

CHAPTER VIII

SOVEREIGN SIKH STATE SIKHS IN SIKH RULE (1799-1849)

The Rise of Sikh Empire

In 1799 the Sikhs established their sovereign Sikh state. So powerful became this state that its territories extended up to Afghanistan on one side and China to the other. That vast area is now contained in Pakistan and in India i.e. erstwhile Punjab, from Delhi to the borders of Afghanistan, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. The Sikhs extended their rule all over these territories ousting the chiefs of some areas who were still subordinate to Afghanistan, while some who considered themselves independent principalities. Some of the chiefs of those territories surrendered to the Sikh state while some were occupied by Sikhs defeating the earlier regimes.

Ranjit Singh, who was chief of Sukarchakaya's confederacy, had become the head of the Sikh state as amongst all the Sikh confederacies, he was the most powerful. Besides his own confederacy, he had the full support of two other confederacies—Ghanayas and Nankaias—as he got married to the daughters of the chiefs of those confederacies. Sardarni Sada Kaur, his mother-in-law, chief of Ghanaya confederacy, was herself a courageous warrior and sober diplomat. Her support to Ranjit Singh proved very valuable and she acted as a guiding force to Ranjit Singh who was at that time about twenty years old. Ranjit Singh had made a name for himself for bravery and courage, besides being a good negotiator. The other Sikh confederacies were amalgamated in the united Sikh state without causing any disputes. Shrewdness and mutual regard and respect, giving of Jagirs and movable and immovable properties to chiefs of other confederacies helped for their comfortable living, while their soldiers were accommodated in the consolidated Army of the Sikh State. Only minor clashes in rare cases took place occasionally between them. This was the first success of Ranjit Singh to comfortably consolidate all the Sikh confederacies in one united force without any intense fights amongst Sikhs.

Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore and made it the capital of the Sikhs state. Lahore had been the official capital of Mughals in Punjab, from where the crusade against Sikhs used to be plotted and planned by the mighty Mughal Governors. On the 7th

of July, 1799, Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore without any bloodshed. It was previously in occupation by the Bhangi confederacy. The citizens of Lahore welcomed Ranjit Singh who came there with twenty five thousand armed forces as they were not satisfied with the misrule of the officials of the confederacy. On 12th April 1801, the formal coronation ceremony for installation of Ranjit Singh as Maharaja of Punjab was held peacefully, attended by most of the Sikh leaders. As a sequel of their approval, Ranjit Singh, however, declared at that time that for the Sikhs he was just one of them and they should not call him a Maharaja rather they should address him as Singh Sahib, being only the head of the Sikh state. He named the government as 'Sarkar-e-Khalsa jio' (Sikh government) – the court of Maharaja of Punjab to be named as 'Darbar Khalsa Jio'. The seal of the government also had no reference to him; it being of the 'Sarkar-e-Khalsa Jio'. The official currency was in the name of Guru Nanak as 'Nanak Shahi coin'. The Sikhs felt honoured and felt contented with these far reaching decisions for the recognition of Sikhs and of the Sikh state. Ranjit Singh in his daily routine followed the Sikh religious practices.

In 1802, Ranjit Singh occupied Amritsar which was previously in occupation by the Bhangi confederacy. It was also done in a peaceful manner. Akali Phula Singh, a renowned Nihang Sikh leader and respected by all, played a major role in the negotiations. Ranjit Singh invited Akali Phula Singh, who was a warrior of high repute, to join the Sikh army. He accepted the offer and became a successful General of the Sikh army. Maharaja Ranjit Singh went to Harimandar Sahib, took bath in the sacred sarovar and paid obeisance at Harimandar Sahib. He declared that Harimandar Sahib would be decorated with marble and gold leaves. This took several years and so many eminent artisans were engaged for this purpose. The present look of Harimandar Sahib is due to his dedicated work on the holiest Sikh shrine, now called Golden Temple due to its golden plating. It is one of the most sacred religious places in the World.

After setting its own house in order, consolidating all the confederacies in one central united state, the Sikh state asked all the other principalities throughout Punjab occupying different territories to surrender to the Sikh state. Some surrendered themselves without any resistance while some others, particularly those with allegiance to the Afghan ruler, had to be conquered on the battlefield. Ultimately the Sikhs brought the entire North India up to Afghanistan under their rule as well as all the hilly areas. The Sikh army fought and conquered Kasur in 1807, Multan in 1808, Kangra in 1809, Attock in 1813, Jammu and Kashmir in 1819, Peshawar in 1824, Naushahra also in that year and Jamraud in 1837. Ranjit Singh spent his entire life trying to occupy the entire area of North India. The principalities which owed allegiance to the Afghan rulers were all brought under Sikh rule.

General Hari Singh Nalwa, who was a well-known warrior and whom the Afghans dreaded, was appointed Governor of Peshawar. Hari Singh Nalwa had captured Jamraud, which is in the precincts of Khyber pass. A fort was constructed there by Sikhs and named Fatehgarh. Another fort was also constructed in that area which

adjoined Afghanistan. Hari Singh Nalwa also constructed Gurdwara Panja Sahib at Hassan Abdal, a Sikh historical place.

Akali Phula Singh, the Nihang leader, was well known for his bravery and courage as General of the Sikh Army, besides being deeply devoted to the Sikh way of life. Several victories of the Sikhs were thought to be due to his command of the Sikh forces such as at Naushehra and Multan particularly. He died fighting near Naushehra in 1823. He remained the Jathedar of Akal Takhat Amritsar and had once summoned Maharaja Ranjit Singh to mete out punishment to him for his misconduct. Ranjit Singh too was a devoted Sikh and he accepted the punishment of receiving lashes after being tied to a pillar at Akal Takhat. However due to the ready submission of Ranjit Singh to being punished, he was merely fined. Such was the devotion of these Sikh leaders towards their religion.

The British, who had occupied the rest of India and were a very powerful force, had to enter into an agreement with the Sikh state. It stated that neither party would enter the territories of the other. This agreement was made on April 25, 1809 and was strictly adhered to during the lifetime of Ranjit Singh.

The Sikh army was among the best in the World which was why the British dared not engage them in battle. About thirty well known foreigner instructors and Generals had been employed in Sikh army which included Frenchmen, Italian, German, American, British and Russians. Sikh warriors had earned very high repute on the battlefield. Gen Ventura of Italy, who had been a General in Napoleon's army, took it as a privilege to join the Sikh army. It was due to the fear of the Sikh army that the British maintained friendly relations with the Sikh state. In 1831, the King of England honoured Maharaja Ranjit Singh with the gift of the finest five horses to him. Only the Sikh state remained free of British rule for a long time.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had taken back the world-famous diamond 'Koh-i-noor' from the king of Kabul, Shah Sujah who had got it from Ahmad Shah Abdali, who had looted it from India. Shah Sujah had been dislodged by his brother Shah Muhammed and so he sought refuge in Punjab which he thought to be the safest place. Maharaja Ranjit Singh provided him safe refuge and in return Shah Sujah gave the 'Koh-i-noor' to the Maharaja as he had brought it with him from Kabul. It was later taken to London by the British after the end of Sikh rule.

The Sikh army though devoted to the Khalsa rule and were brave and courageous, did not have the type of training and discipline of the Europeans, which the British brought to India and trained the Indian army with. But the European army Generals employed by Ranjit Singh gave all such training which helped the Sikh army excel in all respects compared to armies of other nations. The French Generals Ventura and Allard reached Lahore by way of Persia and Afghanistan in 1823 and they were given employment in the Sikh state and treated with distinction. Other European Generals like Court and Avitabile were also employed in the Sikh army. In the words of J.D. Cunningham, Captain of the British army who remained posted in Punjab in the British territory and was in political office for eight years (1838-46)

"These Generals gave a moderate degree of précision and completeness to a system already introduced; but their labours are more conspicuous in French words of command, in treble ranks, and in squares salient with guns, than in the ardent courage, the alert obedience and the long endurance of fatigue which distinguished the Sikh horsemen sixty years ago and which pre-eminently characterize the Sikh footman of the present day among the other soldiers of India. Neither did Generals Ventura and Allard, Court and Avitable, ever assume to themselves the merit of having created the Sikh army and perhaps their ability and independence of character added more to the general belief in European superiority than all their instructions to the real efficiency of the Sikhs as soldiers."

(History of the Sikhs, J.D. Cunningham, p. 157)

And at page 153

"It has been usual to attribute the superiority of Sikh army to the labours of these two officers (Gen-Ventura and Allard) and of their subsequent co-adjustors, the Generals Court and Avitable, but in truth, the Sikh owes his excellence as a soldier to his own hardihood of character to that spirit of adaptation which distinguishes every new people and to that feeling of a common interest and destiny implanted in him by his great teachers."

And at page 154

"The Sikh looks before him only, the ductility of his youthful intellect readily receives the most useful impression, or takes the most advantageous form and religious faith, is ever present to sustain himself under any adversity and to assure of an ultimate Triumph."

The assessment and approach of Cunningham is correct. Sikh soldiers had high spirits and devotion infused by the initiation ceremony of Sikhism, and also a sense of supreme sacrifice for the freedom and service of humanity while maintaining the high moral and ethical code of Sikhism. All the Sikh soldiers were initiated and practicing Sikhs with full faith in their Guru and the Almighty. To each regiment at least one Granthi or reader of the holy Sikh scripture had been attached and the Guru Granth Sahib was usually kept with the Jhanda or flag which belonged to the regiment. Regular daily recitals of the Divine Hymns contained therein were part of the daily routine. The Sikh tradition was maintained by the British army even after the annexation of Sikh state and Gurdwaras were set up in each cantonment for the Sikh soldiers. It was also ensured that Sikh soldiers maintained the Sikh code of conduct. This was one of the factors which led to the Sikh army being adjudged the best in the world. This has been admitted by the British and has been recorded in the pages of Sikh history that not a single Sikh surrendered on the battle field but died fighting till the last breath. Tributes were paid to these Sikh soldiers by their enemies for the courage, bravery, devotion and ethics of excellence and heroism shown by them in battle. It is a different matter that a few at the helm of affairs, not committed to Sikhs and Sikhism, played the role of traitors in order to defeat them.

1809 Treaty between Sikh State and Britain

The Sarkar-e-Khalsa faced another serious threat from the British, who had already annexed the rest of India and were naturally desirous of annexing the Sikh state. But because of the Military strength of the Sikh Empire they dared not come into conflict with the Sikhs as success was not assured. In fact both these powers thought it prudent and also in their own interests to come to an agreement for non-interference in each others' territories. However, Maharaja Ranjit Singh wanted to extend his jurisdiction over the Sikh principalities in Malwa, just as in Patiala, Faridkot, Nabha, Jind and up to Jamna, whose chiefs were not in a position to resist him. The British however wanted to limit the jurisdiction of the Sikh Empire to the west of Satluj.

Another problem was created by the Maratha chief Jaswant Rao Holkar who along with his Rohilla ally Amirchand made their way with their troops to the territory of Sikh state for shelter and refuge after confrontation with British army in their areas. They were chased by the British also. They sent messages to Afghan Shah to invade India. The British requested the ruler of the Sikh state to drive them out of their territories. If they fought them on Sikh territory, there would have been a reaction from the Sikh army. As they had caused a danger to the security of Punjab and also as Sikhs could never reconcile to the Afghans re-entering their area. They were asked to leave the Sikh state and face the British in their own areas.

The cis Satluj states decided to accept the sovereignty of the British for their individual existence rather than amalgamation with Sikh empire. They summed up their views :

"We do not have a very long life, as both the British and Ranjit Singh want to swallow us up. But whereas the British protection will be like consumption which takes a long time to kill, Ranjit Singh's advent will be like a stroke of paralysis which will destroy us within hours."

(Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, 11, 79)

A delegation of the chiefs of these states met the British resident at Delhi and presented the memorandum "for protection against Ranjit Singh acknowledging the British to be the sovereign power." Ranjit Singh presented his views to Lord Metcalfe who was negotiating with him over these matters, that :

"British and Sikh empire should extend most favoured nations treatment to each other and Ranjit Singh's suzerainty over the whole of Sikh nation to be recognized and the British were not to entertain any disaffected Sikh Chiefs or meddle with the tradition of Khalsa Ji besides their alliance to be in perpetuity and the British to have no alliance with the rulers of Bahawalpur and Multan."

How could the British refuse the offer of the chiefs of Sutlej states to accept their sovereignty. They framed a proclamation that the Maharaja should restore all the territories of East of Satluj that he had taken under his control since the arrival of the English mission. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had asserted that he had taken most of the areas under his control and almost all of the chiefs of those areas acknowledged

him as Suzerain. The chiefs on the other hand had given in writing to the British agent that they accepted British sovereignty and wished to be protected from Ranjit Singh.

Ultimately the treaty was entered into between the British and Sikh state on April 25, 1809 that "perpetual friendship shall subsist between them; both to be on the footing of his favoured powers. British government will have no concern with the territories and subjects of the Rajah to the northward of River Satluj. The Rajah will never enter in the territory occupied by him on the left bank of River Satluj and so more troops were necessary for the internal duties of that territory he will not commit or suffer any encroachments on the possessions or rights of the chiefs in its vicinity.

In the month of June of that year the Governor General was able to write to Maharaja Ranjit Singh expressing satisfaction over the accord existing between them. Ranjit Singh answered enthusiastically.

"Judge by the state of your own heart what is that state of mine."

(Political Correspondence of Lord Minto, Vol. IV, p. 275)

Malwa of the cis Satluj states, thus became a part of British India though under the rule of their chiefs, but cut off from the Sikh empire in which the entire areas to the West of Satluj upto Afghanistan were included in due course. The treaty was honoured during the life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

No doubt the treaty of 1809 made the eastern boundaries of Sikhs state safe from any aggression by the British but it divided the territories held by Sikh chieftains in two separate areas – one under Sikh rule to the west of Satluj while the other under the chiefs of cis Satluj states under the British rule. The British issued a proclamation on August 22, 1811, within two and half years of the treaty authorising them to interfere whenever the chiefs of those states would take the law into their hands; thus enhancing their status from a protectorate to a sovereign power. The Malwa states were virtually annexed and made part of British India. It was the selfish move of the chief of those states against the Sikh interests to seek protection against Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was consolidating the Sikh Empire. If they had co-operated with the Sikh states, its boundaries would have been up to Jamuna, instead of Satluj. As a matter of fact, initially the British had decided to limit their territories up to Jamuna. Sikh rule was thus left to extend its area only to the West in North India.

Inclusion of Entire North India in Sikh Empire

There were several autonomous principalities in North India, mostly ruled by the Muslim invaders. Initially these were under Mughal rule. But when the Afghan king invaded India and the Mughal rulers could not put up any resistance against him. They were forced to owe allegiance to the Afghan ruler. The Sikhs had to abolish those principalities to bring these territories under Sikh rule. At several places, the rulers themselves surrendered to Sikh rule finding themselves in no position for armed

conflict with the Sikh state, but at several places fierce battles took place to defeat those rulers.

In 1809 the Gorkhas attacked Kangra. Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra sought the protection of the Sikh state. Sikh armed forces were sent to Kangra. After a fierce battle with the Gorkhas, the Sikh army defeated them causing casualties to the Gorkha army. The Nepalese Gorkhas ran away leaving behind their army and ammunitions. Kangra fort was occupied by the Sikh army. Sansar Chand was given a *Jagir* and Kangra was annexed to the Sikh empire. Maharaja Ranjit Singh held a Darbar of Kangra on December 25, 1809. The chiefs of other hilly states of Chamba, Nurpur, Shahpur, Kehloor, Mandi, Kulu etc. attended the Darbar and submitted to the Sikh Maharaja. Desa Singh Majithia was appointed the Governor of Kangra.

Multan was attacked on February 20, 1810 by the Sikh army under the command of Hari Singh Nalwa. The fort of Multan, occupied by Nawab Muzzafar Khan of Multan, was heavily bombarded but it could not be penetrated though the town of Multan was occupied in a few days by Sikhs. The Sikh warriors at the risk of their lives laid down mines under the wall in spite of heavy firing from under the fort. These mines were ignited, blasting the wall of the fort. Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself took part in that battle. He stormed the fort with the Sikh warriors and the Nawab had to then surrender. The territories across Jhelum river were all occupied by the Sikh army without much resistance. Again in 1818, the last battle of Multan had to be fought by the Sikhs as the Nawab who had earlier submitted started showing disloyalty to the Sikh state. Prince Kharak Singh commanded the Sikh army of twenty five thousands soldiers in addition to the other renowned Generals like Akali Phula Singh etc., with their contingents. This time also the walls of the fort (which was one of the strongest forts) had to be blasted. Fierce fighting took place inside the fort. Akali Phula Singh severed the head of Nawab Muzaffar Khan with the stroke of his sword. The Sikh army won the battle and occupied the fort. The town of Multan had already been occupied by the Sikh army and was now taken under the direct control of the Sikh state. It was a large province and surrounding areas were already under the direct occupation of the Sikh state.

On February 20, 1819, Maharaja Ranjit Singh directed the Sikh army to annex Kashmir. The Maharaja himself took part in this battle besides eminent Sikh commanders—Sham Singh Attariwala and Prince Kharak Singh. The rulers of Rajouri, Poonch, and of Sopian fort themselves surrendered to the Sikh army. A fierce battle took place between the Kashmir army and the Sikh army which was ultimately defeated by Sikhs and the Kashmir valley was annexed by the Sikh Empire. Dewan Moti Ram was appointed the Governor of Kashmir. Sikhs had already cut off Kashmir from Afghanistan and were in control of the passes leading into the valley of Jhelum. The borders of the Sikh empire, after the taking over of the Kashmir valley, now adjoined Tibet and China. Its revenue was over Rs. Seven million. It was a significant acquisition for the Sikh empire.

Peshawar, was also taken over by the Sikhs in 1819. Maharaja Ranjit Singh along with his two famous Generals – Hari Singh Nalwa and Akali Phula Singh – led their troops to the North West in October 1818. They passed through Rohtas, Rawalpindi, Hasan Abdal and the plains of Hazara. No one came to resist Khan. In November 1819, the Sikh army went to Peshawar. Yar Muhammad Khan, the Afghan Governor of Peshawar, fled the city leaving behind fourteen big guns and other war equipments. Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Jahan Dad Khan who had earlier handed over the fort of Attock to the Sikhs, Governor of Peshawar. However, Dost Muhammad later ousted Jahan Dad and accepted the sovereignty of the Maharaja. After several years, Hari Singh Nalwa was made the Governor of Peshawar and he constructed several forts in that area.

In 1820, Dera Ghazi Khan, Hazara and Mankera were annexed by the Sikhs to the Sikh empire, alongwith all the other adjoining areas. Bhawalpur was occupied by the Sikhs and Hari Singh Nalwa was made the Governor of Hazara. As some trouble broke out in Dera Gazi Khan and Ismail Khan, Nalwa had to go there leaving behind his son Gurdit Singh and his aide Hazara Singh. In his absence, Mohd. Khan Pathan rose in rebellion but could not enter the fort. On hearing of this, Hari Singh Nalwa rushed back to Hazara fort. Then the rebels fled, taking with them some captive Hindu women. Nalwa chased them, got released all captives and sent them to their homes.

In February 1823, the ruler of Afghanistan, Muhammad Azim Khan of Kabul, marched to Peshawar with a huge army to take back from the Sikhs all the principalities which had owed allegiance to Afghanistan. His brother Yar Muhammad was the Governor of Peshawar and owed allegiance to the Sikh state, but put up the resistance to the occupation of the Afghan Ruler. In the name of Islamic Jihad, tens of thousands of Pathan Tribesmen joined the Afghan king in addition to his huge armed caravan. The battle between Afghans and Sikhs took place at Naushera. Afghans blocked the Sikh armies at Attock, commanded by General Hari Singh Nalwa and Prince Kharak Singh and broke the Bridge on Attock river to prevent other Sikh forces in reaching the battle field. Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Akali Phula Singh reached the other side of the bridge with over twenty thousand Sikh troops. The river was flooded and the bridge stood dismantled. The Maharaja directed the Sikh army to cross the river riding their horses into the water, as there was no time to be lost. He took the lead by riding his horse into the flooded river and was followed by all the Sikh warriors. They all crossed the river much to the surprise of the Afghans. A fierce battle took place at Naushera between the Afghans and the Sikhs. The Afghans and Pathans lost the battle and ran away after suffering a large numbers of casualties. The biggest set back for the Sikhs in this battle was that they lost their esteemed General Akali Phula Singh who got shot and died on the battlefield along with a large number of Sikh soldiers. The Sikh army marched into Peshawar on March 17th of 1824. The Afghans thereafter never dared to attack Peshawar. The Sikh empire extended up to the borders of Kabul, a fact which the Afghans had to submit to.

In 1837, the last battle between Sikhs and Afghans took place at Jamrod where Sikhs had a very strong fort, adjoining the Afghanistan border. The Afghan army consisting of over thirty thousand soldiers under the command of Mirza Shamir Khan was sent to the Jamrod fort by Dost Muhammad, the Afghan ruler, under the attractive Muslim slogan of jihad. The Sikh contingent there was too small and Sikhs never thought that the Afghan king would undertake such an adventure. The Sikh armed forces stationed at Peshawar had gone to Lahore in connection with the marriage celebration of Prince Nau Nihal Singh while General Hari Singh was bed stricken at Peshawar due to his illness. The Afghan ruler tried to take advantage of this situation and on April 23, 1837, the Afghan armed forces reached Jamrod and started bombardment on the fort. The Sikh soldiers at the fort returned the firing from inside. The Afghans put the fort under siege and stopped the supplies to the fort but they did not have the courage to enter the fort. A message was sent to General Hari Singh Nalwa to send the Sikh army. A bold Sikh woman Harsharan Kaur, disguised herself as an Afghan and walked through the Afghan camp at night was successful in reaching Peshawar to deliver the message to Nalwa. He sent without any delay a battalion of ten thousand Sikh soldiers to Jamrod. Hari Singh Nalwa, in his ailing condition, arrived there to lead the Sikh army in battle at Jamrod. A fierce battle took place there in which the Afghans were defeated and they fled the battlefield. General Nalwa did not chase the fleeing Pathans. However, when he came to know that the Battalion of Nidhan Singh was pursuing them, he also reached the Khyber Pass. There the additional force of the Afghans joined the fleeing Afghans and fighting renewed between the Sikh and Pathan forces. General Hari Singh was wounded seriously and he came back to Jamrod. The Afghans fled to their country having suffered heavy casualties. General Hari Singh Nalwa succumbed to his injuries on 30th April 1837 and it was a great loss to the Sikhs as he was a source of terror to the Afghans. He was cremated at Jamrod fort where his memorial stands still. After hearing the sad news of the demise of General Hari Singh Nalwa, Maharaja Ranjit Singh with tears in his eyes said, "The greatest pillar of Sikh Raj had fallen." It was the right tribute to the great General.

The Sikh empire had taken the entire area of north India under its rule excepting Sindh province to which the British government created hurdles as they did not want Sikh rule to extend to the ocean. A lack of access to the sea would curtail the mighty power of the Sikhs as the British had started feeling very apprehensive for the future. In a note to Governor General, Trevelyan wrote from Delhi :

"In 1809 the rising power of Sikhs was considered so formidable that it was deemed necessary to place a check upon its further progress. If therefore we open the door to Sikhs to Sindh, their power must rise to an inconvenient height."

(S.C. in of 25-11-1831)

Burnes met the Governor General Lord William Bentick at Simla. Burnes had been

deputed to contact the Amirs of Sindh for opening the river to English boats for commercial purpose and to contact Maharaja Ranjit Singh for his reaction. He reported that the Amirs of Sindh were terrified of the Sikhs and would be willing to allow English shipping rights of passage if they were guaranteed security from the Sikh Empire. The Governor General deputed the British agent at Ladhi and Wade to persuade the Maharaja to invite him to Punjab. It was agreed that the meeting would take place at Ropar on October 25, 1831. At Ropar, the British gave a grand reception to the Maharaja and his entourage, besides an assurance of perpetual friendship. They impressed upon the officials of the Sikh state the benefits of navigation on the Punjab Rivers. Maharaja asked a direct question to the Governor General, "whether they meant to expand their dominion over Sindh?" They assured him that it was only for commercial purposes. Initially the Maharaja took the stand that according to the 1809 agreement the British had given up their rights to the west of Satluj. But eventually the British succeeded in their plan for a commercial treaty. It was first signed by the Amirs of Hyderabad and Khairpur in April 1832. Then on December 26, 1832, Maharaja Ranjit Singh affixed his seal to the treaty and so renounced Punjabi's ambition to extend its Empire to the sea.

(Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, pp. 274-276)

Britishers thus prevented the Sikh Empire's expansion to Sindh and sea in 1832, just as they had prevented it to East of Satluj in 1809 with their shrewd tactics and manoeuvrings.

In 1838 the British apprehended the invasion of Afghanistan by Russia and then the attack on India from Afghanistan. The Governor General Sir Auckland decided to replace the Afghan ruler Dost Muhammad, who was anti-British and put in his place Shah Shuja, who was under the protective custody of the British. He was the grandson of Ahmed Shah Abdali and became his successor, but later on his brother Shah Muhammad whose throne he had usurped, overthrew him and became ruler of Afghanistan. Shah Shuja fled to Punjab and got protection from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Later on he entered British territory for refuge. This British plan could never be executed without the active support of the Sikh empire. A British mission was sent to Lahore led by the British political secretary of state Mr. Macuaghten. The plan of the expedition was unfolded before the Maharaja, who agreed to it as Dost Muhammad, the Afghan Ruler, recently had an armed conflict with the Sikhs. The treaty in this regard was finalized between all the three parts – the British, the Sikhs and Shah Shuja. Kabul was attacked by the joint armies of the Sikhs and the British called the grand army of Indus, on January 2, 1838. Afghanistan's army was defeated and Kandhar was occupied by the grand army of Indus, on April 25, 1839. Shah Shuja was crowned the Ruler of Afghanistan on May 8, 1839. The grand Army of Indus came back after fulfilling its mission. Now there could be no chance of armed conflict between Afghanistan and the Sikh state in the near future.

In June 1839, Governor General Auckland came to Lahore to meet Maharaja Ranjit Singh. As luck would have it, the Maharaja suddenly fell ill during these celebrations while sitting on his chair. He was taken to the palace immediately. He could not recover in spite of the best medical treatment. One day realising his end was near, he called his officials and the leading Sikh Sardars to his sick bed. He nominated Kanwar Kharak Singh to be his successor and requested every one to be loyal to him. The Maharaja of the Sikh Empire passed away on June 27, 1839 after being its undisputed head for forty years continuously.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh – A Capable Administrator

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, though without formal educational qualifications, was a shrewd statesman and a capable administrator. He ensured that the Sikh state administration was fair to all. No final order could be passed without his sanction. He would keep a petition box in which any aggrieved person could make a petition to him regarding any matter concerning the administration, against any official in that box, the keys of which would be with him. He would himself daily look at the petition to take immediate and necessary action. The officials thus were always afraid against any person. These actions by the Maharaja instilled confidence in the general public. He even issued an order that any wrong order on action should be brought to his notice for its cancellation or amendment by the officer concerned. So much so that he authorized Fakir Nur-ud-din, whom he considered to be honest and of high integrity, that he could revise or reverse the Maharaja order if it curtailed the rights of any citizen.

The Royal order dated 19 Poh, 1888 (1831 AD) was issued by the Maharaja :

"Ujjal Didar Nirmal Bodh Sardar Amir Singh Ji and our sincere well wisher, Faqir Nur-ud-din Ji, May you live long, by the grace of Shri Akal Purakh and enjoy the protection of Sri Akal Bodh. By the grace of Sri satguru ji this exalted command is issued to you so that deeming yourself to the security of Lahore you should take care of duties pertaining there to. Sri Sat Guru Ji forbid, if His Majesty his beloved son Kharak Singh, Kanwar Sher Singh, the Raja Kalam Bahadur i.e. Raja Dhian Singh Prime Minister Raja Suchet Singh ji or Jamadar Ji, should commit any inappropriate act, you should bring it to the notice of His majesty. Secondly you should send your trusted representation to the Sardars with instructions to refrain them from committing inappropriate acts. Moreover you should not permit forcible possession to be taken of any person's land or any person's house to be demolished. Nor you should allow any high handedness to be practised upon wood workers, fodder vendors, oil vendors, horse shoers, factory owners etc. You should not permit any person to be treated harshly and should forward to His Majesty any petitions intended for him. Further more you should send for Chand Mal Kotwal of the Royal court and Baba Panda and obtain from them the news of all happenings so that every person's rights are secured and no person is oppressed. Hazara sowars should he appointed to watch the roads."

(*The Real Ranjit Singh*, p. 32-33 as referred in *A History of the Sikh people*, by Dr. Gopal Singh, pp. 512-13)

This royal order makes accountable even the Maharaja and other top most officers for any sort of inappropriate acts and against any high handedness and harshness against any individual. It depicts a very high sense of Justice, unparalleled in any such regime. The Maharaja would even go in disguise to public places to hear about the views of the common man about the administration of Sikh state. That is why the people were satisfied on the Sikh state and the law and order situation was good. In the Sikh state, no person was awarded death sentence.

There was complete discipline of restraint even in the places where battles took place. The Sikh armed forces would never humiliate or harass in any manner any adversary or public at large after victory and would show human regard and dignity to every one. There was never any instance of ravaging any city or town or desecrating any place of worship or any misbehavior with any woman during the battles or after the victories by any of the Sikh armed forces, which generally occur in armed conflicts. Maharaja Ranjit Singh would himself show compassion and consideration to his defeated adversaries and would provide them with all the monetary grants according to their status which ended future conflicts.

Civil administration

In the Sikh empire, the civil administration was well organized. It had been divided in four provinces; Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar. Each province was under a Nazim (governor) under whom there were district officers; a Kardar who was the administrator revenue officer and judicial officer rolled into one. They were under the strict supervision and vigilance of the Nazim, who would send periodical reports to him. The settlement of the local disputes in villages rested with the panchayats. Appeals against panchayat orders could be taken to the Kardar. Paid justices were also appointed for cities. The disputes were decided on the basis of the customs by which the parts were governed. Capital punishment could be awarded by the Maharaja, but it was never awarded to anyone. Land Kaveri was initially the share of the crops and was charged to cash amounts. The total revenue was of three crores (thirty million Rupees) for the maintenance of law and order, and police force had been organized.

In the Sikh state there was an exemplary secularism which even today is lacking in most of the secular states boasting of democracy and secularism. In the civil administration, Hindus and Muslims were holding more keyposts than the Sikhs which was a rare state of affairs in such a situation. Fakir Aziz-ud-din, foreign minister; Nur-ud-din home minister; Ghais Khan and Illahi Bakhsh, army Generals were Muslims, Dhian Singh Dogra, Prime minister, Gulab Singh Dogra, Governor of Jammu; Suchhet Singh and Hira Singh were holding higher posts and were Hindus. Khushal Singh Chamberlain, Dina Nath, minister civil administration, Gang Ram, in civil administration, Tej Singh and Lal Singh were Brahmins. The Sikhs were rather not pertinent in the civil administration of Sikh state. There was never any discrimination

on any matter whatsoever against persons having religions other than Sikh religion, or any institution of any other religion. State donations were given to religious places of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. There was complete freedom of religion in the Sikh state. Such secular and equal treatment for the followers of all religions is unparalleled in world history in such a state.

In the Sikh state, justice – religious, political, social and economic – which had been wiped out in previous regimes was ensured for all its citizens without any discrimination whatsoever on any ground. The basic human rights which had been crushed in the previous regime, particularly the right of freedom of religion, were restored for every one. There is no instance of any violation of any such rights of any individual in the Sikh state. Human dignity and honour had been fully restored, which had been fully violated in the previous regime. The head of the Sikh state and other officers were no longer the ferocious tigers and mad dogs which were described as such in Mughal rule and neither was there any harassment to the public at large. They had been directed to consider themselves as the servants of the people and to be just in every matter. Sikhs had ensured that they would maintain the higher ethical and moral values as demanded by their religion.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was very impressive and showed inquisitiveness for all knowledge and even the foreigners praised him for his vast knowledge in every sphere. The Frenchman, Jacquemont, after interview with him, wrote :

"His conversation is like a nightmare. He is almost the first inquisitive Indian I have seen; and his curiosity balances the apathy of the whole of his nation. He has asked me a hundred thousand questions about India, the British, Europe, Bonaparte, this world in general and the next, hell, paradise, the soul, God, the devil and a myriad of others of the same kind."

(Jacquemont, *Travels II*, p. 22)

Shahamat Ali, stated about him :

"He had the same capacity for work as he had for enjoining life. When the feasts were over and the dancers' bells silent, he retired to his bedchamber and spent hours dictating his correspondence to relays of scribes, who were always in attendance."

(Shahamat Ali, *Sikhs and Afghans*, p. 15)

Ranjit Singh's sympathy to common peasantry was a very personal one. In a note to Lehna Singh Majithia on the latter's assignment to collect revenue the Maharaja wrote :

"Take care that in assignment to collect the revenue, all residents of the country are happy and in the cradle of comfort and ease..... See that all the zamindars have prosperous houses and households..... Realise the revenue with a sweet tongue."

(Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 293)

"He also had the peasant's shrewdness and cunning, and once his suspicion was aroused he

considered no trick unfair to outwit an adversary. But he never held a grudge for very long. He forgave people who had wronged him and rehabilitated enemies he had vanquished. He hated inflicting punishment. Never in his entire life did he sentence a man to death—not even an Akali fanatic who tried to assassinate him."

(Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 293)

If any power dared to threaten Maharaja Ranjit Singh he would pay him in the same coin, mincing no words. Once Dost Muhammad ruler of Afghanistan, wrote to the Maharaja :

"If out of haughtiness, the Maharaja does not pay heed to my request I will gird up my loins for battle and become a thorn in the courtyard of his rose garden. I will muster an army of crusaders who know nothing except fighting unto death. I will create tumult on all sides and a scene of chaos everywhere."

The Maharaja immediately replied :

"We have broken the heads of refractory chiefs and put our foes in Irons. If Dost out of avarice and greed desires to give battle with the small force he has let him come."

(*Lahore Darbar*, pp. 178-79)

Major HML Lawrence narrates the achievements of Maharaja Ranjit Singh which he summed up in his own words :

"My kingdom is 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 undivided to my posterity. The maxim 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 and 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 robe of Empire I put on the mantle of care. I fed faqirs and holy men and gained their prayers. The guilty as the innocent, I spared. And those whose hands were raised against myself have met my clemency. *Sri Purakh Ji* (God) has therefore been merciful to his servant and increased his power so that his territory now extended to the borders of China and the limits of the Afghans with all Multan and the rich possessions beyond the Satluj."

These words of Maharaja Ranjit Singh need no further explanation. It is his comprehensive truthful version of himself and his Sikh Empire.

No doubt Maharaja Ranjit Singh is credited for setting up the unified Sikh sovereign state and deserved the title of the 'Lion of Punjab': *Sher-e-Punjab*. It was under his capable and committed Sikh leadership that the Sikh Empire expanded to the whole of North India and no one could even dream of challenging him leave alone revolting against him. Unfortunately some of his wrong policies with political set up

and administration of the Sikh state, trusting insincere elements who had no commitment towards promoting Sikh ideology and the Sikh Empire, besides making his rule a dynastic rule laid the foundation for the disintegration of the Sikh Empire.

J.D. Cunningham, the captain of the British army, who had political charge of Punjab affairs for the British (1938-46) commented regarding Maharaja Ranjit Singh :

"Ranjit Singh found the Punjab a waning confederacy, a prey to the 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 the provinces, and he gave the potent English no cause for interference. He found the military array of his country a mass of horsemen, brave indeed but ignorant of war as an art, and he left it mustering fifty thousand disciplined soldiers, fifty thousand well-armed yeomanry and militia and more than three hundred pieces of cannon on the field. His rule was founded on the feelings of the people but it involved the joint action of the necessary principles of military order and territorial extension and when a limit had been set to Sikh dominion, and his own commanding genius was no more, the vital spirit of his race began to consume itself in domestic contentions."

(J.D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 200)

At page 201, says he on to his last days :

"When Ranjit Singh was Lord Auckland's host at Lahore and Amritsar, his utterance was difficult and the powers of his body feeble; He gradually lost the use of his speech and of the faculties of his mind; and, before his death, the Rajas of Jammu had usurped to themselves the whole of the functions of government, which the absence of Nau Nihal Singh enabled them to do with little difficulty. The army was assembled and a litter, said to contain the dying Maharaja was carried along the extended line. Dhian Singh was assiduous in his mournful attention, he seemed to take orders as if from his departing sovereign and from time to time during the solemn procession, he made known that Ranjit Singh declared Prince Kharak Singh his successor, and himself, Dhian Singh the Wazir or minister of the kingdom. The soldiery acquiesced in silence and the British Government was perhaps more sincere than the Sikh people in the congratulations offered, agreeably to custom, to the men and unworthy master of Punjab."

At page 202

"Lord Auckland hastily desired Sher Singh to be told Kharak Singh was his master."

It obviously shows that the Dogras of Jammu and the British were anxious to see Kharak Singh as the successor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They had their own motivations. Dhian Singh Dogra was asserting that he had been nominated by the Maharaja himself to be the Wazir or minister even at that sorrowful occasion.

It is a great credit to the architects of Sikh Empire, to its head Maharaja Ranjit Singh, to its two pillars – Akali Phula Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa, the great Sikh Generals who laid down their lives by receiving fatal injuries at the battlefields and to all its commanders and warriors who fought and won all the fierce battles for expanding the Sikh Empire throughout North India. It comprised of areas of over two

hundred thousand miles adjoining Afghanistan on one side and China on the other. They would have further expanded the Sikh Empire upto Jamuna, the outskirts of Delhi to the East and to Sindh province touching the sea if the British had not prevented them with their shrewd diplomacies under the treaties of 1809 and 1838.

The only Ruler of Afghanistan to be in armed conflict with the Sikhs Dost Muhammad tried his luck for the last time in 1838 at Jamrod and Khyber Pass unsuccessfully to try to get back the territories from the Sikhs adjoining the borders of Afghanistan, had now been replaced by Shah Shuja with the support of the Sikh and British army. He entered into a treaty with the Sikhs and the British duly signed on July 25, 1838 to never enter into the territory of the Sikh Empire and to be on friendly terms with them. There was thus to be total external peace between the Sikh Empire, British Empire and the Afghan Kingdom.

The Sikhs now had to pay total attention to the development and welfare of the Sikh state, besides Sikh religious affairs into which Brahmanical infiltration had been on the increase because the Sikhs had been more occupied in their army expeditions. The Sikhs were only 12% of the Sikh state, the majority being of Hindus and Muslims but they had dominance in the army. In the civil administrations also the Hindus and Muslim officials were at the pleasure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the head of the state and were naturally fully loyal to him and subservient to him. They knew that it was a Sikh Empire established by Sikhs, the name of which was Sarkar-e-Khalsa. The currency of which was in the name of Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion. No one dared to do any anti Sikh deed or exhibit any such sentiment. Every one was under the authority of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, head of the state who had clarified in the very beginning that for Sikhs, he was only Singh Sahib one of them, though for all others he was the Maharaja.

Events took a sudden turn, when on June 2, 1839 Maharaja Ranjit Singh died. A day earlier he had nominated his son Kharak Singh to succeed him and Dhian Singh Dogra to be the Prime Minister. Though he requested every one to be loyal to the new king and the Sikh Empire, the things obviously changed after his death. The other sons of Ranjit Singh were not reconciled to this decision. They put their claims to the title of Maharaja and particularly the eldest son, Sher Singh. Dhian Singh Dogra wanted to establish his authority and if possible to put his son Hira Singh on the throne, the Maharaja had pampered and treated just like his son. The prominent Sikh Sardars exhibited their rivalries against each other and to show who was more powerful than the other in the new affairs of the Sikh state. Every one having a say in the Sikh Empire adopted an attitude of hostility and exploitation for his own vested interests as now they had no fear of authority and no sense of loyalty to the state as was during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The British who were waiting for such a situation, on the other side of Satluj, became interested in finding out easy targets for the betrayals and traitorships to the Sikh state though outwardly keeping to the friendship treaty. In these circumstances, it became difficult to maintain stability for long in the

administration of the Sikh state. The Dogras and Brahmins whether having been insincere to the ideology of a Sikh state but having been brought at the helm of the affairs of the administration by Maharaja Ranjit Singh became traitors and entered into conspiracies with the British to bring about the downfall of the Sikh state. The dynastic rule opted by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, instead of a democratic rule, also became a factor for the downfall of the Sikh Empire. It took not more than a decade to annex the Sikh state by the British.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh to Share Responsibility for Downfall of Sikh Empire

The rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was never a hereditary dynastic rule. He was the head of one of the confederacies. He had sole credit for ousting the Mughals and Afghans from the territories under Sikh rule. Over two hundred thousand Sikhs had been killed in the prolonged Sikh struggle for freedom and sovereignty. Ranjit Singh named the rule as 'Sarkar-e-Khalsa', its currency was named Nanak Shahi in the Name of the founder of Sikh Religion. He himself explained that he was only one of the Sikhs and as such could not be called the Maharaja of the Sikhs and should only to be called Singh Sahib by them and he being the Maharaja for non-Sikhs also. These were all the ingredients of a Sikh state. Then how could he be justified in making the Sikh state as his dynastic monarchy and bring Sikh at the top of state administration ? Dogra and Purbia Brahmins who had no part in establishing the Sikh state and neither any commitment to the Sikh state or to the Sikhs. The consequences of these mistakes were to prove disastrous for the Sikhs. Similarly Ranjit Singh had no justification for totally ousting the chiefs of the confederacies from the administration of the Sikh state.

If Maharaja Ranjit Singh had not brought the Dogras and Purbia Brahmins to the helm of the administration of the Sikh state and instead given the civil administration into the hands of capable and loyal Sikh sardars committed to the ideology of the Sikh state and secondly had he not forced his dynastic rule instead of the democratic setup as preferred in Sikh ideology, the down fall of Sikh Empire could have been avoided. The sovereign Sikh state was the result of the prolonged Sikh struggle for freedom and sovereignty, the first phase of which was the Sikh confederacies' rule by ousting the Mughals and Afghans from the territories occupied by them. The chiefs of those Sikh confederacies should have been kept in the council of ministers of the Sikh state after their amalgamation in one-consolidated Sikh state, filling the vacancies on merits ultimately making the state democratic instead of monarchic. The failure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to adopt such a procedure to safeguard the Sikh state from betrayal and conspiracy makes him share the responsibilities for the rapid downfall of the Sikh state, along with others, responsible for it.

Some prominent Sikh leaders were not in favour of monarchy and to the succession of his son as the head of the Sikh state, as desired by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. General Hari Singh Nalwa was vocal enough to say to Ranjit Singh's face that :

"This state belongs not to individual but to the Khalsa Commonwealth. It is the sacrifices of a whole people over a century, blessed by the Guru's grace, that we have won an Empire. Its leadership belongs to where it belongs to the whole Sikh people. Let them choose who shall lead them by a conquests (*gurmatta*). Kharak Singh is my friend but not able to bear the great burden. Let us not fail our people when they need our dispassionate lead the most."

(Dr. Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh people*, p. 488)

But General Hari Singh Nalwa died earlier than Maharaja Ranjit Singh. There was no uniform voice of Sikh Sardars and neither was any such united power which could dissuade Ranjit Singh from his thought of dynastic rule.

In fact the Dogra brothers and other Non Sikh elements at the helm of affairs of the Sikh state were considered to be very loyal by Ranjit Singh and supported his ideas of dynastic rule for their own vested interests in ending Sikh rule and the dynasty of Ranjit Singh which could not be possible if capable and selected Sikh leadership was to take charge of the Sikh state, commanding the support and respect of the Sikhs. The British also were not interested in supporting such a stable rule as they were waiting for the conspiracies to end Sikh rule after the demise of Ranjit Singh by making the Dogras and Purbias at the Sikh Darbar the traitors of Sikhs and Sikh rule. Thus all these hidden pressures besides the family pressure and the desire of the Maharaja himself prompted Ranjit Singh to nominate his son Kharak Singh as his successor, little realising that it would prove to be the end of his own dynasty besides that of the Sikh empire, which actually did happen within a decade. Capt. Wade, the British agent at Ludhiana, had even made his assessment of the disintegration of the Sikh Empire in 1834 when Ranjit Singh Maharaja fell ill and recovered. In his communication of July 19, 1834 to the secretary of state, Government of India, W.H. Macnaghten he mentioned :

"Imbecile in character and degraded in intellect as Kharak Singh is, it is a mistake to suppose that Sher Singh is better qualified to hold the reins of govt. After Ranjit Singh's death, Muslim tribe will rebel between Jehlum and Peshawar, three Jammu Rajas, raised to their high stations by the Maharaja, will declare independence of their territories between Ravi and Satluj. Multan will continue to own allegiance under Governor Sawan Mal. The Afghan of Kala Bagh, Dera Ismail Khan, Tonk, Bannu and Senghir will rebel. We expect not much trouble between Ropar and Harika Pattan except some loose hands of plunderers with every difference in my judgments. I beg leave to submit for his lordship's considerations, whether in the event of Ranjit Singh's death it would not be proper to adopt the precaution of advancing a part of Ludhiana force to Ferozepur backed by a regiment of cavalry from Karnal. The feud will occur not only between Kharak Singh and Sher Singh but by the revolt of numerous chiefs as detailed above, who have been the victims of his ambition."

Such was the planning of the British even during the life time of Maharaja Ranjit

Singh. Only a committed and capable Sikh ruler would be able to face such challenges. "Capt Wade, in his letter of August 10, 1836, to the secretary Macnaghten made a mention of the fact of asking for British help for his succession to his father, by Kharak Singh and pointing to the ambitions of the Jammu Dogra Rajas, who were reported to be anti British at that time. In his letter of April 30, 1836, the reply of which had been sent to Kharak Singh on July 19, 1836." It shows Kharak Singh to be in correspondance with the British for their help to succeed to his father, whom they considered to be incapable and inbecile character and degraded in intellect and thus to help him. Again Capt. Wade in his letter of February 14, 1938 to secretary Macunaughten made a mention that :

"Kanwar Kharak Singh, the heir wants energy and his masses are not in his favour not his mind brightened by those beams of intelligence which appear both in the conduct and the observations of his young and active son (Nau Nihal Singh)."

(Dr. Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People*, pp. 488-490)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh still nominated Kharak Singh, his son as his successor and the anti Sikh mischief monger Dogra Dhian Singh to be the Prime Minister of the Sikh state. Both these postings were in contradiction to the Sikh dictums and laid the foundation of the downfall of Sikh Empire. Capable Sikhs selected on merits with commitment to the Sikh empire by Sikh Commonwealth could instill confidence in the Sikhs, and that was the need of the hour to run the affairs of Sikh state with honesty of purpose and not the dynastic rule of Ranjit Singh. The Sikhs and dynasty of Ranjit Singh as well had to pay the price for the violation.

Downfall of Sikh Rule (1839-1849)

After the death of Ranjit Singh, the down fall of Sikh rule immediately started. At the top of the administrative set up, there were no committed Sikhs capable of saving the Sikh rule from the conspiracies of the British. It provided a golden opportunity to the crafty and shrewed British to enter conspiracies with traitorous elements in order to bring about the fall of the Sikh empire, which they could not do in the life time of Ranjit Singh, as no one could take any risk of betrayal to him. The sons of Ranjit Singh were not competent enough to deal with such a critical situation. Infact in Sikh rule and during such a critical time, committed Sikhs should have been in-charge of the administrative set up. All of his sons were assassinated one after the other under the British conspiracies, with the help of the Dogras and Brahmins who were occupying the key post on the Sikh state and who were only interested in their own monetary considerations.

Kharak Singh, his son, was nominated by Ranjit Singh to succeed him as Maharaja and put under the guidance of Dhyhan Singh Dogra, who vowed to be sincere to him and the Sikh state. Ranjit Singh little realized that he would soon prove to be traitor

to his son and his family and the Sikh state. Dhian Singh Dogra was dreaming of putting his son Hira Singh on the throne of the Sikh state. He along with his brother Gulab Singh tried their best to usurp all the powers of the newly appointed Maharaja but could not be successful. Then they committed another mischief by creating a dispute between Kharak Singh and his son so as to install Nau Nihal Singh son of Kharak Singh to be the Maharaja. He would be totally dependent upon them and lose the sympathy of other members of Ranjit Singh family and most of the Sikhs. Under the conspiracies, Nau Nihal Singh was installed de facto as ruler on August 10, 1839 by getting his father Kharak Singh practically imprisoned in the palace. However Nau Nihal Singh also refused to totally play into the hands of these wicked Dogras.

Maharaja Kharak Singh died and was cremated on November 5, 1840. Nau Nihal Singh was also murdered under the conspiracy on that very day by the demolition of the projection of the roof while he was crossing beneath it after the cremation of his father.

Maharani Chand Kaur, mother of Nau Nihal Singh, immediately took the reign of the Sikh state in her hands. She was also dislodged by Kanwar Sher Singh on January 18, 1841 another son of Ranjit Singh. On September 15, 1843, Ajit Singh and Lehna Singh Sandhwalias killed Sher Singh and his son Kanwar Partap Singh in conspiracy with Dogra Dhian Singh. However, they knew the conspiracies of the Dogras and their insincerity to them. So they also killed Dhian Singh Dogra on that very day by taking him into confidence. Hira Singh son of Dhian Singh Dogra killed both Lehna Singh and Ajit Singh on the very next day to take revenge for his father's murder and also feeling his life to be in danger from them. One certainly wonders on so many abrupt killings. However, Dogra Dhian Singh's leaving the scene was in the Sikh interests, but the strife which intensified between relations of Ranjit Singh was not in Sikh interest.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had left seven surviving sons : Kharak Singh, Sher Singh, Tara Singh, Kashmira Singh, Pashaura Singh, Multana Singh and Dalip Singh. There were three prominent Sikh families, Sandhwalias, Attariwalas and Majithas related to the Maharaja. The dynastic rule of Ranjit Singh had become a matter of intense strife among them. Kharak Singh was the eldest son who had become the heir apparent as Maharaja Ranjit Singh had himself named him as his successor. But he was not suited for the intricate problems that manifested at that critical time. Sher Singh was son of the Maharaja from his first wedded wife and so was ambitious to succeed him. He was comparatively a better administrator. However Kharak Singh became the successor of his father and was crowned as Maharaja in his place. Dhian Singh Dogra was made the chief minister.

At the helm of the civil administration, during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time, there were the three Dogra brothers : Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Chet Singh, besides Hira Singh son of Dhian Singh, the confidant of the Maharaja. From the Muslims, there were two Muslim brothers, Faqir Aziz-u-din and faqir Nur-u-din; from the Hindus,

Dina Nath and Ganga Ram; besides the two Purbia Brahmins, Tej Singh and Lal Singh and others. Most of them were not sincere towards Sikh rule. The Dogras and the Brahmins became easy targets for the British to betray the Sikh state. The Sikh Sardars, due to the intense rivalries, became involved in mutual strifes and factionalism.

Chet Singh Bajwa manipulated Maharaja Kharak Singh in state affairs, being his confidant and his main supporter. He sidelined the Dogra brothers and even Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh son of the Maharaja. In August 1839, the Kanwar requested his father to dismiss Bajwa but he refused. On October 9, 1839 the Kanwar along with three Dogra brothers and their armed guards arrested Chet Singh Bajwa and took him to the Maharaja and killed him in his presence.

The Chief supporters of Bajwa, Misr Beli Ram and his brothers were also arrested and their properties confiscated. Maharaja Kharak Singh submitted to his son, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh to become the de facto ruler of Punjab, the Sikh empire, and he himself remained only the de jure Maharaja. Nau Nihal Singh established his capability to rule and the will to effectively govern the state, which he did though in the name of his father. He disappointed the Dogra brothers by not playing into their hands. He regained the control over the armed forces.

On November 5, 1840, Kharak Singh died. After his cremation when Nau Nihal Singh came back to the palace and was just passing through the gateway of the palace, the arch fell down, seriously injuring him on his head with the stone slabs, fracturing his skull to which injury he succumbed. Another version is that he had survived his injuries and Dhian Singh Dogra crushed his head after they reached the palace. Whatever it may be Nau Nihal Singh could not become the Maharaja in his own right, though he had exhibited his capability to hold the high title. If his end had not come so soon perhaps he would have governed the state effectively and further conspiracies against the Sikh state could have been avoided.

Dhian Singh Dogra, Chief Minister, invited Kanwar Sher Singh son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to assume the title of Maharaja but his rivals supported Chand Kaur widow of Kharak Singh and mother of Nau Nihal Singh to become the Maharani of Punjab. Here again the division between the Sikhs on this very pertinent matter came into the open, to be exploited by their adversaries. However, Chand Kaur was installed as the Queen of Punjab on December 2, 1840. Ajit Singh and Attar Singh Sandhawalias took over the control of state affairs. Sher Singh and Dhian Singh Dogra left Lahore. On January 17, 1841, Chand Kaur conceded to relinquishing the title of Queen, in favour of Sher Singh amicably. Sher Singh was installed as Maharaja. He appointed Dogra Dhian Singh as Chief Minister. In spite of the adversities and the intense factions in Sikh Sardars, Sher Singh ruled over Punjab with ability and shrewdness. He had been accepted by the Sikh army and the adjoining British empire.

Sandhawalias had left the state and went over to British territory. The British gave them asylum. The British administration negotiated their case with the Maharaja and got compromise affected between them. In November 1842, Ajit Singh

Sandhawaliala came back to Lahore and was received by Sher Singh. He was Pro-British and Anti Dogra in the Sikh Darbar. He was made a commander in the Army. On September 15, 1843 Sher Singh went to inspect the troops of Ajit Singh Sandhawaliala. He took his son partap Singh with him. After the march past, Ajit Singh came to him at the stage to present an English made gun which he had brought from Calcutta. As Sher Singh got up to receive the gun, Ajit Singh pressed the trigger hitting Sher Singh who died at the spot. Ajit Singh hacked off Sher Singh's head and mounted it on his spear. Ajit Singh's uncle Lehna Singh murdered the minor partap Singh and hacked off his head and mounted on his spear. They went to the fort and killed Dhian Singh Dogra. They had plans to occupy the fort and the palace to rule over the state. Hira Singh Dogra along with Sikh army immediately seized the fort. Ajit Singh Sandhawaliala and his uncle were killed along with six hundred of their troops by the Nihangs and the Sikh army after a fierce battle. The Sikh army was infuriated with those who had assassinated their Maharaja and his minor son. It was a great treachery on the part of these two Sandhawaliala Sardars to assassinate the Maharaja, who had established them as commandants in his army and had imposed confidence in them. They were also to share the responsibility for the downfall of the Sikh Empire as Maharaja Sher Singh had established him as an effective ruler.

Dalip Singh, the minor son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was proclaimed Maharaja. Hira Singh Dogra was made the chief minister on September 18, 1843. Attar Singh Sandhawaliala, who survived the attack, again ran away to British territory and took asylum. The other two sons of Ranjit Singh—Pashaura Singh and Kashmir Singh were not reconciled to the occupation of the throne by Dalip Singh. There was intense rivalry among the Dogras to get the key posts in the Sikh state. Rani Jindan, mother of Dalip Singh, had a pertinent role to play but she failed to bring about the unity in their family and among the Sikh sardars. She was soft on Suchet Singh Dogra, uncle of Hira Singh, but he was killed by the Sikh army, loyal to him (Hira Singh). Both the princes Pashaura Singh and Kashmir Singh contacted the Sikh army in Punjab to make it hostile towards Hira Singh Dogra. The princes visited Bhai Bir Singh who was an ex-Army man and had become a Sikh preacher having constructed a gurdwara at Naurangabad and had influence amongst the Sikhs. Attar Singh Sandhawaliala also came there from British territory. The Sikh artillery blasted the Dera of Bhai Bir Singh in which Attar Singh, prince Kashmira Singh and Bhai Bir Singh were killed along with hundreds of the Sikhs present there. Prince Pachaura Singh went away to British territory. It caused further unrest in the Sikh state.

The Sikh army also turned against Hira Singh Dogra and his associate Julla, a Brahmin, for the character assassination of Rani Jindan. They tried to flee away from Sikh territory but were attacked by the Sikh army who killed both of them along with one thousand of their troops. Thus came the end of the dynasty of Dhian Singh Dogra in December, 1844.

Rani Jindan, mother of the minor Maharaja, took over state affairs in her direct

control assisted by her brother Jawahar Singh. Prince Pashaura Singh captured the Attock fort and proclaimed himself as the Maharaja. He was killed by the Sikh army. The Khalsa army Panchayat held Jawahar Singh to be responsible and ordered to appear before it. On September 21, 1845, when he came to appear before the Army Panchayat he was speared to death. The army Panchayat itself took over the affairs of the Sikh state. Its orders were issued under the seal "Akal Sahai". Diwan Dina Nath was made its spokesman. The British did not recognize it. It failed to have any impact on Sikh state administration and proved to be a temporary arrangement.

The British felt that now there could be no stable government in the Sikh states. So they were encouraged to conspire against the Sikh state. Lal Singh, the Purbia Brahmin was the Chief Minister and confidant of Rani Jindan. Tej Singh, the other Purbia Brahmin was the commander in chief of the Army. The third person at the helm of affairs was Dogra Gulab Singh. They were in conspiracy with British. Dogra Gulab Singh had written to Britishers :

"He would cause the whole of them (the Hillmen) to revolt against the Sikhs and submit to the Britishers if desired. He could besides, assemble 40,000 troops from the hills, probably 50,000 but certainly 40,000 and more and attack the Sikhs."

(S.C. 46 of 25-1845, referred to in *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, Khushwant Singh, p. 37)

What did Lal Singh do as the Chief Minister and who was also the commander of Sikh Army.

"The first thing Lal Singh did on crossing the Satluj was to write to Capt. Nicholson of British army at Ferozepur."

" I have crossed with Sikh Army You know my friendship with British. Tell me, what to do."

Nicholson replied :

"Do not attack Ferozepur. Halt as many days as you can. Then march towards the Governor General."

(Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 47)

What did, Tej Singh, the commander-in-chief of Khalsa army, do :

"The British suffered terrible casualties, every single member of the Governor General's staff was killed or wounded. That frosty night the fate of India trembled in the balance. The sun rose on the plains of Ferozeshahr over a terribly battered British army. It had run out of ammunition and the men had no stomach left for battle. At this point, Tej Singh arrived from Ferozepur with troops with fresh and eager for combat. Tej Singh's guns opened fire. The British army had no shot with which to reply. Then without any reason, Tej Singh's guns also fell silent and after a few minutes later Tej Singh ordered his troops to retreat. Lord Gough quickly realized that Sikh commander had fulfilled their treacherous promises. Soon after the defeat, Tej Singh visited the British camp and had interview with Lord Hardinge."

(SC 319 of 26-12-1846, as referred to in *A History of the Sikhs* by Khushwant Singh at pp. 49-50)

Gulab Singh Dogra had been deputed to represent the Sikh state for negotiations with the British. He was their agent and the traitor of Sikhs and in communication with British since January, 1846, against Sikhs. Lal Singh and Tej Singh, Purbia Brahmins, were the commanders of the Sikh army and were in conspiracy with British against the Sikhs to ensure the defeat of the Sikh army and the victory of the British. There could not be a more unfortunate situation than this for the Sikhs. Why did the Sikh army officers and civil administrative officers not get to know of these conspiracies and treachery against them and remove these traitors from the scene and save the Sikh empire, still remains unexplained.

Dalip Singh installed Maharaja

On September 18, 1843, Kanwar Dalip Singh, youngest son of Ranjit Singh, aged only five years, a minor, was installed as Maharaja. In September 1844, Jawahar Singh, brother of Maharani Jindan, who was the mother of Dalip Singh, murdered Hira Singh Dogra and became the Minister. On September 12, 1845 he got Kanwar Pashaura Singh killed, the only other son of Ranjit who was alive. Thus within five years of the death of Ranjit Singh, all of his sons excepting Dalip Singh had been finished, one by one under different conspiracies. Jawahar Singh who had murdered Pashaura Singh was also murdered on September 21, 1845.

Now came the turn of Brahmins to be in action to demolish the Sikh state as Dogras Dhian Singh and his son Hira Singh had been assassinated, whose conspiracies had already shaken the foundation of Sikh rule. In November 1845, Lal Singh Purbia Brahmin was made the chief minister of the Sikh state while the other Purbia Brahmin Tej Singh was made the commander in chief of the Sikh army. The third Hindu Dina Nath was given charge of the affairs of the Sikh state. The fate of Sikh state was obvious, when all these three heads of Sikh state in civil and defence were acting as traitors of Sikhs and were faithful to the British. These heads of civil and defence administration had gone to that extent of getting instructions from the British in advance to get the Sikh armed forces defeated and to act upon those plans. It is conceded in the confidential reports of British General and other administration that it was due to the betrayal of these two Brahmins against Sikhs that they could be successful, as they had otherwise found it impossible to defeat the Sikh army in any of the battles. In fact, the British did not dare to violate the 1809 agreement between the Sikhs and the British not to enter each others territory uptil then, when these Brahmins betrayed the Sikhs and played into the hands of the British as traitors against Sikhs.

Anglo-Sikh Wars

On December 13, 1845 the British declared war on the Sikhs with the proclamation that the territory beyond Satluj would also be deemed to be under their

domain. The Sikh army reached Ferozepur as it was in a position to defeat the British army but chief of the Sikh army was siding with the British. The Sikh army and the British army met on the battlefields at Mudki on December 18, 1845 and at Feroze Shah on December 21, 1845. Tej Singh, the Brahmin commander in chief of the Sikh army, ensured the defeat of the Sikh army as otherwise the British Army was in no position to defeat the Sikh army. At Mudki, Tej Singh commander of Sikh army along with five thousand Sikh soldiers, ran away from the battlefield ordering the remaining Sikh army to leave the battlefields just when the Sikh army was at the point of success. Similar strategy of betrayal was adopted by the commander of the Sikh army at the battlefield of Feroze Shah in accordance with the instruction from the British.

On January 23, 1846, the Sikh army fought the British army at the battlefield of Sabraon, but this battle was lost even before it was fought because the Brahmin commander of the Sikh army had sent the information as to the plan of their warfare two days earlier to the British ensuring that the Sikh armed forces would be misguided and would be defeated. The commander of the Sikh army had played so low and mean that he ran away from the battlefield and destroyed the arms and ammunition of the Sikh army. The Sikh armed forces who were still engaged in battle were astonished when they found sand in the bags of ammunition. In such a treacherous situation, how could the army be victorious? The deception in the battle of 'Aliwal' was similar by the Brahmin commander of Sikh army. Lord Gough, British Army General, had recorded :

"If Generals of the Sikh army Tej Singh and Lal Singh, had not betrayed their army then the result of the battles fought between Sikhs and Britishers would have altogether been different."

Thus it was due to the traitors holding the position of Generals of Sikh army and their betrayal that the British could win these battles, otherwise it was impossible to defeat the Sikh army. That's why the renowned Muslim poet Shah Muhammad of those days who has described these wars, remarked that these wars were between 'Panjab and India' ruled by British and due to the absence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sikhs though had won the battles, but were defeated by betrayals.

J.D. Cunningham, author of *History of the Sikhs*, published in 1849, was an eye witness to these British conspiracies with the traitors of the Sikh Purbias Lal Singh Prime Minister and Tej Singh commander in chief, and Dogra Gulab Singh, the representative of Sikh rule who was sent to negotiate with the British, was in the political employment of the British for dealing with Punjab. He gave the correct eye witness account in this regard for which he was removed from the political employment. It is thus the most authentic account coming from the person at the helm of affairs. He has recorded on page 279 of his book :

"The English, therefore, intimated to Gulab Singh their readiness to acknowledge a Sikh sovereignty in Lahore after army should have been disbanded but the Raja declared his inability to deal with

troops which still overawed him and other well-wishers of the family of Ranjit Singh. This helplessness was partly exaggerated to selfish objects. But time pressed; the speedy dictation of a treaty under the walls of Lahore was essential to British reputation and the views of either party were in some sort met by an understanding that the Sikh army should be attacked by the English and that when beaten it should be openly abandoned by its own Government; and further, that the passage of the Satluj should be unopposed and the road to the capital laid open to the victors. Under these circumstances of discreet policy and shameless treason was the battle of Sobaron fought."

Both the Purbias Lal Singh and Tej Singh commanders came to the battlefield to ensure the defeat of the Sikh army and the victory of British by misleading the Sikh army and conducting the battle in accordance with the plan set out by the British. It was the height of betrayal and treachery where over fifteen thousand troops of the Sikh army were killed because of their so called commanders. Records Cunningham :

"The traitor Tej Singh (commander in chief of Sikh army) indeed, instead of leading fresh men to sustain the failing strength of the troops on his right, fled on the first assault and either accidentally or by design sank a boat in the middle of the bridge of the communication. But the ancient Sham Singh (Attari Wala) 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 the heap of his slain countrymen yet, although assailed on either side by squadrons of horse and battalions of foot, no Sikh offered to submit and no disciple of Gobind Singh asked for quarter."

(J.D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 284)

Further records Cunningham at page 286:

"The holders of treasure and food and all the ammunitions of war had first passively helped to defeat them and then openly joined the enemy, and the soldiery readily assented to the requisition of the court that Gulab Singh, their chosen minister, should have full powers to treat with the English on the already admitted basis of recognizing a Sikh Government at Lahore."

On February 20, the British and their army arrived at the Sikh capital of Lahore welcomed by the negotiator Dogra Gulab Singh, Chief Minister Lal Singh and the commander in chief Tej Singh both Purbia Brahmins, whom Ranjit Singh Maharaja of Sikhs had brought at the helm of Sikh affairs to be his trusted officers. They agreed to all the terms and conditions of the British in the first step of annexation of the Sikh empire to the British in accordance with the conspiratorial settlements for their selfish ends by making the Sikhs helpless at that state. The intense rivalries and selfish motivations of the Sikh chiefs and of the dynasty of Ranjit Singh were of course also responsible for such a situation.

J.D. Cunningham has also exposed the Sikh commanders at the battles of Mudki and Feroze Shahar and even at Ferozepur to be in league with the British and acting according to the British plans. He records on page 263 of his book *History of the Sikhs* :

"It was sufficiently certain and notorious at the time that Lal Singh was in communication with Capt Nicolson, the British agent at Ferozepur."

And

"The *Calcutta review* for June 1849 (p. 549) while doubting the fact or atleast the extent and importance of Lal Singh's and Tej Singh's treachery, admits that the former was not only in communication with Capt. Nicolson as stated but that on February 7, 1846, he was understood to have sent a plan of the Sikh position at Sobraon to Col. Lawrence, and that on December 19, 1845 the day after the battle of Mudki. Lal Singh's agent came to Major Broadfoot, and was dismissed with a rebuke. As regards Tej Singh's treachery it may be stated that according to a reliable tradition that officer discovered early in the operations that his artillery ammunition had been tempered with and much of it rendered useless. Such treachery on the part of his own side, doubtless, had considerable effect upon his subsequent conduct."

Further on page 265, regarding battle of 'Mudki' he records :

"Lal Singh headed the attack but in accordance with his original design, he involved his followers in an engagement and then left them to fight as their undirected valour might prompt."

And in connection with the battle of Ferozeshahr on page 267 :

"This reserve was commanded by Tej Singh, he had been urged by his zealous and sincere soldiery to fall upon the English at daybreak but his object was to have the dreaded army of the Khalsa overcome and dispersed, and he delayed until Lal Singh's force was everywhere put to fight and until his opponents had again ranged themselves round their colours. Even at the last moment, he rather skirmished and made faints than led his men to a resolute attack and after a time he precipitately fled, leaving his subordinates without orders and without an object at a moment when the artillery ammunition of the English had failed, when a portion of their force was retiring upon Ferozepur and when no exertions could have prevented the remainder from retreating likewise if the Sikhs had boldly pressed forward."

J.D. Cunningham, though a British Captain of the British army, had mostly exposed the conspiracies of his men with the traitors of Sikhs Dogra Gulab Singh, Purbias Lal Singh and Tej Singh, who were at the bellows of Sikh rule but it is not understood why their conspiracies could not be known to the Sikhs and Sikh army and why they were not punished for such heinous crimes, by the Sikhs at that very time. It is unparalleled in that these few scoundrels were successful in managing to disintegrate such a mighty Sikh Empire and to make the brave Sikhs helpless by their treachery in conspiracies with British.

British Annexed part of Punjab and divided it

Conspiracy had been committed by the British side which Dogra Gulab Singh, who had gone to Jammu was brought back and appointed the Minister in Sikh state

administration as if the betrayal of the two Purbia Brahmins Lal Singh and Tej Singh was still insufficient. He was to be made available to the British for the fulfillment of their further intrigues and conspiracies against the Sikh state. It was due to these betrayals that the British were allowed to reach Lahore on February 26, 1846 in accordance with the preplanned scheme.

On February 20, 1846, Dalip Singh was declared as Maharaja of Punjab, Tej Singh Brahmin as Minister and Chief of army. On March 11, 1846 an agreement was entered upon between the Sikh Rule and British according to which the entire territory under the domain of Sikh rule was divided into three parts :

- i) The area in between Satluj and Beas rivers was annexed by the Britishers.
- ii) The areas of Jammu and Kashmir was given to Gulab Singh Dogra in recognition of the services of Dogras as traitors of Sikh concealing Gulab Singh as Raja of that area.
- iii) The rest of the Punjab area was conceded to be under the domain of Maharaja Dalip Singh as Sikh state.

It was also provided in the agreement that uptill attaining the age of maturity by Dalip Singh on September 4, 1854, he would remain under the guardianship of the British government and a British regiment was appointed at Lahore.

The strength of the Sikh army of the curtailed territory of Maharaja Dalip Singh was limited to be not more than twenty thousand armed forces (20,000) in addition to ten thousand (10,000) armed forces with horses.

All the weapons, ammuniton, which were used in the battles by Sikh army were confiscated by the British.

Maharaja of Sikh rule was put under the British government. It was thus a joke as compared to the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sikh state where in the Britishers dared not enter for more than half a century.

Second Anglo Sikh War

The British continued their conspiracies with the help of the Sikh traitors even in the area earmarked for the Sikh rule of Maharaja Dalip Singh. They created armed rebellions at some place in that area with the motivation of pushing in their armed forces into those area, for further annexation. These rebellions created at Multan and other places were given out to be rebellions again the rule of Dalip Singh. Several influential Sikhs were arrested on the ground of rebellions in order to defame them. In the areas of Multan and Hazara and several other places, the British army was sent to crush the rebellions though these had been instigated by them. It was depicted to be the second war of the Sikhs by Chattar Singh, Sher Singh and others. The expenses of the British army to crush these bogus rebellions were charged on the account of Dalip Singh, alleging that the British were duty bound to help the Sikh rule of Dalip

Singh by sending their armies on these expeditions. It was the height of mischievous conspiracies but there was no force to expose it.

Thorburn remarked about the Multan Rebellion :

"The govt. of India has decided to let Punjab excesses come to a head and when ripe to lance it freely in the coming cold weather."

(Thorburn, *Punjab in Peace and War*, p. 101)

The resident was involved personally in spreading the Multan rebellion. In fact the Sikh army joined hands with the so called Multan rebels against British machinations. The Multan Rebellion was thoroughly exploited by the British for their own ends and Rani Jindan, who was under house arrest at Sheikhpura fort was deported from Punjab to Benaras and it was spread that she was also a conspirator. In fact the British wanted to keep her away from her minor son Dalip Singh. It infuriated the Sikhs.

Chattar Singh Attariwala occupied the fort of Attock and took Haripur, as the tribesmen threatened to attack Haripur. Col. Canora was killed in that expedition. Chattar Singh was charged in that case. His *Jagir* was confiscated and he was suspended from the post of Nazim. So he decided to fight the British. Sher Singh son of Attar Singh also left the British along with his troops. He openly condemned the British for the oppression and violence upon Sikhs and the ill-treatment given to Rani Jindan. The Attariwalas led the revolt against the British. They were also aggrieved against them for not allowing the performance of the marriage between Dalip Singh and daughter of Chattar Singh which had long ago been settled.

Lord Dalhousie who was very desirous of wiping out the Sikh power declared war against the Sikhs. It was the second anglo-Sikh war. He declared that :

"We are now not on the eve of, but in the midst of war with Sikh nation and kingdom of Punjab. The insurrection in Hazara had made great head. I should wish nothing better. I can see no escape from the necessity of annexing this infernal country. I have drawn the sword and this time thrown away the scabbard.

(Baird, *Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 33)

Dalhousie was very happy with the defection of Sher Singh and got the chance to start a war against the Sikhs for which opportunity he had been waiting for such a long time. Before leaving Calcutta, Dalhousie made the declaration of war :

"Unwarned by precedents un-influenced by example the Sikh nation has called for war and on my word, Sir, they shall have it with a vengeance."

(Dalhousie to Currie, Oct. 8, 1848, Trotter, *Life of Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 38)

Battle of Chillianwala

On January 13, 1849, the Britishers launched the battle against the Sikhs who

were in the forests near ChillianWala village, led by Sher Singh and his father Charat Singh Attariwala. The battle continued throughout the day and the Sikhs captured four British guns and the colonels of three British regiments. It was considered the worst defeat suffered by the British since their occupation of India. Three thousand British soldiers were killed or wounded by the Sikhs. The British army retreated to the banks of Chenab river on the 4th day. The Sikh army had taken hostage one British George Lawrence and released him with the terms of the truce, that Dalip Singh be invested as a full fledged Maharaja and British troops should leave Punjab. This offer was not acceptable to the British.

Battle of Gujrat

On February 21, 1849, the last battle was fought between Sikhs and the British in the area between the Chenab river and village of Gujrat. A fierce battle took place but the Sikh army's ammunition was exhausted. The Sikhs exhibited such a high level of bravery and courage, which the British General appreciated very much as with the left hand they could hold the bayonets of British soldiers while causing them furious blows with their right hands. Remarkd Sandford :

"Little quarter, I am ashamed to say was given. And even those we manage to save from the vengeance of our men, I fear, were killed afterwards. But, after all, it is a war of extermination."

(Sandford, *Leaves from the Journal of Subaltern*, p. 135)

On March 11, 1849, Charat Singh and Sher Singh Attariwalas surrendered their swords to Major General Gilbert at Hurmuck near Rawalpindi. They were followed on March 14 by the whole Sikh army. Bhai Maharaj Singh was one of those who was deported to Singapur.

General Thackwell described the surrender scene :

"The reluctance of some of the old Khalsa veterans to surrender their arms was evident. Some could not restrain their tears. While on the faces of others rage and hatred were visibly depicted." The remark of one of veteran grey beard as he put down his gun summed up the history of Punjab, *Aj Ranjit Singh mar gaya*. "Today Ranjit Singh has died."

(*A History of the Sikhs*, Khushwant Singh, p. 82).

Thus, came the end of war between Sikhs and Britishers.

British Army commander in chief Lord Gough paid high tributes to Sikh warriors :

"Policy precluded me publicly recording my sentiments on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe or to record the acts of heroism displayed not only individually but almost collectively by the Sikh sardars and the army, and I declare were it not from a deep conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body of men."

(*The Life and Campaigns of Viscount*, Gough, p. 108)

An English eye witness commented :

"Sikhs fought like devils, fierce and untamed even in their dying struggle. Such a mass of men, I never set an eye on and as plucky as lions. They ran right on the bayonets and struck at their assailants, when they were transfixed."

(Sandford, *Leaves from the Journal of Subaltern*, pp. 106-108)

Regarding battle of Chillianwali, British General Thackwell remarked :

"Prince Albert hats and military shoes might be seen on all directions. The camp next day was over spread with funeral gloom."

(Thackwell, *Narrative of the Second Sikh War*, p. 173)

And

Regarding the battle of Gujrat, held on February 21, 1849 which was the last battle between the Sikhs and the British, the British General Thackwell remarked :

"In this action as well at Chillianwala, Sikhs caught hold of Bayonets of their assailants with their left hands and closing with their adversaries dealt furious sword blows with their right. This circumstance alone will suffice to demonstrate the rare species of courage possessed by these men. The fidelity displayed by Sikh gunners is worthy of record. The devotion with which they remained at their posts when the atmosphere around them was absolutely fired by the British guns does not admit description."

(*ibid.*)

General Joseph Thackwell remarked :

"It is due to Sikhs to say that they fought bravely for though defeated and broken, they never ran but fought with their Talwars to the last and I witnessed several acts of great bravery in some of their sardars and men."

(*Military Memoirs of General Sir Joseph Thackwell*, edited by Col. Wylly, p. 209)

Lord Hardinge, who himself saw the action remarked :

"Few escaped; none, it may be said surrendered. The Sikhs met their fate with the resignation which distinguishes their Race."

(Viscount Hardinge, p. 119)

The high morals and Ethics of the Sikhs in treating the prisoners of war were acknowledged by the British.

"Two of the 9,000 lancers who were taken prisoners the other day were sent back this morning with Sher Singh's compliments. They seemed rather sorry to come as they had been treated like princes, and served champagne and brandy to the most head and sent away with Rs. 10 each in his pocket."

(Sandford, *Leaves from the Journal of Subaltern*, p. 18)

The war against the Sikhs had been declared on December 13, 1845 on the false accusation of the Sikhs invading British territory. The British army Major Kenneth Smith (GC) Smith admitted :

"The treaty of 1809 is said to have been binding between the two governments (of Sikhs and Britishers). Then the simple question is who first departed from the rules of friendship. I am decidedly of the opinion. That we did."

Sir George Campbell remarked :

"It is recorded in the annals of History or what is called history which will go down in posterity that Sikh army invaded British territory in pursuance of a determination to attack us. And most people will be very much surprised to hear that they did nothing of the kind. They made no attack on our outlying cantonments nor set foot in our territory. What they did was to cross the river and to entrench themselves in their own territory."

(Memoirs of My Indian Career, p. 78)

Robert Cust referred to the advance of the British force as :

"The first British invasion of the independent kingdom of Punjab."

(Linguistic and Oriental Essays, p. 46-47)

Sikh warriors were determined to defend at the risk of their lives, the war waged against them Col. Gardner stated :

"The real belief that the intentions of the British were aggressive, such the domestic incitements of their families to plunder, and such their devotion of their mystic faith, that one single dogged determination filled the boom of each soldier. The word went round, "we will go to the sacrifice."

(Memoirs of Alexander Gardner edited by Hugh Pearse, pp. 265-66)

Still the traitors Dogras and Purbia Brahmins brought about the defeat of the Sikh army of having conspired with British.

In January 1848, Lord Dalhousie took over as viceroy from Lord Hardinge. There was a basic difference in their attitude. While Hardinge was thinking of supporting a buffer Sikh state in between the Muslim countries of Afghanistan etc. and British India, but as a political plan, Dalhousie wanted to totally uproot the Sikh state and acquire its territory to be included in India, the rest of which the British had already occupied. Dalhousie had written a letter to the secret committee, No. 20 of 1849 :

"There will never be peace in Punjab as long as people are allowed to retain the means and opportunity of making war. There never can be now my guarantee for the tranquility of India, until he shall have effected the entire subjection of the Sikh people and destroyed its power as an independent nation.

British resident, Henry Lawrence, was against annexation :

"My opinion, as already more than once expressed in writing to your lordship is against annexation. I did think it unjust. I now think it unpolitic."

(Henry Lawrence to Dalhousie, Feb. 2, 1849)

The Viceroy Lord Hardinge, had written a letter of his intention and policy dated January 23, 1845 to Ellen Borough :

"Self preservation may require the dispersion of the Sikh army; the baneful influence of such an example is the evil most to be dreaded, but exclusive of this case, how are we to justify the seizure of our friend's territory who in adversity assisted us to retrieve our affairs. Moderation will do us no harm, if in the interval the Hills and plains weaken each other, but on what plea could we attack the Punjab."

(Ganda Singh, *Private Correspondence relating to Anglo Sikh War*, p. 72)

After the killings of Hira Singh Dogra and his troops in December 1844, the instability of the Sikh state increased. The army Panchayats tried to take the Sikh affairs into control and proved unsuccessful. The Sikh civil administration did not have full control over the army. Viceroy Hardinge seems to have changed his opinion. As to the invasion of the Sikh state, thinking that there may not be any stability and also may be under the pressure of the British government besides the easily available traitors, the Purbia Brahmins and Dogra Gulab Singh. The British agent had been instructed to make it clear that :

"British government would recognize no other form of government save the monarchy and regarded the army with its self constituted Panchayats in no other light than as the subjects and servants of the government."

(S.C. 114 of 44-1845)

Hardinge wrote a letter on March 8, 1845 to Ellen Borough :

"We shall now begin to move up the additional regiments to Ferozepur, Ludhiana and Ambala. The barracks, etc. being nearly ready. As the forces depend and heat increases, these movements will cause no alarm but quickly we will get the troops in their proper place."

(Hardinge to Ellen borough, March 8, 1845 Foreign and political dept. records)

Hardinge declared war against the Sikh state and later on took active part in the battles between the Sikhs and the British. Henry Lawrence, being a junior officer, had to co-operate with Viceroy Dalhousie in his policy decisions. However, partial annexation of Punjab was made by Hardinge, while Dalhousie completed the total annexation.

Total Annexation of Punjab

On March 11, 1849, Chattar Singh Attariwala and his son Sher Singh were arrested by the British. The British were now convinced that no Sikh armed force left was capable of armed conflict with them. The Sikh state was under their control through the traitors of the Sikhs. The British now decided to annex the entire territories of the Sikh state bringing it to an end completely.

On March 29, 1849 the document of annexation of the Sikh state was executed. It was read out in Darbar that :

1. Maharaja Dalip Singh gives up all his rights and the right of his successors regarding Punjab and all this area is given to the British in compensation for the huge amount of expenses spent by the British at the time of the battles.
2. That Kohinoor diamond is given to Queen of England which had been taken by Ranjit Singh from King of Afghanistan.
3. That the British would give four to five lacks rupees (forty five hundred thousand) annually to Dalip Singh and his other relations as expenses.

Dalip Singh's signature on this document of annexation was taken quickly by his minister Teja Singh obviously under pressure.

The Union Jack was flown over the Red Fort of Lahore, instead of the Sikh flag.

On March 13, 1849, the services of all the old servants of Dalip Singh were terminated. His other property was also confiscated.

In 1854, Dalip Singh was sent to England. He was already made to adopt Christianity in 1853. He had been taken out of Punjab to Fatehgarh in U.P. and placed under the charge of John Login, who motivated him to convert to Christianity. He was not allowed to meet his mother or other relations or any Sikh priest. Dalip Singh was given an estate at Elvedon in Suffolk.

John Tullivan in his book *Are We Bound by Treaties* rightly remarked :

"This is first instance in which a guardian has visited his own misdeeds on his ward. The British govt. was the self constituted guardian of the Maharaja and the regent of his kingdom; a rebellion was provoked by the agents of the guardian, it was acknowledged by the guardian to be a rebellion against the govt. of his ward, and the guardian punished that ward by confiscating his dominions and his diamonds to his own use."

Dalip Singh had written a letter in 1886 from London to a relation of his mother, Sant Singh, that he was made to adopt Christianity when he was a minor under pressure by the British and that he begs pardon from Sikh Panth. He expressed his desire to become Punjabi and take *Amrit* of the double-edged sword. He did take the *Amrit* at Adan, from Sikh army officers, begging pardon from the great Guru for his previous misconduct. He also made efforts to seek help from some foreign countries to revive the Sikh state but failed in his plans. He died on October 22, 1893 in Paris. Thus came the end of the entire dynasty of Ranjit Singh.

Rani Jindan

Rani Jindan was treated very harshly by the British. She was not permitted to remain with her minor son Dalip Singh. She was falsely implicated in the conspiracy to murder Henry Lawrence, the British agent at Lahore. She was first detained in the

Sammon Burj of Lahore fort in 1847 from where she wrote to the resident, "I had entrusted my head to your Lord. You have trodden it under the feet of traitors. You have paid no regard to the friendship of the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh and have not remained true to your treaties and agreements and caused me to be disgraced." But to no effect, she was on the other hand moved to Sheikhpura fort, from where she wrote to the British resident, "Do not separate me from my son. He is too young to take care of himself." It also had no effect. She was further removed to Benaras in May 1848. Her allowance was reduced to a great extent. From there she escaped to Nepal in the garb of a holy pilgrim in April 1849 and got asylum there. In 1861, she reached London and Dalip Singh took her to live with him. She died there two years later.

Dalip Singh

The story of Dalip Singh is more pathetic. He was removed from Punjab to Fatehgarh (U.P.) immediately on the signing of the document of annexation in April 1849. He was placed under the charge of Sir John Login of the Bengal Army and under this influence, he was made to embrace Christianity. No relation of his, including his mother, was ever allowed to meet him so that the undue influence imposed upon him may not be effaced. In 1854, he was taken away to London to permanently reside at Suffolk near London. The queen had showered affection on him posing to be the God-mother of his eldest son. He was allowed to visit India to cast the remains of his dead mother but was kept confined to Bombay. He married at Alexandria (Egypt) to Bamha Muller, daughter of a German merchant and became the father of three sons and three daughters. His allowances were reduced. In the last days of his life, he intended to come to Punjab. He made an appeal to Sikhs to forgive him for conversion to Christianity status. "I beg pardon and forgiveness of you, *Khalsa Ji*, the pure, for having forsaken the faith of my ancestors for a foreign religion, but I was very young when I embraced Christianity. It is my fond desire on reaching Bombay to take *Pahaul* again and I sincerely hope for your prayers to the Satguru on that solemn occasion." Dalip Singh invited Thakur Singh, a cousin of his who was prominent in Sikh politics in Punjab to London and appointed him the prime minister in exile on January 18, 1881. Dalip Singh pressed his claim to the property and domain of his father Maharaja Ranjit Singh, but it was too late. He went to Aden and took *Pahaul Amrit* of double-edged sword on May 25, 1886 and got initiated into Sikh religion. He went to Paris and then to Moscow, to get the support for his new cause but failed to get any response from the governments of the countries. He died on October 22, 1893 in Paris. Thus came the end to the Dynasty of Ranjit Singh, the Maharaja of Punjab.

(*A History of the Sikh People*, Gopal Singh, pp. 572-84)

The extinction of the dynasty of Ranjit Singh and fall of the Sikh empire could

have been avoided if Ranjit Singh had put the committed Sikhs at keyposts of the administration of the Sikh state instead of the Dogras and Brahmins who could not be expected to have the commitment to the Sikh camp and Sikh rule and were easy targets for betrayal of the Sikhs.

Secondly Sikh rule could have been saved if dynastic rule had not been put in place by Ranjit Singh instead of the democratic rule advocated by Sikhism. Sikhism advocates that leaders be selected or elected by the people on merit.

Due to the blunders on both these basic principles by Ranjit Singh under whatever compulsion that might be, he has to share the responsibility for the fall of the Sikh empire, just like the credit goes to him for the unification of the sovereign Sikh state and making it such a powerful Empire so as to be called the "Lion of Punjab" (*Sher-e-Punjab*). If these consequential mistakes on these two aspects had not been made, then no power on earth could bring about the downfall of the Sikh empire.