*, 2 March 1827. No. 68.

² 2 Vols., London, 1852.

³ *Political and Social State of Northern India, 1830* since published under the title—*The Punjab A Hundred Years Ago*, Lahore, 1934.

⁴ *Journal*, p. 36.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 37.

title and was content with his own name but would allow no one else to bear it in his kingdom ! Like all upstarts, he adds, Ranjit Singh disliked the old aristocracy of the Punjab ; he had clipped the wings of the old Sardars by heavy taxation and created his own courtiers, generals and rajas. Avarice was his ruling passion and he had amassed a treasure worth 8,00,00,000 rupees.¹ His government had no fixed rules : he ruled as he willed.

Of the personal habits of the Maharaja, Jacquemont observes, that he was a heavy drinker, and a moderate opium-eater (his small ration of opium in the afternoon was 3-4 grains), a lively hunter—hunting a tiger either from an elephant or horseback. His passion for horses mostly prevented his Sardars keeping good ones—he promptly took them without any payment.² Cupidity and avarice were the chief adverse characteristics of the Maharaja. He was extremely averse to disburse his hoard, and he only drew money from his treasury to pay his troops and to make presents. The irregular and uncertain payments which his courtiers received were made by *Jagirs* or by royal bonds on the state debtors, either defaulters or criminals who had been fined. Ranjit Singh seldom paid his troops regularly : “But the whole army gets ten month’s pay a year and that is very irregularly paid. Pay is always four, five or six months in arrears, sometimes a year or fourteen months, particularly in the case of cavalry. The result is that the latter are very much in debt.”³

The Maharaja, comments Jacquemont, was more or less a sceptic and extremely superstitious. At the same time, he exhibited great religious devotion to the faith of Nanak. He visited Amritsar twice a year to bathe in the sacred pool and made pilgrimages to the tombs of celebrated Muhammadan saints. He would often sit in the Darbār listening but distracted as if communing with his spirit. He hated the idea of death ; the word was never mentioned in his presence.⁴

His excesses in debauchery were shameless. He consorted publicly with the women of the bazar. At great festivals there were hundreds of them at Lahore and Amritsar, whom he made dress up as Amazons in the most ridiculous way, ride

¹ Jacquemont underestimates the Maharaja’s treasure, which could be computed at double the suggested value. Few foreigners had the privilege of viewing the Crown Jewels. Fane (i, p. 87), who saw them describes them the finest in the world. These were deposited at the Govindgarh fort and at the Moti Mandir in Lahore fort, and were of immense value : “The most remarkable and greatest sight, however, was the great diamond called the *Koh-i-Nūr* or Mountain of Light, valued at three millions and half pound sterling.”

² *Ibid.* p. 51.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 54.

on horses, and follow him ; on such occasions they formed his bodyguard. One of his pastimes when he had nothing better to do was to watch their flirtations with the young men of his Court.¹ An idiosyncrasy of Ranjit Singh was to demand medicines and elixirs from his foreign visitors. He took none of them himself, but was in the habit of amusing himself by making his concubines, friends and servants take them.²

Jacquemont's comments on the character, habits and religion of Ranjit Singh exhibit a quality of keen observation, scepticism and outright frankness. He refers to the vices and virtues of the great Maharaja. He describes him a thin little man whose expression showed nobility of thought, shrewdness and penetration.³ This model Asiatic king, he observes, was no saint. He cared nothing for law or good faith, unless it was to his interest to be just or faithful ; but he was not cruel. Noses and ears or hands of great criminals were ordered to be cut off, but he never took life. His passion for horses amounted almost to a mania ; and he had waged costly and bloody wars for seizing a horse. He was extremely brave, a quality rather rare among eastern princes. He had always been successful in his military campaigns either by treaties or cunning negotiations—in this manner he had made himself master of the Punjab. He was better obeyed by his subjects than the Mughal emperors were at the height of their power.⁴

It is clear from Jacquemont's account that Ranjit had become impotent at the early age of 47. "Like all persons of quality in the East," he confides good humouredly, "he is a *malade imaginaire*, and since he has a large band of the loveliest girls of Kashmir, and sufficient means to pay for a better dinner than anybody else, he is practically annoyed at not being able to drink like a fish without getting drunk, or eat like an elephant without choking. Women no longer give him any more pleasure than the flowers in his garden, and for good reasons, and that is the most cruel of his ills. He had the decency to refer to those functions of whose weakness he complains as his digestion. But I know what the word stomach signified in the mouth of the King of Lahore, and we discussed his malady exhaustively, though in veiled terms."⁵

17. The *firangi* officers

Jacquemont found the position of the European officers in the service of the Lahore Government not much enviable. Although they enjoyed greater

¹ *Ibid.* p. 54-55.

² *Ibid.* p. 45.

³ *Journal*, p. 36.

⁴ *Letters from India*, London, 1835, p. 173-74.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 171.

pecuniary advantages and lived in comparative luxury, they had the disadvantage of living in an atmosphere of jealousy and suspicion at the Court ; they could not leave at will, and their salaries were in the same condition of arrears as the rest of the army. In his *Letters from India*, his description of Allard gives the same impression : "M. Allard is quite the Suliman Bey of Ranjit Singh. He goes from time to time to visit the British officers at Ludhiana ; he is well paid at 1,00,000 francs a year, but he is half a prisoner of Ranjit Singh who takes care to make him spend the whole of his income every year in order to destroy any desire to leave him. He pursues the same policy with all European officers. Allard has literary knowledge and taste. The officers often excite Ranjit Singh's suspicions, and are compelled to be very circumspect in order to keep his confidence."¹

18. Cities, towns and people

Jacquemont gives a description of the cities in the Sikh territory in the Doab which he observes as "the most fertile and best cultivated in the north of India." Wheat and other necessities of life and labour in this region were perhaps cheaper than anywhere else in India. A man could subsist on one pice a day, a labourer's wages being 4-5 pice a day. The Sikh Chiefs paid their infantrymen a salary of 2½ rupees a month, and a *munshī* or clerk got 5-6 rupees a month. Taxation was light—2/5th of the gross produce of the soil. The Maharaja possessed territories on the left bank of the Sutlej with a revenue of 3,00,000 rupees, but a village, several villages or part of a village or of several villages was sometimes the property of a town. Each of the proprietors of that sort of common property took the title of Sardar and held tenaciously on to his fraction of saddle or horse, and unwilling to surrender his sovereignty over the space covered by the shade of a tree,²

Of the social abuses, the custom of *Satī* had been absolutely abolished in the Doab ; marriages took place at an early age of eight or nine, and widow remarriage was less frequent among the Hindus than the Muslims. He observes about the Sikhs : "The Sikhs have also retained a large number of Hindu superstitions. Like the Hindus, they regard cattle as sacred, and the Muhammadans are forbidden to slaughter them. They retain the customs of the caste from which they came, and caste prejudices are as strong among them as among the Hindus, less so than in the rest of India, but certainly more so than in the Himalayas."³

¹ *Op. cit.* ii, p. 64.

² *Journal*, p. 6.

³ *Ibid.* p. 9.

19. Ludhiana and Amritsar

The ruined city of Sirhind is described as "the gate of India"; Ludhiana, "the ancient Muhammadan city" though its flourishing trade with India, Afghanistan and Bukhara had been ruined due to anarchy which prevailed in the area for the last two decades, was still commercially important. Rich bankers and merchants who had business relations extending as far as Calcutta, Bombay, Kashmir, Attock, Peshawar, Kabul and Herat, resided in the town which had a population of 20,000. Ludhiana manufactured Kashmir shawls and low priced cotton cloth. 3,000 or nearly half the female population of Ludhiana, observes the traveller, were prostitutes—the city had the reputation of furnishing women to all British regiments stationed there. Traffic in girls sold in slavery was a thriving business—little girls of 6 or 7 years were bought in the hills for 40-50 rupees and resold after a few years to Indians or sometimes to European officers as concubines.

As a counterpart to the British military post at Ludhiana, Ranjit Singh had fortified and garrisoned the town of Phagwara. Crossing into the Lahore territory, Jacquemont felt the difference where the rule of the Maharaja subsisted. He describes Amritsar the largest city in the Punjab, rich and affluent. Rock salt, timber, and shawls were the main commodities exported to India. "The religion of Nanak admits no rivals at Amritsar." Observes Jacquemont. "Hindus and Muhammadans are less common than Sikhs, in whose hands is practically all the business, to the prosperity of which Amritsar owes its flourishing appearance. There are also a large number of Kashmiris and Afghans; the former weave or spin, and the latter speculate. There is not a single mosque, and the public practice of Muhammadanism is forbidden."¹ Amritsar was famous for its sacred tank, the Maharaja's newly built palace in the Rambagh, the fortress of Govindgarh and the Akālīs. It had a royal mint, where the *Nanakshāhī* rupees were coined.

20. Dialogues with the Maharaja

Jacquemont had numerous meetings with the Maharaja who asked him about King George of England, Napoleon Bonaparte and made enquiries regarding the military and revenue resources of France, the art of war and politics in Europe and things transcendental :—²

The Maharaja : Is there a God himself ?

Jacquemont : Without doubt. Who has made the heaven and the earth and ourselves except God ?

The Maharaja : But who made God ?

Jacquemont : My scientific knowledge does not cover these matters. All the priests of Europe could answer your Majesty better.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 27.

² *Ibid.* p. 40-41,

The Maharaja : The priests of this country would not stop like that. As for me, I do not believe their stories and prefer to remain in ignorance. But do you believe that there is another world, another life ?

Jacquemont : We shall know that later on ; but no one has come back from that country if it exists, with the result that no one knows anything about it.

21. A Nosegay nuptial

In 1832, the Maharaja got infatuated with the charms of a Muslim courtesan of Amritsar named Gul Begum, who was employed as a dancing girl at the palace, and in the September of the same year, caring little for public criticism, he married her. Honigberger, who was present at the occasion of royal nuptials observes that Gul Begum drank spirits and forsook her religion to please the Maharaja. Ranjit Singh, he adds, cared little for public opinion. He declared his marriage legal and celebrated his nuptials, for the Maharaja believed that a sovereign ought to have the highest authority, and independent will.¹ The official Lahore Diarist Sohan Lal Suri records the marriage celebrations which took place on 27 September, 1832 : "At about the third quarter of day the Maharaja put on saffron garments, decorated himself with ornaments and jewellery, and gave a blessed order to the men incharge of floorings to spread out special floors in the silver bungalow and to set up *kanāts* and canopies all over. All the prostitutes, that is to say, the dancing girls, were required to be present in the silver bungalow and all the requirements of a happy gathering were to be provided and wines and refreshments were to be kept carefully inside there. Outside and inside the bungalow, at a small distance, drum-beaters and musicians began to play music enthusiastically and the State *Bhayyas* presented themselves to the Maharaja, dressed in fine garments, and the Maharaja ordered the display of fire-works. Flower-sellers brought flowers of various kinds tied up in nosegays. The *rāja'i kalān* (Dhian Singh) was given a royal order that none of the chiefs or attendants should be present in the bungalow. After that Gul Begum, dressed in yellow garments, with her hands and feet decorated with *hena* and bedecked with bejewelled gold ornaments from head to foot, went into the bungalow. After that the Maharaja happily went in and till the sunset the prostitutes remained drawn in lines, busy on all sides, cutting jokes of the obscene kind. Some of the near attendants of the Maharaja showered large sums of money over him, and again and again music and dancing took place. 7,000 rupees were granted to the dancing girls as reward, and the *rāja'i kalān* under orders of the Maharaja made them depart.

"Then the Maharaja took his seat in a chair and made Gul Begum sit on another. Garlands of roses interwoven with pearls were tied around the forehead of the Maharaja, and a gold nose-ring with pearl was fixed in the nose of Gul Begum,

¹ *Thirty-five Years in the East*, London, 1852, p. 56-57.

and lovely words of congratulations filled the heart of the audience with pleasure. Fire-works began to play and the Maharaja indulged in drinking wine. When the night had passed one quarter they went to Rambagh and Gul Begum was given the name of Gul Bahar Begum. After that royal order was issued that 300 ducats should be sent to Darbār Sāhib, Akāl Bunga, Shahīd Bunga and Jhanda Bunga.”¹

Gulbahar Begum survived the Maharaja ; she died at Lahore in 1863 and till her death received an annual pension of 12,380 rupees.²

¹ UT, III (ii), p. 151.

² Latif, p. 464, footnote,

CHAPTER 11

THE FAMILY OF RANJIT SINGH

1. Marriages and the *Karewas*

UNLIKE THE GENERALITY of Oriental despots Ranjit Singh was comparatively a less married monarch. His known legal and semi-legal (*Karewā*) marriages were about two score. But his indulgence in orgies of the *ranīwās*, and gratification of passions of youth with concubines, courtesans and women of low character would hardly earn him the epithet of a libertine,¹ as these were the common failings of the Sardars and men of affluence and political power of the times. According to a modern Sikh writer, the royal palace had a munificent supply of women : "there were many women in the royal harem some of whom had been admitted after some sort of ceremony ; others (usually widows) simply took residence because the Maharaja had cast his mantle over them ; and then there were yet others who came as maid-servants but having caught Ranjit Singh's fancy became his mistresses."² Dalip Singh, he observes, described himself as "the son of any one of my father's forty-six wives."³

Amongst Ranjit Singh's legal and unorthodox marriages may be enumerated that (1) with Mehtab Kaur of the Kanahayā Misal in 1792 ; (2) with Raj Kauran Nakā'ī in 1798 ; (3) with Rup Kaur, the daughter of Jai Singh, a petty zamīndār of Kot Sayed Mahmud in 1815 ; (4) with Lachmi, the daughter of Desa Singh of Khai in 1820 ; (5-6) with two daughters of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra named Mehtab Devi and Rajbanso late in life—1839. (7-8) He married two Muhammadan courtesans—Moran and Gul Begum ; the former in the exuberance of youth in 1802, and the later when he was down with a stroke of paralysis in 1833. (9-10) He married the two widows of Sahib Singh Bhangī of Gujrat, either out of compassion, or perhaps, for political reasons with the ceremony of *Karewā* ; (11-14) and he married in a similar manner Chand Kaur, Mehtab Kaur, Saman Kaur and Gulab Kaur, all daughters of petty Jat zamīndārs who had caught his fancy.

¹ According to Prinsep (p. 67), Ranjit Singh led a most dissolute life ; his debaucheries particularly during the Holi and Dussehra festivals were shameless, and the scenes exhibited on such occasions openly before the Court, and even in the streets of Lahore, were the conversation of Hindustan and rivalled the worst that is reported in the history of profligacies of ancient Rome. He himself would parade in a state of inebriety, on the same elephant with his courtesans.

² Khushwant Singh, *Ranjit Singh*, London, 1962, p. 185.

³ *Ibid.*

2. Kharak Singh

To Raj Kauran Nakā'ī was born in 1802 prince Kharak Singh,¹ perhaps, the only legitimate son of Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja brought him up as a soldier and employed him to lead armies in various expeditions, but he proved to be a man weak in intellect and resolution. Ungainly in physical appearance like his illustrious father, but unlike him, from his childhood he exhibited signs of imbecility, and an inherent unawareness of politics and statecraft. He had a vague fondness for religion dimly understood, and a tumid acquiescence towards mundane affairs. His looks did not do him an injustice ; as an unwarlike son of a warlike father his personality was unimpressive : "he had nothing to attract or attack."² The Maharaja pointed him out as his heir, notwithstanding the inaudible murmurs of Sher Singh and covert persuasions of his crafty minister Dhian Singh. Dhian Singh kept both of them away from the Court in the vain dream that his eldest son, the effeminate Hira Singh,³ a favoured and adopted child of the Maharaja, would some day eliminate all rivals to the royal throne.

As a successor to Ranjit Singh, Kharak Singh proved unimaginative and witless. He endeavoured to grapple with the affairs of the State, but intrigue and statecraft were beyond him ;⁴ and the ambitions of the Dogra minister and his own clever though dissipated son, Kanwar Naunihal Singh, dominated him. He quarrelled violently with Dhian Singh by ordering that the minister should not enjoy free admission to the palace. This gave offence to the minister, who feared that the king's favourite Chet Singh would soon replace him. Dhian Singh took measures to discredit both Kharak Singh and his favourite by spreading a false rumour that

¹ *Authorities* : Local histories which furnish information on the life of Kharak Singh are : the '*Umdat-ut-Tahwārīkh*, Daftar IV (i) ; Kanahaya Lal-*Tārīkh-i-Punjab* ; Nūr Aḥmad *Chishti-Tahqīqāt-i-Chishtī* ; Gyan Singh-*Tawārīkh-i-Guru Khālṣa* and others. Contemporary accounts are those of Smyth (*History of Reigning Family of Lahore etc.*) Steinback (*The Punjab*), Honigberger (*Thirty-five Years in the East*), Murray, Vol. II and others. See also Griffin (*The Punjab Chiefs*) and Pearse (*Memories of Alexander Gardner*), London, 1893.

² Auckland-Broughton (BM) 36474, 9 December, 1838, fol. 359 ff.

³ See generally, Smyth, p. 25-26 ; Osborne p. 30. Hira Singh's influence over the Maharaja seems to be extraordinary. A strikingly handsome youth, always magnificently dressed and bejewelled, he was allowed a chair in the Darbār, and would with impunity interrupt or contradict the Maharaja without offence.

⁴ Kharak Singh, observes Latif (p. 497 ff), was a man of weak intellect, and was more addicted to opium than his father. He was in the habit of taking the drug twice a day, and passed the whole of his time in a state of semi-inebriety. Physiognomically he was a counterpart of his royal sire, but possessed none of his diplomatic qualifications. One Chet Singh, who had hardly anything to recommend him but arrogance and sycophancy, attained such an ascendancy over the weak mind of the new Maharaja that he became a mere puppet in his hands.

both of them were soliciting British protection, and that Sikh troops would soon be disbanded.¹ Naunihal Singh was summoned from Peshawar and Dhian Singh soon perpetrated the murder of Chet Singh with the Kanwar's connivance.² A breach having been effected between the father and the son, soon the reins of government were taken over by Naunihal Singh, who began to rule in Kharak Singh's name.³ In December 1839, Kharak Singh fell ill, and it was suspected by the royal physicians that slow poison was being administered to him.⁴ After continued illness, during which the unfilial son never visited his father, Kharak Singh died on 5 November, 1840 at the early age of 39.

Circumstances connected with the end of Kharak Singh rightly arouse our suspicions that he did not die a natural death ; that he was either poisoned under Dhian Singh's direction with the connivance of Naunihal Singh or his already shattered constitution was allowed to break down under ill-treatment and neglect.⁵

3. Naunihal Singh

Naunihal Singh was born in February 1821.⁶ He is described as closely resembling his grandfather in physical appearance, deportment and habits. According to Macgregor, Naunihal Singh possessed an ungainly appearance like his father and grandfather ; he had a strongly pock-marked face, yet there was a steady and determined look about him.⁷ An intelligent youth, though self-willed and impetuous, he showed extraordinary courage, ability and political wisdom. He was popular with all classes of people, and also with the Court and the Army. He was also generally free from the moral vices of the time. A young and open-minded prince, uninitiated into the common trickery and intrigue of an Oriental Court, he would call a friend a friend, and an enemy an enemy. Highly ambitious, he was a prince who "combined the discretion of a statesman with the best virtues of a soldier."⁸

Ranjit Singh was very fond of his grandson. Great rejoicings took place at his birth ; a chronogram of his birth describes him "a bouquet of the garden of wisdom."⁹ He grew up in the military traditions of his grandfather—a valiant,

¹ Pearse, *Memories of Alexander Gardner*, p. 215 ; Smyth, p. 28.

² *Ibid.*

³ Maddock to Clerk, 4 May, 1840-(p) 126, 1 : 81.

⁴ Mackeson to Clerk, 7 December, 1840-(p) 41-1 ; 57.

⁵ See generally, on this aspect UT, IV (i), p. 66-67 ; Honigberger, i, p. 102 ; Kanahaya Lal, *Tārikh-Panjāb*, p. 386 ; Smyth, p. 33 ; Latif, p. 499 and others.

⁶ *Authorities* : Same as in footnote under Sher Singh, *infra*.

⁷ *History of the Punjab*, London, 1846-i, p. 252.

⁸ Maddock to Government, 26 August, 1839-(p) 123 ; 91.

⁹ Latif, p. 425 : *Guldasta' i bāgh-i-dānish*.

ambitious and a warlike youth. Ranjit Singh encouraged him to gain experience in wars and conquests. Barely a lad of 13, he participated in the conquest of Peshawar in May 1834 ; and a year later, he reduced a revolt in Dera Ismail Khan and Tank. He remained in active service in the north and the trans-Indus region. In 1834, he was appointed to administer the country lying on both sides of Attock¹ ; in 1836, he accompanied his father to the borders of Sind with the aim of the reduction of Shikarpur and the Mazari town of Ken ;² and the same year the contract of Peshawar was given to him for a sum of 12,00,000 rupees.³ In March 1837, Naunihal Singh was married to the daughter of Sardar Sham Singh Attāriwālā, and Sir Henry Fane, the British Commander-in-Chief, attended the nuptials celebrated with the extravagance of oriental splendour and ostentations.⁴

Naunihal Singh's vigour and resolution was marred by an impetuous and violent temper. He was intolerent of the English, and hated the minister Dhian Singh with whom he had allied to cut short the rule of Kharak Singh, but his virtual assumption of power in the name of the titular monarch in December 1839 was characterized with unwise political steps. He was a party to Chet Singh's murder ;⁵ he prevented the British Political Agent Wade from meeting the Maharaja in December 1839,⁶ and made an attempt that Sir John Keane, the British general should not have an interview with the Maharaja.⁷ He was also responsible for the recall of Wade from Ludhiana for the latter's alleged overbearing and obnoxious conduct towards him and the minister Dhian Singh.⁸

His unfilial conduct in the ill treatment of his father has already been described. Kharak Singh refused to recognise that he had abdicated and he would not forgive his son for his complicity in Chet Singh's murder.⁹ He resisted stoutly the countermanding of his orders by the prince supported by the minister. He castigated the prince for the imprisonment of Misser Beli Ram and his five brothers and demanded the restoration of their estates and possessions.¹⁰ On 5 November,

¹ UT, III (ii), p. 225.

² Wade to Government, 3 January, 1837-(pp) XXXIV, 1843.

³ UT, III (ii), p. 228.

⁴ UT, III (iv), p. 370 sq. Henry Edward Fane has given an interesting first-hand account of the marriage of Naunihal Singh-*Five Years in India*, i, p. 69 ff.

⁵ Smyth, p. 30 ; Pearse, p. 216 ff.

⁶ Wade to Maddock, 11 December, 1839-(p) 147-III : 176.

⁷ *Ibid.* 19 December, 1839-(ISP) 19 February, 1840—No. 18.

⁸ Auckland to Hobhouse, 16 February, 1840-Broughton (BM) 36474, fol 231b.

⁹ Wade to Maddock, 1 January, 1840-(P) 148 : 1.

¹⁰ Misser Beli Ram was incharge of the *Toshakhāna* since Ranjit Singh's time ; of his brothers, Megh Raj was the custodian of the royal treasure at Gobindgarh fort. The entire family was put in prison at Dhian Singh's orders on the flimsy charge that Beli Ram had refused to show the prince the treasury.

1840, Nemesis overtook Naunihal Singh immediately after the death of his father. While returning from the funeral obsequies of Kharak Singh, he received fatal injuries from the fall of a covered gateway.¹

4. *Postscript on Naunihal Singh*

The death of the favourite and promising grandson of Ranjit Singh is the subject of much controversial comments. Traditional accounts recorded by local historians, as for instance, by Kanahaya Lal, ascribe it to the curse of the widows of Kharak Singh, who burnt themselves on the funeral pyre proclaiming that for his unfilial conduct and cruelty he would not enjoy the fruits of sovereignty.² It was also suspected that Dhian Singh had stage-managed the accident; that the heavy battlements of the northern gate of the Hazuri Bagh named the Roshni Gate which fell on Naunihal Singh and Mian Udham Singh, a nephew of Dhian Singh, was the result of foul play. Positive evidence that the fall was premeditated and the work of an assassin is lacking, but the events soon after the accident make it highly suspicious. Udham Singh was killed outright on the spot. Naunihal Singh fractured his arm and received serious injuries in the head. He was instantly removed to the palace; all entrances to the fort were sealed, and none was allowed to see him. The Dogra minister concealed the death of Naunihal Singh for 3 days till prince Sher Singh who was at Batala, and Mai Chand Kaur, Naunihal Singh's mother, who was at Fatehgarh, were farantically summoned, and arrived at Lahore on 8 November, 1840. It is also not known how long after the accident Naunihal Singh remained alive. It was, however, suspected that the human agency of Dhian Singh arranged the fall of the parapet; that the prince had sustained slight injuries and was alive;³ that all was kept ready before hand for the removal of the injured prince to the palace, where he was brutally done to death.⁴

Naunihal Singh's cremation took place on 8 November, 1840. Of his four widows, two burnt themselves on the funeral pyre.⁵ The British Government genuinely lamented the passing away of the grandfather, the father and the son, whom their Governor-General had seen in the pride of power and expectation two years ago at Lahore.⁶

¹ Clerk to Maddock, 6, 7, November, 1840-ISP (I) 23 November, 1840. Nos 71, 75.

² Kanahaya Lal, *Ranjitnāma*. Lahore, 1876, p. 386.

³ UT, IV (i) p. 71.

⁴ Smyth, p. 35-36; Steinbach, p. 25.

⁵ Clerk to Torrens, 10 November, 1840-(P) 150 : 37.

⁶ Auckland to Hobhouse, 20 November, 1840-Broughton (BM) 36474, fol. 271b.

5. Chand Kaur

Few women belonging to the family of Ranjit Singh stand out as conspicuous in Sikh history for their dauntless spirit of defiance and political courage as Chand Kaur, the widow of Kharak Singh and mother of Naunihal Singh. She claimed the throne of Lahore on her spouse's death, resisting stubbornly Sher Singh's right to sovereignty, partly on account of the latter's illegitimacy, and partly because of the fact that her manoeuvrings had won her the support of the Court nobility, the Bhā'īs and the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs. Those who openly sided with her included Bhā'īs Ram Singh and Gobind Ram, rājās Gulab Singh and Hira Singh, Jamadār Khushal Singh and the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs—Ajit Singh, Attar Singh and Lehna Singh.¹

Chand Kaur endeavoured to establish a *zenana* government in the Punjab. She secured the support of the Dogra minister Dhian Singh, who had in the interval of turmoil at Lahore (1840-42), arrogated to himself the rôle of a king-maker, vainly hoping that Chand Kaur would adopt his son, the effeminate Hira Singh, and that he would be able to subvert Ranjit Singh's dynasty in the Punjab.² But the widow of Kharak Singh outwitted the Dogra cunning. She preferred her claims as superior to that of the illegitimate Sher Singh. She spurned Dhian Singh's suggestion, and declared that Naunihal Singh's widow was pregnant, and that she could assume forthwith the guardianship of the unborn legal claimant to Ranjit Singh's throne.³ A valiant daughter of the Kanahayās, absolutely unlettered and without any knowledge of the political game, she had heard that a woman ruled in England. "Why should I not do as the Queen Victoria does in England?" she declared to an astounded Darbār.⁴ After having cast aside her veil and the seclusion of the *zenana*, she came out in the Darbār unveiled, wore a turban, donned male attire, and rode an elephant to inspect the parade of the army contingents assembled at Lahore. Like a Sardar she showed her willingness to receive the English *Sahibs* as did Begum Samru.⁵

The Dogra brothers having been foiled in their attempts by the courage and cunning of Chand Kaur, offered a compromise to regulate State affairs, and Chand Kaur became regent, Sher Singh having been allowed to become the

1 Murray, ii, p. 223-25 ; see also Latif, p. 501 ff. ; Smyth, p. 67-69 etc.

2 Clerk to Government, 8 November, 1840-ISP (I) 23 November, 1840. No. 79.

3 See generally, Clerk's despatches-11, 14 and 17 November, 1840-ISP (I) 23 November and 7 December, 1840. Nos. 81, 115 and 117. For local histories, *vide*, UT, IV (i) ; Kanahaya Lal, p. 388 ; *Tawārīkh-i-Gurū Khālṣa*, iii, p. 651 and others.

4 Auckland to Hobhouse, 5 December, 1840-Broughton (BM) 36474, fol. 391b.

5 Clerk to Governor-General(Confidential) 7 December, 1840-Broughton(BM), *op cit*.

Maharaja and Dhian Singh the principal minister of the State. Being unreconciled with her position, in the middle of May 1841, Chand Kaur sent Sardar Ajit Singh Sindhiānwālā as her emissary to Calcutta to plead her case to the Governor-General;¹ she was even willing to offer to the British a portion of the Kingdom, should they establish her as a full sovereign of the Punjab.² To the general repugnance of her enemies at the Darbār, who asserted that the Sikhs would not be ruled by a woman, she rejoined vigorously: "England is ruled by a queen; why should it be a disgrace to the Punjab to be governed by a rānī?"³

But the regency of Chand Kaur and her pretensions to royalty were short-lived. The triumvirate failed to work because of the machinations of the Dogra brothers—Dhian Singh, Suchet Singh and Gulab Singh, the desertion of the influential Bhā'īs, and Sher Singh's overtures to the British Government in which he was prepared to barter half of the Punjab for being acknowledged by them as the rightful sovereign of the State.⁴ Chand Kaur had only the support of the discredited Sindhiānwālā Chiefs. Amidst the covert but apparent desire of the Jammu rājās for secession from the State of Lahore, the clamour of the republican Army to install Sher Singh as the Maharaja, and the British Government's unwillingness to support either party, Chand Kaur accepted defeat. She was pensioned off by the Army and her Sindhiānwālā supporters fled across the Sutlej on Sher Singh's formal accession to the throne in 1841. She retired gracefully to the segregation of the royal palace nursing her wounded pride. She had accepted a *jāgīr* with an annual revenue of 9,00,000 rupees which was to be managed by rājā Gulab Singh and the disgraceful condition that she would live a faithful widow and would not consider remarriage with Sher Singh by the *Karewā* at any time.⁵

The gruesome murder of the widow of Kharak Singh took place in June 1842. It is doubtful whether she consented to become Sher Singh's mistress and, for a while, she remained in the palace, and Sher Singh cherished the fond hope that she would marry him by the *Karewā*. But Chand Kaur resisted and hinted at his illegitimate origin, and that she was the offspring of a noble lineage and the dowager queen. But, perhaps, the real cause of her murder might be ascribed to her unsuccessful bid for the throne, a few months earlier. In July 1841, Naunihal Singh's pregnant widow, Sahib Kaur Gilwālī delivered a still-born son, but it was suspected that

¹ Murray, ii, p. 225 f.n.

² Clerk to Government, 7 May, 1841-(P) 151 : 53 ; Government to Clerk, 17 May 1841-(P) 128 : II/82.

³ Murray, ii, p. 225 f.n.

⁴ (EP) PRO 30/12 II (i) ; also Clerk to Maddock, 9 February and 14 March, 1841-(P) 151 : 27, 36.

⁵ Smyth, p. 59 ff.

Sher Singh had violated the widow and had caused an abortion¹ to save himself from being confronted by Chand Kaur with a rival to the throne. Moreover, the continuous intrigues of Chand Kaur with the Army, the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs and her overtures to the British had convinced Sher Singh that she constituted a danger to his security as a sovereign.

Therefore, instigated by Dhian Singh, Sher Singh now decided to destroy her. Meanwhile rājā Gulab Singh, who was the manager of her estates, warned her that the Maharaja intended to have her assassinated. She, therefore, left the royal palace, and retired to the *haveli* of Naunihal Singh within the four walls of the city. Sher Singh and Dhian Singh, however, hatched the conspiracy and having bribed the maids of Chand Kaur had her murdered in cold blood.² After her death, Gulab Singh quietly usurped her estates with the connivance of the Maharaja.

6. Sher Singh

Mehtab Kaur of the Kanahayā Misal, Ranjit Singh's first wife was barren but her mother rānī Sada Kaur, desirous of gaining political influence over the youthful Maharaja, produced in the year 1807 male twins—later named Tara Singh and Sher Singh, reportedly born at Batala to her daughter. Contemporary accounts based on local tradition or mere hearsay describes Mehtab Kaur of dissolute character : that Sher Singh was reportedly the son of a chintz-weaver (*chimba*) and Tara Singh that of a washerman (*dhobi*) ; and that the dexterous and artful mother-in-law of Ranjit Singh, after a fake pregnancy declared that both were delivered of her daughter.³ Be that as it may, the Maharaja never fully recognised them as his legitimate offspring.

Tara Singh proved to be of no account. He remained an unknown historical figure, uniformly neglected and lived in retirement at Dasuah on a small *jāgīr* and

¹ UT, IV (ii), p. 19-20 : Bhai Kahn Singh, the *Jangnāma'i Lāhore*, (PSA), fol. 46.

² For details of the murder of Mā'i Chand Kaur, *vide* generally, Clerk to Government, 15 June, 1842 : Governor-General to Secret Committee, 6 August, 1842 (No. 28), BSL(I), para 9. Various accounts of the assassination of Chand Kaur are available. The official Lahore Diarist (UT, IV(ii), p. 35-36, records that she was assassinated on 9 June, 1842. The perfidious maids first poisoned her, and when she became unconscious, broke her head with stones. Murray, (ii p 232) on the other hand, asserts that she was found dead in her bed with a fractured skull, and that her maid-servants had beaten her with their slippers and that she died three days later. Smyth (*Secret History of the Lahore Darbar*, p. 68) mentions that Sher Singh had promised a *jāgīr* of 5,000 rupees to each of the slave girls of Chand Kaur to destroy their mistress, and that they killed her by dashing out her brains with a heavy stone while they were engaged in dressing her hair.

³ See generally, Prinsep, p. 50 ; Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 9 ; Osborne, p. 26 ; Murray, ii, ff. ; Cunningham, p. 26, and others.

the bounties of his brother Sher Singh. He died in September 1859. Sher Singh, although disowned and frowned upon, grew up an intelligent prince and a good soldier, popular with the army, but distrusted by the Maharaja.¹ In 1812, he had been adopted by *rānī* Sada Kaur. In 1820, in order to usurp the Kanahayā possessions on the plea of providing maintenance to Sher Singh, the Maharaja diplomatically recognised him as his son with a liberal addition to his estates. From that date onwards, Sher Singh was the recipient of princely honours and civil and military assignments. The rare privilege of sitting on a chair in the Darbār along with the heir-apparent Kharak Singh and the favourite Hira Singh was also bestowed upon him.²

Sher Singh was a handsome and a comely soldier though sottish and without principles.³ His abandonment to voluptuous pastimes and devotion to manly sports of hunting and hawking had won him popularity at the Court,⁴ but the stigma of illegitimacy marred his political ambition which amounted to be a sovereign of Punjab. Although dissipated and a man of irresolute temperament and wavering loyalties, by all accounts, he is described as a superior person in every respect to Kharak Singh, the heir-apparent.

The death of Kharak Singh and that of Naunihal Singh in November 1840, turned the wheels of fortune in his favour ; but his claims to sovereignty were challenged by Kharak Singh's widow Chand Kaur, who had assumed power with the support of the *Sindhiānwālā* faction. Dhian Singh, however, declared for Sher Singh, but the intercession of the *Bhā'īs* produced a compromise and he agreed to share power as the Maharaja with Chand Kaur as regent and Dhian Singh as the principal minister.⁵ The triumvirate government lasted a few months. Sher Singh remained subservient to the all powerful minister Dhian Singh, who kept him in mental thralldom ; he won the enmity of the *Sindhiānwālā* royal collaterals, and the Army having proclaimed him as successor to Ranjit Singh in

¹ British records deal fully with the political career of Maharaja Sher Singh—see generally, Clerk's despatches to Government, 4 March 1841-ISP(I) 20 March, 1841, No. 28 and of 15 June etc. *Vide.* also *Auckland Papers*—Broughton (BM) 36474 fol. 454 ff ; and *Secret Letters*, particularly of 6 August 1842, No. 28-BISL (I). For Local accounts, see Muhammad Naqi's *Shersinghnāma* (BM), Or 1780 ; Ethe(I) No. 505, which deals fully with the political events of his reign and the '*Umdat-ut-Tawārīkh*, IV(iii). Amongst the contemporary accounts with useful information, are those of Carmichael Smyth, Macgregor, Murray, and Honigberger's besides others.

² Osborne, p. 64.

³ Auckland—14 July, 1839—Broughton (BM) 36474, fol. 150a.

⁴ *Shersinghnāma*, fol. 14a sq.

⁵ Clerk to Government, 8, 11, 14 and 17 November, 1840-ISP(I) 23 November, 1840 No. 79, 81 ; 7 December, 1840. No. 115 and 117.

January 1841, dismally found that as an instrument to carry out its behests he was more than useless.¹ Gradually, the Army which had enthroned him, also became his master. In its first republican upsurge, it plundered the houses of several Chiefs, dismissed all foreigners from State service, and declared its determination to punish those who sought foreign interference.² Sher Singh suspected Dhian Singh of ambitious and dangerous views and capable of swaying the army against him. He distributed 80,00,000 rupees as arrears of pay and bounties to the soldiery in order to induce the *Khālsa* to destroy Dogra influence at the Court. He counteracted Chand Kaur's offer to the British Government to share half of the Punjab with them,³ by a positive overture—the surrender of all Cis-Sutlej possessions of the Lahore Government and 40,00,000 rupees for setting him up as an independent sovereign of the Punjab.⁴

Shorn of political tact and acumen, Sher Singh fought his battles alone.⁵ Soon afterwards, the Army pensioned off the regent and drove her Sindhiānwālā supporters across the Sutlej. It proclaimed Sher Singh as the Maharaja and Dhian Singh as his minister.⁶ By this time, it appears, that series of compromises had left him with no will of his own. He had submitted to the arrogance of Chand Kaur, whom he fondly condescended to win over as a royal bedmate by an offer of *Karewā* marriage; chagrined against the overbearing Dogra influence at the Court, he complained to the Army of the nefarious activities of Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh; he had made an attempt to win over the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs, who had returned to Lahore, and he had incited the Army to wipe out both the Dogra and the Sindhiānwālā factions. Unstable in mind and character, Sher Singh failed to weather the political storm around the throne of Ranjit Singh. Court intrigues, the stigma of his illegitimacy, and a constant threat to his life, heightened his perplexity to find a balance between the antagonistically arrayed political factions and a resurgent republican Army, which had set him as a successor to

¹ Clerk's Reports (Confidential) to Lord Auckland, 2 January, 1841-Broughton (BM), *op. cit.* fol. 455b; and that of 29 July, 1841-(EP) PRO 30/12 Part II (i).

² Clerk to Government, 25, 26, 27 January, 1841 ISP(I) 8 February, 1841, Nos. 87, 90 and 93.

³ Clerk's Report, 29 July, 1841, *ut supra*.

⁴ Secretary's notes (preceding Government's Instructions to Clerk, dated 29 March, 1841)-(EP) PRO 30/12 II (i).

⁵ British records deal fully with the unstable political career of Maharaja Sher Singh. See generally, Auckland to Hobhouse, 15 February, 1841-Broughton (BM) 36474, fol. 454 ff.; Clerk's despatches to Government, 4 March, 1841, 15 June, 1842-ISP (I) 29 March, 1841, No. 28 and 15 June, 1842 etc.; Governor-General to Secret Committee, 19 February, 22 March and 21 April, 1842-BISL(I) etc.

⁶ Clerk to Government, 25 January, 1841-ISP(I) 8 February, 1841. No. 87.

the great Maharaja. Failing to obtain his political objectives, he aligned with all and sundry but trusted none. In desperation, he was willing to surrender to the British part of his kingdom for restoring his authority as a sovereign in 1842 ; he signally failed to take possession of Jalalabad which the British offered to the Sikhs on their dismal evacuation of Afghanistan.¹ As a sovereign of the Sikhs he maintained a precarious position between the struggle of Court factions and the Army, when on 15 September, 1843, the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs murdered him and the minister Dhian Singh in cold blood.²

7. Peshawara Singh and others

Two other reputed sons of the Maharaja were born to rānī Daya Kaur, one of the widows of Sahib Singh Bhangī of Gujrat whom he had married by the *karewā* ceremony. They were named Kashmira Singh born in 1819 and Peshawara Singh born in 1821 at Sialkot. The Maharaja acknowledged them by assigning to them a *jāgīr* at Sialkot amounting to 50,000 rupees annually. The second Bhangī widow, Ratan Kaur also presented to the Maharaja a son born in 1819 under the name of Multana Singh. The Maharaja also acknowledged him by assigning to him a *jāgīr* worth 20,000 rupees at Ajnala. According to various authorities, Kashmira Singh was the offspring of a Rajput of Jammu, Peshawara Singh that of a petty grocer of Lahore, and Multana Singh was reported to have been purchased from a Muhammadan slave-girl by rānī Rattan Kaur.³ Except for receiving a *de jure* recognition from Ranjit Singh, they were brought up by their mothers and played insignificant rôle in the history of the Sikhs.

Multana Singh died in 1846 quite an unknown figure. After Sher Singh's assassination in 1843, when the Army had proclaimed minor Dalip Singh as the Maharaja, both Peshawara Singh and Kashmira Singh revolted at Sialkot, and claimed the throne. The town was besieged by Lahore troops and the pretenders submitted, but were finally pardoned.⁴ In March 1845, at Gulab Singh's instigation, Peshawara Singh revolted again. A Sikh force again invested Sialkot and compelled him to flee northwards.⁵ He raised an insurrection in the hills, and

¹ Clerk to Maddock, 27 April, 1842-ISP(I), June, 1842, No 25 ; also *ibid.* 16 and 26 May, 1842, *op. cit.* Governor-General to Secret Committee, 17 May, 1842-BISL(I), No. 10.

² Richmond to Government, 17, 18 September, 1843-ISP(I), 23 March, 1844, Nos. 461 and 463. Contemporary accounts of the foul play leading to the assassinations are amply given by the Lahore Diarist-UT, IV (iii) p. 27 sq. ; Naqi's *Shersinghnāma*, fol 40 ff ; Honigberger, i, p. 107 sq. ; Macgregor, ii, p. 15 ff ; and Carmichael Smyth, p. 75 ff and others.

³ Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 22 ff.

⁴ *Punjab Intelligence*-ISP(I) 18 May, 1844 No. 19.

⁵ Broadfoot to Government, 24 May, 1845-ISP(I) 20 June, 1845. No. 64.

in July he captured Attock, proclaimed himself a sovereign of the Sikhs, and made an offer of Peshawar to the Afghans for help in fighting the republican army.¹

From Attock Peshawara Singh carried on negotiations with Dost Muhammad Khan which extremely annoyed the army *pañchāyats*; and also the British were loath to see the deposition of Dalip Singh recently recognised by them and the surrender of Peshawar, a town of vital political and military importance to the Afghans. Nothing, however, came out of Peshawara Singh's negotiations with the Amir of Afghanistan. Chattar Singh, the governor of Hazara, was ordered by the Darbār to reduce the pretender to submission. After a nominal resistance, Peshawara Singh surrendered on a promise of personal safety.² While being conveyed to Lahore, he was murdered at the orders of the newly appointed Vazier Jawahir Singh, the debauched brother of rānī Jindan.³

8. Rānī Jindan

(i) *Early life*

Of all the accepted wives of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, only rānī Jindan⁴ was destined to play an important rôle in Sikh history. Her early history remains obscure and most of the contemporary writers describe her a secondary wife or concubine of Ranjit Singh—an assertion fully supported by the fact that the four principal wives of the Maharaja had burnt themselves on the funeral pyre at his last obsequies in June, 1839. That she must be a person of no consequence is substantiated by the fact that till 1841, both the official Lahore Diarist, Sohan Lai Suri, and the British records take no notice of her and that of her minor son Dalip Singh. The Lahore Diarist merely records the birth a son to her on 6 September, 1838. A *munshī*, he observes, brought from nowhere, the blessed tidings to the ailing Maharaja and was dismissed with a customary gift of a few

¹ *Ibid.* 26 July, 1845-ISP(I) 15 August, 1845. No. 56.

² Broadfoot to Government, 8 September. 1845-ISP(I) 26 December, 1845. No. 96.

³ *Ibid.* 18 September, 1845-ISP(I) *op. cit.* No. 106. The assassination of Peshawara Singh proved fatal to the impetuous and arrogant Vazier. The army *pañchāyats* met soon after, and condemned Jawahar Singh to death. He was executed by a firing squad after the pronouncement of the judgment by the Council of the *Khalsa*. *Ibid.* 26 September, 1845, *op. cit.* No. 115.

⁴ *Authorities*: UT, III, Lahore, 1885-89. Bute Shah-the *Tawārīkh-i-Punjab* (BM), Or. 1623; Mufti-*Ibratnāma* (I, No. 504); Hasrat—*Anglo-Sikh Relations*, Hoshiarpur, 1968, p. 242-3, 242-6, 257-8 etc.; Smyth, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, London, 1847, p. 99 ff; Griffin—*Ranjit Singh*, Delhi, 1957, p. 109 sq. etc. British records, particularly the despatches of Major Broadfoot-ISP(I) and the *Ellenborough Papers*, PRO 30/12(27/7) give a good deal of information on the political life of rānī Jindan.

gold ornaments, fruits and vegetables placed at the head of the messenger.¹ He adds : "The horoscope of the *ṣahibzāda* showed the presence of the zodiacal signs of Aquarius and Pisces. Therefore, it has not been written. Any intelligent man could easily comprehend the meanings thereof."²

Accounts of the early life of Jindan are uniformly so sordid and savoury as to belie their credence. But these are the only available. Carmichael Smyth³ has recorded two similar versions from local chronicles. According to him, she was the daughter of one Munna Singh, a Jat of Aulack caste from Gujranwala, who held the humble position of a royal dog-keeper, and a jester or buffoon combined at the Court. In the latter capacity he entertained the Maharaja and the Court with his witless ribaldry with considerable impunity and importunity. When allowed to entertain the Maharaja in the *ranīwās*, he persistently sang the praises of his daughter Chanda, a divine damsel of superb beauty, and worthy of royal attentions. Munna Singh's eulogies of Chanda and how she would energise the fast-waning manhood of the Maharaja so amply tickled the vanity of Ranjit Singh that he had her brought to Lahore. A 9 year old girl of slattern appearance arrived in the Musaman Burj of the royal palace, and the incensed Maharaja assigned her to the miscellanea of his female train.

According to the same account, Chanda grew up in an imodest and loose atmosphere of the camp menials and sycophants. She reached her puberty under the care of Jawahir Mal, a rich banker of Amritsar, with a paltry allowance of 45 rupees a month assigned to her. Soon the guardian represented to the Maharaja to be relieved of his odious charge on account of her loose and immoral conduct, and the young girl was brought to the royal *zenana* to amuse the Maharaja and "enliven the night scenes in the palace."⁴

This account of the early life of Jindan may be regarded as a *scandalum magnatum* by "the confirmed scandal-monger and a scalawag"—Carmichael Smyth, who in his "infamous book"⁵ thrives on profuse exercises of vilification. According to this "authentic account," whatever its worth, the Maharaja ordered that Chanda should be retained in the *zenana* on a stipend of two rupees per diem ; but it is certain, that Ranjit Singh never took any notice of the girl. In the year 1834, the Maharaja had a favourite in one of the *behishtīs* (water carriers) attached to his person named Gullu, a young and forward Muhammadan, who had been placed

¹ UT, III (v), p. 1.

² *Ibid.*

³ *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, London, 1847, p. 91-97.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 94.

⁵ Dalhousie to Hobhouse (Private) 25 May, 1849—Broughton(BM) 36476.

by the Maharaja in charge of young Hira Singh. Gullu was the principal favourite of Ranjit Singh and allowed to mount his favourite saddle-horses and to ride close to and in front of him. He had also free access to the royal *zenana*, and having become acquainted with Chanda, he established a criminal familiarity with her. The alleged intimacy, the chronicle adds, became notorious not only in the palace but even in the Darbār. Ranjit Singh himself was aware of the state of affairs, but Gullu was a hot favourite of his, and no steps were taken to put a stop to the criminal intercourse. From that time, however, the Maharaja never visited the lady or allowed her to appear in his presence. When in the winter of 1836, he was told that she was in an interesting condition, he merely replied with a grim look. Gullu *behishlī* continued to be a favourite of the Maharaja till February 1837, when the birth of a son was announced to him. Then, his equanimity gave way; but soon afterwards Gullu fell ill of a disease which carried him off within a few weeks of the birth of the child.¹

A third account is furnished by Major Broadfoot, British Political Agent at the N. W. Frontier Agency.² Broadfoot maintains that during the lifetime of the paralysed Sikh ruler, Jindan never attained the position of a wife or even a concubine. She was the daughter of a *ghorcharā*, who by praising the beauty and charm of his daughter induced the Maharaja to send his sword and arrow to which she was married in 1835. He adds that at that time Ranjit Singh was worn out by debauchery and a stroke of paralysis; and when Jindan was brought to Lahore, he gave her up to rājā Suchet Singh as in charge of her establishment. A *farrāsh* (carpet-bearer) named Kesari Singh in rājā Suchet Singh's household got Jindan then a girl of fourteen or fifteen *enceinte*, and when after a few months the birth of a son was announced to the Maharaja in the Darbār, he was overjoyed and named him Dalip after a saint of Thanisar, who had prophesied that under a leader so named the Sikh religion and rule would become universal. From that time onwards, Jindan and her son lived unnoticed by the Maharaja and the people under the care of the Dogra minister Dhian Singh.³

(ii) *Jindan becomes regent*

Thus neglected, Jindan the imputed wife or concubine of Ranjit Singh and her son, remained in obscurity at Jammu till 1841, when during the reign of Sher Singh, Dhian Singh fell out with the Maharaja and the Jammu brothers in order to stabilize their position and power around the throne at Lahore, brought to the notice of the army *pañchāyats* the existence of Dalip Singh. Soon Dhian

¹ Smyth, *op. cit.* p. 95 ff. See also Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 109 ff.

² Broadfoot to Government, 27 December, 1844-ISP(1) 4 April, 1845. No. 35.

³ *Ibid.*

Singh suggested to Maharaja Sher Singh to recognise minor Dalip Singh as the legitimate child of Ranjit Singh;¹ and the young prince was brought to Lahore in August 1843, on the plea, that his mother was ill at Lahore, and both the Dogras and the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs conspired to find out means to replace Sher Singh with Dalip Singh.

In September 1843, however, both Sher Singh and Dhian Singh were assassinated; and rājā Hira Singh with the support of the Army and the Chiefs wiped out the Sindhiānwālā faction. Shortly afterwards, Hira Singh captured the fort on 16 September, 1843, and the Army proclaimed minor prince Dalip Singh as the new sovereign of the State.² Hira Singh was appointed the Vazier.

The political career of Jindan already described in some detail by the persent author elsewhere,³ may well be recapitulated here. The murder of Hira Singh and the eclipse of the Jalla regime on 21 December, 1844 brought about the ascendancy of rānī Jindan. She proved to be a women of determination and courage. The position of minor Dalip Singh was threatened by Peshawara Singh and to safeguard the interests of her son, rānī Jindan came out of the *zenana*, cast off her veil, proclaimed herself as the regent and assumed all powers of the government in the name of her son. The regimental committees acquiesced, for, as the widow of Ranjit Singh she could offer a symbol of the sovereignty of the *Khālsa*, and sway both the army and the people. Jindan possessed acumen and courage of the highest quality. She would ride a horse, inspect the *Khālsa* army parades and address the common soldiers. She would hold a regular *Darbār* like a monarch and transact all public business. She reconstituted the Supreme Council of the army *pañchāyats* by giving representation to the chief Sardars—thus effecting a temporary compromise between the republican army and the civil government.⁴

(iii) *Political parties*

As a regent of the State of Lahore, rānī Jindan had a difficult time. Although both the Dogra and the Sindhiānwālā factions had become extinct, Gulab Singh, the rājā of Jammu still possessed considerable political influence on the policy of the State. He felt secure in the hills biding his time. Suchet Singh was still alive, suffering from an infirmity and almost inarticulate and dumb, yet immersed in debaucheries and fomenting intrigue. The Dogras vainly tried to

¹ Clerk to Maddock, 21 June, 1841 (P) 152:5.

² UT, IV (iii), p. 43 ff.; Richmond to Government, 20 September, 1843-ISP (I), 23 March, 1844. No. 477.

³ *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p. 242 ff.; 245-6, 257-8, 299-300, 314-15, and 356-8.

⁴ See generally, Broadfoot to Ellenborough, 17 January, 1845-(EP) PRO 30/12(21/7).

coalesce with Lehna Singh Majithiā, whose appointment as the Vazier was in the offing. Lehna Singh Majithiā was a Sardar of timorous and uncertain disposition without the experience or wisdom to conduct the business of the State.

Jindan relied more on his brother Jawahir Singh, a drunken debauch, and Misser Lal Singh, her alleged paramour. Her other close advisers were Bhā'ī Ram Singh, Dīwān Dina Nath, Sardar Lehna Singh Majithiā, Sardar Sham Singh Attārīwālā, and a few generals of the army viz., Mehtab Singh, Mewa Singh Majithiā, and Lal Singh Morānwālā. Opposed to the Mahārānī's faction and her regency was the crafty and powerful Gulab Singh, whose credit at the Lahore Darbār had sunk low since the assassination of his brother Dhian Singh. In March 1844, Hira Singh was killed and in the May of the same year, also Suchet Singh. Gulab Singh did not get disheartened; he posed as a willing and subservient vassal of the State of Lahore, usurped the revenues of 22 hill districts, quietly absorbed 11 into his own dominions,¹ and ambitiously looked forward to seizing the province of Kashmir. At the Darbār his henchmen flouted the policy of the regency and sowed seeds of rift and discord. He looked forward to the dissolution of the kingdom of Ranjit Singh, a bifurcation of the hills and the plains, and the ultimate possession of the Punjab. He made vain efforts to come to terms with the British Government for being recognised as an independent sovereign of the hills, and having failed to obtain British support in his ambitious designs,² he continued to intrigue against the rānī and the Lahore Government.

(iv) Jindan's policy

Jindan's policy as the Regent of the State was directed by self-interest. She resolutely met intrigue with counter-intrigue. She persuaded the Council and the army *pañchāyats* to take notice of the perfidious conduct of Gulab Singh, his incitement of Peshwara Singh to revolt, his numerous usurpations, and his encouragement of the Muhammadan hill states bordering Kashmir to raise a *jihad* against the infidel Sikhs.³ The army *pañchāyats* met in Council and declared Gulab Singh as a traitor to the State. An army 35,000 strong marched to Jammu, and brought to Lahore the Dogra Chief in chains to answer charges of sedition and disloyalty.⁴ Gulab Singh escaped utter annihilation by posing servility and humility, agreeing to pay a fine of 65,00,000 rupees and by keeping one of his sons as a hostage at the Lahore Darbār.⁵

¹ Richmond's *Memoir of Jammu Rājās* (December, 1843)-(EP)PRO 30/12-60.

² Richmond to Government, 3 June, 1844-ISP(I) 13 July, 1844. No. 126; Government to Richmond, 15 June, 1844-ISP(I) 13 July, 1844. No. 127.

³ *Ibid.* 30 October, 1844-ISP(I) 3 November, 1844. No. 108.

⁴ Hardinge to Ellenborough, 8 March, 1845-(EP) PRO 30/12(21/7).

⁵ Broadfoot to Government, 5 May, 1845-(P) 165 : 31; UT, IV (iii), p. 72 ff.

At the same time, Jindan sent Bhā'ī Ram Singh, Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din and Dīwan Dina Nath to Ludhiana to solicit the aid of British Government, pointing out that the lives of both the Maharaja and the regent were in jeopardy from the republican army and the Sikh soldiery. An offer of a subsidy or tribute was made, and the *subāh* of Kashmir or the territory belonging to the State of Lahore south of the river Sutlej could be surrendered to the British, and the permanent stationing of a British force at Lahore could be agreed upon in lieu of British assistance.¹

Jindan, obviously could cope with the rising temper of the republican army against the British, so garrulously generated by her sodden and dissipated brother Jawahir Singh, whom she had so adroitly managed to appoint as the Vazier of the State on 14 May, 1845.² Amidst the storm and turbulence of the time's political unstablity and Court intrigues, she courageously managed to weather the storm. Gulab Singh's pride had been humbled, the Muhammadan revolt in Muzzafarabad quelled, and provincial satraps subjected to the authority of the Regent. Gulab Singh was still popular with a section of the army, but hated and feared by most of the powerful Sardars at the Court.

Annulment of the extraordinarily vexatious financial and administrative measures of the hated Jalla regime was welcomed by the Sardars and the people. The old Jāgirdārī system was allowed to continue ; the resumed Jāgīrs, farms and monopolies were restored, and rates of taxation lowered ; and the pay of the Khālsa soldiery increased.³ The hazardous measures to reform the army were ameliorative to the common soldiery of the Khālsa, and inculcated in them a sense of respect and obedience towards the regent and the Council. And although amidst the unabated political turbulence the finances of the State sharply dwindled, the rānī and her Council curbed all disruptive tendencies and political bickerings. The regent responded to the republican urge of the Khālsa Army, and with determination directed its fierce energies against the enemies of the State and its sovereign.

Thus since her assumption of power in September 1843, the Dogra and the Sindhiānwālā factions destroyed each other. Suchet Singh was done away with, when he revolted in March 1844,⁴ and Attar Singh Sindhiānwālā slain in action two months later.⁵ The ambitions of the pretender Peshawara Singh having been curbed once in March 1843, were finally extinguished by his murder in September 1845.

¹ Broadfoot to Government, 7 January, 1845-(P) 164 : 31.

² UT, IV(iii), p. 77.

³ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 6 November 1845-BISL(I).

⁴ Richmond to Government, 29 March, 1844-(P) 159 : 43.

⁵ UT, IV(iii), p. 56 ; Richmond to Government, 10 May, 1844-(P) 150 : 71.

The Muzaffrabad insurrection was suppressed in November 1844.¹ The overbearing and oppressive regime of Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla was terminated by their violent death in December 1844.² Gulab Singh was brought to obedience by the despatch of an army to Jammu in September 1845. Most of the *frangī* officers were either dismissed or asked to leave the kingdom. Jindan rode the crest of wave of public enthusiasm and anti-British feeling; she wisely did not interfere with the Khālsa Council, when her brother Jawahir Singh was called to account and executed publicly.³

(iv) *Her bad instruments*

The rānī gradually upheld the semblance of all political power in her own hands; she kept control of the army *pañchāyats*, but the instruments to execute the administrative policy were highly weak, inept and opportunists. Jawahir Singh the Vazier, was sottish, a man of violent nature and addicted to erotic orgies. He generated an anti-British feeling at the Court and his hatred of the rānī's favourite Lal Singh, made him extremely obnoxious to his sister.⁴ He was extremely unsuited to the office of *wazarat*, and in September 1845 the Council of the Khālsa charged him with the murder of Peshawara Singh, and had him executed. Two months later, the Khālsa Council nominated as Vazier Misser Lal Singh, a Brahman adventurer from Jammu, who had risen to power during the Jalla regime. He was a time-server and an opportunist, devoid of any qualities of a soldier or a statesman, and he was notorious for his open intimacy with the rānī.⁵ Another person of ill-repute, who was the confidante and counsellor of the rānī was the slave-girl Mangla, the daughter of a water-carrier and a slave-dealer Piru, who sold her for 40 rupees. In 1835, she was brought to Lahore, and Jindan employed her as a slave and confidential agent. For some time Mangla remained in attendance on her as the active and willing minister of her pleasures. In the *zenana* her natural gift for intrigue and ambition blossomed forth. Soon after the regency of Jindan, she became the mistress of Jawahir Singh and the sole manager and controller of the royal *Toshakhāna*. "Thus the slave girl Mangla rose to be one of the most considerable person," observes Smyth, "with wealth and power almost unlimited. She had both the Ranee Chanda and Rajah Lall Singh entirely at her command, and thus through them she moved the wheels of the Government as

¹ Broadfoot to Government, 7 December, 1844-(P) 164 : 12.

² *Ibid.* 27 December, 1844-(P) 164 : 24 ; UT, IV(iii), p. 64-67.

³ UT, IV(iii), p. 85 ; Broadfoot to Government, 26 September, 1845-(P) 167 : 36.

⁴ Broadfoot to the Secretary to Governor-General (Private) 9 September 1845—(EP) PRO 30/12 (21/7).

⁵ Broadfoot to Government, 26 September, 1845-ISP (I) 20 December, 1845. No. 115.

best suited her own views and interests.”¹ She was removed from the palace and was imprisoned after the execution of Jawahir Singh by the army *pañchāyats*.

Misser Lal Singh, who rose to the fatal office of Vazier of the State of Lahore during the regime of *rānī* Jindan was her favourite and alleged paramour. He was the son of a Brahman pedlar of sundry wares named Jassa who secured a petty job under Basti Ram, the treasurer of Mahan Singh. Jassa Misser continued to be a petty *munshī* under Misser Beli Ram, the nephew of Basti Ram, who succeeded him at the *Toshakhāna*; but Dhian Singh who was an enemy of Misser Beli Ram, attached him to the cause of the Dogra faction at the Court, with a promise that he would replace Misser Beli Ram as the *darogha’i toshakhāna*. Jassa Misser, however, died in 1829, leaving his sons, Amir Chand, Bhagwan Singh and Lal Singh under the patronage and benefaction of the Dogra minister. Amir Chand became a *kardār* at the salt-mines farmed out to Dhian Singh, Bhagwan Singh a non-descript storekeeper at the *Toshakhana*, and Lal Singh was left adrift. After the assassination of Dhian Singh, Lal Singh heartily attached himself to the cause of Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla, and for his sycophancy and overt opposition to the Jammu Dogras, he was rewarded with a minor command in the army. Lal Singh was absolutely unlettered, and for utter want of principles he was justly notorious. He possessed neither any soldierly qualities nor he had any head for statescraft. He clung to the *rānī*, was fearful of the Army who had raised him to the *wazarat*, and in November, 1845, he joined in the general clamour for a war with the British, failing which, he hoped to flee across the Sutlej.²

For obvious political reasons *rānī* Jindan is very much maligned by contemporary British political authorities. She is described as profligate and promiscuous in her amours. “She has lovers and slaves,” wrote Broadfoot, “who of course bear their part.”² Hardinge reported to the Secret Committee that she was profligate, reviewed the troops unveiled, and dressed as a dancing women, which displeased the old but gratified the young. Her irregularities were so monstrously indecent that the troops once held her horse and advised her to be more chaste

¹ For an account of the life and transactions of this favourite and adviser of *rānī* Jindan, who at this time figured prominently at the Lahore Darbār, see, generally, Smyth—*History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, p. 160-66; and Broadfoot's despatches—27 December, 1844, 22 January, 1845-(P) 164 : 40; 23 February, 1845-(P) 165 : 1; 23 February, 1845-(P) 165 : 6; 15 and 26 September, 1845-(P) 167 : 28, 36.

² For the political career of Lal Singh, see generally, Carmichael Smyth-p. 155 160; Cunningham-p. 240 ff and 379; *Lahore News Letters*, 8 November and 6 December, 1845-(PP) XXXI, 1846; and Broadfoot's despatches to Government, 23 and 28 February, 1845-(P) 165 : 1, 6 etc.

³ Broadfoot to Ellenborough (Private), 17 January, 1845-(EP) PRO 30/12 (21/7).

or they would no longer style her the mother of all Sikhs.¹ Further, observes Hardinge, she sent gifts to courtezans. Her days were spent in religious offices, her nights in grossest debauchery. With considerable spirit she had not the decency to veil her continence. The soldiery last year threatened to cut off her nose as a woman of bad morals, and this was the regent of the largest Hindu dynasty which remained in India.² All this, however, appears to be an exercise in vilification. At the same time, Hardinge admits that she showed considerable energy and spirit, led a regular life, and devoted herself fully to the state affairs.³

9. *Postscript on Jindan*

Rānī Jindan's political career before and after the Anglo-Sikh Wars, narrated by the present writer elsewhere,⁴ may well be summarized here. The allegation so much emphasised by all British functionaries at the N. W. Frontier, and given popular currency by poets and bards,⁵ that Jindan becoming desperate at the rising temper of the Khālsa Army brought it on in a headlong collision with the British military power for its complete annihilation, appears to be a half-truth. Nor can the widow of Ranjit Singh be accused of lack of valour; though it might be said that after raising the storm, she was powerless to direct or allay it. She surrendered all political power soon after the first Sikh War, and the treaty of Bhyrowal (*Art. 10*) fixed an annuity of 1,50,000 rupees for her maintenance, but she was still suspected of wielding considerable political influence. In August 1847, she was falsely implicated in what is known as the Preyma Plot,⁶ and was unceremoniously removed from Lahore to Sheikhpura, and her allowance reduced to 48,000 rupees per annum. In May 1848, fearing that she might raise a general revolt in the Punjab, she was whisked away by a stratagem from Sheikhpura to Benares and placed under strict surveillance and her allowance further reduced to 12,000 rupees per annum.⁷ During the Punjab Campaign, Major Macgregor, in attendance on her reported from Benares that she was in correspondence both with Dīwān Mulraj and insurgent Sher Singh. It was then decided to remove her

¹ Hardinge to Ellenborough (Private), 23 October, 1845-(EP) PRO *op. cit.*

² Hardinge to Hobhouse (Private) 19 September, 1845-Broughton (BM) 35475, fol. 25a.

³ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 6 November, 1845-BISL(I).

⁴ *Vide. Anglo-Sikh Relations, A Reappraisal of the Rise and fall of the Sikhs*, Hoshiarpur, 1958. pp. 257-8, 229-300, 314-15, and 356-8 etc.; and *History of Nepal-As told by Its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers*, Hoshiarpur, 1970, p. 323-24, and 341-42.

⁵ See for instance, Kobli and Seva Singh (Ed.) *Var Shāh Muḥammad: Jung Hind Punjab*, Ludhiana, 1957.

⁶ (PP) XLI, 1847. No. 9-Enclosures 3-6.

⁷ Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 2 June, 1848-Broughton (BM) fol. 91-94b.

under strict guard to the fortress of Chunar. It was during her transfer to Chunar, that she made good her escape from British captivity, in what manner it could never be fully ascertained.

The valiant widow of Ranjit Singh appeared at Kathmandu late in April 1849. The *Nepal Residency Records* inform us that she had escaped from Chunar disguised as a *golī* or *kāñchī* (slave-girl) with the connivance of her guards.¹ And yet, although her presence in Nepal was considered politically irksome, Maharaja Jung Bahadur, the Prime Minister of Nepal, gave her political asylum on account of the respect to the memory of Maharaja Ranjit Singh,² with whom the Nepalese Government had retained amicable relations. A small house on the bank of the Bagmati river was assigned to her with an adequate allowance for her maintenance.

Jindan remained in Nepal till 1860. The *Nepal Residency Papers* refer to her 12 years' unhappy sojourn at Kathmandu within the precincts of Jung Bahadur's huge and scrawling mansion at Thapathali. Contrary to the customary Nepalese traditions of hospitality, Jung Bahadur desired her undecorous public appearance in the Darbār to acknowledge Nepalese generosity which she contemptuously refused. Moreover, the pressure of British functionaries at the Kathmandu Residency, who still maintained the fiction of her being able to organise political disaffection in the Punjab from across the Himalayan Kingdom, antagonised the Nepal Darbār, and most humiliating restrictions were placed on her, and baseless charges of poffigacy and misconduct were levelled against her. The bold and imperious *rānī* of Lahore, however, did not brook these indignities and insults with equanimity. She blew hot and cold, dismissed her personal staff foisted upon her by the Nepalese Darbār, and told the *Rānā* tyrant of Kathmandu in the most insulting language what she thought of him. Utterly disgusted with the indignities imposed upon her by Jung Bahadur and fed up with her forlorn life at Kathmandu, she readily agreed to quit Nepal and join her son Dalip Singh, who visited India and accompanied him to England in 1861, where two years later, she died.

10. Dalip Singh

Official as well as private correspondence relative to the affairs of Maharaja Dalip Singh after his deposition has since been published.³ Besides, details of the life of the last sovereign of the Sikhs can be read more profitably in Lady Logan's frank and affectionate Memoir,⁴ and Major Evans Bell's controversial though

¹ Nicolette's *Narrative of Principal Events in Nepal* (1849), *Nepal Residency Papers* (1). See also *History of Nepal*, *op. cit.*, p. 323 sq.

² *Ibid.*

³ *History of the Freedom Movement in the Punjab*, Vol. III, (Maharaja Duleep Singh Correspondence), Patiala, 1972.

⁴ *Sir John Logan and Duleep Singh*, London, 1890.

informative work.¹ It appears that soon after his deposition, the 12 years old Maharaja was removed to Fatehgarh and put under the charge of Dr. John Login and a tutor named Walter Guise. His entourage consisted of a widow of Sher Singh, and other Indian attendants with two Englishmen, Borrow and Tommy Scott. Completely removed from his natural surroundings, cut off from his ancestral religious and cultural environments, Dalip Singh seems to have been brought up and educated as a Christian. "The little Maharaja is an engaging little fellow," observes Lord Dalhousie, "and he has quite won my heart. He appears to be happily enjoying his hawks and his fun and already very fond of Dr. Login, the officer who has charge of him."² In 1851, it was reported that the minor Sikh prince had expressed a desire to become Christian: "The pundits, he says tell him humbug; he had the Bible read to him and he believes in the *Sahib's* religion ... at present it may be represented to have been brought by tampering with the mind of a child. This is not the case—it is his own free act, and apparently his firm resolution. He will be a Christian, he says, and he will take tea with Tommy Scott, which his caste has hitherto prevented."³

The contention that the minor Dalip Singh's resolution to embrace Christianity was a deliberate act and not a fantasy of the boy, might be seriously challenged. Politically, admitted Dalhousie, they could desire nothing better, for, it would destroy his influence for ever.⁴ Brought up under the influence of Christian environments and a mode of living dominated by Dr. Login and Walter Guise, the young prince was given instruction in Christian faith for well over 2 years "without publicity or flourish, no newspaper paragraphs or articles in the *Missionary Record*".⁵ Direct encouragement of the minor Sikh prince to forsake the religion of his forefathers and two years' "patient probation" and unobtrusive instruction in the Christian faith, ultimately led to his conversion. On 3 March 1853, the young Maharaja was quietly baptised in his own house at Fatehgarh. Lord Dalhousie commented: "This is a remarkable historical incident, and if ever the finger of God wrote upon the wall, it did in the sight of this boy, and the touching of his heart."⁶ Soon afterwards, Dalip Singh was permitted to go to England and settle there.

Dalip Singh's life in England as a comfortable country squire has been described in full by Lady Login in her affectionate Memoir, but the shabby treatment meted out to him regarding his claim to his ancestral estates in the Punjab,

¹ *The Annexation of the Punjab and Maharaja Duleep Singh*, London, 1882.

² Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, 15 December, 1849-GHP.

³ *Ibid.* 3 March, 1851.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* 8 June, 1851, *op. cit.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 3 March, 1853, *op. cit.*

the payment of accumulated arrears of his annuity, and the refusal of the British authorities to allow him to return to India and settle in the Punjab, are so well narrated in his private and official correspondence,¹ and his own narrative published for private circulation.²

In 1882, Maharaja Dalip Singh under pressure of extreme financial difficulties requested the British Government to settle the accumulated arrears of his pension under the terms granted to him in 1849—at 4,00,000 rupees per annum. He also demanded the restitution of his private estates in the Punjab valued at 82,00,000 rupees.³ Both these claims were unacceptable to the British Government for various reasons. It appears that since his arrival in England he was in receipt of an annuity of £25,000. £1,05,000 had been paid to him for the purchase of an estate in England; and loans of various amounts totaling £1,40,000 @ 4½% interest had been advanced to him. He was also advanced £60,000 without interest by an Act of Parliament. Total advances of £3,05,000, it was maintained, had almost wiped out the accumulated arrears of his annuity.⁴ No positive reply to his claim to his ancestral estates was forthcoming. Later, however a sum of £50,000 was offered to him in settlement of all his claims. This was rejected by Dalip Singh.⁵

In 1882 also, Maharaja Dalip Singh had evinced a desire to return to the Punjab.⁶ The British Government categorically refused to permit him to do so, on the grounds that under *Art. 5* of the terms granted to him in 1849, the Governor-General of India could only determine the place of his residence.⁷ Two years later, however, the Home Government intimated to the Maharaja that if he were willing to reside at Oatacamand or any other place in the Madras Presidency, he could be allowed to go to India.⁸ Dalip Singh decided to defy the ban: he denounced the restriction both unjust and immoral. On 31 March 1886, he sailed for Bombay, but when on 21 April he arrived at Aden, he was arrested along with the members of his family by the orders of the Government of India under Bengal Regulation III of 1818. Indignantly he refused to return to England, demanded a full judicial investigation by the House of Lords for the curtailment of his liberty as

¹ *Maharaja Duleep Singh Correspondence, op. cit.*

² *The Maharaja Duleep Singh and the Government*, London, 1884.

³ Dalip Singh to the Queen-Lady Login's *Recollections*, p. 247 ff. For the *Statement of Ancestral Estates of Maharaja Duleep Singh, vide.*, Dalip Singh to Earl of Kimberley, 10 March, 1885—*Dalip Singh Correspondence, op. cit.*

⁴ Secretary (Political and Secret Department) to Durand, 4 November, 1885. No. 30.

⁵ Resident at Aden to Viceroy, 5 May, 1886.

⁶ *Dalip Singh Correspondence, op. cit.* p. 108 ff.

⁷ Lord Ripon to Home Government, 15 August, 1883. No. 161.

⁸ Randolph Churchill to Dalip Singh, 30 November, 1885, No. 31.

a British subject, and claimed £2,50,000 as damages. On 25 May, he renounced Christianity and re-embraced Sikhism, resigned his pension, and after 2 months detention, was permitted to leave Aden in disgust for Paris.

The ex-Maharaja of the Punjab spent the remaining few years of his life in forced exile in France and Russia. He remained in political wilderness for almost 7 years having severed all connections with the Court of St. James. His refusal to correspond with the British authorities in England, and his determination not to live any more on the charity of his oppressors, reduced him to acute straitened circumstances. Bitterness against the British, financial bankruptcy, and separation from his family almost drove him mad.¹ His visit to St. Petersburg and Moscow, and the arrival of Sikh emissaries in Europe from the Punjab, Pondicherry, Chandernagore, Calcutta and Kabul; his meeting with the Czar and other Russian dignitaries give an opportunity to the British authorities in India and England to blow up the bubble of his soliciting the support of Russia and Afghanistan to stir up revolt in the Punjab and recover his Kingdom.²

Dalip Singh died in exile, fondly cherishing this hope, in a little known hotel in Paris, on 22 October, 1893, utterly alone and far from his country, friends and relatives. "When the son and heir to Ranjit Singh died," so runs his obituary, "there was no one with him to close his eyes."³

¹ *The Tribune*, 25 October, 1893.

² *Dalip Singh Correspondence, op. cit.*, p. 378 *et seq.* substantiates the truth of this statement. He wrote to his son in England: "I am quite independent of everybody, and perfectly happy, and mean shortly to overthrow the British rule in India, to which I have dedicated the rest of my life (-to Victor Dalip Singh, 21 May, 1887).

³ *The Tribune*, *ut supra*.

CHAPTER 12

MEN AROUND THE MAHARAJA

1. Camp and Court

THE ORIENTAL PAGEANTRY, ostentation and brilliance of the Maharaja's Court has been described by many a contemporary observer. The Maharaja usually dressed in simple white, wore no ornaments but a single string of pearls round his waist and the famous *Koh-i-Nūr* diamond on his arm. He sat cross-legged on a golden chair. Prince Sher Singh, Prince Kharak Singh, and *rājā* Hira Singh were the only individuals who were privileged to sit on chairs in the *Darbār*. Golden pillars covered three parts of the hall. Rich shawl carpets, ignited with gold and silver and inset with jems covered the floor of the *Darbār*. Behind the Maharaja invariably stood the *rājā'i kalān*, Dhian Singh, his principal minister. Although himself dressed in plain clothes except on ceremonial occasions, Ranjit Singh liked to be surrounded by his ministers, courtiers and civil and military officials. They were always magnificently robed, wearing all sorts of glittering ornaments and arms. Osborne observes that the Maharaja took pride in being surrounded by good-looking people, and that few if any courts in Europe or the East could show such a fine looking set of men as the principal Sardars.¹

Henry Edward Fane who accompanied the British Commander-in-Chief to Lahore in 1837, had a glimpse of the Maharaja's magnificent Court: "We found his *darbar*, or place of assembly, erected under a canopy in front of the small house in which he was residing. The canopy is formed of beautiful Cashmere shawls, inlaid with silver, and with silver poles to support it. The floor was also covered with shawls. The dresses and jewels of the Rajah's Court were the most superb that can be conceived; the whole scene can only be compared to a gala night at the Opera. The minister's son, the reigning favourite of the day, was literally a mass of jewels; his neck, arms, and legs, were covered with laces, armlets, bangles, formed of pearls, diamonds, and rubies, one above another, so thick that it was difficult to discover any thing between them."²

The Sikh court nobility consisted of diverse elements. Although the Jat Sikh of the ruling class was the most favoured in the army and held positions of power as commander or landowner in the Kingdom, he exercised little influence

¹ *The Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, Calcutta, 1952, p. 29.

² *Five Years in India*, London, 1842, i, p. 70-71.

in the councils of the Maharaja or the administration of the State. The Sardars that adorned and added lustre to the Maharaja's Court were Sikhs, Rajputs, Muhammadans, Hindus—Khatris and Brahmans, and Europeans of various nationalities. In the Darbār rigid attention was paid to etiquette and precedence. On ceremonial and public occasions, the Sardars attended on their royal master clad in rich and costly dresses. On public occasions the display of pageantry and colour was beyond description. Murray describes the arrival of the Maharaja in Lord Auckland's Camp at Ferozepur in November 1838 : "A discharge of distant artillery announced that the Maharaja had left his tents, and in a few minutes the opposite pageant came in sight, when the scene is represented to have been beyond the power of verbal description, and surpassed in all that European imagination had conceived of even oriental luxury and splendour. Between the ranks of horsemen gorgeously arrayed, with steel casques and glittering appointments, moved in majestic order towards each other two masses of elephants, bringing in rich howdas the two great rulers in India, surrounded by their ministers and warriors. Columns after columns of troops were seen, in every variety of gay colours, covered with a profusion of ornaments, preserving a steadiness which the best European discipline could not excel, while to the east and west stretched an extensive encampment, in the centre of which were numerous tents, glittering in crimson and gold. At a viewing distance from the Sikh legions, were dense masses of spectators of the humble classes, maintaining a decorum scarcely ever shewn in the most civilised countries of Europe. No tumultuous shouts rent the air...the silent awe and breathless astonishment of the masses was occasionally broken by the licensed tongue of an Akali or a fakir. The Maharaja on a ponderous elephant, was habited, as on the day before, in dark crimson shawl-cloth tunic, trousers and turban, without any trinkets, and was thus, as well as by his flowing beard, distinguished from his richly-clad soldiers and attendants."¹

2. Conduct of business

Concentration of all authority in the sovereign rendered the conduct of all official business highly personalised. The appointment of high civil and military officials of the State, the nominations of the *Nāzims* or provincial governors of the *Subahs*, the settlements of revenue, and the audit of civil and military accounts were entirely done by the Maharaja or under his direct supervision. The working day of Ranjit Singh was, therefore, full and hummed with all sorts of activities. In the mornings and evenings, he always went out, observes a contemporary visitor, either on horseback or in a litter to take the air ; when even in ill health or even in rainy or stormy weather, he seldom denied himself the exercise. He took a hasty breakfast, and then held his Court, and sometimes on the plain under the shade of a tree or camp, which continued till noon. The whole business of the day was

¹ *History of the Punjab*, London, 1846, ii, p. 154-55.

transacted by him with rapidity and despatch during that time. When the Darbār was over, the royal sovereign took a siesta of half an hour only. Then he devotedly had the holy *Granth* read out to him for an hour and a half. After that he took the air. In these exercises, he generally employed himself in inspecting his troops or other military establishments or receiving the petitions of his people.¹

3 The Maharaja at work

The extent and scope of state business disposed off by the Maharaja in a single day was stupendous. This is exemplified by the account of the Court historian of the Lahore Darbār in the *Roznāmcha'i Maharaja Ranjit Singh* under date 14 November 1837. The Maharaja is in camp at the bank of the river Jehlum, This is the *Maghar Śankrānti* day. He distributed alms and charities, reached the bank of the river Jehlum, drank water out of it and exclaimed : 'this is the water of Kashmir.' In the Camp, the Nawab of Dera Ismail Khan presented the *nazars* and was dismissed with an entertainment allowance. Kanwar Naunihal Singh, who accompanied the Nawab, similarly offered *nazars* and was likewise dismissed with *zeafat*. Prince Sher Singh, who attended, was directed to proceed to Peshawar, and on his reluctance to do so, was severely reprimanded. The Prince agreed to carry out the royal order. Captain Wade, the British Political Agent at Ludhiana reported about the dacoities and burglaries which had taken place in the territories on the British side of the Sutlej. The *kārdars* were instantly directed to restore the cattle and property. Wade also reported that a disciple of a Sadhu had been killed by the zamindars of Virowal ; orders were issued to the *kārdar* of that place to hand over the murderer to the British Agent. Replies to the cordial letters of the Governor-General of India for an interview with the Maharaja were dictated. News from Hazara indicated that Painsa Khan had captured the fortress of Chandu and had created terror over the country of Hazara. Orders were issued to Sardar Tej Singh to proceed thither with *topkhāna* and the regiments and "crush the brain of the mischief-maker." A royal order was issued to Sardār Lehna Singh Majithiā to store up gun-powder, ammunitions and warlike materials in the fort of Fatehgarh, and report to the Maharaja. Arsala Khan presented a *nazar* of 2 horses to the Maharaja, and was assured that 1,000 horse and 4 cannons appointed by the Darbār would be sufficient to control the country. Sardar Tej Singh was issued an order to construct a new fort at Salingarh. Nur Muhammad Khan son of Sardar Sultan Muhammad Khan presented himself to the Maharaja with reports about the condition of Peshawar and that gifts from the Kandahar Chiefs received at Peshawar were on their way to Lahore.²

A similar entry in the *Roznāmcha* beginning 12 June, 1836 further illustrates the point. It is the *Śankrānti* day of the blessed month of Hār. Alms

¹ Shahamat Ali, *The Sikhs and the Afghans*, London, 1847, p. 17 ff.

² UT, III (iv), p. 439 et seq.

and charities to the value of 7,000 rupees having been distributed, the official business commenced with a letter from Lala Kishan Chand with the suggestion that Kanwar Naunihal Singh, Sardar Attar Singh Attārīwālā and Rājā Suchet Singh should remain at Shikarpur for the conduct of negotiations with the Talpurian Amirs of Sind. An elephant with a golden *howdah* was betowed upon Prince Kharak Singh. Orders were issued for the reception of the *firangī* Anton Sahib, who was asked through Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din to raise and drill a *paltan* for the Maharaja to be inspected on a fixed date. A meeting having been arranged with Anton Sahib, the Maharaja observed of kingly qualities: "Once upon a time the enemy overpowered a king. He decided to run away. While on flight his turban fell on the ground. The hostile forces busied themselves in plundering his camp. Later the said king fell upon the hostile forces with his troops. The enemy forces were ignorantly and negligently busy in plunder. He fell upon them like lightning and storm and the existence of many was consumed in the fire of mortality. This was the way in which the kings showed courage and daring." Nawab Sarfraz Khan presented himself to the Maharaja who assured him that his monthly allowance would be paid regularly from the revenues of Kashmir. A messenger arrived from Peshawar and narrated the political and financial conditions prevalent in that region. A dispute between the zamindars of Jamadār Khushal Singh is settled. General Avitabile is directed to explain the additional expenditure of 80,000 rupees in the administration of Peshawar. The *vakīl* of the Raja of Nepal arrives with presents (2 elephants, one horse, ornaments, musk and Chinese rolls) for the Maharaja, and return gifts are ordered to be despatched to Nepal. On receipt of the news from Peshawar that disturbances in that city have been quelled, a discharge of *topkhāna* is ordered. Orders are issued for the despatch of a deputy to Multan with a force of 500 horse and 36 swivels and 1 cannon to help realise the large amounts due. Prince Kharak Singh is granted an estate worth 50,000 rupees in Kashmir. An order is issued to Khālsa Nau Nihal Singh to submit to the Darbār an agreement for 4,00,000 rupees for Dera Ismail Khan and the revenues of Tank and Bannu amounting to 50,000 rupees and to submit a statement of the collections from Dera, Murath, Kullachi, Baharpur Mabrat, Isa Khel, Waziri and Kalabagh.¹

The Maharaja kept himself fully informed of what was happening in the far-flung provinces and in the neighbouring countries. The *waqā'inawīs* (news-writers) in the *subāhs* sent to the royal court news-letters at regular intervals. The system was borrowed from the Mughals and kept a check on the arbitrary powers entrusted to the provincial satraps and the oppressive tendencies of the *kardārs*. *Vakīls* of foreign states attended the Court and arrangements were made on

¹ UT, III (iii), p. 318-324.

reciprocal basis. The Darbār had news-writers in the *wilāyat* (Afghanistan),¹ and *vakils* (political agents) in Sind and in the British territory. Important Sardars on State duty out of the capital kept their own *vakils* at the Court to watch their interests. *Vakils* of the Cis-Sutlej States, Rajputana and Nepal came often on secret or complimentary missions.

4. Accounts of foreign visitors : Hugel

Foreign visitors were treated with hospitality and dignity and were provided maintenance during their stay in the Punjab. When in January 1835, Baron Von Hugel was the guest of the Maharaja, he noted how the ruler of Lahore conversed with persons of foreign language and manners. An interpreter translated the conversation into Persian, and a Court official, usually Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din, conveyed its import to his royal master in the Punjabi language. The Maharaja's queries and answers were quick and astounding. Hugel also describes in some detail the persons around the Maharaja.² On a chair near the Maharaja, sat Hira Singh, a youth of 16 years, the son of rājā Dhian Singh, the Prime Minister ; all other great chiefs, ministers and officials were seated on the ground. The Court colour of the Darbār was yellow or green ; and all the Sardars and officials were clothed in yellow garments of the wool of Kashmir, except Hira Singh, who wore a satin dress of light green and pink. There were also present, rājā Suchet Singh, the brother of Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, the lord of Jammu hills ; Khushal Singh, called Jamadār, a Brahman, formerly a cook in the Maharaja's household, converted to Sikh faith, and a house-steward in the palace - next to rājā Dhian Singh, was the most powerful of Ranjit Singh's vassals. The heir-apparent prince Kharak Singh, the Maharaja's eldest son, of feeble intellect and of little influence, was always overlooked in the Darbār. His son Naunihal Singh, an active and promising youth of 15, if Ranjit Singh's health failed, may supersede his father and succeed to the throne. Sher Singh and Tara Singh, twins had never been acknowledged by Ranjit Singh as his legitimate sons ; the former had distinguished himself as a soldier, but was found very unfit as governor of Kashmir. He was at that time at Peshawar, with the title of governor ; General Avitabile, however, had the entire direction of affairs and administration of the *subāh*. Tara Singh was not of any importance. Kashmira Singh and Peshawara Singh, were also sons of Ranjit Singh, but nothing much was known about them.

One of the great obstacles to the duration of the empire founded by Ranjit Singh, observed Hugel, consisted in the imprudence of suffering so much power to accumulate in the persons of his vassals. Gulab Singh, for example, in Jammu, with his brothers, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh, possessed a large district, which

¹ UT, III (i), p. 65-66.

² *Travels* (Jervis' translation), Patiala, 1970, p. 287-88.

extended over inaccessible mountains from Attock to Nurpur, in the south-west, and thence to Ladakh, besides other estates in the Punjab. The Dogra brothers, who were powerful in money, troops, cannon and fortresses, would with great difficulty be brought into subjection by the arms of feeble successors of Ranjit Singh, and several others were similarly circumstanced. Nothing could establish Ranjit Singh's dynasty firmly, except an alliance with the Company, which his pride and the policy of the latter had hitherto precluded. The Maharaja had no throne. "My sword," he observed, "procures me all the distinction I desire ; I am quite indifferent to external pomp."¹

5. Burnes' impressions

Alexander Burnes who visited Lahore in February 1831, testifies to the expeditious manner in which the Maharaja transacted business even on parade ground. While inspecting the troops, he dictated letters to the Chiefs of Kabul and Peshawar and several other personages beyond the Indus, issued orders to all Chiefs and Sardars between his capital and the frontier. He recalls that he received letters from Ranjit Singh in the deserts of Tartary and Bokhara. "I never quitted," he observes, "the presence of a native of Asia with such impressions as I left the man : without education and without a guide, he conducts all the affairs of his kingdom with surpassing energy and vigour, and yet wields his power with a moderation quite unprecedented in an eastern prince."²

6. Titles of the nobility

Although there was neither any classification nor gradation of Sikh Court nobility, titles were conferred on favourites by the Maharaja, the highest recorded appears to be the *rājā'i rājgān* held only by the principal minister of the State Dhian Singh. Other Jammu brothers, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh and their nephew Hira Singh held the title of the *rājā*. Other notable titles conferred on the Chiefs were merely honorific viz., *Afzal Didār*, *Ujjal Didār*, *Nirmal Budh*, *Sardar*, *Sardār-i-Bawaqār*, *Bhā'i*, *Jamadar*, *Hizbar-i-Jang*, *General-i-Awwal*, *Šamsām-ud-Dawlā*, *Itmād-ud-Dawlā*, *Mubāriz-ul-Mulk*, *Amānat Panāh*, *Dilāwar Jung*, and *Šafdar Jang Bahadur*.³

These titles had no established order, and were conferred at random at the Maharaja's whim or on suitable occasions. Notable recipients included were : Hira Singh, Sardar Attar Singh Sindhiānwālā, C. M. Wade, Dīwān Jodha Ram, General Avitabile, Sardar Lehna Singh Majithiā, Kanwar Sher Singh, Bhā'i Gobind Ram, and Sardar Tej Singh.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Vide.* Latif, p. 457-58.

³ UT, III (iv), p. 401-2.

⁴ See, generally, UT, II, p. 265, 247 and 261 ; III(ii), p. 297 ; III(iv), p. 438.

One of the highest awards in the State instituted in 1837 on the occasion of the marriage of Kanwar Naunihal Singh, the Maharaja's grandson, was the *Kaukab-i-Iqbal-i-Punjab* (the Star of the Felicity of the Punjab). Its first recipient was the British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Fane, who had come to attend the marriage. The medal had three orders : the first order beset with diamonds was reserved for the princes of the royal family and distinguished foreigners ; the second order beset with emeralds was conferred on the highest dignitaries of the State ; and the third order beset with jewels was reserved for military officers of approved valour. The Lahore Diarist records that the recipients of this medal were : Kanwars Kharak Singh, Naunihal Singh and Sher Singh, Rājā Gulab Singh, Rājā Dhian Singh, Rājā Suchet Singh, Rājā Hira Singh, Jamadār Khushal Singh, Sardar Attar Singh Sindhiānwālā, Sardar Dhanna Singh Malwā'ī, Sardar Lehna Singh Majithiā, Diwān Sawan Mal, Rājā Dina Nath and others.¹

Of the military titles there were merely few. From the *Khālṣa Darbār Records* and the *Roznāmcha* of the Lahore Diarist, we have the list of the following eight persons who were officially given the title of *General* : Sardar Ram Singh, Sardar Gujjar Singh, Ventura, Sardar Tej Singh, Sardar Ajit Singh, Jean Baptiste Court, Misser Sukh Raj, and Mī'ān Udham Singh. Ventura complained to the Maharaja that it did not look proper that he be given the same title as others for he had been the instructor of them all. The Maharaja replied good-humouredly that he would soon be granted the title of *Jarnail-i-A'zam* (the Great General).²

THE JAMMU BROTHERS

The history of the Dogra Rajputs of the hills who rose to the highest eminence at the Lahore Court is variously told.³ Soon after the occupation of Jammu by Ranjit Singh in 1808, Sardar Hukam Singh Chimnī, whom the Maharaja

¹ UT, III(iv), p. 490. The order was probably insitituted at the suggestion of Sir Henry Fane, the British Commander-in-Chief, who came to attend the marriage of Kanwar Naunihal Singh in 1837. The medal was of gold, beset with diamonds with red and yellow ribbon and resembled in shape the French *Legion de Honour*. It bore a small image of Ranjit Singh on one side.

² UT, III(iii), p. 350.

³ *Authorities* : See generally, Kirpa Ram's *Gulābnāma* (Srinagar, B. S. 1932), which gives the official version of the history of the family. Richmond's *Memoir on Jammu Rājās* (December, 1843) in the *Ellenborough Papers* (PRO/30/12-60), Public Records Office, London, gives a fulsome account of the three brothers and their power politics. Carmichael Symth's *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore* p. 219-63 gives a *Genealogical History of the Jammu Family*, compiled from local manuscripts and Col. Gardner's Notes, the veracity of which appears suspect and does not corroborate Richmond's account. See also the *'Ibratnāma* (I) MS. 504, fol. 365 et seq.

had assigned *jāgirs* in the hills near Jammu, collected a large force and attacked the town. Mī'ān Mota, the Lahore tributary of Jammu collected an irregular force of the hill rajputs and routed the insurgent. Among the troopers of Mī'ān Mota, who displayed great courage in fighting, were one Kishora Singh and his two sons, Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh. Mī'ān Mota repaired to Lahore and Gulab Singh was one of his escorts. On Mī'ān Mota's recommendation, Ranjit Singh took young Gulab Singh into service on a salary of 2 rupees a day.

The rise of the Jammu brothers to power at Lahore was phenomenal. Gulab Singh won the approbation of the Maharaja when he assassinated in cold blood, one Suthra, who had murdered his benefactor Mī'ān Mota. He was given a *jāgir* of 12,000 rupees with a command of 50 horsemen. The fortunes of the family rose rapidly when in 1816 Mī'ān Kishora was appointed the ruler of Jammu, and Gulab Singh was allowed to remain with his father looking after the administration. On the death of Kishora Singh, Ranjit Singh conferred the title of *rājā* of Jammu on Gulab Singh for his military services, and Dhian Singh who by his machinations had ousted Jamadār Khushal Singh from the post of the Chamberlain of the Royal Household (*Deodhīdār*), was made the *rājā* of Bhinber, and Suchet Singh that of Bhadrawal.¹

7. Dhian Singh

Having obtained the coveted post of the Royal Chamberlain, Dhian Singh steadily won the confidence of the Maharaja and his star rose rapidly. He was a master of intrigue and servility and gathered all the strings of administration in his own hands. In 1828 he was given the title of *rājā'i rājgān*, and the distinction to hold his own court and to receive *nazars*. He became the principal minister of the Maharaja and the most powerful person in the State after him. Dhian Singh assumed formidable position of power and influence at the Court. He was the eyes and ears of his royal master. He monopolised all power as the Chamberlain and the Prime Minister, commanded a considerable portion of the army, was the Maharaja's *aide-de-camp*, and nothing could be done without his concurrence.

In appearance and deportment Dhian Singh is described as "a fine-looking man, of noble presence, polite and affable, of winning manners and modest speech." Contemporary observers offer various surmises which allowed the Jammu brothers to gain ascendancy at the Court and influence over the Maharaja. Lawrence estimates that both Dhian Singh and Jamadār Khushal Singh rose to power "not by the most respectable road," and that they obtained high favour "as ministers of Ranjit Singh's debaucheries."² This may be a half-truth. Asked as to how

¹ Latif, p. 414.

² Lawrence, *Adventures of an Officer in the Punjab*, London, 1846, i, p. 33-35.

could the Jammu brothers acquire such power and influence over him, the Maharaja rejoined : "Why, it is may fate—I threw myself on them—it is my destiny !"¹

The character of Dhian Singh as the principal minister of the Maharaja and his influence and power impressed everyone who visited the Court. "Rājā Dhian Singh is in the country," observed Lord Auckland, "the observed of all observers, handsome in appearance, graceful in manners, though of much reserve, powerful in wealth, territory and connection ; looked upto by all for ability and charged by all with schemes of high ambition. His possessions are in the hills and extend from the Suttlej to Cashmere, and north of him, his brother's territories run upto Ladakh of which he has recently made himself master. The Jammu army is subservient to their masters who pay them. He in a great measure directs the department of artillery and his influence in all directions is powerful, and with all this he is said to be far from friendly to(wards) the English,"²

Other accounts of Dhian Singh are equally colourful. Osborne describes him a noble specimen of human race, handsome and with aquiline features—a model of manly beauty and intelligence. He was always magnificently attired, possessed enormous wealth and property and a large tract of country, which he ruled with mildness and justice. He presented a singular instance of a favourite and a man in power, whose talents and virtues are more appreciated than his power and influence are envied.³ Lawrence describes Dhian Singh as slightly lame, but a fine-looking man. In the Darbār he always sat on the ground, rather behind the Maharaja. He was decidedly next to his master, the ablest man in the Punjab, though, like him, so illiterate as scarcely to be able to sign his name.⁴

An able administrator and a calculating politician, Dhian Singh is often charged with schemes of high ambition. Under the veneer of winning affability he cloaked a designing and ruthless disposition. As became evident after Ranjit Singh's death—his intrigues against Kharak Singh, his quarrels with Naunihal Singh, the assassination of Chet Singh, and struggle for power with the Sindhianwālās, his ambition and intrigues knew no bounds.⁵ Dhian Singh was assassinated by the Sindhianwālā faction on 15 September, 1843. A fine specimen of noble hypocrisy, his loyalty to his royal sovereign could never be doubted. At his death-bed, the Maharaja nominated him his weak son's principal adviser and guide. Soon after the death of his master, he expressed a violent desire to be cremated alive on the funeral pyre.⁶

¹ *Ibid.*

² Auckland to Hobhouse (Private), 9 December, 1838-Broughton (8M) 36473, fol. 363ab.

³ Osborne, *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, Calcutta, p. 29-30.

⁴ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, i, p. 35.

⁵ *Vide. generally, Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp. 199-200, 207, 220, 222, 224 etc.

⁶ Wade to Maddock, 3 July, 1839-ISP(I) 4 December, 1839, No. 78-79.

8. Gulab Singh

Gulab Singh was the soldier brother and master of Jammu. Having built up a little kingdom in the hills, he had steadily extended it to Ladakh in the north.¹ Gulab Singh's character was a mixture of ambition, avariciousness and cruelty. Since his appointment as the *rājā* of Jammu in 1822, he normally remained at the seat of his government, terms of his allegiance being the maintenance of a troop of horse and foot for his sovereign. He recruited a considerable army of Dogra hillmen and Nujeebs, and extended his authority over the independent chiefs of petty hill states. He occasionally repaired to Lahore when either summoned by the Maharaja or to consult his brothers on the further extension of the family fortunes. The *Jammu Family Chronicle*² describes his rule in the early days of power as "one of the most repulsive." He ruled his subjects with an iron rod, and his avarice and cruelty were boundless. He is said to have reduced his cruelty to a system for the promotion of objects which his ambition and avarice led him to seek. He exercised the most ruthless barbarities against rebellious subjects to keep the terror of his name and all thoughts of resistance to his cruel sway. Complaints of his subjects against his tyranny could hardly reach the ears of the Maharaja. Dhian Singh stifled them and arrested their progress to the Darbār.

Yet with all this it cannot be denied that Gulab Singh was a fine soldier, and an active and bold commander. He served his master well in various expeditions in the hills and in Kashmir. The official Lahore Diarist records the Maharaja's bounties conferred on him and the favours granted to him. Besides being a lord of the hills, he held the country lying between the Chenab and the Jhelum on farm for 25,45,000 rupees; his *jāgīrs* amounted to 7,37,287 rupees; and he held a monopoly of the salt mines for which he paid to the State of Lahore annually 8,00,000 rupees. Financially he was the most highly favoured vassal and tributary of the Maharaja.

And yet during the lifetime of the Maharaja, Gulab Singh proved an astute diplomat: as an ambitious ruler he kept his boundless ideas of extension of power in check, and relied more on his all-powerful brother at the Court to advance the interests of the family. The caution was perhaps the result of his knowledge

¹ It is doubtful whether Zorawar Singh's attempts to extend his master's sway over the hill country north and north-west of Jammu had the sanction of the Lahore Government; at any rate, his expedition across the Snowy Range and conquest of Ladakh caused serious misgivings in the mind of Maharaja of the grasping ambition of his favourites.

² Smyth, p. 257. Another authority cited by the author exhibits Gulab Singh's character of cruelty and avariciousness in its worst shade. He is described as eater of opium, and of unsettled mind, who appointed Brahmans as collectors of revenue holding in farm from him the right of collecting alms; thus the alms which he himself gave, reverted back to him!

of the suspicious nature of his royal sovereign, and artifice and subservience to his lord and master saved him from any retaliatory steps. His dream was to become the master of Kashmir, and he bided his time.

The death of the Maharaja in 1839, however, unleashed his vigorous and unlimited ambitions. He embezzelled the major portion of the revenues of 22 districts assigned to him, and since the occupation of Ladakh in 1836, he had been insistently trying to seize the province of Kashmir.¹ He made numerous overtures to the British for help in taking possession of Kashmir,² although they had full knowledge of his privity to the Kabul Insurrection and efforts to retard the progress of British troops at Attock.³ He accepted to be the custodian of the *jāgīrs* of Kharak Singh's widow Chand Kaur, and carted away to Jammu all that lady's money, jewellery and valuables which he misappropriated.⁴ His intrigues against the Lahore Government produced a *jehād* in Muzzaffarabad in which the insurgent Muslim peasantry overpowered many Sikh garrisons.⁵

The catalogue of Gulab Singh's misdeeds so infuriated the Khālsa Army in 1845, that a force 35,000 strong was sent to Jammu for his chastisement. He naively admitted his treasonable activities, offered bribes to the army commanders and sent his jewels into the British territory.⁶ He was brought to Lahore as a hostage, where he repeated assurances of allegiance to the Khālsa, agreed to pay an idemnity of 68,00,000 rupees, and with a promise of good behaviour for the future, was allowed to return to the safety of the hills.⁷

Notwithstanding the conviction that the encouragement of Gulab Singh's ambitious designs would weaken the power of the Sikhs and a division of Ranjit Singh's dominions, both Ellenborough and Hardinge resisted the temptation of supporting him. In the first place he was considered as an unreliable opportunist "steeped in crime."⁸ His frequent tender of allegiance were considered fictitious,⁹

¹ Richmond's *Memoir on Jammu Rājās* (December, 1843) (EP) PRO 30/12-60.

² *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p. 237.

³ Smyth, p. 197.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 59.

⁵ *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, *op. cit.*

⁶ See generally, Hardinge to Ellenborough (private) 20 February, 8 March, 1845 (EP) PRO 30/12 (21/7).

⁷ *Vide.* Broadfoot's despatches of 18 March, 5 and 24 May, 1845-ISP(I).

⁸ Hardinge to Ellenborough, 3 June, 1845-EP (PRO) 30/12(21/27).

⁹ See particularly despatches of Major Broadfoot, of 6, 8 and 11 February, 1845-ISP(I) 4 April, 1845. Nos. 111, 122 and 125; Hardinge to Ellenborough, 20 February, 1845-(EP) PRO 30/12(21/7). They reveal that Gulab Singh proposed to cede to the British the Lahore estates on the north of the Sutlej together with an offer of 50,00,000 rupees, if recognised as an independent sovereign of Kashmir. He agreed to aid the British with his hill levies if they

and his boastful claims that his hillmen could destroy the Khālśa army independently allowing him to hold Kashmir or the Punjab were considered untenable. Gulab Singh's final act of treachery after the first Sikh War has been detailed elsewhere.¹ Hardinge rewarded Gulab Singh for his perfidy against the Sikhs by making him an independent prince of the hills.

9. The Gay Cavalier

The third Dogra brother Rājā Suchet Singh of Ramnagar was a courtier *par excellence*.² Devoid of political acumen or statesmanship, he was, however, rich in treasure and intrigue. Effeminately handsome and 'the great dandy of the Punjab,'³ he was always splendidly dressed. According to Cunningham, the elegant Suchet Singh 'fluttered about as a gay courtier, and gallant soldier, without grasping power or creating enemies.'⁴

Suchet Singh started his career as an attendant at the Court and a Ganymede or 'cup-bearer', his handsome figure and engaging manner soon attracted the favour of his royal master.⁵ He was given a command in the cavalry and the *Chāryārī-Sowārs*. His star rose along with his brothers ; he became the gay cavalier at the Court, but he was utterly indifferent to politics or state matters. According to Macgregor, Suchet Singh was the *beau ideal* of a Sikh soldier : he was muscular, agile, and well skilled in the use of sword and matchlock and an excellent horseman. In his dress Suchet Singh was particularly gorgeous, and wore a profusion of jewels ; while his arms and horse trappings were magnificently ornamented with gold and silver.⁶

During the lifetime of the Maharaja, Suchet Singh had no politics ; but after his death, he played a fickle political game. He was implicated in the murder of Chet Singh in October 1839 ;⁷ he supported Mā'ī Chand Kaur against Sher Singh,⁸ but changed allegiance to the latter when he invested the fort of

attempted to take possession of the Punjab. In August 1845, he offered to destroy the Sikh army with 50,000 hill levies and facilitate the British occupation of Lahore. Broadfoot, 25 August, 1845 ISP (I) 25 October, 1845. No. 46.

¹ See the present writer's *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, Hoshiarpur, 1963, p. 20, 276 and 243 ff.

² Emily Eden, *Up the Country*, London, 1866, p. 147.

³ Vigne, *A Personal Narrative etc.*, London, 1840, p. 251.

⁴ p. 190.

⁵ Macgregor, i, p. 245.

⁶ *Ibid.* ii, p. 26-27.

⁷ Pearse, *Memories of Alexander Gardiner*, p. 218 ; Smyth, p. 29.

⁸ UT, IV(ii), p. 8.

Lahore in January 1841.¹ He joined the Sindhiānwālā conspiracy to replace Sher Singh by Dalip Singh, but supported Hira Singh to avenge the murder of his brother Dhian Singh. Soon afterwards, he fell out with Hira Singh and the Jalla regime; and feeling disconsolate with his diminishing influence at the Darbār, intrigued with Jawahir Singh and Rānī Jindan to overthrow his nephew, and later left for Jammu.²

In March 1844, he returned to Lahore at the head of a small force but was killed in action on 27 March in a skirmish with Hira Singh's troops.³ Suchet Singh held a *jāgīr* of 3,00,000 rupees, but he had amassed a fortune; part of his treasure—about 15,00,000 rupees secreted at Ferozepur in British territory, was found after his death in 1844, which became the subject of a serious controversy between the British Government and the Lahore Darbār.⁴

10. Hira Singh

Another scion of the Dogra family who was a great favourite of the Maharaja, was Hira Singh, son of rājā Dhian Singh. An "over-petted" and a "light-headed" youth of effeminate character though of comely appearance, he is described as having been reared and brought up as "a lap-dog of Runjeet and his dissolute associates, with a little smattering of English, Persian and Sanskrit and pretending a perfect knowledge of all."⁵ He had been favoured by the Maharaja with the title of rājā and a *jāgīr* amounting to well over 4,50,000 rupees. Hira Singh was a spoilt youth, but the Maharaja was exceedingly fond of him and would not suffer him out of sight. It is alleged that Dhian Singh's crafty mind was the instrument by which the Court regarded Hira Singh as a favourite and adopted child of the Maharaja. His influence over the mind of the Maharaja appears to be extraordinary; he had the privilege of having a seat in the Darbār while the Chiefs stood, and the only person who could speak to the Maharaja without permission and would often interrupt and contradict him in the rudest manner.⁶ Osborne observes that Hira Singh was frequently the Maharaja's companion in his licentious orgies in the *zenāna*, and once he abducted one of his favourite inmates, but Ranjit Singh pretended not to know it.⁷

Yet, politically Hira Singh wielded an insignificant influence, for, he had neither the brains nor the ability for statecraft. After the assassination of his

¹ Clerk to Maddock, 18 January, 1841-(P) 151 : 13.

² Richmond to Thomason, 16 October, 1843-(P) 158 : 142.

³ Richmond to Currie, 29 March, 1844 (P) 158 : 43.

⁴ *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, Hoshiarpur, 1968, p. 226. ff.

⁵ Smyth, p. 262.

⁶ Osborne, p. 30.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 73.

father Dhian Singh, and assisted by his uncle, Hira Singh aroused a section of the army and the troops, and put to death the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs Ajit Singh and Lehna Singh.¹ The widow of Kharak Singh at one time proposed to adopt him as a counterpoise to Sher Singh. In September 1843, the army *pañchāyats*, who had proclaimed minor Dalip Singh as their sovereign nominated Hira Singh to the fatal office of *wazārat* at Lahore.

But as a Vazier of the State of Lahore Hira Singh proved utterly incompetent. He was afraid of his uncle Gulab Singh who resented his nephew's rise to power; he had aroused the jealousy of his uncle Suchet Singh by allowing his family tutor and counsellor Pandit Jalla, a clever but able upstart Brahman, to gain control of the entire administration. Soon the Sardars and the Army drove the imbecile minister and his despicable minion from Lahore. On 21 December, 1844, the excited soldiery overtook them both and put them to death.

The Dogras of Jammu at the zenith of their power held *jāgīrs* worth an annual revenue of 18,97,379 rupees—*rājā* Gulab Singh 7,37,287 rupees, *rājā* Dhian Singh 2,91,112 rupees, *rājā* Suchet Singh 3,06,865 rupees, and *rājā* Hira Singh 4,62,115 rupees.² Of the approximate total revenue of 3,24,75,000 rupees which accrued to the Kingdom of the Punjab at Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, the Jammu brothers contributed about 1/3rd on account of farms, tributes and monopolies.

11. "A royal doorway man"

Khushal Singh, Brahman by caste, hailed from U. P. He drifted to Lahore in search of employment and entered the service of the Maharaja as a footman at a salary of 5 rupees a month. A handsome youth with dash and daring, he attracted the attention of the Maharaja and was soon transferred to be one of the night guardsmen at the royal *deodhi*. Soon promoted as the personal *khidmatgār* or attendant of Ranjit Singh, he climbed to the position of royal Chamberlain in 1811, which coveted post he held for almost 15 years.

As the royal doorwayman, Jamadār Khushal Singh wielded great power and influence. He superintended the royal ceremonies, became the guardian of the royal ears, and none could have access to his master without his permission. The favours of the Maharaja brought him riches and influence and the *jāgīrs* conferred upon him amounted to 4,37,315 rupees annually. Shahamat Ali observes that Khushal Singh farmed out the Deodhi for 60,000 rupees and collected the royal *Moharāna* or fee of the Privy Seal (every *sowār* at the rate of 2 rupees per

¹ Richmond—19 September, 1843, ISP (I) 23 March, 1844. No. 475.

² Shahamat Ali, *The Sikhs and the Afghans*, (London, 1847), p. 102 *et seq.*

head) amounting to 1,60,000 rupees annually.¹ He had a command of 2,000 horse, and for his residence he had erected a citadel-like *haveli* close to the eastern gate of the royal palace which had fortifications within its precincts.² Amongst the Court nobility of Lahore, the Jamadār was considered next to the principal minister *rājā* Dhian Singh in political power, wealth and influence.

Khushal Singh was a handsome man and a courageous soldier though some accounts depict him as cruel and depraved. He did good service in the Multan and Kashmir expeditions. He was devotedly loyal to his master but utterly wanting in principles of honesty and morals. He levied contributions on all attending the Court and openly took bribes. His son Ram Dayal was a brigadier-general in the army and his nephew Tej Singh became a commander of a division. When sent to Kashmir in 1831 to assist Kanwar Sher Singh in the administration of the province, he was so ruthless in squeezing the finances and forcible recovery of rents, that the province was plunged into famine and the inhabitants left their hearths and homes.³

Khushal Singh lost the lucrative office of the royal Chamberlain in 1818 temporarily when his brother Ram Lal like him at the request of the Maharaja refused to embrace Sikhism. A further quarrel with Misser Diwan Chand, whom he stopped at the royal gates and refused admission, so incensed the Maharaja, that he relieved him of the post and put him under restraint with a fine of 50,000 rupees.⁴ He was, however, allowed to retain his *jāgīrs* and was permitted to attend the Darbār.

12. The Royal Collaterals

The Sindhiānwālā Chiefs, the powerful collaterals of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, were descended from Sardar Chand Singh son of Budh Singh. They are described a mixture of national chiefs and Sikh priests.⁵ As the most powerful members of the landed aristocracy of the Punjab, Attar Singh, Lehna Singh and their nephew Ajit Singh held *jāgīrs* amounting to over 10,00,000 rupees annually, assumed high-sounding titles, and served the Maharaja in various campaigns in Hazara and Peshawar during his lifetime. Attar Singh was a brave soldier, a calculating and shrewed courtier, well versed in Court politics, and was designated

¹ *Ibid* p. 40-41.

² "These edifices are strongly built," observes Shahamat Ali, "and their sites are well chosen to give their proprietor a commanding position in the event of any demise or revolution of the government." *op. cit.* p. 43-44.

³ See generally, Lawrence, p. 38 ; UT, III (ii), p. 166-67.

⁴ Murray, ii, p. 30 ; Latif, p. 414.

⁵ Auckland to Hobhouse, 25 September 1839, Broughton (BM), 36473, fol. 137 b.

as "the Champion of the Khalsa."¹ Lehna Singh is described a tall man of truthful character, and Ajit Singh a man of corrupt morals. As the most powerful family of the Punjab, they emanated discontent and indulged in intrigue, though during the lifetime of the Maharaja, they apparently kept themselves aloof from all political factions. The awe of Ranjit Singh kept them in check; he also curbed their power by scattering them and taking recourse to threats of the resumption of their *jāgīrs*.

The Sindhiānwālās assumed active political rôle in the Punjab politics after the death of Ranjit Singh. They hated the power and politics of the Dogra faction at the Darbār, and were themselves political opportunists. They emerged as a well-knit, unscrupulous and violent court-faction during the struggle for power between Mā'ī Chand Kaur and Kanwar Sher Singh. Without any pretensions to sovereignty for which they could not produce a Sindhiānwālā claimant, they assumed the rôle of ineffective king-makers. They supported the aspirations of Mā'ī Chand Kaur to political power, and hobnobbed with the British "to protect the honour and rights of their Queen."² When Sher Singh succeeded to the throne, they refused to accept his sovereignty and the obnoxious rule of Dhian Singh. Soon afterwards, Maharaja Sher Singh struck back. Lehna Singh and Kehar Singh were imprisoned, but Ajit Singh and Attar Singh fled across the Sutlej to British territory and actively engaged themselves in intrigues to subvert their sovereign's authority.³ Sher Singh's offer of reconciliation was spurned by them, and their overtures to the British received little positive response.⁴ However, the British Government mediated between the Maharaja and the Sindhiānwālā Sardars, and both Ajit Singh and Attar Singh returned to Lahore in November 1843.⁵

The return of the Sindhiānwālās to Lahore let loose a game of intrigue and conspiracies. Ajit Singh and Lehna Singh exhibited an outward loyalty to their sovereign, but secretly matured plans to destroy both Sher Singh and minister Dhian Singh. They attempted to lure Dhian Singh to the palace in the fort and kill him, but the clever minister got wind of their schemes of foul play and pretended illness.⁶ Then they conspired to dethrone Maharaja Sher Singh and replace him by the minor Dalip Singh, who had been brought to Lahore from Jammu.⁷ The Dogra brothers, Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, however, foiled their attempt.

¹ Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*. Delhi, 1957. p. 126.

² Attar Singh to Clerk, 25 January 1841-(P) 155 : 82.

³ Murray, ii, p. 264.

⁴ Clerk-22 April, 1841-(P) 151 : 49; Maddock to Clerk, 29 July, 1841-(P) 152 : 20.

⁵ UT, IV (iii), p. 39.

⁶ *Ibid.* IV (iii), p. 26 ff.

⁷ Murray, ii, p. 271.

The crowning act of the Sindhiānwālā treachery took place on 15 September, 1843. While Maharaja Sher Singh was inspecting troops in the Baradari of Shah Balawal, he was shot dead by Ajit Singh Sindhiānwālā with an English rifle which he cunningly presented for the inspection of his sovereign. While the Maharaja fell, Ajit Singh drew his sword and severed off his head.¹ At the same time, Lehna Singh Sindhiānwālā had proceeded to the garden of Jawala Singh to finish off Kanwar Partap Singh, a handsome boy and the heir-apparent, who was engaged in distributing charities to the Brahmans on the Śankrāntī day. With a single stroke his head was cut off and the body hacked to mince-meat. The prince's severed head was fastened to the saddle of Lehna Singh's horse and all the guards and the Brahmans were all killed.²

Lehna Singh then quickly joined Ajit Singh who carried the head of Sher Singh fastened to his saddle, and along with their guards, the regicides proceeded towards the fort. Rājā Dhian Singh, who was on his way to attend the Maharaja at Shah Balawal was met by the assassins near the garden of Jawala Singh. He was told of the perfidious murders and lured into the fort, where he was brutally done to death and his body hacked to pieces.³

Having murdered the Maharaja, the heir apparent, and the Vazier, the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs stood aghast at what they had done. They hastily proclaimed Dalip Singh as the Maharaja and Ajit Singh as the new Vazier. But the public feeling was strong against them, and rājā Hira Singh and Suchet Singh aroused a section of the army, and with the help of the battalions of Avitabile, Ventura and Court besieged the fort. Every one deserted the Sindhiānwālā Sardars when the fort was stormed, and both Ajit Singh and Lehna Singh were slain in action. Their heads were cut off and bodies quartered and hung on the different gates of the city. Each and every relative of the Sindhiānwālās was ordered to be killed, and their houses at rājā Sānsī razed to the ground: "Ajit Singh's house was destroyed, and it was declared that thenceforward, his lands should no longer be ploughed with oxen, but asses."⁴ Attar Singh who was in the British territory escaped destruction. In this manner Nemesis overtook Ranjit Singh's collaterals and they were completely wiped out of the political scene in the Punjab.⁵

¹ For the account of Maharaja Sher Singh's assassination, *vide* generally, UT, IV (iii), p. 28 sq; Mohammad Naqi, *Shersinghnāma*, fol. 38a, et seq.; Smyth, p. 75 ff and Honighberger, i, p. 108. For public records see particularly, Maharaja Dalip Singh to Richmond, 25 September, 1843-(P) 163:68.

² UT, IV (iii), p. 29.

³ *Ibid.* p. 30; Smyth, p. 79 sq; Griffin, *Punjab Chiefs* i. p. 230; Naqi, fol. 59b. etc.

⁴ Muhammad Naqi, *Shersinghnāma*, fol. 83-84.

⁵ See generally, UT, IV (iii), p. 33; *Shersinghnāma*, fol. 86 ff; Smyth, p. 84 ff; Macgregor, ii, p. 19 ff; Murray, ii, p. 281 etc.

13. His master's mouthpiece

Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din, son of the leading physician of Lahore, came to the notice of the Maharaja in 1799, when he cured him of an eye-trouble. He was soon appointed the Maharaja's personal physician and assigned a *jāgīr*. Extremely well-read, an erudite scholar of Arabic and Persian, and a poet, he was highly respected at the Court for his wisdom and scholarship. He became the Maharaja's Foreign Minister and was entrusted with the task of drafting state papers and advised the Maharaja on diplomatic and political matters. An extremely polished courtier, whose affability and catholic outlook on life and religion¹ had created no enemies at the Court, he was the most respected diplomat, statesman and physician in the Kingdom. The Maharaja reposed great confidence in his abilities as an astute negotiator and interpreter of his policy, and he was often sent on political missions. Thus in 1808, he advised the Maharaja to sign a treaty with the British; in 1813 he was sent as a commisson to settle the country and dependencies of Attock; in 1823 to Peshawar to realise tribute from Yar Muhammad Khan;² in 1819 he led a mission to the Daudpotas of Bahawalpur; he was the leader of the Lahore Mission to Lord William Bentinck at Simla in 1831; and he served as an interpreter at the Rupa Meeting the same year, as well as at Ferozepur in 1838, when the Maharaja met Lord Auckland. In 1835, he negotiated skillfully with Amir Dost Muhammad Khan. The Maharaja trusted him both as a counsellor and as a physician. He adopted the title of *faqīr* as a symbol of simplicity and humility. "Aziz-ud-Din is his master's mouthpiece," observes Lawrence, "and most ably fills the office; he interprets a word or even a sign, and throws Ranjit's meaning at once into beautiful language; embellishing sound sense with rich and appropriate imagery; in his own phraseology, 'he is a parrot of sweet sound.'"³

Aziz-ud-Din dealt with the foreigners who visited the Court, and all of them—Moorcroft, Burnes, Von Hugel, Lawrence, Osborne, Shahamat Ali and Mohan Lal were highly impressed by his learning and efficiency in theology, metaphysics, linguistics and diplomatic skill. Griffin calls him as "the most eloquent man of his day," and "as able with his pen as with his tongue."⁴ Osborne observes that along with Dhian Singh he possessed more influence over Ranjit Singh than

¹ Griffin (p. 119) observes: "On one occasion Ranjit Singh asked him whether he preferred the Hindu or the Muhammadan religion. "I am," he replied, "a man floating in the midst of a mighty river. I turn my eyes towards the land, but can distinguish no difference in either bank."

² Prinsep, p. 76; Latif, p. 383.

³ i, p. 40

⁴ *Ranjit Singh*, Lahore, 1957, p. 119. Baron Von Hugel (p. 291) comments on the flowery observation of the Faqīr regarding his interview with the Maharaja: "This will be a rainy day," I said. "When princes meet in the garden of friendship," replied the Faqīr, "the water-bearers of heaven moisten the flowers, that they may give out all the perfume."

any of the Sikh Chiefs. He was a fine-looking man, with a pleasant and good humoured countenance, and his manners were so kind and unassuming that it was impossible not to like him.¹

The Faqīr brothers were a compact family ; and two of Aziz-ud-Din's brothers, Nur-ud-Din and Imam-ud-Din held positions of power and influence in the Kingdom. Nur-ud-Din held the charge of the city of Lahore, and Imam-ud-Din that of the fortress of Govindgarh at Amritsar as the guardian of the royal treasure.

The family held a nominal *jāgīr* of 50,000 rupees, but various grants and bounties of Ranjit Singh made it affluent and highly influential at the Darbār. Honigberger describes Aziz-ud-Din as of Arab origin, descended from the Anṣārī Arabs of the desert. He calls him the oracle of Ranjeet Singh : "He, the prime minister Dhyān Singh, and Dīwān Dina Nath, minister of finance, constituted the triad of which the privy-council of the king was composed."² The Faqīr brothers had established a hospital at Lahore called the *Dār-ul-Shifa*, which they directed, medicines being paid for by the government. Later it was put in charge of Dr. Honigberger, where he served till 1844.

14. The 'Talleyard of the Punjab'

Rājā Dina Nath, the Finance Minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was an able and a shrewd man. He was the son of Bakht Mal, a Kashmiri Brahman, who had served under General Perron, the Maratha deputy at Delhi. Invited by his uncle Dīwān Ganga Ram, he came to Lahore in 1815, and was appointed to a minor post. He exhibited energy and intelligence of an extraordinary kind, and in 1826, on the death of Dīwān Ganga Ram, he succeeded him as the Keeper of the Royal Seal and Head of Military Accounts Department. In 1834, when Dīwān Bhowani Das passed away, the Maharaja appointed him the Finance Minister of the State.

Dina Nath rose to eminence by dint of his industrious grasp of financial and statistical affairs of the State. The Maharaja trusted him on all financial matters, as he did in foreign affairs, Dina Nath's closest friend Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din. Griffin calls him "the Talleyard of the Punjab," and his life and character bore strong resemblance to that of the European statesman : "Revolutions in which his friends and patrons perished passed of him ; dynasties rose and fell but never involved him in ruin ; in the midst of bloodshed and assassinations, his life was never endangered ; while confusion and robbery were the rule of the State, his wealth and power continually increased. His sagacity and farsightedness were

¹ *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, p. 28.

² *Thirty-Five Years in the East*, London, 1852, p. 95 and xviii.

such, that when, to other eyes, political sky was clear, he could perceive the coming storm, which warned him to desert a losing party or a falling friend."¹

In the uncertain struggle between Mā'ī Chand Kaur and Kanwar Sher Singh, Dina Nath was the only person who stood aside.² The politics of Dina Nath were based on an adopted attitude of neutrality. He knew the art of sitting on fence. But as soon as Sher Singh's accession was assured he declared for him and became his favourite.³ He retained his influential position during the fatal and inept *wazārat* of Hira Singh and was deputed to Jammu to mediate in the differences of the Jalla regime with Gulab Singh.⁴ The stringent financial measures - fines, escheats and exactions of the Jalla government were the result of Dina Nath's advice, and for this very reason, he lost popularity at the Court.

Dina Nath was also the founder and leader of the *Mutṣaddī* faction which comprised of the moderate old-guard of Ranjit Singh's time—the Faqīrs, the Bhā'īs and few others ; during the fatal ministry of Jawahir Singh, he conspired to bring its downfall. He was a member of the Council of Ministers reconstituted by rānī Jindan in 1844. Dina Nath was the principal adviser of rānī Jindan, and the Army *Pañchāyats* and wielded considerable influence in moderating their aggressive tone towards the British Government.⁵ Amongst the Court nobility of the Sikh Darbār, rājā Dina Nath was unique. He was respected for his financial ability, his moderation and reserve. His political acumen was self-interest. He was bold, morally courageous, and free from the vices of the time. He grew immensely rich, but wisely kept his money and family at Delhi.⁶ The secret of his well sustained political power was loyalty to the ruling power and employment in every department of the State of his own men.⁷

15. The strong-arms of Kingdom

Of the notable families of the Sardars who were responsible for the rapid consolidation of Ranjit Singh's power in the Punjab were the Ahlūwālīās, the Majīthīās, the Attārīwālās, the Kaliānwālās, the Powindās, the Gadwā'īs, the Paḍhānīās, the Pañjhathās, the Mokālās, the Chimnīs, the Theṭhars and others. Mention must be made of some of these Sardars who constituted the backbone

¹ Ranjit Singh, *op. cit.* p. 127 ff ; *The Punjab Chiefs*, 1890, i, p. 29.

² Clerk to Maddock, 24 February 1841-(P) 151 : 29.

³ UT, IV (iii) p. 28.

⁴ UT, IV (iii), p. 62 sq.

⁵ Broadfoot to Currie, 1 October, 1845-(P) 167 : 37.

⁶ Broadfoot to Government, 2 January 1845-(P) 164 : 26.

⁷ Shahamat Ali, p. 36.

of the Sikh Court nobility and military organisation of the dynasty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

(1) *The Ahlūwālīs*. Of the Ahlūwālīs Sardars, Fateh Singh was the chosen companion of Ranjit Singh with whom he had exchanged turbans in a bond of brotherhood. He was the grand-nephew of Jassa Singh Kalāl, the leader of the *Dal Khālśa* and also who in 1758 had proclaimed the sovereignty of Sikhs in the Punjab. He is described as the ladder by which Ranjit Singh mounted to greatness in the Punjab.¹ Fateh Singh took part in almost all the early campaigns of Ranjit Singh—Kasur (1802-03), the Mālwa Campaigns (1806-08), Kangra (1809), Multan (1818), Kashmir (1819) and Mankera (1821). For these valuable services he was amply rewarded by the Maharaja. He became one of the foremost nobles of the Lahore Darbār, a favourite *confidante* of Ranjit Singh and his territories on both sides of the Sutlej which in 1808 were worth 1,16,000 rupees were augmented by the grants of the Maharaja to yield him in 1837, at the time of his death, an annual revenue of 16,00,000 rupees.²

Fateh Singh lost the favour of the Maharaja in 1825, and the rift between the two friends has been described elsewhere.³ After his death, his son Nihal Singh served the Sikh State to the best of his abilities, but due to underserved hostility of Ranjit Singh and his successors Kharak Singh and Naunihal Singh, the Ahlūwālīs lost their favoured position at the Lahore Darbār.

(2) *The Majithīs*. The family of the Majithīs provided to the state of Lahore its finest generals and administrators—Desa Singh, Lehna Singh, Gurdit Singh, Attar Singh, Amar Singh Kalān, Mewa Singh, Kahn Singh, Mehtab Singh, Surat Singh, Manna Singh, Attar Singh and Ranjor Singh. Desa Singh was one of the ablest generals and administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He served the Maharaja in the Kangra and Multan campaigns and was appointed in 1809 the *nāẓim* of Kangra and the hill districts—Chamba, Nurpur, Kotla, Shahpur, Jasrota, Bosali, Mankel, Jaswan, Siba, Guler, Kolhar, Suket, Mandi, Kulu and Datarpur—which brought to Sikh government an annual revenue of 17,60,000 rupees. Desa Singh commanded great respect and influence at the Court; he was responsible, to a large extent, for the gradual Sikh advance into the hills and the subjugation of hill chiefs to Sikh authority. His unexceptionally mild and unoppressive administration of Kangra and hill districts, has been described elsewhere.⁴

¹ Metcalfe—Despatch No. 28-29, dated 7 November, 1803-PSPC(I).

² UT, III (iii), p. 342; (P) 4: 114-15, 118.

³ *Vide*. Chapter 16(3), *infra*.

⁴ *Vide*. Chapter 3 (32), *supra*.

Of Desa Singh's sons, Lehna Singh Majithiā was the ablest and the most ingenuous. He succeeded his father as the *nāzim* (governor) of Kangra and hill districts in 1837 and became one of the principal Sardars of the Lahore Darbār. An able commander, and civil and military administrator, he served the Maharaja in various capacities. At the Darbār he acted as the Chief of Protocol, received and looked after important foreign dignitaries, and was sent on goodwill missions. He was a well-read man, well-versed in astronomy, mathematics and mechanics and a skillful designer of ordnance.¹ As an administrator, he was honest and free from the vices of the time, and popular in the hills.

Lehna Singh maintained his position of power and wealth for sometime after the death of Ranjit Singh by assuming the appearance of neutrality.² He supported Chand Kaur against Sher Singh, and when Sher Singh assumed sovereignty, he changed sides. He stood aloof when the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs assassinated Sher Singh, but in 1844, he came into conflict with the Jalla regime and feeling insecure at Lahore he left the Punjab and settled at Benares. His *jāgirs* were then confiscated by rājā Hira Singh.³

Other Majithiā Sardars who served the State of Lahore were Amar Singh Kalān and his sons Mewa Singh, Kahn Singh and Mehtab Singh. Amar Singh was a veteran warrior, who took part in various expeditions of the Maharaja and was appointed the governor of Hazara. Mewa Singh, a commander of the artillery division of the Sikh army (*Topkhāna'i Mewa Singh*) attained the position of a general. He was, however, pro-Dogra, and in 1844, became the member of Supreme Khālśa Council, constituted by rānī Jindan.⁴ Kahn Singh was an officer in the *Ghorcharā Khās* during Ranjit Singh reign.⁵ He attained the rank of a general in the Sikh army and fought the British both at Chillianwala and Gujrat. Mehtab Singh started his career as a *subedār* in the irregular Sikh cavalry of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He served in the Peshawar Campaign of 1834, and in the trans-Indus operations in 1839. In 1841, he was promoted a general of the Sikh army by Maharaja Sher Singh. He fought the first Sikh War against the British, but along with his brother, Mit Singh he remained loyal to the British during the second Sikh War.

The house of the Majithiās was proverbially loyal to the ruling family of Lahore. Mention here must be made of Ranjor Singh Majithia, son of Desa Singh

¹ Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, Delhi, 1957, p. 131 ; Osborne, *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*, Calcutta, 1952, p. 31. According to Griffin, besides designing guns, Lehna Singh invented a clock which showed the hour, the day of the month, and the changes of the moon.

² Clerk—14 December, 1840-(P) 150 : 57.

³ Broadfoot—24 November, 1844-(P) 164 : 8.

⁴ *Ibid.* 2 January, 1845-(P) 164 : 8.

⁵ UT, III (iv), p. 514.

and foster-brother of Lehna Singh. He was governor of Hazara and a military commander and a *jāgirdār* of the Lahore Darbār. He commanded a division of the Sikh army which fought the British at Baddowal (21 January, 1846), and Aliwal (28 January).

(3) *The Attārīwālās*. The Attārīwālās were Jat Sikhs ; they were soldiers and statesmen, and constituted the richest and the most aristocratic family of the time. Kanwar Naunihal Singh, the Maharaja's grandson was married to Nanki, the daughter of Sardar Sham Singh Attārīwālā in 1837. A daughter of Sardar Chattar Singh Attārīwālā was betrothed to Maharaja Dalip Singh on 10 July, 1845,¹ but due to the first Anglo-Sikh War, and the British refusal to sanction the marriage, it never came off.

Although a brave soldier, Sham Singh was a man of retiring disposition. The family held a *jāgīr* worth 1,20,000 rupees and Sham Singh held the rank of a commandant of an artillery corp. No Sikh general of Ranjit Singh's army could perhaps match Sham Singh Attārīwālā in valour, patriotism and devotion to the ideals of Gobind's Commonwealth. He fell gallantly at the battle of Sobraon, when all seemed lost. Cunningham, an eye-witness to Sham Singh's gallant conduct, observes : "But the ancient Sham Singh remembered his vow ; he clothed himself in simple white attire, as one devoted to death, and calling all around him to fight for the Guru, who had promised everlasting bliss to the brave, he repeatedly rallied his shattered ranks, and at last fell a martyr on a heap of his slain countrymen."²

Both Sardar Chattar Singh Attārīwālā and his valiant son rājā Sher Singh Attārīwālā are historical figures. Chattar Singh Attārīwālā, a brother of Sham Singh rose from the position of a military commander to become the governor of Hazara during Ranjit Singh's time. He had distinguished in the campaigns in the N. W. Frontier, the trans-Indus region and Kashmir. In 1839, he led the Sikh punitive expedition against Muzaffarabad and Darband. He was a partisan and chief adherent of the Dogra rājā Gulab Singh at the Sikh Darbār, and in 1845 he interceded on his behalf to the Army *Pañchāyats* to forgive his criminal misdeeds.³ In 1845, in order to offset the political influence of the parties opposed to her, rānī Jindan allied herself to the powerful Attārī family by betrothing minor Dalip Singh to the daughter of Chattar Singh. When in August of the same year, pretender Peshawara Singh revolted to claim the Kingdom of the Punjab, Chattar Singh was ordered to march to Attock to put down the rebellion. Peshawara Singh capitulated on assurance of amnesty, but at Vazier Jawahir Singh's orders, was brutally done to death by Chattar Singh⁴.

¹ Broadfoot to Currie, 14 July, 1845-(P) 167 : 9 ; UT, IV (iii), p. 78.

² *History of the Sikhs*, p. 284.

³ Broadfoot to Currie, 26 March, 1845-(P) 165 : 15.

⁴ According to some accounts (*vide. Akhbār Mazhar-ul-Haq*, dated 25 September, 1845), Chattar Singh at first positively refused to comply with Vazier Jawahir Singh's orders to

Chattar Singh Attārīwālā's rôle in the two Sikh Wars is quite well known. When after the disaster at Ferozeshah (21-22 December, 1845), the last Council of the Khālsa assembled at Lahore in tense irresolution and gloom at the prospect of defeat, the brave scions of the house of Attārī—Sham Singh, Chattar Singh and Sher Singh severely upbraided the crest-fallen commanders and the Sardars for having forsaken the ideals of Guru Gobind Singh. The *Khālsa*, they said, was the custodian of the *Panth*, the sovereign and the people. It was immortal and could not be defeated by the hated *firangīs*. As the disciples of Gobind, they should all prefer death to the disgrace of surrender to the enemies of the Sikh Commonwealth.

After the first Sikh War, Chattar Singh continued as the governor of Hazara till 1848, when James Abbott, the Resident's Assistant at Hazara accused him of hatching up a conspiracy to lead a general Sikh uprising against the British.¹ These charges were not only imaginary but baseless, and Chattar Singh took up measures to protect the capital of Hazara when invested by aroused armed Muhammadan levies raised by Abbott to destroy the Sikh governor and the Pukli Sikh Brigade stationed at Hazara.² The entire Hazara incident was investigated by Captain Nicholson, who after investigation, not only exonerated Chattar Singh but justified his defensive measures to save the besieged capital of Hazara from Abbott's Muhammadan mercenaries.³ Notwithstanding Nicholson's report, Resident Currie issued orders which amounted to Chattar Singh's dismissal and the confiscation of his ancestral *jāgīrs*. The valiant scion of the Attārīwālās unsheathed his sword to defy this unqualified unjust order.

Rājā Sher Singh Attārīwālā, Chattar Singh's son, was at this time commanding the Darbār troops at Multan sent to quell Mulraj's revolt. On hearing the news of his father's humiliation, he made a futile bid to resolve the matter by appealing to his British commanders for intercession, failing which, on 13 September, 1848, he deserted the British Camp and with his army joined Mulraj. Soon afterwards, however, he proceeded northwards to join his father at Gujrat.

The Attārīwālā revolts, both in the south and north gathered a national storm. Sher Singh was a brave and energetic soldier. His defection was primarily based on personal grounds—undeserved affronts inflicted upon his father, and perhaps, the British Resident's refusal to allow the marriage of his sister to the young Maharaja Dalip Singh. As he marched northwards, he became the centre

assassinate the unfortunate prince, but was later pressurised to allow the hired assassins to do the job. See also, Broadfoot to Government, 18 September, 1845-(P) 167 : 31.

¹ *Vide*. LPD (iv), under date 28-29 May : 4-6 July, 1848.

² Currie to Government, 15 August, 1848-(PP) XLI, 1849 : LPD (iv), 1 July, 1848.

³ Nicholson to Resident, 16 and 20 August, 1848-(PP), *op. cit.*

of a national rising in the Punjab against the British. He whipped up the enthusiasm of the Khālśa, proclaiming himself to be its servant and that of Maharaja Dalip Singh, and calling the people to rise in arms and expel the *firangīs* from the Punjab.¹

4. The *Kālīānwālās*. The Kālēwālās or the Kālīānwālā Sardars were originally *nahernas* or barbers. It is exactly not known how their ancestor Dal Singh Naherna came into prominence at Ranjit Singh's Court. Due to the ignominy associated with their low-caste origin, they seem to have discarded their occupational title, and in the manner of the Jāts, adopted the name of their village to be prefixed to their names. Fateh Singh Kālīānwālā, another scion of the family was one of the most powerful Sikh leaders in the early decades of the 19th century.² He was a close associate of Ranjit Singh and his favoured ally at the siege of Wazirabad and Naraingarh, where he died in action. Since 1803, he held on farm the entire country of the Siāls—Jhang, Leiah and Chaniot.³ Khem Kaur, one of Maharaja Kharak Singh's wives, was the daughter of Sardar Jodh Singh Kālīānwālā.⁴ Sardar Chattar Singh Kālīānwālā held a command in the Sikh army; he is stated to have been involved in the brutal murder of prince Peshawara Singh.⁵

Of the Sardars of this family, perhaps, Attar Singh Kālīānwālā son of Sardar Dal Singh Naherna was well known for his temerity and timidity. He held a *jāgīr* of 50,000 rupees,⁶ and was one of the prominent court nobles of the time. He held on farm the '*Adalat-i-Ālā*' (Court of Justice) of Lahore. It is recorded that once rānī Jindan's Council of Regency ordered him to arbitrate between the government and the irregular troops who were clamouring for more pay. When the hearings began, the troops, however, ridiculed him for his low origin and taunted him that rather than administer law he should revert to the practice of his ancestral occupation. The timid Chief Justice of Lahore fled from the violent tumult in the Chambers and took refuge in the Darbār.⁷

In September 1845, the army *pañchāyats* made Attar Singh prisoner along with other Sardars for espousing the cause of Vazier Jawahir Singh, but after the

¹ Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 10 October, 1848-Broughton (BM), fol. 205a.

² Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, Delhi, 1957, p. 96.

³ *Ibid.* p. 203.

⁴ Griffin, *Punjab Chiefs*, ii, p. 392.

⁵ Broadfoot-15 September, 1845-(P) 167 : 28.

⁶ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, Appendix.

⁷ Broadfoot to Government, 4 January, 1845-(P) 164 : 67—"The Sirdar's ancestors before becoming Sikhs were of the barber's caste and the men of General Ventura's regiments on bringing up the reports told him that the administration of justice by barbers was a novelty.

latter's execution, were let off.¹ Attar Singh Kālīānwālā retained his *jāgīrs* and position at the Darbār as a member of the Council of Regency after the first Sikh War. He was one of the signatories of the Instrument of the Annexation of the Punjab on behalf of Maharaja Dalip Singh on 29 March, 1849.

16. The minor valiants

Brief mention must be made here of some of the lesser known families or *jāgīrdārs*, soldiers and commanders, whose attachment to the house of reigning family of Lahore has received scant notice in the annals of time.

(1) The *Ṭheṭhars*. They were Sidhū Jāts of the village Ṭheṭhar near Lahore, who joined the service of the Śukerchakiā Misal under Charat Singh and Mahan Singh. Shamir Singh, and his brother Lakha Singh of this family became minor commanders in Ranjit Singh's army. Shamir Singh fought the battle of Rasulnagar (1778-79) under Mahan Singh, and is reported to have killed the Chaṭha Chief, Pir Muhammad Khan after the latter's surrender. He is reported to have built the fortress of Govindgarh at Amritsar at Ranjit Singh's orders, and became its first *qil'adār* (commandant). He served in the expedition of Kasur (1807); and later in 1819, he was appointed the *thānedār* of Nurpur. He held a *jāgīr* at Gujranwala and died in the year 1824.

(2) The *Rasūlpuriās*. Of the Rasūlpuriās, the most prominent was Jodh Singh, son of Sujān Singh, who held extensive territories in Ambala and the Jullunder Doab, and was driven out of them by the Kalsia Chief. He took refuge at Rasulpur in Taran Taran district. He became a *jāgīrdār* of the Maharaja and served him well in his various military expeditions.

(3) The *Paḍhāniās*. The family of the Paḍhāniās served the Maharaja well. Both Mit Singh Paḍhāniā and his son Jawala Singh Paḍhāniā, the latter nicknamed *Lakhdātā* were the military commanders and *jāgīrdārs* of Ranjit Singh. The former, a valiant soldier, who had entered the service of the Śukerchakiā Misal under Mahan Singh, held a command of 500 horse, and during Ranjit Singh's early reign, took part in the occupation of Lahore (1799), the expeditions of Kasur (1807), and Kashmir (1814); he was killed in action in the latter campaign.³ His son Jawala Singh was assigned additional estates at Haripur-Guler in the Kangra district worth 1,25,000 annually. Jawala Singh distinguished himself in the Mālwa

This was followed by such demonstrations of compelling the Sirdar to resume his ancestral trade that he mounted a horse and fled."

¹ *Ibid.* 26 September, 1845-(P) 167 : 36.

² *Vide.* UT, II ; Griffin, *Punjab Chiefs* ; and Latif, p. 34.

³ *Vide.* Latif, p. 361 ; Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, i, p. 380 ff.

Campaign of 1807, and the expeditions of Multan (1818), Kashmir (1819) and Mankera (1821). He was a brave soldier, and while in charge of the fortress of Attock, he is reported to have held at bay the whole Afghan army.¹ In 1829, he suffered a stroke of paralysis and retired from active service. Jawala Singh was rich and his munificent disposition towards the poor and needy have earned him the popular name of *Lakhdāta* (dispenser of millions). He retained his position as the principal *confidante* of the Maharaja till his death. His magnificent garden, between the metropolis of Lahore and Badami Bagh, was a favourite resort of Ranjit Singh, and also the scene of the gruesome murder of Kanwar Partap Singh by the Sindhianwālā Chiefs in 1843.

(4) The *Pañjhathās*. The Pañjhathās claim to be a family of ancient Rajputs who were in the service of rājā Ranjit Deo of Jammu. One of the family, Randat Singh entered the service of the Śukerchakiā Misal under Mahan Singh. Later, another of the same family, Ram Singh and his son Nidhan Singh joined Ranjit Singh's army in 1798. He took part in the occupation of Lahore (1799), and the battle of Naraingarh (1807). Nidhan Singh, who gave the family its name *pañjhathā* (five-handed) had joined as a *sowār* in the Sikh irregular horse. Soon he rose to position of power in the army by dint of his matchless courage as a soldier. In 1823, while serving under general Hari Singh Nalwā, he routed the Afghan host at Jahangira; he is the hero of the action at the Teri hills and the battle of Naushera (1823) where after the death of Akālī Phula Singh, he held out valiantly till the reserve under the Maharaja came to his rescue and routed the Afghan troops of Muhammad Azim Khan. Nidhan Singh served in the N. W. Frontier under Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā and General Avitabile; he took part in the battle of Jamrud (1837). He died in 1839.

(5) The *Mokāls*. The Mokāls were Sindhū Jāts. Sondhu Singh and Thakur Singh took service in Ranjit Singh's army. Jawand Singh son of Thakur Singh, who joined the Sikh army as a trooper became one of the most distinguished soldiers in Ranjit Singh's time. He took part in the battles of Baisah and Haidru (1813) in which the Sikhs routed the Kabul Vazier Fateh Khan. Later he served in the expedition of Multan (1818) and Kashmir (1819). His fortune rose quickly. He became a companion and a favourite of the Maharaja, who assigned him *jāgīrs* worth 1,35,000 annually. At the Darbār, Jawand Singh was a soldier-cum-courtier. He is described by the official Diarist as "a unique man in frivolous talk."²

(6) The *Ghebās*. Tara Singh Ghebā, the powerful Chief of the Dallewālā Misal, who was a close friend and an associate of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in his

¹ Griffin, *op. cit.*, i, p. 280.

² UT, III (ii), p. 371.

early campaigns illustrates Griffin's apt comment : "like Tarquinius (he) struck down all tall poppies in his garden."¹ He had acquired the title *Ghebā* (wonderous) for his dexterity in lifting cattle and flocks of sheep in the good old days of Sikh confederacies, and later had carved out extensive Dallewala territories in the Upper Jullundur Doab, parts of Ludhiana, Ambala and Ferozepur districts—the entire country east of the river Sutlej yielding an annual revenue of 17,00,000 rupees. He was an intimate ally of Ranjit Singh, but soon after his death in 1807, Ranjit Singh ordered Sardar Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā to annex his entire possessions, which were distributed amongst the Maharaja's favourites.²

(7) The *Chimnīs*. Hukma Singh Chimnī, a soldier, commander-cum-administrator of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, had entered the Śukerchakiā service under Charat Singh as a trooper. He took part in the expeditions of Kasur (1807), Pathankot (1808) and Sialkot (1808). For his vigour and alacrity in war, he won from the Maharaja the affectional sobriquet of *Chimnī*—"a brave diminutive dare-devil." He was raised to the position of a Sardar, and the *nizāmat* of Ramnagar was conferred upon him, and a *jāgīr* worth 60,000 rupees was assigned to him. We next hear of Hukma Singh at the battle of Haidru (1813) when the Sikhs defeated the Kabul Vazier Fateh Khan. A year later, Hukma Singh with a small force drove the Afghan host under Yar Muhammad Khan away from the fortress of Attock and plundered the retreating enemy.

In 1818, the Maharaja appointed Hukma Singh as the *nāzim* of Attock and Hazara, but the soldier proved a bad administrator. By nature he was capricious, violent and impetuous. His intolerent administrative measures raised a storm ; a *jehād* was raised against the Sikh oppressors by the powerful Tarain Chief and the troops under Hukma Singh were routed and driven out of Hazara. The Maharaja was so displeased with him, that he was recalled, a fine of 1,25,000 was imposed upon him, and he was dismissed from service. Hukma Singh Chimni died a broken-hearted man, and soon after his death, all his estates were sequestered.³

17. The Bhā'is

The Bhā'is—Ram Singh, Gobind Ram and Gurmukh Singh belonged to the family of Sikh priests noted for their religious sanctity and scriptural learning. Ram Singh and Gobind Ram were the grandsons of Bhā'ī Harbhaj Rai, a famous

¹ Ranjit Singh, Delhi, 1957, p. 96.

² *Vide*. Generally, UT, II ; Latif, p. 369.

³ On Hukma Singh Chumni, *vide*. the local histories of Kanahaya Lal-Ranjitnāma, Lahore, 1876 ; Sohan Lal Suri's 'Umadat-ut-Tawārikh'. See also Griffin, *Punjab Chiefs* ; and Murray and others.

Sikh priest of great religious influence and universal respect, who died at Lahore in 1802. Gurmukh Singh was the son of Bhā'ī Sant Singh, the High-Priest of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. They were the official soul-keepers of the Maharaja, and officiated at all religious ceremonies, expounded the Sikh scriptures to him, and were interpreters, sooth-sayers, astronomers and physicians combined. As royal priests they commanded great respect at the Darbār, and were recipients of munificent grants and estates.

But although, both Ram Singh and Gobind Ram exercised great personal influence over the Maharaja, and Gurmukh Singh was a great royal favourite, the Bhā'īs played a minor political rôle during the lifetime of Ranjit Singh. They represented an innocuous though influential group whose priestly genius after the death of the Maharaja blossomed forth into mutual rivalries and political intrigue. In order to safeguard their position of wealth and privilege at the Dārbar, they drifted into alignments with sundry court factions. During the ascendancy of Kanwar Naunihal Singh, Bhā'īs Ram Singh and Gobind Ram stood by his side in opposition to Vazier Dhian Singh; they advised the prince to assume sovereign powers;¹ and unnecessarily embroiled themselves with the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs and actively co-operated in the gruesome murder of Chet Singh.²

The mutual rivalries of the Bhā'īs—Gurmukh Singh vs. Ram Singh and Gobind Ram purely for selfish ends, prompted them to take opposite sides against each other in the troubled political times soon after. While Ram Singh and Gobind Ram espoused the cause of Mā'ī Chand Kaur, Gurmukh Singh supported her rival, the illegitimate Sher Singh.³ By this time, however, they had lost their prominence at the Sikh Darbār for spiritual enlightenment. None of them possessed political wisdom or had experience of statecraft or military matters. With the accession of Sher Singh, the influence both of Ram Singh and Gobind Ram had sunk low, and the star of Gurmukh Singh arose.⁴

Gurmukh Singh is described to have a reputation of deep piety, great cunning, but little ability. He possessed scant political imagination, and as he gained influence over the new Maharaja, he aspired to supplant Dhian Singh as the principal minister of the State.⁵ Yet, he played an effete though dangerous role in the political affairs. He tried to reconcile the Sindhiānwālā Sardars with

¹ Wade—19 October, 1839-(P) 141-III : 189.

² Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, i, p. 145.

³ *Ibid.* ii, p. 50.

⁴ Wade—15 January, 1840-(P) 148 : 17.

⁵ Clerk—15 March, 1842-(P) 153 : 46.

Sher Singh, antagonised the Dogra faction at the Darbār, and instigated the Sindhiānwālās to assassinate both Maharaja Sher Singh and Vazier Dhian Singh. Thus blinded by political ambition and fearful of his own life, he became a direct party to the murder of his sovereign, the heir-apparent and the Vazier.¹

But Nemesis soon overtook the perfidy of the pious priest. Soon after the extirpation of Sindhiānwālā regicides, Hira Singh ordered his arrest and that of his ally Misser Beli Ram and both were secretly put to death by Shaikh Imam-ud-Din, the governor of Jullundur Doab.²

18. The Missees

Misser Beli Ram and his four brothers, Rup Lal, Ram Kishan, Megh Raj and Sukh Raj held important positions and commanded the confidence of the Maharaja. They were the nephews of Misser Basti Ram, a native of village Kahan near Katas. He was the treasurer of Maha Singh and Ranjit Singh appointed him incharge of Amritsar. Misser Beli Ram became incharge of the *Toshakhana* or Regalia, Treasury and Robes. Misser Megh Raj was incharge of the royal treasure at the Gobindgarh fortress. Rup Lal was the celebrated governor of the Jullundur Doab. Ram Kishan remained in attendance at the court, and Sukh Raj became a commander in the infantry. The family held a *jāgīr* of 60,000 rupees and they farmed districts worth 2,00,000 rupees annually. They served their master with loyalty and efficiency, and the Maharaja reposed such confidence in Misser Beli Ram that the accounts of the *Toshakhana* were seldom checked.

The Missees occupied positions of trust and power during Maharaja Kharak Singh's short rule when they earned the enmity of rājā Dhian Singh and Kanwar Naunihal Singh. On a flimsy charge, all of them were removed from office and put in irons in October 1839. However, on the insistence of Maharaja Kharak Singh and the party favourable to them in the Darbār, they were liberated and restored to their original positions in January 1840.³ In September 1845, after the destruction of the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs, Hira Singh arrested Misser Beli Ram and Ram Kishan, and at his orders, both of them were put to death by Sheikh Iman-ud-Din, the governor of the Jullundur Doab.⁴

¹ UT, IV (iii), p. 30 ; Gyan Singh, *Tawārīkh-i-Gurū Khālsa*, iii, p. 661 ; Macgregor, ii, p. 16 ff ; Murray, ii, p. 279 and others.

² Richmond-24 September, 1843-(P) 158 : 125 ; UT, IV (iii), p. 33 ff ; Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, i, p. 285.

³ Wade to Maddock, 1 January, 1840 (P) 148 : 1. The delivery was obtained by the payment a *nazarāna* of 5,00,000 rupees to the Kanwar, and bribes of 2,00,000 rupees and 1,00,000 rupees to other Sardars, *vide*. Wade to Maddock, 24 January, 1840-(P) 148-I (19).

⁴ Richmond to Thomson, 24 September, 1843-(P) 158 : 125.

19. Generals and Commanders

The *Khālsa Darbār Records* and the '*Umdat-ut-Tawārikh*' mention the names of the prominent generals and commanders of the army of Ranjit Singh. (1) General Ventura : Commander of the *Fauj-i-Khās*.¹ (2) General Court : Commander of the French Legion. (3) Prince Kharak Singh : Commander. (4) Prince Sher Singh : Commander. (5) Dīwān Muhkam Chand : Commander-in-Chief of Sikh Army (1806-1814). (6) Ram Dayal : Commander, grandson of Dīwān Muhkam Chand, killed in Hazara, 1820. (7) Misser Diwan Chand : a Brahman, conqueror of Multan (1818) ; commanded the Kashmir expedition, 1819 ; the title of *Zafarjung* conferred on him after the conquest of Multan, d. 1825. (8) Sardar Fateh Singh Kālīānwālā. (9) Sardar Nihal Singh Attārīwālā. (10) Sardar Feteḥ Singh Ahlūwālīā. (11) Sardar Budh Singh Sindhiānwālā. (12) Sardar Attar Singh Sindhiānwālā. (13) Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā. *Created full Generals in 1836* : (14) Ram Singh son of Jamadār Khushal Singh. (15) Gujjar Singh. (16) Tej Singh, a nephew of Jamadār Khushal Singh. (17) Sardar Ajit Singh. (19) Misser Sukh Raj. (20) Mī'ān Udham Singh. (21) Avitabile. *Created Generals after 1836* : (21) Dīwān Jodh Ram. (22) Gulab Singh. (23) Dhaukal Singh. (24) Jawala Singh. (25) Kahn Singh Mānn. (26) Mehtab Singh Majīthīā. (27) Partap Singh of Punch. (28) Gurdit Singh Majīthīā.²

20. Dīwān Muhkam Chand

We have dealt with separately the *fīrangī* officers of the Maharaja. Some of the Indian officers of the Maharaja's army deserve mention. Foremost amongst these stands out Dīwān Muhkam Chand, to whom the Maharaja owed much in his early campaigns. Muhkam Chand was a Khatri by caste, and previous to joining the Maharaja's service, he was in the employ of Sahib Singh Bhangī of Gujrat. For almost a decade, 1805-1814, he was Ranjit Singh's chief military adviser and a *de facto* Commander-in-Chief of his armed forces. He was an excellent soldier and a faithful servant of the Maharaja, who ousted the Fyzulpuriā Misal from its possessions in 1811, added Jullundur, Phillour, Patti and Hetpur to the Maharaja's kingdom. He defeated the Afghans in the battle of Haidru in October 1813. He died at Phillour in 1814 and was much mourned by the Maharaja and his Court.

Dīwān Muhkam Chand was a man of determination and sound judgment ; to his master he gave unstinted loyalty, and to the organisation of his army his

¹ The *Fauj-i-Khās* or the Special Brigade raised and trained by General Ventura, an Italian Officer, was a mixed brigade of regular infantry (3,000 men), cavalry (composed of a regiment each of grenadiers and dragoons, and a troop of life-guards), and an artillery corps of 30 guns. It was a crack brigade drilled and disciplined in European style. The cost of its maintenance is estimated at 10,00,000 rupees.

² See generally, UT, II and III. ; *Catalogue of Khālsa Darbār Records*, p. 33.

military skill. He led the Maharaja's forces in the Cis-Sutlej region during the three Mālwa campaigns (1806-1808) and the Maharaja conferred upon him 102 villages in the *ta'aluqas* of Zira, Kot Kapura, and Dharamkot and elsewhere of the total annual revenue of 1,54,235 rupees.¹ On the death of this brave and valiant general, his son Moti Ram was appointed governor of Jullundur and the garrison commander of the strategic fortress of Phillour. Ram Dayal, the grandson of Muhkam Chand was also appointed a commander in the Sikh army. Ram Dayal distinguished himself as the commander of the Sikh division in the third Kashmir expedition in 1819, in which although the Sikhs were routed, but his bravery was highly appreciated. He was killed in action in the Hazara campaign of 1820. He is described as a brave leader of the Khālsa army.²

Moti Ram, Muhkam Chand's son, however, continued in service. He was appointed governor of Kashmir in 1820, which office he held till 1826. He was a wise and cautious ruler, and with the help of Pandit Bir Dhar he endeavoured to recover his contracted revenue of 53,00,000 rupees by encouraging the shawl trade which fetched 10,00,000 rupees annually. But the Dogra faction at Lahore was jealous of him and he was ousted from the position of power in 1827. He left Lahore soon after, and returned to Benares, his property and *jāgīrs* having been sequestered due to the machinations of rājā Dhian Singh. The family *jāgīrs* of Dīwān Muhkam Chand had already been resumed by the Lahore Government two years earlier.³

21. Misser Diwan Chand

Misser Diwan Chand rose from the position of a clerk in the Maharaja's artillery to become one of his foremost generals. Driven out by the vendetta of Nodh Singh, the Nakā'ī Chief, under whom he served earlier, he came to Lahore and obtained employment as a petty clerk. He soon rose to the position of a commandant in 1814 due to the death of the artillery commander Ghaus Khan. In 1818, when an army 25,000 strong marched to Multan under prince Kharak Singh, he commanded a division of the army. He exhibited such an energy and talent in the campaign that after the conquest of Multan the Maharaja bestowed upon him the title of *Zafarjung*. Diwan Chand commanded the Sikh army in 1818 which conquered Kashmir. In 1821, he reduced the fort and town of Bhakkar, and took part in the siege of Mankera the same year. In 1824 Diwan Chand died at Lahore of a stroke of paralysis, and the Maharaja and the Court mourned the loss of a brave and valiant general. His brother Sukh Dayal was created Dīwān and confirmed in the family *jāgīr*.

¹ *Statement of Conquests and Grants of Rajah Runjeet Singh*-Ochterlony to Edmonstone, BSPC (I) 29 July, 1809, C 3 and 4 ; *ibid.* 17 March, 1809, BSPC (I) 25 July, 1809, C3.

² Latif, p. 420-21.

³ Wade to Murray, 3 May, 1825- (P) 25 : 82.

CHAPTER 13

THE *FIRANGI* OFFICERS AT THE COURT OF RANJIT SINGH

1. Advent of European adventurers

THE ADVENT OF EUROPEAN adventurers into India began in the late eighteenth century. The Mughals had some 100 European gunners in their service. Some of these adventurers had drifted into the service of the Marathas, of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan in Mysore, and the Nizam of Hyderabad. William O'Brien, an Irishman, and a British military deserter entered the service of rājā Sansar Chand Katoch in the remote Kangra Valley in 1814. Moorcroft records in 1820 that O'Brien and another Englishman named James were in the service of the powerful Kangra ruler and that they had raised for the rājā an army of 1,400 and had established a factory of small arms in the hills.¹ O'Brien not only trained the hillsmen and equipped them with arms and accoutrements in European style, but had also the general control of the rājā's administration. His name is well known in the hilly tracts of the Kangra Valley. Pierre Cuillier (Perron), a French seaman rose to the command of Sindhia's army and became Daulat Rao Sindhia's all-powerful deputy at Delhi. He took steps to prevent the extension of British influence in northern India, and dabbled into the politics of the Sikh country. He is said to have entered into a treaty with Ranjit Singh with vague military and financial arrangements which stipulated that the Sikh ruler would assist him in the Sutlej-Jumna region in return for similar assistance to Ranjit Singh in the conquest of the territory south of the river Sutlej.²

When in 1801, the Sikh Chiefs in the Cis-Sutlej region were harassed by George Thomas, they made an appeal to Perron to help them against the ravages of Thomas, he readily agreed. The Sikh Chiefs accepted Maratha paramountcy in the region, but Perron imposed upon them an annual tribute amounting almost to 1/3rd of their revenues.³ Another adventurer George Thomas, a British military deserter and a soldier of fortune, after a colourful career, had found a petty kingdom at Hansi, in the wastelands of Haryana.⁴

¹ *Travels*, i, p. 125-26.

² For public correspondence on the subject *vide*. generally, PRC, ix, No. 39-40; Ochterlony to Wellesley, 7 December, 1804-BSPC(I) 31 January, 1805, C230; Wellesley to Lake, 2 August, 1803, C11, para 5.

³ The total income of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs amounted to 3,00,000 rupees. The Sardars of Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Khaithal and others were subjected to a levy of 1,00,000 rupees.

⁴ The career of George Thomas has already been briefly sketched, *vide*. Chapter 4(9-10) *supra*. He deserted the British navy in 1781 in which he served as a gunner, took

2. Arrival at Sikh Court

After the establishment of Sikh power in the Punjab some of these *firangi* soldiers of fortune drifted towards northern India and Ranjit Singh employed them in his civil and military service. We have examined in some detail elsewhere,¹ the extent of influence which some of these men exercised over Ranjit Singh's army. They were employed under a regular contract under which they were required to serve. General Allard's cryptic observation to Dr. Honigberger is significant in this respect : "It is difficult to get an appointment here, but still more to get one's dismissal."² They were bound down to domesticate themselves by marriage and settle down in the Punjab, not to eat beef or smoke in public, grow beards and wear turbans like the Sikhs, and do nothing to offend the Sikh religion.

According to contemporary observers, notwithstanding their enhanced emoluments and luxurious mode of living, the position of Ranjit Singh's European officers was not very enviable. Obligated to live in comparative luxury and under restrictions imposed by a capricious ruler, none of them could amass a fortune.³ Ranjit Singh always suspected their loyalty if not their devotion. Generally, the Khālṣa soldier resented serving under a foreigner, and the Sikh commanders who received 1/10th of the pay of European officers, were extremely jealous of them. At the same time, extraordinary deductions were imposed on special occasions on the pay of the *firangi* officers, which were kept in long arrears and Ranjit Singh seldom granted them leave to visit their country.⁴

The exact number of these European officers who took service under Ranjit Singh cannot be determined, though Carmichael Smyth enumerates them as 39 in all—Italians, French, English and Anglo-Indians.⁵ These include those who were in command of Sikh Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery ; only one was recruited for civil service, two as medical men, and two as engineers. The pay of those who were put in battalion command varied from 150 rupees to 1,000 rupees per mensem. The most notable and trusted by the Maharaja were Court, Ventura, Allard and Avitabile, but

service in the Nizam's army, but soon afterwards, came to Delhi and secured employment under Begum Samru, and later joined the Maratha army under Appa Khande Rao, who assigned to him Jhajjar as *jāgīr*. Thomas fortified the town, named it Georgegarh and shook off Maratha yoke. He established himself at Hansi, raised troops, struck coins and declared himself an independent ruler. See, particularly, Francklin, *Military Adventures of George Thomas*, Calcutta, 1803 ; Grey, *European Adventurers in Northern India, 1785-1849*, p. 34 *et seq.*

¹ *Vide*. Chapter 15(14) *infra*.

² *Thirty-Five Years in the East*, London, 1852, p. 46.

³ Jacquemont, *Journal*, p. 56 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 56.

⁵ *Vide*. *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, London, 1847. Appendix, p. xxxvi-xxxvii. Grey (p. 15), however, estimates their number above 100.

none of them was allowed independent command when sent on an expedition. These *firangī* officers lived a life of ease and affluence and formed the European Court nobility at the Darbār. None was allowed to become too powerful and rich; they attended the Court, but except in military matters were seldom consulted or had any say in political affairs.

3. The 'Suleman Bey' of Ranjit Singh

Jean Francois Allard had seen service in Italy and Spain till 1814, and as a Captain of Cuirassiers had taken part in the battle of Waterloo. After the fall of Napoleon, he fled from France for his Bonapartist sympathies and proceeded to Tehran where he sought service in Shah Abbas' army. Here he met General Ventura, an Italian who had also served Napoleon and had fled from his country under similar circumstances. Both of them having failed in obtaining service in Persia, left Tehran and travelling as merchants through Kandahar arrived at Lahore in March 1822 and sought service under the Sikh ruler. Ranjit Singh suspected their bonafides, and after a great deal of negotiations and verification of their credentials from the British Agent at Ludhiana, he agreed to employ them in his army.¹

Allard possessed the qualifications and experience of a trained military officer. He was put in charge of training of the Sikh Cavalry, and within a few years he raised 4 regiments—a regiment of cavalry, one of lancers, and two of dragoons, a total strength of 3,000 horse. European discipline introduced by Allard in the Sikh cavalry is variously spoken of as of high order,² and the *Francese Campo* distinguished itself in the battle of Naushera and the expeditions of Peshawar and Kangra.

Allard rose to eminent heights at Lahore. Besides a salary of 1,00,000 francs a year, he held numerous *jāgīrs* and kept an establishment on the most splendid scale, and due to the Maharaja's munificence he amassed a fortune. Jacquemont calls him the Suleman Bey of Ranjit Singh.³ He adopted La Fayette's flag for his troops, and his cavalry highly impressed the Governor-General Lord William Bentinck when he met the Maharaja at Rupar in 1831.

Allard served the Maharaja for well over 12 years. In June 1834, he went to France on leave and returned after an absence of 18 months. He brought with him a letter of compliments from king Louis Philippe of France for Ranjit Singh

¹ See generally, Lawrence—*Adventures of an Officer in the Punjaub*, i. p. 15 ff. Prinsep—*Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, Calcutta, 1834, p. 104 sq.

² But, *vide*. Chapter 15(7) *infra*.

³ *Letters from India*, London, 1835, ii, p. 64.

which caused a mild flutter both at Fort William and Leadenhill Street.¹ In 1838, Allard was sent to Peshawar to help General Avitabile in the administration of the province, but differences soon arose between them. He sent a report to the Maharaja on the inadequate fortifications of the Shabkdar and other forts on the frontier. A famine had at this time been raging in Peshawar and he suggested to the Maharaja the exemption of octroi tax on wheat and grains.² Avitabile strongly resented Allard's interference in the administration of the country. Allard declared that one who was concerned with the financial affairs could not properly understand the administration and control of the army.³ Allard died at Peshawar of heart failure or incurable constipation in January 1839 and was much grieved by the ailing Maharaja.⁴ His last remains were brought to Lahore and he was buried with military honours.

4. Baron of the Fauj-i-Khas

Jean Baptiste Ventura was a Colonel of Infantry under Napoleon, after whose fall he quitted France and arrived at Lahore in company of Allard in 1822. The *Lahore Akhbār* records in some detail that the Maharaja checked the bonafides of both Allard and Ventura from the British authorities before agreeing to take them in service. He also ascertained from them the conditions prevailing in Afghanistan, for, he told them that after settling Peshawar, he proposed to march on Kabul and Kandahar. Both of them humoured the Maharaja by informing him that the way from Kabul to Kandahar was open and that no Afghan army could stand in the way of Sikh arms occupying Afghanistan.⁵

¹ This letter was somehow intercepted by the British Agent at Ludhiana, who reported that Allard had returned to Lahore as an accredited envoy of the French emperor and that the French Government was fondly trying to gain political influence in the Punjab. (*Vide*. Macnaghten despatches to Wade dated 9 January, 13 February and 12 May, 1837-(P) 119 : 4, 8 and 19). The matter was taken up by the British Ambassador in Paris with the French authorities. Lord Auckland wrote to the Home Government on 9 October : "The French Ministers did not behave ingenuously on this subject to Lord Grenville, and it is in the purest spirit of unfriendliness to us that they are endeavouring to blow up the bubble of national influence in the Punjab. Ranjit Singh seems to be frank and sincere in rather wishing to discourage them to extend this connection, and he understands that resort of French adventurers to his Court will be checked as much as it may be in our power to do so." *Broughton Papers* (British Museum) 36473, fol. 197 ff.

² UT, III (iv), p. 406.

³ *Ibid.* p. 19.

⁴ See generally on the subject, Masson, i. p. 405, 432 ; Hugel, p. 355 ; Jacquemont, ii, p. 64 ; Latif, p. 452 ff ; Grey, p. 80 *et seq.* ; and Fraser, *Life of James Skinner* ii, p. 214 ff. Allard is quite well spoken of by almost all contemporary travellers in the Punjab, who observe his literary knowledge, humanity, justice and wisdom.

⁵ (P) 93 : 46, 94, 106.

Ventura was entrusted with the task of raising and training Sikh infantry in European discipline. He raised 4 battalions of the *Fauj-i-Khās*.¹ His salary inclusive of the *jāgirs* amounted approximately to 3,000 per month. He was an able military leader, by temperament reserved, and a perfect courtier. He married an Armenian lady at Ludhiana in 1825. Later he is reported to have fallen in love with a Muhammadan maid or a dancing girl named Kaulan, whom he refused to marry. The official Lahore Diarist observes that the Maharaja on learning of the affair issued him an admonitory order : "Wisdom, love and honour are those things which are valued more by the wisest of the world, and at the moment when one is overwhelmingly in love, wisdom and honour vanish away."²

Ventura lived in a magnificently built residence in the precincts of Anarkali's old tomb at Lahore. The official Lahore Diarist also mentions a garden of Ventura Sahib.³ Baron Charles Hugel refers both to the magnificent house and the garden : "General Ventura's house built by himself and General Allard, though of no great size, combines the splendour of the East with the comforts of a European residence. On the walls of the entrance hall, before the range of pillars on the first storey, was portrayed the reception of the two French officers at the court of Ranjit Singh, consisting of many thousand figures. The second room is adorned with a profusion of small mirrors in gilt frames, which have an excellent effect ; the third is a large hall, extending the entire width of the house, and terminating in sleeping apartments. A short distance behind the house stands an ancient tomb, crowned with a lofty dome. This is now tenanted by the families of the European officers. Standing in the midst of the garden, which has been laid out in good taste, it forms a very striking contrast to the surrounding sandy plains."⁴

Ventura served in the campaigns of Multan, the Derajat and Peshawar, and the Maharaja employed him in the management of the districts on the frontier. The battalions called after his name are highly spoken of by Murray, Jacquemont, Osborne and Barr. At one time Ranjit Singh proposed to appoint him as the governor of Kashmir, and although we have no corroborative evidence, Baron Hugel asserts that Ventura acted as the Qāzī and Chief Judge of Lahore,⁵ and that he was the Commander-in-Chief of the Khālsa army. The French traveller Jacquemont who became very well acquainted with Ventura observes that he was adept in realising arrears of dues from the tributaries—he levied forced contributions of 6 lakhs of rupees on the Nawab of Bahawalpur, when he owed merely 2½ lakhs of rupees to the State. For this achievement the Maharaja appointed him governor

¹ *Ibid.* 93 : 64.

² UT, III (iv), p. 303.

³ *Ibid.* III (iii), p. 319.

⁴ *Travels in Kashmir etc.*, p. 283-84.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 317.

of the Derajat on the condition that he would pay a revenue of 11½ lakhs annually to the State. Latif, however, asserts that General Ventura made a great deal of money from his farm of the Derajat.¹

Ventura went on leave to Europe in 1837, and he was one of the few European officers who were retained in the service of the Lahore Government after the death of Ranjit Singh. It is also evident that he took part in court intrigues prevailing at that time. "Ventura is the only European there," wrote Lord Auckland to the Home Government in Augst 1840, "who seems at present disposed to play the game of ambition. He is commanding a force in the hills, where he has been more successful by bad faith than by military power."² Ventura supported Sher Singh and became his best adviser against the opposition of the Dogra minister Dhian Singh.³ In 1843, after the assassination of Sher Singh, the Khālsa army *pañchāyats* made things too hot for him and he quitted the Punjab⁴ after selling his *jāgīr* and residence which fetched the paltry amount of 80,000 rupees.⁵ He returned to France and died in 1858.

5. Paolo di Avitabile

Of all the continental adventurers and soldiers of fortune who took service under Ranjit Singh, General Avitabile presents a character of contradictions of the highest order. He is described as a mild, sober, and a skillfully considerate officer. Cotton designates him as a man of matchless honour and glory.⁶ At the same time he is called a man of moral delinquencies and fiendish cruelties—"a perfect monster of cruelty, who has added European refinements of torture and executions to already long Asiatic list; passionate and revengeful; unscrupulous in gratifying his lusts; rapacious in extorting unlawful gains; hanging, torturing and

¹ *History of the Panjab*, p. 465.

² Auckland to Hobhouse (Private), 15 August, 1840—Broughton, (BM) 36473, fol. 344b.

³ Ellenborough to the Duke of Wellington, 11 May, 1843, (EP) PRO/30/2(28/12).

⁴ It is evident that during the difficult times following the assassination of Maharaja Sher Singh, the few European military officers left in the service of the Lahore Government felt insecure at the Sikh capital. Ventura, however, had estates in the Cis-Sutlej territory where he had removed his family. From the British records it is also established that he continually supplied intelligence to the British Agent at Ludhiana regarding the state of affairs in the Punjab (*Vide*. Richmond to Government, 2 October, 1843 ISP (I) 23 March, 1844. No. 492 (Enclosure). Obviously, for this service, the British paid him in the settlement of his estate a sum of £ 20,000 and an annuity of £ 300 for his residence and his daughter's estate.

⁵ According to the Lahore Diarist (III, ii, p. 265 and III, iv, p. 430) Ventura possessed *jāgīrs* "half on this side (of the Sutlej) and half across the river." His daughter also held an estate of 2,500 rupees in the *ta'aluqa* of Sahnewal.

⁶ *Life of Avitabile*, Calcutta, 1906, p. 585.

mutilating without trial, at a mere whim ; unmerciful and unforgiving ; an immoderate drinker and scoffer at everything sacred and divine.”¹

Born in 1791 at Agerola, he started his career at the age of 16 in the Neapolitan Militia, served for a number of years as an artillery sergeant-major in the regular army of the King of Naples resigning the service in 1817. A few years later we find him in the service of Muhammad Ali Mirza, the governor of Kirman-shah in Persia. Later, he was appointed to discipline and train Kurdish levies and obtained a civil appointment as administrator of the Kurdish districts. In 1826, he obtained military service at Lahore through the good offices of General Ventura. He was appointed to command a battalion of infantry on a salary of 200 rupees per month. As an officer with military skill and utter ruthlessness, Avitabile rose quickly in the favour of Ranjit Singh, who appointed him in 1829 as the governor of Wazirabad, allowing him, at the same time, to retain the command of his military brigade.

Joseph Wolff, who visited Wazirabad in 1832, testifies to Avitabile's ability as a civil administrator, a judge and a ruthless despot. The famous Neapolitan, he observes, spoke Italian, French, Persian, and Hindustani with equal facility. He had improved the town of Wazirabad to a remarkable extent. He kept the city clean, and had a fine Palace and a beautiful carriage for himself. He was a clever, cheerful man, and full of fun. He told Wolff at once that he would show him his *angeli custodes*, and then took him to his bedroom, the walls of which were covered with pictures of dancing girls. Then he showed him the marks of civilisation which he had introduced in the country. They rode outside the town, and there Wolff saw before him about six gibbets, upon which a great number of malefactors were hanging.²

Avitabile's rule of Wazirabad is described as wise and vigorous. He inflicted death penalty for the most trivial offence. For theft, the body of the culprit was quartered and hung at the city gate ; for petty larceny the culprit was deprived of an ear and a hand. Dr. Martin Honigberger, who lived with Avitabile for three years at Wazirabad and treated him medically, observes that the pleasure which Avitabile took in seeing people hung by dozens must be attributed to the affection of his brain.³

¹ For the career and life of this remarkable soldier of fortune, *vide.* generally, Cotton, J. J.—*Life of General Avitabile*, Calcutta, 1905. Grey, C.—*European Adventurers in Northern India, 1785-1849*. Lawrence, H.M.L.—*Adventures of an Officer in the Punjaub*, 2 Vols., Delhi, 1842. Edwardes, H. and Merivale, H.—*Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, London, 1872. Hugel, Baron C.—*Travels in Kashmir and Punjab*, London, 1845. UT, III (i-iv) and (P) 73 : 270 ; 110 : 43 ; 401 : 1, 115, 120, 125 etc.

² *Travels and Adventures*, ii, p. 61.

³ *Twenty-Five Years in the East*, London, 1852, p. 53.

6. "Gallows and gibbets"

As the civil and military governor of Peshawar Avitabile proved his ability as a stern and ferocious administrator. He established a rough and ready administration to curb the unruly activities of the turbulent province by a system of gallows and gibbets as a of mode summary punishments, collective fines and reprisals. The state of affairs in the province was anarchical. Crime ran rampant everywhere ; murders and assassinations were the order of the day. Successive governors had failed to curb the lawlessness of the savage and ruthless tribesmen, who habitually murdered Sikh officials. Three-fourth of the revenue remained in arrears, and the expense of running the civil and military administration had mounted up.

To set things right in the *subāh* of Peshawar, Ranjit Singh had given a free hand to General Avitabile. He is renowned for his ruthless rule of which we have numerous sordid and gruesome accounts. With relentless savagery, he established the authority of the Lahore Darbār in the excessively turbulent region. He eradicated all crime from the frontier district by the simple method of extirpation. His biographer details graphically the rule of gallows and gibbets which Avitabile established in his own words : "When I marched to Peshawar, I sent on in advance a number of wooden posts, which my men erected around the walls of the city. The men scoffed at them, and laughed at the madness of the *Ferangi*, and louder still when my men came and laid coils of rope at the foot of the posts. Guns and swords, said they, were the arms to rule the city, and not sticks and ropes. However, when my preparations were completed, they found one fine morning dangling from these posts, fifty of the worst characters in Peshawar, and I repeated the exhibition every day till I made a scarcity of brigands and murderers. Then I had to deal with liars and tale-bearers. My method with them was to cut out their tongues. And then a surgeon appeared and professed to be able to restore their speech. I sent for him and cut out his tongue also. After that there was peace, and in six months there was no crime in Peshawar."¹

H. M. Durand gives an eye-witness account of the rough and ready administration of Peshawar : "I called upon Avitabile and found him employed in giving decisions with his judges around him. Two Kaziz, two Hindus, and two Sikhs formed his conclave. He gave us a sketch of his policy, which was amusing enough. He never used his troops to quell disturbances, but when two troops fight he offers them ammunition to fight it out. Suspended outside the court were ghastly warnings to the disaffected population. Between the trees were double and triple rows of unfortunate culprits, hanging one above the other."²

¹ Cotton, *Life of General Avitabile*, Calcutta, 1906, p. 543.

² *Life of Sir Henry Marrian Durant*, i, p. 63.

Avitabile was one of the few European generals whom Ranjit Singh trusted fully, irrespective of the suspicions of the Maharaja that he was embezzling the revenues of Peshawar.¹ His military salary rose to 60,000 rupees per annum, and he amassed a fortune in India amounting to £ 50,000.² At Lahore also he lived in style in a fort-like residence which he built at the *Budh-kā-Āwā*, and he kept a numerous harem. One of his daughters from an Afghan woman, he married to a cook, giving her a magnificent dowry of gold and jewels, before he departed for Europe.

Alexander Burnes who visited the Maharaja in 1838 told him that Avitabile had managed the country of Peshawar so well that it had become prosperous. He testified to the efficiency of the army under his command, and of the impregnability of the fortress of Fatehgarh which Avitabile had fortified so well.³ Contemporary writers and those who had the opportunity of witnessing Avitabile's administration of Peshawar, all speak of his ability, his stern rule, and hospitality to foreigners. His monstrosities and crude immoralities, his utter disbelief in God, his principles of highhanded strategem, and his steady resolution are some of the vices and virtues of this officer, and in these none of the white officers of Ranjit Singh could remotely match him.⁴

7. Architect of artillery

Claude Auguste Court is described by Henry Lawrence as "the respectable of all the French officers in Ranjit Singh's service." He was an accomplished anti-

¹ UT, III (v), p. 543.

² Havelock (*Narrative of War in Afghanistan*, 1842, ii, p. 195 ff.) records that Avitabile had accumulated 8,00,000 rupees which he salted away in British securities in India. Of the general's administration and his private life, Havelock gives a descriptive account: "The general, though in private life the mildest of men, rules Peshawar with a rod of iron, the only means of governing them. He has established his military, financial, and civil headquarters in the *sarai* called the *Ghorakhatra*. He particularly, and very justly, prides himself on the excellence of his table, and keeps an establishment of no less than eight cooks, all well versed in the mysteries of Persian, English and French cookery. He is frank and gay, and good-humoured person, as well as an excellent ruler and a skilfull officer. His reputation as a skilfull governor had been well established in the Punjab, and even reached India, when he was incharge of the town and district of Wazirabad, and Ranjit Singh showed his usual sagacity when he entrusted the government of Peshawar to him soon after its conquest. He is a man of princely habits, and his dress, chargers and equipage all partake of the splendour which is calculated to uphold and give eclat to his authority amongst a people like the Afghans."

³ UT, III (v), p. 542-43.

⁴ For further details of Avitabile's career in the Punjab, particularly after Ranjit Singh's death *vide* generally, Grey, p. 131 ff.; Pearse, *Memories of Alexander Gardiner*, p. 322 ff.; Mackinnon, *Military Service in Afghanistan*, p. 200 *et seq.*; Havelock, *Narrative of War in Afghanistan*, ii, p. 195-97; LPD(iv), p. 319-20, 338; (P) 110:43; 73:270; 40 1, 33, 115, 125 etc.

quarian and geographer—"a shrewd man of high literary attainments and retiring disposition." How he arrived in northern India is not exactly known, but while in service at Persia, he made Avitabile's acquaintance, and it is generally understood that he entered Lahore service along with him in 1827. He was entrusted by the Maharaja with the organisation of Sikh artillery for which he possessed considerable talents and scientific knowledge. He distinguished himself as an artillery commander and an ordnance officer. Court taught the Sikhs to become excellent gunners irrespective of their habitual aversion to that arm of military service. "The striking improvement in the Sikh artillery," observes Pearse, "which was effected in the twelve remaining years of the Maharaja's life must be largely attributed to Court's exertions, for all accounts of Sikh army agree in stating that he was an excellent officer, and entirely devoted to his professional duties."¹

Under Court's supervision guns of high calibre and brass shells were cast in the ordnance factory in the Lahore fort. The foundry produced batteries of heavy, medium and light guns, small arms, zumburks, howitzers and shells. Officers of Lahore army were sent to India to receive training in the manufacture of guns and small arms. Shells were cast in pewter and brass at another manufactory at the Idgāh. The guns were copies of the British models presented to Ranjit Singh at various times.² The copies appeared almost equally good. Lieut. William Barr who saw a parade of Court's artillery at Peshawar in 1839 observes: "When it is considered that all we saw was the work of General's own knowledge, and we reflect on the difficulties he has had to surmount, it is matter of almost wonder to behold the perfection to which he has brought his artillery."³

Court received a salary of 2,500 rupees a month besides a *jāgīr*. He was promoted a general by Ranjit Singh in 1836, and continued to serve the Lahore

¹ *Memories of Alexander Gardiner*, London, 1898, p. 326.

² Sita Ram Kohli's excellent account (*Journal of Indian History*, September 1922 and *Ranjit Singh Centenary Memorial Volume*, Amritsar, 1939, p. 71-77) estimates the strength of the Sikh artillery at various periods of Ranjit Singh's reign and after as under:

Year	Strength	No. of Guns		Monthly Salary	Remarks
		Guns	Swivels		
1818-19	834	22	190	5,840 rupees	Besides this there were about one hundred pieces placed in the various forts of the Kingdom
1828-29	3,778	130	280	28,390	
1838-39	4,535	188	280	32,906	
1843-44	8,280	282	300	82,893	
1845-46	10,524	376	300	89,251	

He estimates the cost of casting a gun of light calibre to about 3,240 rupees. The cannons of heavy calibre, however, cost much more. Hugel (p. 329) records Ranjit Singh having asked Court to provide a missile for his artillery, which shell cost about 30,000 rupees.

³ *Journey of a March from Delhi to Peshawar etc.*, p. 149.

Government till the time of Maharaja Sher Singh's assassination in September 1843, when fearful of his life, he fled to Ferozepur in British territory. The army *pañchāyats* promptly confiscated his *jāgīrs* for desertion. Court was a man of literary tastes. He composed a *Memoir of a Journey from Persia to Kabul via Herat and Kandahar*, the manuscript of which was purchased by the British Government for a sum of 5,000 rupees.¹ Another paper entitled *A Brief Narrative of the Anarchy in the Punjab, 1839-1845*, originally written by him in French, has also survived.²

8. The "Yankee Doodle"

Dr. Josiah Harlan, an American, who after quitting the post of an assistant surgeon in the British army, had drifted towards Afghanistan in search of adventure and diplomatic distinction. He styled himself as a general, and made a vain attempt to become the king of Kabul. He intrigued both with Shah Shuja and Dost Muhammad Khan, occupied a frontier fortress, but was made a prisoner by a Sikh force sent against him and then brought to Lahore. Major Pearse describes the scene : "Ranjit Singh, seeing his talents, said to him, 'I will make you governor of Gujrat and give you 3,000 rupees a month. If you behave well I will increase your salary ; if not, I will cut off your nose.'"³ Harlan accepted the offer.

He was appointed the governor of Jesrota and Nurpur for a while and given the command of a brigade of infantry. He served the Lahore Government for about 7 years but in 1835, after a vain attempt at acquiring as a grant the *ta'aluqa* of Peshawar from Ranjit Singh,⁴ he proved untrue to his salt, and left the Punjab and entered the service of Dost Muhammad Khan of Kabul. Harlan has written a *Memoir of India and Afghanistan*, which is described as a turgid and bombastic narrative, though of some literary merit. In a *Notice* appended to the *Memoir*, Harlan observes that he was extremely dissatisfied with Ranjit Singh, who was a monarch "absolute and luxurious" and "in possession of treasured wealth and military power," that he resolved to avenge himself and to "cause him to tremble in the midst of his magnificence."

Harlan fought the Sikhs at Jamrud in which the valiant Sikh commander Hari Singh Nalwā was killed. "The Sikhs were defeated," boasts Harlan, "and Ranjit Singh's Commander-in-Chief with 2,000 of his men was killed. The Afghans lost 1,000 men. The proud king of Lahore quailed upon his threatened throne, as he exclaimed with terror : 'This is all Harlan's work : he has avenged himself !'"

¹ Macnaghten to Wade, 25 June, 1838-(P) 138 : 12.

² Both the papers, the *Memoir* and the *Narrative* have since been printed by Grey (*European Adventurers in Northern India*, Appendix ii-iii).

³ Pearse, *Memories of Alexander Gardiner*, London, 1894, p. 330-31.

⁴ Kaye, *History of Afghanistan*, 1874, i, p. 465 *et seq.*

Yet the antagonism exhibited by this turncoat "Yankee Doodle" for his Sikh employer is understandable. While in the service of the Lahore Government, Harlan had acted a double secret agent of both Amir Dost Muhammad Khan and the exiled Sadozai monarch Shah Shuja, then a pensioner of the British at Ludhiana. In 1835, the news-writers reported to the Maharaja that Harlan, the governor of Gujrat was guilty of extortion and oppression. He was also coining base money under the pretence of studying alchemy.¹ Ranjit Singh forthwith removed him from the *nizamat* of Gujrat, and sent him along with Faqir Aziz-ud Din on a mission to the camp of Dost Muhammad Khan, who had crossed the Indus and was threatening Peshawar. There on account of his double-dealing and treacherous conduct both the envoys were arrested, but were later retrieved to safety by the Amir's brother Sultan Muhammad Khan. On their return to Lahore, the Maharaja dismissed the American adventurer, and he left Lahore towards the end of 1836. He arrived at Kabul and entered the service of Dost Muhammad Khan.²

9. Gardona Sahib

Of all the *firangi* officers of Ranjit Singh, Alexander Gardiner who served the Maharaja as a Colonel of Artillery, is a most controversial figure. The veracity of his experiences as a traveller and a soldier as recorded in Pearse's *Memories of Alexander Gardiner* is challenged by Grey and others.³ According to Pearse, he was the son of a Scottish emigrant to the British Colonies in North America, and after a short stay in Russia, he crossed the Caspian Sea and entered the career of an adventurer and a soldier of fortune in Central Asia. He then drifted to Afghanistan where he took service under Amir Habibullah Khan, was involved in the civil war, and when in 1826 Dost Muhammad Khan defeated his master, he became a refugee wanderer among the Khirghiz and travelling through Yarkand to Leh and Srinagar, he appeared at Peshawar in 1831, where he remained with Sultan Muhammad Khan Barakzai for about a year. In 1832 he was summoned to Lahore by the Maharaja who desired his services.

On his way to Lahore Gardiner remained for a few days with Dr. Harlan, the then governor of Gujrat. At Wazirabad he was the guest of General

¹ See Honigberger, *Thirty-Five Years in the East*, London, 1852, p. 55 : "Ranjit Singh told me that Dr. Allen (an American, and governor of Goojrat) used secretly to employ his time in the practice of alchemy. I could not forbear laughing at the idea of his expecting to convert common metals into gold, as the conversion of quicksilver into silver was found to be quite impossible. Subsequently, my assertion was verified by the discovery he made, that the doctor's alchemy consisted in manufacturing false coins."

² Indian records also show Harlan as the spy and secret agent of the British Government while at Kabul. See, particularly, (P) 115 : 49 ; 97 : 63, 120.

³ Pearse, Major Hugh—*Memories of Alexander Gardiner*, London, 1898. Grey—*European Adventurers of Northern India*, Lahore, 1929, p. 268 ff.

Avitabile, and at Lahore he met Court and Ventura. The Maharaja employed him as an instructor of artillery, and it appeared that at that time no one was able to handle the two guns, which Lord William Bentick had presented to the Maharaja at Rupar. Gardiner displayed his skill to Ranjit Singh and his Court how the time-fuse shells could be fired from the guns and was employed as a colonel in the artillery in full command of an artillery *derāh* or camp. At Lahore he was known as Gardona Sahib.¹

While Pearse, Henry Durand and Richard Temple² support the authenticity of Gardiner's *Memories*, Grey rejects them altogether and has taken laborious pains to show the unreliability of Gardiner's narrative.³ He dubs him a fake—an Irishman and a deserter from British army and describes his adventures in Central Asia, Gilgit, Yarkand etc. as fictitious. Grey has endeavoured to shatter the Gardiner myth and that he occupied a position of any consequence in Ranjit Singh's service : "The truth is that Gardiner took his incidents, adventures, and travels from the oral narratives of contemporary adventurers in Ranjit Singh's army, and from books of the period with which, as he survived for over thirty years after the publication of the most, he must have been perfectly familiar, and has supplemented these by drawing on his own imagination."⁴ Against this outright rejection of Gardiner's *Memories* is the fact that his minor rôle in the Punjab is mentioned in the British records,⁵ and Henry Lawrence also mentions him as an adventurer in command of 6 guns with Gulab Singh's artillery at Peshawar, who supplied him information,⁶ he could not altogether be described as fake and his *Memories* fictitious. Whatever may be his antecedents, he did have a career of service under Ranjit Singh ; later the Maharaja transferred him to the service of Dhian Singh, after whose death he was most probably dismissed from Lahore service by the Jalla regime in 1844 along with most of the European officers in the Punjab. He then settled in Kashmir and entered Gulab Singh's service as a commander of artillery. He died at Jammu in 1877 and was buried in the Roman Catholic cemetery at Sialkot.

Whatever the truth about his travels elsewhere, Gardiner's account of experiences in the Punjab is too characteristic to be ignored altogether. His description of Ranjit Singh, his Court and the Army is vivid ; and the political events in the Punjab described by him following the Maharaja's death till the first Sikh War appear to be first-hand and accurate if not authoritative.

¹ Pearse, p. 183.

² *Life of Henry Durand*, ii, p. 230 *et seq.*

³ Grey, p. 279.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See generally, (P) 137 : 44, 41 ; 165 : 1, 65 ; LPD, ii, p. 29, 92 ; iv, p. 52.

⁶ *Life of Henry Lawrence*, i, p. 230.

10. Other *firangīs*

Apart from these principal *firangī* officers of the Lahore Government, other notables were General Van Cortlandt, Colonel Ford, Colonel Foulks, Captain Argoud, Colonel Thomas, Colonel Steinbach, Captain de la Font and others.¹

¹ Two complete lists of Ranjit Singh's *firangī* officers are available—one supplied by Major Pearse in his *Some Account of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His White Officers* (*vide* Appendix, p. 295-6 to *Memories of Alexander Gardiner*), and the other by Carmichael Smyth in his *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*. Appendix, p. xxxvi—xxxvii. Smyth's account gives the list of the following officers in the service of the Lahore Government :—

Name	Nationality	Served	Remarks
1. Alyarine	Italian	Infantry	Died at Lahore
2. Gordon	Anglo-Indian	Cavalry	Do
3. Ventura	Italian	Infantry	Left
4. Allard	French	Cavalry	Died at Peshawar
5. Court	French	Artillery	Left
6. Avitabile	Italian	Infantry	Left
7. Hommus	Spaniard	Infantry	Died at Lahore
8. Vochen	Russian	Infantry	Left
9. Honigberger	German	Medical	Still in service
10. Dottenwise	German	Engineer	Left
11. Harlan	American	Civil	Left
12. De l'ust	French	Infantry	Left
13. Holmes	Anglo-Indian	Infantry	Still in service
14. Dubignon	French	Infantry	At present a merchant at Lahore
15. Hest	Greek	Infantry	Killed at Lahore
16. Hureleck	Greek	Infantry	Left
17. McPherson	English	Infantry	Left
18. Carriherr	American	Artillery	Left
19. Kunarah	American	Artillery	Still in service
20. Cortlandt	Anglo-Indian	Infantry	Still in service
21. Fitzroy	Anglo-Indian	Infantry	Left
22. Barlow	Anglo-Indian	Infantry	Left
23. Mouton	French	Cavalry	Left
24. Steinbach	German	Infantry	At present in Gulab Singh's service
25. De la Roche	French	Infantry	Killed by a fall from his horse
26. De la Font 1st	French	Infantry	Left
27. De la Font 2nd	French	Infantry	Left
28. Foulkes	English	Cavalry	Killed by the Sikhs
29. Hurbon	Spaniard	Engineers	Left service
30. Leslie	Anglo-Indian	Infantry	Left service
31. Martindale	Anglo-Indian	Infantry	Left service
32. Ford	English	Infantry	Died of wounds received from the Sikhs

According to contemporary observers, the position of the Europeans in the service of Ranjit Singh was, notwithstanding their enhanced salaries and luxurious mode of living not much enviable. Obligated to live in comparative luxury and under restrictions imposed by a capricious ruler, none of these could make a fortune. Although Ranjit Singh remained attached to few of them, as for instance, Allard and Ventura, he always suspected the *firangī* officers' loyalty if not their devotion. Generally, the Khālṣa soldier resented the humiliation of obeying foreigners, and the Sikh commanders who received one-tenth of the pay of European officers were silently indignant on account of the pecuniary advantages and *jāgirs* granted to them. Extraordinary deductions, were however made on special occasions from the pay of the *firangī* officers, which were kept in arrears ; and Ranjit Singh was jealous of granting them leave to visit their country.¹

33. De Fasheye	French	Cavalry	Died at Lahore
34. Ditto (son)	French	Cavalry	Left service
35. Dr. Harvey	Scotch	Medical	Left service
36. Jervais	French	Infantry	Left service
37. Moervious	Prussian	Infantry	Left service
38. Bianchi	Italian	Infantry	Left service
39. Argou	French	Infantry	Left service

¹ Jacquemont, *Journal*, p. 56.

CHAPTER 14

ADMINISTRATION OF MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

1. Genesis and structure

THE *SARKĀR KHĀLSAJĪ* or Ranjit Singh's government may aptly be described as a personalised military despotism based on popular will. At the same time, it was a highly centralised despotism. Shahamat Ali, who visited Lahore in 1838, at the zenith of Ranjit Singh's power describes it as a pure despotism, wherein the entire direction of its affairs, political, foreign and domestic, according to the oriental saying rested "on the tongue of His Highness." The Maharaja, he qualifies, has his share of consideration and respect of his countrymen, but he is possessed of a vigorous mind, and having great reliance on his penetration and judgement, he is generally guided by his own opinions.¹

The replacement of theocratic confederacies of the mid-18th century by an absolute monarchy by Ranjit Singh, however, had its self-imposed seemingly ineffective but advantageous limitations. In theory he adhered publicly to the mystic ideals of the *Khālsa* or the Commonwealth as enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh, but his government lacked any principles or a determined system, and in all matters of internal and external policy rested on the will of the supreme despot. In all official transactions his government was designated as the *Sarkār Khālsajī*, he himself being a "drum" or mouthpiece and a devout servant of the *Khālsa*. A positive subservience to the Faith won him popular support amongst the vast mass of his militant and unruly co-religionists. As a devout Sikh he customarily took an augury from the holy Book in making important political decisions. The liquidation of the Sikh Misals had endowed him with great political power; he wielded it unhampered for the common weal of all his subjects—Sikh, Hindu, Muhammadan and others; in all administrative and political matters, his decisions were often tempered with toleration, commonsense and acumen.

For all political purposes the *Gurmatta* or Diet for conclave having been rendered ineffective since 1805, its occasional edicts from the *Akal Takht* at Amritsar merely regulated the social and religious conduct of the people. In all matters Ranjit Singh exhibited publicly a proper sense of enthusiasm and devotion to his Faith, partly perhaps to gain religious sanction for his multifarious activities of conquest and war, and partly to cover up his arbitrary actions and usurpations.

¹ *The Sikhs and the Afghans*, London, 1847, p. 14.

In actual practice, however, such pretence was no bar to despotic actions ; and dexterously he used it to his own advantage. Ranjit Singh was neither a religious fanatic nor a zealot : his conception of the *Khālsa* was fairly broad-based. It enshrined the ideal of a Sikh monarchy unencumbered by religious intolerance or a lure of preferential treatment to those who professed the faith of the monarch, and benevolence to persons of all creeds unless they stood in the way of his ambitious political views. In political matters it was hard to think of Ranjit Singh being guided by religious considerations, or troubled with the theory or the practical niceties of administration. He would more readily subdue an adversary and add a province to his rule rather than think of evolving a system of government, though he was assiduous in proclaiming that the arms of the *Khālsa* had been most favourably sustained by the will of the *Akāl Purakh* and the ordination of the Providence.

2. Concept of Sikh Monarchy

And yet, the concept of a benevolent Sikh monarchy was upheld by him in offering equal opportunities of employment to all his subjects without the distinction of caste and creed, his devotion to saintly persons of all denominations, and a generous distribution of endowments and charities to the temples and shrines of all creeds. Though the Sikh monarchy did everything for the *Khālsa* with the help of the Lord (*Akāl Sahā'i*), its chief merit was religious moderation and practical efficiency.

The Sikh monarchy was extremely popular. It was primarily based on the military might and warlike temperament of Ranjit Singh and sustained by his successive victories. To the Sikhs, it was an embodiment of the ideals of the Faith—the *Khālsa* ; to others, Hindus and Muhammadans, its awesome capacity to rule firmly and tolerantly became highly acceptable. Yet, it was an individualistic and personalised monarchy of an extraordinary kind, sustained by a keen sense of vigilance and the knowledge of what was happening in the wide kingdom. It kept the provincial satraps in check, the *kārdārs* and other civil and military officials widely awake and alert. It was ruthless but to a degree equitable, utterly despotic but benign, devoid of high-sounding principles but based on an individualistic concept ; and above all, it was singularly secular keeping a benevolent regard of the well-being of all classes of people. In an age when in political affairs, cunning, artifice and treachery were deemed virtues rather than vices ; when inhuman barbarity exhibited by a ruler in the extermination of his rivals and enemies would be applauded, Ranjit Singh either designedly or because of an inborn humanity in his character, introduced an element of tenderness, prudence, and a sense of justice in the concept of Sikh monarchy which he had set up.

The political background of the Sikh monarchy established by Ranjit Singh has been so well described by the historian of the Sikhs : “Ranjit Singh found the

Punjab a warring confederacy, a prey to factions of its Chiefs, pressed by the Afghans and the Marathas, 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 of interference. He found the military array of his country a mass of horsemen, brave indeed, but ignorant of the war as an art, and he left it mustering 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 the people, but it involved the joint action of necessary principles of military order and territorial extension; and when a limit had been set to Sikh dominions, and his commanding genius was no more, the vital spirit of his race began to consume itself in domestic contention.”¹

3. Royal maxims of government

Such a distinctive concept of Sikh monarchy and rules of government are outlined by Ranjit Singh himself in an admonitory epistle to his provincial *nāzims* so spiritedly and solemnly worded: “Now give the ear of attention and heart of obedience to the orders that follow. My kingdom is a great kingdom. It was small, it is now large; it was scattered, broken and divided; it is now consolidated. It must increase in prosperity and descend to my posterity. The maxims of Taimur have guided me; what he professed and ordered I have done. By counsel and providence, combined with valour, I have conquered; and by generosity, discipline, and policy, I have regulated and consolidated my government. I have rewarded the bold, and encouraged merit wherever it was to be found. On the field of battle, I exalted the valiant; with my troops I have shared all dangers, all fatigues. Both on the field and in the cabinet I shut partiality from my soul, and closed my eyes to personal comfort. With the robes of empire, I put on the mantle of care. I fed *faqirs* and holy men, and I gained their prayers; the guilty as the innocent I spared, and those whose hands were raised against myself have met my clemency. *Śrī Purukhji* has therefore been merciful to his servant, and increased his power, so that his territory now extends to the borders of Chīn and the limits of the Afghans, with all Multan and the rich possessions beyond the Sutlej. To be the favoured servant of such a monarch is an honour; to serve such *Rāj* is dignity.”²

Rules of government are embodied in a royal advice tendered to his officials and public servants: “The wise man neglecteth not his duty towards his master; and taking his seat in the hall of obedience, remembereth that humility and faithfulness cause exaltation. Falsehood brings a man to shame, and lying lips dishonour their possessor. Be then contented with the fortune that has poured over

¹ Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1955, p. 200.

² Lawrence, *Adventures of an Officer in the Punjaub*, London, 1846, i, p. 64-65.

thy head. Be faithful, honest and true, and mankind will praise thee, and my favour will follow thee. Think of thine end, and oppress not the poor ; so shall thy name remain when all else of thee is gone.”¹

4. System of Government

The entire system of government was highly personalised. It was built around the Maharaja's will and his magnetic personality. He chose his own counsellors and ministers from amongst persons of proven loyalty and devotion irrespective of their adherence to any particular religion. The elimination of the powerful feudal barons of the Misals, the end of the old aristocracy and the *Gurmatta's* edicts on political issues, enabled Ranjit Singh to direct unfettered all State affairs by himself. He could inherit little of consequence from the crude and rudimentary system of government of the Misals ; the adoption, at least in theory, of some of the fundamental principles of Mughal system of administration, would have vitiated his own concept of the State and abhorred the Sikhs, who hated anything akin to the government of their former oppressors and persecutors.

Under these circumstances grew up the despotic but a benevolent and broad-based secular monarchy of Ranjit Singh. Hindus, Brahmans, Muhammadans, and even Christians who enjoyed the confidence of the Maharaja were entrusted with the task of governing the Kingdom. The Jammu brothers—Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh were Dogra rajputs ; Jamadār Khushal Singh, Tej Singh, Sahib Dayal, Ganga Ram, Dina Nath and Ajudhia Prashad were all Brahamans ; the Faqīr brothers-Aziz-ud-Din, Nur-ud-Din and Imam-ud-Din were Muhammadans ; and Allard, Court, Avitabile and Ventura were Christians of diverse denominations. The ruling class at the Court of Lahore was a creation of the Maharaja ; it was allowed to remain in power and authority so long as it evinced absolute loyalty and subservience to its master. The motely crowd consisting of the officials of Ranjit Singh's central government—secretaries, ministers and others, therefore, existed on the breath of the pleasure of the Maharaja. There was no danger of a combined opposition to the throne from them or from the non-hereditary feudal lords of the Kingdom who lived in constant fear of extortions, contributions, confiscations and fines.

5. Civil Service

Under the Sikh rule, there was neither an imperial nor provincial civil service in the strict sense of the term. A large number of officers were employed by the State both at the centre and in the provinces. Some of these officials were paid salaries, other recouped themselves as best as they could from the territories farmed out to them. A dual system of payments either by land assignments or

¹ *Ibid.* p. 63.

fixed salaries from local revenues lessened to some extent drain on central resources, but it increased the political power of the governors and local officials, who not only took more than was their due, and as their land assignments were of temporary nature, they rackrented the peasants and imposed *abwābs* or additional burdens to enrich themselves.

Appointments and promotions of all major civil and military officials of the State rested with the Maharaja. The continuance in office of the civil servants was more or less dependent on paying in time the stipulated amount of their contract and retaining the goodwill of the Maharaja. Some of these provincial officials, who were vested with enormous civil and judicial powers, amassed large amount of riches, but generally the dread of the all-powerful Maharaja kept them within reasonable bounds of restraint in oppressing their subjects.

1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

6. Evolution of *Daftars*

The Central Government designated as the *Sarkār Khālsa* was located at Lahore. The Maharaja was its supreme head in all matters—civil, military, and judicial. He was also the supreme commander of all armed forces. The system of government adopted by Ranjit Singh may be described as a combination of the crude and highly irregular administration prevalent amongst the Sikh Misals and that based on his own convenience. The government was run under ten or twelve *daftars* or departments of State, which varied from time to time.

1. The *Hazūr Daftar* or the Royal Secretariat to which was attached the *Naqal Daftar* or the Copying Office.

2. The *Daftar'i Toshakhāna*, or the Regalia and Treasury.

3. The *Daftar'i Dārogha* or Octrai and Excise Department.

4. The *Daftar'i Roznamcha* or Audit and Accounts Department.

5. The *Daftar'i Moharyānī* or Royal Seals and Commission Department.

6. The *Daftar'i Taujihāt* or Royal Household Department.

7. The *Daftar'i Abwāb-ul-Māl* or Land Revenue Department.

8. The *Daftar'i Mawājib* or Pay and Accounts Department.

9. The *Daftar'i Abwāb-ul-Taḥwīl* or Income and Expenditure Department.

10. The *Daftar'i Mu'ala* or the *Daftar'i Khās* or Special Royal Department.

The evolution and growth of the *daftars* and the machinery of government at the centre was a gradual process. Till the conquest of Lahore in 1799, Ranjit

Singh had no experience of the intricate arts of finance or administration. His forbears like the other Misa'dārs had managed their affairs with the assistance of a *diwān* or minister and a set of *munshīs*, accountants, and *deorhīdārs* under their personal superintendence. They kept their troops under their own management and command, and appropriated the revenues of their territories as they willed. Ranjit Singh followed this practice for a few years of his early rule, but as his territories grew extensive with his conquests, the problems of revenue, finance and administration also became extensive. But the process of evolution of the *daftars* was slow, as except for the province of Lahore and other centrally administered areas, the whole Kingdom was farmed out. This obviated the necessity of evolving a uniform and comprehensive machinery of government for the collection of revenue which was allowed to vary from province to province.

The process of revenue-farming at such an extensive scale, though bad in principle and highly vexatious, was less irksome to Ranjit Singh's government at Lahore, for, it brought a fixed amount of revenue without encumbering it with the task of land-revenue settlements, and evolving a divergent machinery for the administration of equally divergent land-revenue systems in the Kingdom. While we have commented upon it elsewhere, suffice it to say that the system worked well.

As the administrative problems of central government increased, men of talent and ability drifted to the Court of Lahore—Bhowani Das and Devi Das ; Misser Basti Ram, Kirpa Ram, Ganga Ram, Dina Nath, Rattan Chand, Shankar Das, Ram Dayal, Abdul Karim and Dewan Singh. These men were employed by the Maharaja as it suited him best—in secretarial capacity or as army commanders. Some of them rose to eminence, as is evidenced by the fact that the *daftars* under their charge were known by their names and seals of office.¹

Misser Beli Ram held the post of Chief of *Toshakhāna* or Treasurer. Bhowani Das and Devi Das brought into some semblance of order and regularity the deplorable state of finance which had scant records of income and expenditure. Bhowani Das was appointed Finance Minister in 1808. Dina Nath took charge in 1811 to organise revenue administration. He was the nephew of Dīwān Ganga Ram and later became finance minister. Misser Beli Ram, a nephew of Basti Ram became in charge of regalia and treasury (*Toshakhāna*). All these persons enjoyed great confidence of the Maharaja and shaped the financial and revenue

¹ Departments were so personalised that they were known, as for instance, *Daftar'i Devi Dās*, *Sarishta'i Bhowanī Dās*, *Daftar'i Ganga Rām*, *Daftar'i Shahzāda* etc. The *Khālśa Darbār Records*, in general, indicate the origin and growth of the departmental organisation of the time, vide. Sita Ram Kohli—*Ranjit Singh, First Death Centenary Memorial Volume*, p. 99-111.

policy of the administration. The Maharaja supervised personally the working of all the *daftars*, discussed with the officials in charge of them the minutest details and determined ultimate settlements.

7. Chief Functionaries

The Maharaja was assisted by a Council of Ministers appointed by himself, and although they exercised considerable political power in their specific spheres, yet in all matters the will of the Maharaja was supreme. Their counsels were advisory geared to a military despotism and a system of administration, which was benign, efficiently strong and vigorous. His principal councillors or ministers were as under :

1. The *Vazier* or the principal minister of the Crown. *Rājā Dhian Singh* who was appointed to this office was later given the title of *Rāja'i Kalan*. Next to the sovereign, the *Vazier* was the most important person in the Kingdom. In all political matters he advised the Maharaja and enjoyed great privileges of power and patronage. All high level state papers, petitions and representations passed through his scrutiny before being submitted to the Maharaja. He supervised the functioning of all the departments of the State barring finance and foreign affairs. All civil, military and judicial departments were under his control. All important matters on which the orders of the Maharaja had been received, were executed by him.

2. The *Dārogha'i Deorhi'i Mu'alla* or the Lord Chamberlain. This office was of considerable importance and prestige. It was first held by *Jamadār Khushal Singh*, but later on *rājā Dhian Singh* manipulated to replace him.

3. The *Dārogha'i Toshakhāna* or the Minister-in-charge of Regalia, Treasury, and Royal Robes. He was also Keeper of Records—important documents, treaties, and copies of important royal orders were held in his custody. *Misser Beli Ram* held this important post.

4. The *Dabir-ul-Mamlakat* or Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. This was an important office dealing with the relations of the State of Lahore with foreign powers, particularly with the East India Company, Sind and Afghanistan. Some of the Cis-Sutlej States had very amicable relations with the Lahore Darbār and kept their *vakils* at the Court. *Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din* controlled this department. All communications received from foreign powers were read out to the Maharaja, who indicated orally the lines on which the draft of reply was to be prepared, which was presented to him in final form for approval.

5. *Auditor-General of Civil and Military Accounts*. *Dīwān Ganga Ram* held this post, but after his death, his nephew *Dina Nath* was appointed to the post.

6. *Councillors on Religious Affairs and Religious Endowments*. *Bhā'is Gobind Ram, Ram Singh and Gurmukh Singh* held these posts,

In making appointments of his ministers and councillors Ranjit Singh was his own judge without the consideration of caste and creed. He chose them from Brahmans, Khatrīs and Muhammadans. Though he trusted the Jāts as soldiers and gave them positions in the army, he seldom entrusted to them the task of civil administration. According to one authority, Sardar Fateh Singh Kālīānwālā before his death counselled Ranjit Singh to confine them to military service. The current opinion prevalent at the time was that a Jāt was "as stupid as his own buffaloes."¹ And "he could do no more than plough straight and fight. In intellectual competition with the Brahmans and the Muhammadans he was a cart-horse matched against thoroughbreds."² Ranjit Singh gave the Jāt Sardars eminent military commands with land assignments, but seldom consulted them in matters of State.³

It is often alleged that the Maharaja chose persons of low birth and upstarts for appointment to high offices of the State in preference to men of aristocratic birth and Sardars belonging to noble families. This may be true to some extent, yet the principle adopted by him was that of trust and loyalty. Furthermore, efficiency was the main criteria of his selection; race, religion and caste had no consideration. Most of the persons who rose to the highest positions were his own creations. Thus the Dogras of Jammu, the Faqīr brothers, the Bhā'īs, the Missers, the Dīwāns and others. The Dogra brothers entered his service as footmen—Dhian Singh ultimately became the principal Vazier and Chamberlain, Gulab Singh the rājā Jammu, and Suchet Singh one of the foremost nobles at the Court of Lahore.

2. PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

1. Provincial divisions

Confusion still prevails regarding the constitution and character of the provincial administration of Ranjit Singh on two counts. First, because of non-

¹ Griffin, p. 117.

² Ibbetson (*Punjab Castes*, p. 102-3) recounts numerous rhyming proverbs about the qualities of a Jat, viz., in agriculture he is pre-eminent: "The Jāt's baby has a plough handle for plaything."—"The Jāt stood on his corn heap and said to the king's elephant drivers—"Will you sell these little donkeys?" Or, "A Jāt, a Bhāt, a caterpillar and a widow women; these four are best hungry. If they eat their fill they do harm."

³ As for instance, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā; the Majithiās—Desa Singh and Lehna Singh; the Attārīwālās—Chattar Singh, Sham Singh and Sher Singh; the Sindhiānwālās—Ajit Singh, Attar Singh and Lehna Singh, the Kālīānwālās, the Pohwindās and others, who constituted the Jāt Sikh nobility at the Court—all had military commands and were employed in military expeditions. They held large estates or *jāgīrs* and rendered feudal military service but assignments of civil nature were seldom given to them,

differentiation of units of provincial administration controlled direct and those farmed out. But it is generally accepted that the kingdom was roughly divided into four principal *subhās*—Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir. Secondly, part of the kingdom comprising of the hill principalities and those of the conquered Sardars assigned to different persons on specific terms paid tributes direct to the State.¹

If we accept a *subāh* as the main unit of provincial administration, we can leave out the theory that the whole kingdom was divided into districts. Each *Subāh* had a *Nāzim* or governor at the provincial capital; and *Kardārs* in the sub-divisions called *pargannas*. Further division of the *pargannas*, with its functionaries, was on the Mughal pattern. A *parganna* consisted of a number of *ta'ulaqas*, each of which contained from 50 to 100 *mauzas* or villages.

9. *Nāzim* : a miniature potentate

The *Nāzim* or the *Subedār* was a centrally appointed functionary but not so the *Kardār*. The former who farmed the province for a fixed amount of money, wielded more autocratic powers than his counterpart under the Mughals. He was the highest authority in the province and exercised vast civil and judicial powers, and was allowed to maintain a small force and appoint *faujdars* in charge of garrison troops. Usually the persons appointed as *Nāzims* were those in whom the Maharaja reposed full confidence, and except for the punctual remittance of the stipulated amount of revenue to the Central Exchequer and furnishing of troops and provisions in time of war, the State seldom interfered in provincial administration except on reports of mal-administration or cruelty to subjects.

¹ Tributary hill states were Bilaspur, Suket under Lehna Singh (tribute : 140,000); Chamba, Rajauri, Ladakh and Iskardu under Gulab Singh (tribute : 4,25,000). Mandi, Kulu, Jaswan, Kangra, Kuthahar, Siba, Nurpur, Haripur, Datarpur and Katlah paid an annual tribute of 17,10,000 rupees were under Sardar Lehna Singh Majithiā—the rājās and the families of the rājās held *jāgīrs* equivalent to 1/4 of the farmed out revenues.

The important hill *jāgīrs* of the Jammu brothers amounted to 16,20,000 rupees, the Chiefs were assigned *jāgīrs* equivalent to 1/4th of the revenue. These were : Jesrota, Pader, Bhadarwa, Mankot, Bhaddu, Bandralta, Chanini, Jammu, Samba, Kishtwar, Akhnur, Bhimbar, Kotli, Sunach, Khanpur and Sangli.

Ramnagar, Mitha Tiwana, Bhera, Khushab, Pind dadan Khan, Gujrat, Wazirabad, Sialkot, Jullundur Doab, Sheikhupura farmed out to the Jammu rājās and other Chiefs brought an annual revenue of 1,79,85,000 rupees

Other tributaries and *jāgīrdārs* worth 79,15,000 rupees annually were the Sikh Sardars Lehna Singh Majithiā, the Attāriwālās, the Sindhiānwālās, the Kālīānwālās, the Malwāis, the Barakzai brothers, the Faqīr brothers, the royal princes and the miscellaneous favourites of the Maharaja.

The Sikh *Nāzims* in the provinces lived in style and splendour. They built palatial residences for themselves, as did Dīwān Sawan Mal at Multan, General Avitabile at Peshawar, Hari Singh Nalwā at Wazirabad, and Colonel Mian Singh at Srinagar.¹ If they held the goodwill of the Maharaja, they could act as miniature potentates, wear rich robes and ornaments, hold darbārs, and receive *nazrānas* on behalf of the Maharaja, ride on elephants on public appearance, keep harems and numerous concubines, and surround themselves with mounted bodyguards. Some of them accumulated riches, but generally they were made to disgorge them in *nazrānas* or payment of fines at the displeasure of the Maharaja.²

10. Provincial administration at work

We have already given some account of the actual administration of the provinces of Multan, Kashmir, and Peshawar ; of the Jullundur Doab, the trans-Indus districts, but it would be necessary to reassess the variations in provincial administration in general. Thus we find that Dīwān Sawan Mal, the governor of Multan with its dependencies of Leiah, Dera Ghazi Khan, Khangarh and Jhang—the whole called the *Subah'i Multān* ruled humanely and benovently. He paid to the State an annual sum of 27,26,300 rupees exclusive of 7,00,000 rupees for troops and 2,00,000 rupees in land assignments. He is described as “a beneficent and wise” governor and the province sometimes called the *Dār-ul-Amān* or the Abode of Peace and Plenty on account of the general prosperity which followed the benign land and judicial reforms.³

The *Subah'i Peshawar* including its dependencies across the Indus and the Yusafzai territory was the most turbulent and restive province. It brought to the State an annual revenue of 12,21,630 rupees, but most of it was spent on the maintenance of troops and cost of administration. It was ruled successively by Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā and General Avitabile. Both of them were stern and ruthless administrators, and reduced the fanatical and fierce tribes of the region to submission and awe of the Lahore Government at a high cost. However, as governor of Peshawar, Hari Singh abolished the *jeziya* imposed on non-Muslims, evenly distributed the province into 5 *pargannas* for administrative convenience, ordered wells and canals to be dug, and made land revenue lenient for the benefit of the peasants. Avitabile's administration of Peshawar has already been described

¹ Hugel (*Travels*, p. 115-16) gives a graphic description of Mian Singh's eastern court at Srinagar in 1835 attended by all the hill tributary rājās of Lahore.

² As for instance, in 1830 Kirpa Ram, the governor of Kashmir was recalled and confined to prison. He purchased his release by paying a price of 15,00,000 rupees.

³ *Vide. supra*, Chapter 5.

in detail.¹ Suffice it to add here that he was a ruthless and stern ruler. As the governor of Peshawar, he is described as "a savage among the savage men of the N. W. Frontier." A tall and passionate person, he was a man of talents and well-versed in oriental languages. He set up a fine but rough and ready administration at Peshawar. He curbed the unruly activities of the turbulent elements in the province by a system of "gibbets and gallows" as a mode of summary punishments, collective fines and reprisals. Avitabile wielded unlimited authority of an oriental despot without any strings being placed upon him by the *Sarkār Khālsa*. He had previously held charge of the Rechna Doab and afterwards, he became the governor of Peshawar, where, "his stern and ferocious methods reduced the wild tract to something like order for the first time in its history."²

The *Subāh'i Kashmir* with its dependencies yielded an annual revenue of 21,15,590 rupees. In 1820, according to Moorcroft its revenue amounted to 36,00,000 rupees. It was divided into 20 *pargannas*. Its administration is universally described as the most rapacious and extortionist.³ Hari Singh Nalwā, the most celebrated general of Ranjit Singh, who commanded the Maharaja's last expedition against the Valley in 1819, was appointed in 1820 its governor to bring relief to the people from the oppressive measures introduced by the Lahore deputies Moti Ram, Jamadār Khushal Singh and Sheikh Mohi-ud-Din by farming out the province for 40,00,000 rupees. Nalwā's short rule in Kashmir and his beneficent reforms, particularly in the realisation of the arrears of revenue, standardisation of taxes on wool trade, and the reduction of land revenue as an ameliorative measure further reduced the revenues to 13,00,000 rupees. He replaced the old rupee by a newly coined one which bore the inscription of his own name. He was recalled soon, as the Maharaja did not approve of entrusting civil assignments to his military commanders.⁴

The *Subāh'i Lahore* contained the Māñjha region or all the territory lying between the Jehlum and the Sutlej and the important cities of Lahore, Amritsar, Wazirabad as also the Jullundur Doab. These were centrally administered districts divided into *pargannas* and *ta'luqās* with separate *Kardārs* bound to pay to the State a fixed sum of money. At the same time, the Māñjha *pargannas* were excessively held in *jāgīrs* by the Āhlūwālīās, the Majithīās, the Sindhiānwālās and others. The Sikh rule was stronger and more equitable in the centrally administered province of Lahore. In the Māñjha region, the Sikh population were soldiers almost to a

¹ *Vide. supra*, Chapter 6 ; also Chapter 13(5).

² Griffin, Ranjit Singh, *op. cit.* p. 139.

³ *Vide. supra*, Chapter 5.

⁴ Sikh mal-administration of the *Subāh'i Kashmir* has been described at some length in Chapter 5(18-20).

man supplying to the Khālsa army its recruits. The city of Lahore was the centre of all political activity ; here resided the Maharaja and his court nobility ; and to this town came merchants, artisans, tradesmen, diplomats and visitors of consequence. Lahore and Amritsar had their independent local administration based on the *Mohalladarī* system. The *Kotwal* or the Commissioner of Police, and the *Qāzi* or Judicial Magistrate were their chief functionaries. The former was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, while the latter, decided civil and criminal cases.

11. The *Kārdār*

Below the *Nāzim* in the provincial administration, the *Kārdār* was a pivotal functionary. In every *parganna*, usually appointed by the *Nāzim*, without any fixed scale of pay or remuneration, he exercised fiscal, revenue, and judicial powers. He was a Collector, a Settlement Officer, a Treasury Officer, a Magistrate, Excise and Customs Commissioner, and a Welfare Officer. He also held land on farm from the State. His main function was the collection of revenue, and after discharging the cost of establishment, to pay the balance into the provincial treasury. His tenure of office was often two or three years, enabling him a chance to reimburse his labours in the profits of office or extortions. He had an establishment of an accountant and a writer, and twenty or thirty sepoy were at his disposal, for the maintenance of which an additional cess was levied on each village under his jurisdiction.

The delegation of almost unlimited powers to the *Kārdār* under the Sikh rule is a subject of severe criticism. As he did not receive any pay from the State, he usually lived on graft, extortion and squeeze. He made arbitrary assessments, collected multitude of cesses and often squeezed the poor peasant of every penny he could pinch. According to various Punjab Land Revenue Reports,¹ the rule of *Kārdār* appears to be highly oppressive and despotic. As there was little check on him if he punctually deposited the revenues due to the State,

¹ There is consensus of opinion held by scholars of history regarding the usefulness and also of the one-sidedness of the accounts furnished by these Reports. Broadly speaking they describe the Sikh rule in the provinces as rapacious, grasping and inhuman. However, the tendency of the accounts furnished by these venerable civil servants—Barnes, Lyall, Purser, Thornburn, Ibbetson, O'Brien and others, irrespective of their statistical information, is to exhibit the dark side of the picture under the Sikh rule, and undue exaggerations of the blessings of the British Raj in the Punjab. On the subject, *vide* particularly, Barnes' and Lyall's *Land Revenue Settlement Report on Kangra* ; of Captain James' on *Peshawar* ; of Cracroft and Brandreth's on *Rawalpindi and Jehlum Districts* ; of Ibbetson on *the Central Districts* ; of O'Brien's of *Muzaffargarh* etc. The grudging admission of equitable Sikh rule in the Central Punjab is in the classic observation by Ibbetson : "Their rule was just and even in that they meted out oppression to all with an equal hand !"

he was prone to exercise his wide powers which he misused extensively. Although the *Nāẓim* heard appeals against his decisions, yet in the far-flung districts, the reports of his high-handedness would seldom reach the centre. The *Kardar* was assisted by numerous petty officials—the *muqaddams*, or tax-collectors, the *Qanūngo*, the *Patwārī*, and village *chaudharīs*.

3. FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

12. Evolution of daftars

In the matter of finance Ranjit Singh followed no set principles. During his early rule, no records of financial or political transactions were kept, and official business was transacted on the oral orders of the Maharaja. There were no departments of State, no accounts were kept, and provincial governors, except for paying the stipulated amount, had a free hand in the settlement of revenue, civil and judicial administration. Gradually, as the successive conquests enlarged the domains of the Kingdom, the administration of finance became necessary with the widening sources of income. Men of talent and proven ability gathered round the Maharaja—Dīwān Devi Das, Dīwān Bhowani Das, Dīwān Ganga Ram and Dīwān Dina Nath, Misser Beli Ram and others.

A rudimentary *Sarishta'i Hazūr* came into being in 1803, when Devi Das was appointed Dīwān of *Hazūr*, and records of major financial transactions began to be kept; vouchers of expenditure and pay orders were put before the noble *Sarkār* for approval and sanction. To it was attached a *Naqal Daftar* or a Copying Office. An opulent banker of Amritsar named Rama Nand controlled the entire financial affairs of the State. In times of financial crisis, as in 1808, the revenues of the State were mortgaged to the banker and advances secured to meet the civil and military expenditure.

The evolution of the department of finance, however, was a gradual process. A *Sarishta'i Dīwānī* came into being in 1805, under Kirpa Ram. In 1808, Dīwān Bhowani Das became the head of the *daftar* named after his name the *Daftar'i Bhowānī Dās*. Bhowani Das organised the fiscal system in the newly conquered territories. He was appointed Finance Minister in 1811. The same year a new *daftar* entitled the *Sarishta'i Daftar* was established to control general expenditure and income. Bhowani Das was the architect of the financial administration of the Lahore Government. He created a *Daftar'i Mali'at*, which controlled the land revenue (*ta'aluqāt*), and all other sources of income (*Jama' kharch'i sairāt*)—tributes and presents (*nazarānas*), escheats and forfeitures (*zabṭī*), excise (*ābkārī*), registration fees (*vajūhāt-i-muqararī*), and custom and excise duties (*chaukiyāt*).

With the control of the major sources of income the *Daftar'i Mali'at* branched out. In 1817, when Ganga Ram joined service, a Military Accounts Department came into being, and other *daftars* followed in rapid succession. A *daftar* to control the accounts of the royal household (*tauzihāt*) and the *Toshakhāna* came into being in 1818 under Misser Basti Ram. In 1821 the *Daftar'i Shahzāda* was created to keep account of the income and expenditure of the assignments and *jāgirs* of the royal princes. Soon after a *Daftar'i Darogha* to look after the octrai, custom and excise duty receipts was established. A *Daftar'i Roznāmcha* established in 1816, recorded the daily credit and debit entries. Soon after the *Daftar'i Moharyāni* came into existence. Its function was to affix royal seals and charge commissions on documents of payments. In 1822, the *Daftar'i Mu'ala* or the Supreme Department was created to supervise the overall functioning of the financial administration.

The evolution and stabilisation of the various *daftars* of the finance department gave it control of almost all financial transactions. All pay orders or *parwānas* of payment passed through the relevant *daftar*, whose seal had to be affixed on them with date of issue, appropriate cut imposed, and pre-audited before paid ; a copy was kept in the *Naqal Daftar*.

4. REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

13. Settlement Reports

Opinions sharply differ with regard to the nature and general characteristics of the revenue administration of Ranjit Singh. It is variously described as an organised system of pillage and extortion: "the country was farmed to contractors, who were bound to pay a certain sum into the State treasury, and were permitted to collect as much more as was possible for themselves."¹ Against this view is a milder one: "He (Ranjit Singh) took from the land as much as it could yield, and took from the merchants as much as they could profitably give."²

Early Settlement and Administration Reports of the British officials soon after the annexation of the Punjab give an adverse account of the land revenue administration under Ranjit Singh, particularly in the northern districts of the Central Punjab—Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Jehlum ; in the hill districts, and also in Multan in the south. The general tenor of these reports is that the administration was highly oppressive, extortionist and corrupt ; that the government took all they could extract from the cultivator and subjected him to numerous cesses, that the corrupt *Kārdārs* and petty revenue officials accumulated ill-gotten wealth,

¹ Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, p. ix.

² Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 151.

that there was no regular auditing of revenue accounts, and that there was a natural tendency towards embezzlement of the revenue money collected by the revenue officials.¹

That these reports, irrespective of the valuable social, fiscal and historical information they furnish, are highly erroneous and prejudiced is apparent from their one-sidedness, as for instance, O'Brien's account of Sikh rule in Multan : "Diwan Sawan Mall's government was better than anything that had preceded it. Its sole object was the accumulation of wealth for the Diwan. The execution of public works, the administration of justice and security of life and property were a secondary consideration, and were insisted on only because without them agriculture would not prosper, and the revenue would not be paid. When one examines his numerous cesses and sees how he levied dues to pay the people's alms and perform their religious duties, and then paid the poor and the Brahmans what he thought a fair amount and pocketed the rest ; how he levied a cess in return for keeping his word ; and how he encouraged his officials to take bribes and then made them duly credit the amount in public accounts, one's admiration for the great Diwan is less than it would be if based on written history."

O'Brien's account of the beneficent and just administration of Sawan Mal is typical of the most unfair treatment ; others vie with each other to express adverse opinions on Sikh revenue administration. Captain James, for instance, in his otherwise admirable *Land Revenue Settlement Report of Peshawar* describes the Sikh rule as that of Attila, the Hun : "From 1800 to 1820, Peshawar remained in a constant state of excitement and confusion, passing from one ruler to another, none of whom could exercise any real control over its wild occupants, and the hill tribes transferring their allegiance to the highest bidders .. The periodical visits of the Sikhs were calamitous to the people ; their approach was the signal for the removal of property and valuables, and even of the windows and door-frames from the houses. Crowds of men and children fled frightened from their houses, and the country presented the appearance of an emigrating colony. As the hated host advanced they overran the neighbourhood, pillaging and destroying whatever came within their reach and laying waste the fields. There is scarce a village from the head of the Valley to the Indus which has not been burnt and plundered by the Sikh Commander. His visitations were held in such awe that his name was used by mothers as a term for affright, to hush their unruly children, and at the present day, in travelling through the country, old greybeards, with

¹ See generally, the four *Punjab Administration Reports, 1849—1858* ; and those of Ibbetson—*Punjab Revenue Settlement Reports* of various districts ; and Barnes and Lyall—*Land Revenue Settlement Report of Kangra*, Captain James—*Land Revenue Settlement Report of Peshawar*, Cracroft and Brandreth—*Report of Rawalpindi and Jehlum Districts*, O'Brien—*Land Settlement Report of Muzaffargarh* etc.

many scars, point out the hills over which they were chased like sheep by the Singh, and young men show where their fathers fought and fell ... One of the terms on which the Chamkain chief held his tenure of the Sikhs was the annual production of twenty Afridi heads, and the old man relates without a blush the treacherous methods he was sometimes compelled to adopt to fulfil the conditions of his tenure."

British Settlement Reports are full of such grisly accounts and gross exaggerations of the brutality of the Sikh rule. Cracroft and Brandreth in their *Settlement Report of Rawalpindi and Jehlum* observe in their masterly style: "But it was the rule of the Sikh Kārdārs, too far off from Lahore to be under any check, that reduced the Rajput and Ghakkar alike to their present state of poverty. Their rule was a military despotism, and their aim to exterminate all classes and families with any pretension to ruling power, and their strongest measures were accordingly levelled against the Ghakkars and all the gentry who shared with them in the management of the country. Accordingly we find them mere exiles or reduced to abject poverty, insomuch that they are now often compelled to become tenants under their former ploughmen. The high roads were universally unsafe. Passing through the limits of different tribes, travellers and caravans had to satisfy the rapacity of each by paying blackmail, or they had to submit to be plundered, outraged, and ill-treated, happy sometimes to escape with life."

These accounts appear to be highly exaggerated to justify the imposition of British Indian revenue system soon after the annexation of the Punjab. Contemporary evidence and the *Khālṣa Darbār Records*, however, show that the revenue administration of Ranjit Singh, even if variable from place to place, was neither unjust nor unequitable, at any rate, it could not be designated as highly rapacious and oppressive. The customary land revenue system with its various modes of assessment and collection inherited by Ranjit Singh from the Mughals, was maintained by him, with minor modifications to suit political requirements and local conditions in the various parts of the Kingdom. There is hardly any evidence of wilful and callous over-assessment; the system already prevalent in the *subāhs* was allowed to be continued; and it would be mischievous to assert that the Sikhs who were the major landowners in the Punjab, tried "to wring from the Hindu and Muhammadan cultivators the utmost farthing that could be extorted without compelling them to abandon their fields." The cultivators were assessed according to their capacity to pay; in times of famine and draught the entire revenue was remitted and ameliorative measures of relief and free distribution of corn ordered. The oppressive *Kardārs* and grasping revenue officials were punished when reports of their misdeeds reached the Court. Orders were issued to the commanders of troops marching the country to take care that crops were not damaged. In short, the Sikh farmer of revenue, observes Griffin, did not

wish to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs, but he plucked the feathers as closely as he dared.¹

14. Revenue-farming

The system of revenue-farming in the Punjab was not introduced by the Sikhs. It was adopted by them from a system prevalent under the Mughals without, however, its deterrent instruments of the decennial assessment of the average of the produce. The sum contracted was generally half of the actual produce roughly reckoned, which also involved serious breach of the rights of the peasant-cultivators, who were subjected to additional burdens (*abwābs*). During the Misal period, the Chiefs distributed their lands to their followers, thus eliminating the actual right-holders. Ranjit Singh did not disturb the pattern in which the proprietary right was nothing more than a fiction, though its existence, in theory, at least, was recognised by the Sikhs. The land revenue was realised from the actual occupant, be he a zamīndār, a tenant, or a ploughman. The proprietary right could be claimed by the occupant of the land, who generally paid a share of the produce direct to the State.

15. Land-revenue assignments

Approximately one-third of the total revenue of the State was in the form of land-revenue assignments. These were mostly of temporary tenure, notwithstanding the right of the larger assignees to make similar grants out of their holdings to their followers or persons of their choice. A *jāgīr* was held during the pleasure of the Maharaja or for life-time, and on the death of the holder it was normally resumed by the State. Political considerations or exigencies of service compelled Ranjit Singh to make land assignments to Sikh and other Chiefs, whose territories he had taken; to local influential men, to the princes of the royal family and the collaterals, to his favourites, to high-ranking Sardars, and the miscellanea of Court nobility. Assignments of land were also made to cover the pay of the troops and officers of the State. Apart from these, estates were assigned to religious shrines and holy men, and persons belonging to the royal household. The assignees took the State share of the produce under prevalent customary rules.

16. Land-revenue system

Neither unduly benevolent nor exceedingly oppressive, the land revenue system of Ranjit Singh was highly practical and suited to the requirements of the time. It was unrelated to any concept of the economic development of the people or the country, yet the Maharaja kept it within reasonable bounds of moderation and traditionally linked with the general well-being of the cultivators and the farmers.

¹ Ranjit Singh, p. 144.

The system had been inherited from the Mughals ; it was retained and adopted with minor modifications to bring large fixed revenues to sustain a highly personalised military despotism. The whole country was farmed out. It brought to the State an estimated revenue of 1,25,00,000 rupees, an almost equivalent amount required to maintain the armed forces of the State.

In theory, the government took one-half of the gross produce of the land, but the system varied in various parts of the country to suit local conditions. For the purpose of collecting the revenue the Kingdom was divided into *subāhs*. Each *subāh* had a number of *pargannas* further subdivided into *ta'aluqas* comprising of a number of *mauzās*. The functionaries for revenue administration were the *Kārdār* (Revenue Collector) in a *ta'aluqa* assisted by the *Muqaddam* (Headman), the *Qānūngo* (Registrar), the *Patwārī* (Assessor) and the *Chaudharīs*.

The State was the *mālik'i 'āla* or supreme owner of all cultivable land, and the zamindār or cultivator the *mālik'i adnā* or inferior owner. There was no uniform system of assessment, and opinions differ as to the exact share of the government. It is, however, generally believed to vary from one-half to two-fifth because of different modes of assessment prevalent in the country. As the whole country was farmed out on various specific conditions and terms, the revenue administration differed in detail in a variety of ways, as for instance in Multan, in Kashmir, in Peshawar and the trans-Indus regions.

17. Modes of assessment

Various methods of assessment hitherto prevalent under the Mughal rule were adopted, viz., (1) the *Batā'i System* or the division of the crop, under which the State appropriated its share in kind as land revenue at the time of harvest. The obvious disadvantages of this system were the uncertainty of the State share, and the opportunity of corruption and dishonesty it afforded to a host of petty revenue officials who supervised the division of the crop. (2) The *Kankūt System* or the fixation of State's share as land revenue in kind on the appraisal of the standing crop. This obviated the tedium and expense on the division of the crop, but gave incentive to corrupt and wrong assessments to dishonest revenue officials, who often deprived the State of its due and lined their own pockets. (3) The *Cash System*, over both the previously described systems was preferred the payment of revenue in cash, which Ranjit Singh introduced towards the later period of his reign. It facilitated the collection of revenue from larger estates ; although its fixation was both whimsical and not too often arbitrary, it brought a considerable amount of money to the State Exchequer.

In the Jullundur Doab a mixed system was adopted where standard crops continued to pay land revenue under *bata'i* and *kankūt*, sugar-cane, cotton, tobacco,

pepper, vegetables and fodder-crops were assessed on cash basis. In the northern districts—Attock, Hazara, Gujrat and Peshawar, the old system of land revenue remained unchanged. It consisted of the *bigha-rate*, *plough-rate* or *well-rate*, the unit of assessment being a *bigha*—about 15 *bighas* which could on the average be cultivated by a team of oxen with plough, or 25 *bighas* which could be cultivated by a well.

William Moorcroft who visited the Punjab in 1820, observed a new method of rating of land revenue in Kangra district, which must be commonly prevalent in the hills. It consisted of a rough analysis of the soil. A given quantity of earth was put into fine muslin sieve and washed with water until all the mould was carried through and nothing but sand was left. The assessment was determined on the richness of the soil at 3, 2½, and 2 rupees. The system, observes Moorcroft, was preferable by the people to the assessment of out-turn of the standing crops. The persons appointed to form the estimate, made use of their power to oppress the cultivators and to levy from them heavy exactions, in which the zamīndārs not unfrequently were sharers, defrauding the State without benefit to the peasantry.¹

The vagaries of the revenue administration under a wholesale system of land-farming were numerous. It could, however, be hardly described as oppressive. Ranjit Singh “took from the land as much as it could readily yield, and he took from the merchants as much as they could profitably give; he put down open marauding; the Sikh peasantry enjoyed a light assessment; no local officer dared to oppress a member of the Khālṣa; and if elsewhere the farmers of revenue were resisted in their tyrannical proceedings, they were more likely to be changed than to be supported by battalions.”²

18. The Muwājibs

Abstract generalisations about the land revenue system of Ranjit Singh would fail to emphasise its uniformities and its divergencies. Like all oriental monarchies it suffered from the common ills of land-farming. Extortions, and exactions rack-renting under various local convenient names—the *muwājibs*, the *abwābs*, the *tambol*, the *mandiri*, the *rasūm-i-daftar*, the *zābiṭa*, the *torāni* and *sharāfi* etc., were all customary burdens willingly accepted by the peasants and rightfully imposed upon by the farmer of land revenue. The divergencies of the system were apparent at Multan under Sawan Mal where the land revenue was benevolently tolerant, in the Jullundur Doab where it was less arduous and favourable to the cultivators, in Kashmir where it was rapacious and chaotic, in the province of Peshawar where it was uncertain and uneconomical, and in the

¹ *Travels*, p. 73.

² *Cunningham*, p. 151.

trans-Indus region where it was always in arrears and had to be collected *vi et armis*.

19. Resources of the State

An earlier estimate of the revenue resources of the Punjab is by Murray (1832) computed at 2,58,09,500 rupees as under¹ :—

Land revenue and tributes	...	1,24,03,900 rupees
Custom duties	...	19,00,600
<i>Moharānā</i> fee for stamping the State seal on papers	...	5,77,000
<i>Jāgīrs</i> and fiefs	...	1,09,28,000
Total		2,58,09,500 rupees

Later estimates, however, place the resources of the State between 2,50,00,000 and 3,25,00,000 rupees annually. Shahmat Ali (1838) computes them at 3,00,27,762 rupees. The province of Multan under Sawan Mal yielded an annual revenue of 38,98,550 rupees ; the Jullundur Doab under Misser Rup Lal 18,72,902 rupees ; the districts between the Chenab and Jehlum under the charge of Gulab Singh brought 25,45,000 rupees ; the district of Wazirabad under *rājā* Suchet Singh brought 10,55,724 rupees ; the *Māñjha* and the hill territories between the Sutlej and the Ravi under Lehna Singh *Majīthiā* 14,87,475 rupees ; Kashmir under Colonel Mian Singh yielded 36,75,000 rupees ; and Peshawar under M. Avitabile 18,34,738 rupees.²

J. D. Cunningham, who in 1844 drew up *An Outline Sketch of the Military Resources and Political Conditions of the Punjab*,³ estimated the revenues of the State at 3,24,75,000 rupees—tributary states 5,65,000 rupees ; farms 1,79,85,000 rupees ; eleemosynary 20,00,000 rupees ; *jāgīrs* 95,25,000 rupees ; and customs etc. 24,00,000 rupees. Though these figures were compiled in 1844, they are equally applicable to the revenues of the State of Lahore under and immediately after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

20. Customs and town duties

It is necessary at this place to give an account of the custom and excise duties which brought to the Central Exchequer an annual revenue of 24,00,000 rupees.

¹ ii, p. 192-93. Jacquemont a year earlier estimated them at 3,00,00,000 rupees. The Maharaja, he adds, received a great deal in kind, contribution of horses, camels, cloth, grain and lastly of soldiers which the petty rajahs of his creation have to supply in case of war : the value of these was, however, difficult to estimate. *Journal*, p. 49.

² *The Sikhs and the Afghans*, p. 21-23.

³ ISP (I) 28 March, 1845, Nos 55 and 56.

These included the salt mine duties, the *ābkārī* or excise duties, town and transit duties, the *Moharāna* or stamp fees, and the octrai duties of the towns of Lahore and Amritsar. These sources of revenue were farmed out to the highest bidders, and for that very reason their administration was chaotic and baffling. The system though convenient as a form of collecting a fixed amount of revenue, was highly arbitrary and vexatious. Duties and taxes were imposed, though not for the most part immoderate, on all articles. Although the merchants and tradesmen were given protection, they were not immune from the exactions of petty customs officials over the regulated tolls and taxes.

Town duties of Lahore and Amritsar farmed out averaged 8,00,000 rupees, and transit duties 5,00,000 rupees. The system of octrai, however, was ruinous. Farmed out to the highest bidder annually, arbitrary rates were imposed by him; all commodities coming in and local products going out were taxed. Every article was subjected to tax; no differentiation being made between an article of luxury or of common use. It was subjected to duty on entry to the town, then on being taken to the shop, and the third time on being re-exported or taken out of the town. Jacquemont describes the system: "At Lahore, as at Amritsar, there is a sort of octrai system, not only on commodities coming in but on local products going out. It is easy to see how arbitrary the rate imposed is; there is a precedent which forms a rule and that is all. Ranjit has adopted a most ruinous system in order to make money. He farms the revenue of octrai to the highest bidder. The latter has to make what he can out of it, and rarely does so without a thrashing at the end of his contract and without disgorging several lakhs, though not without retaining a certain amount from his extortions. The result is that, after the royal avarice has been satisfied, there are always plenty of competitors when each contract is renewed."¹

21. Professional taxes

Additional income accrued from customary *abwābs* and taxes on professions. In the villages a cess on wells was imposed and a tax on marriages and festivals. Taxes were also imposed on people following various professions, *e. g.*, shepherds, weavers, barbers, blacksmiths, tailors etc. A tax was imposed on water-mills. These taxes were levied at a flat rate, as for instance, traders were taxed at 2 rupees per head; a weaver was taxed per loom, a tanner per hide, and barbers, washermen, potters, blacksmiths, carpenters etc. per family or house. Not too often, the *jāgīrs* were subjected to a succession tax or resumed at the death of the feudatory;²

¹ *Journal of Travels etc.*, p. 59.

² This was a common practice, as for instance, on the death of general Hari Singh Nalwā, Ranjit Singh confiscated his estate worth 8,00,000 annually in 1837.

and in time of financial stress, public servants were ordered to forego a part or whole of their emoluments.

22. An abstract

An abstract of revenues of the State of Lahore under Maharaja Ranjit Singh prepared from the British records is furnished below :—

1. Tributary hill principalities	...	rupees	5,65,000
2. Contracted territories inclusive of land assignments and troops	...		1,79,85,000
as under :—			
Kashmir and dependencies	...	30,00,000	
Peshawar and dependencies	...	10,00,000	
Multan and dependencies	...	45,00,000	
Jullundur Doab	...	22,00,000	
Tank, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan	...	7,00,000	
Hill Farms, Kangra, Mandi, Kullu etc.	...	17,60,000	
Bisholi, Muzaffarabad, Chach Hazara	...	6,25,000	
Wazirabad, Sialkot, Ramnagar	...	12,50,000	
Gujrat and Pind Dadan Khan, Rawalpindi etc.	...	4,50,000	
Cis-Sutlej Farms	...	6,50,000	
Miscellaneous Farms	...	15,00,000	
3. Religious Endowments and grants	...	20,00,000	20,00,000
4. <i>Jagirs</i> and Assignments :—	...	95,35,000	95,35,000
Jammu brothers	...	16,20,000	
Court nobles, Princes and Sardars	...	79,15,000	
5. Excise, Custom and Stamp Duties	...	24,00,000	24,00,000
		Total	3,24,85,000

5. JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

23. The 'Adalat-i A'la

The Judicial Administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh may aptly be described as a patchwork of old and new systems based on local custom and caprice. There being no legal code, little differentiation was made between civil and criminal law and the judges decided cases by custom and usage. Also extensive use was made of the *Dharma Śāstra* and the *Shari'at* in deciding cases of litigants of various communities to whom their customary law was applicable. But although administration of justice was normally regarded a local affair, an *Adalat-i-A'la*

or Supreme Court was set up at Lahore, which was mainly concerned with the hearing of appeals against the decisions of the provincial satraps or the *Nāzims* and the commissioners or the *Kārdārs*. The Maharaja was generally regarded the source of all justice, and heard in the open Darbār appeals against the decisions of the '*Adalat-i-Ā'la* and the provincial courts.

24. The *Adawlat*s

Apart from the Supreme Court set up at the metropolis, the State had established *Adawlat*s or Special Courts in important towns like Lahore, Amritsar, Multan and Peshawar to hear and decide both civil and criminal cases. Prominent persons of the locality were vested with civil and judicial powers, but it is not known how and in what manner they exercised jurisdiction in the provinces and districts where both the *Nāzim* and the *Kārdār* exercised similar powers. Vigilance could not be maintained to supervise the work of the provincial judiciary, yet the Sikh ruler generally issued strict orders to the *Adawlat*s to be just and merciful in their decisions.¹ We do not know whether they derived their powers from the sovereign, the local governors, or the '*Adalat-i-Ā'la* exercised any control over them.

25. Provincial Courts

In the provinces, sub-divisions and in the feudal territories were the *Nāzim's* Court, the *Kārdār's* Court and the *Jāgīrdār's* Court. The *Nāzim's* Court exercised jurisdiction in all civil and criminal matters within the province. All cases at the provincial capital came up before it, and it also heard appeals against the decisions of the *Kārdār's* Court in the sub-divisions, who in their respective regions exercised wider civil and criminal jurisdiction.

26. *Jāgīrdārī* Courts

In the villages, the old traditional *pañchāyats* continued to administer justice in petty civil and criminal cases or settled disputes by arbitration. Large judicial powers rested with the *Jāgīrdārs* both in civil and criminal matters, although we have little information how the litigants sought redress against their arbitrary or capricious decisions. It is almost certain that *Nāzim's* or the *Kārdār's* courts had no right of hearing appeals against the *Jāgīrdārī* courts. Much criticism is rightly levied against the existence of the *Jāgīrdārī* courts of law in the feudal territory which made the establishment of regular courts almost redundant. A feudatory chief was vested with powers to administer civil and criminal law, and in the absence of *lex scripta*, the feudal judges administered justice according to their caprice or whim.

27. Crime and Punishment

Crime was generally atoned with fines, which the judge appropriated, making it as additional source of income. He would normally avoid capital punishment

¹ *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh* (Monograph No. 17). No. 63. p. 286.

for murder, and for other crimes fine the offender not according to the crime but his means to pay, and would often place the family of the accused under restraint till the fine was paid. Mutilation of limbs—cutting of hands, nose, ears, a common mode of punishment could thus be avoided by paying compensation money. As all crime could be atoned by money, the system led to graft and extortion of the worst kind. A litigant was fleeced both ways—if he won, he paid the *shukrāna* or a present of money in gratitude; and if he lost, he paid the *jurmana* or fine. “The wealthy may secure justice,” comments Prinsep on the judicial administration prevalent under the Sikhs, “but the indigent are likely to obtain something less. The larger the bribe the more chance of success. A case where right is clear and undeniable, is often allowed to lie over, that the present may be augmented. All officers under the chief, and employed by him in districts and departments, follow his example; but they are ultimately thrown into a *bora*, or dungeon, and required to refund, and when they have satisfied the cupidity of their superior, they are generally permitted to resume their functions, honoured with the shawl as mark of favour. Capital punishment is seldom inflicted. The most incorrigible culprits are punished with the loss of either one or both hands, and deprivation of nose or ears; but the mutilation is rare, for whosoever has the means to pay, or can procure a respectable security to pay for him within given time, may expiate the most heinous transgressions.”¹

Justice in Ranjit Singh’s time is described as crude and simple but mulct-ridden and of considerable source of income to the State. But although no uniform system of judicial administration could be said to have existed in the whole Kingdom, the pattern was the same. Fine was the mode of punishment, and in criminal cases punishments were quick and summary.²

28. Variations

In sharp contrast to the highly just and humane administration of justice by Dīwān Sawan Mal in Multan, we have horrowing accounts of general Avitabile’s cruel and barbarous one in Peshawar. As elsewhere, in Multan, it was not much severe. Crime was generally punished with fine, if the criminal or his family could

¹ *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, Calcutta, 1834, p. 154-55.

² Osborne, p. 67, describes the method of summary punishments dispensed by the Maharaja, as for instance, in the case of a state messenger riding a camel (*shutar sowār*) whom the Akālīs had robbed 7 miles from Lahore—deprived him of his camel, arms, clothes, and one finger. He received hundred rupees for his camel, another hundred for his arms, clothes and fifty for his finger. “His executions are very prompt,” Osborne observes, “and follow quickly on the sentence: one blow of an axe, and then some boiling oil to immerse the stump in, and stop all the effusion of blood, is all the machinery he requires for his court of justice. He is himself accuser, judge and jury; and five minutes is about the duration of the longest trial at Lahore.”

pay it. Mutilation or imprisonment were commutable for money. A cattle thief was beheaded in public. Highway robbers were usually hanged and quartered. The repression of crime was generally carried out by the members of provincial levies. Prisoners when confined in jails had to beg for their food, the government was not bound to maintain them.¹

The code of civil and criminal justice followed in the turbulent districts in the north-Peshawar and Hazara, was somewhat harsh and cruel. We have numerous accounts of General Avitabile's capricious administration of justice in Peshawar. 'The pleasure which he took in seeing people hung by dozens must be attributed to the affection of his brain.' Observes Dr. John Martin Honigberger. "General Allard told me that the Maharaja once reprimanded him for having executed some Musselmans, whom General Avitabile had ordered to be hung because they were of the opinion, that, under the protection of a European governor 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."² The manner in which justice was administered by Avitabile has been narrated.³ Shahamat Ali also describes his methods.⁴ A gang of dacoits having broken into the city of Peshawar, and carried away some valuable property belonging to a wealthy Hindu merchant, one of whose men was killed, and one seriously injured. General Avitabile prevented the deceased from being cremated, on the plea that his family deserved to be punished for not repairing the wall, through which the party of dacoits came. After much discussion, a fine of 2,000 rupees was exacted from the family before the deceased was allowed to be burnt. Such fines, however, were set apart by him to improve the fortifications of the city !

¹ Maclagan (*Multan District Gazetteer*, p. 228) recounts one of the numerous stories about Diwān Sawan Mal's sense of justice : "Ali Dangra, one of the Diwan's assessors, who ventured to plead on behalf of a handsome young robber, who was under trial, with the result that under the Diwan's express orders the robber was hung at Ali Dangra's own door."

² *Twenty-Five Years in the East*, London, 1852, p. 53.

³ *Vide*. Chapter 13(5-6), *supra*.

⁴ *The Sikhs and the Afghans*, London, 1847, p. 206,

CHAPTER 15

THE ARMY OF MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

1. Its Genesis

STATISTICAL DETAILS regarding the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh are available from the pay rolls of the *Khālṣa Darbār Records* as well as from the stray accounts of contemporary writers. The army of the *Sarkār Khālṣa* grew out of the army of the Misals whom Ranjit Singh wiped out systematically, however, absorbing their soldiers into his own army. The soldier of the *Dal Khālṣa*, or for that matter, of the individual Sikh Misals was a soldier of fortune ; his loyalty lay with the powerful Chief who could lead him to conquest and glory. Having acquired the stamina, endurance and experience of predatory warfare during the good old days of the *Dal Khālṣa* (1739-61) when the recurrent Durrani invasions convulsed the heart of the Punjab, he had gained confidence and experience of war.

We can straightaway dismiss Lawrence's derisive description of a Sikh soldier of the Misal period as highly misconceived, grotesque and erroneous : "Go to a bazar. Take a dirty scoundrel. Twist up his hair, give him a lofty turban and a clean vest. Put a clumsy sword by his side and a long spear in his cowardly hand. Mount him on a strong clumsy two years old, and you have a passable Sikh soldier."¹

2. The *Dal Khālṣa*

Nor can we accept the categorical view that the fighting men of the Misal period were "mobs of predatory horsemen forming a religious theocracy."² Such notions are the product of an all pervasive tendency to misconstrue and belittle the fine body of horsemen, which the *Dal Khālṣa* at the zenith of power could muster to destroy its enemies. The confederacies of the *Dal Khālṣa* who had acquired political power in the Punjab mustered 70,000 horsemen as under : the Bhangīs 10,000 horse, the Rāmgarhiās 3,000 horse, the Āhlūwālīās 3,000 horse, the Kanahayās 8,000 horse, the Dallewālās 7,500 horse, the Nishānwālās 12,000

¹ *Adventures of an Officer in the Punjaub*, i, p. 6 ff.

² *Vide.* generally on the subject, the observations of Grey, p. 17 ff ; Malcolm, p. 150 et seq. ; Francklin *Life of George Thomas*, p. 71 ff ; Forster, *Journey from Bengal to England*, i, p. 332 ff. etc.

horse, the Fyzulpuriās 2,500 horse, the Karor Singhiās 12,000 horse, the Shahīds and Nihangs 2,000 horse, the Phulkiāns 5,000 horse, and the Śukerchakiās 2,500 horse.¹

The military force of the *Dal Khālsa* essentially consisted of cavalry; artillery and infantry were practically unknown to the Sikhs when they rose to power. A powerful Misaldār could merely boast of a few cannon and some 1½ inch zamburaks or camel swivels. A Sikh soldier despised to be a footman; infantry was held in low estimation, and the few who joined it were assigned meaner occupations. The Sikh horseman fought with matchlock, spear and sword. He seldom received any pay, carried sparse rations and had scanty accoutrements. He owned his horse and weapons, and was amply suited for plunder and desultory warfare. Theoretically he was a soldier of the *Khālsa*, fired by the mystic ideals of Gobind which he little understood, and he had no politics. He was also a soldier of the *Panth* out to destroy the enemies of the Faith in all religious fervour and patriotism. Above all, he was a free-lance, a republican with a revolutionary impulse, and being the master of own horse and weapons, he had the freedom to transfer his loyalties to whomsoever he willed.

The armies of the *Dal Khālsa* unencumbered by heavy ordnance possessed an amazing manoeuvrability. The *ghorcharas* were sturdy and agile men who could swiftly load their matchlocks on horseback and charge the enemy at topspeed repeating the operation several times. They looked down upon the comforts of the tents, carrying their and their animal's rations of grains in a knapsack, and two blankets under the saddle as their bedding, they marched off with lightning rapidity in and out of the battle.

The oppression of the nominal Afghan rule in northern India combined with the persecutions of the Mughal governors had aroused the primitive instincts of the Māñjha and Mālwa Sikhs for self preservation. Since 1739, when Nadir Shah's catastrophic invasion had upset the political equilibrium in northern India, it had been the scene of recurrent Afghan invasions violently disrupting the social and economic life of the Punjab. Every village became a fort. A farmer would keep within reach his sword or lance while ploughing his fields. In villages able bodied

¹ This is a conservative estimate based on the known strength of the major Sikh confederacies. The *Dal Khālsa*, which became a dominant force in the Punjab in the mid-18th century, could in a restricted sense be termed as a theocratic military confederacy. Early estimates of the armies of the Misals seem to be highly exaggerated. In 1784, Warren Hastings was the first to realise their potential strength; Forster in 1783 estimated it between 2,00,000-3,00,000 (*A Journey from Bengal to England etc.* London, 1798, i, p. 333); Browne (*India Tracts*, ii) in 1788 at 98,000; Francklin (*History of the Reign of Shah Alam*, p. 75 ff.) at 2,50,000. The British adventurer George Thomas (*Military Memories of George Thomas*, Calcutta, 1803, p. 274) who fought the Phulkiān Sikhs in 1799 at 65,000 horse.

men, in cities and towns men without any fighting experience, without proper arms, swarmed around any one who could lead them to challenge the oppressive ruling Muslim authority or destroy the Afghan invader.

Such was the genesis of the army of the *Dal Khālṣa*, which Ranjit Singh inherited from the Misals. Its soldiery had learnt the lessons of fire and sword, of plunder and rapine, of primitive barbarism, of national and communal unity under leaders like Jassa Kalāl, Nawab Kapur Singh and others. With the growth of the territorial power of the Sikhs, the ranks of the *Dal Khālṣa* swelled, their organisation perfected, and the hardihood of its soldiery tested.¹

The *Dal Khālṣa* was founded on a common faith and a common political need. In time of emergency, the numerous small levies of the Sikh Misals, who were otherwise independent, combined and acted in unison. The threat of Afghan aggression and combined resistance to oppressive Muslim authority kept it alive and active, yet the Misal system possessed no inherent strength. It lacked any permanent cohesive force and its civil and military organisation was highly irregular and imperfect. But for a rudimentary make-belief of justice called *gaha* or self-redress, the Misal System offered to its members, who derived their revenues from a levy of *rākhi* or protection-cess, war-booty and plunder, no sounder principles of administration or conquest. The system worked well so long as common interests actuated its operations, or there was a common enemy to destroy, or territories to conquer and spoils to share; without them it fell to pieces. As the dominions of individual Misals enlarged, the whole region was parcelled out into numerous states. The Misaldārs still regarded the Mughals and the Afghans as their foes, but in the absence of a binding force, they began preying upon the territories of each other. Personal lust for power, mutual jealousies, and wrangling for territorial aggrandizement had reduced the ideal of a Sikh Commonwealth to mockery. Neither the *Gurmatta* or Sikh National Diet nor the *Sarbat*

¹ We have interesting details about the organisation of the *Dal Khālṣa*. Every Chief maintained an independent force, which acted in concert in time of national emergency. In every Misal the Chief was the leader in war, and in times of peace, their judge and arbiter. The soldiers and inferior chiefs were free to change their allegiance or loyalty to another powerful Chief at will. Alliances took place for reciprocal benefit between the Sardars of various confederacies, for each Misal was equal of the other and could act independently for its own well being. Threat of Afghan invasions and religious bigotry of the local Muslim ruling authority unified the Sikh Chiefs who had risen to political power. They periodically met at Amritsar, and at the *Baisakhī* and the *Diwali* festivals for concourse and to settle problems of mutual interest. At the *Sarbat Khālṣa* or a General Assembly, all animosities and mutual recriminations were set aside; the ordinations of the *Gurmatta* on all national political issues could not be challenged by any one. The *Dal Khālṣa* or the joint forces of the Chiefs took collective action under a chosen leader against common enemy, collected *rākhi* or protection cess, and in predatory expeditions divided the spoils amongst themselves.

Khalsa or a General Assembly of the Sikhs could hold it together. As a political force the Misal system had become decayed and lifeless.

3. Core of Ranjit Singh's army

The disintegration of the *Dal Khalsa* followed. The individual ambitions of the Misaldārs, their private distrusts and mutual recriminations transformed the Misal system into a highly disruptive force divorced from the basic ideals of Sikh Commonwealth. The various units of the *Dal Khalsa* degenerated into instruments of territorial enlargements and personal lust for political power. Ranjit Singh took advantage of these unstable political conditions. One by one he destroyed and liquidated the Misals; he not only annexed their territories but also took into service the soldiery of the Misals. Thus, the flower of the Sikh cavalry of the Bhangīs, the Rāmgarhiās, the Kanahayās, the Fyzulpuriās, the Karor Singhiās, the Nishānwālās, the Dallewālās and other petty confederacies was absorbed by him into his own army. The hardened soldiery of the *Dal Khalsa*, therefore, constituted the core of Ranjit Singh's army.

The mass of Sikh horsemen of the Misals had hitherto served their Chiefs without regular pay; they generally subsisted on plundur, rapine, or a share in the booty. Ranjit Singh gave them regular employment, subjected them to drill and discipline, created units and regiments, and gave them military training under his own personal supervision or that of his trained military officers. The introduction of the *Mahadārī* system of payment of fixed monthly salary changed the entire concept of the loyalty of a *sowār* (horseman) recruited by him, who had previously lived on plunder or whatever booty he could grab or was doled out to him after a successful expedition.

4. Its overall strength

From the statistics available, it is well established that the Sikh Army created by Ranjit Singh at the zenith of his power, though not staggering in numbers, was a formidable force. In 1838, its overall strength was about 1,00,000 men—35 regiments of infantry (28,723 men), Akālī fanatics (4,000), irregular levies and garrison troops (32,000); its cavalry strength being 30,000 horse, which included 9 regular regiments (5,400 horse), irregular horse (11,800), the *Ghorcharahs* or matchlock horsemen (10,795), and 5 regiments of trained Jagirdārī contingents (3,000 horse). Its field artillery and heavy guns amounted to 288 (4,250 men), and light artillery exclusive of mortars and swivels 87. We have no exact statistics of the garrison ordnance placed in the fortresses in the northern districts, but a rough estimate as evidenced from the British records after the so-called Second Anglo-Sikh War, would put it over 100.

5. Master of the Machine

Ranjit Singh was the architect of this colossal military machine built up with consummate skill. Part of it was modelled on European pattern, but most of it retained its traditional Sikh character. It was the fond child of the military despot who had nursed it with over 1/3rd (1,27,96,482 rupees) of his entire revenues which approximated little over 3,00,00,000, rupees.¹ It was composed of mixed racial elements—Sikh, Hindu, Muhammadan, Hindustānīs, Nujibs, Hillsmen and the Gurkhas.² It was also commanded by Sikh, Hindu, Muslim and European officers. Ranjit Singh was the master of this efficient machine, and he was his own Commander-in-Chief. Metcalfe testifies to it as early as 1808: "His command in his army is as implicitly obeyed as perhaps it could be among the best disciplined troops. Every private or footman is compelled to look upon him, as his master, whatever Chief he may immediately be attached to, and the Chiefs are as much subject to receive orders as the private soldiers."³

"His orders in his army," Metcalfe observes in an earlier despatch, "are universally and instantly obeyed; the greatest Sardar and the lowest soldier seem to pay the same deference to him. At the same time his manners are affable and

¹ These figures, prepared from the fragmentary pay-rolls of the *Khālśa Darbār Records* and meagre accounts recorded in the British records, particularly the *India Secret Proceedings (I)* may still be regarded as tentative. For contemporary accounts *vide.*, in particular, Shahamat Ali (*The Sikhs and the Afghans*, p. 23-25); Osborne (*Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*, p. 39, 41 ff., 60 ff. etc.); Murray (*History of the Punjab*, ii, p. 192 ff.); Prinsep (*Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, p. 146 ff.). Other relevant authorities having divergent accounts are: Bajwa (*Military System of the Sikhs*, Delhi, 1964), Griffin (*Ranjit Singh*, p. 132 et seq); Chopra (*Punjab as a Sovereign State*, Lahore, 1828); and Sita Ram Kohli (*Journal of Indian History*, i, ii, 1921-22).

British records furnish scanty information about the strength and composition of the Sikh Army till 1839. First reports on the *Military Resources of the Punjab* were compiled by Colonel Richmond, the Agent to the Governor-General, N. W. Frontier Agency in 1843-44, *vide.* ISP(I)23 March, 1844, No. 577; 21 September, 1844, No. 143; 26 October, 1844, No. 113; 27 April, 1844, No. 180-181 and 28 December, 1844, No. 143. Lieutenant J. D. Cunningham, Assistant to the Agent, drew up an outline sketch of the *Military Resources and Political Conditions of the Punjab*, *vide.* ISP(I)23 March, 1845, Nos. 55 and 66. He also prepared an *Abstract* showing the disposition of the Sikh Army in July 1844, *ibid.*

According to the statistics collected by the British officials at the N. W. Frontier Agency in 1844, the regular army of the State of Lahore was not only formidable but possessed impressive fighting power—a fact which belied the earlier erroneous estimates of Clerk that it was ill-equipped and weak; and that it was mercenary, indisciplined and licentious.

² An examination of the *Khālśa Darbār Records* and British official reports regarding the composition of the Sikh army reveals that infantry and cavalry was 60% Sikh, 20% Muslim and 20% Hindu and others. Its artillery regiments were predominantly Muslim, and some were commanded by Europeans.

³ Metcalfe—1 October, 1808. Despatch No. 25.

familiar.”¹ In almost everything in building up his army, its discipline and organisation, training and tactical details, Ranjit Singh exercised personal and direct supervision.

6. Major Divisions

Broadly speaking, the Army of Ranjit Singh was of two categories, viz., the *Fauj-i-Ā'in* or the Regular Army, and the *Fauj-i-Beqawā'id* or the Irregular Force. It had four major divisions : (1) Infantry, (2) Cavalry, (3) Artillery, and (4) the *Fauj-i-Khās* or the Special Brigade.

A—INFANTRY

Infantry of the *Fauj Ā'in* or the regular army, about 30,000 strong consisted of 35 regiments—a force which was practically non-existent in 1799. A Sikh was a soldier on horseback and his aversion to becoming a footman has already been described. Ranjit Singh soon realised that in his scheme of wars and conquests infantry was equally important as cavalry. He, therefore, began raising trained and disciplined battalions of infantry, in which due to the aversion of the Sikhs to serve as footmen, he enlisted Pūrbiās, Hindustānīs, Muhammadans, Gurkhas and Afghans. The earlier pay-rolls of the *Khalsa Darbār* records confirm that Sikh element in the rank and file of the infantry battalions was scarce. General Ventura was put in charge of raising and drilling new regiments of infantry, and gradually it became the most perfect arm of the Sikh Army. Ranjit Singh's personal influence over it was quite extraordinary. Constant parades, drills, and manoeuvring exercises kept it in a state of readiness. Periodical reviews were held : battalions were inspected regularly, and their constant deployment in wars and expeditions hardened its core and made it highly disciplined and effective.

We have numerous contemporary observations regarding the infantry battalions of Ranjit Singh. Osborne, as for instance, describes them as a fine body of men, disciplined and trained for warfare. They had fewer prejudices and as soldiers : “were beautifully steady on parade and fire with greater precision, both volleys and file firing, than any other troops I saw.” Comparing them with the Company's sepoys he observes : “The Sikh army possesses one great advantage over our own—the ease with which it can be moved. No wheel carriage is allowed on a march ; their own bāzārs carry all they require ; and thirty thousand of their troops could be moved with more facility and less expense and loss of time than three Company's regiments on this side of the Sutlej.”²

Steinbach characterises two outstanding qualities of a Sikh infantry soldier—his faculty of subsisting upon very small quantity of food and a capability

¹ *Ibid.* 15 September, 1808. Despatch No. 16.

² *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, p. 39-40.

of enduring great fatigue: "The Sikhs, have indeed, acquired, from their remarkable pedestrian qualities, the epithet of iron-legged."¹ Cunningham gives the opinion that General Allard and Ventura, whom Ranjit Singh took into service gave a moderate degree of precision and completeness to the *Khālsa* infantry, part of which was organised on European model. They introduced French words of command, a code for recruitment, regular parades and long endurance of fatigue.²

A review of Ranjit Singh's battalions of infantry in 1838 is described thus: "It consisted of about twelve thousand men and reached to the city gates, about two miles. I never saw so straight or beautiful line with any troops. They were all dressed in white with black belts, and either a red or yellow silk turban; armed with muskets and bayonets of excellent manufacture, from Ranjit's foundry at Lahore. Their movements are steady, but much too slow, and a European light infantry regiment would find little difficulty in walking round them."³

The phenomenal growth of Sikh infantry is apparent from the following table showing the strength of Sikh Infantry and its monthly salary :⁴

Year	Strength	Monthly Salary in Rupees
1819	7,748	60,172
1823	11,681	84,162
1828	15,825	1,16,284
1833	20,577	1,67,962
1838	26,617	2,27,660
1843	37,791	4,83,056
1845	53,962	5,70,205

These figures prepared from the *Khālsa Darbār Records* almost tally with British Records and other contemporary sources, according to which the strength of Infantry in 1810 was barely 2,825 men which rose to 29,617 men in 1838-39.⁵

¹ *The Punjab*, London, 1845, p. 67.

² *History of the Sikhs*, p. 157.

³ Osborne, *op. cit.* p. 58.

⁴ Sita Ram Kohli, who has prepared these statistics from the pay-rolls of the *Khālsa Darbār Records* (*vide. Journal of Indian History*, Parts I-II, 1921-22; and *Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial Volume-the Organisation of Khālsa Army*, p. 70) states that the actual strength of an infantry battalion was 560 men with an average monthly salary of 4,279 rupees.

⁵ Cunningham in 1844 records a further rise in the Sikh infantry. It consisted of 60 regiments of 700 men each (42,000), Rāmghols, Akālīs 5,000 and irregular levies and garrison companies 45,000: total 92,000 men. (*vide. Appendix, xxxix*). From the *Khālsa Darbār Records*, the constitution of the Sikh army is apparent. The regular army under a commandant of a Corp consisted of infantry and cavalry regiments with an apportionment of heavy and light artillery. It was placed under a general who received an average pay of 450 rupees per month. Very often notable members of the Darbār were appointed commandants of the Corps.

In due course of time the infantry became the flower of the Sikh army in a fair state of discipline, stubborn, hardy men of tall stature capable of great endurance in long marches and experience of exposure to hot and cold weather. Regular infantry men wore scarlet costumes and blue linen trousers. They wore a blue turban and carried a locally made musket and bayonet. The organisation of infantry was borrowed from the East India Company. It consisted of regiments of 700 men each. It was commanded by a *Kumidān* (commander-pay about 100 rupees per month), under whom were an *Adjutant* and a *Major*. A regiment was further subdivided into 7 companies of 100 men each. The average monthly pay of a sepoy was 7 rupees, of a *Nā'ik* 10 rupees, of a *Havildār* 13 rupees, of a *Jamadar* 15 rupees, of a *Subedar* 20 rupees, and of a *Major* 50 rupees. Regimental accounts were kept by an accountant and each regiment had a *granthi* and a copy of the holy *Granth*. Non-combatants and menials attached to a regiment were cooks, watermen, standard-bearers, blacksmiths, carpenters and masons. A *subedar*, a *havildār*, a *nishānchī* and a *nā'ik* were equivalents of non-commissioned officers. Estimated annual cost of maintenance of a regiment according to the scheduled rates sanctioned in the *Khālsa Darbār Records* averaged about 82,100 rupees.

B—CAVALRY

We can easily classify Ranjit Singh's Cavalry into three broad categories, viz., (1) Regular Cavalry Force, (2) the *Ghorcharās*, and (3) the *Jāgirdārī* horse. The regular cavalry about 4,000 strong, was a highly disciplined and organised force under the overall charge of Jean Francois Allard. Both its cuirassiers and dragoons were a fine body of men. The *Ghorcharās* (see *infra*) were a mixed fare. They retained their old methods of warfare, the dare-devil's dash and reckless courage, and resisted the introduction of European methods of drill and manoeuvres which they contemptuously termed as "harlots' dance." They numbered in 1838 10,795. The *Jāgirdārī* horse (see *infra*) whose exact number cannot be computed, is estimated at 32,000 in 1838.

The known strength of the regular cavalry and the *Ghorcharās* is as below :—¹

Table showing the growth of Regular Sikh Cavalry

Year	Strength	Monthly Salary in Rupees
1819	750	11,723
1823	1,656	41,609
1828	4,345	1,03,970
1833	3,914	86,544
1838	4,090	90,375
1843	5,381	1,61,660
1845	6,235	1,95,925

¹ Sita Ram Kohli, *op. cit.* No exact statistics of the *Jāgirdārī* horse are, however, available.

Table showing the growth of the *Ghorcharā Fauj*

		Annual Salary in Rupees
1813	374	1,65,117
1817	2,464	2,78,318
1819	3,577	11,13,782
1823	7,300	22,45,000
1828	7,200	21,94,000
1838	10,795	31,63,714
1843	14,383	44,18,840
1845	19,100	58,27,597

It is admitted by all competent authorities that Allard was responsible for building up the regular cavalry. From 1822 when he joined service till 1838, the strength of the regular cavalry increased four-fold. So was the case with the *Ghorcharā Fauj* and the *Jagīrdārī* horse. Contemporary observers, however, describe the Sikh cavalry decidedly very inferior to the infantry, as for instance, Steinbach : "They are mean-looking, ill dressed and wretchedly mounted....The horses are small, meagre and ill shaped....They are totally deficient of firmness in the hour of struggle, and only charge the foe when a vast superiority of numerical force gives them a sort of warranty of success."¹ Osborne also holds a similar view : "They are men of all ages, ill-looking, ill-dressed, and worse mounted, and neither in appearance nor reality are they compared to the infantry soldier of the Punjab."²

These opinions, however, are not shared by others. Lord Auckland, who visited Amritsar in December 1838, gives a very favourable impression of Ranjit Singh's cavalry : "...horsemen innumerable, with their metal caps, horse-like plumes and silk dresses, the most picturesque troops in the world....Their forming up on about four miles and a half in length was beautiful....In equipment, in steadiness and precision of manoeuvres, they seemed in no respect inferior to our own army."³

Osborne's and Steinbach's view appear to be erroneous apparently based on a general impression of Ranjit Singh's irregular cavalry, raised by the Sardars on feudal terms, who recruited their favourites without conforming to the standards of fitness and capability prescribed by the army regulations. The irregular horse was governed by old rules prevalent during the period of the Misals, when the troops provided their own horses, and although seldom paid a fixed salary, no provision was made for their dress or equipment. Most often they could provide ill-bred, small and weak animals and were miserably dressed.

¹ *The Punjaub, op. cit.*, p. 65.

² *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh, op. cit.*, p. 61.

³ Auckland to Hobhouse, 9 December, 1838—Broughton (BM), fol. 359 ff.

7. The Ghorcharas

The term *ghorcharā* was generally applied to the irregular cavalry, which was classified into two distinct categories viz., the *Ghorcharā Khās* and the *Misaldār Sowārs*. The former consisted of specially raised and trained regiments by Allard between 1822-24,¹ while the latter originally comprised of the *sowārs* of the various Sikh chiefs whose troops had been taken over by the State. The *Ghorcharā* troops were divided into independent units or the *derāhas* of various sizes each under a commander paid by the State.² Each *derāha* consisted of a number of *misals* or companies of various strength under a subordinate leader who acted as its commander. The strength of a company varied between 20-80 *sowārs*. The *sowārs* of the irregular cavalry owned their horse and musket. Each band of horsemen or *misal* had their own type of dress and were totally unencumbered by European discipline.

Compared to the *Ghorcharās*, the cavalry maintained in European style is not highly spoken of. The lancers, cuirassiers and dragoons raised and trained by Allard could never match the daring, and the audacity of the *ghorcharā* dare-devil. Although the men chosen for this wing of cavalry were most noble-looking, who wore short blue coats and pairs of dark blue trousers with glittering steel cuirass and breast-plates, they could hardly harmonise with the Sikh infantry men. "I took the opportunity of looking at Allard's cavalry," observes Osborne, "regiments of which were on the parade. They were the first of them I had met with, and I was much disappointed with them and their appearance. They did not look to advantage by the side of infantrymen. They were men of all ages, ill-looking, and worse mounted and dressed. Neither in appearance not in reality are they to be compared with the infantry of the Punjab."³

The *Ghorcharās* wore velvet coats and a shirt of mail. Some wore a belt round their waist. Others wore a steel helmet and a shield hung on their

¹ *Khālsa Darbār Records*, i, p. 16.

² The *Khālsa Darbār Records* and UT record 17 *derāhas* of the *Ghorcharās* of different size, important amongst these being : (1) the *Derāha'i Khās*, (2) the *Derāha'i Ghorcharā'i Khās*, the *Derāha'i Ardlī'an*, (3) the *Derāha'i Naulakha* or the *Derāha'i Chāryārī*, (4) the *Derāha'i Pindīwalā*, (5) the *Derāha'i Rāmgarhiā*. (6) the *Derāha'i Sindhiānwālā*. (7) the *Derāha'i Attārīwalā* etc. Smaller *derāhas* under minor sardars also existed. According to the *Khālsa Darbār Records*, (i, p. 109 *et seq.*) the strength of the *Ghorcharā Fauj* at the close of Ranjit Singh's reign stood at about 12,000 horse. See also Hugel, p. 350; Shahamat Ali, p. 23; Steinbach, p. 94. According to the British records (*vide. Foreign Secret Proceedings*, 31 December, 1847 No. 335; 4 April, 1845 No. 58) the strength and the expense on the *Ghorcharā Fauj* stood at 21,29 horse and 58,88,116 rupees annully, which was partly paid in cash and partly in land assignments.

³ *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh* p. 165.

back. A bag in the belt held the balls and a tall bayonet held in hand or carried over a shoulder when mounted. Baron Von Hugel who inspected the *Ghorcharās* in 1836 observes: "I never beheld a fairer, nor a more remarkably striking body of men. Each was dressed differently, and yet so much in the same fashion that they all looked in perfect keeping."¹

The chief characteristics of the *Ghorcharās* were their swift and lightning offensive tactics. They rode forth towards the enemy at a staggering quick pace ; they halted and discharged their deadly matchlocks, which they loaded on the horseback, swiftly and retired. They repeated the operation several times. The matchlock horsemen were used to a life of hardship and endurance. The luxury of tent life was unknown to them. They subsisted on frugal repasts and were unencumbered with baggage and were accustomed to rapid marches. The mass of the *Ghorcharās* of Ranjit Singh's army remained unspoilt by European methods of drill and discipline ; they retained their individualistic Sikh character. These self-trained daredevils of the Sikh army performed feats of amazing skill and bravery in the field of battle as they did in the days of the old *Dal Khālsa*. After the death of Ranjit Singh, their strength grew to 20 regiments (12,000 horse) and they distinguished so valiantry in the Anglo-Sikh Wars.²

8. *Fauj-i-Khās*

The *Fauj-i-Khās* was a model brigade commanded by General Ventura. It consisted of 4 battalions of infantry, 2 regiments of cavalry, and a troop of artillery (24 guns). It was a part of the *Fauj-i-Ā'in*, trained and drilled in European discipline.³ It was composed exclusively of the Sikhs, though its officers were Muhammadans and Europeans. Its artillery was maintained on European model, the cavalry included a dragoon on British model, and infantry trained in French style. It used French words of command, and a Sikh flag with an emblem of eagle

¹ *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab*, p. 331 ff.

² At the battle of Ferozeshah, the Sikh Commander Tej Singh is reported to have a *Ghorcharā* strength of 30,000 horse (Lord Gough's despatch to the Governor-General, 22 December, 1845—*Hardinge Despatches*), but due to cowardice he fought shy of their employment in the battle. At Chillianwala the daredevil *Ghorcharās* nearly routed the British army and proved themselves vastly superior to British cavalry. (*Vide* generally, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 22 January, 1849—Broughton (BM), fol. 322a ; and the *Punjab Papers*, p. 248). At the same time, it must not be forgotten that Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir had been all won partly through the dauntless courage of the *Khālsa* cavalier. See, Cunningham, p. 156 and Moorcroft, *Travels*, i, p. 98.

³ Some writers have confused the *Fauj-i-Khās* and erroneously described it as the *Francese Compo*, which was commanded by four European generals, Allard, Ventura, Avitabile and Court having a strength of 20,000 men in times of emergency. *Vide*. Garidner-Memories, p. 185.

with the tenth Guru's commandments inscribed on it. It was a show piece of the Maharaja's army, well-dressed, well-armed, and well-equipped.¹ Ventura brought the *Fauj-i-Khās* to a high degree of perfection.

9. *Jagīrdārī* Horse

The *Jagīrdārī Fauj* was based on the grant of fiefs to specific persons on specific terms. All grants of land were governed by deeds and the *Jagīrdār* was required to enlist, equip and maintain troops for the State. Nearly half of the *jāgīr* was generally assumed to be personal, and the other half was utilized for the maintenance of the troops. A *Jagīrdār* was assigned land for life or at the pleasure of the State, and on his death, the State resumed the *jāgīr* and the troops were transferred to the State.

Generally, the *Jagīrdār* maintained horsemen, but the *Jagīrdārī* contingents of the important Chiefs consisted of all the three arms—infantry, cavalry and artillery. Big *Jagīrdārs* had the privilege of granting portions of their *jāgīrs* to a number of smaller feudatories on similar conditions of military service, and often, in time of financial stringency were entitled to appeal for supplementary cash grants for the support of their troops. The *Jagīrdārs* maintained irregular cavalry, but their infantry consisted of both regular and irregular troops, the former trained and disciplined in the manner of State troops. Their artillery consisted of both guns and swivels and regular State gunners were employed to train them.

The increase of the *jagīrdārī* forces was progressive since 1809, when they amounted to 15,000.² By 1821 it had grown to 20,000, and by 1831 it had increased to over 27,000.³ About this time feudatory sardars and princes were ordered to maintain fixed quotas of trained battalions of artillery in addition to contingents of *ghorcharas* and infantry. This considerably strengthened the efficacy of *jagīrdārī* troops which now consisted of all the three wings of the army.⁴

10. Artillery

The artillery of Maharaja Ranjit Singh grew from a scrach. The army of the *Dal Khālsa* had few guns and the individual Misaldārs exhibited marked

¹ Griffin (p.141) gives a description of the composition of the *Fauj-i-Khās*. It included 4 battalions of infantry (3,176 men), its cavalry force was composed of a grenadier regiment (730 men), a dragoon regiment (750 men) and a troop of life-guards (187 men). Its artillery wing consisted of the corps of Illahi Bakhsh with 34 guns (855 men). The annual expenditure on the *Fauj Khās* was estimated at 11,52,804 rupees.

² Metcalfe, Despatch No. 25.

³ Hugel, p. 400.

⁴ As the descriptive rolls in the *Khālsa Darbar Records* do not mention the feudatory forces maintained by the State, exact figures of their strength cannot be ascertained with

indifference towards the employment of heavy cannon as these were an encumbrance for their swift-moving horsemen. Moreover, the slender resources of the Misals prevented the acquisition of heavy cannon for the efficient employment of which trained personnel was practically not available in the Punjab. Ranjit Singh, however, realised the rôle of artillery as an effective arm in warfare. He never missed an opportunity of obtaining a gun, and after the conquest of a fort, he would order the guns to be dismantled and carted away to Lahore for addition to his small field train.

In 1799, Ranjit Singh had practically no artillery ; the best his numerically small army could boast of was a few zamburks, some buffaloe-drawn light field guns, and about 100 camel swivels (*shutarnāls*). The regular department of *Topkhāna* in charge of a Superintendent (*Dārogha*) was established as early as 1804, and ordnance factories at Lahore and Amritsar were set up in 1807. Gun powder began to be manufactured locally and so were brass and iron shot. But the Sikhs ill-understood the use of artillery ; the soldiers were averse to becoming gunners or footmen, hence, Ranjit Singh employed Hindustānī artillerymen, and ordnance factories were reinforced by importing Muslim workmen from Delhi. Horse artillery became a separate wing of the *Topkhāna* in 1811. By 1821, the Sikh artillery had 200 field guns and 200 zamburks and it was organised into *derāhas* or batteries under individual commanders.¹

The *Topkhāna* consisted of 5 *derāhas* in 1823 with 1688 men and an annual expenditure of 1,47,240 rupees ; it steadily increased to 13 *derāhas* by 1834 with an annual expenditure of 3,00,968 rupees. In 1838, it contained 300 pieces of cannon and had an annual expenditure of 4,00,152 rupees.²

accuracy. Nor is a complete list of the *jāgīrdārs* available. However, see generally, Moorcroft, i, p. 98 ; Prinsep, p. 184 ; Grey, p. 20 ; Shahamat Ali, p. 22 and S. R. Kohli's paper in the *Journal of Indian History*, xxxi (ii).

¹ See generally, *Cat. of Khālsa Darbār Records*, (i), p. 13 ; (ii), p. 2 ; UT, II, p. 197 ; III (i), p. 65 ; Prinsep, p. 184 ; Hugel, p. 400 ff. ; Burnes, *Travels in Bokhara etc.*, i. p. 165 etc.

² The strength of the *Khālsa* artillery almost doubled in 1844, which according to British records stood, inclusive of garrison guns, at 555 pieces of cannon and 975 swivels with a total annual expenditure of 7,20,360 rupees. It had 171 garrison guns, 156 heavy field guns and 228 pieces of light artillery. *Vide*. Foreign : 1846 Secret Consultations (I) 27 April, 170-180. Sita Ram Kohli, who has prepared the statistics of the *Khālsa* army from the *Khālsa Darbār Records*, furnishes a somewhat divergent account of the growth of the Sikh artillery, which excludes the garrison artillery as under : 1818-19 : Strength-834 ; guns 22, swivels 190 ; monthly salary 5,840 rupees. 1828-29 : Strength-3,773 ; guns 130, swivels 280 ; monthly salary 28,390. 1838-39 : Strength-8,280 ; guns 282, swivels 300 ; monthly salary 82,893. 1845-46 : Strength-10,524 ; guns 376, swivels 300, monthly salary 89,251 rupees. *Maharaja Ranjit Singh Death Centenary Memorial Volume* (1939), p. 74.

The Sikhs being unused to gunnery, the Maharaja was perforce compelled to employ Muhammadans and Europeans to train, organise and perfect the artillery corps. General Court, a Frenchman, who joined Lahore service in 1822, and Colonel Gardiner, an Irishman are said to have raised, trained and organised the tactical power of Ranjit Singh's artillery. They also introduced European drill, manoeuvres, accoutrements and discipline in it.

The guns of the artillery were cast at Lahore,¹ and some foundries situated in the Jullundur Doab, where Muhammadan mechanics copied from the models of either E. I. Company or the captured Afghan guns. They bore tantalising names inscribed on them like the *Rāmbān*, the *Fatehjung*, the *Ātishbār*, the *Gulafshān* etc.

Artillery was a mixed arm. Heavy batteries were drawn by elephants : this wing was known as the *Topkhāna'i fili* ; light artillery was drawn by horses known as the *Topkhāna'i aspī* ; swivels or zamburks were mounted on camels called the *Topkhāna'i shutrī* ; and light cannon were drawn by bullocks known as the *Topkhāna'i gavl*. The *Fauj-i-Khās* had a special wing of the artillery commanded by Ilahi Bakhsh. Further, for organisational purposes, the artillery corps were divided into various *dehrās* or *topkhānas*. Important *derahās* of the artillery mentioned in the *Khālṣa Darbār Records* and the *Umdat-ut-Tawārīkh* are : (1) *Derāha'i Illāhī Bakhsh*, (2) *Derāha'i Jodh Singh*, (3) *Derāha'i Shiv Parshād*, (4) *Derāha'i Syed Muḥamūd*, (5) *Topkhāna'i Amīr Chand*, (6) *Topkhāna'i Mazhar 'Alī*, (7) *Topkhāna'i Sultān Muḥammad*, (8) *Topkhāna'i Gulāb Khān*, (9) *Topkhāna'i Sardar Ahlūwālīan*, (10) *Topkhāna'i Amīr Singh*, (11) *Topkhāna'i Imām Shāh*, (12) *Topkhāna'i Gujjar Singh*, (13) *Topkhāna'i Gulāb Singh*, (14) *Topkhāna'i Mī'an Ilāhī Bakhsh*.²

It is the concerted opinion of some of the contemporary observers that Ranjit Singh principally owed the really very advanced state of the equipment and discipline of his artillery to Allard, Ventura and Court. Court is generally credited with the improvement of his artillery and musketry to perfection.³ Burnes testified to the efficiency of this branch of the *Khālṣa* army with the observation that the whole equipment, arrangement of the military *Topkhāna* was favourably comparable

¹ Sita Ram Kohli, who has examined the various papers connected with the artillery of Ranjit Singh in the Public Record Office Lahore, computes the expenditure of the maintenance of a 6-gun horse-troop battery at 34,000 rupees. According to him the total cost of casting a gun of average calibre approximated 3,240 rupees. Computed on the above basis, the artillery equipment cost the State exchequer 10,59,480 rupees plus 5,29,740 rupees for the light artillery estimated at $\frac{1}{2}$ of the cost of a gun. (*Maharaja Ranjit Singh Death Centenary Volume*, p. 76-77).

² UT, III (iv), p. 362. See also for stray accounts—Prinsep, p. 184 ; Burnes, p. 165 ; Hugel, p. 400 ; Masson, i, p. 430 and UT, III (i), p. 65.

³ Fane, *Five Years in India*, London, 1842, i, p. 85.

in every respect to the British artillery.¹ However, after the battle of Ferozeshah, the earlier British estimates that Sikh artillery was of inferior stamp, badly trained and its field-guns badly mounted,² proved grossly inaccurate. It was found that the Sikh artillery was better equipped and manned; that its ordnance possessed much superior calibre to the British 9-pounder batteries.³ Lieutenant Barr speaks highly of the strength and efficiency of the Sikh artillery. The orders were given in French and the system of gunnery used was adopted from Europe, that the gunners performed their task with celerity and precision that would be honour to any army.⁴ The Maharaja, observes Osborne, was justly proud of the efficiency and admirable condition of his artillery, and justly so, for no native power had yet possessed so well organised and large a force.⁵

Table showing the Growth of the Sikh Artillery and Its monthly emoluments⁶

Year	Strength	No. of Guns		Monthly Salary in rupees
		Guns	Swivels	
1818	834	22	190	5,840
1828	3,778	130	280	28,390
1838	4,535	188	280	32,906
1843	8,280	282	300	82,893
1845	10,524	376	300	89,251

11. The Zenana Corps

One of the "capricious whims" of the Maharaja was his Amazon Corps. It consisted of a detachment of one hundred and fifty warriors—the prettiest girls from Kashmir, Persia and the Punjab, magnificently dressed, armed with bows and arrows and mounted on horseback *en cavalier*, to amuse and entertain the Maharaja and his distinguished guests during drinking bouts. They arrived with music and fire-works and mimicked combat and amused the Court. "There is one regiment I cannot manage," Ranjit Singh confided to Osborne in 1838. "They give me more trouble than all the rest of my army put together, and those are the Amazons."⁷

The Amazon Corps came into full display at royal festivals and feasts and entertained the Maharaja and the guests. Edward Fane describes them in attendance

¹ UT, III (iv), p. 561.

² See particular Clerk's despatches—14 February, 1841-ISP(I) March, 1841. No. 137-138. 22 April-ISP(I) 3 May, 1841. No. 122 etc.

³ *Hardinge Despatches*, p. 36—*The Return of Ordnance*.

⁴ *Journey of a March etc.* p. 259.

⁵ *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, p. 160.

⁶ Sita Ram Kohli, *op. cit.* p. 74. These figures are exclusive of garrison ordnance and guns in various forts in the Punjab.

⁷ *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

on the Maharaja at the *Holi* celebration which was attended by Sir Henry Fane, the British Commander-in-Chief and his party in 1837: "The Maharaja was seated surrounded by his Court and the guard of pretty Amazons, some thirty or forty in number, armed with bows and arrows, which they drew the moment, the British party made its entry."¹

12. The Akālīs

A highly turbulent though highly valiant wing of Ranjit Singh's army was the *Akāl Sena*, a paid body of irregular horse numbering about 4,000. These were the immortals of Guru Gobind and the soldiers of God, each individual proclaiming himself equivalent to 1,25,000 soldiers (*sawā lakh*). Instituted by Guru Gobind Singh as the armed guardians of the Faith and the Golden Temple, the Akālīs took over the task of censors of public morals. They relinquished worldly pleasures, adopted meekness and humility as their cardinal principles. They styled themselves as the servants of the *Panth* and would perform any menial office in the service of the Golden Temple. But gradually, a class of zealots and religious fanatics grew out of them. Osborne gives an apt description of the Akālīs in Ranjit Singh's time: "They are religious fanatics, and acknowledge no ruler and no laws but their own; think nothing of robbery, or even murder, should they happen to be in the humour for it. They move about constantly, armed to teeth, and it is not an uncommon thing to see them riding about with a drawn sword in each hand, two more in their belt, a matchlock on their back, and three or four pairs of quoits² fastened round their turbans."³

Ranjit Singh found the Akālīs unruly, arrogant and unmanageable. He dubbed them as loafers and desperadoes, with no share of wisdom or intelligence from God.⁴ They were the recipients of royal bounties as well as chastisements.⁵ Often military detachments were sent to curb their unlawful activities. Large bands of the Akālīs infesting all parts of the Punjab were systematically broken up, and their turbulence was channelised by recruitments into some of the irregular regiments.

The Akālīs fought like the devils and were unrivalled in the frenzy of enthusiasm on the battle-field. Griffin compares them favourably with the fanatical *Ghāzīs* of Afghanistan and Suodan, who drew their courage from drink and

¹ *Five Years in India*, London, 1842, i, p. 90-92.

² A steel ring about 6 to 9 inches in diameter, about an inch in breadth, very thin, and edges ground very sharp; they throw it with more force than dexterity to lop off a limb at sixty or eighty yards. *Vide*. Steinbach, p. 69.

³ *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁴ UT, III (iv), p. 455.

⁵ *Ibid.* III (ii) p. 278.

maddening drugs than religious enthusiasm.¹ The Maharaja employed them in most dangerous expeditions and their daring and fearless exploits proved their worth. In 1818, as for instance, Akālī Sadhu Singh, with a few companions, during the siege of Multan, advanced to the *fausse braye* without orders, fell upon the Afghans on watch, killed every one of them, and the Sikh army carried the citadel.

Though Ranjit Singh had somewhat moderated the fanatical temper of the Akālīs, yet he could not effectively curb their insolence and arrogance. One common characteristic of their fierce enthusiasm was their hatred of the Europeans ; they hurled abuses and insults on them whenever they accosted them in public. They made a fanatical attack upon Metcalfe's Muhammadan escort in 1809, but also distinguished themselves in 1823 in the battle of Naushera when pitted against the equally fanatical Afghan Ghāzīs. Many times they made attempts on the Maharaja's life and openly flouted his authority. At review of the Akālī regiments on parade, it was a common occurrence that on marching past him, they would throw handfuls of musket balls at the Maharaja's feet hurling abuses on him. Ranjit Singh bore these impunities with perfect coolness till any one of them was detected in crime, and then he showed no mercy. He immediately deprived him of his nose, ear, or arms and legs according to the degree of the offence.²

The Muhammadans were another target of Akālī hatred and insolence, so much so, that the Maharaja was compelled to prohibit the call to prayer or the *azān* in all parts of his Kingdom to which they determinedly objected.

The Akālīs were a very useful wing of the army of Ranjit Singh. As soldiers they were brave and as fanatics unparalleled. The Maharaja would let them loose against his Afghan enemies, as he did in curbing the turbulence of the Wahābī fanatic Sayyed Ahmad in 1830. The accounts given by European visitors of these dreadful immortals are highly colourful and amusing. Henry Edward Fane calls them "a sort of military madmen." "It is utterly indescribable," he observes, "the dirt, rascality and filth, which these brutes seems to glory in. Even in the presence of their master no one is safe ; and the Chief himself shewd his doubts by ordering up a guard of regular troops, and placing the fanatics between two large bodies of cavalry. To prevent their fanaticism from being dangerous when they are in numbers, Ranjit Singh had dispersed them among different regiments."³

¹ *Ranjit Singh*, p. 136. According to him (p. 86), the Akālīs were excited by the use of hemp, were generally the first to storm the town, and often did excellent service ; but they were lawless and uncertain, and in peaceful times, enjoyed almost boundless licence.

² Osborne, p. 55.

³ *Five Years in India*, London, 1842, i, p. 82-83.

Strong antipathy exhibited by the Akālīs towards the foreigners¹ have earned them equally adverse accounts of their character and approach towards current problems. Macgregor who also suffered abuse from them bewails : "The Ukalee is a wild-looking character, displaying in his countenance a mixture of cunning and cruelty ; these two propensities, are accordingly the leading impulses of his life. The Ukalees are ostensibly beggars, but differ from this race as found in other parts of India, in their extreme insolence and independence. To the sight, even of an European, they have a strong antipathy ; and never fail to load him with abuse. Runjeet has done much towards reducing this race to some degree of order ; and though the task is a difficult one, they have even been trained as soldiers, retaining, however, their own peculiar arms and dress. The Ukalees wear but little clothing, and are sometimes divested of it altogether. Their turban is of a peaked, or conical form, and invariably of a blue colour ; over this are placed steel circles, made so as to fit the shape of the turban, diminishing gradually in diameter as they approach the top. The outer edge of these weapons is very sharp, and inflicts severe wounds. They are thrown, by giving them a rotary motion on the finger, and then projecting them forwards with velocity. In addition to these weapons, by which they may at all times be known, the Ukalees carry a naked sword in their hand, which they keep flourishing about their heads like madmen. When thus equipped, and mounted on horseback, they present a novel sight ; further increased in terror, if they happen to be under the influence of spirituous liquors, which is by no means a rare occurrence ; their discordant yells, wild gestures, and the brandishing of their swords, give them, on these occasions, more the appearance of fiends, than of human beings."²

13. Payments and Cuts

The training and discipline of the heterogeneous mass of unpaid levies absorbed by Ranjit Singh in his army was a gradual process. He remodelled the entire crude military system which he had inherited from the Misals. He built up both infantry and artillery as separate divisions of his army, introduced European system of discipline, reorganised the cavalry as state troops, and established rules for the control of the feudalistic *Jāgīrdārī* troops. A system of cash payment or *tankhwāh* was set up, though payment by land assignment was retained to a larger extent. A method of direct recruitment was introduced, and steps were taken to improve the organisation of control and command. A central office maintained military records, and to it was attached a Pay Office.

¹ The Akālīs habitually flung abuse and insulted the foreigners. "There go a pair of English thieves ! A couple of pigs !" reports a visitor with the observation : 'these fanatical gentlemen are privileged in their own country to say whatever they like, and we were content to pocket the affront'." —Barr—*A Journal of March from Delhi to Cabul etc.*, p. 58.

² Macgregor, i, p. 236 ff.

In general, cash payments were made by the *Mahadārī* system, by which the salaries of the troops were calculated on monthly basis. Other systems less commonly prevalent were the *Faşaldārī* system when troops were paid in kind twice a year at the time of harvest ; and the *Rozinadārī* system or payment per diem to temporarily employed armed personnel. The rates of pay approximated those of the East India Company. A general in regular infantry received on the average 500 rupees a month, a colonel about 240 rupees, a commandant about 150 rupees, a major 40 rupees, a subedār 32 rupees, a havildār 15 rupees, and the monthly salary of a sepoy averaged between 7-8 rupees. In the regular cavalry, a colonel received 300 rupees, a commandant 150 rupees, and the salary of a *sowār* averaged between 20-25 rupees.¹

By contrast there was a sharp difference of pay offered to the European officers. General Avitabile's monthly pay was 5,000 rupees, that of Ventura 3,000 rupees, of Court 2,750 rupees. Dr. Honigberger received 750 rupees per month, and Steinbach, Mouton and Cortlandt received 700 rupees each month.² However, the general opinion is that pecuniary advantages enjoyed by them were not sufficient enough to compensate them for the arduous restrictions placed on them.³

The bane of the whole system was the irregularity of payments and cuts imposed on the salaries. Often the troops were kept in arrears of pay for months, but generally it was disbursed to the troops after a couple of months. Irregularity of payments to troops have been adversely commented upon by contemporary observers, though it is hard to believe that it arose due to any financial stringency or the avarice of the Maharaja. It could be probably ascribed to a move to check desertions or insubordinations so commonly prevalent in the Misal period. "The whole army gets ten months' pay a year, and that is very irregularly paid." Jacquemont observes. "Pay is always four, five or six months in arrears, sometimes a year or fourteen months, particularly in the case of the cavalry. The result is that the latter are very much in debt and, when they receive orders of transfer, they sometimes refuse to march, for it is impossible for them to subsist on the march, and in new places they are unknown to merchants and cannot obtain credit."⁴

Major Lawrence is more specific on the subject : "The keystone, too, of an army is wanting ; there is no undisputed, punctual pay. The regulars are certainly better looked to than the other troops ; but while the coffers of the State are

¹ *Cat. of the Khālsa Darbār Records*, I (iv), p. 153 sq.

² ISP (I) 23 March, 1844. No. 522.

³ See particularly, Jacquemont—*Journal*, p. 56, who is of the opinion that the European officers were obliged to live in too much luxury to be able to save anything. The Maharaja did not allow them to leave the Punjab, and for this reason their salaries were most often kept in arrears. He observes that the pay of Allard and Ventura in 1831 at the time of his visit was in arrear to the tune of 1,00,000 rupees.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 51.

overflowing with the plunder of Multan and other provinces, the army is seldom less than a twelve-month in arrears. Once, indeed, I saw the Maharaja obliged to take refuge in Gobindgurh, from the violence of the Gurkha Battalion, who were roused to desperation by being kept out of their pay. Rarely is any body of troops paid, except on representation from their commandant, at the *durbār*, that they are starving or mutinying : the answer then, if favourable, is a *tankhwāh* or order on some one or more of the royal domains.”¹

According to Osborne the salary of the Maharaja’s sepoys equalled the Company’s sepoys, though they were frequently upwards of a year, and seldom less than ten months, in arrears. When they were half-starved, and grew desperate, the Maharaja would compromise with them, and giving them half or one-third of what was due to them, half frightened and half cheated them into giving up all further claims.²

The observations of Lawrence, Jacquemont and Osborne and others have some element of truth, but their generalisations appear to be gross exaggerations. It is true that payment to the troops was sometimes irregular, and that cuts were imposed on salaries, but the vast complex of Ranjit Singh’s army was paid at regular intervals though sometimes burden of payment was shifted to provincial and other resources. This is substantiated by the official Lahore Diarist : “On 9 October, 1838 inquiries from Dina Nath Daftrī revealed that four months’ pay for the troops of horsemen, platoons and regiments amounted to 14,00,000 rupees and 1,00,000 may be added to it for miscellaneous expenditure. But the *Sarkār* remarked that the sum was very large. Instead the salaries should be written on different places : Dīwān Sawan Mal 9,00,000 rupees, Misser Rup Lal 6,00,000 rupees, Sardar Majīthīā 3,00,000 rupees, General Avitabile 2,50,000 rupees, Rājā Gulab Singh 4,00,000 rupees, and from the cesses of Lahore and Amritsar 3,00,000 rupees. Thus 26,00,000 rupees would be collected. The *Sarkār* declared that the amount would meet the expenditure.”³

Deductions or contributions on salary averaged two months’ pay in a year. These deductions and cuts were not innovations : they represented customary levies already in existence in the Punjab and elsewhere. These included the first month’s pay on enlistment, royal imposts and *nazarānas* on the occasions of festivals (*Dīwālī*,

¹ *Adventures of An Officer in the Punjaub*, i, p. 41-48.

² Osborne. *op. cit.* p. 39.

³ UT, III (v), p. 12.

Dussehra etc.), royal marriages, and special levies in times of war and other emergencies.¹

14. European discipline

Opinions with regard to the impact of European discipline on the effectiveness of Ranjit Singh's army sharply differ. None can gainsay that the Maharaja was highly interested to learn the relative qualities of the French and British armies as the record of his conversations with Metcalfe, Hugel, Wade, Osborne, Fane, Jacquemont and others show. He was impressed by the European system of discipline and warfare, and considered its introduction into his own forces as highly advantageous. He, therefore, took into his service European soldiers of fortune and professionals who drifted into the Punjab. The first European who joined the Sikh army in 1809 is said to be Price, a British military deserter. Others of note who trickled across the Sutlej or the N. W. Frontier were Allard, a Frenchman; Ventura, an Italian; Court, a Frenchman; Avitabile, an Italian; Gardiner, an Irishman; Harlan, an American; Steinbach, a German; Holmes, an Anglo-Indian; Honigberger, a German; Foulkes, an Englishman; and Moervious, a Prussian. Allard, Ventura, Court and Avitabile may be regarded as the four principal officers responsible for the induction of European discipline in Sikh army. Most of the others were smaller fry, who accepted minor commands on whatever pay they could get, and had hardly any hand in shaping any section of the Sikh army.

Allard and Ventura had come to Lahore through Persia and Afghanistan early in 1822, and the British records tell us about the Maharaja's hesitation in taking them into army service straightaway.² He interviewed them several times, put them to severe tests, and probed into their professional ability and antecedents. Ultimately, he took them into service with apparent distrust. The Sikh Court and nobility disliked them intensively. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, when put to test, these two officers proved themselves as excellent trainers of his troops. Their excellent management and good conduct gradually removed Ranjit Singh's prejudice against the employment of Europeans both in civil and military service.³

¹ See generally, Shahamat Ali, p. 45 ff., *Foreign Secret Proceedings* (I) 26 December, 1846, No. 931; also (PP) XLI, 1847.

² See generally, *Lahore Akhbār*, 5-6 May, 1822 and of 17, 18, 21, 23 May, 1822-(P) 93: 55, 62, 64, 104; 94: 55. See also Prinsep, p. 132 ff.

³ General Ventura wrote a *Manual of Military Training* in French which was translated into Persian by Munshi Harbhagat Rai under the title: *Zafarnāma*. The MS. is in the Patiala Museum and gives an idea of the introduction of European discipline in part of the Sikh army.

Court and Avitabile came to Lahore in 1827 after many adventurous occupations in Persia and Afghanistan.¹ Avitabile though an artilleryman was allotted a battalion of infantry on an initial pay of 700 rupees a month; Court became the Ordnance Officer of the *Khālsa* army. Both in due course of time, attained the highest positions in the Sikh army. To Court is ascribed the perfection of the art of cannon founding at Lahore, which reached an excellence quite equal to that of English guns. Avitabile remained in military service till 1830, when in addition to his military command, he was appointed the governor of Wazirabad and later as governor of Peshawar.

According to one authority it was due to Allard, Ventura and Court that the Sikh army owed its high state of discipline.² The regular infantry had all been raised and drilled by Ventura, and its soldier-like appearance and state of discipline was entirely due to him.³ Ventura also commanded the *Fauj-i-Khās*, which he transformed into a model brigade. He took part in many campaigns of the Maharaja on the N. W. Frontier and was later appointed the governor of Lahore. He maintained a harem like the Mughal court nobles. To Court and Ventura the Maharaja permitted unlimited authority in the recruitment and training of the new levies. The ultimate effect of their reorganisation on the Sikh army as a whole, however, is debatable. They introduced European system of drill, accoutrement and discipline into Sikh infantry, cavalry and artillery. Ventura raised new battalions of infantry and trained them in European style. Allard was assigned the task of putting the Sikh cavalry in shape. He also raised a corps of dragoons, and the training of the newly raised battalions of infantry in European discipline was also entrusted to him.

It would be absurd to designate Allard the Sulaiman Bey of Ranjit Singh.⁴ He was merely in command of some 3,000 cavalry,⁵ and his cavalry is not described in very complimentary terms by competent observers.⁶ And yet, the introduction of the new system of command and drill, the Europeanisation of the Sikh army was half-hearted and partial. It did not cover the whole of the *Khālsa* force, the core of which continued to be essentially Sikh. The Sikh army commanders deeply resented the unlimited authority wielded by Allard, Ventura and other

¹ For details, *vide*. Cotton, *Life of Avitabile*; Lawrence, *Adventures in the Punjaub* etc. p. 69 and 274; Wolff, *Travels*, ii, p. 61; Hugel, *Travels*, p. 317 ff.; Honigberger, p. 53 etc. See also Chapter 13 *supra*.

² Macgregor, i, p. 191.

³ Osborne, p. 60.

⁴ Jacquemont, *Letters from India*, ii, p. 64.

⁵ Masson, *Travels in Afghanistan*, i, p. 405.

⁶ *Vide. supra*, under sub-head Cavalry.

European officers, particularly the disproportionate salary paid to them.¹ For some time, at least, Allard and Ventura exercised powers to raise new levies, control their promotions and appointments and any opposition to their orders was summarily punished.

Ranjit Singh's predilection for the modernisation of the Khālśa army was a sound step, but its partial Europeanisation was a half-measure. Though the system of European discipline produced a few efficient regiments of troops in infantry, cavalry, and artillery, it could hardly penetrate the stubborn and hardy military genius of the Sikh soldiery as a whole. "The mushroom military discipline attempted by Ranjit Singh," observes Major Lawrence, "never harmonised in its parts. Discipline could not be established and upheld by the utmost exertions of a general standing alone, without Colonel, Captain or a Subaltern. The building completed, the Maharaja does not think the same care necessary for its preservation as for its construction ; and boys, simpletons, and dotards are here, as in old service, creeping into command."²

It is, therefore evident that the early enthusiasm exhibited by the Maharaja for the induction of European discipline into his troops gradually waned. In the first place, the system of training and equipment proved highly expensive. Constant arrears of pay kept the regular troops grumbling and disgruntled. The employment of European officers on drills, on dangerous enterprises, and restrictions placed upon them made them sore and discontented.³ And finally, the payment of disproportionate salaries to them generated a sense of resentment and inferiority amongst the Sikh generals who looked upon the *firangī* officers as bounders and adventurers. Osborne, who was otherwise impressed by Ranjit Singh's army in 1838, points out the dearth of good officers, too much reliance on European officers, and the irregular pay as its main defects. "... but nothing can be worse than the system now in vogue. The commanding officer abuses and beats the major, the major the captains, the captains the subalterns, and so on till nothing is left for the privates to beat but the drummer boys, who catch it accordingly."⁴

Sikh artillery was, however, Ranjit Singh's pet child. Here the influence of European discipline seemed to be insignificant. Erroneous estimates of its

¹ The salary of the European officers was disproportionate to that paid to Sikh and other officers. Allard and Ventura, for instance, were paid 50,000 rupees per annum. The salary of other officers averaged between 500 rupees to 1,000 rupees per month.

² *Adventures of an Officer in the Punjaub*, i, p. 47 sq.

³ These *firangī* officers at Lahore adopted themselves wonderfully to the ways of Indian life. They grew beards and donned turbans like the Sardars, abstained from smoking and eating beef. Some of them lived in style of oriental potentates, kept harems and consorted with local concubines and begot children.

⁴ *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, p. 58.

strength and efficacy both by British and foreign observers were belied in the first Anglo-Sikh War. The artillery wing of Ranjit Singh's army has much too often been characterised as having possessed inferior pieces of worn-out guns of different calibre, wretchedly mounted and served. Jacquemont as for instance : "The guns are much heavier than those twice their calibre in Europe, yet they are worn out after a few discharges. They are cast in mould without being bored. The arsenal of this miserable artillery is the Rājā's own palace."¹ Yet after the battle of Ferozeshah, it was found that the Sikh artillery was better equipped and manned ; that its ordnance possessed much superior calibre to the British 9-pounder batteries.²

Notwithstanding these adverse reflections, it cannot be denied that the skill and experience of the *firangi* officers improved the quality, discipline and tactical power of Ranjit Singh's army. Recruitment to the army became selective though still voluntary ; the European officers applied rigorous standards of health, suitability and deportment : "In the Maharaja's army, the infantry were the pick of the youth of the country ; only the handsomest and strongest men were selected ... The infantry under their (European) instruction became a formidable body of troops, well disciplined and steady, though slow in manoeuvring. Their endurance was great, and a whole regiment would march 30 miles a day for many days together,"³

¹ *Journal*, p. 52-53.

² *Hardinge Despatches*, p. 36 : *The Return of Ordnance*.

³ Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 134-35.

CHAPTER 16

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICS : INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICY OF RANJIT SINGH

1. INTERNAL POLICY

1. Its basic structure

IN INTERNAL DIPLOMACY Ranjit Singh adopted a calculated policy which was both simple and complex. Simple, because it was primarily based on the overriding principle of self-interest. Random unethical modes of statecraft adopted for the extension of power, acquisition of riches and enlargement of dominions exhibited a naive political wisdom aroused to cope with its diverse problems. As a result his internal diplomacy became complex and ruthless though keeping a judicious equilibrium between determined absolutism and moderation. On the whole, his policy was broadbased though wilful, humane though despotic, and expedient though based on practical politics.

As a wilful autocrat of powerful means, Ranjit Singh could hardly countenance a political rival. Neither religious sanctions, nor ties of kinship, nor a sense of gratitude could sustain such a contingency. "Cunning and conciliation," observes a contemporary critic, "were his two great implements of diplomacy, whilst his consummate prudence, his great knowledge of mankind in general, and of Asiatics in particular, his energy and perseverance, enabled him to employ these implements with invariable success."¹

A milder estimate of Ranjit Singh's virtues of constancy and steadiness would be that they were entirely subordinated to political opportunism. Ambition being the keynote of his internal policy, he seldom hesitated to resort to diplomacy, fraud or even rapacity in the attainment of his political objectives. Political wisdom had dawned early in life on Ranjit Singh. Barely a youth of 15, he took steps to annihilate the triumvirate which stood in the way of his assumption of power. He had to contend with the wicked machinations of his father's maternal uncle Dal Singh, the overbearing hold of the alleged paramour of his mother and minister Dīwān Lakhpat Rai, and his dissolute mother Mā'ī Malwan. With a determined ruthlessness he cleared the path to power. Having connived at the assassination of the minister by ordering him to an expedition of death to Kitas, where hired assassins put him to death, he is alleged to have put to sword his own mother for

¹ Murray, ii, p. 81,

profligacy.¹ He freed himself from the irksome influence of Dal Singh, who was driven away from the seat of the Śukerchakiās to Atulgarh in disgrace, and later deprived of all power and imprisoned.²

2. Fall of an ally

Such measures were, however, the order of the day. They were neither held in abhorrence nor were they contrary to the generally accepted principles of kingship and royalty. Destruction of a political adversary by any means was considered a political virtue of the time. The fall of rānī Sada Kaur, Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law, illustrates further that he was unwilling to share power with any one. The rānī had exercised quite a disturbing influence over the young Maharaja, and it is generally held that without her active assistance and sagacious counsels he could hardly have risen to political power in the Punjab.³ Yet, the pitiless treatment meted out to her was in line with Ranjit Singh's internal policy. Gratitude for past benefactions was not a habitual virtue with Ranjit Singh's diplomacy which subsisted on political expediency. In 1807, Ranjit Singh fell out with rānī Sada Kaur. To offset the power of the Kanahayās, a force sent to Dinanagar to levy exactions on several Sikh and hill Chiefs dependent upon the Kanahayās, gave offence to the rānī, who still wielded powerful influence over the affairs of the State. The breach widened when Sada Kaur opened secret negotiations with Metcalfe in 1808 for the subversion of his son-in-law's power.⁴ Moreover, Ranjit Singh suspected the fidelity of his barren wife Mehtab Kaur, Sada Kaur's daughter, whom she had taken away from Lahore lest she should incur the displeasure of her spouse. Soon afterwards, she presented to the Maharaja twins Sher Singh and Tara Singh reportedly to have been born to Mehtab Kaur. Failing to obtain a public acknowledgement of the twins as the legitimate offspring of the Maharaja, she began to sulk loudly and whisper intrigue. In 1812, she designedly abstained from attending the nuptial celebrations of prince Kharak Singh, the heir-apparent, which further estranged Ranjit Singh. She constantly clamoured

¹ On the subject, see generally, UT, II, p. 31-32 and 37 ff; Prinsep, p. 47; Latif, p. 346; Osborne, p. 10; Griffin, p. 162 etc.

² Cunningham, p. 158; Murray, p. 46 etc.

³ Wade (to Prinsep, 19 May, 1831-(P) 137:9) sums up the character of this valiant successor to the powerful Kanahayā Misal: "Mae Sada Kaur is one of the most remarkable woman of her time. To a severity and enthusiasm of character one added the higher attributes of fearless and enterprising valour. After the death of her husband, she connected herself with the rising dynasty and by marrying her daughter to Ranjit Singh whom she not only assisted by her counsels but by her presence in the field where she appeared at the head of her troops and distinguished herself by feats of bravery seldom found in one of her sex."

⁴ Metcalfe—Despatch No. 23-26 September, 1808—BSPC (I) 24 October, 1808. C 68.

for the recognition of Sher Singh as a royal prince whom she had adopted, making at the same time, complaints against the Maharaja to the British Government as having usurped her rights.¹

In 1820, Ranjit Singh struck back. He demanded that suitable assignments from the Kanahayā possessions be made by the rānī for both the princes Tara Singh and Sher Singh. Sada Kaur demurred, but ultimately agreed to do so on the condition that the Maharaja acknowledge both of them as his legitimate sons. Then the expected blow fell. Having fomented a dispute between Sada Kaur and Sher Singh in October 1821, Ranjit Singh issued a peremptory order that she surrender half of her possessions for the maintenance of the two princes. She executed a deed of the requisite assignment under duress, but soon after, made an attempt to flee from Lahore. A detachment sent under Desa Singh overtook her and brought her back to the capital where she was put under close confinement. All Kanahayā territories in her possession were sequestered and the wealth and riches of the family confiscated. Thus by sheer ingratitude, though for justifiable political reasons, was brought about the downfall of the irksome and resolute woman, who is described in Sikh history as a person of considerable fortitude and intrigue.

3. Moderation and compromise

Ranjit Singh's treatment of Sardar Fateh Singh Āhlūwālīā indicates his policy of moderation and compromise. A close friend and associate of the Maharaja since 1802 with whom he had exchanged turbans in an eternal bond of brotherhood, Fateh Singh had grown rich in territory and wealth. He had been a constant companion of Ranjit Singh in his early expeditions and conquests, and enjoyed his confidence and esteem, but gradually the ties of friendship snapped, and the Maharaja began to treat him a mere vassal. Fateh Singh's direct communications with the British over the question of Bhirog and Kotla chiefships, the construction by him of a strong fort at Isru, and his constant pleas for British protection² excited the jealousy of Ranjit Singh. Fateh Singh grew suspicious that Ranjit Singh contemplated the seizure of his person and confiscation of his territories. Feeling unsafe at Lahore, he fled across the Sutlej in 1825 to his Cis-Sutlej possessions and sought British protection.³ In the meanwhile, the Maharaja gave orders for the confiscation of all his territories situated within the Kingdom. But soon reason dawned on both sides. Wade and Murray counselled Fateh Singh Āhlūwālīā against breaking up the long-standing friendship with the powerful ruler of the

¹ Murray, ii, p. 46-51, 57 ff. ; Cunningham, p. 158 etc.

² Birch to Ochterlony, 12 March, 1 Nov. 1817 ; Murray to Colebrooke, 2 August, 1828—(P).

³ Wade to Metcalfe, 27, 29 December, 1825—(P) 94 : 116, 118.

Punjab, and the utter futility of his pleas for grant of protection to his possessions situated within the jurisdiction of the State of Lahore. They advised him to suffer reconciliation with the incensed Maharaja. At the same time, Ranjit Singh realised the impolicy of a precipitate step which had led to the alienation of the powerful Sardar of the *Āhlūwālīā Misal*, who might prove dangerous in the British Camp. A compromise was soon arrived at which led to a reconciliation between the estranged friends. Fateh Singh returned to Lahore in 1827, and the Maharaja received him with marked honour restoring to him all his possessions.¹

4. Humanity and benevolence

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of Ranjit Singh's internal policy was its moderation and humanity. Neither in war nor in peace he soiled his hands with the blood of a fallen foe. He treated the vanquished with a leniency and kindness unknown in Oriental despotism. Force or craft was commonly employed to abolish feudal tenures or annex the territories of an actively hostile rival. Heavy death duties were imposed on the succession to the estate of a powerful Sardar on his demise, thus depriving the successor the benefit of bequest, but invariably small estates were left for the despoiled families, without reducing them to penury. Ranjit Singh rendered his political rivals innocuous and not beggars. Baron Von Hugel comments on this extraordinary trait of the Maharaja that he never wantonly imbrued his hands in blood with the classic observation: "Never perhaps was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality."²

5. Sophistry and chicanery

Ranjit Singh has often been accused of chicanery to satiate his love for power and usurpation of territories of those under his authority by every sort of means. In statecraft and intrigue he was a master mind. He would incite others to sow seeds of dissension or commit depredations in the territories of his intended victim. In this manner he deprived the tributary Chief of Dera Ismail Khan and the Nawab of Multan of their major *jāgīrs*.³ A trumped up charge of treason was a convenient method of depriving a Chief or Sardar of his possessions.⁴ Past services or proven loyalty found no consideration in the execution of this grasping policy. Thus the estates of *Dīwān Moti Ram* were resumed in 1825;⁵ of Hari Singh

¹ See, generally, Murray to Metcalfe, 25 April, 1827-(P) 79:49; also *Gazetteer of Kapurthala State*, p. 5 ff.; Prinsep, p. 114; Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 535 sq., etc.

² *Travels*, p. 382.

³ Wade to Prinsep, 18 May, 1831-(P) 173:3; Wade to Macnaghten, 7 July, 1836-(P) 142:42.

⁴ Wade to Macnaghten, 13 July, 1831-(P) 142:46.

⁵ Wade to Elliot, 23 May, 1825-(P) 23 May, 1825-(P) 94:93.

Kāng in 1824;¹ of Nawab Qutub-ud-Din of Kasur in 1826;² and of Sardar Deva Singh Sialba in 1825.³

In dealing with his powerful feudatory Sardars, Griffin aptly observes that Ranjit Singh "did not approve of hereditary wealth and honour, and like Tarquinius Superbus, struck down all the tall poppies in his garden."⁴ Almost all assignments were made for life, and on the death of a favourite assignee, he would either promptly resume his possessions, or impose heavy death duty or *nazarana* on the successor, thus sweeping away the larger portion of the estate. The most glaring examples of this policy were the resumption of the *jāgīrs* and estates of two of his most trusted generals—Dīwān Muhkam Chand and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā. In 1814, when Dīwān Muhkam Chand died at Phillour, his son Moti Ram was allowed to succeed to his extensive estates;⁵ but in April 1825, on the alleged grounds of ill management, sequestration of all the estates and possessions was made.⁶ Similarly, soon after the death of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā, all his estates with an annual revenue of 8,00,000 rupees and the accumulated wealth of the family was confiscated. The grounds for such outright confiscation of the Nalwā estates were the incapacity of his son to manage them and the alleged accumulation of wealth by Hari Singh by dishonest means.⁷

A calculated policy of despoilation was dexterously employed with equal ruthless vigour against all victims, Sikh as well as Muhammadan Chiefs alike. As a political necessity, it was devoid of any qualms of conscience, ties of blood or kinship. In this manner was accomplished the ruin of the or Nakā'ī confederacy in 1810, notwithstanding the fact that Ranjit Singh was married in the family. Without any reasons, Kahan Singh who had succeeded to the Nakā'ī possessions was ousted from them and all the territories annexed.⁸ In 1816, axe fell on the Rāmgarhiā territories in Amritsar, Jullundur and Gurdaspur districts, soon after the death of Jodh Singh Rāmgarhiā, with whom Ranjit Singh had sworn friendship, and who had faithfully served him in many campaigns.⁹ The sons of the Rāmgarhiā Sardar were, however, assigned small *jāgīrs* and taken into Lahore service.

¹ Elliot to Murray, 11 November, 1824-(P) 24 : 215.

² Wade to Metcalfe, 29 November, 1826-(P) 95 : 44.

³ Murray to Elliot, 17 May, 1825-(P) 72 : 355.

⁴ *Ranjit Singh*, p. 96.

⁵ Macgregor, i. p. 174.

⁶ Murray, ii, p. 80.

⁷ Shahamat Ali, p. 55.

⁸ Macgregor, i, p. 136 ; Prinsep, p. 68 etc.

⁹ Jodh Singh Rāmgarhiā was a devoted and loyal follower of Ranjit Singh. He was the last chief of the powerful confederacy with whom Ranjit Singh had sworn friendship before the holy Book in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. After his death, however, he summoned

6. Muhammadan Chiefs

In the subjugation of the proud and fanatically hardy Muhammadan Chiefs west of Lahore in the sub-montane region between the Chenab and the Indus, the established pattern of internal policy was followed. The first to be subjugated were the *Kharrahs* in 1803, who held extensive possessions in the neighbourhood of Sheikhpura and Jhang. Then came the turn of the *Sials* of Jhang, Leiah and Chiniot. Ahmad Khan Sial had previously paid an annual tribute of 60,000 rupees, but his country was taken and farmed out to Sardar Fateh Singh Kālīānwālā. The *Tiwāns* of Nurpur were subjugated in 1817. In 1821 came the turn of Nawab Hafiz Muhammad Khan of Mankera, who had earlier helped the *Tiwānā* Chief Ahmad Yar Khan. Mankera was a well-defended fortress, but after a siege of 25 days, the Nawab surrendered. He was made the governor of Dera Ismai Khan, but a larger portion of his territories was annexed. The *Gakhkar* Chiefs, who held territory around Rawalpindi, Jehlum and Gujrat had been subjected to heavy exactions till 1811, when the Sikh forces ousted them from their possessions. The *Awān* rulers holding large territories in the districts of Rawalpindi, Jehlum and Shahpur, had been Lahore tributaries till 1813, when a large Sikh force under *Dīwān* Muhkam Chand marched and ousted them from their possessions. The territories of the *Chib* rājā Umar Khan in Chunian and Mangha in the low hills of Kangra and Jammu were confiscated soon after. These little Muhammadan states were uprooted, but although their rulers were deposed, they were not hounded out. Prudence dictated to make them feudatories and subject vassals of the Sikh Government by assigning to them small estates or farming out to them the conquered territories in the region.

7. Blot on a fair name

But although Ranjit Singh's internal policy was humane, resort to double-dealing and duplicity could be made in the attainment of an objective. His callous and disgraceful treatment of Shah Shuja while a refugee at Lahore illustrates this point. Ranjit Singh's conduct, to say the least, was highly treacherous and unworthy of the noble traditions of hospitality and sanctity of asylum. Avarice being the chief motive behind the despoilation of the forlorn Afghan ex-king, who was not only subjected to the disgrace of virtual confinement, but Ranjit Singh also endeavoured to make him a tool to serve his political ends. As Ranjit Singh was universally much above the depraved vices of cruelty and barbarism, his abject treatment of Shah Shuja would ever remain a blot on his fair name.

the heirs to meet him at Nadaun to arrange for succession. According to Griffin (p. 97), Ranjit Singh surrounded the reception with troops, took them prisoners, and then marched a strong force against Amritsar and seized all the Rāmgarhiā estates.

The unfortunate ex-Shah made good his escape from Lahore in 1816 and found a much more agreeable asylum with the British at Ludhiana, but the reverses of fortune had in no way dampened his enthusiasm for the recovery of his lost throne in Afghanistan. In July, 1826, Ranjit Singh opened correspondence with the ex-Shah, ruefully regretting his past behaviour, and lured him to recover his territories with Sikh assistance.¹ But the old Shah was no fool ; from past experience he rightly suspected that the real motive behind Ranjit Singh's offer was to make use of his name in furthering his own schemes of conquest. His own ambition, however, made him utterly blind to the consequences of an alliance with Ranjit Singh, and but for British discouragement, he would have readily succumbed to the offer.²

Yet, the bait offered by Ranjit Singh had the irresistible charm of a chance of turn in the ex-Shah's fortunes. He, therefore, made a distinct overture to the Maharaja in 1829, offering him 1,00,000 rupees and other presents, if he could be assisted in recovering Peshawar and Kabul.³ As this proposal was contrary to the Maharaja's aims towards Peshawar, he evaded a direct response, but the correspondence between Shah Shuja and Ranjit Singh continued.⁴ Encouraged by the Maharaja, the ex-Shah continued to seek direct assistance from him, and finally, he bluntly asked him to state the price he would have to pay. The Maharaja invited him to a meeting at Lahore or Amritsar for entering into a treaty on terms so arbitrary and humiliating,⁵ which fully exposed Ranjit Singh's aims. The Shah showed his utter disgust ; he exclaimed that the acceptance of the proposed terms would plunge him into eternal disgrace ; that to desire the disgrace of a friend was inconsistent with the dictates of wisdom. If the real designs of the Sikhs were the fulfilment of the prophecy of their forefathers to advance into Afghanistan, then the foundation of their empire would certainly be overthrown !⁶

Notwithstanding the intemperate protests, soon afterwards, the deposed Shah of Kabul was entangled in the web of his own political ambition. Highly suspicious of the friendly designs of Ranjit Singh, he readily responded to an invitation of the Talpurian Amirs of Sind to invade Afghanistan. The Amirs were being threatened both by the Sikhs and the British. Ranjit Singh had advanced a claim on Shikarpur, and demanded tribute from them on threat of invasion ;

¹ Wade to Metcalfe, 22 July, 1826-(P) 95 : 29.

² *Ibid.* 27 September, 1826-(P) 95 : 35 ; Hilson to Wade, 7 July, 1827-(P) 115 : 19.

³ UT, III (ii), p. 338 ; Wade to Hawkins, 21 June, 1830-(P) 98 : 98.

⁴ *Vide.* (PP) XI, 1839—*Correspondence relative to the Expedition of Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk into Afghanistan, 1833-1834.*

⁵ *Vide.* Chapter 8, *supra*.

⁶ Wade to Prinsep, 21 November, 1831-(PP), *op. cit.* No, 4,

and the British, under the cloak of commercial negotiations, were harassing them to establish their political influence in Sind. In their dire need to save themselves from both, the Sindhian Amirs found it convenient to invite Shah Shuja in the vain hope of discovering a titular monarch for their salvation.¹

Shah Shuja readily fell into the Talpurian trap. Disaffected elements in Afghanistan had assured him of their loyalty. Balauchistan stood for him. Faint whispers from Herat and Kandahar were favourable to his cause. Hope and ambition revived, and so also the remote chance of Sikh help in the attainment of his objectives. He wrote to Ranjit Singh at once in a supplicatory tone for help.²

Ranjit Singh took full advantage of the situation. In agreeing to help the Shah, he was motivated by two considerations: first, to consolidate his position in the conquered Afghan possessions in the north by supporting a weak pretender against the power of Dost Muhammad Khan, who was threatening to wrest Peshawar from the Sikhs. Secondly, it would afford him an opportunity of obtaining a larger chunk of Sind with Shikarpur thrown in, should the Shah occupy that country.³ It is also remotely possible that Ranjit Singh wished to forestall British influence in Sind and Afghanistan, towards which Burnes' journeys had actively aroused interest at Fort William. The Shah's predicament was augmented by lack of funds: the British support amounted to a mere advance of 6 months' stipend amounting to 16,000 rupees.⁴ He had neither an army nor means to sustain him in his march on Sind. Ranjit Singh promised him pecuniary help in the vaguest terms, and the hapless Shah was made to sign a secret Agreement on 12 March, 1833, embodying almost the same terms previously spurned by him. He relinquished all claims to the erstwhile Afghan territories on the right bank of the Indus then held by the Sikhs; the future of Shikarpur was left open to settlement through British mediation.⁵

8. Policy towards hill states

Sikh penetration in the Kangra hills being actuated by a policy of aggrandizement, its chief aim was the subjugation of the Hindu Rajput states. This is evidenced from the ruin of the Katochs of Kangra. Rājā Sansar Chand's grandfather Ghumand Singh had been the military governor of the Jullundur Doab, on whom Ahmad Shah Abdali had conferred the fortress of Kangra. His

¹ *Ibid.* 9 September, 1831-(P) 137 : 27; Mackeson to Wade, 12 October, 1831-108 : 23; Government to Wade, 20 September, 1832-(P) 116 : 29.

² Wade to Macnaghten, 11 October, 1832-(P) 138 : 53.

³ Wade to Macnaghten, 27 March and 9 April, 1833-(P) 139 : 17, 19.

⁴ *Ibid.* 11 November, 1832-(P) 138 : 65.

⁵ *Ibid.* 5 February, 1833-(P) 139 : 5 ; 17 June, 1834-(P) 140 : 7,

father Tegh Chand had extended Katoch territories from the banks of the river Sutlej to the borders of Kashmir. Sansar Chand had inherited a sizeable kingdom with an annual revenue of 35,00,000 rupees. He was a powerful Chief and the lord of the hills. He possessed a force of 4,000 horse of Rohillas, Afghans and Rajputs, trained by an Irish adventurer O'Brien, a manufactory of small arms, and a disciplined infantry corps of 1,400 men.¹ A stroke of misfortune befell the powerful Katoch Chief which led to his ruin.

In 1806, Amar Singh Thapa, the veteran Nepalese commander, carried on the crest of Gurkha wave of expansion to the banks of the Sutlej, took the Kangra hills by storm. He invaded Sansar Chand's territories, and in a battle routed and dispersed Katoch forces at Mahal Mari. Sansar Chand took refuge in the strong fortress of Kangra, invited Ranjit Singh to aid him resisting the Gurkhas, who had in the meantime laid siege to the fortress. The fort of Kangra was offered to Ranjit Singh as the price of his assistance. Fearing duplicity on the part of the Katoch Chief, Ranjit Singh seized Anrudh Chand, the rājā's son sent to him as a hostage, and marched on Kangra in 1809 with a large force. Sansar Chand shrank from admitting the Sikh forces into the citadel; but Ranjit Singh drove the Nepalese commander to the left bank of the Sutlej and took possession of the fortress. Thus the Sikh allies of the Katoch ruler not only established a strong foothold in the Kangra Valley, but also deprived Sansar Chand of his large territorial possessions in the hills, confining him to Katoch, Changa and Palam with an annual revenue of 70,000 rupees. The Katoch Chief became a tributary vassal of the Lahore Kingdom liable to render military service whenever required.

With Kangra as an integral part of the Sikh dominions, a rapid penetration into the hills took place. Sardar Desa Singh Majithīā was appointed the fort commander to subdue the Katoch dependencies; and by 1812 in pursuit of a forward policy, Ranjit Singh brought under Sikh subjugation the hill states of Mandi, Suket, Chamba, Kulu, Bilaspur, Kalhur, Jaswal, Siba and Guler—all Katoch dependencies.

As a matter of policy, Ranjit Singh was content to render these hill states tributaries of the Sikh Government. When the possessions of a hill rājā were annexed, he was invariably assigned an estate in his territory for maintenance. Generally, the older Rajput families in the Kangra hills were not allowed to die out or languish in punery. The tributary hill Chiefs were left the civil possession of their territories paying a fixed sum and the inevitable *nazarānas*. The hill

¹ *Authorities : Gazetteer of Kangra District, Lahore, 1904. Moorcraft and Trebeck, Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab, London, 1841. Macgregor, i, p. 164 ff. ; Lawrence, Adventures of an Officer etc., p. 129 sq. etc.*

policy of Ranjit Singh was eminently successful. Besides the subjugation of the sub-Himalayan region, it brought ample revenues to the Kingdom. Territories were farmed out and Sardar Lehna Singh Majithīā was entrusted with the management of the hill districts. Bilaspur paid an annual tribute or revenue of 70,000 rupees, Suket 70,000 rupees, Chamba 2,00,000 rupees, Kulu 1,20,000 rupees, Jaswan 1,25,000 rupees, and Kangra 6,00,000 rupees. The rājā of Mandi was permitted to farm his own territories for an annual payment of 4,00,000 rupees.

9. Jammu hills

In the Jammu hills, and further north along the base of the Snowy Range—towards Ladakh and Iskardo, however, for no obvious reasons, Ranjit Singh's policy diverged to an extraordinary extent. The conquered hill rājās were not reduced as tributary vassals but their territories annexed in successive stages, were bestowed upon the favourite Dogra brothers. In 1808 due to domestic dissensions and disputes, the territories of rājā Chet Singh of Jammu were taken possession of, a *jāgīr* for lifetime having been conferred on the deposed Chief for his subsistence. In 1816, Mī'ān Kishora Singh, the father of Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh was made the Chief of Jammu, and on whose death Gulab Singh was officially made the rājā of Jammu, Dhian Singh the rājā of Bhimber, and Suchet Singh the rājā of Bhadarwal.¹

Rājā Sultan Muhammad Khan of Bhimber² was a close friend of the Bhangi Chief Sahib Singh of Gujrat, and after the latter's reduction, his defiance and arrogance had given offence to Ranjit Singh. When summoned to Lahore, he had refused to attend the Court. An expedition sent against him under Faqīr Aziz-ud-Din having failed, recourse was made to treachery. The Sikh general Dīwān Muhkam Chand made overtures of peace to Sultan Muhammad Khan, and assured of the safety of his person and possessions, he was lured to Lahore. Ranjit Singh showered upon the unsuspecting rājā presents and gifts in the public Darbār, but soon afterwards, he was denounced as a dangerous enemy, and ordered to be confined, in which state he remained for 6 years. The Bhimber territories were broken up, and larger portion of Sultan Muhammad Khan's territories were assigned to the Dogra favourites Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh.

A similar fate befell Rahmatullah Khan, the Chief of Rajouri and Rohilla Khan, the rājā of Punch, and other hill Chiefs. Ranjit Singh's obvious aim in

¹ Authorities : Kirpa Ram—*Gulābnāma* (Srinagar, B. S. 1932) ; Richmond's *Memoir on Jammu Rajas* (*Ellenborough Papers*, Public Record Office, London : PRO/30/12-60) ; Smyth, p. 219-63 : *A Genealogical History of Jammu Family* etc.

² Prinsep, p. 72 ff. ; Murray, ii, p. 50 sq. and others.

breaking up the small hill states in the Jammu region was obviously to pave way for the conquest of Kashmir. Their territories were sequestered, and the Chiefs rendered dependents of the Lahore Government as petty jāgīrdārs, but surprisingly, their possessions were assigned to the Jammu brothers.

The policy pursued in respect of the Jammu hills was in sharp contrast to that followed in the hills of Kangra. Pampering of the favourite Jammu rājās was a fatal mistake. It increased their power, wealth and intriguing capacity to dangerous proportions which ultimately posed a serious threat to the Kingdom soon after Ranjit Singh's death. That the Lahore Government wilfully connived at the upsurge of Dogra ambition in the Himalayan kingdoms of Iskardu and Ladakh customary tributaries to it, or whether Ranjit Singh was unable to restrain the schemes of Gulab Singh and his deputy Zorawar Singh to establish Jammu authority in that region, exposes the understandably tolerant and effete policy. The Sikh governor of Kashmir bewailed the extension of Dogra power in the Ladakh Valley. He complained that the annual tribute was not forthcoming, and due to the stoppage of shawl wool from Ladakh, the manufacture and trade in Kashmir had dwindled.¹ No notice was taken of the Dogra usurpations by Ranjit Singh till the British Government lodged a protest against the Dogra forward movement complaining that Gulab Singh proposed to monopolise the shawl and wool trade to the detriment of both Sikh and British interests.²

10. Parleys with Afghans

Although a sense of moderation and diplomacy guided the shrewd counsels of the Maharaja in dealing with his political opponents, yet as a matter of policy, there could be no compromise with the Afghans. Recourse to diplomatic negotiations with them to settle political issues was ever infructuous. Thus, Ranjit Singh's negotiations with Shah Mahmud at Sahiwal in 1811 were fruitless. A weathercock alliance with Vazier Fateh Khan of Kabul in 1812 for a joint Sikh-Afghan expedition to Kashmir resulted in sore disappointment. Fateh Khan broke the solemn agreement and appropriated Sikh share of the booty; but Dīwān Muḥkam Chand, the Sikh general, secured the person of the unfortunate ex-king Shah Shuja as a solace against the Afghan perfidy. As a retaliatory measure, the Afghan governor of Attock was bribed to surrender the fortress to the Sikhs.³ A battle had to be fought with the Kabul Vazier in July 1813 in which the Afghans were defeated.⁴ In 1822, negotiations with Muhammad Azim

¹ Moorcroft, *Travels*, p. 203; Cunningham, p. 181 ff.; Vigne, *Travels in Kashmir and Tibet*, ii, p. 352 etc.; Smyth, p. 198 ff.; and Macnaghten to Wade, 22 November, 1837-(P) 119: 79.

² ISP (I) 16 August, 1841, Nos. 39 and 96.

³ Ochterlony to Adams, 26 March, 1813-(P) 13: 29.

⁴ *Ibid.* 1 July, 1813-(P) 13: 53.

Khan, who had succeeded his brother Vazier Fateh Khan at Kabul and aimed to bring Peshawar under firm Afghan rule, were abortive. The Maharaja's demand for tribute from the harassed Afghan governor of Peshawar Yar Muhammad Khan, though accepted, was not forthcoming.¹

Though Peshawar was reduced by the Sikhs in 1823, for obvious reasons, it could neither be retained nor administered. Yar Muhammad Khan was allowed to rule it as a nominal dependency of the Sikhs. It was a prudent and expedient measure of policy. Dost Muhammad Khan's ascendancy at Kabul, and his known intentions of regaining Afghan possessions, particularly Kashmir and Peshawar, was a signal of danger to the consolidation of Sikh power in the north. To counteract the danger, in 1831 Ranjit Singh made two diplomatic moves. He made Shah Shuja sign an agreement relinquishing almost all claims to the Afghan possessions occupied by the Sikhs.² As a counterpoise to Dost Muhammad's antagonistic designs the measure was of some value. Secondly, the Sikh bribes and diplomacy effected a division in the ranks of the Barakzai brothers. Jahandad Khan of Attock had been won over by a bribe as early as 1813; Yar Muhammad Khan had been weaned away by threats and cajolery to become a Sikh tributary of Peshawar to the utter humiliation and disgust of his Afghan Barakzai brothers. The Peshawar Barakzais—Sultan Muhammad Khan, Pir Muhammad Khan and Syed Muhammad Khan were won over by bribes, threats and show of Sikh might.

Politically, the defection of the Peshawar Barakzais was of little value to Ranjit Singh. They were indolent, unreliable and shifty, and the Maharaja distrusted them. As the feudatories of the Lahore Government they were mere appendages of Sikh prestige: they were required to maintain 2,000 horse and join the Sikh army whenever their services were requisitioned. That the Barakzai facade of Ranjit Singh's diplomacy was a weak counterpoise to Dost Muhammad's designs on Peshawar is evidenced by the fact of persistent claims of both Shah Shuja and Dost Muhammad Khan to the contended province.

Ranjit Singh's diplomatic negotiations with Dost Muhammad Khan in 1835 at the eastern entrance to the Khyber Pass were, in fact, a feint to bring up his armies into the Peshawar Valley to surround the Afghan host. Both sides, having irreconcilable views of enmity and friendship, resorted to treachery and deceit. The Maharaja's emissaries, Faqir Aziz-ud-Din and Dr. Harlan, sent to the Afghan Camp, were detained and put under the custody of the fickle Sultan Muhammad Khan, who had deserted the Sikhs and had reconciled himself with his brother

¹ UT, II, p. 301 ff.

² Wade to Macnaghten, 17 January, 1833—(P) 139 : 1.

Dost Muhammad Khan in the vain hope that the latter would reinstate him as a sovereign of Peshawar. Harlan boasts that he had effected a division amongst the reconciled Barakzai brothers by inducing Sultan Muhammad Khan and his brothers to withdraw suddenly from the Afghan Camp with their 10,000 retainers and join the Sikh Side.¹ As a matter of fact, Ranjit Singh had won over the Peshawar Barakzais by offering them a bribe—the *jāgīrs* of Kohat, Tank and Bannu worth 4,00,000 rupees annually.²

2. PATTERNS OF NORTH-WESTERN FRONTIER POLICY³

10. Extension of Sikh authority

THE NORTH-WESTERN FRONTIER policy of the Sikhs devolved upon three main problems, *viz.*, the subjugation and control of border tribes, the defence of the frontier from Afghan aggression, and the administration of the settled and unsettled trans-Indus districts. These problems arose simultaneously with the penetration of Sikh arms northwards. The turbulent Afghan tribes of the hills north of Hasan Abdal, although subdued as early as 1811, were generally in a rebellious state. They would descend into the plains and lay waste the country. They hated Sikh authority and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā, appointed to curb down their unlawful predatory activities, was put to a severe test. Similar was the case with the Hazara and Khatar territories, but the firm and resolute policy of Ranjit Singh and the establishment of military garrisons, periodical punitive expeditions, bribes, and subsidies ultimately reduced them to Sikh authority.

It must, however, be not forgotten that till the reduction of Peshawar in 1823, Ranjit Singh was not tangibly confronted with a frontier problem. The Sikh occupation of Attock may well be determined a prelude to further Sikh expansion in the north and north-west. The fortress betrayed by its Afghan governor Jahan Dad Khan was adequately garrisoned. It became a rallying point of Sikh armed forces on account of its strategic position for an ultimate march on Peshawar. Beyond the hills of Akora and Jahangirabad to the Yusafzai frontier was the Khatak territory; but although the Sikhs had gained complete ascendancy over the region, the old spirit of animosity between their rule and the Khataks occasionally flared up in the shape of predatory Khatak incursions

¹ Wade to Macnaghten, 15 April, 1835-(P) 141 : 25 : see also Grey, *European Adventurers in Northern India*, p. 257.

² Wade to Macnaghten, 25 April, 1835-(P) 141 : 36 ; see also Masson, *Journeys*, iii, p. 342 ; Shahamat Ali, p. 266 ; and Mohan Lal, *Life of Amir Dost Mohammad Khan*, i. p. 172.

³ *Authorities* : See generally, Masson, *Journey in Beloochistan, Afghanistan and the Punjab*, i ; Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, i ; Elphinstone, *Cabul*, ii ; LPD—iv, v ; J. A. S., xvii (2) ; MacLagan, *Fragments of the History of Mooltan, the Derajat, and Bahawalpur* ; the chronicles of Mohan Lal and Shahamat Ali etc.

from thier fastnesses.¹ The Khataks paid to the Sikh Government their annual revenues though rather unwillingly, for they resented Sikh authority.²

Beyond a few miles from Akora commenced the possessions of the Mohmand tribe divided into numerous cantons or *tappās*. The Sikhs held this territory on the main road to Peshawar firmly. In the important town of Machni, a custom post was established for the merchants of the Punjab and Afghanistan. From Hasan Abdal to the northern outskirts of the Mohmand territory, therefore, the Sikh authority was supreme, and the Afghan tribes overawed by the armed might of the Maharaja, generally remained subservient.

The subjugation of these territories had kept pace with the extension of Sikh power in the nominal Afghan possessions across the Indus, which pushed up the Sikh frontiers from Attock right into the wild and untamed trans-Indus region. The battle of Haidru (26 June, 1813) had exposed to Ranjit Singh the shallow strength of Afghan power ; and the waning Afghan hold on their north Indian possessions was further shattered by the political convulsions in Afghanistan, which followed the brutal assassination of the all-powerful Vazier Fateh Khan in 1818. Ranjit Singh took full advantage of the political turmoil in Afghanistan, and during the year Sikh forces occupied Peshawar, and the Barakzai stooge Jahandad Khan was put in possession of it. Soon afterwards, Ranjit Singh occupied Darband and Mankera ; in 1821 he conquered Dera Ismail Khan, in 1822 Dera Ghazi Khan. In 1825, Bannu, Isakhel, Marwat and Tank were subjugated. All the trans-Indus territories owning nominal allegiance to Afghanistan were taken possession of by the Sikhs.

11. Policy of hesitancy

It would seem, that till the battle of Noushera (14 March, 1823), the positive existence of the Afghan threat from across the Khyber Pass outweighed all other political considerations. This danger precluded the formulation of any north-west frontier policy as premature ; but war with the Afghans and the expulsion of the Afghan intruder occupied the apprehensive mind of Ranjit Singh who never underrated that positive threat. But the decisive Sikh victory Naushera dispelled all such apprehensions, and the reduction of Peshawar soon after, established Sikh supremacy in the north-west. From thence onwards new problems of administration and defence of the north-western frontier were posed, but met with in an oddly hesitant, lop-sided and an indifferent manner. Peshawar was left as a dependency with the Barakzai Yar Muhammad Khan on payment of a nominal tribute. Dera Ghazi Khan was farmed out to the Daudpotas of Bahawalpur ; Dera Ismail Khan and its dependencies to the deposed Nawab of

¹ Barr, *Journal of a March from Delhi to Peshawar etc.*, London, 1844, p. 201.

² Shahamat Ali, *The Sikhs and the Afghans*, London, 1847, p. 191.

Mankera. In short, it became obvious that Ranjit Singh was not yet inclined to take over and establish Sikh authority in the regions from which he had almost obliterated all symbols of Afghan rule and suzerainty.

Many reasons could be ascribed to this effete and hesitant policy. The final score with the Afghans had yet to be settled. Effective control of the trans-Indus region was an impossibility because of its anti-Sikh, extremely turbulent and fanatical tribal element, which would not readily submit to Sikh authority except under force of arms. Moreover, the country produced little revenue, which could only be realised *vi et armis*. Added to it was the fact that almost all the revenue thus realised was swallowed up by the cost of maintenance of the troops sent to collect it. Fiscal inadequacies and political exigencies, therefore, could have stultified Ranjit Singh's ambitions to assume full control. This half-hearted policy was eminently wise, for it saved the Lahore Government from the odium of setting up a weak civil administration and the encumbrance of stationing permanent Sikh garrisons in an extremely hostile area. As a matter of policy, these territories were not annexed to the Lahore Kingdom, and Ranjit Singh prudently fought shy of consolidating Sikh power in the trans-Indus region by shirking the responsibility of safeguarding a turbulent and unmanageable frontier.

12. Rude awakening

Sikh supineness and neglect of the north-western frontier received a jolt of awakening in 1827. In that year the whole of north was set ablaze by the war-cries of the *jehad* against the infidel Sikhs by the Wahābī fanatic Syyed Ahmad. Overnight all symbols of Sikh authority evaporated. The fickle loyalties of the Muhammadan tribes and their Chieftains, from Attock to the Valley of Peshawar came to the forefront in a blaze of hatred against their Sikh conquerors. All joined the *Ghazis* in a holy war to exterminate the Sikhs. To Ranjit Singh it brought a sore realisation that fire and sword and not moderation were the only implements necessary to quell and bring under firm Sikh rule the turbulent tribal elements inhabiting the north-western frontier. Attock was in danger, and the Sikh stand in Akora in 1827 had proved ineffective to check the hostile and fanatical Afghan tribal elements within his Kingdom supporting the Wahābī insurrectionists. The tributary Sikh governor of Peshawar, Yar Muhammad Khan, after having come to an agreement with the insurrectionists in 1830, was defeated and slain. The occupation of Peshawar by the Wahābī fanatic had jeopardised the entire structure of supine Sikh attitude towards their north-western possessions.

13. Change in postures

The Wahābī storm subsided in 1831. The disturbances in the north-west abruptly brought a sharp reaction at Lahore, justifying a complete change in the

north-western policy of the Sikhs. It was resolved to effect a complete reduction of the region, to assume direct administrative and military control of the conquered territories, and to take effective measures for the safeguarding of the north-western frontier. By 1834, a new aggressive and vigilant policy was in full operation in two ways.

In the first place, military garrisons and outposts were established in the frontier region on an extensive scale. At Peshawar, the nerve-centre of all tribal disturbances, a large army 12,000 strong under Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā was stationed. The Valley was studded with small well-garrisoned fortresses—Jamrud, Barah, Shamshergarh and Doaba to serve as outer defence barrier around Peshawar. Garrison troops were stationed at Naushera, Syedghar, Ramnagar, Muzaffarabad, Attock, Hazara, Kohat and Hashtnagar. For the effective defence of the frontier, old forts were repaired or new ones ordered to be constructed at Sikham, Machin, Khairabad, Shubukdar, Jahangira and Kushangarh. Hari Singh Nalwā constructed a new fortress at Jamrud, and the existing mud-forts at Nari, Darna, Satna and Tarbela were repaired and garrisoned.¹ These measures ensured the maintenance of a firm hold on the frontier region, the curbing down of the fierce antagonism of the tribal population, and the forming of a defensive bulwark against any advance of Afghan armies from across the Khyber Pass.

Secondly, it was decided to take under direct control the civil and military administration of Peshawar and the trans-Indus territories, which had so far been left in the hands of local Muhammadan Chiefs on payment of a nominal tribute. The Barakzai brothers, who had been allowed to govern Peshawar and its dependencies, after a decade of misrule and oppression, were ousted and Peshawar was finally annexed to the Lahore Kingdom on 6 May, 1834. The Derajat, Tank, Bannu and other trans-Indus dependencies, already annexed, were now brought under direct Sikh administrative control.

14. Frontier Policy at work

(i) Trans-Indus Region

An account of the civil administration of these territories having been briefly furnished elsewhere,² it yet remains to assess how this forward defensive policy on the north-western frontier worked in actual practice. The trans-Indus region under the Sikhs consisted of the Derajat, Bannu, Marwat, Isakhel, Tank, Kulachi and

¹ Cunningham testifies to the wider dispositions of the Sikh army in the north-western frontier in an *Abstract: Showing the dispositions of the Sikh Army*, compiled in 1844, *vide*. *ISP* (I) 1 July. His figures tally approximately the strength of strategic frontier outposts as given in British records.

² *Vide*. Chapter 6, *supra*.

Darband. The Derajat was the western frontier of the Kingdom, lying between the Salt range, the river Indus, the Sulaiman range and Sind. It had three principal divisions on the banks of the Indus—Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Fateh Khan. Dera Fateh Khan was merged with Dera Ismail Khan and placed under a Lahore governor *Dīwān* Daulat Rai. Dera Ghazi Khan was farmed out to *Dīwān* Sawan Mal, the governor of Multan. A strong fort at Girang, near Dera Ismail Khan was built and garrisoned with Sikh troops.

(ii) Bannu

While the Derajat was in effective control of the Sikhs, the wild Valley of Bannu had never been completely subjugated. In fact, it had never been conquered or occupied by the Sikhs. The area was inhabited by the Bannuchis descended from distant Afghan tribes, and the wild and quarrelsome Ahmadzai and Utmanzai Waziris, who had resisted Sikh supremacy for almost 25 years. Their fixed annual revenue was 60,000 rupees, and the Sikh Government allowed the numerous *Khāns*, *Maliks* and *Arbābs* to rule their rude people. Its only concern was the collection of the fixed revenue : "Every two or three years, the Sikh army harried their fields, trod down their harvests, burnt their houses, and inflicted injuries which it took the interval of peace to repair."¹

The Waziris of the Sulaiman range having settlements in the hills of Bannu, the Thall, and the banks of the Tochi, had never owed allegiance even to the Shah of Kabul much less to the King of the Sikhs. They were a vicious mongrel people, and subject to none but themselves. They never paid any revenue to the Sikhs except when extorted at the point of sword. Sikh authority in the Valley of Bannu and its Waziri settlements was as nominal as their periodic armed visitations were ruthless. The thirst for infidel Sikh blood in these regions was aggravated by Sikh reprisals. In Bannu no Hindu was permitted to wear turban and a licence-fee had to be paid to the ruling Malik for celebrating a Hindu marriage.

Notwithstanding a nominal control, Sikh policy in this area was eminently wise. The local Malikhs were allowed to collect the revenues of the *tappās*, and as it was expensive and dangerous to administer them through a *Nāẓīm* or a *Kardār*, they were conveniently permitted to regulate law and justice under local tribal customs.

(iii) Marwat, Isakhel etc.

Towards the south of Bannu and separated from the Derajat by the river Indus, was Marwat country with its principal town Lakki.² It was placed under

¹ Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, i, London, 1851, p. 76-77.

² See generally, Elphinstone, ii, p. 56 ; Masson, i. p. 85 ; Edwardes, i, p. 301 sq. etc.

the governor of Dera Ismail Khan, and yielded an annual revenue approximating 40,000 rupees, if it could be collected by the despatch of a Sikh force. Masson observes that once Ranjit Singh himself marched with an army 25,000 strong to Lakki. He could exact 30,000 rupees out of the arrears of revenue of 2-3 years. He did not judge it prudent or convenient to make a permanent settlement in the country, as, it was said, he had contemplated.¹ The Marwat country was then farmed out to Diwān Daulat Rai, who imposed a "*putka-tax*" and a land tax of 1/6th of the gross produce both of which yielded annually over 70,000 rupees.²

The Isakhel territory situated north to the Kalabagh mines, and lying parallel with the Indus, was farmed out to Lakki Mal for 51,000 rupees. The country of Tank, towards the north of Dera Ismail Khan was taken from Nawab Sarwar Khan who paid a tribute of 3,000 rupees, three horses and a pair of hawks. The meagre tribute fell into arrears, and when a Sikh force marched to recover it, Sarwar Khan fled to the Waziri hills. Tank was taken and assigned in *jāgīr* to Kanwar Naunihal Singh, and its inflated revenue estimated at 1,00,000 rupees, but seldom realised, was prudently apportioned to the local Maliks for nominal military service.

Kulachi, south of Tank and the Sulaiman range, was farmed out to Lakki Mal for 51,000 rupees.³ Darband, to the south-west of Kulachi, inhabited by the Miankhel Afghans was imposed a fixed revenue of 18,000 rupees, and Kanwar Naunihal Singh who effected its settlement, raised it to 24,000 rupees.

The whole of the trans-Indus region posed few frontier problems to the Sikh Government. It was a turbulent and ethnically isolated area and was left to its own means on payment of fixed dues. Its total approximate revenue had been worked out at over 6,65,000 rupees, but whether contracted or farmed out, it could only be realised *vi et armis*.⁴

15. The Valley of Peshawar

A chain of garrisoned fastnesses along the river Indus formed an effective line of defence on the N. W. Frontier against foreign aggression. This line skirted the Khyber Pass but did not go beyond it, for, Ranjit Singh's ambitions of conquest stopped in the Peshawar Valley without any thought of extension of Sikh frontiers towards the natural barriers of the Hindukush, or Seistan and Makran. Peshawar was the key to the north. It was considered advisable to consolidate

¹ *Narrative of Various Journeys in Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and the Panjab*, i, London, 1842, p. 99.

² Edwardes, *op. cit.*, i, p. 310.

³ *Ibid.* p. 342.

⁴ Pearse, *Memories of Alexander Gardiner*, London, 1898, p. 184.

Sikh power in its turbulent Valley rather than pursue an impetuous and highly hazardous forward policy across the Khyber Pass. The outer defences of Peshawar, though diffusive, were apparently quite effective. The citadel of Jamrud or Fatehgarh stood as a symbol of Sikh determination against Afghan aggression, 12 miles from Peshawar. But militarily, it was a vulnerable outpost. Though located at a strategic point, it could hold a garrison of 2,000 men;¹ and watered by a stream flowing down the Khyber, which could be cut off at any time by the Afridis unless they were paid a periodical subsidy. The fortress of Barrah was small and could hold only 1,000 men. It had an outer defence and a 20 feet deep ditch.² The fort of Shamshegarh built by the Sikhs on the ancient site of Bala Hissar could, however, garrison 7,000 troops, and on its ramparts were fixed 9-pounder batteries.³ Fifteen miles north-west of Peshawar was the octagonal fortress of Doaba. It was situated in the low country, about 5 miles from the river Kabul, and could be inundated by the inimical tribes. It could barely hold 400 men but it was well calculated to keep in check the predatory Mohmands in troubled times.⁴ These outposts around Peshawar exhibited the vigour and determination of the Sikh Government to maintain an effective north-western frontier policy to hold their own. Although at times they were poorly garrisoned and badly provisioned, they were sustained by the larger military establishments situated between Attock and Peshawar.

Within the hills of the Valley of Peshawar, on either side of the river Indus, inhabited the Yusafzais—the largest of the warlike Afghan tribes. The Sikhs had subjected the Peshawar Valley, but large sums of money had to be settled on the Yusafzai Chiefs or the *arbab*s who seldom paid any revenues, to keep peace. Similarly, other rude and equally turbulent tribes of the Valley—the Khataks, the Momands, the Kugianis and the Khalils, had to be bought off with subsidies both in time of war and peace. Hindu and Sikh settlers were encouraged to settle in the five *tappās*, a few miles from Peshawar called the *Khālsa*⁵ to somewhat neutralise the strong tribal element, but without much success.

An outline of the administration of Peshawar has already been furnished in this narrative,⁶ yet it would be necessary to assess the cost of military adminis-

¹ LPD—iv, p. 325. The fort of Jamrud was totally destroyed by the Afghan artillery in the battle of the same name in 1837. A year later, Shahamat Ali writes: "The site of the battle-ground where the gallant Hari Singh lost his life was pointed out to us, as well as the remains of the fort of Jamrud, near to which the encounter took place. Little beyond a confused-looking mound is to be seen of the latter, it having been demolished after the fatal action." *The Sikhs and the Afghans*, London, 1847, p. 369.

² LPD—iv, p. 326.

³ *Ibid.* p. 327.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 334.

⁵ Shahamat Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

⁶ *Vide* Chapter 6, *supra*.

tration of the Valley. The subjugation of the Peshawar Valley had been accomplished after much bloodshed and vigorous Afghan opposition. It was also retained at an inordinate expense justified for Sikh political prestige and the defence of the north-western frontier. Large armies had to be stationed in the Peshawar area at enormous expense. It is estimated that under General Avitabile, out of a total revenue of 13,39,057 rupees, 10 battalions of regular Sikh army, a few regiments of artillery and regular horse stationed at Peshawar cost annually 8,00,000 rupees; 2,40,000 rupees were expended on subsidies and allowances to the tribal Chiefs; and the cost of civil administration swallowed up the residual revenue.¹ Able, vigorous and ruthless Sikh governors kept the turbulent tribes in check. Amongst the stringent measures introduced by Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā and General Avitabile were : the ban placed on the slaughter of kine, the prohibition to public call for Muhammadan prayer (*azān*),² the resumption of the *jāgirs* of the Syeds and the Mullāhs—the traditional fanatics and fomenters of religious hatred against the Sikhs, a rough-and-ready justice,³ and the imposition of collective fines for insubordination to Sikh authority.⁴

16. The Khyberis

Beyond the Valley of Peshawar, extending from Kadum to Lalpura lay the 24-mile long Khyber Pass, the doorway to Afghanistan. From their advanced position the Sikhs made no efforts to control it or the virulently fanatical and anti-Sikh Shirwani, Afridi and Mommand tribes which inhabited it. The Khyberis lived on plunder and Afghan subsidies to keep open the Pass for trade caravans or Afghan incursions into the Valley of Peshawar. They could muster 21,000 matchlock-men and an equal number of ill-armed marauders at the time of war or a *jehad*.⁵ They hated the Sikhs for their intolerant policy towards the Muhammadans, considered them infidels and persecutors of the true religion, and more so because the strong Sikh rule had deprived them of their lucrative plundering raids into the Valley of Peshawar. As the Sikhs had no political aims beyond the border, except for offering them occasional bribes, they had little concern with the Khyberis.

17. Sikh aims beyond the Khyber

It could be stated without any fear of contradiction that although continually involved in a war for supremacy with the Afghans in the north, Ranjit Singh's

¹ *Catalogue of Khālṣa Darbār Records*, i, No. Aa (15) – ii.

² LPD – iii, p. 249 and 287.

³ For instances of the harsh and cruel sense of Avitabile's justice, *vide*. Chapter 14(10), *supra*; also Chapter 6—*Sikh Administration of Peshawar*, *supra*.

⁴ UT, III (iv), p. 443.

⁵ Leech's Report (dated 1 October, 1837) : *On the Khyber Pass and the tribes inhabiting it*—(P) 144 : 51.

political ambitions did not transcend beyond the Khyber Pass towards the hills and valleys of Afghanistan. Ideologically the Maharaja often talked of conquering Jalalabad, Ghazni and Kabul to fulfil the prophecy of the Gurus,¹ he had neither the will nor the means to undertake a hazardous expedition to Kabul for the subjugation of Afghanistan. The dream never went beyond mere wishful thinking. He informed Wade in 1827, that his French officers had convinced him that given ten regular battalions, two or three regiments of cavalry, and a few pieces of artillery, they would engage to conquer Kabul, and subjugate the whole of Afghanistan to his authority.²

The hypothetical question whether the Sikhs had the means to conquer Kabul independently and retain it, has many interesting points. These came to surface when Lord Auckland and his advisers debated the feasibility of Sikh occupation of Afghanistan in 1838 in connection with the resuscitation of Shah Shuja with Ranjit Singh's help. "Can the Sikhs by their own power hope to conquer Cabul?" Auckland wrote. "I would not venture to assert that they could not by looking at the great amount of disciplined troops, superior material and treasure at their command. They might overrun the plains of Cabul and its vicinity, but, they would retain possession of it, as in the case of Peshawar, at a great loss and expense. But Cabul could be held easier by the Sikhs than Peshawar, for the base of hostility of the Maliks, the Khyberis, the Yusafzais and others was Cabul, on whose promise the tribal people acted in hostility to the Sikhs. Once that place was reduced, they would subside into peaceful subjects. But the Sikhs, though powerful, would not be able to conceal their religious intolerance or become endeared by the Pathans, who certainly are brave and equally fanatical like the Sikhs. The Sikhs, therefore, could only hold Cabul independently with a large army. If it were resolved to give Runjeet Singh a fair chance of destruction also, the best plan that could be desired would be to encourage him to proceed against that place...that Runjeet Singh should have any serious designs of establishing his power in Cabul, I can scarcely believe."³

¹ Reference is here to the well-known passages from Nanak's Discourse with *Qārūn*, the lord of Medina :

And the empire of the *Khālṣa* shall prevail.
First, the Punjab shall become the land of the Sikhs ;
Then other countries shall be theirs ;
Hindustan and the North shall be possessed by them ;
Then the West shall bow to them.
When they enter Khorasan,
Kabul and Kandahar shall lie low.....
In the *Kaliyuga* shall the Kingdom be established,
Which Nanak received from the Lord.

² Wade to Government, 1 August, 1827—BPC (I).

³ Auckland to Hobhouse (*Summary of Enclosures during the year 1838*)—Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 369-374.

3. FOREIGN RELATIONS

18. British jealousy

IT WOULD ALMOST BE correct to assert that except with the British Government, the State of Lahore did not maintain any direct political or diplomatic relations with any European nation. Although in theory Ranjit Singh was an independent sovereign monarch of the Punjab, yet acute British jealousy and resentment precluded the establishment of overt political connections with foreign states. Yet to admit that his foreign relations with any other European, or for that matter, Asian countries existed on the breath of the British approval or condescension, would be a *misnomer*, for he had none. His sporadic connections with the Cis-Sutlej States after 1809, with the Marathas, with France, Russia and Burma, with Nepal, even with Sind and Afghanistan, were highly frowned upon and objected to by the British Government.

We have a few examples of this British attitude, which without openly challenging the Maharaja's right to have foreign relations, considered it its exclusive reserve either to retard them or bring them in line with British foreign policy. When in 1821, William Moorcroft reportedly sent from Ladakh a letter from the Russian minister Prince Nesselrode to Ranjit Singh, recommending a trader to his good offices, and observing that the merchandise of the Punjab would find a ready market in Russia,¹ it created a mild flutter at Fort William. Another instance of this extraordinarily suspicious attitude became apparent when in 1836, General Allard, an officer of Ranjit Singh's army, returned from Paris bearing a personal letter from emperor Louis Phillipe to Maharaja Ranjit Singh.² The incident bubbled up in a mild British protest, and Ranjit Singh was accused of having intermittent flirtations with the French. The matter was even taken up with the French authorities by the British Ambassador in Paris. Ranjit Singh, however, denied Wade's allegation that Allard had come back to Lahore as a duly accredited envoy of the French emperor, and that resort of French adventurers to gain political influence in the Punjab would be checked as much as it may be in his power to do so.³

The wearisome circumspections of his non-existent foreign relations annoyed the Maharaja, but he bore them with good cheer, for they were senseless. He visualised little utility or political necessity of such relations, at any rate, he avoided them from fear of giving unnecessary umbrage to the British Government. He

¹ *Travels*, i, p. 99 ff.

² Government to Wade, 3 April, 1837; Auckland to Hobhouse, 9 October, 1837-Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 197 ff.

³ *Ibid.*

readily agreed to check the supposed French invasion of India in 1809, as he did in 1838 to forbid the entry of the Russian phantom into his territories. At the same time, his interest in understanding the power and politics of the European powers—England, France, Russia, Prussia, Austria and others, was unbounded. He satisfied this insatiable curiosity by his endless queries posed to foreign visitors to his Court—Moorcroft, Hugel, Jacquemont, Osborne and others. According to Wade, as for instance, when he visited Lahore in 1831, the Maharaja's conversation with him consisted chiefly of enquiries regarding the French revolution, the military strength of Russia and France, the political relations between Russia and China, and those between the British Government and Ava and Nepal.¹

19. Titbits of political intrigue

The treaty of 1809 having barred all direct communications with the Cis-Sutlej states, matters of political nature, of adjustment of boundaries and territorial disputes with them were transacted through the Ludhiana Political Agency. Occasional reports that Ranjit Singh made attempts to win over the rājā of Patiala and other Sikh Chiefs from their allegiance to the British,² came to nothing. The actual presence of a British military force on the Sutlej had compelled Ranjit Singh to resign all pretensions of sovereignty over the whole country between the Jumna and the Sutlej; it also precluded any possibility of direct relations with the disaffected political elements in India, yet he was supposed of carrying on intrigues with the Marathas against the British. In December 1809 intelligence was received at Ludhiana of the arrival of *vakils* from Holkar and Sindhia to urge Ranjit Singh to hostilities with the British.³ In June 1810, the Resident at Delhi reported that Amir Khan Rohilla was making overtures to Ranjit Singh for joint depredatory incursions into the British territory.⁴ Reports of an imaginary Sikh-Maratha conspiracy against the British were the outcome of an earlier fictitious intelligence of Brookes, the British Agent at Benares, who alleged that a secret agent of Ranjit Singh had brought communications to Amrit Rao.⁵ Later, these letters were proved to be forgeries.⁶ Late in May 1809, the Resident with Sindhia discovered another conspiracy between Ranjit Singh and Daulat Rao Sindhia. Gurdial Misser, a dismissed cook of Sindhia was alleged to have brought secret communications from his master and Surjit Rao Ghatika with the suggestion of a Maratha-Sikh

¹ Wade to Prinsep, 22 May, 1831-(P) 137 : 11.

² Ochterlony to Lushington, 5 January, 1810-(P) 10 : 45.

³ *Ibid.* 6 December, 1809-(P) 10 : 34.

⁴ Seton to Government at Fort William, 15 June, 1810-(P) 3 : 87.

⁵ See BSPC (I) 27 May, 1809, C3 and C9 and also HMS (I), Vol. 592.

⁶ Edmonstone's *Memorandum* on Ranjit Singh's intrigues with Amrit Rao-BSPC (I) 29 August, 1808, C 29-30.

combination "to extirpate" the British. These reports were found to be false and imaginary.¹

It is, however, doubtful whether the shrewd Maharaja had any direct or secret relations with the Marathas or other disaffected elements in India. Yet occasional reports in the British records persistently suggest these. Thus in 1825 Wade reported that Ranjit Singh was carrying on intrigues with the rājā of Bharatpur,² with Rewa in 1824,³ with Nepal (see *infra*), with the rājā of Nagpur,⁴ with Ava, and even with Russia.⁵

20. Ex-*raja* of Nagpur

That there was hardly any substance in these reported titbits of political intrigues is illustrated by Ranjit Singh's treatment of Appa Sahib, the ex-ruler of Nagpur. In 1824, C. Elliot, Agent to the Governor-General at Delhi reported a rumour current at Calcutta to the effect that Ranjit Singh had determined to reinstate the ex-*raja* of Nagpur and had offered him the aid of 50,000 troops.⁶ Elliot's report was based on a handful of mist. Appa Sahib after continued wanderings in northern India had escaped to Amritsar in 1820. The Maharaja received him cordially, but when he made his intentions clear and endeavoured to win him over, Ranjit Singh asked him to quit his territories. Appa Sahib then retired to the Kangra hills, where he remained in the territories of rājā Sansar Chand. He entertained wild schemes of conquest of India in concert with a son of ex-king Shah Zaman. Sansar Chand became highly annoyed and being fearful of both the English and the Sikhs, asked him to leave his territory. Appa Sahib then strayed into Mandi, a Lahore tributary. In 1828, he again entered the Punjab on his way to Jodhpur, where he hoped to get asylum. He finally quitted northern India in 1829.⁷

4. RELATIONS WITH NEPAL

21. No regular intercourse

Ranjit Singh's relations with Nepal were largely of sporadic and desultory nature. These were formal and distant exchanges of goodwill notwithstanding

¹ For correspondence on the subject, see Close to Government, 27 May, 1808, C 3; BSPC (I) 13 March, 6 May, 1809, C 5-7, C 63.

² Wade to Murray, 5 October, 1825-(P) 94 : 105.

³ Elliot to Murray, 7 July, 1824-(P) 24 : 126-27.

⁴ *Ibid.* 17 June, 1824-(P) 24 : 115.

⁵ According to Wade in 1830 a rumour circulated that Ranjit Singh was desirous of opening correspondence with the Russians, but the Maharaja contradicted it. Wade to Hawkins, 24 August, 1824-(P) 98 : 114.

⁶ Elliot to Murray, 17 June, 1824 *ut supra*.

⁷ For correspondence on the subject, *vide.* (P) 24 : 117, 140 ; 25 : 126 ; 27 : 32 etc.

British jealousy magnifying them as unfriendly acts full of dangerous import. Nothing, however, could be farther from truth. Like the Sikhs the Gurkhas were a warlike race, and Ranjit Singh admired their warlike qualities of tenacity and endurance. For this very reason he had enlisted a few regiments of the Gurkhas in the Sikh army. Since the clash of Sikh arms with Nepal in 1809 at the gates of the Kangra fort, he considered the Nepalese a designing, ambitious and a race of faithless people.¹ We have no evidence of any regular diplomatic or political intercourse between Nepal and Ranjit Singh during the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-1816, except that in 1814, Amar Singh Thapa addressed a communication to Ranjit Singh warning him that the British were contemplating to conquer Multan with the assistance of Amir Shah Mahmud of Afghanistan.² But the Sikh Chief gave no credence to it.

22. Nepalese missions

The first Nepalese embassy arrived at the Court of Lahore in February 1825. The Lahore news-writer describes it a secret mission,³ but for what purpose none could say. At the same time, it could not be ascertained whether the two Courts were in the habit of keeping any sort of diplomatic intercourse.⁴ For almost a decade thereafter there seems to be no further contact between Nepal and Ranjit Singh till 1834, when we hear of a Nepalese Agent at Amritsar named Lieutenant Karbir Khatri.⁵ We have no idea of the exact nature of this mission also, but perhaps it was one of goodwill as the Maharaja sent a return mission to Kathmandu.⁶

The mission of Karbir Khatri appears to be of no political significance except that the ascendant Thapa faction in Nepal in order to annoy the British Government was endeavouring to blow up a bubble of political connections with Indian Chiefs of Bundelkhand, Rajputana, Lahore, and even Bhutan, Tibet and Burma. Wade, however, commented that Karbir's mission to Lahore did not portend any sinister designs of the Nepalese against British interests.⁷

¹ Wade to Prinsep, 25 May, 1831-(P) 137 : 31. The Maharaja told Wade in 1831 that Amar Singh Thapa had proposed to him the partition of Kashmir and the hills of Kangra, but it was his object to drive the Gurkhas across the Sutlej.

² *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh*-(P) No. 17. 184 (40).

³ Elliot to Murray, 9 February, 1825-(P) 25 : 31.

⁴ *Ibid.* 12 April, 1825-(P) 25 : 69.

⁵ Wade to Macnaghten, 21 October, 1834-(P) 140 : 88.

⁶ Tickell : *Events at the Court of Nepal, 1830-40*-Foreign Secret Consultations (I), 18 January, 1841. No. 74.

⁷ Wade to Macnaghten, 21 November, 1834-(P) 117 : 58.

In the year 1837, violent political convulsions took place in Nepal, leading to a sudden eclipse of the Thapas from political power. The Pande faction which gained ascendancy at Kathmandu brought about changes in the external policy of that country. Bhimsen Thapa was dismissed, and his nephew Matabar Singh was mysteriously allowed to leave Nepal, but he was arrested by the British authorities on the suspicion of having been sent by the Nepalese Court on a clandestine mission to Ranjit Singh. A mission from Kathmandu, however, arrived at Lahore in May, and was received by Ranjit Singh with marked civility.¹ The continued intercourse between the Nepalese and the Sikhs was highly irksome to the British Government, but it did not know how to prevent it.² A year earlier, a gift of two elephants had been sent by the Nepalese king to the Sikh ruler, who had already given employment to Amar Singh Thapa's son Bhupal Singh in one of the battalions of the French Legion.

The Nepalese mission was composed of Sardar Kalu Khawas and Captain Karbar Singh and was well received at Lahore. According to the Lahore Diarist the Maharaja wrote a letter to the King of Nepal welcoming the gift of elephants, assuring him that the interests of the two States were identical, and expressing a wish in general terms for the continuance of the friendly intercourse.³

But the British Resident at Kathmandu alleged that Ranjit Singh was negotiating a secret alliance with Nepal, and that the Hindu Kingdom of Nepal would be linked up with the Sikh Kingdom of Ranjit Singh, and it would not be advisable to allow them to march together behind the Himalayas!⁴ Wade's suggestion that the continued intercourse between Nepal and Ranjit Singh had the stronger motive of advancement of trade between the Sikh occupied Ladakh and Lhasa is too far-fetched as his allegation that Ranjit Singh visualised an anti-British alliance with the warlike Nepalese.⁵

23. Matabar Singh

In 1838, the British Government permitted Matabar Singh to proceed on his journey towards Lahore. His flight from Nepal in 1837 after the fall of the powerful Bhimsen Thapa forms an interesting episode. Ousted by the Pande faction after being deprived of his command and estates, he repaired to the Terai jungle on the pretext of catching elephants, and proceeded to the plains of India. There is no truth in the assertion that he was allowed to leave Nepal on a

¹ Macnaghten to Wade, 12 June, 1837-(P) 119 : 26.

² *Ibid.* 20 October, 1837. (P) 119 : 64.

³ UT III (iii), p. 504 ; Macnaghten to Wade, 17 April, 1838-(P) 121 : 36.

⁴ Macnaghten to Wade, 17 April, 1838 (Enclosure), *ut supra*.

⁵ Wade to Macnaghten, 20 October, 1837, *ut supra*.

secret mission, and that the Pande faction was in correspondence with the Dogra minister Dhian Singh or the Sindhianwālā Chiefs. He crossed the Sutlej in 1838, and soon got a command in the Lahore army, or perhaps a high position at the Court.¹ Ranjit Singh received the Gurkha general cordially, and he is reported to have remarked : "that as the English and the Muslims (alluding to the proposed restoration of Shah Shuja) had united, it was for Hindus to look to themselves !"²

The alleged observation of Ranjit Singh appears to be fictitious, as he had signed the tripartite treaty, and he had consulted the British Government before the appointment of Matabar Singh to a position in his army.³ Therefore, Matabar Singh's appointment does not reflect any anti-British swing in Ranjit Singh's policy. In 1840, the British Government found the overbearing Pande faction at Kathmandu adverse to its own interests, and considered it feasible to employ Matabar Singh as a tool to oust the reprehensive Pande regime. Matabar Singh was induced to quit Lahore service, and he remained in British territory with a monthly allowance of 1,000 rupees. But in the meantime at Kathmandu anti-British feeling had subsided, and the British authorities in India found no use of him. He returned to Nepal in January, 1843 to assume the premiership, and two years afterwards (17 May, 1845), was treacherously assassinated in the royal palace.

5. POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANSITAN

24. Its aims

Ranjit Singh's policy towards Afghanistan has been described elsewhere in this narrative⁴ at some length. Sufficient it would be to advert here to its basic principles. As a nation, the Sikhs were ever at war with the Afghans whom they considered their irreconcilable enemies. Both on general principles and on political grounds there could be no compromise with the Afghans ; complete obliteration of their power and influence in northern India was the chief Sikh aim. In the accomplishment of this political aim, Ranjit Singh was eminently successful. British realisation that the powerful Sikhs had, for almost three decades, barred the entrance of the Afghans into India came rather late after the disaster of the first Afghan War had been learnt.⁵ However, British interference notwithstanding its annoyances and embarrassments posed by double-dealing with Dost Muhammad

¹ Cunningham, p. 219, fn. 1.

² Tickell : *Events at the Court of Nepal*, *ut supra* ; see also the present writer's *History of Nepal*, Hoshiarpur 1970, p. 301 ff.

³ UT, III (iii), p. 485 sq.

⁴ *Vide*. Chapters 6, 8 and 16.

⁵ Hardinge to Hobhouse, 21 January, 1847-Broughton (BM) 36475, fol. 24a ff.

Khan—as for instance, Burnes mischievous endeavour to barter Peshawar for uncertain Afghan acquiescence to British aims, came to nothing. Ranjit Singh showed determination and steadfastness of purpose in his policy towards the Afghans, which aimed at the annihilation of Afghan power in northern India and its substitution by Sikh rule. British distrust of Sikh power saved them from direct embroilment in the first Afghan War, and the Sikhs malignantly gloated over British disgrace of defeat and humiliation when disaster overtook them in Afghanistan.

6. POLICY TOWARDS SIND

25. Sikh designs on Sind

Ranjit Singh's policy towards Sind came into clash with British diplomacy. Sikh and British designs on Sind converged on the same point though their aggressive postures ran a different course. Ranjit Singh claimed that he had inherited the right of receiving the customary tribute which the Sindhian Amirs paid to Kabul,¹ and further that Shikarpur should be ceded to him because the rights of suzerainty belonged to the Lahore Government.² These aggressive Sikh designs of extension of power in the south became apparent both to the British Government and the Talpurian Amirs. The Lahore news-writers reported that the Maharaja would soon invade Sind, and that he was holding frequent discussions with his French military advisers for its ultimate conquest.³

26. British diplomacy

Till 1819, when Cutch was conquered and British frontiers became contiguous to Sind, the British Government evinced scant interest in Sind, but when the Khosa and Balauch tribes began making frequent inroads into British territory from Sind in 1820, a revision of the almost defunct Anglo-Sindhian treaty of 1809 had become necessary.⁴ Otherwise Sind appeared of no political or commercial advantage though William Moorcroft had two years later suggested to Lord Amherst's Government that commerce in the river Indus between India and Central Asia from the mouth of that river would offer both these advantages to the British Government. Burnes' mission in 1831 up the river Indus under the subterfuge of a present of dray-horses from the King of England to Maharaja Ranjit Singh aroused British interest in Sind. Ranjit Singh did not suspect that the real aim of the British mission was to survey the river's navigability and to gain information

¹ Wade to Government, 13 May, 1831-(P) 137 : 8.

² Wade to Elliot, 7 August, 1823 ; Elliot to Wade, 24 August, 1823-(P) 94 : 11, 18.

³ *Ibid.* 7 September, 1823-(P) 94 : 17 ; Wade to Colebrooke, 11 August, 1823-(P) 96:113.

⁴ *Correspondence relative to Sind*-(PP) XXIV, 1843. No. 2.

regarding the power and resources of the Sindhian Amirs. He even coerced the Amirs with a display of force at the Sindhian frontiers when they retarded Burnes' progress towards Lahore.¹

Unaware of British political designs on Sind, in 1831 at the Rupar Meeting Ranjit Singh threw feelers to the British officers accompanying Lord William Bentinck for a joint Anglo-Sikh invasion of Sind.² Bentinck affably ignored the suggestion for he had forestalled Sikh advance on Sind by deputing Henry Pottinger on "a commercial mission" to the Talpurian Amirs. Soon afterwards, Wade arrived at Lahore to lull the Maharaja's apprehensions assuring him that Pottinger's mission was a purely commercial one.³ The Maharaja, however, wanted an assurance that nothing would be done in contravention of the Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1809, and that the Sikh conquest of Sind and Shikarpur would not be objected to.⁴

27 Impact of Indus Navigation

Meanwhile, Pottinger had forced a commercial treaty on the Amirs, and Wade had gone to Bahawalpur and signed a similar treaty with the Daudpota Nawab, at the same time, acquiring geographical and statistical data of the country upto Mithankot. None could, however, be hoodwinked by the Indus Navigation Scheme—a farce of the illusory revival of ancient trade route for maritime intercourse between Upper India, Central Asia and Europe. Ranjit Singh saw through the British diplomatic game which aimed at checkmating his designs on Sind. It brought into open British objectives in Sind and Afghanistan, and placed an ostensible barrier against Sikh advance to the south. He accepted diplomatic defeat but not without a final battle of arguments. The Indus Navigation treaties with the Sikhs, the Talpurians and the Daudpotas allowed the British to station its officers at key positions along the entire line of the Indus—Hyderabad, Mithankot, Shikarpur and Bahawalpur, thus enabling them to obtain a political foothold in Sind.

28. Sikh designs thwarted

With the arrival in India of Lord Auckland in 1836, the hectic commercial zeal of the Government of India whittled down. Auckland deemed it necessary not only to prevent the extension of Sikh power along the whole course of the Indus, but to obtain a closer political union with Sind.⁵ Bentinck's policy of "forced intimacy" and "wanton coercion" under the uncanny commercial garb was given

¹ Burns to Martin, 6 June, 1831-(P) 115 : 25.

² Wade to Prinsep, 19 October, 1831-(P) 137 : 34; Murray, ii, p. 113 ff.

³ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 19 November, 1831-BISL(I). Vol. 21.

⁴ Wade to Prinsep, 13 January, 1832-(P) 138 : 2.

⁵ Macnaghten to Wade, 26 September, 1830-(PP) XXXIV, 1943. No. 2, para 2.

up. Auckland directed Wade to inform the Maharaja that his advance on Shikarpur would be viewed with displeasure by the British Government, and that any Sikh aggression on Sind would seriously prejudice Anglo-Sikh relations.¹ At the same time, Colonel Henry Pottinger was directed to open negotiations with the Amirs for a defensive alliance, pointing out to them the threat posed by the Sikhs to their existence.²

29. The Mazari affair

Auckland's forthright policy towards Sind had an element of chicanery—a belief that he was conferring an enormous boon on the Amirs by protecting them from their only enemy. Ranjit Singh complained loudly against British interference in Sind, but sensible of the benefits of British friendship did not venture upon a quarrel with them. He accepted the diplomatic reverse, but determinedly pointed out his grievances against the Amirs who had incited the turbulent Mazaris in making frequent depredatory raids into his territories.³ He took prompt measures to retaliate. Sikh forces on the Sindhian borders were ordered to demand a tribute of 12,00,000 rupees and immediate cession of Shikarpur from the Talpurian Amirs on the point of sword and attack Shikarpur after the Dussehra festival.⁴ The threatened Sikh advance on Shikarpur prompted the Indian Government to take immediate steps to stop it. Auckland wrote to Ranjit Singh showing his dissatisfaction at his contemplated operations against the Sindhians.⁵ Wade informed the Maharaja that although Sikh retaliatory measures could not be objected to, the dispute could be settled through British mediation as the Amirs had since then placed themselves under British protection.⁶ At the same time, at Hyderabad, Pottinger impressed upon the Amirs the danger in which their territories stood from Sikh aggression, and that they should accept British mediation in their dispute with Ranjit Singh. They were required to withdraw their *vaklis* from Lahore, conduct all negotiations with the Lahore Government through a British Resident to be stationed at Hyderabad, and agree to the stationing of a British force in Sind.⁷

30. Dialogue on Sikh claims

Ranjit Singh had no alternative but to acquiesce to British wishes though with some sulking.⁸ He promised to abstain from further aggressive designs on

¹ Auckland to Hobhouse, 7 October, 1836-Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 92 ff.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* For the Mazari affair, *vide. supra*, p. 152-3.

⁴ Wade to Mackeson, 15 October, 1836-(P) 142 : 76 ; also Governor-General to Secret Committee, 28 November, 1836, *ut supra*.

⁵ Auckland to Hobhouse, 7 October, 1836 *ut supra*.

⁶ Macnaghten to Wade, 26 September, 1836-(P) 107 : 16.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Auckland—7 October, 1836, *ut supra*.

Sind, and seemed inclined to accept the proffered British mediation in his differences with the Amirs.¹ He challenged the right of the British Government under the treaty of 1809 to hold intercourse with the countries west of the river Indus, or at least, to prevent him from extending his dominion in that direction.² He claimed that Shikarpur was a dependency of Peshawar and that the Amirs who held that place, were his tributaries ;³ that Shah Shuja had ceded it to him, or at least, assigned half of it in return for a payment of 1,25,000 rupees in 1832.⁴ And finally, the Amirs who had violated his dominions by wilfully encouraging the Mazaris to make depredations on his territories should surrender Shikarpur to him.⁵

British arguments against Ranjit Singh's claim were to the effect that his title to Shikarpur as a dependency of Peshawar was invalid, were it so, it then equally belonged to the Shah of Persia or the Amir of Afghanistan ;⁶ that Ranjit Singh's secret transactions with Shah Shuja were no concern of theirs—at least, the British Government never sanctioned the ex-Shah's late misadventure.⁷ It was further contended that the Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1809 only restricted the Maharaja's movements to the south of the Sutlej—at least, it did not preclude the British from forming relations with the states to the north of the Indus.⁸ Even admitting that the Amirs had provoked the Maharaja, the British Government could not view with indifference the extension of Sikh power towards that territories of the Amirs, who, it was falsely contended, had placed themselves under British protection.⁹

¹ Wade to Macnaghten, 2 November, 1836-ISP(I) 21 November, 1836. No. 12.

² That British interference was unjustified and in contravention of the Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1809, is admitted by Lord Auckland in a private communication to the President of the Board of Control on 7 October, 1836 ; "Runjeet Singh, on the other hand," he wrote, "has some cause of complain of us for interfering with him on this side of the Indus. Our treaty with him fixed the Sutlege as the boundary to his ambition on our side ... As long as it suited our purpose, we maintained that the treaty made the Sutlege, when it became merged in the Indus, the bar to Ranjeet Singh's power on this side. On that account when he took the territories of the Nawab of Bahawalpur on the other side of the river, we did not allow him to touch on this side, although we had no treaty with Bahawalpur, and that state was not in contemplation when the treaty with Runjeet Singh for the protection of the Sikhs on this side of the Sutlege was made. Are we at liberty to put one construction of treaty at one time, and another at another when it suits our convenience ? If not, we can hardly say that we have any right to interfere between Runjeet Singh and Sind."—Broughton (BM) 36473, fol. 92 ff.

³ Wade to Macnaghten, 5 October, 1836-ISP(I) 24 October, 1836, No. 4 ; UT, III (iii), p. 168 sq.

⁴ *Ibid.* 5 September, 1836-(P) 142 : 61 ; UT, III (iii), p. 578.

⁵ *Ibid.* 5 October, 1836, *ut supra* ; UT, III, (iii), p. 313,

⁶ Macnaghten to Wade, 2 March, 1837-(P) 119 : 10.

⁷ *Ibid.* 26 September, 1836-(PP) XXXIV, 1843. 2.

⁸ *Ibid.* 14 November, 1836-(P) 107 : 33,

⁹ *Ibid.* 26 September, 1836, *ut supra* ; UT, III (iv), p. 537.

In this manner failed Ranjit Singh's diplomacy in Sind, and his aggressive designs on Shikarpur. British realisation of an unfair deal to the Sikh ruler led to his placation by a bribe of 15,00,000 rupees out of a sum extorted outrageously from the Sindhian Amirs.¹ In this manner was sustained the Maharaja's vanity at the cost of his ambition.

7. DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH THE BRITISH

31. First contacts

EARLY BRITISH CONTACTS with the Sikh country and Ranjit Singh were the result of an exaggerated Afghan threat to India, when in the year 1800, Lord Wellesley's Government sent Mir Yusuf Ali Khan, a British emissary to the Court of Ranjit Singh of Lahore. It is, however, clear that the threat was unduly magnified by Wellesley to force his treaty on the Nawab Vazier of Oudh; that the fear of an Afghan-Sikh coalition was unrealistic and that the overtures of the Rohillas and the Marathas to Shah Zaman could not endanger Oudh and Delhi.² To thwart the imaginary threat of Shah's advance on Delhi, Wellesley however assembled the main body of the army of Bengal on the frontier of Oudh;³ and directed the Resident at Lucknow to arrange with the Sikh Chiefs a concerted plan of operations against the Shah⁴ regarding which communications had been received by the Governor-General from the Bhangī and Rāmgarhiā Sardars.⁵

When in 1799, Ranjit Singh had occupied Lahore, the British even then considered him a Chief of little significance and far too distant. The so-called grant of Lahore to the young Śukerchakiā Chief was noticed in the British records, particularly the Poona Residency Correspondence, and it was remotely apprehended that a Sikh-Afghan coalition would emerge. The mission of Mir Yusuf Ali Khan sent to Lahore to forestall this unnatural combination attained substantially nothing, for, when the British emissary arrived at Lahore late in 1800, the threat of Afghan invasion had evaporated.

It is, however, interesting to note that the British mission did not make much impression on Ranjit Singh, who listened to Mir Yusuf Ali Khan's exhortations regarding the danger posed to the Punjab by the cruel and treacherous Afghans, the superiority of the British arms, and the dire consequences of the Sikhs forming

¹ Macnaghten to Torrens, 26 June, 1838-ISP(I) 17 October, 1838.

² See generally, Wellesley to Dundas, 23 February, 1793-(WD), i, III; Governor-General to Secret Committee, 23 April, 1800-BISL(I), Vol. 3; PRC, viii and ix.

³ Wellesley to Court of Directors-(WD), i, CXXXIV.

⁴ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 24 December, 1793-BISL (I). Vol. 3.

⁵ BPC (I) 9 June, 1797. No. 3.

any connection with them.¹ The Maharaja treated the British mission well, and dismissed Yusuf Ali Khan with a *khill'at* and presents.²

An important outcome of Mir Yusuf Ali Khan's mission was the establishment of a vague sort of connection between the East India Company, the Cis-Sutlej Sardars and Ranjit Singh. Earlier political communications of Ranjit Singh to Mr. Collins, the British Resident with Sindhia indicate his political wisdom in assuring the British Government that their fears of a Sikh-Afghan coalition were groundless, and that he considered the Afghans as unreliable tyrants and confirmed liars.³ He assured the British of his friendship. "Shah Zaman", he wrote, "was the enemy to the lives and property of both your government and mine, and meditates the ruin of both the states."⁴

32. Desire for alliance

Wellesely papers show that during the overthrow of the Marathas (1803-04), although some of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs has stood for and against the British, Ranjit Singh had remained cautiously aloof. Reports circulated at Delhi that he had signed a secret treaty with the Maratha deputy Perron on the basis of reciprocal military assistance.⁵ That these reports were imaginary is proved by the fact that Ranjit Singh had informed the British Government of the overtures made to him by Perron.⁶ Ranjit Singh's correspondence during this period shows that he had no intention of offering any assistance to the Marathas against the British, but was earnestly desirous of entering into a treaty with them ; and that in return for a defensive alliance, he was prepared to accept British supremacy over all countries south of the river Sutlej.⁷

Negative British reaction to these positive proposals of Ranjit Singh seems to be their ignorance about the Sikhs. They were considered as an untrustworthy race, and Ranjit Singh at quite a distance from the field of their intended operations though capable of exerting influence over the other fickle and faithless Sikh Chiefs sitting on fence till they were fully convinced of the overthrow of the Marathas.⁸

¹ Collins to Governor-General, 24 June, 1800-PRC, ix, 7.

² UT, II, p. 54.

³ Collins to Wellesley, 18 December, 1800-PCR, ix, No. 24 A (Enclosure from Ranjit Singh).

⁴ *Ibid.* 13 January, 1801, *op. cit.*

⁵ Ochterlony to Wellesley, 7 December, 1804-BSPC(I) 31 January, 1805, C 230.

⁶ Wellesley to Lake, 2 August, 1803-BSPC(I) 2 March, 1804. C11, para 5.

⁷ Lake to Wellesley, 6 September, 1803, *op. cit.* (Enclosure), C79.

⁸ Wellesley to Lake, 22 September, 1803, *op. cit.* C118, paras 11 and 14.

Soon after the suppression of the Sikh depredations in the Doab in 1804, David Ochterlony, the British Resident at Delhi, suggested to the Government of India the annexation of the whole country upto the banks of the Sutlej in the name of the Mughal emperor without great expense,¹ but the Marquis of Wellesley fought shy of subjecting the region to British paramountacy in a more decided manner. The subjection of the Cis-Sutlej Sikh region to British authority was deemed unjust and inexpedient.² A permanent arrangement with the Sikhs and Ranjit Singh was considered unwarrantable and expensive.³ Any association with Ranjit Singh would involve the British Government in a participation in his schemes of conquests.⁴ British involvement with the Marathas and Oudh precluded any unnecessary embroilment in the politics of the Sikh country, then considered a wild region inhabited by a wild race !

33. A wise step

The policy of British non-interference in the country beyond the Jumna in 1803-04 gave Ranjit Singh a free hand to extend his authority over the Mālwa and Sirhind Sikhs. It was apparent to him that the Company's frontiers stopped at the Jumna, and that the British Government was not interested in interfering in his schemes of conquest. Then came Holkar's intrusion into the Punjab in 1805, and Lord Lake in hot pursuit of the Maratha refugee halted at the Beas with his army to settle the issue. The expulsion of Holkar from his territories by Ranjit Singh made a deep impression on Lake and Wellesley of his good intentions towards the British Government. Although different versions of Ranjit Singh's change of his earlier sympathetic attitude towards Holkar are forthcoming, yet it is clear that he realised the power of British arms and took a decision not to link up his ambitions with a forlorn cause. This eminently wise step, perhaps, saved his little kingdom from certain destruction at its inception, and won him British friendship and confidence.

34. Advantages of British friendship

The Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1806 bestowed upon Ranjit Singh ample rewards. It allowed him a free hand in subjugating the Cis-Sutlej territories unhampered.

¹ Ochterlony to Wellesley, 7 December, 1804, *ut supra*.

² *Vide. Lumsden's Minute*—Resident at Delhi to Ochterlony, 13 January, 1805, (Enclosure)—BSPC(1) 31 January, 1805, C243.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Wellesley's limitation of the Company's frontier at the Jumna, apart from other considerations was, perhaps, due to the fact that the country beyond that river was considered infested by bands of warlike Sikhs, who were far from friendly towards the British during their struggle with the Marathas (1803), and the Doab disturbances (1804-05). Moreover, in the impending struggle with Holkar and the rājās of Bharatpur, the Sikhs were deemed unreliable allies.

The policy of cautious neutrality adopted by the British for political considerations led to the first two Mālwa campaigns in the Cis-Sutlej region, and it is certain, that but for the intercession of Francophobia and Metcalfe's mission, the extension of Ranjit Singh's authority to the Jumna would have been the logical consequence of Sikh ambition. Within a few months after the treaty, Ranjit Singh began the subjugation of the Cis-Sutlej region, and by 1808, practically unnoticed by the British, he had established a *de facto* suzerainty over Mālwa and Sirhind. The entire Cis-Sutlej region trembled before the might of his arms. The Chiefs of the region hovered around him to pick up the crumbs of territorial grants and awards, submissively willing to accept Ranjit Singh's suzerainty as lord-paramount of all the Sikhs.

Therefore, Ranjit Singh's virtual domination of the Sikh country between the Sutlej and the Jumna was the outcome partly of British supineness and to a larger extent, their conviction of his friendly intentions towards them. The stir created by his successive inroads into Mālwa and Sirhind compelled the Cis-Sutlej Sardars to send, in 1808, a deputation to Delhi to seek British protection against his aggressive designs upon their possessions. They complained to the Resident at Delhi that Ranjit Singh was a Chief of unreliable temper, that his real intention was to subjugate their territory, and that protection, if granted to them, would make them ever loyal to the British Government.¹

The British Government adopted an entirely evasive attitude. The Cis-Sutlej deputationists were told that the British Government had no quarrel with Ranjit Singh, that it was improbable that he had evil designs on their territories, and that their uneasiness was ill-founded.² In this manner were dismissed the Cis-Sutlej supplicants for British protection against Ranjit Singh's aggressions. In short, the complaints of the Sardars were considered imaginary, inopportune and ill-founded.

35. Minto-Ranjit Singh Correspondance

Ranjit Singh was aware of the perfidy of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs. His spies had trailed the deputation to Delhi. The Lahore Diarist records that the Maharaja viewed the transactions of the rājā of Patiala and other Mālwa Chiefs with contempt. They were between the devil and the deep sea, and in order to save themselves, they had sent emissaries to the British to come to their aid.³ Ranjit Singh had viewed the continuous stay of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs at Delhi with utmost suspicion. In July 1808, he wrote to Lord Minto and charged the Cis-Sutlej

¹ Seton to Edmonstone, 3 April, 1808-BSPC(I) 18 April, 1808, C8.

² *Ibid.* para 5.

³ UT, II, p. 79 *sq.*

Chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal of duplicity and intrigue. He said, that the Chiefs had sent him letters which had led him to suppose that the British Government was making preparations of war against him. He charged them with perfidy and falsehood.¹ He enclosed copies of these letters to the Governor-General, which had been received by him from the Sikh Chiefs containing these and many other allegations.

The communication from Ranjit Singh obviously aimed at discrediting the Chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal who had sought British protection against him. On 20 June, 1808, Ranjit Singh wrote to Lord Minto conveying his sense of friendship, and enclosing a *Memorandum* containing his suggestions for an offensive and defensive alliance with a plea for the removal of misunderstanding created by the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs.²

Lord Minto's reply to Ranjit Singh assured him that the British Government disbelieved all the idle reports mentioned by him, and that an envoy would soon arrive at his Court to negotiate with him the matters connected with the welfare of both the States.³

36. First exercise in diplomacy

Diplomatic negotiations during the early stages of the Metcalfe Mission (1808-09) exhibit Ranjit Singh's extraordinary vigour and astuteness. The British envoy had come to Lahore to offer to the Maharaja proposals for an offensive and defensive alliance against the imaginary French menace to India.⁴ The Maharaja gave little credence to the supposed threat, but found it a convenient handle to gain British recognition to his claim of paramountcy over all the Sikhs. This point needs a little elaboration in the light of diplomatic discussions. When the British envoy told the Maharaja that a French army would soon approach the Indus, that he should co-operate with the British Government in his own interests by consenting to the march of a British force through the Punjab,⁵ Ranjit Singh exhibited a most striking sense of jealousy and suspicion. He observed that he was not

¹ Ranjit Singh to Lord Minto, 6 July, 1808-HMS(I), Vol. 592, No. 22, para 2. Referring to the postponement of his visit to Hardwar, he informed Lord Minto that the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs had represented to him that Archibald Seton the Resident at Delhi, had ordered troops to march against him, and that, if he came to Hardwar, he would do so at his own risk—"a barricade at Hardwar with fourteen entrances had been constructed to entrap him!" (Enclosure No. 1).

² HMS(I), Vol. 592 (Enclosure II)-Ranjit Singh's *Memorandum*.

³ Minto to Ranjit Singh, 11 July, 1808-HMS(I), *op. cit.* No. 23, paras 1-2.

⁴ Secret Committee-Memorandum No. 80, HMS(I), Vol. 511, fol. 81.

⁵ Edmonstone to Metcalfe, 20 June, 1808-BSPC(I) same date, C3, paras 35-36,

convinced of the French threat ; at any rate, it appeared to him too remote to be real ; he was willing to accept British proposals for a joint action against the French threat, provided the British Government should first acknowledge him as the head of the Sikh nation.¹

Counter-proposals made by Ranjit Singh, without the acceptance of which he refused to come to terms, included among others, the British acceptance of his suzerainty over the Sutlej-Jumna region,² non-interference in his schemes of conquest against the territories subject to the Afghans,³ a defensive and offensive alliance with the British Government,⁴ an assurance that the time and route of the march of British army through his territories and its eventual evacuation should be settled through his concurrence.⁵

These Sikh demands flabbergasted the British envoy, who had come to Lahore with grandiose schemes of overawing the ruler of Lahore. However, Metcalfe was surprised to witness the military power of Ranjit Singh in 1808.⁶ He reported that the Maharaja had virtually made himself the overlord of the region between the Sutlej and the Jumna and his successive conquests tended towards the complete subjugation of the area.⁷

But although the pursuance of a vigorous diplomacy of evasion by Ranjit Singh was impressive, its enforcement by an impetuous and hasty display of force in the Cis-Sutlej region proved to be an error of miscalculation. Metcalfe's reports regarding his aggressive designs across the Sutlej created a sharp reaction at Fort William. It was noted that the Maharaja treated the Napoleonic menace as illusory, that he had no intention of treating the British mission seriously, and that he was anxious to prevent Elphinstone's passage through his territories on a similar mission to Afghanistan.⁸ It was also realised that the British refusal of protection to the Cis-Sutlej States in 1808 had encouraged Ranjit Singh to dominate the region with the result that the Chiefs were in compulsory attendance on him and the local Sardars bent on mischief.⁹

¹ Metcalfe-Despatch No. 23-BSPC(I) 24 October, 1808, C69.

² *Ibid.* Despatch No. 23 and 26-BSPC(I) 24 and 31 October, 1808, C69 and C2.

³ *Ibid.* Despatch No. 35-BSPC(I) 28 November, 1808, C4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* Despatch No. 13-BSPC(I) 3 October, 1808, C20.

⁷ Governor-General to Secret Committee, 15 December, 1808-BISL(I), Vol. 10, fol. 377 sq., para 2.

⁸ Metcalfe-Despatch No. 23, *ut supra*.

⁹ *Ibid.* No. 16-BSPC(I) 17 October, 1808, C12.

37 Second phase of diplomacy

With the recession of French threat, the second phase of Anglo-Sikh diplomacy began. In December 1808, the Supreme Government had come to a decision for the reduction or subversion of Ranjit Singh's power even without reference to the apprehended French invasion. It was decided to prevent the extension of Sikh power across the Sutlej, to afford protection to the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs, require Ranjit Singh to relinquish all pretensions of sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej region, and to surrender all conquests made subsequent to the arrival of the British Mission.¹ Metcalfe's persuasions having failed to attain their objective, these were now reinforced by the advance of British detachments to the Sutlej under Colonel Ochterlony and General St. Leger. These arguments of force alerted the Maharaja, who took counter-measures of war in huff and excitement to stop the British advance to the Sutlej. But ultimately, recourse to diplomatic negotiations was taken on 12 December.

Determined to evince the superiority of British arms, Metcalfe confronted the Maharaja with the impending arrival of the British troops on the Sutlej. He informed him of the British claim to paramountcy, its resolution to protect the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs, and demanded the surrender of his recent conquests and the withdrawal of his troops immediately to the right bank of the Sutlej.²

38. Battle of arguments

Ranjit Singh took the British demands calmly. Bluster of Sikh military preparations to stop the British advance to the Sutlej having failed to register impact, it was prudently considered to fight out the issues by diplomatic negotiations. On 21 December, the Maharaja assisted by his Council of ministers launched the attack. The British claim of paramountcy over the Cis-Sutlej Sikh States was vehemently challenged. It was pointed out that the British Government had never on any occasion exercised such right; the mere fact that Ranjit Singh had not been interfered with his former incursions in the Cis-Sutlej region was an incontrovertible proof that the British Government had no intention of exercising any supermacy over the Sikh Chiefs. Had it been so, it would have paid attention to the solicitation of protection by the Sikh Chiefs who had gone to do so to Delhi in March 1808. On the other hand, they had since acknowledged the supermacy of the Maharaja, received grants of territories from him, and offered *nazrānas* in token of allegiance to the Lahore Government. No British protest had so far been made; the so-called introduction of British power in northern India carried with it no

¹ Edmonstone to Metcalfe, 31 October, 1808; Metcalfe to Ranjit Singh, 12 December, 1808-BSPC(I) 2 January, 1809, C93.

² Envoy to Rajah of Lahore, 12 December, 1808-No. 43-BSPC(I) 2 January, 1809, C93.

inherent right of interference beyond the Jumna. The right of British paramountcy, if any, did not exist as it had never been exercised before. In fact, it was an obsolete right; and having once been relinquished, it could not be revived at pleasure.¹

Metcalf's rejoinder to these arguments was equally spirited. The Maharaja and his Council of Ministers were informed that it was unnecessary to prove the original right of the British Government as to when it had succeeded to the power exercised by the Marathas in the region. It had allowed the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs to conduct their affairs without any interference to avoid unnecessary control over them. British protection had never been refused to the Sikh Chiefs when they had visited Delhi, but it was believed that their alarms against aggressive intentions of Ranjit Singh were unfounded. The British Government had never heard of the acknowledgement of Lahore suzerainty by the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs, and that if it had, it could not have agreed to it. At any rate, now that the Maharaja had tried to impose his authority over the country, the British Government found itself called upon to interfere and declare to him that it could not acquiesce to his designs.

39. Channel of diplomatic relations

The vigorous diplomatic dialogue ultimately ended in an Anglo-Sikh treaty of peace and friendship in 1809, making the river Sutlej as a political boundary between the two States. It also led to the establishment of the Ludhiana Political Agency,² soon after, through which all political and diplomatic matters of the State of Lahore were broached, discussed and settled. Originally Ludhiana was seized by Ranjit Singh during his early Mālwa campaigns and bestowed upon rājā Bhag Singh of Jind, who in 1809 expressed a desire to the British Government to exchange it with either Karnal or Panipat.³ With the establishment of a military post at Ludhiana, although its exchange was considered highly desirable, Bhag Singh's proposition was not approved from fear of arousing Ranjit Singh's distrust of British intentions.⁴ For obvious political reasons, soon after the treaty of 1809, it

¹ These arguments advanced by the Maharaja's ministers and the envoy's reply are contained in Metcalf's despatches to the Government of India of 18. 20 and 22 December, 1808 (Nos. 48-50)-BSPC(I) 30 January, 1809, C103-105. Also a substance of these is given in Governor-General to Secret Committee, 15 April, 1809-BISL(I), fol. 137 ff., paras 13, 15-20.

² For a brief account of the Ludhiana Agency *vide* the present writer's *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, Hoshiarpur, 1968, p. 105 ff; p. 110 ff.

³ *Memorial of Raja Bhag Singh*—BSPC(I) 20 March, 1809, C27.

⁴ Government to Ochterlony, 3 June, 1809-HMS(I), Vol. 595; Government to Seton, 3 June, 1809-BSPC(I) same date, C29.

was decided to discontinue the British military post at Ludhiana as it had aroused Ranjit Singh's suspicions and had led to the strengthening of the border fortresses of Gobindgarh and Phillour. Moreover, Lord Minto had given a personal assurance to Ranjit Singh that British military detachments would be withdrawn from Ludhiana.¹ Any apprehension that a hasty withdrawal of British troops might tempt Ranjit Singh to seize Ludhiana and convert it into a Sikh military cantonment,² having been found baseless, Ludhiana was converted into a Political Agency in 1810. Ultimately, Ludhiana Political Agency was entrusted with the task of dealing with all political relations with the Lahore Government, and the affairs of the Punjab beyond the Sutlej and the Indus.

¹ Minto to Ranjit Singh, 3 June, 1809-BSPC(I) same date, C4.

² Metcalfe to Government, 2 June, 1809-HMS(I), Vol. 595, No. 40.

CHAPTER 17

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN THE PUNJAB
UNDER RANJIT SINGH

I. The Kingdom

THE KINGDOM OF THE PUNJAB under Ranjit Singh had extensive limits.¹ In the northwest its boundaries extended into the base of the Yusafzai territory northeast of Peshawar, touching the small fort of Ookole about 25 miles northwest of Gilgit ; then these extended to about 12 miles of the Karakoram range, where a small Sikh fortress stood at Chaola. Beyond Peshawar, the Sikh rule extended upto Fatehgarh, a fort near the Khyber Pass. In the northeast the Sikh dominion touched the boundaries of Chamba and Kulu. In the south the Sikh boundary touched the undefined borderland of Sind beyond Rojhan and Mithankot, the junction of the rivers Indus and the Sutlej. From the southern extremity of Mithankot the boundaryline turned upwards to the Rowant Pass, thence towards the Sulaiman range extending itself along the east base 16 miles of Tank ; then towards the western boundary of Bannu to Kalabagh. It extended about 12 miles of the fort of Attock moving northwards towards the Khyber Pass. While in the north Ranjit Singh's kingdom extended from the highest chain of the Himalayas 35° north latitude to 28°, and from 70° to 79° longitude west, the Sutlej and the Ghara formed its boundaries in the south and southeast.

2. Subāhs and feudatories

The Lahore Kingdom and its feudatories states under Ranjit Singh comprised of the *Subāhs* of Lahore, Multan, Peshawar, Kashmir and their dependencies. The *Subah* of Lahore where the central government was situated included the entire Māñjha country and the important towns of Lahore and Amritsar : its population towards the close of the Maharaja's reign approximated 19,00,000. The *Subah* of

1. Cunningham's description of the geographical limits of the Sikh Occupation which includes the dominions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is classic ; "The Sikhs, or Disciples", he wrote in 1848, "have now become a nation ; and they occupy or have extended their influence from Delhi to Peshawar, and from the plains of Sind to the Karakoram mountains. The dominions acquired by the Sikhs are thus included between the 28th and 36th parallels of north latitude, and between the 71st and 77th meridians of east longitude ; and if a base of four hundred and fifty miles be drawn from Panipat to the Khaibar Pass, two triangles, almost equilateral, may be described upon it, which shall include the conquests of Ranjit Singh and the fixed colonies of the Sikh people."

Multan included the dependencies all along the east bank of the river Indus, and the districts of Jhang, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh and Leiah : its population approximated 7,50,000. The *Subah* of Peshawar comprised of the Valley of Peshawar and its dependencies across the river Indus and in the Yusafzai territories : its population approximated 6,00,000. The *Subah* of Kashmir included the whole Valley of Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, Ladakh, Gilgit etc. : its population approximately 5,50,000.¹ The tributary states of the Lahore Government were : Bilaspur, Suket, Chamba, Rajouri, Ladakh and Iskardu. The territories which were farmed out were amongst others : Mandi, Kulu, Jaswan, Kangra, Kutlahar, Siba, Nurpur, Haripur, Datarpur, Katlah, Bhosali, Muzaffarabad, Chach-Hazara, Pakhli, Dhantur, Rawalpindi, Hasan Abdal, Dhauni, Katas, Chakwal, Tank, Bannu, Mankera, Ramnagar, Mitta Tiwana, Bhera, Khushab, Pind Dadan Khan, Gujrat, Wazirabad, Sialkot, the Jullundur Doab and Sheikhpura. Besides, Ranjit Singh possessed large territories on the left bank of the Sutlej yielding an annual revenue of 20,00,000 rupees.

The Kingdom of the Punjab and its feudatory states at the zenith of Ranjit Singh's power covered an estimated area 1,00,436 sq. miles with an approximate population estimated by Smyth, five years after the Maharaja's death, to be 53,50,000.² The *Subah*-wise break-up of the population of the Punjab is estimated as under : Lahore—19,00,000 : Kashmir—5,50,000 ; Multan—7,50,000 ; Peshawar—6,00,000 ; the Derajat—4,50,000 ; Jammu and hill country—11,00,000. The city of Lahore was the most populous of the kingdom with 72,500 inhabitants and 3,000 shops ; Kashmir 65,000 inhabitants and 2,500 shops ; Amritsar 60,000 inhabitants and 4,500 shops ; Peshawar 55,000 inhabitants and 2,000 shops ; Multan 45,000 inhabitants and 1,800 shops ; Jammu 10,000 inhabitants and 250 shops ; and Dera Ismail Khan 8,000 inhabitants and 300 shops³. The Central Punjab is a flat plain, fertile and rich, comprising of the *Bari Doab*, the territory between the rivers

¹ The Tripartite treaty of '838 confirmed to the Sikhs all the territory lying on either side of the river Indus viz., Kashmir, including its limits, E. W. N. S., together with the fort of Attock, Chach Hazara, Khabal, Amb, with its dependencies, on the left bank of the aforesaid river ; and on the right bank Peshawar with the Yusufzai territory, the Khataks, Hashtnagar, Michni, Kohat, Hangu, and all other places dependent on Peshawar, as far as the Khyber Pass, Bannu, the Waziri territory ; Daur-Tank, Garang, Kalabagh, and Khushalgarh with their dependent districts ; Dera Ismail Khan with its dependency ; Kot Mirthan Amarkot and their dependent territory ; Saughar, Harand-Dajal, Hajipur, Rajanpur, and the three Kaches, as well as Mankera with its district, and the province of Multan, situated on the right bank.

² Exact statistics regarding the population of the Lahore kingdom are not available. The above estimate is by Carmichael Smyth dated 1847. *Vide. A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, London, 1847, Appendix, p. XXIX-XXX.

³ As to how Carmichael Smyth arrived at these calculations is not known, but these surmises or approximations regarding the Punjab population are the only ones available.

Beas and Ravi ; the *Rechna Doab*, the territory between the rivers Ravi and Chenab ; the *Chaj Doab*, the territory between the rivers Chenab and Jehlum ; the *Sind Sagar Doab*, the territory between the rivers Indus, Jehlum and Chenab ; and the *Bist Jullundur*, the territory between the Beas and the Sutlej.

3. Lahore : the metropolis

Lahore, the metropolis of the State, where the Maharaja lived and held his royal Court, was the never-centre of the Kingdom. It was a city of gardens, fields, and ruins. It throbbed with great political and commercial activity. Within the circle of the Fort fortifications was the Maharaja's Palace, surrounded by small gardens and spacious courtyards. Commanded by the Palace, a large plain south of the city and the Ravi was the local *Camp de Mars*, and viewed from the outside it stretched out from the ramparts in a picturesque manner. All around there were military camps—the regiments of the *Fauj-i-Khās*, of the *Ghorcharās*, of the battalions trained in European discipline by Allard and Ventura ; and within the fortress, stationed a little distance from the Palace, was the Maharaja's Bodyguard. The outbuildings of the royal place were mostly occupied by arsenals. The Maharaja had his residence in the Mughal Palace and a range of buildings with octagonal towers called the *Mussaman Burj*, where he transacted all official business of the State, and held his Court in the *Dīwān-i-ʿĀm* or the Audience Hall.

Emperor Akbar had surrounded the city of Lahore with a wall, which as the time passed, fell into ruinous disrepair. Ranjit Singh entirely rebuilt it. The architectural history of Lahore is almost entirely Mughal, though it retains a few specimens of Afghan style, mostly religious in character, as for instance, the tomb of Shāh Mūsa and of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh. The fortress of Lahore and its walls, within which the Sikh monarch resided, are traditionally said to have been miraculously raised by Malik Ayyāz in a single night, but in reality they are the work of Emperor Akbar, who made Lahore his capital for a number of years. The massive gateways, the elaborately carved buildings in the interior of the fort, and the elegantly styled *khwābgāh* of Emperor Jahangir, and his mausoleum at Shahdara across the Ravi, the tomb of Asaf Khan, and that of Nur Jahan, the mosque of Wazir Khan, the Pearl Mosque, the Garden of Shalamar, and the *Jāma' Masjid* and the *ʿIdgāh* are the finest specimens of the Mughal and Indo-Muslim architecture.

To Shah Jahan may be attributed the enlargement of the work of beautification of the city of Lahore begun by Akbar and Jahangir. Most of the important buildings and mausoleums of note were constructed and executed under the supervision of Asaf Khan. The royal palace was enlarged with a range of buildings for the Imperial Mughals, the gardens were laid in the Chinese style, and the exquisite *Mussaman Burj*, a marble pavilion of beauty of design and style, was built.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had neither the taste nor leisure for lingering over the elegance of architectural designs so delicately executed by the Mughals. He followed

a policy of judicious spoliation and a hybrid design, having stripped the Muhammadan tombs and mausoleums of their marble facings for the Sikh temple at Amritsar¹. His futile attempt to restore the Shalamar Gardens to its former glory, resulted in the erection of badly designed structures in brick and mortar ; and some additions and alterations inside the fort in the *Mussaman Burj* were the ugly specimens of imposition of vulgarly designed and badly executed substitutions in comparison to the superb Mughal architecture. At Lahore, the Sikh architecture, for what its worth, is badly conceived and poorly designed. It is a poor blending of Hindu and Mughal design. It is insipid, and tasteless, and has no elegance or refinement. With the exception of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, and the *Smādh* or the mausoleum of Ranjit Singh—built substantially in Hindu design but overlaid with Muhammadan details, the reign of Ranjit Singh can hardly boast of any works of architectural magnificence.

The city of Lahore had lost its splendour since the generations of despoilation by the Afghans and the Sikhs ; and yet its mosques, gardens and palaces still retained their subdued embellishments. Akbar had enlarged the fort, and surrounded the city with a wall, 30 feet high extending for about 7 miles. The city wall was repaired by Ranjit Singh in 1814 and a moat around the city was constructed. Several of the old buildings in the fort were in ruins, and had been repaired and altered without good feeling and taste.² The garden named the *Ḥazūrī Bāgh*, used as a *serā'i* under the Mughals had been turned into a pleasure garden ; the exquisite ornamentation adorning its marble edifice was taken from the tombs of Asaf Khan and Emperor Jahangir's mausoleum at Shahdara.³ The *Jāma' Masjid* of Lahore served as a magazine.

A little farther from the two storey marble pavilion in the *Ḥazūrī Bāgh* stands the mausoleum of Ranjit Singh, which is described as a curious mixture of Hindu and Muhammadan architecture : "In the centre is a raised stone platform, on which is a marble lotus flower, surrounded by eleven smaller ones. The central flower covers the ashes of the Maharaja, the others the four wives and seven slave girls who perished on his funeral pyre."⁴

The circumference of the city of Lahore, a populous town with narrow streets and bazars, is described at about 12 *kos*,⁵ and its population estimated in

¹ *Gazetteer of Lahore District*, p. 29.

² Moorcroft, *Travels*, p. 62 ff.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Ross—*The Land of Five Rivers and Sindh*, p. 128.

⁵ According to various authorities, under the Mughals, the city of Lahore covered a much larger area than under the Sikhs. It extended from the walls of the fortress to Shalamar, and was divided into 36 *guzārs*, or quarters ; it had also a much larger population.

1831 at about 50,000, about half of that of Amritsar, less mixed than that of the latter city. It consisted of Hindus, Sikhs, Muhammadans, with plenty of Afghans, Kashmiris and some Parsians and a few Armenians. Jacquemont, who visited Lahore in 1831, confirms that the practice of Muhammadan religion was permitted, and the Sikhs had left several mosques with their minarets in tact.¹ He gives a picturesque description of the interior of the city : "Narrow winding streets, where the mud often remains even in dry season ; some of them containing shops, whose windows, often protected by a penthouse, make them still narrower ; all the evil smells of these tiny factories, for most of the merchants manufacture themselves in front of their shops the articles they sell, either vases or ornaments of copper, sweatmeats, or vile pastry, or dyes : bulls, cows, goats, and donkeys wandering freely about ; horses placed under a shelter which projects into public street, with their hind legs attached by two long cords to a post in the centre of the street ; half starved and ravenous dogs often covered with disgusting sores ; here and there heaps of brick, the ruins of former houses, and piles of dung which the neighbouring inhabitants have deposited ; trees stretching across the road stripped of their leaves by passing camels and elephants ; such is the interior of Lahore."²

The Sikh Court nobility, who followed the Maharaja everywhere, had built for themselves magnificent though ungainly structures—amongst them the lofty citadel-like *haveli* of Jamadār Khushal Singh, and General Ventura's magnificently built residence in the precincts of Anarkali's tomb at Lahore. But the houses built by the Sardars and influential men were merely functional : they lacked elegance of style or any architectural perfection. There is hardly anything individualistic about the Sikh style of architecture in the very few structures of the time extant at Lahore ; they exhibit a random admixture of Muhammadan and Rajput ornamentation and sorely lack grace and beauty of design and execution.

Around Lahore suburbs and across the Ravi, practically in ruins and in an extremely neglected state, were the mausoleums of Jahangir, Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan, bereft of their valuable ornamentations and precious stones despoiled to adorn the palaces and gardens of Ranjit Singh. Their graceful minarets and copulas with fretted work of white marble, all the marble facings of their domes gone, presented a desolate appearance. Three miles away from the Sikh metropolis were the Shalamar Gardens, a place of retreat, relaxation and entertainment for the Maharaja. Laid out in 1637, by Emperor Shah Jahan in the style of the garden of same name by Emperor Jahangir in Kashmir, it was a beautiful resort in summer, and the Maharaja and his Camp often sought relaxation there. On special occasions, the beautiful marble pavilion and the gardens were illuminated and its 500 fountains, feeded by underground water channels, played in the gay atmosphere

¹ *Journal, Lahore, 1934*, p. 57-58.

² *Ibid.*

of music and dance. A fair in honour of saint Madhu Lal Hussain was held here in January, and the celebrated *Melā'i Charāghān* or Feast of Lights was held in April every year.

4. Amritsar

The city of Amritsar was the religious metropolis of the Sikhs. It was the most populous (population : 1,00,000-2,00,000) and wealthiest city in the Punjab, and an entrepôt of trade and commerce for Kashmir, Afghanistan and Central Asian markets. As a holy city of the Sikhs, Amritsar had retained its sacred character, but since its occupation by Ranjit Singh, and the abolition of the *Gurmatta* in 1805, it had lost its political influence which guided the destiny of the nation in the heyday of the supremacy of the Misals in the Punjab. With the liquidation of the Misals and the establishment of monarchical absolutism, it would be futile to argue that the discontinuance of the *Gurmatta* in political sphere was a fulfilment of Sikh idea ; the fact of the matter is, that the combination of political power with religious suzerainty was an impractical proposition to the political ideology or concept of Ranjit Singh. Furthermore, except for the all-powerful Maharaja there were no powerful Sardars in the Punjab to seek advice and counsel either in their inter-cenine querrels or there was any threat of foreign invasion. It would be absurd to assume that Ranjit Singh abolished it to propitiate his Hindu and Muhammadan subjects.¹ As an institution, the *Gurmatta* in political matters was based on political independence of the Misals and corporate consciousness in the face of recurrent threat of Afghan invasions ; it became redundant and obsolete in a personalised monarchy. The political ambitions of Ranjit Singh could brook no interference from anyone.

Thus, during the zenith of power of Ranjit Singh, Amritsar and the Golden Temple received the humble devotion and munificent endowments, monetary gifts and land assignments from the Maharaja and the Sardars, but so diminished was the influence of the *Akāl Takht* in the counsels of the State, that the Maharaja, the Court nobility, the Sardars and men of position and wealth visited it for the redemption of their worldly woes and for obtaining salvation of their souls. A lip-service was paid to the Commonwealth of Gobind, the ordinations and behests of the *Khālsa*, but the *Akāl Takhat* had no say in political matters or the policy of State. The *Bhai's* and the *Granthīs* of the Golden Temple of Amritsar long accustomed to political dabblings in the rifts and jealousies of the warring Misaldārs, soon realised the trend of the time : they were content to sing the sacred hymns of the Gurus and sermonising on the path of righteousness and truth to the faithful. Except for the fanatical *Akālīs*, the warrior-priests of Amritsar and the guardians

¹ This theory is propounded by Teja Singh and other Sikh writers, *vide. Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial Volume*, p. 57 ff.

of the Golden Temple, none had the audacity to challenge the political authority of the Maharaja.

Amritsar was an affluent town. It throbbed with commercial activity of all sorts. Rich bankers and merchants having credit and exchange facilities throughout the Kingdom, in India, Afghanistan and Central Asia, resided there. It was the main centre for the export of rock salt, timber, cottons, silk and woollen shawls. It manufactured a large variety of woollen stuff and Kashmiri shawls which were exported to India and Central Asia. Large number of Kashmiri immigrants, mostly weavers, were engaged in their manufacture. Jacquemont describes the city in 1831 : "The population is a mixture of different peoples and religions. Hindus and Muhammadans are less common than the Sikhs, in whose hands is practically all the business, to the prosperity of which Amritsar owes its flourishing appearance. There are also a large number of Kashmiris and Afghans ; the former weave or spin, the latter speculate. There is not a single mosque, and the public practice of Mohammadan religion is forbidden. The Hindu temples are small and scarce. The religion of Nanak admits no rivals at Amritsar."¹

Jacquemont refers to the Akālīs, who were in abundance at Amritsar : "The Akālīs or Immortals, are properly speaking Sikh faqīrs. Their rule compels them to be dressed in blue and always to carry arms. The sacred pool of Amritsar is their head-quarters, but they often spread themselves over the Punjab in large and formidable parties. Ranjit wisely turns their ferocity to his own advantage. He enlists them in his armies, and employs them preferably against his Mussalman enemies. He has at the moment about 4,000-5,000 of them in the army which he maintains at Attock, ready to march against another fanatic the Syed. I have only seen two of them in the streets of Amritsar ; it was evening, their arms glittered in the light of the torches and the matches of their muskets hung readily lighted. I had never seen more sinister looking figures."²

The town of Amritsar was surrounded by a rampart of mud and sand ; the city wall had 12 gates with extremely poor defences till Ranjit Singh built towards the south-east of the city, the fortress of Govindgarh. It was about 100 meters in perimeter and square in shape, having 4 large bastions at four corners, and 2 gates, surrounded by a moat. As a fort it was poorly designed and clumsily constructed. Its defensive works were also poor and ill-designed. Ranjit Singh kept his treasure valued at 800,00,000 rupees here and some of his heavy cannon were placed in the fort.

While at Amritsar, Ranjit Singh resided in a palace which he built for himself in the Rāmbāgh. As a palace, it was designed in Indo-Muslim style and small

¹ *Journal*, op. cit. p. 27.

² *Ibid.* p. 28,

in dimension, it could not boast of any embellishments or architectural elegance in design or construction.

5. Forts and strongholds

Amongst the important forts in the Kingdom was that of Rohtas. It was originally built by Sher Shah Sūrī in 12 years at an estimated expense of 11,000,000 rupees. It could hold a garrison of 3,000 horse and 50,000 infantry. In 1768, Charat Singh laid siege to it, and Baland Khan, its Afghan governor was taken prisoner. Ranjit Singh pensioned off Baland Khan's son in 1808, and two years later Gulab Singh took charge of it.¹ Mohan Lal, who visited Rohtas in 1832, found it situated on a high mountain and in strength and solidity no fort in the Punjab could match it. Its ramparts, according to him were stronger than that of the Delhi fort. It was accessible through tedious and tremendous defiles, and had five gates and thick walls of burnt bricks. Although strongly built and spacious enough, in 1833 it was poorly garrisoned and badly provisioned.²

Equally strong was the fortress of Attock with its subterraneous passage of water from which the garrison obtained its supply. Built of stone and lime it had a circumference of two miles. In 1833, it had a garrison of 1,000 troops and five guns. The fort was large, with high ramparts and 10,000 troops could be easily garrisoned there. Akora and other Afghan villages in the vicinity supplied its provisions by means of boats in the Indus river, which was fordable at three places above the village Haidru.³

¹ Shahamat Ali, p. 18.

² *Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan etc.* p. 28 and 365. Lieut. William Barr (*Journal of March from Delhi to Cabul*, 90 ff.) who visited the fortress of Rohtas in 1839 describes it as a badly chosen place of defence as at many places it was commanded by neighbouring hills. The road leading to its main gateway was steep, and by no means calculated for large horses, being nothing more than a bad hill track. The city of Rohtas which Barr also visited is described as a miserable place, constructed entirely of unburnt bricks, and swarming with *nāutch*-girls or prostitutes catering for the garrison soldiery. Several buildings were erected below the fort, amongst others a large mosque and a school (*madrassa*). The building of the fortress of Rohtas is beset with numerous legends, one of these being that Sher Shah Sūrī, obsessed with the resistance of Rai Sareng, whose dominion extended over the mountainous tract of country situated to the west of Jhelum and inhabited by wild Kakars, resolved to erect the fort. The inhabitants of the country were, however, lured to the work of construction by an offer of one golden *ashrafi* for one stone, by Todar Mal who was in charge of the work. Afterwards a stone was paid with a rupee, further reduced to five *tankas*, and thus the fortress of Rohtas was completed.

³ See particularly, Mohan Lal, *op. cit.*, p. 38 and 365; Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 107 ff. describes the country around Attock; Shahamat Ali, p. 179 ff. besides giving an account of the fortress of Khairabad-constructed with mud, 1½ miles in circumference, with 3 watch-towers commanding entirely the fort of Attock, describes how the latter fort was handed over to the Sikhs by its Afghan governor, Jahandad Khan, who betrayed his master and delivered it to Ranjit Singh for a bribe.

The account of the magnificent fortresses of Lahore and Multan has been given elsewhere.¹ At the entrance of the defiles of the Khyber Pass stood the fastness of Jamrud beyond which lay the open roads to Jalalabad and Kabul. The Sikhs had occupied it in 1837, and Hari Singh Nalwā had strongly fortified it and garrisoned it with Lahore troops. Here was fought in the April of the same year the decisive Sikh-Afghan battle of Jamrud in which Hari Singh Nalwā lost his life. Hari Singh had constructed a new fortress at the site of Bala Hissar two years earlier.²

6. Village Communities

From the earliest times agricultural tribes based on race or caste existed in the corporate life of the villages in the Punjab. These village communities constituted the landowning and agricultural groups comprising of similar racial elements. Thus in the trans-Indus region, and generally in other parts of the Punjab, the Balauchs, the Pathans, the Tanaolis, the Tājaks and the Hazara tribes had such joint agricultural bodies ; and so had the Jāts and the Rajputs, the dominant races of the Central Punjab, the Māñjha and Mālwa regions and the hills. The Awāns, the Gakkhars, and the Janjuas in the Salt-range tract, and other agricultural classes—the Kharrals, the Arā'ins, the Ahīrs, and the Sainīs etc. had all tribal village communities. In such communities there did not exist any concept of individual ownership of agricultural land ; the proprietary rights were vested in the village community and not in the individual. The system has been rightly described by Thorburn as "the village system in the Punjab," by which the agricultural land was jointly owned by a number of persons of common descent, forming one large brotherhood, having their own headman, accustomed to joint action and mutual support.³

Briefly, Punjab village communities were self-sufficient units. Headed by the village elders, called the *Pañchāyat*, they cultivated land jointly, divided the crop, and had a joint responsibility for the payment of land revenue. The system of corporate village communities had become extinct in Bengal due to the collection of revenue through farmers ; it had died out in southern India due to the farming system of the Marathas ; but in the Punjab under Ranjit Singh, it retained its vigour. Even after the fall of the Sikh Kingdom, the British administration found the joint responsibility of a village group a convenient way of realising the revenue. "In the Punjab joint responsibility for payment of land revenue became a prominent feature of village tenure under the British," observes Trevaskis, "though it occupied a prominent position in theory than in practice. So great was the early predilection

¹ *Vide. supra* (sub-section 3), and Chapter 5, p. 93-94, fn. 3. *supra*.

² For details of the fortresses on the N. W. Frontier vide. Chapter 16 (13-15) *supra*.

³ *Punjab in Peace and War*, p. 231.

in favour of the village community that even the scattered hamlets of the sub-montane ravines and the still more even the scattered wells of the south-western deserts were grouped in artificial villages, which were made jointly responsible for the payment of the land revenue."¹

7. Structure of Society

As elsewhere, the basic structure of society both in towns and villages of the Punjab was built on hereditary occupations, racial ties, tribal distinctions and caste. Occupations were distinctly differentiated, and tribal communities bound by these bonds, segregated themselves into occupational groups and tribal or caste communities. They practiced their particular manners and laws of social conduct, of marriage and inheritance. Thus from the highest rung of social ladder, on which amongst the Hindus stood the Brahmans and the Rajputs ; amongst the Muhammaddans, the Sayyeds, the Pathans and the Jats ; and amongst the Sikhs the Jats and the Bhā'is, to the lowest classes amongst them—the scavenger, the barber, the carpenter, the weaver, the blacksmith and others—all had a position in their own hereditary occupational groups. So profound and fundamental was the impact of occupation on social structure that change of religion by a person of lower class would not promote him to higher social grade. A scavenger or a *chamār* converted to Sikhism or Islam, as for instance, would in theory be admitted on terms of equality into the new faith, but in practice he would still ply his ancient trade, and members of highest castes would socially keep him at a distance.

Conversion to the Islamic faith was rare in the time of the Sikhs, but those of the lower classes who had adopted the religion of the Prophet, could hardly vie with their superiors in the Muslim caste hierarchy. A Gujjar or Awan will ever remain a Gujjar or Awan ; he could neither become a Sayyed nor a Pathan. The Mughals, the Sheikhs, and the Sayyeds jealously safeguarded traditions of their nobler descent by excluding all outcaste converts to their tribal communities. These exclusive castes amongst the Muslims, however, had had a fictitious origin so well expressed in the current proverb : "Last year I was a weaver, this year I am a Sheikh ; next year if the prices rise I shall be a Sayyid."²

The tribal and occupational caste had so vitiated the doctrine of social equality in the Punjab that a new entrant into the faith must perforce remain at

¹ *The Land of the Five Rivers*, p. 236. For further studies in the subject, *vide* generally, Baden-Powell—*Land System of British India*, p. 163-69 ; Douie—*Settlement Manual*, p 100 ff., 198 ff ; Trevaskis—*The Land of the Five Rivers* treats at some length the evolution and structure of Village Communities in the Punjab, see p. 23-4, 183 and 236-8. See also Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*, Paras 349 and 355.

² Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*, para 242.

his previous social level. Intermarriage without equal ancestral status was traditionally interdicted. Thus the Sayyeds of the Punjab, who followed the rule of the *Shri'at* in personal and public law, would not give their daughters in marriage to those of lower origin, and would not permit widow remarriage. In the Derajat, Peshawar and Multan, the Qāzis, the *Makhdūms* and the Mī'āns, who claimed to be higher in descent from the general mass of the Muslims in the Punjab, occupied themselves from their positions as heads of the celebrated shrines and endowed religious places of Muslim worship, to raise their temporal dues from the common mass of their co-religionists.

Amongst the adherents of Hinduism, Brahmanism had lost its position of power for spiritual guidance and superior learning in northern India. In the iron-clad hierarchy of the caste they still occupied the first position, but their occupation had fallen from the high pedestal of priesthood. The generality of hereditary priesthood subsisted on royal bounties and public alms. People consulted them for good and bad omens, auspicious and unlucky events, and they conducted the religious ceremonies of the Hindus. In some parts of the Punjab, Brahmanism finding its occupation as ungainful, had drifted towards agriculture and money-lending; in the frontier villages it was tolerated as "grasping and overbearing evil." Having lost the higher qualities of learning and spiritual sublimity, Hindu priesthood in the Punjab had degenerated into something like a necessary evil in the Hindu social order. None could do without them, but the Punjab proverbs of the time express the derision in which a Brahman was held—"A Dūm, a Brahman and a goat are of no avail in time of need." Or, "A famine from the desert, so comes evil from a Brahman." It was unlucky to accost a Brahman while proceeding on a journey.

Consequently, the Brahmans having lost a lucrative profession, had drifted into other occupations. The Sarsut Brahman of the Punjab became lax in the rules of the caste, and in the hills he partook of flesh, and had no compunction in having social relations with the lower orders of caste.¹ Quite a number of Brahmans had adopted Sikhism, and Ibbetson enumerates 3,500 Musalman Brahmans known as the Hussainī Brahmans, who were said to receive oblations in the name of Hindu gods from the Hindus and in the name of Allāh from the Musalmans.²

8. Religious Conditions.

(a) *General.* The common mass of the people under Sikh rule professed either Hinduism or Muhammadanism or Sikhism. In the central Punjab—the Doābs, the Māñjha and the Mālwa regions, ritualistic Brahmanism had received a severe jolt from the monotheistic teachings of Guru Nanak. It reeled under the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 218.

impact without any apparent resistance as it had done under the proselytizing zeal of the Muslim conquerors for many generations. Its general elasticity, esoteric teachings and ethical doctrines had, however, survived the iconoclastic zeal of Islam. The active and prevailing principles of Sikhism shook it superficially ; gods of its pantheon still reigned supreme in the remote villages as also in towns and cities. Its sacrificial ritualism and ceremonial observances still held a strong hold on the social order in the hills and plains.

Yet, the abated predominance of Brahmanic priesthood in the Punjab and its sacerdotal despotism had to contend with two powerful iconoclastic forces—Islam and Sikhism. For generations, the exclusive fanaticism of the Mughal and Afghan rulers of the Punjab had failed to dislodge or disintegrate the social fabric of Hindu society by misrule, social injustice or religious intolerance. However, the common mass of the Muslim population could hardly escape from being influenced by their environments. The eclectic pantheism of Hinduism silently struck back at the exclusive Muslim fanaticism. Outwardly, the inequality of man, adherence to class, caste and sect received a severe jolt from Sūfism, and the monotheistic teachings of Guru Nanak, but the cobweb of caste and the established Hindu way of life in towns and villages of the Punjab remained almost undisturbed. And although a finer synthesis of Indo-Muslim culture was the outcome of this intermingling of two apparently diverse creeds and social systems, yet the ruling Muslim class and its adherents got themselves entangled in social diversifications of caste and creed. Like Hinduism, the Muslim social fabric had branched out into the Mughals, the Pathans, the Sayyeds, the Shi'as, the Sunnīs, the Jāts, the Gakkhars and other innumerable tribal communities.

To the Sikhs of the Punjab, however, the temporary release from the thraldom of ritualistic Brahmanism had been welcome. The hardy and warlike race of the Jāts, as for instance, could pursue their individualistic and unruly independent tendencies unhampered by the galling yoke of Hindu caste restrictions imposed by the priestly order. To the down-trodden lower castes in Hinduism converted in large mass both in the Mālwa and Māñjha regions to Sikhism, the new faith offered equality and social justice. Yet so deep were their roots in Hindu social environments everywhere that Hindu caste, customs and ritualism still had a strong hold in their midst. Conversion to Sikhism had neither altered their social status, profession nor the pattern of their every day life. Absence of an exclusive customary law or legal code, lack of distinctive customs and ritualism, prevented the general mass of the Sikh people to adopt an antagonistic attitude towards the mainspring of Hindu religion or social structure which for generations had regulated their social life. Except for a change in belief and outward appearance, the common mass of the Sikh people still accepted Hindu caste, customs and

superstitious beliefs. Towards the close of the 18th century, Sikhism had become a dominant political force in the Punjab, but "the Sikh had fallen away from the original faith; in his reverence for the Brahman and his observance of caste rules, he differs only a degree from his Hindu neighbour."¹

(b) *The Hindus.* The Hindus of the Punjab, as in remotest time, held belief in the philosophy propounded by their ancient scriptures, and the worship of their numerous gods and goddesses. Their great object of veneration was the sacred triad—the Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahesha. The Jumna and the Ganges were sacred to them. Amongst the general mass of the people the worship of nature still continued—the sun-worship, the tree-worship and the worship of sainted dead was common. Some of these saints were the object of common worship both by the Hindus and Muslims of the Punjab, as for instance, the Saint Sakhī Sarwar in Multan district, Bābā Farid Ganj Shakar of Pakpattan, Data Ganj Bakhsh at Lahore, and the universal saint Khāwajā Khizr.

Worship of trees—Pipal, Jand, Kikar and Tulsī was common among the Brahmans and Kharīs at certain festivals. Cow-worship took place at *Gopaśtamī*. The cult of Gugā was prevalent in various forms among all varieties of people both in the plains and hills.² Nāg and Devī temples were numerous established in the hills—Chamba, Kulu, Kangra and Simla.

Common superstitions constituted a belief in the spirits and ghosts, witchcraft, the evil eye, and sorcery. Ibbetson records numerous agricultural superstitions prevalent at the time of sowing, harvesting and threshing. Charms could be used to protect crops and cattle from evil eye, drought or lean harvest.³ Malevolent spirits and diseases could be warded off by charms and amulets. The Devī or the small-pox goddess was an object of universal worship. The lower classes of society had their own patron-saints.

Hindu social order was still perniciously caste-ridden. Brahmanic priesthood having merged into hereditary sacerdotalism governed all religious ceremonies of the Hindus from their birth to death. Amongst the superstitious modes of their worship largely prevalent in the Punjab may be enunciated, the planet worship at eclipses, the earth-worship, and the river-worship. Brahmanism as a caste had lost prestige in northern India; the rare pre-requisites of sound learning and

¹ Ibbetson, *op. cit.* i, p. 118.

² On the subject, see generally, Rose, i, p. 143 *sq.*; *Punjab Notes and Queries*, I, 122, 607; and 671; and *District Gazetteer of Kangra*. Gugā Pīr also termed Zāhir Pīr is common to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the Punjab and has numerous shrines and legends all over the country.

³ Rose, i, p. 218 *ff.*

knowledge of the Vedic scriptures were rare in the priestly class, and in its place it had emerged as professional priesthood, living on the credulity of the ignorant gathering their *dakṣṇa* for the performance of religion ceremonies at birth, marriage and death.

Amongst the common superstitious practices followed in the hills and the plains of the Punjab were the cult of the *Gugā* or snake-worship in its highly diversified form. Each town had its temples consecrated to its favourite gods and goddesses; each village had its numerous godlings both benevolent as well as malevolent. Of the most popular deities was *Bhumia* or *Khera*, the god of home-stead—worshipped after the harvests and marriages; in some villages the godling *Bundela* was worshipped in times of sickness and epidemics. Ancestor-worship prevailed in the hilly areas. Erection of stone pillars in shrines with memorial tablets in honour of the dead was resorted to in the Himalayan region.¹

(c) *The Muslims.* Muhammadan practices both orthodox and unorthodox had stronger roots in the predominantly Muslim areas in the north and in the southern Punjab. In larger towns the Muslim intellegentia both the *ahl-alḤadīth* and *ahl-al Qurʾān* had their respective institutions. The Shiʿites and the Ibādites had little influence in the Punjab. The Afghans and the Pathans of the northern districts, and those settled in Central Punjab were almost all Sunnīs. Muslim priesthood in the Peshawar region and tribal districts was pretty well organised. The hierarchy of the *āstanadārs*—the Sayyeds, the Pīrs, the Mīʾāns and the Sāhibzādās exercised powerful religious influence over the social life of the Muhammadans. Various Ṣūfī orders had their organisational and institutional growth during the Muslim rule in the Punjab.²

9. The Sikhs

The categorical view that the religion of Nanak under Ranjit Singh tolerated no rivals, or that his apparent devotion to the faith was merely a political demonstration to satisfy popular superstition, can no longer be accepted. Apparently, the Sikh sovereign monarchy was designated the *Sarkār Khālsa*, the royal *farmāns*, seals and coins bore the inscriptions the *Akal Sahaʾi* but it was a singularly secular monarchy. The Maharaja's devotion to Sikhism was intensively personal; and by temperament he was extremely tolerant. At no time Sikhism

¹ For a detailed study of superstitious worship in the Punjab, *vide*. MacLagan-Census Report of Punjab, 1833; Rose-Glossary, Ibbetson and the various District Gazetteers, particularly those of Peshawar, Lahore, Kangra, Multan, Kashmir and Ladakh.

² See generally, Temple-Legends of the Punjab iii; the Gazetteers of Multan, Lahore, Peshawar Districts; the *Khazinat-ul-Asfiā*; the *Saifnat-ul-Awaliyā*; Beale-Miftāḥ-ul-Tawarīkh. For a detailed study of the origin and development of the four Ṣūfī orders, *vide*. the present writer's *Dārā Shikuh*, (Visva-Bhārati, Santiniketan, 1953), p. 44 ff.

was declared as the official religion of the State, nor did the Maharaja's political expediencies masquerade under the cloak of religion. He rarely interfered in the religious beliefs of his subjects, and abhorred all kind of fanaticism but strongly checked such retrograde and dangerous tendencies, as for instance, those of the Akālīs and of the Wahābī fanatic Syyed Ahmad.

The faith of Nanak had received a larger number of adherents during the preceding centuries but the State hardly had any proselytizing zeal; nor did it encourage in any way forcible conversions. The fervour of the Khālśa was more often utilised against the political antagonists of the State, particularly the Afghans, and the ruler hailed as a champion and defender of the faith. Ranjit Singh's rigid observance of outward forms of his religion in his personal conduct had won him the goodwill and approbation of his Sikhs and Hindu subjects.

Sikhism being the faith of their royal sovereign, it had naturally earned a popular preference. The faithful conformed to the fundamental principles of Sikhism and visited the principal holy shrines at Amritsar, Dera Baba Nanak, Pañja Śāhib. Damdama Śāhib, Taran Taran and others. The growth of a Khālśa community was visible in social sphere; yet the religious tolerance of the Sikh sovereign would brook no interference in the matters of State. In the absence of any marked antagonism between Hinduism and Sikhism the currents of social stream often submerged into each other with harmony. In general, the Hindus revered the Sikh beliefs and visited the sacred Sikh shrines.

10. Hindu-Sikh common beliefs

And yet, Brahmanism with its caste prejudices had imperceptibly crept into the core of Sikh social order. There were Brahman and Khatrī Sikhs in the Punjab; Brahmans in the *Mujhal* class had given up their sacerdotal character and adopted military service under the Sikhs. The Hindus and the Sikhs followed common law and social superstitions; observed the same festivals, fairs, caste prejudices and social customs. Cow was sacred to both; the presence of a Brahman was essential at births and deaths. Sikhism had a tendency to conform to the established Hindu usage, customs and superstitions. Thus on the *Makar Śankranti day*, the Maharaja distributed charities after a dip in the Katas, his Hindu subjects bathed in their sacred rivers, and the Sikhs observed the celestial sign of capricorn and obtained salvation by bathing in the sacred tank at Muktsar. At Bhā'iwālā in the Māñjha region, Hindus and Sikhs made offerings in honour of Bhā'ī Bālā, a disciple-companion of Guru Nanak. The spring festival *Basant Pañchanmī*, was a day of rejoicings for both the Hindus and the Sikhs when they wore yellow clothes and mustard seed in their turbans. The festival of *Holī* was celebrated with great *eclat* and carnivals of joy and hilarity by both the Sikhs and the Hindus, who visited the fairs at Anandpur Sahib and Kiratpur. In February

and March a fair was held at the shrine of saint Sakhī Sarwar at Dera Ghazi Khan and Lahore, and people of all religions visited it. The Māñjha Sikhs and Hindus worshipped the Devī or the goddess of small-pox ; in the Mālwa region they paid equal reverence to another Devī, the patron goddess of thieves and cattle lifters. The *Baisākhī* was a common social and religious festival. The *Dīwālī* was a special occasion for both the Sikhs and the Hindus, and the festival was celebrated with rejoicing throughout the Kingdom. Other common festivals of the Sikhs and the Hindus of Lahore and Amritsar were that of the *Kālī Devī*, the goddess of good and evil in June ; the *Nāg-pañchamī*, a fair held in honour of the snake-gods ; the *Gugāpīr* fair in honour of the king of snakes in August in the plains and hills of the Punjab ; and the lunar and solar eclipses. Both the Mālwa and Māñjha Sikhs observed the ceremony of the *Śrāddha*, at which the Brahmans performed the ceremonial service and were feasted. Caste system held a firm grip on the social and religious life of the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muhammadans all over the country.

11. Adherents

Apart from the Jāts, Sikhism had drawn adherents from all classes of Hindu society—the Brahmans, the Rajputs, the Khatrīs, the Arorās, and persons from the lowest rung of the caste. Thus the *Kalāls* (distillers), the *Chimbās* (calico-printers), the *Nā'īs* (barbers), the *Chamārs* (leather-dressers), the *Jhīnwars* (water-carriers) and others who had joined the Sikh fold, but had retained the chief characteristics of their race and caste, and carried on their ancestral profession. A village community in the Punjab was dependent upon its low caste manials, as they were upon persons of high caste. Conversion to Sikhism without any appreciable rise in social status did not prompt the converts to abandon their old occupations. Sikh social order was still under the strongly attractive force of Hinduism which regulated its laws, customs and observances. The Sikhs were the ruling class, but their Maharaja was neither a zealot nor a fanatic. He was a tolerant Sikh to whom religion meant devotion to his faith personally which satisfied popular expectations of a devout Sikh monarch, but he would not brook religious fanaticism.

A general tendency amongst the official class to become Sikhs to gain social and material advantages was visible, but little advantage could be gained from it. The people of the lower caste readily adopted the religion of the ruling class, but discovered that Sikh social structure refused to absorb them on footing of equality in respect of status, intermarriage or position in the community. However, they gained an enthusiasm and a common national pride for belonging to the same faith as their ruler.

12. The Jāts and other castes

Divided into numerous classes of caste and tribal distinctions, the Jāts of the Punjab were a manly and a virile race. Agriculture and soldiering was their

main profession. Each clan had their peculiar traditions respecting their origin and descent. The Bhullars and the Manns claimed their origin from the matted hair of Lord Śiva. The Aulaks, the Bains, the Bals, the Baths, the Chahals, Chimas, the Garewals claimed a Rajput origin. The Chamans, the Deos etc. had a non-Rajput origin. The Sānsīs or Sindhiānwālās were descended from the aboriginal tribe of vagrants of that name. The Siddhus and the Dhaliwals claimed their origin from the Bhatti Rajputs, and also from the Phul, the founder of the Phulkiān Misal in the Mālwa region. The Sandhus, the Randhawas, the Sahis, the Kangs and the Gills from a solar branch of the Rajputs. The thirty-and-odd divisions of the Jāts were further sub-divided into various sub-castes and observed a variety of customs peculiar to them, particularly respecting marriage and social laws.

The Rajput and Khatrī Sikhs were a class by themselves. The former had embraced Sikhism to gain lucrative employment. They ranked below the Sikh Jāts, who looked upon them with a contemptuous disregard. They were agriculturists and soldiers and a few amongst them attained high political status. The Sikh Khatrīs were traders and merchants; they monopolised the internal and external trade of the Punjab; some of them trickled into civil service and clerical jobs. They were also village accountants, city traders and bankers, shop-keepers and money-landers.

The Sikh Arorās of the Central Punjab, like their Hindu counterparts in the southern districts—Multan, Jhang, Muzzafargarh and the Derajat, were engaged in petty trade and usury. Though described as “a cowardly and a secretive race,” they were industrious and enterprising and carried on business in the tribal area, in Afghanistan and even in Turkistan. As a race, both the Hindu *Kirārs* of the southern Punjab and Sikh Arorās were like the Jews, thrifty, cunning and grasping; being the peasant’s creditors, they were proverbially much abused.¹

The Labānā Sikhs and the Mahātams or the Bahrūpiās were both low caste vagrant tribes. The Labanās, mostly in the districts of Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Gurdaspur and Gujrat, were hereditarily carriers of grain and merchandise; when recruited into the Khālśa army as footmen, they proved themselves as hardy soldiers. The Mahātams or the Bahrūpiās, inhabited the banks of the Punjab rivers and claimed their progeny from fallen Rajputs. In Sikh infantry they proved fair soldiers, but the proud Jāt soldiery of the Punjab looked down upon them as menials. Another class of low origin who had embraced Sikhism was that of the Sainīs. They inhabited the foothills of the Punjab in the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur region, and were good cultivators of the soil, but when enlisted in the Khālśa army they proved extremely bad soldiers.

¹ See Ibbetson — *Punjab Ethnology and the Multan District Gazetteer*, p. 87.

Originally, the Kalāls or Āhlūwālīās in the western Punjab and the Rāmgarhiās widely distributed throughout the Punjab, ranked high among the village menials. The former were socially uplifted because of their professed association with Jassa Singh Kalāl, the founder of the Āhlūwālīā Misal; and the latter, on account of the founder of the great the Rāmgarhiā Misal. The Āhlūwālīās generally took service as soldiers or petty clerks, while the Rāmgarhiās intellectually and physically inferior to the virile Jāt Sikhs, reverted to their original profession of carpenters but some adopted the profession of priests in Sikh shrines.

13. Schismatic sects

While Sikhism flourished in close harmony with Hinduism in the Punjab, there was hardly any appreciable decline in the activities of most of the schismatic sects which ran contrary to the monotheistic doctrines of the faith of Nanak. Thus the benevolently tolerant religious policy of the State did not interfere with the *Nanakpanthīs* or the *Sahjdharīs*, who dispensed with the outward observances of social and ceremonial behaviour of Sikhism; the *Udāsīs*, following Hindu asceticism, had their principal seat at Dera Baba Nanak; the *Niranjanīs*, founded by Handals, who rejected the marriage and funeral rites of both the Hindus and the Sikhs, were settled in the Doab and Amritsar; and the *Nirankarīs*, who strictly eschewed Hindu practices and Brahmanic rites in social life. Amongst other notable Sikh sects in the Punjab were the *Rāmra'īs*, the *Nirmalās*, and the *Akālīs* and *Nihangs*.

14. Social practices and customs

Except in matters of inheritance and religious practices of birth, marriage and death, the Sikhs were governed by Hindu law, although the interpretation of its principles were variously modified by usage and custom. In the Māñjha region inheritance was regulated by equal distribution of all moveable and landed property amongst the sons under the *Bhā'iband* system, the eldest son receiving an extra share. The *Chūndaband* was another approved system among the polygamous Sikhs—by it the property was distributed amongst the mothers for their male issue. Where there was no male issue, brothers and nephews and the widows shared the inheritance according to custom and usage. The Brahman, Khatrī and Rajput Sikhs followed Hindu laws of inheritance; they ignored both the *Bhā'iband* and *Chūndaband* systems customarily prevalent amongst the Jāt Sikhs. They also did not practice the *Karewā*, and the widows were merely entitled to maintenance. A widow amongst them retained a life interest in the property; on remarriage she lost the right, and a son the right to inheritance if he forsook his religion. The Mālwa Sikhs followed in general the law of primogeniture, and admitted the usage of the *Karewā*.

15. The *Karewā*

The practice of *Karewā* also known as *Chadar-andazī*¹ was an inferior form of marriage commonly prevalent amongst the Jāt Sikhs. It grew out of economic necessity and the tendency to exclude the females from inheriting property. As an acceptable form of inferior marriage amongst the Hindus and the Jews² of the marriage of a widow with the brother of the deceased husband, the custom was of ancient usage. Amongst the Jāt Sikhs it was a convenient way of retaining the deceased brother's estate in the family, as according to their traditional laws of inheritance the widow succeeded to her husband's property in case there was no male heir. A simple ceremony was performed by covering the head of the widow by the brother, usually the elder one, signifying that a marriage has been performed. The children of such union were considered legitimate enjoying the right of inheritance. This kept the deceased's estate in the family, preventing the Sikh widow finding a lover and exploiting the inheritance, and finally, in times of war, found a bride for a soldier without the encumbrance of cost and tedious ceremonials. But the *Karewā* marriage was generally deemed as an inferior marriage, and the affluent Sikh Sardars utilised it notoriously in solemnising unions with concubines and slave girls.² Out of this practice grew the *Threwā* form of marriage, where the widow did not agree to marry her deceased husband's brother, or the latter did not exercise his choice, then she married out of the family.

16. Social and Economic Problems

The basic structure of village life under Sikh rule in the Punjab remained undisturbed ; its relative prosperity was, more or less, dependent on agricultural production and economic conditions. But although the Punjab peasant was a hardy cultivator, the moderate land revenue surcharged with excessive *abwābs* or burdens and numerous extortions left him little more than bare subsistence till the next crop. The highest rate of division of crop between the cultivator and the owner of land was one-half ; but generally it varied between one-fourth and one-third, and the landlord often took more from the tenant in cash and kind under various pretexts. While the *zamindār* with larger holdings led a life of affluence, an average cultivator was frugal in his expenses, and led a life without any luxuries. He would borrow from the rich the price of seed or a pair of bullocks, which he settled with interest at the next harvest. Rural indebtedness was infrequent as

¹ On the subject, see generally, Ibbetson—*Punjab Castes*, Lahore, 1916 ; Rose—*A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab etc.* ; Griffin, p. 63 ; Bingley, p. 103 ; Steinbach—*The Punjab*, p. 75 ff. ; Prinsep—*Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, Appendix ; and the *District Gazetteers* of Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Ferozepur etc.

² Another form of inferior marriage with persons of lower rank was *nath dālna* or the nose-gay marriage, and Ranjit Singh himself married the courtesan Gul Begum by this method, *vide* U.T., III (ii), p. 151 ; also *supra*, p. 212-13.

there was little credit available ; serious indebtedness was scarce as the revenue officials were empowered to reduce excessive rates of interest. To the cultivator the income of the harvest left little surplus ; the produce was consumed in paying the rent and providing for the food of the family and other bare necessities of life. Yet the Punjab farmer did not live in punery, though left without any means for the improvement of the land or his living standards. He employed primitive agricultural implements both at the time of cultivation and harvest.¹

Wheat, millet, rice, pulses and oil-seeds were grown in the Central Punjab ; sugarcane, cotton, hemp, poppy and indigo were the main cash-crops, but the farmer received no incentive for intensive cultivation or relief from the State in time of a lean year, drought or famine. In the villages of the Central Punjab, the Jāts owned most of the land, and they were sturdy yeomen and industrious agriculturalists ; proud that they belonged to the ruling class, yet, they were as good with plough as with sword, and formed the hard core of the Khālsa army. Mostly they were of Rajput origin, but they despised the Rajputs, whose arrogance of race irrespective of decadence under the Sikh rule, earmarked them for derision.

Famines. In time of famine the State professed and undertook ameliorative measures such as remissions of land revenue, but inadequacy of such measures was apparent from the famine which gripped the *Subāh* of Kashmir in 1833.² Roads were bad, and means of transportation from one province to another wanting. The *Nāzims* and the *Kārdārs* in the distant provinces concealed the occurrences of drought and famine from reaching the ears of the Maharaja ; made ineffective efforts of the relief, but on failure to collect the revenue, were constrained to report the matter to Lahore. Pestilence and starvation followed famines. Migrations took place on a large scale and rural economy was disrupted beyond description.

Agricultural products. Major agricultural products of the Punjab in the 19th century were wheat, gram, barley, maize, millet, rice, cereals and pulses. Rice was extensively grown in Hoshiarpur region and the Kangra hills and Kashmir. Fibres grown were cotton and hemp. Sugarcane was extensively grown and so was tobacco. Multan was famous for its dyes—indigo and safflower. Spices—chillies

¹ *Authorities* for the further study of the subject, are generally, *Punjab Administration Reports*, 1920-21 ; 1922 ; Douie—*Settlement Manual* ; *The Punjab, Northwest Frontier and Kashmir* (Cambridge, 1916) ; Darling—*The Punjab in Prosperity and Debt* (Oxford, 1925) ; Lucas—*The Economic Life of a Punjab Village* (Lahore) ; Trevaskis—*The Land of the Five Rivers* (Oxford, 1928) ; and Ibbetson—*Punjab Census Report* (1881, Cal. Vol. I) and *A Glossary of Tribes and Castes of the Punjab etc.*, Vol. I.

² *Vide*. UT, III (ii), p. 170.

and ginger were the product of the hills. Rape-seed (*sarson*), linseed (*alsī*), and sesmun (*tīl*) were common crops.

There was no systematic marketing of agricultural products. Prices of food-grains were different in various parts of the kingdom. From the meagre statistics available, as for instance, for the year 1839-40, the price of wheat in Dera Ismail Khan per rupee was 19-20 seers, while in the district of Multan it averaged 8-9 seers, and in Kashmir 60 seers per Kashmiri rupee. While barley was sold in Dera Ismail Khan 21 seers per rupee and rice 8 seers, in Kashmir for the same period it was priced 90 seers and 48 seers per Kashmiri rupee.¹

From the statistics compiled from various Settlement Reports the average prices in Punjab markets of agricultural produce under the Sikh rule between 1830-40 per rupee *Nānakshāhī* were as under :

	Wheat			Barley			Jowar			Gram			Gur			Cotton			Rice		
	(In Maunds, Seers and Chattaks)																				
Lahore & Amritsar	1	0	1	2	2	0	1	9	4	1	0	10	0	19	3	0	4	0	0	8	4
Multan	1	11	6	1	27	12	1	39	2	1	2	9	0	15	1	0	4	3	0	12	0
Ferozepur	1	1	10	1	36	0	1	26	10	1	9	4	0	17	13	0	5	0	0	12	2

The produce of various agricultural products in maunds per acre for the same period averaged as under :

	Wheat	Barley	Jowar	Maize
Lahore	10	10
Dera Ismail Khan	12
Multan & Muzaffargarh	12	12	16	18
Jullundur Doab	19	20	7	24
Ferozepur	20	18	12	22

17. Trade and Commerce

Exact statistics of the commerce of the Punjab being unavailable, we turn to the meagre observations of contemporary travellers and writers on the commercial activities of the principal towns, trade routes, import and exports of the Punjab and the system of town duties prevalent under Ranjit Singh. The principal trade centres of the Punjab were Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Peshawar, Shujabad and Leiah. Lahore was famous for silk, woollen cloth, carpets, woodwork and manufacture of small arms. Amritsar was the centre of shawl manufacture and a thriving trade centre and "the commercial emporium of northern India." Hoshiarpur produced exquisite ivory and woodwork. Kashmir produced shawls and woollen fabrics and

¹ These meagre details are furnished by the *Punjab Akhbars* Nos. 58 : 97—*The Punjab in 1839-40* (1952). 157 Kashmiri rupees were equivalent to 100 *Nānakshāhī* rupees of the Punjab.

enamel work ; it imported shawl wool worth 7,50,000 rupees annually from Ladakh, and its annual output of shawls was estimated at 35,00,000 rupees.¹

The trading centres in the kingdom—Lahore and Amritsar employed considerable skilled and unskilled labour. A skilled workman, as for instance, in a gun-factory at Lahore received 2 rupees per day and a labourer $\frac{1}{2}$ a rupee. The pay of a newly recruited sepoy was 7 rupees a month, a scavenger 3 rupees a month, a water carrier 3 rupees a month, a mason 5 rupees a month and a cook $3\frac{1}{2}$ rupees a month.

Imports and exports. Punjab produced a variety of manufactures and agricultural products. It exported its indigenous products to other parts of the Punjab, India, Afghanistan and Central Asia : grains, pulses, rice, indigo, sugar, cotton, oil and ghee, manufactured silk, shawls and woollen fabrics, cloth, blankets, country made paper, gold and silver articles, enamelled work, lace and salt. From the Himalayan region, Afghanistan and Central Asia it imported groceries, dry, and fresh fruit ; from Kashmir shawls and blankets, dyes from Multan, from Ghazni clay, Persian carpets, ornamental woodwork and metallic ores. From India and Europe it imported fine cotton cloth, silk fabrics, unwrought iron, sugar, gold and silver, spices, ivory, glass, copper hardware and precious stones. From Afghanistan and Central Asia caravans brought to its plains gold, silver, horses, *lapis lazuli*, cochineal, madder, asafoetida and wool.

Mines and Minerals. Punjab produced Saltpetre used in the manufacture of fireworks and gunpowder, limestone, carbonate of soda and ammonium chloride (*naushādar*). Saltmines at Khewra, Nurpur and Kalabagh produced rock-salt. Gold was found in small quantities in the sandstones of the Salt Range and in the river beds of the Indus, the Jehlum, the Beas, and the Sutlej. Iron ores were located in the Himalayan districts of Suket, Mandi, at Bhir Bangal in Kangra and in the northern district of Peshawar. Mohan Lal who visited the Saltmines of Khewra in 1834 describes them bounded by a range of hills situated at foot of the Sufaid Koh, passing along the Indus at Kalabagh : “The salt which is reddish, is very hard and is dug out with sledge-hammers and axes..... The revenue of the saltmines amounts to eighteen lacs of rupees a year, with two additional lacs for duties. The salt is exported, laden on mules and camels, to all parts of the Punjab but seldom to India.”²

¹ Moorcroft, (*Travels* Part III, p. 384-85) observes that the production of shawl-goods had declined to half in 1822-23. Previously, the shawl-goods had an extensive market in Asia and Europe—in Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, India and Chinese Turkistan but trade with Persia and Turkey had declined ; with India it had decreased due to the loss of wealth by the princely courts. The trade with Turkistan in 1823 had increased in consequence of the extending demands of Russia.

² *Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan etc.*, p. 24 ff.

Town Duties. The system of town, transit and custom duties in the Punjab prevalent in large towns under Ranjit Singh brought to the Khālsa exchequer annually a sum of 24,00,000 rupees.¹ These measures may be termed as indirect taxation. Fiscal posts were established at the principal gates of the town and all merchandise, which might pass, was taxed ; no distinction was made between an article of luxury and that of daily use. Duties were imposed both on imports and exports. Custom duties were levied on dried and fresh fruit, groceries and furs of Central Asia, the shawls of Kashmir, and the piece goods of Europe. Transit duties were imposed on sugar and cotton of the northern districts ; and indigo from the southern districts ; and excise duty on the silks of Multan and the shawls of Kashmir. All articles entering the town had to pay octroi or town duties. In this manner both internal and external traffic was taxed.²

Graft and corruption by petty officials was a common feature of the system. According to one observer, the "custom rules and rates are laughed at, every ferry and every pass is guarded, and the trader pays according to the humour of the watchman, which in turn is regulated by a close calculation whether the amount taken will crush the nest-egg, and prevent the trader returning, or bring down on himself observation, and consequent squeezing."³ In big towns like Lahore and Amritsar these town duties were farmed out to the highest bidder. Apart from these, the trade also paid other taxes called deductions, viz., amounts payable to wholesale dealers' servants, weighmen, commission to middleman, and a watch and ward cess called the *rakhī*.

Trade routes. Under the Mughals the sea route for trade between Asia and Europe was the Black Sea. The ancient trade route which from the Black Sea and the Caspian sea went to Tehran and Meshad was much disused. From China a route crossed over to the Hindukush range of mountains to Kabul, and thence to Lahore and Delhi ; a shorter but more hazardous route lay through the Punjab, Kashmir, Tibet to Turkistan and thence to China. By the end of 18th century, however, the main routes from the Punjab to Kabul *via* the Khyber Pass, and to Kandahar *via* Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan were open for commercial traffic. Caravans from Kashmir travelled to Ladakh, Lhasa and Yarkand and *vice versa*. Mohan Lal enumerates both the internal and external trade routes of the Punjab

¹ Town duties of Lahore and Amritsar farmed out to Rājā Dhian Singh approximated annually 7,00,000 rupees ; salt mines leased out to Rājā Gulab Singh 8,00,000 rupees (UT, III (i), p. 65 and 339) ; miscellaneous town duties and excise duties at Lahore 1,50,000 ; Moharānā or stamp duty 2,50,000 and transit duties from the banks of the Sutlej to Peshawar 5,00,000 rupees. Total : 24,00,000 rupees.

² R. Temple—*Memo on System of Town Duties in the Punjab in Selections from the Public Correspondence for the Affairs of the Punjab*, Vol. I. No. X. Lahore, 1857.

³ Lawrence, i, p. 52.

through which considerable commerce was carried on during the Sikh rule. Although large mercantile operations were retarded through vexacious exactions, duties and tolls, yet the roads were free from robberies and the trade caravans securely travelled from Multan to Peshawar and Kashmir, and from Peshawar to Kabul. Silk and cotton fabrics, leather goods and shawls manufactured in Kashmir and Amritsar had a wide market outside the Punjab. Frequent trade caravans carried goods between Multan and Sind, between Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan and Lahore. There were five separate routes between Dera Ghazi Khan and Kandahar on the south bank of the Indus leading to the trade centres of Afghanistan, Persia and Turkistan.¹ From Sind, commercial traffic flowed to Kandahar by six routes *via* Rojhan, Badhni, Ghauspur and Shikarpur.² Extensive trade from the Punjab was carried to Kabul, Kunduz, Balakh, Bokhara, Mashad, Herat, Sistan and Kandahar. Opium, tobacco, silk, shawls, cloth, muslins and indigo were the main articles of trade to these countries.

From Herat and Kandahar caravans carried the goods of Central Asia to Sind *via* the Bolan Pass, and from Kabul and beyond through the Khyber Pass to Peshawar, Bannu, Lahore, Amritsar and thence to Delhi. Merchants of the Punjab and India maintained intercourse with Kashmir and Lhasa. For the internal trade within the Punjab, the routes were well defined, though the roads were in a state of disrepair and neglect. Jungles were less infested with highwaymen. Means of transport were usually camels, horses, mules and donkeys, and boats over the rivers carried the produce and manufactures from one part of the Kingdom to the other. Cost of transport was excessive, if not prohibitive, on account of various tolls and duties, and graft and robberies by local petty officials. Caravans unescorted by armed guardsmen were likely to be plundered by the roving banditti.

Transport by the river was less expensive and this means was utilised on all the five rivers of the Punjab. Barriers on trade and imports and town duties imposed on various parts of the kingdom were not conducive to the promotion of large scale commercial ventures. As normally a village was a self-sufficient unit, food grains and coarse cloth produced locally met the needs of the people. Articles of luxury, silks, perfume, musk, gold and silver ware etc. used by rich people of the towns, however, were profitable articles of commerce.³

¹ *Travels*, p. 406 ff.

² *Ibid.* p. 410.

³ According to the statistics supplied by Mohan Lal (*Travels*, p. 404 ff), indigo of Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan purchased @ 55 rupees per maund could be sold at Bokhara @ 60 rupees per maund inclusive of transit duties; but a camel load of English cloth worth 1,000 rupees purchased at Bahawalpur and sent to Dera Ghazi Khan after payment of freight and town duties could be sold at a profit of 250 rupees.

The Sikh government was averse to making or repairing roads in the north, as it was generally held that improving them only prepared the way for a foreign enemy from the west, who would thereby be able to enter the country without obstruction.¹ As the neighbouring hills were inhabited by a wild and predatory race of people, the caravans were not safe from free-booters.

18. Society : Racial Groups

THE KINGDOM OF THE PUNJAB under Ranjit Singh had a variety of terrain, climes and was inhabited by numerous races or racial groups.² The whole of the country west of the Punjab, in the north and north-west where its boundaries touched the Hindukush mountains, and the *Subāh'i* Kashmir in the east was predominantly Muhammadan. This area included the district of Hazara, and the trans-Indus region comprising of the *Subāh'i* Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and the Derajat, and was populated principally by two dominant races—the Balauchs, the Pathans and allied races—the Tājiks, the Hazārās and the Tanā'olis. The Balauchs with their numerous tribal sub-divisions—the Drishaks, the Gurchānīs, the Laghārīs, the Khetrāns, the Qasrānīs, the Mazārīs and others lived mostly in the *Subāh'i* Multan which included Jhang and Muzaffargarh, the Derajat, Jehlum, Shahpur and on the borders of Sind, adjacent to the southern confines of the Lahore territory. They were tribes nomad in their habits; in some districts they were settled in sufficient numbers, and had political organisations called the *tumāns* or a group of confederacies. Elsewhere, as on the southern frontiers of the Kingdom, they were nomadic, freebooters, and of marauding and criminal habits.

The Pathans, probably of mixed Indian origin, and the most virulent enemies of the Sikhs, with their principal divisions—the Wazīrīs, the Bannuchīs, the Khataks, the Āfrīdīs, the Yusufza'īs, the Mohmands, the Muhammadza'īs, the Utmanza'īs, the Dāūdza'īs, the Khalīls, the Abdālīs, the Tārins, the Khetrans etc. inhabited the *Subāh'i* Peshawar, Bannu and Kohat region, the Derajat, Rawalpindi, Hazara and the trans-Indus Salt Range. The Pathans are generally described as the most cruel, bloodthirsty and vindictive people, yet they were virile and warlike like the Sikhs, and possessed their own code of honour, of revenge, retaliation, and open-handed

¹ Shahamat Ali, p. 130. Baron Von Hugel (p. 326) who broached the subject of making good roads in the kingdom to the Maharaja with the expression that such measure would facilitate the movement of his troops from one part of the country to the other got the reply : "Yes, but I should make it also more easy for an enemy to advance against me !"

² Authorities : Hughes—*Bilochistan* ; Bruce—*Memorandum on Derah Ghazi Khan District* ; Pottinger—*Travels in Bilochistan and Sindh* ; Masson—*Travels* ; Macgregor—*Gazetteer of the N. W. Frontier* ; and Ibbetson—*Punjab Castes* etc. For the Pathans, see generally, Dorn—*History of the Afghans*, London, 1829 ; the *Hayāt-i-Afghāni* (trans by Priestly), Lahore, 1874 ; Elphinstone—*Kabul* ; and the *Settlement Reports* of various N. W. Frontier Districts.

hospitality. They were the dominant race west of the Indus, in the Hazara region and its Chach tract, and had numerous colonies scattered all over the Punjab.

In the western plains of the Punjab, central Sikh districts, and western and central sub-montane regions, the Jāts were especially numerous. The Jāt tribes of the western plains, west of Lahore were entirely Muhammadans. These were the Bhuttās, the Langāhs, the Bhattīs, the Siāls, the Tāhims, the Chīnnas, the Sumrās, and the Kharrals. In the western sub-montanes they were a mixed fare—the Tarārs, the Varāichs, the Sāhīs, the Hinjrās, the Chīmās, the Bājwās, the Deos, the Ghummans, the Kalhons, and the Chaṭhās. The Jāts of the Sikh tracts of the Punjab inhabiting the central districts were the Dhillons, the Virks, the Sindhus, the Bhulars, the Mānns, the Bals, the Gills and the Brārs. In the eastern sub-montane region were the Randhāwās, the Sohāls and the Bains. This region which included the base of the Śiwaliks—the districts of Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur and Sialkot, was inhabited by the Rajputs, Sikh Jāts and Pathans of mixed racial elements. Hindus and Sikh Jāts as also the Muslims inhabited the western sub-montane region—Sialkot, Gujranwala and Gujrat, beyond which lay the Jammu hills and the ancient principalities of Bhimber and Rajouri.

The most fertile and populous and wealthy region was the Punjab Proper, which included the prosperous towns of Lahore, Amritsar, Multan and Jhang. In it flowed the great five rivers of the land—the Sutlej, the Ravi, the Chenab, the Jehlum and the Indus. In it lived the Balauchs, the Jāts and the Rajputs, the Gujjars and the Sayyeds, the Kharrals and the Tiwānās. Hindus and Sikhs were quite a powerful element of its social order. The Salt Range tract of the Kingdom which included the districts of Attock, Rawalpindi, Jehlum and Shahpur was chiefly Muhammadan.

19. The Jāts and Rajputs

Apart from the three principal religions, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, the kingdom of the Punjab was populated by numerous tribes.¹ In the Rawalpindi region lived the Khattars, the Kahutānīs and the Bālā Ghebs; the Gakkars and the Awāns inhabited the Salt Range region; the Gujjars Gujranwala and Gujrat region, the Manjkīs in Nakodar and Phillour, the Khokhars in Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala region, the Kolīs in Kulu, the Gaddīs in Chamba. The numerous Pathan tribes lived in the north-west.

Of all the races inhabiting various parts of the kingdom of Ranjit Singh, the Jāt was most powerful numerically, politically and from the point of ethnology.

¹ For the numerous tribal areas and the tribes inhabiting the Punjab, *vide* generally, Rose—*A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab*, etc., 3 Vols.; the *Districts Gazetteers* of Lahore, Peshawar, Hazara, Rawalpindi, Kangra etc.; Cunningham; *Ancient Geography of India*; *Jour. of the Anthro. Inst.* xliv, p. 270 ff.; Ibbetson—*Punjab Castes* etc.

He is generally described as of Rajput origin ; but in the western districts the Jāt professed the Muslim faith, in the Central Punjab he was a Sikh, and in the southeast a Hindu. The Sikh Jāt was a sturdy, hardworking agriculturalist. He owned most of the land, belonged to the ruling race in the Punjab under the Sikhs, and remained distinct from the Rajput whom he had subjugated.

Of the Rajputs of the hills and the plains of the Punjab we have a group belonging to the western hills and Kangra. In the Punjab Proper, the Rajput had practically disappeared before the Sikh, the Pathan and the Balauch. "Under the Sikhs," observes Ibbetson, "the Rajput was overshadowed by the Jāt, who resented his superiority and his refusal to join him on equal terms in the rank of the *Khālsa*, deliberately persecuted him wherever and whenever he had the power, and preferred his title of the Jāt Sikh to that of the proudest Rajput."¹

In the Punjab, therefore, the Rajput's pride of blood and ancestral superiority had sunk low ; the Rajputs ceased to be Rajputs and were relegated to the lower ranks of ploughmen, brigands and cattle-lifters. They had submerged with the Jāts, the ruling class of the Punjab. Hence we find common clans of the Rajputs and the Jāts, *i.e.* in the Punwars, the Rāñjhās, the Rāthīs, the Siāls, the Sumrās, the Tarārs, the Virks, the Wattūs and others. There was no dividing line betwixt the Jāt and the Rajput in the western plains of the Punjab. But the Rajput of the eastern hills of Kangra and the sub-montane tract, though subjugated by Ranjit Singh, remained free from Sikh social domination, as he had resisted successfully the political thralldom of the Pathans and the Mughals in the past. Although the Sikh Gurus had maintained plentiful amiable connections with the hill rājās and Ranjit Singh had subjugated most of the hill states—Kangra, Kulu, Mandi, Chamba and others, the influence of Sikhism in the hills was practically non-existent. One reason for this may be the devoted tenacity of the proud Rajput to ritualistic Hinduism ; secondly, no attempt was made under the Sikh rule to proselytize the hill people. "Between Ranjit Singh and the hill Chiefs," observes Rose, "no love was lost. They despised him as upstart of lower status socially than themselves, and possessing no claim to their homage and allegiance."² On the contrary, to Ranjit Singh the Rajput Chiefs "were an object of special aversion, for they represented the ancient aristocracy of the country, and declined to countenance an organisation in which caste counted for nothing."

The Rajput of the hills retained the appellation of Rajput as his legitimate right ; and although divested of political power and privilege, he still retained the

¹ *Punjab Castes*, p. 100.

² *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab etc.* i, p. 693.

pride of his race and ancient lineage.¹ He clung to his ancestral prejudices and social superstitions, and even when in punery or distress, he would refuse to do fieldwork or take to plough. Amongst these race proud hill Rajput tributaries of the Maharaja were the Katochs, the Golerias, the Dhārwals, the Jaswals, the Ghorewālas, the Nārūs and the Manjs. The lower orders of the Rajputs who had adopted agricultural profession, were the Thākurs and the Rāthīs.

20 Professional classes

But although the Sikh Jāt was politically dominant, owned most of the land and belonged to the ruling class, in the social order at the top stood the priestly class—the Brahman priest in Hindu and Sikh social order, the Sheikh, the Qureshī and the Sayyed amongst the Muhammadans. The Bhā'īs or the literate priestly class amongst the Sikhs, though highly revered, had not acquired a similar status. The obvious reason for this phenomenon could be the unrestricted independence which the Jāts, the ruling class, enjoyed in the Sikh society and the fact that the converted Sikhs in the social order of the Punjab, including the wealthy and politically powerful Jāts, still preferred to employ a Hindu Brahman priest to conduct most of their ceremonies. The Hindu priests or the Brahmans held this privileged position on account of the ordinances of the Hindu religion ; and in Islam there being no organised priesthood, the Sayyeds, the Qureshīs and the Sheikhs held their superior position in the social order on account their holy descent. The Brahman priest still presided over Hindu and Sikh ceremonials, though his social status in the Punjab in theory was on the decline. He was hardly loved by the people, and was described as grasping, quarrelsome and overbearing, inflated with pride in his own descent, holding himself aloof from the clients whose pockets he preyed upon, and declined to associate himself with the community he lived.²

In the hills, however, Brahmanic exclusiveness and ostrichism had adopted itself to the high climes. Here the Brahman ate flesh and intermixed and his caste rigidity was lax. Brahman converts to Sikhism in the plains had forsaken

¹ As for instance, in 1828, the Raja of Kangra left his hereditary kingdom rather than carry out the behest of Ranjit Singh to marry his sisters to Rājā Dhian Singh ; and when Mi'an Padma, a Hindu Rajput of the hills married his daughter to the Sikh monarch, he was ostracized from the Rajput caste. The Rajputs of Katgarh set fire to their homes and immolated their females to avoid an alliance with Ranjit Singh. See Ibbetson-*Punjab Castes*, p. 156.

² Ibbetson, p. 218.

orthodox ways and Hindu Brahmans still served as Sikh family priests.¹ In the hill shrines a non-Brahman class of *pujārīs* called the *Bhojikās* monopolised the function of the hereditary priests of both Kangra and Jawālāmukhī temples. They ate flesh, were profligate, and litigious, but were much revered by the superstitious hill people.

The Sayyeds amongst the Muslims, scattered through the Punjab, were the landowners and cultivators. They claimed a higher descent in the west of the Punjab, and accepted offerings from their co-religionists. Another class of distinction amongst the Muhammadans was that of the '*Ulamā*', the learned men — the Qāzī, the Mullā', the Mī'ān, and the Mukhdūm etc. The Sikh rule in the Punjab had not disrupted the core of Muslim social order, and the Muslim priesthood enjoyed a position of privilege and power as of the old.

21. Court nobility

All wealth, ostentation and pageantry centred around the Maharaja and his Court at Lahore. Here lived his principal Sardars and the highest officers of the State in their privileged position of power and wealth. Those who attended the Darbār and were in attendance on the Maharaja held great power of patronage and distribution of favours. The chief Sardars, the principal members of the royal family, and the collaterals lived in style in their palatial residences. They lived a life of luxury and extravagance. They were the chief patrons of costly and rich articles of wear, gold ornaments and silver ware. Concubinage, addiction to drugs like opium, *bhāng* and *dhatora*, drink and debauchery were their common vices. Some kept harems with slave attendants and spent lavishly on their mistresses and dancing girls. As the Maharaja required his courtiers to attend the Court richly dressed, they were lavish in spending money on costly dresses and articles of jewellery. The nobility and some of the Sardars often led a life of indolence, avarice if not of depravity; they lived on the breath of the Maharaja and endeavoured to keep him in good humour. But most of them were sent on military expeditions and diplomatic and political duties. Some of the royal princes and the *raja'ī kalān*, Dhian Singh were permitted to hold their own miniature darbārs. The major pastimes of the Sardars were to go boar and quail hunting, gambling with dice, wine-drinking, and entertaining themselves with music and dances by the *nāutch*-girls. Amongst their common vices were pederasty, gambling, wine-drinking,

¹ As for instance, the Maharaja always employed Hindu Brahmans on all religious ceremonies. Capital punishment was not permissible in case of the Brahmans. He visited the Hindu shrines—Hardwar, the Katās, the Kāngrājī, and the Jawālājī, observed Hindu rites and festivals, and was equally munificent in his charities and endowments to Hindu temples as to the Sikh and Muslim shrines. See UT, III(i), p. 10, 72-3; (ii), p. 225-6, 234; (v), p. 148-9 etc.

the use of opium and *bhāng*, fornication, and similar social evils. They kept their wealth concealed from the dread of the Maharaja, but accepted bribes without any sense of shame. The general standards of morality were low amongst the Sardars of the Court. Education was almost unknown, except for these who were in Government service ; their offspring was brought up almost in total ignorance, though they were trained in the use of arms and horsemanship—the normal marks of distinction of the time.

Common superstitions were prevalent amongst the higher ranks of the nobility. There was a universal belief in astrology, alchemy, sorcery and witchcraft. Visits to the sacred shrine and worship of saints and faqīrs was quite common. *Purdah* or seclusion of womenfolk was universal, and slavery existed in the form of concubinage. The practice of *sati* was more common amongst the higher court nobility of the time than in the common mass of the people.

22. Upper middle class

In the heterogeneous social order, the upper middle class in the Punjab was composed of diverse elements. Amongst the Hindus, those who could be classified as the upper middle class were the Banyās, the Mahājans, the Sūds, the Khatrīs, the Bhāti'ās, and the Arorās, who monopolised trade and money-lending. In large towns, like Lahore, Amritsar, Peshawar and Multan, their commercial activities were extensive ; they financed commerce and served as bankers. In the hills, both the Mahājans and the Sūds engaged themselves in trade or served as clerks and accountants, and their activities were confined to the lower hills and Lahore and Amritsar regions. They were also agricultural money-lenders. The Sūds were proverbially shrewd and prosperous business men. Service or trade was the main occupation of the Khatrīs of the Punjab, a literate class who held high administrative posts under the Sikhs. They monopolised the trade : both internal and foreign particularly with Afghanistan and Central Asia. In the villages they were shopkeepers, grain dealers and money-lenders, and some served as petty clerks and government officials. They were found everywhere—in the predominantly Muhammadan districts, Rawalpindi, Hazara, and Multan. The Bhāti'ās were mostly traders, inhabitants of the lower valleys of the Indus and the Sutlej. They were a hardworking mercantile community. The Arorās, a trading class of the south-western Punjab, dwelled predominantly in the Derajat and the Multan regions of the kingdom. They were active, enterprising, industrious Hindus, and for being mean and thrifty they were dubbed with the contemptuous epithet of *Kirār*, or a coward. They are described as “a cowardly, secretive, acquisitive race, very necessary and useful may be in their places, but possessed of few manly qualities and both despised and envied.....”

Amongst the upper middle class of the Muslims were their trading Khojās and the Prāchās in Shahpur, Multan, Jhang and Lahore districts. The former were

mostly converts from the Hindu trading class. The Prāchās, however, were Muslims and inhabited the Peshawar and Rawalpindi region, Lahore, Sialkot, and the Salt Range tract. They dealt in cloth, carried on extensive trade in skins and hides, leather, silk and indigo in the cities of Central Asia. They were an industrious and a prosperous community.

23. The lower middle class

The lower middle class in the Punjab under the Sikhs consisted of people professing certain specified trades *viz.*, meat, liquor, vegetables and cattle. These included the Banjārās, or carriers and cattle dealers, the Labānās, or carriers and hawkers, the Untwals or Balauch camel-men, the Maniārs or petty hardware sellers, and the Brahman Bhatras or hawkers of small hardware, who also practiced astrology and plied the trade of piercing noses and ears. To these professional classes may be added others of petty occupations, *viz.*, the *toba*, or a diver who dug and cleaned wells; the *patwā* or a silk-weaver; the *kharāsī'a* or a watermill man; the *palledar* or carrier of grains in markets; the *dārūgar*, or a maker of fire-works; the *pālī*, a cowherd or a handicrafts man; the *jarrāh*, usually a barber who was also a surgeon of all sorts; the *pānda*, or a literate Brahman who officiated at religious functions; the *'attar*, or a dispensing druggist and also a perfumer; the *gharāmi* or a thatcher; the *sangtarāsh* or a stone-cutter; the *tabākhīa* or a vender of cooked food.

24. Menials

At the lowest rung of the social order in the Punjab stood the vagrant, menial and artisan classes, so essential for village and town economy. The vagrant and criminal tribes, such as the Ods, the Changars, the Bawarās, the Sānsīs, the Kanjars, the Nats and the Bazīgars were perhaps remnants of the original inhabitants of the region; the scavenger and lower artisan classes were part and parcel of the heterogeneous social system of the Punjab. The lowest were the hereditary scavengers, whose occupation was the removal of night soil, and distributing manure in the fields. They also performed much of the agricultural labour. The scavengers belonged to all the three major religions of the Punjab.¹ Hindu scavengers were called the Chuhrās; the Dhanaks, the Khātiks, the Musallīs, and the Kutānās were their counterparts amongst the Muhammadans. The Sikh scavenger class were called the Mazhbīs and the Rangretās; the latter, venerated

¹ Temple, i, XVII, *The Genealogies of Lal Beg*, p. 527. According to him a large proportion of the scavengers in northern India were the followers of Lal Beg, their tutelary saint. They had a religion of their own, neither Hindu nor Muhammadan, but with a priesthood and ritual peculiar to itself. Their religion may best be styled hagiolatry, pure and simple, as it consisted merely of a confused veneration of anything and everything, the tenets and superstitions of the Hindus, the Musulmans, and the Sikhs all thrown together.

Guru Teg Bahadur, and wore long hair, abstained from tobacco, but conversion to Sikhism had little improved their social status. Above the scavengers in social standing were the leather-workers (*chamārs*), the weavers (*julāhas*). The Sikh *chamār* was called Ramdāsīā, because of the fact that Guru Ram Das admitted them into the fold of Sikhism. The Muslim *chamār* was called the *mochī*. The weaver or the *julāha* of the Punjab was called the *pā'olī*, and both in Hindu and Muslim society, he enjoyed a better position than the *chamār*, who ate carrion, and touched carcasses. Above these two menial classes were the watermen (*jhīnwārs*) and fishermen (*māchhīs*), the carpenters (*tarkhāns*), the blacksmiths (*lohārs*), the stone-masons (*thāvis*), the potters (*kumhars*), the brick-layers (*rājs*), the washermen (*dhobīs*), the dyers (*chīmbās*) and the tailors (*darzīs*) etc.

In the social economy of the village life in the Punjab these lower classes performed domestic duties of the community, but with the exception of the artisan classes who were paid for their jobs, most of them received customary dues or a fixed share of the grain at the time of the harvest.

25. Sects, mendicants etc.

Ascetics, mendicants and faqīrs variously termed as the *pīrs*, the *sādhs*, the *jogīs* and the *derreshes* were quite common all over the Punjab. *Bharā'īs* were predominant in Lahore, Gujranwala and in the sub-montane districts. They begged in the name of the saint Sakhī Sarwar, performed circumcision and acted as *mirāsīs*. Another class of Muslim mendicants characterised as holy ascetics—the *Qalandars* with shaven heads, who professed to have abandoned the world roamed about the towns and villages. Amongst the category of the *faqīrs* of high religious respectability may be included both Hindu and Muhammadans ascetics who either lived in monasteries (*khānqāhs*) or shrines (*derās*); others travelled about begging and visiting their disciples. Amongst the *jogīs* were the followers of the legendary Gorakhnath; the various orders of the *sanyāsīs* and *sādhs*. The *sādhs* wore long matted hair made brown with ashes. They were treated with respect both by the Hindus and the Sikhs, but they regarded the Muhammadans with contempt and insult.¹ Amongst the Muhammadans were the Sūfī *pīrs* or saints of various orders of reputed sanctity, exercising great influence on the social and religious life of the Punjab Muslims. The Hindu *sādh* imitated the Muslim *pīr* in many respects; some pious saints had common adherents amongst both the Hindu and Muhammadans. The *Bairāgīs* were the wandering mendicants generally found in Lahore, Amritsar and Ferozepur districts.²

¹ Mohan Lal, p. 19-20.

² On the subject, *vide*, generally, Wilson—*Indian Caste*, ii, *Hindu Sects*, p. 227 *et seq*; Ibbetson—*Punjab Castes* (Part IV); Rose—*A Glossary of the Punjab Tribes and Castes*, i, etc.

The Sikh ascetic orders among others were the *Suthra-shāhīs*, who put the Hindu sectarian mark on their foreheads, and who are described as "notorious for gambling, thieving, drunkenness and debauchery." The *Udasis* or the followers of Baba Sri Chand who practiced Hindu rites were found both in the Mālwa and Māñjha regions. The *Nānakputrās*, who on account of their sacred character were employed as escorts on trade routes in the Punjab ensuring safety from attack or pillage by robbers. The *Nirmalās* or 'the pure ones' who were the strict followers of the tenth Guru, and practiced celibacy and mostly lived in monasteries in the Punjab were much respected. Lastly, there were the *Akālīs* and the *Nihangs* or the Immortals of Guru Gobind Singh, the zealot soldiers and warrior priests. They had assumed the office of the guardians of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, and acted as censor of morals of the Sikh people and preservers of the original ordinances of the faith. Their fanaticism and turbulence has been commented upon elsewhere.¹

Vagrancy and beggary as a profession was common. "The *faqīrs* in the Punjab," wrote Baron Von Hugel in 1835 from personal experience, "are quite intolerable ; great athletic fellows, and without exception, the most impudent beggars in the world. This morning one came to my tent with two tamtams or drums ; he was accompanied by three men, each provided with a sort of oboe ; I thought they would have distracted me outright. In vain I commanded the man to desist and take himself off ; he was shameless enough to keep his ground until absolutely driven from it by the blows of my servants."²

26. Festivals at the Court

Sarwārna (votive offerings) and the presentations of *nazars* were the chief modes of expressing goodwill and allegiance at the Sikh Court by princes, nobles, and foreign dignitaries on all occasions. National festivals of the kingdom were the *Baisākhī*, the *Dussehra*, the *Basant*, the *Holi* and the *Dīwālī*. The Muslims observed the *Īd*, the *Muḥarram*, the *Shabrāt* and the *Milād-un-Nabbi*. The day of *Baisākhī* was deemed blessed and celebrated at the Court, and for the *saṁkalpa* of the Maharaja money, silver bedsteads, gold and silver utensils were kept ready. The day was a public holiday in the whole country, and charities were given to the poor and the Brahmans, which consisted of cows, horses, elephants, gold bangles and foodstuffs.³ On the day of the festival of *Basant* great festivities took place, when the officers of platoons, commandants and jamadārs were ordered to prepare yellow uniforms for the troops for parade. A public assembly was arranged for

¹ The Akālīs later assumed a semi-military turbulent character, and to draw off their fanaticism Ranjit Singh wisely recruited them in his army. *Vide. supra* p. 325 ff.

² *Travels*, p. 62.

³ UT, III(i), p. 18 ; III(ii), p. 124.

the celebration—all the Court officials and Sardars offered *nazars*. *Khill'ats* or robes of honour were granted to every one according to his rank and status.¹

The Court assembled usually for the celebration of the *Dussehra* at Amritsar. The occasion was utilised for taking muster of the *Jagirdāri* troops and inspection of troops on parade. The Maharaja on this blessed day worshipped the horse, the sword, and the elephant at the *Barādari* of Rāmbāgh and thence the royal standards departed for the *Kotha* of *Dussehra*. All the Chiefs then presented *nazars*, and the parade of horsemen, footmen and the platoons took place.²

At the commencement of the spring, the festival of *Holi* arrived with great rejoicings and merry-making. The Court celebrated it with great enthusiasm and special preparations were made for its requisites. Syringes of gold and silver were made, and lac-dye was ordered in large quantities. Merry-making and enjoyment of the festival was accompanied by the giving away of *khill'ats* or robes of honour with large sums of money to the soldiers of the platoons.³ The Kārdārs of Lahore and Amritsar were ordered to make adequate preparations for the celebrations of the festival, and visiting dignitaries were invited to join in the celebrations. The *Akhbarat of the Deorhī of Ranjit Singh*,⁴ for the year 1825 describe its celebrations at the royal Court of Lahore: "The courtiers are provided with gold syringes. The trays of *gulal* are sent for. The Maharaja plays *Holi* with his courtiers. Their turbans are removed and they are given beating on head with shoes by one another. The dancing girls are summoned and sing and dance. The *Sawaran-i-Khasgī* (royal body-guards) are then summoned and ordered to join in the celebrations. They stand facing each other and indulge in shoe-beating and pebble-throwing: a pebble hits the face of the Maharaja, and he receives his share of two or three shoe-beatings on his back. Dhian Singh is given a good beating on the head and back. As the shoes are no more handy, they uproot plants and saplings from the Ḥaẓūrī Bāgh and beat one another with them. They turn deaf ear to the abuses and curses of the Maharaja. At last, the Maharaja and the courtiers holding sticks in their hands turn the troopers out of the fort. Thirty persons from both parties are wounded. Three hundred pairs of shoes, and seventy-six turbans are lost in the scuffle." Thus was the festival of *Holi* celebrated at the Court of Ranjit Singh.

We have another interesting account of the celebration of the *Holi* when Sir Henry Fane, the British Commander-in-Chief and Ranjit Singh celebrated it in

¹ *Ibid.* III(ii), p. 194.

² *Ibid.* III(ii), p. 341.

³ *Ibid.* III(iii), p. 302.

⁴ MS. in the National Archives of India, fol. 18-22.

March 1937.¹ Ranjit Singh was seated surrounded by his Court and the guard of pretty Amazons, some thirty or forty in number, armed with bows and arrows, which they drew the moment the British party made its entry. In front of every one were small baskets filled with small brittle balls containing red powder. Large bowls of thick yellow saffron stood along side. As soon as guests were seated, the Maharaja took a large butter-boat kind of article, filled it up with saffron and poured it on Sir Henry Fane's bald head ; while at the same time, the prime minister rubbed him over with gold and silver leaf, mixed with red powder.

The Maharaja himself seemed to enjoy the fun as any one, while the courtiers threw balls of saffron and red powder on each other, although few of them aimed at him personally. "The battle raged for more than an hour," comments Edward Fane, "during which neither the Commander-in-Chief nor the Amazons came off scot free ; and by the time we all got up to return home the Honourable Company of London chimney-sweeps would have turned us out as too dirty for their society."²

The *Diwali* was a day of festivities, illuminations, alms-giving to the poor and the Brahmans, and bestowal of the *khilla'ts* and monetary grants to the nobles and persons of the royal family. On this day illuminations took place at night "with great glory and the surface of the earth began to reflect the sky."³ Drinking parties took place, and dancing girls entertained the Maharaja with songs and dance.

27. Position of women

Compared to male population of the Punjab there were lesser women. Female infanticide though discouraged, was commonly practiced in secret by both the Sikhs and Muslims and this perhaps accounts for the disproportion of females to male population. According to Punjabi popular tradition, a woman held an inferior status than man and she was associated with folly and impurity and unfaithfulness. But in general practice that was not so ; and the women held position and authority in the house-hold and if she bore a son, her status in the family increased ten-fold. Child marriage and polygamy were common in the Punjab among the rich and the poor also, and the system of joint family prevailed. The widows and barren women had a hard time. Concubinage and prostitution was common in all classes of society.

¹ Fane, *Five Years in India*, London, 1842, i, p. 90-92.

² *Ibid.* p. 92.

³ UT, III (iii), p. 221.

28. Slavery

Slavery was very common among the women in the Punjab.¹ A female slave from the hills cost about 60 to 80 rupees. Nobles and Chiefs at the Court and rich landlords and merchants kept concubines, and females servants were most of them slaves. The *fīrangī* officers of the Court maintained harems and bought slaves to attend upon their wives. Slaves had no rights or privileges, like that in Muslim law, but they were treated with kindness for personal service. Ranjit Singh's seraglio contained a large abundance of female slaves (*golīs* and *bandīs*), seven of whom are said to have burnt themselves in humble devotion on the funeral pyre of their master at his death.

29. The practice of *Satī*

Although the practice of *satī* in the Punjab was uncommon, we have numerous instances which indicate that it was generally confined to the royal widows and those belonging to the highest strata of society. According to a contemporary opinion, at the Lahore Darbār *satīs* were generally considered sacred ; their last words were considered prophetic, their blessings eagerly sought for and their curses dreaded.² We have already narrated how the four principal wives of Ranjit Singh immolated themselves on the funeral pyre of their lord and master.³ Out of the four widows of Kharak Singh, only one—Ishwar Kaur along with her three slaves became *satī*, although it was suspected that she was forced to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband at the orders of rājā Dhian Singh.⁴ Two of Naunihal Singh's widows became *satī*.⁵ Thirteen widows and slave-girls immolated themselves on the funeral pyre of rājā Suchet Singh.⁶ Two of the widows of rājā Hira Singh along with 22 widows and slave-girls of his supporters killed by the soldiery, performed the rite of *satī* ;⁷ and four of the wives of minister Jawahir Singh, the brother of rānī Jindan became *satīs*.⁸

The practice of *satī* was, therefore, not infrequent amongst the widows of the highly-placed nobles and Sardars ; amongst the common mass of the people—Hindu and Sikhs, it was rare. Allard witnessed one at Lahore which he described to the French traveller Jacquemont in 1831 : “The procession, in the middle of which

¹ Jacquemont, *Journal*. p. 35.

² Broadfoot to Currie, 26 September, 1845—(P) 167 : 36.

³ *Vide*. Chapter 9 (Sub-section 9 *et seq.*)

⁴ UT, IV (i), p. 67 ; Smyth, p. 33 *sq* ; Griffin, *Punjab Chiefs*, p. 249 *ff*.

⁵ Clerk to Government, 10 November, 1840—(P) 150 : 37.

⁶ Richmond to Currie, 29 March, 1844—(P) 159 : 43.

⁷ Murray, ii, p. 306.

⁸ Government to Currie, 26 September, 1845—(P) 167 : 36.

the victim walked, made a terrible uproar ; but the *satī* seemed to have retained all her composure. She lay down herself on the pyre and removed her ornaments, which she distributed among those around her, and when she had finished, she picked out the most comfortable position, getting up several times to alter the position of logs of wood which were not comfortable. When she was at her ease, she had herself covered carefully with more logs. Then they threw a quantity of oil on the pyre in which she burned herself, and when fire was applied, it blazed up with such violence that she must have been suffocated at once.”¹

30. Education

Education was not the responsibility of the State ; the system prevalent was the institution of *maktabs* and *pāthshālās* encouraged by private philanthropy. Princes, nobles and men of means educated their children by private tutors. Female education was practically unknown. Men of letters were few, but these commanded considerable respect. Illiteracy was common among the Sikhs, the Muslims and the lower class Hindus. The Sikh Omera neither encouraged education nor did they possess any accomplishments in art and literature. Only the *Bhā'īs* or the priestly class among the Sikhs were literate, but they confined their activities to reading and writing of religious literature. Hindu *munshīs* and Muslim *mutṣaddīs*, with adequate knowledge of Persian—the prevalent language of the Court and public business in the Punjab, grew up as a professional class of scribes, clerks, writers and accountants. Punjabi was the spoken language of the great mass of the Māñjha and Mālwa people ; Lande or western Punjabi better known as Multānī in the southern Punjab—Multan, Bahawalpur and the Derajat ; Pushto and Persian in the north-western districts ; and Kashmīrī in Kashmir, the hill districts had their own peculiar pahārī dialects.

Large-scale educational endowment was scarce ; but the rich and the affluent often gave large sums of money for the establishment of *madrasās* and *pāthshalas*, which were generally attached to religious institutions. The most popular institution was the endowed *maktab*, an institution so common under Muslim rule in India, attached to a mosque, where besides the reading and learning the Qur'ān by heart, the elementary classics in Persian, the *Gulistān* and the *Bostān*, arithmetic, algebra, geometry and calligraphy were taught with skill and efficiency. In the *pāthshalas* attached to Hindu and Sikh temples, pupils learnt mainly Sanskrit and Sikh religious scriptures.

The teacher got practically no pay in town and villages, he subsisted on his own learning, and offerings of cash or presents from the scholars and their parents.

¹ *Journal, op. cit.*, p. 55 ff.

31. Thaggī

The criminal institution of Thaggī in the Punjab, according to H. Beereton's Report, originated under the Sikh rule.¹ Wazir Singh, a Mazahbī Sikh, an inhabitant of the village Bura in the Māñjha, introduced it in the Punjab in a systematic manner. Originally in the service of Jodh Singh Rāmgarhiā, Wazir Singh acquired the knowledge of the secret crime of the Thaggī in India from a gang of Thaggs at Hardwar, and on his completion of a short apprenticeship to the unorthodox sect, he returned to the Punjab and laid the foundation of professional highway robbery in the land of the five rivers. He entered the service of the Maharaja as a *ghorcharā*. He was a notorious and daring robber, and the Maharaja turned his energies to good account by setting him loose against his enemies. He carried on his exploits clandestinely, travelled as a Sikh Sardar of means, and adopted the style of Hindustani Thaggs. But in 1817, his gang was traced for murdering two Sikh travellers, and he was summarily put to death.

But Wazir Singh had sown the seeds of organised Thaggī in the Punjab, and the remnants of his gang led by Gulab Singh and his brothers, carried on their nefarious activities from Govindpur in Amritsar district. From this place they organised Thaggī in all the districts of the Punjab—Batala, Hoshiarpur, Multan and Pakpattan, and when the Sikh government took strong measures to extirpate the Thaggs, part of their gang infiltrated into British territory across the Sutlej. Petrols were ordered from Lahore to Multan, and from Lahore to Peshawar to seize and search all strangers. The Thaggs caught were hung on the nearest tree.

32. Female Infanticide

Female infanticide prevailed among the Rajputs of the hills, the Khatrīs of Gujranwala, Multan and Jhang, Shahpur, Jehlum and Lahore. The Bedīs all over the Punjab practiced it on a very large scale. The general causes of this nefarious practice were the misconceived notion of disgrace in marrying a daughter, and the heavy expenditure attendant on her marriage. "It is astonishing what large sums are spent on such occasions," Melvill observes in his *Report* on the subject. "People live to save money to marry their daughters; others impoverish themselves for life to outvie their neighbours. Such is the custom all over India, but it is carried to greater extent in the Punjab than elsewhere. Seventeen lakhs of rupees are said to have been spent at the marriage of Koonwur Nao-Nihal Singh, with the daughter of the Ataree Chief. Eight lakhs that of the Raja of Aloowala."²

Pride of race or poverty was, therefore, the main cause of female infanticide, and although practiced secretly,³ it was not considered a crime either by the State

¹ *Report on Thuggee in the Punjab (Selections from Public Correspondence of the Administration for the Affairs of the Punjab, Lahore, 1857. Vol. 1, No. XIII.*

² Melvill to Government, 8 July, 1853. Foreign Deptt. No, 453.

³ The child was destroyed immediately after birth, by filling the mouth with cow-

or the society. Hypergamy was prohibited under social and religious practice—and the convenient mode was adopted by the chief sacerdotal class in the Punjab, especially the Bedīs amongst the Sikhs, and the Sayyeds amongst the Muhammadans. “There are two causes alleged for female infanticide,” observes Grant in his *Minute* on the subject, “—the one is a religious one, founded upon peculiar tenets or considerations of caste ; the other is a pecuniary one, arising out of the habitual expenditure of large sums upon marriage ceremonies.”¹

Apart from the female infanticide in the Punjab, on account of superstition and ignorance in rare cases, the murder of male child was deemed to be a remedy for barrenness. The crime of female infanticide was gradually discouraged and made illegal soon after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

dung, or by immersing the head in cow's milk, or by drawing the umbilical cord over the face ; all these means were calculated to prevent respiration and cause immediate death. Other methods were to bury the infant alive, starvation or suffocation.

¹ On the subject, see generally the *Reports and Minutes on Infanticide in the Punjab*, particularly, Grant to Lawrence, 7 September, 1853—No. 3894 ; *Minute on Infanticide in the Punjab* ; John Wilson—*History of Suppression of Infanticide in Western India*, 1885 ; and the *Reports* of R. Montgomery, P. Melvill, and J. P. Grant—No. XVI—*Selections from the Public Correspondence etc.*, Lahore, 1857, p. 392 ff.

CHAPTER 18

LITERATURE, FOLKLORE AND ART IN THE PUNJAB

Section I : *Literature and Folklore*

1. No Royal patronage

IT WOULD BE FUTILE to trump up the fond assertion that under the Sikh rule literature and art received direct encouragement from the State. Few nightingales warbled at Ranjit Singh's Court ; no poets sang his panegyrics, and none worshipped the pen, brush or chisel. The royal Sikh Court at Lahore though magnificently crowded by gorgeously-dressed and over-ornamented Sardars, warriors armed *cap-à-pié*, ministers, sycophants and abject flatterers, was pitifully devoid of men of letters, artists and sculptors. There were no Abul Fazls, Faizis or Urfis attached to the Maharaja's [entourage to immortalise the great man to the posterity. The solitary record of the times maintained officially was by the lone *roznāmchanawīs* Sohan Lal Sūrī, whose otherwise excellent chronicle is also pitifully devoid of any literary merits. It signally fails to register the currents and cross-currents of social, economic or intellectual tendencies of the people.

One main reason for this attitude could be the royal indifference towards intellectual or artistic pursuits : what was not popular at the Court, was not worth recording. The Maharaja had other mundane interests. Illiterate himself and brought up in the lap of crude times in which a prince learnt to respect vaguely learning and learned men, but the embellishments of scholastic attainments were unnecessary for him. Ranjit Singh disliked all books, except the holy book to which he devoutly listened to twice daily. Wars and conquests and problems of administration occupied most of his time ; personal attention to all political affairs of the State was his daily routine. Wine, women, *nautch*-girls and music his hours of relaxation. Consequently, there seems to be little or no official patronage of literature or art at the Court.

2. Social environments

However, the evolution of human mind, or for that matter, of literary and poetical trends need no royal sanctions. These transcend barriers of political anarchy, royal indifference, or even studied discouragement by those controlling social or political environments. Illiteracy was a common phenomenon under the Sikh rule. Persian being the current official language for all political purposes, the

Bhā'īs or the literate priestly class among the Sikhs were well versed in the interpretation of the philosophy of the religion propounded by their sacred Gurus. As a priestly class they had gradually grown professional; a few amongst them had inherited any literary or aesthetic traditions, but they exhibited little concern outside their limited sphere of theological learning and scholastic studies. As under the Mughals, in the Punjab the intellectual and literary fabric was still highly permeated with Persianised forms in all aspects. Unlike the ruling class *i. e.* the rugged Misaldārs, who were generally illiterate busy fighting their petty battles, and who could hardly be expected to devote their time to such ungainful activities, the upper middle class intelligentsia who could afford education were well up by their traditional upbringing in the lore of Sa'adi, Hafiz, Jami, Attar and Rumi. All those who rose above the commonality conformed to the established Persianised literary trends.

3. Growth of Punjabi Literature

Irrespective of scanty official patronage the growth of Punjabi literature a century earlier (1708-1799) was multifarious. Poets and bards, and writers composed their works irrespective of social decadence and political confusion. Their early exercises had little originality and they adopted Persianised forms both in prose and poetry. For the Punjabi writers the guidelines were the Persian works on Hindu religion, and the current Punjabi legends and folklore. Thus in 1748, the well-known *Razmnāma*, a Persian translation of the Indian epic *Mahābhārta* made for Akbar by Badauni, Naqib Khan, Muhammad Sultan Thanisari and Mulla Sheri in all its 18 *parvas*,¹ was versified in Punjabi by Krishan Lal Khatri. Munshi Jamiat Rai and Parmanand made Punjabi versions of the '*Iyār-i-Dōnish*, a modernised Persian translation of the *Pañchatantra*. Other essays in re-translations of Sanskrit works already available in their Persian versions were the *Purāṇas*, the *Yoga-Vasishṭa*, the *Sinhasanadvātrinsati*, the *Bhagwatgīta*, and the *Rāmāyana*. These translations were the result of an inherited spiritual urge of the new generation of the Hindu Khatri and Kayasth *munshis* now settled in the Punjab and having a fair knowledge of both Persian and Punjabi. They had retained an active interest in the cultural synthesis evolved during the reign of Akbar, which culminated in the translation of Indian religious works into Persian. They had inherited a spirit of uniform elements of Vedantism and Śūfism of the yore, of the catholicity of Hindu-Muslim saints, common Indo-Muslim thought, an interest in comparative religion so well represented in Indo-Persian literature. Yet, their efforts in this direction were a sore failure. The re-translation method employed by them without the knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian philosophical terminology, made their works

¹ For details, see Etche's *Cat. of Persian MSS in India Office*, i, p. 57; and the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh*, Calcutta, 1865-69, ii, p. 278 ff; also the present writer's, *Life and Works of Dara Shikuh* (Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, 1953), p. 196-200.

a mixture of gloss and a flimsy paraphrase. Most of these translations have not survived because of their mediocrity and misinterpretations of texts, and because those really interested in them adverted to the extant translations of higher quality in Persian.

Popular literature in Punjabi based on romantic themes and Indo-Muslim religious traditions grew up in a abundance. Thus the Punjabi poets wrote *Hīr Rāñjha*, *Sassī Punnūn* and *Sohanī Mahīwāl*, classic romantic tales of human love and passion, of jealousy and vendetta, of degredation of human mind and its sublimity, and dire pathos and worldly wisdom. Tales of *Dharmī Haqīqat Rā'i* and *Rāja Gopī Chand* versified during this period reflected some of the social and religious problems of the Punjab. The writers of this period turned to the convenient existing Persian verse-forms and metres, suitably amended to suit local Punjabi dialects, for they had nothing better to turn to. A hazy semblance of an urge to interpret Śūfic and Vedantic thought pervaded their moral, didactic and pantheistic tone, but their simple idiomatic language made them usually understood by the common mass of the people in the Punjab.

Thus, early Punjabi poetry was nursed in the lap of existing Persian script, verse-forms and metres commonly understood by the people. Hamid Shah exercised his pen in *marsiā*-writing, a highly popular subject with the Shi'a Muhammadans. If poetry was highly tinged with Śūfī eclectic pantheism, literature was generally chained to the religious traditions of the time. Historical themes were scant, as for instance an account of Nadir Shah's invasion or Bir Singh's account of the battles of Guru Gobind Singh.

4. Evolution of Punjabi verse

As a medium of literary expression Punjabi verse was extremely popular. It had also wider appeal, for, itinerant professional minstrels and bards transmitted it throughout the length and breadth of the Punjab. Thus Gopal Singh, Sewa Singh, Sahib Jai Singh, and the immortal Bulleh Shah set their styles in the *kāfis*, the *baitis*, the *kabits* and the *dohas*. Bulleh Shah may be regarded as the moralist of the Punjab. He advocated Śūfic thought in common parlance in *kāfis*, which are supremely melodious, highly scathing and admonitory towards human failings. For his pessimism and negative attitude towards life and the transitoriness of the world he set up a new style in Punjabi poetry. He has copiously borrowed from Persian Śūfic lore, yet moulded his expression to popular comprehension in rugged and forceful Punjabi dialect. In many ways his *kāfis* could favourably be compared to the quatrains of the celebrated Omar Khayyam.

Hindu poets of the period may rightly be regarded as the *Bhaktakavis*, as they derived their inspiration from the Braj and immortal legends of the Kṛṣṇa

cult. They adopted the popular symbolism and spiritual zeal from the celestial songs of Radha and Kṛṣṇa. Rasik Lal is the master of this style and its chief exponent. Amongst the Muslims who wrote romantic poetry of high order, Warris Shah interpreted the highlights of mystic thought in popular language.

5. Literature under Ranjit Singh

And although we have no evidence of direct royal patronage of literature under Ranjit Singh, it is apparent that the emergence of the Punjab as a sovereign State did have some impact on consolidating and unifying the existing literary trends. The Muslim poets Hashim, Ahmad Yar, Ghulam Farid and Karam Ali Shah perfected the Punjabi lyrical poetry in the already established verse-forms and metres. Islamic Ṣūfī thought was the main source of inspiration of these pure lyricists. The *ghazal* grew out of its Persianised groove, and assumed a metamorphosed Punjabi form and environment employing Punjabi vocabulary and metaphor. The *qata's*, the *rubā'is*, the *kāfis*, the *dohras* and the *kabits* took a distinct Punjabi shape and a characteristic individualistic style, which was at once musical to the common ear. The lyricist propounded pantheistic thought in common Punjabi parlance, experimental mysticism still dominated the minds of the poets, and its perfect realisation through devotional aspects of knowledge was their chief goal. These verse-forms became highly popular with all classes of people.

6. Love ballads

Early mid-nineteenth century was the age of Punjabi romantic poetry. Various versions of longer ballads of love and romance based on indigenous and foreign legends were composed during this period, amongst them were the *Laila Majnūn* by an anonymous writer, the *Yusuf Zuleikha* by Abdul Hakim, the *Kāmraṇ Kāmlata* by Ahmad Yar, *Rajā Gopīchand. Mainawantī* by Ganga Ram, the *Sassī Punnūn* by Alakh Shah, the *Chander Badan* by Imam Bakhsh, the '*Ajā'ib-ul-Qaṣaṣ* by Muhammad Muslim, the *Rūp Basant* by an anonymous author, the *Hīr Rāñjha* by Warris Shah, the *Sohanī Mahīwāl*, the *Rajā Risālū* and *Pūran Bhagat* by Qadir Yar.

Among the Sikh writers Santokh Singh stands out unique for his sundry works on the interpretation of the Sikh religion and his spiritual biographies, the *Nānāk Parkash* and the *Guru Partāp Sūriya*. The merits of his works have been discussed by Macauliffe, Cunningham and Trumpp.¹

7. Folklore and Legends

Side by side with the evolution of new literary trends was the extraordinary growth and popularity of folklore and legends which have so enriched Punjabi

¹ See generally, Cunningham, p. 54; Macauliffe, i, lxxxvi; and Trumpp-Introduction, p. viii.

literature. Minstrels and wandering bards sang them in towns and villages all over Punjab. Affluent noblemen and Sardars at the capital and elsewhere patronised them. Semi-religious and sacred legends of the Hindus and Muhammadans were recited in verse or performed in the form of plays at various festivals and occasions, viz, Basant, Dīwālī, Dussehra, Muḥarram and Milād-un-Nabī, etc. A professional class of singers or performers, the *bhāt* and the *mirāsī* speedily sprang up. Occasionally Brahman *swāng*-singers and the *bahrūpias* narrated these legends by word of mouth to large audiences at social and religious functions.

The vast mass of versified Punjabi literature based on folklore and legend and characterised by the employment of common Punjabi language and dialect was unencumbered by abstruse doctrinaire or morphological absurdities. It was written in simple Punjabi dialect commonly understood by the people of the Punjab. This literature which grew up was based on heroic Punjabi legends, romantic stories of love both human and divine, tales of sanctified nature or pure hagiology, legends of saints, tribal tales of love and vendetta, mythological stories or ballads adopted from the Indian epics, ogre stories, or of persons wielding miraculous and occult powers. Amongst the major popular legends of the Punjab recorded in verse were those generally current, that of *Rāja Risālū* and *Puran Bhagat*, *Sakhī Sarwar*, *Guggā Pīr*, *Hir Rāñjha*, *Sassī Punnūn*, *Sohanī Māhiwāl*, *Mirza Sahibān*, *Nala and Damyanti*, *Yusuf Zuleikhā*, *Chander Badan*, *Kāmṛūp Kāmlata* and many others.¹

8. Legend of Rāja Risālū

Two outstanding figures dominate the literary trends of the nineteenth century in the Punjab—Qadir Yar and Santokh Singh, and to a lesser degree, poets like Hashim, Ghulam Farid and others. Qadir Yar, a Muslim poet immortalised the legend of Rājā Risālū, the most important of the Punjab folklore. The legend is generally considered as historical and of Poṭhwār origin, Risālū being identified with king Sālvahana. Another authority regards Risālū as identical with Ranbal, a Hindu prince who opposed the Muslim invaders in his native land Manikpur, but he appears to be a mythical person.² Supplementary to the legend of *Rāja Risala* is that of *Puran Bhagat* or Chaturangināth, a disciple of the celebrated Machchandranāth. He is the legendary son of rājā Sālivahana and rānī Achhrān of Sialkot. His step-mother Lūnān, a women of cunning charm and dissolute character, falls in love with Pūran. The step-son categorically repels the nefarious advances of the step-mother, who calumniates him to her spouse. At the hoodwinked

¹ *Authorities* : See generally, *Punjab Notes and Queries*, i, 1883-84 ; Temple; *Legends of the Punjab* 3 Vols., Lahore, 1834 ; Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab* etc. Lahore, 1919 etc.

² Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab*, op. cit., i, p. 124.

rājā's orders Pūran's hands and feet are cut off and he is thrown into a disused well. Guru Gorakhnāth of Kāmruṇ,¹ and universally acknowledged as a wandering mendicant endowed with miraculous powers, arrives and rescues him. Restored to his lost limbs, Pūran becomes a disciple of Gorakhnāth. He too is endowed with miraculous powers, and returns to Sialkot, where he restores the eye-sight of his blind mother, bestows upon rānī Sundrān a son, and refuses to rule the kingdom of his father. He becomes a *jogī*.

9. Legend of Hīr Rāñjha

The classic romance of *Hīr Rāñjha* is the most celebrated and popular romance of the Punjab. It was first versified by Damodar and also by Muqbil and others in the 16th century, late in the 19th century Arif wrote its another version; but its best and universally popular version is that by Warris Shah. Warris Shah is the master of his own style; his verse and thought flows like a clear stream, and his pen manipulates the rugged Punjabi idiom into forceful expression with a magic touch. His immaculate realism has a pungent and sharp didactic tone, and his philosophy of life with all its subtleties has a common popular grain. Warris Shah employs a simple rhythmic and melodious metre and rhyme tuned to Punjabi ear, a common mode of expression in the interpretation of mundane joys and woes, human fulfilment and despair. He speaks of passionate love, jealousy, fire, anger, lust, avarice and spiritual contentment. His long, dramatic ballad written in terse, craggy and idiomatic Punjabi is a masterful allegory; its style is popular for its melody, emotional depth and an intimate knowledge of the habits, customs and common superstitions of the people of the Punjab.

Briefly, the legend of Hīr is based on the illicit love of Hīr, a daughter of a Si'āl Rajput of Rangpur, and Rāñjha, a Jāt herdsman of Takht Hazara, employed in that capacity by her father. The scandalous affair becomes a common knowledge of the locality, and the villain of the piece is Kaidu, a lame character of satanic disposition who considers the conduct of the lovers as outrageous. Ultimately, Hīr is married off to Saida Khera, a Jāt youth, to whose village Rāñjha repairs in the disguise of a *jogī* or a mendicant. With considerable artifice the lovers escape, but are apprehended and brought to trial before a Qāzī, who ultimately lets them off. Hīr's parents suffer humiliation and when she returns to her parental house, she is poisoned to death. On hearing the news of the death of Hīr, Rāñjha also dies broken-hearted. In the *Epilogue*, Warris Shah emphasises the allegorical character of the ballad.

10. Other love tales

Equally popular were the romantic tragedies drawn on the pattern of *Hīr*, and versified in Punjabi language—*Mirza Sāhibān*, *Sassi Punnūn* and *Sohnī Mahīwāl*.

¹ For the legend of Gorakhnāth *vide* the present writer's *History of Nepal*, Hoshiarpur, 1970, p. 44 ff., 61 f. n. 2; also Temple, ii, p. 375; *Punjab Notes and Queries*, ii, p. 390 etc.

Mirza Sahibān is a legend of love and pathos. Sāhibān, the already betrothed daughter of the Mahni Chief of Khiwa, falls in love with Mirza, her cousin, and elopes with him towards Danabad. The lovers are, however, overtaken by their pursuers – the Mahnis and the Chadhars, and done to death.

Sassī Punnūn, another romantic tragedy of note, originally a tale of Sind and southern Balauchistan, was rendered into Punjabi verse amongst others by Hashim Shah in the 18th century. The legend is very well known and popular in the Punjab. It narrates the story of Sassī, the daughter of one Jam Adam, whom the astrologers warn that she would bring disgrace to the family by falling in love with a man outside the tribe. She is therefore placed in an ark and floated down the river Indus. A washerman rescues her and brings her up as his own daughter. The young maiden falls in love by seeing a portrait of Punnūn, the prince of Kach and Makran. Some merchants from Balauchistan arrive and are imprisoned at Sassī's instigation in the hope that their prince Punnūn would come to rescue them. Punnūn arrives and meets Sassī with whom he falls in love and refuses to return to his native land. His father, however, has him carried off to his own country; Sassī follows him and dies in the desert. Punnūn later arrives at her grave which opens up to receive him and thus the two lovers are united in death eternally.

11. Historical Works

Gurmukhi historical works written during the period are few and far between. One of these is Sukha Singh's *Gur Bilās*, a biography of the tenth Guru completed towards the close of the 18th century. Other works of similar nature already described are those of Santokh Singh, viz., *Nanak Parkāsh* and *Guru Partap Sūriya*. While Sohan Lal Suri compiled his *Umdat-ut-Tawārikh* and the *Roznāmcha* of the events at Ranjit Singh's Court, the chief historians of the period are: Bute Shah, who wrote the *Tawārikh-i-Punjab*; Khushwaqt Rai who completed in 1811 the *Tawārikh-i-Sikhkhān*; Kanahaya Lal wrote the *Ranjitnāma*, Amar Nath the *Zafarnāma'i Ranjit Singh*, and Bakhtmal who completed in 1814, the *Khalsanāma*.

12. The Vārs

Early *vār* literature was religious and semi-historical. It is principally represented in the writings of Bhā'ī Gurdas, one of the most revered disciples of Guru Nanak, who wrote his *vārs* in the early 17th century. Bhā'ī Gurdas had such a wonderful grasp of the mission of Guru Nanak that Guru Arjan, according to tradition, was inclined to incorporate his writings in the *Ādi Granth*, but the learned amanuensis of the Sikhs declined the honour in all modesty to let his writings rest for the spiritual benefit and instruction of the faith of the holy Gurus. The contents of Bhā'ī Gurdas' *vārs* and *kabits* are so well described by Cunningham:

"He regards him (Nanak) as the successor of Vyasa and Muhammad, and as the destined restorer of purity and sanctity ; the regenerator of a world afflicted with the increasing wickedness of men, and with the savage contentions of numerous sects. He declaims against bigotry of the Muhammadans and their ready resort to violence ; he denounces the asceticism of the Hindus, and urges all men to abandon their evil ways, to live peacefully and virtuously, and to call upon the name of true God to whom Nanak had borne witness...The writings of Gurdas are, indeed, rather figurative descriptions of actual affairs than simple hymns in praise of God ; but they deserve attention as expounding Nanak's object of a gradual fusion of Muhammadans and Hindus into common observers of a new and better creed, and as an almost contemporary instance of the conversion of noble but obscure idea of an individual into the active principle of a multitude, and of the gradual investiture of a simple fact with the gorgeous mythism of memory and imagination. The unpretending Nanak, the deploer of human frailty and the lover of his fellow men, becomes, in the mind of Gurdas and of the Sikh people, the first of heavenly powers and emanations, and the proclaimed instrument of God for the redemption of the world ; and every hope and feeling of the Indian races is appealed to in proof or in illustration of the reality and the splendour of his mission."¹

Bhā'ī Gurdas raised the *vār* literature to the highest pedestal in the interpretation of Sikh historical and religious tradition, and in the exposition of the transcendental and the mundane in ballads of extreme elegance and sublimity. Later, however, the *vār* or ballad began to be employed in popular language in the description of historical events. It became popular throughout the Punjab on account of its common theme, rhythmic medium, emotional appeal and sectional interests. Thus we have, amongst others, Pir Muhammad's *Chathian di Vār* and Shah Muhammad's celebrated *vār-Jang Singhān wa Faringiān*. This type of literature was also popular in the hills as is evidenced in the *vārs* written, some of which furnish genealogies of the ancient and current heroes viz. the *Vār of Rāja Sonsār Chand of Kangra*, the *Vār of Chauhān Singh*, and the *Vār of Rāja Jagat Singh of Nūrpur and Rāja Fateh Parkāsh of Sirmor*, the latter work being of semi-historical description giving an account of war between the hill states of Kangra and Sirmor.²

Section II : *Sikh Art***

13 Political background

THE CLASSIC COMMENT of the critic of Sikh art that until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, no painting that was truly Sikh could be said to

¹ *History of the Sikhs*, p. 43-49.

² See Temple, ii, p. 133 ff ; 146 ff ; and 457 ff.

***Select Authorities* : Gupta, S. N.—*Catalogue of Paintings in the Central Museum, Lahore, Calcutta, 1922*. Percy Brown—*Indian Painting*, Calcutta, 1917. Archer, W. G.—

exist,¹ is partially correct for historical reasons. The rude and warlike barons of the Misal period had neither inherited any aesthetic traditions from their forebears nor had they any time to cultivate love or patronage of fine arts. Towards the closing decades of the eighteenth century little of the creative impulse of the Indo-Muslim or Mughal art and architectural styles had survived in northern India. The Afghan power which had shakily gripped this part of the sub-continent offered no equal or even an inferior heritage in art or letters which could attract or counterbalance the fast-decaying literary, artistic or architectural values and styles set up by the Mughal rule in higher social circles. There being no inflow of men of letters and artists in the wake of Afghan Ghāzīs, whose depredations shook up political and intellectual fabric of the Punjab, a vacuum was created in which art and architecture sorely declined and their existing values became effete and decadent.

The Sikh confederacies which rose to meet the Afghan political challenge confined their concerted activities to overthrow and expel Afghan power from northern India. Engaged in a war of survival, they had little time to cultivate arts of peace. When they had carved out their petty kingdoms on the ruins of Abdali's empire in India, the Sikh Misals were confronted with a new threat of extinction posed by Ranjit Singh, who had salvaged the Punjab from the weak and confused thralldom of an effete feudalistic political structure, internally torn by the mutual jealousies and intrigues of the Sardars.

And if the Misal period could rightly be regarded as totally barren in so far as art and literature were concerned, the new master of the Punjab, had not much reverence for their promotion. He was a soldier and a warrior. Sword and horse were objects of his adoration. With these he had created his kingdom. Traditionally or temperamentally he had not inherited any love or devotion for art and literature. Hence during the early period of his reign we hear of no men of letters, artists or sculptors at Lahore. Local painters and writers, devoid of court patronage ploughed their lonely furrow as best as they could. A few of their works executed during this period half-heartedly show their bafflement.

Paintings of the Sikhs, London, 1966 ; *Kangra Painting*, London, 1952. Harding, C.—*Recollections of India*, London, 1847. Havel, E. B.—*Indian Sculpture and Painting*, Oxford, 1916. Soltykoff, A.—*Indian Scenes and Characters*, London, 1859. Coomaraswamy, A. K.—*Rajput Painting*, Oxford, 1916, i. Eden, Emily.—*Portraits of Princes and People of India*, London, 1844. Gray, B.—*Art of India and Pakistan* London, 1950 French, J. C.—*Himalayan Art*, Oxford, 1931. *Descriptive List of Paintings etc. in the Punjab State Archives*, Patiala, 1970. Art Journals *Rupam*, iii, 12 ; and *Marg*, vii, 2 ; viii, 3 ; x, 2. Besides the works (See *Bibliography*) of Barr, Osborne, Macgregor, Jacquemont, Orlich, Hugel and others.

¹ Archer, *Paintings of the Sikhs*, London, 1966, p. 18.

14. Kangra art

In the hills of the Punjab, however, art flourished copiously at Kangra which was the main centre of painting, and Guler and Nurpur artists were the main exponents of a new hill Rajput style. Kangra and Guler artists were sustained by the generous patronage of the hill Chiefs; they interpreted Rajput culture and Hindu mythology which found favour in the hills.

With the Sikh advance in the hills during the early eighteenth century, and the ultimate subjugation of Kangra in 1809, and annexation of Kotla, Guler and Nurpur two years later, these independent hill States became subservient to Lahore authority. In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, therefore, hill artists attracted by the glamour and splendour of the Maharaja's Court, drifted towards the plains—Lahore, Amritsar and even to Delhi. But the El Dorado of hill artists' dream—Lahore, proved to be a wasteland. The cumulative effect of the Sikh conquest of Kangra, Nurpur and Guler was catastrophic for the hill art; its verdant sapling of luxuriant growth sorely wilted in the plains for want of care and nourishment. It is an admitted fact that Guler and Nurpur painting when descended from the height of the hills to the plains lost its vigour, and became effete and unimaginative on account of severe jolts of adaptations of new styles and themes in the Punjab. And yet, notwithstanding its steady decline, the hill artists of Lahore and Amritsar evolved the Sikh-inspired art of the Punjab plains. The Guler and Nurpur painters adopted new styles in the plains conforming to the Sikh subjects, and they were chiefly responsible for the introduction of popular Hindu mythology in the early Sikh art.¹

15. Ranjit Singh's aversion

Travellers to the Court of the Maharaja of Lahore make no reference to the patronage of art at Lahore—at least none of the local painters seems to have received gainful employment at the Court. Baron Von Hugel testifies to the little interest evinced by the Maharaja in art. When Ranjit Singh asked Hugel's fellow traveller Vigne as to what was his occupation, the latter replied that he was a painter. The Maharaja, observes Hugel, did not seem to comprehend how art so little esteemed by himself, could be the occupation of a European!² Without royal patronage the artists newly arrived in the plains found no incentive to drive their imagination for so little requited labour.

¹ On the decline of the hill art in the plains, *vide.* generally, Gray, B.—*Art of India and Pakistan*, London, 1950, p. 103 ff; Randhawa, M. S.—*Marg* (1954), vii, No. 3, 21-36; Goetz H.—*Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* (1947), i, p. 40 etc.

² Vigne, G. T.—*A Personal Narrative of a Visit to Ghazni, Kabul etc.*, London, 1840, p. 274.

One ostensible reason for such negative attitude could be Ranjit Singh's personal aversion to being painted on account of his unprepossessing looks. He had a highly pock-marked face, was one-eyed, and possessed an unattractive appearance. He exhibited a marked aversion to being portrayed. When requested by Vigne to give him a sitting, he sent to his residence a white Arabian camel belonging to his favourite *rājā* Hira Singh for exercising his talents.¹ However, by constant supplications he was able to persuade the Maharaja for a sitting. There is no trace of the original portrait of the Maharaja drawn by Vigne, but we still have a full face lithograph of Ranjit Singh after a drawing by him in March 1837 in the India Office Library. This portrait is amongst the best ever drawn of Ranjit Singh, of great simplicity of design and pure elegance. Ranjit Singh is shown wearing an unusually large turban over his forehead and a padded Punjabi tunic; a single pearl necklace around his neck and a white handkerchief in his hand. He has a square contour of face, light olive complexion, wide forehead, his right and only eye large and prominent. A grey moustache blending with white beard, adds character to the very expressive countenance of the Maharaja.

16. European painters

Ranjit Singh had no personal use of the hill artists who had come down to the plains and hovered around his Court for royal patronage. So marked was his sensivity to being portrayed that with the exception of Vigne, we have no record that he condescended to sit for any local or foreign artist. Foreign travellers, visitors and artists who visited Lahore—Osborne, Honigberger, Macgregor, Von Orlich, Emily Eden and others were well content to draw the portraits of the Maharaja from personal impressions which they gained from meetings with him in the full glory and magnificence of his *Darbār*. As these foreign artists set an invigorating style in Sikh art, they deserve a brief mention at this place.

G. T. Vigne, who accompanied Baron Von Hugel to Lahore in 1835, was an accomplished artist. Besides his classic portrait of Ranjit Singh, he drew numerous sketches on Punjab life, amongst them being the celebrated horse Leili, the favourite of the Maharaja. W. G. Osborne, who visited Lahore in 1838, was a nephew of Lord Auckland. He was an excellent amateur painter. His *Journal* incorporates

¹ *Ibid.* "By persevering in my request," narrates Vigne, "Runjeet at length allowed me to attempt his portrait in full *darbar*. When I first asked him I was in company with Baron Hugel. He coloured, smiled, and replied: 'Tomorrow at Amritsar!' Which was only an oriental mode of refusing, as he had no idea of going to Amritsar. I again respectfully urged the request. 'No! No!' he said, 'I am an old man. Take his picture,' pointing to Hira Singh. 'He is very young and handsome' ... Had I been obsequious enough to have given Runjeet two eyes, he would probably have made no objection; and when he did sit to me, he was constantly turning away, so as to conceal his blind eye."

16 lithograph sketches of the highest quality, which include a classic sketch of the Maharaja with his favourite rājā Hira Singh in an elaborate setting,¹ portraits of Sher Singh, Ajit Singh Sindhiānwālā, Faqīr Azīz-ud-Din and others.² Emily Eden, a sister of Lord Auckland, was one of the most skilled British artists, who visited Lahore in 1838. Her tender and exquisite portrait of Ranjit Singh is very close to the Sikh traditional style of painting.³ Emily Eden's portfolio of lithographs set a new standard of technique in Indian art ; and her Punjab studies were copiously copied by local artists. Her portrait of Sher Singh in all his princely grandeur and characteristic sensuousness is a masterpiece of vivid naturalism.⁴ Macgregor's *History of the Sikhs* (London, 1846) incorporates numerous lithographs based on portraits in water colour drawn by local artists of Lahore. These include studies of Ranjit Singh, prince Kharak Singh, Kanwar Naunihal Singh, the Dogra brothers and others.

Among other notable foreigners who have left us information about Sikh art are Von Orlich, Martin Honigberger, and August Theodor Schoefft. Von Orlich was a German soldier with the British army ; he visited Lahore in 1842 and testifies to the great interest which Maharaja Sher Singh exhibited in art. He mentions that the Sikh Court extended patronage to artists and painters, and that Sher Singh was very fond of having his likenesses portrayed in water colour.⁵ Dr. Martin Honigberger was a German physician who took service under Ranjit Singh. He lived at Lahore from 1835 to 1850, and his work *Thirty-five Years in the East* (London, 1852) contains a fine collection of judiciously selected or acquired portraits in water colour drawn by local artists of the Punjab—of the Maharaja, individual drawings of almost all the members of the royal family, and principal dignitaries at the Court. It gives a large drawing of the Lahore fort with minute details and sketches of great interest from Punjab life.

August Theodor Schoefft, a celebrated Hungarian painter visited Lahore in 1841.⁶ Maharaja Sher Singh and several principal persons at the Darbār sat to him for their portraits. He was commissioned by Sher Singh to draw a painting of the Golden Temple at Amritsar which he began from an elevated terrace in the square of Bhā'ī Gurmukh Singh's house ; but the Nihangs and the Akālīs found him smoking. A clamorous mob surrounded the building and assaulted him for

¹ VAM, No. I. S. 114-1953.

² *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*, London, 1840.

³ *Portraits of Princes and People of India*, London, 1844. Plate No. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.* Plate No. 2. See also her masterly study of Sher Singh—Plate No. 7.

⁵ *Travels in India including Sinde and the Panjab*, London, 1845, i, p. 206.

⁶ For Schoefft's career as a painter at the Lahore Darbār, see Honigberger-*Thirty-five Years in the East*, p. 171 ff. ; W. Foster—*Some European Artists in Bengal Past and Present*, xi, p. 79 sq.

committing such an outrageous sacrilege. In the scuffle, his clothings were torn off, and stark naked he barely escaped with his life.¹ Schoefft, however, had the protection of Maharaja Sher Singh, and the incident was soon allowed to be forgotten. The Hungarian artist was a genius of adaptation to his environments at Lahore; his keen observation and imagination soon transformed him into a painter of the Sikhs. He assiduously learnt what was best in the local art and he gave glamour to the Sikh style of painting by introducing into it elements of realism, clarity and gorgeousness. He collected materials for reconstructing historic scenes, set up a refreshing style in portraits and group paintings, which were later copied by Lahore painters. Amongst his masterpieces in pure Sikh style in oil are: An oil painting of *Maharaja Sher Singh with a drawn Sword*; the *Dussehra Festival at Lahore Court* in oil, 1841; and the *Maharaja returning from a Royal Hunt*.²

17. Sikh Art

Sans Court patronage the lamp of art flickered at Lahore, but it cast no glow. The Sikh art consists chiefly of portraiture. It represents the characteristic national vigour of the Sikhs in spiritual as well as historical spheres. The pictorial *Janamsakhis* drawn by local artists reflect the spiritual element, while its historical element is adequately represented in the portraiture of the persons who played their ordained role in the political history of the Sikhs. Due to its haphazard growth the Sikh art signally suffers from lack of variety of themes and subjects. The genius of Gurmukhi had yet not assimilated anything approaching harmonic synthesis between the *khat* and the *naqsh*; hence we do not find any ornate specimens of either calligraphy or miniature. There were no architectural frescoes, for, few edifices of note were built by the Sikhs. Sikh murals (*see below*) were executed in a bad style. The richness of colour, brilliancy of outline and sharpness of tone were borrowed from Guler and Nurpur style. There are no landscapes and fewer panoramas drawn with imagination. And yet the Sikh art does not seem to be prosaic and sultry as it would appear.

In recent times some attempts have been made to define Sikh art and assess the relative value of the paintings in the Punjab and the Kangra hills.³

¹ Honigberger, *ut supra*.

² All these 3 paintings in oil are in the Bamba Collection, Sikh Museum, Lahore.

³ See on the subject generally, Havel, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, London, 1909, p. 228 ff. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting*, Oxford, i, p. 25; Archer, *Paintings of the Sikhs*, London, 1966 and his *Catalogue of Sikh Paintings* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, *op. cit.* etc.

A. Coomaraswamy, the celebrated art critic is of the opinion that a group of paintings from the middle of the eighteenth century to that of the nineteenth, comprising mainly of portraiture class belong to what may be called the Sikh School of art. These include the Kangra Sikh Paintings, the crude portraits of the Sikh Gurus produced at Lahore and Amritsar, the fragments of wall paintings within the precincts of the Golden Temple, and some of the magnificent specimens of calligraphic copies of their holy scripture. The theme of the Sikh School of paintings of late eighteenth or early nineteenth is purely religious *viz.*, the pictorial biographies of the Sikh Gurus.¹

18. Pictorial *Janamsākhīs*

The most favourite and popular form of the Sikh art found expression in a series of biographical paintings of the Sikh Gurus. These are the pictorial *Janamsākhīs* of the Sikhs, and the subjects are drawn from religious tradition, popular preceptorship lore of the life and events concerning the Gurus. It is, however, erroneous to link them with the Guler style of art. To a larger extent they are Sikh in conception and design. Guru Nanak is ever exhibited in accoutrements of a *Ṣūfī darvesh*; Guru Arjan with his sword and holy Book before him suggesting the transformation brought about by him in the Sikh faith; Guru Hargobind, a saint and a warrior symbolising spiritual and temporal power—the *mīrī* and the *pīrī*; and lastly, the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, always depicted riding a white restless stallion, a falcon perched on his right hand, with ethereal angels overriding the horizon, a halo round his head symbolising saintliness, a royal umbrella held over his head by a shielded and an armed attendant signifying his temporal power.²

These could rightly be described as the finest specimens of pure Sikh art, pulsating with life and popular religious tradition. And yet, executed in rich colourful setting and background they appear to have the influence of both Rajput and Mughal style of painting, though their ornamental floral marginal designs and gold-ruled borders bear a remote suggestion of the Guler art. A very good set of the pictorial *Janamsākhīs* of Guru Nanak is in the Patiala Historical Museum.³ It depicts the life of Guru Nanak in sixteen drawings—infancy, childhood, schooling, marriage and his miraculous powers. In one of the paintings, he is settling accounts with Nawāb Daulat Khan Lodhi (No. 118); in another the miracle of Guru Nanak is shown to Malik Bhago at Eminabad (No. 119); and yet in another

¹ Six paintings of this group in Sikh-Guler style have been reproduced by Archer—*Paintings of the Sikhs*. Fig. Nos 1-6.

² *Descriptive List of Paintings etc.* in the Punjab State Archives, Patiala, (1970), Nos. 107-124; Archer, *Figs.* 1-7.

³ *Ibid.*

is depicted Guru Nanak's encounter with the *Kaliyuga* (No. 120). He delivers Bhā'i Mardana from the clutches of Kauda demon (No. 121); and he is seen bequeathing a needle to the mythical Qārūn for its delivery in the hereafter (No. 122).

Popular themes from Guru Gobind Singh's life are the reproductions of the stirring events of his life; of the creation of the *Khālsa*, when Guruship was abolished and merged with it (No. 123), and the convening by the tenth Guru of the *Sarbat Khālsa* and the administration of the *Khande ka Amrit* to the *Five Beloveds* (No. 298).

These popular religious themes were abundantly drawn by the local artists and were commercially remunerative; but often these were the work of mediocre men with indifferent quality, but they were executed in pure Sikh style for their general appeal to the common mass of people.

19. Water Colours

The gouache paintings of the period are described as crude derivatives from the later Kangra and Guler style and consist mainly of the portraits of the Maharaja, the royal princes and court nobles. The materials used are principally local; opaque colours ground in water and thickened with gum or honey exhibit skill in the variety of mixtures; the paper used is of the fine Lahori texture with soft surface or thick quality manufactured in Kashmir and Kangra. The Sikh water colours show the adaptation of the Guler style to Sikh themes and though earlier attempts probably made by the hill artists were crude, yet in due course of time, they captured the spirit and imagination of the plains. The grandeur and magnificence of the royal Court, and the warlike character of the Sikhs attracted the attention of the artists; the paintings and sketches of the period depict characterization of Sikh martial vigour in details. Portraiture became the soul of Sikh art. The subject is either on horseback, hunting or hawking, or seated on a *masnad* or chair relaxing or receiving petitions. Others relate to characters from common Punjab life, as for instance, *a Sikh Youth*, *a Courtier*, *a Sikh Sardar*, *a Prince*, *a Sikh groom with horse*, *Sikh horsemen and warriors*, and *the Akālīs and Nihangs*.

The Sikh portraiture in water colour is energetic, rugged and vigorous. It has a sort of subdued realism and an almost oblique approach. Few water colour landscapes were drawn and still fewer paintings with romantic or poetic touch,¹

¹ We have a few paintings in romantic style executed between 1815-1839. Of these notable ones are: (1) *A Sikh Sardar carousing with a Guler lady*; and *Maharaja Ranjit Singh drinking wine with a Kangra lady*—both in Guler Collection, Punjab Museum, Chandigarh. (2) *A Sikh youth dallying with a Kangra lady*—BM, 1925-4-6-03.

or imaginative appeal. They are characteristically Sikh in style and background, Sikh in dress, beard and turban, arms and facial expressions of poise, solidity and depth.

The water colour portraits of Sikh royalty, princes and principal Sardars are executed boldly, having coloured or gold margins, and floral scrolls. They give an image of the grandeur of monarchy, the status of the princely order, and the glamour of the dress and martial vigour as represented by the Court nobility. Some of the famous gouache paintings are enumerated below :—

1. *Maharaja Ranjit Singh on horseback* (1835)—VAM, No. I. S. 282-1955.
2. *Guru Gobind Singh* (1830)—Tehri Garhwal Collection, Narendernagar.
3. *Raja Dhian Singh on horseback* (1835)—VAM, No. I. S. 124-1960.
4. *Youth in Sikh Costume dallying with a Kangra lady*—BM, No. 1925-4-6-03.
5. *Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Darbār* (1830-35)—Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.
6. *The Funeral of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (1840)—BM, 1925-4-6-03.
7. *Maharaja Kharak Singh on horseback* (1840)—VAM, I. S. 338-1951.
8. *Maharaja Ranjit Singh with Hira Singh* (1830-40)—I.S. 114-1953.
9. *Raja Gulab Singh on horseback* (1840-45)—(I) Add. Or. 707.
10. *Maharaja Sher Singh having a bath* (1830 ?)—Punjab Museum, Chandigarh.
11. *The Second Lahore Darbār* (1846-47)—BM, 1948-10-9-0109.
12. *Maharaja Dalip Singh in Darbār* (1845)—(I) Add. Or. 710.

20. Rothenstein Collection

Sir William Rothenstein's Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, contains some portraits in excellent Sikh-Kangra style, viz., *Kharak Singh*,¹ *a Hill Prince*,² *a Prince in Sikh Costume*,³ and *Maharaja Gulab Singh*.⁴ They are expressions of a style in themselves. Their distinctive feature is the Sikh costume, and a fair blending of Sikh and Kangra styles—the subject whether Sikh or Rajput is always clad in Sikh dress and various styles of turbans. In the foreground are floral designed carpets in variegated colours; the subject often leaning against a

¹ No. I. S. 338-1951.

² No. I. S. 193-1951.

³ No. I. S. 192-1951.

⁴ No. I. S. 194-1951.

massive cushion, a large shield at his back and a bunch of flowers in hand. The portraits of this collection and those others in the Victoria and Albert Museum (*see below*) exhibit a sensitivity of detail and strength and vigour of the Sikh style of art.

Some of the most celebrated paintings of the Sikhs are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Apart from half a dozen portraits of the Maharaja, described separately hereinafter, we have a fine painting of *Rājā Dhian Singh on a hawking expedition*,¹ of *Rājā Hira Singh*,² of *Maharaja Kharak Singh on horseback*,³ with red golden caprison, and an umbrella held over his head by an attendant; of *prince Naunihal Singh and Rājā Dhian Singh*,⁴ *Rājā Gulab Singh*⁵ and others. Numerous studies of pure Sikh subjects, generally executed in Sikh School are: *Two Sikh Horsemen*,⁶ armed with lances, black shields at their back, swords by sides and riding together; a *Sikh Lancer*,⁷ clad in chain mail, with a black shield at the back, riding a white stallion, carrying a lance in his right, and a dagger at left side, and also carrying a bow and quiver. Some others show the Sikh horseman with breast-plates on white or black stallion, and in place of a turban wearing a helmet on the head.⁸ These studies show the Sikh warrior, a favourite theme. He invariably rides a horse, wears a mauve jacket and red trousers; he wears a turban or a helmet on his head, a breast-plate on his chest; he carries a lance, a dagger and a sword. His beard is either flowing or tied up, his features are sharp and soldierly. Sometimes he carries a matchlock.

Another favourite theme of the local and foreign artists were the much feared Akālīs. They have a ferocious demeanour, wear a blue turban, and carry a variety of arms—clubs, swords, lances, muskets, bows and arrows; and on their conical turbans sits the awesome steel quoits, on their wrists steel bangles.⁹ Their portraiture is vivid and sharp: "their arms glittered in the light of torches, and the matches of their muskets hung readily lighted."¹⁰

Characterization of the life of the people of the Punjab in portraiture or sketches was quite a common theme. The artist found his subject amongst the professional classes—a mason and a labourer at work, a water-man, a tinker, a

¹ Lorry Collection, No. I. S. 124-1960.

² No. I. S. 115-1953.

³ No. I. S. 338-1951.

⁴ No. I. S. 116-1953.

⁵ Coles Collection, No. I. S. 37-1949.

⁶ Elliot Collection, No. I. S. 479-1950.

⁷ No. I. S. 03534-iH.

⁸ No. I. S. 03534-iii.

⁹ VAM, No. I. S. 489-1950; Patiala Museum, Nos. 67 and 303.

¹⁰ Jacquemont, *Journal*, p. 28.

juggler, a *hakīm* or a *jarrah*, a distiller, a dyer, a weaver, a washerman, a merchant, a foundry-man, a potter, a shoemaker, a matchlock manufacturer, a goldsmith, a bear-hunter etc.¹ He would also draw portraits or sketches of cultivators or Sikh Sardars in various styles.²

21. Artists' *beau ideal*

All factors taken together, by popular tendency Sikh predilection for portraiture found its expression in the artist's preference for historical personages—Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharaja Kharak Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh, Kanwar Naunihal Singh, the Dogra brothers, the Sindhiānwālā Chiefs, the Attārīwālā Sardars, and other influential persons at the Court.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the *beau ideal* of local and foreign artists, and despite his natural aversion to sit for a portrait, he has been profusely drawn in full majesty and royal magnificence. Of his classic portraits is the one drawn by a Lahore artist named Kehar Singh in 1849, now in the South Kensington Museum. Kehar Singh is realistic and has shown the Maharaja as he was. Ranjit Singh is shown nimbate, on a chair, his blind eye is not concealed nor his brown face which is heavily pock-marked. He wears a much elaborate dress and is richly ornamented. Another portrait³ shows him on horseback, attended by an armed escort done in Kangra-Sikh style. He has a golden halo around his head, rides a white stallion richly caprisoned. The background depicts a hillock strewn with flowers. "It is clearly an idealised rendering," comments Archer, "stressing qualities as much as majesty of presence, dignified serenity and grave and earnest demeanour rather than athletic energy and lively gusto which endeared him to his times."⁴ Drawn by an unknown artist, the painting remained in the family of Von Courtlandt who was an officer in Ranjit Singh's army.

Among other celebrated portraits of Ranjit Singh are : (1) Emily Eden's superb drawing of the Maharaja a few months before his death, seated facing right on a cushioned armed chair.⁵ (2) Two studies of Maharaja Ranjit Singh on horseback,⁶ both formerly in the collection of Lord Auckland and painted perhaps in 1838 when as a Governor-General he visited Lahore in the month of December of the same year. (3) The Maharaja sitting cross-legged on a golden chair, in a private collection in London. (4) Maharaja Ranjit Singh seated with his favourite

¹ All in the Patiala Museum- *Cat.* Nos. 162-191.

² VAM. Nos. I. S. 488-1950 and I. S. 10, 13, 15, 18 etc.-1957.

³ VAM, I, S. 282-1955.

⁴ *The Paintings of the Sikhs*, London, 1966, p. 118.

⁵ *Portraits of Princes and Peoples of India*, London, 1844, Plate No. 13.

⁶ VAM, *Cat.* Nos 5-6.

rājā Hira Singh.¹ (5) Another, showing him seated on a chair with his minister rājā Dhian Singh in the Archaeological Museum, Bikaner. (6) Another, showing the Maharaja in *khilwat*, carousing with a Kangra Lady.² This painting is in a private collection in Gujrat, and reveals the Maharaja in a new light—drinking wine from tiny golden cups, the silver goblets resting peacefully on the uncarpeted floor.

One of the most pathetic and exquisitely executed painting, drawn in 1840, by an unknown artist is in the British Museum. It depicts the last obsequies of the Maharaja. It is an impressive and vivid painting drawn with details; the elaboration is in grim and awful grandeur, showing the four principal rānīs and seven female slaves (*golīs*) ready to immolate themselves with their royal master.³

After Ranjit Singh's death, Sher Singh is described to be quite fond of art. He gave sittings both to Osborne and his aunt Emily Eden,⁴ and also to Schoefft: numerous portraits and studies of Sher Singh are extant and quite well known.⁵ Maharaja Kharak Singh had about a dozen portraits drawn in water colour, the most celebrated being in the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is purely in Sikh style, showing Kharak Singh riding a white stallion with an attendant holding a dark red umbrella over his head.⁶

The Dogra brothers—Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh have been profusely painted by the Lahore and foreign artists. Two of the most celebrated portraits of Gulab Singh—one painted by Rothenstein⁷ and the other by William Carpenter⁸ are in the Victoria and Albert Museum. W. G. Archer observes that the short-lived cult of Gulab Singh introduced a new style in the Sikh painting.⁹ These portraits were obviously executed when Gulab Singh rose to meteoric power as independent sovereign of Kashmir in 1846. The paintings of the Dogra family are generally related to their connection with the Sikh Darbār both before and after the treaty of Bhyrowal.

22. Decline of portraiture

The exuberence and force of Sikh style of portraiture naturally waned after the extinction of Sikh rule in the Punjab. It had been sustained by the grandeur,

¹ *Ibid.* No. I. S. 114—1953.

² Archer, *op. cit.* Plate No. 12.

³ BM, No. 1925-4-6-03.

⁴ See Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Emily Eden, *Up the Country*, London, 1866, p. 223.

⁵ The most celebrated studies of Maharaja Sher Singh are those by Schoefft (Lahore Museum), another by Vigne (*Travels etc.*, London, 1842), and yet another by Emily Eden: *Portraits of Princes and Peoples of India*, London, 1844, No. 2.

⁶ VAM, No. 113-1953 and also Nos. I. S. 338-1951, and I. M. 57-1936.

⁷ *Ibid.* Cat. No. 25.

⁸ *Ibid.* No. I. S. 152-1832.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 52 ff.

majesty and splendour of Ranjit Singh's Darbār and the principal characters around him. Most of them were dead and gone ; and those alive had neither any political influence and power, and lived without the trappings and glamour of an Oriental Court. The favourite themes of the Guler, Kangra and the Punjab artists having become scarce, the vigour and popularity of the Sikh portraiture suddenly declined. It sought a possible outlet in woodcuts and ivory-disc miniatures (*see below*), and its survival in drawing portraits of lesser historical figures, and attempts at effete and lifeless paintings of landscapes and general subjects on Punjab life.¹ But the zest and spontaneity of the *zarrīn-raqams* and *Guler-qalams* had sunk low. The artists of the later Sikh School lack vigour and incentive after the annexation of the Punjab. The curtain had fallen on the dynasty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. With him had departed the priceless glamour of an Oriental Court, the irresistible charm and the awe of a humane and diversified personality. In the vacuum created, the artists who had sustained their skill in portraiture, in their bewilderment, found little else to draw.

23. Some historical paintings

It would be appropriate to mention here some of the well-known historical paintings of the Sikhs executed either by the local or the artists commissioned by the British. It is, however, a fact that not a single event of the Maharaja's reign, his numerous wars and glorious conquests has been recorded by the artists of the time, with the exception, perhaps, of the Maharaja's meeting with Lord William Bentinck (*see below*) and a gigantic mural representing the famous battle of Jamrud (*vide. infra*. Murals). To these may be added the semi-historical pictorial *Janamsākhis* already described, particularly those executed by Lahora Singh, a talented artist of Lahore.²

The rest of the historical paintings of the Sikhs—lithographs, water colours and oil paintings were mostly executed by commissioned British artists. Amongst these are the famous Dunlop Sketches relating to the first and Second Sikh Wars—the *Siege of Multan* in all its details (Nos. 82-93) ; *Diwān Mulraj and his Surrender* (No. 95) ; *the Battle of Mudki*, 18 December, 1845 (No. 96) ; *the Battle of Ferozeshah*, 21 December, 1845 (No. 97) ; *the Battle of Sobraon*, 10 February, 1846 (No. 97) ; and *the Battle of Aliwal*, 28 January, 1846 (No. 100). Hardinge's lithograph after an original drawing of *the Battle of Ferozeshah*³ is very impressive. Much can be said about the Dunlop Sketches so well described by Rudolph

¹ Various albums of this effete style in Sikh art are extant, but the work executed seems to have utter lack of elegance and perspective. See, particularly the two albums of such paintings in the India Office Library, Add. Or. 1397-151 and 1452-1511.

² Patiala Museum Art Gallery : *Catalogue* Nos. 107-122.

³ *Recollections of India*, London, 1847.

Ackerman, yet their salient feature seems to be the fierce and grim struggle of the Anglo-Sikh Wars. They pay a silent tribute to the warlike resources of a more perfect system of military organisation of the Sikhs than any to which the British arms had heretofore been opposed.¹ They pay the Khālsa soldiery its due for their obstinate resistance, doggedness in the blinding fury of the conflict, which incidently, was confirmed by Hardinge : "the Sikh soldiers are the finest men I have seen in Asia, bold and daring republicans."²

Two very interesting oil paintings of the *Second Lahore Darbār* (26 December, 1946) exist in the British Museum.³ These show Lord Hardinge, Sir Henry Lawrence, Maharaja Dalip Singh and a few Court nobles. Two more in gouache show Maharaja Dalip Singh holding *Darbār*, drawn by Hasan-ud-Din, a famous Lahore artist. One of these is in the India Office Library, and the other, in Anson Collection, Chiswick, London⁴—both are amazing specimens of the later style of Sikh art. In one of these, there is a halo around the head of minor Dalip Singh, who is holding a dog in his lap, and in the other, he is holding in his hands a small musket.

24. Woodcuts

Coloured woodcuts are mostly of post-Ranjit Singh period. They represent the popular expression of Sikh art as crude derivatives from the later Guler-Sikh drawings of the Maharaja, the royal princes, the celebrated Court nobles, the twelve Sikh heroes,⁵ and the ten Sikh Gurus. These were modelled on the standard current portraits in gouache or water colour. Perhaps the finest specimen of woodcut is in the Victoria and Albert Museum,⁶ depicting Maharaja Ranjit Singh holding his *Darbār* in all its magnificence. He is attended by his sons and the principal ministers of State. All the prominent figures are recognisable. The three Dogra brothers—Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh are there ; Dīwān Dina Nath sits at the end of the line behind Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā. One obvious incongruity is the presence of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan of Kabul,

1 Governor-General to Secret Committee, 19 February 1846—BSIL (I), No. 6.

2 Hardinge to Ellenborough, 20 April, 1847—(EP)PRO 30-12 (21-7).

3 BM-*Manuk and Coles Collection* 1948-10-9-0109.

4 (I) Add. Or. 710 and Anson Collection, Chiswick, London.

5 These are : Maharaja Sher Singh, 2. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 3. Maharaja Dalip Singh, 4. Diwān Mulraj, 5. Rājā Gulab Singh, 6. Rājā Jindan, 7. Diwān Dina Nath, 8. Sardar Sham Singh Attāriwālā, 9. Sardar Chattar Singh Attāriwālā, 10. Rājā Dhian Singh, 11. Amir Dost Muhammad Khan of Kabul, and 12. Akālī Phula Singh.

6 No. I. M. 2/16-1917.

and the other, Maharaja Ranjit Singh fondly holding the hand of infant Dalip Singh.¹

The extant woodcuts of the period determine their chronology by the presentations of battle scenes, and characters popularly designated as the twelve heroes of the Sikhs. Ranjit Singh comes after Sher Singh; Dalip Singh has a hawk perched on his tiny fingers; *rānī* Jindan is shown in an unveiled posture, and Sher Singh and *Dīwān* Mulraj are prominent, and so is Dost Muhammad Khan, the Amir of Kabul. Obviously, the woodcuts are the product of nationalistic sentiment picked up by the local artists after the second Anglo-Sikh War, but they represent the popular public feeling of the people of the Punjab.

25. Ivory-disc miniatures

Another popular medium of artistic expression was the copying of water colour miniatures of historical personages of the Punjab on oval shaped ivory-discs. The ivorists were common in Ranjit Singh's time at Lahore and Amritsar, though their full skill emerged a little after his death. They were perfect translators of the existing Sikh portraiture, and though their work lacked originality, it was executed with intrinsic skill and finesse. The skilful ivory workers of Punjab and Delhi began to be commissioned by Sikh Sardars and minor court nobility for copying their water colour paintings on ivory-discs. Water colour paintings on ivory are numerous, but glass portraits are few in number, and are often copies of previously drawn portraits of the Maharaja, the royal family, and the Court nobles. There are about two scores of this category in the Victoria and Albert Museum² and about two dozen in the Patiala Museum³ in sets of miniatures of Ranjit Singh, Kharak Singh and Dalip Singh, of the Jammu Dogras, of *rānī* Jindan and other notables of the Lahore Darbār.

26. Sikh Murals

Sikh murals and frescoes are few and far between. Some of the murals which existed during Ranjit Singh's time have been commented upon for their grotesqueness and ludicrousness. William Barr, who visited the Maharaja's palace in 1839, observed that the lofty archway of the gateway was besmeared with decorative paintings of fantastical designs, depicting the *rās lila* of Lord Kṛṣṇa

¹ Obviously, this illustrious woodcut belongs to a period after the second Sikh War, in which Amir Dost Muhammad Khan joined the Sikhs against the British. Archer (p. 190) dates the woodcut to 1870, which was given by Rudyard Kipling to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1917.

² See, particularly, Archer—*Indian Paintings for the British*, London, 1955, p. 65-68; and *Paintings of the Sikhs*, p. 166 ff. Figs. 96-107.

³ *Descriptive List etc., op. cit.* Nos. 380-402.

in poor taste ; and another gateway embellished with figures of animals and flowers, all in equally bad taste and ill-conceived artistic conception. Describing the frescoes of the first gateway he observes : "The figures are almost all about one-third the size of life, but with proportions as ludicrous and absurd as they can well be. In some the eye occupies nearly the whole side of a face, and in others the head appears as massive as the body. Here faqīrs may be seen with their hands clasped above their heads, and with finger-nails two or three inches long ; there are others standing on one foot, their bodies besmeared with ashes, and their long hair streaming over their shoulders in the most offensive state of filth. Crisna's exploits occasionally partake of the ludicrous and disgusting. In one compartment he is portrayed with a milkmaid shampooing his great toe ; in another, he is perched up in a tree, from the branches of which depend various articles of dress he has stolen from some fair damsels who are refreshing themselves in a limpid stream below, and whose heads and hands, clasped in a supplicatory manner, appear above water beseeching him to return their apparel, but to no purpose, as he is laughing at their distress. In a third, he is dashing out the brains of a man with his club ; and in a fourth, tearing out the entrails of a prostrate foe with the most brutal ferocity."¹

27. Royal "picture-gallery"

The gateway murals, however, have nothing in common with the Sikh art. These could have been super-impositions ordered by the superstitious Bhangī Sardars when they occupied Lahore by effacing the Arabic calligraphic inscriptions which usually adorned the gate archways under Muhammadan rule. Barr also speaks of an 'art gallery' located close to a building within the palace close to the entrance to the hall of justice. The exterior of this small court was covered with paintings of very extravagant description. One of these commemorated the Maharaja's meeting with Lord William Bentinck. Barr comments on this oil painting now lost to posterity : "The parties are supposed by the artist to be assembled in the audience tent, the Sikhs being on one side and the British on the other. The two great potentates occupy the centre of the scene, and Lady William, accoutred in white trousers, boots, and gold straps, is seated behind her husband. An uglier set of vagabonds than the man dubs has made our countrymen cannot be well conceived ; the people who accompanied us regarded them as likenesses, and were eager to point out 'Macnaghten Sahib' the 'Bakhshi Sahib' (Wade), and others, who have only to see their portraits to be grateful."² This oil painting appears to be a caricature of the Rupa Meeting, obviously drawn by local commissioned painters, who had little experience of painting in oil.

¹ *Journey of a March from Delhi to Cabul etc.* Reprint, Patiala, 1970, p. 39-40.

² *Ibid.* p. 57.

Another painting in the 'picture gallery' represented the Maharaja in the presence of Guru Nanak ; the holy father being most splendidly robed in a suit of embroidered gold, and sitting, and Ranjit Singh standing, dressed in bright green silk, with his hands joined in a supplicatory manner. Behind the great master, an Akālī with a drawn sword, keeps guard. Another painting represented a similar scene, with Ranjit Singh in supplication to the Guru on his knees. These two paintings in oil, rare specimens, are now lost. The rest of the "art gallery" was covered with drawings of flowers, extremely well done and true to nature.¹

23. Shīshmahal and Rāmbāgh Murals

To return to murals, in those executed in the *Shīshmahal* of the Maharaja's palace, and his Rāmbāgh residence at Amritsar, or elsewhere in the Punjab, we discover a common Hindu-Sikh theme. These represent scenes from the *rās-līla* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and life-events of the Sikh Gurus. The influence of the Sikh school on Kangra styles of murals and *vice versa* is well illustrated in some of them.² Helen Mackenzie gives us a brief description of the murals executed on the walls of rooms in Rāmbāgh, Ranjit Singh's lone effort in building at Amritsar. These were covered with curious paintings from Hindu mythology.³

Baron Von Hugel, who visited Ranjit Singh's Court and his country house at Wazirabad, set in the midst of a lovely garden, observes that the apartments within were adorned with fresco paintings—life-size portraits of the ten Gurus with the classic comment : "the chief painter of Ranjit Singh's Court is certainly not a Raphael !"⁴

24. Murals in residences

The Court nobles and the affluent Sardars followed a set pattern of murals current at the time to embellish the walls of their residences. These were either the *rās līla* scenes or pictorial representations of the *Janamsākḥīs*, Hindu gods, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Mahesh, the local deities, scenes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahābhārata*. Those of the powerful Sardars not interested in religion in particular, and fond of an epicurian way of life, preferred frescoes of erotic scenes and dancing girls to amuse themselves.

Another common theme of residential murals adopted by politically powerful persons was recording their personal exploits, if any, or those of the Maharaja. These murals, however, have little of elegance of style or finesse ; but were the

¹ *Ibid.*

² French, J. C.—*Himalayan Art*, Oxford, 1931, p. 74 ff.

³ *Life in the Mission, the Camp and the Zenana : or Six Years in India*. iii, p. 58. ff.

⁴ *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab*, London, 1845, p. 210,

products of individual idiosyncracies, whims and bad taste executed by non-descript artists who did what they were bid by their affluent clients. We have the record of such murals in General Ventura and Allard's residence at Lahore in all grotesqueness and absurdity. William Barr was shown the "painted chamber" of the residence of the *firangī* officers in Anarkali, Lahore, where murals executed on lime-coated walls by local artists commemorated the exploits and battles in which the two generals participated : "The perspective of these scenes is most ridiculous ; and at the siege of Moultan the cannons are turned up on end to enable the gunners to load them ! the figures overtop the fortifications, and the cavalry seems to be manoeuvring in the air ; and absurdities of a similar nature are perpetrated throughout them all, and no doubt afford much amusement to their gallant owners whose policy has led them thus far to assimilate their dwellings with those of the native population ; for it can hardly be supposed their taste is so far vitiated as to regard these embellishments as ornamental."¹ Allard's garden house had similar murals—dragoons, lancers, and foot-soldiers etc. though executed in somewhat better style.

30. Nalwā Murals

The finest example of contemporary murals were those executed in the fort and villa of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā at Gujranwala. The valiant general and commander of Ranjit Singh's army, it appears, had a fondness for art, though he had hardly an inkling of what it really meant. To the German traveller Baron Von Hugel he exhibited a portrait of himself which proved that he was a *Nalwā*—a person who had cloven the head of a tiger who had already seized him as his prey.² Hari Singh was a rare man among the Sikhs—well-read and a person, apart from his soldierly qualities, conversant with the affairs of European States of the time and of the policy of the British Government. Hugel also observes that the Sardar possessed a collection of paintings which he showed to him.³

The gigantic mural which adorned his garden villa, representing the battle of Jamrud, was a classic example of the general tendency of the time. It was twelve feet long and six feet high, painted on the back of an apartment. It was divided into two compartments, one representing the Sikh Camp, and the other the Afghan. The mural was amazingly vivid and its extraordinariness is described thus : "The two upper rows tell us the advance of cavalry regiments on either side ;

¹ Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

² There are two very good paintings of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwā in the Patiala Museum : (1) No. 78, executed by a painter named Brij Lal showing him as governor of Peshawar inspecting troops near Jamrud ; (2) No. 272, a portrait as a general of the Sikh army.

³ *Travels*, p. 254.

the next two, of the formidable array of *jinjalls* carried on camel's backs, preceded by a few horsemen, who have already come into action ; the fifth, which is the centre one, displays the valiant Hari Singh sumptuously clothed, and seated on an elephant, with an attendant holding a *chattar* over his head, the renowned Akbar Khan opposite to him, similarly mounted and similarly attended. Below these, are other squadrons of cavalry and camel *sowars*, of both nations, facing each other ; and the concluding line is occupied by a detachment of Sikh infantry marching in regular order to the sound of martial music, with a gun in front blowing a party of Afghans to eternity. The whole skill of the artist seems concentrated on this spot ; for independent of grapeshot, which appear in multitude as the stars of firmament, he portrays with dignified ease and simplicity the muscular power of an Afghan, who is lifting his wounded comrade from the ground with one hand, and that too with so little apparent exertion as to be seemingly a matter of ordinary occurrence with him.

"The same display of strength is exhibited among the cavalry in one of the upper rows, where a Sikh, with one stroke of his scimitar, has severed a horse into two equal portions, which strange to say, inspite of dismemberment, are capable of retaining the uprightness of their position ; and another, of the same nation has, by a clean sweep of his sabre, cut off the head of an Afghan, which is being returned with the velocity of a bullet into the ranks of his wondering countrymen, whose heads and arms are flying in every direction, and are parted by their owners with all possible indifference and utter disregard of their value Nor ought the dignified complacency and perfect good humour visible in the countenances of the two Chiefs, opposed to each other, to be overlooked ; and it would be well if more civilised generals were to display equal urbanity of manner and coolness of demeanour when brought in such close contact on similar occasions, and take example from their behaviour, as depicted by the artist, whose skill is only equalled by his impartiality."¹

This amazing mural with its naturalism and a realistic approach to the famous battle of Jamrud is unparalleled. It is a masterpiece of all the Sikh murals. However, in the fiercely contested battle (30 April, 1937), the valiant general of the Sikhs, Hari Singh Nalwā was killed. The mural, therefore, must have been executed after his death to perpetuate his memory by one of his descendants.

The murals in Hari Singh Nalwā's palace, however, beneath the Sarcenic arches, were glazed paintings on small scale, finely executed. Some of these related to Hindu gods, others to the orgies of the *zenana*, as may be supposed, were by no means decorous in their description. The walls of Hari Singh Nalwā's bed room are described to be covered with pictures of dancing girls.²

¹ Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 73-74.

² J. Wolff, *Travels and Adventures*, London, 1860, ii, p. 61.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1774 Death of Charat Singh
- 1778-79 Battle of Rasulnagar
- 1780 (2 November) Birth of Ranjit Singh
- 1792 Death of Maha Singh : Accession of Ranjit Singh
- 1797 Shah Zaman at Lahore
Perron gains ascendancy at Delhi
George Thomas establishes himself at Hissar
- 1798 (October) Shah Zaman's second march on Lahore
- 1799 (July) Ranjit Singh occupies Lahore
George Thomas invades the Sikh country
- 1800 Expulsion of the Afghans from northern India
George Thomas marches towards Ludhiana
British mission to Ranjit Singh's Court
Ranjit Singh's march on Jammu
The Battle of Bhasin
- 1801 Coronation of Ranjit Singh
Defeat of the Bhangīs
Expedition to Kasur
Reduction of Nurpur
Alliance with Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā
- 1802 Birth of Kharak Singh
Occupation of Amritsar
Marriage with the Muslim courtesan Moran
George Thomas surrenders to Perron
Perron-Ranjit Singh reported alliance
Conquest of Chiniot, Phagwara and Daska
Reduction of Kasur
March on Multan
- 1803 Invasion of Jhang
Sikhs of Sirhind tender allegiance to the British
- 1805 Holkar in the Punjab : Meets Ranjit Singh
Subjugation of the Muhammadan Chiefs of the Jehlum and the Chenab
Last *Gurmatta* held at Amritsar
- 1806 (1 January) The first Anglo-Sikh treaty
The first Mālwa expedition
Occupation of Ludhiana and Nakodar
Muhkam Chand appointed Chief of Army
Conquest of Zira, Muktsar, Kot Kapura, Dharamkot and Mari
Gorkha invasion of Kangra
- 1807 Annexation of Pasrur
Conquest of Kasur
Dipalpur taken
Third Multan Expedition
Second Mālwa Expedition
Occupation of the Dallewāla territories
Birth of (reputed) sons Sher Singh and Tara Singh

- 1808** The Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs solicit British protection
Metcalf's Mission to Lahore
(October) Third Mālwa Expedition
Pathankot captured
Sialkot reduced
Shiekhupura annexed
- 1809** British advance to the Sutlej. Occupation of Ludhiana
(9 February) Ochterlony's Proclamation
(25 April) The Treaty of Amritsar
(3 May) British Declaration of Protection to Cis-Sutlej States
Conquest of Kangra
Gujrat taken
Jammu conquered
Expulsion of Shah Shuja from Afghanistan
- 1810** Establishment of Ludhiana Agency
(February) Ranjit Singh meets Shah Shuja
Conquest of Khushab and Sahiwal
(February) Fourth Expedition to Multan
Annexation of Wazirabad
Capture of Bhimber and Gang
- 1811** Ranjit Singh meets Shah Mahmud
Capture of Kotla
Shah Zaman repairs to Lahore
- 1812** Marriage of prince Kharak Singh ; Visit of Ochterlony
Ranjit Singh meets Fateh Khan, the Kabul Wazir
Sikh-Afghan (joint) invasion of Kashmir
Arrival of Shah Shuja at Lahore
- 1813** Capture of Attock ; defeat of Fateh Khan
The battle of Haidru
Second Expedition to Kashmir
Extortion of the *Koh-i-Nūr* diamond
- 1814** Shah Shuja granted asylum at Ludhiana
Third Expedition to Kashmir
- 1815-16** Expeditions against the hill Chiefs ; Conquest of Cis-Indus territories
- 1818** Conquest of Multan
Fourth Invasion of Kashmir
March on Peshawar
- 1819** Sikh occupation of Kashmir
- 1820** William Moorcroft visits the Punjab
Dera Ghazi Khan occupied
The Hazara Campaign
Visit of Traveller William Moorcroft
Sada Kaur imprisoned
Rawalpindi captured
Conquest of Dera Ismail Khan
- 1821** Birth of Naunihal Singh
Shah Shuja's expeditions against Shikarpur and Peshawar
- 1822** Allard and Ventura arrive at Lahore
Lahore forces expelled from Wadni
Gulab Singh became Raja of Jammu

- 1823 The Sikhs March against Peshawar
(14th March) The battle of Naushera
Death of Muhammad Azim Khan
- 1824-25 Insurrection in trans-Indus districts
Expedition towards Sind
Delegation from Nepal arrives at Lahore
Quarrel with Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā
- 1826 Illness of Ranjit Singh
Dr. Murray at Lahore
- 1827 Fateh Singh Ahlūwālīā returns to Lahore
Turbulence created by Sayyed Ahmad
Sikh Mission to Lord Amherst at Simla
Wade at Lahore
Sayyed Ahmad repulsed at Akora
- 1830 Sayyed Ahmad occupies Peshawar
- 1831 (17 July) The Rupal Meeting
Visit of Victor Jacquemont and G. T. Vigne
Burnes spurious mission up the river Indus
(May) Sayyed Ahmad defeated and slain
Expulsion of the Daudpotas from the Lower Punjab
Alexander Burnes visits Lahore
- 1832 (26 December) Indus Navigation Treaty
Reduction of the Derajat and Hazara
Visit of Rev. Joseph Wolff
Alexander Gardiner enters Lahore service
Ranjit Singh marries courtesan Gul Begum
- 1833 The Sikh-Afghan Agreement
Shah Shuja's bid to recover his Kingdom
- 1834 Sikh mission to Calcutta
Conquest of Peshawar
(29 November) Supplementary Indus Navigation Treaty
Shah Shuja defeated by Dost Muhammad Khan
- 1835 Zorawar Singh occupies Ladakh
Baron Charles Hugel visits the Punjab
Ranjit Singh claims Shikarpur
Dr. Martin Honigberger enters Lahore service
- 1837 Marriage of Naunihal Singh
(March) Sir Henry Fane visits Lahore
(30 April) The Battle of Jamrud. Death of Hari Singh Nalwā
Burnes' mission to Kabul
Establishment of Military Order—"The Star of the Punjab"
- 1838 Macnaghten's Mission to Lahore
(26 June) The Tripartite Treaty
Shah Shuja restored to throne at Kabul
(29 November) Auckland-Ranjit Singh Meeting at Ferozepur
W. G. Osborne visits the Punjab
- 1839 (27 June) Death of Ranjit Singh

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