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Maharaja Ranjit Singh

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MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

The land of Punjab had been victim of perpetual ingress of invaders from the North-West. For centuries, it suffered the ignominy of plundering, pillaging, mass scale genocide, cruelty of the alien forces who robed it of all its mighty glory. Incessant plunderings by the likes of Ahmed Shah Abdali and Mughals much before him had not only weakened the coffers of the natives but had also affected their will to resist. One such person who arrested the ever increasing decline of the state, who ruled on the minds of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike, who established a reign of peace and removed the fear of invaders from the minds of population was Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was born on 13th November 1780 at Gujranwala in the house of S. Mahan Singh Shukarchakia and Mai Raj Kaur. Mai Raj Kaur was the daughter of the king of Jind. She was also known by the name of 'Malwain'.

The Lineage. The elders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were brave warriors who had earned fame and high position in Punjab by virtue of their exploits, ability and bravery. Having occupied a large area of Punjab, they had established their own *misl* (confederacy) by the name of Shukarchakia. This *misl* was established by great grand father of Ranjit Singh. His name was Budha Singh (Budh Singh). S. Budha Singh participated in many *Dharam Yudhs* (religious battles) as head of the *Khalsa Dal*. He had more than forty marks of wounds on his body received in various battlefields.

S. Budha Singh died in 1718. He had two sons—S. Chanda Singh and S. Naudh Singh. Both brothers won

many battles and expanded their territorial jurisdiction from what was left by their father. The Sandhawalia dynasty of Raja Sansi were the descendents of S. Chanda Singh. Sardar Naudh Singh was great grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was a courageous and a brave Sikh. He participated in many battles against Ahmad Shah Abdali as part of the force headed by S. Kapur Singh. He was the leading *Sardar* amongst the leaders of the *misls*.

S. Naudh Singh died fighting Pathans in 1752. His son named Charhat Singh was born in 1721. As he grew up, he became famous as a brave, courageous and valliant person beside being a benevolent Sikh. He achieved many significant victories along with the leaders of *Khalsa Dal* and earned name and fame for himself. During the two holocausts, he led the *Khalsa Dal* with panache, bravery and intelligence. He took over much territory from the Muslim of foreign origin and brought it under his control. He died in 1774 during a battle when his own gun had burst.

S. Mahan Singh was the son of S. Charhat Singh. He was born in 1760. At the tender age of fourteen, S. Mahan Singh took over the command of the *misl* and discharged his duties to perfection. He too annexed much territory after defeating the muslim rulers/nawabs. During one of the battles, he fell seriously ill and handed over the command of his *misl* to his twelve year old son—Ranjit Singh, and returned home to Gujranwala. He died in 1792.

Birth and Childhood—Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was born on 13th November 1780. He was named Budh Singh by his mother. His father S. Mahan Singh received the news of the birth of his son when

he was returning after winning a campaign. To commemorate his victory, he named his son as Ranjit Singh. He became famous by this very name.

For the religious education of his only son, he engaged a *Granthi* of a government *Dharamshâlâ*. At the same time, adequate arrangements were made to train him in horse riding, swimming, weapon training and other physical fitness. He was very fond of horse riding and weapon training. Therefore he achieved proficiency in both these disciplines at a very young age. He could ride the horse the whole day without getting tired. He could wield the sword with such deftness that used to surprise many elders. He started going to the battlefield with his father at a very young age. In one of the battle, he was surprised by a Pathan with an attack. He was not more than ten years at that time. He was just not scared. With one slash of the sword, he brought the head of the Pathan rolling on the ground. S. Mahan Singh and other soldiers were very pleased to see this unique feat by a ten years old. Once when S. Mahan Singh fell seriously ill during a battle, he handed over the command of the battle to Ranjit Singh and went away to Gujranwala. Ranjit Singh performed his duty with elain and won the battle. Before his death, Mahan Singh received the news of this victory. He was immensely pleased. He was now sure that his son would follow the footsteps of his elders and expand his regime and area of influence.

Leadership of the Misl. After the death of his father, Ranjit Singh took over the reigns of his father's *misl* at the age of twelve years. Since he was very young and not well versed with the intricacies of administration, both Sardar Dal Singh and Diwan Lakhpat Rai managed the affairs of the

state according to the directions from Sardarni Raj Kaur. In 1798, Diwan Lakhpat Rai died. Sardarni Raj Kaur, mother of Ranjit Singh also expired during this period. He was now 18 years old. So he took over the mantle of the *misl/Raj* in his own hands.

In this task, he was fortunate to receive the help of another very intelligent woman. She was his mother-in-law, Rani Sada Kaur who was the leader of *Kanaihya misl*. Her daughter Mehtab Kaur was married to Ranjit Singh in 1795. By the wise counselling of Sada Kaur, Ranjit Singh progressed and prospered a lot.

Marriage and Issue

1. As described above, Ranjit Singh's first marriage took place with Mehtab Kaur in 1795. She was daughter of S. Gurbaksh Singh and grand daughter of S. Jai Singh of *Kanaihya Misl*. This marriage was solemnised at Batala. She gave birth to Maharaja Sher Singh and Kanwar Tara Singh. She died in 1813.

2. His second marriage took place with Datar Kaur, daughter of S. Ram Singh Nakai in 1798. Her actual name was Raj Kaur. Since the name of Ranjit Singh's mother was also Raj Kaur, therefore her name was changed to Datar Kaur. She gave birth to Maharaja Khark Singh, the eldest son of the Maharaja. Maharaja Sahib used to address her as 'Nakain'. She died in 1818.

3. His third marriage took place with Jind Kaur, daughter of S. Manna Singh Aulakh, a resident of village Chaarh (Sialkot). She gave birth to Maharaja Dalip Singh. After annexing Punjab, the Britishers imprisoned her in

Sheikhupura and then in Chunar in (Uttar Pardesh). She escaped to Nepal in the disguise of a beggar woman. She stayed there honourably. Her son Dalip Singh had been taken away to England by the Britishers. In 1861, she reached England to meet him. She died there in 1891.

4. His fourth marriage took place in 1811 with the widow of Sardar Sahib Singh, a landlord of Gujarat. Her name was Rattan Kaur. She gave birth to Kanwar Multan Singh.

5. The fifth marriage of the Maharaja took place with Daya Kaur. She gave birth to Kanwar Kashmira Singh and Kanwar Peshora Singh. She died in 1843.

Occupation of Lahore. After taking over the command of his *misl* and the reign of his territory, Ranjit Singh realised that most of the area of Punjab was in the occupation of *misls* who were functioning independently. They were fighting with each other. Factionalism was rampant among them. Some areas like Multan and Kasur were under the rule of alien Muslims. Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not like this division and in-fightings of Sikh *misls*. So he decided to remove the division and factionalism and establish one rule in the Punjab. Such a state should have peace, prosperity and unity among them. So he kept this objective before himself and started working towards its fulfillment.

Soon after the first marriage of the Maharaja Sahib, his mother-in-law needed his help. S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia started ingressing into the territory of Kanaihiya *misl*. So Maharaja Ranjit Singh reached Batala at the head of a column of troops. On his way, he stayed at Lahore for two days. Lahore was in the hands of Bhangi *Sardars*. This is

when he saw the fort of Lahore and developed a desire to occupy it. Without doing so, it was impossible to bring the whole of Punjab under one flag.

Invasions of Shah Zaman. Shah Zaman, grandson of Ahmed Shah Abdali became the king of Kabul in 1783. Like his grandfather, he too decided to invade India repeatedly. He came to India in 1793 for the first time and in 1795 for the second time. But due to internal disturbances in his kingdom and after facing defeat at the hands of the *Khâlsâ*, he did not come beyond Panja Sahib. In 1796 he invaded for the third time. On reaching Panja Sahib, he wrote a letter to the heads of the *misls* including S. Ranjit Singh to accept defeat and subjugation. The *Khâlsâ* replied that they were prepared to fight. With great enthusiasm and speed, he reached Lahore. After occupation of Lahore, he headed towards Amritsar where the *Khâlsâ* army was waiting in full preparation. A pitched battle took place in which Shah Zaman absconded after a crushing defeat.

In 1798, he attacked India for the fourth time. Fighting his way, he reached Lahore and occupied it. S. Ranjit Singh and some other *Sardars* attacked Lahore. Frightened, Shah Zaman took up positions in the fort. *Khâlsâ* army encircled the fort from all directions and blocked all routes that would help providing logistic support to the forces inside the fort. The *Khâlsâ* army tightened the noose on Shah Zaman and caused much hardship to him. Much peeved, he decided to come out and face the Sikhs in the open field.

An interesting incident of this time is worth narrating, that establishes how brave and courageous was Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When Shah Zaman was bottled up in the fort of

Lahore, Maharaja Ranjit Singh took some Singhs with him and came close to the fort three times. On reaching 'Samman Burj' where Shah Zaman was staying, they fired shots and then Ranjit Singh shouted loudly—"O grand son of Ahmad Shah, the grand son of S. Charhat Singh has come to meet you. Come out if you have the courage." He made this challenging cry thrice but Shah Zaman kept quiet. Soon after, he returned to his country.

Occupation of Lahore. Soon after the return of Shah Zaman, the *Sardars* of Bhangi *misl* re-occupied the city of Lahore. All the three *Sardars* namely S. Sahib Singh, Chet Singh and Mohar Singh used to fight with each other. The administration of the city had deteriorated. The population was much peeved. No one cared about the protection and defence of the city. Appreciating the situation, Nawab Nizam Din of Kasur decided to attack Lahore and capture it. Although the people of Lahore were much distressed by the behaviour of the Sikh *Sardars*, yet they considered the Nawab of Kasur as worst adversity. They had also heard the glory and fame of Ranjit Singh. His subjects were happy, prosperous and living in peace. They were sure that the city will become more fortunate if Ranjit Singh becomes the ruler of Lahore. No one like the Nawab of Kasur would dare threaten it beside it becoming rich and prosperous. So some leading personalities of the city like Hakim Hakam Rai, Mian Mohkam Din, Mian Mohammad Barkar, Mian Mohammad Tahir, Mian Ashiq Mohammad, Bhai Gurbaksh Singh etc wrote a petition letter to Ranjit Singh requesting him to take over Lahore.

As it is, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was looking for a similar opportunity. Yet he did not want to act in haste. He sent

Quazi Abdul Rehman, a trusted official of his *darbar* to Lahore to carryout an on the spot appreciation of the situation. At the same time, he himself went to Batala to consult his mother-in-law—Rani Sada Kaur. She counselled him in favour of occupation of Lahore. She also agreed to extend her help in this venture. Both collected an army of 25,000 each and set out towards Lahore. On reaching Lahore, they camped in the garden of Wazir Khan where Museum is located these days.

Ranjit Singh divided his army into two groups. One group was placed under Rani Sada Kaur and it attacked from Delhi Gate side. With the second group, Ranjit Singh started advancing from Luhari Gate side. The Bhangi *Sardar* could not face the onslaught. Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh absconded the city while Chet Singh hid himself in the fort. On a pre-fixed signal, by Mian Mohkam Din, the gates of the city were opened soon. S. Chet Singh vacated the fort.

Thus Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore on 7th July 1799. The residents of the city celebrated the occasion. A just rule had been established and the people heaved a sigh of relief.

S. Chet Singh accepted superemacy of Ranjit Singh. He was treated kindly. He was awarded a handsome *Jagir*. Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh, the two other *Bhangi Sardars* joined hands with *Sardar* Jodh Singh Ramgarhia and Nawab Nizam Din of Kasur in order to re-occupy Lahore. A pitched battle fought at a place called Bhasin brought out Ranjit Singh victorious. He was magnanimous to grant handsome *Jagirs* to both Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh. Many other *Sardars* who accepted defeat were also rewarded with *Jagirs*.

Invasion of Jammu. Soon after, Ranjit Singh invaded Jammu. He conquered Mirowal and Narowal on the way. The king of Jammu accepted defeat. He made an offering of twenty thousand rupees and an elephant. On his return journey, Ranjit Singh occupied Sialkot and Dilawargarh.

Sensing the ever increasing influence of Ranjit Singh the Britishers sent Yusuf Ali Khan to Lahore as their ambassador. He carried many gifts as good will gesture. He was extended much honour and welcomed the sentiments of friendship of the Britishers.

Title of Maharaja. On the Baisakhi day of 1801, a big gathering took place inside Lahore fort. Many Hindu, Muslim and Sikh Rajas and Sardars from Punjab attended the *Darbar*. After making a supplication (Ardâs) to the Almighty according to the Sikh traditions, Ranjit Singh sat on the royal throne. Baba Sahib Singh Bedi applied the *Raj-Tilak* (consecration mark of kingship) to him. He was unanimously honoured with the title of Maharaja. Prayers were held in the mosque, temples and Gurudawaras of the city. It was a time of rejoicing for the residents of the city who observed '*deepmala*' for three consecutive days.

Orders were issued to release coins. The mint produced coins of gold and silver. The Maharaja named the coin as Nanakshahi. Instead of his name, he engraved the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Whatever number of coins were minted on the first day were distributed in charity.

Common Punjabi Rule. Now Maharaja paid particular attention to the administration of the city. For managing the

affairs of the state, merits of a person were considered. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were all given equal opportunities. The city was divided into *Mohallâs* (Segments or Avenues) and a *Chaudhary* (Person incharge) was appointed for every *Mohallâ*. Muslims discords were settled according to *Sharah*. Quazi Nizâm-ud-Din was appointed the principal Quazi of Lahore. Saadulla Chishti and Mohammad Shah Mufti were appointed as magistrates under him. A charitable hospital was opened in the city. This was placed under the care of Fakir Noor-ud-Din, brother of Fakir Aziz-ud-Din. To maintain peace in the city and provide protection to the assets of the people, police force was raised. Imam Baksh was appointed as *Kotwal* of the city. Schools, temples and mosques were given liberal donations. *Panchayats* were established in the villages who were entrusted with the responsibilities of resolving disputes as well as administer the local affairs. Separate code of conduct was framed for the officials. It was a directive issued to the officials that they will keep the welfare of the people as their primary concern. Thus Maharaja Ranjit Singh established a common rule of Punjabis in the Punjab. It was his strong desire that such a rule should get established in the whole of Punjab.

Political State of Punjab. Maharaja Ranjit Singh wanted to bring the entire Punjab under one rule. It was a difficult task. The Punjab was divided into number of small states. Central Punjab, *Main Doab* and *Malwa* were under the rule of *misls Sardars*. All of them were at daggers drawn with each other. They were very envious of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Kasur, Multan, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Kohat, Tank, Attock, Kashmir and Bahawalpur were under the muslim rule. Jammu, Kangra, Mandi, Suket, Basoli, Kulu

and other hill states were under the Rajput chiefs. The Britishers were a strong force in the East of Punjab. They were keen to annexe Punjab into their kingdom. He was surrounded by opponents from all sides. Despite their presence, Maharaja Ranjit Singh succeeded in establishing his mighty empire. Although he could not succeed in uniting the whole of Punjab, he brought the spirit of being Punjabis into the minds of the people and thus a feeling of brotherhood.

Unity Efforts. In order to achieve his aim, the first thing that the Maharaja did was to take possession of small hemlets under *Sardars* and *Misaldars*. These *Sardars* and *Misaldars* were granted adequate *Jagirs*. In 1802, he occupied Amritsar and granted *Jagirs* to Bhangji *Sardars*. Secondly, he befriended the strong *misls* and removed misunderstandings amidst them. He brought Kanaihya and Nakai *misls* close to him by marrying into their families. He established brotherhood with Sardar Fateh Singh, leader of the Ahluwalia *misl* by exchanging his turban with him. He had the disputes between Nabha and Patiala settled and made them his own and each others friend. To establish his honourable intentions in their mind, he gave away a part of his won territory to Maharaja Jind and Nabha. Similarly, Phagwara and areas around it was won by him and handed over to S. Fateh Singh of Kapurthala. By such efforts, the Maharaja Sahib consolidated the broken and scattered strength of the Sikhs.

Occupation of Pathan Territory. Some part of this consolidation was still left. There was much territory in North-West Punjab that had been under the rule of Pathans.

Maharaja now decided to win these territories and bring them under his rule by annexing them with Punjab. This was necessary to establish a just and peaceful reign.

Kasur. First of all, he concentrated on Kasur which was very near Lahore. It was a state with all sorts of problems. Its ruler Nizam-ud-Din was against the Maharaja. He was keen to take over Lahore but the Maharaja did not let his dream get fulfilled. Then he joined hands with *Bhangji Sardars* and took part in the Battle of Bhasin against Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After sorting out the affairs of Lahore, Maharaja Sahib sent an army against Kasur in 1801. After a fierce battle, Nizam-ud-Din accepted defeat and agreed to pay yearly tribute to the Lahore *Darbar*. But he was very unhappy at heart. Realising that the Maharaja was busy in a campaign against Chiniot, he revolted and declared *Jehad*. Maharaja once again defeated him by sending a garrison against him. Nizam-ud-Din wailed and whimpered and promised to remain loyal to him. The big hearted Maharaja forgave him.

Nawab Nizam-ud-Din died in 1807. His brother Kutab Din became the Nawab of Kasur. He did not want to serve under Lahore *Darbar*. Maharaja decided to end this troublesome thorn from his side once for all. So he attacked Kasur. After a pitched battle, Maharaja overcame the resistance and took over the state. Nawab Kutab-Din was caught absconding. He was given a *Jagir* at Mamdot in Ferozepur district. Its annual revenue then was one lakh rupees.

In 1803, Maharaja won the cities of Jhang and its associated territory and annexed it in his kingdom *Multan*.

After settling the score with Nawab of Kasur, the Maharaja turned towards Multan in 1803. This was the hub of *Pathan Raj*. Maharaja advanced towards Multan. Its ruler Nawab Muzaffar Khan accepted defeat without fighting and agreed to pay tribute.

In the meantime, Nawab Kutab Din became rebellious and commenced *Jehad*. Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan helped him secretly. Maharaja Sahib came to know of it. He raided Multan and Nawab Muzaffar Khan claimed clemency and paid a sum of rupees seventy thousand as tribute. He was forgiven.

Treaty of Amritsar

Advent of Holkar to Punjab. In 1805, when the Maharaja Sahib was busy in his campaign against Multan, he received the news that Jaswant Rao Holkar, a Mârâtha Chief of Indore had come to Punjab after facing defeat at the hands of Britishers. He had come to seek help and refuge. Lord Lake of the British Army was right on his heels. Maharaja Sahib rushed to Lahore and made arrangements for the stay of Holkar at Amritsar. Holkar asked for help against the Britishers but Maharaja said that he will decide after consulting his council of ministers.

Maharaja did not want to turn Punjab into a battlefield for no cogent reasons and at the same times, he did not want Holkar to feel spurned since he had come in his refuge. So he decided to bring both Holkar and Britishers together through an accord. Taking Holkar in his confidence, he wrote a letter to Lord Lake. The Britishers readily accepted the proposals of the Maharaja. Holkar and Britishers signed an

accord. Britishers returned much of the territory to Holkar that they had occupied.

Help to Raja of Kangara. After setting the issue between Patiala and Nabha, Maharaja was returning to Lahore when he met younger brother of Sansar Chand the king of Kangara. He prayed that some of their territory had been taken by General Amar Singh Thapa of Nepal who was planning to make further ingress into their territory. So he sought help and protection from the Maharaja. Maharaja headed towards Kangara with a sizeable army. Amar Singh Thapa absconded without fighting.

States Beyond River Satluj Under Britishers. So far the Maharaja's objective was to unite all the Sikh states and prepare one front that would become sign of a big empire—on the pattern of a Punjabi kingdom with hues of Sikh Raj. He tried to befriend trans river Satluj states like Patiala, Jind, Nabha. Maharaja had made it clear to them that he had no intentions of annihilating them into his kingdom. But a very insignificant event caused much fear in the minds of the trans Satluj *Sardars*. It may be recalled that the Maharaja had annexed the territory of S. Tara Singh Dalewala after his demise.

In 1808, these *Sardars* assembled at Samana. A village of Patiala and decided that instead of joining hands with Maharaja Ranjit Singh they would rather join the Britishers. They informed about their decision through an ambassador who was sent to Delhi.

There was a misapprehension in the minds of the British officials that Napoleon or Czar of Russia may attack India.

So they did not want their relationship to become sour with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They dilly-dallied their decision for sometime. At the same time, they sent Sir Charles Metcalfe as ambassador to the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with a proposal of treaty of friendship between the two governments. Maharaja was well seized with their dilemma. The terms offered by Sir Charles Metcalfe were not accepted by the Maharaja but he made some counter proposals. Metcalfe was not empowered by his government to do necessary modification to the terms and conditions. So he sent these counter proposals to the Governor General at Kolkata.

Maharaja Sahib sensed the danger that the Britishers would take the states of *Malwa* under their control. Therefore in order to maintain his authority over them, he marched into *Malwa*. He established police posts in Faridkot and Malerkotla and placed his soldiers there.

At that time, the fear of Napoleon's invasion blew over. The Governor General sent a letter to the Maharaja that the British Government has taken the states south of river Satluj under its protection. At the same time, they have sent a strong army across river Jamuna via Boorhia and Patiala that had stationed itself at Ludhiana.

Maharaja Sahib felt much annoyed at this development. He started war preparations. He concentrated his artillery at Phillaur. The fort at Amritsar was strengthened. The requisite ammunition was stocked. All Sikh *Sardars* were ordered to be ready. An army of one lakh strong soldiers assembled at Lahore in a short span of time.

But despite his anger, the Maharaja took no drastic step that would lead him into battle situation. He knew well that he was not firmly established as a ruler. He was still surrounded by hostile rulers from some sides of his kingdom. He appreciated the situation and realised that in the event of a war with Britishers, these hostile chiefs may also rise against him. Therefore he kept his anger suppressed.

Treaty with British Government. In the meantime, Sir Charles Metcalfe brought another set of proposals. These were to the liking of the Maharaja. Both sides signed this treaty at Amritsar on 25th April 1809. The conditions were as under :

- (a) Both sides will remain friends forever.
- (b) The British Government will treat Maharaja amongst the most respected powers in India. They will not interfere in their territory North of river Satluj.
- (c) The Maharaja will not interfere in territories South of the river (Satluj).

Political Impact of the Treaty. This treaty had much impact on the political situation of the Punjab. The expansion of the Maharaja's kingdom towards South was arrested. Without much effort, the Britishers became the rulers of areas between river Jamuna and Satluj. The objective of consolidating the Sikh states into a single powerful force as envisaged by the Maharaja was impaired. One positive point that went in favour of the Maharaja was that he was freed from any possible threat from this side. Therefore, he could now concentrate on his campaigns

towards West against the hill chiefs.

The most dangerous effect of the treaty was the chasm of *Majha-Malwa* that had developed amongst the Sikhs. This divide was used by the Britishers to their advantage at a later time.

Wins over Kangra and Attock-Kohinoor

Victory of Kangara. Now that British army had stationed itself at Ludhiana, Maharaja asked his army at Kangra to fall back to Phillaur. With this vacation, Amar Singh Thapa of Nepal re-entered Kangra. The king of Kangra again asked for help. Maharaja headed towards Kangra. He blocked the lines of communications of the Nepal army cutting off their supplies. Pitched battle was fought between the two. On 24th September 1809, Khalsa army took over Kangra fort.

In order to check the frequent and unhindered interference of the Nepalese and plugging the routes of ingress, the Maharaja annexed the area of Kangra in his own kingdom. S. Desa Singh Majithia was appointed its ruler. Maharaja held a *Darbar* in the fort in which the kings of Chamba, Nurpur, Kotla, Shahpur, Guler, Kehloor, Mandi, Saket and Kulu also attended and paid tribute to the Maharaja.

Invasion of Multan. After this, the Maharaja won the states of Gujarat, Bhera, Miani Khushab, Sahiwal, Jammu, Wazirabad etc and annexed them with his kingdom. In February 1810, the Maharaja paid attention towards Multan. Its Nawab, Muzaffar Khan who had accepted paying the tribute on regular basis was now becoming defiant. So Maharaja Sahib reached Multan. S. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia

also reached there with his army. A pitched battle was fought but Nawab was defeated. He apologised once again and promised to remain loyal to the Lahore *Sarkar*. The magnanimous Maharaja forgave him once again.

On reaching Lahore from Multan, Maharaja won the territories of Daska, Halowal, Katas and Khiorha. Then he also annexed the fort of Mangla and other small forts across river Jhelum.

Shah Shujah and Koh-i-Noor. The king of Kabul, Shah Shujah was defeated by his brother Shah Mohammad and was exiled from the country. He came to Punjab for refuge. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was near Khushab at that time. He called Shah Shujah and gave him due honour. He also helped him with money to enable him live life well and also fixed pension for the future. He was also permitted to reside wherever he liked. He chose Rawalpindi.

After sometimes, he left Rawalpindi and went to Kabul. He defeated his brother Shah Mohammad and became king again. But within four months, he was dethroned, imprisoned and sent to Kashmir. Maharaja Sahib sent for his family at Lahore and gave them a house to live in. They were also allotted pension.

Fateh Khan, a minister of Kabul wanted to invade Kashmir and capture Shah Shujah. He sent his Diwan named Godharh Mal to the Maharaja and sought his help. Maharaja Sahib agreed to help him.

The family of Shah Shujah was much worried about Shah who was in prison in Kashmir. They were sure that Fateh Khan would kill Shah Shujah. His wife Vafa Begum

asked both Fakir Aziz-ud-Din and Diwan Mohkam Chand that if Maharaja could arrange release of her husband from Kashmir, she would present the Koh-i-Noor diamond as a tribute. Maharaja Sahib agreed.

Khalsa army was sent to Kashmir under the command of Diwan Mohkam Chand. The army of Fateh Khan also joined in. Pitched battle was fought. Diwan Mohkam Chand took Shah Shujah out of the prison and without bothering about the objections and opposition of Fateh Khan, brought him to Lahore.

When Shah Shujah had spent some time with his family at Lahore, he was reminded of the promise made by his wife. Shah Shujah started evading the issue. He made a false statement that the Koh-i-Noor diamond was pawned by his wife at Qandhar and is not with them at that time. Both Fakir Aziz-ud-Din and Diwan Mohkam Chand were much disappointed. They had motivated the Maharaja to send an army against Kashmir. They impressed upon Shah to fulfil his promise. In June 1813, Shah and his wife handed over the diamond to the Maharaja.

Victory of Attock. The Maharaja now planned to expand his territory towards North-West frontier. He was firmly of the opinion that both Punjab and India can only be protected if the might of the Pathans is suppressed. During the campaign of Kashmir, Sikhs had learnt the tactics and warfare technique of the Pathans and they were convinced that they can defeat them. The fort of Attock on river Sind was the gateway to India for the invaders. In order to save the country against their attack, it was necessary to win and occupy it. The Maharaja decided to go on a

campaign against Attock. So he sent a strong army under the command of Diwan Mohkam Chand, S. Hari Singh Nalwa and Desa Singh Majithia.

When Fateh Khan of Kabul learnt about the attack of *Khalsa* army on Attock, he sent a large army under the command of his brother Dost Mohammad. But before he could arrive at the scene, *Khalsa* army had occupied the fort of Attock. However Dost Mohammad laid a siege around the fort. After sometimes, the *Khâlsâ* army attacked the Pathans. A bloody battle was fought at Hazro. Dost Mohammad was wounded. His army ran helter-skelter. The Sikhs chased them over a long distance.

The *Khâlsâ* army annexed areas of Burhan, and other forts around Attock. This was an important victory. Firstly it brought all territory upto river Attock under the rule of Maharaja Sahib. Secondly, he defeated Pathans who had been invading India unchecked. This victory made the Maharaja very popular amongst his countrymen and a person to be feared by the enemies.

Victories of Hill Areas and Multan

Invasion of Kashmir. In the summer of 1814, Kashmir was invaded. Maharaja Sahib also participated in this campaign. Pitched battles were fought around Behram Gala. Sikh army kept on advancing. They occupied Amadpur and Hamirpur. Battles fought with Pathans were fierce in which the Sikhs emerged victorious.

The rains set in. *Khâlsâ* army advanced towards Srinagar and encircled it. Azim Khan, the ruler of Kashmir, signed an accord with the Maharaja. He sent valuable gifts and

agreed to remain loyal and faithful to Lahore *Darbar*. Thus ended this campaign but Kashmir could not be conquered.

Sorting Out the Hill Chiefs. The partial success of *Khâlsâ* in Kashmir in 1814 made the kings of Rajouri and Bhimber defiant. An army of *Khâlsâ* was sent to settle the score with them. The king of Rajouri took positions in a fort on the hill top. Sikhs took their guns up the hill loaded on elephants and shelled the fort. The king accepted defeat. The entire area was annexed with *Khâlsâ Raj*. Later, he also took over Kangra and other hill territory.

Coronation of Maharaja Kharak Singh. It was the policy of the Maharaja to expose and train his sons and grandsons in the matters of administration to enable them discharge their responsibilities successfully. Under the same policy, he declared Maharaja Kharak Singh as his successor, on the day of Dusehra of 1816. He was coronated as such and vested with many responsibilities of the state.

Occupation of Multan. The Nawab of Multan, Muzaffar Khan had accepted to pay yearly tribute to Lahore *Darbar* but he kept dilly dallying the payment. He was against the Maharaja and could never reconcile to the idea of serving one of his honoured subjects. Therefore in 1817 Maharaja Sahib decided to annexe the state with *Khâlsâ Raj* and end this perpetual thorn from the side of Lahore *Darbar*. In January 1818, Prince Kharak Singh was given command of 25,000 strong army. Nawab Muzaffar Khan declared *Jehad*. Muslims from all sides started assembling under his banner. A fierce battle was fought near the city of Multan. The Nawab lost and took shelter behind the walls

of the city and closed the doors. The *Khâlsâ* army broke the wall at number of places and entered the city. After extensive massacre, they took control of the city. Muzaffar Khan went into the fort. The *Khâlsâ* army encircled the fort and started shelling it.

Ghulam Jilani, a Muslim writer has recorded an eye witness account of the events. It discloses the strong sacrificing spirit of the Sikhs. He writes-

“When the walls of the fort were being shelled, the wheel of a gun carriage broke. The officer incharge firing wanted to continue with shelling for some more time, to break the wall. There was no time to get the wheel repaired. The Commander told his men that it was the time of sacrifice. For the glory of the *Panth*, someone should put his shoulders in place of the wheel. Many young men leaped forward to be first to do the needful, By the order of the commander the volunteers came forward one by one and kept sacrificing themselves. When about ten shots had been fired, a big gap appeared in the wall.

This siege lasted for three months. It was a fierce battle. Nawab Muzaffar Khan, his five sons and nephews, some other near and dear one's were killed. The fort was overpowered in June 1818. Two of his sons were arrested alive. They were brought to Lahore. They were awarded *Jagirs* in Shakarpur areas. The residents of Lahore celebrated this victory with lights and fire works.

Victories of Peshawar and Kashmir

Winning of Peshawar. Maharaja Sahib was well aware of the fact that the Pathans had been invading India

unimpeded from North-West side of India. So he decided to plug these routes forever beside displaying the military prowess to the Pathans. After the occupation of Attock, he resolved to win Peshawar. It was part of the Kabul regime.

Maharaja commenced an expedition to Peshawar in October 1818. He reached Hazro via Rohtas, Rawalpindi and Panja Sahib. To assess the dispositions of the enemy across river Attock, he sent a patrolling party to probe and know their strength. The Pathans came to know about it. They immediately mustered a force of 7 to 8 thousands Pathans and took position on hills on either side of Khairabad. When the Sikh soldiers came within the range of their guns they let loose fire on them.

When the Maharaja Sahib came to know of the event, he was beside himself with anger. He had brought a contingent of boatmen from river Ravi, Chenab and Jehlum. He ordered them to identify the place from where the river could be crossed conveniently. Then in the zeal of revenge and success, Maharaja Sahib said loudly—“**Attock can stop those who have hesitations in their mind. It cannot stop those who have no reluctance in their heart.**” Saying so, the lion of Punjab entered the river on his elephant. He stopped his elephant in mid stream. The army shouted their war cry and entered the river. Soon, they were across the river.

The Pathans were ready and waiting. A pitched battle was fought. The Sikhs showed their prowess with sword. Akali Phoola Singh stood out in bravery and valour. Many thousand Pathans fell in the battlefield. They raised a flag of truce and accepted defeat. Thus the Maharaja Sahib took

over the forts of Khairabad and Jahangirey.

After the occupation of these forts, the *Khâlsâ* army advanced towards Peshawar. When Yaar Mohammad Khan the ruler learnt about it, he left Peshawar and absconded. The Maharaja occupied the city on 20th November 1818. He appointed Jahandad Khan as the ruler of Peshawar and returned to Attock.

Soon after the departure of Maharaja Sahib for Attock, Yaar Mohammad Khan returned to Peshawar. He turned Jahandad Khan out and sent an ambassador to Maharaja Sahib with a request to appoint him as the ruler of Peshawar. He assured his loyalty to the Lahore *Darbar* and agreed to pay a revenue of one lakh rupees every year. Maharaja Sahib acceded to his request and appointed him as the ruler of Peshawar.

In this battle, Maharaja Sahib collected 14 guns, many horses and substantial quantity of military hardware.

It was a significant battle from many point of views. It arrested the unchecked and unhindered ingress of enemy from North-Western borders of India. In fact it brought the Indian forces at the door step of their erstwhile invaders. In the beginning of eleventh century, Mahmood Ghaznavi had defeated king Anang Pal of Punjab and plundered the state. Then started a long chain of invasions. Invaders would come one after the other, plunder the country, capture young girls and boys and take them to their country to be sold as slaves. Maharaja Sahib arrested this evil trend. He re-affirmed the Pathans that those who had always been considered lambs and driven to the slaughter house have

turned lions now capable of making you lick dust. As the Indian people used to fear the invaders from North-West, the people of Kabul would fear the names of S. Hari Singh Nalwa and Akali Phoola Singh. The glorious outcome was that *Khâlsâ* army had managed to create impression of supremacy not by cruelty, tyranny or oppression but by their feats of valour. The Maharaja had issued strict instructions to his army not to plunder the city. No unarmed, weak or non-soldier will be harassed. This victory gave the Punjabis their much needed esteem and self-confidence.

Victory of Kashmir. Kashmir was still under the rule of Pathans. According to the policy adopted by the Maharaja, it was essential to remove the threat of Pathans from the neighbourhood and annexe the territory with Punjab. Otherwise the goad of the Pathans would stay on the head for ever.

Jabbar Khan, the ruler of Kashmir was a cruel and an unkind person. He was very harsh on the Hindus. Even a common man was not too happy. His revenue Minister named Bir Dev fell out of his favour and came over to the refuge of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Maharaja Sahib was very kind by nature. He gave due honour to Bir Dev and acquired information about the internal affairs of the state and also of routes leading to the state.

In 1819, the Maharaja started preparation for annexing Kashmir in his reign. The army was assembled at Wazirabad. It was divided in three columns. One column was placed under command of Missar Diwan Chand and S. Sham Singh Atari. The second was placed under Shahzada Kharak Singh while the third was held back as

reserve under the Maharaja Sahib in order to render help to the column which may need. It would also protect the lines of communication that is essential for reaching the much needed supplies. The army as a whole was placed in the over all command of Maharaja Kharak Singh.

The Sikh army attacked Rajouri. Its ruler Agar Khan ran away. His brother Rahimulla surrendered before Shahzada Kharak Singh, who sent him to Maharaja Sahib. As usual the Maharaja was magnanimous and appointed him the ruler of Rajouri.

The *Khâlsâ* army now reached Behramgaley. The ruler of Supeen surrendered. Zabardast Khan the ruler of Poonch got ready to fight but surrendered himself not much later.

The *Khâlsâ* army entered Kashmir crossing the hills. They were confronted with the Pathan army under the leadership of Jabbar Khan. The *Khâlsâ* army attacked. The stacato of guns, the flashing of swords, the rain of bullets and arrows and lion like roar of the Singhs created a fear of God in the minds of the Pathans who ran away from the battlefield. The army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh entered Srinagar on 4th July 1819 with great pomp and show. The soldiers were instructed not to cause any harm or inconvenience to the residents of Srinagar. The Sikh soldiers exhibited remarkable discipline.

Diwan Moti Ram was appointed ruler of Kashmir. S. Sham Singh Atari, S. Jawala Singh Bharhanian and Misar Diwan Chand stayed there to ensure restoration of orderliness in the administration and life of the people.

Maharaja Sahib celebrated this victory with great pomp

and show. He came to Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar with much offerings to pay his obeisance. He distributed much wealth in charity to the poor. People of Amritsar and Lahore lit arrays of oil lamps in their houses for three nights consecutively.

Maharaja used to pay particular attention to the prosperity of Kashmir. He made special efforts to promote the handicraft of the state. The comforts and needs of the people were paid particular attention to. When he realised that the ruler was not very effective, he was removed and replaced with S. Hari Singh Nalwa.

Kashmir was adversely hit by a famine in 1833. Maharaja Sahib sent thousands of mounds of grain to Kashmir.

Hazara, Nushehra and Other Victories

Tour of Chiniot and Multan. On return from Kashmir, Maharaja Sahib undertook a tour of Chiniot and Multan. At first, he visited Pindi Bhatia and Chiniot. He had a small army with him. Then he reached Multan by boat through river Chenab. He held courts at all the major cities enroute. He would listen to the grievances of the people during these courts and take immediate necessary actions. Even the poorest and weakest person had the right to come face to face with the Maharaja and express his difficulty. During these meetings, he learnt that the people were very unhappy at the hands of S. Sham Singh Pashauria. He was removed and interned immediately. Someone else was appointed in his place.

Dehra Ghazi Khan. Zaman Khan, the ruler of Dehra

Ghazi Khan considered himself under the king of Kabul. To remove this misapprehension from his mind and to annexe the state with Punjab, an army was sent under Jamedar Khushal Singh from Multan. After a short encounter, Zaman Khan ran away. Dehra Ghazi Khan was occupied by *Khâlsâ* army.

Capture of Hazara. During the Pathan kingdom, Hazara was part of Kashmir province. Kashmir had been won by Maharaja Sahib but the Pathans of Hazara still considered themselves under Kabul. They were defiant of Maharaja's authority. After improving the state of affairs of Kashmir, Maharaja Sahib now paid attention towards Hazara in 1820. He sent an army of thousands under the command of Prince Sher Singh with the objective of bringing the people in obedience of the Lahore *Darbar*. Prince Sher Singh was accompanied by Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. S. Sham Singh Atari and Diwan Ram Dayal. The Pathans had also prepared themselves for a fight. In the process of chasing a band of enemy soldiers, young commander Ram Dayal was killed. The Sikhs dealt a crushing blow on the Pathans who ran away from the battlefield.

Hazara was won. Those who were defiant were sorted out. They begged for pardon and accepted surrender. Hazara was occupied and handed over to S. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and his Diwan Kirpa Ram.

Mankera and Dera Ismail Khan. In 1821, a campaign was launched against Mankera—another strong hold of the Pathans. Later on, he himself reached Kundian via Khushab after crossing river Jehlum. S. Hari Singh

Nalwa and Misar Diwan Chand also reached there with their army. The entire army marched into Mankera from Kundian. The fort of Bhakhar was won and a small contingent of Sikhs invaded Dera Ismail Khan. It was brought under control soon. Another contingent of the *Khâlsâ* army took over forts of Lahia, Khangarh, Panjgarh etc.

Then the Sikh army advanced towards Mankera. Nawab Ahmed Khan put up a resolute resistance but had to accept defeat after fifteen days long drawn battle. He accepted to rule under the protection of Lahore *Darbar*. Maharaja Sahib occupied Mankera but granted Dera Ismail Khan as *Jagir* to Nawab Ahmed Khan. This campaign brought an area yielding over ten lakhs per year in revenue into the *Sikh Raj*.

Battle of Naushehra–Martyrdom Akali Phoola Singh. It has been mentioned in the previous pages that in 1818, Maharaja had conquered Peshawar and had appointed Nawab Yaar Mohammad as its ruler to function under the Lahore *Darbar*. His brother Mohammad Azim Khan was ruler of Kabul and leader of Barkazae tribe. It hurt him no end that his brother should live a life of subservience of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Also, the Maharaja had taken away Kashmir from his other brother, Jabbar Khan. This Azim Khan was very peeved and angry. If nothing more, he sincerely wished to annexe Peshawar in the Pathan kingdom. He could only bear the boundaries of Sikh Raj upto river Attock.

In 1823, Azim Khan mustered a very large army and launched an attack on Peshawar. He also sounded the bugle of *Jehad* and incited the Pathans on the name of religion. His brother Yaar Mohammad Khan was the ruler

of Peshawar and he held his allegiance with him. He left the city and hid himself into the mountains. Without any resistance, Azim Khan took over the city of Peshawar. Thousands of Pathans of the surrounding area joined hands with him in the name of '*Jehad*'. To face the Sikhs, he selected Nushehra and Hasht Nagar as battlefield.

When Maharaja Ranjit Singh learnt about these developments, he too sounded the war drums. A column of army was sent towards Peshawar under the command of Shahzada Sher Singh. S. Hari Singh Nalwa followed him. A few days later Maharaja Sahib himself set out for Peshawar at the head of a big army. S. Desa Singh Majithia, Akali Phoola Singh and S. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia were with him.

Azim Khan sent his nephew Mohammad Zaman at the head of a big army to win the fort of Jahangir. The fort had a small contingent of Sikh army. Pathans succeeded in taking possession of the fort. In the mean time, Shahzada Sher Singh and S. Hari Singh Nalwa crossed river Attock and reached near Jahangira. They succeeded in taking possession of the fort once again.

Hearing this news, Azim Khan was highly disturbed and angry. He sent a powerful army under the leadership of Mohammad Khan and Jabbar Khan to recapture Jahangira fort. A fierce battle was fought near Jahangira. The boat bridge that was used by the Sikhs to cross river Attock was blown up by the Ghazis. This was done by them to ensure that no help arrives from Maharaja Sahib to prince Sher Singh.

Meanwhile Maharaja Shaib also reached the bank of

river Attock. He ordered construction of a new bridge immediately. But when he learnt that the *Khâlsâ* army has been encircled by the locust swarm of the Pathans, he decided to wade through the river. He shouted the war cry, challenged his army and entered the river to go across. His brave soldiers followed suit and managed to cross the river.

The news of Sikhs having crossed the river came like a bolt from the blues for the Pathans. They left Jahangira and headed for Nushehra to join their main body. Maharaja Sahib strengthened the forts of Jahangira and Khairabad. He also sent his spies and agents to Nushehra and Peshawar to collect intelligence of the enemy.

S. Jai Singh Atari, who for some differences with Maharaja Sahib had left him and joined Azim Khan, joined *Khâlsâ* army with his soldiers at Jahangira. Maharaja pardoned him and re-instated him on his erstwhile post.

Maharaja Sahib drew out a plan of attack on the Pathans. One group was placed under the leadership of Akali Phoola Singh. He was asked to launch an attack from one side. The second flank was to be attacked by S. Desa Singh Majithia and S. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. The third column under the command of Prince Kharak Singh, S. Hari Singh Nalwa and Ventura was to cross river Lunda and block the line of communication of the Pathans to check reaching of help and supplies to their main army. The fourth part of the army was held in reserve with Maharaja Sahib. He would send it wherever it was needed the most.

On 14th March 1823, an *Ardâs* (Supplication) was made before Sri Guru Granth Sahib during the ambrosial hour

seeking Almighty's permission to launch an attack on the enemy. Just when the army was about to advance, an informer came and reported that a very large army supported by 40 guns have arrived for the help of the enemy. Maharaja thought it would result in greater damage to the *Khâlsâ* army if the attack was launched as per schedule. He was now in a mind to launch attack after his own guns arrived which were scheduled for the afternoon.

Akali Phoola Singh said that they have already made '*Ardas*' and therefore cannot retrace their steps. He proceeded further and pounced upon the enemy as was planned. Maharaja ordered his army to follow suit. Both sides took heavy toll of each other. The field was littered with dead bodies. Akali Ji fought bravely despite heavy attack of the enemy. His horse was hit by a bullet and it fell dead. He mounted an elephant. He was also wounded but kept motivating his soldiers. His body was riddled with bullets and very soon, he died. The Sikh army soldiers were beside themselves with rage and they started fighting more fiercely. At last the Pathans were uprooted and they ran away. *Khâlsâ* army chased them for a long distance. *Khâlsâ* army captured a large quantity of military hardware, horses, camels etc.

The battle caused heavy loss to the *Khâlsâ* but it brought much Pathan territory under them. Secondly it created a feeling of awe and authority on the minds of the Pathans. Azim Khan was so frightened and ashamed that he died on his way to Kabul.

The army was ordered not to plunder the city and even behave unbecoming of a Sikh. This order was followed

implicitly.

Maharaja Sahib entered Peshawar in great pomp and show on 17th March 1823. The resident of the city celebrated his advent and welcomed him with open arms. A few days later, both Yaar Mohammad Khan and Dost Mohammad Khan came to the Maharaja Sahib to seek forgiveness for their past deeds. They presented him with fifty horses of good breed besides many other gifts. They promised to serve him in the future. The big hearted Maharaja pardoned them and appointed Yaar Mohammad Khan as the ruler of Peshawar.

Maharaja Sahib reached Lahore on 27th April 1823.

Disturbance on Border—Maharaja and Britishers

Jehad of Sayyad Ahmed. In 1827, Sayyad Ahmed of Bareilly (area in the jurisdiction of British Empire) came to the Sikh held territory of Pathans. He started instigating the Pathans to revolt against the Sikhs. He took some men and money from the British territory to the border area. In fact he was sent to cause disturbance in the border area of Sikh *Raj* with Pathans. The primary aim was to involve the resources of Maharaja in sorting out and suppressing the defiant and revolting elements, so that he pays scant attention to the other affairs.

Sayyad Ahmed and his companions incited the Muslims on the name of religion and prodded them to rise for *Jehad* against the Sikhs. About forty thousand Pathans assembled under his flag and got ready to revolt.

Maharaja Sahib sent S. Budh Singh Sandhawalia with

a large army to suppress the rising of Peshawar. Two major battles were fought. Sayyad Ahmed lost and escaped into the mountains. After a while, he managed to assemble yet a bigger force and started causing disturbance in the area of Attock. In order to effect his exit from the area, Maharaja Sahib sent a strong army under the leadership of Kanwar Kharak Singh. A pitched battle was fought between Sikhs and Pathans where the Sikhs took a heavy toll of Pathans. The Pathans left the battlefield. Sayyad Ahmed once again took shelter in the mountains.

And yet again, he raised a strong army and attacked Peshawar. Yaar Mohammad Khan was the appointed ruler of Peshawar. He confronted Sayyad Ahmed and was killed fighting. Sayyad occupied the city. Immediately, he issued an edict—“**All Hindu widows in Peshawar must get married with Pathans within three days. If they do not, the houses of their descendents and heirs will be looted. All unmarried girls will be produced before my officials within 12 days.**” This immoral order caused consternation among all in Peshawar.

Maharaja Sahib sent a strong army under Kanwar Sher Singh and Ventura. A fierce battle was fought. Sayyad Ahmed was defeated but he escaped into the mountains. Peshawar came under the *Khâlsâ Raj* once again. Sultan Mohammad Khan brother of Yaar Mohammad Khan was now appointed ruler of Peshawar. He presented Maharaja Sahib with the famous horse ‘Leli’ of his brother. Maharaja was desirous of owning this horse since long. Sometimes earlier the Maharaja Sahib had made a handsome exchange offer of 50 horses and money to Yaar Mohammad

Khan for this horse, but Yaar Mohammad did not agree. When Kanwar Sher Singh presented the horse to Maharaja Sahib, he was highly pleased.

After sometimes, Sayyad Ahmed came down from the mountains and started inciting the Pathans and spread unrest. The ruler of Peshawar, Sultan Mohammad Khan fought with him many times, but could not vanquish him completely. At last Pathans felt annoyed with him and left his side. Sensing not much future in this area Sayyad Ahmed went away to Muzaffarabad. In April 1831, *Khâlsâ* army laid a siege around the fort of Muzaffarabad. In the battle that ensued, Sayyad Ahmed was killed. Thus ended this *Jehâd*.

Maharaja Sahib and British Government. We have seen that the British Government wanted to retain friendly relations with Maharaja Sahib. And for this reason they had signed a treaty at Amritsar in 1809. When Kanwar Kharak Singh got married in January 1812, Colonel David Octarloni brought gifts on behalf of the British Government. When the Maharaja fell ill during the summer of 1826, a British doctor had come for his treatment.

On the other hand, Maharaja was also keen to maintain friendly relations with the Britishers. When in 1827, Lord Amherst, the Governor General had come to Shimla from Kolkatta, Maharaja sent precious gifts for him through Fakir Aziz-ud-Din and Diwan Moti Ram. Both of them were extended warm welcome and honour. Lord Amherst also reciprocated the gesture of the Maharaja Sahib with gifts.

In 1831, the king of England sent five decent horses and

a beautiful coach for Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The same year S. Hari Singh Nalwa, Fakir Aziz-ud-Din, Diwan Moti Ram, S. Dhanna Singh Malwaî, S. Ajit Singh Sandhawaliala and S. Lehna Singh were sent to meet Lord Bentinck. They too were extended very warm and cordial welcome. One day Lord Bentinck was talking to Fakir Aziz-ud-Din. The Governor General asked, "Fakir Sahib! which eye is Maharaja Sahib blind of?" Fakir Aziz-ud-Din replied, "His face is so radiating and impressive that I have never dared look at him straight. So I am unable to tell you which eye is not functioning."

By the meeting of these leading personalities of Lahore *Darbar*, Lord Bentinck felt a keen desire to meet Maharaja Sahib. He sent his special emissary to him so that he could accept his visit. Maharaja agreed. The venue selected was at Ropar. Much preparations were made. The place was decorated at a lavish cost.

Maharaja Sahib set out for Ropar from Lahore on 15th October. On 26th October, he went across river Satluj and met Lord Bentinck. Next day Lord Bentinck came to the Maharaja's camp for a meeting. Both sides extended much respect to each other. By this meeting, Governor General wanted to tell the whole world that there was complete unity between the two sides.

Victories of Peshawar and Ladakh

Peshawar Campaign. We have already learnt that after the death of Yaar Mohammad Khan fighting against Sayyad Ahmed, his brother Sultan Mohammad Khan had been appointed as the administrator of Peshawar. He did

not prove a trustworthy and able ruler. He used to incite the Pathans to create disturbances. In order to remove this perpetual thorn from the side of the *Khâlsâ Raj*, Maharaja Sahib decided to annexe the state with his kingdom for good. In 1834, he sent a strong army under the command of his grand son Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh and S. Hari Singh Nalwa to conquer Peshawar and annexe it with the kingdom.

Pathans converted the city of Peshawar into a fort and gave a tough fight to the *Khâlsâ* army. At last Sultan Mohammad Khan was caught absconding the city in a seriously wounded state. Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh praised his feats of bravery and had his wounds dressed.

According to the tenets of Sikhism, the army had been instructed not to plunder and pillage the city and no citizen was to be harassed. Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh entered the city in great pomp and show. The residents of the city welcomed them with due honour. Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh was appointed the ruler of Peshawar who was felicitated by Hindus and Muslims alike.

After sometimes, Maharaja Sahib also visited Peshawar. He was delighted to see complete peace and orderliness in the city and he appreciated the efforts of both Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh and S. Hari Singh Nalwa. He also ordered construction of some more forts in the area in order to strengthen the border. He encouraged people of Punjab to go and settle in Peshawar. Thus many new villages were founded and inhabited.

When Mohammad Khan, the king of Kabul learnt that Maharaja Ranjit Singh has turned his brothers out of

Peshawar and has annexed the area with his kingdom in all respects, he was very annoyed and distressed. So he decided to avenge the insults suffered by his brothers and re-capture Peshawar. He raised a very strong army and proceeded towards Peshawar in 1835. But Maharaja had worked out a strategy and plans to thwart such aggression of Pathans that Mohammad Khan could do no harm at all. Seeing such a powerful army before him, the king of Kabul trembled. So he played a trick. He sent an emissary to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and said, "I am tired of this frequent battles. I would highly appreciate if both Government can sit together and fix interstate boundary between the two states so that there never arises any possibility of a dispute. It will ensure friendship and an atmosphere of peace between the two states."

Maharaja Ranjit Singh accepted the proposal immediately. He sent Fakir Aziz-ud-Din and Mr. Harlen an American to Dost Mohammad to exchange their views with each other. Violating all norms of peace and war, Dost Mohammad captured both these officials and took them to Jalalabad. When Maharaja Sahib came to know of it, he prepared to launch a big campaign. Fakir Aziz-ud-Din was a wise and clever person. He told Dost Mohammad Khan that his act would become a cause of his destruction, because Maharaja Sahib will go to any extent of efforts and sacrifice to ensure release of his officials. He would then be made to pay for his ill deeds. Realising his mistake, Dost Mohammad Khan released both emissaries. At the same times, he was so frightened that he considered it impossible to win Peshawar. So he returned home.

Maharaja Sahib further consolidated the defence of the area by constructing more forts and improved the administration.

Victory of Ladakh. Kanwar Sher Singh was the ruler of Kashmir. Once when he was touring the Kashmir territory, he reached the boundary of Kashmir and Ladakh. Which is located in the North-East of Kashmir Mountains. He saw that many passes lead from Ladakh into the valley over the mountains. So he appreciated that it was necessary to control these passes to ensure safety of Kashmir. It was possible only if the territory of Ladakh was won and annexed with the *Khâlsâ Raj*. Such a step would ensure safety from any foreign aggression from this side beside opening trade routes with China, Gilgit, and Tibet.

Kanwar Sher Singh placed his proposal before Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He considered it from all angles and consulted his council of Ministers. They all highly appreciated the wisdom and far sightedness of Kanwar Sher Singh and liked the proposal. So, Maharaja Sahib accorded his approval.

Under the command of Sardar Zorawar Singh, Kanwar Sher Singh sent a force of 8000 strong men. Climbing over the treacherous hills, this army reached Iskardu. The Ladakhi soldiers fought bravely. They kept fighting for two months. They then gave in and the area of Ladakh became part of *Sikh Raj*. For the protection of this area, S. Zorawar Singh had two forts constructed.

Marriage of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh. In March 1837, Maharaja Ranjit Singh solemnized the marriage of his grand son Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, son of Maharaja

Kharak Singh with Bibi Nanaki daughter of S. Sham Singh Atari. Historians believe that no marriage in the world has ever been solemnized at such a lavish cost. The number of participants were countless. The guests of Maharaja were over five lakhs. He gave out about 20 lakh rupees in charity to the poor.

The marriage ceremony was attended by the kings of Faridkot, Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kalsian, Kapurthala, Naramgarh, Malerkotla, Mandi, Suket. The British Government was represented by Sir Henry Fan and his wife and a few other officials.

Maharaja Sahib spent lavishly. Sardar Sham Singh Atari did not lag behind. Rightly, such a marriage had never been celebrated any where nor it will be celebrated ever.

Battle of Jamraud–Martyrdom of S. Hari Singh Nalwa

Strengthening of Border Areas. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had complete possession of Peshawar. Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh was the ruler of Peshawar. S. Hari Singh was the army commander and principle advisor of the ruler. It hurt Dost Mohammad Khan and other Pathans of the border area no end to see a Sikh ruler amongst their people and right under their nose. Feeling the ignominy and anguish, he had attacked Peshawar in 1835 and had to face humiliating defeat. S. Hari Singh had established the administration of the border area on a strong footing. He had also paid much attention to strengthen the defences and protection of the key places of military importance. He had decided to plug the Khyber pass which was the route of ingress of the foreigners. For doing so, he took

possession of the fort of Jamrud which was right at the entrance of the Khyber pass. He strengthened the fort both with men and material. Sardar Mahan Singh was appointed the Garrison Commander of Jamraud. He also made many other forts. There was one named 'Burj Hari Singh' on road Peshawar and Jamraud. One fort was constructed on the bank of Barha Nadi. Michni fort was raised on river Kabul. The fort of Shankargarh was constructed to block the routes of Hasht Nagar, Bijaur and Gandhav.

As a result of these chain of forts, peace reigned in this volatile Pathan territory. The influence of S. Hari Singh on the Pathans was indisputable. A good sized Sikh army was stationed in the border area. Peshawar had eight Platoons and about 15 guns.

Battle of Jamraud. Dost Mohammad Khan was ill at ease with himself seeing the perpetual progress of the Sikhs. He was now scared of losing his own kingdom. He felt that both Jalalabad and Kabul were well within their striking range. He was perturbed with these developments. So he prepared himself for a battle.

In April 1837, Dost Mohammad Khan declared a '*Jehad*' against *Sikh Raj*. He asked Pathans to join him in this campaign and extend all possible help. He sent a big army under his son's command to launch an attack on Peshawar. Many Pathans joined this army. They crossed Khyber Pass and reached the fort of Jamraud. There were barely 800 soldiers in the fort under the command of S. Mahan Singh. S. Hari Singh was down with fever in Peshawar.

Hearing the news that Hari Singh was not there, the

Pathans became more unruly and disorderly. On 28th April 1837, they started shelling the walls of Jamraud fort. The shelling was replied by S. Mahan Singh appropriately checking further advance of the enemy. The shelling continued the next day too. They succeeded in raising down a part of the wall. They dare not go inside the fort since the Sikhs were defending it with their lives. The Sikhs managed to plug the breach during the night and at the same time sent the news to S. Hari Singh Ji.

As soon as he received the letter, S. Hari Singh even in his state of ill health marched towards Jamraud at the head of ten thousand strong force. He reached there soon. The besieged Sikhs were very pleased. S. Hari Singh pounced upon the Pathans as a lion pounces upon its prey. A fierce battle raged for long till the Pathans withdrew leaving about 14 guns and much more military hardware. Sikhs chased the Pathans for a long distance. S. Nidhan Singh Panjhather went after them for a long pursuit. He ran into a fresh contingent of Pathans that was coming to the help of their main body. S. Nidhan Singh and his companions fell into their trap. S. Hari Singh came to their help. Some Pathans were hiding in an ambush near Khyber Pass. They let loose a volley of fire upon S. Hari Singh. S. Hari Singh was hit in the stomach and side of the stomach. The injured commander encircled the ambushing Pathans and killed them all.

The continuous flow of blood from the wounds of S. Hari Singh was making him weak every minute. He was taken inside the fort, where his wounds were stitched. But he could not be saved. He died on 30th April 1837. A mighty

pillar of *Sikh Raj* had fallen. The Sikhs kept the news of his death a secret till the Pathans withdrew from the scene of the battle badly mauled.

When the Maharaja Sahib learnt about the martyrdom of his unique and beloved general, he was immensely sad. He shed some tears in grief. He regained his calm and set out for Peshawar at the head of a strong force. On reaching there, he paid his homage to the brave General and completed his incomplete work. After staying there for sometimes and restoring peace, Maharaja Sahib returned to Lahore.

Punjab became Masterless

Meeting with Lord Aukland. When Governor General Lord Aukland came to Simla in 1838, Maharaja Sahib sent six leading *Sardars* in order to express his feelings of friendship and regards. Lord Aukland extended very warm and courteous welcome to them. Later on, Lord Aukland also sent five officials to the court of Maharaja who too were given honour and respect due to them according to the protocol.

Soon after, both Lord Aukland and Maharaja Sahib met—first at Ferozepur and then at Amritsar.

Battle of Afghanistan. In order to stop Russia coming to Punjab via Afghanistan, the British Government wanted to keep Afghanistan under their control. They started establishing cordial relationship with Dost Mohammad Khan the ruler of Afghanistan. In return, he demanded Peshawar which was under the occupation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The British Government did not want to spoil their

relationship with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. So no accord could be arrived at with Dost Mohammad Khan since his conditions were not viable.

Therefore, the British Government decided to dethrone Dost Mohammad Khan and appoint Shah Shujah as the king of Kabul. They needed help of the Maharaja Sahib in achieving this objective. When they asked for help, Maharaja Sahib agreed on the condition that Shah Shujah will not demand area around Peshawar which was then under the occupation of *Sikh-Raj*.

Maharaja Sahib sent a strong army under the command of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh. Dost Mohammad Khan could not face the onslaught of combined force of Sikhs and British Rule. So, they enthroned Shah Shujah as the ruler of Kabul.

End of the Lion of Punjab. In May 1839, Maharaja Sahib suffered a stroke of paralysis. Many doctors and medical practitioners from Lahore and Amritsar tried their best to cure him. The British Government also sent an expert doctor but to no avail. His disease kept increasing making his body weak. Sensing his time to be near, he held one last *Darbar* in Hazoori Bagh where all his ministers, *Sardars*, warriors, military commanders and close relatives were summoned. He himself came in a palanquin even in his grave state of health. The brave lion of Punjab who had caused much fear in the minds of his foes and earned love and affection of his people was lying helpless in a palanquin. Seeing his pathetic state, his courtiers could not help wailing and crying.

Addressing all Maharaja Sahib said, **“*Khâlsâ* Ji, it seems my end in near. It is a matter of a few days and so is the wish of the Lord. One has to bow before it. My last desire is that the kingdom that has been raised and strengthened with the blood of Nalwa Ji, Akali Ji and many other warriors besides the efforts put in by you all, do not let it grow weak or perish. Be careful not to split and become easy morsel of your neighbours. Be cautious of the moves of the enemy. Freedom is dear to me more than my life. By the grace of God and your strong arms, I have taken Punjab out of the foreign rule. Be sure not to push it into their lap once again. If foreign feet tread the soil of Punjab, they will be walking on my chest. Save me from this distressing insult. Protect the freedom of Punjab. If you all remain united, no one will ever cast an eye on you. When you all remain free, my soul will remain happy and satiated.**

There is not much time to say anything more. Please bring Tikka Kharak Singh before me.

In 1816, Maharaja Sahib had declared Tikka Kharak Singh as his successor. He now coronated him as king and placed him in the regal care of Raja Dhian Singh Dogra and said, **“Kharak Singh will be the Maharaja in my place and you (Dhian Singh Dogra) will be his Minister. Take care of him.”** Raja Dhian Singh swore on Geeta to remain faithful to Maharaja Kharak Singh and remain loyal to the kingdom. The *Sardars* and other courtiers made gifts to Maharaja Kharak Singh.

Thereafter as per the desire of Maharaja Sahib, the doors of the treasury were opened and donations were

made to the poor. About 25 lakh rupees were distributed then. Thereafter, he ordered that Koh-i-Noor and some other diamonds be gifted to Sri Harminder Sahib but Raja Dhian Singh and Jamedar Khushal Singh evaded the issue. In the meantime, Maharaja Sahib had another attack and he became unconscious. The *darbar* ended in these circumstances. The palanquin of the Maharaja Sahib was taken back to the palace.

The disease kept aggravating and the great warrior, fearless soldier, able administrator, clement ruler, a statesman and liberator of Punjab from the foreign rulers breathed his last on 27th June 1839. A wave of sorrow and grief swept through out the country. Everyone said that the Punjab has become a widow, an orphan.

Next day he was cremated in Hazoori Bagh near Gurudawara Dera Sahib. A grand sepulchre was raised there later on.

VIRTUES OF MAHARAJA SAHIB

A Grand Success Story. Having been born in a not too famous and rich house, by virtue of his wisdom, capabilities and courage Maharaja Ranjit Singh became a king of such a vast empire that extended from river Satluj to Peshawar in the West and from Ladakh to Sind in the South. Its area was 1.45 lakh square miles and its annual revenue earnings were nearly three crores. At the time of his death, his treasury had 8 crores in cash beside a large quantity of diamonds and other precious stones. His army proved victorious at every front. He took Punjab out of the foreign rule and established a joint *Punjabi Raj*. His subjects were happy and prosperous. He plugged the routes of ingress of the foreigners from North-West direction. We will now discuss the personality, virtues and achievements of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Personality of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Maharaja Sahib was not a tall man. He had small pox marks on his face. He was also blind of one eye; yet he had superb radiance on his face that never dared anyone look at his face. He had all the characteristics those were wanted in an ideal soldier and a warrior. He was physically strong, agile, active, brave, fearless and infatigable person. He was an expert rider. He could remain in saddle the whole day. When he heard the news of the martyrdom of S. Hari Singh Nalwa, he immediately set out for Peshawar. He covered the distance of 102 miles from Lahore to Jhelum on the horse back in a day. When in 1831, he met Governor General of the British rule in India, he participated in an exhibition of pegging and sword fight with English soldiers

at Ropar. Those who watched his feat were amazed at his dexterity. He performed such a difficult task that none could do. A man held a lemon fruit on his palm and stood at a place with his hands extended. Maharaja Sahib came charging on his horse, cut the lemon into two without hurting the hand of the person and sped away.

He was so fearless and brave that he never feared any impediment. We have seen that even river Attock could not cause any obstacle in his mission. Which ever campaign he undertook, he emerged victorious. His life style was very simple and full of engagements and occupations. He would wear very simple clothes. He never appreciated showing his wealth of diamonds pearls etc on himself. He never experienced laziness or lithargy. Poet Sahib Singh writes-

Sad hî kamar kasî hum dekhî.

Kabauhn nâ sustî mukh per pekhî.

His magnificence is world famous like his bravery. He also felt pleasure making charity to the poor and needy. He would donate after every victory. If natural calamity like famine would fall, he would open camps for distribution of food and clothings to the needy. In order to see that the needy were not denied their right, he would often go about in a disguise. No one every left his door disappointed. Many tales of his big hearted behaviour and clemency are famous. One day when he was going on a horse, a stone hit him. This stone was thrown by a boy on a Jujube tree in order to get some of its fruits. His courtiers got hold of the boy and started scolding him. Maharaja Sahib intervened and said, "The stone would have provided him berries from the tree. Now that the stone has hit me, I shall give him gold coins."

Once when he was proceeding in a procession, an old Brahmin Woman came and started rubbing her *Tawâ* (baking plate) with his clothes. Maharaja Sahib did not feel angry. Instead he asked her what and why she was doing it? She replied, "I had heard that the kings are philosopher stone. If any iron article is touched with a philosopher stone, it turns into gold. I am a poor woman. A young daughter has yet to be married off. This is the only iron article in the house. I thought I should turn it into gold by touching with you. But this has remained iron." Maharaja Sahib said, "No, old woman, it has become of gold." He ordered that the old woman be given gold equalent to the *Tawâ*.

In addition to the charity made off and on, he would spend about twelve lakh rupees making donations and alms.

He had been blessed with such a sharp and penetrating eyes that he could assess the traits of a person just in one look. He could select most suitable person for every task in a very little time. Every person who came before him would be assigned most appropriate task wasting least amount of time. His selection had never proved wrong. He trained very ordinary looking person so well that people of status and standing could not help admiring them. Diwan Mohkam Chand was a shopkeeper while Fakir Aziz-ud-Din was a dresser of wounds. They both proved very intelligent ministers in the court of the Maharaja Sahib.

Sikh Devotion. He was brought up in a Sikh house. He was imparted adequate religious training in his childhood. This teaching helped him through out his life. He would listen to the recitation of *Pâth* from Sri Guru Granth

Sahib every day for one hour. Whatever task he would undertake or campaign he would set out on, he must always make a supplication to the Lord and demand strength from Him. On achieving victory, he would make a thanks giving prayer or a supplication of gratitude. He would then visit Sri Harmandir Sahib to pay his obeisance. He would feel happy if addressed as "Singh Sahib".

Once some priests of Delhi Gurudwaras came to meet him at Lahore. He dusted their feet with his beard in the full view of his court and courtiers.

When he was declared a 'Tankhaiya' and made to stand as an accused in the congregation of Sri Akal Takht Sahib by Akali Phula Singh, he accepted his tying with the 'Tamarind' tree. Baring his back, he also accepted flogging.

He was more keen to spread the name of Satguru Ji than his own admiration. The coins he minted bore the names of Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh. He named it *Nanak Shahi* coins. He had a fort constructed in Amritsar and named it 'Gobindgarh' on the name of the Tenth Master. A garden laid out in Amritsar was named Ram Bagh. The Nawab of Hyderabad Deccan had presented him with a very beautiful canopy. He sent it to Sri Darbar Sahib since according to him, it was more suitable for that place. The '*Sehra*' prepared for the marriage of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh was also sent to Sri Darbar Sahib as his offerings.

He performed *Sewâ* (Service) in respect of many Gurudwaras. These Gurudwaras were allotted *Jâgîrs* and lands that would help them meet their day to day expenditures. Sri Nankana Sahib had land that was

equivalent to 750 marabbâs (each marabbâ is equivalent of 25 acres). In the case of Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar, in addition to covering with gold plate and fixing marble in the floor, he also allotted *Jâgîr* worth 25,000 rupees per year. He had top storeys of Akal Takht made. He also had the birth place of the Tenth Master at Patna reconstructed. He donated 1.25 lakh rupees for the construction of Gurudwara at Kartarpur (Jalandhar) and also paid revenue of one village as *Jâgîr*. The Sodhis of Sri Anandpur Sahib were awarded handsome *Jâgîr*. The Darbar Sahib at Taran Taaran was also done up. In short, he had allotted *Jâgîrs* to most of the historic Gurudwaras of Punjab beside improving their looks, facilities available etc.

Service of Other Religious Places of Worship.

Where as the Maharaja Sahib had great devotion for Sikhism and Sikh places of worship, commensurate with the teachings of Sikhism, he would also pay equal attention to the places of worship of other religion as well. He donated handsome amount of money for the religious place of Muslims and Hindus.

The golden mosque of Bhikhari Khan in Lahore was under the occupation of the Sikhs since the days of the *misls*. Maharaja Sahib gave it to the Muslim community. When Multan was won, Maharaja Sahib fixed an annual *Jagir* of 3,500 for the Langar of Pir Bahawal Huq. In 1821, when the flood waters of river Ravi had threatened to wash away, the tomb of Shah Shujah Bahawal, Maharaja Sahib spent thousands of rupees to safeguard it. An embankment was raised to protect it against ingress of water of the river. When it had become evident that it cannot be saved, Maharaja Sahib re-located the tomb at its present place.

The tomb of Hazrat Data Ganj Baksh at Lahore was repaired at state expenses. Similarly he donated liberally for the up keep of temples at Kashi, Hardwar, Jawalamukhi, Katas etc.

Politics of Equality. Although he felt happy being called Singh Sahib, yet he treated all the subjects alike. He had equal love and sympathy for members of all the communities. It was rightly the reign of Punjabis or a common reign of Punjabis. In making selection for the coveted appointments, merit was the primary consideration. People from Sikh, Hindu, Muslims, European communities were given posts according to their abilities and merits. There was no communal considerations. In the daily administration, his behaviour towards all communities was alike. Everyone enjoyed religious freedom. No one could interfere or pass derogatory remark on others religion. Once a few Sikhs of a village asked the Muslims to stop making call to the faithfuls to come for *Namâz*. Those Muslims lodged a complaint with Maharaja Sahib. Maharaja Sahib called all the Sikhs and told them that if they did not like their call for prayers, they should then go to the house of all Muslims at the prayer time and ask them to reach the mosque. Sikhs withdrew their objection quietly. He had ordered his military Generals not to defile any religious book or place of the town that has been won or taken possession of. He also warned them against plundering and disrespecting women.

Just and Protector. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was really protector of his subjects who held them dear to his heart. When the rules of conduct in the administration Dastur-ul-Awal were made for the officials to follow—the first thing that

was written in then was “**It is the duty of all government officials to ensure welfare of the masses.**” These rules and regulations were not just on paper but were acted upon. The people were at liberty to report any act of irregularity and accesses of the high official fearlessly and in complete details before the Maharaja Sahib. Every one could reach his plea and complaint before Maharaja Sahib. A complaint box duly locked had been installed outside the fort gate. Those seeking justice used to drop their complaints in it. He would listen to each and every complaint make immediate enquiry and issue necessary orders. If the complaint was against some senior officials or *Sardar*, he himself would investigate, enquire and issue just orders.

Beside this, he would tour every three months. His places of visit were informed much in advance. Every person had a right to put up his grievances before the Maharaja. He was so just and honest in his dealings that whatever item of consumption he would take from the local traders, he would pay for it, and more often pay more than the price. Even his officials were ordered to do like wise.

Administration. Every historian acknowledges that the administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was of very good quality. Peace prevailed through out and the people lived happily. The incidents of murder, theft dacoity and other such like offences were very few and far in between. *Panchayats* used to settle disputes amongst the people. These *Panchayats* were not government elected or appointed. The people of the village used to select their elders and wise people to acts as *panchayat*. These *Panchs* used to be consulted in every official matter. The administrative excellence and its effectiveness can be

gauged from one fact that no one was ever awarded hanging sentence or death sentence in his entire period of rule. The cases of arson, loot and riots seldom took place.

The land revenue was charged at a fixed rate of production. Those officials who were assigned the task of fixing this revenue had been given specific directions to fix it in consultation with the *Panchs* of the village. There should be no case of high handedness.

For better administration, the entire kingdom was divided into four provinces—Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar. Each province had been divided into *parganas* (Districts), Tehsils (Sub districts) and towns. The officials selected to run the administration were capable and expert. Religion was never the consideration. If some one was found incapable, he was changed immediately or transfered.

The entire population of the Punjab used to sing his praises. Those who had enjoyed the pleasure and comfort of his rule used to fondly describe it to their grand children as long as they lived. They often used to narrate the stories of magnanimity of the Maharaja Sahib and sigh remembering their good old days.



Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Hindi: रणजित सिंह, Punjabi: ਰਾਜਗਿਤ ਸਿੰਘ), also called "Sher-e-Punjab" ("The Lion of the Punjab") (b.1780-27 June 1839) of Sandhwalia Jat Gotra, was a emperor of the Sovereignty country of Punjab and the Sikh Empire. His Samadhi is located in Lahore, Pakistan. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a Jat belonging to the Sikh faith born in 1780 in North India, Gujranwala, which is now located in modern day Pakistan; in a Jat Sikh family of Sandhwalia Gotra. At the time much of