

RANJEET SINGH, MAHARAJA OF THE PUNJAB AND THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN COURTIERS/ TOURISTS

Abstract

This paper focuses upon the reign of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, his governance, the economic condition of the Punjab in the early 19th century, revenue administration of the Punjab and the influence of the western courtiers in the Court of Ranjeet Singh as depicted by the Orientalist travelers. The influence of European tourists to the Court of Maharaja had already existed but one can see that this influence was greatly increased after 1826. Towards the end of 1826 the Maharaja was attacked by sickness. And he sought the aid of Dr. Murray, an English army surgeon at Ludhiana. Dr. Murray stayed with Ranjeet for eight months and closely studied the political and military situation in the Punjab. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh drew many foreign mercenaries into his service. He attracted the attention of numerous travelers, soldiers, and diplomats. Though Ranjeet Singh had a very unpleasant physical appearance with his smallpox pitted face and his single eye yet his capability of persistent questions, his delight in dancing girls and his impressive capacity for the most ardent spirits, he fascinated many Europeans travelers and finds space to become a topic of discussion in their travel writings.

By the end of the 18th century there were three powers contending for the leadership of the northern part of the Sub-continent. The English had established their influence over Oudh and maintained their power against the Marhattas. After the battle of Panipatt, (1761) The Marhattas had revived their power to a certain extent under the leadership of MahadajeSindhia. By 1761 they occupied Agra and 'reduced the Mughal emperor at Delhi to subservience and re- entered Southern Punjab'.¹ Their troops were trained by Europeans and were better disciplined than the Sikhs. "The third power was that of the Sikhs, who, since the death of Ahmad Shah Abdali, had over run the Eastern Punjab as far as Jamna".²

In the first half of the nineteenth century the Sikhs became the master of north and formed their Kingdom in the Punjab. The Sikh warlords at the heads of their followers at first began to exercise political control over the small areas, which subsequently took the form of Misls of confederacies,³ and then the process of cohesion began under the military genius of Ranjeet Singh.⁴ He was only twelve year old when his father, Maha Singh died. Ranjeet was the only son of Maha Singh. The virulent attack of smallpox had deprived him of vision in his left eye and also deeply affected his face. "He did not receive any education and became an inveterate hunter, and love for horses became an absolute passion".⁵ He used to drink hard and started enjoying his life. A sudden change came over him when he reached at the age of fifteen, when he assumed control of the Sukerchakia estates and married.

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The marriage brought Ranjeet Singh under the influence of his mother-in-law, SadaKaur. More than anything else, she directed his energy towards unifying the Punjab. At the beginning of his career he was only a Sardar of 400 to 500 horsemen.⁶ The Punjab at that time was in a continual state of anarchy, there were local wars between the Sardars and the invasions of Shah Zaman, who came down with large armies from Kabul to attack Delhi. By his skill and ability Ranjeet soon made his reputation among the Sardars of his period. He invaded all the territories bordering his misl and kept them in his possession. Thus his rule and influence increased. He created a loyal and faithful army and was very generous to his companions.

According to J. D. Cunningham⁷ Ranjeet Singh was the leader who created unity among the Sikh community and formed a state, which was based upon the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh. The state was also having deep impact of Guru Nanak. Cunningham has given positive views about the Sikh state and has also negated the philosophy of oriental despotism. According to him the Sikh state was a 'Khalsa' state and misl represent freedom and liberty among the Sikh community.⁸

So far as the physical appearance of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh is concerned Hugel has described it in a very interesting way. At the time of the visit of Hugel to the Darbar of Maharaja, Ranjeet Singh was fifty-four years old. The small pox deprived him, when a child of his left eye, whence he gained the surname of Kana, one eyed, and his face was scarred by the same malady. He says that his beard was thin and gray, with a few dark hairs in it: according to the Sikh religious customs, it reaches a little below his chin and is untrimmed. His head was square and large for his stature, which, though naturally short was then considerably bowed by disease, his forehead remarkably broad. His shoulders were wide, though his arms and hands were quite seen. His large, brown, unsteady and suspicious eye seem diving into the thoughts of the person he converses, and his straight forward question were put incessantly and in the most laconic terms. 'His speech is so much affected by paralysis that it is no easy matter to understand him, but if the answer be delayed by an instant, one of his courtiers, usually Jemidar, repeats the question.'⁹

Jacquemont has also explained the personality of Ranjeet Singh and says that he was a thin little man with an attractive face, though he has lost one eye from small pox, which has otherwise disfigured him little. His right eye, which remains, was very large; his nose was fine and slightly turned up, his mouth firm, his teeth excellent. He wears slight moustaches, which he twists incessantly with his fingers, and long thin white beard, which falls to his chest.¹⁰

Many orientalist writers have discussed the positive aspects of the personality of Maharaja. According to them Maharaja was a man of genius. '...He was the one man of genius the Jat tribe has produced. A splendid horseman, a bold leader, a cool thinker untroubled with scruples, an unerring judge of character, he was bound to rise in such times.'¹¹

Jacquemont has also thrown light on some positive aspects of the personality of Maharaja. He has written that the expression of Ranjeet Singh shows nobility of thought, shrewdness and penetration and these indications were

correct. He used to wear a little turban of white muslin rather carelessly tied, a kind of long tunic with a little cape falling over his shoulders like a French riding cloak. He used to wear tight trousers with bare feet. His clothes were of white Kashmir tissue with a little gold trimming on the collar, cuffs and sleeves; of a very comfortable and old-fashioned cut it seemed to Hugel. "For ornaments he wore large round gold earrings with pearls in them, a collar of pearls in ruby bracelets almost hidden under his sleeves. At his side hung a sword, the gold hilt of which was encrusted with diamonds and emeralds."¹²

In most of the orientalist writings in the 19th century Punjab, the focus was Maharaja Ranjeet Singh and the politics of the Punjab. It was a shift in the orientalist writings, the travel narratives from general travel accounts had become politics specific accounts. During his lifetime Maharaja Ranjeet Singh remained the master of the land of the Punjab. He was an absolute ruler and ruled absolutely. "...to his last Gasp he remained absolute master of his people, the sole and only "lion of the Punjab", as he was often called".¹³

Jaquemont has written a lot about the personality of Ranjeet Singh and has discussed his personal life that Ranjeet was more or less a skeptic, this does not prevent his being extremely superstitious. The fact that he raises whenever a descendent of Guru Nanak approaches him that he goes twice a year to bath in the sacred pool at Amritsar, is merely a critical demonstration to satisfy popular superstition. But he had invented devotions of his own which were regarded by the Sikhs with indifference if not with displeasure.

He has explained that Ranjeet makes pilgrimages to the tombs of celebrated Muslim saints and gives them considerable presents of which charity was certainly not the motive; and he often mutters prayers, which were unintelligible to anyone else. Jacquemont says that he had seen him in durbar listening but distracted; and, when he should have replied, silent and self-absorbed; his lips moved and his courtiers said he was communing with his spirit. Ranjeet Singh hates the idea of death and the word had never mentioned in his presence, when it was no longer possible to conceal from him the death of one whom he has known well, particularly of one of his companions of his youth, it was stated that "He has gone away". The Raja knows what that means, makes a grimace and never alludes to the matter again. It was probably the same religious idea which prevents his passing a death sentence; it was certainly not humanity. (Garrett has written about this statement that this is merely a surmise, and does not do justice to Ranjeet Singh who deserves great credit for having avoided capital punishment among a turbulent people like the Punjabis of his day). "Once when crossing the Indus, M.Allard saw him laughing and joking, while seeing a number of his people drowned and their corpses washed away by the river. I believe for all this he believes in the devil and serves him like Jesuit."¹⁴

H. T. Prinsip in his book *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and the life of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh* has also written that death sentence was prohibited in the reign of Maharaja. This important book on Sikh era was published in 1834. Though mainly the book has not appreciated the reign of Ranjeet Singh and has declared the Maharaja a cruel ruler and his government based upon looting. According to him the Sikh army was undisciplined and out of control and the

government was running without any system. However the prohibition of capital punishment and the control over Afghans has been appreciated by Princip.¹⁵

In the first half of the 19th century the main focus in the orientalist writings was the ruling sovereign. Which reveal the fact that the British wanted to control the political affairs of the Punjab as soon as possible. John Wood has thrown light to the claver and to some extent the cunning nature of Ranjeet Singh. He has written that 'Ranjeet with his usual discrimination, does not despise even the prejudices of an opposite creed, when, by a little hypocrisy, he can add to the stability of his own power'.¹⁶

The travelers who visited the court of Maharaja have also mentioned the excesses of Maharaja. Jacquemont has written about Ranjeet Singh's private life. The remarks reveal the picture of Maharaja's routine life. He says, every one knows that Orientals are debauched, but they have shame about it. He has written that Ranjeet's excesses are shameless. He has always consorted publicly with the women of the bazaar, whose patrons and protector he is.¹⁷

The topic of Maharaja as being womanizer has also come under the discussion of many tourists. Jacquemont says that in his youth he was passionate in love with one of these women. She had to be always near him. The inhabitants of Lahore saw him hundred times in those days sitting with her on an elephant, and toying with her, as though in the zanana, and that in broad daylight, surrounded by a large escort and talking and laughing with them all the time. The Sikhs have a horror of tobacco. A Muslim would never smoke in the Punjab in front of a respectable Sikh. "This women who has such influence over the Raja smoked in his presence in his howdah and he even assisted to light her hookah, probably the most outrageous exhibition he has made in Lahore."¹⁸ (Garrett has written that this reference is probably to Moran, in whose company he made his appearance on the back of an elephant in the streets of Amritsar. The Akalis hate him up for improper conduct before the Akal Takht in the Golden Temple and he was ordered by the priests to receive 9 shoc beating which he had actually to undergo. He married Moran and even struck coins in her name).

Orientalist travelers like Hugel and Steinbach have thrown light about the administration of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. The term oriental despotism has also come under their debate in the description of Maharaja and his rule. Steinbach says that after the overthrow of the Muslim rule in the Punjab, the Sikh Chieftains formed themselves into an oligarchy, which, like all similar institutions of which history preserves a record, gradually fell under the yoke of one family more potent than the rest, and at length of one man. The only government, therefore, of which the Sikhs have had any experience were the aristocratic and the despotic; and, judging from their conduct and their internal prosperity under these respective systems, "we have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that a despotism is the best suited to their temperament."¹⁹

So far as the era of Ranjeet Singh is concerned, Steinbach has written a detail commentary about it. According to him Ranjeet Singh controls all the matters of importance, collecting and appropriating the revenue; appointing and removing all the state officers by his own will; personally regulating all political negotiations; and exercising the royal prerogative of coming money and making

war. Under his rule, the whole country was divided into provinces, and these provinces into districts, which were formed out to the highest bidders.

Steinbach has discussed in detail the nature of Sikh rule in the Punjab and the enhancement of British influence in the Sikh Kingdom. He has written that under any circumstances that may arise to give the British a more direct influence over the Sikhs, it is to be presumed that the system of rule that has been enforced since the latter became an independent nation, will not be tolerated in its original form, it may nevertheless be useful to describe the nature of government to which the people have been accustomed.²⁰

The British were not having good opinion about the general economic condition of the people of the Punjab, so they thought that the regime change would have bring better economic prospects for the Punjabi people. Steinbach has written that the Maharaja was pressing upon the provincial administrators for their quota of revenue, and these authorities, who were armed with the terrible power of life and death, in their turn grinding the farmers with their exactions, the condition of the peasantry, whom the farmers in like manner squeezed for rents, was always the most abject and pitiful that can be conceived.²¹

The change of masters from Sikh to the British, and in consequence the feelings of three major communities of the Punjab, the Sikhs, the Muslims and the Hindus, Stienbach has given his comments while showing some partial attitude towards his European community. He says that the revenue system in force in Ranjeet Singh's time continuing to the British rule, it may readily be conceived that the transfer of the country from Sikh to the British rule will not be unacceptable to the agricultural population, who see that, in the provinces of India contiguous to the Punjab, the cultivators enjoy in peace and security a fair proportion of the results of his industry. Amongst the Muslims this desire for a change of masters is particularly strong; and there is no doubt that, the Hindus would become equally reconciled to a just and equitable system of government. However according to him at that time the feeling of the latter against a race that was not restrained by religious obligation from the use of animal food, is anything but friendly.²²

Travelers have written detail about the treasury of Ranjeet and are of the view that though the treasury was full of money but people were not prosperous. State was having complete control over the economy and all the financial resources were going straight in the state treasury. The book of Steinbach gives a detailed account of the treasury under Ranjeet Singh. He has written that the Maharaja had been hoarding treasure, which may be estimated to have amounted at his decease to about eight crores of rupees in cash, or the same number of million of pound sterling, with jewels, shawls, horses, elephant, etc., to several millions more.

Even during the last days of Maharaja's life, although much had been abstracted from the royal treasury, during the constant succession of troubles, it was doubtful if any court in Europe possesses such valuable jewels as the court of Lahore. Some idea of the vast property accumulated by Ranjeet Singh may be formed from the circumstances of no less than thirteen hundred various kind of bridles, massively ornamented with gold and silver, some of them even with diamond, being found in the royal treasury.²³

The Revenue administration under Ranjeet Singh has also come under discussion of many travelers. Captain V. Orlich says that this country was so highly favoured by nature, but so neglected by man, the empire of the Sikhs extends over the fine and rich province of Multan, a tract seventy miles wide, along the right bank of the Indus, beyond Mettun-Kote and the province of Peshawar. The territory under the dominion of the Maharaja may be estimated at 8000 geographical square miles, with five million inhabitants and revenue of between two and three million sterling in the views of Orlich. It is divided into provinces and districts, the administration of which is committed to governors and Sardars, who pay a certain sum to the prince; and of course, each of them endeavors to extort as much more as he possibly can from the country under his charge. Multan which was governed by a Hindu enjoys the best administration, and Kashmir is the most plundered and desolated.²⁴

When Sir Alexander Burnes²⁵ came to the court of Maharaja in July 1831, along with the presents from the king of England, he found the Maharaja at the height of his power, dreaded by his enemies and respected by the British. The veteran hero was flattered by so distinguished a mark of honour, from a nation which he highly venerated, and whose superiority he acknowledged in every respect. A splendid reception which he gave to Sir Alexander Burnes, as well as the high esteem which he then manifested for the English, led to an interview between him and Lord William Bentinck, the governor general of India. In consequence of that interview a treaty of navigation and commerce between Ranjeet Singh and the English was concluded.²⁶

A short time before opening of the campaign against Afghanistan, in 1838, another interview took place between the governor general, Lord Auckland and Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. At this occasion the Maharaja promised to give the British some assistance and granted them a free passage through his territory. But Ranjeet Singh was at this time in an enfeebled state of health and he died on the 27th of June 1839, of paralysis.²⁷

Steinbach has written that after the death of Maharaja the scenes of anarchy and confusion have existed in the Punjab. For some month before his demise, from his extreme debility he had lost of speech from paralysis and public business had been almost entirely neglected. The revenue misapplied, and order of state was going out of control. A few days previous to the death, the 28th of June, 1839, the Maharaja, conscious of his approaching end, ordered the whole of his superior officers, European and native, to be assembled in his presence and caused them to take the oath of allegiance to the successor, his son, Koonwar (Prince) Kurrck Singh. As a result of it and contrary to general expectation, he succeeded to the throne of his father without any opposition.

Ranjeet Singh was surrounded in his last moments by his favourite minister, Raja Dhyan Singh, the chief officers of his household, and the principal man of his Kingdom, upon which later he bestowed the most extravagant donations. Amongst other bequests, he directed that the far famed koh-i-Noor diamond, valued at a million sterling, which he had so disreputably obtained possession of from Shah Soojah, should be given to the high priests of the celebrated temple of Juggernaut, a place of great sanctity, situated in the south of

Bengal, wither religious fanatics, at a certain season annually, make a pilgrimage from the remotest parts of India. This order 'which fortunately for the glory of the British crown, was not carried out.'²⁸ The wish of Maharaja about Koh-i-Noor was not fulfilled and according to Steinbach the Koh-i-Noor was still in the Lahore treasury.

The funeral rites of the Maharaja, the custom of Sati,²⁹ the burning of eleven wives of Maharaja, the detail of this incident has given by Steinbach. He says that the funeral rites of this extraordinary man were too remarkable that should not be mentioned here. When his death was made public, the whole of the Sikh Sardars at Lahore, assembled to do honour to his Sati, and four of his favourite queens, together with seven female slaves, having in conformity with the horrible practice of the country, expressed their intention of burning themselves upon his funeral pile, so preparation were immediately made for the solemnity.

It is said that much dissuasion is exercised in cases of Sati, ostensibly such may be the case; but in private every argument to the contrary is made use of by the relatives of the wretched victim, and the promise once given cannot be retracted. A Street of a double line of infantry having been formed, the procession proceeded at a slow pace to its destination, only quarter of a mile distant, and within the precincts of the palace. The corpse of the later Maharaja, placed upon a splendidly gilt car, constructed in the form of a ship, with sails of gilt cloth to waft him (according to belief) into paradise, was borne upon the shoulders of soldiers, preceded by a body of native musicians, plying their wild and melancholy airs. His four queens, dressed in their most sumptuous apparel, then followed, each in separate gilt chair, borne upon the shoulders of their attendants. While the female slaves were following on foot.

After them came the successor to the throne, the Maharaja Kurruck Singh, attended by the whole of Sikh Sirdars, barefooted and was wearing white clothes. The queens appeared in a high state of excitement and the slaves also appeared perfectly resigned, but less enthusiastic. The body of the Maharaja having been placed upon the pile, his queens seated themselves around it, when the whole was covered over with a canopy of the most costly Kashmir shawls. The Maharaja Kurruck Singh then taking a lighted torch in his hand pronounced a short prayer and set fire to the pile, and in an instant the whole mass was in flames. The noise from the tom toms (drums) and shouts of the spectators immediately drowned any exclamation from the wretched victims. Steinbach is of the view that it was with some difficulty that the Raja Dhyan Singh (Ranjeet's minister), under strong excitement, was prevented from throwing himself into the flames.

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh was highly impressed by the discipline and war tactics of the European soldiers. At first Ranjeet Singh had a great fear and anxiety from the discipline of the English army, which he had observed in disguise on the banks of the Bias. He told Captain Wade in 1827 how impressed he had been with the spectacle of Holkar³⁰'s hundred thousand soldiers flying before a few trained battalions under Lord Lake.'³¹ It was due to that reason that he appointed many European military men into his service for the training and discipline of his army. Maharaja used to spend a large amount on the pay and facilities to these Europeans trainers. The capture of Amritsar brought luster to the Maharajah's name, and men from all over Hindustan began to flock to his standard. Among

them were deserters from the regiments of the East India Company. They were paraded before him and he saw, for the first time, soldiers march in step and makes battle formations on simple words of command. He recognized that the secret of British success against larger and better-equipped armies lay in their superior discipline.

Two French officers, Captain Ventura³² and Allard³³, who, after the fall of Napoleon, had in vain sought an honorable employment in Persia, came to the court of Lahore in 1822. They got a very friendly and brilliant reception and were employed by Ranjeet Singh to organize his army on the French footing. M. Mevius was the first one who came after them, representing himself as an Old Prussian officer. He came to Ludhiana and wrote to Allard and Ventura asking them to obtain for him a military command under Ranjeet Singh. After some negotiations the Raja agreed and he was allowed to train and instruct a regiment in the English fashion. Although the rest of the regular troops, trained by Mr. Allard and Ventura, were drilled in the English style.

Almost at the same time as Mevius, another stranger had come to Ludhiana to negotiate with Ranjeet Singh for similar purpose through the agency of Mr. Allard. He was Mr. Harlan, a doctor of Philadelphia, who had arrived at Calcutta as doctor of Philadelphia ship. From Ludhiana, where he stayed two or three months negotiating for a post in the service of Ranjeet Singh, he then crossed the river Sutlej and Indus and passed into Afghanistan.³⁴ He then visited Kandahar, Kabul and Peshawar and entered the Punjab through Attock to obtain employment in the court of Ranjeet Singh. Ranjeet Singh made him collector of the district of Nurpur.³⁵

Four years afterwards General Court³⁶ and Avitable³⁷ followed them. By the aid of these officers, on whom Ranjeet Singh conferred the rank of generals, the Maharaja succeeded in forming a well armed and tolerably disciplined army of 50,000 men, besides 100,000 irregular troops; cannon foundries, power magazines, and manufactories of arms were established in Lahore and Amritsir.³⁸ Ranjeet Singh required from the Europeans, who entered his service, not to eat beef, not to shave their beards, and not to smoke tobacco.³⁹ These officers were respectively placed at the head of a brigade or division. Ventura and Allard were the founders of his regular cavalry; General Avitable was distinguished as infantry officers, and to the General Court Ranjeet Singh was indebted for his artillery.

Notwithstanding the great confidence which the Maharaja placed in them, with this honorable and extensive sphere of action and princely recompenses in lands and money, they were not applied to in any affair relative to the court and the government; they were not allowed to sit down in the presence of the Maharaja, and were often obliged to petition for their high pay, from 2000 to 3000 rupees a month.⁴⁰

It is important here to talk about another European who visited the court of Ranjeet Singh in 1829. His name was Masson. He has written detailed note

about the Darbar of Ranjeet Singh, his army, the training of his army by the Europeans officers, the weapons used by the military of Ranjeet Singh and the number of horses in use etc. One can find the detail about the Punjab and Ranjeet Singh in his travel account *Massons's travels in Afghanistan. Vol.1.*⁴¹

Last of all came the Transylvanian doctor Martin Honigberger, who was wondering from the last seventeen years in Asia, seeking his fortune. He was very familiar with the languages and customs of the east. He came to Lahore and stayed a fortnight in the city without anyone suspecting that he was a European. In his book Honigberger has discussed the Punjab and the regime of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh.⁴²

So the influence of European tourists to the Court of Maharaja had already existed but one can see that this influence was greatly increased after 1826. Towards the end of 1826 the Maharaja was attacked by sickness. And he sought the aid of Dr. Murray, an English army surgeon at Ludhiana. Dr. Murray stayed with Ranjeet for eight months and closely studied the political and military situation in the Punjab. 'His frequent interviews with the Maharaja and his Sardars enabled him to collect an extremely useful fund of information, which he regularly supplied to the authorities of the Company at Ludhiana and Delhi.'⁴³ At the same time, Lord Amherst, the new governor general, visited the northern provinces and excited both the fear and the curiosity of the Sikh ruler. When he arrived in Simla, the Maharaja thought of arranging an interview with him, and expressed his ideas about it to Dr. Murray several times, but the meeting never took place.⁴⁴ Ranjeet Singh however sent instead a complimentary mission, composed of Diwan Moto Ram and Faqir Imam- ud- din, to Simla to wait upon the governor general, who returned the compliments by sending Captain Wade and Pearson and Surgeon Gerard. They visited the Punjab in the middle of 1827 and were given a hearty welcome by the ruler of the Punjab.⁴⁵ In 1827- 28 a new dispute arose about the Maharaja's claims over Chamkaur, Anandpur, Makhawal, and Ferozpur, but this was soon afterwards settled to the satisfaction of both parties.⁴⁶

The reorganization gave a clearer picture of the forces available and fixed the responsibility for putting them into the field. "The position of European officers employed by Ranjeet Singh in a military capacity was peculiar and precarious, and in no way to be compared with that of their equals in the Europeans armies."⁴⁷ Once this had been done, Ranjeet Singh prescribed the most exacting standards of efficiency in march, maneuver, and marksmanship. He spent three to four hours of his day with the troops, and seldom did a day go by when he did not reward a gunner or a cavalier for good performance. '...He usually accompanied his armies to battle; he was able to encourage individual acts of bravery by rewards of land and pensions.'⁴⁸

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh drew many foreign mercenaries into his service. He attracted the attention of numerous travelers, soldiers, and diplomats. Though Ranjeet Singh had a very unpleasant physical appearance with his smallpox pitted face and his single eye yet his capability of persistent questions, his delight in dancing girls and his impressive capacity for the most ardent spirits, he fascinated many Europeans travelers and finds space to become a topic of discussion in their travel writings.

Most of the European observers did not limit their comments to feature of the Maharaja which were, after all, comparatively trivial. These Orientalist travelers were also interested in his conspicuous success as a military leader and, in some instances, as they had interpreted as a failure in terms of civil administration and provision for an orderly succession. His military achievements were obvious for all the powers of the sub-continent.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the British were too close to the Punjab to be ignored and Ranjeet Singh's policies reflected this situation. Notable amongst these policies was his decision to create an army on European lines. For that purpose Ventura and Allard were employed in 1822 as the first of his European officers and with their assistance he began the transformation of his military forces. From one point of view he was apparently successful. Although the new army was never put to a serious test during to his own lifetime, however, it presented convincing displays of strength and efficiency. Ranjeet Singh had to pay a considerable financial price for these military achievements. He succeeded in creating an impressive army on European lines; he failed to provide his state with adequate long-term means of paying for it. This failure in revenue administration coupled with an evident unwillingness to train a successor was set in sharp contrast to Ranjeet Singh's earlier successes.

Alexander Burnes in a very concise and clear way expressed an opinion shared by several other visitors. "It appears to me that Ranjeet Singh, in his career, will have raised, formed, and destroyed a government."⁴⁹ This is important to say that it was the opinion of an interested party. Burnes represented the East India Company, and the Company's servant made no secret of their interest in the future of the Punjab. Trade prospects, a concern for natural frontiers, and the fear of Russian intensions combined to render Punjabi affairs an object of much attention. This, however, leaves the truth of Burnes prediction unaffected.

Events following the death of Ranjeet Singh in 1839 rapidly confirmed it. In the turmoil which so speedily over took the Punjab three families must be distinguished, although it should not be assumed that the family loyalty was a notable feature of the period. The first was that of the deceased Maharaja. Within the short space of five years three of his sons were to sit on the throne. A wife, a daughter in law and a grandson were also to play important roles. The second was the family of Dogra Rajas from Jammu, notably Dhian Singh and Ghulab Singh. Dhian Singh had occupied a ministerial position of major importance under Ranjeet Singh had he retained his prominence until his assassination in 1843. Ghulab Singh, who survived to rule Kashmir, deserves special mention of the Sikh rulers. Finally there were the Sandhavalias, three brothers who took a prominent part in the disturbances of that period.

The prominent European officers in the service of Maharaja were Ventura, Allard, Court and Avitable. Avitable got many medals from the court of Ranjeet Singh he uses to wear all of them. These officers were highly paid and they taught four important points to the Indian army. These were to maintain discipline and make effective moves during the war, to acquire the capability of constant firing, the effective use of artillery and the use of proper army uniform.⁵⁰

The European officers made a special Dragoon battalion with special drill, they use guns instead of swords.

Over all the policy of Ranjeet Singh was successful. The conclusion of the whole subject is that the Indians were unable to compete the technology of the British and the Europeans of the 19th century. The war tactics of Indians were of 16th or 17th centuries; the Maharaja was the only ruler who strengthened his army with the help of European military officers. He was always busy in learning and improving the military affairs. That was the reason that the British did not attacked the Chenab during the lifetime of Maharaja and even after his death they just bought the Khalsa lands for colonial destruction, which is another story.

affairs. That was the reason that the British did not attacked the Chenab during the lifetime of Maharaja and even after his death they just bought the Khalsa lands for colonial destruction, which is another story.

Notes & Reference

¹Ikram Ali Malik, A book of Readings on the History of the Punjab: 1799- 1947. (Lahore: Research society of Pakistan, 1970), p. 3.

²G.L. Chopra, The Punjab as a Sovereign State, Reprinted in Pakistan in 1977, (Lahore: Al-Bironi, 1977), p.46.

³ The Sikh Misls were, in popular estimation, twelve in number. For detail see Ikram Ali Malik, A book of readings on the history of the Punjab.

⁴ The Misls of Ranjeet Singh was Sukarchakia.

⁵Ikram Ali Malik, A book of Readings on the History of the Punjab, p. 2.

⁶Jacquemont, The Punjab a hundred year ago, record office of the government of the Punjab, p. 48.

⁷ Cunningham's History of Sikhs is a book which no serious student of Indian history can do without. The writer brought to bear on the subject an unbiased mind. The author had lived among the Sikhs for a period of eighty years during the very important period of their history. His first work appeared in 1849 and gave the fullest and most accurate details of the events. This book could not get popularity in the English circles because the writer has criticized the British administration and have given positives views about the Sikhs.

⁸For Detail See: J. D. Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, 1981).

⁹Hugel, Travels into Kashmir and the Punjab, pp.288-289.

¹⁰Jacquemont, The Punjab a hundred year ago, record office of the government of the Punjab, 1935, p. 36

¹¹ Sir James Douie, The Punjab, North West frontier province and the Kashmir, (Lahore: Islamia Al Saudia printer, 1916), p. 181.

¹²Jacquemont, The Punjab a hundred year ago, record office of the government of the Punjab, 1935, pp.36-37.

¹³ S. S. Thorburn, The Punjab in Peace and War, (New Delhi: Usha Rani Jain publications, 1987), p. 20.

¹⁴ Jacquemont, The Punjab a Hundred Year Ago, record office of the government of the Punjab, 1935, p.54.

¹⁵ For detail See: Henry, T. Prinsep. Origins of the Sikh power in the Punjab and the life of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, (Calcutta, 1834).

¹⁶ John Wood, Journey to The Source of the Oxus, p. 48.

¹⁷ Jacquemont, The Punjab a hundred year ago, record office of the government of the Punjab, 1935, p.54,55.

¹⁸ Jacquemont, The Punjab a hundred year ago, record office of the government of the Punjab, 1935, p.55.

¹⁹ Steinbach, The Punjab, pp.91-92.

²⁰ Steinbach, The Punjab, p.91.

²¹ Steinbach, The Punjab, p.92.

²² Steinbach, The Punjab, p. 93.

²³ Steinbach, The Punjab, pp.15-17.

²⁴ Orlich, Travels in India including Sindh and the Punjab, 1 Vol.p.162.

²⁵ He was son of James Burnes and born in 1805. he was connected with the family of the poet Burns and educated at Montrose Academy. He entered at the E. I. Co.'s military service in 1816. he was posted at Surat in 1823. And transferred to Cutch in 1825. He was sent in 1830, on a mission with a gift of horses, to Ranjeet Singh at Lahore and to explore the country. In 1832, he traveled by the orders of the government in North India, Afghanistan, Bokhara and Persia.

²⁶ In this treaty it was declared that the merchants should pay a certain duty, in order to put an end to the arbitrary exactions.

²⁷ Orlich, Travels in India including Sindh and the Punjab, 1 Vol.p. 168.

²⁸ S. S. Thorburn, The Punjab in Peace and War, p.20.

²⁹ This was later on severely criticized, as it was not in general practice in the Sikh community.

³⁰ For detail see: Sachchidananda and Bhattacharya, A Dictionary of Indian History, (New York: George Braziller, 1967), p. 426,427.

³¹ G.L. Chopra, The Punjab as a Sovereign State, p.50.

³² He was one of the first of the foreign generals who trained the army of Ranjeet Singh on the European model. He is been considered an Italian by birth and was an infantry colonel in Napoleon's army. He also (doubtfully) said to have been a Jew, named Rouben-Ben-Toora, who was employed in Persia. He in Lahore on March 1822 and started commanded a Brigade with Allard. He helped to defeat the Afghans in 1823. He received high pay and grants of land from Ranjeet Singh. He was constantly engaged in his campaigns and expeditions, sometimes to stop the Sikhs' jealousy, sharing the commands with mamber of Ranjeet's family. From 1831 to 1833 he was sent on service to Multan and was made there

Kazi and governor of Lahore. He was retired in 1843. he was a man of honour and high character and was greatly respected.

³³ Jean Francois Allard was born in France on 8th of march 1785. he served in the French Cavalry from 1803. After waterloo he went to Persia, thence through Kandhar and Kabul to Lahore. He entered in the service of Ranjeet Singh in 1822 and drilled Sikh cavalry for him on the European model. He was engaged in the numerous campaigns of high character and much liked and respected in the European circles. He was general in the French army and political agent of France in Lahore. He died at Peshawar on 23rd of January 1839 and was buried at Lahore.

³⁴ Jacquemont, The Punjab a hundred year ago, record office of the government of the Punjab, 1935, p. 32.

³⁵ For detail see: Jacquemont, The Punjab a hundred year ago, record office of the government of the Punjab, 1935, p. 33.

³⁶ Claude Auguste Court was born in 1783 educated at the Ecole Polytechnique, Paris. In 1812-13 he entered the French army. In 1815 he left the army. By 1818 he served in Persia and joined Ranjeet Singh's forces with Avitable. He greatly improved the Sikh artillery. He also paid attention to archaeology and coins. After the death of Ranjeet Singh the Sikh troops attacked Court and was protected by Ventura. He was then retired from Lahore to France.

³⁷ If we look at the western officers in the Darbar of Ranjeet Singh, none of them was so complicated as was the personality of P. D. Avitable. However he attained a special position in the army of Ranjeet Singh due to his capabilities. He was born 1791 and died on 28th of March 1850.

³⁸ V. Orlich, Travels in India including Sindh and the Punjab, 1 Vol. p. 167.

³⁹ The tobacco however was allowed to them, on their declaring themselves ready to comply with the first two conditions.

⁴⁰ V. Orlich, Travels in India including Sidh and the Punjab, 1 Vol, pp. 167-168.

⁴¹ C. Grey, Dr. Mubarak Ali (Ed.), Tareekh 14: Book serial of Fiction House, (Lahore: Fiction house), p. 59.

⁴² For detail see: J.M. Honigberger, Thirty five years in the East (London, 1852).

⁴³ Ikram Ali Malik, A book of Readings on the History of the Punjab, , p. 17.

⁴⁴ It was owing to the indisposition of Ranjeet Singh that the meeting never took place. See Ikram Ali Malik, A book of Readings on the History of the Punjab: 1799-1947. p. 17.

⁴⁵ Ikram Ali Malik, A book of Readings on the History of the Punjab: 1799-1947. p. 17.

⁴⁶ Maharaja's claim to the possession of the places other than Ferozpur was recognized by the English.

⁴⁷ C. Grey, "Ranjit Singh's Army", Verinder Grover, (ed.) The Story of the Punjab Yesterday and Today Vol 1, (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1995), p. 20.

⁴⁸ G. L. Copra, The Punjab as a Sovereign State, p. 207

⁴⁹ Alexander Burners, Travels into Bokhara Vol.II, (London, 1934), p.283.

⁵⁰Dr. Mubarak Ali (Ed.), Tareekh: Book serial of Fiction House, (Lahore: Fiction house), p. 46.