RANJIT SINGH

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I was waiting for a long time for this opportunity of publishing a thoroughly revised and rewritten second edition of my work on Ranjit Singh. As my ideas about research developed, I became almost ashamed of my hasty first publication. I hope that in this edition the presentation has gained in smoothness because I could find more time to collect, arrange and dissect my materials. In matters of detail there is much that is new, especially in the earlier chapters, but my main conclusions remain more or less the same. I do not flatter myself that I have produced a standard work. But in the present state of our knowledge, I hope that this edition will be of some interest and value.

I owe my thanks to Mr. K. Zachariah for much kindness and help, to Dr. N. C. Roy for his very frank and useful criticism, to Mr. N. C. Sinha for the thoroughness with which he searched for me the records in the Imperial Record Department concerning the Metcalfe embassy, to Mr. A. C. Banerjee for co-operating on the proofs and to Mr. M. N. Das for preparing the index. There are some obvious misprints. They are due entirely to my inefficiency in proof reading.

Calcutta
June 30, 1945.

N. K. SINHA

NOTE TO THE THIRD EDITION (1951)

Since the second edition of this book was published in 1945 piecemeal additions have been made to our knowledge of the history of the Punjab in the first half of the nineteenth century. These details have been integrated or dovetailed. Two of the chapter-headings have been changed and there is also some change of arrangement. The primary sources remain what they were. There is therefore nothing remarkably new in this edition. The Preface to the First Edition has been omitted. It was a misfit even in the second edition and a historian's reverence for the past should not extend to his own handiwork.

September 15, 1951.

N. K. SINHA

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

"From a portrait by Jewan Ram, a native artist of Delhi, who accompa the Governor-General to the interview at Roopur in 1831."

INTRODUCTORY

Ranjit Singh was born in 1780. Guru Gobind Singh had died in 1708. The history of these intervening seventy-two years explains many of the peculiarities of the celebrated Sikh monarch and his short-lived creation, the Sikh monarchy.

Guru Gobind Singh was the father of Sikh militarism. He found that the two most potent forces which dominated the mind of the Sikhs were the all-pervading sense of brotherhood among themselves and deep reverence for the Guru. He, however, abolished the personal Guruship and declared that the Guru would henceforth be embodied in the Khalsa. Thus the Khalsa or the commonwealth became the most potent force in Sikh life. The policy of persecution that was followed by the decadent Delhi monarchy did much to mould the Sikh nation. The ring dance of repression and revenge that had begun continued during the period of Banda's temporal leadership of the Sikhs (1708-1716) and even afterwards. The visibly increasing weakness of the Delhi monarchy encouraged the Sikh warriors and they began to organise themselves into small bands. Then fell in quick succession on the declining Mughal Empire a series of stunning blows—the invasion of Nadir Shah and the invasions of Ahmad Shah. Ahmad Shah Abdali compelled the Mughal Emperors to cede to him the Punjab and Sind. He also conquered Kashmir. Thus the Sikhs came under the sway of Ahmad Shah. But that ideal Afghan warrior, "fitted for conquest but incapable of empire," was too busy in Afghanistan to pursue a consistent policy of conquest and consolidation. The Sikh misls or associations of warriors, that had already been formed, gained an accession of strength.

The sudden death of his father made Ranjit the leader of one of the Punjab misls in 1792. He was expected by contemporaries to play a prominent part when he grew experienced in the internal warfare that was the chief characteristic of misl polity. Fate had helped him by removing some of the big men who might have stood in his way. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, leader of the Sikhs against the Durranis, had died, regretted by all alike, in 1783. The Bhangi chiefs who had marched triumphant from Jammu to Multan had died in quick succession and the misl was no longer what it was in the sixties and seventies of the eighteenth century. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, famous in both the trans-Sutlej and cis-Sutlej Punjab as also in the Ganges-Jumna Doab for his daring raids, was too advanced in years to hamper the young chief's first steps to power. Jai Singh Kanheya, a fearless fighter against the Durranis and for some time the most powerful of the Sikh chiefs, was only a shadow of his former self and was now allied with the young Sukerchukia chief by the betrothal of his grand-daughter to him. The old Kanheya chief died in 1793. Thus in the scramble for ascendancy among the Sikh chiefs of

The Dallewalas:—This confederacy was founded in the extreme south-west of Jalandhar, near the junction of the Beas and the Sutlej.

The Ramgarhias:—Their possessions lay on both sides of the Beas. Sri Hargobindpura was the capital of the principality.

The Nishanwalas:—Their chief town was Ambala.

The Karora Singhias:—Their headquarters was at Chiloundhi, 20 miles from Karnal. Their possessions extended to the banks of the Sutlej and the Jalandhar Doab.

The Sahids and Nihangs (?):—Were in the cis-Sutlej region.

The Phulkias:—also a cis-Sutlej misl—Patiala, Nabha and Jind being important Phulkia states.

Some of the trans-Sutlej misls had some share of the cis-Sutlej territory from Ferozpore to Karnal and the Phulkias had their possessions between Sirhind and Delhi.

the Punjab there was fortunately for Ranjit Singh no one who could be compared to the leaders who in the preceding generation had ousted Ahmad Shah Abdali and established the misl polity.

If the plains of the Punjab presented to this "man of superior capacity and enterprise, the gradual and easy means by which the whole might be enveloped within his supremacy", the Kohistan or the Punjab hill regions were a different proposition. The petty chiefs of these tracts were no doubt too weak and divided among themselves. The Katoch chief Sansar Chand was trying to bring some of these under his control. His attempt, though not altogether unsuccessful, would have only facilitated the work of Ranjit Singh, but the advance of the Gurkhas introduced a complicating factor.

Prithi Narayan, the Gurkha ruler of Nepal, died in 1771, having ensured the pacification and unification of the country. The Gurkhas conquered Kumaon, invaded Sikkim, threatened Tibet. There was a clash with China resulting in defeat in 1792. Checked in the east, they now began a westward advance, annexing Garhwal and Kumaon in 1794. The Gurkha kingdom extended from Sikkim to the borders of Kashmir and the Kumaon and the Simla hill states were under their domination. About the beginning of the nineteenth century Bhim Sen Thapa became the Prime Minister of Nepal and held this office for thirty-three years. Through the agency of his father, Amar Singh Thapa, he tried to extend Gurkha dominion further westward. Thus Gurkha aggression came into collision with Sikh ambition.

"On the edge of this cockpit of North-western Hindustan three nations, the British, the Sikhs and the Gurkhas were seeking an empire. They followed inward among the Himalayan foot hills as well as over the plain feeling their way as the tide feels it with wide-sweeping fingers. Their vanguards

were bound to be in contact soon." The possibility of the Sikhs of the region between the Sutlej and the Jumna being involved in this collision of forces added to the difficulties that beset the path of Ranjit. The Patiala house which dominated the cis-Sutlej region was traditionally unfriendly to the interest of the Sikh commonwealth. The Patiala chief, Sahib Singh, who was Ranjit's contemporary, was not expected to offer any stubborn resistance to him. But in this policy of eastward expansion he must reckon with the advancing British power. Daulat Rao Sindhia and his French lieutenant, Perron, dominated the Delhi region when Ranjit began his steady rise. But by the time the Sikh chief became interested in the cis-Sutlej Sikh country, Daulat Rao Sindhia was defeated and the "French territorial power established by Perron" in the Delhi region was swept away. British power, now dominant at Delhi, began to think of the cis-Sutlej Sikh States as buffers. Most of the British Governors-General were expansionists, very little hampered by the pacific professions of the Court of Directors and of the Board of Control in England. But Minto, unlike his successors Moira, Auckland and Ellenborough, was not an expansionist. He was the first of the British proconsuls with whom Ranjit had a tussle. As we read the history of this diplomatic contest we feel the truth of the broad rule that a state conquers until it reaches a frontier at which some other state or states can exert a pressure either stronger than or at least as strong as its own.

If in the east the British Government "fresh risen to its majesty of power" was to serve as a restraint upon him, in the west the decline of the Durrani power was to make progress smooth for him. The historian Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) assessed the average duration of empires in general at not more than three generations. The Durrani empire proved the truth of this generalisation. It still extended from Herat in the west to Kashmir in the east, from Northern Balkh to

Southern Shikarpur. It boasted of a proud record of past victories over the Indians and was peopled by the most manly and martial races that ever formed the backbone of any state. But the Durranis, who under Ahmad Shah Abdali carried everything before them and penetrated as far as Delhi and even beyond, were, under his son Timur, content to confine their activities to the Kashmir-Peshawar-Multan region, and, under the sons of Timur Shah fell to wrangling among themselves. Ranjit was ready to take the fullest advantage of Durrani weakness but there was always the possibility of the Afghan people's finding a leader. The description of the Afghans as "a bellicose nation that has so often invaded India and can muster 30,000 armed cavalry" is perhaps the best summary of Ranjit's position *vis-a-vis* the Afghan monarchy.

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

(1780-1797)

Ranjit Singh was born on the 13th November, 1780.[1] He was the only son of Maha Singh, leader of the Sukerchukia misl. His mother Raj Kaur was the daughter of Gajpat Singh, the Jind chief. In 1785, Ranjit was betrothed and, in 1796, married to Mahtab Kaur, daughter of Gurbaksh Singh, son of Jai Singh, head of the Kanheya misl. Maha Singh died in 1790 and the guardian of Ranjit was now his mother. Dewan Lakhpat Rai helped her to manage the affairs of the misl and Sada Kaur, whose daughter had been betrothed to Ranjit Singh, had a great influence on the conduct of affairs. In 1793, on the death of Jai Singh, she got the direction of the affairs of the Kanheya misl, her husband having predeceased his father.

Under the guardianship of his mother and Lakhpat Rai Ranjit grew up illiterate. In those days few of the nobility cared for literacy. Reading and writing were not fit occupations for warriors. His illiteracy was not therefore likely to be the result of any settled plan on the part of his guardians. He must have been headstrong and ungovernable by nature. He himself once told Wade, British Agent at Ludhiana, that when his father died, he left 20,000 rounds of shot which he expended in firing at marks.[2] His early years were spent in dissipation and indulgence. Whether this was done on set purpose, as some European writers assert, or whether this was due to the lax morality of the times cannot be ascertained with certainty. During his minority Ranjit married Raj Kaur, a Nakkai princess. She was his principal wife, Mahtab Kaur's position being definitely subordinate to that of the Nakkai princess.

In his seventeenth year Ranjit is said to have asserted himself. "Having come to years of discretion he aspired to exercise the functions of government in his own person and meeting with some resistance and anxious to remove every obstacle that impeded the gratification of his ambition it is reported that the means which he employed to do so involved the commission of some mysterious transactions which if founded on truth, would deeply implicate the humanity of the Raja.....he despatched the Dewan on some business of secrecy towards Kutas and Rotas where he was slain by the zemindars and the Maharaja's mother also fell an untimely victim of his cruelty."[3] Captain Murray asserts that he dismissed the Dewan and caused the mother to be assassinated. On this topic writers like Sohanlal and Amarnath do not throw any light. Most of the European travellers, however, mention the story. Major Carmichael Smyth, who professes to record secret history, in other words scandals from hearsay, asserts that Ranjit put his mother to death with his own hands. According to Prinsep, she was imprisoned through the instrumentality of Dul Singh. Carmichael Smyth even says in his notes that he saw pictures depicting Ranjit Singh murdering his mother being sold in the open bazar. The story is hardly credible. It is based on mere gossip; and it must be said in favour of Ranjit Singh that throughout his life he never committed an unnecessarily cruel act and he was certainly not a barbarous man. "He has never wantonly imbrued his hands in blood," says Hugel. Burnes describes him as a despot without cruelty. "The most creditable trait in Ranjit's character is his humanity. He has never been known to punish a criminal with death since his accession to power."[4] Thus it is very difficult to think of him as a matricide. Some of the European writers have therefore tried to explain the allegation by saying that he wreaked the vengeance of a wronged son on his dissolute mother. These conclusions are not, however, warranted by the

recorded evidence in our possession. Scandals and rumours must not be confounded with historical facts and the allegation is certainly not consistent with the general character of the chieftain. There is also no positive evidence to show that he had any hand in the death of Lakhpat Rai. A young chief, when he attempts to assert himself, generally finds the regent of his minority in the way. Suspicion therefore clings to him when his guardian's death occurs at an opportune moment. But the available evidence is not sufficient to establish his responsibility for the death of the Dewan whom he perhaps sent away in order to be more free himself. Lakhpat Rai's death was perhaps as accidental as that of Akbar's guardian, Bairam Khan.

The early life and surroundings of Ranjit Singh explain much. The plastic mind of the young boy was moulded by men and women from whom he had no lofty religious and moral ideas to imbibe. He was brought up more or less as a spoilt child. The early life of Ranjit is a striking contrast to that of Shivaji who grew to manhood forsaken by his father under the fostering care of the able and honest Dadaji Konddev and his deeply religious, almost ascetic mother, Jija Bai.

Early Conquests—1797-1805

In his seventeenth year Ranjit Singh began his career of "petty warfare". His grandfather, Chharat Singh, head of the Sukerchukia misl had established his headquarters at Gujranwala and dominated from Guiranwala the Wazirabad-Sialkot-Rohtas-Pind Dadan Khan region of the Punjab. His defence of Gujranwala against Khwaja Abid Khan, the Durrani governor of Lahore, had thrilled and encouraged the Sikhs in their resistance to Ahmad Shah Abdali. After his death in 1770, Maha Singh, father of Ranjit Singh, extended Sukerchukia sway southward, conquered Akalgarh and realized *nazrana* from Jammu. Maha Singh died suddenly in 1790.

Young Ranjit Singh, aspiring to build an empire, had at the very beginning of his career to face another young man with similar hopes. Zaman Shah of Kabul was the heir to the Ahmad Shahi tradition of Indian conquest and Ranjit Singh had to reckon with him at the outset. With the example of the great warrior Ahmad Shah's failure before him Zaman Shah ought to have paused before nursing such an ambition. He succeeded to the Kabul throne in 1793 and immediately began his pressure on the Punjab. In 1795 he could not advance beyond Hasan Abdal. His third invasion and first serious attempt is dated 1796-97. This time he occupied Lahore on the 3rd January, 1797. He raised false hopes in the minds of many including the blind emperor Shah Alam II. It was fondly hoped that "on the tablet of the destiny of this star of happiness and terror",[5] the Almighty had inscribed "with my aid he shall greatly conquer".[6] These hopes were belied. On his way to Lahore he had established a thana at Gujrat and another at Ramnagar. The Sikh sardars drove his people off. The power of the Shah in Afghanistan rested on too shaky a foundation to enable him to play the part of an Indian conqueror. He had to go back to Kabul leaving behind him Ahmad Khan Shahanchi, whom at Ramnagar the Sikhs defeated and slew. In these operations against Zaman Shah and his lieutenants in the year 1797, we do not hear about the part played by the young Sukerchukia chieftain, though all this happened near his territory.

The veil is, however, lifted when Zaman Shah led his fourth invasion in 1798. The British newswriter at Delhi sent the following information to Calcutta in December, 1798—"Ranjit Singh of Gujrat (Gujranwala?) has assembled about 10/12 thousand horse. He and many other sardars were attempting to hem in the army of the invader and grain was already selling in Zaman Shah's camp at 3 seers the rupee."[7] According to Sohanlal, Ranjit Singh was so bold that he even rushed upon the *Samman Burj* of the Lahore fort, fired shots and killed

some of the Afghans. As an expression of youthful bravery this was what could be expected of the grandson of Chharat Singh. Ranjit Singh told Wade in 1827 that at the time of Zaman Shah's last visit to Lahore he used with a few sowars to make attacks every night on the Shah's army to distress him.[8] In any case, he was so important at that time in the Punjab that Zaman Shah thought it necessary to make an attempt to conciliate him. The Kabul wazir Wafadar Khan through his dewan Atma Ram tried to present *khilats* to the Sikh chiefs. One of those chiefs whom he appears to have succeeded in placating was Ranjit Singh. retreat of Shah Zaman to Kabul.

Zaman Shah had to return very suddenly before he could do much on account of the rebellion of his irrepressible half-brother Mahmud. He lost most of his big guns by the sudden rising of the Jhelum. Ranjit Singh later dug out and delivered to Zaman Shah's vakil 15 pieces of cannon which the Durrani prince had lost in his retreat. The Shah also sent him a rich *khilat*. The Shah could not relinquish his design on Hindustan and was anxious to conciliate Ranjit Singh, whose position in the Punjab at that time is best described in the words of the British Resident with Daulat Rao Sindhia—"Zaman Shah is endeavouring to attach to his interests Ranjit Singh the usurper of Lahore who has lately received a rich *khilat* from the Durrani prince....Should the Shah succeed in conciliating him or reconciling him to his views his next attempt on Hindustan may not terminate so disgracefully as the last since the Sikh chief possesses considerable power as well as influence in the Punjab and seems ambitious of acquiring still greater authority therein which he may flatter himself with the hope of obtaining by means of a close connection."[9] Each wanted to make use of the other to serve his own interest and the submissive attitude of the one and the conciliatory attitude of the other must be regarded as mere diplomatic camouflage to hide the real objectives for which they were striving.

Ranjit became master of Lahore on the 6th July, 1799, Zaman Shah having turned back from that city on the 4th January of the same year.[10] It has been generally asserted that the aspiring young chief was induced to restore the guns only on a distinct promise of the royal investiture for the capital of the Punjab which he wanted and which he got in return for the service. According to Captain Wade he occupied the city on the authority of the grant. We read in the British records of April, 1800, "Ranjit Singh has lately delivered to Zaman Shah's vakil 15 pieces of cannon which the Durrani prince lost last year in a retreat."[11] The Durrani grant could not have helped him to conquer the capital of the Punjab which he took on the 6th July, 1799, the *khilat* arriving possibly in March of the following year, when the fifteen pieces of cannon were delivered. At this stage of his career Ranjit Singh was not so strong as to refuse the Durrani support, dubious though it certainly was. The dates, however, disprove the theory that he secured Lahore on the strength of a grant from Zaman Shah.

If Zaman Shah sent a vakil with a *khilat* to Ranjit Singh he also sent messengers with letters to Jaipur and Delhi.[12] He had not given up the hope of invading India. Ranjit's pro-Afghan attitude caused the British the utmost concern and was responsible for the appointment of Yusuf Ali in 1800 in order to counteract "the insidious proposals of the Durrani prince". The British were aware of the partial revolution in the Punjab, of Ranjit Singh's taking possession of Lahore. Yusuf Ali was instructed to tell the Lahore chief that it was a snare. If he fell into the trap he would ruin the whole Sikh nation. To flatter his vanity Yusuf Ali was to add that Ranjit was regarded throughout Hindustan as the protector of the Sikh nation. What would be the astonishment, disappointment and indignation of every prince in India were the Durranis to receive his assistance in their designs on Hindustan? He was to refer to British military power which had

brought about the ruin of Tipu, who was helped by the French, the Durranis of Europe.[13] By the time Yusuf Ali actually reached Lahore, Zaman Shah had ceased to be the ruler of Kabul.

The first important achievement of Ranjit Singh was the occupation of Lahore, held by the Bhangis. In this he was assisted by his mother-in-law, Sada Kaur. The rulers, Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh were oppressive and tyrannical. They had returned to Lahore twenty-six days after the retreat of Zaman Shah. Five months after their return,[14] the leading citizens of Lahore, many of the Muhammadans, sent a petition to the young Sukerchukia chief requesting him to take possession of the city and offering their co-operation. There was no effective resistance. Of the three chiefs Chet Singh alone fought for some time. It was a very easy conquest of a valuable prize.

Battle of Bhasin

Nizamuddin of Kasur, allied with the Bhangis of Amritsar, was a possible rival of Ranjit in this struggle for supremacy. He had offered to Zaman Shah to hold the Punjab for him and pay him five lakhs per annum. Zaman Shah did not accept the offer. The rumour that he intended to attack Lahore was possibly responsible for the invitation sent by its prominent citizens to Ranjit Singh. Naturally, Nizamuddin's chagrin was the greatest when he heard the news of Ranjit's occupation of Lahore. His successful seizure of this Imperial city also alarmed the neighbouring chiefs. A combination was formed against him of Nizamuddin of Kasur, Gulab Singh Bhangi of Amritsar, Sahib Singh of Gujrat and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. They collected an army on the eastern side of Lahore at the village Bhasin. For two months they lingered there. Their mutual jealousies and the fear in which they stood of Ranjit's preparations might have brought about the dissolution of this confederacy. Gulab Singh Bhangi died of excessive indulgence in liquor. Thus Ranjit Singh got rid of a great danger. After this the Sikh chieftains never had a second chance of uniting and far less of overthrowing him.[15]

Ranjit did not take the offensive against these chiefs at this stage. He went in for easier victims. Jammu for its riches first attracted his attention. On his way to Jammu he conquered Mirowal and Narwal. The Jammu chief submitted to be a feudatory and paid him Rs. 20,000 in cash. He returned by way of Sialkot. Sahib Singh of Gujrat, one of the Bhasin confederates, found an ally and intriguer in Dul Singh of Akalgarh, an old lieutenant of Ranjit's father. Ranjit defeated him and took him prisoner. Sahib Singh and the Bhangis of Amritsar as also Jodh Singh of Wazirabad prepared to fight for his release. Baba Keshra Singh, a holy man, mediated and Ranjit agreed to release Dul Singh who, however, died shortly after his release. Ranjit went to Akalgarh, annexed it, leaving to Dul Singh's widow two villages for her subsistence. He then made an outpost in the annexed territory. Sahib Singh of Gujrat was also chastised. It was only the intervention of another respected religious leader, Sahib Singh Bedi, which saved him from ruin. But the irrepressible Gujrat chief began again to intrigue with Nizamuddin of Kasur, his confederate at Bhasin. Ranjit therefore sent an expedition to Kasur under Fateh Singh Kalianwala. Nizamuddin thought it prudent to submit and gave his brother Kutubuddin as a hostage.[16]

In the hill country Sansar Chand of Kangra was pursuing a policy similar to that which Ranjit Singh adopted in the plains and the two therefore came into an inevitable collision. Sansar Chand conquered some of the possessions of Sada Kaur towards the hills. Ranjit approached to support Sada Kaur. The Kangra chief found Ranjit Singh too strong for him and after a defeat fell back. A *nasrana* was fixed by the Lahore chief on Nurpur. These operations were not certainly on a scale to satisfy the aspiring lord of Lahore. He now took a step that undoubtedly made him better able to pursue his plan of systematic aggression with success. He exchanged turbans with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia as a mark of perpetual friendship. The resources of three misls—the Sukerchukia, the Kanheya and the Ahlu-

lia—were now united to secure the success of Ranjit's policy. eir interests at this stage were to some extent identical. Fateh ngh regarded Sansar Chand as an enemy and Ranjit regarded m as a rival. Fateh Singh was also opposed to the Ramgarhias who had joined the confederacy against Ranjit Singh at Bhasin. The Ahluwalia chief had also rebellious vassals to chastise and Ranjit's help would be valuable to him. The Kanheya misl was also the traditional rival of the Ramgarhia and Sada Kaur regarded Sansar Chand's encroachment with apprehension. All the three allies were opposed to the Bhangi chiefs of Gujrat and Amritsar. But Fateh Singh and Sada Kaur were very soon to find that while the alliance stood them in good stead in their fight against their rival misl chiefs, it left them helpless, after some time, before the advancing power of their ambitious Sukerchukia ally. This coalition based on kinship and political friendship served as the ladder by which Ranjit Singh climbed to political supremacy. The initiative always rested with the Lahore chief.

In 1802, Ranjit Singh conquered Chiniot from Jassa Singh, son of Karm Singh, who resisted for two months and then negotiated his surrender through Fateh Singh Kalianwala. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia got Pindi Bhattian and Dhana across the Jhelum as his share in this campaign. While they were busy at Chiniot, Nizamuddin of Kasur, almost as irrepressible as Sahib Singh of Gujrat, plundered a flock of camels belonging to Ranjit's subjects. The allies marched against him. Nizamuddin retired within the fort and with the help of a Sikh chief, named Nahanga Singh, succeeded in bringing some gunpowder inside the fort. But his resistance petered out and he agreed to pay a heavy nazrana.[17] In 1803, Ranjit marched to Multan for the first time. While he was yet at a distance of 30 miles, Muzaffar Khan came out to meet him and made a large present. Ranjit Singh also felt his way in Jhang, Sahiwal and other territories of the Kabul monarchy, peopled mainly by the Muhammadans. Ahmad Khan of Jhang after a stiff resistance consented to pay an annual

nazrana. According to Wade, advance was made as far as Rawalpindi in the north-west. "The bars of Karlan and Kathia between the Ravi and the Chenab, the bar of Sahiwal between the Chenab and the Jhelum were made tributary.....levied the usual contribution on Ahmadabad and Khusab."[18] Taking advantage of dissensions in Kabul, the governors of the distant Indian possessions of Kabul practically drifted away from the Kabul monarchy. With his keen powers of perception Ranjit was certainly conscious of his opportunities, felt his way and was satisfied. In the east Sansar Chand's attempts to occupy portions of the fertile Jalandhar Doab were frustrated; he was expelled from Hoshiarpur and Bijwara which he had occupied. He now found himself involved in a fight against Gurkha aggression and became very soon a suppliant for Ranjit's assistance.

There is some difference of opinion about the date of the conquest of the great Bhangi stronghold, Amritsar. Sohanlal's date is February 1805. The sequence of events that led to the conquest of the Bhangian fort is, however, clear. Gurdit Singh, son of Gulab Singh, was a minor. Mai Sukhan, widow of Gulab Singh, managed the affairs. In possession of Lahore, Ranjit Singh was only expected to covet Amritsar, so near the centre of his authority. Shaikh Kamaluddin, who was in charge of the *Deohree*, and Rhur Mal, a great banker of Amritsar, were his active partisans. A pretext in such circumstances was easy to find. He demanded of Gurdit Singh the famous Bhangi gun *zamzama* which he had some right to regard as a Sukerchukia share of the spoils of a fight with the Durranis in 1764. Mai Sukhan refused to hand it over. Jodh Singh, son of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, advised the Amritsar people to hand it over to Ranjit Singh and establish friendship with him or break it to pieces. Gurdit Singh's people would not agree to any of these proposals. The resistance lasted only two hours. Gurdit Singh and his mother fled leaving Ranjit Singh in possession of the coveted citadel and town.[19]

By the year 1805, Ranjit Singh was in possession of Lahore nd Amritsar, in alliance with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Sada aur, and was realising tribute from Jammu and Kasur. He vas already feeling his way in the north in the Kohistan country, in the west in the Jhang-Sahiwal-Khushab-Rawalpindi region, nd in the south in the direction of Multan. But momentous events were happening in the east and they drew his attention in that direction.

NOTES

1. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* II, 17, 19.
2. Wade's letter, 31st May, 1831.
3. Foreign Dept. Miscellaneous No. 128.
4. Burnes, *Travels,* Vol. I.
5. Francklin, *Shah Alam.*
6. Ibid.
7. P. R. C., Vol VIII, letter No. 98.
8. Wade's letter, 1st August, 1827.
9. P. R. C., Vol. IX, letter No. 7.
10. *Tarikh-i-Sikhan,* f. 139.
11. P. R. C., Vol. IX, No. 7.
12. Ibid, Introduction.
13. Ibid, 17B.
14. *Tarikh-i-Sikhan,* f. 138.
15. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* Vol. II. & *Zafarnama;* also P. R. C., Vol. IX, No. 11A enclosure.
16. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* II.
17. P. R. C., Vol. IX, No. 47.
18. Wade, *On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces.*
19. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* II, *Zafarnama, Tarikh-i-Sikhan.*

CHAPTER II

Failure In The East; Success In The North

1805-1809

In 1805, when Ranjit was advancing in the direction of Multan he heard the news that Jaswant Rao Holkar with Amir Khan, the Pindari chief, had entered the Punjab and Lord Lake was in close pursuit. Holkar had about 12000 horse, 3000 infantry and 30 guns.[1] The young chief hurried back to Amritsar to attend a meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* or an assembly of the Sikhs, which was to be held specifically for this purpose. When Holkar asked him for help, the Sukerchukia chief politely asked for his aid against his own enemies in the Punjab. When Lord Lake demanded his active support, the suave young diplomat was noncommittal and would only agree to "cause Jaswant Rao Holkar to remove with his army to the distance of thirty *kos* from Amritsar".[2] Holkar looked around for aid in view of the provoking silence of the Sikh chief and sent vakils with presents to Shah Shuja, King of Kabul, then at Shikarpur.[3] But British terms were favourable and by the Treaty of Raipur Ghat (on the Bias river) in December, 1805, he at last came to an understanding with them. Ranjit later described Holkar as a "determined rascal" (*pucka haramzada*).[4] Holkar prohibited his troops from plundering as long as Lord Lake's army was near him but let loose his troops upon the country as soon as Lord Lake had commenced his return. Sir John Malcolm, Political agent with the British army, told Sardar Mith Singh Pradhania, Ranjit Singh's agent—"Go back my friend and tell your master to congratulate himself on getting rid of two troublesome visitors".[5]

The suavity of Ranjit Singh in 1805-6 was in striking contrast to his impatience in 1808-9. A review of his relations

with the powers successively dominant at Delhi is relevant and explains much. General Perron was in charge of Daulat Rao Sindhia's affairs in Northern India from 1796 to 1803, having succeeded De Boigne to the command of the regular corps of Daulat Rao and to the jagirs for their maintenance. The Sikh chiefs in the cis-Sutlej country, hard-pressed by the Irish adventurer George Thomas, approached him for help. Perron sent his lieutenant Louis Bourquin against George Thomas who was compelled to surrender after four months' campaign on January 1, 1802. The cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs had entered into a pact with Perron in September 1800, which led to further developments after the fall of Thomas. The Patiala chief Sahib Singh exchanged turbans with Perron and a Patiala vakil presented *nazrana* to Daulat Rao.[6] In the guise of friendship Perron was seeking to reduce the cis-Sutlej chiefs to a position of subordination. Bourquin began to exact money from the chiefs under the pact of 1800 in which they had agreed to pay Perron "50,000 rupees per month for six months certain".[7] Thus the fall of Thomas made Maratha influence predominant in the cis-Sutlej country. Perron perhaps thought that the cis-Sutlej chiefs would, out of their weakness, very soon come completely under his control. He therefore approached Ranjit Singh, the most powerful chief in the trans-Sutlej country, and sent an ambassador Sadasukh to Lahore immediately after the fall of Thomas. Soon after this he decided to take up the matter in greater earnest and selected Bhag Singh of Jind, maternal uncle of Ranjit Singh, as the intermediary. Bhag Singh agreed to approach the Lahore chief on the following terms—"No one but the latter shall possess any authority in the territories of Lahore and Manjha.....and friendship maintained with Ranjit Singh only whose boundary shall be extended to the banks of Attock".[8]

But Ranjit was too wary to fall into the snare. He could not be prevailed upon to enter into any sort of alliance with a stronger power. He was playing this game on a small scale in

his own part of the country and he was determined to avoid any entangling political connection with Daulat Rao or with his agent Perron. He merely preserved appearances, at the same time informing the British about the approaches made by Perron.[9] The Treaty of Bassein of December, 1802, and the subsequent outbreak of the second Anglo-Maratha war brought about a complete change. Perron and Bourquin were swept away, Daulat Rao's sway in Northern India was at an end, the British succeeding to the Maratha heritage at Delhi.

The extent of Maratha influence in the cis-Sutlej Sikh country is difficult to determine. Collins, British Resident with Sindhia, wrote in June, 1802, that "the chief of Patiala was pressing for a renewal of the former friendly correspondence that subsisted between him and me".[10] The Patiala chief was already sick of Perron's friendship. In the despatches of Wellesley, Maratha rights in the cis-Sutlej Sikh country which the British later claimed to have inherited have been variously referred to as Perron's "influence", his "personal connection" or as his "ascendancy".[11] The British succeeded to this position which was really indefinable. Under Wellesley's influence this might have developed into something definite and concrete but the reappearance of non-intervention under Cornwallis and Barlow, establishing the British frontier on the Jumna and abandoning even such states as Jaipur, Bundi, Macheri, Bharatpur and Gohad with whom Lord Lake had concluded treaties of alliance, left British relations with the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs more inchoate than ever. When Lake entered the cis-Sutlej Sikh country Ranjit Singh was too busy with his own affairs to think of eastward expansion. Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala, an "inveterate squabbler" was quarrelling with his Rani. Holkar was not then in a position to take advantage of these "silly disputes": But he is said to have remarked to Amir Khan, "God has assuredly sent us these two pigeons to pluck; do you take up the cause of one while I take up with the other".[12] The weak Sahib Singh was in need of

protection and he is said to have approached the British to this end. Lord Lake was joined by Lal Singh of Kaithal and Bhag Singh of Jind. Cunningham says: "The connection of Lord Lake with many of the Sikh chiefs of Sirhind had been intimate and the services of some had been opportune and valuable."[13] But when the Jumna became the British frontier both Maratha claims and Lake's connections were equally disregarded and the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs were definitely not included in the general system of British political relations in India.

The statement that "no ground of political advantage can be abandoned without being instantly occupied by an enemy" is a historical truth frequently illustrated. Ranjit told Metcalfe later that he was perhaps justified in concluding that the British Government had renounced whatever claims it had. With Lord Lake in the neighbourhood, the Raja and the Rani of Patiala were quarrelling. Ranjit argued that the slightest intervention of the British Commander-in-Chief would have ended the quarrel. When Lake retired from the cis-Sutlej country, if he had left even one battalion "no one would have disputed the right of the British government to supremacy". Ranjit was allowed to march frequently south of the Sutlej and to realize his *nazrana* from the chiefs. When several cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs went to Delhi to ask for protection against Ranjit Singh, their complaints were not attended to. He naturally concluded that the country was open to his arms. He led two invasions and he later argued that his claims were established "by the quantity of blood that had been spilt in his armies and the money and labour expended in his endeavours to extend his authority".[14] His preoccupations with the Afghans of Kasur and Multan and the Gurkhas in the north of course prevented his grip on the country between the Sutlej and the Jumna from being complete. But he could not then foresee that British interest in the cis-Sutlej country would revive.

In 1806, a quarrel broke out between the Rajas of Patiala and Nabha, and Ranjit's help was invited by Bhag Singh of Jind

chiefs, his stay was short and he did not appear to entertain designs of settled conquest, and therefore although it was evident that he had exceeded the bounds of his dominions, it was not thought necessary to take notice of these excursions, ...The chiefs who applied for protection at Delhi formerly were not informed that they should not be protected. It was believed that their alarms were unfounded."[18] This was, however, the language of diplomacy. Disappointed with the result of their mission to Seton, the cis-Sutlej chiefs had already become reconciled to their lot. Metcalfe himself records—"The cis-Sutlej Rajas and chiefs in the Maharaja's camp were as submissive as if they had long been used to his authority." Metcalfe could not admit that British policy was inconsistent because circumstances had changed.

With the Metcalfe Mision Ranjit Singh's foreign relations acquire certain new characteristics and we notice a change in scale. But the genesis of this mission, its changes of tone and temper can be understood only if we take into consideration the background of European, Near Eastern and Middle Eastern diplomacy. The British foreign office could not forget what Napoleon had done during the years 1798-1801. Henry Dundas, British Secretary of War, had compared Bonaparte's objective to that of Alexander. The British no doubt succeeded in parrying Napoleon's thrusts in Egypt and Syria, but the impression remained. The possibility of a joint invasion of India by Russia and France was also conceived by Paul I of Russia—"A Russian army was to advance by way of Bokhara and Khiva, a French army under Massena was to pass down the Danube to Taganrog, thence by the Don and the Volga to Astrakan, whence, combined with a Russian force, it was to proceed by way of Herat and Candahar."[19] His Don Cossack troops were actually on the march when he was assassinated. In view of these antecedents Napoleon's diplomatic offensive in 1806-7 was at first taken more seriously than the situation warranted.

The Shah of Persia suffered defeats in the hands of the Russians in 1805. England would not give him any help against Russia. He therefore turned to Bonaparte. A Persian envoy was dispatched to Europe to negotiate a treaty with France. In May, 1806, Napoleon appointed General Horace Sebastiani as ambassador to Constantinople. In May, 1807, the Treaty of Finkenstein was signed between the representatives of France and Persia. Three of the articles were calculated to facilitate and assist a possible French move against India. A French military mission went to Persia. Turkey did not actually conclude an anti-British alliance, but there is no doubt that by the middle of 1807 England found herself replaced by France as the most favoured power in the Near and Middle East.[20]

This situation was responsible for a British diplomatic offensive and the Government of India was instructed to approach the rulers of Lahore, Kabul and Teheran. Malcolm's mission to Persia in May, 1808, failed, but Sir Harford Jones from England saved the situation there. Napoleon and Czar Alexander I concluded the Treaty of Tilsit in July, 1807. This treaty has been regarded as the precipitating factor in Ranjit's relations with the British. Though it led to Metcalfe's mission to Lahore, it also created a situation that brought about the discomfiture of Ranjit Singh. To the Persians as also the Turks Napoleon lost at Tilsit his qualification for being considered a reliable friend. Their most formidable enemy was Russia. Circumstances now favoured an Anglo-Persian and an Anglo-Turkish understanding. The Treaty of Dardanelles was concluded between England and Turkey in January, 1809, and an Anglo-Persian alliance was concluded in March the same year. Risings in Spain had begun in the middle of 1808. Towards the end of 1808 the position in the Near East as also in the Middle East had eased sufficiently enough to make the Governor-General feel that it was no longer necessary to coax the Lahore chieftain into an alliance.

Metcalfe was ordered on June 20, 1808, to go to Lahore as

an ambassador. The Chief Secretary wrote to him: "Witl regard to the precise nature of the measures and operations b which the French may endeavour to prosecute their hostile designs government possesses no authentic information." If there was nc French agent at Lahore, Metcalfe was to declare that he wanted to improve the good relations set up by Lord Lake in 1805 and he was to refer to the encroachments of the French Emperor and a possible French understanding with Persia. He was also to suggest that a British army might appear to help him and, if necessary, might march beyond the Indus with his consent. If Ranjit Singh asked for something in return for this, the consideration was to be postponed until it appeared how far the French menace was real. Ranjit Singh must have argued in his mind: "If the British really thought his friendship essential he might as well get a price for it".[21]

Before the negotiations had advanced, Ranjit Singh began a series of conquests. He crossed the Sutlej and stopped at Khai. The vakils of Faridkot came to him and told him that Dewan Mohkam Chand had taken *nazrana* quite recently. Ranjit, however, secretly appointed Karm Singh to capture the fort which was occupied on October 1, 1808. Maler Kotla was next made tributary and Ambala was annexed. Mahtab Singh of Thanesar submitted. The Raja of Patiala exchanged turbans with him (Nov. 1808). Each gave to the other a written agreement of friendship. Bedi Saheb Singh, a descendant of Guru Nanak, was present there to invest the agreement with a sacred character.

On his way to Lahore Metcalfe had come to Patiala in August, 1808. Sahib Singh of Patiala, apprehensive of Ranjit Singh, had offered the British enemy the keys of the fort with a request to have them restored to him as a gift from the British. Metcalfe had to avoid this commitment as the British Government considered it expedient to postpone determination of their cis-Sutlej policy. If the French menace proved to be real and

anjit refused to enter into an alliance unless his cis-Sutlej claims were conceded, the British would perhaps yield. Metcalfe could ot therefore give any assurance to the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs on is way to Lahore. In his third cis-Sutlej expedition Ranjit ingh induced Metcalfe to accompany him upto about 25 miles uth-east of Ludhiana, but he refused to proceed any farther. anjit returned from his third cis-Sutlej expedition at the beginning of December, 1808. Raja Jaswant Singh and Bhai Lal Singh followed him. Metcalfe wrote: "Neither is ashamed of accepting from his hands part of the territories of the unfortunate Rani of Ambala. Bhai Lal Singh has even solicited the aid of Ranjit Singh's troops to obtain possession of Mohilan, to be forced from one of the dependents of Raja Sahib Singh.....It is not surprising that Ranjit Singh should have gained an ascendance over chiefs actuated by such selfish and contending interests."[22]

On the 10th December, 1808, at Amritsar Metcalfe gave Ranjit Singh a letter from the Governor-General and two days later sent him another note. It was argued: "His Lordship has learned with great surprise and concern that the Maharaja aims at the subjugation of chiefs who have long been considered under the protection of the power ruling in the north of Hindustan.... By the issue of a war with the Marathas the British Government became possessed of the power and rights formerly exercised by that nation .... in an early period of that contest a communication was received by the late Lord Lake which proposed to fix the Sutlej as the boundary between the British Government and his.....it is hereby declared that the British Government cannot consent that these chiefs should be subjugated by the Maharaja and it is hereby announced that these chiefs, according to established custom, are and will remain under the protection of the British Government....The British Government sent an envoy to the Maharaja to give him information of a great danger ....The Maharaja did not receive these propositions with the same confidence and cordiality with which they were made, but

in reply brought forward a demand for the assent of the British Government to the subjugation of chiefs connected with it..... instead of waiting for a reply proceeded to execute his intention of subjugating the chiefs.....In making the reference the Maharaja showed that he well knew that without the consent of the British Government he had no right to invade the country between the Sutlej and the Jumna.....The British Government cannot acknowledge any right in the Maharaja, to any territories that he may have taken possession of, situated between the Sutlej and the Jumna since the first reference of this question to the British Government.... The Governor-General expects that the Maharaja will restore all the places that he has taken possession since that period to the former possessors and will confine his army to the right bank of the Sutlej.....In expressing these sentiments the British Government is desirous of maintaining the most amicable relations with his Government."[23]

Thus the Metcalfe Mission began the second phase of its negotiation. Ranjit Singh had planned to take advantage of the British proposal and thinking that the British Government stood in some need of his friendship had tried to extort the most favourable terms and with this end in view had hurriedly conquered as much of the cis-Sutlej country as he could. As Lepel Griffin says, there was something of genius in his policy that deserved success. But in the meantime intelligence had been received by the Government of India which set it at rest as to the possibility of a French invasion. The Spanish insurrection had broken out. Sir Arthur Wellesley had beaten the French at Rolica and Vimiero. Improved relations had been established between England and Turkey leading ultimately to the signature of the Treaty of Dardanelles in January, 1809. The Government of India's policy thus underwent a change. The anti-Gallican alliance was now of small concern. The British Government now wanted to check the rising Sikh power 'to oppose the extension on the Indian side of the Sutlej of an ambitious military power which would be substituted upon

our frontier for a confederacy of friendly chiefs rendered grateful by our protection and interested in our cause."[24]

Ranjit was not prepared for this sudden change in the political situation and Sardar Mith Singh, Misser Prabhudayal, Fakir Azizuddin and his brother Imamuddin, who carried on negotiations on his behalf, compared the original object of the mission with the demands now made. A compromise solution of the impasse was proposed—"The cis-Sutlej states to pay him tribute, the Company to guarantee this. Ranjit Singh would not cross the Sutlej with his troops to ensure payment."[25] This was exactly the solution suggested by Seton, Resident at Delhi. The Government had already turned down Seton's proposal and Ranjit was told by Metcalfe that he could not enter into any compromise. In his conversations with Metcalfe Ranjit said that it was an extraordinary kind of friendship that Metcalfe had come to establish and added, "do not let the same injury arise in friendship, which would be the result of enmity".[26] Metcalfe reported to his government that Ranjit Singh had issued orders to collect his troops and actual circumstances did not afford sufficient ground to entertain a confident expectation that Ranjit Singh would assent without opposition to the arrangement which the British Government was determined to adopt. But the British Government was adamant. It was conscious of the strength of its position and the weakness of Ranjit Singh. Metcalfe, who later made a scathing attack on Burnes's mission of espionage through Sind in 1831, had intrigued with many of Ranjit's subordinates including Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Sada Kaur and others and had "put his own government's hands on the cords that could, if necessity arose, pull tight a wide net of conspiracy."[27] The British Government, through its envoy, now announced the plan to advance a British detachment to the Sutlej and to establish a military post there. As Metcalfe argued: "His dominion has been exercised absolutely on the left bank of the Sutlej for some time. Nothing but the advance of the British troops could have removed the idea of his sovereignty."[28] Troops

under Sir David Ochterlony reached Ludhiana on the 9th February to back the British demands. Ranjit Singh evacuated all his recent acquisitions, withdrew his own detachment from Ambala, gave up Saniwal but strove to retain Faridkot which he regarded as a dependency of an earlier conquest. Even this claim was rejected. He retained control for sometime but had ultimately to yield. He evacuated Faridkot on April 2, 1809. The British army under St. Leger fell back leaving Ochterlony at Ludhiana. The car of Juggernaut rolled over the small cis-Sutlej states.

In the third and last stage of the negotiations Ranjit Singh expressed an anxiety for a treaty "to obtain a security in its good faith against the consequences which might ensue from the establishment of the British power on the Sutlej".[29] It is relevant to note that he had wanted a definitive treaty and not a vague entente from the very beginning of the negotiations. He urged even before he had finally evacuated Faridkot that men's minds would not be at ease without a treaty. Metcalfe argued with his government in favour of the conclusion of a treaty. He wrote to the Chief Secretary that the British Government no longer wanted to aid the spirit of revolt in the Punjab. It would be proper in the circumstances to introduce a spirit of cordiality in the relations between Ranjit Singh and the British Government and to make him less prone to watch for a favourable opportunity for declaring war against the British Government. If the British Government did not comply with his pressing request, he would naturally regard it "as a sign of a distant and unfriendly disposition, if not as a proof of hostile intention". Metcalfe argued—"His jealousy once allayed, I am not aware of any circumstances that will make him less friendly to the British Government than most of the other powers of India." He further argued that "under the present policy of the government, with the Sutlej as the boundary, the Punjab chiefs would be equally subject to him whether he had engagements with the British Government or not".[30] These very cogent

arguments influenced the Government of India and a treaty was concluded in April 1809.

The terms of the treaty were:

(*1*) The Lahore government was placed "on the footing of the most favoured powers"—the British Government having no concern with "the territories and subjects of the Raja to the northward of the river Sutlej".*

(*2*) Ranjit Singh retained the territory he had possessed on the left bank of the Sutlej before the coming of Metcalfe but he was not to "maintain in the territory which he occupies on the left bank of the river Sutlej more troops than are necessary for internal duties of that territory" and he was not to encroach on others' possessions and rights. [Metcalfe's wording was "occupied by him and his dependents."]

(*3*) In the event of the violation of any of the preceding articles or of departure from the rules of friendship, the treaty shall be considered null and void.[31]

Moorcroft tells us that at one stage of the negotiations Ranjit Singh seriously thought of going to war with the British.[32] Metcalfe's reports also referred to the possibility of such a development. 'A great part of his army was collected under his best general, Dewan Mohkam Chand, in the Kangra country. His artillery and infantry were also kept in readiness. Besides, he summoned back the chiefs who after the last campaign had returned to their homes, ordered new levies, prepared ammunition

* The following passage in Edmonstone's draft—"and on the other hand, the Rajah renounces all claims to sovereignty over the Sikh chiefs to the southward of that river and all rights of interference in their concerns"—was erased as of too general a character and in view of the second article.

and hastened the completion of the new fort at Amritsar. Ranjit perhaps apprehended that a British military establishment on the Sutlej would be only preparatory to a British advance to Lahore and he was perhaps preparing for an honourable fall. Mohkam Chand advanced from the Kangra hills to Hoshiarpur Bijwara and thence to Philour Ghat on the Sutlej and for some time Metcalfe's communications with the territories of the East India Company were intercepted and Metcalfe had to inform the Chief Secretary that things bore signs of determined hostility on the part of Ranjit Singh.[33] About this time other powers, disaffected with the British Government, naturally cherished the hope of securing his friendship and alliance. Gurdayal Misser, suspected to be an agent of Sindhia, appeared in Lahore and made an offer of assistance in his name to Ranjit Singh. The watchful jealousy of the British government found this out and Gurdayal Misser withdrew from Lahore. Mohkam Chand also sought to open a correspondence with Sarji Rao Ghatke, Sindhia's Prime-Minister. A Lahore vakil Inder Deo as also Mohkam Chand's vakil Sahib Singh were in Sindhia's territory in April, 1809. A vakil from Amir Khan, a letter from Begam Samru and a letter from Holkar were also received in Lahore about this time. Lieutenant R. Close, Resident with Sindhia, wrote—"The circumstances will appear to establish the belief that Ranjit Singh has been desirous to engage the southern chiefs in the cause with no other view of course than that of avoiding a compliance with the *just demands* of the British Government."[34] Ranjit Singh even performed the ceremony of taking the field in an auspicious hour fixed by the Brahmins.[35]

But at the last moment he yielded to British demands and submitted to the establishment of the British detachment on the Sutlej. The defeat of a large number of Akalis by a small band of Metcalfe's sepoys, the determined attitude of the British Government, his consciousness of his own inability to meet the British power at this moment, his fear that the Sikh chiefs on the other

side of the Sutlej would take advantage of the impasse and a tip-of-the-finger feeling that the British might not after all interfere in the trans-Sutlej country if he yielded, led him finally to make up his mind. Metcalfe might very well comment, "he is not famous for desperate enterprises".[36] Ranjit suffered a diplomatic defeat and had to put his pride in his pocket and eat the humble pie. His ignorance of the turn of events in Europe brought about this discomfiture. We are reminded, as we read this history of his failure, of the truism—"If you wish to obtain your objectives by force you must be strong, if you want to obtain them by negotiations you must be stronger still."

In all such disputes between two military powers the appeal to history is in reality irrelevant. But as both the powers advanced historical claims to supremacy over the cis-Sutlej region, it will not be unprofitable to go deep into the question of right apart from might. Ranjit's assertion was that as the head of the Sikh people and as the ruler of Lahore and Amritsar he was supreme also over the cis-Sutlej country. The British Government asserted, on the other hand, that the country between the Sutlej and the Jumna was historically a part of the Delhi Suba and the British Government had inherited the power and the right enjoyed by the Marathas until the subversion of their authority in Northern India by the British.

In the geography of Mughal India the cis-Sutlej Sikh country was not a part of the Punjab. But between 1752-61 Sirhind ceased practically to be a Mughal district. In 1756 Ahmad Shah Abdali appointed Abdus Samad Khan Muhammadzai Hashtnagari as the governor of Sirhind and next we hear of his appointing Zain Khan in the same capacity. In 1763, the Sikhs defeated and slew Zain Khan, took Sirhind and levelled it to the ground. "With the fall of Sirhind vanished the last vestige of Imperial control over that portion of the empire of which it was the headquarters."[37] Between 1784-1794 Mahadji Sindhia could

not establish a claim to dominance over the cis-Sutlej Sikhs. His successor Daulat Rao made such an attempt through his agent Perron between 1800-1802, but, as has been pointed out, this was too recent, too vague and too nebulous to be expressed in categorical terms. Ranjit, on the other hand, might argue that the Malwa Sikhs formed a part of the Sikh *Khalsa* or commonwealth no less than the Manjha Sikhs and they had no right to secede and place themselves under some other power. "He was only trying to mould the increasing Sikh nation into a well-ordered state."[38] He always acted in the name of the *Khalsa*. The conflicting claims of Ranjit Singh and the British Government were to cause a split among the Sikhs who in theory formed one united people. It is tempting to compare this failure to evolve one united Sikh military monarchy with two colossal successes in Europe and America. Had Austria succeeded in winning over the southern German states, German history would have recorded the failure of Bismarckism. The success of Lee would have marked the end of the career of the great federation of U. S. A. In a small sphere, Ranjit's role was that of an unsuccessful Bismarck and Lincoln in one. His failure to absorb the cis-Sutlej states was a tragedy of Sikh militant nationalism and the success of the cis-Sutlej Sikhs with the aid of the British Government marked the disruption of the great creation of Guru Gobind Singh.

Reference has already been made to Ranjit's preoccupations with Kasur, Multan and the hill states. In 1807, Ranjit annexed Kasur. At Naoshera, 30 miles from Kasur, he collected a big army and then surrounded the Pathan stronghold. It was not perhaps considered prudent to allow this Pathan colony with its semi-independent tradition of bygone days to exist so near the capital. Nizamuddin had been assassinated and his brother and successor Kutbuddin was administering in his place. He fought for a few days but had to surrender. Ranjit treated him with generosity and gave him a valuable jagir.

He was given lands on both sides of the Sutlej. At the time of Metcalfe's mission the Khan was present with the army of Ranjit Singh. In 1825 Ranjit conferred Mamdot on the Khan as a reward for his services. When the Khan wanted later to transfer his allegiance to the British as a cis-Sutlej chieftain the British Government declined to extend protection to him. He was regarded as an avowed follower of the ruler of Lahore.

In 1807 Ranjit also made an attempt to take Multan. At this stage he could not be aware that his cis-Sutlej venture would have to face rough seas. He wanted to pursue a more leisurely course in that direction and not to hustle the frightened chiefs everywhere. But the chief of Multan, who instigated and helped the Kasur people, next received his attention. Ranjit succeeded in taking the town but the fort held out and Ranjit agreed to raise the siege[40] in return for a heavy ransom. It was through the efforts of the Nawab of Bahawalpur that the compromise was effected.

Ranjit's eagerness to extend his sway northward was as conspicuous as his desire for territorial expansion eastward. About this time he also succeeded in taking Pathankot. He went to Jasrota, fixed a tribute of 8,000 rupees per annum on the Raja of Basoli and a similar amount on the Raja of Chamba. He then conquered various places in the upper Punjab, the most notable of them being Sialkot. With Sardar Fateh Singh in his company he surrounded the fort. He asked Jiwan Singh of Sialkot to surrender the fort and remain content with two or three villages as jagir for his maintenance. Jiwan Singh refused and a stiff struggle followed. Two or three small forts in the outskirts were taken. Guns were placed on the high walls of these forts pointing to the central citadel. Jiwan Singh at last submitted and was given a jagir. An army was also sent against Shaikhupura. The post was taken by stratagem without much resistance. Murray tells us that Ranjit's activity in the region under the Kangra hills,

his detaching a force against Dinanagar, his levying exactions from the mountain chiefs referred to, who had enjoyed immunity from their dependence on the Kanheya misl, gave Sada Kaur much offence and "the foundation was thus laid for the differences and intrigues".[41]

The able and ambitious Katoch chief Sansar Chand, with his capital at Nadaun, was in possession of Kangra. Ranjit thought it necessary to secure this very strong hill fort which would enable him to dominate the hill states between the Ravi and the Sutlej. But he must reckon with Sansar Chand as also the Gurkhas. Sansar Chand was already trying to establish his ascendancy over the chiefs of the eastern portion of the Alpine Punjab. He attacked the hill state of Kahlur and the chief in his distress solicited the aid of the Gurkhas. Sansar Chand's previous attempt to take possession of Hosiarpur and Bijwara had once brought him into collision with Ranjit Singh. Unaccustomed to the use of fire-arms his soldiers had failed to defend his acquisitions in the south against the troops of Lahore. The Katoch chief now found himself hemmed in between the Gurkhas and the Sikhs and, having already alienated the sympathies of the hill chiefs by his aggression, found himself between the devil and the deep sea.

After his check in the east marked by the treaty of Amritsar (April, 1809), Ranjit turned his attention to Kangra. But this account of the taking of Kangra must be prefaced by a description of the advance of the Gurkha power. The "*Bara*" (twelve) and the "*Athara*" (eighteen) "*Thakurias*" *i.e.*, the twelve and eighteen lordships that comprised the total number of cis-Sutlej hill states had fallen into the hands of the Gurkhas. When the Nepalese had thus established themselves in the cis-Sutlej mountain territories they crossed the river.[42] Many of the dissatisfied hill chiefs joined the Gurkhas. They defeated Sansar

Chand at Mahal Mori in May, 1806, and pressed on for Kangra, keeping open their communication with Bilaspur on the Sutlej. Sansar Chand invited Ranjit Singh to help him against the Gurkhas under Amar Singh Thapa. Ranjit wanted the fort of Kangra as his price. Sansar Chand was not prepared for this sacrifice and frantically approached even Jaswant Rao Holkar who had come to the holy temple of Jwalamukhi after his settlement with Lord Lake.[43] But nothing could be settled with Holkar. With his unaided resources Sansar Chand could not hold out indefinitely. The struggle between the Gurkhas and the Katoch chief has been thus described—"The memory of the disastrous days which then followed stands out as a landmark in the annals of the hills. Time is computed with reference to that period and every misfortune is justly or unjustly ascribed to that prolific source of misery and distress. The Gurkhas prepared to establish their success. Certain portions of the country were subdued and held by them. Other portions including the fort of Kangra and the principal strongholds remained in the hands of the Katoches. Each party plundered the districts held by the other to weaken his adversary's resources. The people, harassed and bewildered, fled to the neighbouring kingdoms, some to Chamba, some to the plains of the Jalandhar Doab. Other hill chieftains, incited by Sansar Chand's former oppressions, made inroads with impunity and aggravated the general disorder. For three years this state of anarchy continued in the fertile valleys of Kangra; not a blade of cultivation was to be seen. Grass grew up in the towns and tigresses whelped in the streets of Nadaun."[44]

In his distress Sansar Chand again approached Ranjit Singh at the time of his negotiations with Metcalfe. Mohkam Chand was sent towards Kangra but demanded as the price of his assistance against the Gurkhas the cession beforehand of the fort of Kangra. Sansar Chand engaged to cede this fort after the defeat and expulsion of the Gurkhas and offered his eldest son as a hostage, but this did not satisfy Mohkam Chand or his

master.[45] About this time Anglo-Sikh negotiations reaching a critical stage, Mohkam Chand with his army came southward. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Amritsar the Sikh army was again sent to the Kangra country. What now happened is thus described by Kushaqt Rai, "..... After the engagement with Ranjit Singh Sansar Chand entered into an engagement with Amar Singh, promising to surrender the fort to him and thus obtaining leave to bring away his family, threw into the place his brother with four months' supplies. He thus hoped to keep it against both claimants."[46] Conscious of this duplicity of Sansar Chand, Ranjit Singh, who had been campaigning in the hills for two months and who had spent much money, was furious. He seized Anrudh Chand, son of Sansar Chand who was in attendance, obtained from him an order to be received into the place, and secured access to the gate when no resistance was offered to his entrance.

Kangra thus came into Ranjit's possession in August, 1809. Even before the fall of Kangra, Amar Singh Thapa had begun negotiations with Ranjit Singh. The Sikhs, in alliance with hill chiefs, cut off his communications. Amar Singh fell back, suffered dreadfully and thought it prudent to retreat farther and farther. He is said to have purchased his retreat by paying Ranjit Singh one lakh of rupees and crossed over to the left side of the Sutlej, thus abandoning his conquests on the right side of the river.

Sansar Chand sank into the position of an obsequious dependent. "His country's revenue was valued at six lakhs, yielded eight and he paid to Ranjit Singh two lakhs of rupees, used to keep two disciplined sepoy battalions under the command of a European officer, a deserter from the Company's artillery named Jackson."[47] He was very sorry for the British policy of non-intervention regarding the trans-Sutlej country. From British records we get an idea of his anxiety to place himself

under British protection.* The Gurkhas, thus ousted from the Kangra valley, left the Sikhs dominant there. Defeated in the east by the Chinese, in the west by the Sikhs, they turned south to find an outlet for their warlike energy. This state of things was responsible for the Anglo-Nepalese War. If they had been successful in the Kangra valley nothing could have stopped their extending as far as Kashmir.

By the year 1809, baffled in the east, successful in the north, Ranjit had also consolidated his position in the Punjab proper by the absorption of Kasur, conquest of Sialkot, Shaikhupura and other places. In 1807, in course of Ranjit Singh's second cis-Sutlej expedition, while the Sikh army was besieging Naraingarh, death took place of Tara Singh Gheba of the Dallewala confederacy, who was almost a centenarian. He was accompanying Ranjit Singh. The possessions of Tara Singh Gheba were secured in the teeth of the opposition of the widow. In the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* we read that Mohkam Chand, the trusted commander-in-chief of Ranjit Singh, was granted the fort of Rahon in the territory of Tara Singh Gheba. Thus the Dallewala misl made its exit from history. The annual collection of this misl was worth about 4 lakhs.[48] In 1809, Ranjit also took Hariana and the surrounding country in the Jalandhar Doab from the widows of Bhagail Singh Karora Singhia, who had dominated the cis-Sutlej affairs for a very considerable time. He left no son. His wives,

* Pol. Proceedings, 4th May, 1816, No. 90. "He has sought the protection of the British Government and has declared his attachment to it and is ready with a body of 10|12 thousand men to devote himself to its cause."

"My object is to get my former possessions together with the fort of Kangra restored to me and the administration of justice left in my hands." —Sansar Chand.

Pol. Proceedings, 23rd Oct., 1819, No. 101.

"I am continually putting up my prayers that the auspicious day may arrive when I shall be favoured with an interview which will be a source to me of temporal and eternal happiness."—Sansar Chand.

Ram Kaur and Raj Kaur, could not offer much opposition. The cis-Sutlej possessions of the misl were secured by the *Kalsia* family, Ram Kaur and Raj Kaur holding only Chiloundi in the cis-Sutlej territory.

The ruler of Lahore, addressed as Maharaja since 1801 by his courtiers and by the neighbouring chiefs as also by other powers, was strong enough after 1805 to take his own line irrespective of the likes and dislikes of his old confederates, Fateh Singh and Sada Kaur. He made friends with Jodh Singh, the Ramgarhia chief, to the disgust of his old allies. Jodh Singh was guaranteed in the possession of his territory coveted by the Kanheyas and Ranjit agreed to give a jagir to Gurdit Singh, ex-chief of Amritsar, a protege of Jodh Singh. The Ramgarhia chief henceforth helped Ranjit Singh loyally. Ranjit Singh respected him most among the Sikh chiefs and used to call him " Babaji ".[49]

Sada Kaur was restless and Fateh Singh was discontented. Misser Prabhu Dayal, who was employed by Ranjit Singh in his negotiations with Metcalfe, was a confidential servant of Sardar Fateh Singh. He maintained a separate communication with Metcalfe and wished to obtain the favourable consideration of the British Government for his master and himself.[50] Sada Kaur's message to Metcalfe was also anti-Ranjit in tone. Metcalfe wrote, "She says that she has been made acquainted by Ranjit Singh with the proposals made to him by me. That she understands our object to be to obtain a free passage for troops and the possession of a place for a depot that if the Raja accedes readily to these proposals, good, if not that she is ready with other chiefs to offer us a free passage and to join us and that she will put into our possession the strong fort of Atalgarh, as a place for our depots. The reward required is the restoration of the country that she formerly possessed."[51] The disaffection of these chiefs was perhaps more than anything else responsible for Ranjit's yielding to the British in 1809 without a war. After the

treaty of Amritsar he could pursue his plan of systematic aggression unhampered by British attempts to undermine his position. Metcalfe had drawn Ranjit's attention to this advantage that he would derive if he yielded to British demands.

Elphinstone, returning from Kabul in 1809, wrote, "Almost the whole of the Punjab belongs to Ranjit Singh who in 1805 was but one of many chiefs but who when we passed had acquired the sovereignty of all the Sikhs in the Punjab."[52] This was the impression of a very competent foreign observer. A dynamic, vigorous personality now began to shape the history of the Punjab. The diverse groupings and affinities, a feature of misl history, the differences and discords of the princes and princelings, were now replaced by the achievements of one man with determination who "absorbing the power of his associates, displayed from the ruins of their commonwealth the standard of monarchy".[53]

NOTES

1. Grant Duff, III, p. 306 (Cambray edition).
2. Aitchison, Vol. VIII.
3. *Tarikh-i-Shah Shuja*, f. 26; Holkar Shahichya Itihasanche Sadhane, II, No. 72.
4. Kaye, *Metcalfe*, Vol. I, p. 267.
5. Wade's letter dated 1st August, 1827.
6. P. R. C., IX, 49.
7. Ibid, 30.
8. Ibid, 34, 46A.
9. Ibid 40.
10. Ibid 64.
11. Owen, *Wellesley's Despatches.*
12. Amir Khan's *Memoirs*, p. 276.
13. Cunningham, p. 130.
14. Metcalfe's letter, Dec. 22, 1808. Sec. Cons., 30th Jan., No. 105.

14a. Sardar Banerji's unpublished paper—Calcutta-Lahore Contest for Malwa.

15. Ibid.
16. The account of the two cis-Sutlej expeditions is based on *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Zafarnama,* Murray's account and *Punjab Rajas.*

17. Cunningham, p. 133.
18. Sec. Cons., 30th Jan., No. 105.
19. Camb. Mod. Hist., IX, 47-48.
20. Zaki Saleh—Origins of British Influence in Mesopotamia, p. 53.
21. Thompson, *Metcalfe.*
22. Sec. Cons., 2nd Jany., 1809, No. 92.
23. Ibid, No. 94.
24. Minute on proposal made by Commander-in-Chief, June, 1808.
25. Sec. Cons., 30th Jany., 1809, No. 101.
26. Ibid, No. 105.
27. Thompson, *Metcalfe.*
28. Sec. Cons., 13th March, 1809, No. 68.
29. Ibid, No. 45.
30. Sec. Cons., 20th March, 1809, No. 10.
31. Aitchison, Vol. VIII (4th Ed.).
32. Moorcroft's *Travels*, I, No. 94.
33. Sec. Cons., 30th Jan., 1809, No. 114.
34. P. R. C., No. 182, 12th April, 1809, Vol. XI.
35. Sec. Cons., 13th March, 1809, No. 63.
36. Ibid, No. 78.
37. Ludhiana Dist. Gazetteer, p. 269.
38. Cunningham, p. 133.
39. Wade to Metcalfe, Nov. 29, 1826. Metcalfe to Murray, Dec. 10, 1826, quoted Sethi—*Lahore Durbar,* pp. 40-41.
40. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* p. 64, & Prinsep.
41. Prinsep.
42. Fortescue, *Protected Sikh & Hill States.*
43. *Tarikh-i-Sikhan,* f. 164.
44. Kangra Dist. Gazetteer, p. 35.
45. Sec. Cons., 13th March, No. 45, para 9.
46. *Tarikh-i-Sikhan,* f. 167; also Prinsep.
47. *Asiatic Journal,* Vol. XVIII.
48. *Tarikh-i-Sikhan,* f. 115.
49. Ibid, f. 127.
50. Sec. Cons., 13th March, 1809, No. 43.
51. Ibid, 6th Feb., 1809, No. 92.
52. *Kabul,* I, p. 111.
53. Forster, *Travels,* I, p. 291.

CHAPTER III

Conquests And Consolidation

1810-1824

With its eastward expansion barred by the treaty of Amritsar, the Sikh state might now advance only at the expense of the Kabul monarchy that still held Kashmir, Attock, Peshawar, Kohat, Tank, Bannu, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan and was even nominally still supreme over Multan and Sind. Between 1810-1824 Ranjit was busy conquering these regions and fighting decisive battles with the Kabul monarch as also consolidating at the same time his hold over the Punjab. The Barakzais, who were in power in Afghanistan during this period, offered him the most stubborn opposition in his career of conquest. A review of his relations with Afghanistan prior to 1810 will explain the state of things.

Shah Zaman 1793–1800
Shah Mohamad 1800–1803
Shah Shuja 1803–1809.

The Durrani monarchy gradually sank into anarchy and decay. The weakness of Shah Zaman (1793-1800), the misgovernment and indolence of his successor Shah Mahmud (1800-1803), made the government an object of general contempt. Shah Shuja (1803-1809) succeeded in bringing about the dethronement of Shah Mahmud but could not consolidate his own power. Taking advantage of these dissensions, the governors of the distant Indian possessions practically drifted away from the Kabul monarchy. Ranjit Singh also took advantage of this practical suspension of the Afghan monarchy and conquered gradually the Muhammadan powers on the left bank of the Indus.

Shah Shuja lost the Afghan throne in the battle of Neemla in 1809, immediately after the return of the British mission under Elphinstone. He advanced in the direction of the Punjab, hoping to secure aid from some neighbouring power. Ranjit thought it

necessary to get an idea of the motives of Shah Shuja. He was at this stage of his career very distrustful of the motives of the British Government and feared that the latter might make use of Shah Shuja.

Murray says that Ranjit met the exiled King at Khushab. But Cunningham says that they met at Sahiwal. But the statement of Murray must be regarded as wrong in view of the ex-King's entry in his autobiography that he met Ranjit Singh at Sahiwal. The Shah thus describes the interview: "Ranjit gave me some *peshcush*. I also gave him presents I thought proper. Ranjit proposed a joint conquest of Multan, offering to give it to me. But I was apprehensive that if it fell into his hands, he would keep it to himself."[1] Ranjit's conference with Shah Shuja proved abortive.

The ex-King got offers of help from Ata Muhammad Khan, Governor of Kashmir, a son of his old wazir, and with his help he secured Peshawar; but within a short time he was expelled by Muhammad Azim Khan, brother of the Kabul wazir Fateh Khan. After some more misadventures Shah Shuja fell into the hands of Jahandad Khan, Governor of Attock, who sent him to his brother Ata Muhammad Khan in Kashmir, where Shah Shuja was kept a close prisoner. In the meantime, his blind brother Shah Zaman with his own family as well as that of Shah Shuja sought shelter in Lahore.[2]

Fateh Khan, the eldest of the Barakzai brothers, was the wazir of Shah Mahmud, half-brother of Shah Shuja. It was Fateh Khan who had installed Shah Mahmud in 1800 after defeating Zaman Shah. It was Fateh Khan again who restored him to power in 1809, after defeating Shah Shuja. This all-powerful wazir of Kabul was able, astute and ambitious. He was not an unworthy antagonist of the Sikh ruler. Towards the close of 1812, he came to Peshawar with the intention of punishing the

brothers Ata Muhammad Khan and Jahandad Khan who held Kashmir and Attock respectively but did not own allegiance to Kabul. The wily Kabul wazir knew it quite well that if he was opposed by Ranjit Singh he would not certainly be able to take Kashmir. Ranjit might co-operate with Ata Muhammad Khan. The Lahore monarch also at this stage did not consider himself strong enough to take Kashmir single-handed in the face of the opposition of the governor of Kashmir on the one hand and the Kabul Wazir on the other, with the hill states not yet completely subdued. Therefore, each wanted to make use of the other. Craft was pitted against craft. Murray says that Ranjit Singh made the first overtures, but in the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* corroborated by the *Zafarnama,* we find that even before the marriage of Kharak Singh (February, 1812) Godar Mal, the vakil of Fateh Khan, approached Ranjit Singh, proposing a coalition against Kashmir. Whoever made the first overtures, they were met halfway by the other. Ranjit's chief motive in joining Fateh Khan was not so much the lure of a heavy money payment, nor the hope of getting Kashmir itself by some stratagem, as the desire to acquire local knowledge for future use. Another motive of Ranjit Singh in participating in this expedition was his eagerness to get the person of Shah Shuja, the ex-King, who was a close prisoner of Ata Muhammad Khan of Kashmir. Wafa Begam, wife of Shah Shuja, had taken shelter in Lahore and had promised him the world-famous Kohinoor in exchange for the release of her husband.[3] As she was in distress for shortage of funds she was being supplied 4,000 rupees a month by the Lahore Durbar.[4] A definite promise to hand over the Kohinoor on the release of her husband explains this generosity.

The Kabul wazir and the Lahore King met each other in an interview at Rohtas.[5] Burnes says that Fateh Khan was accompanied by all his eighteen brothers, who wanted him to consent to the assassination of Ranjit Singh in course of the interview. "One of them is said to have tendered his services

by a sign during the meeting."[6] But in that case Fateh Khan's immediate difficulties would not be solved. He was not in a position to conquer Kashmir without the help of a strong Sikh contingent depending on its own supplies. The Kabul monarchy without the resources of Kashmir was too poor to embark on a prolonged campaign at such a distance. He did not therefore accede to the proposal. There was no question of moral scruples. The cool Sikh diplomat had most probably counted on the improbability of an attack in these circumstances. Otherwise he would have come prepared for the contingency of an attack. We know how suspicious Ranjit Singh was when he met the Governor-General for the first time. If the young Barakzais had attempted to attack Ranjit, a repetition of the episode of Afzal Khan and Shivaji would not have been unlikely.

Different versions are given of this compact between Ranjit Singh and Fateh Khan. Murray says that Ranjit agreed to help Fateh Khan with an army of 12,000 (Wade gives the same number) under Mohkam Chand and to give facilities for an Afghan march through Rajori and over Pir Panjal. In return he was to get a detachment of the Afghans against Multan and nine lakhs from the spoils of Kashmir. The *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh's* version is somewhat different. In course of a peace-parley after the battle on the Chuch plains Godar Mal, the Afghan vakil, was informed by Ranjit Singh that if they were going to observe the terms of friendship they should pay one lakh of rupees annually from Kashmir and according to their former promises they should get Multan for him and when they had satisfied these two conditions the post of Attock would be handed over to them.[7] In a letter written in April, 1813, to Fateh Khan the Rohtasgarh agreement is thus described by the Sikh ruler himself: "Get the fort of Multan evacuated and surrender it to the Noble Sarkar, establish and recognise the government of the Noble Sarkar over one-third of the country of Kashmir and also yield one-third of whatever treasure, property and other things have been seized

from Kashmir in accordance with the terms of the agreement."[8] Thus the Sikh version of the Rohtasgarh compact is that in exchange for this help in conquering Kashmir Fateh Khan was to secure for the Sikh ruler an easy conquest of Multan, a share in the spoils of Kashmir and a portion of its territory.

12,000 Sikh troops under Mohkam Chand formed a junction with the Afghans. Kashmir was occupied, Ata Muhammad Khan was expelled, but Fateh Khan then showed no eagerness to give the promised share of the spoils which according to Lahore report amounted to forty lakhs of rupees and some jewels.[9] "His Sikh allies left the country in disgust."[10] Thus it appears that in the contest of artfulness Ranjit Singh was overreached by Fateh Khan. He could not get his share of the spoils and his share of the conquered country, though he incurred the expenses of the expedition and faithfully carried out his part of the compact. It does not, however, seem at all likely that Ranjit Singh at this time wanted to get the whole of Kashmir for himself in the teeth of the vigorous Afghan opposition under Fateh Khan. At one stage of the campaign Ata Muhammad Khan had offered to join the Sikhs with all his valuables and cash if they promised to help him. The offer was not accepted by Mohkam Chand, though he shifted his headquarters to a distance and communicated the offer to Ranjit Singh, who must have refused it.[11] In this expedition the Sikh ruler got an easy introduction into the country. The best general in the service of the Lahore monarch, who was likely to be chosen as the leader of the future Sikh army of invasion, acquired a local knowledge which was sure to stand him in good stead in future. In other words, the position was successfully reconnoitred. Mohkam Chand also got the person of Shah Shuja, who preferred to be with the Sikhs in spite of the seductive offers made by Fateh Khan,[12] whose idea most probably was to make use of Shah Shuja in his plans for the reconstruction of the Afghan empire and of falling upon him when he had no further need of his services.[13]

Murray says that an intrigue of Ranjit Singh with Jahandad Khan of Attock had been in progress even before the expedition against Kashmir was embarked upon. Ranjit had therefore left a detachment under Daya Singh in the vicinity of the Indus when he left for Lahore after the meeting with Fateh Khan. Jahandad Khan took alarm at the news of the success of Fateh Khan and the expulsion of his brother Ata Muhammad Khan and sent word to Ranjit asking him to send men to conclude a treaty and occupy the fort. Azizuddin was sent to take possession of it and others went to strengthen the hold. He sent orders to the leaders of the expedition at Kashmir that they should come at once before the proceedings at Attock were known and they should bring Shah Shuja with them. After their departure Fateh Khan learnt of the occupation of Attock and was very much annoyed.[14] Murray, on the other hand, says that "Fateh Khan cried out against the usurpation and, deeming himself absolved by it from the conditions upon which he had obtained the co-operation of the Sikhs, he dismissed them without any share of the booty obtained".[15]

The question is whether Fateh Khan heard of the capture of Attock before or after the departure of Mohkam Chand. Mohanlal in his *Life of Dost Muhammad* writes, "The Sikh general persuaded the wazir to allow Ghulam Muhammad Khan to go with him. Ghulam Muhammad insisted on his third brother Jahandad to sell the fort of Attock to the Sikh government." The version of Murray is different from that of Sohanlal. I am inclined to give greater credence to the version of the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* which is corroborated by a statement in the British records—"When Fateh Khan heard of the affairs at Attock, he sent a detachment to attack the Sikh army under Mohkam Chand at that time retiring from Kashmir but the latter marched too rapidly to be overtaken".[16] Mohkam Chand retreated by the Baramgola-Rajori-Bhimbur route.

"Ranjit Singh obtained Attock at the small sacrifice of a lakh of rupees and prepared to defend his acquisition."[17] It is relevant

to note that Ranjit got in the fort of Attock grains 3510 mds., ammunition etc., 439 mds., guns, mortars and swivels etc. 70 pieces and rock salt etc. 235 mds.[18] He thus got this important strategic base very cheaply. This was in the beginning of March, 1813. But the position, difficult then, threatened to be serious very soon. Dost Muhammad Khan, Duni Beg Khan and Samad Khan, lieutenants of Wazir Fateh Khan, came from Kashmir and encamped at a distance of 24 *kos.* from Attock. They could not, however, advance further. Mahmud Shah's troops led by Shahzada Ayub and Abbas were on the other side of the river Attock. But Ranjit's people at Attock were in possession of the boats and they could not cross. The Lahore chief knew that a severe trial was near. When the Sardars offered him congratulatory *nazr* he would not accept it till he could conquer Multan[19] by which he perhaps meant that he would take the *nazr* when the Afghan threat would be over.

Negotiations led to no solution of the impasse. The Afghans were not strong enough to lay siege to the fort with Ranjit's army so near at hand and the Lahore chief continued to send as large provisions as he could to this newly acquired fort. By the month of May war clouds thickened and very soon the storm burst. Dost Muhammad, a brother of the Kabul Wazir, hovering around the fort at the head of 4,000 cavalry, sought to cut off communications of the fort, and grain, gunpowder and ammunition which had been sent from Lahore in that direction had to be brought back. The vanguards of the Sikh army sent to establish communications had their skirmishes with Afghan detachments about the end of May. Dewan Mohkam Chand himself was now sent with reinforcements. He reached Rawalpindi in the beginning of June. His arrival in that region dominated by the mobile Afghan cavalry was urgently required. Fateh Khan's men had already raided Hasan Abdal and defeated a Sikh detachment there under Ram Singh. But Mohkam Chand with his personality, his circumspection and his energy, was very soon responsible for a complete change in the

aspect of affairs. The army led by him advanced from Saraikala to Hasan Abdal and was about the middle of June at a distance of 5/6 *kos* from the troops of Fateh Khan. Now Sikh victories in the skirmishes became a feature of this war, leading ultimately to a brilliant triumph on the 26th June, 1813.* This decisive battle is best described in the words of a banker's agent: "Early in the morning of the 11th of this month (Ashar) Diwan Mohkam Chand and other chiefs of the army gathered together and marched towards the fort of Attock with the intention of supplying rations of grain. From the other side Dost Muhammad Khan, a brother of Sardar Fateh Khan Wazir, and other Sardars, who had arrived near the Bawli (well) at about a distance of one and a half *kos,* showed their readiness to plunge into battle. It was also mentioned that the Durranis made a sudden attack and the artillery and swivels were fired from this side and that after a great deal of fighting and killing the enemy felt that they could not withstand the

* 13th July, 1813, is the generally accepted date of the battle. But contemporary news-letters must have preference over chronicles and foreigners' accounts. Extracts from Poona letters give us an idea of the actual date of the battle—

Lahore—23rd June—" Sardar Fateh Khan at a distance of 7 *kos.* from the troops of the Noble Sarkar. 30th June—The Noble Sarkar made an "ardas" upon the "Karah" and distributed it to everyone—a letter from his master presented by the vakil of Multan containing congratulations on his victory. Those who were present expressed the hope that Kashmir too would likewise be shortly conquered—talked with the vakil of Hyderabad (Sind) regarding control of the country on the other side of the river Attock. The Noble Sarkar said that Mohkam Chand was a very brave man for he plunged into war immediately on the arrival of the enemy and gained a victory".

There is also no newsletter after the 13th July that mentions any big victory over the Afghans, whereas in all the letters between the 30th June and 13th July, references to a victory already won are many.

Lahore—8th July—Details of the battle were described by Ram Singh for one quarter.

shock and took to flight, that most of the enemy was drowned in the river Attock".[20] Hugel's description of the battle agrees with that quoted above. He writes, "The plain of Chuch is intersected by some small streams one of which has been better known since the battle between Ranjit Singh's general and Fateh Khan. By following its course the Sikhs were able to recruit themselves constantly throughout the heat of the day by which great advantage the contest was decided in their favour." The "bawli" referred to by the agent of the banker Ramanand is perhaps the small stream mentioned by Hugel. The Chuch plain is famous for its well-cultivation. There is only one stream, the Chel, which flows along the southern border. Beginning in the Hatti marsh near Hazro it joins the Indus after a course of twenty miles above Attock. The Haro rising in the Hazara hills is not possibly meant. The base of Fateh Khan's army was most probably Hazro and Mohkam Chand's was certainly Hasan Abdal. The fight took place while Mohkam Chand was advancing to throw supplies into the fort of Attock and is likely to have been fought about the Saidan-Hattian region. The Sikh army pushed on to Hazro and plundered there the Afghan camp in which they got 18 maunds of grain. It was no wonder that the Afghan soldiers felt too starved to stay there. It may be of interest to remember that Hazro was, in A. D. 1008, the scene of the great battle in which Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni defeated the united forces of the Hindu Rajas of North-Western India. Dewan Amarnath acknowledges the bravery of Dost Muhammad and says that he advanced upto the Sikh Topkhana. According to the Dewan, 2,000 Afghans were killed. Messengers who arrived at Lahore on the 13th July brought the information that "Sardar Fateh Khan, Wazir was encamped near Kundagarh, that although he had offered every encouragement to his companions yet his soldiers felt too starved to stay on and were proceeding towards Peshawar and that therefore the Wazir himself was compelled to march thither."[21]

The importance of the pitched battle on the plains of Chuch must not be underestimated. Hugel writes, "The Muhammadan power was already on the decline in India and the unimportant battle of Attock only drove the last bands over the Indus." This, however, is an entirely misleading view. The importance of a battle does not depend on the numbers engaged. What would have happened if Fateh Khan had been victorious? Attock would have fallen at once into his hands and the Muhammadan chieftains of Jhang and Sindsagar Doab would certainly have once again acknowledged the supremacy of Kabul and the moral effect of a defeat would have been incalculably injurious to Ranjit's sway over the Punjab. If Fateh Khan had been victorius on the plains of Chuch, he would, without doubt, have continued his victorious Indian career and with the revenues of the rich valley of Kashmir at his disposal, with the usual tribute from the Talpur Amirs, with a consolidated Afghanistan, with Peshawar and Attock in his possession, flushed with victory over the Sikhs, he would certainly have attempted to win back the whole heritage of Ahmed Shah. The results of an Afghan victory in the battle of Chuch would have been as important an episode in the history of the Sikhs as the third battle of Panipat was in the history of the Marathas in the north. Ranjit's hold over the Punjab was not yet consolidated and a defeat might have been disastrous. The British Resident at Delhi, Ranjit's old friend and antagonist Sir Charles Metcalfe, was not unaware of the importance of the Sikh-Afghan contest, and, if Sohanlal is to be believed, he wrote a letter to Ranjit expressing a wish that the fort of Attock should not be surrendered to Fateh Khan. He is even said to have offered the service of some platoons as a token of friendship in case of a fight. Ranjit replied in cordial terms thanking him for the help offered.[22] Fortunately for the Sikh ruler, as also for the even tenor of Anglo-Sikh relations, the power of the Afghans collapsed altogether on the eastern side of the Indus and Ranjit Singh was left to consolidate his hold over it. Attock was strongly garrisoned and Gurmukh

Singh, Dewan Singh and Sarbuland Khan were appointed to guard it.

Towards the close of the year 1813 Ranjit advanced to the Indus. Fateh Khan came to Peshawar and the two enemies were watchful. Fateh Khan is also said to have gone to Kalabagh whence he went to the Deras. The Nawabs of Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan promised him help against Multan. The Nawab of Multan was consequently at his wit's end. He sent his vakil, Ghulam Muhammad, to Ranjit Singh and Ranjit promised him help if Fateh Khan crossed the Indus. However, in the end, the threats of the Kabul Wazir did not materialize. He was no doubt anxious to restore his prestige. The Durrani sardars reproached him in the open durbar for the defeat he had suffered. Exchange of retorts was not enough. He was, therefore, anxious to show some such achievement to his credit as the reconquest of Multan. But ultimately, in view of the possibility of a second encounter with the Sikhs, he thought it unwise to make the attempt. The King of Kabul in his anxiety to retrieve his position is even said to have approached the ruler of Bukhara for help against the Sikh chief.[23]

The year 1814 is marked by Ranjit's unsuccessful attempt to conquer Kashmir from Muhammad Azim Khan. Mohkam Chand could not take the command of this expedition as he was seriously ill and, deprived of his experience and generalship, the Maharaja fared very badly. The difficulties and dangers predicted by him could not be surmounted without his skill and knowledge. Muhammad Azim Khan placed a garrison at each "garhi" or good defensive position, keeping with himself an army of 18,000 horse and foot for a decisive battle. There was also a possibility of Fateh Khan's crossing over to Kashmir by the Amb-Darband ferry or at Torbela and the garrison master of Attock was ordered by the Lahore chief to guard the Muzaffarabad *ghat*.[24]

In the middle of June, the Sikh army reached Rajori. In pursuance of the advice of the treacherous Raja Agar Khan of Rajori, the army was arranged in two divisions. Ranjit Singh himself, at the head of the main army, was to march along the Punch route by the Tosh Maidan pass and a detachment under Ram Dayal, a grandson of Mohkam Chand, Dal Singh and Namdar Khan Thakkar was to march to Haripur and Shupiyan from Baramgola. Ram Dayal's detachment secured the Pirpanjal pass, occupied Haripur, but failed in its attack on Shupiyan. The Afghan opposition was stubborn and what was more unfortunate was that because of rains the Sikh guns could not be fired during the battle which followed. In a battle of swords Jiwan Mal Munshi, an ideal dare-devil *Khalsa Ghorcharah,* and Sardar Fateh Singh Chachi were both killed. Ram Dayal had consequently to fall back and asked for reinforcements. The main army, under Ranjit Singh himself, reached Punch only to find itself exposed to rain and storm. Ranjit advanced to Mandi, thence to Tosh Maidan Pass where he found Azim Khan entrenched. He heard here about the distress of Ram Dayal's detachment and sent Ram Singh, Devi Das and Kutbuddin with as many soldiers as he could spare to aid the hard-pressed brilliant young grandson of his trusted commander-in-chief. Ranjit Singh, with a precarious supply and with insufficient troops, was unable to continue in that position. His retreat was in fact precipitous and was attended with very considerable loss. He fell back on Mandi, thence to Punch, continued his retreat, reaching his capital about the middle of August. The detachment under Ram Dayal was surrounded but was let off, it was said (1) out of respect for Mohkam Chand, the commandant's grandfather, for whom Azim Khan professed friendship. Amarnath says, however, that (2) Ram Dayal killed 2,000 Afghans and forced the Afghan army to retreat. Azim Khan took fright (3) told Ram Dayal about his friendship for Mohkam Chand and sent some presents for the Lahore Durbar as also a written document admitting its supremacy. Ram Dayal thereupon retired. It is not probable that Ram Dayal actually

won any great victory. It is also almost a certainty that Azim Khan was not the man to let a Sikh army slip from his grasp merely out of respect (which, from the nature of the circumstances, might not be very genuine) for the grandfather of the commandant. Therefore the most likely interpretation is that Ram Dayal was too strongly entrenched to be defeated or dislodged without great difficulty and a very considerable sacrifice. Ram Dayal, too, felt very insecure because of the retreat of the main army. Therefore both parties were eager to come to terms and there were talks of Azim Khan's friendship for Mohkam Chand. The Kashmir expedition brought Ranjit Singh only a costly parchment. At Lahore he had a private conference with Mohkam Chand and Sada Kaur in which he remarked "that the province of Kashmir had remained out of his hands simply on account of the conduct of the troops of Bhai Ram Singh the traitor, that in this expedition lakhs of rupees had been spent and a great deal of disgrace and insult had been incurred by him from the viewpoint of his rivals." Of course Ram Singh's cowardly retreat with the troops under his charge was largely responsible for undermining the morale of the Sikh army but there was also the brilliant rally under Ram Dayal as a balancing factor. Mohkam Chand and Sada Kaur replied, "It was very unfortunate that the Noble Sarkar did not accept their earlier suggestion, *viz.*, that it was advisable for him to stay on in the town of Gujrat or in Rajori and to send only his troops forward because in that case all things might have turned out quite satisfactorily through his prestige." They said that even then "in the month of Chaitra (March-April) they would make themselves responsible for the conquest of Kashmir provided the Noble Sarkar would keep himself assured, call Bhayya Ram Singh to his own presence and scold him suitably."[25] But Mohkam Chand died in the beginning of November, 1814, and the next Kashmir expedition had to be postponed until the hill chiefs were completely subdued.

The military expeditions of 1815 and 1816 were not of spectacular importance. Ranjit's sway in the hill region was shaken by his failure in Kashmir. At Dinanagar he recruited and disciplined Gurkha soldiers, who were the best fighters in the hill country. The hill chiefs of Rajori and Punch must be subdued, zamindars who had plundered his bazars must be taught a lesson, the "mulkias" *i.e.*, men of the locality, who had carried off guns, swords and other implements of war, must be taught that Sikh power could not be defied with impunity. The Nepalese were fighting against the British and Ranjit's help was sought by the Gurkha chief Amar Singh Thapa, who had come into contact with him in the Kangra hill. Ranjit Singh declared his inability to help in view of his friendship with the British government. But their complete defeat was to him a great disappointment.[26] The Gurkhas were poor but made fine soldiers. They were henceforth in request as mercenaries in the Punjab and later also in British India. Ranjit was the first man to begin this enlistment of Gurkhas as mercenaries on a large scale. "It is curious to note that Gurkha recruits coming from central Nepal and entering the British army are still known familiarly as Lahoria from the fact that the early men were nearly always bound for that place."[27] The hill chiefs were completely subdued, the chiefs controlling the approach to the Pir Panjal pass were brought under absolute control before the attack on Kashmir was renewed. The recalcitrant Raja of Nurpur gave the greatest trouble and sought safety in flight to British territory.

One of the favourite objects of the Sikh ruler's ambition was to annex Multan. Its governor knew this as much as the courtiers at Lahore. Expeditions of 1802 and 1807 must be regarded as only preliminary surveys. In 1810, however, Ranjit Singh devoted his whole effort to its complete conquest. But sustained bombardment as also mining and two general assaults proved ineffective and the Lahore chief had to be content on this occasion with a ransom of 2½ lakhs.[28] In the

following year he tried to induce Shah Shuja to facilitate his seizure of Multan. But failing to persuade the ex-king to play his game he tried to induce Fateh Khan to help him to realise his ambition in return for help in conquering Kashmir. But no immediate result was forthcoming. The Maharaja was too busy otherwise to make any attempt on Multan in 1813, 1814 and 1815. But in 1816 the effort was renewed. Phula Singh Akali was sent against Multan. A band of desperados led by him stormed the town and even secured the outworks of the citadel. But Muzaffar Khan held grimly on and Dewan Bhowani Das, who led the expedition, consented to withdraw on payment of 80,000 rupees.[29] But Muzaffar Khan could perhaps feel that the end was drawing near. The British would not help. The Afghan chief Fateh Khan's help was unwelcome, because that would mean an end of his comparative independence. He could trust only to his own bravery and that of his followers and to the strength of the walls of the citadel. All the same when another force was sent in 1817 against Multan under Bhowani Das and Ram Dayal they had to retire with a *nazr* of 61,000 rupees. "But the Maharaja was now collecting his strength for a great effort having sworn that Multan, which had so often defied him should yet be his."[30] He invaded Multan altogether seven times between 1802-18 and gradually drained the resources of the Nawab. The river transport system was now elaborately organised. Kharak Singh was given the nominal command but the Maharaja with his eye for merit selected a real leader in Dewan Chand, who was perhaps expected to take the place of the great Mohkam Chand, who was dead. Ranjit thus issued his orders to the leaders of the Multan expedition.... "Give the Multan vakils a frank reply that it is my intention to occupy Multan and so they should not talk of the giving of *nazrana*." Subsequently Ranjit was informed by the leaders of the expedition that the vakils of Multan came and made an agreement by which Shujabad and Khangarh were to be spared to the Nawab as maintenance and the forts of Multan and Muzaffargarh should come into the

possession of Ranjit Singh. But afterwards Dewan Chand sent the information that some of the Afghans spoke harshly to the Nawab and rebuked him for the terms offered, whereupon the Nawab went back upon his words and refused to surrender.[31] The operations began in February. Muzaffargarh and Khangarh were stormed and taken and the city of Multan itself was occupied by the Sikhs. The citadel, however, held out for a very considerable time. In storming the outworks of the citadel some of the renowned Sikh sardars perished. Even when the walls were battered the Nawab refused terms. On the 2nd June, Sadhu Singh Akali made a surprise attack and overcame the garrison. The rest of the Sikh army supported him and the citadel was carried. Muzaffar Khan and five of his sons fell fighting bravely. Zulfikar Khan, the second son, was severely wounded and taken prisoner. The eldest son, Sarafraz Khan, asked for quarter as also the youngest Amir Beg. The troops made a great loot but on their return to Lahore they were forced to disgorge their plunder by Ranjit Singh. Five lakhs worth of plunder was extorted from the soldiery. The title "the sincere well-wisher and the hero victorious in war" was conferred on Dewan Chand.[32] For three years Multan was ruled by different governors and in 1821 Sawan Mal was appointed. A garrison of 600 men was left there. The shattered walls were rebuilt. "The total expenditure in buildings and repair works is shown at Rs. 38,284-11-6 from first *Har* 1875—*Bhadon* 1876."[33] People received every encouragement to come back to the rebuilt city. Sawan Mal proved to be "the wisest of the Sikh governors". Sarafraz and his brother Zulfikar were granted a pension of an annual value of Rs. 30,000.

(4) Ranjit then took advantage of the confusion following the murder of Wazir Fateh Khan in Afghanistan to make the first campaign on the right bank of the Indus. Feroz Khan, chief of the tribe of Khattaks, had been instigated by the deceased Wazir Fateh Khan and invaded Khairabad opposite Attock and

killed two Sikh chiefs. The Lahore ruler personally marched against him. The fortress of Khairabad with the territory on the opposite bank was secured. He then advanced towards Peshawar. Yar Muhammad Khan, the Nazim, evacuated the city. The fort of Bala Hissar there was burnt down. After a stay of two days the Maharaja left it. Jahandad Khan, who had surrendered Attock to Ranjit Singh, was appointed governor but the Lahore chief left him to his own resources and withdrew without giving him men and money to enable him to resist the dispossessed Barakzais. The Maharaja had even taken with him 14 cannon which he had found in Peshawar, leaving Jahandad practically helpless against the Barakzais.[85] No wonder that two months after the Barakzais expelled Jahandad Khan.

(b) Diwan chand. Kharak Singh

The year 1819 was marked by the successful conquest of Kashmir. The Afghan garrison there had been much reduced by Muhammad Azim Khan taking away a large number of the veteran troops with him to Kabul. Dewan Chand, leader of the successful Multan expedition of the previous year, was the leader of the third Sikh expedition to Kashmir. He led the vanguard of the army. A second army under Kharak Singh supported from behind, while at a distance from the two armies was the Maharaja himself, keeping the rear and ensuring supplies. Profiting by the experience of his former failure, the Maharaja adopted the plan of his deceased general Mohkam Chand. Dewan Chand occupied the passes of the (a) Pir Panjal range. The second army advanced to (b) Rajori and the Maharaja with the third army to (c) Bhimbur. Pir Panjal was forced and Dewan Chand advanced into the valley, Ranjit himself advancing to Rajori. Zabbar Khan, the deputy of Azim Khan, fought with 12,000 soldiers. He was completely defeated, was wounded by a ball, fled first to Srinagar and thence by Baramulla escaped to Peshawar. There was no pursuit. Kashmir came completely under Sikh sway within 22 months. Dewan Moti Ram was

appointed governor. Dewan Chand was invested with the title—"Nasrat Jang" or "Fateh Jang".[36]

The conqueror of Multan was anxious to secure the mid-Indus region. He naturally directed his attention to the conquest of Dera Ghazi Khan in 1820. It was nominally a dependency of Kabul. After Khushal Singh's conquest, the Maharaja gave it in farm to Sadi Khan, Nawab of Bahawalpur, who also held under Ranjit Singh the fork between the Indus and the Chenab. In 1821, Ranjit Singh also conquered rather easily Dera Ismail Khan, Bhakkar, Leiah. The Maharaja himself now advanced with his whole army upon Mankera. The Nawab had earlier given a heavy *nazrana* of 70,000 rupees. But the Maharaja, with a view to annex it, now went there with Dewan Chand. Two of the principal lieutenants of the Nawab went over to the Maharaja. The vakils of the Nawab promised a *nazrana*. Dewan Chand told them plainly that the Maharaja had come expressly to take Mankera. The Nawab should better give it up and have Dera Ismail Khan. In the face of this plain statement the Nawab found it of no use to temporise. He accepted the terms offered, gave up Mankera and became the Lahore feudatory of Dera Ismail Khan. The siege of Mankera showed how much Ranjit Singh could inspire the sardars and troops to action. No water could be found nearer than 15 *kos* of the place. But even the sardars offered in a body to dig wells and provide the army with water in case the Maharaja advanced to Mankera. In the course of a few hours many wells were dug, plenty of water supplied and batteries erected.[37] With the annexation of Mankera in 1821 the Indus boundary was made secure for the region directly administered. Beyond the Indus, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan were held by feudatories, and Khairabad, opposite Attock, was in Sikh possession. In the Pakhli, Damtaur Torbela and Darband region Sikh sway was still precarious. Hari Singh Nalwa was about this time sent there to create a tradition of vigorous and efficient administration.

In 1822, the Lahore ruler for the second time crossed the Indus. He took advantage of the practical abeyance of the Afghan monarchy to make conquests on the right bank of the Indus. In 1818, Fateh Khan, the great Afghan Wazir, was blinded by Kamran, the son of the Afghan king Shah Mahmud, and then put to death. With the death of Fateh Khan disappeared all the wisdom and cohesion of the Afghan government. The brothers of Fateh Khan took up arms. But Muhammad Azim Khan, the eldest Barakzai living, was a man of moderate abilities, not equal to his mission and was moreover wanting in firmness. Mahmud had to take shelter in Herat. Muhammad Azim Khan hurried from Kashmir to Afghanistan to head the Barakzai rebellion. Shah Mahmud was expelled from Kabul by Dost Muhammad and established himself at Herat. Azim Khan on his way from Kashmir to Kabul invited Shah Shuja from Ludhiana to ascend the Afghan throne with his help. The Shah consented, but on his way he "prematurely displayed his notions of royal authority by insulting some friend of his benefactor whom he considered to be encroaching on his dignity by using a palankeen".[38] Azim Khan thought the choice of such a haughty monarch with ridiculouus pretentions as improper, deserted him, turned upon him and defeated him. Shah Shuja fled to the Khyber hills and thence to Sind. Azim Khan chose Shah Ayub as his tool. Shah Shuja collected an army at Shikarpur. But this army melted away on the approach of Azim Khan and he returned to Ludhiana in 1821. Muhammad Azim Khan succeeded in uniting the Barakzais under his leadership, but he never became so powerful and influential as Fateh Khan. Ranjit Singh's conquests on the right bank of the Indus soon awakened the energy of the Barakzai leader. Jai Singh Attariwala, a fugitive Sikh chief, also joined the Barakzais about this time.[39]

Peshawar was held by one of the Barakzai brothers, Yar Muhammad, who was not very well affected towards Azim Khan. As the Maharaja advanced to Rawalpindi intending to

cross the Indus, the vakil of Peshawar came with presents. "Yar Muhammad accepted to pay forty thousand rupees to the Noble Sarkar as a tribute of submission regarding Peshawar and promised to pay twenty thousand rupees in future."[40] Murray says that he made an offering of some valuable horses. Azim Khan was furious and is said to have remarked that Ranjit Singh was his only enemy at that time.[41] He advanced from Kabul to Peshawar, whereupon Yar Muhammad Khan sought safety in flight. Ranjit Singh would not, however, allow Azim Khan to strengthen his hold and take a determined offensive. Prince Sher Singh with Attar Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa and others surrounded the fort of Jahangira.[42] In the fight that ensured, the Afghans were defeated. They left the fort and fled. The infuriated Afghan Wazir thereupon proclaimed a holy war and tried to cut off the Sikh army west of the Indus. A decisive battle seemed inevitable as the Maharaja crossed the Indus to support his advanced detachments. The fugitive Jai Singh Attariwala came back and received his pardon. "A battle was fought between the Sikhs and the Afghans at Nowshera. The army engaged numbered about twenty thousand on both sides."[43] Different accounts are given of what followed. According to Kaye and Mohanlal, Ranjit Singh won at Nowshera solely by bribery having won over Sultan Muhammad and his brothers and even Dost Muhammad. Azim Khan's hands were thus paralysed. All other contemporary writers, Indian and European, mention that a severe engagement took place. The number of killed on the Afghan side varies according to different estimates—from 2,000 according to Wade to 4,000 according to Amarnath. The battle of Nowshera was fought on the 14th March 1823.

Azim Khan had appealed to the fanaticism of the neighbouring tribes and given the war a religious character. But the fanaticism of the Akalis was pitted against the fanaticism of the Ghazis. The entire Afghan army was not engaged. The Afghan plan of operations was very badly conceived. A part of the

Afghan army under Azim Khan and some of his brothers was on the other side of the Kabul river. They could not ford it and support the troops on its opposite side. Ranjit Singh detached a force to immobilize Azim Khan, prevent his crossing while he fought the armed Ghazis on the left bank. But the Afghans repulsed four successive charges. Even after the inspiring courage and brave death of Phula Singh Akali, the Sikhs could not make any great impression on the serried ranks of the Afghan footmen. "Seeing the doubtful nature of the battle and some hesitation on the part of his men, Ranjit seized a standard and proceeding with all his personal troops into the heat of the conflict told the Sikhs that Lahore was distant and a retreat would be fatal to them. Inspired by his presence their drooping courage revived."[44] The Afghans yielded to the fifth charge and Sikh victory was complete. As Ferrier notes, Azim Khan's heart failed him. Otherwise he could have certainly crossed the river. The runaways found no difficulty in crossing it and a detachment of the Sikhs also pursued them to the other side. Azim Khan fled precipitately leaving his guns and tents and Ranjit entered Peshawar. Shortly afterwards Azim Khan died of broken heart enjoining it upon his sons to avenge the defeat. But it was all anarchy and confusion once again in Afghanistan. "As the battle with Fateh Khan on the plains of Chuch decided the supremacy of the Sikhs eastwards of the Indus, this campaign established his power between that river and Peshawar."[45] Peshawar was entered, but as the country to the west of Khairabad was difficult to hold on account of the unruly character of the Afghan tribes, the Maharaja thought it prudent to recognise Yar Muhammad Khan as a Lahore feudatory there in the same way as he had established dependent chiefs in Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan. In 1824 he also collected tribute from Tank and Bannu. Peshawar was not finally annexed till 1834.

Though busy expanding his dominion north, west and south, the ruler of the Punjab was with sleepless vigilance con-

solidating his sway at the same time in the regions already brought under control. Jodh Singh of Wazirabad, who held a dominant position in the Sialkot district, died in 1810, and his son Gonda Singh could not prevent the sequestration of his taluks next year. The Fyzullapuria possessions were seized by Dewan Mohkam Chand and Jodh Singh Ramgarhia in 1810-1811. Budh Singh Fyzullapuria ceassd to be a semi-independent chief. Sahib Singh of Gujrat, an important Bhangi chief, an arch-intriguer in the early years of Ranjit Singh against his ascendancy, had already lost his energy and had without much resistance accepted a position of subordination. He had to evacuate his fort of Manglanpur and was dispossessed of his other territories. Gujrat, Jalalpur, Islamgarh and other forts in the possession of Sahib Singh and his son Gulab Singh were one after another taken. But after his submission he was assured in the open durbar by Ranjit Singh that he entertained feelings of almost filial respect for him and promised always to look after him and protect him and his dignity. He was given the Taluqs of Baijwat and Kallowal. In 1811 the territory of the Nakkais which included Pakpattan was conquered by Mohkam Chand. After annexation this was given to Kharak Singh, the heir—apparent. Fakir Imamuddin was sent with Ram Singh to capture the fort of Hajipur and other places occupied by Nadhan Singh, a son of the deceased chief Jai Singh, who had given him some separate possessions in order to secure the headship of the misl to Sada Kaur. Ranjit Singh gave a jagir to the family. In all these operations of 1810-1811 there was not much of resistance offered by anybody to this policy of absorption except by Budh Singh Fyzullapuria, whose troops holding Patti near Tarn Tarn about 40 miles from Amritsar, resisted for sometime. In 1812 on the death of Sardar Jaimal Singh Kanheya his territories including Taragarh, Fatehpur, Mirthal were annexed.[46] So long as Jodh Singh Ramgarhia was alive he aided Ranjit Singh loyally in many of his campaigns. A famous story is associated with the name of Jodh Singh. When Ranjit Singh ordered some presents to be

given to the old Ramgarhia chief, the latter begged to be excused from the honour and added that in those times a man was fortunate if allowed to retain his own turban on his own head, thus hinting openly at the rapacity of the Sikh ruler and the nervousness of the dependent chiefs on that account. During the lifetime of Jodh Singh, Ranjit remained quiet. On the death of the latter in August 1815, the Ramgarhia possessions were taken from his cousins Mahtab Singh, Nihal Singh, Bir Singh and Dewan Singh. The Ramgarhia revenue was estimated at 6/7 lakhs of rupees.[47]

In 1821 Sada Kaur's possessions were annexed and she was imprisoned. Thus ended the history of the Kanheya Misl. She had brought up two of the sons of Ranjit Singh, Sher Singh and Tara Singh, said to have been born to Mahtab Kaur, her daughter, who was long dead. Her son-in-law now demanded that as they had grown up she must make some provision for them out of her own estates. Ranjit applied force and asked her to assign half of her own estates to her grandsons. Sada Kaur refused and threatened to put herself under British protection. She was put under restraint and compelled to execute a deed in favour of her grandsons. All her possessions except Wadni and other cis-Sutlej territories were annexed. In her trans-Sutlej possessions only the qiladar of Atal offered any resistance. Sada Kaur was kept a close prisoner until her death.[48]

Amarnath's version of events leading to Sada Kaur's incarceration is different. Sada Kaur, he says, had enmity in her mind and used to write letters to many persons preaching hatred against Ranjit. Gami Khan Khansama and Kumar Sher Singh informed Ranjit Singh that Sada Kaur was ready to disobey him and they were of opinion that there was every possibility of her crossing the Sutlej and also of raising people in its arms against him.[49]

A comparison of the two versions of events leading to Sada Kaur's incarceration leads us to conclude that both these views contain an element of truth. Sada Kaur and her son-in-law were both masterful personalities, and they did not pull on well with each other. Friction had begun quite early, as has been already indicated. The preference accorded to Kharak Singh as heir-apparent over Sher Singh, her grandson, was galling to her and she was perhaps the only person of importance who did not take part in the festivities on the occasion of the marriage of Kharak Singh. But soon after we find her more or less reconciled to her fate as a subordinate and dependent chief, and though no longer included in his inner council she was consulted on important occasions and was sent with Sher Singh, her grandson, to administer the Hazara district before Hari Singh's appointment. As Cunningham says in another connection, "The Maharaja was not disposed from nature to be wantonly harsh, nor from policy to drive anyone to desperation". But her position was different from that of others. Ranjit's policy was one of absorption of all the Sikh confederacies. No tie of kinship, no sentiment of gratitude was strong enough to stand in his way. But, as we have seen, he could also patiently wait. In the case of Sada Kaur, however, he became suddenly impatient in 1821. Sada Kaur's influence, her intriguing disposition, her high tone amounting at times almost to defiance were factors to be taken into consideration. Murray very rightly comments in this connection that "however humanity may plead in her behalf one does not see how she can well be treated otherwise being what she is and has been".[50] Even when Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, a very respected religious leader of the Sikhs, pleaded for her release, the Maharaja's reluctant consent naturally led to nothing and her release never took place. She remained under restraint, Misr Beli Ram being ordered to pay her Rs. 10/- each day for her expenses and the Diladar of Wadni, a cis-Sutlej possession of Sada Kaur, furnished her some money at times for her expenses.[51] This Sada Kaur episode in Sikh history reminds us of the episode of

Tarabai under restraint in the history of the Marathas in the eighteenth century.

Thus all the trans-Sutlej misls were gradually absorbed. An exception was, however, made in the case of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, who was perhaps regarded as a safe friend. His relations with Ranjit Singh were peculiar. In youth there was a position of complete equality between the two. In 1802, there was a romantic exchange of turbans and the formal establishment of friendship. At that time the possessions of Fateh Singh were equal if not greater in extent than those of Ranjit Singh. They together entered into a "Treaty of Friendship and Amity" with the East India Company. From this complete equality he gradually sank into the position of a dependent ally and instrument of Ranjit Singh's aggrandisement. As the Maharaja's power increased, the territory of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia was also very considerably extended by him. But even at this stage the show of equality was kept up. As Metcalfe wrote, one of the ministers of Fateh Singh was employed in common with the ministers of Ranjit Singh in 1808-1809. No person was employed on the part of any other Sikh chief.

But he sank into the position of a subordinate chief without any very formal acknowledgement of subjection. In 1810, we find the Lahore chief dictating to him in matters that the Ahluwalia Sardar regarded as his own concern. He was compelled to profess that he would abide by the orders of the Maharaja and though very reluctant to release Amar Das Singh, whom he had put under restraint, he had to do it. In 1813, Ranjit Singh ascertained from reliable persons how many troops Fateh Singh Ahluwalia had, and on learning that he kept 3,500 horse and foot the Lahore chief said that he would inspect the Ahluwalia detachment on the Dussera day.[52] Faithfully the Ahluwalia chief served his erstwhile comrade until 1826, when all at once he crossed the Sutlej and threw himself on the pro-

tection of the English. Ill at ease as early as 1809, if Metcalfe is to be believed, he had reasons to be apprehensive after the absorption of the Ramgarhia and Kanheya misls. But the immediate reasons for this hasty decision are not well-known. The English, true to their terms of the treaty with Ranjit Singh, could not concern themselves with the territory on the other side of the Sutlej. Ranjit Singh was, however, anxious for an amicable adjustment with his turban brother. He was brought back with marked honour. He said that his evil councillors had led him astray. He was reinstated to more than half his trans-Sutlej lands* and the full exercise of the rights he possessed in them. It is relevant to note that on Fateh Singh's death in 1826, Ranjit Singh demanded a heavy *nazrana* from his son.

During the years 1797-1823, Sikh military monarchy was created and consolidated. This was the work of one man. His career was naturally one long appropriation clause as is the career of empire-builders in all climes and in all ages. To use the language of Hugel, he "embodied a multitude of disjointed materials". Political parochialism and local dynasticism were almost insuperable barriers. There was no current of popular enthusiasm to sweep these away. No triumphant militarism, no dramatic scene as in the *Galerie des Glacis* at Versailles on January 18, 1871, was to help the creation here of a majestic fabric. There was also no high-bred courtesy to help his diplomacy to lose half its grossness. Yet this architect, skilful in his own way, worked out a scheme, the inevitability of whose success seems surprising. He was as inexorable as fate, unmoved by feelings of pity or compassion. Bismarck told Jules Favre, the tearful suppliant for the fate of his conquered country, that bursts of sentiment are out of place in politics. The same attitude of

* The following taluqs were detached—Urmar Tanda, Jandiala etc. Micheki, Nandpur etc. and Wairowal (*Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records*, II, p. 129.)

mind must be associated with the creative work of this great organiser. Cautious, discerning, conciliatory, depending more on diplomacy than on force, he was "more unscrupulous than cruel". Most of those chiefs whom he dispossessed—and the list is very long—found to their relief that their conqueror was willing to give them sufficient jagir to maintain them in comfort and even high rank in state service if they were willing to serve him. Qutbuddin of Kasur, Ahmad Khan of Jhang, Sarafraz Khan of Multan, Sultan Khan of Bhimbur, Sahib Singh of Gujrat, his son Gulab Singh, Ranbir Chand of Katoch (grandson of Sansar Chand) and many other persistent enemies of the Lahore chief found to their great relief that this erstwhile foe was forgiving and generous within limits. "He has never taken life even under circumstances of most aggravated offence", says Murray.

NOTES

1. *Tarikh-i-Shah Shuja,* f. 48-49.
2. Ibid, f. 51-5.
3. *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh.*
4. Monograph No. 17, 17th Sept., 1812.
5. Ibid, 18th April, 1813.
6. Foreign Dept. Miscellaneous, No. 305, Chap. II, 4th para.
7. Foreign Dept. Miscellaneous, No. 128, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* II, 181.
8. Monograph No. 17, April, 1813.
9. Ibid, 5th May, 1813.
10. Foreign Dept. Miscellaneous, No. 305, Chap. II, 5th para.
11. *Umdat,* II, 134.
12. Ibid, 135.
13. Ferrier, *History of the Afghans.*
14. *Umdat,* II, p. 135.
15. Prinsep, 95, 96.
16. PP. 23rd April, 1813, No. 11 para 7.
17. Burnes, III, p. 238.
18. *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records,* Vol. I, p. 30.
19. Monograph, No. 17, 13th March, 1813.
20. Ibid, p. 77, 1st July, 1813.
21. Ibid, 16th July, 1813.

22. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* II, p. 142.
23. Ibid, p. 152; Monograph No. 17, 10th Sept., 26th Sept., 1813.
24. Monograph No. 17, 1814, No. 18, 19.
25. This account of the second Kashmir expedition is based upon *Zafarnama, Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* and Monograph No. 17.
26. Monograph No. 17, 1810 (7).
27. *The Gurkhas,* W. Brock Northey and C. J. Norris.
28. Monograph No. 17, 1810 (4); *Multan Gazetteer.*
29. Ludhiana Agency Volume, 1808-1815; Monograph No. 17, 23rd April, 1816.
30. *Multan Gazetteer* (1883-1884).
31. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* II, pp. 211, 212, 217, 218.
32. Foreign Dept. Miscellaneous.
33. *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records,* Vol. II, p. 63.
34. Ibid.
35. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* II, 1875.
36. *Zafarnama.*
37. Wade's letter, 1st Aug., 1827 (Consultations, 12th Oct., 1827).
38. Burnes III, 246.
39. Monograph No. 17, 1822 (1).
40. Ibid, 1822 (1).
41. Ibid.
42. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* II, Sambat 1879.
43. Foreign Dept. Miscellaneous, No. 128.
44. Ibid, No. 206, p. 142.
45. Ibid, No. 305, paragraph 13.
46. *Tarikh-i-Sikhan,* p. 141. Monograph, 17, 1810 (6 & 7). Prinsep.
47. Monograph 17, 1815 (Nos. 17; 18). *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records,* Vol. II, p. 47.
48. Prinsep, pp. 127, 128.
49. *Zafarnama,* 1821.
50. Prinsep, p. 135.
51. *Umdat,* III, p. 40-41. *News of Ranjit Singh's court,* 1825, f. 637.
52. Monograph No. 17, 1813 (22).

CHAPTER IV

Ranjit Singh's Relations With The British Government

(1809-1839)

The treaty of Amritsar (1809) marks the definite beginning of Anglo-Sikh friendship. It confined Ranjit Singh's activities to the other side of the Sutlej, the British Government taking the cis-Sutlej states under its protection. Thus the English alliance began by depriving Ranjit Singh of one of the most cherished objects of his life, the ideal of being the sole ruler of all the Sikhs. But at the same time it seemed to give him a *carte blanche* so far as the region to the west of the Sutlej was concerned. Sir Charles Metcalfe is said to have told Ranjit Singh on taking leave that in 20 years he would reap the fruits of his alliance with the British. The Maharaja told Wade in 1827, "His words have been verified".[1]

There were some doubts and suspicions upto 1812. A small fort was raised at Philour, a town on the opposite bank of the Sutlej, about five miles distant from the nearest British station. It was placed under the superintendence of Mohkam Chand, who according to Ranjit's own confession "was decidedly inimical to the British Government and was urging him to war"[2] at the time of Metcalfe's mission. Philour served as a frontier outpost, a station of defence and as a watch-tower. It is even said that Mohkam Chand there received deserters from the British Army. But "the concord and cordiality of the two states" began to improve and as Ranjit Singh gained confidence in the British policy of non-interference, friendly relations became well established.

Anglo-Sikh political relations continued to be satisfactory till 1823. During this period the British Indian Government was too busy with its own affairs; the Sikh chief was equally preoccupied with other matters. Naturally there happened nothing of importance to test the strength of the alliance. The British Government was busy curbing the power of the Nepalese, crushing the remnant of the Maratha power and rendering Rajput clans tributary; the Sikh chief was engaged in conquering Multan, Derajat, Kashmir, Peshawar and the hills and plains of the Punjab and reorganising his army. Both the parties, it may be repeated, were busy elsewhere and naturally in spite of suspicion and watchfulness in some matters cis-Sutlej "the Sutlej continued to give freshness and beauty to the emblematic garden of their friendship and continued its fertilising way to the ocean separating yet uniting the realms of the two brotherly powers". But with the Maratha confederacy crushed, the position and the views of the English Government materially changed. They became the paramount power in India, east of the Punjab and Sind. But meanwhile, as Cunningham puts it, "Ranjit had become master of the Punjab almost unheeded by the English".[3] He had an uninterrupted career of prosperity. With his conquests of Multan, Attock and Kashmir, his victories over the Afghans in the battle on the Chuch plain and at Nowshera, and with his generals schooled in European wars and soldiers trained in European fashion and flushed with victories in many battles, the Punjab chief was now almost a rival of the British in India. It was time therefore that his power was checked and curbed. As Murray, Political Agent at Ambala, put it, "the approximation to British boundary of an ambitious prince was an object of sufficient importance".[4]

There was an indefinite cis-Sutlej frontier. In the treaty of 1809 there was no specification of the districts on the south side of the Sutlej over which the sovereignty of the Maharaja was to extend. According to Ochterlony's letter of 6th July, 1809, only

Dewan Mohkam Chand, Sardars Ghurba Singh and Uttar Singh and the districts of Gungrana and Nara unequivocally subscribed to Lahore supremacy. Of the others the territories of Sardars Fateh Singh, Danna Singh and the districts of Machiwara and Makhowal were in dispute and the rest of the districts were under British jurisdiction. As the places where the point of right was more or less doubtful had little value, present or prospective, the Governor-General in Council considered it inexpedient to contest with Ranjit Singh. Discussions relative to the treaty led to the enunciation of the following principle: "Of these districts and places those should be exempted from interference which had been bestowed by him on chiefs of the Punjab free from any condition of allegiance. In other words, his dominion should be confined to districts which he had retained in his own hands or which were held in jagir by his dependents under condition of allegiance." There were some disputed cases—Wadni, Ahluwalia possessions in the cis-Sutlej regions, Sealba territories, Machiwara, Chamkaur, Ferozpore, Umrala, Kulall Majrah, Kote Guru Harsa, Mullee, Rujooana and Toogul and Anandpur Makhowal*. Disputes relating to Wadni and Ferozpore illustrate British attitude towards Ranjit Singh at this stage.[5]

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* *Ahluwalia possessions*: Territories received by grant from Ranjit Singh—Naraingarh—46 villages, Jugraon—66 villages.

Ancestral possessions—Bhuroog—62 villages, Bhoondree (sic) Bulleepoor—40 villages.

Boondulwah—20 villages, Bassee—20 villages.

Eesuroo—60 villages, Kote Eesukhan Dabewal—42 villages, Mullowalla—23 villages, Mukhoo—12 villages.

Peir Mahamad—30 villages, Suhm Ullumpoor—25 villages.

Under orders of Government dated the 17th February, 1826, the ancestral possessions of Sardar Fateh Singh were declared to be under British protection and the territories ceded to him by Ranjit Singh to be subject to British supremacy. "Resumption of gifts was and would ever be inadmissible".

Wadni was held by a zemindar, Mian Noudha. In Ranjit Singh's expedition of 1807 he was saved by Rani Sada Kaur to whom he then promised his future fealty. In Ranjit's third expedition of 1808 this domain was again protected by Rani Sada Kaur and an unconditional grant of the domain was made by Ranjit Singh to Rani Sada Kaur on payment of 15,000 rupees. In September 1821, the Maharaja threw Sada Kaur into confinement. It was ordered by Sir David Ochterlony that "Sada Kaur has never but in one trifling instance condescended to acknowledge the supremacy or seek the assistance of the British Government but still she should be so far protected as not to admit any force of Ranjit Singh to cross for the purposes of coercion even though she still disdain to crave assistance". The question whether Wadni was to be regarded as an escheat to the British Government in case of Rani Sada Kaur's death was also to be considered. Captain Ross, Deputy Superintendent of Sikh and Hill affairs, reported in August 1822 that it was debated whether the domain was held by Rani Sada Kaur of the Maharaja of Lahore as her superior or of the British Government. As the Rani held the domain under a sanad from the Lahore chief and as the sanad could be understood to convey only a life grant, she being a heirless widow, it was not improper to conclude that the

Sealba—Sardar Dawa Singh of Sealba received a letter from Ochterlony as he advanced to Ludhiana, inviting him to place himself under British protection. Letters to Ochterlony of 1809, 1811 and 1815 confirmed his status under British protection.

Machiwara—It was claimed that British supremacy by direct interference was asserted in 1816 and 1823. In 1816 two villages seized by Ranjit Singh's people were reannexed and in 1823 the British Government asserted its supremacy by dividing the territory among three claimants.

Cham Kaur—This was held under a grant from the confederate Sikh chieftains dated 1810 Sambat. It was therefore declared that Ranjit Singh could not assert any claim.

supremacy or sovereignty remained with Ranjit Singh and on the demise of Sada Kaur the estate should be escheated to the Maharaja. Captain Ross asserted that it was a jagir circumstanced precisely as Dhurmkote and other cis-Sutlej possessions held in jagir by Dewan Chand and other places in the district of Tahawat etc., held in jagir by different persons.

Umrala—This territory was ceded to the Raja of Patiala by British Government orders of 25th April, 1815. According to the Lahore vakil the introduction of this name was a mistake.

Khulall Majrah, Hussunpoor and Chuk—This was a part of Ahluwalia ancestral territory, granted by Fateh Singh Ahluwalia to the present family. In 1826, on the death of Himmat Singh to whom the grant was made, Fateh Singh wanted to resume it but the British Government interposed.

Kote Guru Hursa—British supremacy over this territory was declared to have been proved by direct interference in 1811.

Mullee—There was nothing to point to Ranjit's overlordship.

Rujooana and Toogul—Two villages which were a mere religious endowment. The proprietors, when petty disputes arose among them, repaired to whom they pleased. They submitted to Lahore protection in 1820 and to the protection of the Patiala Raj in 1821. The British Government considered it immaterial to what government they were subject.

Anandpur Makhowal—In 1807, Mohkam Chand took Kot Kapura, Mani Majra, Rasseah and Huthawat. Anandpur Makhowal is situated in Huthawat territory. Mohkam Chand established a garrison in Kartarpur which continued to be in Ranjit Singh's possession. The Dewan did not, of course, interfere with the established rights of the Sodis. In 1824, the Maharaja proposed to Capt. Murray through his Agent to act in concert and co-operation with him in settling the affairs in Anandpur Makhowal, which was declined unless acquiesced in by the Sodis. (*Spelling of place names as in British records*).

The annual revenue of the cis-Sutlej Lahore territory was estimated in 1842 at 17 lakhs of rupees (Andrew D'Cruz, *Political Relations between the British Government and Native states of the N. W. frontier*, p. 128).

The Agent to the Governor-General at Delhi differed from this view. He opined that in case the Rani took possession of it in 1807, she took it for herself without acknowledging any superior, and if Ranjit Singh gave it to her after the coming of Metcalfe in 1808, the grant was invalid. He counter-argued with reference to the case of Ludhiana. Ludhiana was one of Ranjit Singh's old conquests and was given free from any condition to his maternal uncle Bhag Singh. It was deemed a dependency of the British Government in 1809 and the town was selected to be a military post.

These counter-arguments carried greater weight with the Government of India and it was considered expedient to maintain the Rani's rights and on her demise the domain was to be regarded as an escheat to the British Government, when the rights of the descendants of Mian Noudha would be taken into consideration.

Ranjit Singh's claim to Ferozpore was disallowed. The Lahore monarch claimed that the Sikhs of Ferozpore were among the oldest of his subjects. They were included among the dependents of Nihal Singh Attariwala, who was a vassal of Ranjit since 1805. When the Sikhs of Ferozpore and Nihal Singh fell out they established themselves under Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, who gave the Sikhs a fourth of their former revenue. In consequence of their giving some trouble Ranjit Singh's vakil, Anand Singh, wrote to Captain Birch to have them kept in order. The Captain wrote on the back of the petition that the turning out or punishment of the Sikhs of Ferozpore rested solely with those having care of the affairs of the Maharaja. In the time of Captain Ross, Lachmi Kaur, widow of Dhanna Singh, one of the Ferozpore Sikh chiefs, presented a petition against Dharm Singh and Khushal Singh to Captain Ross, who gave orders to hand it over to the vakils of the Maharaja. The reasons which superseded these precedents and claims are set forth in the correspondence

between the Government of India and its agents. Murray wrote, "The capital Lahore is distant only forty miles with a single river to cross, fordable for six months in the year. The post of Ferozpore from every point of view seems of the highest importance to the British Government whether as a check on the growing ambition of Lahore or as a post of consequence." In 1824, when Sardarni Lachmi Kaur offered to put the British in possession of Ferozpore in return for an equivalent near her father's estate in Buria, the British Government declined her offer but directed that Ranjit Singh must not be permitted to obtain possession of Ferozpore under any pretence whatsoever. "The Governor-General in Council would by no means be understood to reject altogether the proposition for an exchange but as the measure would doubtless excite alarm and suspicion in the mind of Ranjit Singh and perhaps not unnaturally be objected to by him as an encroachment on our part, the Governor-General in Council does not propose at present to accept the Rani's offer." Ferozpore was, however, occupied by the British in 1835 and in 1838 was made a military cantonment. There were protests against this in the open durbar—that the English were drawing nearer and nearer. The Maharaja also expressed his uneasiness. That the loss of Ferozpore was regarded by the Maharaja as weakening his political influence is evident from the fact that as a countermove, in 1836, Ranjit Singh attempted to establish a cantonment at Kasur, soon after the occupation of Ferozpore by the British.

Until February, 1823, British attitude towards Ranjit Singh as a cis-Sutlej neighbour was very much influenced by Murray, who was Political Assistant at Ludhiana. Ranjit Singh was not to be permitted to strengthen his hold south of the Sutlej and none of the southern states would be allowed to attach itself to that powerful neighbour. Ranjit was to be carefully watched. As Murray wrote, "The British Government must not lose sight in a moment of repose and tranquillity of one of the principal and original

motives of the advance of our troops to the frontier."[6] In doubtful cases, as a formal declaration might injure chiefs who held territory on the north bank of the Sutlej no specific declaration would be made unless the Maharaja wanted a decided opinion in each case. The small states that formed a barrier between British territory and the state of Lahore were to be dependent entirely upon the British. The relations between Ranjit Singh and the British Government in matters cis-Sutlej were not relations of intimate and cordial friendship and we must not be misled by the rhetorical language of diplomatic intercourse.

In 1823 with the appointment of Wade as Political Assistant at Ludhiana and the transfer of Murray to Ambala we find a noticeable change in the tone and temper of British intercourse with the Lahore Durbar. Over Wadni Wade pressed Ranjit's claim of sovereignty as also over cis-Sutlej Ahluwalia possessions granted by Ranjit Singh. These territories were declared amenable to Lahore supremacy. In the same manner the Kang Sardar Hari Singh was declared to be Ranjit's vassal. It was also considered expedient to recognise the Sodhis of Machiwara, Makhwal and Anandpur as subject to the jurisdiction of the Lahore Durbar. The Mamdot chief failed to transfer his allegiance to the British.[7] But on the Ferozpur question there was no departure from the position of Murray. In the matter of cis-Sutlej territorial disputes British policy after 1823 was to yield on minor matters. In view of other important demands made one after another by the English on Ranjit Singh involving very considerable sacrifice of ambition, it was certainly expedient to give him some satisfaction on such minor territorial disputes. But the British saw to it that Ranjit's cis-Sutlej territories remained scattered and the slightest attempt at territorial exchange and consolidation was not encouraged. The British also gained in another respect by yielding on such unimportant matters. Ranjit Singh became very well disposed towards Wade, who occupied the base line of British diplomacy.[8]

Jacquemont wrote in 1829, "If you hear that Ranjit Singh has violated the Company's frontier, congratulate yourself upon the chance it will give me of seeing an Asiatic war on my way or if the Himalayas collapse and sink to the level of the plains of Bengal (which is quite as probable as an invasion by Ranjit Singh) congratulate yourself upon the juxtaposition of strata this accident will enable me to see."[9] This very intelligent French traveller had good reasons to conclude that Ranjit Singh's opinion was decisively formed on his utter inability to contend with British arms. In 1815, Pirthi Bilas, the vakil of the Gurkhas, and Sheo Dat Rai, a reliable person of the Raja of Bilaspur, approached him. He was requested to help the Gurkhas in their war with the British, to speak to the bankers to lend them five lakhs of rupees and to help the Gurkhas cross the rivers Ganges and Jumna. The Maharaja declared his inability to help the Gurkhas against the British, though he later expressed his disappointment when the Gurkhas were driven out of the neighbouring region as a result of the Anglo-Nepalese war.[10] In 1820, Ranjit Singh was impervious to the entreaties of the ex-King of Nagpur.[11] In 1822, he would not respond to the appeal of the ex-Peshwa Baji Rao II.[12] At the time of the First Anglo-Burmese war the British unnecessarily kept an eye on him.[13] In 1825-1826 he refused to respond to the repeated requests of the people of Bharatpur. Ranjit Singh told Osborne some years later that at the time the British army was marching to invest Bharatpur he had an army in arms preparing for an expedition to Kashmir. The Bharatpur chief offered him 100,000 rupees for every day's march and 50,000 rupees for every day he remained with him, if he would bring 20,000 troops to his assistance. Ranjit added, "At that time all my people were very anxious that I should have done it."[14] Jacquemont had thus good grounds to form his opinion, but British suspicion of this restless neighbour was deep-rooted and this was also perhaps natural in the circumstances.

It should be mentioned in this connection that the claim made by Wade that he succeeded in dissuading Ranjit Singh from joining the Burmese or the chief of Bharatpore is one of the most preposterous ever made.[14] Ranjit Singh's faith in Wade could not from the nature of circumstances be so deep that he would allow him to influence policy in an advising capacity. In making such a claim Wade was deluding himself. Ranjit Singh must have regarded him only as an echo for others.

Between 1827-1831 the insurrection at Peshawar led by Sayyid Ahmad kept Ranjit's energies confined to that quarter. The Sayyid indirectly served the British Government by checking the activities of the restless Sikh chief. When the Sayyid was slain in 1831, Wade wrote to the Secretary, "The Sikhs having finally achieved the extinction of the Sayyid who has afforded employment to their arms for the past five years nearly, are now speculating on the future field of their exploits. Their career has been one of continual warfare and with a large disposable army impatient of repose, His Highness will not be long before he directs his attention to another quarter". The British Government, of course, gave no help to the Sayyid direct or indirect but connived at covert and overt help given to him by its own subjects. Metcalfe, Resident at Delhi in 1827, wrote to the Secretary, "During the period of their recent attack on Ranjit's territories the most fervent anxiety for their success pervaded the mind of the population of Delhi. Numbers quitted their homes and marched to join them including some who resigned their employment in the Company's service. It is said that the King of Delhi encouraged this spirit. If he did, the fact was not forced on my attention".[16]

Free from the Sayyid, Ranjit now turned to Sind. But the British Government was on the alert, for Ranjit Singh was feeling his way to Sind for some time. The British now forestalled him there. While the Governor-General and Ranjit Singh were

making friends at Rooper*, Colonel Pottinger was on his way to Sind with a navigation treaty in his pocket. The Amirs of Sind very reluctantly agreed to a treaty that the rivers and roads of Sind should be open to the "merchants and traders of Hindustan". Here, therefore, "Ranjit Singh was checked in the guise of material utilitarianism. But Ranjit had seen the beginning of those trading aspirations which bestowing a power to interfere had led to the absorption of Bengal".[17] Still he yielded on this occasion. But Ranjit Singh recurred to his claim on Shikarpur and his designs on Sind during the years 1834-1836. He was, however, always hesitating. Finally, the determined attitude of the British Government induced him to give up his plans. The Chief Secretary wrote, "His Lordship in Council cannot but view with regret and disapprobation the prosecution of plans of unprovoked hostilities injurious to the neighbouring states with whom the British Government is connected by ties of interest and goodwill." Wade wrote to the Secretary in reply, "Looking to the extent to which he has already committed himself and to the impatience of his character when the gratification of his ambition is concerned, the restraint which my observations will tend to impose on the execution of his designs not only with regard to Shikarpur but other countries regarded by him as a fair field for conquest, is not likely to be palatable and cannot fail to awaken him to the *new lines of policy* which the British Government is determined to adopt."[18] Inspite of the exhortations of his Sardars to the contrary, Ranjit yielded once again. In return for this service the British Government extorted from the Amirs a very reluctant consent to the admission of a British Resident at Hyderabad in 1838.

*The motives underlying the interview at Rooper: The suspected designs of Russia made it desirable to give the world an impression that there was complete unanimity between the British Indian Government and the Lahore Durbar. Ranjit Singh also wanted to make an impressive display of the fact that he was acknowledged as the head of the *Khalsa* by the British Government.

Here it may not be out of place to discuss the importance to Ranjit Singh of the acquisition of Sind. In the first place, it would have enabled him to open communication with other countries free from British control. Next, as it has been said, Sind and the Punjab are provinces of the Indus as Bengal and Bihar are provinces of the Ganges. They can constitute a section separated from other parts by rivers, mountains, the sea or the broad belt of sandy desert. We cannot but wonder why Ranjit Singh yielded to the British Government on the Sind question. It was this ready acquiescence on the Sind question that enables us to realise how impotent Ranjit Singh was so far as his relations with the British Government were concerned. The Secretary wrote in 1836, "The dread in which he stands of our power may be accepted as a sure pledge that he will never suffer himself to oppose the views and wishes of the government so long as we admit him to a participation of them as a friend." Hugel was justified in his comment: "Ranjit is as much independent of the British Indian Government as his position as a weaker neighbour can admit of."[19]

Ranjit Singh also became gradually conscious that the increased interest evinced by the British people in the affairs of Afghanistan might very well take a political turn. He knew that Alexander Burnes explored the Indus in 1831 under pretence of conveying presents to him. In 1832, Alexander Burnes again proceeded as a private traveller by the route of Peshawar and Jelalabad to Kabul and thence to Central Asia, but returning to India conveyed his information to the Governor-General. Wade wrote in November 1834, "His Highness believes from the increased interest that we have evinced in the affairs of the Afghans, by the journey of Lt. Burnes into that country and his subsequent correspondence with the chiefs that he hopes to renew his intercourse with them that we are contemplating political relations with that country".[20] He was again sent on an ostensibly commercial mission in November, 1836.

He wrote not long after his arrival in Kabul that he was "to see into affairs and judge of what was to be done hereafter but the hereafter has already arrived".[21] He wrote in October, 1837, "We are on the threshhold of a negotiation with King Ranjit the basis of which will be his withdrawal from Peshawar and a Barukzye receiving it as a tributary of Lahore, the chief of Kabul sending his son to ask pardon".[22] Burnes thought that the possession of Peshawar by Sultan Muhammad Khan would increase British influence in that quarter. On behalf of Dost Muhammad, who was very much opposed to the restoration of Sultan Muhammad, it was suggested to Burnes that Peshawar might be delivered over conjointly to the Amir and Sultan Muhammad, Ranjit Singh receiving from them the value which he might fix as the terms of surrender. It might be argued that all this was due to the excess of zeal of Burnes. But it was actually suggested to the Maharaja's agent in 1837 that Sultan Muhammad Khan should be reinstated in the civil government of Peshawar while the military protection was to remain with the Sikhs. The Maharaja treated this outline of a policy with silence.[23] The Governor-General himself wrote in 1837, "I am thoroughly convinced that it is for the best interests of Ranjit himself that he should come to terms of proper accommodation with the Afghans..... I have made it my object without obtrusive interference, yet perhaps at the hazard of some temporary unpopularity with his chiefs and soldiery to induce the Maharaja to cultivate peace".[24] Matters might have progressed as in the east and south but Russian intrigues and Persian hostility gave a different direction to the negotiations. Vickovich, the Russian agent, was at Kabul and he was also ready to make overtures to Ranjit Singh. The Persians laid siege to Herat and the Barakzais at Kandahar intrigued with them. In view of this situation Lord Auckland decided against the policy of friendship with Dost Muhammad, who insisted upon securing possession of Peshawar. Auckland wrote to Hobhouse, "It would be madness in us, though we may wish to see his independence assured, to quarrel with the Sikhs for him."[25] Sykes says that it was most

unwise "to make paralytic Ranjit Singh the sheet-anchor of the British policy".[26] But there was really no alternative. To concede the claims of Dost Muhammad on Peshawar would have certainly meant antagonising the Maharaja, and with the Persians besieging Herat and Vickovich at Kabul it would have been extremely hazardous for the British to follow this policy. Burnes left Kabul on April 25, 1838.

The next step was the Tripartite Treaty negotiated by Macnaghten, who came to Lahore in May, 1838. This treaty revived Ranjit Singh's old treaty of 1833 with Shah Shuja substantially as also literally but some supplementary articles very considerably modified the spirit of the old treaty. The Tripartite Treaty has been described as a treaty between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja, which the British guaranteed. But two aspects of this treaty have not been properly emphasised. It was calculated to checkmate Ranjit Singh and he was conscious of it. From the British point of view the Tripartite Treaty was due to the Russo-Persian menace, Dost Muhammad listening to Vickovich and the Persians besieging Herat (23rd Nov., 1837—9th Sept., 1838). But it also marks the last stage in the development of British plans to resist Sikh designs of aggression on Sind. Article 16 of the treaty provided, "Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk agrees to relinquish for heirs and successors all claims of supremacy and arrears of tribute over the country now held by the Amirs of Sind on condition of the payment to him by the Amirs of such a sum as may be determined under the mediation of the British Government, 1,500,000 of rupees of such payment being made over by him to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. On these payments being completed, article 4 of the treaty of the 12th March, 1833, will be considered cancelled and the customary interchange of letters and suitable presents between the Maharaja and the Amirs of Sind shall be maintained as heretofore."

The Tripartite Treaty was concluded on the 26th June, 1838, and ratified on the 25th July. Ranjit Singh had often used Shah

Shuja as a scare-crow to frighten the Barakzais. He had supported Shah Shuja in his attempt at restoration in 1833-1834. But that was perhaps because everybody connected the British Government with that expedition. Ellenborough wrote in his memorandum about Shah Shuja's expedition of 1834, "The sovereigns of Afghanistan naturally connected the government with the expedition. All central Asia did the same. It may be seen in Fraser's *Travels* that so strong was the feeling even of the distant Turkomans against the English for the part they appeared to have in the movement and the ambitious designs it was understood to indicate that it was not safe for any European to go into Turkoman territory".[27] In 1838, Ranjit Singh at first showed great hesitation, and hesitation in his case really meant opposition. He would not at first give any reply to Wade's communications regarding Afghanistan. Wade guessed that Ranjit Singh most probably wanted to defer the consideration of the subject in the hope of events superseding the occasion for the discussion.[28] There is no doubt about the fact that Ranjit Singh was an unwilling partner in the scheme. He felt that he was going to have in the west a dependent ally of the British. But he knew he could not improve his position if he stood aloof. Mackeson, who accompanied Macnaghten, told Ranjit, as Macnaghten had told Fakir Azizuddin that in case the British were compelled in self-defence to take their own measures to ward off the danger, they would use their own troops to restore Shah Shuja. Cunningham is not therefore wrong when he wrote, "That Ranjit Singh was told he would be left out if he did not choose to be a party to the treaty does not appear on public records: It was, however, the only convincing argument used in the long discussion."[29] Seven days before the conclusion of the Tripartite Treaty, Osborne, who also accompanied Macnaghten, wrote, "The Old Lion has turned sulky and refuses to sign the treaty, wishing to stipulate for all sorts of concessions which cannot be granted."[30] Osborne's entry should be regarded as a flash

of light thrown on Ranjit Singh's figure clinging to his opposition to the Tripartite Treaty. But he yielded at last.

Ranjit Singh took all possible precautions. Shah Shuja as also the British Government guaranteed him in his territories. The Shah recognised Ranjit's sway "in all places dependent on Peshawar as far as the Khyber Pass" and enumerating all the territories on either bank of the Indus disclaimed all title on the part of himself, his heirs and successors. At this stage Auckland did not contemplate any active British intervention on behalf of Shah Shuja. He wrote in May, 1838, "Ranjit would assist by the employment of a portion of his troops and we by some contribution in money and the presence of an accredited agent of government and of a sufficient number of officers for the direction of the Shah's army."[31] It is relevant to note that the Tripartite Treaty did not pledge the British Government to send their soldiers beyond the frontier. But it was not Ranjit's venture. He could not be expected to show any enthusiasm. Shah Shuja could not be expected to raise a force that would fight with success. It was thus not unnatural for Lord Auckland to come to the conclusion that a British force should be sent to put Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul. In July, 1838, Lord Auckland thus embarked fully on the Kabul venture. The Tripartite Treaty developed into a far more extensive British scheme of invasion of Afghanistan.

This was not an altogether unexpected development. The fourteen articled Testament of Peter the Great though perhaps apocryphal was accepted as genuine by the Russians as also by the British. According to one of the articles of the Testament Russian rulers were to bear in mind 'that commerce of India is the commerce of the world and that he who can exclusively command it is the dictator of Europe'. Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Middle East, thus envisaged in Peter's so-called Testament, began in 1828 with the Treaty of Turkomanchai, by which Russia im-

posed very rigorous terms on Persia. Throughout the Middle East British resistance to the spread of Russian influence increased. Mesopotamia, Persia and Afghanistan again became important strategically as gateways to India. The impulse to resist Russian advance led step by step to the attempt to establish a British protectorate in Afghanistan.

In order to reconcile Ranjit Singh to this new move the Governor-General met him seemingly on equal terms at Ferozpore on the 30th November. The conquering army was to proceed to Kandahar through Sind and Beluchistan and Colonel Wade with Shahzada Timur was to advance with a small force through the Khaibar to cause a diversion. Ranjit provided against the passage of British troops through the Punjab. He remained in control of every pass into Afghanistan north of the Bolan. From a military point of view he was perhaps master of the situation. But he could not be oblivious of the fact that Shah Shuja was really going to have a dependent throne. Judged by the sequel, British failure was perhaps inevitable. But if we judge it from the standpoint of the Lahore chief's relations with the British Government, the Tripartite Treaty and the subsequent developments in British foreign policy formed the most conclusive evidence of Ranjit's helplessness and his own consciousness of it. "Ostensibly Ranjit Singh had reached the summit of his ambition. He was acknowledged to be an arbiter in the fate of that empire which had tyrannised over his peasant forefathers and he was treated with great distinction by the Lord Paramount of India."[82] Ranjit Singh died before the sovereignty of Shah Shuja had been outwardly established. But he left a very trying situation behind him. Subsequent developments necessitated the passage of British troops and British convoys through the Punjab and this at a time when affairs in the Punjab were very unsettled after Ranjit's demise. There was then every possibility of collision between the British Government and the Sikh Durbar. The Tripartite Treaty and the subsequent developments after Ranjit's death created this

difficult situation and the Sikh Durbar had to yield to British demands. The Anglo-Afghan war actually weakened the independence of the *Khalsa* by the constant passage of British troops and British convoys through the Punjab.

This is in brief the outline of the relations between Ranjit Singh and the British Government during the period 1809-1839. "Ranjit Singh differed from many other great eastern potentates in his statesmanlike recognition of the strength of the East India Company, the reliance he placed on British promises and his loyalty to his plighted word."[33] This is the traditional estimate of Anglo-Sikh relations after the conclusion of the treaty of Amritsar. Ranjit Singh is said to have remarked, "I might perhaps drive the British (*Ungrez Bahadur*) as far as Allyghur but I should be driven back across the Sutlej and out of my kingdom."[34] Tradition also ascribes to him the remark *"Sab lal ho jayega"*. There were already loose talks in Anglo-Indian circles about expansion westward. In 1837, at the time of Lord Auckland's tour of the upper provinces, the commander-in-chief and Metcalfe amused themselves with discussions, no doubt purely academic, as to the best way of conquering the Punjab.[35] Osborne wrote in May, 1838, "One course to pursue on Ranjit Singh's death—the instant occupation of the Punjab by an overwhelming force and the establishment of our North-Western frontier on the Indus. The East India Company has swallowed too many camels to strain at this gnat." It is evident that Ranjit himself could see clearly enough that his own kingdom in such a provocatory proximity would ere long be absorbed within the British Empire. But then what steps did he take to prevent the calamity? Ranjit no doubt told Mackeson, Wade and other gentlemen that he consulted the Granth Sahib on the policy of entering into friendship with the British and received a favourable answer.[36] In the letters that passed between the Sikh and the British Governments neither the sun nor the moon was spared to attest the stability of their friendship. But the real basis of a political alliance is self-interest,

the needs and purposes of each. It is possible to get behind camouflage to have a knowledge of the system of diplomacy and statesmanship of each of the two allies. Ranjit Singh profited by British friendship during the period 1809-1824. After that he had to yield on vital matters on every conceivable occasion.[36] As matters stood, the British Government would not have gained more if it had adopted a contrary policy. But we cannot make the same statement so far as the Sikh ruler was concerned.

Let us speculate as to what he could have done if he had lived to hear of the disasters of the British in the Kabul campaign. McGregor says in this connection, "Had Ranjit survived to witness the English disasters in Kabul, he would readily have discerned that they arose entirely from local circumstances and in no way deteriorated from English prowess."[37] But there is at least some evidence to show that things might have been different. Wade referred in November, 1837, to the change he could notice in the tone and temper of the Lahore ruler. That sense of deference to the British Government which had been the chief source of mutual confidence and harmony was gone. In 1837, Kanjit Singh began to show a friendly feeling for the Nepalese Government. A Nepalese mission arrived at his court. It was cordially received and this cordial reception offers a marked contrast to his previous attitude towards Nepal. In the opinion of the British Government such an intercourse was inconsistent with British interests. Other states might follow the example of the Nepalese. Wade wrote to the Secretary, "Ranjit Singh has hitherto derived nothing but advantage from his alliance with us. While we have been engaged in consolidating our power in Hindustan, he has been extending his conquests throughout the Punjab and across the Indus and as we are now beginning to prescribe limits to his power, which cannot be supposed he will regard with complacency, he is now more likely to encourage than withdraw from alliances which may hold out to him a hope of creating a balance of power."[38] It is relevant to note that in

Nepal Prime Minister Bhim Sen fell from power in 1837. The senior queen and the Panre party who dominated during this period were very anti-British and another Anglo-Nepalese war seemed imminent. This cordial reception of the Nepalese mission is as yet the only thing on which we are to stand, if we conclude that if Ranjit Singh had been at the helm of affairs in the Punjab at the time of the Afghan disaster, he would have taken advantage of the British difficulties and the hostile attitude of Nepal and other states towards the British. After British occupation of Ferozpore, admission of a British Resident at Hyderabad and the Tripartite Treaty, it was natural for Ranjit Singh to cease to be pacific and conciliatory. His impatience is also clearly discernible.

But leaving aside the "had been", let us judge Ranjit as we find him; Ranjit was the Massinissa of British Indian history. As Massinissa created a state out of scattered elements only that it might be absorbed within the expanding Roman Empire not long after his death, so did Ranjit in his relations with the British Indian Government. Both could create but none could ensure security and both had presentiments at the time of their death that their creations would not endure.

What could Ranjit Singh have done? In his relations with the British Government in the last decade of his career Ranjit is a pathetic figure, helpless and inert. But an alternative to the policy pursued by him, an alternative that would have been crowned with success, it is not possible to suggest. The English were too strong even for a nation of warriors like the Sikhs. But Ranjit had made his kingdom too powerful to be regarded by the British as a safe buffer state. He himself does not seem to have any erroneous, exaggerated estimate of his own power and resources. But the British would tolerate only another Patiala or Jind. In his relations with the British Government, Ranjit Singh appears to be superior to the contemporary underlings of the British power in India. But he does not show any courage or

statesmanship that deserves our applause. A statesman must be judged on his actual achievement. War with the British Government would have come sooner or later. Instead of postponing it to some future period, he could, if necessary, have boldly met the British demands with regard to Sind by declaring war, though that would have been at that time, as it proved subsequently, a hopeless contest. But he chose an impracticable alternative, that of conciliating an Imperial power which could not look with equanimity on the military structure he had raised. Perhaps with the solicitude inherent in all builders he feared to expose the kingdom he had created to the risks of war and chose instead the policy of yielding, yielding and yielding.

NOTES

1. Wade's letter, 1827.
2. Sec. Cons., 13th March, 1809, No. 63; Ibid, 29th April, 1809, No. 39.
3. Cunningham, p. 180.
4. Murray's letter, 19th Feb., 1828.
5. This account of the cis-Sutlej position is based on Foreign Dept. Political Proceedings, 16th Aug., 1828, No. 3, 14th Nov., 1828, No. 3.
6. P. P., 16th Aug., 1828, No. 3.
7. *The Lahore Darbar*—ch. IV.
8. *The Lahore Darbar*, p. 18 footnote.
9. Jacquemont, pp. 46, 47.
10. Monograph, 17, p. 191.
11. P. P., 1820, 2nd Sept., No. 17.
12. *Ranjit Singh centenary volume*, Cawnpore. A letter of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to Maharaja Man Singh, 25th Dec., 1822.
13. Jacquemont, p. 27.
14. Osborne, *Court and Camp*.
15. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XX, p. 412.
    Wade to Murray—Sept. 9, 1824, Oct. 5, 1825, quoted in *Lahore Darbar*, p. 22 footnote.
16. P. P., 17th June, 1831, No. 41.
17. Cunningham, p. 193.
18. P. P., 3rd October, 1836, No. 27.

19. Hugel, *Travels.*
20. P. P., 2nd Dec., 1834, No. 60.
21. Unpublished correspondence of Burnes quoted by Kaye, Vol. I, p. 183.
22. Burnes to a private friend, Kaye, p. 185.
23. P. P., 2nd Oct., 1837, No. 72.
24. P. P., 11th Sept., 1837, No. 42.
25. Auckland to Hobhouse; Sykes—*Afghanistan,* Vol. I.
26. Sykes—*Afghanistan,* Vol. I, p. 397.
27. Algernon Law, *India under Ellenborough.*
28. P. P., 9th May, 1838, No. 45.
29. Cunningham, p. 220.
30. Osborne, *Court & Camp.,* 19th June.
31. Minute of Lord Auckland, 12th May, 1839, MS Records, Kaye, p. 319.
32. Cunningham, p. 221.
33. Roberts, *History,* p. 27.
34. McGregor, Vol. II, p. 35.
35. Thompson, *Metcalfe.*
36. P. P., 23rd January, 1836, No. 115.
37. McGregor, Vol. II, p. 33.
38. P. P., 20th Oct., 1837, No. 61.

CHAPTER V

Ranjit Singh And Afghanistan

Azim Khan at Nowshera. (1823-1838)

Azim Khan, the Barakzai leader, died shortly after his defeat at Nowshera. On his death-bed he summoned his wives to his presence, dispossessed them of their jewels and delivered these jewels with the whole of his property to his son Habibulla Khan and charged him to wipe off the disgrace of the defeat from his father's name.[1] But from 1823, the year of the death of Azim Khan, up to 1826, when Dost Muhammad became supreme in Kabul, Afghanistan does not count at all in Sikh history. The process of dismemberment of the Durrani monarchy was now complete. Dost Muhammad got possession of Kabul; and of the other Barakzai brothers, Sher Dil Khan took Qandahar and Yar Muhammad Khan, Peshawar; Shah Mahmud, the Durrani King, was in Herat and the Sindhis no longer paid tribute. Even in Kabul, Dost Muhammad had to reckon with the opposition of Habibulla Khan, the eldest son of Azim Khan. The Barakzais were engaged in quarrelling among themselves. Even after Dost Muhammad had become well-established in Kabul and Habibulla Khan had been crushed, he was up to 1831 too much taken up with internal affairs to mind the consolidation of Sikh sway west of the Indus. During this period he was engaged in his work of "treading down the Durranis".

Shah Shuja asks for Ranjit help.

In 1831, Shah Shuja contemplated another effort to recover the Afghan throne and sought Ranjit Singh's alliance. But the Maharaja wanted that in case he was successful, the Shah should prohibit the slaughter of cows throughout Afghanistan, deliver to him the gates of Somnath and his heir-apparent should attend the Maharaja with an auxiliary force.[2] Fallen though his fortunes

were, the Shah refused to accede to these preposterous proposals which would make him practically the vassal of Ranjit. The British Government also refused to "countenance or encourage"[3] the plan which fell through.

In 1833, the indomitable Shah once more attempted to regain the Afghan throne. But though he possessed the enterprise to commence, he had not the resolution nor the capacity to accomplish such an undertaking. This time, however, Lord William Bentinck "suffered Shah Shuja to raise an army of invasion under the shadow of British flag". The king even got an advance of four months' pension. He got a gun and some camels from Bahawal Khan and advanced upon Shikarpur. The Sindhis were hostile but they were defeated in an engagement at a place seven *kos* from Shikarpur and agreed to pay a contribution of six lakhs of rupees and to farm the Shikarpur territory for a settled annual sum. But Shah Shuja was routed by Dost Muhammad near Qandahar. After many wanderings he returned to Ludhiana in March, 1835. Before embarking on the enterprise, a treaty had been concluded between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja which became the basis of the later Tripartite Treaty. The articles were fifteen in number whereas the proposed treaty of 1831 consisted of 17 articles; the article that the Shah's heir-apparent should always attend the Maharaja with a force was waived. The proposal that the Shah should observe to send presents to the Maharaja at the *Naoroj* and *Dussera* was modified in such a manner as to obviate any open acknowledgement of allegiance to the Maharaja. "Regarding Shikarpur and the territory of Sind lying on the right bank of the Indus the Shah will abide by whatever may be settled as right and proper through Captain Wade. Nothing was spoken about the gates of Somnath. The ex-king recognised Ranjit Singh's sway on the right bank of the Indus over the Kabul territories he had conquered."[4] From the *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records, Vol. II,* we find that Ranjit's payments to Shah Shuja at different dates between 1833 and 1834

amounted to Rs. 14,500. If the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* is to be believed, Shuja-ul-Mulk was paid on different dates a sum of one lakh twenty-five thousand rupees.[5]

Ranjit was actuated by a variety of motives in making this treaty with Shah Shuja. He wanted in the event of Shah Shuja's success to strengthen his position on the right bank of the Indus. He also wanted to anticipate any exclusive views that the British Government might have on Afghanistan. "From the journey of Lieutenant Burnes into Afghanistan and his subsequent correspondence with the chiefs that he hoped to renew intercourse with them as also from the interest of the British in Afghan affairs, Ranjit surmised that the British were contemplating political relations with that country and he wished to establish a claim for himself to participation in any steps that the British might take to secure that object."[6]

annexed Peshawar.

Fearing that if Shah Shuja became successful, he might set aside the Treaty of Alliance, Ranjit annexed outright Peshawar which had been left to Sultan Muhammad as a Lahore tributary. In fact, Shah Shuja himself is said to have remarked that agreements are of no use, it is power that matters; that the document would remain in his pocket and he would certainly take back the Kohinoor from Ranjit and wear it.[7] The citadel of Peshawar was stormed by Hari Singh and Sultan Muhammad fled to Dost Muhammad. The Sikh army under Hari Singh and Nau Nihal Singh consisted of only 9,000 men.

Shuja danger removed on Peshawar.

Now that the danger from Shah Shuja had disappeared and a brilliant victory won over the ex-King, Dost Muhammad turned his attention to the recovery of Peshawar. Here we enter upon a new phase of Sikh-Afghan relations. When Shah Shuja was advancing in the direction of Qandahar on the 17th January, 1833, Dost Muhammad made a proposal for an alliance to the British Government. The reply of the British Government was

that its policy towards the different chiefs contending in Afghanistan was one of perfect neutrality.[8] We may, however, add that the neutrality was not without a perceptible tinge of benevolence so far as Shah Shuja was concerned. At the beginning of 1835, before embarking on his expedition against the Sikhs, Dost Muhammad again wrote a letter to the British Government, complaining of the occupation of Peshawar by the Sikhs, announcing his resolution to wage a religious war against them and applying for the support of the British Government. He laid great stress on a passage in a previous letter of the Governor-General to the effect that "His Lordship would give him a proof of the interest which he took in his welfare when the occasion should arrive".[9] Dost Muhammad was, however, told that "there was no promise of assistance in any of the late Governor-General's letters".

Dost Muhammad made colossal preparations to measure his strength with the Sikhs. Ranjit Singh's capture of Peshawar deprived a section of the Barakzais of their possessions. His advance was a menace to the Muhammadan tribes of the frontier region as well as to the Kabul monarchy. Political interest, religious sentiment, as well as the instinct of self-preservation impelled the Muhammadans to make one grand effort. Dost Muhammad wanted to give to the struggle the character of a *jihad* or religious war and assumed the title of *Amir-ul-Momein*.* To meet the expenses of the impending war he seized the Shikarpur merchants of Kabul and took from them a lakh and a half of rupees as a loan. The Qandahar chiefs were, however, disinclined to support their brother and his assumption of the title of Amir alienated them. Dost Muhammad also applied to the Amirs of Sind for pecuniary assistance as it was too far for them to send troops. The Amirs feared the wrath of Ranjit Singh which financial aid to his

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* The coin of Kabul, during the period of turmoil, had been struck in the name of 'Saheb-i-Zaman', *i.e.*, ruler of the day. It was now impressed with the cognizance 'Amir Dost Muhammad by the grace of God'.

enemy could not but evoke. Ultimately they demanded an *Ahadnama* to secure the integrity of Sind and the aid of Dost Muhammad Khan in the event of an attack on Sind by the English, Sikh or other enemies. The Amir considered that the proposal of the Sindhis was intended merely to amuse him.[10] Letters were sent also to the Khan of Bahawalpur. The hearty enthusiasm of the Bajal and the Yusufzai chiefs in his cause encouraged the Amir. Letters were sent also to the Khatak, the Mohmand, the Khalil, the Khubar and other tribes in the vicinity of Peshawar. "From Kohistan, from the hills beyond, from the regions of the Hindukush, from the remote fastnesses of Turkistan, multitudes of various tribes and denominations came flocking to the Amir's standard. Ghilzyes and Kohistanees, sleek Kuzzilbashes and rugged Oozbegs, horsemen and footmen came pouring amain. The brave heart of Ranjit Singh quailed before this immense assembly."

The troops assembled by Dost Muhammad by his own assertion numbered 40,000 besides the infinite multitude of the voluntary Ghazis:—

The Amir Daftars probably	..	12,000
The Eljuri troops of Kabul	..	10,000
The troops of the Peshawar Sardars	..	1,500
The troops of Sadat Rahman Momund	..	1,500
The troops of Mir Alam Khan Bajore	..	5,000
The troops with Fateh Khan Panchtor	..	10,000
		40,000

He had also 37 guns provided with 700 rounds each and had a treasure of 3 lakhs of rupees. The troops of the Amir were paid in advance. Large supplies of grains were also collected at Jalalabad. The Sikhs are commonly said to have had 80,000 men in the Peshawar valley about this time.[11]

It was a great crisis in Sikh history. Had Ranjit been defeated, he would most probably have been driven across Attock and the Muhammadan tribes on both sides of the Indus would have risen up in arms. The wily Maharaja resorted to diplomacy, a sphere in which he was always at his best. He deputed Harlan Feringhee and Azizuddin to negotiate with Dost, so that he might gain time to concentrate his forces as also to alienate from Dost Muhammad his Peshawar brothers. It was well-known to Sultan Muhammad that in case of Afghan success Peshawar would be annexed by the Amir. He was not unwilling to come to terms with Ranjit. He was promised Kohat, Tank and Bannu in Jagir for himself and his own brothers. Sultan Muhammad and Dost Muhammad had sworn on the Quran to stand true to each other and the former Peshawar Chieftain was asked by Dost Muhammad to imprison and keep in custody the Sikh *vakils* as pledges for the restoration of Peshawar. Mirza Samad Khan, Dost's minister, had expected that in case Azizuddin was detained, Ranjit Singh would be prostrate as the Faqir alone had the secret of the drug which was indispensable to the Maharaja and which upheld his failing strength. But Sultan Muhammad knew it quite well that Dost Muhammad would retain Peshawar for himself and only wanted him to compromise himself with the Maharaja by seizing the person of his envoys. Seduced by Harlan and Azizuddin, he withdrew from the Afghan camp with his soldiers and retainers and went over to the Sikhs. This defection had a very bad effect in the Afghan camp and on the morale of the Afghan troops. The two armies had been within seven *kos* of each other. They had faced each other for seventeen days according to Dost Muhammad's own version. Ranjit Singh took advantage of the negotiations to mass his troops and almost surround Dost. Finding himself in this predicament, the Amir thought it prudent to retire in the night. His retreat, though precipitate, was creditable and even brilliant because he succeeded in taking with him all the equipment and stores. Thus Ranjit gained a bloodless victory. It added to Ranjit's prestige

and ensured his sway west of the Indus. Dost Muhammad suffered incalculably in public opinion and the disgrace of the retreat always rankled in his mind. His reputation was terribly damaged by the retreat before a race which he execrated, especially because he had pledged to carry on the war by the most sacred obligations of his religion. His great mistake lay in the delay which he made. He allowed himself to fall into Ranjit's trap. He began negotiations though he knew it quite well that his own camp was full of intrigue and treachery and delay might help his adversary. Though he tried to overreach Ranjit, he yet allowed him to mass his troops, and, having suffered an ignominious diplomatic defeat, "withdrew his hand from the front of his reputation",[12] as Ranjit put it.

The Amir was very eager to wipe off the disgrace of his retreat and, as Masson informed Wade, he engaged to do so with the chiefs of Bajore and the principals of the several independent Afghan tribes. The assumption of the title of *Amir-ul-Momein* pledged Dost to a system of perpetual hostility with the Sikhs. According to Malleson, Kaye and others, "In bitterness of spirit declaiming against the emptiness of military renown, he plunged deeply into the study of the Quran." According to Mohanlal, however, Dost Muhammad had received repeated communications from the chiefs of the Khaibaris, demanding the despatch of some troops and offering him their co-operation against the Sikhs, stating that otherwise they would be obliged to acknowledge the authority of Ranjit Singh.[13] The Sikhs were fast entrenching their position to the east of Afghanistan. It appeared as if they would take the offensive against Dost Muhammad. At Peshawar towards the middle of 1836, they were busy completing a fortress at Shubkudur, which would give them command of the road Gandab, next to that of Khyber the most practicable for artillery of all the routes across the mountain ranges between Peshawar and Jalalabad.[14] Ranjit Singh had given Dera Ismail Khan to Hafiz Ahmad Khan of Mankera in 1822. His son was

now dispossessed. The direct annexation of Dera Ismail Khan at this time by Ranjit was a stroke of policy. It was intended to threaten Dost Muhammad from a new quarter.[15] An agent of Shah Shuja was in Ranjit's court, ostensibly of course to recover some money due to the ex-King by the Maharaja's subjects; but the Maharaja took advantage of his presence to propose to Shah Shuja whether he was prepared to give a written undertaking relinquishing Peshawar and Shikarpur and in that case the Maharaja would conquer Kabul and Qandahar for him.[16] Hari Singh Nalwa was engaged in building a fort at Jamrud at the very mouth of the Khyber Pass. The extreme views of that chieftain always advocating a march on Kabul were too well-known even throughout Afghanistan. In the open Durbar there were talks about the intended invasion of Kabul and Khusal Singh's comment on hearing of the annexation of Dera Ismail Khan was that there was only a distance of sixty *kos* between Tank and Kabul.[17] Letters passed between the two rulers whose tone was certainly not amicable. In Ranjit's letter there was the verse, "Retrace your step if you desire not to make me your enemy; if other sentiments actuate your mind, remember that an army as numerous as the waves of the sea will instantly be with you."[18] In Dost's letter the concluding verse was, "I do not withhold my hand from soliciting favour but if you wish to destroy yourself, my sword is at your service."[19]

The news from the frontier alarmed Dost Muhammad and he sent an army under his sons Shamsuddin and Muhammad Akbar to oppose the Sikhs at Jamrud. As much has been made of the Sikh defeat at Jamrud, we should study the history of that battle very carefully. According to Mr. Fast, the Afghans numbered 18,000, the whole of Dost Muhammad's cavalry being present in the action. As Mackeson informed Wade, Maha Singh, an officer of Hari Singh, had only 600 men with him at Jamrud when he was attacked by the Afghans. He sustained the attack for three or four days. Hari Singh marched from Peshawar to

his help with 10,000 men and with 25 pieces of ordnance. The engagement began with a cannonade by the Sikhs, which had little effect. The Najib battalions then advanced and opened fire upon the Afghans, who retired in confusion from their camp leaving three guns. The Sikhs then began plundering of the Afghan camp and their ranks fell into disorder. Akbar Khan saw this from a distant eminence, and when Shamsuddin came with fresh troops, the Afghans vigorously charged the Sikhs and they retreated in disorder towards the fort. Hari Singh, however, received a mortal wound in the melee. The main body of the Sikh army, however, rallied. "The Afghans were not in a condition to improve upon their victory."[20] The Sikhs threw up entrenchments in the night. The Afghans watched for five or six days and finally retired. The number of killed and wounded on the Sikh side was about eight hundred; while among the Afghans the casualties numbered five hundred. Sardar Lahna Singh Sindhanwala had a garrison of 1,500 men at Shubkudur to the north of Peshawar. Here Hiji Khan Kakar and Mir Alam Khan had come with a part of the Afghan army. "The Afghans placed great hopes on this diversion but nothing came of it*."

The Afghans retreated precipitately, but this battle cost Ranjit Singh that flower of Sikh chivalry, the Murat of the Sikh army, Hari Singh. It was the death of this great Sikh warrior which was responsible for making the battle of Jamrud a theme of exultation among the Afghans and it was this sad accident that cast a gloom over the Punjab. In itself the action at Jamrud was of no importance. The Afghans neither succeeded in occupying or destroying the fort of Jamrud nor in taking Shubkudur or Peshawar.

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* "An opinion has prevailed that the Afghans were aided in their late operations near Peshawar by the presence of Mr. Harlan. It is a popular error. Neither he, nor any of the Europeans with the Amir was present with his troops"—Masson to Wade. Harlan had been dismissed from Ranjit Singh's service and had joined Dost Muhammad.

As Osborne wrote, "The Maharaja seemed to bear the reverse with great equanimity and in answer to some question said that a trifling defeat now and then was useful as it teaches both men and officers caution."[21] The Amir was satisfied, if Masson[22] is to be believed, that his army withdrew from the Khaibar hills without serious disgrace. He had made an all-out effort, risking with this army at Jamrud five of his sons and nearly all of his family at Kabul. As a result of the battle of Jamrud the Amir became to a certain extent convinced of the futility of attempts beyond his strength and on account of the defection of the Yusufzais must have lost his faith in the benefits to be derived from insurrection. As Jacquemont wrote, "The Afghans were really just strong enough to have an occasional brush with Ranjit Singh and nothing more."[23] In 1838, Dost Muhammad had an annual revenue of 24 lakhs, a park of 45 guns, a standing army of 2,500 infantry and 12 or 13 thousand cavalry.[24] He was thus too weak to pursue foreign conquests on a large scale. As Dost Muhammad himself confessed to Burnes, he could not do Ranjit Singh any real harm and fear of Dost Muhammad did not certainly compel Ranjit Singh to conclude the Tripartite Treaty.

NOTES

1. Foreign Miscellaneous, No. 305, II, para 13.
2. Burnes, III, p. 248.
3. Kaye, I, p. 127.
4. P. P., 2nd Dec., 1834, No. 60.
5. *Catalogue,* II, p. 192; *Umdat,* III, p. 16.
6. P. P., 2nd Dec., 1834, No. 60.
7. *Zafarnama,* 1832.
8. Wade's letter, 1st Aug., 1827.
9. P. P., 23rd March, 1835, No. 25.
10. Masson to Wade, 2nd Feb., 1835.
11. P. P., 25th May, 1835, No. 30.
12. P. P., 15th June, 1835, No. 28.
13. Kaye, I, p. 136.
14. Mohanlal, *Life of Dost Muhammad.*

15. P. P., 21st Novr., 1836, No. 32.
16. Ibid, 3rd Oct., 1836, No. 24.
17. P. P., 15th Aug., 1836, No. 17.
18. *Englishman,* 10th July, 1837.
19. Ibid.
20. Mackeson to Wade, 24th Oct., 1837.
21. Osborne, 8th July.
22. Masson to Wade, 19th May, 1837.
23. Jacquemont, p. 105.
24. P. P., 7th May, 1838, No. 65.

CHAPTER VI

Ranjit Singh And The North-Western Frontier Problem

The North-Western Frontier has always formed a vital problem and has always been of the utmost concern to the power paramount in India. In view of this fact, a past history of the attempts to solve the North-West Frontier problem of India has a living interest. Just before the British took into their hands the solution of this frontier question it was tackled by Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab. A study of Ranjit's western frontier policy has some significance for those who are interested in the problem of India's defence.

The Indian North-Western frontier problem is made up of four subsidiary problems:

(*1*) The international problem of the relations between India and Afghanistan.

(*2*) The political problem, *i.e.*, the problem of the control of the border tribes.

(*3*) The problem of the military defence of the frontier.

(*4*) The problem of the administration of the North-West frontier.

Ranjit Singh did not want to conquer Afghanistan. The arguments in favour of a negative view appear overwhelming. Ranjit had experienced disasters in his first attempt to conquer Kashmir owing to the peculiar local conditions. He no doubt dreaded the operation of the same causes in the event of his invad-

ing Kabul. Once in the year 1827, he had a conversation with Wade on the advisability of invading Kabul. About this interview Wade writes, "I proceeded to remark that it would be a very hazardous expedition. The country is a strange one to the Sikhs, intersected by mountains and torrents not easily passable. It would be difficult to maintain his communication and keep his troops supplied*—observations in which His Highness at that time expressed his concurrence."[1]

Ranjit Singh himself once wrote in a similar strain to Wafa Begum, wife of Shah Shuja. Of course from both these persons Ranjit Singh had reasons to suppress his motives. But that these considerations had effectively influenced his decision is evidenced by the fact that he made no attempt to conquer Afghanistan during the long interval of confusion in Afghan history between the death of Muhammad Azim Khan and the accession of Dost Muhammad to power. His French officers were no doubt eager to march on Kabul and no less eager were the Sikh sardars and soldiers. But though he spoke of invading Afghanistan on occasions just to humour his sardars and French officers and keep Dost Muhammad on tenterhooks, the mere warrior within him never got the better of the statesman. It was only on one occasion probably that he seriously thought of invading Afghanistan. This was when Hari Singh Nalwa was killed in a surprise attack by the Afghans. Anger, pride and sorrow for a time overwhelmed him but when he regained his composure he thought no more of it. The opinion of the British

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* Wade's letter, 1st Aug., 1827, "The French officers tell me," said the Raja, "that if I will place ten regular battalions, two or three regiments of cavalry, and a few pieces of artillery at their disposal they will engage to conquer Kabul and subdue the whole of Afghanistan to my authority"—but he anticipated the reply and said that it was a distant affair and the provision of supplies to the army would be difficult.

Government in this matter should be noted. The Secretary wrote to Burnes, "His Lordship thinks that though it might be hazardous and unprofitable to the Maharaja to seek to retain possession of a country so difficult, yet in the immense resources at his command, in his wealthy treasury and numerous and disciplined army, he has the means of overrunning it and of consummating at least the ruin of its present ruler,"[2] Ranjit was not, what he otherwise would have been, the last link in the chain of conquerors like Chengiz Khan, Timur, Nadir and Ahmad Shah. The temptation of pushing his conquests to the Hindukush, of avenging upon the Afghans the innumerable wrongs they did to his people, "fulfilling the prophecy of the lawgiver in recovering the sandal-portals, an exploit which would shed a lustre on Ranjit Singh's action"[3]—all these dreams he brushed aside. He did not believe in desultory raids. What he conquered, he consolidated in his own way.

It may be argued against this view that the fact that he joined in the Tripartite Treaty to restore Shah Shuja shows that he was not disinclined to an enterprise against Afghanistan. But he was an unwilling partner in the alliance. He joined because he knew that the British Government was prepared to undertake the expedition even without him and perhaps he feared that with their phenomenal good luck and their immense resources they might succeed where he could expect nothing but failure. "Yet perhaps he cheered his vexed spirit with the hope that the English would yet be baffled"[4] as in fact they were.

Ranjit's North-Western conquests have two stages. At first he did not either feel himself strong enough to rule directly the territories beyond the Indus or he did not think it to be the proper policy. He conquered Peshawar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Kohat, Tank and Bannu but was at first content rule these regions through the local Muhammadan chieftains,

who acknowledged his overlordship and paid tribute. He conquered (1) Peshawar but gave it first to Jahandad Khan, then to Yar Muhammad Khan and finally, in 1830, to Sultan Muhammad Khan as a feudatory. (2) He conquered Dera Ghazi Khan but gave it to the Nawab of Bahawalpur in farm and also made a pretended or real offer of it to one of the Sind Amirs. From Sultan Muhammad Khan of Peshawar Ranjit used to derive an annual tribute of some horses and rice and kept one of his children as a hostage in his court. (3) He subjugated Dera Ismail Khan, but gave it to the dispossessed Mankera ruler Hafiz Muhammad Khan as a tributary to Lahore. (4) Tank and the neighbouring districts were made tributary in 1822 but not directly annexed. But not long after the disturbances from Sayyid Ahmad in Peshawar were over, we recognise a change in his policy. Dera Ghazi Khan was brought under direct rule in 1831, Peshawar in 1834; Tank, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan were directly annexed between 1832 and 1836. His territory extended from Mithankot along the right bank of the Indus to the hills of Bajour. From Burnes we learn of the extent of the authority of the Maharaja west of the Indus, "He has no power beyond the plain country. The Derajat is under complete subjection. In Dera Ismail Khan the people are heartily disaffected. In the Esha Khail territories the chief is now in rebellion. From Tank a more certain but varying tribute is levied. From Bannu nothing is procurable but by the presence of an army and north of it to the plain of Peshawar the country is entirely dependent."[5]

So far as the problem of the control of the border tribes was concerned, Ranjit was only partially successful. Many brave Sikh officers met with death while trying to suppress tribal rebellions. Dewan Ram Dayal, Amar Singh Kalan and Attar Singh were amongst the number. Ram Dayal was one of the bravest, ablest and most successful generals that Ranjit had. The Maharaja very much deplored the loss and said, "It is a misfortune to

lose a hero, but to lose one in a petty skirmish is sad indeed. Had he fallen in a great battle the regret would have been less."[6] Turbulent spirits like Sayyid Ahmad also chose the tribal territory as the scene of their activity. Sayyid Ahmad or Mir Ahmad, who was originally in the service of Amir Khan, came from Bareilly in Hindustan. With his lieutenants Maulvi Abdul Hai and Maulvi Ismail, he went to the North-West *via* Shikarpur and instigated the people to proclaim a *Jihad*. A tract published in Oudh enables us to trace the beginning of the *Jihad* against the Sikhs on the 21st December, 1826. From Pakhli, Dhamtaur, Pangsad, Swat, Bunnoo and Tirah people gathered around him. Even Yar Muhammad Khan of Peshawar became ostensibility his 'murid' or disciple, called his troops and gave them orders according to the Sayyid's behests.[7] Sayyid Ahmad and Yar Muhammad were defeated by Budh Singh at Saidu but the victory was not followed up. The Sayyid took shelter with the Yusufzais. With their aid he tried to take the fort of Attock but was repulsed. There were strained relations between Yar Muhammad and the Sayyid and the former was denounced as an infidel under Sikh influence. He was defeated and severely wounded. Ranjit wrote, "By divine power Ventura who had gone to bring the horse Lily, with a small escort gave an asylum to the leading men of the place"[8] and the place was saved from plunder. Sultan Muhammad succeeded Yar Muhammad as the ruler of Peshawar under Sikh influence. But Sayyid Ahmad continued to give trouble, and on one occasion even succeeded in defeating Sultan Muhammad and securing Peshawar. After the fall of Peshawar the Sayyid proclaimed himself Caliph and struck coins bearing the legend 'Ahmad the Just, Defender of the Faith; the glitter of whose scimitar scatters destruction among the infidels'.[9] But a disunion between the Yusufzais and Sayyid Ahmad forced the latter to retire from Peshawar. He retired to Pakhli and Dhamtaur and succeeded in exciting an insurrection in those mountains.

There was even a danger of his attempting to take Kashmir. But as they attacked the Sikh position at Muzaffarabad, the Muhammadans were put to flight and Zabbardast Khan, a prominent ally of the Sayyid, submitted. The Sayyid proceeded to Melakot with a view to rallying his men. An attack made by Sikh troops of Sher Singh at Dooble was repulsed. Shortly after, the Sayyid was surprised and slain by the troops of Sher Singh with 500 of his followers at Balakot. After the death of the Sayyid, the Peshawar region enjoyed comparative tranquillity under direct Sikh administration. But in 1836, Mohanlal wrote to Wade, "Active, though at present concealed, efforts are being made by a Muhammadan fanatic named Nasiruddin who has lately appeared in the Derajat for the purpose of exciting the population to a religious war. He is said to be a relative of the late Sayyid Ahmad."[10] The danger, however, did not materialise. After he had annexed the frontier territories, Ranjit followed a policy not very different from that which was followed by the British Government in the years following the Sikh wars. It can be called 'a tip and run policy', *i.e.*, when any particular tribe became too aggressive, committing too many raids, a military column went into the country, inflicted whatever damages it could and came out again. The mountaineers were kept down by a movable column constantly in the field. The prophecy of Masson made in May, 1835, that "Peshawar is the land of Egypt, the tribes of Peshawar the children of Israel and Ranjit Singh Pharaoh and the river Attock would become Red Nile if a Moses were found to overwhelm the Pharaoh in it"[11]—did not materialise at any period of Sikh history.

A description of Ranjit Singh's North-West frontier administration is incomplete without an estimate of the memorable part played by Hari Singh Nalwa as Governor in Hazara and Peshawar. Hazara was very unruly and between 1813 and 1820

all the attempts of Ranjit Singh at thorough subjugation of the district seemed to end in failure. (1) Successive Governors, Makkham Singh, Ram Dayal and Amar Singh Majithia were slain. (2) Sada Kaur and Sher Singh adopted the policy of conciliation but Sikh sway continued to be weak. Then an important event occurred. (3) Hari Singh, Governor of Kashmir, was coming to Lahore *via* Muzaffarabad with 7,000 troops and much treasure. The Hazara people numbering about 25,000 tried to intercept him and demanded a toll. Hari Singh defeated them and killed not less than 2,000. It was an impressive victory. The Taran chief, leader of the insurgents, fled to Srikot hills. After this resounding victory (4) Hari Singh was appointed Governor of all Hazara. During the next two years, Hari Singh, though uniformly successful on the plains, failed to get at the rebels retiring to the safety of Srikot hills. He built several forts—Haripur, Nawasahr, Manshera. In his first attempt at taking Srikot hills he barely escaped with his life but the Maharaja came with reinforcements and a simultaneous attack at a number of points carried this nest of rebels. The Taran chief was taken prisoner and in 1825 executed. A fort was built at Srikot. The Ghakkars were also overawed. Hari Singh succeeded in subjugating Hazara for his monarch.[12]

He became the Governor of Peshawar after its annexation. In his annual expeditions he displayed soldierly qualities that the Pathan appreciated. He has left behind him a tradition of bravery and skill that time cannot obliterate. He is the greatest celebrity in Sikh history as the chastiser of the unruly Pathans. The Maharaja's policy very considerably facilitated his work. The most troublesome portions of the district, Hastnagar, half of the Doab, Kohat and Hangu, were given to the Barakzais in jagir in 1836. Ranjit Singh thus reduced annoyance to a minimum.

The military arrangements on the North-Western Frontier were calculated to defend the Punjab against an invasion from Afghanistan to prevent an *em masse* gathering of the tribes, to facilitate the collection of the tribute and, where necessary, to overawe the tribes and to keep open the means of communication. Ranjit did not look beyond Afghanistan to Russia and stood in no awe of Russian advance. Burnes thus describes Ranjit's arrangements for bridging the Indus at Attock: "He retains a fleet of 37 boats, for the construction of a bridge at Attock where the river is only 260 yards wide. The boats are anchored in the stream, a short distance from one another and the communication is completed by planks and covered with mud—such a bridge can only be thrown across the Indus from November to April. Skeleton frame-works of wood filled with stones to the weight of 250 mds. and bound strongly by ropes are let down from each boat to the number of 4|6 though the depth exceeds 30 fathoms and these are constantly strengthened by others to avoid accident. Such a bridge has been completed in three days but six is a more usual period."[13] Peshawar was strongly fortified after it had been annexed. Forts were erected there at Sikham, at Machin; a line of towers at intervals of two *kos* connected that city and Attock. Forts at Attock, Khairabad, Shubkudur, Jahangira and other places guarded that region.[14] The most important fort in the Hazara region was that of Kushangarh.[15] There was a fort at Nara, one at Darma, one at Satna, one at Maru, *i.e.*, one fort for every Rs. 4,000 supposing that the Sikhs collected Rs. 70,000 or Rs. 80,000. In the south country were Narrai, Kron and other forts. The whole of the Dhoond, Kurrak and other mountains yielded no revenue. But unless overawed by forts, they became a harbour for all the bandits of the Punjab. Hari Singh Nalwa was killed by a surprise attack of the Afghans while building a fort at Jamrud. After his death a new fort was built nearby and was named Fatehgarh. The forts between Torbela and Darband were almost within sight of each other."[16] But the most important

part of his plan of defence was connected with the acquisition of Tank, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan. According to Burnes, he seized Dera Ismail Khan in order to establish a connection along the banks of the Indus with Peshawar. But Wade remarks that the object was far deeper. "The seizure was intended to threaten Dost Muhammad Khan from a new quarter less difficult of access than Peshawar, while at the same time protected the centre of the Punjab from any invasion of the Afghans when they might be employed in strengthening and consolidating their power in Peshawar."[17] The Governors of Peshawar region were able but ruthless administrators like Hari Singh Nalwa and Avitabile.

In his civil administration of the North-Western frontier, Ranjit was concerned mainly with revenue and very little with justice, etc., though it is going too far to assert that "to the day of his death he was carrying on war and plundering rather than governing the greater part of the country beyond the Jhelum".[18] Ranjit allowed a great amount of local independence. "Although acknowledging the *Khalsa* supremacy and paying all demands made by the Sikh Governor, each Khan was still a despot so far as the management of his little Khanship was concerned and imposed taxes, levied fines, in many instances punished capitally without further reference." From the papers of Lachmi Prosad, the Dewan of Avitabile, we can collect details about the revenue and expenditure of Peshawar in the time of Avitabile.

Peshawar—

Revenue—

	Rs.	as.
Nanakshahi	11,86,709	0
Goondas (rupees)	1,74,112	0
	13,60,822	0
Deducting 1|8 for 1,74,113 Goondas ..	21,764	5
	13,39,057	11

Expenditure—

	Rs.	as.
Pensioners	9,898	0
Charitable lands	24,939	4
Jageerdars	6,20,590	0
Salary of Avitabile	50,000	0
Office Establishment	7,087	0
Headmen of villages, district officers, judicial expenses	25,849	8
Ramghol Battalion (4,834) ..	2,86,827	0
Police Corps	51,155	0
	10,76,345	12
Deducting for Goonda (rupees) ..	2,263	14
	10,74,081	14
Balance in Nanakshahi (rupees) ..	2,64,975	12

This is exclusive of the expenses of the Kohistanee force of 6,000 men, of repairs of public buildings, supplies in the forts, commissions, assignments, etc."[19]

Bannoo, Tank—

Revenue about 65,000 rupees.

The revenue was very often collected *vi et armis.*

Dera Ismail Khan, Marwat, etc.

Revenue 6,04,868.[20]

Ranjit was to a large extent successful in the solution of his western frontier problem. So long as the Sikh kingdom lasted, the frontier was defended against Afghanistan. The border tribes were not of course brought under direct control but that was not possible under the circumstances. So far as the administration of the conquered territory on the western frontier was concerned, he showed an excellent grasp of the realities of the situa-

tion. It was Ranjit Singh's aim to make high road to Peshaw safe even for private individuals and he issued orders to ro out the marauders by fire and sword. W. Barr, who accompanie Wade to Kabul in 1837, wrote, "Nothing beyond a solita assassination is now heard of unless the hill tribes descend fro their fastness".[21] In the ragged unfruitful country, where con munication was so difficult, where feuds lasted for years an depredations were so frequent, Ranjit Singh's success is bes described in the following words—"The authority of the Lahor Government was always admitted and often asserted but subjec to that admission the people were left to wrangle among them selves and to settle their own disputes with sword and dagger.... Tribal authority was relied on to keep society together and prevent anarchy and revenue was the only care".[22]

The moderation of Sikh rule in the North-West frontier is acknowledged by Wade. He wrote, "The Sikh garrison at Dera Ghazi Khan and Mithankot does not exceed 500 men. The paucity of troops maintained by the Sikhs in such an extent of newly acquired country is the clearest evidence of their rule in tranquillising and subduing the insurrectionary spirit of the chiefs in the Derajat."[23]

NOTES

1. Political Proceedings, 31st July, 1837, No. 23.
2. Ibid, 9th May, 1838, No. 76.
3. Ibid, 15th August, 1836.
4. Cunningham, p. 221.
5. Political Proceedings, 11th September, 1837, No. 39.
6. *Calcutta Review*, 1858.
7. Dewan Amarnath, *Zafarnama*, 1826.
8. Political Proceedings, 23rd October, 1822, No. 19—Ranjit to his agent at Ludhiana.
9. Hunter—*The Indian Mussalmans*, p. 9.
10. Political Proceedings, 6th June, 1836, No. 86.
11. Ibid, May, 1835.

12. Punjab District Gazetteers, Hazara and Peshawar (1883-84), (1897-98).
13. Burnes, *Travels,* Vol. I, pp. 267-68.
14. Extract of a letter from Masson to Wade, 26th Jan., 1836.
15. Mackeson to Wade, 25th November, 1837.
16. Mackeson to Wade, 24th October, 1837.
17. Political Proceedings, 31st August, 1837, No. 69.
18. Parliamentary Papers, Lt. H. B. Edwards to the Resident at Lahore, May, 4, 1847.
19. Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 351, Sec. V, refers to revenue and expenditure in normal times.

Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records, Vol. I, Bundle No. Aa 15, (*ii*) —Official-in-charge—Bakhshi Bhagat Ram.

The pay-rolls contained in the bundle relate to a division of the regular army stationed in Peshawar. The normal strength of this division consisted of seven to ten battalions of infantry and fifteen to twenty pieces of artillery of the regular army together with some irregular horse whose number cannot be exactly estimated. The annual cost of the maintenance of this division amounting to eight lakhs of rupees per annum was almost equal to the revenue of the province.

J. A. S. B.—Agha Abbas Shirazi wrote that the revenue of Peshawar under the Saduzai kings was 9,51,000; 2,40,000 of this was distributed among the Mullas.

20. Foreign Dept. Miscellaneous, No. 351.
21. W. Barr, *Cabul and the Punjab,* p. 168.
22. Attock District Gazetteer, 1907, Part A, p. 39.
23. Foreign Dept., P. P., 20th Oct., 1837, No. 69.

CHAPTER VII

Ranjit Singh's Relations With Bahawalpur, Sind, Nepal And Other Indian States

Bahawalpur—was a state on the left bank of the Sutlej and the Indus below its junction. On its south it was bounded by the territories of the Amirs of Sind, on the east by the deserts and Rajputana, on the west by the Sutlej, the Punjnad and the Indus, on the north by the protected British territories. After 1809, it was also to some extent under the protection of the British Government. In 1833, a treaty was concluded between the East India Company and the Bahawalpur chief which established "eternal friendship and alliance". It was ruled by the Daudputras.

In 1807, when Ranjit Singh laid siege to Multan, its ruler Muzaffar Khan was encouraged by the reigning Khan of Bahawalpur to offer resistance, but in February, 1810, when Ranjit Singh again besieged Multan the Bahawalpur Khan was lukewarm and did not send any help. The Khan wanted to be on good terms with the Sikhs. Even when approached by the chiefs of Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan, he remained apathetic.[1] The Khan was anxious to continue as the lessee of the territory he held on the right bank of the Sutlej.

In 1818, Ranjit conquered Multan and in 1821 the Derajat. After the death of Bahawal Khan I, Ranjit demanded tribute of his successor Sadik Muhammad Khan. He refused. A battle was fought near the fort of Tibbi. The Khan was defeated and had to promise to pay a heavy *nazrana*. Sadik Muhammad Khan had to transfer the payment of tribute from the Nawab of Multan and the Nazim of Dera Ghazi Khan to Ranjit Singh

when he became possessed of these countries. After the Derajat was farmed to the Khan the annual *nazrana* was raised to three lakhs of rupees. The annual *nazrana* had always to be exacted *vi et armis.* As often as a military demonstration occurred "it was the signal for the Khan's officers in authority on the opposite side of the river to abandon the country and cross over to their side leaving as little property as possible to be pillaged by the marauding invaders. A compromise generally occurred for less than half the sum demanded, when the Sikhs retired leaving the country each time less capable than before of satisfying the increased demands upon it".[2] For military reasons most probably the Sikh territory on the Derah frontier was devetailed into that of the Khan of Bahawalpur.

Bahawal Khan III or Rahim Yar Khan, who succeeded in 1825, continued to pay the annual *nazrana* to the Sikhs. The revenue demand was increased annually until it rose to a sum of five lakhs of rupees per annum. In 1831, Ranjit Singh annexed the territories held by Bahawalpur in farm and brought them under direct control. Ventura was placed in charge of these regions.

Bahawalpur never paid any tribute for its possessions on the left bank of the Sutlej and the Indus. In the arrangement for the distribution of tolls which was entered into by the Sikhs, the British, the Sindhis and the Daudputras, Bahawalpur was also given a share. Out of a total of Rs. 570 of the toll per boat from Rooper to the sea, the Nawab of Bahawalpur's share amounted to Rs. 106-12-3.[3]

Sind—The Amirs opened communication with Ranjit Singh after his first expedition to Multan, when he sent a vakil to them. The vakil had to proceed to Hyderabad by water; the tribes on each bank of the Indus fired at him but the river was broad

enough to protect him. After the capture of Multan, Ranjit's fondest hopes were, as Cunningham puts it, in the direction of Sind. The capture of Multan was the signal to the Amirs of Sind to conciliate the goodwill of their potent neighbour.[4] Envoys from Sind presented themselves regularly before the Lahore ruler. The Maharaja also took the earliest opportunity of informing them that he expected tribute from Sind which they were before in the habit of paying to the Afghans. He did not, however, persist in his claim. In 1826, he again demanded tribute from the envoys of the Amirs of Sind. His assertion was that he had acquired the greatest share of the Kabul dominions and had succeeded to its rights.[5] Ranjit could very well argue that it was not so much the distracted condition of Kabul as his own success that had emboldened the Sindhis to refuse their tribute to Kabul. The envoys disputed the principle and the Maharaja did not press his demands.

It was with the year 1831 that we enter upon a new phase of Ranjit's relations with Sind. Sayyid Ahmad, who had given him so much trouble on the North-West, was now dead and the whole country from Peshawar to the borders of Sind along the left bank of the Indus being now secure, the Sikh ruler was free to turn his attention in the direction of Sind. The Sindhis were of all people perhaps the most ripe for conquest. His steps in his advance in the direction of Sind were quite well-marked. When he had invaded Bahawalpur, his troops had been pushed to Sabzalkot, a frontier post of Sind. Very fortunately he next came in possession of the Baloch provinces of Harrand and Dajil and this laid Shikarpur open. He then resumed Dera Ghazi Khan, hitherto farmed to Bahawalpur. Ventura was appointed Governor with orders to build a strong fort evidently intended for a *place d'armes* in the intended preparations against Sind. Ventura also said that Shikarpur was distant only thirty *kos* from the dominions of the Maharaja.[6]

Sind was, at this time, divided among three branches of the Belochee tribe of Talpur—Hyderabad, Khairpur, Mirpur. According to Pottinger the total revenue of Sind was upwards of 50 lakhs of rupees.

Hyderabad	..	30 lakhs per annum.
Khairpur	..	15 lakhs per annum.
Mirpur	..	7 lakhs per annum.[7]

But Burnes says that Hyderabad had only an income of 15 lakhs, Khairpur 10, Mirpur 5 lakhs per annum and the total revenue was thus 30 lakhs only.

The military force of the Amirs according to Pottinger amounted to 20,000; 12,000; 8,000 or 40,000 in all. The chief strength of that force was in cavalry and a more contemptible body could scarcely be imagined. Burnes,[8] however, observes that "various surmises have been made regarding the strength of their army but they seem vague and indefinite, for every native who has attained the years of manhood, the mercantile classes alone excepted, becomes a soldier by the constitution of the Government.....the host to be counted is therefore a rabble".

The Sindhis after the death of Muhammad Azim Khan had succeeded in getting possession of Shikarpur. It was a fortuitous possession and Ranjit thought that he had greater claims upon it as the successor of the Durrani monarchy in this part of its empire. Shikarpur was his main objective in the south. It was regarded as the gate of Khorasan, was of the greatest importance to the Indus trade and also to that of Central Asia. It had a commercial connection with many remote marts. The possession of Shikarpur would lay Afghanistan and Beluchistan under tangible control. What was most interesting was that more than half the population were Sikhs and only about one-tenth were Muhammadans. Its land revenue was 2½ lakhs and its customs revenue was farmed at 64,000 rupees.[9]

The Maharaja thought it necessary to sound the views of the British Government. He told Wade early in 1831 that he had asked Sir David Ochterlony over their libations whether the British Government had any design of extending its possessions, who said, "No, the company is sated" (*sair hogia*). He enquired of Wade whether it was still the case.[10] In October, 1831, when Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentinck met at Rooper, Ranjit did not make any direct enquiry of the Governor-General. But informally he asked the Chief Secretary some questions regarding Sind with the object of eliciting the views of the British Government regarding Sind. But the Government was reticent. Even though Pottinger was at that time negotiating a commercial treaty with the Amirs of Sind, the British Government kept the fact concealed during the interview. "As the project had been matured, it would have better suited the character and position of the British Government if no concealment had been attempted",[11] especially because he was also to be a party to the opening up of the Indus. Ranjit Singh did not think it prudent to oppose the British Government on the point of the commercial treaty and for the time being did not press his claims on Shikarpur and gave up his intended designs against the Amirs. But a commercial treaty meant that the English would have objections to Ranjit's disturbing the Amirs of Sind and it practically amounted to the English taking the Sindhis under partial protection. Ranjit, however, did not altogether give up his designs on Sind. We learn from Burnes that one of the Talpur princes of Hydcrabad, Noor Muhammad, cultivated a close friendship with the Sikhs. Ranjit also fixed a pension for an expelled Kalhora and kept him at Rajanpur beyond the Indus as a check upon the Talpurs.[12]

In 1835, Ranjit once again began to make preparations for an advance on Shikarpur and an attack on Sind. On the 29th September, 1836, the Maharaja held his Durbar, he presented a

Khilat to his grandson Nau Nihal Singh and ordered him to proceed to Multan to advance to Mithankot and to inform the rulers of Sind that if they would agree to pay the Maharaja the tribute which they were accustomed to pay to the kings of Kabul, all would be well, otherwise Shikarpur would be occupied. Hari Singh Nalwa was directed to join the prince. A *casus belli* was also there; the Mazaris had attacked Mithankot and returned to their homes after taking a good deal of plunder. The merchants, too, complained of the unauthorized detention which they suffered from the Mazaris, a wild and lawless tribe, paying little obedience to any government, still considered among the nominal subjects of Sind.[13]

Amirs decision to fight against Ranjit

The Amirs of Sind were in great alarm when Ranjit Singh seemed bent on advancing towards Shikarpur. They despatched a *vakil* to Dost Muhammad and also wrote to the Afghan chiefs by the way of Kohat on the Derajat. The Amirs, Mir Nur Muhammad Khan and Nasir Muhammad Khan, had a long private conversation and the two brothers decided in the first instance to assemble troops with a view to deterring Ranjit Singh's advance, but in case that scheme did not succeed they would apply to the British Government for assistance.[14]

Dewan Sawan Mal.

Dewan Sawan Mal, the Governor of Multan, advanced with 2,000 men, 5 guns and 50 swivels and plundered the town of Rojhan belonging to Rustam Khan. He also took the fort of Kem on the Indus. The Sikh army was coming every day from Lahore to Mithankot and the Sindhis were assembling at Shikarpur. The Amirs sent a force of 10,000 horse and foot to Larkhana and their troops were mobilised from all quarters. Fifty pieces of artillery were also sent to that place. It was expected that an engagement would shortly take place between the two armies unless the Amirs consented to pay the amount of tribute demanded.[15]

There was no doubt "that Sind would have been invaded by the Sikhs had not Pottinger's negotiations for their protection deterred the Maharaja from an act which he apprehended the English might seize upon to declare their alliance at an end".[16] Ostensibly in deference to the wishes of his ally, Ranjit let his relations with the Amirs of Sind stand on their old footing. He was urged by his sardars not to yield to the British Government and it is said that Dhian Singh in open court went so far as to call him a woman to his face.[17] But all this was to no purpose.

It is wrong to assume that Ranjit now gave up all his designs upon Sind. He did not enter into any final demarcation of the frontiers. He tried to take advantage of the want of cordiality between the Mirpur branch of the Talpuris and the chiefs of Hyderabad and Khairpur. "It has apparently been the policy of the British Government to overlook this chief while it has been courting alliance with his brethren in authority in Sind, which has made them careless of their goodwill and a more ready instrument in the hands of the Sikhs."[18] Wade thought it necessary to check the intercourse between Lahore and Mirpur. Burnes wrote to Secretary in July, 1837—"In reply to a complimentary letter congratulating me on my arrival the Maharaja thought it necessary to point out the exact limits of his power in my way 'By the grace of God from Ladak to Omercote my subjects are contented and happy'. It is strange that he should name Omercote which is his frontier town close upon Rojan." Even in 1838, the Amirs of Sind were apprehensive of Ranjit's designs on Shikarpur. Ranjit Singh told Lala Kishan Chand, Wades' agent at Lahore, that at Rooper he had been told by the Governor-General that the treaty of 1809 was final—the British could not consistently with this declaration oppose his annexation of Shikarpur—(*Umdat* II, p. 533). All old letters and correspondence with the English were read out by Fakir Azizuddin and the Maharaja remarked that he was entitled to conclude that the British would have nothing to do with Shikarpur.[19] The Tripartite

Treaty of 26th June, 1838 compelled him to resign all hope of Shikarpur.

Ladak—The tableland of Ladak is in the upper Indus Valley. Two-thirds of the people were Bhooteah hillmen and one-third Kashmiri Muhammadans. The Raja's title was Geeapo. The entire government was in the hands of the Khalone or minister. The Geeapos were frequently changed and afterwards turned priests or Lamas.[20] The troops of the Ladak Raja were mostly horsemen who used matchlocks, bows, arrows and swords. They numbered about 8,000. The infantry numbered approximately about 1,200 and used the same arms. The revenue of the Ladak Raja was approximately about 5 lakhs of rupees per annum but this revenue was paid mostly in kind.[21]

The trade of Ladak was not inconsiderable, though almost the only stock-in-trade was shawlwool. Moorcroft wrote, "It is not easy to make out the capital which passes through Leh but I find that Kothee Mull, a banker at Amritsar, has generally from two or three lakhs employed through the medium of Russool Joo, Azim Joo and other Kashmirees at this place.[22] Ladak had no relation with China of a political nature, had no connection with Lhasa save that which arose from community of religion, language, manners and close proximity.[23]

Thus Ladak was not an unprofitable country to conquer. After the conquest of Kashmir the next step would naturally be the conquest of Ladak. Major Hearsay notes, "In the event of an enemy wishing to conquer Kashmir that place could always be invaded from the Ladak side and the task of invasion would become easier in the winter with the snow frozen and all the rivers and watercourses passable over the ice. The Sikh troops would not be able to fight at an advantage there in the winter. Neither their horses nor their horsemen would be able to withstand the cold."[24] If this view of the military importance of

Ladak was correct, it was necessary for Ranjit Singh after the conquest of Kashmir to subdue Ladak and maintain it as a buffer. Most probably other motives no less important than these were also at work directing his ambition towards Ladak.

It was no wonder that in the winter of 1820 when Moorcroft came to Ladak with a view to opening up British trade relations any buying horses, the Ladak Government was very apprehensive of Ranjit Singh's designs. Moorcroft remained in Ladak for the remaining days of the year 1820 and the whole of 1821. He at first talked about shawlwool and horses but very rapidly mutual confidence was established and the Ladak Government tendered its allegiance to the British Government, through Moorcroft. Moorcroft wrote to a friend, "An outline of the principality of Ladak, as much details of the interior and exterior relations as may enable our government to appreciate the value of the subjection and the cost of protection have been transmitted to the political department."[25] Thus Moorcroft's journey to open up Ladak to British trade might have become the thin end of a wedge and the same process of British expansion might have begun in Ladak as was later on repeated in Sind. But in the year 1821 the Government had not yet become apprehensive of the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of Ranjit Singh. As it was, the British Government disowned Moorcroft and tried in every way to quiet the alarms of Ranjit Singh.[26] Later on, when the British Government became apprehensive of the power of Ranjit Singh, they considered its limitation in the direction of Sind as more important than in the direction of Ladak. So Ladak could easily be conquered by the Jammu Raja Gulab Singh in 1834.[27]

According to Wade, Gulab Singh did this "in order to strengthen his means of seizing Kashmir itself when the expected opportunity may offer and the Maharaja neither knew his design before the place was conquered nor approved it though he may not be in-

clined to reverse its execution".[28] But Wade's statement that the Maharaja did not like the conquest of Ladak is contradicted by the fact that for a long time Ranjit's intention of invading Ladak was an open secret. Further, at the time when Zorawar Singh invaded Ladak, Dr. Henderson chanced to be present there. The chief of Ladak tried to make use of him and gave out that he was a British ambassador sent to ratify the treaty that Moorcroft had entered into with him, though he knew that the Englishman was really an explorer. For three months the operations of Zorawar Singh were suspended. He informed Gulab Singh and Gulab Singh applied to the Maharaja, who in his turn referred to the British Resident at Ludhiana. The Resident assured the Maharaja that the British Government had nothing to do with Dr. Henderson.[29] All this would not have been done if Ranjit Singh had disapproved of the policy of conquest. He could have easily put a stop to the campaign of Zorawar Singh before it was successful.

A tribute of 30,000 rupees was fixed for Ladak. It should further be noted that Gulab Singh was anti-British in feeling and most probably he wanted to extend his conquests down the course of the Spith until they approached the North-Eastern frontier of the Nepalese dominions and this might in near future lead to an alliance resulting from direct intercourse which might be of advantage to both the powers. The wily one-eyed ruler most probably approved the plan of the professedly anti-British Dogra with some such ulterior motive in view. At least this is not an improbable view.

Moorcroft letter to Ahmad Shah ruler of Iskardu.

Iskardu—After Ladak it was the turn of Iskardu, which was to the west of Ladak. The traveller Moorcroft wrote an ambiguous letter to its ruler Ahmad Shah, holding out promises of British support. It fell into the hands of Ranjit Singh and he forwarded it to the British Government without complaint or comment. A duplicate, however, reached Ahmad Shah of Iskardu

and that ruler, therefore, continued to expect British help. He took Jacquemont in 1831 as the successor of Moorcroft. When Jacquemont was in Kashmir, a messenger came to him from Little Tibet with a proposal from the ruler to place his country at the disposal of Jacquemont. But the latter under the pretence of requiring an interpreter sent for a man whom he knew to be Ranjit's spy there.

In March, 1831, there was a conversation between Ranjit Singh and Jacquemont, which clearly indicated that the Sikh ruler had ambition in two directions—north and south.

Maharaja—What conquests can I undertake at present?

Jacquemont—Any country of Asia not already occupied by the English.

Maharaja—But what province shall I first think of taking? Tibet? You have been there.

Jacquemont—Your Majesty would have only to send your Gurkha regiment but that country is miserably poor.

Maharaja—What is the use of conquering such a country? I want lands which are rich and prosperous. Could I not have Sind?[30]

But as he feared active British opposition to his southward advance, he advanced northwards.

Ahmad Shah, the reigning prince, tried an alliance with the Company. The visit first of Moorcraft, then of Vigne, then of Dr. Falconer to Iskardu, enabled him to postpone the evil day. The British Government's attitude was not very encouraging to Ahmad Shah. The Secretary wrote to Wade, "No proper opportunity ought to be omitted of cultivating a friendly understanding with this chief but you must be careful not to use any expression which could excite in him a hope of our ever interposing on his behalf with any of his neighbours."[31] But Wade's

hints and intercessions on behalf of the Iskardu Prince combined with the visit of Vigne and Falconer to Iskardu with no other merit than that of being Europeans, deterred Gulab Singh from invading that principality for the time being. Most probably Gulab Singh connected Wade's hints with the visit of Vigne and Falconer and as he did not know that there was any difference of views between the Government of India and its agent, he thought it prudent to postpone his attack for some time and feel his way.

In 1836, we find Ranjit Singh in Kasba Jandiala, where Zorawar Singh, Jammu Governor in Kishtwar, responsible for the conquest of Ladak, waited on the Maharaja. Zorawar Singh gave a hint that Little Tibet was not very distant and its boundary was conterminous with the dominions of China. Ranjit Singh's reply was that the 'Padishah of China' had always 120,000 soldiers ready to fight with him. Zorawar's reply was that by the luck of the Maharaja they would succeed.[32]

Ranjit was not guided by mere lust of conquest in approving the move against Ladak. He wanted to be the neighbour of the Nepal ruler. But the Maharaja deprecated the idea of any further advance that would bring him into collision with the mighty Colossus of Asia—China. He moderated the ambition of his overzealous deputies and lieutenants. After his death when Zorawar Singh took Iskardu in 1840 and Garo in 1841, Ranjit's prophecy proved true. There was a collision with the Chinese, a Sikh defeat, English interference, resulting in peace and restoration of the *status quo ante bellum*.

Ranjit had one great gift—a very fine and rare gift of high statesmanship—the sense of limits. His willingness to moderate his ambition is specially conspicuous in his relations with the Afghans and the hill states in the north outside the Punjab.

Nepal—From the death of Prithi Narayan, the first Gurkha king of Nepal, in 1771, until the usurpation of power by Jang Bahadur in the forties of the nineteenth century, Nepal was the greatest centre of political intrigues. Ever since the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-1816, the Nepalese Court was trying to find out allies and towards the close of Ranjit Singh's life, a special effort was made to engage him in an anti-British alliance with Nepal. His great fascination for the Gurkhas as soldiers, his well-known disappointment of the British alliance, his conquest of Ladak which made the Sikhs the neighbours of the Gurkhas, the presence in the Lahore Court of a strong anti-British party headed by the Dogra brothers, encouraged this intercourse.

In 1834, a Nepalese agent arrived at Amritsar *via* Ludhiana. The nature of his interview was at variance with the avowed object of his visit. Wade thought it too late in the Maharaja's career and too repugnant to his political sagacity to enter, except in the last extremity, into any sinister designs which the less sagacious chiefs of India might cherish.[33] He was destined to revise his opinion very soon.

In May, 1837, a mission arrived at Amritsar from Nepal, composed of Kalo Singh and Captain Karbar Singh. They also talked of going to Kashmir. The British Government employed a person to accompany the party.[34] About a year ago a man named Ekku Shah Pandit had arrived at Lahore from Benares with a present of two elephants for the ruler of Lahore from the Nepal Government, but curiously enough there was no letter accompanying these presents, at which the Maharaja had expressed his surprise. He had gone back from Lahore with two horses and some articles of furniture as presents in September. Wade thought that "the affair was brought by intermediate parties as a prelude to a regular mission"[35] and this surmise was true. The regular mission came now in May, 1837. Bhopal Singh Thapa,

son of late Amar Singh Thapa, was an officer in one of the battalions of the French Legion in the Sikh service. He was most probably a medium of communication between those parties in the two courts who were willing to establish an official intercourse. His presence in the Sikh army also enabled the Maharaja to recruit Gurkha soldiers for his army.

The members of the Nepalese mission of May, 1837, were at first treated with bare civility but very soon the Maharaja's attitude towards them changed. The members of the mission left no stone unturned. They addressed him in the most flattering terms as the lamp of the Hindus, an *Avatar*, etc. "The Sikh chieftain replied in a gratified manner that he considered the interests of the two states as identical and invited a continued intercourse and presents of elephants from Nepal. The Maharaja wrote a letter to the Ruler of Nepal acknowledging the present sent with Captain Karbar Singh, expressed himself pleased with the expression of friendship and desired its continuance."[36] Whether these sentiments were real or dissembled on the part of the Maharaja, they offer a strong contrast to the receptions usually given to the communication of the Nepalese before the journey of Captain Karbar Singh. Prior to that time no one ever came openly to Lahore from the Court of Nepal and if any one did arrive he was generally dismissed without an interview.[37]

Wade feared that if an intercourse was continued between Lahore and Nepal, other states might follow the example of the latter power and try to ally themselves with the Sikh Chieftain. Ranjit might thereby seek to establish a balance of power as against the British Government.[38] But the most interesting episode in this regard was connected with Motabir Singh, a refugee from Nepal, nephew of the Nepalese Prime Minister Bhim Sen, who fell from power in 1837. In 1838, Ranjit Singh received an application from Motabir Singh that he had been discharged from employment by the Government of Nepal, that he had come to

Ludhiana and wanted to come to the Punjab. Captain Wade detained him. Azizuddin and Gobind Ram were asked to enquire of Captain Wade about Motabir Singh. Wade's reply was that the Governor-General objected to the secrecy observed by Motabir. He had permitted him to go on condition that he consented to be accompanied by an English agent. Ranjit told Azizuddin to report to Wade that he had no design relating to Motabir Singh but only wanted to see his *'Kaydah'* of fighting because he cherished the plan of conquering Kabul. Then if the Governor-General agreed he would appoint Motabir as a servant.[39] About this time Nepalese relations with the British Indian Government were not very cordial and when in 1840 war with Nepal seemed imminent overtures were made by the British Government to Motabir who was then employed in Lahore and was a person of considerable influence in the army as also in the Durbar. The British Government wanted to support him in Nepal as a claimant for power or as a partisan leader. But as war clouds disappeared, he was cast aside. Ranjit's eagerness to welcome Motabir is thus not without some political significance.

Ranjit Singh undoubtedly approved of the conquest of Ladak, which made him the neighbour of the Court of Nepal. He was not an infant in the art of diplomacy, the last man who would be won over by mere flattery. Therefore his changed attitude towards the Nepal mission[40] may be regarded as a real change of policy.

In 1814, during the war between the Gurkhas and the British, Amar Singh Thapa, the Gurkha general, wrote a letter to Ranjit in which he mentioned that the English were contemplating the conquest of Multan and they were on terms of friendship with Shah Mahmud of Kabul, who was Ranjit's enemy, and it was proper for Ranjit Singh to send him military assistance.[41] The Sikh chief no doubt turned down this request. But in a private conversation with Bhai Gurbaksh Singh, Dhanna

Singh Malwai and others, he used the following very significant words—"Though apparently sincere friendship is supposed to exist between myself and the English people, yet in reality our relations are merely formal and conventional. Therefore, I had thought out to myself that in case the English should act differently in their dealings with me, I would call upon the Gurkhas and make friends with them and in case they showed any hesitation I intended to make over the fort of Kangra to them to win their comradeship. Now they have been expelled from the mountains and it cannot be said when they would cherish a desire for the above-mentioned region. I never expected such a thing to happen that the mountainous region would be evacuated by them so suddenly."[42]

By the treaty of Sagauli, the Nepalese ceded Garhwal and Kumaon to the west of the Kali river and most of the Tarai. Ranjit lost all prospect of a direct contact with them. This might explain why Ranjit approved of Gulab Singh's conquest of Ladak in 1834, when the new outlines of British policy of prescribing limits to his power became clear to him. In 1834, a Nepalese agent arrived at Amritsar. In 1837, a mission came openly to Lahore from the Court of Nepal. It was well-received. About this time, Nepalese relations with the British Indian Government were not very cordial. The Sikh conquest of Ladak opened up the possibility of a direct intercourse with Nepal provided further advance could be made down the course of the Spith. If we take into consideration the words used by Ranjit Singh in 1814, this sudden importance of Sikh-Gurkha contact will be seen in its proper perspective. In this connection we should note that Wade's despatch to the Chief Secretary contains the following significant paragraph—"The information gained by me in my late visit to Lahore was that among other objects of ambition Raja Gulab Singh had in taking Ladak, one was to extend the conquest down the course of the Spith until they approached the north-eastern confines of the Nepalese

possessions in order that he might connect himself with that Government ostensibly with the view to promote the trade between Lassa and Ladak, which the late commotions in Tibet have tended to interrupt, but in reality to establish a direct intercourse with a power which he thinks will not only tend greatly to augment his present influence but lead to an alliance which may at some future period be of reciprocal importance."[43]

When the official Nepalese mission came to the Punjab in 1837, Wade wrote.... "With whatever views the Nepalese may have now opened a communication with the Sikhs, it is evident to me from the pains which they have taken to establish relations with a people whose territory is not contiguous to their own, that they have some stronger motive than a mere exchange of compliments.... To suppose that Ranjit Singh is attached to us by any other principle than that of self-interest would be a delusion which neither I nor my able predecessors in office Sir David Ochterlony and Captain Murray have allowed ourselves to entertain."[44] Ranjit possibly visualised an anti-British compact with the warlike Gurkhas in case the British drove him to extremities.*

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*Even Burma was not outside the range of his interest and inspite of the distance, he strove to keep himself informed of what took place there. In 1838, Ranjit observed to a member of the British mission, "I have heard that Burmese fought well and beat your sepoys".

In 1814, the Magistrate of Chittagong reported that a party of Burmans had arrived there, the head of the party was a confidential man of the king of Ava, despatched under the pretence of trade on a mission to the Sikh country. The Collector wrote, "I imagined from what I gathered that it must be Ranjit Singh".

In 1818, a letter from a minister of the Burmese king to the Governor-General wanted permits for certain persons to proceed to the Punjab to collect original sacred writings.

In 1823, some Sikhs, claiming to be agents of Ranjit Singh, came to Amarapura (Capital of Burma). They said that as a result of shipwreck they lost their papers and presents from their master. They proposed a treaty offensive and defensive to drive the English out. They were honourably received but during the war they were suspected and sent back with letters and a sum of money.

The king of Burma gave credence to rumours regarding Ranjit Singh. Ranjit was sometimes pictured as the hero of a victorious war with the British or as forming a formidable coalition with the Turks and the Persians against them. The British Resident had to deal with these rumours officially. (Osborne—Court and Camp, p. 105. Political Cons., June 23rd, 1814; No. 42 Bengal Secret and Pol. cons., Vol. 361; Aug. 1831).

NOTES

1. Shahamat Ali, *History of Bahawalpur.*
2. Ibid.
3. Sethi, *The Lahore Darbar*—Wade to Mackeson, July 17, 1834.
4. Political Proceedings, 20th October, 1831, No. 70.
5. Ibid, 17th June, 1831, No. 41.
6. Masson, *Travels,* Vol. I, p. 430.
7. Lieutenant Pottinger's Memoir on Sind.
8. Burnes, *Travels,* Vol. I, pp. 224-26.
9. Political Proceedings, 1st July, 1831, No. 43.
10. Ibid, No. 43.
11. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs,* p. 193.

Metcalfe's Minute...."It is a trick in my opinion unworthy of our Government....it is just such a trick as we are often falsely suspected and accused of by the native powers of India."

12. Burnes, *Travels,* Vol. I, p. 231.
13. Political Proceedings, 12th October, 1835.
14. Ibid, 3rd October, 1836, No. 31.
15. Ibid, 28th November, 1836, No. 16.
16. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs,* p. 205.
17. Vigne, *A Personal Narrative.*
18. Political Proceedings, 21st July, 1837, No. 18.
19. *Umdat,* III, 533, 536.
20. Hearsey's Note, Vol. XVII, 1835, *Asiatic Journal.*
21. Journal of Gholam Hyder Khan, 1819-1825, *Asiatic Journal,* p. 170.

22. Letters of Moorcroft, No. 1, *Asiatic Journal*, XXI, 1836, p. 232.
23. Ibid, No. 3, June 11, 1822.
24. Hearsey's Note, Vol. XVIII, 1835, *Asiatic Journal.*
25. Letters of Moorcroft, No. 1.
26. Political Proceedings, 27th October, 1821, No. 23.
27. A letter of Guthrie, one of the unfortunate companions of Moorcroft, refers to the career of one Agha Mehdee and a Muhammadan assistant or servant of his and their activities in the interest of Russia in the region of Leh or Ladak. (*Asiatic Journal*, 1828, February, p. 157, dated, Leh, 1st August, 1821).

Agha Mehdee had according to Guthrie come once before to Ladak with a view to securing shawlwool goats in order that they might produce the material and manufacture shawls in Russia. This Agha was originally a Jew, then he became a Christian. He was discerning and sagacious. He was so successful in his first mission that he was sent once again with introductory letters to the chief of Leh and other states on the borders of India and with valuable presents. After his arrival at Yarkhand Agha Mehdee became a Muhammadan and successfully baffled for the time being the designs of Moorcroft and his companions to visit Yarkhand. He then marched to Leh but on the way he died. His assistant arrived in Ladak but not being so sagacious as Agha Mehdee, being addicted to sensuality, he squandered away the large sum at his disposal and gave up the intention of returning to Russia.

According to Mr. Guthrie, Agha Mehdee had imperial letters to the Raja of Ladak and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He thought that the Czar Alexander contemplated an invasion of China and as Ladak and Kashmir were localities favourable for the Russian army the friendship of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the chief of Ladak was sought. But, as narrated above, the plan, if there was any, fell through. The story is interesting though we are not in a position to say how far the surmises as to the political nature of the mission of Agha Mehdee are correct.

28. Ibid, 3rd January, 1838, No. 26.
29. Hugel, *Travels*, pp. 101-102.
30. Victor Jacquemont's interview with Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore. *Modern Review*, 1931, November. Translated by B. R. Chatterjee.
31. Political Proceedings, 23rd May, 1836.
32. *Umdat*, III, p. 306.
33. Political Proceedings, 21st Nov., 1834, No. 154.

34. Ibid, 12th June, 1837, No. 41.

35. Ibid, 12th June, 1837, No. 41.

17th January, 1838, No. 29. "I observed to Govind Jus that the avowed object of the Nepalese Agents in wishing to visit the Punjab was to present a consecrated bell at the shrine of Jawlamukhi, while the real one seems to have been an exchange of presents with the Maharaja which, according to the relations with the Government of Nepal, require the previous sanction of our Government."

36. *Umdat,* III, p. 504.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid, 20th October, 1837.

39. *Umdat,* Vol. III, Part III, pp. 486-87.

40. *Umdat.* The Nepalese vakils had been shown the fort of Govindgarh.

41. Punjab Government Record Office Monograph, No. 17, 1814 (40), p. 182.

42. Ibid, 1815 (4), p. 192.

43. Political Proceedings, 12th June, 1837, No. 41.

44. Ibid, 20th October, 1837, No. 6-.

CHAPTER VIII

Ranjit Singh's Government, Institutions And Policy

The *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records,* Vol. II, gives us a good idea of Ranjit's system of Government in its actual working. We can also glean some information from the writings of contemporary authors and from the references to the previous administration contained in the reports of the British officers engaged in making a settlement after the annexation of the Punjab. Besides these, there are, in the National Archives of India, many contemporary and semi-contemporary records which contain information on the Punjab supplied to the British Political Agent at Ludhiana or by him to the Governor-General. Though these do not refer generally to civil administration, yet much valuable information bearing on civil administration can be gleaned from them.

During the period 1799-1839 the Punjab had the constitution pictured by Carlyle,—"Find in any country the ablest man that exists there, raise him to the supreme place and loyally reverence him, you have a perfect government for that country, no ballot box, parliamentary eloquence, voting, constitution-building or other machinery whatever can improve it a whit". But in theory and to some extent in practice Ranjit was not the supreme embodiment of all economic and political authority. One great limitation was to be found in the living principle of a commonwealth. Some check was also exercised by the order of the Akalis, and by the martial nobility of the Punjab, though they were, to a great extent, restrained by him and then there were the common people possessed of arms.

The theocratic commonwealth or the *Khalsa* of which each individual Sikh considered himself as a member, was a potent force and Ranjit Singh always showed due deference to it. Guru Gobind Singh had invested the sect with the dignity of 'guru-dom'. The three factors of the religious life of the Sikhs were the love of God, reverence for the Guru and the ideal of a commonwealth. In course of the gradual evolution of Sikhism the first two had been merged in each other and when the personal Guruship was abolished by Guru Gobind Singh and the tenth Guru declared that the Sikhs would find the Guru in the *Khalsa,* the commonwealth became the most potent factor of the Sikh religious life. A drum which Guru Gobind Singh had constructed was named Ranjit and the one-eyed Sikh ruler also professedly regarded himself as nothing more than a mere drum of the commonwealth for the assertion of the political supremacy of the *Khalsa.* He might have been absolute, but he always acted in the name of the *Khalsa.* He did not assume the title of king but rather the impersonal designation of *Sarkar* to denote the source of orders. In referring to his government he always used the term *Khalsaji* or *Sarkar Khalsa.* On his seals he had the inscription 'God the helper of Ranjit'. Ranjit's deference to the *Khal*sa was not like the seeming deference showed by Julius and Augustus Caesar to the name of the Roman Republic, when they established Caesarism. The Senate was at that time, to all intents and purposes, dead, whereas the Sikh religion was in Ranjit's time fully alive and the *Khalsa a reality.*

The Akalis were a product of the extreme interpretation of the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh in which he referred to "Kritnash, Kulnash, Dharamnash and Karamnash."[1] They did not own any earthly superior and represented in a peculiar manner the religious element in Sikhism. In addition to their other military activities, they acted as the armed guardians of Amritsar, took upon themselves the direction of religious ceremonies and also acted as censors of private morals. Their contempt for

foreigners knew no bounds. They were a standing menace to the stability of Ranjit Singh's government and embroiled him in interstate complications.[2] The attack on Metcalfe's escort is a case in point. Burnes says that Ranjit had to place detachments of troops in the ferry stations on the Sutlej to prevent the fanatics from crossing over to British territories. They also took the law into their own hands and inflicted cruel punishments. Burnes also mentions a village to which the fanatics had put fire.[3] On several occasions they even made attempts on the life of Ranjit Singh. Yet Ranjit dared not crush them, though he had the means to do so. All that he could do was to moderate their fanaticism. They were formed into a band of irregular cavalry, retaining their own peculiar equipment and dress and when these fanatics began their ravages, regular troops were employed to bring them back. His Akali troops were always employed on dangerous or desperate service. The Akalis were greatly respected by the Sikhs and partly because of this and partly because of his own superstition he dared not defy the religious susceptibilities of his people and abolish the order of the Akalis. As it has been said, he considerably moderated this nuisance but he could not exterminate it.

When Ranjit Singh became the sole and supreme ruler of the Punjab, his aim was to keep his big sardars under his complete control. He weakened all powerful chiefs by confiscations, fines and forfeitures. He did not approve of hereditary wealth. When his officials died, he used to seize their estates, though normally he left sufficient for the maintenance of the family. We cannot find fault with this practice from a political point of view, as feudal tenures were the bane of all governments. His big standing army overawed the nobility, the review at Dusserah of the troops of the feudal chieftains and the enforcement of strict rules of feudal dues gave him a hold on the troops in the service of the chiefs. The yearly review during Dusserah was like an annual oath of fealty. The new nobles created by Ranjit

Singh became a powerful check upon any lingering opposition that the old Sikh chiefs still cherished towards monarchy. But the fatuity of his later years was responsible for a lapse from this attitude of alertness and this enabled the Jammu brothers to firmly entrench themselves in the hills. He allowed too much power to accumulate in the hands of Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh, who were in a position to seize Kashmir and to retain Jammu and a large district which extended over inaccessible mountains from Attock to Nurpur in the South-east and thence north to Ladak besides large estates in the Punjab.[4]

Moreover the Sikhs of the Punjab were soldiers to a man and Ranjit never attempted (and it was of course beyond his powers) to disarm them. It speaks much in favour of the popular character of the military monarchy. "Patriotism", as Acton says, "consists in the development of the instinct of self-preservation into a moral duty," Fully armed and forming the bulk of the regular army, the Sikh people could not altogether sink into the languid indifference of private life. If military courage is democratised, as it was in the Punjab, the government cannot afford to flout the opinion of the people. It can ignore the masses only when military courage is the monopoly of a ruling caste or of an aristocracy, as the Spartans ignored the helots, as the feudal nobility ignored the commonalty of Europe in the middle ages.

Central Government.—The centre of the whole system, the pivot of the whole structure of government was, of course, the Maharaja. The direction of affairs lay entirely with him. At first there was no regular system of accounts at Lahore. The revenue was managed by the Amritsar banker Ramanand, who held the Octroi of Amritsar and farmed the salt mines of Pind Dadan Khan. Bhowani Das, a high revenue officer under Shah Shuja, joined Ranjit in 1808.[5] He at once effected a great improvement, established a pay office for the troops and a finance

office, of both of which he was made the head. Gradually Bhowani Das arranged the civil and military business of the government into twelve daftars or departments. Bhowani Das received great assistance from Ganga Ram, who had served under the Maharaja of Gwalior. Ranjit placed him at the head of the military office and made him Keeper of the Seal. In the earlier records the dates used on the top of the papers are in Turkish calendar months and years but after 1815, the practice of using Turkish dates gives place to the use of Indian chronological terms. Dewan Ganga Ram seems to have brought greater simplicity and definiteness in the system of keeping records.[6] When Ganga Ram died, Deenanath received charge of the Royal Seal and in 1834, on the death of Bhowani Das, he was made the head of the civil and finance office. Bhai Ram Singh, Govind Ram and Fakir Azizuddin also assisted Ranjit in civil matters. The Fakir also acted as the Chief Secretary for foreign affairs. The letters of business were also frequently written by him. Though illiterate Ranjit frequently criticised and corrected the diction of his Secretaries. Misr Beli Ram was in charge of the Regalia and the Treasury. Khushal Singh was in charge of the Deodhee in which he was later replaced by Dhian Singh.[7]

From the financial point of view the Punjab was divided into districts leased out, granted or directly administered. Deenanath is said to have remarked that "originally Maharaja Ranjit Singh had fixed money assessment for every village but gradually the syetem as he grew old had been subverted and that for many years there had been seven great districts—Cashmere, Peshawar, Wuzeerabad, Multan, Pind Dadan Khan with the salt mines, Kangra with a portion of Manjha and Jalandhar Doab and in these the governors did what they liked".[8] The affairs of the country were in the hands of three classes of officers—(*1*) Men of wealth, position and influence who were sent to the distant provinces as farmers of revenue—Hari Singh, Sawan Mal, Dehsa Singh, Lehna Singh, Avitabile and others. They managed the

whole business connected with their territories and very seldom reported any case to the court. When they occasionally made any reference, the orders of the Maharaja were communicated by issuing *purwanas*.

(*2*) The military chiefs who held feudal demesnes on the condition of sending contingents in the field had also unlimited authority within their jurisdiction.

(*3*) The Kardars or agents whose power varied according to the influence they possessed at the court. The pay of these local tax-gatherers and other secondary officers varied and was mostly uncertain. It was tacitly understood that they were to live by the perquisites of their own appointments.[9]

Local Government.—So far as Lahore was concerned the Malladari system was re-established, every *malla* or quarter being put under one of its influential members. The office of the *Kotwal* or chief police officer was conferred on a Muhammadan. The village communities were left undisturbed in the enjoyment of their ancestral rights.

Financial Administration.—The arrangements for auditing of accounts were for many years defective. It was, however, not until late in the Maharaja's reign that financial order was restored. "He trusted to his memory for remembering complicated accounts of expenditure and for many years periodically allowed the rough memoranda of those who were responsible to him to be destroyed."[10] This state of the accounts facilitated embezzlement. Ranjit Singh knew this quite well. He, therefore, sometimes called upon his servants to pay him fees or aids and, if they refused to disgorge, he would plunder them. This was not in many cases unjustified. When he confiscated the properties of his dead officials, he, in most cases, merely balanced his accounts. "Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa used to pocket the

proceeds of his frontier government by reporting constant raids by or against the Yusufzais, the result being that he accumulated eighty lakhs of rupees which Ranjit Singh seized on his death."[11] "Sawan Mal collected ninety lakhs of rupees in the space of nearly twenty years, though not engaged in trade or in any speculation in which rapid fortunes are made."[12]

Land Tax.—According to the Sikh system the government share was assumed to be half at least of the gross produce. There are instances in which as much as fifty-four per cent. was demanded. Whenever revenue was collected in kind a deduction of ten to fifteen per cent. must be made for expenses, fraud and waste. Normally, however, the public demand may be said to have varied between two-fifths and one-third of the gross produce. There were various methods of assessment, Kunkoot, Batai, *i.e.*, appraisement or division of produce in the field also money rates and assessment per well.

In 1847, Mr. Elliot submitted a note on the revenues and resources of the Punjab. His figures, though they refer to a later period, give us an idea of the land revenue that was possibly realised in the days of Ranjit Singh.

	Rs.
Doab Baree	17,81,800
„ Rechna	40,12,300
„ Jech	12,39,400
„ Sindsagar	19,85,700
Hazara	3,00,000
Peshawar	15,32,500
Bannoo Tank	65,000
Dera Ismail Khan	6,04,700
Multan	19,71,500
	1,34,92,900

From the Jallandhar Doab which was then in British possession and which was previously included in Ranjit Singh's dominions the collections were estimated by Temple as amounting to Rs. 13,20,024. To this should be added 9 lakhs from Kashmir. This brings total land revenue of Ranjit Singh's time to 1,57,12,924. To this we should add collections from the cis-Sutlej territory estimated at 17 lakhs[13] and from the hill regions. Thus land revenue collections must have been approximately 1,75,00,000[14]. The estimate of Mr. Elliot agrees approximately with that of Raja Deenanath, who furnished an abstract to the Board of administration in Lahore in September, 1847. Raja Deenanath put it in a different way—

Number of Dists.	Mode of Collection.	Amount of Revenue.
		Rs.
8	Farmed out to Kardars ..	25,49,873
8	Assessed, the engagements being made with the heads of villages ..	18,23,556
43	Revenue collected by division and appraisement of crops ..	89,44,658
		1,33,18,087[15]

Excise and Customs.—Throughout the whole country there was a net-work of preventive lines. At the same set of stations excise duties, town duties, customs duties and transit duties were all levied without any distinction as to whether the goods were domestic or foreign. No distinction was made between luxuries and necessaries. The whole country being intersected by preventive lines, both lengthwise and breadthwise, no goods could escape government duties for they were checked at least a dozen times in the customs and excise offices on the way. Even many agricultural commodities of the Punjab were liable to pay these taxes after

their full share of the land revenue had been paid. Ranjit's taxation embraced "everything, every locality, every thoroughfare, every town and village, every article wherever sold, imported or exported, domestic or foreign".[16] This had at least one great merit. It was not uneven. Moreover, the customs levied were not so objectionable in their total amount as for the worry and delay which they involved. The merchants frequently contracted with a third party for the conveyance of goods from the starting point to destination. The taxation by the chiefs could not be excessive and arbitrary, as in that case, the merchants would change their routes and convey their goods through the territory of a less exacting chief. In spite of the handicaps mentioned, commerce was in a flourishing condition.

There were in all eight salt mines of which four only were worked, their names being—Khur Chotana, Korah, Kerah, and Makraj. Gulab Singh farmed the salt mines. According to Agha Abbas Shiraz, writing in 1837—"Formerly the tax on salt amounted to four lakhs, after the visit of Captain Wade the farm rose to 8|9 lakhs, afterwards to twelve lakhs, then to fourteen at which I found it".[17] According to record No. 357 of the Miscellaneous Section of the Foreign Department, excise and customs returns under Ranjit Singh may be analysed thus:

	No. of article.	Yield Rs.
Imports	7	3,62,697
Exports	19	9,74,861
Imports and Exports ..	4	1,37,739
Miscellaneous ..	18	1,61,817
		16,36,114[18]

To this should be added the taxes from salt monopoly approximately 8,00,000 rupees. This brings the total customs revenue approximately to 24,00,000 rupees. The excise and customs revenue from Kashmir yielded eighteen lakhs.

Ranjit Singh, of course, did not understand the advantage of doing away with internal barriers. But we should not find fault with him when we consider the environment in which he was brought up, his want of education, and his ignorance of the principles of political economy. That his government was anxious for the economic welfare of the governed will be apparent from the following extracts:—

"Last year owing to the effects of the famine, grain was distributed to the zemindars and others both for sowing and subsistence."[19]

"Kharak Singh was ordered to proceed to Multan and to take care that the cultivation along the way was not damaged by the people."[20]

"Remission of the rent of Rs. 5,000 was made in the case of Rotas for the continuance of the Maharaja's camp.....for the passage of the troops a remission of 15,000 rupees to be made to the zemindars of Gujrat".

"The Ghorcharahs and others were almost all dismounted. His Highness said that he had ordered them to send their horses away that the country might not be distressed by supporting them which led me to enquire whether he had any regulations to restrain his troops from destroying the crops in the line of march. He stated that he had the most prohibiting orders in force on the subject and took prompt and severe notice of any infraction of them. His attention to the preservation of crops from depredation is remarkable. Few chiefs exercise a more rigid control over the conduct of his troops than he does."[21]

We learn from Dewan Amarnath that when Khushal Singh brought a sum of money from Kashmir in 1833 Ranjit expressed great surprise and told him that in view of the great famine in Kashmir there would have been no dereliction of duty if he had brought no money. He then sent to Kashmir thousands of asses with wheat and made arrangements for the distribution of corn from the mosques and the temples.[22] Conscious that the stain of the misrule of Khushal Singh would ever remain on his government, Ranjit tried in every way to improve the state of things. "He directed four companies of Sepoys to collect all the Kashmir people in the plain outside the city and they would each receive until further orders two seers of coarse flour, that as soon as the whole were assembled from an adjacent country, they would be escorted back and blankets and largesses would be distributed on their arrival there."[23]

"M. Ventura was ordered to reach Peshawar with all possible haste to make M. Avitabile return the two hundred rupees he had unjustly taken as a fine from the Khutrees of the place and rebuild at his expense, not exceeding 15,000 rupees, the houses of the people demolished by him."[24]

After the capture of Multan Ranjit Singh "began to encourage the silk manufacture of the city. He began to make presents of Multan silk goods at his court and thus their consumption was greatly encouraged. It became fashionable among the Sardars to wear sashes and scarfs of Multan silk".[25] Ranjit once proposed to despatch 30|35 boats *via* Bombay, with the produce of the Punjab, to try what market they would find. Ranjit also showed much desire to promote the prosperity of his subjects, to induce them to extend their trading operations turning the treaty regarding the navigation of the Indus to the best account,[26] and Wade himself admits that he was well-inclined to the interests of the merchant so far as his "limited ideas in the sphere of commerce and industry would allow".[27]

Finally we should note one thing in particular about Ranjit Singh's financial administration. The revenues of the country might have been strained by his system of taxation but in some respects the government gave back with one hand what it took with the other. The employments of the state were numerous and every Jat village sent recruits for the army, who sent their savings home. Village life had not ceased to be attractive and most of those who had come to Lahore and Amritsar had their families in villages. Many a village paid half its revenue from the earnings of these military men. Again, the presence of a vast army created an immense demand for manufacture and commerce could thus bear up against heavy taxation. The growth of the flourishing commercial city of Amritsar is a case in point.

Judicial Administration.—There were no special officers for the dispensation of civil justice or for the execution of criminal law. The chiefs generally judged both civil and criminal cases and thus no regular courts of law were required.

There was no written law. Still some sort of justice was dealt out. "Private property in land, the relative rights of landholders and cultivators, the corporate capacity of village communities were all recognised. Under the direction of local authorities, private arbitration was extensively resorted to. The Qazis and Qanungos exercised privately and indirectly those functions which had descended to them since the Imperial times. The former continued to ordain marriage ceremonies, to register testaments and attest deeds, the latter to declare recorded facts and expound local customs".[28]

The Maharaja made extensive tours and he heard appeals; he generally severely rebuked the governors of those regions in which too many appeals were made. He also heard appeals in courts. Justice was not so much a national as a local concern. It was left to the feudatories but as they were men of the locality

they could not go far. "Custom and caprice were the substitutes for legal codes". Fines were levied in almost all cases. Imprisonments were unknown and capital punishments were rare. In distant and disturbed provinces like Peshawar and Hazara, however, the case was different.[29]

Many defects there were undoubtedly in Ranjit's judicial administration and police system, but to his credit it must be acknowledged, if Masson (writing in 1826) is to be believed, that the predatory propensity of the Sikhs was to a great extent kept under restraint. "Time was that a Sikh and a robber were synonymous terms, now few thefts are heard of and seldom or ever those wholesale forays to which the chiefs were so much addicted."[30] On the testimony of Hugel we can assert that the Punjab was even safer than Hindustan, then under British sovereignty. The Maharaja compelled every village near which a robbery took place to a very strict account and they were made to pay the value of the stolen goods.

Diplomatic service.—By an arrangement with the Lahore Government, Wade had a news-writer, Lala Kishan Chand, at Lahore; Rai Govind Jas was the Sikh agent at Ludhiana. Ranjit was also supplied with political information from Afghanistan and Sind. He had also news-writers in almost all the important places of his realm. These news-writers reported independently of the Kardars, the Jagirdars or the Governors and sometimes even reported against them. They served as a great check upon the local agents. The most important of the diplomats of the Lahore Court was Fakir Azizuddin, who was employed by Ranjit Singh in all his important international transactions. Azizuddin, who was sent on a complimentary mission to Lord William Bentinck in 1831, and who also played a prominent part in the interviews of Ranjit with Bentinck and with Auckland, was one of the two agents who deluded Dost Muhammad in May, 1835. Fakir Aziz-ud-Din's son Fakir Shah Din was also sometimes assigned a minor diplo-

matic role. According to Elphinstone even in the days of Ahmad Shah Abdali one of the defects of the Afghan government was that it had little information about the neighbouring states. But the Sikh ruler, personally, was one of the most well-informed of men and his government was quite well-acquainted with the affairs of the countries it was interested in. "His curiosity is in striking contrast to the general apathy of the nation," so wrote a foreign observer.

Relation with Muhammadans.

In making an estimate of Ranjit Singh's civil administration we should note in particular the relations between his government and the Muhammadan subjects. As early as 1801 we find Ranjit Singh (1) nominating Kazi Nazimuddin as the head of all the Muhammadans who recognised his government. (2) Mufti Muhammad Shah was appointed as his adviser in matters relating to mortgages, sales and contracts. (3) Imam Bux was made the head of the city police. (4) He had many trusted Muhammadan officers like Azizuddin, Nuruddin, Chaudhuri Qadir Bakhsh and others. During a great part of Ranjit Singh's reign the custodian of the (5) celebrated Sikh fort at Gobindgarh in Amritsar was Imamuddin. (6) When Ranjit appointed Nuruddin as the Governor of Gujrat the high caste Hindus wearing the sacred thread protested against this but to no purpose.[31] The great Sikh ruler was superior to communal prejudices. He even publicly expressed his regard (7) for Muhammadan saints. His custom was to favour the Syads in the matter of assessment.[32] Sometimes Muhammadans who (8) could reproduce the entire Quran from memory were ordered to be brought and they were asked to reproduce the contents of the Holy Quran for days together and the Maharaja would pay them liberally.[33] Ranjit Singh maintained the established Muslim tra- (9) dition of State-grants to Ulemas and holymen. There is an important entry in the Diary—News of Ranjit Singh's Court—25th August, 1825. . . . . "The Kazis, Syads, Alams and Fakirs of Peshawar were given good khilats and each was given a jagir for his maintenance when the Maharaja annexed Peshawar."[34]

1825 In this connection we should further note the following incident:—On the 20th August, 1825, Mirza Bagun Beg, *"Kumidan-i-Topkhana"*, with others approached Ranjit Singh and protested to him on behalf of his Muhammadan officers against his order that there must not be any *"Tazia"* on the street in connection with the Mohurram festival. He pleaded in favour of the Muhammadans that they were taking out *Tazias* from time immemorial. He further submitted that if the Maharaja had any prejudice against the Muhammadans he should first dismiss his Muhammadan officers. The Maharaja told them to build *"Tazias"* in their own houses but not to exhibit them in public. Ranjit Singh then asked Azizuddin whether he too expressed sorrow in that fashion at the time of the Mohurram. Azizuddin replied in the negative.

Two days after Kharak Singh told Ranjit Singh in the open durbar that the Muhammadans of the town and the Muhammadan soldiers of the Maharaja were very dissatisfied because they had been ordered not to take out *"Tazias"* in the streets. The Maharaja then gave orders to the Kotwal to proclaim that any one willing to take out *"Tazias"* could do so and the Maharaja would not object.[35] It was of course the force of Muhammadan public opinion that compelled the Maharaja to yield. But if Ranjit Singh had been a bigot, he would certainly have stood by his previous decision. Well might the Muhammadans pray in their mosques for the recovery of Ranjit Singh as they did when the Maharaja fell ill in 1826.[36] Burnes wrote in his report, "I have always observed the Sikh to be more tolerant in his religion" and Metcalfe admired Ranjit Singh for his unprejudiced use of talented men of all religions.[37]

There were many defects undoubtedly in the administrative system of Ranjit Singh. Though forms and institutions were evolving they were yet in their infancy. To a large extent it was a government of discretion. The kingdom was not united by

laws and adorned by arts. There might have been also a partial abuse of delegated authority. His own mind, again, does not seem to have been suited to enlarged views but only to the minute details of civil policy. The greatest defect of his system lay in the fact that the treasury was in many cases filled with the help of the standing army and it was with its help again that control was exercised over distant provinces. The personal influence of the head of the state formed the only hold upon the discipline and affections of the troops. But the greatest merit of Ranjit Singh was that he knew where to let men and things alone. His mind unlike that of many other autocratic rulers was not obsessed by the idea of centralisation. In his government, there was centralisation, but it was mainly financial. The Sikh Government was prepared not only to allow subordinate rights to remain but also to preserve them. Temple says in his report on the settlement of the district of Jalandhar: "As things stood there have been no convulsions, no confusions of rights and properties. The springs of society had been overstrained perhaps but they only required removal of the pressure, no delicate readjustment was needed." It may not be out of place to mention here two British testimonies in favour of Ranjit's civil administration. "In a territory compactly situated, he has applied himself to those improvements which spring only from great minds and here we find despotism without its rigours, a despot without cruelty and a system of government far beyond the native institutions of the east, though far from the civilisation of Europe."[38] "It gave hope to all, roused emulation, brought out the energies of the employees and prevented their hanging on as excrescences and nuisances. As a military despotism the government is a mild one and as a federal union, hastily patched up into a monarchy, it is strong and efficient."[39] Life and property were secure. The towns like Lahore and Amritsar had certainly increased in wealth; manufactures and trade were more thriving and the people were not at all over-anxious to migrate to British territories.

Temple's picture of Ranjit Singh's system of government may be thus summarised—it was rough but firm. Its yoke though onerous, was not galling. Its justice was rude but the people had the power and resolution to resist any very great injustice of delegated authority. The aristocracy, accustomed to arbitrary absolutism on occasions, had its own way for the most part, the yeomanry, prepared to sacrifice much, was jealous of its essential rights, the peasantry, inured to hardship, clung tenaciously to the ancestral fields and homesteads. Property in land survived despite all changes and the village communities preserved their constitutions in tact.[40]

A Supplementary Note on Kashmir Administration under Ranjit Singh

Kashmir.—Was divided into twenty parganas, had twenty collectors, ten thanas and four hundred inhabited villages.[41] The different kinds of coins in use were:—(*1*) The old rupee valued at only ten annas according to Hindustani rates. This rupee was minted in Kashmir and had the Emperor of Delhi's name on it. The transactions in the shawl market were made in this rupee. (*2*) There was another kind of rupee, associated with the name of Hari Singh and as such called Hari Singhee. On one side of these coins was written 'Sri Akal Jiu' and on another 'Hurree Singh'. This was worth twelve annas—rents, taxes and customs duties were paid in this coin. (*3*) The third kind of rupee was called Nanaksahee; it passed current at sixteen annas throughout the dominions of Ranjit Singh but was valued at 14½ annas at Delhi. The troops were paid in these coins.

According to Moorcroft the whole of the revenues in Kashmir amounted to thirty-six lakhs per annum. Land-rent, grain and saffron amounted to twelve lakhs and twenty-four lakhs were collected from duties on shawl and merchandise. Converted into terms of Indian money it would amount to

twenty-seven lakhs. Ranjit told Wade in 1827 that Kashmir was the most productive of all his provinces and gave him a net surplus of 25 lakhs a year.

The whole of the military establishment of the Sikhs in Kashmir (1822) was 4,000 of which 1,000 were horsemen. The Afghan force before had numbered 16,000 to 20,000.[42]

According to Moorcroft the duty levied on shawl was about fifteen per cent. of the prime value.[43] We know the details of the organisation of the shawl department from other sources. Before 1833 duty on shawl was levied according to the number made and stamped in a year. The rate was three annas in a rupee. In 1835, General Mian Singh established the 'Baj' or fixed amount to be paid by each shop. This method was continued by Sheikh Ghulam Mahiuddin who, however, increased it to Rs. 120 per annum.[44]

Moorcroft, who was not a friendly critic of Ranjit Singh and his administration, was of opinion that Ranjit Singh used to rackrent the poor Kashmirees. This allegation may be partly true. But we have specific instances of his interest in the welfare of the Kashmirees. Some of his deputies like Jamadar Khushal Singh and Ghulam Mohiuddin were, however, over-rapacious. The Sikh Chief himself was intelligent enough to know that it would not be to his best interest to kill the goose that lay the golden egg. But he never attempted scientifically to tackle the problems of civil administration. Had he done so he would have known that it was necessary to establish a rigid monopoly of rice trade as a preventive against famine. Kashmir was almost inaccessible for heavy transport and as such in case of a failure of the crop, there would be a famine and no speedy relief would be possible. Such famines occurred during the administration of Ranjit Singh and no measure of relief could in such cases suffice.

NOTES

1. Glossary of the Punjab Tribes and Castes, Vol. I, p. 698.
2. P. P. 31st July, 1823. Murray to Wade.

Para 3. An Akali attempted the life of Sir David Ochterlony. The notorious Akali Phoola Singh headed the attack made on Mr. Metcalfe in Amritsar, crossed the Sutlej and created disturbances in these states several times.

(1) In 1809, he attacked Lt. White, who was in an official capacity conducting a survey to the west of Ludhiana.

(2) In 1814-15, he was plundering the western districts and fortified himself in a place from where he was ejected by the forces of Raja Ranjit Singh.

(3) In 1817, Phoola Singh was again with several hundred followers and two guns laying waste the country west of Ludhiana and exacting contributions from the inhabitants and finally submitted himself to a force from Lahore. Raja Ranjit Singh suffered him to retire to Anandpur, situated in the north-eastern frontier of the protected states, whence by the order of the Resident he was removed across the Sutlej and favoured with a *jagir* by the Chief of Lahore.

A repetition of like outrages and violence has occurred in the person of Nayan Singh and his associate Khushal Singh.

3. Burnes, *Travels,* Vol. II, p. 91, Ranjit Singh's 'purwana' to his officers, "take most particular care that the Nihungs and such other wrongheaded people are kept at a distance".
4. Hugel, *Travels*, p. 288.
5. Lepel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs, re* Bhowani Das.
6. Shahamat Ali, *The Sikhs and the Afghans,* p. 16.
7. Parliamentary Papers, Acting Resident to Secretary, September, 25, 1847.
8. Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 356, Report of the Board of Administration, Lahore, p. 17.
9. Parliamentary Papers, Acting Resident to the Secretary, September, 25, 1884.
10. *Calcutta Review,* 1844.
11. Parliamentary Papers, the Acting Resident to the Secretary to the Government of India, Lahore, December, 27, 1847.

12. Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 157, p. 165.
13. Andrew D'Cruz, Pol. Relations Bet. Br. Govt. and Native States in 1840.
14. Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 351.
15. Ibid, 357, p. 165.
16. Steinbach, *The Punjab.*
17. Agha Abbas Shirazi, *Journal of a Tour.*
18. Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 357, p. 219.
19. Political Proceedings, 31st May, 1836, No. 57.
20. Ibid, 29th August, 1836, No. 57.
21. Ibid, 7th August, 1837, No. 94.
22. *Zafarnama.*
23. *The Englishman,* December 25, 1833.
24. *Punjab Akhbar,* 10th March, 1839.
25. Burnes, *Travels,* Vol. I, p. 96.
26. Political Proceedings, 9th November, 1937.
27. Ibid, 21st November, 1836, No. 30.
28. Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 156, p. 21.
29. Ibid.
30. Masson, *Travels,* Vol. I, p. 426.
31. *Zafarnama,* 1809, p. 54.
32. The Resident to Lieutenant Edwards, 13th November, 1847.
33. *News of Ranjit Singh's Court,* 20th and 22nd August.
34. Ibid.
35. A very interesting incident in connection with Ranjit Singh's relations with the Muhammadans was a complaint made by Shah Ayub. He complained before the Maharaja that Sultan Muhammad Khan had married the daughter of Shahzada Ashraf. His complaint was that it was a disgraceful thing that a Wazir should marry the daughter of a Shahzada. Ranjit Singh said that the Lahore *Adalat* would try the case. Then he proposed to refer the matter to Captain Wade. Even in their disgrace the descendants of Ahmad Shah retained their false notions of prestige but curiously enough did not feel a sense of shame in referring such matters to an alien ruler who was no co-religionist (*Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* II, pp. 293-94).

36. *Zafarnama,* 1826, p. 172.
37. Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 305, Thompson—Metcalfe letter of May 9, 1831.
38. Burnes, *Travels,* Vol. I, p. 285.
39. Lawrence, *Adventures of an Officer.*
40. Temple, *Men and Events of My time.*
41. Asiatic Journal, Vol. XVIII, 1836, Moorcroft's journey to Balkh and Bokhara.
42. Ibid; also Hugel, *Travels,* p. 123.
43. Ibid.
44. Panikkar, *Gulab Singh, Punjab Political Diaries,* Vol. VI, pp. 44-45

CHAPTER IX

The Army of Ranjit Singh

Ranjit Singh created a regular disciplined professional Sikh army in the place of part-time levies of predatory horsemen. The strength of the regular army was 4061 in 1811—2852 infantry and 1209 artillery. In 1838 this Regular Army—*Fouj-i-Ain*—numbered 38,242—infantry 29,617, cavalry 4,090, artillery 4,535 and the total expenditure for this Regular Army amounted to Rs. 3,74,101 per month.*

The cash monthly payment system was borrowed from the East India Company. Formerly the Jagirdar (assignment of territory in lieu of pay) and faslanadar (harvest-time payment) systems had been more general. The harvest-time payment system gradually disappeared. But the monthly payments were not regularly made. The troops as a rule were in arrears for five or six months. They were normally paid five times a year. Men served so long as they were physically fit. There was no regular pension but thirty per cent of the vacancies were filled from the members of the family of the retiring soldiers. A kind of

* Average salary per month.

	Rs.	As.		Rs.	As.	
Kumidan Commandant	60	0	to	150	0	per month.
Mahzur	30	0	to	60	0	„
Subadar	20	0	to	30	0	„
Jamadar	15	0	to	22	0	„
Havildar	13	0	to	15	0	„
Naik	10	0	to	12	0	„
Sarjan	8	0	to	12	0	„
Phuviya	7	8	to	10	0	„
Sepoy	7	0	to	8	8	„

allowance was sometimes granted to the families of the dead and the wounded. In the pay-rolls we come across a section entitled "Dharmarth" in which payments are recorded to the families of dead and wounded soldiers to the mother, wife or widow, son or brother.

In 1839, W. Barr met at Rajpora a Sikh in Ranjit Singh's service—an officer with 67 horsemen under him. He received two rupees per diem for pay and subsistence. He was in action at Jamrud where he received a desperate sabre cut for which he received a large present. He said, "The Maharaja is extremely liberal to those who are wounded in his service and if he hears of a Sardar failing to reward such he immediately disgraces him."

Besides the regular army there was the irregular cavalry—*be-qawaid fauj,* the salaried *Ghorcharah.* Their number was 10,795 in 1838. These troops had to provide for themselves and their horses. They were divided into *derahs,* subdivided into *misls,* each varying from 15 to 70, usually members of one clan. These troops reminded Hugel of the time when the fate of empires hung on the point of a lance. There were frequent inspections of horses with reference to descriptive rolls. Pay and allowance of a trooper was regulated by the condition of his horse. In case the horse died, the trooper drew the pay of a footsoldier till he provided himself with another. Not even the most highly placed official could expect any lenient treatment if any lapse was noticed. "This type of organisation kept intact the spirit of clannish union and its old tendency of fighting under the immediate command of a natural leader, while it did not deny to the *misldar* the lessons of co-operation." Besides the regular army and the irregular cavalry there were also contingents furnished by the jagirdars. These jagirdari troops were employed on comparatively unimportant punitive expeditions.[1]

Some of the Englishmen who visited the Punjab in the thirties of the nineteenth century adversely criticised Ranjit's army administration. There were others who expressed their appreciation of it. Lawrence said, "The building completed, the Maharaja does not think the same care necessary for its preservation as for its construction. There is no undisputed punctual pay." The efficiency of Ranjit's military machine in the closing years of his rule is acknowledged by Osborne. He wrote, "The Sikh army can be easily moved. No wheel carriages are allowed on a march. Their own bazars carry all they require and 30,000 of their troops could be moved with more facility and less expense and loss of time than three Company's regiments on this side of the Sutlej." The average monthly pay of the infantry and artillery was 7.8 in 1811, when service in the regular army was not at all popular and recruits were difficult to find. The average for the infantry and artillery was 7·7 and 7·2 respectively in 1838 when service in the regular army was very popular and recruits were so easy to find. Ranjit Singh did not take advantage of the popularity of the service to lower the pay to any considerable extent. The scale of pay from the commandant to the sepoy in the Sikh service compared very favourably with the corresponding ranks in the Company's service. Some consideration was shown to the family of the dead and the wounded.

It must certainly be acknowledged that irregularity of payment was one of the greatest defects of Ranjit's military organisation. Burnes wrote, "For some years past the army has been irregularly paid—due to the growing friendship with the British Government or the increasing avarice of age." He had introduced the monthly payment system in imitation of the British. But this was absolutely an innovation. It demanded such an efficiency of the revenue system as the Sikh monarchy had not yet attained. As Wade remarked in 1835, in another connection, "The merit of our (British) regulations consists in their general application to the system of government for which they are intended

and that they are not calculated for partial adoption, that where the elements of rule are so different as between the British government and his, the details of the one can never be suitably engrafted in part only on the other."[3] This is the best explanation of the partial failure of the *Mahdar* system. It became practically something midway between the old *faslanadar* system and the British monthly system of payment.

European Officers

The idea of appointing European officers to train Indian armies was an old one. As early as the seventeenth century European officers were greatly in demand in India as artillery experts. Balaji Baji Rao for the first time began the practice later popularised by Mahadji Sindhia. With the appointment by the Peshwa, in the fifties of the eighteenth century, of Muzaffar Khan and Ibrahim Khan who had been trained by Bussy, began the history of the trained battalions under the Indian chieftains, the most prominent among these being Haidar Ali, Tipu Sultan, Jaswant Rao Holkar and above all Mahadji Sindhia and Daulat Rao Sindhia.

Ranjit followed this tradition. In the British records we come across the names of twenty European and Anglo-Indian officers who served under Ranjit. In Colonel Gardner's list of Ranjit Singh's white officers we have about forty-two names. In Carmichael Smyth's appendix occur thirty-nine names. Ventura and Allard, the famous European Officers of Ranjit Singh, made their first appearance in the Punjab in 1822. Before them there were two white officers in the Punjab service—James and Gordon.[4]

"Their admission created a new era in his government", said Wade, the British Resident at Ludhiana, referring to the coming of Allard and Ventura. But this is a mistaken view. The idea of training soldiers in the European fashion had occurred to Ranjit Singh long before the coming of these officers and, in fact, descriptive pay rolls in the *Khalsa Durbar records* prove

that battalions trained in the European fashion existed since 1807. There were three battalions initiated in the methods of European drill in 1807.[5] Ranjit himself told Wade in 1827 that it was not until after the flight of Holkar to the Punjab that he thought of training a regular army. He went incognito to look at a review of Lord Lake's army. Allard, Ventura and Court thus played the same part in the Punjab under Ranjit Singh as did Gordon and Lefort in Russia under Peter the Great. They were only entrusted with the task of carrying out details. They did not originate any new idea or initiate any new scheme. "They merely gave a moderate degree of precision and completeness to a system already introduced."[6]

When Allard and Ventura made their first appearance in the Punjab, they were naturally regarded by all sections of the population as undesirable intruders. Run Singh, the Commander of the Gurkha battalion, even went to the length of disobeying an order of the Maharaja, asking him to submit to the orders and wishes of the Frenchmen. The Maharaja had to promise an increase of pay before he could persuade the Gurkhas to comply. Kharak Singh, the heir-apparent, requested the Maharaja to assign quarters to the Frenchmen at a decent distance from his own.[7] The Maharaja also was at first distrustful but according to Steinbach, "a submissive and judicious letter from these officers removed the apprehension of the Maharaja and he, with the spirit and originality of a man of genius, admitted them into his service. The good conduct and the wise management of these gentlemen speedily removed Ranjit Singh's prejudices against the Europeans and the door to employment being thrown open, several military men entered the service of the Maharaja".[8] Ranjit Singh gave the Frenchmen his unreserved confidence and handed over to them one of the gates of Lahore for their egress and ingress. But even as late as 1826 some Sardars of the Sikhs refused to serve under Ventura and Allard and threatened to resist them by force.[9] But we learn that gradually friendly relations were

established between the 'Firinghee' officers and the Punjab Sardars and this state of things continued so long as the European officers were required by the Maharaja to adhere strictly to their military duties. But as grants of land were made to them, it led to heart-burnings among the Punjabi Sardars and dissensions became frequent. To take one instance, the Maharaja made a free grant of the village of Muranpur to Ventura. It was almost a depopulated and deserted village in the vicinity of the *jagir* of Kumar Kharak Singh. Ventura repeopled it, and, as it became prosperous, emigration from the Kumar's village to this settlement became frequent. In order to put a stop to this, Kharak Singh's men once attacked and plundered Muranpur and even violated the tomb of Ventura's son which was situated there. Ventura appealed for redress. Ranjit wanted him to take the law into his own hands but that was not possible in view of the relation in which an officer stands to the heir-apparent. Ventura thought himself ill-treated and applied for discharge.[10] The matter was somehow patched up. When once Ranjit Singh showed some intention of conferring the government of Kashmir on Ventura there was a chorus of protest from his courtiers.[11] Such instances may be multiplied. The Maharaja himself was not a little responsible for this ill-feeling between the Sardars and the 'Firinghee' officers. We read in the Englishman of 1833 that the Maharaja asked Mr. John Holmes,[12] an Anglo-Indian Officer, in open court how much he thought Khushal Singh Jamadar had looted from the revenue of Kashmir. Mr. Holmes evaded the question and said that he was a mere soldier and knew little or nothing about revenue. Thus pretty often Ranjit Singh would unknowingly rouse jealousy against his white officers in the bosom of his Sardars. But one exception must be made in favour of Allard, who was loved both by the Punjabis as also by the Europeans in Ranjit's service. The Maharaja loved him very much and as a token of his regard presented him with a Persian sword. For the blade alone the Maharaja paid Rs. 5,000, the hilt

being of gold studded with jewels. W. Barr testifies to the fact that the death of Allard cast a gloom over the whole of the capital.

Ranjit Singh's European officers were recruited from various nationalities. In Gardner's list of foreign officers, we come across Italians, Frenchmen, Americans, Englishmen, Anglo-Indians, Spaniards, Greeks and Russians. A German and an Austrian name also occur. As the Sikh Sardars were jealous of these foreign officers, the latter should have presented a united front. But this was not to be. The motely host remained to the end a heterogeneous body. It is quite apparent from Gardner's language against Ventura that there was no love lost between them. As Major Hugh Pearse notes, "The French and Italian officers in Ranjit Singh's service held much aloof from those of the other nationalities and this must have contributed to the unfriendliness".[13] Ranjit once told Wade with reference to Oms, a Spaniard, that the French officers would not associate with him. There was some difference between them and they disputed each other's merits.[14]

creation of Permanent interest

Ranjit Singh tried to create a permanent interest for the Punjab among his European officers. He did not like that his 'Firinghee' officers should remain unmarried or, if married, have their wives and children in their native country. He wanted them to marry and settle with their wives and children in the Punjab. While conversing with Wade, Ranjit once remarked with reference to the application of a European that the applicant had been asked to bring his family if he wanted to get the appointment.[15] After Messrs. Allard and Ventura had come to the Punjab, they married and settled in the country and Ranjit encouraged them to do so. In the opinion of the Maharaja, "Firinghees who were single men were apt to think of their own country, grew discontented and applied for their discharge at a time when probably their services could not be dispensed with."[16] The European officers were at first required not to eat beef, not to shave their beards and not

to smoke tobacco. The third condition, however, was not always insisted upon.

As early as November, 1831, Wade wrote to the Secretary to the Government of India, "His Highness expresses himself desirous of preventing further resort of Europeans in his service."[17] If Wade is to be believed the Sardars said that they would rather see more battalions added to the large force under the command of Messrs Allard and Ventura than an additional number of Europeans. When Allard (Junior) in 1832 wanted to enter the Punjab service, Ranjit offered him a much lower salary than he had expected, and naturally he did not enter the Punjab service. It was not his growing avarice that accounts for Ranjit's unwillingness to pay the big salaries that were demanded by the European adventurers who wanted to come to the Punjab during the latter part of his reign His unwillingness to take more foreigners in his service was due to his consciousness that Ventura, Allard and Court as trainers had fulfilled their mission. But those who were already in his employ did not meet with a shabby treatment solely because they had to a great extent done their work. The British records convey the impression that the European officers of Ranjit Singh were restive towards the latter part of his reign. Even Ventura is said to have once offered his services to the British Government through McGregor and later directly to Wade. But this restlessness can be explained solely on the ground that the Punjab service was undoubtedly insecure, dependent on the life of one man, whose health had been already undermined.

Ranjit Singh looked upon his European officers as men of varied talents and he regularly made them undertake additional duties of different natures. (1) Ventura and Avitabile were artillery instructors and also Governors of provinces. (2) Harlan, though usually employed in civil duties, had also to command troops. (3) Honigberger was a doctor but he had also to superintend a gunpowder factory and (4) Ventura was even called upon on one occasion

to construct a steam-boat.[18] Primarily, however, they were wanted for their specialised knowledge of military science.

The European officers of Ranjit Singh were advocates of the policy of conquest. Their spirit is well expressed in the following lines from a British record which refers to it—"Why keep us and your battalions at Lahore? We are of no use at this place. Send us across the Attock to Peshawar and we will take possession of Kabul for you." But Ranjit always put them off with promises that he would think over their proposal. They also wanted that Ranjit should try to conquer Sind. They hoped by this means to establish direct relations between Ranjit Singh's dominions and France and thereby secure easy ingress and egress. The British Government looked with suspicion upon the influx of foreign officers, specially Frenchmen, into the Punjab.

Under the successors of Ranjit Singh the foreigners found themselves in an atmosphere of suspicion, treachery and bloodshed. The shifting party politics of the country made their position very unsafe. The Sardars disliked them, the rulers distrusted them and, for reasons not well-known, they were also unpopular with the soldiery.[19] After the accession of Kharak Singh the mutinous soldiers plundered the house of General Court. Both Court and Ventura had narrow escapes. Lieutenant-Colonel Foulkes was put to death and Lieutenant-Colonel Ford was plundered, ill-treated and died of broken heart. After such unfair treatment, with assassination, and with 'horror on horror's head', Ventura, Avitabile and others thought it prudent to retire from the Punjab. The allegation made by Gardner that the departure of Avitabile and Ventura was 'pusillanimous and ignominious' is not justified. Admitting that he himself was treated with honour and respect, that was no reason why Ventura and Allard would not find reasons for hasty departure. They had occupied higher positions under Ranjit and as a consequence had more enemies. Admitting that "they had eaten the salt of

the Punjab and their departure at this critical juncture disgusted the army which wanted efficient control",[20] it was only human that they should try to leave behind them a region which was weltering in blood.

In this connection, we should not fail to take note of the fact that the Europeans and particularly the French group led by Ventura were supposed to be in opposition to Kharak Singh. As Hugel says, throughout India the General was supposed to be not on good terms with the Crown Prince. The French officers led by Ventura were, according to rumour, partisans of Sher Singh, whose success against Syad Ahmad almost made him a rival of Kharak Singh as successor to the Maharaja. Sher Singh was very friendly with the Europeans and particularly with French officers in his father's service.[21] He used even to eat sitting up to table on a chair. Their previous opposition to Kharak Singh should be regarded as one of the factors responsible for their eagerness to depart on the demise of the Maharaja.

Estimate:—It is perhaps necessary to discuss whether the introduction of trained battalions was in itself a better policy from a military point of view than the traditional method. The Maratha military system largely degenerated when the trained battalions were introduced and the downfall of the Marathas was to a great extent due to this degeneration. But the defects of the Maratha military system in the closing years of the eighteenth century were conspicuous by their absence in the Sikh army as organised by Ranjit Singh.

The Maratha army was denationalised on the introduction of the western system. The regular forces under Sindhia and the Peshwa were composed entirely of the non-Marathas—the Telingas, the Najibs and the Alygholes whose morality was very low. But Ranjit was quite successful in making the western system popular among the Sikhs. The pay-rolls show that up

to 1813 the bulk of the regulars consisted of the Hindusthanis, the Gurkhas and the Afghans, whereas those of 1818 and onwards reveal that the Punjabi element was becoming more and more predominant.[22] Though till the end Ranjit Singh took recruits from different communities it was the Sikhs who formed the bulk of the army and the history of the *Khalsa* army after the death of Ranjit Singh showed that the rank and file possessed a strong *esprit-de-corps* which may perhaps be most easily realised by the analogy of a trade union.

In 1827 Wade saw the parade of some regular battalions at Amritsar. He noticed that the Sikhs were intermixed with some *Poorbiahs*. He was told that "this was done in order to counteract any mutinous disposition which the one or the other might evince".[23] Ranjit took particular care to fashion his army in such a way that communalism and localism could not hamper the growth of the military spirit. This process of intermixing was completed in the army reorganisation of 1836. Such was the power of the leaven of collective energy that it welded the *Poorbiahs*, the Sikhs, the Gurkhas, the Muslims and the Hindus together, creating a picked professional army of more than 38,000 men.

As to the western officers of the Maratha regular army, it has been said, "if the men were bad their officers were worse. Their inconsistency earned Dudrenec and his colleagues the unenviable epithet of *Dagabaj* or traitor from Yasavant Rao Holkar. They were of low birth, had little education and no morals. In a war with the English the Maratha employer could not rely on his English captains. When war broke out in 1802, not only the English but also the French officers of the Maratha army took advantage of the Governor-General's offer. They had come to seek fortune and not to lose it.[24] Ranjit Singh, if we can interpret his motives from his actions, knew it quite well that to rely much on the westerners for officering his army, would be to build upon a foundation of quicksand.

Ranjit Singh once went out on a walk. Three Englishmen, who had come in the company of Macnaghten, met him by accident and a conversation ensued. After a while the conversation turned upon his European officers. Ranjit said that his European officers had given him a deed of agreement and made a promise on oath that they would fight for him whoever might be his enemy. The Maharaja asked the three Englishmen whether the European officers would fight honestly for him in the event of an Anglo-Sikh war. Their reply was in the negative. They said that the 'Francisi' and the 'Firinghee' officers would not fight with the English and the French but with all other European powers except these two. Ranjit referred to the promise on oath. The ready reply was that the Maharaja must not rely upon their promise because their principle was self-interest and gain, and a promise with them not even a hair's worth. Still the Maharaja declined to be convinced and referred to the excellent service they were rendering him.[25]

But the Maharaja was very much distressed over this frank speech of the Englishmen. On returning to the fort Ranjit Singh expressed his grief to Dhian Singh and Fakir Azizuddin that most likely the three Englishmen had spoken the truth. This conversation makes it clear that the Maharaja had thought of the possibility of his European officers behaving in a lukewarm manner in the event of an Anglo-Sikh war, in which the regular army would play the most important part. It explains the assertion of Lawrence that the European officers were retained as mere drill masters and it also explains why the matter was so managed as to afford them little influence".[26]

When Wade came to Lahore in 1836 he found that the Sikh army had been formed into brigades each consisting of three or four battalions of infantry and a portion of cavalry and artillery. In the Durbar records of 1836 we find many trained Sikh generals for the regular army. The Lahore generals were Ram Singh,

son of Jamadar Khushal Singh, Gujar Singh, Tej Singh, nephew of Khushal Singh, Ajit Singh, Ventura, Court, Misr Sukh Raj, Mian Udham Singh.[27] His disinclination to take more Europeans in his service towards the close of his reign is a point whose significance must not be lost sight of. Further, in Carmichael Smyth's appendix we come across the names of 39 foreign officers of whom twelve were Frenchmen, seven Anglo-Indians, four Italians, four Germans, three Americans, two Spaniards, one Russian, one Scotch and only three Englishmen. Ranjit relied most upon the Frenchmen from a knowledge of the traditional hostility between the Frenchmen and the Englishmen and he was not certainly oblivious of the fact that the Englishmen, as officers in his employ, might not be safely relied upon. The British Government encouraged British subjects, as a matter of policy, to take service with the Maratha powers in order to safeguard Britain's interest, whereas it looked with great suspicion upon the influx of foreign officers into the Punjab, chiefly because of Ranjit's distinction of nationality in the choice of his military officers. As most of the foreign officers had left the Punjab service before the outbreak of the Anglo-Sikh war it is not possible to guess how faithful they would have proved. From one or two cases of desertion we should not generalise. Allard, Ventura, Court and Avitabile were not certainly persons of doubtful credentials like most of the European officers of the Maratha army. As Jacquemont says, the Maharaja was remarkably shrewd in seeing through dubious adventurers and getting rid of them. Still we cannot assert with certainty whether they would have remained true to Ranjit if an Anglo-Sikh war had broken out during his lifetime. At least the attitude of Avitabile during the first Anglo-Afghan War does not encourage an optimistic view. Ventura is said to have offered in 1848 to fight the Sikh state while the second Anglo-Sikh war was in progress.[28]

The artillery of the Sikhs was much better than that of the Marathas, who relied mainly on the rejected artillery of other

powers. Naturally, it was the weakest branch of the Maratha service. But Ranjit Singh had foundries of his own where guns were cast within the Lahore fort as well as in other parts of the town at Shah Dera. The artillery was one of the best served of the branches of the Sikh army. Moreover, unlike the Marathas under Sindhia and other Chieftains, the Sikh arms and equipment were not of a heterogeneous character, the *Ghorcharas* and the *Jagirdari Fouj* being of course expected. As a result of western discipline "the rank and file of Sikh army became, under the training of the skilled officers, the finest rank and file in the world. They wanted but officers to be invincible".

It has been said that as a result of the introduction of western methods the Maratha army resembled an eagle with its wings clipped, fighting with the English merely with its talons. It lost its mobility, its speed. The traditional method would have stood the Marathas in better stead. A like opinion is also expressed with regard to Ranjit's regular army. In view of the fact that most of his important conquests were made by his unreformed army and his reformed army became in the end an intolerable burden, which overwhelmed the civil constitution and brought about not only its own ruin but also that of the state, some people have expressed the opinion that Ranjit should have retained the traditional method. Let us judge the question purely from a military point of view. The trained battalions were undoubtedly intended by Ranjit against the British and the reformed Sikh army more than sufficiently justified itself during the First and Second Sikh Wars.

The Sikh army fought with a discipline and a stubbornness unequalled in British experience of Indian warfare. The Sikhs were led in the first Anglo-Sikh War by Sardars who were not unnaturally charged with "something worse than incapacity". Betrayed by their leaders in "Pheeroo Ka larai", the soldiers of Ranjit Singh did not disgrace their master. This memorable battle

is best described in the words of Subadar Sitaram, a soldier of the invincible Anglo-Sepoy army:

"This was fighting indeed; I had not seen anything like it before. Volleys of musketry were delivered by us at close quarters and returned as steadily by the enemy. In all former actions I had been in, one or two volleys at close distance were all the Sarkar's enemies would ever stand; but these Sikhs returned volley for volley and never gave way until nearly decimated. They had their regiments placed between their guns and behind them: their fire was terrible, such as no Sepoy had ever been under. The Sarkar's guns were almost silenced, and the ammunition waggons blown up. I saw two or three European regiments driven back by the weight of the artillery fire; it was like the *bursat* (rains); they fell into confusion; several Sepoy regiments did the same. One European regiment was *kafoor hogia* (evaporated). I now thought the Sarkar's army would be overpowered and fear filled the minds of many of us . . . it was a dreadful night; the English had not left the ground and the Sikhs had not been driven from their breast-works; it was *boerd* (a drawn game)."[29]

"After the battle of Firuzshuhur whilst the English army was cooking their food . . . a report came that the whole of the Sikh cavalry was coming down upon us and soon a fresh army was seen marching upon us. The fight began again but the Sarkar's guns were unable to fire as they had expended all their ammunition. The Sarkar's *icbal* (good fortune) was indeed great for without any apparent reason the Sikh army retreated. There was enough cavalry to have surrounded our force and totally destroyed it . . . The Sahebs were as much astonished as any one."[30]

The Sikhs fought the battle of Sobraon in 'circumstances of discreet policy and shameless treason' to use the memorable words of Cunningham. But their indomitable courage and determination must have filled the victors with amazement. It was noticed with surprise that no Sikh asked for quarter in this war.

It was bad generalship that lost the battles of Gujrat and Chilianwala and it was treachery even more than bad generalship that lost the battles of Sobraon and Firuzshuhur. It does not seem plausible that the guerilla method of warfare of the Sikh feudal chieftains, which availed them against Ahmad Shah Abdali, could have stood the Sikhs in good stead as against the British power. According to Lawrence, "the Maharaja would have shown more foresight if he had devoted the same attention that he did to the European tactics to rendering his troops really efficient after their own fashion, if he had erected fortifications around Lahore and Amritsar on European models and there planted his guns encumbering his troops in the field with but a few, perfectly equipped light artillery."[31] But the trained battalions of Ranjit were not certainly the outcome of a mistaken policy and it is difficult to agree with this conclusion. In the fullness of their triumph over a worthy enemy leaders of the British army must have been admiring that organising genius which had transformed a rabble of horsemen into the most efficient fighting machine. Ranjit Singh's mistake was the postponement of the inevitable war, not the introduction of trained battalions.

NOTES

1. This description of the Regular Army is based on *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records* I and *Hisabnama-Fouj-i-Ranjit Singh.*
2. Ibid.
3. Pol. Pro. 24th August, 1835, No. 59.
4. Foreign Department Miscellaneous, No. 128.
5. K. D. R. II, p. 145.
6. Sita Ram Kohli, *Army of Ranjit Singh* (*Journal of Indian History*).
7. Political Proceedings, 22nd August, 1823, No. 19.
8. Ibid.
9. Steinbach, *The Punjab,* p. 62.
10. Gardner, *Memoirs,* Appendix.
11. Political Proceedings, 17th December, 1830.
12. Ibid, 7th November, 1836.

13. John Holmes joined service as commandant on Rs. 150/- p. m. and ultimately rose to be Colonel. For two years, Samvat 1892 and 1893, he was Kardar or Collector of revenues of Gujrat. Catalogue of K. D. R. Vol. I, p. 27.
14. *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner,* Appendix by Major Hugh Pearse.
15. Political Proceedings, 20th April, 1827, No. 7.
16. Ibid,. 29th April, 1827, No. 7.
17. Ibid, 4th November, 1831, No. 19.
18. Ibid, 17th July, 1837, No. 33.
19. Lawrence, *"Adventures of an Officer"*. The matter has been so managed as to afford them little influence, they have instructed regiments which have been removed and replaced by others sent to be taught and in like manner taken away. This statement, if true, explains want of popularity but not unpopularity. Probably the European officers were more strict.
20. *Memoirs of Gardner,* p. 202.
21. Jacquemont, p. 304; consultation, 29th July, 1821, No. 415.
22. Sita Ram Kohli, *Army of Ranjit Singh, also Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records,* Vol. I.
23. Sethi—*The Lahore Darbar.* Wade's observations on the Court of Lahore.
24. Sen, *Military System of the Marathas,* Chapter VII.
25. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* Vol. III, p. 570.
26. Lawrence, *Adventures of an Officer,* Vol. I, p. 227; also p. 42.
27. *Catalogue of Khalsá Durbar Records,* p. 33. In the pay-rolls of 1837-1838 we also find Avitabile mentioned as a general.
28. *Adventures of an Officer,* Lawrence. According to Lawrence, somehow or other the foreigners all managed to keep up communications with Ludhiana.
29. Sita Ram—*From Sepoy to Subadar,* Trs. by Norgate; Ed. by Phillot, pp. 96-98.
30. Ibid.
31. Lawrence, *Adventures of an Officer,* 1845, p. 237.

CHAPTER X

The Sikh Durbar

Ranjit's courtiers have been described as a band of adventurers. But most of them were very able men, whose loyalty to him was beyond question.

Mohkam Chand.—He was originally no soldier. His father was a trader and he himself served as a munshi under Dal Singh of Kakkoo, and then under Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat.[1] Disgusted with the latter master, he offered his services to Ranjit Singh and in the Punjab of those days career was open to talent. That the one-eyed Sikh ruler could quickly discern such talent is proved conclusively by his choice of Mohkam Chand and later of Dewan Chand. In Ranjit Singh's sleepless perseverance in self-aggrandisement his chief helper was Mohkam Chand.

As a general, he was uniformly successful and from 1806 to 1814 the annexations of Ranjit were due not only to his own irresistible cunning but also to Mohkam Chand's military talents. In his cis-Sutlej expeditions, in the conquest of Sialkot and the Nakkai country and the territories of Tara Singh Gheba and in the subjugation of the hill states between Kashmir and the Punjab, (*e.g.*, Rajori, Bhimbur, Kaloo) and finally for his victory on the Chuch plains, Ranjit owed much to Mohkam Chand. To this able lieutenant he was also largely indebted for the successful establishment of the fort of Philour and for the efficient administration of the Jalandhar Doab. It is also doubtful whether Ranjit Singh could have got Shah Shuja under his control without the assistance of this resourceful general. It is also significant that the second Kashmir expedition undertaken in the teeth of the opposition of Mohkam Chand proved a failure. But it should be remembered that the brightest episode in this unsuccessful Kashmir expedition was the stand made by Ram Dayal, a grandson of Mohkam Chand and heir to his fulfilled renown.

Mohkam Chand's record was not merely that of a successful general but also that of a very excellent administrator. His government of the Jalandhar Doab, to which reference has already been made, was the most popular and at the same time efficient. As a governor he was the (a) most regular in his payments to the Lahore exchequer, yet he (b) never oppressed the people. Between 1806-1814 he was the man next in importance to the Maharaja in the Lahore state. When Ranjit Singh was wavering between the policy of peace and war over the cis-Sutlej question he sought to utilise the unique position occupied by Mohkam Chand. He himself talked of peace while Mohkam Chand made preparations for war. He told Metcalfe that, "The Dewan for his advanced age and the general control he had over all affairs was a privileged character and very difficult to manage."[2] Metcalfe of course never made the mistake of thinking that the Raja was being thwarted by his officer.

Wade describes Mohkam Chand as "the first of the Raja's officers who succeeded in planting his authority in the valuable acquisitions to his power".[3] In 1814 he died full of honour amidst the regrets of the grateful Sikh Durbar. He gave to the state very devoted servants in the persons of his son Moti Ram and grandsons Kirpa Ram and Ram Dayal.

5 *Dewan Chand.*—This Brahmin was another of the finds of the Maharaja. Between 1814-1825 he was the officer on whom Ranjit Singh largely depended for the success of his military operations. He was the actual Commander-in-chief of the armies that conquered Multan and Kashmir. He was also largely responsible for the successful siege of Mankera. After the triumphant campaigns in Multan and Kashmir, Dewan Chand advised the Maharaja that Peshawar should be the next object of attack. When Sada Kaur's possessions were annexed one of her men, the qiladar of Atal resisted. But Dewan Chand took the place by force. His administration of Pakhli and Damtaur was not,

however, very successful and Hari Singh was appointed in his place. Dewan Chand had also been to Bannoo and Tank. He was moreover prominent in the battle of Nowshera. From 1814-1825 he was in charge of the Ordnance Department. The title of *Jaffar Jang* was conferred on him after the conquest of Multan, and after the conquest of Kashmir he got the appellation 'Fateh Jang' or 'Nasrat Jang'. He was given a *Jagir* with an income of Rs. 50,000.[5]

He died on *Sravana 5* (July 18), Samvat 1882/1825 of cholera.[6] He was a very able general, an excellent companion, and a liberal and gifted man. When the Maharaja heard the news of his death he mourned the loss of Dewan Chand for several hours in his Durbar and told his courtiers that he had not another such man in his service.

Hari Singh Nalwa.—Originally a prsonal attendant,[7] he received recognition for his boldness, intrepidity and address and rose to the very high rank of a governor and became one of the greatest noblemen of the Punjab. He had earned the title 'Nalwa' for having cloven the head of a tiger that had seized him.[8] He could both read and write Persian and was very well informed as regards the policy of the East India Company and the state of Europe. So the Maharaja at times requisitioned his services in connection with the missions that he sent to the British Government. He was both feared and respected and, according to Masson, his deportment and intrepid conversation resembled those of Ranjit Singh.

On the Chenab, guarding and administering, as the second in command to Dewan Chand against the Kukkas and Bumbas, as an administrator in Pakhli and Dantaur, he was everywhere successful. His best administration was of course that of Kashmir, which he held for two years, proving himself one of the ablest of the Sikh Governors there. But Hari Singh has left his impress

on history as Ranjit's Viceroy on the western frontier, the most difficult charge of a Sikh Viceroy. The robbers slaughtered without mercy, the Kabul monarchy overawed, the turbulent Afghan tribes kept down by his movable columns—this was the record of Hari Singh on the western frontier. His work there so much pleased the Maharaja that on one occasion he remarked, "To rule a kingdom it is necessary to have men like you".[9] When Abbas Mirza of Persia asked Mohanlal whether the Sikh army could compare in courage and discipline with his, Mohanlal's reply was—"If Hari Singh Nalwa were to cross the Indus, His Highness would soon be glad to retreat to his original government of Tabriz"[10]—a reply which proves clearly the impression created by him on the western frontier.

Hari Singh was a *Jagirdar* with an income of three lakhs and sixty-seven thousand rupees of annual revenue. His son did not inherit his ability and he was given only a minor post. The vast sum of money accumulated by him was confiscated by the Lahore ruler. But for this we must not regard Ranjit as ungrateful. Undoubtedly Hari Singh was a very trusted and able officer. But in money matters he was not always honest. It has been said about him on good authority, that he would report raids and appropriate the money without undertaking these. On one occasion while the Maharaja was reviewing the troops under Hari Singh's charge he found the battalions below their full strength. Yet Hari Singh had been drawing money from the treasury at the usual rate. He was heavily fined.[11] But it must be said in favour of Hari Singh that his conduct was in keeping with the notions of service morality in those days and in spite of such lapses Hari Singh must be regarded as a very faithful and trusted servant, far superior in every respect to many other people in the service of Ranjit Singh. When the Maharaja shed tears on hearing the news of the death of Hari Singh, the tears were very sincere and when he described the deceased Sikh Governor as a great Nimak halal'[12] the epithet was also justified.

Wade's account of Hari Singh's death at Jamrud best illustrates the unshaken courage of this soldier even in his death—"He received four wounds, two sabre cuts across his breast, one arrow was fixed in his breast which he deliberately pulled out himself and continued to issue his orders as before until he received a gunshot wound in the side from which he gradually sank, and was carried off the field to the fort, where he expired, requesting that his death should not be made known until the arrival of the Maharaja's relief."[13]

Khushal Singh.—He was at first a menial, then an ordinary sepoy in Dhonkal Singh's regiment on five rupees a month, then a Jamadar or Lieutenant, next the Palace-steward or Deodhiwala.[14] From this coveted post he was displaced by Dhian Singh but he remained the aide-de-camp of the Maharaja. This is the life-story of the man who did not, after all, justify his phenomenal rise and who richly deserves the epithet of an upstart. His original name was Khushal Ram and he was a Gour Brahmin. The story is that the Maharaja gave him the 'pahul' and at that time promised that he would never degrade him from his position.[15] This seems plausible and explains why the Maharaja continued to favour him in spite of obvious lapses. The *Jagir* which he enjoyed towards the close of his life has been estimated by Shahamat Ali as worth four lakhs two thousand six hundred and seventy rupees.[16] He was dismissed from his charge of the *Deodhee* and Dhian Singh was appointed on the recommendation of Dewan Chand. He was, however, restored to favour shortly afterwards though not to his position as Deodhiwala.

In most of the military expeditions he took part along with others. So it is very difficult to assess his merit as a commander. His greatest military exploit was the conquest of Dera Ghazi Khan. But as an administrator he was a failure; his record of Kashmir administration was the blackest in that province. In a time of great scarcity, he so far fleeced the people along with Bhai

Gurmukh Singh and Shaikh Gulam Muhiuddin that it drew severe reprimands from the Maharaja. The Jamadar paid to the treasury three lakhs in cash and five lakhs worth of 'pashmina' and at the same time filled his own pocket as much as he could. In this connection Ranjit Singh once in open durbar suggested that the property of such an offender "who had burnt the fire of persecution", should be confiscated.[17] On another occasion as Sawan Mal sent repeated letters of recommendation from Captain Wade, the Jamadar protested against this piling up of recommendation from the agent of an alien Government; Ranjit Singh's retort was that to secure a recommendation from the Jamadar, a bribe would have been necessary but not so in the case of Captain Wade.[18] Khushal Singh was, moreover, very indiscreet in his speeches. On one occasion he quarrelled with Wasa Singh. There was a free fight between the followers of both the leaders. On being informed of this the Maharaja rebuked Khushal Singh for not having informed him about the misunderstanding earlier. Khushal's reply was that he was accustomed to do many things without informing the Maharaja. The Maharaja was so offended that he remarked that such deeds made one sink.[19] The Jamadar thereupon begged forgiveness and was forgiven.

These incidents show that the Maharaja knew the real worth of Khushal Singh. Still he remained a very prominent person in the Lahore durbar and, in 1839, was one of the Sikh leaders selected to co-operate with the British in the First Afghan War. His son and his nephew were generals in the Sikh army.

The Jammu Brothers.—The Jammu brothers—Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh—were sons of Kishore Singh and grandsons of Zorawar Singh. Their grand uncle was Mian Mota, the administrator of Jammu (1808). Mian Mota was the elder brother of Zorawar. If the *Gulabnama* is to be believed, Gulab Singh, dissatisfied with his grandfather, at one time contemplated joining Shah Shuja, but he had to give up the project. Ranjit Singh who had heard of Gulab's prowess, sent for him and Gulab

Singh joined the service of the Sikh monarch in 1810 and he later on brought his younger brothers. In 1816, Mian Gulab Singh Jamwal is shown commanding a small number of 'sowarian Jamwal' (the Jamwal cavalry). In the rolls of the previous years up to the end of Sambat 1871, he is shown as one of the troopers in the Jamwal cavalry where the name of his brother Dhian Singh is also borne on the list at Rs. 3/ per day.[20] Their rise was very rapid. The Jammu brothers were accomplished courtiers. The three made a common cause. Dhian Singh became such a favourite that he displaced Khushal singh as Deodhiwala. The three brothers became Rajas—Gulab Singh of Jammu, Dhian Singh of Bhimbur and Kussal, Suchet Singh of Ramnagar.[21] Gulab Singh remained away from Court in his estate of Jammu and was there left entirely to himself. The brothers at Lahore pushed their common cause. The infatuation of the Maharaja for Heera Singh, the son of Dhian Singh, proved an additional encouragement in their bid for power, position and wealth.

During the later years of the Maharaja these brothers were the most potent influence in the Lahore Durbar. Indeed, Dhian Singh may very well be described as the Prime Minister. He was the channel of petition and representation. It is even said that he used to hold a miniature durbar of his own in his own house in order to facilitate the transaction of business with His Highness and that he made references only in cases of importance.[22] Gulab singh is described by Jacquemont as "a soldier of fortune, a lion in war, with the plainest, noblest and most elegant manners".[23] A writer in the *Calcutta Review* describes Dhian Singh as "cautious and wily in some matters, open and fearless in others, ruthless yet not openly cruel."[24] Of course these brothers knew very well how to dissimulate and the combination which they formed—Dhian the civilian, Suchet the soldier and Gulab Singh combining a portion of the talents of both—was the most irresistible faction in the later days of Ranjit Singh.

These Jammu brothers were anti-British—"cold and repulsive towards Europeans" as Fane puts it. There is no doubt that the brothers wielded greater influence with Ranjit than any other family in the kingdom. Masson therefore asserts that though this was not agreeable to the Maharaja, he was not willing to acknowledge his own error. It was popularly believed that he would have seized them and they, aware of this, did not attend the Court at the same time.[25] The Jammu brothers had practically an entrenched position in the hills. They perhaps expected that after the death of the Maharaja, they would establish an independent power in Jammu and the hill countries and would put themselves at the head of an anti-foreign, anti-English national party in the Punjab. It is inconceivable that in the existing circumstances they could think of ousting the family of Ranjit Singh. They perhaps hoped to set up phantom kings and rule in the manner of the Sayyid brothers or the Peshwas. We even hear from Burnes that Dhian Singh fortified his home in Bhimbur by strengthening it with guns taken from Lahore, but no one dared disclose these facts to the Maharaja.[26]

What Gulab Singh was doing in Jammu and the surrounding hill regions, Sawan Mal was doing in Multan. There, so far away from the centre of royal power, he went on entrenching his own position. The Dogra party was anti-foreign and pro-national, whereas Sawan Mal knowing the hold of the British alliance on Ranjit Singh sought British support and pretty often Wade from Ludhiana and Mackeson from Bahawalpur would write in his favour to Ranjit.[27] He was in a comparatively weak position because Gulab Singh had his younger brothers at Court to further his own influence and support him whereas Sawan Mal stood alone. There was no love lost between the anti-English Dogra Governor of Jammu and the pro-English Governor of Multan.

In the thirties of the nineteenth century we hear pretty often of *'fashads'* or open quarrels between Gulab Singh and Sawan Mal and between their people. On the advice of the Maharaja a show of amity was restored by Khushal Singh, Ram Singh, Azizuddin and others acting as mediators.[28] Though Dhian Singh had so great an influence over the Maharaja, Sawan Mal's power continued undiminished and the inference is natural that the Maharaja regarded him as a make-weight on the Dogras. The Sindhianwalas, relatives of Ranjit Singh, described as *Jagirdars* of the second class (Sardaran-i-Namdar), served as a real balance against the Dogras as the subsequent history of the Punjab showed.

Azizuddin.—Azizuddin along with his brothers Imamuddin and Nuruddin played an important part in the Punjab under Ranjit. Their career testified to the capacity of Ranjit to rise above religious prejudice. The brothers were Ansari or Bokhari Sayyids.[29]

Azizuddin began his career as a physician to the Sikh ruler. He is said to have been a pupil of Lala Hakim Rai, the chief physician of Lahore when Ranjit occupied that city. Ranjit found him an excellent adviser and raised him to what was practically the rank of a minister of foreign affairs. He was an excellent negotiator, possessed very considerable literary ability and played also the part of a secretary. The interpretation of the Maharaja's words was always difficult, especially in view of the Maharaja's partial paralysis of tongue and no one was able to do this better than Azizuddin.

He styled himself as a *fakir* and adopted the dress of a *fakir*. This he regarded as an armour in the Court of Lahore, which was in its later days so full of intrigues. 'His politics was timid. As a diplomat he was invariably employed by Ranjit Singh in his embassies to the British Government and

was used as an intermediary in his own meetings with the representatives of the British Raj. His greatest achievement as a diplomat was the defection of the brothers of Dost Muhammad which he so cunningly brought about when Dost came to wage a holy war with Ranjit but was compelled to fly without striking a blow.

His personal attachment to Ranjit Singh was very great. On the occasion of Ranjit's attack of paralysis, the Fakir was most unremitting in his attention and McGregor says, "Had Ranjit been his father he could not have evinced a greater solicitude." He is described by Lepel Griffin as one of the ablest and certainly the most honest of all of Ranjit Singh's courtiers.

His brothers Nuruddin and Imamuddin were also very much trusted by the Maharaja. The former was employed in public works, arsenal and commissariat matters while the latter was in charge of Gobindgarh, the most important Sikh stronghold, and governor of the surrounding country.[30]

With so much power in their hands, had these Muhammadan officers been so inclined they might have added one more party to the list of three that arose on the death of Ranjit Singh. In addition to the Court, Dogra and Sindhianwala parties there might have been a Muhammadan party resting on the support of the Fakir brothers, the Muhammadan officers in charge of the artillery and the Muhammadan population of the Punjab. To the honesty of Azizuddin and his younger brothers there is no better testimony than this that the confidence Ranjit reposed in them was never misused. According to Honigberger, the Fakir, the Prime Minister Dhian Singh and Dewan Dina Nath, Minister of Finance, constituted the triad of which the Privy Council was composed in the later years of Ranjit.

Besides these people mentioned, other important persons in the Punjab under Ranjit Singh were Bhowani Das, Ganga Ram and Dina Nath. Misr Beli Ram was in charge of the *Toshakhana*. He secured high appointments for his brothers Ruplal, Meghraj, Ramkissen and Sukh Raj. In domestic politics and court intrigues he was arrayed against the Jammu brothers. Bhowani Das had been a revenue officer under Shah Shuja. He came to the Punjab in 1808, organised a pay office and a finance office. Ganga Ram had served under the Maharaja of Gwalior and he was placed at the head of the military office and made Keeper of the Privy-seal. Dina Nath, a nephew of Ganga Ram, became Keeper of the Privy-seal on his death and head of the civil and the finance offices on the death of Bhowani Das. Another very important person was Desa Singh Majithia, governor of the Jalandhar Doab.

Cunningham says, "Ranjit has laid himself open to the charge of extravagant partiality and favouritism as is the case with all despots and solitary authorities,"[31] but in the same breath he says that the mind of Ranjit Singh was never prostrate before that of others. The fact that Ranjit never allowed the anti-English Dogras to influence his attitude towards the English proves conclusively that so far as policy was concerned, no reigning favourite determined it. It has also been shown that in matters of policy no favourite dared undertake anything on his own account. Neither did the rancorous enmity of the Dogra brothers prejudice the Maharaja's relations with Sawan Mal.

A mere enumeration of the names of the prominent persons of Ranjit's Court proves conclusively that he knew how to rise above communal narrowness. Mohkam Chand, Dewan Chand, Azizuddin and his brothers, Hari Singh, Sawan Mal, and Desa Singh were all very able men. The two elder Dogras were also very efficient though they were not so honest as Mohkam Chand and Dewan Chand. In their case Ranjit's departure from his usual

attitude of vigilance had its nemesis. His sons paid very dearly "for the engrossing and prejudicial influence which he allowed the Dogra brothers to attain".

Cunningham asserts that as Ranjit "had placed himself in some degree in opposition to the whole Sikh people, he sought for strangers whose applause would be more ready if less sincere,"[32] but as has been shown in details in the preceding chapters, Ranjit's administration was the nearest approach to the ideal of popular monarchy that was possible in those days and in those circumstances. Apart from personal whims in the choice of favourites, we must note one thing about policy. All that was cultured and refined had disappeared from the Punjab long before Ranjit came into power; therefore in his attempt to establish order out of chaos he had to look for administrators outside the Punjab because his own land was then all but bare of talent.

The *Umdat-ut-Tawarik* gives us a very vivid impression of the Lahore Durbar. The patient reader gets a very good picture of the Maharaja in the midst of his courtiers, in council and in conversation. In the young days of the Maharaja the Court etiquette was not perhaps so well-established and in 1809 Metcalfe referred to the sublime confusion caused by the eagerness of the councillors to display before their master their zeal, their skill and their acuteness but in 1827 Wade wrote about "the order and regularity of the whole assembly, the deference with which the Sardars treated the Maharaja and the courtesy they observed towards each other. There was no rude familiarity and confusion, every one seemed to know his place and to be conscious of the station he filled". But whether in 1809 or in 1827 the intelligent visitor at the Durbar could easily see for himself that the Maharaja seldom "divulged his plans till they were ready to be carried into execution". With limitations imposed by his physical infirmity this statement is true of the last years of his life as well.

NOTES

1. Lepel Griffin, *Punjab Chiefs*, Vol. I, p. 202.
2. Sec. cons., 13th March, 1809. No. 45.
3. Wade, *On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces.*
4. Kohli, *Army of Ranjit Singh: Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records*, Vol. I.
5. *Umdat*, p. 264.
6. *News of Ranjit Singh's Court*, 1825.
7. Shahamat Ali, *Sikhs and Afghans*, p. 53.
8. Hugel, *Travels*, p. 254. "His conversation proved him to have thought and reasoned justly".
9. *Umdat*, III, p. 140.
10. Mohanlal, *Travels* (Memoir first published in the *Calcutta Observer*, XIV).
11. *Umdat*, II, p. 379.
12. Ibid, III, p. 395.
13. Wade to Macnaghten, May 13, 1837 quoted by Sethi—*The Lahore Darbar* p. 299.
14. Hugel, *Travels*, p. 287; Shahamat Ali, *Sikhs and Afghans.*
15. Shahamat Ali, pp. 28-29.
16. Ibid.
17. *Umdat*, III, p. 179.
18. Ibid, p. 313.
19. Ibid, 320.
20. *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records*, II, p. 50.
21. Carmichael Smyth, p. 256.
22. Shahamat Ali, p. 26.
23. Jacquemont, *Travels.*
24. Cal. Review, 1844.
25. Masson, *Travels.*
26. Burnes, Vol. I, pp. 287-88.
27. *Umdat*, III, pp. 254, 291, 313.
28. Ibid, pp. 254, 436.
29. Lepel Griffin, *Punjab Chiefs*, Vol. I, p. 75
30. *Umdat*, II, p. 252.
31. Cunningham, p. 178.
32. Ibid.

CHAPTER XI

Personality And Place In History

Ranjit Singh in court and camp is a fascinating study. Great activity of mind and body was the prominent feature of his character. He has been described as the very embodiment of practical sagacity despite unlettered ignorance. Crude, dynamic and vigorous, this fostering despot was a very concrete and compact man and though there are so many anecdotes about him they do not build up into a legend.

Ranjit had many demonstrable and conspicuous defects. His mental make up showed a puerile curiosity combined with remarkable intelligence and rare sagacity. Even in his mature life we find irrational behaviour along with commendable self-restraint. Unable to read and write he exercised a minute criticism in correcting the diction of his expert secretaries. The style of letters written in ornate Persian, read out to him by his secretary Fakir Azizuddin, would be improved by him in open durbar. Himself illiterate, he respected the acquirements in others and issued strict orders at the time of his first Peshawar campaign for the preservation of the extensive library of the Mussalman saint at Chamkanni, (Masson). Habitually reserved in matters of business, he would joke with dancing girls in open court as it illbehoved a monarch. A professing Sikh, he would go to Amritsar for his devotions, pay his respect to Brahmins and visit the tombs of various Muslim saints as well. Accustomed to act singly and independently practically in every important matter he would make a show of consulting his courtiers whenever it suited his interest.

Jacquemont tells us that this great ruler with his prodigious memory knew the name, position and history of from ten to

twelve thousand villages in his kingdom. In course of a discussion with Wade on the terms of the navigation of the Sutlej, Ranjit Singh "himself counted his different districts along the right bank from Harikepattan to Mithankot together with the names of his local officials and the force stationed in each". The precision with which he did this showed how much he depended on himself for regulating his administration. He knew every detail and with his indefatigable capacity for work he would give suggestions and instructions on minute points. The most inquisitive of men, his conversation was a 'nightmare' even to a man of the intellectual capacity of Jacquemont, whom he asked "a hundred thousand questions about India, the English, Europe, Bonaparte, this world in general and the other one, hell and paradise, the soul, god, the devil and a thousand things besides." William Macnaghten, Auckland's Chief Secretary wrote in May, 1838, that the Maharaja "passed from war to wine, and from learning to hunting with breathless rapidity". Though some decline of his remarkable mental faculties is noticeable in his later years he remains, when all is said, one of the most remarkable personalities in British Indian history.

In his military expeditions Ranjit Singh was accustomed to issue instructions to his officers in such details that little or no initiative was left to them. A book of military *purwanas* covering the period from 14th November, 1833 to 18th December, 1834, shows how indefatigable was his capacity for work, how thorough was his grasp of details, how keen was his solicitude for his men. A good general, who showed conspicuous personal bravery at Nowshera and remarkable tenacity at Mankera, he was more conspicuous in the organisational than in the operational part of campaigns. One of his French officers described him as a man without passions. This remark, however true of Ranjit Singh as a politician, is certainly inapplicable to him as a soldier. He was seen to weep as some of his old soldiers approached him with petitions and showed him their wounds. The personal devotion

and loyalty that he inspired smoothed the path of duty. But few chiefs exercised more rigid control over the conduct of their troops than he did.

Ranjit Singh was not 'an adventurer of genius in a temporary political vacuum'. He was to Guru Gobind Singh what Lenin was to Karl Marx, what Omar was to Muhammad. "Guru Gobind Singh called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flow in a particular direction. By this means the Sikh nation was poured into the mould of a special purpose and acquired solidity . . . he converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a means of worldly advancement. An ephemeral outburst of passion, a temporary sense of need made Guru Gobind Singh exalt the channel . . . the result was that the Sikhs got a contrivance for a close union among themselves but lost their progressive power." There is such a thing as the logic of history. The exclusively military turn given to the Sikh character resulted after the Sikh wars of liberation and the establishment of a theocratic confederate feudalism in the founding of a military monarchy, when a strong man arose who could compel the entire system to gyrate round himself and Sikh valour flared up brightly.

There has been an age-long controversy between collectivistic and individualistic historiographers. The former assign to collectivity the power that is creative of ideas and institutions, the latter attribute it to the individual of genius. Both are true in what they include and false in what they exclude. Admitting that the development of capacity in a nation is more a question of opportunity than of ability, we must at the same time recognise that the Jats who formed the backbone of the Sikh community were principally soldiers and became even more so as a result of the reforms of Guru Gobind Singh. Therefore power, as Ranjit Singh the last great constructive genius among the Sikhs understood it, was not moral but military. But an Indian chieftain who could secure the support of all sections of his people—

Sikhs, Hindus and Muhammadans,—who could defend the North-Western frontier against a powerful Afghanistan and unruly border tribes and administer it successfully, who could train an army whose fighting qualities came as a revelation to their famous opponents, who could to a certain extent furnish Indian nationalism with what it greatly needs—a tradition of strength—must always stand in the forefront of great men of Indian History.

Among Ranjit Singh's principal achievements we must count his very successful defence of his kingdom against the Afghans. We know that Afghanistan was at one time a part of India. But India lost it once for all. She would also have lost the North-Western Frontier region, the Punjab and Kashmir but for the rise of the Sikhs and the consolidation of Ranjit's sway in those regions. It is a certainty that if the disorganised misls had retained their hold over the Punjab, at least the North-Western Frontier region and Kashmir would have become a part of Afghanistan under the Barakzais.

Ranjit Singh is a supreme example of an intellect without a conscience. He forgot that force, stratagem and policy alone can create only a very rude organisation. He did not breathe into the hearts of his people any noble sentiment that would have held them together after his death. Shivaji like Ranjit Singh had incapable successors. But the history of Maharastra after his death presents a striking contrast to that of the Punjab after the death of Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit built up a state. But as a builder his imperfections are apparent. Like many other great men Ranjit Singh so completely centralised everything pertaining to his government in himself that his disappearance caused not a vacancy but a void in which the entire structure of government was submerged. He left the Jagirdars weak and the army too powerful for his weak successors to control. With the help of the standing army was

the treasury in some cases filled and control exercised over distant provinces. The personal influence of the head of the state was the only hold on the discipline and affection of the troops. The army, as subsequent events proved, had a very strong *esprit-de-corps* which may be explained by the analogy of a trade union. The army considered itself as the visible embodiment of the *Khalsa* or the commonwealth. But "habituated at once to violence and to slavery, the soldiers are very unfit guardians of a legal or even civil constitution. Valour will acquire their esteem and liberality will purchase their suffrage. But the first of these merits is often lodged in the most savage breasts, the latter can only exert itself at the expense of the public and both may be turned against the possessor of the throne by the ambition of a daring rival" (Gibbon).

His Generals died before his death. Traitors left.

Ranjit Singh was very unfortunate in one respect. The very able generals of his choice—Mohkam Chand, Dewan Chand, Hari Singh Nalwa, Ram Dayal—all died even during his lifetime. Only crafty designing men, either weaklings or traitors, survived to command his forces. Naturally the army grew out of control. After the death of Nau Nihal Singh, there remained nobody with an undisputed claim to the throne. Disputed succession encouraged intrigues. The Punjab became a scene of the wildest disorder.

His relations with British Political alliance.

The one great external cause of Ranjit's failure is found in his relations with the British Government. Very early in his career he had entered into a treaty with the British Government. But in almost all cases, as Bismarck has put it, a political alliance means a rider and a horse. In this Anglo-Sikh alliance, the British Government was the rider and Ranjit was the horse. The English limited Ranjit's power on the east, on the south, and would have limited him on the west if that were possible. Evidently a collision between his military monarchy and British Imperialism was imminent. Ranjit Singh, the Massinissa of

British Indian history, hesitated and hesitated forgetting that in politics, as in war, time is not on the side of the defensive. When the crash came after his death under far less able men, chaos and disorder had already supervened and whatever hope there had been when he was living, there was no more when he was dead. In his relations with the British Government Ranjit Singh is seen at his worst. He never grandly dared. He was all hesitancy and indecision. inherent failure. British imperialism.

But at the same time we must acknowledge that Ranjit's failure was inherent in the very logic of events. "All causes that were not the cause of Rome wers destined to be lost. The central power, once dominant, could only grow and all the outside forces could only shatter themselves against Rome as enemies or augment the strength of Rome as vassals." This remark about Roman Imperialism is true of British Imperialism in India as wel .

APPENDIX A

Shah Shuja In Lahore (1813-1815)*

The Durrani monarch Shah Shuja lost his throne in 1809. As he was deserted by his chiefs and his people he had to desist from operations. He was carried off a prisoner to Kashmir where Ata Muhammad Khan, the Afghan Governor, would only offer him release if he gave the Koh-i-noor. The Shah refused to surrender this jewel. He was released from captivity by Mohkam Chand, Ranjit Singh's general, and was brought to Lahore. Shah Shuja remained there for about two years (1813-1815).

After his arrival in Lahore Shah Shuja was assigned for his residence the haveli of Sada Singh (Sawa Singh) and another haveli for his harem. If necessary, intercourse between the two residences could be interrupted. On the second day after his arrival, Ram Singh came. He demanded the Koh-i-noor. Shah Shuja replied that it was not with him, but when real friendship would be established he would give it. Ram Singh asked for it again next day. The same reply was given. There was an altercation. After this the free movement of Shah Shuja's people was at an end. At times Ranjit's men would permit his attendants to go out, at times they would not. They would supply food or would not according to their pleasure. Thus one month passed. Every day they would ask for the Koh-i-noor and the Shah's reply always was—"when friendship will be established it will be given". The confidential servants of Ranjit Singh enquired if the ex-king wanted ready money and was willing to enter into a treaty for the world-famous diamond. The Shah answered in the affirmative and after some days about fifty thousand rupees was given in

* Published in *Bharatiya Vidya*, March, 1945.

several instalments. The confidential agents of Ranjit Singh again asked for the Koh-i-noor. Shah Shuja replied that when a treaty would securely lay the foundations of unity he would give it to the Maharaja. Two days after Ranjit Singh himself came, expatiated at length on his friendship, took an oath on his holy granth and the sword and made a paper grant of the districts of Kot Kamalia, Jhang Sial and Khulenur to the ex-king and also offered assistance in troops and treasure if the Shah attempted to recover his throne and also assured him that the friendship now established would continue even if he succeeded in reconquering Kabul. There was an exchange of turbans. Shah Shuja then gave him the Koh-i-noor. On the second day after this Shah Shuja returned the visit. There was music and dancing to soothe the feeling of the ex-king.

But Ranjit did not fulfil his part of the contract. When Shah Shuja sent his people to the districts assigned, Ranjit's people would not let them manage. The Lahore ruler was approached and he said that he would give these to the ex-king next year. In the meantime Mulla Sher Muhammad, Shah Shuja's "pesh namaz" (imam), was alleged to have written a letter to the Kabul Wazir. Shah Shuja sent him to Ranjit Singh who had him imprisoned. Sher Muhammad was tortured and very badly treated. Shah Shuja released him by payment of 12,000 rupees. At last it was known that Mulla Zafar and Abul Hasan, two men in the train of Shah Shuja, who were enemies of Sher Muhammad, had done this. They had accompanied the family of Shah Shuja to Lahore, had appropriated his money and joined Ranjit Singh's party. They were at the root of the Koh-i-noor affair and were responsible for the present troubles as well.

Ranjit then asked the ex-king to accompany him to Rohtas and Shah Shuja had to accompany him. Ranjit went to Rawalpindi with the ex-king in his train. He was told that Fateh Khan was at Peshawar and Ranjit would go there. But Ranjit

abandoned this expedition and returned to Lahore, leaving Shah Shuja with prince Kharak Singh and his agent Ram Singh. The latter even sent thieves to steal his belongings. They were caught. Kharak Singh asked for the Shah's camp-beds and other personal belongings which the Shah had to give. As Ram Singh and Kharak Singh started for Lahore he was asked to accompany them and on the way he was surrounded by 300/400 Sikh sowars and lost all his belongings including jewels, silk goods, gilt swords, small guns and gold and silver coins. When he reached Lahore he was compelled to part with half of his belongings which were taken by Ranjit Singh's men. Thus the Sikh chief violated all his promises. Even after this spies continued to watch him and guards surrounded his dwellings.

The Shah decided to fly. His family escaped to Ludhiana in the costume of Indian women who frequented his harem but he himself was being closely watched. Ranjit was surprised when he heard about the flight of the Shah's family. The precautions were now redoubled. Eight persons guarded his haveli at night. But he made a hole through the ceiling and changed room after room seven times in succession. Leaving a faithful attendant to sleep on his bed, the ex-king with his immediate attendants escaped in the dress of a fakir, reached the bazar, thence the riverside. As the city gates were guarded he must have escaped through one of the nullahs of the city. The boatmen previously engaged were there and the ex-king escaped to the hills. After an ineffective attempt on Kashmir with the assistance of the Raja of Kishtwar the Shah finally reached Ludhiana where he had his family. The ex-king thus placed himself under British protection. This was in September, 1816.

After his escape Ranjit seized the money which the ex-king had deposited with the bankers at Lahore. In his anger the Shah in his autobiography describes the Sikhs as "men whose very foundation is evil".

This is the version of the ex-king himself of the life which he led at Lahore during the months he lived there under Sikh protection (*Tarikh-i-Shah Shuja,* f. 56—f. 69). The Tarikh Sultani's version is not materially different from that of the ex-king (*Indian Antiquary,* XII and XVII). This version of events is also substantially corroborated by contemporary news-letters (*Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh*). In one of these letters dated 4th March, 1814, we find that "Ram Singh came in and reported that he had gone to the *dera* of Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, had demanded the jewellery, had then sent five maid-servants into the ladies' apartments inside the palace, that they had brought everything that they could find in the interior such as jewellery, turquoise, pearls, small boxes, carpets and the like and Hazrat Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk had wept and cried aloud that he could not resist the will of god". But there are two material points of divergence. In a letter dated 8th June, 1813, we read "Ghafoor Khan Afghan came from Jhang Sialan, paid his respects, presented one gold ducat as *nasr* and stated that he had been in service at Jhang for a very long time but that since the control of Hazrat Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk had been established there he had been dismissed from his post and did not know where to go from the door of the Noble Sarkar".

This letter shows that the districts promised must have been assigned to Shah Shuja and his control established there. Subsequently on account of reasons as yet unknown these must have been resumed. Shah Shuja tells us that Sher Muhammad was falsely accused of writing to Azim Khan. But we read in a letter dated 23rd June, that "Pir Baksh in charge of the police station came in and stated that Mulla Hasan and Qazi Sher Muhammad Khan, the companions of Hazrat Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, had written some letters on their own accord and under their own seals to Sirdar Fateh Khan Wazir, that as the messenger carrying these letters had been brought to him as a captive, therefore he submitted those letters to the Noble Sarkar.—It was written in them

that the Noble Sarkar was all alone at that time in Lahore, that he had no troops with him, that if he the wazir would send his troops it would not be difficult to capture Lahore".

It was well known that after Shah Shuja had been seized by Ata Muhammad Khan, the lancet was frequently held over his eyes and he was threatened with instant death with a view to extorting the Koh-i-noor from him (Burnes, *Travels,* III). Wafa Begam, wife of Shah Shuja sent a petition to Ranjit Singh to the effect that the Afghan Wazir was talking of taking Kashmir and in that case her husband would be taken to Kabul and his eyes would be taken out. So Ranjit was requested to rescue him. Ranjit was also told that the Koh-i-noor was in Kashmir with the Shah and if he was taken to Kabul the priceless jewel would be taken along with him (*Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh,* 1812). Thus it seems quite probable that Wafa Begum promised Ranjit Singh the world-famous jewel if he succeeded in rescuing Shah Shuja from the hands of the Afghans and the Sikh ruler could claim it in return for the services rendered. Ranjit later told Wade, British Agent at Ludhiana, that Shuja-ul-Mulk was rescued because the Koh-i-noor had been promised as the price. But the ex-king was not a simpleton like Muhammad Shah, the Timurid, so that a wily exchange of turbans would bring the Sikh ruler the world-famous jewel. In this Koh-i-noor transaction "the character of Ranjit Singh more unscrupulous than cruel was curiously displayed in the measures he adopted. No greater severity was employed than appeared absolutely necessary to overcome the obstinacy of the Shah and none was omitted that promised the accomplishment of the end" (Osborne—Introduction). It required more self-denial than is to be expected that with the world-famous diamond in his grasp he would not try to secure it merely out of respect for "the shade of that which once was great". Reverence for the past was not his weakness. It is relevant to quote in this connection a historic estimate of the value of the Koh-i-noor. "It is so valuable that a judge of

diamonds valued it at half of the daily expenses of the whole world". This precious jewel, as seen by visitors who came to the Sikh Durbar after 1814, was of the shape of a small hen's egg set as an armlet with a large diamond on either side of it.

Shah Shuja was not a helpless dependent ex-king as was Shah Ayub who later sought shelter in Lahore and was granted an allowance of rupees one thousand a month and a jagir. Even after he was plundered by Ranjit Singh the ex-king had still in his possession jewels whose sale proceeds yielded him a very considerable amount at Ludhiana and enabled him later to embark on his ambitious ventures.

Ranjit's rapacious treatment of Shah Shuja after the Koh-i-noor seizure has been sought to be justified on the charge of the intrigues of the Shah and his companions but it scandalised even Ranjit Singh's own courtiers. We find in a letter dated 10th September, 1813—"The Noble Sarkar told Nihal Singh, Mith Singh Bharania, Bhai Gurbaksh Singh individually in privacy that Shuja-ul-Mulk had with him one saddle beset with jewels worth 28 Lakhs of rupees, one big bedstead of turquoise fixed upon four legs, each of which was studded with one big diamond and he said he proposed demanding these articles for himself. They said that the Noble Sarkar could do whatever he thought fit but that already he had suffered a great deal of disrepute in his seizing the Koh-i-noor gem from him and these things could not be secured without inflicting further hardship, unpleasantness and humiliation. The Noble Sarkar might show him kind attention, consideration, patronage and encouragement." It is not difficult to understand Ranjit's design to detain Shah Shuja as a prisoner and to make use of his name for purposes of his own. This also explains the anxiety of the Shah to escape from his clutches. Ranjit was eager to secure his jewels and other valuables and deprive him of the means of independent endeavour. But he was not unwilling to supply him money if he was really

in need of it. On the 19th September, 1813, he sent Shah Shuja 1,000 rupees for his expenses and the Shah accepted it. On the 27th October, 1814, the Shah was paid Rs. 2,000. There are other entries (*Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh*). The ex-king could not, however, like such dependence on the Lahore chief for his daily expenses. With his jagir resumed, his jewels seized, his pension of no fixed amount, the Shah felt that his position was intolerable and he wanted to escape. But it is interesting to note that even after he was repeatedly despoiled, we find Shah Shuja trying to secure Ranjit's help while at Lahore to fight Fateh Khan. Ranjit's reply was that the best policy was that of delay. Sadi Khan Kotwal was appointed to guard Shah Shuja. When the Shah protested, the Lahore Chief replied that he was not a prisoner but had only a guard of honour (*Zafarnama,* 1815).

In spite of the shabby treatment at Lahore, the Shah being always guided by political considerations and not by a sense of personal injury and personal wrongs was always eager to approach him for help even from Ludhiana and at times Ranjit responded to his appeal. In 1830, Shah Shuja sent complimentary presents to Ranjit Singh. In 1831 he wrote to Ranjit Singh 'that whatever had happened to him in the past he considered as proceeding from adverse fate and not from His Highness' (Wade to Prinsep, Nov. 21, 1831 quoted in *The Lahore Durbar*). In the *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records, II,* p. 192, under the heading *Madid Kharch* we find that Ranjit supplied to the ex-king between 5th Bhadon 1890 and 19th Baisakh 1891 (1833-34 A.D.) a sum of Rs. 14,500 for his Qandahar expedition. But the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh's* figure is one lakh twenty-five thousand. If the Shah could forget his personal wrongs so soon and approach him for help and later make him an ally, the historian has no right to expatiate on these personal wrongs in spite of the very unfavourable impression created by Ranjit's shabby treatment of the fugitive monarch in his distress.

APPENDIX B

A Critical Bibliography

Persian Sources:

I. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh.*—A Diary of Ranjit Singh, a "Roznamcha", written by Sohanlal, the *Akhbar Nawis* of Ranjit Singh, published by his son in 1885. I consulted the copy in the Buhar Library, Calcutta. Captain Wade's remark as to the value of this book is worth quoting. "As a record of dates and chronicle of events tested by a minute comparison with other authorities and my own personal investigations . . . I am able to pronounce it in these two respects as a true and faithful narrative of Ranjit Singh's eventful life." It goes into very minute details. It is not overlaudatory though as a mere chronicle we must not expect it to be critical. Many of the details of the *nazranas,* the rewards, whatever might have been their interest to a contemporary, are useless from a historical point of view.

II. *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh—of Dewan Amarnath,* edited by Sita Ram Kohli. It comes down to 1836. There is a translation of a part of it in the *Calcutta Review,* 1858. This translation comes down to 1820. But the translator in the *Calcutta Review* has so interwoven his own reflections with his translation as to damage the historical value of his work. The author was for some time a paymaster of the irregular cavalry forces of the *Khalsa Durbar.* His father was the finance minister of Ranjit Singh. This book is of first rate importance for the political history of the Sikhs. It was used by Latif.

III. *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*—Kushwaqt Rai Ms., transcribed for me by the research department of Khalsa College, Amritsar.

Kushwaqt Rai wrote this "at the instance of Nawab Nasir-ud-Daula Mata-mud-ul-Mulk Wafadar Khan Colonel Akhtar Luni Sahib Bahadur Zafar Jang" in 1811. An excellent contemporary source for the early history of Ranjit Singh. For the period extending from 1797-1811, I regard the Kushwaqt Rai Ms. as more important than that of Sohanlal.

IV. *News of Ranjit Singh's Court.*—Written in Persian, translated in English—author unknown, date 1825. It is a 'Roznamcha'—a day to day account of the Court proceedings. It gives us a graphic picture of business transactions in the Sikh Court. It is valuable so far as the history of the year 1825 is concerned, also as regards Ranjit's relations with Sada Kaur after her incarceration and his relations with his Muhammadan subjects. The document is in the Persian Section of the Imperial Record Department.

V. *Manuscript No. 622, Khuda Baksh Library* (*Hisabnama Fouj-i-Ranjit Singh*)—author unknown; date early nineteenth century. It is a beautiful manuscript relating to the military system of Ranjit Singh. It is divided into three sections . . . cavalry, infantry and artillery. It gives a very good view of Ranjit Singh's military system in all its three branches. It is specially interesting as showing the percentage of Muhammadan soldiers and officers.

VI. *Tarikh-i-Shah Shuja, Br. Mus. Ms. or. 1796*—extends from 1216 to 1241 A.H. (1801-1826). This autobiography of Shah Shuja is a very reliable source of information for the career of the ex-king from 1810-1815. For his later life-history after 1826 ample evidence is available in British records.

VII. *Punjab Government Record Office Publication*—Monograph No. 17—*Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh* (1810-1817), translated into English and edited by Garrett and Chopra—Newsletters in Persian contained in 193 loose sheets preserved in the

Alienation Office, Poona—most probably written for the benefit of some Maratha chief, possibly the Peshwa, at Poona. The name and identity of the writer is not to be found in the letters. In the letters of the first two years a Khushal Singh is mentioned as the informant, identified by the editors with Khushal Singh Jamadar. In three letters of 1817 the sender's seal is that of 'Azimulla', who remains unidentified. There are large gaps in these letters. There was no Peshwa after 1818, but there is a letter of 1822. The editors have not been able to explain how this letter of 1822 finds its place in this series. In this volume of letters we get authentic and detailed history, personal as also administrative and political, for the period 1810-1817. In spite of the gaps we get a very full picture of life in the Lahore Durbar during the period covered by these news-letters. I have seen the original letters in the Alienation Office, Poona. The handwriting is execrable. Even the best expert in Ms. reading must find the greatest difficulty in deciphering even undamaged portions of the letters. Let us hope that the Persian translators at Lahore did their work with absolute accuracy. The letters are of a type familiar to students of Maratha history of the 18th century. The Maratha Government was not like the British Government of India, a Government by writing. But the Marathas possessed excellent historical sense. Letters of this type are too few, alas, in Sikh History.

I have not attached any importance to Kanheya Lal's *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, Ranjitnama* (1876) and Bute Shah's *Twarikh-i-Punjab* (1848)—The *Ranjitnama* has got all the defects of a bad chronicle—a mixture of memory, imagination and design, a general prolixity and redundancy. Bakht Mal's *Khalsanama* (Br. Mus. Pers. Add. 24033), written in 1814, does not enlighten us much about Ranjit Singh. To quote H. A. L. Fisher, "a good history will emerge from a few first class authorities clearly interpreted than from a vast and exhausting miscellany of unequal value. There is a fallacy in the assumption

that the more man reads the more nearly he approaches the truth. There is no such relation between the thing that was and the number of words which has been written about it"—I confess I have not read Kanheya Lal's *Ranjitnama,* Bute Shah's *Twarikh* and the *Gulabnama* with the care they perhaps deserved from the orthodox standpoint because they are not really indispensable primary sources.

Mohan Singh's *Waqaya-i-Holkar* gives nothing that we do not know about Holkar's relations with Ranjit Singh from other sources. The Persian Ms. *Akhbarat-i-Sindhia*—Br. Mus. Add. 24,086—has only two entries relating to Ranjit and they are misleading. In one (4396) we read "Maha Singh Dalewal is dead, his sons are fighting among themselves"—in another, 4776, we find "Letters from Ranjit Singh, Grandson of Maha Singh"—such a source cannot be helpful in any way.

English Sources:

Records in the Imperial Record Department, Foreign Political Proceedings, 1808-1839.

Records in the Imperial Record Department, Foreign Miscellaneous, 1809-1839.*

*Wade—*On the Punjab and Adjacent Provinces.*

Malcolm—*On the Invasion of India by Russia.*

Elliot—*On the Revenue and Resources of the Punjab.*

Report of the Board of Administration at Lahore.

Report of the Settlement of the Districts of the Jullundhur Doab.

Lieutenant Pottinger's *Memoir on Sindh.*

Burnes—*Report on Countries between India and Russia,* No. 206.

Indian Papers, Punjab 1845-1849

Parliamentary Papers.

These records are most important contemporary British official sources of information as distinguished from the non-official records of the European travellers. So far as Anglo-Sikh, Sikh-Afghan, and Anglo-Afghan relations are concerned, they are both elaborate and valuable. We should not forget that the French traveller Jacquemont gathered the impression that India was governed by stationery. The English official point of view is not always correct, as we know. Even within the records there are official evidences contradicting official conclusions. A discriminating eye can discern the truth. We should, however, keep in mind the warning of Peter Cunningham that "even state papers have been altered to suit the temporary views of political warfare or abridged out of mistaken regard for the tender feeling of the survivors." Through newswriters the British agency at Ludhiana kept itself informed of the happenings in the Sikh country and informed the Central Government. Further, of the records in the Miscellaneous section, the report of Wade and Pottinger's *Memoir on Sind* serve as good supplementary sources of information. The reports of the Board of Administration and on the revenues and resources of the Punjab as also the *Punjab papers* and *Parliamentary papers,* 1845-1849, refer to a period much later than the period under review. But in them there are references to the Sikh administrative system of the previous period.

Poona Residency Correspondence—Vol. VIII, Daulat Rao Sindhia and North Indian affairs, 1794-1799.

Poona Residency Correspondence—Vol. IX, Daulat Rao Sindhia and North Indian affairs, 1800-1803.

Poona Residency Correspondence—Vol. XI, Daulat Rao Sindhia's affairs, 1804-1809.

For facts relating to Ranjit Singh's rise up to 1809, this correspondence gives excellent corroborative evidence and at times evidence that starts a new line of investigation.

I also consulted old records of the N. W. Frontier province in the custody of the Imperial Record Department. I did not find in these records anything of value to me for my present purpose. There are, however, some passages of strategic importance which were withheld from me. I could not therefore incorporate these passages in my chapter on the N. W. frontier.

The contemporary newspaper, *The Englishman*, has some corroborative value. News-service in those days was not very efficient but partisanship was not also as blatant as in modern times.

Barr, W.—*Journal of March from Delhi to Peshawar, 1844*—It is of some importance for its valuable comments on the army of Ranjit Singh.

Burnes—*Travels into Bokhara*, in three volumes, 1834. A diplomat, adventurer and explorer, he supplies very valuable information regarding Ranjit Singh's relations with Afghanistan. He had an admirable opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the history of the Sikhs at first hand as the frequent mention of his name in the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* proves. Incidentally, we have some references to Ranjit's civil administration in the account of Burnes. In the case of all foreign travellers, Burnes not excepted, we must make a distinction between what they probably saw and knew and what they heard and guessed. Burnes was not a bad observer, or he would not have been such an able diplomat. Later in Afghanistan, however, he failed to perceive the first premonitions of trouble which were quite apparent to many of his subordinate colleagues. We must, in order to avoid pitfalls, note that there are inaccuracies in his book.

Eden—*Up the Country,* London, 1866, also her *Letters,* London, 1844. She was a sister of Lord Auckland and she accompanied the Governor-General in his visit to Ranjit. She describes things very vividly. The approach is journalistic.

Elphinstone—*An Account of the Kingdom of Kabul,* London, 1839, Vol. II, is useful. It contains an account of the tribes as also a history of Afghanistan.

Fane—*Five Years in India,* London, 1842. As an aide-de-camp to Lord Auckland he accompanied Lord Auckland to the camp of Ranjit Singh. His account is superficial though interesting.

Forster—*Journey from Bengal to England* through the Punjab, Afghanistan and Persia; London, 1708. Like Malcolm's *Sketch* it is also one of the oldest and also one of the best sources. It is also very valuable as a very early description of the country and its people by a contemporary foreign traveller. Malcolm and Forster give us some very admirable descriptions of the state of things before the rise of the Sikh military monarchy.

Gardner, *Memoirs*—The book is edited by Pearse, London, 1898. He was a Colonel of artillery in the Sikh service. His account of the European officers in the Sikh service is useful. But he was a great liar, deliberately passing off as his the adventures of other men.

Harlan—*A Memoir of India and Afghanistan,* 1842—*Personal Narrative,* 1823-'41, Ed. by F. E. Ross.

Hugel, Von: *Travels,* translated from German by Major Jervis, London, 1845—This German scientist makes incidental references to Sikh politics and history. But a foreign traveller, ignorant of the language, is always very gullible unless he is a very keen and critical observer.

Jacquemont, Victor—*Letters from India,* London, 1835, Trs. Macmillan—Jacquemont was sent on a scientific mission by the authorities of the Paris Museum of Natural History. The letters are dated 1831. A scientist's power of observation is entitled to respect; he is refreshing in his candour, but in his sweeping generalisations, especially about Ranjit's army, Jacquemont does not always display discernment.

Lawrence, II—*Some Passages in the Life of an Adventurer in the Punjab,* London, 1846. It is a readable novel that incidentally describes the court and the administration. He criticises the military system of Ranjit Singh. The information, the observation and the criticism supplied under the guise of fiction are valuable.

Malcolm—*Sketch of the Sikhs,* 1812. It is one of the earliest accounts of the Sikhs and one of the best. But for the Ranjit Singh period it does not supply much information.

Masson—*Narrative of Various Journeys*—London, 1858. The information supplied by him is to be carefully used as in the case of all foreign travellers. The further difficulty is that he gives us no dates. He is also at times fanciful.

McGregor—An army doctor, wrote the history of the Sikhs in two volumes, London, 1846. It is valuable so far as the period of the Sikh wars is concerned. For the period ending in 1839 it is not of much value.

Mohanlal—*Journey of a Tour* through the Punjab and Afghanistan in the Company of Lt. Burnes, Calcutta, 1834. It is important because it comes from the pen of an Indian who was one of the first products of English education in India. Accounts of Indian travellers are very important as a set-off against the narrative of the European travellers.

Moorcroft and Trebeck—*Travels in the Himalayan Provinces,* 1819-25, John Murray, London, 1837. It is, as a writer in the *Calcutta Review* notes, "a thing of shreds and patches". The compiler Horace Wilson has not been able to make it intelligible at all places. In the *Asiatic Journal,* 1835, 1836, we have an account of travels written by Gholam Hyder Khan who accompanied Moorcraft in his journey. This account of Gholam Hyder is edited with notes by Major Hearsey. Some of the letters of Moorcroft have also been published in the *Asiatic Journal.* Moorcraft gives us much valuable information on Lahore-Ladak relations and on Ranjit's rule in Kashmir. In the Journal of the Punjab Historical Society, Vol. II, part I, an important and interesting letter of Moorcroft to Ochterlony has been published. The letter is dated May 12, 1820.

Osborne—*The Court and the Camp of Ranjit Singh,* London, 1840. It is the picture of a very able British official observer. As a description of the manners of the Chief, the characteristics of the different men, it is excellent. The introduction is based on Prinsep and Murray.

Punjab Government Records (Published)—The Ludhiana Agency Volume, 1808-1815, is helpful. It shows the mutual doubts and suspicions of the English and Sikh Governments during 1809-1812.

Prinsep, H. T.—*Origin of the Sikh Power,* 1834. Based on a report by Captain Murray, who collected his materials while he was Ochterlony's Assistant at Ludhiana. As a compiler Prinsep had also before him some reports of Wade and other Indian agents and intelligencers of the British Government. It narrates political history as also customs and manners.

Shahamat Ali—*The Sikhs and the Afghans,* John Murray, 1847. He was in the Punjab immediately before and after the death of Ranjit Singh. He was a school-fellow of Mohanlal.

He is one of those very rare writers of Sikh history who have attempted, however briefly, to give an account of Sikh civil administration.

Smyth, Carmichael—*A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore,* London, 1847. May be valuable in some details. But he records bazar rumours. His reliance on uncorroborated hear-say evidence makes him undependable.

Steinbach—*The Punjab,* London, 1846—He was in the Sikh service and as such had an opportunity of looking into things. But his account is much too brief to be of value.

Vigne—*A Personal Narrative of a Visit to Ghazni, Kabul, Afghanistan,* London, 1840. As a book of travels it is delightful reading. But he had all the limitations of a foreign traveller ignorant of the manners and customs of the country. We must be very discriminating in the information we obtain from him.

Secondary works:—

Andrew—*The Indus and its Provinces.*

Cunningham—*History of the Sikhs* (Garrett), 1918.

Ferrier—*History of the Afghans,* 1858.

Grey and Garrett—*European Military Adventurers in India.*

Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society, Vol. II, Part I.

Kaye—*Life and Correspondence of Charles Lord Metcalfe,* London, 1854.

Kohli—*Army of Ranjit Singh,* Journal of Indian History, Feb., 1922.

Kohli—*A Book of Military Parwanas,* Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1940.

Khalsa Durbar Records, Catalogue, Vols. I & II.

Panikkar—*Gulab Singh.*

Sarkar J.—*Bibliography of Sikh History,* Modern Review, 1917.

Rise and Fall of the Sikhs, Modern Review, 1911.

Sethi—*The Lahore Durbar.*

Thompson—*The Life of Charles Lord Metcalfe.*

Thornton—*A Gazetteer of the Countries adjoining to India on the North-West.*

Zaki Saleh—*Origins of British Influence in Mesopotamia,* New York, 1941.

INDEX

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