



## **Department of Distance Education**

### **Punjabi University, Patiala**

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**Class : B.A. III (History)**

**Sem. : 6**

**Paper : History of the Punjab : 1799-1966 Unit : I**

**Medium : English**

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#### ***Lesson No.***

- 1.1 : Early Career & Conquest of Ranjit Singh
- 1.2 : Major Conquests of Ranjit Singh
- 1.3 : Anglo-Sikh Relations (Section - B)
- 1.4 : Civil and Military Administration of Ranjit Singh

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## RISE OF RANJIT SINGH AND HIS EARLY CONQUESTS OF THE PUNJAB

**Early Life :** Maharaja Ranjit Singh was born at Gujranwala in November 1780. (There are also few other opinions regarding his birth place). His father Sardar Mahan Singh was the leader of Sukarchakia Misl. He was a brave soldier and within a very short period he conquered the neighbouring territories and established his own independent state. Mahan Singh was the son of Charat Singh who gave tough fight at the time of Ahmed Shah Abdali's Invasion of the Punjab. Ranjit Singh's mother Raj Kaur was the sister of Raja Bhag Singh of Jind State. Ranjit Singh lost his left eye due to a severe attack of smallpox. It may be noted that much attention was not paid towards his education due to the reasons : firstly, being only son of his parents he got too much affection from them; secondly, at the age of 12, Ranjit Singh's father died and his mother and Diwan Lakhpat Rai paid no attention towards his education. According to Latif, Ranjit Singh spent most of his time in hunting. However, it is a noteworthy that in those days, education had not so much importance. Ranjit Singh was fond of military training instead of education. As he grew up, he became perfect in the art of war and usually accompanied his father in expeditions. He himself admitted before the British political agent, Captain Wade that he got about 20,000 cartridges at the time of his father's death and used all of them in hunting.

In 1796, Ranjit Singh was married to Mehtab Kaur, daughter of Sardar Gurbux Singh son of Sardar Jai Singh of Kanheyia Misl. His mother-in-law, Sada Kaur was a woman of extraordinary courage and ability. It is noticeable that Ranjit Singh's early success was due to her help. This relationship united the Sukarchakia and Kanheyia Misls. It may be mentioned here that according to Griffin, Ranjit Singh had 18 wives.

**Early Administration (1792 to 1797) :** At the time of Mahan Singh's death Ranjit Singh was a child. Therefore, the administration of Sukarchakia Misl was run by his mother Raj Kaur. She was a woman of indifferent character and the real power rested in the hands of her favourite Diwan Lakhpat Rai. When in 1796 Ranjit Singh married Mehtab Kaur, his mother-in-law Sada Kaur began to take part in the administration of his misl.

Thus, during the early years of Ranjit Singh's the administration of his misl was in the hands of three persons, i.e. Raj Kaur, Dewan Lakhpat Rai and Sada Kaur. Historians have called this period the rule of three. However, Sada Kaur wanted to bring the territories of Sukarchakia under her control. But the rise of

Ranjit Singh to power spoiled her designs.

At the age of seventeen, Ranjit Singh decided to take administration in his own hands from his mother, Raj Kaur, Dewan Lakhpat Rai and Sada Kaur. Murray, Princep, Wade and Latif have noted that Ranjit Singh had grown tired of the intrigues and scandals of his mother and the Dewan and therefore he tried to get rid of them. Major Smith goes to the extent of attributing to Ranjit Singh the murder of his mother. He further notes that such pictures were often seen and soled in which he was shown murdering his mother. But Dr. N. K. Sinha proves that Ranjit Singh did not commit the murder of his mother and Dewan Lakhpat Rai. He has further argued that this story is merely a gossip and is not supported by any evidence. According to Hugal, Ranjit Singh never involved himself in any body's murder. Burnes further adds that Ranjit Singh never sentenced any body to death. It is impossible to think that he is the murderer of his mother. Sinha further writes that Dewan Lakhpat Rai died his natural death like Bairam Khan, though Akbar is also doubted for the latter's murder.

### **Conquest of Lahore, 1799**

The first conquest of Ranjit Singh in the trans-Sutlej Misl was that of Lahore. At that time Lahore was under three Bhangi Sardars-Chet Singh, Mohar Singh and Sahib Singh. But the people of Lahore were fed up with their rule. So, they thought that Ranjit Singh was the only suitable man. Therefore, the Hindus and the Muslims of Lahore sent an invitation to Ranjit Singh to invade Lahore. On the other hand Ranjit Singh had already made up his mind to conquer Lahore. He ordered his troops to march upon Lahore. He also asked his mother-in-law, Sada Kaur for help. Ultimately, Ranjit Singh captured Lahore on 7th July, 1799, without much resistance from the Bhangi Sardars.

However, a few historians are of the view that Shah Zaman, the Afghan invader during his last invasion on Punjab had lost 15 pieces of cannons in river Jhelum and Ranjit Singh sent back those cannons to Shah Zaman on the condition that he should give the charge of Lahore to him. Although Prof. Sita Ram Kohli writes that Ranjit Singh returned the cannons on the demand of Shah Zaman, but the question is whether Shah Zaman appointed Ranjit the Governor of Lahore or not? Still, some other historians hold the view that after the occupation of Lahore by Ranjit Singh, Shah Zaman on his own appointed him the Governor of Lahore.

However, it seems possible that when Ranjit Singh's uncle Dal Singh asked him to return the cannons of Shah Zaman, perhaps Ranjit Singh laid the condition that in future Shah Zaman should recognise him as the ruler of Lahore and the Punjab. Since, no other view is supported by concrete facts, so we can safely conclude that Ranjit Singh conquered Lahore with force and co-operation of the people of Lahore and that he did not get Lahore with the Khilat he received from Shah Zaman in 1800.

**Battle of Bhasin**

Under the leadership of Sardar Gulab Singh, a united front was organised against Ranjit Singh. The members of this front were Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujarat, Jodh Singh of Wazirabad, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Nizam-ud-din, the Pathan ruler of Kasur. On hearing all this Ranjit Singh also made large scale preparations and also asked his mother-in-law to give every possible assistance. At a distance of about twelve miles from Lahore Ranjit Singh confronted his enemies. But action was delayed, as both the parties over estimated the strength of each other. For two months the two forces lay encamped opposite each other. Then all of a sudden, Gulab Singh Bhangi died of excessive drinking. This incident caused confusion in the ranks of enemies and they disappeared without fighting. This incident is called the Battle of Bhasin.

**Significance of the Battle of Bhasin**

The battle of Bhasin is very significant in Ranjit Singh's career of conquests. At the battle field of Bhasin, his big rivals lost their power. If they had no mutual jealousy, they would, most probably have become a big hurdle in the progress of Ranjit Singh. According to N. K. Sinha, "Ranjit Singh got rid of a danger. After this the Sikh chieftains never had a second chance of uniting and far less of overthrowing him."

**Conquest of Akalgarh and Gujarat :** After the battle of Bhasin, Ranjit Singh left powerful Sardars unconquered and he first tried to crush the weak by force. He showed patience in conquering their territories. After the battle of Bhasin, first victims of Ranjit Singh's aggression were Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujarat and Dal Singh of Akalgarh. Sahib Singh was charged with joining the confederacy of Bhasin and Dal Singh of helping Sahib Singh.

Ranjit Singh defeated both of them. Dal Singh was taken prisoner but released later. After the death of Dal Singh, Ranjit Singh annexed Akalgarh to his empire. He also defeated Sahib Singh and occupied Gujarat.

**Conquest of Chiniot :** This territory was under Sardar Karam Singh and he had helped Sahib Singh Bhangi. After two month's siege Ranjit Singh conquered Chiniot.

**Conquest of Amritsar :** In 1805, the second important conquest of Ranjit Singh was of Amritsar. Historians have different views regarding the date of this conquest. According to Cunningham and Latif, the attack on Amritsar was made in 1802. But Sohan Lal, the court diarist of Ranjit Singh, says that Amritsar was conquered in 1805. After Gulab Singh his minor son Gurdit Singh became the ruler of Amritsar and his mother Mai Sukhan became the regent. After becoming the master of Lahore, Ranjit Singh decided to conquer Amritsar. As a pretext for attack, Ranjit Singh demanded the famous gun Zam-Zama, which had been given to his grandfather Charat Singh by Ahmed Shah Abdali, the Afghan ruler in 1764. Mai

Sukhan refused to hand over the gun. Ranjit Singh marched on Amritsar and besieged Lohgarh. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia also helped Ranjit Singh in this campaign. After small resistance Mai Sukhan and Gurdit Singh fled and took refuge in the 'Haveli' of Jodh Singh Ramgarhia. Ranjit Singh annexed the territories of Amritsar in his empire and allotted small Jagir to Mai Sukhan and his minor son Gurdit Singh.

### **Significance of the Conquest of Amritsar**

The conquest of Amritsar is significant in the career of Ranjit Singh. With the conquest of Lahore, Ranjit Singh had become master of the political capital of Punjab and with the city of Amritsar he became the master of "the religious capital of the Sikhs." With Lahore and Amritsar, as parts of the empire, Ranjit Singh was no longer just one among the Misldars but had attained a status and position far superior to them.

### **Conquest of Dallewalla Misl and the battle of Rahon**

The most powerful chief of this misl was Sardar Tara Singh Gheba. Ranjit Singh did not take up arms against this so long Tara Singh Gheba was alive. He died in 1807. On hearing this news Ranjit Singh immediately launched an attack on Dallewalla Misl. Tara Singh Gheba's widow offered small resistance at Rahon but could not continue for long. Ranjit Singh annexed Dallewalla Misl. Its annual income was of Rs. 4 Lacs.

**Conquest of Karorsinghia Misl (1810) :** The territory towards the south of river Satluj was under Sardar Bhagal Singh. In 1810, Ranjit Singh attacked this misl and after allotting a small jagir to Misldar's widow, annexed the remaining part of this empire.

**Conquest of Faizalpuria Misl (1810) :** The territory of this misl was on both sides of River Satluj. The brave chief of this misl was Sardar Budh Singh and he refused to submit before Ranjit Singh. On his refusal a big force under Diwan Mohkam Chand was sent against him. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Jodh Singh Ramgarhia also helped in this campaign. Ranjit Singh's forces easily captured Jalandhar and Phillaur. Budh Singh crossed the Satluj and Ranjit Singh annexed all his territory lying to the north of Satluj.

**Conquest of Ramgarhia Misl (1815) :** After the conquest of Bhasin, Ranjit Singh conquered his weak rivals by force and with powerful Sardars he made friendship. In 1803 Jassa Singh Ramgarhia died at the age of 75. After his death Sardar Jodh Singh became the ruler of this misl. Ranjit Singh established friendly relations with him and to give him honour he began to call him 'Babaji.' Ranjit Singh did not take up arms against this misl so long Jodh Singh was alive. But Jodh Singh died in 1815. Ranjit Singh then annexed this misl. The annual income of this misl was about Rs. 6 Lacs.

**Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia :** Ranjit Singh defeated all the misldars except only two powerful sardars Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Jodh Singh Ramgarhia. Ranjit Singh did not use force against them; rather he dealt with diplomacy. In 1801 Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh exchanged turbans (which stands for brotherly relationship) with each other at Tarn Taran pledged to be brothers. In 1802 Ranjit Singh conquered the territories of Chaudhry Kaura Mal and gave these to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. Fateh Singh always helped Ranjit Singh in his difficult Military expeditions. But Ranjit Singh began to interfere in the affairs of Fateh Singh. Fateh Singh did great services for Ranjit Singh. But when Fateh Singh died, Ranjit Singh got heavy amounts from his son as Nazrana.

**Conquest of Cis-Satluj States :** Ranjit Singh had a profound desire to establish a national Sikh state in Punjab after conquering the territory of Majha (the territory lying beyond river Beas) and Malwa (the territory lying towards south of river Satluj). Therefore, Ranjit Singh wanted to conquer the territory of Cis-Satluj. This territory was under Phulkian rulers. The most powerful king among them was Sahib Singh but he was not far-sighted. The other rulers were of Nabha and Jind, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind was an uncle of Ranjit Singh.

**First expedition of Malwa (1806) :** On 1806, a serious broke out over the possession of a small village, Dalaudhi between the rulers of Patiala and Nabha and there was every possibility of hostilities. Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha approached Ranjit Singh through Raja Bhag Singh of Jind for help. Ranjit Singh was already waiting for an opportunity. He immediately marched into the territory of Malwa and occupied the village Dalaudhi. He compelled the ruler of Patiala to give him tribute. On his way back he conquered the territories of Ludhiana. Dakha, Raikot, Jagraon and Ghugrana and distributed these among his friends.

**Second expedition of Malwa (1807) :** Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala had a serious quarrel with his Rani Aas Kaur. This time Rani Aas Kaur invited Ranjit Singh for help and in return, she promised to give him a necklace of diamonds and a brass cannon. Ranjit Singh marched on Malwa second time. Before the arrival of Ranjit Singh both Raja and Rani settled their family dispute but even then the Rani gave to Ranjit Singh the promised presents. After a few day's stay at Patiala, Ranjit Singh marched towards Ambala and forced the Sardars of this area to pay him tributes. On his way back he conquered Mani Majra, Wadni, Zira and Kot Kapura. In December, 1807, he reached Lahore.

**The meeting of the Sikh Sardars of Malwa at Samana :** The Malwa expedition of Ranjit Singh alarmed Malwa rulers and they realised that Ranjit Singh would gradually annex their territories. They approached the British Resident at Delhi for protection. In 1809 Ranjit Singh had to conclude the treaty of Amritsar with

the British and river Satluj was declared the boundary between Ranjit Singh and the British.

### **MINOR CONQUESTS OF MUSLIM STATES**

**Conquest of Kasur :** When Ranjit Singh conquered Lahore in 1799, the Pathan Chief of Kasur, Nizam-ud-din alongwith the Bhangi Sardar took part in the battle of Bhasin against Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh died and the members of the coalition did not cooperate with one another and Ranjit Singh won a bloodless victory. From 1801 to 1806, a number of expeditions were sent against Nizam-ud-din. Tributes were exacted from him. In 1801 Nizam-ud-din had died and was succeeded by his brother Qutub-ud-din. He tried to recover his independence and began to negotiate with Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan. When Ranjit Singh came to know of this, he sent an expedition under Jodh Singh Ramgarhia against Qutub-ud-din. The Afghans were defeated at two places, and then they took refuge in the fort. The Sikhs sieged the fort and after a month's siege Qutub-ud-din surrendered. Ranjit Singh treated him nicely and for his maintenance granted him the Jagir of Mamdot. This conquest made Ranjit Singh more popular.

**Conquest of Sheikhpura, Jhang and Bahawalpur :** In 1803 Ranjit Singh attacked the territories of Kharalas of Sheikhpura and Jhang and annexed these. In the same year, he sent a message to the Sial Chief, Ahmed Khan of Jhang and Chiniot, to submit. But Ahmed Khan did not sent a favourable reply. So Ranjit Singh marched against him and defeated him. Ahmed Khan saved his life by paying a tribute of Rs. 60,000. In the same year Ranjit Singh exacted tributes from the chief of Sahiwal etc. In 1805 Ranjit Singh sent an expedition against Amir Khan and the amount of tribute was raised to 12,00,000. In 1807 Ranjit Singh came to know that Ahmed Khan Sial had negotiated a secret treaty with Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan and they were preparing against him. Consequently Ranjit Singh sent expedition against Ahmed Khan. He was defeated and his territories of Jhang and Chiniot were annexed and for his maintenance a Jagir was granted. In the same year Nawab of Bahawalpur was forced to accept Ranjit Singh's overlordship and pay him tribute.

**Conquest of Hill States :** In 1808, Ranjit Singh made a plan to conquer the hill states. For the realisation of this work he appointed Dewan Mohkam Chand. First of all, Dewan defeated Sardar Jaimal Singh of Pathankot and received Rs. 40,000. After this he forced the chief of Jamrota to accept the lordship of Ranjit Singh. Then he forced the rulers of Chamba and Basoli to pay tributes of Rs. 8,000 to the Maharaja.

**Conquest of Kangra :** In 1809 after conquering the above mentioned hill chiefs. Ranjit Singh occupied the fort of Kangra. This fort was under Sansar Chand Katoch.

**Relevant Pages of Books for Further Study**

1. Narang, K.S. and Gupta, Hari Ram : *History of the Punjab*, pp. 267-304.
2. Latif, S.M. : *History of the Punjab*, pp. 346-81.
3. Cunningham, J.D. : *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 107-30.

**Self Check Exercise**

1. Fill in the blank :
  - (i) Ranjit Singh annexed Dallewalia Misl in .....A.D.
  - (ii) According to Sohan Lal, the court diarist of Ranjit Singh, Amritsar was conquered by Maharaja Ranjit in .....A.D.
  - (iii) With the conquest of Lahore Ranjit Singh became the master of the ..... Capital of Punjab.
  - (iv) The annual income of Ramgarhia Misl was about..... rupees.
  - (v) Ranjit Singh signed the treaty of Amritsar with the British in .....A.D.
  - (vi) In 1806 Ranjit Singh led his first expedition against.....
  - (vii) Maharaja Ranjit Singh was born in .....A.D.
  - (viii) Raj Kaur was the ..... of Ranjit Singh.
2. Mark (✓) the correct answers :
  - (i) The second expedition of Malwa was undertaken by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in :
    - (a) 1806 (b) 1807
  - (ii) The treaty of Amritsar was signed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in :
    - (a) 1809 (b) 1838.

2. (i) b (ii) a

1. (i) 1807 (ii) 1805 (iii) Political (iv) Rs. 65,000  
 (v) 1809 (vi) Malwa State (vii) 1780 (viii) Mother.

**Key of Answers****Check up your position**

Excellent	:	Above 6 correct answers.
Good	:	5-6 correct answers.
Satisfactory	:	4 correct answers.
Unsatisfactory	:	Below 4 correct answers.



**MAJOR CONQUESTS AND NORTH-WEST FRONTIER  
POLICY OF RANJIT SINGH****CONQUESTS OF MULTAN**

When Ranjit Singh ascended the throne; Multan was a province of Afghanistan. It was ruled by Muzaffar Khan who was appointed the Governor of the province in 1779 by Timur Shah, son of Ahmed Shah Abdali. Towards the end of the 18th century, Afghanistan was in the throes of the war of succession and as a result the control of Multan became very nominal, and to all intents and purposes, Multan became independent.

**Strategic Significance of Multan**

Ranjit Singh was very keen to occupy Multan, because he considered it very important from many points of view. Firstly, it was a great trade centre. It provided market both for the goods from Central Asian countries as well as those of India. Secondly, the annual income from Multan of about Rs. 7,00,000 could add substantially to the exchequer of Lahore Darbar. Thirdly its occupation had a vital strategic importance. It was situated between Bahawalpur and trans-Sindh states such as Dera Gazi Khan. Once Multan was conquered, it could become virtually impossible for these states to make a united cause against Ranjit Singh. Multan is also important because of its significant geographical location. It is situated on the route which connects the Central Asian Countries to India via Qandhar, Quetta and Dera Gazi Khan. Since some of the invaders had attacked India from this route, Ranjit Singh considered the conquest of Multan imperative for the safety of his possessions in India.

In view of the aforesaid importance of Multan, Ranjit Singh sent six expeditions to conquer it; and finally achieved his object only in the sixth expedition.

**First Expedition (1802)**

In 1802, Ranjit Singh sent the first expedition. There was opposition from many Sardars of Ranjit Singh who felt that the time was not opportune for such an expedition but the Maharaja did not give up his idea. The Lahore army entered Multan. Although Muzaffar Khan made all preparation to oppose the Lahore army yet he thought it prudent to conclude peace with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He sent his envoy to the Maharaja to negotiate peace. Maharaja having accepted the offer of advancing a large sum as annual tribute, withdrew his forces and returned to Lahore.

**Second Expedition (1805)**

In 1805, the second expedition was sent to Multan. The immediate cause for undertaking this expedition was the non-remittance of the annual tribute by Muzaffar Khan. But even this expedition could not achieve much. Hardly had the Maharaja reached the village Mahatam when he got news that the Maratha chief Holkar pursued by Lord Lake had crossed into his territory. Lord Lake had barely halted at the border of the Maharaja's territory. Since this event could have vital political implication, Ranjit Singh thought it advisable to rush back to deal with the matter personally after arriving at a settlement with Muzaffar Khan.

**Third Expedition (March 15, 1807) :**

Maharaja Ranjit Singh led the third expedition in March, 1807. The main reason for undertaking this expedition was the provocation provided by Muzaffar Khan; he gave assistance to Nawab Kutab Khan of Kasur and secondly, sheltered Ahmed Khan Sayal, the ruler of Jhang, whom the Maharaja had defeated. The net result of this expedition was that peace was concluded through the mediation of the Nawab of Bahawalpur by virtue of which Muzaffar Khan paid Rs. 70,000. After that Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore.

**Fourth Expedition (February 24, 1810) :**

For the fourth time, Lahore armies marched to Multan under the able command of Dewan Mohkam Chand on February 24, 1810. The Lahore armies reached the walls of the fort having conquered the city of Multan. There was exchange of gun fire between the two parties. Sardar Nihal Singh succeeded in making a breach in the left wall of the fort with the help of the mines he had laid underneath, although in doing so he and twelve of his friends suffered fatal injuries. On March 21, 1810, the Lahore armies followed up the advantage of the battered wall and launched an offensive, but it proved to be of no avail. Another offensive was undertaken on March 25, 1810, but this too did not yield much. In this way, after prolonged fighting of two months, Ranjit Singh had to accept those terms which he had rejected when offered before. Accordingly, Muzaffar Khan paid Rs. 2,50,000/- as war indemnity and promised to render military assistance as and when, he was called upon to do so by the Maharaja. On April 14, 1810, Sikh armies came back to Lahore.

**Fifth Expedition (1816-17) :**

In 1816-17, another expedition was planned for the conquest of Multan. This time there was not much of fighting. This expedition is important particularly because Akali Phula Singh and his followers showed praiseworthy valour. Phula Singh and his band of Akali soldiers made such a vigorous assault on the Multan forces stationed on the outskirts of the city that Muzaffar Khan felt unnerved and gave up the idea of resisting the Lahore armies. He bought peace by giving Rs. 90,000 as tribute to the Maharaja.

**Sixth and last Expedition (1818) :**

In the winter of 1817-18, Ranjit Singh made a massive preparation for the final conquest of Multan. On January 14, 1818, a large force numbering about 25,000 men under the nominal leadership of Prince Kharak Singh (but in reality under the command of Misr Diwan Chand) set out from Lahore to conquer Multan. After conquering Khangarh and Muzaffarbad, the Lahore forces advanced further and occupied the city of Multan. After this, the Sikh forces got busy with the capture of Multan Fort, which was noted for its impregnability. It was built on an elevation as compared with the level of the city and was surrounded by a ditch which was fairly deep and always full of water. No doubt it was not an easy task but equally strong was the iron will of the Sikhs to capture it. The Afghans, under the command of Muzaffar Khan, put up a gallant defence and gave a determined fight to the Sikhs.

In June 1818, the Sikh forces succeeded in capturing the fort, Muzaffar Khan and his five sons were killed. His sixth son received severe wounds in the face and the other two submitted to the Maharaja and were saved and given Jagir. A few of the garrison escaped with their lives and the whole city was given to plunder. The fort of Multan thus fell into the hands of Ranjit Singh on Monday, the first day of June, 1818.

The Maharaja felt extremely happy and celebrated the victory on a grand scale. Misr Dewan Chand, the victor of Multan, was awarded the title of 'Jafar Jang.'

**Conquest of Attock, Kashmir and Derajat**

Kashmir like Multan, was also one of the provinces of Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, before the rise of Ranjit Singh all the Multan states of the Punjab recognised the sovereignty of the ruler of Afghanistan and certainly it was due to the tact of the Maharaja that many such states had accepted hegemony of the Maharaja, while others were to follow soon.

**First Expedition to Kashmir (1813)**

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Maharaja made up his mind to conquer it, Kashmir was under Ata Muhammad Khan. In 1811, Ranjit Singh conquered Bhimber and Rajori and in this accomplished the first step towards the conquest of Kashmir.

In 1812, Fateh Khan Barakzai, the Prime Minister of Afghanistan made a plan to lead a punitive expedition of Kashmir to order to punish Ata Mohammad, who had rendered help to Shah Shuja in the war of succession for the throne of Afghanistan. But it so happened that when Fateh Khan led an Afghan attack on Kashmir, at that very moment, Ranjit Singh also sent his forces under the command of Dewan Mohkam Chand to invade Kashmir.

In November 1812, Fateh Khan and the Maharaja met at Rohtas. After a good

long drawn out discussion, the two parties reached an agreement. It was decided that Ranjit Singh would help Fateh Khan with an army of 12,000 soldiers and in lieu thereof, Fateh Khan after conquering Kashmir would give half the booty and a sum 9,00,000 annually out of the province. The Maharaja considered the decision diplomatically important. Such a settlement eventually paved the way for the conquest of Kashmir for the Maharaja. Moreover, Ranjit Singh was pre-occupied with planning the release of Shah Shuja from his imprisonment at the hands of the ruler of Kashmir. The Maharaja ultimately wanted Shah Shuja to join his family members in Lahore. In return for this help the eldest and the dearest wife of Shah Shuja Wafa Begum, had promised to give the diamond Koh-i-noor.

The Sikh armies under the command of Dewan Mohkam Chand advanced to Kashmir along with the armies of Fateh Khan. According to Dr. Chopra, Fateh Khan had no intention of allowing the Sikhs to take part in the campaign. He merely wanted them to help during the enterprise. Soon both the armies crossed the difficult pass of Pir Panjal and reached the valley of Kashmir and laid siege to Shergarh. Though the Sikh forces were not accustomed to the biting cold of Kashmir valley, yet they fought valiantly, Ata Mohammad Khan fled, and the forts and strongholds of Kashmir were occupied by Fateh Khan without much opposition.

After the conquest of Kashmir, Fateh Khan refused to share the spoils with Ranjit Singh. He only handed over Shah Shuja, the ex-King of Kabul (who was living as prisoner with Ata Mohammad of Kashmir) to Dewan Mohkam Chand. Ranjit Singh made good his loss by extorting the famous 'Koh-i-noor' diamond from Shah Shuja. But still he felt that he had been outmaneuvered by Fateh Khan in the joint invasion of the Kashmir valley. He, therefore, wanted to retrieve his prestige and this he did by conquering Attock.

### **Conquest of Attock and the Battle of Hazro (1813)**

The fort of Attock is situated on the right bank of the river Indus and was considered as the gateway to India. It was held by Ata Mohammad brother Jahan dad Khan. After the defeat of his brother in Kashmir, Jahandad Khan grew apprehensive about his own position. He could easily see himself as the next victim of Fateh Khan's aggression. Ranjit Singh took advantage of his apprehension and consequently sent Faqir Aziz-ud-din to open negotiations with Jahan Khan and asked him to hand over the fort in return for a rich Jagir. Jahan Dad Khan agreed and thus without any fighting, the Sikhs occupied Attock.

But when the news of the occupation of Attock, reached Fateh Khan in Kashmir he was greatly upset. He felt his brother Azam Khan in Kashmir and himself descended to wrest Attock from the hands of the Sikhs.

Ranjit Singh also sent his army under Dewan Mohkam Chand to defend Attock. After a few skirmishes in which the Sikhs fared better, the famous battle of Hazro

took place on June 20, 1813. The Afghans suffered a crushing defeat and it is said that about 2,000 Afghans lost their lives. Fateh Khan retreated and retired to Kabul.

The victory of Hazro is a landmark in the history of Ranjit Singh's career of conquest. It raised the morale of the Sikh soldiers and thereafter they became more bold and aggressive in their attacks on the Afghan territory.

### **Second Expedition to Kashmir (1814)**

Encouraged by the success of Harzo, Ranjit Singh again decided to send an expedition to Kashmir and to conquer it. In the month of June, the expeditionary force reached Rajori. Following the treacherous advice of the chief of the place, Ranjit Singh committed the initial mistake of dividing his force into two sections. The main body which was commanded by Maharaja himself was to take the Punch route, while the other detachment, under Dewan Ram Dayal, was to proceed by the Braham Gala via Supin.

Partly because of the division of the army and partly because of difficult means of transportation and communication both the detachment could not keep contact and liaison. As soon as the detachment under Dewan Ram Dayal reached Kashmir valley enroute Pir Punjal, Azan Khan the Governor of Kashmir attacked it. The Sikhs suffered heavy losses.

At this juncture, Ranjit Singh sent a force of 5000 under Bhai Ram Singh, but nothing tangible could be achieved. Ranjit Singh realising the futility of defending his position with insufficient supplies and troops decided upon withdrawal. The retreating army suffered heavily. Generals, like Fateh Singh Chachi, Desa Singh Mann and Gurbakash Singh were killed in this battle. In this way, this expedition proved an utter failure.

### **Third Kashmir Expedition (1819)**

Kashmir was finally conquered in 1819. The circumstances in this year were favourable to Ranjit Singh. Firstly, Multan's conquest had given fresh confidence to the Maharaja's soldiers. Secondly, Bir Dhar the able Minister of the Governor of Kashmir had taken refuge in the court of Ranjit Singh after falling out with his masters.

He supplied useful information to the Maharaja concerning the strength of the Afghan army and the various routes leading to the Kashmir valley.

Ranjit Singh prepared a large expeditionary force, which he divided into three sections. Advance section was put under the command of Misr Dewan Chand who was the architect of victory in Multan. The second detachment was placed under Prince Kharak Singh, with orders to support the former. Ranjit Singh himself commanded the third column which formed the reserve at Wazirabad. The overall nominal command was vested in Prince Kharak Singh, although the real commander

was Misr Dewan Chand. At the end of June, 1819, the Lahore forces occupied Behram Galla Pass, thence moved to Pir Panjal and crossed it. Jabbar Khan advanced to meet the Sikh army. A severe fight took place between the two armies on the plains of Supin. The Afghans under Jabbar Khan put up a gallant defence but eventually they suffered a crushing defeat. Jabbar Khan had a narrow escape.

On the 4th day of July, the Sikh forces occupied Srinagar. Ranjit Singh gave away large sums of money in charity to commemorate this victory. Misr Dewan Chand, the victor was given an additional title of 'Fateh-o-Nusrat Nasib' i.e. one who is determined to win.

#### **Conquest of Dera Gazi Khan (1820)**

In 1820, Ranjit Singh sent Khushal Singh to conquer Dera Gazi Khan. Its Governor was expelled and Dera Gazi Khan was handed over to Nawab of Bahawalpur in return for a heavy annual rent.

In 1821, Ranjit Singh defeated Hazi Ahmed Khan, who held Dera Ismail Khan and as a result Tonk, Bannu, Liah and Kundian, which were under Ahmed Khan were annexed to the kingdom of Maharaja.

#### **Conquest of Peshawar**

In 1818, taking advantage of the political chaos in Afghanistan, following the murder of Wazir Fateh Khan, the Sikh army advanced upon Peshawar which on account of its geographical location, had always been the gateway of India. Ranjit Singh occupied the town and stayed there for four days. During this short stay he received about Rs. 25,000 as 'nazrana'. The shrewd Maharaja, however, felt that he was not strong enough to maintain his authority beyond the Attock region and consequently gave Peshawar to his old ally Jahandad Khan, ex-Governor of Attock, and himself returned to Lahore.

But Azam Khan, the Wazir of Kabul did not like Ranjit Singh success against the Afghan Sardars of Mankera, Derajat and Kashmir. This was an unpalatable truth for Azam Khan. This being so he wanted to measure his sword with the Maharaja to re-establish his authority over Peshawar and by the end of January 1823, he succeeded in occupying it. The ruler of Peshawar favoured this move of Azam Khan and hid themselves in the Yusufzai hill. In this way, Azam Khan occupied Peshawar without any fight. Shortly, he called upon the Afghans of Peshawar and Attock regions to unite under his banner and wage a Jihad or 'holy war' against the Sikhs and thus recover the entire Afghan territory under their control.

Ranjit Singh on getting news of these developments despatched a huge force under the command of Prince Sher Singh and Dewan Kirpa Ram—Misr Dewan Chand, Hari Singh Nalwa, Attar Singh Sandhanwalia and Dhanna Singh Malwai were also sent with the army to direct its operations. Soon after sending its forces, Ranjit Singh also reached Peshawar alongwith Akali Phula Singh and his followers.

**Battle of Naushera (1823)**

On March 16, 1823, the Sikh forces clashed with the Pathan armies at Naushera. The Sikhs fought so gallantly that at one time they mastered the situation. The hero of this assault was Akali Phula Singh with his band of Akalis, rushed into the battle-field and made dangerous penetration into the enemy's formations. Akali Phula Singh was killed in action and defeat of Sikhs seemed certain. Ranjit Singh spoke with great feelings to the Sikhs. Sikh soldiers rallied around his call of Sat Sri Akal and with tremendous zeal and energy stormed the Afghans and forced them to flee from the battle-field. Azam Khan, who was witnessing all this from the opposite bank of the Indus could not join the Pathan armies, because General Ventura and Hari Singh Nalwa were stationed on this side of the river to accord them a befitting welcome with artillery fires.

The Maharaja then marched to Peshawar and made a triumphant entry into the city on 16th March, 1823. But still he did not consider it prudent to annex Peshawar and administer it directly. He gave it to Yar Mohammad in return for an annual tribute of Rs. 10,000. After these arrangements, he himself returned at Lahore.

The victory was very important in history on account of two reasons. Firstly, the turbulent tribesmen began to fear the might of the Maharaja and secondly it enabled the Maharaja to have control over the province from Jamrud to Malahand and also the area from Bannu to Kohat.

In 1833-34, the ruler of Kabul and Shah Shuja (ex-ruler of Kabul) were involved in civil war. Ranjit Singh took advantage of it. He sent his general Hari Singh Nalwa to annex Peshawar. Its Muslim Governor Sultan Mohammad, was expelled and Peshawar was annexed to the Sikh dominions. For the first time, Hari Singh Nalwa, a non-Muslim Governor was appointed to rule over the turbulent Afghans.

In 1835, Dost Mohammad, the Afghan ruler decided to re-establish his supremacy over Peshawar. Like his brother Mohammad Azam, he also gave a religious dimension to the struggle. He called upon the Mohammadan tribes of the region (namely Khataks, Yusufzais etc.) to join him in the holy war against the Sikhs. He also called upon the British to help him but the British politely declined to interfere in his affairs. Even then according to an estimate, he collected as many as 40,000 Afghans and set out to recover Peshawar. Ranjit Singh scored a diplomatic trick on Dost Mohammad. He started negotiations with Dost Mohammad. While the Afghan ruler was engrossed in negotiations Ranjit Singh mobilised an army consisting of 25,000 soldiers and despatched it to Peshawar to meet the Afghans.

For some time Ranjit Singh's forces lay opposite Dost Mohammad's forces but the latter could not muster enough courage to take initiative. At last without giving battle the Afghan forces retreated. This was a great bloodless victory for

Ranjit Singh and it dealt a serious blow to the reputation and prestige of Dost Mohammad.

**Conquest of Shabqudar Fort and Construction of the Fort of Jamraud :**

In order to ensure the safety of Peshawar, Ranjit Singh conquered the fort of Shabqudar and built the fort of Jamraud right on the mouth of the pass of Khaibar.

In 1837, Dost Mohammad made a last attempt to recover Peshawar. He sent a large force under the joint command of his sons, Akbar and Sham-ud-din. The Sikh forces led by Hari Singh Nalwa advanced to meet the Afghans. The hard contested battle was fought at Jamraud. Hari Singh Nalwa was killed but the Afghans failed to dislodge the Sikhs from Jamraud and after some time, they gave up the project.

This battle disheartened the ruler of Afghan so much that for sometime he abandoned the idea of recovering Peshawar. In 1838, no doubt he asked the British to help in recovering the much coveted city of Peshawar, but the English refused to put any pressure on Ranjit Singh.

**Extent of Ranjit Singh's Kingdom :**

At the height of his power, Ranjit Singh's kingdom comprised an area of 1,40,000 square miles in the north, it extended, on the side of Ladakh and Iskardu and on the other to the Sulaiman hills. In the south east it extended upto the river Satluj and in the South West upto Shikarpur but excluding that city.

**SECTION-II**

**North West Frontier Policy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh**

The North-West Frontier has always been a serious problems for the Rulers of India and Ranjit Singh also had a face a number of difficulties with regard to this issue.

Having strengthened his position in the Punjab, the Maharaja embarked upon the conquest of the North-Western areas of Punjab. Studying the plan of these conquests we find two clear phases. In the first phase, Ranjit Singh conquered Bannu, Tonk, Kohat, Dera Ghazi Khan and Peshawar but did not consolidate these areas. He subjugated Peshawar but handed over its administration of Jahan Dad Khan then to Yar Mohammad and Sultan Mohammad respectively, who gave only annual tribute to Ranjit Singh. Likewise he gave Dera Ghazi Khan to Nawab of Bhawalpur in lieu of the annual tribute. He captured Dera Ismail Khan but gave it to Hafiz Ahmed Khan, who promised to remain loyal to the Lahore Darbar.

In the second phase which began with the defeat of Sayyad Ahmed (1827), the above mentioned trans-Sindh territories began to be brought under the direct rule of the Lahore Darbar.

After he occupied the frontier region, Ranjit Singh followed a policy which was fundamentally not very different from that followed by the British Government



in the years following the Sikhs wars. This policy can be summed up as a hit and run policy, i.e. when any particular tribe became aggressive and committed too many raids, a military column went into that area and inflicted whatever punishment it could. The multineers and their activities were kept in check by a moveable column constantly in the field.

**Tribal Problem**

Apart from the conquest of the north-western frontier territories there was another aspect of this problem which was closely related to the character and behaviour of the tribesmen inhabiting the areas. These tribesmen were turbulent by nature and drew pleasure in revolts and disturbances. Certainly, this was not an easy work and Ranjit Singh's renowned generals such as Dewan Ram Dayal, Amar Singh Kalal and Attar Singh were killed in action against these tribesmen. Even after the end of the revolt of Sayyad Ahmed, the situation was not very peaceful in this area.

**Defence of the North-West Frontier :**

With regard to the consolidation and special administrative problems of this region Ranjit Singh took into consideration two factors, viz. Internal peace and security and the protection of the frontier from the attack of the Afghans. Many forts were constructed in this region at his instance. Forces and armed garrisons were stationed in the neighbourhood of Peshawar. A chain of forts Attock, Khairabad, Shabqudar, Jamraud were the significant features of Ranjit Singh's plan of defence of the trans Sindh areas. The fort of Kushangarh was the most famous in the region of Hazara, besides other such as that of Nara, Darama, Jamraud and Fatehabad were also important.

**A critical appraisal of North-West Frontier Policy of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh :**

There is no doubt that all the complex problems of North-West Frontier region could not be completely resolved, yet the Maharaja succeeded to a great extent. According to Dr. Sinha, Ranjit Singh was to a large extent successful in solving his North-Western Frontier problems. So long as the Sikh Kingdom lasted, the frontier of his kingdom was defended against Afghanistan. The border tribes were not of course brought under the direct control but that was no possible under the prevailing circumstances. So far as the administration on the conquered areas on the Western Frontier was concerned, he achieved an excellent grasp of the realities of situation.

**Relevant Pages of Books for Further Study**

1. Narang, K.S. and Gupta, Hari Ram : *History of the Punjab*, pp. 286-87.

B. A. Part-III	17	History—Paper B
2. G.L.Chopra	:	<i>The Punjab as a Sovereign State</i> , pp. 10-21.
3. N.K. Sinha	:	<i>Ranjit Singh</i> , pp. 34-69.
4. G.S. Chhabra	:	<i>The Advanced History of the Punjab</i> , pp. 52-82.
5. J.D. Cunningham	:	<i>A History of the Sikhs</i> , pp. 136-45.
6. R.R. Sethi	:	<i>The Mighty and the Shrewed Maharaja</i> , pp. 136-84.
7. Sir Lepel Griffin	:	<i>Ranjit Singh</i> , pp. 182-240.

### Self-Check Exercise

- Q. 1. Fill in the blanks :
- Ranjit Singh sent the first expedition to conquer Multan in.....A.D.
  - Muzaffar Khan was the ruler of.....
  - Misr Dewan Chand, the victor of Multan was awarded the title of.....
  - The famous battle of Hazro was fought on June 20.....A.D.
  - Ranjit Singh Conquered Kashmir in ..... A.D.

- Q. 2. Mark (✓) the correct statement :

- Who was ruler of Afghanistan when Ranjit Singh conquered Peshawar?  
(a) Trans-Sindh (b) Shah Shuja (c) Dost Mohammed Khan.
- Who was the Prime Minister of Afghanistan in 1812?  
(a) Fateh Khan (b) Azam Khan.
- Who was appointed the first Governor of Kashmir by Ranjit Singh?  
(a) Dewan Moti Ram (b) Hari Singh Nalwa
- In which battle was Hari Singh Nalwa killed?  
(a) Hazro (b) Naushera (c) Jamraud
- In which battle was Akali Phula killed?  
(a) Naushera (b) Dera Ismail Khan

Q. 2. (i) c (ii) a (iii) a (iv) c  
Q. 1. (i) 1802 (ii) Multan (iii) Jafar Jung (iv) 1813 (v) 1819

### Key to Answers

### Check up your position

Excellent	:	Above 6 correct answers.
Good	:	5-6 correct answers.
Satisfactory	:	4 correct answers.
Unsatisfactory	:	Less than 4 correct answers.

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**LESSON NO. 1.3**

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**ANGLO-SIKH RELATIONS (1800-1839 A.D.)**

It will be easier to understand the Anglo-Sikh relations if we are acquainted with three facts about the history of India pertaining to the later-half of the eighteenth century which can be summed up as follows : (i) The Political situation was changing towards the end of the eighteenth century after the anarchy of about 50 years. The Mughal ruler Shah Alam II (1759-1806 A.D.) was only a nominal King. The Mughal power had considerably declined during his lifetime, and now he was constantly under the subjugation of one power or another : (ii) The Marathas, the Rohilas and other adventurous leaders had established their own independent Kingdoms. (iii) Ahmed Shah Abdali could not take advantage of his victory in the third Battle of Panipat (1761 A.D.). His army became restive and wanted to return home. His power was on the decrease since 1765. He invaded Punjab twice in 1766-67, but achieved little success. After that he remained busy in establishing his authority in Afghanistan until his death in 1773 A.D. The Sikhs took maximum advantage of this situation and in a short span of time, they became the master of the territory lying between Jhelum and Jamuna rivers. This territory was divided into twelve principalities, called misls. Each one of these Misls was independent, and had its own Sardar or leader. One of these was known as Sukerchakia Misl. Its leader was youthful Sardar Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh got to himself the title of Maharaja in the year 1801. It is to be noted that he was the most powerful ruler in the Punjab in the beginning of the 19th century. (iv) The influence of the East India Company which had established its roots in the Deccan, was now spreading to the north through Bengal. The British Government was directly responsible for the administration of the Company in India, after passing of the Pitt's India Act (1784 A.D.), capable Governor-Generals like Lord Cornwallis, (1786-1798 A.D.) and Lord Wellesley had considerably increased the territories and political influence of the East India Company. They enlarged the boundaries of the British either through conquest or through treaties. Thus, in the north-west the boundaries of the British territory touched the banks of Jamuna. The British now took greater interest in the affairs of Punjab, and wanted to gain better knowledge of this area. Their interest became even more serious when they captured Delhi in 1803 A.D. They were particularly interested in the territory lying between the Jamuna and the Satluj because there were no fixed or natural boundaries to demarcate the area of influence of different powers.

**Details of the Anglo-Sikh Relations (1800-1839 A.D.)**

(a) **The Period of increasing friendship :** The friendship between the British and Ranjit Singh was on the increase during 1800 to 1809 A.D. This period is also very important as it led to the treaty of Amritsar in 1809 A.D.

(b) **The Period of distrust :** From 1809 to 1812 there were certain misunderstandings about each other and the mutual relations were not friendly.

(c) **The Period of trust and confidence :** From 1812 to 1827 both sides trusted each other and there was continued friendship.

(d) **The Period of tension :** From 1827 to 1839 there were some territorial disputes which caused tension in their relations.

**The Period of increasing Friendship (1800-1809 A.D.)**

**Yusuf Ali Mission :** Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the East India Company had their first contact in 1800 A.D. because Zaman Shah the king of Afghanistan had attained the climax of his power in 1799. The British feared that he might try to extend his empire in India. So the British Governor General sent Yusuf Ali, with gifts for the Maharaja, in 1800. Yusuf Ali had secret instruction to win the sympathy of Ranjit Singh and to get a promise from him to the effect that Ranjit Singh will not side with Zaman Shah if the latter invaded India. Such an understanding was as much in the interest of Ranjit Singh, as it was for the British Government. He readily accepted the appeal of the British, but the danger of Zaman Shah's invasion was averted after some time, therefore, Yusuf Ali was called back.

**Agreement of Ranjit Singh with General Lake (1806 A.D.) :** Shortly after, there came another occasion for contact between Ranjit Singh and the British Jaswant Rao Holkar, who was defeated by the British, reached Amritsar in 1805 A.D. General Lake who was chasing him crossed the Satluj and reached on the bank of river Beas. However, Ranjit Singh was busy in Jhang campaign at that time. On getting the news about Holkar and General Lake he hurried back to Amritsar. Holkar requested Ranjit Singh for help against the British, but Ranjit Singh acted with prudent, restraint and farsightedness and politely refused to be drawn in this conflict. The reason appears to have been that the Maharaja was not willing to come in open conflict with the British by siding with a defeated leader. He told Holkar, in mild words, that he was unable to help him.

Therefore, a treaty was concluded between General Lake and Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. According to the terms of the agreement. Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh accepted that they would force Holkar to be atleast 30 miles away from Amritsar, and they would not plunder the British possessions. The British promised to treat Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh as their friends and honour their property.

**The treaty of Amritsar (1809 A.D.)****Circumstances leading to the Treaty of Amritsar**

**The Dispute between Nabha and Patiala :** There existed no agreement between the British and Ranjit Singh about the states of Malwa region till 1806. As such no power was completely supreme in this region. This territory was divided among some Sikh sardars, who often quarrelled with each other. Their mutual disputes enabled Ranjit Singh to interfere in this region. There was a dispute between Nabha and Patiala in 1806, concerning the ownership of a small town called Dulaudhi. Ranjit Singh was made the arbitrator in this dispute at the request of Jaswant Singh. Raja of Nabha and his companion Bhag Singh, the Raja of Jind, Ranjit Singh crossed the Satluj at the head of a huge army and reached Patiala. Sahib Singh, the Raja of Patiala had to yield before Ranjit Singh, and offered him a purse of valuable gifts. Ranjit Singh occupied Ludhiana on his return journey, but gifted it to his maternal uncle Bhag Singh of Jind. He also captured Dakha, Ghungrana, Rajkot and Jagraon and handed these over to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Mohkam Chand.

**The Dispute between the Ruler of Patiala, Sahib Singh and His Rani Aas Kaur (1807) :** Rani Aus Kaur fell out with her husband, Raja Sahib Singh, in 1807 A.D. The Rani invited Ranjit Singh and promised to give him a brass gun and a precious necklace if he got the dispute in her favour. But the Raja and Rani made up their dispute before the arrival of Ranjit Singh, at Patiala. Ranjit Singh, however, took full advantage of the occasion. He occupied many places of strategic importance. He compelled the rulers of Patiala, Nabha, Malerkotla, Kaithal as also some other chiefs to pay him tributes. While returning, he occupied Naraingarh, Zira, Wadni and Ferozepur. The rulers of Malwa region felt insecure due to the campaigns of Ranjit Singh in 1807, and the British also were alerted.

**The Request of the Rulers of Malwa and Dilemma of the British :** The rulers of the Malwa region found themselves in danger. They considered themselves to be safer under the protection of the British Government, rather than to lose their territory to Ranjit Singh. They considered Ranjit Singh as a fatal head blow and the Britishers as the slow killing disease of consumption. Coming to this conclusion they sent their representatives in 1808 to meet, Seton, the British Resident at Delhi. This party included Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, and a representative of the Raja of Patiala. They requested the British Government for protection. The British were willing to give them protection, but they could not decide the manner of granting such protection. The reply of Seton was ambiguous. There were two reasons for this doublemindedness. Firstly, Lord Wellesley had been called back in 1805. His successor Lord Cornwallis died after a few months. He was succeeded by Sir George Barlow who had instructions from the Directors of the Company not to interfere in the political affairs of the Indian

rulers. The next Governor-General, Lord Minto (1807-1813) was also directed to follow the policy of non-intervention. It was not easy to go against this policy and secondly Napoleon in France was at the zenith of his power by 1807, and had concluded the Treaty of Tilsit with Russia. It was agreed upon through this treaty that Russia and France would jointly invade India. Thus the British were fearing an attack on India. They therefore, did not want to displease Ranjit Singh by granting protecting to the rulers of cis-Satluj states.

When this deputation returned from Delhi, the agents of Ranjit Singh were ready for an agreement. Ranjit Singh was trying to allay their fears and convince them, when he received the news of the arrival at Kasur of Sir Charles Metcalfe, the British envoy.

**The First Meeting of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Metcalfe :** Lord Minto sent Sir Charles Metcalfe to finalize a treaty of friendship with Ranjit Singh and to request him to give up the policy of the extending his influence in the Punjab on 12 September, 1808. Ranjit Singh agreed to enter into a treaty of defence with the British, but he laid down following conditions : (i) his right to the cis-Satluj States be accepted, and (ii) The English should not interfere in case of war between him (Ranjit Singh) and the Amir of Kabul. However, parleys broke down because the British envoy was not empowered to take decision about the cis-Satluj states. He sent his report to the British authorities at Calcutta.

**The Third invasion of Ranjit Singh on Cis-Satluj Territory (1808 A.D.)** : Ranjit Singh wanted to bring the cis-Satluj states under his control, and thereby to convince British that he was the virtual overlord of these regions. He crossed the Satluj third time and took possession of Faridkot, Malerkotla, Ambala and Shahabad. The British envoy, protested against these activities of Ranjit Singh but he ignored this protest. The things continued in the same manner till December, 1808.

**Change in the Attitude of the British because of the favourable conditions in Europe :** The events took a turn in Europe Napoleon got entangled in wars with Spain and Portugal, and the danger of Franco-Russian invasion of Indian was averted. Because of a comparatively favourable situation, the British attitude towards Ranjit Singh stiffened. Metcalfe informed Ranjit Singh through a note on 22nd December, 1808 that he should withdraw his forces from cis-Satluj territory and confine his activities upto the northern Bank of Satluj. He was also informed that the cis-Satluj territory was under Sindhia's control prior to the second Maratha War, and after the defeat of Sindhia, this territory came under the protection of the British. The third condition was that Ranjit Singh would surrender all those territories which he had captured after the arrival of the mission. Ranjit Singh tried to argue against these conditions, but did not succeed.

The British sent a large force under the command of Colonel David Ochterloney, to make a show of power. Ochterloney crossed the Jumuna on 16 January, 1809

and on the 9th February, he proclaimed that all the cis-Satluj states were under protection of the British Government. Therefore, he reached Ludhiana on 19th February.

The Maharaja was not willing to accept these terms. It is said that once he even got ready for a war with the British. But Faqir Aziz-ud-din pacified him. He therefore, signed the Treaty of Amritsar on 25th April, 1809.

**The Terms of the Treaty of Amritsar (1809)**

- (a) the British Government, and the Lahore-Darbar were to maintain friendly relations on permanent basis;
- (b) river Satluj would be the boundary between the two governments;
- (c) the British will not interfere in the trans-Satluj regions; and
- (d) the Maharaja was to maintain only a limited army in his cis-Satluj possessions.

**The Importance of the Treaty of Amritsar**

**The gains of the British :** This proved to be a treaty of much significance because it greatly influenced the future of the Punjab. The British increased their territories and their influence by means of this treaty. Now the boundary of the British extended from the Jamuna right upto the Satluj.

Hence forth, cis-Satluj states were safe. The states of Patiala, Nabha and Jind etc. remained intact even after the annexation of the Punjab.

**The Losses of the Maharaja :** This was a political defeat of the Maharaja because he had to sign this treaty under pressure of military might of the British. He also had to accept limitation on his armed forces in the cis-Satluj possessions. This was a serious blow to the prestige of Ranjit Singh, but he was forced to swallow this bitter pill.

Both parties had now a realistic estimate about each other's strength and weakness. Further both sides could now understand each other's diplomatic moves. Besides the sphere of influence of either side came into clash with the other. As a result, the British were well acquainted with the Sikh politics by the time of the death of the Maharaja.

The greatest loss to Ranjit Singh was that he could not become a common leader of the Sikhs of Majha and Malwa belts. His dream of an integrated Sikh empire was shattered because he could not bring all the Sikhs under one banner.

**The Gains of the Maharaja :** It will be incorrect to assume that this treaty was totally detrimental to the interests of Ranjit Singh. On the contrary his eastern boundary was not quite safe and he had complete freedom to extend his empire towards north-west. Now he could pay full attention to the north-western region. In a short time he conquered Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar.

In conclusion it can be said that in 1809, Ranjit Singh was as yet not so powerful as to be absolutely certain about his victory against the English.

**(b) The Period of Distrust (1809-1812 A.D.)**

The treaty of 1809 between the Maharaja and the British was not a sincere agreement. Both sides suspected and arranged the formation of the other through spies. The British Government, suspected that Ranjit Singh was working some political agreement with Sindhia. Again, the presence of agents of Holkar and Amir Khan in Lahore for a number of years created doubts in the mind of the British Government. The British were under the impression that these agents were conspiring with Ranjit Singh to make a common cause and to attack the British collectively. To quote Cunningham "The British had the impression that Ranjit Singh was planning to attack the British with the help of the Sikhs of the frontier and Holkar." Under these circumstances Ochterloney started strengthening the fortification of Ludhiana.

On the other hand the Maharaja built a small fort at Phillaur near Ludhiana on the right bank of Satluj. This fort served as a watch tower. However, such suspicion and distrust was confined to correspondence alone.

**(c) Period of friendship (1812-1827 A.D.)**

There was gradual improvement in the Anglo-Sikh relations because for about ten years, both powers were involved in solving problems in their respective territories. The British were busy fighting against Nepalis, Marathas, the Pindaris and Bhartpur. The Maharaja was engaged in campaigns against Multan, Derajat, Kashmir and Peshawar. In these circumstances as a gesture of friendship, David Ochteloney was invited to join the marriage of Prince Kharak Singh. He was treated with great honour and hospitality and the promises of friendship were reiterated on this occasion. Hereafter, both sides manifested friendliness and perfect good will towards the other e.g. when the Gurkhas invited the British for a joint venture against Punjab, the British turned down the offer. As a result, the Maharaja being convinced of the friendship of the British refused to grant the request of Gurkhas who sought military help against the British and a loan of rupees five Lakhs from the Maharaja in 1815 A.D.

In 1825, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia felt tired of the treatment he had been given at the hands of the Maharaja. He along with his family, crossed the Satluj and came to Jagraon. He requested the British for granting him protection. But the British refused to accede to his request. Similarly, when Ranjit Singh fell ill in 1826 the British sent Doctor Muray to treat him.

In 1827, the British accepted Maharaja's claim to Wadni (near Moga). Similarly, the claims of Ranjit Singh on a Machhiwara, Anandpur and Makhawal were also accepted.

It is clear from the above that the friendship between the two powers was progressively increasing during this period.

**(d) The Period of Differences (1827-1839 A.D.)**

Although some cause of mutual distrust had propped up in 1823, but there was



slight tension only in the initial stages. However, from 1828 onwards the relations of Ranjit Singh with the British gradually became estranged due to the following reasons :

**The Rebellion of Sayid Ahmed Shah (1827-1831)**

A fanatic Muslim, Sayid Ahmed Shah declared a jehad in the territory of Peshawar in 1827. He instigated the local Muslims against the Sikhs. He was defeated and killed in 1831, but he remained a cause of anxiety for the Maharaja till his death. Sayid Ahmed Shah was a resident of district Kharo (under British control); and the inhabitants of this area continued to render every possible help to the Sayid. It is correct that the British did not help Sayid, but it is also a fact that they remained aloof and detached, while as friends, they ought to have actively helped the Maharaja.

**The Dispute of Sind :** After capturing Multan in 1818, Ranjit Singh had a strong desire extend his influences of Sind, and to annex the adjoining parts of Sind to his empire. The British also wanted to enhance their influence in Sind. The clash of interests created tension between the two powers.

**Burnes's Mission (July 1831 A.D.) :** The British and the Maharaja made a show of friendship during this period of tension too. There was exchange of gifts. Ranjit Singh sent some gifts to the Governor General, William Bentick in 1831. The English reciprocated. The king of England sent a buggy and five horses as a gift for Ranjit Singh. The Governor-General ordered Alexander Burnes to take these gifts to the Maharaja through Sind. The actual aim of Burnes was to submit a report to the Governor-General on the importance of Sind from the point of view of trade. He advised the Governor-General at Simla that the British should bring Sind under their control. Though outwardly this mission was for presenting gifts to the Maharaja, but in reality it was sent to gather useful information about Sind.

**The Dispute over Shikarpur :** The Maharaja wanted to bring Shikarpur under his control. The place was not only an important trade centre on the route to Khurasan and Iraq, but was also of great strategic importance because, it was located on the route of Afghanistan, through Bolan Pass.

The Maharaja faltered in 1831. Although, he had made full preparation for an attack on Shikarpur, he could not openly invade this territory; since that would have endangered his friendship with the British. At the same time he was not keen to offered the British.

In 1835, the Amirs of Sind started plundering the subjects of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh now had an excuse and he sent army towards Shikarpur in 1836 to control the situation. This upset the British as well the Amirs of Sind. The British sent a message to Ranjit Singh to withdraw his forces from Shikarpur. As Maharaja did not want to create a situation, which might lead to hostilities with the British, he therefore, decided to agree to the wishes of the British.

**The Meeting at Rupar, October (1831 A.D.) :** A personal meeting of Maharaja and the Governor-General Lord William Bentick took place at Rupar on 26th October, 1831. Its aim was to make a show of friendship. However, the desire of the Governor-General was to know Ranjit Singh's view about Sind, and to keep the British plans secret. Ranjit Singh on the other hand, wanted to know the British view-point on this subject, but William Bentick refused to discuss this subject because the Governor-General had sent Colonel Pottinger to finalize treaty with the Amirs of Sind. This treaty was signed when the meeting at Rupar was in progress, and thus Sind went under the influence of the British. Qadir is of the opinion that William Bentick was flattering Ranjit Singh at Rupar so that he should not get information about the British activities in Sind. However, a treaty of friendship and trade was signed as a result of the Rupar meeting. But when Ranjit Singh got the news of treaty with the Amirs of Sind he was very upset.

**Unauthorised Occupation of Ferozepur by the British :** The dispute about Ferozepur was directly between the Maharaja and the British. Ferozepur was a very important place for the British for the military point of view. They wanted to bring the town under their own control by fair or foul means. Murray informed the British authorities that Ferozepur had more of a strategic importance than Ludhiana. Secondly, Ferozepur was close to the boundary of Bhawalpur and Lahore, as such it was a useful watch tower to know the activities of the Nawab of Bhawalpur as well as of Ranjit Singh. The British Government sent clear orders to their agent, Captain Wade that the Maharaja should not be permitted to occupy Ferozepur. Even though Wade knew that the British had no legal right to it, yet he occupied Ferozepur in 1835 and made it an important cantonment in 1838. The Maharaja felt this loss as if some body had placed a pistol on his temple head, but he was helpless and had to bear the aggression.

**Tripartite Treaty (1838 A.D.) :** Russia had considerably increased her sphere of influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan and that was a cause of anxiety for the British. They sent Alexander Burnes to Kabul to negotiate a treaty of friendship with the ruler of Afghanistan. The Amir of Kabul was agreeable to such a treaty. But he put a condition that the British should pressurize Ranjit Singh to hand over Peshawar to him. The British did not want to displease Ranjit Singh. Thus the talks with the Amir broke down. Now, Lord Auckland decided to dethrone Dost Muhammad and to crown Shah Shuja as the King of Afghanistan. Consequently, a tripartite treaty was signed by the British, Ranjit Singh and Shuja. The aim of the treaty was to make Shah Shuja the ruler at Kabul, because he was friendly towards the British. Ranjit Singh made it clear that he would not give passage to the British forces through the Punjab. However, the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839, was followed by some sort of confusion in the Punjab, and thus some terms of this treaty regarding Punjab were violated during the first Afghan War.

#### **Criticism of the Anglo-Sikh Relations**

Ranjit Singh consistently followed the policy of maintaining friendship with the British. This gave an impression to the British that Ranjit Singh considered himself weaker in comparison to the British, and was not willing to fight a war with

them. During the last ten years of his reign, he made show of the same weak policy even though he knew that the British were encircling his kingdom. It may also be noted here that there was no doubt left about the deceitful policy of the British after their occupation of Ferozepur and Shikarpur. But Ranjit Singh always tried to avoid war and there was no power to stop or resist the aggressive policy of British after the death of the Maharaja. Dr. Sinha is of the opinion that if he had given a battle to the British in his lifetime, the Sikh empire might not have fallen so quickly after his death. He never showed courage to challenge the British. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Sikh relations also expose the treacherous policy of the British. Ranjit Singh was throughout true to his commitments, but the British often betrayed him. It must however, be remembered that the Maharaja followed a realistic policy, and the annexation of Punjab by the English after the Maharaja's death cannot be attributed to the cordial though tame policy of Ranjit Singh. In fact the Kingdom of the Punjab fell to the British largely due to the incompleteness of the Maharaja's successors.

#### Relevant Pages of Books for Further Study

1. Narang, K.S. Gupta. H. R. : History of the Punjab, pp. 298-310.
2. Cunningham, J. D. : History of the Sikhs : pp. 112, 17, 19-20, 22-23, 48, 65-67, 82-86, 90, 92, 94, 96, 290, 345-64.
3. Latif, S.M. : History of the Punjab, pp. 346-496 (Passim)

#### Self-Check Exercise

##### Q.1. Fill in the blanks :

1. Ahmed Shah Abdali invaded the Punjab twice in ..... A.D.
2. The period of Anglo-Sikh relation during A.D. 1800-1839, can be divided into ..... parts.
3. .... was sent to Ranjit Singh in A.D. 1800.
4. Treaty of..... was concluded A.D. 1809.
5. Rani.....invited Ranjit Singh in 1807 A.D.
6. Metcalfe held his first meeting with Maharaja Ranjit Singh on .....
7. ....built a fort at Phillaur.
8. Meeting between Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentick took place on 26th October 1831 at.....
9. Maharaja wanted to bring Shikarpur under his.....
10. Tripartite Treaty was concluded in A.D.....

September, 1808, vii. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, viii. Rupa, ix. Control, x. 1838.  
 1. 1766-67, ii. four, iii. Yusuf Ali Mission, iv. Amritsar, v. Aas Kaur, vi. 12

#### Key to Answer

#### Check up your Position

Excellent : Above 6 correct answers Good : 5-6 correct answers.

Satisfactory : 4 correct answers. Unsatisfactory : Less than 4 correct answers

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**LESSON NO. 1.4**

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**CIVIL AND MILITARY ADMINISTRATION OF MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH  
CIVIL ADMINISTRATION****Features**

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was an absolute and benevolent monarch. He had conquered the trans-Sutlej misls, and replaced their system by sound administration. No Sardar or chief could claim equality with him. He was the fountain-head of justice. He used to declare war and establish peace according to his own thinking and no person could question his decision. Here it can be deduced that Ranjit Singh was the pivot of the whole structure of administration. In theory, Ranjit Singh was an absolute monarch, but he was very kind and benevolent. But nonetheless the direction of affairs lay entirely with him. In brief, he was the source of all power and authority in the state but he was very considerate about the well being of peasantry e.g. standing orders were given to the army that no harm should be done to the standing crops during war.

**Checks on Ranjit Singh's autocracy :** Ranjit Singh had neither ego, nor was he devoid of reason. He was assisted in his administration by ministers. His advisers or ministers exercised a tremendous influence on him. For example, Faqir Aziz-ud-din, his Foreign Minister, was greatly responsible for persuading the Maharaja to sign the treaty of Amritsar in 1809 A.D. Besides, Ranjit Singh always regarded himself as the servant of the Khalsa or the Sikh Commonwealth. He always acted in the name of the Khalsa and designated his government as (Sardar-i-Khalsaji). His seal bore the inscription 'Akal Sahai' (God be our helper) and not 'Ranjit Sahai'. The coins were also struck in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, and he was generally addressed as 'Singh Sahib', Ranjit Nagara was the name of Guru Gobind Singh's drum and Ranjit Singh never considered himself to be any thing more than a drum of the Ranjit Singh never considered himself to be any thing more than a drum of the Guru for the assertion of the political supremacy of the Khalsa. In fact Ranjit Singh was a true representative of the Sikh commonwealth, and respected all its social and religious traditions. While he was in Amritsar, once he violated some religious principle, which was greatly resented by the Akalis and their leaders. Akali Phula Singh summoned the Maharaja at Akal Takhat and ordered that the Maharaja should be flogged like an ordinary offender. Ranjit Singh did not grumble and volunteered himself for the punishment. This, the Akalis were a great check on Ranjit Singh. They regarded themselves as the armed guardians of the Sikh religion. But they often took law into their own hands. Thus, they were the standing menace to the

stability of Ranjit Singh's Government. But according to Sinha, Ranjit Singh dared not crush them, though he had the means to do so. All that he could do was to moderate their fanaticism. Another check on the Maharaja was that the Sikhs of Punjab, in those days, were soldiers to the last man. Ranjit Singh, however, could not flout the opinion of the people.

### **Central Government**

**The Cabinet :** The centre of the whole system, the pivot of the whole structure of the Government was the Maharaja himself. The direction of affairs lay entirely with him. Mostly, the initiative regarding the fundamental of internal and foreign policies rested with him. But it was humanly impossible for him to conduct the details of the affairs of the state personally. He was, therefore, assisted and advised by a number of ministers. The designations of the ministers were : (i) Prime Minister (ii) Foreign Minister, (iii) Defence Minister, (iv) Finance Minister, (v) Sadar Deori (Minister of the royal household).

### **Central Departments**

The number of the central departments was 12; the more important being.

**1. Dafter-i-Abwab-ul-Mal** (may be called the Finance Department). This department kept the account of land revenue and other taxes and sources of income. It had further four sub sections.

**2. Dafter-i-Tozihat :** It kept the account of the expenses of the royal household and kept a record of the royal harem and Toshakhana i.e. where jewellery, diamonds etc. were stored.

**3. Dafter-i-Mahajab :** It kept the account of salaries of the army personnel, civil servants and clerks. This department had many sub-divisions.

**4. Dafter-i-Roznamcha Kharch :** It kept the account of the daily expenses.

**5. Dafter-i-Tehwil :** It kept the account of the expenses of the Government in parganas.

**6. Dafter-i-Aakhirajat :** It kept the records of the things stored in forts.

**7. Dafter-i-Madad Kharch :** It kept the account and records of the political pensions given to important persons.

### **Provincial Administration**

For the sake of administration convenience, Ranjit Singh had divided his kingdom into four Subas or provinces. The total area of his kingdom was one lakh forty thousand square miles. The following were the names of the provinces :

1. Suba-i-Lahore.
2. Suba-i-Kashmir.
3. Suba-i-Multan.
4. Suba-i-Peshawar.

The province or the Suba was further divided into 'Parganas' each 'Pargana' being divided into 'talukas' and every 'taluka' comprised of about 100 villages.

**Nazim :** Nazim used to be the head of the provincial administration. The office of the Nazim was generally given to men, in whom the Maharaja had great confidence. The provinces of Lahore and Multan were well administered, but the provinces of Kashmir and Peshawar were known for mal-administration. The 'Nazims' used to draw high salaries. To quote an example, Sukhdial was appointed the 'Nazim' of Multan in 1820 at Rs. 26,000 per year.

**Kardar :** Next to Nazim was the office of the 'Kardar' who was incharge of the district administration. In fact they were more important than the Nazim. The latter was more of an appellate authority, where as a 'Kardar' was directly concerned with the administration and had to maintain a contact with the people. The powers and duties of a 'Kardar' were vast. He was a revenue collector as well as supervisor of land revenue settlements. He was an excise supervisor as well as an accountant. He was a judge as a custom officer. He had the duties of general supervision of the people. 'Kardar' was also responsible for maintaining law and order in his district. He was also required to carry out the royal decrees.

**Village Administration :** In the village, the panchayats continued throughout Ranjit Singh's reign and he did not disturb the right and privileges of these old self-governing institutions.

**Jagirs Administration :** The Jagirs were held by the big chiefs or sardars. When they offered their submission, they were given Jagirs at places away from their original possessions which had been confiscated by the Maharaja. In those 'Jagirs' the 'sardar' or chiefs enjoyed vast powers. They directly controlled these lands and the people residing therein were directly responsible to Ranjit Singh himself.

**Administration of the City of Lahore :** The City of Lahore was ruled independently. It was divided into mohallas (localities). In each of which its most influential man was responsible for the maintenance of peace and order. The chief police officer of the city was called 'Kotwal' having huge powers for the maintenance of law and order in the city. He, generally a Muslim 'Qazi', was a special judicial authority in the city who decided civil cases of the Muslims.

#### **Judicial Administration**

Ranjit Singh's judicial system did not differ much from the one he had inherited from the misls. There was no written constitution of law. Customs and usages were generally the bases of justice. Another feature of Maharaja's judicial system was that it was a source of income to the state, but this does not mean that Ranjit Singh was not a just sovereign rather he was very particular about justice. He made extensive tours and would often hear appeals against the judicial affairs and passed orders punishing them for their faults. He often checked that his judicial officers were

discharging their duties properly and efficiently. He himself had the highest powers and could reverse the decisions made by the courts.

### **The Courts**

Maharaja had set up many courts of justice. For example, there was an 'Adalat-i-Ala' or a High court in Lahore. There were also the courts of 'Kardars' and Nazims. In the village, panchayats exercised their judicial authority.

**Adalat-i-Ala :** This was the central court or the high court of the Kingdom. Little is known regarding the appointments of the judges in this court, but it is held that most of the appeals against the decisions of the lower courts i.e. the 'Kardar's and 'Nazims' courts were heard firstly by this courts, and then, if the wronged person was not satisfied, could take his appeal, to the Maharaja.

Besides special courts were instituted in the cities of Amritsar, Peshawar, etc. which decided both civil and criminal cases.

**Nazim's Courts :** At the headquarters of every province there was a 'Nazim's court. It heard appeals against the decisions of the courts of the Kardars and generally heard criminal cases.

**Kardar's Courts :** The Kardar's court was at the district headquarters and it heard both civil and criminal.

**Panchayats :** In village, the Panchayats exercised their judicial authority both civil and criminal cases. Only honest men were elected as 'panches' in the village panchayats.

**Jagirdari Adalats :** Within the jagirs, whether belonging to Sikh chiefs or the Muslims Nawabs, the heads, the jagirdars, were given absolute civil and criminal authorities in their respective courts and ordinarily, their subjects could not appeal even to Maharaja.

**Punishments :** The penal code of Ranjit Singh was not very severe. Fines were levied in almost all the cases. Imprisonments were unknown and capital punishments were rare. In the worst cases some limbs of the criminals were ordered to be cut off. But even such kind of penalty could be replaced, if the desired fine was paid off. Sometimes even serious crimes were atoned by fines. But it must be known that it was not only the criminal alone who paid fines, even when the innocence of an undertrial criminal was established the judge exacted from the prisoner a present of gratitude called 'shookrana'. The winning party had to pay 'nazarana', because the case had been decided in his favour and the losing party paid 'jurmana' or fine.

Whenever a particular case was brought before a court, the party, which had lodged the case had to pay *Taikhana*. Similarly, whenever the stolen goods were recovered, the owner had to pay 1/4th of that to the court. Thus justice was an essential source of income.

### **Financial Administration**

The financial structure of Ranjit Singh's administration was very simple. There was no budget system and expenses increased or decreased with the increase in the resources. The main sources of income were : (1) Land revenue; (2) custom and excise; (3) income from the jagir; (4) moharana; and (5) professional tax.

#### **Land Revenue**

Land Revenue was the main source of income. There had been different methods of assessment as given below :

**Batai System :** During the early period of his administration batai system was introduced in the country. This method seems to have been borrowed from the Mughals and no change was introduced in it even during the Misl period. Under this system, land revenue was assessed and collected by the government officials after crops had been harvested, but that was a cumbersome system. Therefore, this system continued till Ranjit Singh was busy in his conquests and did not get time to make reforms.

**Kankut System :** Under this system, the assessment was made of standing crop taking a representative field and estimating yield, out of which the state share was claimed in cash on the basis of the average price of the concerned crop for the last ten years.

**Mixed System :** At some places, such as Lahore, the Maharaja allotted land to many cultivators and cultivators in return paid a final amount at the end of every year.

At certain places in the state the assessment was made on the basis of plough i.e. the land ploughed by a single plough or on the basis of a well (i.e. irrigated by a single well as unit).

**State Demand :** Regarding the government share out of the produce of land divergent opinions have been expressed. Sir Lepel Griffin is of the opinion that Ranjit Singh charged one-half of the gross produce as land revenue. But Dr. N.K. Sinha says that there are instances, in which as much as 40 percent was demanded from the irrigated and rich lands. Sometimes the state demand was as high as fifty four percent. Dr. G.L. Chopra and Sita Ram Kohli are also of the same view. Another feature to be noted is that Government's share was not uniform for all the lands. It varied according to the nature of the crops and the irrigation facilities provided. As regards income from land revenue, Sita Ram Kohli opines that the annual income amounted to Rs. 1,75,47,741.

**Mode of Collection of Land Revenue :** Land revenue was collected twice a year. At the end of each harvest in May and October, revenue collectors under the directions of 'Kardars' used to collect land revenue. Responsibility for the collection of land revenue was entirely on the 'Nambardars' and 'Maqaddams'. It was the duty of the 'Kardar' of the area to see that all the revenue was collected in time and remitted to the state treasury.



**Criticism of the Land Revenue System :** The land revenue system of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has been criticised by many writers. For example, Sir Lepel Griffin is of the opinion that the rate of land revenue was unusually high and some time the cultivators had to bribe the collectors to take less share. Sir Egerton says, "The main object was to wring from the Hindus and Mohammedan cultivators the utmost farthing that could be extorted." But we should not forget that the main object of the Maharaja was not to extort money, but as Dr. Sinha writes "in some respects the government gave back with one hand what it took with the other." The employment of the state were numerous and every Jat village sent recruits for the army. These recruits sent their savings to their homes. Maharaja used to distribute seeds among the peasants, and also gave liberal subsistence, when there occurred famines.

**Other Sources of Revenue :** Besides the land tax, another source of income was custom and excise. Dr. Sinha writes "Ranjit's taxation embraced everything, every locality, every thoroughfare, every village and every article whether sold, imported or exported." But even then the commerce and trade was in flourishing condition the estimated annual revenue from these levies was Rs. 10 lakhs. The 'jagirs' yielded the highest amount, next to land revenue which was more than nine lakhs of rupees. Besides, the principal artisans such as blacksmiths, weavers and tanners paid a professional tax of Rs. one per house. Traders were also taxed at the rate of Rs. two per head. Ranjit Singh levied salt-tax, and more than eight lakhs rupees flowed to the state exchequer from this source.

#### **SPY SERVICE**

Ranjit Singh had his news-writers in every part of the country, who supplied to him regularly, the reports regarding the activities of the Nazims and Kardars. They acted as an effective check on the corrupt practices of the high officials and spied against their disloyalty to the Maharaja.

#### **DIPLOMATIC SERVICE**

Ranjit Singh also employed diplomats who supplied him political information and acquainted him with the affairs of the countries he was interested in among his diplomats Faqir Aziz-ud-din was the most famous. He was employed by Ranjit Singh in almost all the important missions. According to Elphinston, the Sikh ruler has one of the most well informed men.

#### **ESTIMATE OF MAHARAJA'S CIVIL ADMINISTRATION**

Though a devout Sikh, Ranjit Singh followed the policy of toleration towards other religions. The Faqir brothers, the Dogra Rajas, and Brahmans Khushal Singh and Tej Singh occupied more trusted position than the person of his own community. He had a very keen eye to judge the merits of a man. When he selected officers, it was neither religion nor race, nor the birth of a man that counted with him. It was only his merit. Despite these merits, there were some faults also. The system of

taxation was cumbersome and sometime the local officers chastised the people to exact the levy. There was no codified legal system in the absence of which the Government officials on many occasions misused their powers.

### **MILITARY ADMINISTRATION**

Ranjit Singh was a great military organiser. He re-organised the Sikh troops into a disciplined and well equipped army. In this field his notable reforms were :

1. Reorganisation of the infantry on western lines.
2. Introduction of European drill and discipline.
3. Maintenance of Heavy artillery.
4. Introduction of a monthly payment system.
5. Manufacture of weapons.

**Reorganisation of infantry :** In the pre-Ranjit Singh period i.e. during the days of the misls, the main strength of the Sikh force was cavalry. A soldier without a horse was never considered a true soldier. But the Maharaja carried out a number of reforms by which infantry became the strongest and most efficient wing of the army of Ranjit Singh. Maharaja employed some European officers also on high pay packets for training of his men.

**Regular Drill and Discipline :** The regular drilling system was introduced in the army by the Maharaja, which greatly helped in the maintenance of discipline. The Sikhs, however, first resisted the rigidity of military training and scoffed at it by calling it the dance of the dancing girls (Raqs-e-Looluan). But later on, it became a regular part of the training system.

**The Artillery :** The Maharaja did his best to build and organise a regular Artillery Department. Most of the workshops for casting guns were situated in Lahore. In 1831 Lord William Bentinck presented to Maharaja some heavy guns. Ranjit Singh issued instructions to his men to cast similar guns. European officers, Court and Gardner assisted the state in the organisation of the artillery. The artillery was divided into four wings namely Elephant Batteries; Camel Swivels also called "Zamburakas", Horse Batteries and Bullock Batteries.

**Monthly Salaries :** It was for the first time in Sikh history that the system of regular monthly salaries was introduced by Ranjit Singh. Prior to this system the Sikh soldiers had always depended upon the loot and plunder of their enemy or on the share of the levies.

### **Division of the Army**

Maharaja had divided his army as follows :

1. Special Brigade or French Legion of 'Fauj-i-khas'.
2. Regular army or 'Fauj-i-Qawaid'.
3. Irregular Army or 'Fauj-i-BeQawaid'.

**Special Brigade or Fauj-i-khas :** The Maharaja organised a special brigade

(model brigade) or French legion. It was organised and commanded by General Ventura. This brigade, according to Griffin, consisted of regular infantry - 3176, Regular Cavalry - 1667 and Artillery 34 guns with 885 men working on these. The artillery of the 'Fauj-i-khas' was the Corps of Illahi Bakhsh better known as the Illahi Bakhsh ka Topkhana. Mostly salary of their brigades was 3,96,067. In course of time, this brigade became the best fighting army of Ranjit Singh.

#### **Regular Army or Fauj-Qawaid**

This force was organised on the European style. It consisted of infantry, cavalry and artillery. Its number was 28, 242 in the year 1838.

**Infantry :** The Maharaja carried out a number of reforms and organised the infantry for the first time. He employed many European officers among whom the name of General Ventura is well known. The infantry was divided into units called battalions. Battalions were further sub-divided into companies and the companies in turn were further sub-divided into platoons.

**Cavalry :** The second part of the Regular Army was cavalry. It was placed under General Allard. The strength of the cavalry in 1811 A.D. was 1209 which in 1831 A.D. rose to 4390.

**Artillery :** As mentioned above, Ranjit Singh had come to realize the importance of maintaining heavy artillery. With the assistance of generals Court, Gardner, and Illahi Baksh and Qadar Baksh, he organised a strong branch of artillery. In 1819 A.D. Ranjit Singh was able to possess 122 heavy guns and 190 swivels. And by 1838 the number had raised to 188 guns and 280 swivels.

#### **Irregular Army or Fauj-i-BeQawaid**

The irregular army consisted of the Akalis, misldars, and jagirdari cavalry. The Fauj-i-Be-Qawaid did not undergo any training or drill. Rather the Akalis used to consider themselves as the true representatives of Guru Gobind Singh and fought with religious enthusiasm. They hated the foreigners particularly the Europeans and the Afghans. They were ways employed in the most dangerous battles. They were about two to three thousands in number. They were not paid regularly and were only provided with horses and arms.

**The Ghorcharas :** The soldiers in 'Ghorchara' regiments were recruited from the families of the Sikh chiefs. In the beginning each of them was given a 'jagir' of the value of Rs. 330 to Rs. 400 a year, but later cash salaries to be paid to them also.

**Misaldars :** They were the ex-soldiers or horsemen of the Sikh Misls, who had joined the service of Ranjit Singh after the defeat of their misaldars. They used to arrange their arms and horses themselves.

**Jagirdari Contingents :** The 'Jagirdaris', who held jagirs from Ranjit Singh furnished a certain number of cavalries, Maharaja used to inspect these Jagirdar contingents every year at the time of Dussehra festival. Every jagirdar had to supply

a regular descriptive roll regarding his contingents in the state record office.

**Subsistence :** The state was not responsible to provide subsistence to the army while in cantonments. In every cantonment there used to be one or two markets. Whenever a regiment migrated from one place to the other these markets also shifted alongwith it. The monthly salary of a General ranged between Rs. 400 to Rs. 463, a commandant got from Rs. 60 to Rs. 150 and a sepoy from Rs. 7 to Rs. 8.5. During active service, each soldier used to receive one seer flour, 1/2 chatank butter, and one seer food daily. In addition to this sometime the soldiers used to get meat and sweet dishes also. For this subsistence each soldier used to pay Rs. 2/- p.m. only and remitted to his home Rs. 6 p.m. regularly.

**Prizes and help to the Soldiers :** The Maharaja was extremely liberal to those who were wounded in this service and pensions were granted to the family of the deceased. In addition to this, Maharaja's employees were conferred upon titles also. Alongwith such titles, Maharaja used to present gold ornaments. The title for the soldiers was 'Jaffar Jang' and for the civilians, it was 'Doyanat Panah'. In 1837, he instituted gold medal 'Koqib-i-Iqbal Punjab' for three categories; firstly the member of the royal family, or the high and loyal officials, secondly, the faithful Generals and thirdly the valiant fighters.

#### **Estimate of the Military Administration of the Maharaja**

Many European writers such as Charles Gough, Osborne and Cunningham have greatly praised the military system of Ranjit Singh. Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief, who fought in the first Anglo-Sikh battle against the Sikhs, writes that, "Certainly it would have a different story to tell, if the body of men had not been commanded by traitors." Some critics are of the view that the Maharaja committed a mistake by adopting the western style of training for his army. They are of the opinion that the Maharaja won all the ferocious battles by the years 1822, i.e. before the adoption of new method of training. But it must be remembered that the Sikh army fought and won the famous battles of Peshawar and Jamrud with great discipline after the reorganisation of the army. In the memorable first and second Anglo-Sikh wars, the Sikh army fought with great discipline and stubbornness unequalled in the annals of British history. And it may be added that it was largely due to the new method of training introduced by Ranjit Singh the Sikhs came out victorious. Some writers find fault with the non-existence of a regular system of payment to the soldiers. They further opine that often the soldiers were not paid for six months. But it must be understood that more men were kept at hand, in particular cases, than could be easily paid for. Again, by paying salaries six months or late, the Maharaja ensured that the soldiers did not revolt.

**Relevant Pages of Books for further Study**

1. Narang K.S. and Gupta, Hari Ram : History of the Punjab, pp. 321-327.
2. Chopra, G.L. : The Punjab as a Sovereign State, pp. 50 and 94.

**Self-Check Exercise****Q. 1. Fill in the blanks :**

- i. There were checks on.....autocracy.
- ii. Maharaja Ranjit Singh always acted in the name of.....
- iii. The pivot of the whole government was .....himself.
- iv. There were .....department of the Central Government of the Maharaja.
- v. Nazim was head of the .....
- vi. Kardar was the..... of the district administration.
- vii. High court of the Maharaja was known as.....
- viii. Land revenue was collected.....a year.
- ix. French Legion was commanded by.....
- x. Fauj-i-BeQawid consisted of.....

Q.1. (i) Ranjit Singh's (ii) Khalsa (iii) Maharaja (iv) Twelve (v) Province (vi) Head and Jagirdari cavalry. (vii) Adalat-i-Ala (viii) Twice (ix) General Ventura (x) The Akalis, Misildars

**Key to Answer****Check up your position**

Excellent : Above 6 correct answers, Good : 5-6 correct answers, Satisfactory : 4 correct answers, Unsatisfactory : Less than 4 answers.