Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs

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INTRODUCTION

European historiography has a history of its own, almost as varied as the past it studies. Many of its principles were laid down by ancient Greeks. Unlike preceding narrations which were intermixed with fables, the first page of Thucydides was the commencement of real history. Thucydies had made a disciplined effort to dissect the past scientifically, that is to say, critically.

Unfortunately the example set by the great Greek historian, Thucydies, was not followed up by the 'Christian' historians. For more than a thousand years, beginning in the fourth century with Eusebius of Caesarea, they wrote works that might loosely be called historical ; they compiled accounts of the growth of their Church, narratives of the Crusades, or chronicles of the reigns of Christian Kings. Yet even at their best, their histories were a regression from the peaks of tough-minded realism reached by Thucydides. For the most part they were more fable than history. Their conception of the moving forces of history-of causes-was parochial and unscientific. They explained the victories of Christians, or their prosperity, as the miraculous rewards dealt out by God, and their defeats or miseries as divine punishment. History, for the medieval Christians, was a record of an imperfect earthly existence that, they hoped and prayed, would soon end with the Second Coming of Christ.

Compared with such attitudes, the Greek views of history appear modern. Still, when we consider the craft as it is practised to-day, the feats of antique historiography seem far removed. "In the sense in which Gibbon and Mommson were historians", R.G. Collingwood wrote "there was no such thing as an historian before the 18th century." That is, however, too harsh a judgement. It seriously underestimates the contributions made to the modern discipline by its Greek predecessors. History, as the modern European historical writing knows it, is a synthesis of principles and practices that reached independent status and a kind of perfection in the 19th century with Leopold Von Ranke and Jakob Burckhardt. The Greeks brought to history a point of view about the world that we might call realism —a critical distance from myths and fables that enabled them to discriminate between historical accounts and offer naturalistic reasons for events. They however applied their realism to a small

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canvas. Their relevance to the present-day point of view of European historical writing is indirect rather than direct. Their direct relevance begins only with their revival by the Renaissance Humanists.

Ironically the ancestor of modern history in Europe was not a historian but a poet, Petrarch. He discovered distance and thus set for the recovery of classical realism. If an age of darkness had intervened between classical Rome and Petrarch's time, ancient Rome was truly dead and could become the subject of detached historical inquiry. Petrarch's redefinition of "dark ages" was the pre-requisite for the age of historical realism that was to follow. In the hands of the Renaissance historians, glorification of Rome was worth doing but equally so they emphasised political history that utilised the bitter, disenchanted insights of ancient historians like Tacitus to understand the political realities of their own day. Three great Florentines—Leonardo Bruni, early in the 15th century, Machievelli and Guicciardini early in the 16th century—produced historical works designed to have some bearing on contemporary affairs. They were realists but were more than partisans or ideologists ; they were realists in the comprehensive sense of being secularists. For them the proper study of mankind's past was man's past actions, not providential intervention. This was the distinct contribution of the Renaissance and the essential first step towards the writing of modern history in Europe.

The historians of the Renaissance were scholars and professional sceptics. Out of this combination was born the historical scholarship of Europe in the form it still has to-day. Methods of research were systematically explored, new techniques of reading documents were introduced and old techniques perfected. What the historians in their pride like to call "auxiliary sciences" were invented one after another. The contributions of the inventors of these sciences are essential to modern scholarship. These sciences helped the 17th century European historians collect documents, and make some rational order out of almost indescribable chaos. The seventeenth century scholars established reliable scientific criteria for discriminating among documents and other historical artifacts.

History is an evolving discipline ; the achievements of one age are usually taken over by the next. But all is not gain. As the

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age of scholarship turned into an age of criticism, much was retained, but something was also lost. In applying the realism of the Renaissance with exhilerating self-confidence to all historical events whatever, the *philosophes* (the politician intellectuals of the 18th century) found themselves impatient with the laborious compilation of the erudite historians of the 17th century. Perhaps because their interest was wider, the 18th century *philosophes* studied their devout precursors, used them freely, and despised them.

The loss entailed by such self-confidence was great. The European historians of the age of criticism did nothing to advance the historical discipline in its technical aspects. They invented no new intellectual instruments, and they left the deciphering of manuscripts or digging up of coins to others. Yet this loss in momentum was more than made up for by the breadth of vision that the *philosophes* brought to and, with their fine historical works, imposed on the profession.

Each of the three masters, Voltaire, Hume and Gibbon, was more than a historian. Each brought to history the experience of literary men, an abiding love for philosophy, and a love of culture. And, not, surprisingly, they took out of history what they brought to it.

Historiography of the European period of Enlightenment is modern in its tone, but it is not the final word. "Before any further progress could be made in historical thought," Collingwood observes," two things were necessary. First the horizon of history had to be widened through a more sympathetic investigation of those past ages which the Enlightenment had treated as unenlightened, or barbaric and left in obscurity : and secondly, the conception of human nature as something uniform and unchanging had to be attacked."

These two attacks were made—with all the vehemence, exaggeration and ingratitude one may expect of a younger generation assailing an older one by two related, sometimes cooperating and sometimes hostile, movements of thought that became prominent in Europe at the end of the 18th century—romanticism and historicism. The German romantics in particular did the historical profession a signal service. They called attention to what had been neglected, and they praised what had been despised by the men of the Enlightenment, the Middle Ages. And by doing so, by

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reversing the value system of the philosophers, they did precisely what Collingwood rightly insisted needed doing ; they widened the horizon of history.

The historicists did a signal service to history. They taught that the human nature changes and evolves and that individuals (whether men or nations) are unique. This doctrine rapidly became a philosophy of life : men and nations do not have a nature ; they only have histories. In the eyes of the historicists the historian is the master scientist. The historian is the student of change ; the central reality of the world is change—what is more important, then, in the scheme of things than the historian ?

The historicists treated human nature more flexibly than their predecessors had been able to do ; their capacity for capturing the variety and the irrationality of human activities was considerably expanded. They could genuinely appreciate customs and institutions that to the *philosophes* had been foolish or incomprehensible.

But this gain was matched by a loss : Ranke, the first full-fledged historian to benefit from the historicist mentality, said gravely that "every epoch is equally close to God". This came to mean, in Ranke himself and in his pupils, a passive acceptance of military expansion, of cruelty and war—since life, history, was like that. And so the age of nostalgia and historicism liberated the profession of history but left it with an ambiguous legacy in the twentieth century Europe.

Fortunately for the craft of history, however, Ranke's God revealed himself in detail, and Ranke was realistic in his conception of cause as the Humanists, as diligent in his reading of archival material as the scholars of the 17th century, as fascinated by the totality of cultural life as the *philosophes*, as much in love with the past as the romanticists, and as reluctant to judge historical figures as the historicists.

His genius lay in combining intuition with exactitude, the humble consciousness of performing a religious service with pride in his craft. He turned history into a profession. With his fully professionalising European history, the age of the amateur, the intelligent literary man trying his hand at history, was over. More and more universities in Europe established chairs of history and historical associations sprang up everywhere on the continent, and with them the mark of the organised profession, the journal.

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It was also in the course of Ranke's lifetime that most of the present-day techniques of European historical scholarship and most current professional debates first appeared. The debate on what is history is one of the most important of such debates.

The question has always been interesting—it is still interesting today. In 1961 the prominent English historian E.H. Carr gave some widely read lectures with precisely this title—What is history ?—but the 19th century, with the claims of Hegel and Marx that history provided a philosophy of the world, and the claims of positivists like Fustel de Coulanges and H.T. Buckle that history had scientific status, the question became acute.

In 1902 the famous English historian of the ancient world, J.B. Bury proudly announced that history is "simply a science, no less and no more." Meanwhile, a group of German historians trained in the philosophy of Kant took the opposite side and argued that while the sciences strive for universal laws, history seeks to understand the unique event. The argument is not yet settled and is not likely to be for a long time.

Similarly, the age of Ranke had to deal with the related question, what is the domain of history ? In his great *History of England* Macaulay included a famous chapter that analysed the social scene of England in 1685 by using the evidence of newspapers, handbills, signs on shops, journals, scientific treatises, wage rates, and so forth. Modern social history, foreshadowed in the histories of Enlightenment, was born officially in this chapter of Macaulay's *History.*

A few years later, in 1860, Burckhardt-published his *Civilization of the Renaissance* in Italy. The book is as alive today as it was then. It expanded the range of historians even beyond what had been thought possible before. Burckhardt was trying—and in a large measure he succeeded—to portray a whole culture through its political ideas, its festivals, its religion, its attitudes towards marriage and commerce and heroism, its reading, writing and painting. Like Macaulay, Burckhardt left succeeding generations with a thesis to criticise and a model to imitate.

In the twentieth century these arguments over history continued. C.H. Wedgewood wrote her graceful narrative about the 17th century England in the midst of debates over narrative

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versus analytical history. Arnold J. Toynbee continued to insist till his death last year that comparative history on the grandest possible scale can and must be written ; but while he had completed his vast *Study of History* which elaborated the laws of growth and decay that according to Toynbee all civilizations follow, professional historians from all sides had been attacking his generalisations, challenging his facts and doubting the very feasibility of his enterprise.

In England Geoffrey Barraclough has proclaimed the birth of world history and has asked European historians to abandon their parochial concentration on the West. There is much activity in France as well : a group of social historians inspired by the memory of two great historians, Marc Block and Lucien Febvre, are attempting to rewrite the history of Europe by paying close attention to the history of nutrition, the evolution of concepts of childhood, and other long-neglected aspects of cultural geography.

The historical profession, as practised in the West, is very much alive. New interpretations, new techniques of research dizzy the European reader—but they also hearten him. The prevalence of debate rightly appears to him as a sign of life, of vital strength, a guarantee that historiography of Europe will go on.

The account of Western historiography given above is rather longish but its justification lies in the help which it may render, by way of contrast, to understand the corresponding tradition of historical writing in India. The dearth of historical literature in the ancient period of Indian history has led to the common belief that there was no sense of history as such in that age. Modern researchers have tried to prove that this sense was not totally absent. Even if this is granted, the fact remains that with the exception of *Rajatarangini* and *Mahavamsa* of Ceylon there is hardly any writing of a truly historical character coming from the ancient period. The *Puranas* to some extent do contain historical element but this too is submerged in a sea of myths and legends. Why it was so, has often been explained by the predominance of a metaphysical outlook in every sector of peoples' lives. The dominant philosophy of life at that time was based on "the orthodox Brahmanical view that the world is immensely old and in decline, that things are impermanent,

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that superhuman forces have the largest influence in shaping man and that man's proper course is to accept and to encourage the sentiment of resignation." The Turks, the Pathans and later the Mughals who ruled in India for nearly seven centuries, unlike the ancient Hindus, possessed a keen sense of history. In this connection Dr. Philips writes : "Muslim historians of the Sultanate period in India, like their brethren elsewhere, wrote in the conviction that true religion is to be found in the authoritative guidance of the divinely revealed Quran. They assumed, so to speak, that an ideal history of the Muslims was laid up in heaven and that their primary task was to illustrate this history, treating their source materials as authorities to be cited rather than questioned or interpreted. They concieved of history not as a process but rather as a sequence of events, often isolated, and without obvious relationship, to which meaning was given by God. With their gaze firmly fixed on Muhammad as the founder of their religion, their historical perspective was finite and linear, radically different therefore from that of the Hindus, and their sense of chronology, like that of early Christian writers, correspondingly more precise". The Mughals who destroyed the Sultanate to establish their own empire in 1526 broadly followed the line of their predecessors though in the Mughal historians a gradual drift towards a growing interest in biographical works is discernible.

In the eighteenth century the Muslims gradually gave way to the British who expanded and consolidated their power in the nineteenth century. Then many Europeans came forth to write on India and porduced a large amount of historical literature. Among them James Mill and Mountstuart Elphinstone in particular belonged to influential British schools of historical thought, the utilitarian and the romantic respectively. Most of the other writers, however, were hardened administrators who were chiefly motivated by the desire to write with the object of influencing official policies. It is remarkable that though in Europe historiography was making great advances, practically all of these writers show "so little awareness of the main, contemporary, currents of western thought and of the changing character of western historical scholars p". Nevertheless, imperceptibly they introduced into this country the historical methodology of Europe, which was radically different from what had

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hitherto prevailed here. Their writings, howsoever biased and politically motivated, were marked by elements of analysis, discussion and interpretation-features which had been conspicuous by their absence in the writings of Indian scholars. In more recent times, with increased contact between India and the west, these new trends have struck deeper roots so that Indian writers also by now have come fully under their influence.

It is against this background that the foreign and indigenous historiographers of the Sikhs need to be seen. The existence of the Sikhs was first noticed by the British when the Sikhs having established their political supremacy in Punjab were threatening to become masters of Delhi and the Ganga-Jamuna Doab. Impelled by great curiosity to know about them, British officials like Browne, Polier, Forster and Malcolm collected information of a preliminary nature and put it into brief notes, essays or monographs. When in the opening decades of the nineteenth century Ranjit Singh established a mighty Sikh empire in the north-west of India, the British felt the need for more than preliminary information and endeavoured to understand the Sikh community closely by familiarising themselves with their customs, usuages and institutions. This purpose was well served by the writings of Prinsep, Murray, Smyth, Steinback, Gardener and Honigberger. The works of M'Gregor and Cunningham, besides being helpful in aiding the above process of understanding, also reflected the controversies thrown up by the outbreak of hostilities between the Sikhs and the British. After the annexation of Punjab in 1849, the Sikhs began to be viewed by the British from a new angle. Because of their great martial qualities they were now much sought after for recruitment in British armed forces. Thus, Griffin. Macauliffe, Gordon, Bingley and Payne laboured hard and produced works to placate the Sikhs. When Ernest Trumpp, a German missionary, injured their sentiments by his comments on the Sikh scriptures. hurried steps were taken to undo the damage caused. It needs to be noted that as soon as the Sikhs began to show sympathy for the notionalist struggle against the British Rule, practically all British interest in them was lost so that from the standpoint of British writings on the Sikhs the last three decades of British Rule in India was almost a barren period.

As the knowledge of western historiography advanced in

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India, English-educated Indian scholars too tried their hands at it. In the sphere of Punjab history the pioneer was Syad Muhammad Latif whose writings include *History of the Punjab, History of Multan and History of Lahore*. Though his general approach was pro-British and pro-Muslim yet in dealing with the Sikh portion of Punjab history he was able to display a measure of fair assessment of men and events earlier unknown in any writer on the Sikhs from that community. Latif was followed by four writers from the Hindu community, namely Indubhusan Banerjee, Sita Ram Kohli, Gokal Chand Narang and N.K. Sinha. All of them had received regular training in the discipline of history and three of them, Banerjee, Kohli and Sinha, were also practising historians. The works of all these writers show a clear impact of the modern historical methodology which is obviously the gift of the West to India. But if their methodology is from outside, their point of view is Indian and not foreign. The strong wave of Indian nationalism was sweeping the country at the time of their writing and this has left a deep mark on their way of thinking. Narang was most pronounced in projecting Sikh history as a national struggle. Banerjee, Sinha and Kohli were more balanced and also more keenly aware of the historical forces that have been operating through the centuries to shape the community. But they too were not entirely free from the nationalist bias.

So much about the historians and historiographers who have been included in the present work. However, there is no doubt that much has happened since they produced their writings. Historical scholarship in our country and elsewhere has taken long strides. New tools of research have been evolved and new points of view adopted. As in other areas of historical research, research in the field of Sikh history too has registered big advances. Emphasis is fast shifting from the old narrative and descriptive type of historical writing to critical and interpretative exposition of historical phenomena. Similarly, social and economic aspects of history are now receiving more and more attention. All this has been possible because in recent years the problems of Punjab, particularly Sikh, history have attracted the notice of a large number of scholars, both Indian and foreign. It is indeed heartening to note that their labours have already produced valuable results and thereby they have

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made notable contributions in the field of Sikh historiography. But though well aware of the high merit of their works, we have not been able to include them or any of them, in this present survey for the reason that its scope has been restricted only to those of our writers who are no longer with us.

The present work *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs* is the first book of its kind on the subject. It is also the first in the series of a projected three-volume work on it. This one is exclusively concerned with writers who have adopted the medium of English language for their writings. The two subsequent volumes will be respectively concerned with writings in Persian and Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi. But being the first in the series is not the only merit of the work. Among its other distinguishing marks are its extensive range and high scholarship. The range has been widened so as to include practically all writers, foreign as well as Indian (living scholars excluded), who have made any significant contribution on the subject. The authors of the essays incorporated herein are all eminent scholars with well-established positions in their respective fields.

As will be seen, the book is the outcome of sustained cooperative efforts on the part of many scholars. I take the opportunity of offering to them my most grateful thanks for their unstinted cooperation and their valuable contribution in its production. I am particularly thankful to Professor S.S. Bal who besides writing two chapters for it has also helped me to prepare the Introduction to the book. My colleagues in the Department of History and in the Directorate of Punjab Historical Studies have rendered great assistance in the preparation of the Press Copy as well as the Index. I thankfully acknowledge their help and cooperation. In this respect my thanks are particularly due to Ajit Singh, Parambakhshish Singh and R.K. Ghai. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not appreciate the great interest and speed with which my publishers have brought out the book.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY EUROPEAN WRITERS

BROWNE, POLIER, FORSTER AND MALCOLM

The first signs of European interest in the Sikh community date back to the period of Warren Hastings, first British Governor General in India. By that time the British had triumphed over their European rivals, the French and the Dutch, and had got a firm and secure foot-hold in the Presidency of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. They had also acquired a position of influence in the state of Oudh through a special treaty arrangement with the Nawab. This was the time around which the Sikhs were also actively engaged on establishing themselves as a political power in the north-western parts of the country. By about the year 1750 they had successfully met the mighty challenge of the Mughals. The Afghan challenge following that of the Mughals, posed by repeated Indian invasions of Ahmad Shah Durrani of Kabul, was no less formidable. But they dealt such severe blows against the invaders that the latter had to quit within a decade or so leaving the field wholly clear to the Sikhs, though in the process of this titanic struggle the Sikhs themselves had to undergo a heavy ordeal of suffering. The total failure of Ahmad Shah, the vanquisher of the Marathas in 1761 and at that time a great terror for Indian Princes, to suppress the Sikhs greatly raised the latter's reputation in the whole of the country. The result was that there arose an immense curiosity all around to know about them, to understand the secret of thier strength. This curiosity soon became a matter of necessity for the British when the Sikhs, not contented with their possessions in the Panjab, threatened Delhi and the Doab and even knocked at the doors of Oudh. Not long after, Zaman Shah of Kabul following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Ahmad Shah Durrani, set out on a

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career of conquest of India. Once again, there were nightmares in Indian capitals. But all his expeditions were set at naught by the Sikhs and this in due course paved the way for the rise of a powerful Sikh state under the able leadership of Ranjit Singh.

The first European to take a literary notice of the Sikhs was Major James Browne. His work *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks* is the earliest known historical writing on the Sikhs.

James Browne was born about the year 1744 and joined the English East India Company in 1765 as a Cadet. He was commissioned as Ensign towards the end of the same year. He got rapid promotions in his military career. In 1767 he was promoted Lieutenant and four years later he was given the Captain's rank. In 1772 he attracted the notice of Warren Hastings who appointed him his *aide-de-camp*. By his good work he soon won the full confidence of his master and he was appointed collector of the jungle Terai districts in 1774. He held this position till 1780. On January 19, 1781 he was promoted to the rank of Major. In August 1782 he was sent to the Imperial Court at Delhi as Agent or Envoy of the Governor General.

The affairs at Delhi were then in a critical state. With the death of Najjaf Khan in April 1782, the Imperial Court was once again plunged into a chain of intrigues and counter-intrigues. There was a tussle for power among Mirza Shafi Khan, Afrasiab Khan, Najjaf Quli Khan and Mohammed Beg Hamdani. The Emperor Shah Alam II was too weak to have a firm grip on the situation with the result that the Marathas and the Sikhs were greatly encouraged in their raids into the Imperial territories. In deputing Major Browne as his Envoy to the Emperor's Court at Delhi Warren Hastings had before him the objective "simply to assure the King of the attachment of the Compnay...to his person and interest...and to afford him such substantial proofs of it as the state of our affairs will admit". (Hastings to Browne, August 20,1782 : *Browne Correspondence*, No. I, pp. 1-5). The zeal of Browne however, led him astray and deeply involved him in the court

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politics though he had been instructed to keep himself aloof from it. First, he became an active supporter of Shafi Khan. In 1783 he changed sides and began to support the cause of Shafi Khan's rival, Afrasiab. With the murder of Afrasiab in November 1784 the ground was cleared for the Maratha leader Mahadaji Sindhia acquiring supreme influence at the Mughal Court, and he was appointed *Vakil-i-Mutlaq* in December 1784. Thereupon, Browne's position at Delhi became untenable. He had been opposing the Maratha Chief all along and therefore he could serve no useful purpose by continuing to stay at Delhi. Moreover, his patron Warren Hastings handed over the charge of his office and left India in February 1785. His successor John Macpherson recalled Browne from Delhi soon after assuming the charge.

Major Browne while at Delhi utilized his stay of two years and a few months to collect as much information as he could about the Marathas and Sikhs whose ceaseless raids then were posing a serious threat to the Imperial possessions. All his correspondence with Warren Hastings, which is replete with such information, is now available in a published form. It was edited by K. D. Bhargava and published by the National Archives of India, New Delhi in 1960. Besides, two tracts were written by him. One dealt with the Jungle Terai areas and is entitled *Description of the Jungle Terry Districts.* This dates prior to his mission to Delhi. The other tract with which we are here primarily concerned is regarding the Sikhs and bears the title, as hinted earlier, of *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks.* This latter work belongs to the period of the author's stay at Delhi. Both of these tracts were submitted by the author to Mr. John Motteux, Chairman of the Honourable Court of Directors in 1787. They were published in London in 1788 under the common title of *India Tracts.*

The forwarding letter (dated September 17, 1787) accompanying the tract on the Sikhs submitted by Browne to Mr. Motteux explains the purpose of preparing the work as well as gives a brief idea of its contents. It says :

> "Conformably to the wish you were pleased to express, that I should furnish you with an account of the rise and present State of the tribe

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of the people called Sicks, I now beg leave to submit to your perusal, the following translation which I have made of a Persian manuscript, written by my desire while I resided at the Court of Dehly, to which I have added all the information which I have by other channels acquired, respecting that people and I have accompanied the whole with a map, specifying the extent of their territories, the names of their chiefs, together with the places of their respective residence, and the number of their forces".

The above extract from the letter makes it sufficiently clear that Browne attempted his work on the Sikhs at the instance of the Court of Directors which was rather anxious to obtain authentic information about them in view of their fast growing political importance. Obviously, this desire of the Court would have been conveyed to him by the then Governor General Warren Hastings. But Warren Hastings had left before the work was ready for submission and with Macpherson who succeeded him temporarily, Browne picked up a quarrel and even had a personal duel[1] on his return to England. And therefore instead of submitting his work to the British Government in India, he preferred to present it personally to the Chairman of the Court of England.

As the author himself has suggested, his account has two aspects pertaining to :

(*i*) "rise" of the Sikhs,

(*ii*) "present state" of the Sikhs.

The portion concerning the first aspect was an English rendering of a Persian manuscript prepared by Budh Singh Arora of Lahore and Ajaib Singh Suraj of Malerkotla. Browne happened to meet both of these men at Delhi and on learning that they had in their possession a manuscript in *Devnagri* giving an account of the rise and progress of the Sikh people, he "persuaded them to let me have a translation of one of them in the Persian language, abridging it as much as they could do, without injuring the essential purpose of information" (*Introduction*). The Persian version that they

1. Browne nursed a grievance against Macpherson for the aspersions that his government had cast upon him. On Macpherson's arrival back in England, he called upon him to apologise in public. When Macpherson refused to do so, Browne challenged him to a duel which was fought at the Hyde Park, London, in September 1787. Both escaped unhurt.

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jointly produced at Browne's special request is known as *Risala Dar Ahwal-i-Nanak Shah Darwesh*, or simply *Risala-i-Nanak Shah*. Browne being a good scholar of Persian himself translated it into English.

As it is, the account of the development of the Sikh community as found in this English translation suffers from many serious errors of omission and commission. Apart from its being "extremely defective in a regular continuation of dates"—a flaw pointed out by Browne himself, it has a large number of factual inaccuracies even with regard to the names of the ten Sikh Gurus. Dr. Ganda Singh has commented on these shortcomings exhaustively in his edited work *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*. Obviously, most of these defects were present in the Persian manuscript itself and Browne having no ready means of checking and removing them, could hardly do anything to eliminate them. Even so, many of these defects are of the faulty English translation. In this respect Browne alone is not to blame. Other European scholars, too, in spite of their best efforts, have been guilty of committing blunders in translating Persian texts. Their usual tendency to paraphrase complicated linguistic constructions has very often been responsible for gross errors. In the case of Browne, it is all more the regrettable because his work was used as a historical source by subsequent writers on the subject.

The second portion is Browne's original contribution. It consists of the *Introduction* and the additional account at the end covering the period from 1764 to 1785. This is far more valuable than the translation portion of the tract and contains all that body of information which with great pains he collected during his stay at Delhi through diverse channels. Some important contents of this collection are a list of the Sikh chiefs of the period along with their respective military resources and places of residence, a map showing the extent of their territorial possessions and a brief description of Sikh institutions, customs and manners. Among these institutions, customs etc. are mentioned particularly the grand Diet of the *Sarbat Khalsa*, by him mistakenly called

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'Goormatta' (*Gurmatta*), *'Dull Khalsa Gee'* (now spelt as *Dal Khalsa*), *Amrit* ceremony, *Rakhi* system, camp life, dress, weapons, horses, food habits and coins. The account of Browne, though brief, offers a fairly good picture of the Sikh polity and Sikh society of those days. This is probably the first notice taken by a European of these eighteenth-century Sikh institutions and practices. The point particularly to be noted here is his appreciative attitude throughout towards the Sikh people and the manner in which they conducted themselves. The brave demeanour of the few Sikhs he happened to meet and speak to during his tenure of office at Delhi and what he learnt about them from other sources seem to have created upon his mind a most favourable impression about them. He writes : "I have conversed with several Sikhs who were sent to me by different chiefs on complimentary messages : and I perceived a manly boldness in their manner and conversation, very unlike the other inhabitants of Hindustan, owing no doubt to the freedom of their government" (*Introduction*). Browne also admires the way the principalities under the Sikh chiefs were administered. "I shall only observe that the country is said to be in a state of high cultivation which, I believe, is because they carry into it all the cattle fit for tillage, which come into their possession by plunder, collect a very moderate rent and that mostly in kind and during any intestine disputes, their soldiery never molest the husbandman" (*Introduction*). He also refers to the fine manufactures of the Sikh-ruled territories, such as fine cloth and arms—"the best arms in Hindustan."

The people who had fought with the Mughals and after them the Afghans of Kabul, and won the struggle for supremacy in Punjab were mostly of the Jat tribe. Secondly, the Sikhs had at the time the most cordial relations with the Hindus. They had helped them greatly in their hour of difficulty and when the danger was over, they prided themselves on the triumph won by the Sikhs. Both of these elements are traceable in Browne's account of the Sikhs. He identifies them with the Jat tribe and describes Sikhism as a

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form of reformed Hindusim. He writes that Sikhism "appears to bear that kind of relation to the Hindoo religion, which the Protestant does to the Romish" (*Introduction*).

Apart from impiricism, the ferment of human rights marking the European scene in the latter half of the eighteenth century seems to have influenced his mode of thinking. The American Revolution of 1776 had been fought on the democratic principle of *no taxation without representation*. The French Revolution with its Declaration of Rights of Man was just round the corner. The atmosphere was surcharged with new ideas. Browne who was a linguist and a good scholar seems to be well aware of the new consciousness arising in Europe. This becomes manifest from his manner of explaining the rise and progress of the Sikhs. "At first the sect was merely speculative, quiet, inoffensive and unarmed ; they were first persecuted by the barbarous bigotry of Aurangzeb ; and persecution, as will ever be the case, gave strength to that which it meant to destroy ; the Sikhs from necessity confederated together, and finding that their peaceable deportment did not secure them from oppression, they took up arms to defend themselves against a tyrannical government, and as will always happen where the *common rights of humanity* are violated, a hero arose whose courage and ability directed the efforts of his injured followers, to a just though severe revenge" (*Introduction*).

To conclude, Browne attached very great importance to the study of the Sikhs and the argument advanced by him in this respect was that "the rapid progress of this sect will hereafter render a knowledge of them, their strength and government very important to the administration of Bengal". Clarifying his view-point he stated that "a sect which contained in its original principles so much internal vigour as sustained it against the bloody persecution of a great government determined and interested to suppress it, raised it up again with fresh strength on every opportunity which occurred, and at length enabled it so far to subdue all opposition as to acquire an entire and undisturbed dominion over some of the finest provinces of the empire, from whence it makes incursions into others, holding out protection to all who

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join and destruction to all who oppose it ; a sect which makes religion and politics unite in its aggrandisement and renders the entrance into it so easy to all who desire to become members of it, cannot fail to extend itself very far and in the end to be exceedingly formidable to all its neighbours" (*Introduction*).

Unlike Browne, Colonel Polier-his full name was Antoine Louis Henri Polier-had no instruction from the British government to write on the Sikhs. His work, *The Siques,* was an independent attempt of his own. Just a brief paper consisting of a few pages only, it would have been passed over but for two reasons : (i) divergence of approach, (ii) corroboration of some of Browne's observations. But before taking up these points, it is necessary to know who he was.

He was a Swiss engineer, nephew of Paul Phillip Polier, the Commandant of Fort St. George (Madras). He entered the service of East India Company in 1757 and arrived in India in 1758. For some years he served in Madras and Bihar and then was appointed Assistant Engineer at Calcutta with the rank of Captain in the army. Being a non-Englishman, he experienced great difficulty in the way of further promotion. Therefore, he gladly accepted the offer when he was sounded whether he would be willing to be deputed to Oudh. There also he faced many difficulties and ultimately had to resign his job in 1775. Seven years later financial compulsions forced him to seek re-employment with East India Company. He was now promoted Lt. Colonel and was again stationed at Lucknow. In 1789 he retired from service and returned to Europe. He settled down near Avignon in France, where he was murdered on February 9, 1795.[1]

While at Lucknow or moving about in the neighbourhood of Delhi and Agra, Col. Polier collected a number of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic manuscripts. Some of these manuscripts along with a complete set of the Vedas were presented

1. For more details about his life see Dr. Ganda Singh's *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, Hodson's *Officers of the Bengal Army* (Part III, L-R) and Buckland's *Dictionary of Indian Biography*.

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by him later to the British Museum, London. A good number of his manuscripts are also preserved in the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris.

Polier became an elected member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 and from then onward always took keen interest in the affairs of the Society. He presented a number of research papers at its various meetings. Of them the first to be thus presented was his paper on the Sikhs, called *The Siques* or *History of the Seeks*.

The paper, *The Siques*, bears no date of writing but from several internal references it appears to have been written in or around the year 1780. That way, it dates even earlier than Major Browne's *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks*. But though of earlier origin, it was read at a meeting of the Asiatic Society several years later on February 9, 1787, only seven months before Browne presented his work to the Chairman of the Court of Directors in England.

Unlike Browne, Polier is very critical of the Sikhs. Whereas Browne attributes their rise and progress to the "internal vigour" of their "original principles", the justice of their cause, their persistent resistance against the persecutory policy of a tyrannical government and the republican spirit of their institutions, Polier holds that it was not so much due to "their bravery, conduct or military knowledge as to the anarchy and confusion that has desolated the empire, one may say, for these 60 or 70 years past, that is ever since the death of that Great Aurangzeb but more particularly from the weak government during the reigns of Mahomed Shah, Ahmed Shah and Allumguir Sany, the last of which may be cited as an example of the weakest and most wretched that ever was."

The key to the understanding of Polier's attitude towards the Sikhs lies in his prolonged stay at Lucknow. He had been there for several years before he resigned his job in 1775. In 1782 he rejoined the Company's service and returned to Oudh where he continued to stay until he retired from service in 1789. This long period of his stay in the State of Oudh went a long way, it seems, in determining his attitude towards the

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established Muslim authorities as well as towards the Sikhs. Between the Sikhs and the Nawab of Oudh, his sympathies lay with the Nawab. The Sikhs who were conducting ceaseless raids into the Doab areas, thus posing a serious danger to the integrity and independence of Oudh, were looked upon by him as disturbers of peace, freebooters, people "noted for being of an unquiet and turbulent disposition." This firmly rooted bias of his mind against the Sikhs also coloured his view about the struggle which the Sikhs had previously conducted against the Mughals and the Afghans. He speaks of "that Great Aurangzeb", "the Gallant Mir Mannou" who by the popular Sikh tradition was the greatest oppressor of the Sikhs, and of "Adina Big Khan, a brave and valiant officer". He recalls with ill-concealed regret several occasions when the Mughals could have completely destroyed the Sikhs but their internal weaknesses always came in the way. Similarly, Ahmad Shah Abdali who supplanted the Mughal power in Punjab, had the capacity to destroy them totally, but here too the Sikhs proved lucky because the Afghan leader could not afford to stay for long in this area. In their struggle against the Afghans, the Sikhs, says Polier, committed several communal outrages against Muslim religious places and if subsequently Ahmad Shah Abdali damaged the holy shrines of the Sikhs, he did so in retaliation.

The Sikhs' guerilla mode of fighting had thoroughly non-plussed both the Mughals and the Afghans, and had been largely responsible for the Sikhs' ultimate triumph. But even this has failed to elicit any word of appreciation from Polier. Rather on the other hand he deprecates it. "In their military capacity the Siques are far from being so formidable as they are generally represented, or as they might be......when it is considered in what disorderly manner they fight, that they know not what it is to be in close order, or to charge sword in hand, and that they never could yet be brought to face the Duranies though 3 or 4 to 1, it must be acknowledged that at best they are but the *Croates* of India......"

Viewing the Sikhs as he did as a menace to the constituted authority and to peace, he advocated immediate adoption of strong measures to curb their power. They were

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spreading disaffection among other rural folk, which, if not checked in time, might assume dangerous proportions. He has observed : "Such are the Siques, the terror and plague of this part of India, a nation and power well-calculated for mischief and encouraging rebellion in the Zemidars or cultivators, who often follow steps at first with a view of saving themselves and afterwards from the pleasure of independence, and indeed it is that makes them so troublesome, for they begin to have connections in almost all the parts they visit on their excursions, and if they are not attacked soon in their own proper provinces, it is much to be feared that their tenets and manners will be adopted by all the Zemindars of the *Soubah* of Delhi and part of Agra". Having placed his finger on the danger-spot, he felt encouraged to think that Najjaff Khan would soon be in a position "to turn all his forces towards the Siques and at least to drive them from this side of Sirhind which he may, I think, easily do, though perhaps it would not be safe for him to go farther, except Timur Shah, son of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and at that time King of Afghanistan, should on his side attack them also across the *Attek*, then indeed and by remaining a few years in the centre of their country they might effectually reduced".

Browne during his mission at Delhi also advocated a strong anti-Sikh alliance with the support of Marathas if possible. But in his case, the proposal was born of diplomatic grounds and not of his personal hatred of the Sikhs as we find in the case of Polier.

However, even the strong anti-Sikh prejudices of Poiler could not prevent from his view some of the remarkable features of the Sikh society and Sikh polity. The most important of them were the Sikh General Council which discussed all important issues facing the community and passed *Gurmatas*, the democratic elements in Sikh society, their government which was a mixture of democracy and aristocracy, their army organisation and military resources and their concern for the welfare of the people under their rule as well as under their protection (*rakhi*).

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Equally remarkable are Polier's references to the simplicity, toughness and sturdiness of the Sikhs. For instance, he writes : "The Siques are in general strong and well-made, accustomed from their infancy to the most laborious life and the hardest fare ; they make marches and undergo fatigues that will appear really astonishing. In their excursion they carry no tents or beggage with them, except perhaps a small tent for the principal chief ; the rest shelter themselves under a blanket which serves them also in the cold weather, to wrap themselves in and which in their march covers their saddles."

To illustrate his views on these matters, he has given a brief description of their horses, their food and their dress. All this information provided by Polier is valuable as it corroborates Browne's account noticed earlier.

But Polier differs from Browne in his views about the Sikh religion. While both of them agree that Sikhism has several elements of Hinduism in it, their attitudes towards Sikhism differ. Browne holds it to be a form of reformed Hinduism but on the other hand Polier does not seem to think very highly of it which to his mind was but slightly distinguishable from the common creed of the Hindus. Unlike Browne, Polier has no awareness of *Khande di Pahul* ceremony initiated by Guru Gobind Singh and instead describes the ceremony of *Charanamrit* and calls "letting the hair of the head and beard grow' a "filthy beastly ceremony"— a result partly of his ignorance and partly of his prejudice.

Unlike Browne who was primarily motivated to collect information regarding the Sikhs for the benefit of his government, Polier's chief desire seems to be not so much to collect information as to make out a case for strong and immediate military intervention against the Sikhs. All the same, the information provided by him, imperfect and scanty though it was, was useful from the British point of view, anxious as they were to acquire as much knowledge about the Sikhs as possible.

The concluding sentence of Polier's *The Siques* refers to a Sikh prophecy, "delivered down by some of their Gorou," that "the Siques after remaining some time the terror of India would at last be finally destroyed by white men coming

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from the westward". A prophecy of this nature is no doubt some times attributed to Guru Tegh Bahadur but that is not exactly in the same form. Nevertheless, the functioning of Polier's mind becomes very clear from this. By bringing in this prophecy at the end, he probably wants to suggest and holds out the hope that the destruction of the Sikh menace which he thinks so essential, would be ultimately achieved by the British.

George Forster's account of the Sikhs was written three years after Polier produced his paper in 1780. Forster was a civil servant on the Madras establishment of the East India Company. He was a man of adventure and a scholar of considerable merit. He left Calcutta on May 23,1782 on his long and arduous overland journey to England. He was a keen observer of men and things and he recorded all the new information he collected in the course of his travels along with his impressions in a series of letters which were later published in two volumes in London in 1798 under the title, *A Journey from Bengal to England.*

The main letter bearing on the Sikhs was written by Forster to Mr. Gregory at Lucknow from Kashmir in 1783. This was mostly but not entirely based on what he had personally observed about the Sikhs and their country during his journey through the hilly areas of Punjab in the months of February, March and April, 1783. Stray references to the Sikhs are also found in a few other letters written by him on other occasions. That he had some written sources as well with him at the time of writing his letter is borne out by the writer himself when he says that he was "under great obligations to Colonel Polier of the Honourable Company's service (1757-75, 1782-89) for having furnished me with large historical tracts of the Siques".

There is a clear hint in the letter showing that it was written at the express wish of the addressee, Mr. Gregory. This fact carries a two-fold significance. First, it indicates the great hunger at this time among Europeans for authentic information about the Sikhs in view of their great political achievements. Secondly, it shows that the chief motive of Forster in this writing was to furnish first-hand information

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concerning the Sikhs. In discharging this function he tried to be as objective as possible. To this he testifies when he writes : "Thus, Sir, to the utmost of my abilities and with a scrupulous adherence to the Spirit of the Facts which have presented themselves, and which I have carefully avoided to discolour or warp by my prejudice or political bias, have I discussed the subject which you were pleased to interest to my investigation". This objective and truthful approach brings him closer to Major Browne than to Polier who had looked upon the Sikhs with a jaundiced eye.

On account of paucity of material, Forster was as much handicapped about the origin and earlier history of the Sikhs as his contemporaries, Browne and Polier, were. The brief sketch he has given of the earlier period, thus, suffers from serious shortcomings. He has dealt with it in three broad phases : (i) Guru Nanak, (ii) the invasion of Nadir Shah and the Sikh fight against the Mughals after that, (iii) Sikh struggle against the Afghans. Being extremely sketchy and replete with factual errors, this part of the writing is hardly of any value but perhaps it was considered sufficient at the time for Europeans who knew next to nothing about the Sikhs.

The really valuable part of Forster's writing is that which relates to the contemporary period. Here Forster touches upon several important aspects of Sikh society and Sikh polity, such as their "aristocratical" government, their armed forces, their guerilla mode of fighting, their concern for the welfare of the people under their rule, and their religion. It is remarkable that on most of these matters Forster's account agrees with that of Major Browne though they often differ in details and sometimes even in the subjects discussed. On the whole, Forster's account is of greater dependability, being based on personal observations rather than on hearsay.

Forster's overall opinion about the Sikhs was quite favourable, like that of Browne and unlike that of Polier. Addressing Mr. Gregory he writes : 'In this Account, which may I be allowed to say has a reasonable claim to authenticity, you will see that the Seicks are a very respectable people, and when united in common cause must be powerful

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and formidable." Speaking about the secret of their success, he says : "The success and conquests of the Sikhs have principally arisen from their unparalleled activity and the endurance of an almost incredible Fatigue". But if that was the secret of their success, internal divisions were the cause of their weakness. Forster was well aware of this fact in view he made a prophecy which literally came out true with the rise of Ranjit Singh. He said : "In the defence and recovery of their country, the Sicques displayed a courage of the most obstinate kind and manifested a perseverance, under the pressure of calamities, when the common danger roused them to action, and gave but one impulse to their spirit. Should any future cause call forth the combined efforts of the Sicques to maintain the existence of empire and religion, we may see some ambitious chief led on by his genius and success, and absorbing the power of his associates, display from the runis of their commonwealth, the standard of monarchy. The page of history is filled with like effects, springing from like causes. Under such a form of government I have little hesitation in saying that the Sicques would be soon advanced to the first rank among the native powers of Hindustan ; and would become a terror to the surrounding areas".

This last quotation from Forster's letter reveals that the writer was no mere observer and collector of information but also was a thinker well conversant with the operative forces of history, and his appreciation of the Sikhs was based on his realization that they possessed some of those qualities which go to make a powerful nation.

John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* is a better quality of work than the earlier works we have noticed so far. Malcolm's own observation brings out the difference clearly and aptly. He says : "Though this subject had been treated by several English writers, none of them had possessed opportunities of obtaining more than very general information regarding this extraordinary race ; and their narratives, therefore, though meriting regard, have served more to excite than to gratify curiosity". The superior merit of Malcolm's work lies in the richness of its information, better organi-

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zation of its material, scholarly treatment of the issues involved and employment of historical methodology such as references of sources and footnotes.

Malcolm thought of writing on the Sikhs when in 1805 he accompanied Lord Lake into the Punjab in pursuit of Maratha chief, Jaswant Rao Holkar and collected necessary source-materials for this purpose. This slender stock of materials was subsequently much enriched by his friend Dr. Leyden who favoured him "with a translation of several tracts written by Sikh authors in the Punjabi and Duggar dialects, treating of their history and religion which, though full of that warm imagery which marks all oriental works and particularly those whose authors enter on the boundless field of Hindu mythology, contain the most valuable verifications of the different religious institutions of the Sikh nation". He wanted at first to confine himself to collection of written sources and to wait for a more leisurely period to write a detailed history of the Sikhs but the active nature of his public duties made it impossible for him to carry his plan into early execution. So changing his mind he started writing a brief treatise with whatever material he had with him and the result was his work under reference, *Sketch of the Sikhs*.

The motivation behind this work was not different from the motivation that underlay the accounts of Browne, Polier and Forster : the desire to gratify the curiosity of the European mind about the rising Sikh community. Malcolm points to this fact in no uncertain terms when he mentions : "...for although the information I may convey in such a sketch may be very defective, it will be useful at *a moment when every information regarding the Sikhs is of importance...*

Malcolm is regarded as an illustrious member of that gallaxy of scholar-statesmen who even when they were deeply involved in the discharging of their arduous public duties, were able to snatch time from their busy schedules for writing books of considerable information and merit. He occupied, at one time or another, important diplomatic, political, military and administrative positions and by dint of merit finally attained the prize post of the Governor of Bombay Presidency. But his heavy official responsibilities could not

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curb his urge to be a writer. Among his literary products the most notable may be counted as his *History of India*, his *Memoirs*, his report on the Central Provinces and his English translation of Bakhat Mal's *Khalsa Nama*.

Both as a writer and an administrator he belonged to the Romantic School to which Elphinstone and Munro also had the honour to belong. As such, he had great sympathy and regard for the history, customs and religions of the native people of India. This attitude was in sharp contrast to that of utilitarians like James Mill who saw nothing good in Indian society. It is this mode of thinking which seems to have shaped the general approach of Malcolm in the writing of *Sketch of the Sikhs*. Confronted with the difficulty of contradictory sources on the Sikhs, he decided to give preference to the sources of the Sikhs themselves though he fully knew their serious shortcomings and his argument in justification of this decision makes his basic line of approach abundantly clear. The argument runs : "...many considerations have induced me to give a preference, on almost all occasions, to the original Sikh writers. In every research into the general history of mankind, it is of the most essential importance to hear what a nation has to say of itself, and the knowledge obtained from such sources has a value, independent of its historical utility. It aids the promotion of social intercourse and leads to the establishment of friendship between nations". It may be remembered in this connection that a friendly treaty was concluded between the British and the Sikh chiefs, Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, in 1806. The concluding part of this argument shows that his Romanticism was not a mere matter of pious sentiment but was also a politically sound doctrine. Subsequent history of our country proved well enough the validity of this view, the abandonment of which was visited by a massive revolt against the British in 1857.

Though not a professional historian, his treatment of the subject is logical, balanced, nearly free from bias and well-authenticated. Among the written sources used by him particular mention may be made of *Janamsakhi Bhai Bala*, *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, wrongly called *Gyana Ratnavali*, *Adi*

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Granth, Dasam Padhshah ka Granth, Vachitar Natak, Seirul-Mutakhrin, and Forster's *Travels.* He has not said so, but may also have used Bakhat Mal's account of the Sikhs, called *Khalsa Nama* because he had a copy of it in his possession and subsequenty rendered it into English. But there is reasonable evidence to indicate that he did not entirely depend upon these written sources and supplemented his knowledge derived from literary sources with his close personal observations gained in the course of his Punjab tour and intimate discussion with other knowledgeable persons like Dr. Leyden.

Sketch of the Sikhs has three sections, namely : (*i*) religious institutions, usages, manners and character ; (*ii*) Sikh countries and government ; (*iii*) religion of the Sikhs. In all the three sections glaring inaccuracies are found at several places but they are not unnatural to the situation of a foreigner writing about the Sikhs at that early period. What in this little work strikes us most is not so much the factual errors or funny spellings of names of persons and places as the considerable body of correct information which the Europeans had been able to acquire about the Sikhs and their society, particularly when it is remembered that only twenty years or so earlier they were so poorly informed about them. Despite all its shortcomings, a great many of the things said by the author of this work as early as the first decade of the 19th century will not be challenged even today.

Not only is Malcolm more elaborate in detail than his predecessor European writers ; he also goes deeper into things and thereby considerably advances Europeans' understanding of the Sikhs. For instance, on the subject of origin of Sikhism alone he has shown a degree of profoundness unthinkable earlier and naturally absent in the writings of Browne, Polier and Forster. While echoing the opinion of Browne that Sikhism was a reformed Hinduism or that of Polier and Forster that several Hindu elements were present in the contemporary Sikh society, he registered a major step forward by saying that in the course of its development it had acquired a dynamism of its own which gave it a distinct identity, particularly under the distinguished leader-

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ship of the last Sikh prophet, Guru Gobind Singh, whom he calls "a bold and enthusiastic innovator." He writes : 'Though Guru Govind mixes, even more than Nanak, the mythology of the Hindus with his own tenets......... yet it is impossible to reconcile the religion and usages which Govind has established with the belief of the Hindus. It does not, like that of Nanak, question some favourite dogmas of the disciples of Brahma and attack that worship of idols, which few of them defend, being symbolical representations of the attributes of an all-powerful divinity; but it proceeds, at once, to subvert the foundation of the whole system. Wherever the religion of Guru Govind prevails, the institutions or Brahma must fall. The admission of proselytes, the abolition of the distinctions of caste, the eating of all kinds ot flesh, except that of cows, the form of religious worship and the general devotion of all Singhs to arms, are ordinances altogether irreconcilable with Hindu mythology and have rendered the religion of the Sikhs as obnoxious to the Brahmans, and higher tribes of the Hindus, as it is popular with the lower orders of that numerous class of mankind."

A similar depth marks Malcolm's treatment of the Sikhs' struggle against the Mughals and Afghans. After tracing this contest through its various distinct phases, he sums up the various factors which led to the Sikhs' triumph over all their adversaries and cites as among the foremost of these causes, the ardour of their spirit. He says : "The Sikh nation, who have, throughout their early history, always appeared, like a suppressed flame, to rise into higher splendour from every attempt to crush them, had become, while they were suppressed, as formidable for their union, as for their determined courage and unconquerable spirit of resistance......". However, he is not carried away by this one factor, whatever its importance, but taking a balanced view of the situation, gives due significance to the key role of disruption of the Mughal empire as a helpful factor.

On the whole, this *Sketch of the Sikhs*, its shortcomings notwithstanding, presented to the West a much more comprehensive picture of the Sikhs and their society than was hitherto

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available and thereby prepared a secure basis of Sikh studies on which subsequent European writers such as Cunningham could build up their accounts more elaborately. That this was also the expressed wish of Malcolm is clear for his statement at the outset of his work that ..."it may perhaps stimulate and aid some person who has more leisure and better opportunities to accomplish that task which I once contemplated"—that is to say, the task of producing a detailed and comprehensive work on the Sikhs.

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CHAPTER II

PRINSEP, MURRAY AND SMYTH

I wonder if it would be irrelevant to quote one of the most pungent remarks of C. H. Philips that "British historians of India have tended to produce a divided, schizophrenic kind of history"[1] to the extent that most of them (with the notable exceptions of Alfred Lyall, Henry Maine and William Hunter) did not attempt to correlate the history of Britain to the process of events in India or to place the Indo-British relationships within a broad concept of historical development. This may be true of Indian history as well as Punjab history.

Its geo-political and socio-economic situation being different from the rest of the country (in a limited sense), the Punjab attracted attention of the British as a part of the vital central Asian drama. Having firmly established the Company's rule in India, the British came face to face with the Sikhs who had by then set up a mighty state in the North-West of India. The ruler of the Sikhs then was Ranjit Singh who had under his command an army considered second best in the whole of Asia. The region, however, had great attraction for the British both commercially and strategically. Its importance mounted further when Russian advance in central Asia posed a serious danger to the British Empire in India. As long as the British were busy with the Marathas and other Indian powers, they looked upon Ranjit Singh as a friend or an ally and generally humoured him to keep him attached to their interests. But with their attainment of supreme position in the country, their attitude towards him

1. C. H. Philips (ed), *Historians of India, Pakistan* and *Ceylon* (London), Rep. 1962, *Introduction*, p. 8.

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underwent a radical change. Whereas outwardly they continued to profess friendship towards him in view of the Russian danger from central Asia looming large on the horizon, in their heart of hearts they began to regard the Sikh power with feelings of suspicion and jealousy. The same feelings determined the approach of Europeans in general in their writings on the Punjab and the Sikhs. Gone were the days when information was sought after to gratify their curiosity about the Sikhs. If they were still interested in collecting information on the subject, it was primarily with the desire of assessing the military potential of the Sikh State, or in a secondary way, to find new avenues for the expansion of their trade and commerce. Otherwise, by and large the emphasis in their writings shifted from appreciation of Sikh character and Sikh polity to finding of flaws in the Sikh system and character assassination, particularly dissemination of scandals about Ranjit Singh. Of course depending upon the social background and mental make-up of the writers, motivations varied in sharpness with individual writers. After the death of Ranjit Singh, the European writers became bolder and openly pleaded for putting an end to the Punjab kingdom. But not everyone of them toed this line. Some of them were not in favour of outright annexation, though they too were not opposed to the extension of British control in this region.

A perusal of historical writings and, in the process, establishment of a correlation at the two levels, *viz.*, between a historian and the prevailing situation and between a historian and his successor historians would reveal a deep-seated relevance in the process of understanding of regional history and also the commitment or bias and purpose of historical writings. In the attempt of the Europeans to explore Punjab history, if viewed in relation to their attitudes, we witness two elements-one, trying to understand things for a political purpose and the other, desire for reconstruction. The latter element became predominant after the annexation of the Punjab.

Before the Governor-Generalship of Lord Wellesley, the Punjab was quite obscure to the British. It was in

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the wake of an imperialistic policy in the course of the British struggle against the Marathas that Liet-Col. Lake of the Company's forces touched the Land of Five Rivers while making a hot pursuit of the fleeing Jaswant Rao Holkar. Outside the frontiers of India, the country had assumed significance since Napoleon Bonaparte had shown to the world that British power after the independence of American colonies primarily hinged upon their empire in India. Having conquered a vast expanse of territory in India, the British East India Company found it necessary to have a breather. During this period, they witnessed another great man Ranjit Singh carving a niche for a Sikh Empire in the North-West India. A strange people with small principalities under the control of petty chieftains were growing into a strong kingdom under the leadership of Ranjit Singh. Forced by circumstances and out of curiosity, the British East India Company desired to establish a living contact with the Punjab. Thus began the chapter to understand the inhabitants of this region who had lived through many vicissitudes and foreign invasions. But in due course, as said before, a radical change occurred in their outlook on this vital problem of relationship with the Punjab. Before the political contact came into being, there were some Europeans who wrote about the Punjab, particularly the Sikhs, as for instance Polier, Browne and Forster and Malcolm.

Polier wrote his paper *The Siques* in 1780. Browne wrote his *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks* during his stay at the Mughal Court at Delhi from 1782 to 1785. It was mostly an English rendering of a Persian manuscript and only slightly original. Forster wrote his account of the Sikhs in the form of a letter which he addressed to one Gregory of Lucknow and which was published later in his travelogue called *A Journey from Bengal to England.*

Brief references to the Sikhs are also found in the writings of Father Xavier, Sarman, Wilkins, Griffiths and Franklin.

But the first really worthwhile account of the Sikhs came from Malcolm in the early years of the 19th century. Like the earlier works, Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* was under-

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taken to gratify his countrymen's curiosity about the Sikhs. But additionally it was intended to promote "social intercourse" with the avowed object of establishing friendly relations between nations.[1] Placed as the English East India Company was in a complex political situation in India and abroad, demanding peace and friendship with a frontier state, Malcolm took every care not to offend the Sikhs in any way. His eagerness to establish friendly relations with Ranjit Singh is reflected in his treatment of the Sikh history. Elaborating his stand-point, he wrote, "The most savage states are those who have most prejudices and who are consequently most easily conciliated and offended. They are always pleased and flattered when they find that those whom they cannot but admit to possess superior intelligence are acquainted with their history and respect their beliefs and usages".[2] Deliberate avoidance of controversy, however, minimised the historical significance of his writing though it remains an important contribution if viewed in its historical context.

With the sole exception of Malcolm, all these European writers' accounts of the Sikhs were scanty due to lack of information with them. And for the same reason and also due to large-scale adoption of Hindu customs and superstitions by the Sikhs during the eighteenth century, these writers identified the Sikhs as one of the sects of the Hindus. As most of the early Europeans had no positive political mission to carry out, they stuck to this tradition even at the cost of a scientific analysis. At the most it may be argued that the early European scholars based their assessments on the contemporary social milieu of harmony among various religio-social communities.

For several years after Malcolm, no serious attempt was made until Henry Prinsep and Captain Murray published their writings on Punjab history. Born on 15th July 1793[3] at Thoby Priory in England, Henry Prinsep was the fourth son of John Prinsep. The latter had served as a military cadet in India for a short time around 1770. After resigning

1. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 5.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
3. Died on 11 February, 1878.

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from that post he started business in indigo. At the age of sixteen, on 20th December 1808, Henry Prinsep joined the East India Company as writer at Calcutta. During his stay in India till 1843 he served in various capacities. In due course he rose to be the Persian Secretary to the Government and later member of the Governor-General's Council. Conservative to the backbone, he regarded Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India, as an addict to the theory of change for the sake of change. He pulled on better with Lord Auckland but he disapproved of his Afghan policy of supporting Shah Shuja for he regarded the latter as infirm and weakminded. On his return to England he was elected member of Parliament. For his experience and knowledge of Indian affairs, he became an elected member of the Court of Directors in 1850. After the transfer of power in 1858, he was one of the few people whose merit was recognised and he was offered membership of India Council, which he held till 1874. Frank, forthright and fresh in his views, he wrote many dissenting notes.[1]

Although Prinsep's official life was very busy, he found time to write. When he was Persian Secretary, he wrote the book entitled *The Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and the Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with an Account of the Religion, Laws and Customs of the Sikhs.* His account starts from 1742 when after the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 rapid dissolution of the Mughal Empire started and ends with the year 1833. Prinsep largely depended on Captain Murray "who has the merit of being the first to collect and put together in a consistant narrative, the loose fragments and materials that exist, in respect to the events in the Punjab at this period".[2]

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1. For details see *Dictionary of National Biographies*, Vol. XVI, (Oxford, reprint 1959-60), pp. 392-5.

2. Henry Prinsep, *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (second impression, Patiala, 1970), P. I. His other works are :—

(i) *A History of the Political and Military Transactions in India during the Administration of Marquis of Hastings* (1813-1823).

(ii) *The Historical Facts deducible from recent Discoveries in Afghanistan* (1844).

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For the origin of Ranjit Singh's family, he depended on Captain Wade's report on the Punjab which struck him as very authentic.[1] But in the choice of his facts and events, the author used his own discretion.[2] It is generally believed that Prinsep also used Khushwaqt Rai's *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*, a monumental work in Persian, which gives an account of the Sikhs up to 1811. This Persian manuscript was completed in November 1839 whereas Prinsep's account was published in 1834. From this we may draw the inference that Khushwaqt Rai either showed his manuscript to Prinsep part by part, or had a close contact with him.

Since the purpose of Prinsep's work was to furnish information about the Sikh kingdom and Sikh community, the book goes into detail regarding the origin[3] of the Sikh power on the ruins of the Mughal Empire. Besides the political cataclysm perpetrated by the Afghan invaders, the author believes, "The distractions of the Mughal empire, and the intrigues and imbecilities of the viceregal court at Lahore, gave encouragement to the system pursued, not only by the neglect to punish, but by the occasional availment of the services of individual chiefs, so that many of them assumed an organised martial appearance."

While dealing with the period, Prinsep makes a prophetic statement which shows his insight into the Sikh institutions. Writing five years before the death of Ranjit Singh, Prinsep in his comments on the Treaty of Amritsar (1809), said that "it was based however on no better foundation than the personal character of Ranjit Singh and his personal conviction that the British government desires to see him prosperous and powerful, and would regard the extinction of his rule,

(*iii*) *Social and Political Conditions of Tibet, Tartary and Mangolia* (1852).

(*iv*) *A Pamphlet on India Question.*

(*v*) He brought out Ram Dasa's 'Registrar of Bengal Civil Servants' besides writing commentaries and translations of classical works.

1. *Ibid*., p. 17.
2. *Ibid*., pp. 31-32.
3. *Ibid*., p. 3.

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and the confusion and convulsions which must follow, as a serious evil or mischievous influence to itself."[1]

Prinsep was more concerned with the immediate than with the past. He was trying to reconstruct the history of the Sikh power with a view to establishing intimate relations with the Lahore Darbar as Russian danger began to loom large on the minds of the British administrators, of which Prinsep makes no secret while explaining the Pottinger Mission to Sindh. He says[2] :

> The object of entering upon this negotiation, at the particular juncture, was perhaps, in some measure political, having reference to the necessity of being prepared against the possibility of designs on the part of Russia......The Governor-General, however, was not prepared to make any avowal or display of such motives, and a commercial treaty, stipulating for the free navigation of the river, seemed to him the better form in which to open relations with the Governments and Chiefs who occupied its banks.

Elaborating his view-point, he further argued that negotiations for a mere commercial treaty, with silence about any political objective, was calculated to produce an impression on the Lahore Darbar that the English East India Company had only mercantile interest in view.[3] The Company never wished to annoy a friendly ally like Ranjit Singh who himself had shown interest in this region. The Company feared that Ranjit Singh might counteract the British negotiations with the Sindh Amirs by intrigue.[4]

The Sikh nobility in the court of Ranjit Singh had no faith in the innocence of the British, as on many occasions they remonstrated against Ranjit Singh's innate faith in the East India Company. The latter apprehended that these nobles would force Ranjit Singh to take up arms.[5] In fact, Prinsep believes that since the purpose of the Pottinger Mission was limited to collect intelligence and assess means

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 127-8.

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of defence provided by the Indus at the time of the impending Russian danger[1], the British did not consider it advisable to have an open confrontation with such a powerful ally. Prinsep's opinions are very important as they run counter to the official stand.

Prinsep also shows great insight into the character and personality of Ranjit Singh. Despite his "selfish, sensual and licentious" nature[2] like most of the other oriental despots, Ranjit Singh did not display ferocity in his disposition and never took life of anybody, even under circumstances of aggravated offence.[3] Comparing him with other chiefs who raised themselves to high position, Prinsep believes that Ranjit Singh's "means were least exceptionable, his career being stained by no bloody executions and by much fewer crimes" than are chargeable against most founders of dynasties.

However, Prinsep could not discern any system or principle in the internal administration of Ranjit Singh. Summing up the career of Ranjit Singh, he observes[4] :—

> His career throughout has been that of an encroaching usurper, and seizer of all within his reach, but what he has so possessed himself of, he subjects to no systematic administration.

Despite lack of systematic administration, Prinsep's own account yields, though vaguely, a kind of a system in his administration. Having confidence in his military means for effective control over his subjects, Ranjit Singh's extortions were directed against the old Sikh families and his own state officers.[5] Both these sections flourished at the expense of farmers whom Ranjit Singh compensated by recruiting them in the *Khalsa Army* and paying handsome wages. He provided protection to merchants and traders. The whole scheme as explained by Prinsep thus yields two conclusions, *viz.*, that he kept his treasury replenished and repelled all political dangers which could have been posed by the Sikh aristocracy; and that

1. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
2. *Ibid* , p 142.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 148.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
5. *Ibid.*

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he certainly maintained the producing and purchasing power of the people. But this system operated well mainly due to the personality and wisdom of Ranjit Singh. Prinsep, therefore, prophesized that[1] :

> Upon his being removed from the scene, unless there be another to fill his place, with equal energy, and command over the attachment and affections of his dependents, which it is feared is not the character of Kharak Singh, everything must necessarily fall into confusion.

As regards Ranjit Singh's relations with the British, Prinsep had full confidence in the former, and firmly believed that in times of danger from the North-West Ranjit Singh would side with the British. "His profession, his interest, his inclination are all for us at present, and he derives no little strength and security for giving it out that he is on such terms with the British nation."[2] Keeping this spirit of Ranjit Singh in mind, Prinsep held that the Punjab was a powerful state and was dependable for the security of the North West Frontier of India. He expressed this opinion about Ranjit Singh when British were thinking of taking some action with regard to the Punjab which in their opinion was gradually assuming vital political and diplomatic importance and was fast becoming an integral part of the central Asian politics.

In the appendix Prinsep has included a short paper of Captain Murray on the Manners, Rules and Customs of the Sikhs. It was taken from the appendix to the report which Murray had presented to Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor-General of India. Having resided for more than fifteen years among the Sikhs, Captain Murray produced from his personal observation an account which, in the opinion of Prinsep, was "replete with useful information and intelligence."[3] It has since been used and even reproduced by many a historian on the Punjab. It gives a vivid idea of the Sikh institutions, social practices, rules of succession, agrarian

1. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.
3. *Ibid.*

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laws etc. It alludes to a few important aspects of the Sikh character. For instance, the Sikhs by and large had aversion to the study of Persian and utterly lacked the sense of maintenance of proper accounts. Their habits and customs were such as only backward people would have. Their *Batai* was a kind of *Lotai i.e.*, plunder. Their society was conspicuous for absence of *Sati.*[1]

At the instance of Major George Broadfoot, then the Agent to the Governor-General of India on the North Western Frontier, to whom the book is dedicated, Major G. Carmichael Smyth wrote *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore, with some Account of the Jummoo Rajahs, the Seik Soldiers and their Sardars* (1847). The purpose of writing this book, in the words of the author himself, was to bring forward all those facts which pertained to the political condition of the Lahore Darbar. He also felt the need to present to the British public information on Punjab history, "for since Mr. Prinsep's "Life of Ranjeet Singh" no work of importance has appeared"[2]. The book was "compiled partly from native information collected from Seik Sardars, and European officers in the Seik Service ; but chiefly from the notes of a Captain Gardner of Seik Artillery."[3] The work is divided into five sections ; the first furnishes introduction to the history of Ranjit Singh's family and his early life. Feeling that the history of Ranjit Singh, reign was too well known, he begins his narration from 1839. The secret history of Lahore Darbar, divided into twelve chapters appears like a detective's report. The third section includes miscellaneous notices including one on Akali Phoola Singh. The genealogical history of the Dogra rulers of Jammu is contained in the fourth section. And the last section entitled *Appendix* furnishes notes on the works of Malcolm, Prinsep, Major Lawrence and Steinback besides

1. *Ibid.*, see Appendix : The comment about *Sati*, however, is not a fact, as several *Satis* were committed on the pyres of Ranjit Singh, Kharak Singh, Nau Nihal Singh etc.

2. G. Carmichael Smyth, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, (first published in 1847, Reprint Patiala, 1970), p. XX.

3. *Ibid.*, p. XXII.

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infromation about products of Punjab, its trees, shrubs, population, political boundaries numerical strength of the Sikh army, list of Sardars and chiefs, prices of various commodities etc., etc.

A favourite of Ellenborough, Broadfoot was known to be "too prone to war"[1]. It is interesting to study Carmichael Smyth's work keeping in view his relations with the former. The author does not hold Lahore Darbar responsible for providing a cause for the First Anglo-Sikh War. Quoting Prinsep[2] in support of his contention, he says, "We kept the island between Ferozepore and the Punjab, though it belonged to the Seiks, owing to the deep water being between us and the island". "I only ask, had we not departed from the rules of friendship first[3] ?" On the other hand to absolve the British of the charge of provoking a war with the Lahore Darbar, Smyth argues that the Treaty of 1809 never existed between the two governments after the death of Ranjit Singh. The blame of violating the treaty of friendship first by the British could be established squarely, asserts Smyth, if it was accepted that the Treaty had not become null and void[4]. From this hypothesis he concludes, "Regarding Punjaub War, I am neither of the opinion that the Seiks made an unprovoked attack nor that we have acted towards them with great forbearance ; my opinion is, that we should, as the paramount authority, long ago have adopted coercive measures with the Seiks, and have assumed what Kings call "a commanding attitude". His suggestion of assuming a "commanding attitude" was also influenced "by the fact that the British had discovered that the Sikhs were brave men and good soldiers".[5], and no amount of temptation could entice them to defect from the Khalsa Army. Smyth's cryptic remark is significant. He says, "Only

1. Ganda Singh, *Private Correspondence Relating to Anglo Sikh Wars*, (Patiala, 1955), p. 67.

2. Smyth, *op. cit.*, p. XXII.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. XXIII

5. *Ibid.*, p. XXIV.

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six came over to our camp, notwithstanding every attempt we made to induce them to desert"[1].

Smyth rejects the policy of keeping the Sikh state "entirely independent" and "in no way answerable" to the British. Disapproving of the British policy of "playing the fable of 'shepherd Boy and the Wolf", the author believes that the English should have made defensive military preparations without disturbing "the perpetual friendship" which was also ephemeral as the author expected it" to "last, like Paddy's love, to the end of the word, and after O !". Analysis of Smyth's attitude clearly brings into focus the third dimension of the picture which automatically has been considered to have only two dimensions The third side is that a section of the British officials in India wanted the Government to follow Wellesley's policy of Subsidiary Alliance. To these people the greatest "bugbear" was the Home Government,[2] but for this they would have also favoured the policy of annexation. Smyth produced this work in a little more than one year's period. He started working on it only after he met Broadfoot in Ludhiana (Broadfoot joined his post as Agent in November 1844) and the book was ready by May 1846 when the author sent a portion of it to Major Lawrence, the successor of Broadfoot. Let us now comprehend the real motives and the purpose behind producing such a work which includes description of scandals, murders, plots and counter-plots. It was a deliberate move initiated by Broadfoot who wished to counteract the influence of Geroge Russell Clerk who was incharge of the Agency at Ludhiana for three years before Colonel A.F. Richmond, the predecessor of Broadfoot. Clerk was in England during this period, and his advice was occasionally sought by Ripon, the President of the Board of Control in Peel's ministry. Clerk was opposed to annexation and weilded great influence over the administration and public through Mohan Lal.[3] Sir Henry Hardinge the Governor General, Sir Fredrick Currie, the Secretary in the Foreign Department and Broadfoot

1. *Ibid*.
2. *Ibid*., p. XXIII.
3. S.S. Bal, *British Policy towards Punjab* (Calcutta, 1971), pp. 28-29.

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worked in unison to achieve success in their mission of annexing Punjab. It should be now very clear that Smyth was their propagandist, trying to create public opinion in favour of intervention by denigrating the Lahore Darbar.

A close study of Gardner's *Memoirs*, Smyth's history and Broadfoot's correspondence would provide significant background material, Broadfoot at Ludhiana had developed a well-knit secret agency in Punjab. He procured information from the local *Sardars* and Europeans. The most important among them was Captain Gardner in the service of the Dogra Chiefs. The information which Broadfoot procured was communicated to Sir Frederick Currie, the then Secretary in the Foreign Department and to Smyth who was writing this book at his request. Being an official, Broadfoot perhaps cautioned Smyth not to go to the length of suggesting outright annexation. Since the purpose was to convince the public in England, it was wise to suggest a policy just a little short of annexation of the Sikh state.

The main text of the book has two major projections. The first of them is that at the back of all these events were the Dogra brothers who suffered from "boundless ambition and fathomless duplicity."[1] In support of his contention he quotes Major Lawrence who says that the Dogra brothers were "as wary as they were daring, as little disposed to use force where cunning will succeed, as they are unscrupulous in the employment of violent measures where such seemed called for."[2] At the same time he has discredited the Sikh nobility, soldiers and administration.[3] The other projection of his narration is that time and again he highlights that the heirs of Ranjit Singh were not legal successors. Perhaps by implication he was trying to suggest that no

1. Smyth, *op. cit.*, pp. XX-XXI, 61-63.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

3. N.K. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh* (Reprint, Calcutta, June, 1968), p. 209. The author challenges the assertion of Smyth that Ranjit Singh killed his mother with his own hands and pictures depicting the scene were sold in the open bazar. In view of Ranjit Singh's general character as depicted by other contemporary writers, Sinha says that "the story is hardly credible".

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agreement or treaty concluded with Ranjit Singh could be valid with the contemporary rulers of the Punjab.

The importance of Smyth's work is that he has been very heavily depended upon by scholars, both European and Indian, of Punjab history to discredit the Lahore Darbar. No serious attempt has so far been made to verify the facts, N.K. Sinha, however, says that Smyth "records bazar rumours. His reliance on uncorroborated hearsay evidence makes him undependable." Interestingly he has been referred to by historians as a contemporary source to establish that the British were responsible for violating the truce with Lahore. Far from it, Smyth was an active interventionist and suggested a policy very near to the annexation of the Punjab. His stand on the Anglo-Sikh relations shows a great change from Prinsep's advocacy of leaving the Sikh State uninterrupted for it was powerful enough to serve as a barrier between British India and Central Asia in 1830's. Moreover, Prinsep had innate faith in the friendly professions of Ranjit Singh. Political situation having undergone a change, the strong hand of Ranjit Singh having been removed by death followed by cataclysm in the Punjab, Sindh having been annexed, and the First Anglo-Afghan war having been fought damaging the reputation of British military strength, the European writers now began to suggest annexation of the Punjab as a political as well as military necessity.

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CHAPTER III

STEINBACK, GARDNER AND HONIGBERGER

These writers constitute a separate category of their own by reason of all of them having been in the service of the Lahore Darbar for many years. They were all adventurers from different countries who had come to the Punjab attracted by bright prospects of employment offered by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to Europeans having any skill or proficiency in military matters. It has been calculated that more than thirty[1] Europeans benefitted from the Maharaja's anxiety to Westernize his armed forces and occupied varying positions depending upon their capabilities. Some of them like Ventura, Allard, Avitabile and Court rose to the exalted positions of generals and governors.

The more important of these European adventurers married Indian women and reared families, trying their level-best to adjust themselves in the society of their adoption. Even so, coming from a radically different cultural back-ground, they found it impossible to shed off their innate pre-judices against the people among whom they now happened to be living. Some of them even changed loyalities when in the turbulent times of the post-Ranjit Singh period the British began to cast covetous glances on the Kingdom of Lahore. As a result of this, all Europeans in the service of the Darbar fell under suspicion, were subjected to indignities and ultimately dismissed. Thus nursing feelings of personal bitterness against their erstwhile employers, they, but not all, became enthusiastic supporter of British designs in the Punjab.

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1. Colonel Gardner's list includes forty-two names of the European officers whereas that of Carmichael Smyth has thirty-nine.

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It is necessary to remember the above facts while examining the attitudes of those Europeans who have left behind their written works. Of the three writers we have chosen to deal with in this chapter Steinback represents the typical attitude of a European ex-army officer of the Lahore Darbar. His prejudices against the Punjabi way of life, his personal bitterness against the Lahore government and his enthusiastic plea for British conquest of the Punjab all come out very clearly in his writing.

Steinback commanded an infantry regiment in the Sikh army. He had witnessed the climax of Ranjit Singh's power as well as the confusion and cataclysm which followed his death. He subsequently entered the service of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu and Kashmir and commanded his army at the time of the Second Sikh War. During this period he wrote a small book on the Punjab and got it published from England.[1] He explains in his Preface that he wrote this account with the specific motive of enlightening the British public about the state of affairs of the region which they should seriously think of annexing to the British empire in India.

> "The annexation of that extensive and fertile territory to the provinces of British India, so necessary and unavoidable a result (sooner or later) of its present state of disruption, that he regards it as duty to give his countrymen the clearest notion of the Sikh state it is in his power to convey."[2]

Although his is a firsthand account, yet its objectivity has been marred by his hasty generalisations. The study seriously suffers from preconceived notions and prejudicial treatment. Writing with a definite purpose Steinback strives hard to convince his readers and the policy-makers about the desirability of annexing the Punjab.[3] Consequently, he conceived the whole history of the Punjab since the advent of Sikhism on the assumption that there was an inherent conflict among the three major communities of the Punjab. To begin

1. Steinback, *The Punjab : Being Brief Account of the History of the Country of the Sikhs, its Extent, History, Commerce, Productions, Government, Manufactures, Laws, Religion etc.*, (*London*, 1845).

2. *Ibid.*, Preface.

3. *Ibid.*, p. IV.

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with, Guru Nanak, no doubt, tried to reform the society and in the process evolved a reproachment between the two major religions. The Hindus were soon alienated by Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru, who refused to incorporate the writings of "Hindoo zealots into the Granth.[1]" The Hindus, in his opinion, plotted against the Guru and procured his arrest and imprisonment "which terminated in his death or assassination.[2]" By the time of Guru Gobind, the whole movement had become political since he had the ambition to establish an empire of his own by liquidating the Mughals in the Punjab. Explaining the reason of large-scale following of the Sikhs Steinback writes:[3]

> "the desparate state of poverty to which a series of exactions on the part of the government had reduced the Sikh land-holders, induced them to rise and become plunderous on a large scale, and as a bond of union and excitement against their oppressors, they proclaimed the faith and tenets of Gobind Singh, the last acknowledged Gooroo or spiritual guide of the Sikhs, and commenced marauding in large organised bodies under different chieftains."

Steinback gives a very brief account of the period before the death of Ranjit Singh, thinking that the history of Ranjit Singh's gradual aggrandizement until he became the ruler of the entire Punjab, his relations with Afghanistan, the Sindhia Chief and the British government down to the period of his death was too well known to need any mention in the book. However, he gives a brief note on the relations between Ranjit Singh and the British government till the death of the former. In two chapters he narrates the events from the death of Ranjit Singh to 1844-45 when anarchy and confusion reigned supreme. In the rest of the chapters he discusses trade, commerce, people, administration, army, religion, customs, manners, the court, climate etc. While dealing with these problems, he often refers to the period of Ranjit Singh. For instance, he gives full account of the interview between Lord Aukland, the Governor-General, and Ranjit Singh on 29th November, 1838 which the author

1. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

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has reproduced verbatim from Stocqueler's *Memoirs* of Afghanistan.

Working on the hypothesis of an inherent communal conflict in the Punjab situation, Steinback argues with somewhat reservation :[1]

> "Among the Mussulmans this desire for change of masters is particularly strong and there is no doubt that in time the Hindoos would become equally reconciled to a just and equitable system of government ; but at present the feeling of the latter against a race, who are not restrained by religious obligation from the use of animal food, is anything but friendly."

As regards the Sikh soldiery, it was opposed to British supremacy for the reason that it would bring an end to their licentious and reckless habits.[2] He goes on to plead for smashing the military potential of the Sikh rule. The *Khalsa* army, in his opinion, was totally deficient in the hour of crisis.[3] It was a totally disorganised army. Insubordination and promotion not by good service but by bribery were rife in its ranks. Despite the efforts of European instructors the *Khalsa* army, in the opinion of Steinback who himself was in command of a regiment and who claims, though apologetically, to have done so to repair the defects in his own corps, was slow in manoeuvering and vulnerable to the cavalry attack while changing positions. He felt that the Sikh cavalry and armaments were far inferior to those of the British. As regards civil administration, the land revenue was often settled by collusion between the chief and the party responsible for appraisal, and appraisment was done by the caprice, power, necessity, or despotism of the chiefs. Oppression of the chiefs and rampant corruption not only left the common man disgruntled but also led to irregularities in accounts and deficiency of revenue.[4] The civil and criminal justice was done by outmoded and defective methods ; customs and caprice worked in place of written law. On the whole, Steinback tried to establish that the condition of the common

1. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-3

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man including agriculturists was most abject. He believed that the masses of this area would welcome the transfer of the country from the Sikh to the British hands.[1] In the process, he tried to prove that the absolute government of Ranjit Singh was not popular since attempts had been made by *Akalis* to assassinate him. He has, time and again, mentioned that the treasury of Ranjit Singh was greater than that of many of the European rulers. How lavishly Ranjit Singh squandered his treasury, he tries to show by giving many instances. Perhaps he was appealing to the avarice of the British government that an attempt to annex the Punjab was worth the trouble it involved. To cap it all, he pointed to Nau Nihal Singh's design to collaborate with Nepal and Kabul to rise against the British Empire in India.

> "Had he (Nau Nihal Singh) lived, a war with Punjab and Nepal would have been inevitable and Afghanistan would have taken part in general."[2]

Speaking for Europeans in the Lahore Darbar, he asserted:

> "that tranquility never can be permanently established in the Punjab until under the firm rule of the British Government, whose interference, it is fully anticipated, will, ere long, become unavoidable."[3]

To what extent this contention can be considered objective is clear from the sense of grievance nursed by Steinback and other Europeans serving under the Lahore Darbar :[4]

> "The successors of Ranjeet Singh, however, did not look with an eye of favour upon men who were not to be bought, and whose sense of personal dignity revolted at the treatment to which the unbridled Sikh chieftains were inclined to subject them."

Being one of the aggrieved persons and having a strong feeling of bitterness, he brought to focus all aspects of the Punjab problem and like a lawyer pleaded for immediate action for the annexation of the Punjab.

In fact, in the period approaching the end of the Sikh state, Europeans displayed ambivalence, if not confusion, in their study of the Sikhs. Those who held the Sikhs in

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

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admiration and had faith in their capabilities of defending the Indian frontiers from the impending Russian invasion did not favour annexation. J.D. Cunningham was one of them. Those who like Steinback viewed the situation with suspicion and apprehended danger from Russian expansion and the *Khalsa* Army both, could not but propose immediate action for direct or indirect control.

The rest of the chapters on trade, commerce, population, climate and religion are given with the sole purpose of enlightening the British people about their prospective acquisition. But there are some interesting instances which demonstrate ignorance as well as unsympathetic and prejudicial attitude of Steinback towards those among whom he had served for nine years. For instance, regarding Harmandir Sahib, the Golden Temple, he writes[1] :

> "A temple to Vishnu, one of the Sikh deities, stands upon a small island in the centre of this tank and is maintained in great splendour by the offerings of piglrims and devotees."

At another place he writes :[2]

> "Sense of shame or feelings of honour have no place in the breast of a Jat and the same may be said of men of other low tribes."

About the Sikhs in general, he is equally harsh.[3]

> "...there is hardly an infamy which this debauched and desolute race are not accused, and I believe with justice, of committing in the most open and shameful manner."

The authorities which the author acknowledges include :

Henry Prinsep	: *Origion of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, Calcutta, 1834.
Baron Charles Hugel	: *Travels in Cashmere and the Punjab*, London, 1845.
Sir John Malcolm	: *Sketch of the Sikhs.*
Moorcroft, W. and Trebeck, G.	: *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab*, 2 vols. London, 1841.

Steinback almost entirely depends on Captain Murray for his chapter on 'Manners and Customs.' For his chapter

1. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

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on the court of the Sikh sovereigns he seems to have depended on his own notes and recollections which the author accepts to be imperfect. One of the most important aspects of the book is the inclusion of a map depicting the Punjab and its frontiers.

Although the account of Steinback is highly prejudicial, it may be regarded as a useful and contemporary source about the period following the death of Ranjit Singh which witnessed a kaliedoscopic transformation in the political scene of the Punjab.

Gradual decline of the Sikh power in the post-Ranjit Singh Punjab began to be viewed in the wider context of the Central Asian politics. The British were faced, like the Hamlet of Shakespeare, with the eternal question: 'to be or not to be.' The fear that political cataclysm might emerge into a new pattern of power relationship governed the minds of European historians in projecting their view-point. Thus in the first half of the nineteenth century Europeans' attempt to explain the history of the people of their neighbourhood in North-West India witnessed a transformation of motivation from curiosity to concordat and from concordat to aggrandizement.

Unlike Steinback Alexander Gardner and John Martin Honigberger had no pretentions of being publicists or historians. Adventurous by temprament, they wrote their works for the sheer pleasure derived from this exercise, or at the most to record their feelings and reactions about a society which in many ways fascinated them. Certainly they did not write to fulfil a practical or moral or academic or even aesthetic purpose. Alexander Gardner's memoirs were published twenty-one years after his death while Honigberger's interest in publishing his travelogue was to leave to the posterity the medical knowledge and experience which he had acquired during his life-time. Being deeply devoted to their professions both, one soldier and another medical doctor, have left to us valuable sources of information about one of the most crucial periods of Punjab history. Their works should be viewed as observations of those Europeans who were sympa-

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thetic to oriental societies, particularly the society of the Punjab of the first half of the nineteenth century. Inspite of its lack of inner vitality, as these accounts clearly show, the Sikh polity survived for some time by the sheer dynamism and force of the personality of Ranjit Singh. It is, therefore, in the dimensions of political situation, mode of operation of the ruling elite and social mores that the search for intelligibility in these works can prove rewarding.

Born in 1785 near Lake Superior in North America, Alexander Gardner's father was a Scottish emigrant and his mother, an English resident of Mexico. She had an admixture of Spanish blood too, inheriting an adventurous disposition. Gardner started his travels in his childhood. From Mexico he came to Ireland. During his sojourn for five years in that country he acquired knowledge of the science of gunnery. One of his brothers had sought an engineer's post at Astrakhan in Russia. After visiting Madrid and Cairo, Gardner joined his brother in 1817 where with his help he tried to secure a job. But unfortunately his brother was killed by a fall from his horse on December 14, 1817. Disgusted with Russia and disheartened by the loss of his brother, Gardner moved down to Persia and from there to Afghanistan with a keen desire to reach Punjab. At the age of thirty-four, he was still leading the life of a wanderer, which continued in one form or another until he arrived in the Punjab in August 1831.

During his stay with Habibulla Khan of Afghanistan, he got married to a native girl and led a peaceful life for two years during which a child was born to him. But amidst the fury of the tribal conflict rampant there the lives of Gardner's wife and child were terminated in a clash, leaving a deep agony in his heart. After undergoing great perils and after having travelled long distances through unknown countries, he finally reached the Lahore Darbar and joined the artillery service of Ranjit Singh as a Colonel. Two years before the death of Ranjit Singh, Prime Minister Dhyan Singh took him into his service and gave him the command of his own and his brother Gulab Singh's artillery.

Gardner served the Dogra brothers for the rest of his active life. He was an eye-witness to several bloody palace

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revolutions, mechanisations of the Dogra brothers, murders and chaos in the Punjab. When Gulab Singh secured Jammu and Kashmir after the first Anglo-Sikh War and when the Punjab came under indirect British control, Gardner moved to Srinagar and led a comfortable life with an allowance of five hundred rupees and a *jagir* granted to him by his employer. He died in 1877 in Srinagar.

Major Pearse of the 2nd Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment did a commendable job by piecing together and editing the personal notes or memoirs of Alexander Gardner filling necessary gaps to make it a connected and readable account. The value of the book which is called by the name of *Soldier and Travellor : the Memoirs of Alexander Gardner, Colonel of Artillery in the Service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* may well be estimated from the fact that before it was published, certain portions were used by Carmichael Smyth in his study, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*. The experts on Central Asia during the early stages of the Anglo-Afghan conflict also made use of Gardner's memoirs to gain knowledge of the geography of the area and also to authenticate and confirm their information.

Divided into sixteen chapters including those written by the editor himself, the first nine chapters of the book deal with the early life of Alexander Gardner and his exploits and escapades in Central Asia. The chapters ten to fifteen describe the climax of Ranjit Singh's power, its denouncement, court intrigues, role of the Khalsa Army and the last of all, his sojourn at Srinagar where he died as a pensioner of the Jammu and Kashmir State. In the Appendix, Pearse has given brief biographical sketches of other European officers in the service of the Lahore Darbar.

Chapters three to nine may be divided into two groups : (*i*) One dealing with the geography of Central Asia, especially the valley of the rivers Oxus and Jaxartes, the Turkoman desert, the western extremity of the Himalayan range, Badakshan, the Pamir and Chitral ; (*ii*) the other concerning characteristics, mental and physical, of the people of these regions, customs and traditions of tribes inhabiting these regions, and

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disposition of individuals. As regards its geographical value even after fifty years when it was published, Richard Temple could remark :[1]

> "Still these Memoirs of his deserve study, for they will clear up some points that are obscure, confirm others that may have been doubtful, add others not previously verified and render our general view more correct and better subservient to our comprehension of political relations."

As compared to this region where things were flung into the vortex of barbarism, the Punjab evidently presented an area of peace and prosperity. And to this he has devoted the last six chapters of his work, explaining political and military organisation of the Punjab and kaliedoscopic events, some of them utterly tragic and terrific, which led to the Anglo-Sikh wars.

Before describing the value of the book as a source of Sikh history, it is necessary to explain the reason why the British got interested in publishing this book fifty years after the events. Besides its usefulness as a source of information regarding the geography of Central Asia, they found in Gardner a case of "rising manhood" in the British Isles." Temple significantly observes :[2]

> "Though relating not to the British dominions nor to the British service, it shows what men of British race can do under the stress and trial and suffering. It illustrates that self-contained spirit of adventure in individuals which has done much towards founding the British Empire and may yet help extending that Empire in all quarters of the Globe."

Alexander Gardner reached Peshawar in August 1831 and Lahore in the following year. On his way he met Dr. Harlan, an American adventurer who was then the Governor of Gujarat. He had served Dost Muhammad and had written *Memoirs of Afghanistan.* At Wazirabad he met General Avitabile. About the attitude of Ranjit Singh towards European officers, Gardner says that he looked upon them as men

1. Major Hugh Pearse (ed), *Soldier aud Travellor : Memoirs of Alexander Gardner*, with introduction by Sir Richard Temple (London, 1898), pp. XVI-XVII.

2. *Ibid*., p. XV.

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of universal talents and therefore entrusted them with varied duties, civil and military, irrespective of their special competency. Honigberger was nothing but a doctor but he was asked to superintend a gunpowder factory. Having heard of steam boat Ranjit Singh asked Ventura to construct one. Since such a thing was highly technical, Gardner on the request of Ventura constructed a paddle boat which was admired by Ranjit Singh. Gardner's Memoirs contain numerous instances showing what he calls the 'diosyncracies' of Ranjit Singh. Nevertheless, he was so much impressed by the Maharaja's personality that he remarks :[1]

> "The Maharaja was indeed one of those master minds which only require opportunity to change the face of the Globe. Ranjit Singh made a great and powerful nation from the disunited confederacies of Sikhs, and would have carried his conquests to Delhi or even further, had it not been for the simultaneous rise and consolidation of the British Empire in India."

After successfully operating the guns which were presented by William Bentinck, Gardner established his reputation as an artillery expert. He was given the rank of Colonel with a full command of a camp of eight horse artillery guns, two mortars, and two howitzers. While serving first under Tara Singh and then under Dhyan Singh, he participated in all the North-West Frontier campaigns. But nowhere in his work does he explain the wider strategy of the Khalsa army.

Writing about the early years of the Khalsa army Gardner presents a vivid picture of the homely and simple dealings of Ranjit Singh with his soldiers. To strengthen his force, he started westernisation of his troops. Although his old soldiers resented introduction of cash salaries, drill and wearing of caps, Ranjit Singh was able to make them accept the first two by presistent effects and sweet pursuation while he did not press the third on the soldiers. The tactful management and employment of the Khalsa army by Gardner and the strange and interesting events in the North-West Frontier find place in his narration. As a rule, he observes discreet silence

1. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

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about the weaknesses of the chiefs, but Gulab Singh, his patron, was not spared in this respect. His description of Gulab Singh which was included by Carmichael Smyth in his book, amounts to a most ruthless vivisection of his personality. Depicted as one of the most repulsive characters, ambitious, avaricious and cruel by nature, Gulab Singh, in the opinion of Gardner, committed the most horrible atrocities. In the opinion of Sir Herbert Edwardes, his sense of pride was even more powerful than his avarice which seemed to most people his guiding impulse. He was as Gardner writes[1] :

> "in reality a very leech, sucking their life's blood, the shameless trader of their sons and daughters ; would-be great merchant of the East, the very jack of all trades, usurer, the turnpenny, the briber and the bribed."

Yet his name invoked great reverence and submission on the part of his subjects. Though uneducated, he was shrewd, active, bold, energetic, resolute, judicious and watchful to the last degree. He was a good soldier and an able commander.

The death of Ranjit Singh was followed by a period of storm and anarchy. As Lepel Griffin would have us believe the kingdom founded in violence, treachery and blood could not long survive its founder. To the rapid succession of crime, Gardner was not only an eye-witness but also an active participant in the execution of many conspiracies hatched by the Dogra brothers. He, in detail, explains how all the murders were brought about directly or indirectly by the Dogra brothers to clear their way to the throne. They played the aweful game with deliberate and unswerving pertinacity and yet succeeded in showing fealty to the Khalsa army and loyalty to the sovereign. The chain of murders started when Chet Singh in collaboration with some foreign officers, particularly Ventura, decided to end the lives of Dogra brothers within twenty-four hours. But Chet Singh was killed in a counter-plot prepared against him. After that Kharak Singh was forcibly made to make room in favour of his son, Nau Nihal Singh. Maharaja Kharak Singh breathed his last

1. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

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on November 5, 1840. The narrative of Gardner suggests that the death of Nau Nihal Singh was plotted by the Dogra brothers. However, historians like Kanhaya Lal (*Tarikh-i-Lahore*), Sohan Lal (*Umdat-ut-Twarikh*) and Lepel Griffin (*The Punjab Chiefs*) and Mohammad Latif (*The History of the Punjab*) have rejected the account of Gardner as concocted and do not see the hand of the Dogra brothers in it. Continuing his account, Gardner writes that the Dogra brothers brought further disaster to the Kingdom of Lahore. They supported rival claimants to the throne-Dhayan Singh supported Sher Singh and Gulab Singh upheld the claim of Chand Kaur, the widow of Kharak Singh, who wished to act as Regent to the yet-to-be-born child of Nau Nihal Singh's wife. About the violent conflict which occurred at Lahore, Gardner is the only person who gives full details and explains how these brothers brought about a compromise and shared the wealth lying in the vaults of the Fort treasury.

There was an inherent animosity between the principal Sindhanwalia Sardars—Attar Singh and Lehna Singh (brothers) and Ajit Singh, their nephew, on the one hand, and the Dogra brothers on the other. Their struggle led to the deaths first of Maharaja Sher Singh and Raja Dhayan Singh and then of their murderers, Lehna Singh and Ajit Singh. The severed heads of the Sindhwalia Sardars were placed at the feet of Dhayan Singh's corpse by Gardner himself.

After these tragic events, Dalip Singh ascended the throne with Rani Jindan as Regent and Raja Hira Singh as Minister. Pandit Jalla who was, according to Gardner, "a man of most repulsive cast of contenance and of the most tyranical and ambitious spirit", acted as the mentor of Raja Hira Singh.[1] Pandit Jalla intrigued to produce a deadly feud between Hira Singh, son of Dhyan Singh, and his uncles Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh with disastrous results to the Dogra family. After Pandit Jalla was killed, Gardner in the garb of an Akali carried his head in the streets of Lahore.

After witnessing the murder of his nephew, Raja Hira Singh, at the hands of the Sikhs Gulab Singh avenged himself

1. *Ibid.*, p. 251.

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on the Sikh nation. He determined to collaborate with the British and to push the Sikh nation to its doom. Jawahar Singh, brother of Rani Jindan, especially incurred his wrath. Intoxicated by his sudden rise to power, Jawahar Singh ill-treated Princes Kashmira Singh and Peshora Singh, two surviving sons of the late Maharaja Ranjit Singh and potential rivals of the infant Maharaja Dalip Singh. The Khalsa army got infuriated and decided to murder Jawahar Singh. Gardner gives a very graphic description of the murder of Jawahar Singh and the resultant distress of Rani Jindan. Continuing his story, he says that fired with the spirit of revenge, Rani Jindan and her paramour Lal Singh acted on the old Sikh motto : throw the snake into your enemy's bosom. Gardner writes[1] :

> "The snake was the evilly disposed, violent, yet powerful and splendid Sikh army. It was to be flung upon the British and so destroyed."

The Sikh army crossed the Sutlej on 8th December 1845 and then the First Anglo-Sikh War started. Now Gardner acted as an agent of Raja Gulab Singh in Lahore and his duties, *inter alia*, were to protect Rani Jindan and the young Maharaja and to get the Khalsa Army destroyed somehow or the other. Betrayed by Lal Singh and Tej Singh and deserted by Ventura and Avitabile, the Khalsa Army implored Gulab Singh for help, This was the most important moment of the career of Rani Jindan. When it was brought to her notice that Gulab Singh was not rendering any help and there was great resentment among the forces, she acted quickly and dramatically. She flung her petticoat over them and said, "Wear that, you cowards, I'll go in trousers and fight myself."[2] Cut to the quick by the Rani's remark, the representatives immediately went back to the battle-field and fought desparately. But the Khalsa Army was defeated and the Kingdom of Ranjit Singh was reduced to the position of dependency and subjection.

Raja Tej Singh, President of the Regency Council instituted after the First Sikh War, was a personal enemy of Gard-

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 261-62.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

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ner. The former, therefore, served the latter with orders to leave Lahore within twenty-four hours. Leaving Lahore, he came down to Patiala where he assisted Colonel Carmichael Smyth of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry in writing his book, *The History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*. Soon after he was invited by Maharaja Gulab Singh to serve as Commandant of the Ranbir Regiment of infantry and of Kashmir artillery with a salary of 500 rupees per mensem which was supplemented by a *jagir*. Here he was blessed with a daughter who enlivened his old age.

A staunch advocate of forward policy, he wrote voluminously on the subject of Russian advance and is said to have considerably influenced Sir John Lawrence during his Viceroyalty.

With regard to his sympathies they were in favour of Indians rather than in favour of the British. At the age of ninety-one, he wrote a long letter dated 22nd July 1876, in which after tracing briefly the history of the British conquest of India, he expressed his belief[1] :

> "...I and nearly all my brethren and kindred here really and seriously believe that the time has arrived when a true and sincere community of feeling, thought, word and deed should exist between us for our mutual and common interest, and should by all possible means be promoted for the future welfare and happiness of the great Aryan family."

He favoured the Liberal Party's stand on the scrapping of national debt, exploitation of natural resources, development of agriculture, Indianisation of higher services and representation of India in both the houses of Parliament. Like all Britishers, he favoured recruitment of troops from the recognised martial races, and suggested to the Government to treat the Indian aristocracy honourably and justly because it could prove a solid and strong pillars of strength to the British India.

The long and eventful life of Gardner at last came to a peaceful end on 22nd January 1877 and his body was buried in the cemetry of Sialkot, now in Pakistan.[2]

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1. *Ibid*., p. 282.
2. N. K. Sinha, *Ranjit Singh*, (Reprint, Calcutta, June 1968), p. 206.

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Before we pass on to the next writer, it is necessary to emphasise the point that the guiding motive of Gardner in writing his *Memoirs* was to record his adventures, and as happens in all such works, he portrays himself as the hero of those adventures. Naturally, things are exaggerated, sometimes even distorted, to suit the interests of the narrator. It is on account of this that Gardner has been styled by some critics as a great liar. But all said and done, his work is full of information which, though not wholly free from prejudices natural to a foreigner, is yet valuable.

Known in the Khalsa service as Martin Sahib, John Martin Honigberger was a simple-minded old Tyransylvanian about whom official records of the Punjab or those of the East India Company do not provide much information.[1] His book, autobiographical in nature and profusely illustrative, affords us not only his personal history, but also gives interesting and significant details about Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his court, and about medical and archaeolgical matters. Unique in its contents, the book is very valuable as it provides details of diseases and their remedies in allopathy, homoeopathy, *ayurveda* and *unani hikmat*. Even more significantly, it throws light on social attitudes towards diseased persons, medicines, their preparation and administration. No disease or injury seems to have come amiss to him. He performed his experiments of treatment and surgical operations without sophisticated instruments or drugs with success during his travels in the principal parts of Europe, Asia, Egypt and India.

Born in 1795 at Kronstadt, Honigberger left his country in 1815. After a year's wandering, he arrived at Varna on the Black Sea. After a sojourn of a few months at Constantinople, he sailed down to Syria and reached Cairo where he joined military service as a physician. Then he visited Baghdad. Having heard of glowing tales of job prospects in the Darbar of Ranjit Singh from a merchant, he wrote to General Avitabile. After he was promised a job,

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1. *Thirtv-Five Years in the East : Adventures, Discoveries, Experiments and Historical Sketches Relating to the Punjab and Cashmere. . .* London, 1852.

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he travelled to Karachi and then to Lahore in 1829. During his travels in Asia he learnt eleven languages and made acquaintance with many dialects. His observations about the people of various countries are both interesting and significant. For instance, he says that "the Arabs in general may with justice be looked upon as robbers of the worst description" (p. 36). He also writes about the cowardice of Persians. Writing about the Shias and Sunnis, he says that they were inveterate enemies whether in Persia or in India. "Great animosity prevails between these two sects in India, also on the day on which the Shias expose the Tabut (coffin) in procession. In Cashmere, on these occasions, the Mohamedans burn each other's houses and shawl manufactories."[1]

Eventually arriving at Lahore he found that Ranjit Singh with his army and four French officers had gone towards Peshawar. Ranjit Singh even after having returned from the expedition made Honigberger wait for the interview. Meanwhile, Honigberger treated the fistula of Achille, adopted son of General Allard, and journeyed to the hills along with Raja Suchet Singh to cure him of a longstanding disease of a nature similar to that of the Pasha of Baghdad. Later, the Maharaja appointed him an ordinary physician to the court, giving him at the same time the charge of gunpowder—a curious combination. Honigberger then settled down at Lahore and lived there for four years during which he effected some extraordinary cures. To Dr A. Murray and Colonel Sir C.M. Wade, the Political Agent of Ludhiana, when they visited Lahore, General Allard recommended Honigberger's mode of treatment of hydrophobia. They got so much impressed that his mode of treatment was published on 2nd July 1831 in Calcutta.

Among the curious duties of Honigberger was to superintend the distillation of a very potent spirit which he himself had invented for Ranjit Singh's special delectation. As the Maharaja used to drink heavily, he gradually lost taste for ordinary spirits. The spirit which Honigberger prepared was exceptionally strong and the Maharaja indulged freely in it.

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

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Writing about Ranjit Singh in this connection, he says that his extreme "devotedness to sensuality, spirits and opium" shortened his life.[1]

Honigberger makes some more significant observations about Ranjit Singh. He "rarely did what was required of him and acted often contrary to what he said" (p. 56).

> "He cared not for public opinion, deeming that a sovereign ought to have the highest authority and independent will."[2]
> Nevertheless, "Ranjit Singh was a man whose talents and prudence had acquired for him a great reputation, whose memory is honoured and whose name will long occupy a glorious place in the history."[3]

A close friend of Avitabile, the governor of Wazirabad and Peshawar, Honigberger's objectivity is not affected by his sentiments of friendship for him. He boldly remarks that he "exercised his sway in a most arbitrary manner". "The pleasure which he took in seeing people hung by dozens must be attributed to his brain. General Allard told me that the Maharaja once reprimanded him for having executed some Musselmans, whom Avitabile had ordered to be hung because they were of the opinion, that, under the protection of a European governor, they might be at liberty to eat beef ! The opinion of Ranjeet Singh was that he ought to have imprisoned the criminals and then allowed them to escape."[4]

About the *Nihangs*, the author says that they gave a great deal of trouble to Ranjit Singh in times of peace. He adds in his ignorance that as they preferred "begging and living by pillage to regular military service", they always posed a problem of law and order for the state.

It is interesting to note from his work the diseases which affected important courtiers of Ranjit Singh. Raja Suchet Singh suffered from some secret disease, Hira Singh from diabetes, Avitabile from contraction of facial muscles. Mirza, the brother of Gulbadan, turned mad due to excessive use of *churus* and Rani Jindan was affected with opthalmia in consequence of many abortions.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

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In 1833 an overwhelming nostalgia overpowered the doctor and he determined to return to Transylvania, his home country. So strong was his longing that even the offer of Kohinoor could not have tempted him to stay back, says the author. Honigberger's biographer, C. Gray, writes:[1] "Loath to part with Honigberger, for whom he had sincere liking, Ranjit Singh increased his pay, and offered him charge of a district such as Avitabile and Harlan enjoyed". Travelling through Afghanistan, Bokhara, Orenburg and Petersburg, facing all hazards of an adventurer of those times, practising his profession sometimes with rewards and sometimes without them, he reached his home in 1834, after twenty years of absence. Spirit of adventure and financial needs and above all his inner urge to alleviate the sufferings of humanity afflicted with various kinds of diseases, however, forced him to leave his home only after six months. He visited Hungary, Italy, France, England and finally Constantinople along with his brother. During his journey he met Dr. Hahnemann, the father of Homoeopathy in Paris, Dr. Ehrenberg, a naturalist in Berlin, and Dr. Lekmann in Austria. From 1836 to 1838, he practised homoeopathy at Constantinople. He met him at Alexandria. Hearing from him that Ranjit Singh desired him back, he made a journey to Bombay in the company of Ventura and reached Lahore. He found the Maharaja seated in a chair ;

> "With swollen feet, and making himself understood by gestures and signs with his hands ; his organs of speech being paralysed to such a degree that he was unable to utter a single articulate sound, and other means of imparting his thoughts were not in his possession, as he never had learned to write."[2]

Honigberger prepared a special medicine for the Maharaja which the author claims to have brought considerable relief to him within three days. But the native physicians "would have preferred seeing the King die rather than acknowledge me, an European, as his saviour."[3] Thus the life of the

1. See *European Adventurers in Northern India*, 1785-1849, (Lahore, 1929), Edited by H.L. D. Garret, 236

2. Honigberger, *op. cit.*, p 92.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

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great Maharaja was entrusted to the local physicians. Within a fortnight the Maharaja yielded the ghost.

Distressed at the death of Ranjit Singh upon whose life depended "the happiness, peace and prosperity of that country", Honigberger led a quiet life at Lahore, witnessing many of the most stirring events, such as performances of *sati*, stormings of the Lahore fort, and the tragedy that befell Nau Nihal Singh and caused his premature death. Dr. Honigberger contradicts the popular version that Maharaja Kharak Singh was poisoned to death. Circumstances connected with the death of Nau Nihal Singh have ever remained a matter of great controversy. Without going into the details of events which are well known, it will suffice to mention the evidence of the author that it was not considered proper to conduct enquiry into the matter. Whereas Gardner clearly holds the Dogras responsible for the tragedy, Dr. Honigberger expresses his opinion in this matter as follows :[1]

> "There is more reason to support that the partisans of Khurruck Singh and Chet Singh were the authors of this plot against the prince as he had intended to ask them for an account of their perfidious behaviour during his father's long illness, they having cheated and robbed him in the most shameful manner, and it is generally known that immediately after the funeral rites of his father, he (the prince) intended to order seven of their houses to be closed and enquiries to be made."

Honigberger also gives an account, though brief and incomplete, of the horrible and atrocious murders of Chand Kaur, Sher Singh, Kanwar Pratap Singh and Dhyan Singh. From the contemporary or nearly contemporary accounts, it can be deduced that their writers freely borrowed facts from one another. But the account of Honigberger deserves to be given more credence as he was an eye-witness to many of these acts of assassination. Honigberger, however, feels that "in this party contention a great deal of bloodshed and mischief might have been averted, if the Sikhs had been endowed with more penetration, and if, instead of defending the cause of Heera Singh's party, they had ranged themselves under the banner of Ajit Singh, and supported his interest."[2]

1. Honigberger, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

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Honigberger's brief survey of the events up to the annexation of the Punjab offers nothing new and his accounts of the intrigues of Jalla (the idol of Hira Singh), Jawahar Singh, Rani Jindan and Lal Singh are extremely sketchy. So also are his descriptions of the Anglo-Sikh wars and of the Dogra chiefs from the Punjab's political scene. References to the treachery of Rani Jindan and Lal Singh are found in both Gardner and Honigberger. According to Honigberger, it was Rani Jindan who in order to seek English protection and to do away with the turbulant army, decided to make "war against the English.[1]"

During this period of political cataclysm, the European employees of the Lahore Darbar, about twenty in number, were dismissed by Pandit Jalla on account of his distrust of their loyalty in the event of a war between the English and the Lahore Darbar, though he was motivated by other considerations as well, such as religious fanaticism and economy. Honigberger, a German, and another a Spaniard were, however, allowed to continue for some time more. Honigberger too was dismissed but after Jalla's death he was again employed at a salary of Rs. 900/- per month and he served the Darbar till the fall of the Sikh Raj. After that his services were retained by the British as officer incharge of the jail and lunatic asylum, Lahore.

About the end of his career in the Punjab, C. Gray writes :[2]

> "But having been long independent of control, he soon fell out with Dr. MGreger, his British superior, and resigning the service, departed for Kashmir, with the intention of setting up a beat sugar farm on some land Gulab Singh had offered him. The project did not materialise, he returned to Lahore and applied to the British Government for pension. In this matter he was generously treated, for they gave him one of Rs. 500/-per month payable in Europe."

During his second stay in Lahore he got married to a Kashmiri woman by whom he had two children. They were educated at Missouri, a hill station near Dehradun. When Honigberger returned to Hungary, he took them along with

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-8.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

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him. A man with a worthy simple soul, "his insatiable wander-lust only equalled his zeal for that profession" which he loved so well and practised so worthily.

Honigberger's book *Thirty-five years in the East*, first published at Calcutta in 1852 is of exceptional merit and value for it provides useful and authentic information about peculiar diseases, indigenous methods of treatment and social attitudes towards diseases and patients. While speaking of serpants, the author mentions a disease known as *Mar-ashekh* (sepant-love) which occurred only in the Punjab. In 1832, Faqir Nuruddin brought a laundry man who was afflicted with it. He allowed himself to be bitten by a serpant every month. There were many cases of this kind. The nature of the disease was that the patient at certain times developed irresistible inclination to be bitten by a serpant.

Honigberger knew of a native Muhammedan who could extract a stone with his fingers through the rectum. In such cases fatality seldom occurred though fistula frequently resulted from its repeated practice. He also refers to Muslim occultists in Lahore who sat in streets with crude instruments and performed operations of cataracts. The Indian *jerahs* (surgeons) had no knowledge of intricacies of surgery. All the same, they were proficient in vaccination. The instruments which a native surgeon possessed were some razors, lancets, pincers for drawing teeth and cupping-apparatus. They did not know about binding an artery, amputation and operation for the extraction of stones. Most practitioners believed the pulse beat to be of great importance. The patients, particularly rich, used to consult *hakims* in groups and consultations were generally held in the presence of the patients so that they could choose the remedy they preferred. The *hakims* spoke Persian with Arabic technical words which no patient could understand. In the case of a Hindu patient, a Hindu physician or an astrologer was always invited. Most inhabitants practised a sort of animal-magnetism (*Jara*) for inflamatory, rheumatic and nervous pains. In hopeless cases the patient was taken to the bank of a sacred river where his relatives attended on him till his death. The Hindus and Sikhs did not take any liquid prepared by a Muslim or a European. After giving details of the preparation process of intoxicants

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with illustrations, Honigberger proceeds to add that *hooka* smoking was very popular among the Muslims as well as the Hindus. Among the Sikh, however, it was forbidden by their religion. He says[1] :—

> "As a compensation for this deprivation they were permitted to use opium and spiritous liquors to any extent."

A large number of people belonging to all sections of society, both male and female, were addicted to opium eating. Excessive indulgence in intoxicants led to mental disorders amongst most people.

Writing about the social customs and practices of the people, Honigberger dwells in great detail on untouchability observed in case of food matters by the high and the low alike. The Dogra brothers never took food in utensils but cups and plates made of leaves of trees. Maharaja Gulab Singh invariably took his meals alone in the kitchen itself. In summer the favourite cold drinks of the Punjabis were ginger beer, milk punch and grog (a word used by sailors meaning drink of spirits, rum whisky etc. mixed with water), syrup and *shardai* or cooling drinks prepared from almond and a variety of other things. However, cooled soda water, lemonade etc. were used by Europeans. The book closes with Dr. Tiller's Rules of Health written in poetry. One of these rules is about smoking, which reads like this :

> "The so-called barbarous Sikh preserves his race against the noxious plant; while the boasting European tries to increase its filthy use..."

In the end it must be pointed out that Honigberger's work is far more valuable than the memoirs of Gardner. One reason is that Honigberger is more matter-of-fact and makes no attempt to present himself as a person at the centre of all things, or even things with which he was not connected. Secondly, whereas Gardner's interest was mainly political, Honigberger has given extremely valuable information about the actual social conditions in the Punjab of those days.

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

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CHAPTER IV

W.L. M'GREGOR

It is necessary to know the historian to fully understand the history that he writes. This is particularly true of some one like Dr. W.L. M'Gregor who is not well known and who wrote primarily for his contemporaries.

M'Gregor was a medical doctor. He was attached to the First European Infantry as Assistant Surgeon in 1835 when he first visited Punjab. That was in September-October of that year. On this visit, he saw the celebration of Dusseira at Amritsar then as now the holy city of the Sikhs.[1] In the following year he came on deputation to Lahore where he arrived with the "Political Agent of Lahore by the orders of the Lord Metcalfe, the Governor of the North-Western Provinces."[2] Metcalfe had been a personal friend of the Maharaja for almost three decades[3] and expected M'Gregor to cure the Lion of the Punjab of the after effects of a paralytic stroke by 'Electrifying' the Maharaja with 'Lyndel Phial', an operation M'Gregor performed with a good deal of tact and efficiency soon after coming to Lahore.[4] He got very close to the Maharaja and began having frequent meetings with the latter. In a brief span of six months he was intimate enough with the Maharaja to discuss the relative merits of English and Sikh drinks as intoxicants.[5] He began having a prominent place in social gatherings organised to honour visiting dignitaries.[6]

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1. W.L. M'Gregor, *The History of the Sikhs* (London, 1846) Vol. I, p. 240.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
3. Metcalfe had come to Lahore in 1808 and prevailed upon the Maharaja to sign the Treaty of Lahore on 25 April 1809. They had become intimate later.
4. M'Gregor. *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 2; *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. VII, Art. I, p. 285.
5. *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. VII, Art. I, p. 286.
6. M & Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. Il, p. 287.

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As was natural, when M'Gregor had acquired sufficient influence on the Maharaja, he started using it to serve the interest of the Company of which he was the employee. One occasion on which he did that with great success was when Sir Claude Wade had come to Lahore to prevent the Maharaja from marching into Sind. In the midst of the delicate negotiations between the British diplomat and the shrewd Maharaja, the latter took it into his head to get rid of the former not by asking the unwelcome British diplomat away from Lahore, but "by taking his own departure and leaving the agent to his solitary cogitations."[1] Very tactfully M'Gregor made the two meet again with the result that "negotiations were renewed, and the annexation of Sciende prevented."[2] It was undoubtedly, as he himself put it, "an instance of a victory in the political department effected through the instrumentality of an humble individual."[3]

M'Gregor used the many opportunities that he had to be in the company of the Maharaja[4] to wean him away from the influence of his French employees. One such opportunity came M'Gregor's way when the Maharaja asked him to compare the Sikh army with armies elsewhere in the world. The Maharaja set the ball rolling by offering his own opinion. He insisted that his regular troops were equal to any in the world.[5] M'Gregor could easily see that the Maharaja was basing himself on the erroneous information given to him by his French employees who had insisted that his troops were a match to those of their country and the French had beaten the English. While entering into a discussion of this "knotty problem"[6] M'Gregor tried to disabuse the Maharaja of the wrong information given to him by his French employees. He successfully excited the curiosity of the Maharaja on works written in English on the British army that would show to the Maharaja how good their armies were.[7]

1. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 279.
2. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 280.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 278.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 87.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 87.
7. M'Gregor, *op., cit.*, Vol. II, 87.

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By 1838 M'Gregor felt he was an authority on the Maharaja. He wrote a paper on the Sikh ruler in that year and with a few preliminary remarks presented it to Lord Auckland, the then Governor-General of India.[1] The doctor did that in the hope that the Governor-General would read it carefully and base not only his Punjab but Afghan Policy on it.[2] After the death of Ranjit Singh M'Gregor went back to his regiment at Sabathu and continued taking interest in the Punjab politics. Of course he viewed the kaleidoscopic changes in Lahore from the point of view of British interests. In an article published in a medical journal he suggested "a depot of medical stores being formed at Karnaul" and the appointment of a superintending surgeon at Ferozpore.[3]

When the first Sikh War broke out, M'Gregor accompanied his regiment when called upon to reach the operation theatre and reached Mudki on 20 December 1845. He served as a Medical Officer for the rest of the war that came to an end in February of the following year. He personally saw that the suffering that the British soldiers passed through after two of the most closely contested battles of the war. A day after the battle of Ferozshah he witnessed "the lamentable condition of the brave European soldier who had bled for his country's cause, now imploring in vain for a mouthful of water."[4] He helped ameliorate the suffering of such "brave" soldiers by prevailing upon the authorities to lodge them in a "range of barrackes" of Her Majesty's 62 regiment.[5] Later he was in the very midst of the battle of Sobraon. While the battle was being fought, he was "sitting under the shade of a tree waiting the result of the battle......with the view of lending our aid to the wounded."[6]

On the close of the war, when British army was stationed at Lahore under the terms of the Articles of Agreement signed on 11th March 1846, M'Gregor was posted there to serve

1. M'Gregor, *op., cit.*, Vol. II, p. 202.

2. M'Gregor seems to have believed that the Governor-General had really done that. M' Gregor, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

3. M' Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 115.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

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under Sir Henry Lawrence, the Agent of the Governor-General on the North-West Frontier with his headquarters there. The doctor's position at Lahore was senior enough to make him officiate "for the Political Agent, during the temporary absence of the functionary"[1] from the place. While doing that he was confronted with the problem posed by the commanding officer of the Lahore contingent. That was when the merchants of Lahore had organised a *hartal* there. The commanding officer had then pointed out to M'Gregor that if grain was not immediately obtained the "siphaes must starve."[2]

M'Gregor was a medical officer. His professional work had given him the chance to attend on Ranjit Singh when he was at the height of his power, to see action in the battle of Ferozeshah and Sobraon and to watch Henry Lawrence attempt to bolster up a Sikh Government under Rani Jindan and Lal Singh. The whole of M'Gregor is unmistakably reflected in the two-volume history of the Sikhs that he published in the second half of 1846. He saw the history of the people on which he focussed his historical muse to have passed through six phases—the first from the birth of Guru Nanak to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the second from the start of the pontification of Guru Gobind Singh to the fall of the six trans-Sutlej Sikh *misls*, the third covering the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the fourth of the rapid disintegration of the Sikh kingdom built by the genius of the founder to the start of the first Anglo-Sikh war, the fifth of the two months of the war and the sixth of the weakened Sikh kingdom operating under the supervision of British politicals stationed at Lahore.

In the history of the Sikhs that he wrote and published he focussed his attention primarily on the last three phases. The first two he capsuled in almost one seventh of his work.[3] He wrote on those two almost by way of an introduction to a detailed history of the reign of Ranjit Singh, and the history of what happened after his death. Bulk of his history is undoubtedly a contemporary history devoted to

1. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 281 and f.n.
2. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 281.
3. See f.n. 4 on p. 76.

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describing events which had been witnessed by his own self or seen by those on whose authority he described them. What was not contemporary was related in a very summary fashion.

M'Gregor gave to the first phase of the history of Sikhs only two chapters, one to Guru Nanak and another to his eight successors. He looked upon the history of the Sikhs in this period to be the history of a peaceful sect. Guru Nanak had inculcated "peaceful tenets" which were in "pleasing contrast to the present warlike and quarrelsome habits of the Sikhs"[1]. Guru Nanak's successor made no change in his tenets. They maintained the simplicity that the faith possessed at the time of the founder.[2] It was in the second phase that the Sikhs passed through a transformation. Guru Gobind Singh "gave an entirely new character to the Sikhs, who from being quiet and peaceable, became at once a war-like tribe, spreading terror and desolution wherever they went".[3] Guru Gobind Singh, M'Gregor wrongly insists, had by no means done a good thing. He had affected the transformation to avenge the execution of his father and decided on the character of his transformation by invoking the "Debee."[4] It "was eminently calculated to please the lower order of the Hindoos" and produced the desired result. In "a short time vast crowds from all parts of the Punjab flocked" to him.[5] He had, of course, to pay a price for this transformation. He first had to reckon with the enmity of the Hill Rajas and then the Mughals. Forced to leave Anandpur-Makhowal he had to face many a "trying situation."[6] The way he met these situations determined both the externals and the customs of the Sikhs.[7] On the eve of his death realizing the magnitude of the task he enjoined upon Banda to carry on his uncompleted mission.[8] Banda did not

1. M'Gregor, *op, cit.*, Vol. I, p. 39.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-47.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
7. See M'Gregor's explanation of how the Sikhs came to keep their hair "tied in a knot" and eat their victuals with first turning them with a knife, Vol. I, pp. 90-92, f.n.
8. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, I, p. 104.

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the work a bit too thoroughly. "Seldom in the annals of the most barbarous nations do we find traces of such savage slaughter and devastation as marked the progress of the Byragee."[1] But more than him, it was Guru Gobind Singh who was responsible for it for Banda had acted in strict conformity to the direction left behind by Guru Gobind Singh. In fact, "Had the Gooroo himself not been weighed down by years and afflictions, nor oppressed by cares incident to his position : in short, had he been a younger man ; there is little doubt that the punishment he would have inflicted on the Mussalmans, though differing in kind, would have been equally ample with that bestowed by Banda."[2] A cruel persecution was inflicted on the Sikhs by the two successive Mughal Governors of the Punjab, Abdul Samad Khan and Zakaria Khan. In this persecution the former succeeded but the latter failed because he became "extremely lax."[3] Jats joined the Sikhs in large numbers and "the Sikhs began to flourish."[4] They started nibbling at the Mughal administrative machinery in the Punjab when it first started tottering under a big assault made on it by Nadir Shah in 1739 and uprooted it when Ahmad Shah shook it to its very foundation in his early invasions of the Punjab. They later challenged Ahmad Shah's and his son Timur Shah's claim to the Punjab and soon became the masters of the whole of the Land of Five Rivers. Immediately after the assumption of the overlordship of the land they built up a workable polity to become "a friendly nation, divided into what was called the missuls",[5] but that was only for a while. Soon they were generally quarrelling to reduce the number of their *misls*.[6] The *misl* period gave way to that of monarchy of Ranjit Singh who owed almost nothing to his patrimony. His grandfather was at best the founder of a *misl* which was "one of the smallest in the Punjab."[7] His father was a

1. *Ibid*., p. 110.
2. *Ibid*., p. 110.
3. *Ibid*., p. 114.
4. *Ibid*., p. 115.
5. *Ibid*., p. 118.
6. *Ibid*., p. 118.
7. *Ibid*., p. 115.

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"man of great military skill and bravery" but he had died when Ranjit Singh was only eight years old.[1] On terms of "undue intimacy" with her *dewan*, Ranjit Singh's mother was "an abandoned character."[2] Ranjit Singh rose because of his own skill, dexterity, and foresight. Beginning with the capture of Lahore in 1799,[3] he had made a series of conquests for the next twenty-four years to become the master of the entire Punjab. In 1822 he began effecting a much-needed reform which was by no means an easy task. It was a reform that he had decided upon as far back as 1808 when he had learnt of the escort of Metcalfe who had come to his kingdom "as ambassador, or envoy of British", humble the much greater number of Akalis in a scuffle at Amritsar.[4] He started taking steps at reforming his army in 1822 when there arrived "two European gentlemen in the Punjab". They were M.M. Allard to whom he gave the command of the cavalry and Ventura whom he gave charge of the infantry. Both served the purpose intended of them by the Maharaja admirably well as also another European, Monsieur Court, who came to Ranjit Singh a little later. Court modernised Ranjit Singh's artillery.[5] By 1827 Ranjit Singh was at the height of his power. No one dared challenge his authority except in the Muslim part of his kingdom, when Syed Ahmad, "a fanatic", challenged him in the trans-Indus.[6] The Maharaja vanquished the Sayid on the plains and the latter "fled to the hills" where he continued to defy the Maharaja's authority for four more years.[7] When in 1831 he was "eventually slain" by the Sikh forces under Ranjit Singh's son, Sher Singh,[8] the Maharaja's hold was confirmed all over the Punjab.

1. *Ibid*., p. 152-53.
2. *Ibid*., p. 153.
3. Ranjit Singh had captured Lahore with the help of his mother-in-law, Sada Kaur, "one of the most artful and ambitious women in Sikh history." But that was the only help he received from her in his continuous rise to become the undisputed overlord of the Punjab. He confiscated all the possessions of Sada Kaur in 1821. *Ibid*., pp. 115, 189.
4. *Ibid*., pp. 161-162.
5. *Ibid*., pp. 190-91.
6. *Ibid*., p. 196.
7. *Ibid*., p. 198.
8. *Ibid*., p. 198.

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What contributed in a big way to Maharaja's success was his consciously maintaining a friendly attitude towards the British ever since 1809.[1] In 1827 he had sent *vakils* and presents to Lord Amherst and in 1828 to Lord Cambermere.[2] In 1831, inspite of misgivings which were snared by his sardars he had agreed to meet Lord William Bentinke. Ranjit Singh had surrounded himself with people who helped him maintain "friendly feelings which at all times existed" between him and the British.[3] The Maharaja was sincere in signing the tripartite treaty through which the British had aimed at securing the twin purpose of having "a friendly power in Afghanistan as well as a peaceful neighbour for our ally, Runjeet Singh."[4] The proof of his sincerity lay in the fact that he had "offered to aid the British, not only in allowing a free passage through his dominions to Captain Wade and Prince Timoor, but by furnishing the Sikh contingent to co-operate with the British troops in forcing the Khyber Pass."[5] He was not alive to witness the "disaster" that subsequently overtook the British in Cabul but if he were "he would have readily discerned that they arose entirely from local circumstances, and in no way deteriorated from our military prowess". It was not Ranjit Singh's fault that "Cabul massacre was otherwise viewed by Ranjit Singh's less intelligent countryman."[6]

The fourth phase of Sikh history was characterised by the re-emergence of the Sikh militarism that had been briddled by Ranjit Singh. This emergence was facilitated by the inefficiency of the successors of Ranjit Singh and characterised by assassination of Maharajas, royal princes and *wazirs*. It manifested itself in the rapidly increasing power of the *panchas* and the Sikh state under Ranjit Singh's successors becoming more and more anti-British with every

1. On 25 April of that year, Ranjit Singh had entered into his famous treaty with Metcalfe which he "religiously kept until the day of his death, or a period of nearly thirty years" *Ibid*., p. 103.

2. *Ibid*., p. 199.

3. *Ibid*., p. 227.

4. *Ibid*., Vol. I, p. 267.

5. *Ibid*., Vol. I, p. 272.

6. *Ibid*., p. 273.

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passing year. Beginning with the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh on "30 June 1827"[1] it lasted till the start of the First Anglo Sikh War.[2]

Ranjit Singh was succeeded by his son, Khurruk Singh who "possessed none of his father's qualifications for rule, though resembling him strongly in feature".[3] His son Naonihal Singh, got his favourite Chet Singh murdered and took away the conduct of the public affairs from his hands.[4] Naonihal Singh "who had always shown a dislike to the British" started making preparation in the vicinity of Lahore against that power[5] but did not live long enough to test those preparations. When returning from "the obsequies" of his late father who had "died of a broken heart",[6] he was "killed by a stone falling on his head from one of the gateways of Lahore."[7] There followed a civil war in which Sher Singh, the second son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Chand Kaur, the wife of Kharak Singh contented for the throne. In this civil war, the *wazir*, Dhian Singh played his cards extremely well. He succeeded in getting Sher Singh securely placed on the throne and force Sindanwalas, the supporters of Chand Kaur, run across the Sutlej.[8] Dhian Singh's victory proved phyrrick. When as *wazir* or Prime Minister, Dhian Singh, started objecting to the proceedings of Sher Singh, the latter called back the Sidanwalas from across the Sutlej.[9] The latter, by their cunning, made the Maharaja and the wazir "unconscious murderers of each other."[10] The Sidanwala's had done that to have the mother of Naonihal Singh restored to power and one of them became the *wazir*.[11] Unfortunately for them their twin aims were thwarted by Hira Singh, son of late Dhian Singh. He successfully roused the

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 4.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 6.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 6-11.
9. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 11.
10. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 15.
11. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 17.

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Sikh sodiery against the Sidanwalas and claimed Dalip Singh the Maharaja.[1] In the "important" reign so stated "the Sikh power had become so arrogant, that no longer confining to the Punjab, it aimed at the conquest of Hindustan and imagined itself capable of overthrowing the British supremacy."[2] Hira Singh who had proclaimed Dalip Singh as the Maharaja and himself become the *wazir* adopted in the beginning "measures which were prudent and such as the crisis demanded."[3] He, however, soon allowed himself to be influenced by "injudicious and interested advisers."[4] The result was discontent which increased to an extent as to make him fear an attempt on his life. He "endeavoured to escape" but it was too late.[5] He and his favourite, a Pundit, were pursued and slain.[6] On Hira Singh's death, Rani Jindan, the mother of Dalip Singh, reposed her faith in her brother, "a man of some energy and talent"[7] but those hopes were dashed to the ground when the army *panchas* got angry with him as *wazir*. They murdered him leaving no one to head the government. No one actually would now come forwarded to assume the high office of the *wazarat*. That was for two reasons. In the first place *panchas* were all powerful and secondly they were determined on a war with the British inspite of the advice of not only of the Rani but also of the Sardars to the contrary.[8] Gulab Singh was the only Sardar who had not joined the Rani in advising against the war. On the other hand, he had made "a virtue of necessity" and promised support in case the *Panchas* decided on waging a war against the British.[9] That was because "the Raja believed that a rupture with the British would most effectually accomplish his ambitious views."[10]

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

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The war was not expected by the Governor-General and its start could have taken an ugly turn for the British, if the Commander-in-chief had not "given early warning to the troops on the frontiers, as well as those at the important military stations of Meerut to hold themselves in readiness."[1] The credit of winning the first battle which was fought on 18th December between a portion of the invading Sikh army and the British was necessarily to go to him. Hiding themselves among the jungle and shunted trees in the vicinity of Mudki, the Sikh had directed their guns "at the mounted Britisn troops and European soldiers."[2] To silence these guns the Commander-in-chief had "resolved to adopt the neverfailing though desperate mode, of charging them with his infantry and seizi ng he guns at the bayonet."[3] Under the circumstances it was the right tactics adopted. "In Sir Huge Gough the army employed at Moodki had a gallant and experienced general."[4] The British army had been victorious in this closely contested battle primarily because of him.

The Commander-in-chief was equally responsible for the British victory in the second battle which was even more closely contested than the first. The offensive was in this battle taken by the British on the afternoon of 21 December. The Commander-in-chief had intended beginning it earlier in the day but because of the Governor-General's insistance that it should begin only after the Ferozepore contingent had come and joined the main Army, the British offensive was begun in the afternoon.[5] The result was that by the time the cold wintry night of 21 December had forcibly "stopped the day's fighting" inspite of the indomitable bravery of the British, a portion only of the Sikh entrenchment was carried".[6] On that memorable night the British were in a mess. Their "European regiments" were placed in the

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 43.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

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enemy's camp, having captured a portion of it while the Sikh occupied the rest".[1] The British were bivocked and the Sikh cavalary moved about throughout the night. The British were victorious the next day but chiefly because of the "indomitable spirit and courage of the British" combantants.[2] They had saved the British from a possible route to which the Governor-General's veto on the plan of the Commander-in-chief had led them.

These two battles were followed by an interregnum which brought out in clear relief the inefficiency of the Sikh leadership that had led the Sikh armies in the two battles and the attempt of the army *panchas* to get rid of them. Soon after the battle of Ferozeshah, Lal Singh and Teja Singh had fled to Lahore and the army *panchas* pitched their faith in Gulab Singh. They invited the Dogra chief to come and lead them but he was "little inclined to leave Jummo."[3] That was because his "object, and that of the Ranee, was to preserve friendly terms with the British, since they well knew that in the Punjab, their position as hostile parties would not be an enivable one."[4]

The interregnum was broken with the British deciding to capture Dhumarkote, "a place of some importance to the Sikhs, and situated half-way between Ferozepore and Loodhiana."[5] The Commander-in-chief entrusted the job to Sir Harry Smith. Smith captured Dhuramkote without facing any resistance but when he was proceeding towards Ludhiana "he was fired on by the Sikhs, who seized a great portion of his baggage".[6] Panic seized not only the inhabitants of Ludhiana but also those of Subathoo, Simla and Ambala[7] but it lasted only for a while. Within a week of reaching Ludhiana, Smith engaged the Sikhs in "one of the best managed actions on record."[8] In this battle of Aliwal,

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. II.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-31.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

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he won a "victory so complete" and created a "confusion among the Sikhs so great" that if he had "been then in a condition to follow them, he might have driven the Sikhs before him to Lahore".[1]

While Smith was thus operating in the vicinity of Ludhiana, the bulk of the Sikhs army was planning to move across the Sutlej in the neighbourhood of Ferozepore. It had completed a bridge across the river and covered it "by guns on the right bank, so as to prevent its destruction by the British."[2] It was surprising why the Sikhs were allowed to do so but it went to the credit of the Commander-in-chief that he later used it to the great disadvantage of the Sikhs.[3] He had carefully planned for it. The fact that before he had executed his strategy, Gulab Singh had come over to Lahore to "play" a "deep game" did not make any difference to the Commander-in-chief's plans. Gulab Singh had "inspired sending of emissaries from Lahore" to the "British camp" early in February but because neither the siege trains had arrived nor Harry Smith's division rejoined the army "no reply was given to the Lahore Government though one was promised."[4] The delay in the British offensive was used by the Sikhs "for constructing that entrenchment of Sobraon, under the direction, it is said of a Spanish Engineer, Hobron".[5] They had also used the fortnight between the middle of January to the beginning of February to collect in the Sobraon entrenchment a large force composed of a large number of soldiers "trained by the French officers" and "adept in the use of sword and musket".[6]

As planned by the Commander-in-chief the British attacked the Sobraon encampment of the Sikhs "at half-past three o'clock, on the morning of Tuesday, 16th February 1846."[7] Because they had taken the offensive the British suffered large number of casualties. The battle of Sobraon, as this battle

1. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
7. *Ibid.*

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between the British and the Sikh came to be called, became one of those "in which the assailants suffer for some time very severely, without having it in their power to make any effectual return."[1] In this battle, as earlier in those of Mudki and Ferozeshah, Gough had employed the infantry "notwithstanding the large force of artillary now possessed by the British."[2] The infantry did not fail the British. It rendered yoeman service and enabled Gough to lead his men to a decisive victory in the battle. The defeated Sikhs were "precipitated... in mass over their bridge and into the Sutlej, which a sudden rise of seven inches had rendered unfordable."[3]

They suffered a great deal while trying to reach the right bank of the Sutlej but hardly deserved any sympathy. That was because "in the ealier part of the action" they had "sullied their gallantry, by slaughtering and barbarously mangling every wounded soldier, whom in the viscitude of attack, the fortune of war left at their mercy".[4] Sobraon was indeed a great battle. It could 'justly" be "termed the Waterloo of India" and for good reasons. It was "the last and one of the hardest contest" but "completely broke the power of the foe".[5]

The last and the final phase of the history of the Sikhs was the three and a half months that followed the end of the war which the Sikhs army had begun "in the vain hope of conquering Hindostan". It covered M'Gregor's own period that was yet in the process of unfolding itself.

Soon after the battle of Sobraon the British army crossed the Sutlej and the Governor-General issued the proclamation which gave "a much better idea of the great objects attained and contemplated by the British arms, than any words of our own can possibly convey."[6] At this stage, on the insistence of the "alarmed" Rani, Gulab Singh who had so far followed

1. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Governor-General's dispatch quoted by M'Gregor. See *Ibid.*, p. 165.
4. *Ibid.*, II, p. 165.
5. *Ibid.*, II. p. 174.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 197.

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a "wily policy" appeared on the scene. He came to the Governor-General but was directed to the Political Secretary, Fredrick Currie and Political Agent, Major Henery Lawrence. He did not go to the "major and secretary."[1]

Instead he went to Lahore and brought the young Maharaja to Kasur where the latter was received "with the utmost kindness" by the Governor-General. It was a consideration shown to the "descendant of a man who had preserved a strict and lasting alliance with the British for a period of thirty years".[2]

Hardinge now wisely decided on avoiding the annexation of the Punjab. That was because "such a step was impracticable ; except at risk of destroying the European portion of the troops, by exposure to burning sun, during the hot and rainy months".[3] He also wisely decided to reach an agreement with the Maharaja and not the army *Panchas*. Having avoided annexation that was the only alternative left. "A Government must be established and with it alone could the Governor-General treat. Sir Henry Hardinge wished to see a descendant of its original founders seated on the throne of Lahore".[4] That was precisely the nature of the Treaty of Lahore. The other treaty, the Treaty of Amritsar, by which Gulab Singh became independent of the Sikh government of Lahore was a logical next step to the Treaty of Lahore. Unless "Sir Henery Hardinge had subjugated and annexed the whole kingdom of Lahore to the British possession he could not have possibly occupied Cashmere".[5] The arrangement by which Punjab was to be looked after under the terms of the Treaty and the Articles of Agreement was however open to objection. It was to be administered by the Rani as Resident of the Prime Minister of the State but under the watchful eye of the British "*corps diplomatic* for the north-west frontier of India".[6] Headed by Henry

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 203.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II. p. 203.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 209.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 216.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 219.

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Lawrence, it included not only Macksons and John Lawrence but also "Mills, Cunningham, Edwardes, Vansittart, Agnew, and Cust." All of them were 'politicals' but a "more efficient body of men could not have been selected".[1] It was not the men but the system by which the Punjab was to be managed that was objectionable. That was because the Punjab had been reduced to a "irksome, degration and humiliting position" and the Sikh were not likely to tolerate it for long.[2] To hope that they would do so "would argue a very imperfect knowledge of the character of the Sikhs, to suppose that he will long yield even a seeming obedience to the present government".[3] The British were bound to be soon the master of the Punjab, at least upto the River Indus. That would necessitate in the first place a great increase in the number of troops with a large proportion of of Europeans among them to be stationed in the Punjab.[4] It would be necessary to do so for completely breaking the refractory spirit of the Sikhs.[5] The establishment of the *corps diplomatique* in the Punjab was wrong and needed to be replaced by the military rule on the Sindh pattern, preferably under the creater of that pattern itself.[6] It was necessary because "in governing a country whose inhabitants are decidedly hostile to us, and only wait for an opportunity of expelling and destroying our servants and troops, surely military is best adopted for preventing both disaster".[7] It was to be regreted that Gulab Singh had become the master of Kashmir. He was unpopular among the Kashmiris and the British rule over that state would have been extremely beneficial to them. Those among them who had been earlier forced to leave the state "either because of Sikhs or Dogra tyranny" would then have returned back and carried on the shawl trade. Kashmir would then have become an earthly paradise" peopled "by a happy race".[8]

1. *Ibid.*, Vol, II, p. 257.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 270.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 285.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 219.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 264.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II. p. 270.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 287 (quotes underline by M'Gregor).
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 292.

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In writing the History of Sikhs, M'Gregor had sought to satisfy the ever increasing interest of the British in the Sikhs in the first half to the 1840. With the Afghan War that they had fought between 1838 and 1842 and the political upheavals that had occurred in the Punjab in these three years and in the two years that followed them, the interest was natural. The degree of this interest was reflected both in the number of works published between 1840 and 1845 on the Sikhs and the Punjab and the reasons that had prompted their publications. In 1840 W.G. Osbourne published the *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh* because of the "excited State" of the North-West of India where the Sikh held a "peculiar position".[1] In 1843 Steinback published *The Punjab* to prove "the fullest possible information on the Sikh and their country" for "the probable future possessors of this country" because "a rupture with the present rulers" of the Punjab was inavitable.[2] In 1844 the East India Company aided the publication of Edward Thronton' A *Gazeteer of the Countries adjacent to India on the North West* because the Sutlej had acquired "a new and extraordinary interest".[3] An English translation of Baron Charles Hugel's *Travel* was published for the same reason. It was expected to throw light on "the proper line of policy to be pursued by the Government of India in relation to the Punjab.[4]

M'Gregor was also aiming to achieve the same two ends in writing the *History of the Sikhs.* He intended giving to the English information on the Sikhs and make suggestions for a right policy towards the Punjab.[5]

In all probablity M'Gregor had begun composing the History of the Sikhs soon after he had arrived at Lahore. He assures us that he collected the information needed for the purpose of writing the History of the Sikhs, "either in

1. W.G. Osbourne, *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*, Preface.
2. Steinback, *The Punjab* preface ; also pp. 41-42, 55, 57, 58, 129.
3. Preface.
4. Tervis, T.B. (Ed.)*Travels in Kashmir & Punjab*, Preface, (*iii*).
5. M'Gregor does not say that these were his intentions in the Preface of his book but that this was so is clear from his second volume.

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the country described or in the vicinity".[1] The major part of the material on the second volume was actually collected in the very midst of one of the most memorable campaigns on record".[2]

M'Gregor had aimed at producing a history and not a journal. That is evident from many an asides in the six hundred and eighty pages of the text of the book that he had finally published in 1846. He was conscious of the need of making the reader familiar with the geography of the place where the people, whose history he was to give, lived. He felt that "before attempting the history of a nation or people it is necessary" to be "acquainted with their country."[3] He kept in mind the obligations of a historian who was to relate "history" and "not merely military detail".[4] He was to fulfil "the earnest wish natural to the historian to place the matter in proper light".[5] He was to avoid "particulars ... of little interest to the parties"[6] and to discharge "the duty of an historian to reconcile as far as possible conflicting accounts."[7] He was duty bound to praise parties in "the proper need" of it but "without detraching from the merits of others".[8] He felt irritated when failing to find evidence for filling the blanks that might disconnect his accounts of the history of the Sikhs. He lamented "that no authentic records are to be found regarding the Public affairs of the Punjab after the time of Alexender, until the time of Mussalman rulers of the country, embracing a period of 1,300.[9] He regretted that the "records of Jaipal, Anundpal and Potturgal" should be "so scanty, excepting as regards their contention with the Mussalmans."[10] He felt sorry that he was accepting a particular theory of the origins of Bedies and

1. Preface, iii.
2. Loc. cit.
3. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 1
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 94.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 326.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 362.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 362.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 362.
9. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 23.
10. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 30.

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Sodhies based on scanty or inconclusive evidence.[1] He was conscious of the problem posed by contradictory evidence and knew how to distinguish between an evidence which was authentic from one that was doubtful.[2]

Unfortunately M'Gregor failed to give to his *History of the Sikh* the standard that he could have given it. To anyone acquainted with Sikh history that would be evident from the space that he gave to the six phases into which he believed this history could be divided. To the first phase which covers the work and teachings of Guru Nanak and his eight successors he gave thirty-seven pages[3] and to the second which detailed the history of the trials and tribulations of Guru Gobind Singh, the meteoric career of Banda Bahadur and the activities of the Sikh misls he gave eighty-two pages.[4] The space so devoted to two of the most fruitful periods of Sikh history is in sharp contrast to that devoted to Maharaja Ranjit Singh which constituted the third phase of the Sikh history and even more so to the reign of Ranjit Singh's successor which constituted the fourth phase, the Anglo-Sikh war which was the fifth phase and the Sikh state that survived the war operating under the British control the sixth phase. His treatment of Ranjit Singh' covers one hundred and forty

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 30.

2. Cf *Ibid.*, p. 47.

3. Chapter I (pp. 31-47) 'The history of Gooroo Nanuk' and Chapter II (pp. 48-67) entitled 'Lives of Gooroo Ungut, Ummar Doss, Ram Doss, Urjun, Har Govind, Hur Rao, Hur Kishen and Tej Bahadur.'

4. Chapter III (pp. 69-78) entitled 'The history of Gooroo Govind. His reformation of the Sikhs', chapter IV (pp. 79-87) entitled 'The warlike exploits of Govind Singh,' chapter V (pp. 88-94) entitled 'The adventures of Govind Singh after leaving Makhowal', chapter VI (pp. 95-104) entitled 'The death and character of Govind Singh', Chapter VII (pp. 105-111) entitled 'The history of Byragee Banda', Chapter IX (120-127) entitled 'The history of Bhungee Misl', Chapter X (pp. 128-139) entitled 'The history of Fyzoolpoorea and Ramghurea misl', and chapter XI (138-150) entitled 'The history of Ghuneeya, Aloowalya, and Sukkerchukea mis'.

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one pages,[1] that of Ranjit Singh's successor sixty pages[2] that of the Anglo-Sikh War three hundred and three pages[3] and that of post-war period thirty one pages.[4]

Many reasons prevented M'Gregor giving his book the quality that he could have given to it. One of them was that in his hurry to publish the book[5] he did not master

1. Chapter XII (pp. 151-163) entitled 'The life of Maharaja Runjeet Singh, founder of the Sikh monarchy', chapter XIII (pp. 164-181) entitled 'Continuation of the life of Runjeet Singh, after the Treaty of 1809 with the British', chapter XIV (pp. 182-214) entitled 'The friendly terms subsisting between Runjeet Singh and the British Government in India', chapter XVI (pp. 215-241) entitled 'A Sketch of the Lahore Court', chapter XVII (242-266) entitled 'The same subject continued' and chapter XVIII (267-291) entitled 'The Maharaja's view regarding the British invasion of Afghanistan and other matters'.

2. Vol. II, chapter I (pp. 1-9) entitled 'The death of Maharaja Runjeet Singh', chapter II (pp. 10-23) entitled 'The reigin and death of Shere Singh, and the wuzeer Rajah Dhyan Singh', chapter III (pp. 24-31) entitled 'Events following the death of Shere Singh, and administration of Heera Singh', chapter IV (pp. 32-38) entitled 'The accession of Maharaja Dhuleep Singh to the throne of Lahore' and chapter V (pp. 39-68) entitled 'State of affairs in the Punjab on the death of Juwaheer Singh. Hostilities commenced against the British'.

3. Volume II chapter VI (pp. 69-98) entitled 'Further remarks on the battle of Moodkee, and other matters regarding the state affairs' chapter VII (pp. 99-128) entitled 'The battle of Feerozshuhr or Ferozeshah', chapter VIII (pp. 129-153) entitled 'Progress of affairs', chapter IX (pp. 154-195) entitled 'The battle of Sobraon', chapter XI (pp. 251-274) entitled 'General remarks', chapter XIII (pp. 293-308) 'The governor-general's views of the Sikh invasion and the preparation of the Commander-in-Chief examined', chapter XV (pp. 323-337) entitled 'Further Particulars regarding the battle of Sobraon', chapter XVI (pp. 338-348) entitled 'The British artillery at Feerozshuhr and Sobraon, and chapter XVIII (pp. 363-373) entitled 'Sir Harry Smith's account of the operations of his division at Feerozeshuhr Conclusion.

4. Volume II, chapter X (pp. 296-250) entitled 'The British army crosses the Sutlej,' chapter XII (275-292) entiled 'The difficulties of the British garrison at Lahore and chapter XIV (pp. 309-322) entitled 'Movement against the Kangra Fort'.

5. M'Gregor hurry is reflected in an ample measure in the way he has mixed up the chapters on the Sikh War with those on the administration of the Punjab after the Treaty of Lahore and the Articles of Agreement. It is also reflected in his failure to give titles in the text to chapters XII, XIII, XIV and XV of the volume II of the book.

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the subject before beginning to write it. That was particularly true of the Sikh History under the ten gurus, Banda Bahadur and the misls. He depended for his chapters on Sikh Gurus on secondary sources of very doubtful authenticity. He based his account of Guru Nanak and his eight successors as pontiffs of the Sikh Church on Malcolm *Sketch of the Sikhs*[1] though he claimed that for the first guru he had depended also on "Mussalman accounts of the Punjab, apart from Thornton and Forster".[2] In the case of Guru Gobind Singh he relied also on Muslim historians and "accounts of particulars by Gooroo himself".[3] But his account of Banda was based exclusively on Molcolm.[4] It is difficult to determine the source from which he had obtained his information on the Misls. Most probably it was the anecdotes that he had heard from descendants of the people who had been active when the *misls* were engaged in fighting the Mughals and the Afghans before beginning to do so among themselves. With such scanty material to depend upon, M'Gregor was at his weakest in depicting the history of the gurus, Banda Bahadur and the Sikh *misls*. He tells us next to nothing of Guru Nanak and his eight successors. He is not only scanty but downright offensive in depicting Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Bahadur. He was at the best informative in what he wrote of the Sikh misls that rose and fell to the north of the river Sutlej. M'Gregor was a little more successful in his account of the Sikhs under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Partly that was because he had come in close contact with the Maharaja. But it was more so because he had read of Ranjit Singh from some good secondary works and collected a few original and hitherto unused material on the Maharaja. He appears to have carefully read H. T. Prinsep's *Life of Maharaja* compiled from records obtained by the "Late" Captain Murray and "present" C. M. Wade[5] and equally so the Persian "history of the

1. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 312 f.n.
2. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 29.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
4. Cf *Ibid.*, p. 107 f.n.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 184, 201, 291.

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Maharaja kept by a family in the Punjab, natives of Wattala, and carefully translated from the work rendered into Oordoo by our friend Abdoolashah".[1] He also went through Henery Lawrence's, *Some passages in the life of an Adventurer in the Punjab*[2] and Vigne's *Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh, Iskardo, the Courtries adjoining the mountain Courses of the Indus and the Himalayas, North of the Punjab.*[3] His adoration for the Maharaja unfortunately had the better of him. His account of the Maharaja was bit too adulatory. He did not realise that while doing that he was failing to connect Ranjit Singh's period of Sikh History with the militarism set in motion by Guru Gobind Singh and the militarism that raised its head under Ranjit Singh's successors to subsequently come in headlong clash with the British. M'Gregor's accounts of the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh s successor was better than the one he had given of them under Ranjit Singh. His being in the Punjab both before and after the rapid succession of murder and assassinations gave him a certain perspective of the period that he might have ordinarily lacked. He could also chance on material that would not have come his way if he were not a high functionary in the Agency set up at Lahore under the terms of the Treaty of Lahore. For his account on the murder of Sher Singh and Dhian Singh he could base himself "on the authority of Said Hussain Khan, the son of Syed Ahmed Shah Abdullah, in whose possession are the very documents giving orders or the deaths ot Sher Singh and Dhian Singh under their own signature."[4] For the "obstensible reasons" for Hira Singh" taking away his uncle Suchet Singh's life and the manner in which the latter's life was taken" he had the account given to him "by a faithful adherent and follower of Soochet Singh namely Esree Singh a man who had behaved with marked attention to the officers visiting the court of Lahore".[5] His account of the rise of the *panchas* that arose out of the circumstances

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 291.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 291.
3. Loc. cit.
4. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 17.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

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that had prevailed in the state and the havoc that their rise caused to the future of the state fitted in the theme that he had been building up. It also prepared the reader for what followed. Under the influence of the *panchas*, the Sikh army took the imprudent step of challenging the British and precipitated the war that was to destroy it. On the Anglo-Sikh war he was full of details. Almost half of the book was on the war. He had carefully collected his material on it. He had got the description of the battle from the despatches of the Commander-in-Chief and the "Communication addressed by the Governor-General to the Secret Committee...laid before Parliament".[1]

He also collected information supplied by active participants, prominent and not so prominent, in the battles of the war. For Ferozeshah and Sobraon, the two important of them, he obtained "information politely furnished" by Sir Henry Smith and Sir Joseph Thackwell[2] and for the battle of Ferozshah also from "a gallant officer who took a conspicious part in the conflict".[3] He had exploited "the kindness of a friend" to get a "map of the Doab"[4] and made another friend, Captain Combe to supply him with "a small portion of the valuable and never-to-be forgotten aid...without which and his preserving, example, the work might never have seen the light".[5] Unfortunately M'Gregor allowed his present to influence him to an excessive degree in writing his account of the Anglo-Sikh war. Partly that was because he took too serious a note of what was appearing in the contemporary newspapers. He took particular note of the observation of a writer in the *Delhi Gazette* under the signature "BENGAL FUSIER"[6] and what had appeared in *Chronical* which was "being brought out from Agra".[7] His notice of what was being published in these newspapers determined the sort of

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 293.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 328.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 344.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 94 and f.n.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

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questions whose answers he sought to give in his account of the battles of the Anglo-Sikh War. Most of these questions and also their answers were of the type that were of interest only for the contemporaries of M'Gregor. His interest in his contemporary world was reflected in his being suggestive beyond proportion. Touched by the lot of many a wounded soldier failing to find medical aid on the fateful night of 21 December he was tempted to point out what he believed was a major drawback in the way the British fought their battles then. It was the absence of "no medical stores or surgical instruments on the field" because they would all be kept in the regimental hospital located miles away from a battle-field.[1] "In all engagements, in India at least" he wrote, "the sooner a limb is lost after it has been wounded, the greater will be the chance of success ; in fact, the amputation if delayed, had not been performed at all."[2] In the hope that his suggestion given in the context of the battles of the Anglo-Sikh War might get a serious consideration, he observed : "Hence, the necessity of a field hospital is an important point that will not, it is hoped be overlooked in future wars".[3] On the basis of his experience at Sobraon and Ferozshah he further suggested "that a musket bullet or grape shot loged in the knee, requires immediate amputation".[4] He insisted : "This is an important point and had it been fully appreciated, we should not have to lament the death of many men and officers thus wounded during the present campaign."[5] He was for quick action by the military surgeons.

M'Gregor's contemporariness is also revealed in his depiction of the part played by his own regiment, the *First European Light Infantry*, in the war. It had narrowly missed participating in the battle of Mudki but had more than a proportionate share in the battle of Ferozshah. It had joined the main British army on 19 December and had only one day

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 114-15, Calcutta Review, Vol. VII, Art. 1.
2. Calcutta Review, Vol. VII, Art I, p. 291.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

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rest before being made to fight in the battle of Ferozshah.[1] As a regiment attached to the Gilbert's brigade, it had collaborated with 29th and 80th to capture a portion of the "enemy camp" when the sunset had put a stop to the battle.[2] On that awful night it was one of the few European regiment which lay surrounded by the Sikh cavalary and infantry which moved "throughout the whole night, harassing and firing on the British who were bivocked."[3] Together with the Mejesty's 80th it captured "the gun" with "as brave a charge as there on record".[4] He was all praise for Captain Thomas Box of this regiment whom he regarded "as brave a soldier as. ever entered, the field of battle."[5] Together with Her Majesty's 29th this regiment had also played a heroic role in the battle of Sobraon. The two regiments had "with undaunted bravery rushed forward, crossed a dry nullah, and found themselves exposed to one of the hottest fires of musketry that can possibly be imagined; and what rendered it still more galling was, that the Sikh were themselves sealed behind a wall, over which the European soldiers could not climb."[6] The First European Light Infantry had also in company with Her Majesty's 29th suffered a good deal : "...thrice did Her Majesty's 29th regiment charge the works, and thrice were they obliged to retire, each time followed by the Sikhs, who spared none, and cut to pieces the wounded. Similar was the fate of the Ist European Light Infantry who, in retiring, had their ranks thinned by musketry, and their wounded men and officers cut up by the savage Sikhs."[7] Its list of killed and wounded was high: "12 officers, 12 sergeants and 173 rank and file."[8] Much to M'Gregor's regret most of them did not get a decent burial :

1. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 53.
2. *Ibid.*, II, p. 104.
3. *Ibid.*, II, p. 104.
4. Commander-in-Chief's despatch cited by M'Gregor. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 113.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 127.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 163.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 163.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 167.

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"... at one spot near the dry bed of the nullah, no fewer than twenty-seven soldiers of the 1st European Light Infantry, lay interred in a single grave."[1]

M'Gregor's contemporariousness is to be noted at its height in his imagining that the British annexation of the Punjab was inevitable.[2] He felt convinced that the Lahore government under Lall Singh was bound to collapse. He looked upon the British having agreed to prop up that government under the terms of the Treaty of Lahore as a mistake. He believed that the Sikhs in general were not likely to continue "even a seeming obedience to the present government."[3] To hope that they would do so "would argue a very imperfect knowledge of the character of the Sikhs."[4] So sure did M'Gregor feel of the inevitability of British annexation that he felt obliged to suggest measures that be followed on its heals. He suggested in the first place a great increase in the number of troops stationed in the Punjab with a great increase of Europeans among them. He argued: "In the event of the Punjab being annexed to our territory, there will necessarily be required four complete regiment of European infantry and one of the cavalary for each Doab, in addition to a considerable forces of Native infantry, cavalary and artillary; at least, until the refractory spirit of the Sikh should be broken. The European making five in all should each be kept complete to the strength of 1,000 bayonets."[5] He further suggested that the rule of the Punjab through the politicals be dispensed with and it be placed under a military rule on the Sindh pattern, preferably under the creator of that pattern itself. He argued "that in governing a country whose inhabitants are decidely hostile to us, and only wait for an opportunity if expelling and destroying our servants and troops, surely military powers is the best adopted for preventing both disasters."[6] It was natural that with these

1. *Ibid.*, Vol II, p. 177.
2. M'Gregor, *op., cit.*, Vol. II, p. 264.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 258.
4. M'Gregor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 258.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 270.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 287.

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suggestions made in the belief that the British annexation of the Punjab was bound to occur, M'Gregor should have regretted the transfer of Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh.[1]

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1. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 291-292.

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CHAPTER V

JOSEPH DAVEY CUNNINGHAM

Joseph Davey Cunningham who died in 1851 before completing his fortieth year came of a brilliant Scottish family. The members of that family possessed a great flair for writing. His father, Allan Cunningham, had attained great fame as a journalist, poet, play-wright and novelist before his death in 1832[1]. Three of his uncles[2] had also distinguished themselves as writers. One of his brothers had just started a long and distinguished activity in the field of archaeology and as the au thor of numerous work on that and other subjects.[3] Another had already published as many as six books, the latest proving one of the best sellers of its times.[4] The youngest took to writing after his retirement and much after the death of Joseph Davey Cunningham but wrote enough to be remembered as a writer by subsequent generations.[5]

Joseph was perhaps the most brilliant of this talented family. He had given proof of this when still in his childhood and early youth. Born in Lambeth on 9 June 1812, he was educated in different private schools in London. He had

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1. *Dictionary of National Biography* (London 1886), to be hereafter referred to as *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 309.

2. These three were James Cunningham, Thomas Cunningham and Peter Miller Cunningham. For their brief life sketches and their writings see *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 308, 316 and 317, respectively.

3. This brother was Alexander Cunningham who later became famous as Sir Alexander Cunningham. See for a life sketch and details of writings in Majundar (ed), *Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India*, pp. liii-lv and *D.N.B.* Supplement (London, 1901).

4. He was Peter Cunningham. For details see *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 316.

5. He was Francis Cunningham. See *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 312.

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then shown such a marked aptitude for studies that his father was advised to send him to Cambridge.[1] The father had, however, to think of his other sons and a daughter, all of whom were younger than Joseph and used his influence with Sir Walter Scott to procure for Joseph a cadetship in the East India Company.[2]

Joseph proceeded to Addiscombe[3] and made a mark there. He rose to be the Senior Scholar in that institution,[4] and ended his military training there with a number of firsts. He was the outstanding cadet among those who passed from that training school of the officers for the military service to the East India Company in India in 1831. He obtained the first prize in mathematics, the sword of good conduct, and the first nomination for the Bengal Engineers.[5] He then moved to Chatham for professional training in Engineering.[6] He came out from that place a year later with even greater distinction, receiving the highest praise from his instructors, Colonel Pasley and Jelb.[7]

Perhaps because of his brilliant performance at Addiscombe and Chatham, Joseph curbed his innate tendency to do a bit of writing for a long time and on reaching India used all his

1. *Ibid.*, p 314

2. That was in 1828 when Joseph was sixteen years old. See *ibid.*, p. 312.

3. Addiscombe was started in 1809 and closed in 1861. The cadets selected for military service under the East India Company were trained here. In the words of Philip Woodruffe it was "a kind of joint Woolwich and Sandhurst for the Company's army". Brian Gardner, *The East India Company* (London 1971), p. 189 ; Philip Woodruffe *The Men who ruled India, Vol. I. The Founders* (London 1965), p. 283.

4. J.D. Cunningham's Memorial to the Court of Directors dated 30 August 1849, *India Secret Consultations* (to be referred to as I.S.C.), No. 12.

5. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314. A cadet to the military service of the East India Company was sent to the Engineers, the Artillery or the Infantry in that order according to the position he obtained in the final examination at Addiscombe. Philip Woodruffe, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

6. Those chosen to become Engineers on the basis of their performance in the final examination at Addiscombe were sent to Chatham for professional training, Brian Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

7. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.

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abilities to do well in his professional duties.[1] He reached Delhi by the end of 1832, joined the Sappers and Miners in the Engineering branch of the Bengal Army ; and immediately posted to the staff of General Macleod, the Chief Engineer in the Bengal Presidency.[2] That was his first appointment but he was not allowed to remain on it for long. He was posted to survey and level, in conjunction with other officers, the country immediately westwards of the Bhagantee River with a view to the formation of a navigable Canal between the Ganges and the Hoogly.[3] He had done a commendable job of forming an estimate of this canal besides looking after the construction of an extensive series of buildings at Murshidabad. He had done his work so well that "the other officers were withdrawn in 1834 and 1835" and Joseph given the sole charge of the work.[4] Joseph completed this work in the last quarter of 1837 and won great praise from his superiors.[5]

Joseph's brilliance and his reputation for efficiency attracted the attention of Lord Auckland. On the look-out for a bright "young officer to train for the political agent on the frontier", Auckland's choice fell on Joseph and he drafted Cunningham to the Political Service in 1837.[6] At twenty-five, thus, Joseph found himself in the coveted service entry into which then used to be the great ambition of the best talent in the Company's service, both civil and military.

Joseph had every reason to feel proud of his selection for the North Western Agency and he decided to excel everyone else while working in it. This Agency which had come into

1. in 1832. The Memorial to the Court of Directors dated 30 August 1849, para 2 (to be hereafter referred to as 'The Memorial') I.S.C., No. 12.

2. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.

3. The Memorial, para 2.

4. J.D. Cunningham to Secretary Governor-General 12 August 1850, para 7. Indian Political Consultation (to be hereafter referred to as I.P.C.) 6.9.1850, No. 209.

5. The Memorial, para 2.

6. G.B. Malleson, *The Decisive Battles of India* (London 1886), p. xvi.

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existence in 1809,[1] had become particularly important in 1830s because of the Russian interest in Persia and Afghanistan and the British desire to see a strong 'Sikh State' securely established between the Sutlej and the Khyber Pass.[2] He served in that Agency for nine years, from 1836 to 1846, and was a thumping success.

In these nine years, Cunningham intermittantly held the civil charge of the then frontier districts of Ferozepur, Ludhiana and Ambala,[3] but most of the time acted as a personal assistant to the successive heads of the Agency—Lieutenant Colonel Wade,[4] George Russel Clerk,[5] and Lieutenant Colonel Richmond.[6] He also served, though not as a personal assistant, under George Broadfoot[7] and for a brief period under Henry Lawrence.[8]

Wade, Clerk and Richmond reposed great faith in his political tact and acuemen and unhesitatingly entrusted him with diplomatic assignments of delicate nature. In his very first appointment as the assistant to Colonel Wade, he was

1. The Agency had come into existence soon after the Treaty of Amritsar was signed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and C.T. Metcalfe. For details of subsequent changes that came into the structure of the Agency and the various places at which it and its subordinate Agencies came to be located see V.S. Suri, 'Political, Territorial and Administrative Changes in the Punjab from Earliest Times upto 1943' in *Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. I, Part I, August 1967, No. 1, pp. 187-203.

2. For a critical analysis of the British attitude towards the 'Sikh State' in the Punjab see S.S. Bal *British Policy towards the Punjab* (Calcutta 1971), p. 1 and pp. 56-58.

3. The Memorial, para 3.

4. For bio-data of Lieutenant-Colonel Wade see S.S. Bal, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

5. For bio-data of George Russel Clerk see *ibid.*, p. 282.

6. Officiating Agent to the Governor-General on the North-West Frontier from 21 June 1843 to 1 November 1844.

7. For bio-data of George Broadfoot, see S. S. Bal, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-282.

8. From 21 December 1845 to April 1846. Life of Henry Lawrence is well known to all students of Punjab History. Numerous biographies have been written on him. The best and the most authoritative is by Edwardes, H.B. and Merivale pulished in 1872 from London under the title *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*.

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entrusted with "the special duty of fortifying Ferozepur."[1] Situated on the Sutlej, it had been "recently acquired"[2] and made "the Agent's headquarters."[3] He did the work efficiently and finished it in the stipulated time. A year later he played no small role in making a success of Auckland's famous meeting with Ranjit Singh which paved the way for the Tripartite Treaty.[4] In 1839, on the outbreak of the First Afghan War, he accompanied the expedition under Sir Claude Wade and Shaizada Taimur and in July of that year was present at the time of the forcing of the Khyber Pass.[5] In 1840, he was given charge of Ludhiana under G.Russel Clerk, Colonel Wade's successor[6] but soon after asked to accompany as "political officer" Brigadier Shelton and his army to Kabul through the Sikh territory.[7] He had hardly reached the Afghan capital when he was told to accompany the brigade under Colonel Wheeler carrying Dost Muhammad a prisoner to India.[8] Dost Muhammad had been arrested by the British after they had supplanted him what their puppet Shah Shuja as the Afghan ruler. That was in the beginning of 1841. In October of that year, he was asked to go on an extremely delicate mission to Jammu, Kashmir and Tibet in order to bring to an end the hostilities then going on "between the Sikhs and the Chinese."[9] Joseph spent a year in Tibet[10]

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1. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314 ; J.D. Cunningham to Secretary Governor-General 12 August 1850, para 8 , I.P.C. 6.9.1850, p. 209.
2. The Memorial, 30.8.1849, para 3.
3. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.
4. Loc. cit.
5. The Memorial, 30.8.1849, para 3 ; J.D. Cunningham to Secretary Governor-General 12.8.1850, para 8. As a political officer with this large body of Sikh auxiliaries and Afghan levies, Cunningham had looked after the Pay and Commissarait Department of those bodies, as well as the care of accounts of the whole expedition.
6. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.
7. Loc. cit.
8. The Memorial, para 3.
9. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.
10. Cunningham was in Tibet from October 1841 to October 1842. *Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. II, Part I, April 1965, p. 37.

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and performed his assignment with consummate skill.[1] In the winter of 1842 he was present at the interview between Lord Ellenborough, Dost Muhammad and the Sikhs.[2] In July 1843, he became the assistant to Colonel Richmond who had succeeded Clerk as the Agent of the Governor-General on the North West frontier on 21st of the previous month, and in 1844 he was asked to go as the British Agent to the native state of Bahawalpur.[3] During his stay of nearly two years in that state he tried to settle an acrimonious dispute between that "Muslim state and the neighbouring state of Bikaner."[4] When the First Sikh War broke out, Sir Charles Napier ordered him at once to join his army in Sindh because of his great knowledge of Sikh affairs.[5] For the same reason, Sir Hugh Gough summoned him to join his headquarters in the Cis-Sutlej after Ferozshah but soon after detached him to accompany Sir Harry Smith with whom he saw latter's skirmish with the Sikhs at Budowal and the action at Aliwal.[6] Immediately after Aliwal when the contingent under General Smith joined the main army, he was ordered to join the staff of Sir Henry Hardinge.[7] In the battle of Sobraon, he was asked to remain all the time near the person of the Commander-in-Chief.[8] For his role in the Sikh War, he received in the General Orders the thanks of not only Sir Harry Smith but also of Sir (later Lord) Henry Hardinge.[9]

Joseph's political role in the war impressed the Governor-General who after it was over asked him to decide the case of Suchet Singh's treasure which was pending since 1844.[10] He

1. The Memorial, para 3.
2. G.B. Malleson, *op. cit.*, Preface xviii.
3. Loc. cit.
4. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.
5. G.B. Malleson, *op. cit.*, Preface xviii.
6. Loc. cit.
7. *D.N.B.*, Vol. XIII, p. 314.
8. G.B. Malleson, *op. cit.*, Preface xviii.
9. The Memorial, para 3.
10. There is no mention of this in *D.N.B.* See mention of this fact in a Memorandum drawn by J.D. Cunningham on Suchet Singh's treasure, a copy of which is lying in Henry Lawrence Papers. *India Office Library*, London.

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hardly took a month to do so[1] but decided it in a way which was not to the liking of the Governor-General. The Governor-General suddenly discovered in Cunningham "a decided partisan of the Sikhs", gave him a promotion and packed him off to Bhopal.[2]

Joseph seems to have expected a promotion in the North Western Agency itself and did not like the shift to Bhopal[3] but all the same made the best of it. In fact after moving to Bhopal he won further laurels as an efficient political. Soon after his arrival at Bhopal, he brought about peace in that turbulent state, then under a minor Nawab and his mother carrying on the administration. To begin with, Cunningham used the British troops under him to suppress a dangerous uprising so effectively as to win the testimony of political officers and "other British functionaries" in the Rajput States around Bhopal, to the effect that his prompt action had produced "good effect generally on the peace and quietness of the surrounding districts." That was in October 1846. For this he subsequently got a commendation certificate from Sir Henry Hardinge.[4] Soon after he prevailed upon the Bhopal Regent to construct two roads, one running east to west, and the other north to south, which were very essential for the maintenance of peace in that area.[5] He also prevailed upon the states in Rajputana to follow the example of Bhopal to increase their tribute to the British. This enabled with British to make their contingents in these states effective bodies[6] and to put peace in the whole of Central India on an enduring basis.

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1. J.D. Cunningham drew the Memorandum on Suchet Singh's case on 8 April 1846 *i.e.*, barely a month after the Treaty of Lahore (9 March 1846).

2. MSS 'Notes on Captain Cunningham's History of the Sikhs'. They are to be found in the Henry Lawrence Papers, *India Office Library London*.

3. *Ibid*.

4 I.S.C. 29.9.1849, No. 12.

5. *Ibid*.

6. *Ibid*.

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Joseph gave proof of how brilliant he was as a political when he used to influence to make the Bhopal Regent and the ruler of the neighbouring states interested "in the cause of education" and arrange for the preservation of many historical monuments lying within their boundaries.[1] He made them renew their orders against immolation."[2] He prevailed upon them to abolish the institution of slavery and trade in it. He insisted on and succeeded in their stopping the mutilation of limbs as a punishment and codify their judicial laws.[3] He also made them improve their revenue system.[4]

As the head of the British Agency in Bhopal, Cunningham took great interest in the archaeological remains lying not only within the Bhopal Agency but even beyond it. On 23 January 1848, he wrote to the Resident of Indore, asking him to direct Lieutenant Murray's attention to the architectural and sculptural remains at Sanchi.[5]

On 9 June 1848, while celebrating his thirty-seventh birthday, Joseph could have looked on a highly successful career. During the seventeen years that he had till then served the East India Company, he had performed duties of many sorts for the Company with credit. As an engineering officer, he had carried on surveys, formed estimates and looked after the construction of buildings. He had executed military plans for covering a frontier town and looked after the construction of roads in the north-western and Bhopal Agencies. As a civil officer he had held charge of treasuries and the immediate revenue and judicial control of districts. He had adjusted the claims of village communities broken up to provide space for British cantonements. As a Political Officer, he had done, among others, the more especial duties of gaining influence in Tibet, in the Sikh states and in Malwa. While doing these jobs he had shown great judgement and a varied knowledge. His object had been "to gradually improve the administration of

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. MSS. EUR. D 313, pp. 61-62. *India Office Library, London.*

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our dependents and at the same time to secure the rights of British Government by winning the confidence and by obtaining ascendancy over the minds of those among whom I was placed." He had regarded himself in some measure as the guardian of the chiefs and one expected to be ready to point out to them how they "should satisfy the supreme power by introducing physical improvements. We would gradually pursuade them to "frame their rule upon the model of our administration." As a British political he saw to it that he functioned in a way "as to be always operative in an unostentious way, and yet capable of at once assuming as an emergency a practical and overawing shape." In whatever capacity Joseph had worked as an officer of the East India Company, he had done things which were "of some credit to myself and of some advantage to the Government."[1]

The secret of Cunningham's thumping success in his official career was his hard work and devotion to the immediate tasks entrusted to him. By July 1848 he had made about one thousand marches and lived more than half of his time as an official in camp. While working on the projected Rajmahal Canal in lower Bengal, he was one time in tent for twelve consecutive months and was engaged in surveying and levelling for four hot seasons running. He had lain encamped during the summer of 1841 in Peshawar and lived his entire period in Tibet between October 1841 and October 1842 in the tent. In 1845 he was marching about in Bahawalpur, Rajputana and Sindh until the middle of May. He had remained unmarried and he had taken no furlough or leave of any kind during the seventeen years of his service till 1848.[2]

He was very fond of reading books and not the whole of his reading was calculated to render his more efficient as a public servant.[3] He would read books on such disperate

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1. J.D. Cunningham to Secretary Governor-General, 12 August 1850, para 8. I.P.C. 6.9.1850, No. 209.

2. *Ibid.*, para 7.

3. That is evident from the range of his intellectual interests as reflected in the four articles that he published in the Journal of the *Asiatic Society of Bengal* which he published between 1844 and 1848 and *A History of the Sikh* that he published in April 1849.

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subjects as History,[1] Literature,[2] Philosophy[3] and Science,[4] including Geography and Geology. If he would enjoy reading Milton, Shakespeare, Homer, Dante and Vigil, he was also fond of the writings of Plato, Scheirmarcher, Herodotus, Tacitus, Gibbon, Grote, Thirlwell and Hallem.[5] His study of the works of the great historians helped him develop a philosophy of history in which religion played a dominant role in making a nation of people.[6] Possibly he came to that philosophy as much because of reading great masters of historical writing as do a critical study of *The Bible*, Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Newman's *On the Development*

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1. In his *A History of the Sikhs*, he refers to such works as Bishop Thirlwell's *History of Greece*, Hallam's *Middle Ages*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Ranke's *Ottoman Empire*, and Prichard's *Physical History of Mankind*.

2. In his *A History of the Sikhs*, he refers to such works as William Gray's *Sketch of the English Prose Literature*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, *Odeysseys* 1802 edition and his father's dramatic poem *Sir Markduke Maxwell*. While, referring to his father's poem in a foot-note, Joseph did not name the author.

3. In his *A History of the Sikhs*, he refers to such works as Scheleirmarcher's Introduction to *Plato's Dialogues* and Ritter's *Ancient Philosophy*.

4. In his *A History of the Sikhs*, he refers to Whelwell's *History of Inductive Science* and Prinsep's *Useful Tables*.

5. All these authors find mention in the first four chapters of *A History of the Sikhs*.

6. Cunningham saw in the History of the Sikh people the growth of 'a nation'. A living spirit seemed to animate the whole Sikh people and bound them together by 'a community of inward sentiment and of outward object'. This nationality was the product of a historical process in which race and religion had played a dominant role. To Cunningham the core of the Sikh nation was provided by the Jats, 'the finest rural population of India'. Sikhism had inspired them with a spirit comparable to that of 'our own chivalrous and believing forefathers'; the 'religious faith and worldly aspiration' of the Sikhs distinguished them from all other people of India. In attributing a positive role to religion in history Cunningham had chartered a new approach to history which was different from those of other early ninteenth-century British historians of India. J.D. Cunningham's *A History of India* (London, 1849 edition), pp. 1, 9, 13, 16, 90-91.

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of Christian Doctrines and Waddington's *History of the Church.*[1]

It was inevitable that while on the way to developing a philosophy on history, he should have made a critical study of Indian history. He made a thorough study of such general Indian histories such as Elphinstone's *History of India*, Mill's *History of British India*, Auber's *Rise and Progress of British Power in India*, Thorton's *History of the Marathas* and Harlan's *India and Afghanistan.*[2] He did a critical study of some Persian works in all probability both in that language and in translation. Among others these included *Debistan*, *Sivar ul Mutakhrin*, *Jahangir's Memoirs*, Shah Jahan's *Mirat-i-Aftab Nama* and *Memoirs of Amir Khan.*[3]

As one who was both interested in history and working in the North Western Agency, Joseph started doing a critical study of the history of the Sikhs. He read very carefully Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, Lt. Colonel Lawrence's *Adventures in the Punjab*, Murray's *History of Ranjit Singh*, Colonel Steinback's *Punjab*, and Captain Osbourne's *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh.*[4] He also made himself familiar with the *Adi Granth*, Guru Gobind Singh's *Gur Ratnavali* and one or the other *rehatnamas* believed to be enjoined on the Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh.[5] The fortunes of the Sikhs as a peculiar people started interesting him a great deal.[6]

Cunningham had controlled his urge to do a bit of writing but sometimes in 1844 he could not resist it any longer. In the middle of that year when he was required "to draw up reports on the British generally with the states on the Sutlej, and especially on the military resources of the Punjab, that he conceived the idea, and felt he had the means of writing" the

1. See references to the books on Christianity in the first four chapters of *A History of the Sikhs.*

2. See foot-notes in his *A History of the Sikhs.*

3. See foot-notes in his *A History of the Sikhs.*

4. See foot-notes in his *A History of the Sikhs.*

5. See foot-notes in his *A History of the Sikhs.*

6. Preface to the second edition of *A History of the Sikhs* published in 1853.

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history of the Sikhs.[1] To do that with good effect while preparing these reports, he read again and again all public records within his reach and made abstracts of them.[2] He started scanning through volumes of the *Asiatic Researches*,[3] the *Calcutta Monthly Journal*[4] and the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*[5] and examine the articles on the Sikhs published in them.

Joseph was to take almost four years in writing the history that he had conceived in 1844. Meanwhile, as if to test his power of writing, he started writing articles and send them to the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* for publication. In the four years between 1844 and 1848, this journal published four articles of Joseph Davey Cunningham. The first of these articles 'Notes on Moorcrafts' travels in Ladakh' was published in one of the numbers of the Journal in 1844[6]; the second 'Notes on the Antiquities of the Districts within the Bhopal Agency' in 1847[7]; the third 'On the ruins of Puthree' in 1848[8]; and the fourth 'Notes on the Limits on Perpetual Snow in the Himalayas' also in 1848.[9] Barring the first, thus, all his articles were written when he was the Political Agent at Bhopal. Indeed his most creative period as a writer was between early 1846 and 1848 and covered a total span of slightly less than three years. His *A History of the Sikhs* was also mostly written during this period. That was obviously because as the Political Agent at Bhopal, he had more time to spare than he had in his earlier appointments in the North Western Agency for his historical muse.

1. Preface to the first edition of *A History of the Sikhs*.
2. The Memorial para 5 I.S.C. 29.9.1849, No. 12.
3. Two volumes of the *Asiatic Researches* find place in references in *A History of the Sikhs*. They are Vol. i and Vol. iv. Vol. i contained an article by Wilkins and Vol. iv an article by H.H. Wilson.
4. One volume of *Calcutta Monthly Journal* finds mention in *A History of the Sikhs*.
5. Two volumes of *Asiatic Society of Bengal* find mention in the foot-notes of *A History of the Sikhs*. These two are Vols. xvii and xix.
6. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XIII, Part I, January to June 1844, p. 172.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI, Part II, July to December 1847, pp. 739-763.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVII, January to June 1848, pp. 305-310.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

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His articles reveal that he would take the subject on which he would choose to write very seriously. His 'Notes on the Moorcraft's Travels in Ladakh', for example, bear clear evidence of the labours he must have put in to get at the bottom of the subject. While writing these 'Notes', he not only seems to have read the Moorcraft's *Travels* again and again but also make a critical study of Buddhism. It is evident that for writing this article he had besides reading Hodson's work on the subject also examined Cosma-da-Koras' latest work on the subject.[1] In writing his second article which was on the antiquaries within the Bhopal Agencies and published three years later he appears to have worked even harder. He toured the entire Agency, made detailed notes on the antiquaries at Bhojpoor, Raeson, Bhilsa, Satcheh, Peepla, Bijolee, Oodehgir, Gheeasipur, Oodehpoor En-Ehrin, Putharee, Soondursee and Sehore,[2] and compared these notes with whatever had already been written on these antiquaries before him.[3] Before sitting down to write his article on his finds, he also seems to have increased his command over Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and make a special study of the history of Central India.[4] Reference in that article to books apparently so disperate as Sir Malcolm's *Central India* and Wilson's *Hindu Theatre* and the works of Dr. Yeld and Captain Fell prove that.[5]

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1. See J.D. Cunningham's article in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part I, p. 172.

2. See description of Bhojpur on pp. 740-744 ; that of Raeson on p. 744 ; that of Bhilsa on p. 744 ; those of Peepla, Bijolee and Sanche on pp. 745-46 and that of Oedeghir on pp. 755-758 of the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XVI, Part II, pp. 740-44.

3. While writing about the 'Tope' near Bhilsa, he observed that this fact was "known to myself as others through the medium of the *Asiatic Society of Bengal*." JASB, Vol. XVI, Part II, p. 739.

4. J.D. Cunningham's command over Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as also his insight into the general history of India is reflected in the masterly way in which he puts forth the ruins and the architecture of those ruins that he described in the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* in their porper historical context. The number of times that he does that is too great to be cited in details in a foot-note.

5 For references to Sir Malcolm's *Central India* see JASB., Vol. XVI, Part II, p. 740 ; to Wilson's *Hindu Theatre* see *ibid*., p. 741 ; to works of Dr. Yeld see *ibid*., p. 742 and those of Captain Fell on *ibid*., pp. 745 and 751.

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Cunningham would literally seek for perfection in his articles. That would force him sometimes to enter into correspondence with the editor of the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* after the Journal had published his article.[1] He would also discuss his published article with acknowledged authorities on the subject which would pay him rich dividends in the form of fresh ideas and additional researches.[2] That would enable him to write new articles. He would have, perhaps, never written 'On the ruins of Puthree' if he had not pondered over his earlier article on the ruins within the Bhopal Agency and after hearing of the stone representation of the Boar of Avatar of Vishnu discussed the subject with Dr. Spilsbury and Lieutenant-Colonel Sleeman.[3] The result was that "his subsequent visit" to Puthree "not only confirmed the existence of the 'image' of a boar, but also the existence of a series of antiquities possessed of some peculiar characteristics and highly deserving of accurate description and delineation."[4]

It appears from at least three of his four articles written between 1844 and 1848 that J.D. Cunningham had great archaeological sense like his younger brother, Alexander, who was to earn a big name in that field later.[5] It is more than probable that had he lived longer, he might have equalled if not excelled his brother's work in the field of archaeology.

J.D. Cunningham's articles reveal numerous qualities in him which might well have made him a pioneer in the field. He could make intelligent guess of the nature of buildings on

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1. See his observations on his own article on 'Antiquarians within the Bhopal Agency' in a communication to the editor of the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* in JASB., Vol. XVII, Part I, January to June 1848, p. 154.
2. Introductory paragraph on article 'On the ruins of Puthree'. JASB, Vol. VII, Part I, January to June 1848, p. 305.
3. Loc. cit.
4. Loc. cit.
5. Alexander Cunningham who had also begun publishing articles of archaeological interest subsequently became the first Director of Indian Archaeology and published numerous articles on archaeology.

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visiting a ruined site and determine their construction in time.[1] He could determine the peculiar characteristics of the ruins with an insight given to only those who have special aptitude for archaeology.[2]

The articles further reveal that J.D. Cunningham's examination of the ruined sites suggested to him historical problems[3] and answers to some of them.[4] He could easily compare the architecture of the ruined sites within the Bhopal Agency with those found in Europe, Africa and other parts of the world. His articles are full of parallels between the architectural designs noticed by him at various places within the Bhopal Agency and the sculptures elsewhere.[5]

J.D. Cunningham showed great passion for discovering inscription on the ruined buildings lying within the Bhopal Agency. In fact that was the primary concern that had made him visit these places. His article on these ruins was accompanied by the transcription of these inscriptions.[6]

1. Mark his observation on the ruined temple of Puthree JASB, Vol. XVIII, Part I, p. 304.

2. Note his observations on the monuments at Satchel, temple of Oudepur, Jain temple at Puthree, temple called 'Guulmurh' at the same place and the detached fanes near that temple. *JASB*, Vol. XVI, Part II, pp. 748, 725 and *JASB*, Vol. XVIII, Part I, pp. 305-306.

3. An example of this type would be his observation on what was between two of the upper topes at Peepla Bijole. *JASB*, Vol. XVI, Part II, p. 752.

4. Three examples of such types would be his observations on the topes at Satchel, on the sculptures guarding these topes, and on the monuments at Ehrin JASB, Vol XVI, Part II, pp. 753, 754 and 761.

5. Note the way he links the shape of topes at Sanche with those of the 'great Minar' at Delhi and the buildings in Nepal and his observation after saying that to him topes at Sanche showed the transition or the intermediate stage between the two to the effect that "the traceable change of the flat Bastila of declining Rome into lofty cathedral of the middle ages seems to illustrate this speculation"; also note that the sculpture at Sanche appeared to him to be having "something Persian or Babylonian, and also something Egyptian about them" and to him the ground plan of the temple of Odeipoor forming "a Greek, or nearly equal armed cross, with the outlines everywhere broken by regular projections, or with corners filled in much as we are told Sir Christopher Wren wished to do when he built St. Paul" JASB, Vol. XVI, Part II, pp. 754-775.

6. JASB, Part II, p. 753; for Cunningham's observation on the numerous inscriptions see *ibid*. p. 742, 744, 749, 751, 756 and 758.

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J.D. Cunningham was, however, more concerned at Bhopal about finishing the History of the Sikhs that he had conceived in 1844 than in developing his archaeological potentialities Already in the two years before arriving at Bhopal he had collected a good deal of material that had been used by the earlier historians of the Sikhs. He had collected Memoirs, both published and unpublished, and made notes on the material contained in them on Sikh history. He had carefully studied Lieutenant Barr's published Journal to collect the relevant information on the Sikhs and had also minutely examined the unpublished Memoirs of chief of Bahawalpur and his family. He had drawn up his own "Memoranda of written documents" and on doubtful points made "personal enquiries".[1] He had not only gone through all the public records "within the reach" but also made notes of them "in such a way as rendered them of easy reference".[2] He had, thus, already made a thorough preparation of writing the history of the Sikhs which he was keen on finishing at Bhopal.

J.D. Cunningham aimed at achieving two objectives in writing the *History of the Sikhs*. His main endeavour was "to give Sikhism its place in the general history of humanity, by showing its connexion with the different creeds of India, by exhibiting it as a natural and important result of the Muhammedan conquest and by impressing upon the people of England the great necessity of attending to mental changes in progress amongst their subject millions in the East, who are erroneously thought to be sunk in superstitions designing priesthood".[3] But that was not to be only purpose. "A secondary object was to give some account of the connexion of the English with the Sikhs, and in part with the Afghans, from the time they began to take a direct interest in the affairs of these races, and to involve them in the web of their policy for opening the navigation of the Indus, and for

1. See J.D. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, (S. Chand edition), foot-note on pages 103, 104 and 105.

2. J.D. Cunningham to Secretary Governor-General 25 July 1849. I.S.C. 29 September 1849, No. 9.

3. Preface to the second edition of *History of the Sikhs* published in 1853.

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bringing Turkestan and Khorasan within their commercial influence".[1]

His first four chapters were mainly aimed at achieving the first objective. He succeeded in his effort to a great extent as much because of the labour he had put in to get the right material for the subject as the philosophy of history that he had adopted. In these four chapters which covered the Sikh history from its origin to the year 1764, Joseph depicted the growth of 'a nation'.[2] By the end of this period, a living spirit animated the Sikh people and bound them together by "a community of inward sentiment and of outward object".[3] This nationality was the product of a historical process in which religion had combined with race to play a dominant role.[4] Indeed "the characteristics of race and religion are of greater importance than the accidents of position of the achievements of contemporary genius.[5] The core of the Sikh nation was provided by the Jats, "the finest rural population of India".[6] Sikhism had inspired them with a spirit comparable to that of "our own chiverlous and believing forefathers" and "the religion of the Sikhs distinguished them from all other people of India".[7]

Joseph depicted Sikhism as the chief motive force of their history. That was both because it had appeared at a time when the historical situation needed it the most as due to the "excellence" of Nanak's message. Hindu civilization had reached its highest level of achievement after the victory of Brahmanical faith over Buddhism. Shankra Achariya was the last great exponent of Brahmanism and his final triumph had "brought with it seeds of decay".[8] A thousand years after Christ while Islam received a fresh impetus from the conversion of Turks, Hinduism had lost its original fitness for

1. *Ibid.*
2. *A History of the Sikhs* (first edition), p. 1.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.
4. Loc. cit.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 90-91.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

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"general adoption". Its doctrines had been debased and its social efficiency impaired.[1] Though Islam itself was "Indianised" in its new environments, its doctrinal purity and social dynamism did not fail to influence the static Hindu society. Chiefly because of that "in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Hindu mind was no longer stagnant or retrogressive".[2] By that century Ramanand had already preached religious purity and Chaitanya had denounced caste; Kabir had appealed to the people in their own language against idol-worship ; and Vallabh was teaching religious devotion as compatible with the ordinary obligations of social life.[3] But they succeeded in perfecting only the "forms of dissent" and "their sect remains to this day as they felt them".[4] Nanak possessed all their merits but none of their grave defects.[5] "It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest in race as well as creed, in political rights as in religious hopes".[6]

Nanak's work was carried forward by his successor. Significant contributions were made by the third, the fifth, the sixth and the tenth gurus. Amar Das successfully made a clear distinction between the true followers of Nanak, the active and domestic Sikhs, and the followers of Nanak's son Sri Chand, the passive and recluse Udasis. Arjun perceived the wide import of Nanak's teachings, their adaptibility "to every state of life and to every condition of society".[7] His activities gave Sikhism a social orientation which enabled Har Gobind to proclaim himself the master of *degh* and

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
3. Loc. cit.
4. Loc. cit.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
7. *Ibid.*

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tegh, that is "of grace and power".[1] The impulse thus given to the Sikhs finally separated them from all the Hindu sects, for "after the time of Har Gobind the 'disciples' were in little danger of relapsing into the limited merit of utility of monks and mendicants".[2] The Sikhs were already a "kind of separate state within the empire" before "study, reflection, experience, judgement as well as prosecution" induced Gobind Singh to awaken his followers to "a new life" and to give precision and aim to "the broad and general institution of Nanak".[3] He died without achieving the immediate aim of subverting a powerful empire but success has not always been the measure of greatness. "Govind saw what was yet vital, and returned it with Promethian fire", so that, at the end of two centuries "the Sikh faith" became the guiding principle to work its way into the world".[4]

Govind's unfinished work was sought to be completed by Banda, "the chosen disciple of Gobind".[5] He came to the Punjab from the south, broke the Mughal administrative machinery of the *chakla* of Sirhind, and established a Sikh state around Lohgarh which however lasted for a little more than a year.[6] With the entire might of Mughal empire after him, his state collapsed and he ultimately "forced" to submit.[7] He was taken to Delhi and executed with great cruelty. One reason why Banda failed after a spectacular success and his memory not held in esteem by subsequent generation of Sikhs was that he did not "comprehend the general nature of Nanak and Gobind's reforms ; the spirit of sectarianism possessed him, and he endeavoured to introduce changes into the modes and practices enjoined by these teachers".[8] These changes "were resisted by the more zealous Sikhs."[9]

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 53, 59n.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 70-71.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 89-90, 95.
5. J.D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs* (S. Chand reprint, 1955), p. 77.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
8. Loc. cit.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

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Banda's execution was followed by "an active persecution" of the Sikhs and "all who could be seized had to suffer death or renounce their faith".[1] It produced an effect albeit a temporary one. The Sikhs "were scarcely again heard in history for the period of a generation"[2] but when the Mughal Government go weakened as much because of the degenera tion that had come over the Mughal authority at Delhi as the hammering it had received at the hands of Nadir Shah in 1739, they appeared on the scene. What had enabled them do so was that the tenants of Nanak and Gobind had "taken roots in the hearts of the people ; the peasant and the mechanic nursed their faith in secret, and the more ardent clung to the hope of ample revenge and speedy victory".[3]

The Sikhs began a war of independence and inspite of the fact that on the wreckage of the Mughal administrative machinery, the Afghan and the Marathas had appeared on the Punjab scene, they ultimately succeeded in their aim. They succeeded because "God was their helper and only judge, community of faith or object was their moving principle, and warlike array, the devotion of steel of Gobind was their material instrument".[4] The Sikhs were conscious of the secret of their success. On the first occupation of Lahore by them, they had underlined this consciousness by "striking a coin with an inscription to the effect that Guru Gobind Singh had received from Nanak 'Degh, Tegh, and Fathe, or Grace, Power and Rapid Victory.[5]

One of the great things of Sikhism, in Cunningham's eyes, was the spirit of freedom and progress in the Sikh religion. It was embodied in the dynamically social character of the Sikh faith. Nanak had likened the Deity to Truth and laid equal emphasis on faith, grace and good conduct.[6] From Hinduism he had taken over only the doctrine of Transmigration which, Cunningham insisted, was not different "in an

1. Loc. cit.
2. Loc. cit.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.
6. *A History of the Sikhs* (1849 edition), pp. 43 and 44.

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ethical point of view" from the Christian doctrine of Original Sin. Philosophically the notion of transmigration "seem equally but modes of accounting for the existence of evil, or for its sway over men."[1] In Joseph's view, Sikhism stood in more or less the same relationship to Hinduism as Christianity to Judaism. Just as Christianity had provided the "latent energy" for Europe, so did Sikhism possess the energy to leaven the stagnant Hindu society.[2]

The first four chapters of Joseph's book were truely written in great sympathy with the Sikhs, a young nation. About them one could say with justification what Kaye wrote about the entire book that it was written for the most part as a Sikh historian would write it.[3]

The last five chapters were also written in great sympathy with the Sikhs but they were more anti-British than pro-Sikh. That was because in these chapters Joseph's emphasis had shifted to achieving his second objective, which was, as has already been noticed, to give an "account of the connexion of the English with the Sikhs and in part with the Afghans, from the time they began to take a direct interest in the affairs of these races, and to involve them in the web of their policy for opening the navigation, and for bringing Turkestan and Khorasan within their commercial influence."[4] These chapters were a contemporary history of Cunningham's own times.

A large part of these five chapters dealt with Ranjit Singh and his achievements. On the eve of his rise of power, the Sikhs inspite of political sway all over the Punjab had lost the "singleness of purpose, the confident belief in the aid of God which had animated mechanics and shepherd to resent persecution, and to triumph over Ahmed Shah."[5] The new generation of men who were born to "comparative power and affluence" had "like rude and ignorant men broken from all

1. *Ibid.*, p. 25n.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 341 ; also the Preface to the 1853 edition.
3. *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. XI, No. XXII, p. 523.
4. Preface to the second edition of *A History of the Sikhs* published in 1853.
5. *A History of the Sikhs* (1849 edition), p. 119.

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law" and given "the rein to grosser passions".[1] They and their paid followers had come to think of their faith as conventional formula and the "genuine spirit of Sikhism had again sought the dwelling of the peasant".[2]

It was Ranjit Singh who took note of this spirit and laboured "with more or less intelligent design, to give unity and coherence to diverse atoms and scattered elements, to mould the increasing Sikh nation into a well-ordered State or commonwealth".[3] By the time he died, he had proved that he had not laboured in vain. He had found the Punjab a wandering confederacy, a prey to factions of its chiefs, pressed by the Afghans and the Marathas, and ready to submit to the English supremacy. He consolidated the numerous petty states into a kingdom, wrested from Kabul the fairest of its provinces, and he gave the "potent English no cause for interference". He found the military array of his country as a mass of horsemen, brave indeed, but ignorant of war as an art. He left it mustering fifty thousand disciplined soldiers, forty thousand well-armed yeomanary and militia, and more than three hundred pieces cannon for the field.[4]

Ranjit Singh had succeeded because he had "grasped the more obvious characteristics of the impulse given by Nanak and Gobind".[5] He had "dexterously turned" these characteristics "to the purpose of his own material possession."[6] If he looked "an absolute monarch in the midst of willing and obedient subject"[7] it was because he had directed "into a particular channel a power which he could neither destroy nor control."[8] To prevent the Sikhs "turning upon himself, or contending with one another", he had engaged them in conquest and remote warfare.[9] He never conceded that "his

1. Loc. cit.
2. Loc. cit.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
4. *A History of the Sikhs* (S. Chand reprint), p. 200.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
6. Loc. cit.
7. Loc. cit.
8. Loc. cit.
9. Loc. cit.

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own or the Sikh sway was to be confined to the Punjab, and his only wish was to lead armies as far as faith in the Khalsa and confidence in skill would take brave and believing men."[1] In his kingdom the "whole wealth and the whole energies of the people were devoted to war, and to the military means and equipment".[2] He had not "rejoiced in the opportunity for wise legislation, and for consolidating aggregated provinces into one harmonious province".[3] That was because "such a task neither suited the Maharaja's genius nor the Sikh nation"[4] and partly because it was not "agreeable to the constitution of any political society, that its limits shall be fixed, or that the pervading spirit of a people shall rest, until its expansive force is destroyed and becomes obnoxious to change and decay".[5] He did not trouble himself "with the theory or the practical niceties of administration."[6]

In the first two decades and a half of his reign Ranjit Singh had done his work without any interference from the British. In fact during this period he "had become the master of the Punjab almost unheeded by the English".[7] The British were themselves then busy elsewhere in India and the only time that they involved themselves in the Punjab affairs, they entered into a relationship with him which indirectly contributed to his rise. In 1808-09, they had entered into a Treaty with him after thwarting his ambition over the Cis-Sutlej states. By that Treaty they had given him a free hand in the north and the north-west of the Sutlej and he had made the best of it. By 1825 he had made himself the master of Kangra, Kashmir and Peshawar and thus made himself "supreme in the hills and the plains of the Punjab proper."[8]

It was round about 1825 that the British gave a serious thought to the power that had entrenched itself across the

1. Loc. cit.
2. Loc. cit.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
5. Loc. cit.
6. Loc. cit.
7. J. D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (S. Chand reprint, 1955), p. 163.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

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Sutlej in the north-west of their Indian empire. Now they decided "to depricate the ambition of the king of the Sikhs" and check his rising power.[1] Between 1825 and 1838 they did that through a series of diplomatic moves which were not to the liking of Cunningham. They felt happy that even without their encouragement, there was "a formidable insurrection" against Ranjit Singh between 1826 and 1831 "in the neighbourhood of Peshawar, by an unheeded person and in an unlooked-for manner".[2] Later they checked his "fonded hopes" in the direction of Sind and did not show any consideration for his "main apprehension" on the side of the Peshawar.[3]

In their dealings with Ranjit Singh, the British did not show any appreciation of the nature of the Sikh movement and made their moves only with reference to what they believed were their self-interests. In 1808-09, they did not realise that the Sikhs then "were in a state of progression" and to whom "exercise of political moderation and the practice of just morality" was matched by their ignorance "alike of despotic control and regulated freedom".[4] Subsequently they failed to realise that Ranjit Singh's only aim was conquest and "he would rather have added a province to their rule than have received the assurances of his English neighbours that he legislated with discrimination in commercial affairs and with just regard for the amelioration of his ignorant and fanatical subjects of various persuasions."[5] In late 1820s the English rulers felt that they were bound by the strongest consideration of political interest to prevent the extension of the Sikh power along the Indus"[6] and soon after feel very strongly at the highest level that "the time seemed to have come when political interference would no longer be embarrassing, but, on the contrary highly advantage-

1. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-189.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

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ous to schemes of peaceful trade and beneficial intercourse".[1] By the time Ranjit Singh's reign was coming to a close, they had convinced themselves that their commercial policy actually "required that peace and industry should at once be introduced among the half-barbarous tribes of Sind, Khorasan and the Punjab ; and it was vainly sought to give fixed limits to the newly-founded feudal governments, and to impress moderation of desire upon grasping military sovereigns".[2] In that context, the "idle design or restless intrigues of Persians and Russians"[3] caused "the disputes of the Sikhs and the Afghans to merge in the British scheme of resenting Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul."[4] Ranjit Singh entered into the scheme most reluctantly because he was suspicious of "a power he could not withstand and never wholly trusted. He suspected that the success of the plan would result in his being "enclosed within the iron arms of the English."[5] It was not surprising, therefore, that he subsequently became "indifferent about the careful engagement into which he had entered".[6] The delay of British at Kandhar on their way to Kabul "served to cheer his vexed spirit with the hope that English should be vexed.[7] He died "before that capture of Ghazni and the occupation of Kabul, and the forcing of the Khyber Pass with the aid of his own troops placed the seal of success on a campaign which he was an unwilling partner".[8]

This partnership was continued for four more years. The British tragedy and the subsequent reversal in the British Afghan policy synchronised with the first half of the anarchy that had started engulfing the Punjab after the death of the great Maharaja. In this period, also, the British continued with their mistaken attitude towards the Lahore kingdom.

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
4. Loc. cit.
5. *Ibid.*, (S. Chand), p. 198.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
7. Loc. cit.
8. Loc. cit.

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In fact the mistakes they now made when the "commanding genius" of the Maharaja was no more and "the vital spirit of his race began to consume itself in domestic contentions"[1] were worse. The first of these mistakes was made by the Supreme Government at Calcutta. It was to succumb to the pressure of Nau Nihal Singh, the Crown Prince, and Dhian Singh, the Wazir, and remove Wade, the Governor-General's Agent from the frontier. "That officer had stood high with Ranjit Singh as a liberal construer of Sikh rights, or as one who would carefully show how collision with the English was to be avoided".[2] His presence on the frontier was disliked "by men not inclined to wholly yield themselves to English counsels, and yet accustomed to see the suggestions of the Governor-General regularly carried into effect by the sovereign of Lahore".[3] The British had agreed to Wade's removal to get the Punjab "freely opened to the passage of British troops, in support of a policy which connected the West of Europe with the South of Asia by an unbroken chain of alliances".[4] Cunningham insisted that this policy of the British was as bad as "their favourite scheme of navigating the Indus and of forming an enterpot on that river which should have at once become the centre of a vast traffic".[5] He suggested that any attempt to "change the established economy of prudent merchants must be the work of time in a country long subject to political commotion, and the idea of forming an emporium savours more of Eastern vanity than of English sense and soberness".[6]

The second great mistake that the British committed was to continually underestimate the Sikhs as soldiers and the Dogra superior to them as such. This started happening in the two and a half months which followed the deaths of both Kharak Singh and Nau Nihal Singh on 5 November 1840 when the Punjab was convulsed by the Civil War between the

1. Loc. cit.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
3. Loc. cit.
4. *Ibid.*, (S. Chand), p. 205.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

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adherents of Sher Singh and the supporters of Chand Kaur. Among the British then "the natural desire of aggrandizement, added to the apparently disorganised state of the (Sikh) army" had "contributed to strengthen a willing belief in the inferiority of the Sikhs as soldiers, and in the great excellence of the mountain levies of the cheifs of Jammu, who alone seemed to be the master of their own servants".[1]

The mistaken estimate of the relative merits of the Sikhs and the Dogra armies had informed the British dealings with the Sikhs all through the Afghan War in which the British and the Sikhs were nominally committed to a common policy towards Afghanistan. Even when "no valient youth arose superior to the fatal influence of military subordination, to render illustrious still, the successfull defence of their position"[2] in the crisis resulting from the outbreak of the Kabul insurrection against the British on 2 November 1841, no "confidence was placed in the Sikh efficiency or the friendship of the Sikhs".[3] When on occasion the British were forced to seek the help of the Sikh army "the mode in which it was asked and used only served to sink the Lahore army lower than before in British estimation".[4] The wrong estimate that the British had made of the Sikhs and the Dogras led them misunderstand the motives of certain actions of the Sikhs and the Dogras in 1842 and think of moves which they might well have avoided. In the spring of 1842 when the Sikh troops at Peshawar showed thier reluctance to come to the aid of the British garrison at Jalalabad it was attributed to "fear alone" though it was "really with feelings in which contempt, distrust, apprehension were all mixed".[5] On the other hand great faith was reposed in the shrewdness of Gulab Singh and in the efficiency of his troops. His "prudence and ill success" in performing an assigned task at the same time "were looked

1. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
3. Loc. cit.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

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upon as collusion and insincerity".[1] To tempt him to an effective aid, the local British officials actually proposed to bribe him "by the offer of Jalalabad, independent of his sovereign Sher Singh".[2] This suggestion was discouraged by Lord Auckland and forgotten when "the auxiliary Sikhs acquitted themselves to the satisfaction of the English general"[3] but only for a while. When Ellenborough became the Governor-General he sought to prevail Gulab Singh "to relinquish Ladakh, and to accept Jalalabad on equal terms of dependency on the Punjab".[3] The scheme came to nothing only because of a rapid change in the situation. In April 1842 Shah Shuja died.[4] It rendered the "reoccupation" of Afghanistan "unnecessary and the tripartite treaty was declared to be at an end".[5]

The British low opinion of the Sikh army was matched by that army's suspicious of the British intentions towards their state which had become weaker than it was at the time of Ranjit Singh due to the imbecility of Kharak Singh and the civil war that followed his death. The British had done nothing to remove that suspicion. It prevented Sher Singh coming to meet Ellenborough at Ferozepur where, after the close of the Afghan War, Lord Ellenborough had "proposed to thank the Maharaja in person for the proofs which he had afforded of his continued friendship."[6] That the same Maharaja soon afterward did not find any difficulty in not only receiving at Lahore "Dost Muhammad with distinction" but also in entering "into a formal treaty of friendship with the released Amir" indicated the degree of that suspicion.[7]

This suspicion became a hysteria seven months later when Sher Singh and Dhian Singh lost their lives at the hands of

1. *Ibid*., p. 224.
2. *Ibid*., p. 225.
3. Loc. cit.
4. According to T.W. Beale, Shah Shuja was murdered by the son of Zaman Shah on 2 May 1842. T.W. Beale, *An Oriental Biographical Dictionary* (Kalyani reprint, 1972), p. 368.
5. J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (S. Chand reprint, 1956), p. 226.
6. *Ibid*., p. 228.
7. *Ibid*., pp. 228-229.

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those who were earlier their common enemies, the Sandhanwalias. Dhian Singh's son, Hira Singh keen on an instant revenge of his father's murder painted the Sandhanwalias as British Agents and fanned the anti-British feeling of that army to a feverish pitch.[1] That helped him proclaim Dalip Singh, the hitherto unknown infant son of Ranjit Singh as the Maharaja and assume to himself the wazarat of the state.[2]

The anti-British hysteria created by Hira Singh coloured the politics of the Punjab not only for the year and a quarter that he was the wazir but even later. For some time it served him well in consolidating his position as a wazir. When a possible rival, Jawahir Singh, the brother of the Rani, tried to strengthen himself with the threat that he would settle his score with Hira Singh's uncle Golab Singh "by procuring the aid of the English" he was "immediately made a prisoner"[3] by the army. Before he could secure his release after five months of confinement "to assume the place in the court as the uncle of the child to whose sovereignty in the abstract all nominally deferred".[4] Hira Singh was firmly on the saddle. He had defeated an insurrection raised by Fateh Khan Tiwana[5] and confidently ignored the attempt made by Kashmira Singh and Peshaura Singh, "sons born to, or adopted by, Ranjit Singh at the period of his conquest of the two Afghan provinces" to form a party of his own.[6] Hira Singh's hold, however, started waning when in May 1844, his troops killed the holy figure of Bhai Ram Singh in an attempt to prevent Attar Singh Sandhanwalia and Kanwar Kashmira Singh enter Maharaja Dalip Singh's kingdom from the British territory in the Cis-Sutlej.[7] Hira Singh started fearing "lest he should be rejected" by the army "as its master"[8] and the instinct of

1. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 233 (S. Chand).
4. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

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self-survival made him "take advantage of a projected relief of the British troops in Sind and the consequent march of several battalions towards the Sutlej" to hint "that a near danger threatened the Sikh on the side of the Sutlej."[1] He succeeded in the game obviously because "there were not wanting causes of real or alleged dissatisfaction with the British government."[2] For Hira Singh these causes "served the useful purpose of engaging the attention of Punjab soldiery."[3] Hira Singh regained his former hold and might have continued to remain the wazir for a much longer time than just another six months if he had not earned the hostility of Sikh chiefs by giving a free hand to his mentor, Pandit Jhalla, to crush them.[4] The latter made the mistake of forgetting that the Sikhs were jealous "of strangers to their faith and race" and that the Sikh chiefs "were Sikhs equally with soldiers, and that the 'khalsa' was a word which could be used to unite the high and the low."[5] "The incensed Sikh chiefs" worked upon "the impulsive soldiery" and Hira Singh and Pandit Jhalla perceived that their rule was at an end. On 21 December 1844 they endeavoured to avoid the wrath of the Sikh soldiery by a sudden flight from the capital towards Jammu. They were, however, overtaken and slain before they could reach their destination.[6]

The tragic end of Hira Singh led to such a fright even among the Sikh chiefs who had instigated the army to the act that none came forward to become the wazir for about five or six months. It was only on 14 May 1845 that Jawahir Singh consented to become the wazir.[7] It appears he had done that in the hope that while his sister, the mother of Maharaja, would confide in him, the army would continue to support him. On 21 September, however, within four

1. Loc. cit.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
3. Loc. cit.
4. *Ibid.* p. 240.
5. Loc. cit.
6. Loc. cit.
7. For the date see *Ibid.*, p. 242.

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months of his becoming the wazir, he was put to death by the Army "with the solemnity and moderation of a judicial process, ordained and witnessed by the whole people."[1] What had happened was that he had dared to defy the Army to get the royal prince, Peshaura Singh, murdered. The latter had surrendered to the Army after an unsuccessful bid to raise a rebellion against Dalip Singh but was "secretly put to death at the instigation of Jawahir Singh and through the instrumentality, as understood, of Fateh Khan Tiwana."[2] The Panchayats of the Army had met in council, and resolved that "Jawahir Singh should die as a traitor to the commonwealth".[3]

In his account of the six years between the death of Ranjit Singh and the murder of Jawahir Singh when the "vital spirit" of the Sikhs was consuming itself in "domestic contentions",[4] Cunningham had highlighted the big mistakes that the British had made in their dealings with the Sikhs. He, however, referred to them in a way as to suggest that it is not so much the highest functionaries of the state between 1839 and 1844 who were as much responsible for these mistakes as those who were executing the general British policy on the spot.[5] While referring to Auckland and Ellenborough, the two Governor-Generals during these six years, he had at times put in clauses which showed that the author had immense regard for them and though he held them partly responsible for involving the Sikhs and the Afghans "in the web" of the British "policy for bringing Turkestan and Khorasan within their commercial influence", these mistakes were minor and committed inadvertently.[6] It is the British

1. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
5. See *A History of the Sikhs* (S. Chand) f.n. 1, p. 202 ; f.n. 3, p. 204 ; f.n. 1, p. 205, p. 206 & f.n. 4 ; p. 213 f.n. 1, p. 213-214, p. 223, p. 223 f.n. 1, p. 244, f.n. 1 & f.n. 3 (Auckland-Clerk) ; p. 225 & f.n. 3, p. 226 f.n. 2,3, 4 p. 227, p. 277, f.n. 2.
6. J.D. Cunningham, Preface to the 2nd edition of his *History of the Sikhs*, para 2; J.D. Cunningham, *op. cit.* (1956 reprint) pp. 195-196, f.n. 1 on pages 196 ; 197, f.n. 3 ; pp. 198-199 ; f.n. 2, p. 199, p. 205 & f.n. ; p. 225, f.n. ; p. 227 & f.n. 2, p. 235 & f.n.

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Agents on the North-West Frontier and Afghanistan who had made the worst mistakes.[1] Primarily if their wrong handlings of the situations created in pursuit of a general policy that created the anti-British feelings in the Punjab in the six years between 1839 and 1845.[2]

The last chapter of the book entitled "War with the English" which detailed the immediate circumstances leading to the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46, was, however, a scathing criticism of Lord Hardinge, the highest functionary of the British government in India.[3] As the Governor-General of the empire, he had done nothing to prevent the earlier mistakes from continuing to add to the distrust of the Sikh army from feeling suspicious of British intentions. While strengthening the frontier posts "the fair and moderate object of British Government",[4] he ignored the "conviction" that his proceedings was to produce among the Sikhs.[5] He did not realise that the Sikhs "feared the ambition of their great and growing neighbour", and would neither "understand why they should be dreaded when intestine commotion had reduced their comparative inferiority still lower" nor "able to appreciate why the "inefficiency of rule" of their Government be "construed into hostility of purpose".[6] He had gone in for the "defensive purposes" of the British empire in India in a way as to look to the Sikh army as "aggressive preparations"[7] and lead them "to the conclusion that they were to be invaded". The Sikh army was soon convinced

1. These British agents were Sir George Clerk and Lt. Colonel Richmond.

2. J.D. Cunningham was particularly severe on Clerk for the mistakes he had made in his approach to the Lahore Kingdom. For the mistakes committed by Clerk in the eyes of Cunningham see S.S. Bal, *British Policy towards the Punjab* (Calcutta 1971).

3. S.S. Bal, *British Policy towards the Punjab*, (Calcutta, 1971), pp. 252-253.

4. J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (S. Chand reprint), p. 248.

5. Loc. cit.

6. Loc. cit.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

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"that the fixed policy of the English was territorial aggrandizement and the immediate object of their ambition was the conquest of Lahore".[1]

Among the mistakes made by Hardinge in dealing with the Sikhs, one of the earliest was the appointment of Major G. Broadfoot in November 1844 as his Agent on the North West Frontier. Broadfoot who "thirty months before had made so stormy a passage" through the Punjab had left behind the image of an aggressive character.[2] Cunningham insisted that from Hardinge's appointment of Broadfoot to that strategic post "it is certain the Sikh authorities did not derive any assurance of an increasing desire of peace" on the part of the British.[3] Their fears of Broadfoot were soon confirmed and their suspicions of the British increased many folds. One of his first acts was "to declare Cis-Sutlej possessions of Lahore to be under British protection equally with Patiala and other chiefships, and also liable to escheat on the death or deposition of the Maharaja Daleep Singh."[4] Broadfoot acted on this declaration "when he proceeded to interfere authoritatively, and by a display of force in the affairs of the priest-like Sodhis of Anandpur-Makhowal, a fiet to which some years before it had been declared expedient to waive all claim, especially as Ranjit Singh could best deal with the privileged proprietors."[5] He had once again acted on the same principle when he drove back "a troop of horse" of the Lahore Government "which had "crossed the Sutlej near Ferozepore, to proceed to Kot Kapoora, a Lahore town, to relive or strengthen the mounted police ordinarily stationed there."[6] In this context "motives of Sir Charles Napier of driving back in the summer of 1845 some Multan horsemen who had crossed a few miles in Sind territory" in pursuit of some marauders "to preserve the integrity of his frontier from

1. Loc. cit.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
3. Loc. cit. and foot-note 2 on the same page.
4. Loc. cit.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.
6. Loc. cit.

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violation" were "mistakenly looked upon as one more proof of a desire to bring about a war with the Punjab."[1]

The chiefs of the Lahore Kingdom who were in great dread of their army took advantage of this feeling. Ever since the authority of the army had begun to predominate and it had begun to derive force from its system of committees, the territorial chiefs and the adventures in the employ of the government had felt a new danger threatening them. These men now "considered that their only chance of retaining power was to have the army removed by inducing it to engage in a contest which they believed they would end in its dispersion, and pave the way for their recognition as ministers more surely than if they did their duty by the people, and earnestly deprecated a war which must destroy the independence of the Punjab."[2] They, therefore, "tauntinigly asked" the Khalsa soldiers "whether they would quietly looked on while the limits of the Khalsa dominions were being reduced, and the plains of Lahore occupied by the remote strangers of Europe"[3] and thus provoked the army to a war with the English. It began on "the initiative" of the Sikhs, who by an overt act broke a solemn treaty and invaded the territories of their allies."[4]

The real blame of the war, however, rested with the English. They had pursued a policy which was "not in reality well calculated to ensure a continuance of pacific relations."[5] For quite some time they had not exhibited "that punctitious adherence to the spirit of first relations which allow no change of circumstances to cause a departure from arrangements which had in the progress of time, come to be regarded by a weaker power as essentially bound up with its independence."[6] They had also not shown "that high wisdom and

1. *Ibid.*, pp, 225-56. (The reference to Sir Charles Napier from which the quoted sentence has been taken, was slightly changed in the second edition of the book).

2. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

4. Loc. cit.

5. Loc. cit.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

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foresight, which should distinguish the career of intelligent rulers acquainted with actual life and the examples of history."[1]

Under Hardinge as the Governor-General, the English preserved in "despising or misunderstanding the spirit of the disciples of Gobind".[2] They took no note of the "unity and depth of feeling, derived from a young and fervid faith".[3] In their eyes "no historical association exalted the Sikhs to the dignity of Rajputs and Pathans".[4] In 1845 "the Lahore soldiery was called a "rabble" in sobre official dispatches", and "daily deteriorating as a military body".[5] They also continued to give "little thought" to "the selfish views of factions Sikh chiefs, or to the natural effects of the suspicions of the Sikh community when wrought upon by base men for their own ends".[6]

That the war began on the initiative of the Sikh army took the British with as great a surprise as the tough fight it gave before accepting defeat. Till the very day the Sikh army crossed the river Sutlej, the British had "scarcely thought" that the newly established ministry of Lal Singh at Lahore or even the army "would have the courage to cross the river in force, and to court an equal contest".[7] They did expect the war but the "English officers and Indian sepoys equally believed that they were about to win battles by marching steadily and by the discharge of a few artillery shots, rather than by skilful dispositions, hard fighting and a prolonged contest".[8] They had confidently hoped that the war would come at a time of British choosing and would take the form of British intervention.[9] They had consequently prepared for it in a way which provoked the war alright but proved extremely inadequate to fight it with the speedy success that

1. Loc. cit.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
3. Loc. cit.
4. Loc. cit.
5. Loc. cit.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

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they had expected in it. "Thus boats for bridges, and regiments and guns, the natural and undesigned provocation to a war, were sufficiently numerous ; but food and ammunition, and carriage and hospital stores, such as necessary for a campaign, were all behind at Delhi or Agra, or still remained to be collected ; for the desire of the English was, it is said, peace, and they had hoped that an assemblage of troops would prevent predatory aggression or deter the Sikhs from engaging in Sikh hostilities."[1]

The British won the war but could have as well as lost it. What contributed to their success was the treachery of the leaders who had instigated the Sikh army to cross the Sutlej and begin the war. The army had crossed the river in the neighbourhood of Ferozepur but was prevailed upon by Lal Singh and Tej Singh to move on to Mudki at a distance of twenty miles rather than attack the "seven thousand defenders" of Ferozepur,[2] though it would have been quite easy to do that and gain an initial advantage. At Mudki itself, "Lal Singh headed the attack ; but in accordance with his original design, he involved his followers into an engagement, and then left them to fight as their undirected valour might prompt."[3] But inspite of Lal Singh, the Sikh army fought heroically and in this first battle of the War "the success of the English was not so complete as should have been achieved by the victors in so many battles".[4]

The treachery was repeated by Lal Singh and Tej Singh in the second battle fought three and four days later. On the evening of 21 December 1845 despite the fact that the British had "at last got the field they wanted";[5] the Sikh army gave the resistance which "was wholly unexpected."[6] By the time it was dark "the obstinacy of the contest, threw the English into confusion ; men of all regiments and arms were mixed

1. Loc. cit.
2. *Ibid*., p. 263.
3. *Ibid*., p. 263.
4. Loc. cit.
5. *Ibid*., p. 266.
6. Loc. cit.

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together ; the generals were doubtful of the fact or of the extent of their own success, and Colonels knew not what had become the regiments they commanded."[1] On the night of 21 December, the English position was that of real danger.[2] They were "hardly the masters of the ground on which they stood ; they had no reserve at hand, while the enemy had fallen back upon a second army, and could renew the fight with increased numbers".[3] On the morning of the next day the position of the English became even worse and "the wearied and famished English saw before them a desperate and, perhaps, useless struggle."[4] What saved the British, however, was the treachery of Tej Singh which changed the entire course of the battle. From the Sikh point of view a sure victory was converted into defeat. He had appeared on the scene commanding the reserve but "delayed until Lal Singh's force was everywhere put to flight and until his opponents had again ranged themselves round their colours".[5] Subsequently when he did engage in the battle he "rather skirmished and made feints than led his men to a resolute attack".[6] and finally, he "precipitately fled, leaving his subordinates without orders and without an object."[7] That was "at a moment when the artillery ammunition of the English had failed, when a portion of their force was retiring upon Ferozepore, and when no exertion could have prevented the remainder from retreating likewise, if the Sikhs had boldly moved forward".[8] His object was as traiterous as that of Lal Singh. It was "to have the dreaded army of the Khalsa overcome and dispersed."[9] The object was only partly served. The Sikh army was beaten but not dispersed. It withdrew to its side of the Sutlej in order.[10]

1. Loc. cit.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
3. Loc. cit.
4. Loc. cit.
5. Loc. cit.
6. Loc. cit.
7. Loc. cit.
8. Loc. cit.
9. Loc. cit.
10. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

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One month after the battle of Ferozeshah, the Sikh army, encouraged by the exploits of the Raja of Ladwa[1] and the "suppineness" of the British,[2] crossed the river Sutlej in the neighbourhood of Ludhiana. On the morning of 21 January, 1846 it attacked Sir Harry Smith's men "wearied with a march of nine hours and eighteen miles"[3] but did not derive full advantage of that attack. That was because it was "without a leader, or without one who wished to see the English beaten".[4] Ranjhoor Singh, the Commander "let his soldiers engage in battle, but that he accompanied them into fight is more than doubtful, and it is certain that he did not essay the easy task of improving the success of his own men into the complete reverse of his enemy".[5] All the same the Sikh army relieved Harry Smith force of the "mass" of the British baggage. "Every beast of burden which had not got within sight of Ludhiana, or which had not, timorously but prudently, been taken back to Jugraon, when the firing was heard fell into the hands of the Sikhs, and they were enabled boastfully to exhibit artillery store carts as if they had captured British cannon".[6]

The immediate effect of the "skirmish" at Buddowal[7] in which the Sikh army had the upper hand was tremendous. It "added to the belief so pleasing to the prostrate princes of India, that the dreaded army of their foreign masters had at least been foiled by the skill and valour of the disciples of Gobind, the kindered children of their own soil. The British sepoys glanced furitively at one another, or looked towards the east, their home; and the brows of Englishmen themselves grew darker as they thought of struggles rather than trium-

1. For details of the exploits of the Raja of Ladwa see *ibid.*, pp. 270 and 271 and the f.n. 2 beginning on the page 270 and ending on 271.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
5. Loc. cit.
6. Loc. cit.
7. Loc. cit.

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phs".[1] On the other hand the Sikhs "were correspondingly elated; the persence of European officers added to their triumph; Lal Singh and Tej Singh shrank within themselves with fear".[2] This feeling of elation of the Sikh army however was short-lived; "defeat and subjection speedily overtook them".[3]

The British pessimism gave place to optimism after 28 January 1846 when Sir Harry Smith inflicted a total defeat on the Sikh army in the battle of Aliwal where it had entrenched itself after the skirmish of Buddowal.[4] Smith had attacked it with a regiment of European troops. At this critical moment "the unaccustomed discipline of many of Gobind's champions failed them."[5] It helped the British drive the Sikh army across the Sutlej and take more than fifty pieces of its cannon. The English "General forgot his sorrow, and the soldiers their sufferings and indignities in the fullness of their common triumph over a worthy enemy, in a well planned and bravely fought battle."[6]

For the British the victory was timely and opportune. It tempted the time-serving Gulab Singh who had just then arrived at Lahore from Jammu to enter into secret negotiations with the British.[7] He came to an understanding with the English "that the Sikh army should be attcked by the English, and that when beaten it should be openly abondoned by its own government" and "further, that the passage of the Sutlej should be unopposed and the road to capital open to victors."[8]

It was under "such circumstances of discreet policy and shameless treason" that the last battle of the war fought.[9]

1. Loc. cit.
2. Loc. cit.
3. Loc. cit.
4. For Cunningham's detailed description of the battle see *ibid.*, pp. 275-277.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
6. Loc. cit.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

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It was fought at Sobraon in the neighbourhood of Ferozeshah when the Sikh army was prevailed upon by its leaders to entrench itself after crossing Sutlej. As in earlier battles, in this battle also the Sikh army fought valiently though it was taken by surprise by the British attacking the Sobraon entrenchment at a time when the Sikh army least expected it.[1] The rank and file of the army faced the firing from the batteries early in the morning of 10 February "unappalled, and 'flash for flash returned, and fire for fire'."[2] They showed the same bravery when this artillery exchange was followed by close infantry fight and then the cavalry warfare.[3] Ultimately, however, the British secret understanding with Gulab Singh decided the fate of the battle against the Sikh army. "The traitor, Tej Singh, instead of leading fresh men to sustain the failing strength of the troops on his right, fled on the first assault, and either accidently or by design, sank a boat in the middle of the bridge of communication"[4] and gradually the British captured "each defensible position."[5] The Sikh army "was pressed towards the scarcely formidable river"[6] but although then "assailed on either side by squadrons of horse and battalions of foot, no Sikh offered to submit and no disciple of Gobind asked for quarter."[7] They died in a way worthy of them. Even the victorious British army looked with solid wonderment upon the indomitable courage of the vanquished and their rank and file "forebore to strike where the helpless and the dying forworn unawaiting hatred."[8] The attitude of Hardinge, the Governor-General and the other high ups on the British side was different. While the soldiers of the defeated Sikh army were crossing the Sutlej to their side of the river "the warlike rage, or the calculating policy of leaders, had yet to be satisfied, and standing with the slain

1. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
2. Loc. cit.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 283-284.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
5. Loc. cit.
6. Loc. cit.
7. Loc. cit.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 285.

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heaped on all sides around them, they urged troops of artillery almost into waters of the Sutlej to more thoroughly destroy the army which had so long scorned their power."[1] This work the troops of artillery were made to do most thoroughly. "No deity of heroic fable received the living within the oozy gulps of the oppressed stream, and its current was choked with added numbers of the dead and crimsoned with the blood of a fugitive multitude. 'Such is the lust of never-dying fame'. But the vengeance was complete."[2]

Cunningham was rather severe in his criticism of Hardinge's policy towards the Punjab. According to him, it was based on an improper understanding of the Sikh movement and wrong evaluation of rapidly changing situation. He had shown no grasp of the new forces that would emerge in that state and had inadvertently brought about the war without making the right preparations for it.[3] Victory came to him through sheer good luck. It came not because of the military valour of his troops, British or India, but because of the treachery of its commanders and the leaders of its government. These commanders and leaders had succeeded in their nefarious game of weakening their overbearing army.[4]

Hardinge's arrangements after winning the war were also faulty in the eyes of Cunningham. The Governor-General took advantage of the "low state of the Lahore treasury and the anxiety of Lal Singh to get a dreaded rival out of the way" to "appease Gulab Singh in a manner sufficiently agreeable to Raja himself."[5] Hardinge not only made Gulab

1. J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (Ist edition) ; in the second edition of the book published in 1853, this and the quotation that follows were changed.

2. Loc. cit. This quoted words formed part of the same passage that has been quoted just prior to this quotation ; as already mentioned this was dropped in the second edition of the book.

3. For the concrete instances cited by J.D. Cunningham of the mistakes by Hardinge in dealing with the Sikh State of the Punjab see S.S. Bal, *British Policy towards the Punjab* (Calcutta 1971), p. 274, f.n. 7.

4. J.D. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, (1956 reprint), p. 288.

5. Loc. cit.

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Singh the "master" of Jammu but also "transferred to him "Kashmir and the hill states from the Beas to Indus" as "a separate sovereign for a million of pound sterling."[1] This arrangement, Cunningham wrote "was a dexterous one, if reference be only had to the policy of reducing the power of the Sikhs; but the transaction scarcely seems worthy of the British name and greatness, and the objections become stronger when it is considered that Gulab Singh had agreed to pay sixty-eight lakhs of rupees (£ 680,000), as fine to his paramount, before the war broke out, and that the custom of the East as well as the West required the feudatory to aid his lord in foreign war and domestic strife."[2] Hardinge had gone into this arrangement to enable Lal Singh to become the minister once again but "he and all the tratorous chiefs knew that they could not maintain themselves, even against the reduced army, when English should have fairly left the country, and thus the separation of Gulab Singh led to a further departure from the original scheme."[3] It led to the Articles of Agreement by which it "was agreed that a British force should remain at the capital until the last day of December 1846, to enable the chiefs to feel secure while they reorganised the army and introduced order the efficiency into the administration."[4] But did that serve the purpose for which it was intended? Cunningham answer to that question was in the negative : "the end of the year came ; but the chiefs were still helpless; they clung to their foreign support, and gladly assented to an arrangement which leaves the English in immediate possession of the reduced dominion of Ranjit Singh, until his reputed son and feeble successor shall attain the age of manhood."[5]

In the last five chapters of his *History of the Sikhs*, Cunningham had made an effort to explain the movement of

1. Loc. cit.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
3. Loc. cit.
4. Loc. cit. Here Cunningham was referring to the agreement affected on 16 December 1846 described by historians as the Treaty of Bhairowal which Cunningham himself entitled as the 'Second Treaty of Lahore of 1846'.
5. J.D. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, (1956 reprint), p. 289.

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history that had just culminated in the clash between the British and the Sikhs and the former's conquest of the latter. He had analysed the last great Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh, as a man who was extremely skilful in keeping his people under control and in giving them the sort of government which suited them.[1] In the eyes of Cunningham, Ranjit Singh was not a despot. His government was typically feudal. He had manipulated his great nobles so that they had turned their warlike energies into foreign conquests; he had taxed his landowners, merchants and peasants without oppressing them;[2] he had recognised the reality of British power and come to terms with it in order to preserve the integrity and independence of his realm.[3] After Ranjit's death, Cunningham insisted, the Sikhs were impelled by circumstances into war with the British. The British, he asserted, were the aggressive power. Their policy had not been calculated to preserve peace, and they welcomed a war which would increase British power. With their discipline, resources, and unity of action, the British could expect to be successful in the conflict.[4]

1. According to Cunningham while the licentious and self-seeking Sikh chiefs and their paid followers had come to think of their faith as a conventional formula, Ranjit Singh "laboured, with more or less of intelligent design, to give unity and coherence to diverse atoms and scattered elements; to mould the increasing Sikh nation into a well-ordered state, or common-wealth, as Govind had developed a sect into a people, and had given application and purpose to the general institution of Nanak. Ranjt appeared to be an absolute monarch over willing and obedient subjects, but "he knew that he merely directed into particular channel a power which he could neither destory nor control. The secret of his success lay primarily in his ability to give practical shape to Sikh aspirations for freedom and progress. J. D. Cunningham, *A history of the Sikhs* (London, 1849), p. 141, 178, 141, 180 *passim*.

2. J.D. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, (1956 reprint), p. 151.

3. J.D. Cunningham's observations on Ranjit Singh's attitude towards the British when confronted with the British on his ambition conflicting with those of the latter on the use of the Sutlej and Indus, and to the residence of a British Officer at Mithankot to superintend the navigation ; also note his attitude on Shikarpur on pp. 176-77 of 1956 edition.

4. This is not explicitly stated but the impression to that effect is certainly created on the reader. See J. D. Cunningham (1956 edition), pp. 258-259.

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Joseph wrote unequivocally against what had happened. He was full of praise for the state created by Ranjit Singh.[1] Showing awareness of a kindness of uniqueness in historical situation, he had remarked that since India was "far behind Europe in civiliation" political morality or moderation as it was understood in the nineteenth century Europe could be as little appreciated in India "as it was in Christiandom in the middle ages."[1] He had refused to judge the "abstract excellence or moderation"[2] of Sikh government for such a judgement ignored the genius of the people and their historical circumstances. "It is not simply an unmeaning truism to say, that the Sikh government suited the Sikhs well, for such a degree of fitness is one of the ends of all governments by ruling classes, and the adoption had thus a degree of positive merit."[3] The "native youthful vigour" of the Sikh kingdom reminded Joseph of the "rising medieval Europe". The men of barbarous ages could not be judged by the standards of modern Europe, for in judging the individuals "the extent and peculiarities of the civilization of their times should be remembered."[4]

Joseph had regretted that the British should have in any way contributed to the weakening of such a state and ultimately take over its administration. He felt that this Sikh State deserved immunity from an overwhelming external circumstances, even though it might be that of the British. He did not deny that the British rule in India brought "some moral as well as material blessings" to its people.[5] The Sikhs too under the English sway were "perhaps to be moulded to noblest purpose by the informing touch of knowledge and philosophy."[6] But the advantages were a poor compensation for the loss of "national independence."

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1. See J.D. Cunningham observation on the state created by Ranjit Singh on p. 200 of his *History of the Sikhs* on p. 200 (1956 reprint).
2. J. D. Cunningham, *op. cit.* (1849 edition), p. 291
3. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 180 n.
5. Loc. cit.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 242, n.

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Joseph's criticism of the British was put in a focus in the last chapter of the book. It spelled out in unequivocal terms the thesis that the four previous chapters were suggesting in guarded language. It spared no words in criticising the British handling of the problems posed by the political upheavals in the Punjab after the murder of Jawahir Singh.[1] It pinpointed two individuals primarily responsible for it. Joseph's criticism of one of these two individuals who was till very recently the highest functionary of the British government in India was most severe.[2]

It was only natural that this chapter attracted the immediate attention of that individual, Lord Hardinge. He got Cunningham dismissed from the Political Service that the latter had served with such great distinction for more than seventeen years.[3] What helped him to do that was the fact that the then Russell's ministry of England depended for its survival on the political support of the Peelites, the group of which Hardinge was an influential member.[4]

Hardinge also prevailed upon J.W. Kaye, then recognised an acknowledged authority on Indian history to write a detailed review of Cunningham's book. This review published in the influential journal, *The Calcutta Review*,[5] mostly tried

1. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

2. For details of J.D. Cunningham's criticism of British handling of the problem so posed, see S.S. Bal, 'Joseph Davey Cunningham's History of the Sikhs' in *Bengal Past and Present*.

3. The two individuals were Sir (later Lord) Henry Hardinge and Sir George Broadfoot. Sir Henry Hardinge was the Governor-General of India from July 1844 to January 1848.

4. For details of how Hardinge got J.D. Cunningham removed from the Political Service see S.S. Bal 'Joseph Davey Cunningham's dismissal from the Political Service' in K.S. Bedi and S.S. Bal (ed), *Essays on History, Literature, Art and Culture* (Atma Ram and Sons, 1970).

5. Sir John Russell had formed a Whig ministry. His party, however, did not have an absolute majority in the House of Commons. It depended on its survival against the Tory attack on the political support of the Peelites.

6. This review was published in the June 1849 issue of the *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XI, No. XXII.

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to rebut Joseph's thesis that the First Sikh War had come because of British mistakes and was won because of the Sikh leaders treachery towards their own army.[1] It concentrated on four vital points in the last chapter of the book to demolish them.[2] The reviewer had done that in the hope that by successfully disproving Cunningham on those four points, he would pull down the main thesis of the last five chapters of the book.

The review rebutted Cunningham's view that the British had no right to take the Cis-Sutlej states under their protection on the plea that Sutlej and not Jumna had long been the British frontier. Broadfoot was, therefore, right in regarding the Cis-Sutlej possessions of Dalip Singh as under its protection as Agent of the Governor-General on the North-West Frontier. There was therefore no provocation in preventing the entry of the Sikh guards without the Agent's permission even though they might only be coming to replace others. The other acts of Broadfoot, which Cunningham had criticised, were also defended and it was argued that no offence was given by him to the Sikh army as to have provoked them and so play into the hands of their leaders.[3]

Cunningham's charge that Lal Singh was in secret communication with the English so that the army would be destroyed was more difficult to meet but it was explained on the plea

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1. Out of the thirty-five pages of Kaye's review as published in the *Calcutta Review* as many as seventeen were devoted to the last chapter of the book and ten to the other eight chapters. This chapter suggested that the war came because of the treachery of the Sikh leadership against their own army.

2. These four points were whether or not (*i*) British had the right to take the Cis-Sutlej territories of Maharaja Dalip Singh under British protection, (*ii*) Lal Singh, the Prime Minister of the Lahore State, was in secret communication with the English so that the Lahore army be destroyed on the eve of the battle of Mudki, (*iii*) Tej Singh, the Commander-in-chief, was treacherous to his army at Phirozeshah and other battles of the war, and (*iv*) Jammu was cut off from the Punjab and placed under Gulab Singh because he had helped in the destruction of the Sikh army at Sobraon.

3. *Calcutta Review*, No. XXII Vol. XI June 1849. Art. VII: 'Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs*', pp. 545-548.

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that Lal Singh was actually trying to deceive the English while communicating with them. Lal Singh's communication with Peter Nicholson and Broadfoot were admitted but it was argued that he was playing a double game. He wanted to remain on friendly terms with the English while doing his best to see that his side won. It was a treachery against the English and not for them.[1]

Cunningham's attribution of treachery to Tej Singh, the Commander-in-Chief and Ranjhor Singh the commander of the troops at Buddowal and Aliwal was challenged. The role of both of them was explained on their imperfect knowledge of the position of English forces in the battlefields. It was also argued that Tej Singh, at least, though the Commander-in-Chief was acting on the orders of the "Punchas."[2]

Cunningham's charge that the British had cut off Jammu from the Punjab and placed it under Gulab Singh and followed it up by transferring Kashmir to him because he had helped in the destruction of the Sikh army at Sobraon was looked upon as particularly serious and sought to be explained away in details. In the case of Jammu, the explanation given was that its severance under Gulab Singh from the Punjab was encouraged and accepted not because he had helped at Sobraon but partly because the Lahore state had to be weakened by separating the hill areas from the plains and partly because of his neutrality in the battles fought earlier.[3] As for Kashmir, the Lahore state ceded it to the British because it could not pay the war indemnity and they sold it to Gulab Singh. There was nothing dishonourable in the transaction because he was not the minister of the Lahore state. After the war he was only associated with Dina Nath and Fakir Nur-ud-din to make terms of peace with the British.

The review was noted by Cunningham in the second edition of his book. In two foot-notes specially added to this edition he made particular mention of this review but only to insist

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 549-50.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 550.

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that the points made out in the review were wrong.[1] In the main body of the last chapter of the book he repeated his thesis that the war began with the provocation given by the British Agent on the frontier and won in collaboration with the leadership on the other sides.[2]

Kaye's review and Cunningham's insistence on the correctness of his thesis began a controversy that continued throughout the nineteenth century.[3] That proved doubly unfortunate for the book. In the first place it came to be associated with a viewpoint that did no credit to the British name and was put on *index expurgatrious*.[4] Secondly some of the uncomplimentary observations of Kaye made in the review came to be looked upon by most people who counted then as the only objective and correct evaluation of the book.

For a long time, the book was looked upon as the outpourings of "the apologist of the Khalsa"[5] in which the author "had done the English less than justice".[6] It was insisted that in his book Cunningham had forgotten the good old maxim, 'Be just, before you are generous' but had suffered his generosity to outstrip his justice.[7] Whilst "succoring his enemies", he was believed to have "despitefully entreated his friends."[8] It was almost taken for granted that the author had been clearly "led astray by overweaning

1. J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (2nd edition, London 1853), Footnotes on pp. 288, 299. These two footnotes are put in square brackets and begin by referring to the Kaye's review of the first edition of the book in the *Calcutta Review* of June 1849.

2. The footnotes on pp. 288, 299 mentioned above actually gave the point a special emphasis.

3. For details of the controversy see S.S. Bal's Cunningham's 'History of the Sikhs'. *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. LXXXII, Part II, Serial No. 154, pp. 126-129.

4. The book was on *index expurgatrious* for more than half a century. See Introduction to 1904 reprint of J.D. Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs*.

5. *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XI, No. XXII (June 1849), pp. 523, 541.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 523.

7. Loc. cit.

8. Loc. cit.

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anxiety to do justice to our enemies."[1] At places he had "fallen short of truth", and at others "drawn hasty conclusions from insufficient premises."[2] He was "prejudiced and often wrong" though "manifestly conscientious".[3]

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1. Loc. cit.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 523.

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CHAPTER VI

LEPEL HENRY GRIFFIN

At present when a serious attempt is being made to rewrite Indian history, it is necessary to study attitudes, assumptions and limitations *etc.* of our past historical writers. It is in this connection that we propose to study Sir Lepel Henry Griffin as a historian. Unlike other administrator historians of the last century, who either wrote in retirement or while they were on furlough, Lepel Griffin, having a flare for writing, began to contribute to the vast historical information while he was still very young. A perusal of his writings reveals the versatile nature of his genius.[1] He wrote on varied and controversial topics. In this essay an attempt has been made to analyse his major assumptions and attitudes as reflected

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1. Besides his journalistic writings following are Lepel Griffin's works published in the form of books and pamphlets:

(i) *The Punjab Chiefs.* Historical and biographical notices of the principal families in the territories under the Punjab Government, Lahore, 1865.

(ii) *The Punjab Chiefs.* The historical and biographical notices of the principal families in the Lahore and Rawalpindi Divisions of the Punjab; New edition bringing the histories down to date by Charles Francis Massey, two volumes (Lahore, 1890).

(iii) *The Punjab Chiefs.* Appendix. Revised pedigree of the families mentioned in Griffin's Punjab Chiefs and Massey's Chiefs and families of note in the Punjab.

(iv) *The Rajas of the Punjab.* Being the history of the principal states in the Punjab and their political relations with the British government, Lahore, 1870.

(v) *The Law Inheritance to Chiefships as observed by the Sikhs previous to the Annexation of the Punjab, Lahore,* 1869.

(vi) *Ranjit Singa,* Reprint, Delhi 1957. (Continued on page 135)

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in his writings on the Punjab and to assess his position as a historian. Officials like Griffin "readily betrayed prejudices formed during a life-time of official labour in the East."[1] The nature of prejudices being both personal and universal, the writing of every individual historian needs a scrutiny for the proper understanding of their writings.

Born on 20th July, 1838 at Watford, Hertfordshire, Lepel Henry Griffin was the only son of his father, other two being daughters. After receiving his early education at Maldens preparatory school, he joined Harrow which he soon left, on account of illness.[3] He appeared for the Indian Civil Services Examination in 1859 and success in it brought him to the Punjab as an Assistant Commissioner on 17th November, 1860. Like love at first sight, Griffin stayed in the Punjab and never wished to leave during his official career. From the date of his joining to July, 1879, continuously for two decades he served the Punjab Government and rose to the position of Chief Secretary. In April, 1875, he was appointed as superintendent of the Kapurthala State. In November, 1878, he was appointed permanent Chief Secretary of the Punjab. Griffin's greatest opportunity came in later days of the Second Afghan war. In February, 1880 he was asked to go to Kabul, as assistant of Sir Fredrick Roberts, the military commander to conduct negotiations with Abdur Rehman who had returned from ten-year exile in Russia. He successfully superintended the delicate and difficult negotia-

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(vii) "*Sikhism and the Sikhs*", an article contributed to the book, *Great Religions of the World*, London, 1905.

(viii) *Famous Monuments of Central India*, London, 1886.

(ix) *The Great Republic*, London, 1884.

(x) *Women's Influence in the East*, with an introduction by Sir Lepel Griffin, (1892).

(xi) *Our North West Frontier*, Allahabad, 1881, printed 27 pages for private circulation.

2. Eric Stokes, "The administration and Historical Writings on India" in C.H. Philips' *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylone* (London 1961) p. 385.

3. For biographical details see *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, Vol. II (Twentieth Century, 1901-1911) Oxford Reprint, 1963, pp-167-169.

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tions. Complimented by Lord Roberts, Griffin received a befitting epithet of 'Lord of Kabul' from Abdur Rehman. For his services the Government conferred on him the titles of C.S.I. in July 1879 and K.C.S.I. in May 1881 repectively.

Such a successful official career in the Punjab was followed by a critical period. Admired by Lytton, he was punished by his successor Ripon who sent him to Central India as his Agent, a post incommensurate with his position and dignity. Much against his wishes, he left Punjab but in the firm hope that one day destiny would bring him back to that province. For the time being,.he zealously took up the task of reforming the governments of the local princely states of Gwalior, Indore, Bhopal, *etc.* His only ambition, at this time, was to become Lieutenant-Governor of his old province after the retirement of Sir Charles Aitchison. His claim to the post of Lieutenant Governor being ignored, he got completely dejected and refused to leave Central India till he sought retirement in January 1889 on medical grounds. His brutal frankness combined with his ill-reputation brought on by his sex adventures "made the government shy of giving adequate recognition to his exceptional ability."[1]

After his retirement, he settled in England and interested himself in literature, finance and politics. He was a great organiser and innovator and could always find means to amass wealth. His entrepreneurial activities ranged from journalism to banking and business. Despite his preoccupation with multifarious activities, he took keen interest in Indian affairs. He was the Chairman of the East Indian Association which disinterestedly advocated the cause of India in England. He died at the age of seventy at his residence in London on 9th March, 1908 leaving behind, besides large wealth, his wife Marie Elizabeth, elder daughter of Ludwig Leapold of Genoa and two sons. His widow later married Mr. Charles Hoare.

He was one of the most fascinating and charming personalities among the Anglo-Indian administrators. "His conversational powers and ready wit made him popular in society: but he soon proved himself in addition an effective writer, a

1. *Ibid.*

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fluent speaker and despite a somewhat easy-going manner, a man of untiring industry."[1] Having tremendous literary abilities, he soon attracted the attention of Sir Robert Montgomery, the Lieutenant-Governor who selected him to prepare historical accounts of the principal families and rulers of the Punjab. Having keen interest in journalism, he started a newspaper *Punjab Public Opinion* from which he was ordered to dissociate on account of some injudicious statements.[2] For his unconventional frankness and journalistic approach to the administrative problems, he was many a time advised to use his privilege of discussing questions in Press with due regard to his position.[3] His observations regarding contemporary problems being more hasty than logical did not help to prove that he was a seasoned administrator. However, he elicited admiration of Northbrook and Lytton for his diplomatic skill and literary taste. His biographer believes that he was "the original of the brilliant civilian portrayed in Sir Henry Cunningham's novel 'Chronicles of Dustypore'[4] (1875). One of the most gratifying compliments to Griffin was offered by Lytton in his semi-official correspondence in February 1880. He said, "There is only one man in India who is in all respects completely qualified by personal ability, quickness and tact, general commonsense and literary skill, to do for the government of India what I want done as quickly as possible at Kabul, and that man is Lepel Griffin."[5] Strangely enough such a man by his utterances and deeds could displease the government on more than one occasion.[6]

1. *Ibid*. Quoted from the journal of East India Associations in its April, 1908 issue---the month of his death.

2. Lord Northbrook took a serious note of his statement wherein he alluded to Afghanistan as a feudatory state of British Government. From Northbrook to R.H. Davies, March 2, 1875, Northbrook Papers Roll No.7.

3. *Ibid*. Also letter from R.H. Davies to Northbrook, March 13, 1875, Northbrook Papers, Roll No. 7.

4. See *Dictionary of National Biography, op. cit.*

5. *Ibid*.

6. Besides the case of remarks in press, His speech at Gwalior as Agent to Governor General in Central India and his intervention in Bhopal affair, to cite a few were not taken by the Government favourably. See speech of Sir Lepal Griffin, at Lashkar, 15, December, 1887, extract from *Pioneer* reported on 19 December 1887, and the Draft of H.M.D. to Sir Lepel Griffin 27 March 1889-Foreign (Secret) May, 1889, No. 81.

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Despite being an official, Lepel Griffin was one of a few of his class who expressed himself without fear. If a detailed study of his ideas is made, it appears that he jumbled together all sorts of views displaying inconsistency, pragmatism and at times originality. But that may be a superficial judgement. However, the fact remains that he did not choose to toe the prevailing ideological path scrupulously.

He was one of the greatest critics of the prevailing system of education in which Macaulay's views were still closely adhered to. His constant intercourse with Indian aristocracy bred in him a distrust of making English language the sole medium of imparting higher education to Indians. His efforts in collaboration with Dr. G.W. Leitner, the Principal of Government College, Lahore, to institute a University college in the Punjab University and to open the Oriental Institute at Woking, England, speak eloquently of his interest in Indian languages and literature. The similarity of his views with those of the earlier orientalists like Prinsep and William Jones was more apparent than real. The earlier orientalists had keen desire to know India's past and also admired it greatly, whereas Griffin's efforts in this direction were rooted in the fact that to him it did not appear worthwhile to teach western literature to Indians. As late as 1887, he explained his attitude in the following words :[1]

> "All that I urge is that English ideas and English education should be imparted with discretion, and that when they are imbibed unwisely they are apt to have the effect of too much wine, intoxication and had headache the following day. It is unwise in my opinion to teach English to peasants and artisans who have to work with their hands for a living like their fathers before them, and whom an education above their stations only renders bad workmen and discontented subjects".

Further :

> "In India all classes have their assigned places, and only foolish hope to see the triumph of what is called in Europe democracy and what would signify in India confusion, anarchy and the ruin of society".[2]

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1. Speech of Lepel Griffin delivered at Lashkar on 15 December, *op. cit.*

2. In the context of Indian society, Griffin uses the terms caste and class as synonims. He viewed caste as socio-economic institution.

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Believing that caste was the essential and stable basis of Indian Socio-economic system, he strongly advocated in favour of its maintenance and urged to keep it in view while formulating educational policy A society regimented on caste pattern strongly guarded by the portals of tradition was a securer base of imperialism. This idea of his perhaps emanated from the general belief that the Revolt of 1857 was due to the over enthusiasm of the Anglo-Indian administrators for reforms. His conservative belief was further strengthened when the Indian National Congress started demanding representative institutions.

Analysing the Indian situation, Lepel Griffin evolved his own system of argument. Declaring Indian National Congress as a sham, he attempted to prove that the Sikhs, Marathas and Rajputs like the English had remained independent in history. Since they had no relationship with other Indian communities, Lepel Griffin, like many other officials, tried to raise walls of separation among them. Urging the favoured communities to cultivate worthy pride in their race and country, he advised them :[1]

> "My advice to you Marathas is to distrust natives of India who have given up their caste and the national dress. Cherish and observe strictly your rule of caste, which missionaries and philanthropists tell you is a bad thing, but which is in reality mortar which holds together building of Indian society."[2]

In another speech at Rutlam in Rajasthan, he gave expression to his fears. While urging the Princes to reform their administration to ward off possible agitations and convulsions in the wake of which political changes occur, he warned that if they did not heed his advice, their rule would be overthrown by people.[3] Being actually aware of the changes taking place in Europe and the world, he was thus making a bold attempt to embank the social change by emphasizing the retention of caste system and traditional institutions.

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1. Speech of Lepel Griffin, Lashkar, 15 December, 1887. *op. cit.*
2. Here he referred to the growing educated middle class.
3. Also speech delivered on March 2, 1889 on the occasion of investiture of the insignia of the Most Eminent order of Indian Empire on Ranjit Singh Raja of Rutlam. Foreign (Secret) May 1889, No. 81.

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This conservative approach, in his opinion, could provide a solid foundation to the British Empire in India. Shrewd and intelligent as he was, he thought that arrest of modernisation and strengthening of traditional institutions, in which traditional political elite (aristocracy) ruled the dumb driven subjects, were assential to making their rule permanent. But it was impossible to hold the tidal waves of history in check.

His opposition to the introduction of modern institutions in India as well as his abhorence to Bengalis and middle classes in general can properly be comprehended in the context of the so-called Punjab school of administrators to which by official experience he was wedded. Confronted with the sturdy people of the Punjab having pride in their tradition, the Punjab administrators were of the general opinion that neither education nor English law could provide a sound base to the British Empire in the Punjab. Uneducated but brave Punjabis, in Griffin's opinion, could best be ruled not by complex and unintelligible legal institutions but by the superior British character. He believed that introduction of English language and literature had led to anarchy and opposition to the government in Bengal. Propaganda in the Bengal Press in those days and demonstration of opposition to government by the Bengal associations which posed serious problems for the government were set forth as the results of English education. The Punjab administrators discerned the cause of trouble in Bengal in the social changes for which the East India Company was largely responsible and found it inconsistent with the robust tradition of the Punjab. Griffin's understanding of the Indian conditions and requirements of the stability of the Empire led him to advocate *status quo*.

He argued :[1]

> "In India, whose conservatism is intense, and where prescription and tradition and heredity outweigh, in popular estimation, any personal virtues of a ruler... But heart of the people of any particular State has almost invariably remained loyal to the hereditary local dynasty,...."

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1. Lepel Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 12-13.

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While building up his theoretical formulation of the Indian political system, he construed that the politico-social system in India and position of hereditary aristocracy therein provided a potential political leverage in them to counteract the rising tide of discontent among the educated middle classes. Considering the aristocracy of the Punjab as natural leaders of the society, Lepel Griffin strongly advocated to strengthen their position. He was so optimistic of the permanence of this class that he prophesied :[1]

> "Princes, good or bad, beneficent or tyrannical, have ruled these states ; but the people have accepted them, one and all, without a thought of revolt or resistance ; and these same families will probably be still securely reigning over their ancient principalities when the conquest of India by England will be taught as ancient history in the Board Schools of a distant future".

In an attempt to prove his contention he applied the fallacious assumption of the dynastic basis of rule in India to the fall of Ranjit Singh's Empire. He argued that "The downfall of the Sikh monarchy was chiefly due to the fact that the authority of Ranjit Singh was personal and drew no part of its strength from the inherent respect of the people for an ancient house."[2] Yet, he concluded that "No man can be more strong than destiny."[3]

Lepel Griffin was one of the trio who profusely contributed to the historical literature of India, the other two being Charles Aitchison and W.W. Hunter. He had very close contacts with both of them and commanded their respect and regard. But Hunter and Alfred Lyall, another contemporary administrator historian, studied history in the wider context of British experience in India, as F.J. Stephen and Henry Maine were doing. Unlike them, Griffin in his major works concentrated on the Punjab and the Sikhs, not going beyond their immediate past.

After the revolt of 1857, there were primarily two schools of thought in India among the Anglo-Indian historians : One which derived inspiration from the classical school of Whig

1. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
3. *Ibid.*

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historians including liberals of the second half of the nineteenth century. The foremost among them was John Bright. The liberals held that British rule in India was founded by violence and crime and was maintained by "intolerable concentration of power."[1] Being acutely aware of the fact that British government in India was a minority government, the second school of historians which included persons like F.J. Stephen, Henry Maine, Alfred Lyall and W.W. Hunter believed that it could be maintained only by force. They took up the challenge to prove that Bright was wrong. In their writings they advocated that the strong government directed by intelligence and run by scientific laws and efficiency was good both for the rulers and the ruled. Lepel Griffin scupulously following the line set by the second school felt that responsibility also devolved on his shoulders to condemn Bright and other liberals intensely. He wrote :

> "The time may perhaps have passed... when educated Englishman, regarding with some degree of pride the conquest and possession of India, yet believed that the country was won by the most unjustifiable means, that each new province added to British India signified new crimes, and that the conquerors were only successful because they were unscrupulous. If this belief has been generally abandoned by educated men, it is still retained by those who have neither the means nor the inclination to inform themselves of the truth. It is encouraged and stimulated at the present day by writers in England, some ofthem men of ability, who either find it profitable to abuse their country, or who are so unfortunate as to be able to find nothing but national shame and incapacity where others would find monuments of national energy and glory."[2]

Lepel Griffin had two-fold objective in writing the history of the Punjab, *viz.*, to provide justification of British expansion in India and to establish the superiority over the Indians of character of the English people, which of course, was not a new thesis. On the basis of his study of a limited area, he

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1. E.T. Stokes, "The Administrators and Historical Writings on India", See C.H. Philips, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

2. Lepel Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab.* Being the history of the Principal States in the Punjab and Their Relations with the British Government. (Second edition) (Patiala, 1970, reprint), Preface, P. vii.

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asserted that "the Native rule in India, in former days signified oppression of the most terrible kind, insecurity of life and property, luxury and debauchery in the Prince, misery and want in the people;......the simple fact remains that whenever an opportunity has been afforded them, the people have accepted British rule with the most unfeigned satisfaction."[1] In his indictment of the Indian rulers and their administration, he did not even spare Ranjit Singh. He writes :[2]

> "The Punjab proper, during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was certainly a favourable specimen of a Native State. Yet the revenue system of Ranjit Singh was but an organised system of pillage, and the country was farmed to contractors who were bound to pay a certain sum into the State treasury, and were permitted to collect as much more as was possible for themselves."

Having a very poor opinion about the calibre and capabilities of Indian rulers, he felt happy to assert that "the policy of the British government, so far as the Sikh States were concerned, has been uniformly liberal, enlightened, and just."[3] While criticising Ranjit Singh's despotism he observed that "sagacity, unselfishness and benevolence are not the fruits which grow on the thorns and branches of tyranny."[4] As far as annexation of the Punjab was concerned, it was accepted by the Sikhs as just.[5]

With regard to the English character he does not lag behind the other contemporary thinkers of his kind in applauding it. Praising the splendid record of his countrymen, their chivalry, sacrifices and noble actions, he raises them to the status of angels. For instance, he observes that the English displayed admirable temperance in the hour of victory and generosity to the vanquished.[6] He could not find a single episode in connection with the Punjab history including the annexation of the Punjab which could be cited to prove that the British deviated from their "liberal, enlightened and just" policy.[7]

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1. *Ibid.*, p. iv.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. viii.
4. Griffin's *Ranjit Singh*, p. 71.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*

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Like Lyall and Hunter, Griffin refuted the age-old Burkian charge against the English East India Company that it was responsible for absorbing Indian nationalities, displacing long-seated dynasties and levelling ancient nobility.[1] Rejecting it as a misconception of these men, he refuted the idea that nationalities in any form ever existed in India. Lyall opined that India was "a mere loose conglomeration of tribes, races and caste,"[2] while Griffin contended that the Indian society was in an arrested state of development. India, in his opinion, was "composed of many different nations, with very little in common; and it is as foolish to hope to unite them to join in one nation as Russians, Frenchmen and Englishmen who are more closely connected by civilisation and descent than various peoples of India."[3] In fact he believed in the superiority of certain races in India. Comparing the Marathas, the Sikhs and the Jats with the Bengalis, he argued that latter being racially inferior had never ruled the former. Griffin, true to the spirit of the Punjab school of administrators, supported the induction of the members of the superior races in the civil services.[4] While rejecting the continuation of the competitive system for recruitment of civil servants, he argued, "The smooth-tongued, supple Bengali would probably rank first in such a competition, although he has neither the physical courage to fight nor the moral courage to govern."[5] Thus, he pitched one community against another with the sole objective of warding off dangers to the British imperial interest in India.

Griffin did not possess any historical vision. He wrote under diverse influences and in the process he evolved a sort

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1. Slrokes, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

2. Alfred Lyall, *Rise aad Expansion of the British Dominion in India*, (5th ed.) 1910, pp. 321-22.

3 See speech of Lepel Griffin delivered at Lashkar on 15th December, 1887.

4. See "Indianisation of Civil Services in India, 1869-79", by S.K. Bajaj in *Punjab : Past and Present* Vol. V. Pt. I, April, 1971.

The article traces in detail how there developed strong opposition in the Anglo-Indian Civil Servants to the idea of recruitment by competition due to their fears of the success of India in competition.

5. Griffin *Ranjit Singh op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

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of thinking of his own. Having experience of serving in the Punjab where he dealt with the sturdy people of the Punjab, he suggested the maintenance of the *status quo* so far as social-political structure was concerned. Like John Strachey and Stephen, he advocated over-centralised administrative structure based on just sympathetic and efficient bureaucracy. Like all ultra-conservative imperialists, he supported the maintenance dynastic rule in the princely states strengthening of aristocracy in the hierarchical society and suppression of the educated middle class which was gradually corroding the existing socio-political system. Such a policy, in Griffin's opinion, would provide a base of granite for the continuation of British Imperialism in India.

Works of Lepel Griffin

From the perusal of the vast literature produced by the administrator historians, it appears that they had taken upon themselves the twin responsibility : first, to acquire more and more information about the people they ruled and second, to inform the British public about the significance and need of maintaining their empire and also the noble character of their rule. The latter aspect was a political measure to counteract the Gladstonian idea of Little England. In an effort to know more about India Henry Maine, Hunter and Aitchison, to count only a few important writers, made significant contributions.[1] Following in their footsteps, Griffin did a fine job even at the cost of his time and health by contributing his share in the historical literature of this type. He produced comprehensive and detailed works on the *Punjab Chiefs*, *Punjab Rajas* and the *Law of Inheritance to Chiefships*. It will be no exaggeration to say that all these works were highly considered and excellently received. For the *Punjab Chiefs*, Griffin like his predecessors Aitchison and Hunter earned great credit.[2]

1. They wrote *Village Communities in the East and West Annals of Rural Bengal* and *Treaties and Engagements* respectively.

2. From Government of India to Government of Punjab, April 1, 1871, Foreign (General B), April, 1871, No. 6.

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The *Punjab Chiefs* is Griffin's major contribution. Being very close to the period about which he wrote, there was no want of source material. During his tenure in the Punjab, Griffin had developed intimate relations with the chieftains and successors of the erstwhile rulers. Although he had access to the British official records which he no doubt adequately used, yet for the purpose of his writings he primarily depended on his interviews with chieftains and members of aristocracy and their private records. They yielded a very useful information about geneologies, personalities and private squables of the Punjab chiefs. This was the ground work which led to his second publication *The law of inheritance to chiefships* previous to the annexation.

His treatise on the laws of Sikh inheritance helped the British in properly comprehending the customs and traditions of the Sikhs. Depending more or less on the same source material he wrote the *Rajas of the Punjab.* Biographical in style, this work, however, presents a connected account of the political relations of the British Indian Government with the Patiala State in detail and with Bhadaur, Jind, Nabha, Kapurthala, Faridkot and Mandi in brief. His sole motive of writing this book was to convince the Sikhs that the British policy towards them had been just and benevolent.

From these three standard works of Lepel Griffin, it is difficult to formulate any ideas about his concept of Punjab history. For this purpose, we have to largely depend upon his book *Ranjit Singh* which is a maturer work written under the project *Rulers of India* series on the request of W.W. Hunter, officer incharge of the project. Here also he used the source material which he had utilised earlier for his works on cognate subjects, for instance, "State of the Punjab at Ranjit Singh's birth", "The Court of Ranjit Singh", and "The English and the Cis-Sutlej Territories". But other works which he consulted for writing on Ranjit Singh were Trumpp's *Adi Granth* and Denzil Ibbetson's *Census Report of 1881.*

As noticed earlier, Griffin had a keen desire to influence the British policy in India. Like other administrator his-

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torians of his times, his method of arguing depended on his view of the contemporary social institutions, customs and attitudes. This fact is very well illustrated in his writings on Sikh history.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, by his preachings desired "To raise Hinduism from degraded forms of superstition and polytheism into which it had fallen."[1] The movement started by a 'mystic' and 'reformer' did not, however, witness a major change till the Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh who by creating the Khalsa started a political movement. Guru Gobind Singh was more inclined to polytheistic ideas than to the refined pantheism of Guru Nanak. Nonetheless, he did not bring about any doctrinal change in the Sikh thought. In fact he directed his energies to consolidate the Sikh power and to bring them completely out of the ranks of Hinduism.[2] On this premise, the author builds up his theory that "Hinduism has been ever hostile to Sikhism, for the latter faith attacked it in its most vital principle of caste without which the whole Brahmanical system falls to the ground."[3] But apparent similarities in the socio-religious practices of the Hindus and the Sikhs required a plausible explanation. Astute Griffin putforth two arguments in this regard : first, "In ordinary matters the Sikhs obeyed the Hindu law",[4] reason being that the Sikh Gurus did not provide a comprehensive code of conduct; and secondly, "its (of Hinduism) ivy-like vitality, enfolding and strangling everything which it has once grasped, has been fatal to almost all creeds which like Sikhism and Buddhism, both heterodox forms of Hinduism, have put themselves in competition with it."[5] One of the most interesting argument which Griffin extends to explain the popularity of Hinduism as against Sikhism is the influence of women to whom Sikhism appeared less attractive than Hinduism. The former being an abstract faith was over-shadowed by the colourful festivals of the

1. Griffin's *Ranjit Singh*, p. 52.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

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Hindu Pantheon. "To choose between Hinduism and Sikhism was for them (women) as if English women were asked to choose between a ballroom and Quaker meeting,"[1] says Griffin. He, thus, established that there was inherent antagonism between the Sikhs and the Hindus at social level.

While describing the conflict between the Sikhs and the declining Mughal Empire of the early eighteenth century, in which the Sikhs survived by sheer faith, bravery and sacrifice, Griffin squarely places the Sikhs and the Muslims antogonistic to each other at political level. In his opinion, this conflict transformed the Sikhs, the 'undoubted robbers' and 'cattle-lifters' into a community having dignity and national interest. The nature of this transformation and conflict may better be explained in his own words.

> "While the Sikhs were undoubted robbers, and though cattle lifting was the one honourable profession amongst them, as on the Scottish border a few hundred years ago, their enthusiasm for their faith, their hatred to the Muhammadans who had so long trampled them under foot, who had killed their prophets and thrown down their altars, gave them certain dignity, and to their objects and expeditions an almost national interest".[2]

In the later half of the eighteenth century, having assumed an identity of an articulated socio-political community, the Sikhs rose to power and prominence. "The keen sword and the strong hand were the foundations upon which Sikh society,......was reared."[3] Emergence of chieftainship among the Sikhs put a seal on the egalitarianism as preached by the Gurus. Flourishing on the disintegrated political authority and politico-social crisis in the Punjab, the powerful Sikhs established *misls*.[4] During this period of adventure and comparative stability, the Sikhs developed their social customs and practices—a fusion of various practices which the contemporary conditions forced them to adopt. It was a first step towards making this community an exclusive group.

1. *Ibid*., p. 29.
2. Griffin's *Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 17.
3. *Ibid*., p. 16.
4. *Ibid*.

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But vague as these customs and laws were, the British as Paramount Power in India took full advantage of their lacunae. It was only in Patiala, Jind and Nabha states that the principle of primogeniture crystalised ;[1] elsewhere the situation remained fluid. The story of the British relations with the Sikhs clearly shows that the English taking advantage of this lacuna appropriated many *jagirs* in the Cis-Sutlej region. So much so that many a times they laid down fresh rules of succession.[2] While dealing with the period roughly from A.D. 1775 to 1800 about the British relations with the Sikhs and with the Cis-Sutlej states, Griffin describes them as very petty principalities sustaining themselves by force and practising some tribal practices. Their contact with the British later as Paramount Power not only saved them from the titanic expansion of Ranjit Singh and their unceasing internal strife but also civilised them besides providing opportunities to them to develop their institutions and customs.

At the advent of the last century, Ranjit Singh emerged as the supreme ruler of the Punjab. Comparing him with Napoleon for the suddenness of their rise and similar dominant personality traits, both being military genius, selfish and pitiless. Griffin, however, acknowledged Ranjit Singh as a great leader who solicited willing obedience from the people. "He was a born ruler, with the natural genius of command. Men obeyed him by instinct and because they had no power to disobey."[3] He admires Ranjit Singh for his courage, perseverence, political sagacity not so much for establishing a strong Empire as for maintaining good relations with the British.

After acknowledging Ranjit Singh's greatness as a conqueror, he proceeds to prove that he was not a great administrator. Otherwise, how could he justify the annexa-

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 200, Various cases given in the book establish his contention.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Griffin's *Ranjit Singh*, p. 10.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

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tion of the Punjab? He starts with a severe attack on his personal weaknesses.

> "He had a large and indeed an unusual share of the weaknesses and vices which grow up, like ill weeds, in human nature, and his moral being seemed, at a superficial glance, as dwarfed and distroted as its physical envelop. He was selfish, false and avaricious; grossly superstitious, shamelessly and openly drunken and debauched".[1]

At the same time, accepting him as one of the "front rank" statesmen of the century,[2] Griffin attributes Ranjit Singh's success to his servants who served him well. In foreign affairs he was constantly guided by Aziz-ud-Din due to whose benign influence Ranjit Singh did not have any confrontation with the British instead assumed a posture of a loyal and permanent friend.[3] The other person who contributed a lot was Mokham Chand. "It was in great measure", remarks Griffin, "owing to his military ability that the Maharaja established himself as sole ruler of the Punjab".[4] For the success of Ranjit Singh in the battlefield he accredited the Jat Sikhs who were slow witted but determined and zealous fighters. Yet another factor which largely helped him in the founding and establishing of an empire was his military organisation which the sagacious Maharaja copied from the British.[5]

With regard to Ranjit Singh's administration, one of the most notable facts is that there was no general revolt in the country. For such a phenomenon against which even the great Mughals had to fight all the time, Griffin does not give any credit to the administration of Ranjit Singh. Instead, he argues that the aristocracy had nothing to gain by raising the standard of revolt. In fact it was an opportunity for the officials to enrich themselves by bribe and corruption. They could squeeze peasantry to their will so long as they paid their due share into the treasury.[6] Absolving Ranjit Singh of

1. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 118
4. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

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having any hand in the prevailing corrupt and degraded administration, Griffin asserts that the officials, mainly the Hindus and Muslims, incidentally the majority communities, were responsible for such a state of affairs since they "were spiritual guides and wordly advisers of the monarch ; their authority overshadowed his ; he reigned and they governed."[1] He thus spared Ranjit Singh from the blemish of being personally responsible for the bad administration. Perhaps he wished to extract sympathies of the Jats in particular and the Sikhs in general for whom Ranjit Singh had become a legend like Napoleon.

Coming to his liberal religious policy, Griffin, without deviating from his line of argument, suggested that Ranjit Singh employed the Hindus and Muslims for historical and political considerations. Both having hereditary talent for government in contrast to the Jat who was "as stupid as his own buffaloes",[2] Ranjit Singh preferred to recruit the former for the army but he was no good for administrative work. In an intellectual competition with Brahmans and Muhammadans, he (Jat) was as a cart-horse matched against thorough-breds", observes Griffin. He alleges that Ranjit Singh was advised by "Sardar Fateh Singh Kalianwala never to appoint any Jat Sikh to a position of authority in the court."[3]

Griffin seriously doubted whether religious toleration could provide a sound basis for any rule at any time and in any country.[4] He attributed the attitude of religious tolerance "to indifference and selfishness than to any enlightened sentiment of the Sikh ruler."[5] In conclusion he reiterated that "it was virtually impossible to carry on a complex administration without making use of the only classes, Muhammadans and Brahmans, who had any hereditary capacity for government."[6]

1. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

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As regards the decline of Sikh state and annexation of the Punjab by the British, it has already been mentioned that Griffin attributed the fall to the fact that Ranjit Singh's rule was personal and not dynastic and weak successors only hastened the pace of its decline. The fall of the Empire was inevitable since it was based on violence, treachery and blood. On the other hand, the British rule being based on the ideas of "justice, beneficence and strength", *ipso facto* was more enduring and permanent than that of the Sikhs.[1]

Believing that the unprovoked aggression by the Sikhs caused the Anglo-Sikh wars, Griffin extends the presumption to say that the annexation of the Punjab was forced unwillingly upon them by the fierce and uncontrolled passions of the Sikh chiefs and people.[2] He adds : "The temper of the Sikhs was so hot and imperious ; the prestige of England was so essential to maintain, that it was impossible that these two military powers could have for long existed side by side in peace".[3] He squarely puts blame on the Lahore Darbar for provoking a war which led the British to annex Punjab.

As observed earlier, Lepel Griffin formulated no philosophy of history as such. So far as the general pattern of his writing of history is concerned he broadly followed the line set by Henry Maine and W.W. Hunter. Since he was a journalist by passion, he suitably modified the pattern to his own logic. And if there appear apparent inconsistencies in his writings, it was due to his commitments rather than confusion. His tenure of service in India (1860-1887) is a period when a new political pattern was emerging. The Muhammadans were looked upon with suspicion and the Hindus with fear. Having alienated the two major communities, the Government was in search of such sections of Indian population as could stand by the British. In this situation Griffin tried first to secure the support of aristocracy to the Empire. Since Griffin was connected with the Punjab, from where large numbers of Jats had been recruited into the army,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3. *Ibid.*

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he supported the cause of the Jat Sikhs. Therefore, in his writings he tried to prove that they for their poor wit had throughout been exploited by the courtiers of Ranjit Singh who were generally Hindus and Muhammadans. In an effort to justify the annexation of Punjab and the rule of the British, he while acknowledging the greatness of Ranjit Singh, stripped Ranjit Singh off his greatness whenever and wherever he could. By sharp intellect, adroitness and mastry of language he attempted to convince the readers that the British rule was good and benign as it was based on justice, benevolence and right. His main concern, therefore, remained to provide justification for British rule in the Punjab and basis for preservation of British Empire in India. His writings leave no doubt that like other conservative thinkers, he believed in the policy of *divide et empera*. Like them he suggests that the loyalty of aristocracy and army were the only dependable pillars of permanence of British rule in this country. All the same, it has to be admitted that he was one of those few administrator historians who have left to us a rich heritage of historical literature on the period which though not very remote, is yet obscure in history.

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CHAPTER VII

ERNEST TRUMPP

In the first half of the nineteenth century a number of European scholars wrote and published accounts, fragmentary or full, of the history of the Sikhs. Almost all of these accounts had been inspired by a spontaneous desire or curiosity to acquire and spread information about these 'extraordinary' people who had struggled heroically against the tyrannical Mughal rulers and Afghan invaders, carved out independent principalities (*Misls*) merged subsequently into a well-organised kingdom under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and finally fought against the British armies with wonderful courage and gallantry. The most notable of such accounts had been written by the British officials such as John Malcolm, W. L. M'Gregor and J. D. Cunningham. After the annexation of the Punjab to the British Indian Empire in 1849, the most serious problem of the British authorities was how to convert this "martial and hostile population into industrious subjects cultivating the arts of peace and civilization". In an earnest endeavour to solve this problem the Board of Administration of the Punjab under the presidentship of Henry Lawrence (1849-53) and the John Lawrence as the Chief Commissioner of the Province (1853-58) conceived and carried out a series of measures successfully. Due to these measures and some other well-timed steps taken by the provincial authorities, the Sikhs, by and large, remained quiet during the great revolt of 1857-58, despite the dormant discontent in a section of them. Not only that, a good number of Sikh soldiers recruited from the disbanded Khalsa army fought faithfully on the side of the British in Delhi and elsewhere. The Sikh Chiefs of Patiala, Jind, Nabha,

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Kapurthala and Faridkot also rendered conspicuous services to their paramount which were duly appreciated and rewarded by the British authorities.

After the suppression of the revolt, the British Government was keen on keeping up the loyalty of the Sikhs, and as such it wanted to get some first hand information about the social and religious background of this community. The accounts published earlier about the Sikhs gave but a scanty second hand information regarding their religion wherein lay the real root of their strength. The Punjab Government, therefore, mooted the proposal of getting prepared an authentic translation of *Adi Granth*, the Bible of the Sikhs. The proposal was accepted by the India Office authorities who decided to entrust the work to a German Christian missionary named Dr. Ernest Trumpp.

A learned scholar of oriental languages at the University of Tubingen, having good knowledge of Sanskrit, Prakrit and North Indian vernaculars, Trumpp was considered very competent to undertake this work. He was not an unworthy representative of his age which produced a number of eminent philosophers and philologists. Like them, he possessed the scholarly spirit of enquiry and doubt, and would not entertain anything unacceptable to reason. But being essentially a philologist, he did not have any historical bent of mind, much less acumen, and as such lacked objectivity in approach. In attempting the stupendous work on Sikhism, be it noted, he had also not been actuated by any devotional feelings or fascination for Sikh religion. On the contrary, his deep-rooted commitments as a Christian missionary do not appear to have allowed him to cast away his pre-conceived prejudices about a non-Christian religion. It is also important to emphasize that Trumpp had been launched into the study of Sikh religion not by his own choice. He had rather been employed by the India Office authorities of London to take up this work. Little wonder, therefore, that Trumpp had no instinctive sympathy or liking for the subject he has been asked to work upon, except perhaps some interest of a linguistic nature.

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Trumpp had evidently no previous knowledge at all about the Sikh Gurus and their religion, nor does he appear to have had any preliminary understanding of the cultural background and traditions pertaining to the subject on which he had agreed to work. Naturally he was confronted with 'considerable difficulties' at the very outset. He had started the work towards the close of the year 1869[1] but there was no substantial progress for about a year. Under the circumstances he decided with the permission and subsidy of the authorities to go to the Punjab towards the end of the year 1870, "in the expectation, that all difficulties would be easily surmounted there." The learned German scholar sought the help of some *Granthis* at Lahore and Amritsar but he was 'sorely disappointed' as they could not, or perhaps did not, give him the type of information which he required. It is quite possible, as Macauliffe writes, that he might have offended the *Granthis* by pulling out his cigar case and polluting the holy *Granth* with tobacco smoke.[2] He is also reported to have boasted that he understood the Granth better than they.[3] Due to all this the Sikh *Granthis* were probably reluctant to give him the required information. Or it might be that Trumpp could not contact the Sikh *Granthis* who were really competent to guide him. At that time ruthless "suppression and vilification of the Sikhs on the plea of Kuka anarchism" had been going on, and harassed by the political persecution the scholars well-versed in the *Granth* had left Amritsar and Lahore for Gurukashi (Damdama Sahib in the modern Bhatinda District).[4] However, deprived of the assistance of competent *Gyanis*,[5] Trumpp had to depend mainly upon his own

1. It was coincidently the year of the fourth birth centenary of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

2. M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* : A Symposium (Calcutta, 1958); p. 1.

3. Trumpp himself writes, "They (*Granthis*) had not even a clear insight into the real doctrines of the Granth" *The Adi Granth or the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs*. (London, 1877), Preface, p. VI.

4. Giani Harnam Singh Ballabh, *Trumpp's Translation of Siri Guru Granth Sahib*, Introduction, P. vi.

5. Trumpp, however, did get some help from a Nirmala Sadhu of Amritsar establishment named Atama Singh who, he admits, was for considerable time his instructor. See f.n. I at p. Cxviii. He is also reported to have got some assistance from Hindu *Munshis*.

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genius and once more found the task "infinitely more arduous than I had ever imagined"[1]. He had, of course, the advantage of enjoying full and ungrudging support of the Government authorities who placed all the materials available in the India Office Library at his disposal. He also gleaned relevant information from a number of English, Persian and Punjabi books and manuscripts he came across in the course of his stay in India. After putting in seven years of continuous and strenuous labours, Trumpp at last succeeded in completing only a portion of the work which was published early in 1877 A.D.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part (pp i-Cxxxviii) contains Introductory Essays which are divided into five chapters. Chapter I gives a succinct account of the life of Guru Nanak, followed by the text of *Puratan Janamsakhi* marked A and that of the then current *Janamsakhi* marked B. Chapter II sketches the life of the other nine Sikh Gurus. Chapter III brings out the teachings of the Sikh Gurus under the caption 'Sketch of the Religion of the Sikhs'. Chapters IV and V deal with the composition, language and metres of the *Adi-Granth*. The second part of the book (pp I-708) contains translation of the voluminous *Adi-Granth* from the original Gurmukhi into English with explanatory footnotes. The book closes with an Appendix (pp. 709-715) giving original text of the *Japji* in *Gurmukhi*.

What strikes the reader at the very outset is the author's significant observation regarding the relative value of the old *Janamsakhis* and the later *Janamsakhis* for constructing an account of the life of Guru Nanak. It is a well-known fact that Trumpp was the first person to discover H. T. Colebrooke's *Janamsakhi*, also called *Wallait-Wali Janamsakhi* in the old India Office Library.[2] After a close examination and

1. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, Preface, P. VII.

2. This *Janamsakhi* had been taken from India by Henry Thomas Colebrook in 1815 A.D. and deposited in the East India Company Library (India Office Library after 1858). Trumpp discovered it in 1872 A.D. Thereupon, a few copies of this manuscript were prepared by the efforts of Sir Charles Aitchison, the then Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, and they were distributed among the prominent leaders of the Sikhs. It was then popularly known as 'Wallait Wali Janamsakhi'. Afterwards it was compiled and published by Bhai Vir Singh (1926 AD) under the name '*Puratan Janamsakhi*'.

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comparison of this manuscript with the later *Janamsakhis* which were then current, he concludes :

"........this is the fountain from which all others have drawn largely : for the stories, as far as they are common to both relations, very frequently agree verbally, with the only difference, that the later *Janamsakhis* have substituted more modern forms for old words, which with the progress of time had become unintelligible.........but compared with the later *Janamsakhis*, which enter into the minutest details, in order to satisfy curiosity, and which have no sense but for the miraculous, however absurd, it is relatively sober."[1]

It is, indubitably, a great contribution of Trumpp not only to have discovered this old *Janamsakhi* but also to have highlighted the comparatively greater value of this manuscript. Considering this *Janamsakhi* as relatively more reliable, he has based his account of the life of Guru Nanak largely upon this source. But in a bid to analyse critically its contents in comparison with those of the later *Janamsakhis*, he has misrepresented the great personality of the first Sikh Guru. Alluding to Nanak's lack of interest in worldly affairs after marriage and consequent anxiety of the family who regarded him as a 'lunatic' (obviously a wrong term for ਦੀਵਾਨਾ occurring in the original text) and called a physician, Trumpp writes :

"It is very significant, that this whole circumstance is carefully passed over in the later *Janamsakhis*, as every other point which throws an unfavourable or doubtful light on Nanak"[2]. It is not understandable as to how Trumpp considers this as throwing an unfavourable light on Nanak". He seems to have failed to appreciate the fact that this circumstance was simply indicative of his spiritual propensity, and as such, far from being unfavourable, it was a significant gesture of the future greatness of the Guru. The same error is noticeable in what Trumpp considers the unhappy married life of the Guru. He remarks :

1. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. ii.
2. *Ibid.*, p. iii.

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"..........his domestic life being by no means happy, owing, it appears, to his own fault, as nothing is reported prejudicial to his wife".[1] Imbued with mundane Western ideas and not really conversant with the spiritual and cultural traditions of India, Trumpp seems to have applied rigorously a materialistic standard to the portrayal of the picture of a man who was, when all is said, a spiritualist par excellence. This so-called very 'fault' of Nanak was verily his greatest quality and provides the real key to the proper understanding of his personality. Trumpp betrays a colossal ignorance of another sacred Indian tradition when he attributes Guru Nanak's practice of daily bath in the canal (Bein) to the advice of a Govind Faqir for the purpose of curing himelf of a liver complaint".[2] He seems to have been utterly unaware of the fact that it has been an age-long religious tradition among the Hindus to take bath regularly, preferably at canals and rivers.

Trumpp was, however, the first scholar to explode the popular belief based upon the later *Janamsakhis* that Bhai Bala was the constant companion of Guru Nanak in his travels and a sort of 'mentor' to him. If it had been a fact, he observes, it would be quite incomprehensible, why never a single allusion should have been made to him (Bhai Bala) in the old tradition.[3] In this the learned scholar seems to be correct and his viewpoint has not been challenged or disproved so far. But Trumpp's account of the travels, or 'wanderings' as he says, of Guru Nanak is at once deficient and defective. Reproducing a brief survey of the five *Udasis* of the Guru from the old *Janamsakhis*, he arbitrarily rejects the Master's reported visits to far off places without assigning any substantial reason. For instance, he considers his visit to Ceylon (Singhala Dvipa) as 'in the highest degree unlikely' and the tradition about his visit to Mecca as 'an invention.'[4]

1. *Ibid*., p. iv.
2. *Ibid*.
3. *Ibid*., p. v.
4. *Ibid*., pp. v-vi.

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Summing up the account of the life of Guru Nanak, Trumpp writes : "It is a biography containing very little to attract our interest and, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to nearly every Hindu Faqir"[1]. Thus with his characteristic prejudice, the German missionary scholar has, it appears, wantonly tried to belittle the great personality of the founder of Sikhism.

Trumpp's account of the other Sikh Gurus also reflects his prejudices on the one hand and bears evidence of his superficial study on the other. In his misdirected attempt to seek scientific education and accomplishments in the Sikh Gurus, he describes the second, third and fourth Gurus as 'unlettered' and 'without any scientific education',[2] and ninth Guru as 'not a learned man',[3] although they all composed great many verses of a high order. From Trumpp's point of view all the great prophets of the world should be considered illiterate. The German scholar fails to understand that it is not 'scientific' learning but spiritual devotion which was *sine qua non* for Guruship, and it is this which all the Sikh Gurus possessed in an eminent degree. Trumpp evidently errs grossly by applying the Western standards of scientific learning current in his age to the study of the great spiritual guides of the East.

Not caring to verify facts and seek their corroboration from different sources, Trumpp gives numerous wrong and unfounded statements. Of these, the following are worthy of notice :—

"Lahana became first acquainted with Nanak at Kangra, whither he had gone to worship the Devi. He heard there, that Nanak, a great faqir, was staying there.........
......"[4] "Guru Amar-Das was particularly fond of his daughter (whose name was Mohani), so that passing his son Mohan, he entrusted the Guruship to his son-in-law Ram-das......"[5]

"His (Guru Ram Das's) income from the voluntary offerings of his disciples must have been considerable : for it

1. *Ibid.*, p. vi.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. Lxxvii, Lxxviii and Lxxx.
3. *Ibid.*, p. Lxxxvii.
4. *Ibid.*, p, Lxxvii.
5. *Ibid.*, p. Lxxx.

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enabled him to restore magnificently an old tank which he called Amritsar (the nectar-tank), in the midst of which he built a place of worship, to which he gave the name of Harmandar."[1]

"Guru Arjun was the first Sikh Guru who laid aside the garb of a Faqir and kept an establishment like a grandee ; he engaged also in trade in a grand style, as he either loved money or was much in want of it."[2]

"It is expressly stated in the *Dabistan* (II, p. 274) that he (Guru Hargovind) appropriated to himself the pay due to the soldiers in advance, in consequence of which and on account of the mulct imposed upon his father Arjun, the Emperor Jahangir sent him to the fort of Gualiar, where he remained imprisoned for twelve years."[3]

"After the death of Jahangir (1628) Har-govind entered the service of the Emperor Shah-jahan, but he seems soon to have left his service and to have taken up a reckless course of life again."[4]

"ਬਾਬਾ ਬੁਢਾ, a notorious freebooter in the Punjab, who had become a disciple of Har-govind."[5]

"Then he gave the order, that whosoever desired to be his disciple, he must always have five things with him which all commence with the letter Kakka (*i. e.* K) *viz.* the *hair* (ਕੇਸ, which must not be cut), a *comb* (ਕੰਘਾ), a *knife* (ਕਰਦ), a *sword* (ਕਿਰਪਾਨ), and *breeches reaching to the knee* (ਕੱਛ)."[6]

"The hill Rajas marched with a considerable force on Anandpur and some severe battles were fought, in one of which, near the town of Camkaur (ਚਮਕੌਰ), the two eldest sons of Govind Singh were killed ; but the Rajas were at last succcessively repulsed and compelled to flee to the hills."[7]

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, p. Lxxxi.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. Lxxxiii-Lxxxiv. The first part of the statement is based on a wrong translation of *Dabistan* by Shea and Tryer. The original sentence in *Dabistan* is : *Vazah-i-sipahian pesh-grift*, which means that the Guru adopted the style of a soldier. See Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I (Bombay, 1950), p. 40 f.n.
4. *Ibid.*, p. Lxxxiv.
5. *Ibid.*, p. Lxxxiv, f.n. 2.
6. *Ibid.*, p. xci.
7. *Ibid.*, p. xcii.

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The above-mentioned erroneous statements tend to suggest that Trumpp based his account on a superficial study of the sources that could be readily available to him. He seems to have depened largely upon *Dabistan* (English translation by Shea and Tryer), *Siyar-ul-Mutaakhirin* (English translation by Briggs), *Sakhis : Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh* (English translation by Attar Singh of Bhadaur), *Sikhan de raj di vithia etc.* the sources which are far from trustworthy. Either he did not come across, or as it seems more probable he did not care to go through the more raliable Punjabi works such as *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas and works of Bhai Mani Singh, Sainapat, Bhai Nand Lal, Kesar Singh Chhibbar, Rattan Singh Bhangu, Bhai Santokh Singh, Sarup Das Bhalla *etc.*, which could have given him more authentic and detailed information about the Gurus and Sikh traditions. Unlike Malcolm before him and Macauliffe after him, Trumpp appears to have looked askance at the Sikh traditions, and therefore his occount of the Sikh Gurus is found to be faulty in the highest degree.

Trumpp claims to be the first? writer to base his account of the religion of the Sikhs on the actual study of the *Granth* and says that the account of the previous writers who had depended upon second-hand information, is "partly defective, partly labouring under mistakes."[1] There is no doubt that Trumpp not only studied but also translated a major portion of the original *Granth*, and has brought out the main tenets of Sikh religion, supported by numerous quotations from the *Granth* itself. But he has betrayed a lamentable lack of understanding of some fundamental principles of this religion. Obsessed with the notions of highly materialistic speculative philosophies of his age, he vainly endeavours to find a speculative and scientific philosophy in the composition of the Sikh Gurus and as such the *Granth* in its contents appears to him "perhaps the most shallow and empty book that exists, in proportion to its size."[2] Trumpp fails to com-

1. *Ibid.*, p. xcvii.

2. *Ibid.*, p. cxxii---He calls it elsewhere "incoherent and shallow in the extreme, and couched at the same time in dark and perplexing language, in order to cover these defects". See Preface, p. VII.

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prehend the basic fact that the object of the Sikh Gurus was not to propound any philosophy that might confuse the people but to place some practical principles of their teachings before the common people in a simple language. Trumpp is also grievously mistaken in his observation that Sikhism, like Buddhism, is "nothing but unrestricted Pessimism, unable to hold out to man any solace, except that of annihilation"[1] and that "in a religion, where the highest object of life is the extinction of individual existence, there can be no room for a system of moral duties."[2] The ultimate goal of the Sikh religion is, of course, the liberation of individual soul but the means preached by the Sikh Gurus for the achievement of this goal is not renunciation of the world, much less self-mortification. On the other hand, the way of Sikh religion is more a way of life to be lived according to a definite model than a set of dogmatic doctrines,[3] there being a great emphasis on inculcating social and moral virtues such as truth, contentment, tolerance, forgiveness, charity, love, compassion, inter-caste mixing, *etc., etc.*

Not appreciating aptly the unique importance of the guru or guide for spiritual advancement, which is indeed one of the pre-eminent principles of Sikh religion, Trumpp disdainfully attributes it to the vanity of the Sikh Gurus to keep up their importance. He remarks that the Sikh Gurus took good care not to make the muttering of the name of Hari too easy lest they themselves should be considered 'more or less superfluous guides.'[4] It was obviously foreign to the sense of the German missionary to grasp that it was not for self-importance or self-adulation that emphasis was laid by the Sikh Gurus on the necessity of Guru but for the supremely selfless purpose of leading the disciples from darkness unto light on the spiritual path.

Himself a learned scholar of vernacular languages of northern India, Trumpp gives able comments on the composition of the *Granth* as well as on the language and the metres

1. *Ibid.*, p. cvi,
2. *Ibid.*, pp. cix-cx.
3. Teja Singh, *Asa di Var* (Amritsar, 1957), Introduction, p. 12.
4. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. cvii.,

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used therein. From the linguistic point of view, he considers this work, "of the greatest interest to us, as it is a real treasury of the old Hindi dialects, specimens of which have been preserved therein which are not to be found anywhere else." "The Granth," he goes on to observe, "contains sufficient materials, which will enable us to investigate those old and now obsolete dialects, from which the modern idioms have had their origin, so that the gap, which hitherto existed between the older Prakrit dialects and the modern languages of the Arian stock may, by a careful comparative study of the same, be fairly filled up."[1].

Trumpp was the first European writer to translate the voluminous *Adi Granth* from original *Gurmukhi* into English. Some imperfections in a work of this nature and magnitude were bound to be there; firstly, there existed neither a grammar of the old Hindi dialects nor a dictionary, and the meaning of many old obscure words could not be easily comprehended; secondly, Trumpp did not have a good command of English language which was not his mother-tongue ; thirdly, the author being a Western had no previous knowledge of the religious and cultural traditions which could help in the understanding of hymns of spiritual nature. It has, therefore, been pointed out that his translation is "literal and at various places incorrect"[2] and that he has used "cynical and irrelevant remarks on the etymology of certain words in the strictest sense of the grammatical rules.[3] According to a later Western writer, his work "was highly inaccurate and unidiomatic, and furthermore gave mortal offence to the Sikhs by the *odium theologicum* introduced into it."[4] Nevertheless, there are "some good and meritorious aspects" of this translation work which should not be ignored. Trumpp also deserves credit for having produced this 'solid work' of a pioneering nature. Even the inaccuracies of his work and his

1. *Ibid.*, p. cxxii.

2. Surinder Singh Kohli, *A Critical Study of Adi Granth* (New Delhi, 1961), p. 23.

3. Giani Harnam Singh Ballabh, *op. cit.*, p. VII.

4. M A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I (Reprint Delhi, 196C), Preface, P. vii.

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"defaming the Gurus, the sacred book, and the religion of the Sikhs" inspired Macauliffe to produce his valuable voluminous works on Sikh religion "to make some reparation to the Sikhs for the insults which he offered to their Gurus and their religion."[1] His work may also be said to have drawn the keen attention of the contemporary Singh Sabhaites and subsequent Sikh scholars to the need of reinterpreting the real tenets of Sikhism, exploding the fallacies which had become current about it.

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1. *Ibid.*

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CHAPTER VIII

TRUMPP AND MACAULIFFE : WESTERN STUDENTS OF SIKH HISTORY AND RELIGION

During the later part of the nineteenth century, the Sikhs of the Punjab seriously began to explore the historical roots of their religious faith and tradition. At least two foreign scholars, Max Arthur Macauliffe and Ernest Trumpp, made an important contribution to that search. Separated by time, training, and perspective, these interpreters of Sikhism nevertheless had much in common. Both depended on Indians for assistance in translation and supply of background information, and hence their publications tended to reflect the intellectual milieu of the period. In addition, each began his work with specific goals and preconceptions, and to some degree, these changed over time. Finally, Macauliffe and Trumpp came to terms with broader cultural patterns in the Punjab, especially in the critical area of how Sikhism appeared to fit into contemporary religious development. This essay surveys how and why each scholar dealt with Sikhism and suggests their long-term influence on Sikh studies.

Western influence in Sikhism had been found in the writings of missionaries and administrators ever since the British Empire began spreading into North-West India. Only after annexation of the former Sikh state of Punjab, however, did the government seriously attempt to understand the Sikh faith by sponsoring scholarly research and translation of texts. Although curiosity in the life style and religion of the new members of the Empire contributed to the new attitude, the major force behind officially sanctioned schemes was politics. Officials felt that they had to know more about Sikhs in order

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to deal with them.[1] Much discussion focussed on two Sikh books, the Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth. Written in a script and a dialect quite foreign to Western experience, the Adi Granth or Granth Sahib was universally acknowledged as the major religious work in Sikhism. The Dasam Granth, a collection of writings by the final Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, and his contemporaries, also supposedly contained vital information on Sikh tradition, especially the symbols and the militarism characterizing the faith in the eighteenth century. In 1859, therefore, the Punjab government initiated a project to preserve and to translate authentic versions of both Granths.[2] Copies of the Dasam Granth were available, but securing an authentic version of the Adi Granth proved more difficult. Sadhu Singh Sodhi, who had possession of the Kartarpur Granth reputed to be the original copy, refused to supply a copy earlier even to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Through personal and official persuasion, Sadhu Singh ultimately agreed to present a copy to the British for shipment to England. There John Lawrence was to present the manuscript to the India Office Library. When forwarding the Granth to Calcutta for transhipment, the Punjab government noted that while Robert Cust (a noted oriental scholar) had offered to translate if provided released time and funds, the translation probably might be more easily carried out in London.

The issue of translation then remained dormant for a decade. In May 1869, the Punjab government mentioned proceeding with the original plans and asked to have the Granth returned to India for study if the work could not be done in Europe.[3] The Secretary of State responded by initiating discussions with a renowned student of Indian languages, Dr Ernest Trumpp. Born in 1828, Trumpp received

1. See, for example, the detailed discussions of Sikhism and its political implications in Foreign Political 1859, April 8, 141-2 (Government of India, NAI, New Delhi) ; Foreign Secret 1851, February 28, 37-44 ; Foreign General July 1869, 68-9KW.

2. Correspondence in Foreign Political 1859, April 8, 141-2.

3. PG to GI, 164, May 25, 1869, and subsequent correspondence, Foreign General July 1869, 68-9KW. The following summary also based on these Foreign General files : Nov. 1870, 26-7 ; Dec. 1870, 1-2.

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his advanced degree in language and linguistics from Tubingen, and after passing theological exams, went to Karachi in 1854 for linguistic research under the auspices of the CMS. While in Sind, Trumpp mastered local languages and produced several studies on Sindhi and Pushto. When the India Office contacted him, the former missionary was lecturing in Oriental Languages at Tubingen after his return from India because of illness. Trumpp welcomed the idea of translating Sikh scriptures and with an India Office subsidy he began to work on India Office manuscripts.

It is obvious from Trumpp's subsequent writings that he had neither interest in the religious tenets of the Sikhs nor an appreciation of the difficulties entailed in translating the Granth. His main concern, initially and throughout, was a linguistic study of documents, at hand and an accurate translation based on sound linguistic principles. Trumpp quickly realized that preparation of a final text could not be done in isolation, and he applied to the India Office for support to visit India for work on the spot with Sikh scholars. At the same time, he requested a subsidy to publish a Sindhi grammar that he claimed as vital for study of the Granth. Although suspicious, the Secretary of State agreed and gave Trumpp both passage to India and a stipend for other expenses. In agreeing to the grant, and limited funds for the grammar, the India Office warned that these terms were final. Trumpp would be expected to produce translations, if possible, of both the Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth. He agreed, noting progress in translation and the forthcoming publication of an initial draft of the Japji in the *Journal* of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Trumpp found a much different situation than anticipated when he arrived in Lahore in 1870.[1] The intellectual tradition among Sikh *granthis* and *bhais* had dissipated considerably, and few scholars were able to assist in translation. Moreover, many scholars themselves Sikh were in a confused state, with lack of clarity on such basic issues as to whether

1. Letter from Trumpp, April 13, 1872, in Foreign General Feb. 1873, 58-67A.

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Sikhism was a separate religion or only a sect within Hinduism. Some reputable Sikhs emphasized the spiritual side of their faith and said that baptism and maintaining the symbols associated with Guru Gobind Singh were not necessary to be a faithful Sikh.[1] In short, Trumpp could not rely on experts to assist him, nor was there an undisputed theological tradition on which he could draw, a frustrating circumstance aptly described later by Donald McLeod :

> "He entered on the translation of the Adi Granth as a learned philologist, expecting to find in the Sikh Granths a congenial sphere for the exercise of his great powers, and to be aided in the work by learned men versed in the Sikh scriptures---an expectation which was doomed to early disappointment."[2]

Despite these problems, Trumpp attempted to find help from Sikhs associated with the Golden Temple in Amritsar. According to Macauliffe and other sources, Trumpp proceeded to insult the Granth by blowing cigar smoke across its holy pages and thus managed to alienate in five minutes the very men who might have been most useful to the project.[3] Whether true or not, the story does illustrate the tenor of Trumpp's personality and approach that would have made collaboration with traditional Sikhs difficult if not impossible. Adopting an aloof attitude that reflected missionary background and rigorous linguistic training, Trumpp egotistically felt that he knew more about the real meaning of the Adi Granth, at least linguistically, than those revered for their ancient knowledge of the holy book but who "had lost all learning."[4]

Rather than cooperating with Sikhs, therefore, Trumpp prepared translations with the aid of Hindu *munshis* and

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1. For example, notes on discussions between British officers and prominent Sikhs, surveyed in Foreign General Jan. 1874, 1-5A.

2. McLeod letter in Foreign General 1873, Feb. 58-76A.

3. Macauliffe account in GI Home-Books, June 1907, 121-1A ; also Macauliffe comments on Trumpp in *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs* (Allahabad, 1900), pp. 25-26.

4. Trumpp's perspective reflected in his letter to the Secretary of State for India, Jan. 13, 1873, in Foreign General July 1873, 34-7A. Also, comments scattered through his *The Adi Granth* (London, 1877).

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occasional advice from members of a local oriental society, the Anjuman-i-Punjab. Besides commenting on Trumpp's work, the Anjuman helped locate and verify the authenticity of various manuscripts.[1]

Trumpp spent eighteen months on translation of the Adi and Dasam Granths. By April 1872, illness and frustration with the intricacies of the material led him to request permission for a return to Europe.[2] In summarizing the fruit of his work, he stated that the Dasam Granth had turned out to be a collection of myths, *puranic* tales, and ill-considered theory and thus did not justify extensive research. Even the Adi Granth, according to Trumpp, did not need total translation. The Punjab government attempted to make concessions to the scholar in order to complete the Granth and also to secure translations of related material, but to no avail. Trumpp returned home, and after protracted negotiations with the Secretary of State, eventually made arrangements to publish part of the Adi Granth in 1877. The publication contained a lengthy introduction on Sikhism and the Gurus, followed by translation of approximately one-third of the Sikh scripture (complete with extensive footnotes and commentary.)[3]

Before turning to the importance of the volume, it might be useful to highlight the evolution of Trumpp's ideas, the perspective that colored his translation and introductory-essays. First, Trumpp probably assumed from the outset that Sikhs were Hindus, and while somewhat differentiated from Hinduism by symbols, soon would be slipping back into the Hindu fold. In his words, "Sikhism is a waning religion, that will soon belong to history."[4]

1. Trumpp and orientalism surveyed in Jeffrey Perrill, *Punjab Orientalism* (unpub. diss., History, University of Missouri, 1976), pp. 503-508.

2. Correspondence in Foreign General, May 1872, 6-9A.

3. *The Adi Granth* (now available in reprint edition, Oriental Reprints). On Trumpp's views on the Granth, see his introduction and a detailed letter to the Secretary of State, Nov. 26, 1873, Foreign General August 1874, 3-5A.

4. *The Adi Granth*, p. viii.

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With regard to the Granth, Trumpp quickly adopted the position, mistakenly of course, that the style and composition of the holy scripture was imperfect, a complicated mixture of ideas and hollow phrases. When corresponding with the British, this opinion surfaced quite plainly. What then was the value of the Adi Granth? For Trumpp the philologist and linguist, the answer was simple :

> It is undoubtedly of great value from a philological point of view that, it is, so to say, a great store-house of a variety of dialects of the middle ages, of which we else would have no trace. It fills up a gap in our knowledge of the development of the North Indian Vernacular."[1]

Despite his gratuitous remarks dotting the translation and introduction, Trumpp's publications made several important contributions to the study of Sikhism and Sikh historiography. First, his book constituted the first serious translalion of the Adi Granth. As such, it remained a benchmark and even today is considered a useful source on one version of Sikh theology. The translation, however, was marred by Trumpp's inadequate command of English coupled with a pedantic, philological approach to the material. As Macauliffe later criticized, the literal translation of words without coming to terms with the milieu in which they were written often left faulty and imperfect impressions for those unacquainted with Sikhism.[2] Even with defects in translation, the critical footnotes serve as a valuable reference on terminology and the use of words.

Equally as important, and undoubtedly more controversial, were the judgements found in Trumpp's essays on Sikhism and the Gurus. Trumpp approached historical data in a cold, ruthless fashion. His criticism of the *janamsakhi* literature and other traditional sources probably mirrored both disdain for Sikhism and rigid training in textual analysis. In addition to noting gaps, differences, and inconsistencies in existing *janamsakhis*, he discovered and helped publicize the

1. Letter to Secretary of State, Jan. 13, 1873, Foreign General July 1873, 34-37A; also comments in *The Adi Granth*, p. viii.
2. Macauliffe comments in Home Public Aug. 1902, 192A.

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Colebrooke manuscript, now generally acclaimed as a fundamental source on early Sikhism.[1] Leaving aside Trumpp's persistent habit of making derogatory comments on Punjab life and Sikh scholarship (as for example saying that Sikhs were so poorly educated and superstitious that they would only accept historical works filled with phantasy and myth), Trumpp's observations on contemporary Sikhism must be taken seriously if one wishes to understand the peculiar mix of Sikhism and Hindu tradition from which the Singh Sabha movement developed. Trumpp's assessment of the Sikh inability to understand some of the meters and content of the Adi Granth also probably was not entirely wrong, although overstated. One of the frustrating problems confronting subsequent Sikh scholars involved that very issue, the general absence of a living tradition among Sikh *granthis* who ordinarily might be thought to be useful in translating and explaining theological points. His rapid survey of the lives of the Gurus also is important because it ranks among the earliest attempts to integrate existing sources in a scholarly manner. Almost every page contains provocative assessments that later were to scatter sparks among Sikh scholars. He argued, for example, that Guru Gobind Singh worshipped Durga, that the Gurus accepted caste and Brahmin-dominated ritual, and so forth. Moreover, Trumpp highlighted serveral key problems that required, and to some extent still require, careful study, such as the relationship between politics and religion during the lives of the last four Gurus.[2]

Finally, Trumpp made an inadvertant albeit negative contribution to Sikh studies in that he provided a controversial and much discussed overview with stress on the Hindu character of Sikhism. Trumpp's book gradually became seen as a historical statement that had to be confronted and proven wrong. It often is forgotten that in the early 1870's, many Sikhs probably agreed with a majority of Trumpp's conclusions. Certainly Sikhs surveyed by the British on the

1. Evaluation of contributions by Trumpp and Macauliffe found in WH McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford, 1968).

2. Issues raised in his introduction to *The Adi Granth.*

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issue of the relative importance of the Adi Granth and its role in contemporary Sikhism often supported his assessment that Sikhism and Hinduism were fundamentally the same.[1] A few Sikhs denounced the book at the time, but their criticisms reflected more the wave of the future and not the majority reaction in the 1870s. Trumpp therefore produced a translation and a commentary that had to be taken seriously. Later generations of Sikh scholars and reformers realized the threat posed by his interpretations and made displacing his scholarship a primary goal.

The second major interpreter of Sikh tradition, Max Arthur Macauliffe, had a different background and approach than Trumpp. A leading orientalist known throughout Europe for his original work on grammars and philology, Trumpp had helped lead the budding attempts in the Punjab to teach oriental languages and to study indigenous subjects. Although working with Oriental College and the Anjuman-i-Punjab, however, Trumpp's religious intolerance and his Germanic orientation prevented the variety of sympathy for things Indian that characterize the lives of many of the orientalists with whom he associated. Macauliffe, on the other hand, came to India as a young I.C.S. officer in the early 1860s. He perhaps had an interest in orient topics during his early career, but it is clear that the young judge did not associate with the core group of scholars in Lahore nor did he contribute significantly to orientalist literature. While the rationale for Macauliffe's burst of interest in the Sikhs in 1880 is not clear, from that point onward, much of his time and limited linguistic abilities focussed on the study of Sikhism. In 1880 and 1881, for example, the *Calcutta Review* included Macauliffe's first descriptions of the Sikhs— "The Diwali at Amritsar", "The Rise of Amritsar and the Alterations of the Sikh Religion," "The Sikh Religion under Banda and Its Present Condition." The essays are important since they reflected a sympathy for an identification with Sikhism that persisted throughout the remainder of Macau-

1. Documents Foreign General Jan. 1874, 1-5A.

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liffe's life, an empathy that colored his efforts to present a new assessment of Sikh literature and religion.

The essays are significant for two other reasons. First, Macauliffe demonstrated an ability to tell a good story, to describe events in a clear and highly readable fashion. His descriptions of festivals, daily life in Amritsar, and the conflicting traditions and superstitions found within Sikhism in 1880 remain classics. Macauliffe did not pretend to be an original scholar, relying instead on personal observations or borrowing (often uncritically) from Western commentrators such as McGregor, Cunningham, and even Trumpp. He also routinely attempted to clarify complex issues, such as explaining the key junctures in the evolution of Sikhism, by drawing real or imagined parallels with Western tradition or religion. Reliance on the opinions of others and a tendency to bridge gaps in argument through use of analogy appeared continuously in his later writings. Secondly, Macauliffe's interpretations generally reflected the intellectual currents around him. Guru Nanak was portrayed as strongly influenced by Hinduism and espousing a message that encompassed many intellecutual paths and processes. In the touchy area of Hindu/Sikh relations, Macauliffe stated clearly that "it was not the object of even the most zealous Gurus altogether to break with ancient and deeply-rooted tradition.[1] The evolutionary nature of Sikhism also was highlighted. "The subjective doctrines of Nanak would probably have ceased to influence the Sikhs of the age of Gobind, if Nanak's successor had not allowed the religion to fall to the level of popular comprehension, and if they had not infused into it a new and vigorous spirit redolent of arms and war, breathing the duty of revenge, and inculcating the necessity of the preservation by whatever means of the chosen people of the Khalsa."[2] Finally, with an argument and description closely matching that of a key Sikh associate, Attar Singh Bhadour, Macauliffe summarized the present condition and danger facing Sikhism.

1. "The Diwali at Amritsar," *Calcutta Review*, CXL, 1880, 623.

2. "The Rise of Amritsar and the Alterations of the Sikh Religion," *Calcutta Review* CXLIII, 1881, 70.

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"Hinduism is like the boa constrictor of the Indian forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds around its opponent, crushes it in its folds, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior. Sikhism may go this way. Brahmins and Sikhs mix today. Brahmins help Sikhs to be born, help them to wed, help them to die, and help their souls after death to obtain a state of bliss. Brahmins, with all the deftness of the Roman Catholic missionaries in Protestant countries, have partially succeeded in persuading the Sikhs to restore to their niches the images of Devi, the Queen of Heaven, and the saints and gods of their ancient faith."[1]

Macauliffe's assessment of Sikhism in danger remained a theme in his later intellectual development, but many of his ideas on the Gurus and cardinal tenets of Sikhism changed over time primarily due to intimate contact with Sikh reformers. Between 1880 and 1900, a growing band of intellectuals and publicists attempted with marked success to redefine the Sikh faith and to strengthen the self-identity of Sikh ideas and institutions. Adopting as a slogan "Ham Hindu Nahin," (We are Not Hindu), the resulting Singh Sabha movement stressed a dual message of the uniqueness of their faith and the need to remove accretions endangering the community.[2] Although Macauliffe apparently did not get along well with some Sabha leaders (most notably, Bhai Gurmukh Singh of Lahore), he did become caught up in the vitality and painful process of self-examination characterizing Sikh intellectual developments during the period. By 1893, his identification with Sikhism had reached the point that the officer, now a divisional judge, resigned his commission and dedicated himself to preparing a translation of the Adi Granth into

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1. "The Sikh Religion under Banda and Its Present Condition, *Calcutta Review*, CXLV, 1881, p. 168.

Attar Singh's ideas reflected in his correspondence and discussion with the government, Foreign General, Jan. 1874, 1-5A, and Foreign General June 1874, 12-13A.

2. Background on developments in the period in N.G. Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature* (Manohar, New Delhi, 1970) ; parallel trends among Hindus in Kenneth Jones, *Arya Dharm : Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* (Univ. of Calif. 1976).

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English.[1] Support for his research and livelihood henceforth came from patrons, especially the Sikh rulers of the princely states of Nabha and Patiala. Closely working with Singh Sabha leaders who were concerned that Trumpp's ideas about the Granth and the Gurus had to be rectified, and sponsored by *rajas* at least nominally identifying with the neo-Sikh movement, Macauliffe set forth to present to the world an accurate representation of the true nature of Sikhism.

Over the next fifteen years, Macauliffe became involved in two related activities : research and soliciting patronage for his work. Most of his energy was devoted to preparing a *magnum opus* of Sikhism. Although initially planning a new edition of the Adi Granth, the project expanded to encompass not only translation but voluminous notes and lives of the Gurus and *bhagats*/saints whose writings appear in the Granth. An expanded study was necessary, according to Macauliffe, so that the Sikhs and a Western audience could fully appreciate the richness of Sikh literature and tradition.[2]

Macauliffe's approach to collecting and analysing information differed from that of his predecessor, Trumpp. Instead of study in isolation or with non-Sikh informants, Macauliffe relied heavily on prominent men in the community such as Bhai Sardul Singh, Bhai Sant Singh, and Bhai Prem Singh. Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha, later to become the major Sikh scholar of the early twentieth century, probably aided in much of the translation and provided guidance as to interpretation and contextual statements.[3] Moreover, once a section had been completed in rough form, Macauliffe circulated the draft for comments, with the result that many of the earlier versions available in Punjab or American libraries contain extensive handwritten comments in the margins. To insure that his work received a seal of approval from the

1. The actual reasons for the resignation are not clear. Macauliffe claimed it was an act of altruism, but government officials later insisted that his inability to move further up the administrative ladder may have been a primary motive.

2. Macauliffe letter in Home-Books June 1907, 121-22A.

3. Macauliffe willed the copyright and royalties from his publications to Kahan Singh.

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reformist wing of the Sikh community, Macauliffe submitted drafts directly to a special committee established by the Khalsa Diwan the Singh Sabha, Amritsar.[1] The final drafts therefore resulted from a lengthy series of reviews and alterations, in a sense the product of compromises and a composite of documents rather than the work of a single person.

In order to publicize the study, Macauliffe began to publish sections long before completion of a polished manuscript. Two examples of such essays reflect limited continuity with earlier ideas and a move toward interpretations more comfortable to Singh Sabha associates. The first, *The Holy Writings of the Sikhs*, surveyed early Sikh history and scripture.[2] Reliance on analogies with western experience continued, but unlike his previous essays that contained fresh ideas and detailed observations, this article and following ones shared a new format of condensed commentary interspersed among long translations either from the Granth or *janam-sakhis*. Macauliffe adopted a style of letting the Sikh founders speak for themselves in the form of quotes from the scriptures or miscellaneous quasi-historical documents. Although excerpts from his initial publications could be found in the survey, Macauliffe reorganized his material around two dominant themes, the separate nature of Sikhism as a world religion and the heroism inherent in recent Sikh tradition. Dropping once-held ideas about ambiguities in Sikh theology and custom, Macauliffe presented Guru Nanak as the founder of a "new" and important religious system : "The tenets of Nanak, of his precursors and his followers are very simple. They rejected the idolatry and superstitions of the Hindus, taught that God was one alone, and that dire vengeance would pursue those who worshipped strange gods before Him. The doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of transmigration were adopted in their entirety by the Sikhs ; and they were taught to believe that good works and

1. Process of writing covered in great detail in documents in Home-Books, June 1907, 121-2A.

2. The *Holy Writings of the Sikhs* (Allahabad, 1900).

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the utterance of God's name were the most meritorious human acts leading to absorption in God and release from the pain and misery of transmigration.[1] Sikh heroism and a new sense of militancy, supposedly resulting from Muslim atrocities, received equal attention.

After discussing the Sikhs, Macauliffe described his own experiences, focussing on the difficulty of translating scripture: "It is necessary for a translator to reside in India, and place himself at the feet of the best gyanis, who are totally unacquainted with the English language. Few of them indeed even speak Hindustani but give their interpretations in long paraphrases in Panjabi dialects, and most of them have a decided objection to impart a knowledge of their sacred books to Europeans. This, however, is only a part of the difficulty, for, wherever I have gone, the gyanis have always given me different translations ; and one of my most trying functions as a translator has been to decide between rival and contradictory versions. Had I known the difficulties I should have to encounter, I should certainly never have undertaken a translation of this description."[2] Why then pursue the project ? Macauliffe concluded with a series of arguments as to the importance of research on the Sikhs, and concomitantly, why his own study should receive broad-based support. First, a translation of the Granth would help Westerners understand Sikhism. Secondly, the older gyanis were dying out, and therefore the Sikhs themselves soon might lose contact with their own traditions. Finally, suggested Macauliffe, a fresh translation would refute statements (particularly by Trumpp) "disparaging to the Gurus."[3] The historical and literary record must be corrected.

A second preliminary statement (a published version of an address given to the United Service Institute, "The Sikh Religion and Its Advantages to the State") contained a repetition of material appearing in Macauliffe's earlier works. Parallels with Western history persisted, as did a repeating

1. *Holy Writings*, p. 8.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

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of themes and quotations. Macauliffe presented Sikhism as a distinct religion and a universal ethical system: "We have seen that Sikhism prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concremation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to the sacred rivers and tanks of the Hindus, and it inculcated loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty, and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest Christians."[1] Sikh loyalty to the *raj* had been mentioned briefly in other essays, but the lecture especially underscored this dimension of recent Sikh experience. A "bulwark of British power in this land," the Sikhs would continue to remain friendly allies.[2] The only danger, said Macauliffe, was the erosion of Sikh power through inadequate education and a decline in population. The British consequently should take immediate steps to provide the Sikhs with more patronage. Implicit throughout the lecture was a message that such support also should be extended to Macauliffe.

By 1908 Maçauliffe had finished a voluminous manuscript and made arrangements for its publication by Oxford University. The successful completion of a project stretching backward almost two decades should have evoked happiness, but it did not, largely because of Macauliffe's failure in a second area of endeavor. The author had attempted unsuccessfully to develop significant financial support and public enthusiasm for his work. Although Sikh journalists "of the new school" and public meetings applauded each stage of the research and writing, neither non-official or British sources were forthcoming with monetary reward. Moreover, the government refused to sponsor the publication or to associate openly with the written material. What should have been a moment of exhilaration thus turned out to be empty and filled with bitterness.

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1. *A Lecture on "The Sikh Religion and Its Advantages to the State"* (Simla, c. 1903), p. 27.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

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scrutiny. The Punjab government also shifted its position, arguing that since Macauliffe now planned to publish commentary on the scriptures and history, too intimate an association might be dangerous. The Government of India felt obligated to meet its former commitment and reoffered Rs. 5,000, but at the same time, the Governor General publicly refused to give official sanction to the publication. Macauliffe reacted violently and rejected the offer out of hand, claiming that the British position indicated disfavor and thus cost him promised grants from rich Sikhs.[1] After examining copies of the book, the Government of India had no regrets over its handling of the matter. The publication, according to official observers, was not scholarly and probably would not affect the Sikhs either positively or negatively. Fifty copies were purchased for distribution in government offices and regimental libraries.[2]

Macauliffe's six-volume set, *The Sikh Religion, Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors* (Oxford University at Clarendon Press, 1909) consisted of the lives of the Gurus, their followers and contemporaries, as well as extensive translations from the Granth spaced throughout the narrative. Volume one had a lengthy introduction to Sikhism and the life of Guru Nanak ; volume two discussed Gurus Angad, Amar Das and Ram Das ; three dealt primarily with Guru Arjan, while four covered the lives of Guru Har Gobind, Har Rai, and Tegh Bahadur. Volume five described the life and times of Guru Gobind Singh, plus an essay on Banda and annotation on *rags*, or the musical measures of the Sikh hymns. The concluding part provided short sketches on other contributors to the Granth such as Namdev, Kabir, and a prominent Muslim saint and poet, Shaikh Farid.

The historical essay in the first volume subsumed both new material as well as earlier writings by Macauliffe rearranged and placed in sequence. Obviously writing for a Western audience, Macauliffe again went to great pains to

1. Correspondence mentioned in f.n. 32.
2. PG to GI, 573, April 14, 1910, Home-Books and Publications, June 1910, 145-51A.

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draw comparisons between key doctorines in Sikhism and Western history and metaphysics. Emphasis also had been placed on the need for "reparation" to the Sikhs for Trumpp's translations (and derogatory comments) and on Sikh loyalty. Macauliffe presented Sikhism as a major world religion, quite separate from Hinduism, but one still in danger of reabsorption by the Hindu faith. The now familiar analogy of the boa constrictor (used at least three times earlier) reappeared, but with a slightly more positive twist : "Hinduism on its own ground disposed of Buddhism, which was largely a Hindu reformation ; and in this way, in a prehistoric period, it absorbed the religion of the Scythian invaders of Northern India, in this way, it has converted uneducated Islam in India into a semi-paganism ; and in this way it is disposing of the reformed and once hopeful religion of Baba Nanak. Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its folds ; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without State support."[1] Although Macauliffe occasionally dealt with critical matters, such as the nature of the *janamsakhi* literature on which he and most Sikh writers relied, the introduction does not seriously attempt to evaluate historiographic or philosophical issues ; rather, the author avoided controversy. The interpretations accepted from or preferred by Sikh intellectuals around him remain dominant in the essay and subsequent volumes.

Macauliffe adopted a particular pattern of organisation and style when presenting the lives and teachings of the Gurus. First and foremost was the goal of telling a good story with as much drama and flurry as possible. Popular tales about each Guru were pieced together in clear fashion, interspersed with prayers and scripture from the Granth. Identification of material and the location of specific quotations often were not given. Except for very sporadic breaks in the narrative, such as a two-page attempt to show that Guru Gobind Singh had not worshipped Durga (Vol. v. pp. 81-83), Macauliffe preferred to let the Gurus speak for themselves.

1. *The Sikh Religion*, I, lvii.

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In summary, Macauliffe gave Sikhs and the world a readable, popularized, but very uncritical account of the early evolution of Sikhism, a sympathetic version contrasting sharply with the bland, unidiomatic and often caustic version of Trumpp. Neither work is definitive, and both suffer from numerous defects of scholarship. Nevertheless, the two Western observers made distinct contributions to research on the Sikh faith. At various points in their career, each produced useful assessments of the contemprorary condition and problems confronting the Sikh community. Although disagreeing on the origins of the religion, both realized that Sikhism stood at a cross-roads and thereby left to future students a benchmark in the historical development of the religion. Secondly, each contributed to the intellectual ferment that arose largely because of the confusion and debate about self-identity and the authentic nature of Sikh institutions. Trumpp came to symbolize a foreign threat to Sikhs who responded sharply to his negative ideas about the Gurus and the assertion that Sikhs were Hindus, and Macauliffe became at least temporarily a hero of the neo-Sikh movement which helped him develop an interpretation quite opposed to that of Trumpp.[1] Thirdly, both authors injected new ideas and approaches into Sikh studies. Trumpp discovered fresh material (most notably, the Colebrooke *janamsakhi*) and attempted to apply for the first time Western standards of philology and textual criticism to the evaluation of Sikh documents. Had he studied Sikhism a decade or two later, his role among Sikh intellectuals might have been both greater and more productive. Despite frequently unscholarly handling of sources, Macauliffe also served as a catalyst for locating and publishing new documents about the Gurus. Although neither man pursued a detailed assessment of Sikh origins that might have been made possible because of their

1. See, for example, discussions in *Khalsa Samachar*, May 27, 1903, p. 10; *Khalsa Samachar*, May 26, 1910, pp. 3-4. The newspaper subsequently published several articles critical of Macauliffe's translations and interpretations, and there was a split within the Chief Khalsa Diwan over whether Macauliffe should be given great public honours. Macauliffe died in 1913, an impoverished and bitter man.

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discoveries, the legacy remained for generations of specialists yet to come. The irony of Trumpp and Macauliffe is that their approaches subsequently became so caricatured that Sikh scholars generally have not followed up their leads and suggestions. The tendency to look down on Trumpp and a similar trend toward virtually enshrining Macauliffe as a major interpreter require re-thinking. Macauliffe and Trumpp devoted too much of their lives and energy to the study of the Sikhs to deserve less than a critical new appraisal.

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CHAPTER IX

GORDON, BINGLEY AND PAYNE

After the publication of his *Outlines of Punjab Ethnography* by Denzil Ibbetson[1] which furnished very valuable information about the people of the Punjab, a serious study of communities in the context of their political relevance began to be made. Study of local history or that of a community, however, was never an end in itself with the European historians on the Sikhs. This is based on the fact that an ethnological study distinguishes members of one community from another irrespective of time and space transcending both these barriers. In the present study, we have taken up the examination of the writings of Gordon, Bingley and Payne, comparatively less trained historians than Cunningham, Lepel Griffin and Latif, yet important for writing an extremely divided and schizophrenic kind of history. In this context it may be right to say that no other State of India has attracted so much attention as the Punjab for writing this kind of history.

Here the reference is to the period of the first two decades of the present century. It was a period during which the entire gamut of British policy was formulated on the three-dimensional problem of their existence. Within England the liberal group was urging the Government to readjust its policy towards imperial dependencies and colonies on Gladstonian, or liberal principles. In India, the freedom struggle was fast transforming from a constitutional agitation into a revolutionary movement; and lastly, at the international arena, Germany was on the point of challenging the supre-

1. Also see Denzil Ibbetson, *Census Report of the Punjab*, 1881. Also see *Census Report* ot 1892, Pt. III, for the complete list of Jat clans.

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macy of England. It may be added that the danger from Central Asia still persisted. Confronted with such challenges, centralisation of authority and loyalty of the army were considered necessary preconditions for the continuation of British imperialism in India. The latter had the greater political relevance to the Punjab because a large number of Jat Sikhs had been recruited in the army.

Around the turn of the last century, Charles Gough in collaboration with A.D. Innes wrote *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars* (1897). It was meant primarily to defend General Gough of the Anglo-Sikh Wars, who was uncle of the writer, and only in a general way to explain the role the British army had played in extending and maintaining the British rule. The book, however, suggested an idea which greatly struck subsequent writers such as Gordon, Bingley and Payne. Besides eulogizing the exploits of the British Army, these studies brought into sharp focus the military potential and liberal administration of the British to infuse confidence in the administrators and to overawe their subjects. But in the process they never forgot to pay rich tributes to the Sikhs, especially the Jat Sikhs. This is the main thread which runs through the writings of Gordon, Bingley and Payne with varying degrees of emphasis. Since all the three writers were persons of average intellect, it may be presumed that they reflected the mind of an average British citizen.

Gordon closely followed the official thinking of the Curzonian administration. With the outburst of Hindu revivalism, the administration was attempting at national level to win over the Muslims and at regional level, especially in the Punjab, to placate the Sikhs.

Gordon himself writes :

> Of all the many peoples of India none possess for us greater or more varied historical interest than the Sikhs..,...[1]

Resting his hypothesis on the contemporary researches regarding foreign origin of the Rajputs and the Jats, Gordon sets out to prove that the Sikhs "have preserved inherited racial characteristics foreign to Orientals".[2]

1. J.H. Gordon, *The Sikhs*, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

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Like many ethnographers, he identified the origin of the Jats with the Scythians who when they first came to India, uprooted Hinduism and planted the Chinese-type of Buddhism. Gordon believes that except the language, the Jats continued their Scythian customs, habits and indulgences. In fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they again rose against Brahminical Hinduism. To prove this, he rejected the accepted theory that Guru Nanak's message was the synthesis of the best of Hinduism and Islam. Instead, he substituted Buddhism,[1] and suggested, perhaps deliberately, that Guru Nanak and all his successors were Jat Sikhs.[2] He further proves that Guru Nanak's message had special appeal to the Jats because "their old Gaetic faith had left a lasting impression on their independent character".[3] By interpolating references, he indicates that the Sikh customs and habits were relics of the Scythians.[4]

His account of the Guru period may be summed up in his own words :

> "As Nanak woke up the people by reforming their religion, and Gobind by stern discipline developed their political independence, so Ranjit Singh with his wise old head on his young shoulders, seizing the opportunity to found a military monarchy on the fruits of their labours gave coherence to the Sikh nation."[5]

After the death of Ranjit Singh, who symbolised political unity of the Sikhs, the Sikh power "exploded, disappearing in fierce but fading flames".[6] Like Lepel Griffin, these European historians also held the British absolutely innocent ; but made special efforts to place the blame squarely on people other than the Khalsa Army. For Gordon, it was Rani Jindan and her Brahmin courtiers Raja Lal Singh, Raja Tej

1. *Ibid.*, p. 13. But at another place the author says, "He (Guru Nanak) contended against the furious bigotry of the Muhammadans and the deep-rooted superstition and caste thraldom of the Hindus and aimed at reforming and reconciling the two creeds." p. 16.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-76.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-19.

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Singh who swept the Khalsa "into the vortex of intrigue"[1] and instigated them to wage a waron the British. Gordon says that Rani Jindan "feared the Sikhs far more than the British. If victorious, the Khalsa would be engaged in plundering India, and she would gain the credit, if not, she could depend upon the British for life and generosity."[2]

The court intrigue and insolence of the Khalsa Army, they say, led to the declaration of war "without a shadow of provocation". Gordon makes us believe that the Khalsa Army was enticed to join war to settle their "old scores, plunder other rich cities of India, march to Calcutta and even to London". No doubt while referring to the Anglo-Sikh Wars, he also praises the fighting spirit of the Sikhs. The author, however, compares it with the battle which took place between the Scythians under Darius and the Greeks under Alexander[3], thereby indicating British military superiority.

After separating the Sikhs from the Hindus racially and on basis of religion,[4] Gordon provides an explanation to the knottiest problem *viz.*, inconsistency between emerging nationality or identity of the Sikhs and British Imperialism. Gordon is of the opinion that the Sikhs could maintain their sentiment of nationality in the form of subordinate patriotism for the British rule which had contributed towards the moral strength of the Sikh nation to such an extent as its own nation would not do.[5]

To provide an adequately convincing basis for his assertions, he cited various illustrations from history wherein mutual assistance had proved mutually beneficial. The Sikhs assisted the British in 1857 and in the process wreaked their vengeance upon the Brahmins[6] and the British avenged the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur by executing Mughal princes at

1. *Ibid.*, 133.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 200. Gordon believes that Guru Nanak "established an independent religious sect".
5. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
6. *Ibid.*, 205.

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the same spot.[1] To drive the point home, he also made a general statement that everywhere the Sikhs "identified themselves with our cause and fought as lions of their race".[2] Recalling an old tradition, perhaps fabricated by the British themselves, the author asserted that Guru Tegh Bahadur had prophesied that white persons would come from far beyond the seas "who shall overthrow their (Mughal) Empire", which happened in 1857 when the British "shook down the treacherous throne of the Mughals, an avenging act in which they (Sikhs) also played a part".[3] Gordon was acutely aware of the fact that the Khalsa had ceased to be a political power. Time and again, he refers to the British efforts for the promotion of two basic traditions for which the Khalsa stood-militancy and religious zeal, and in turn expected a strong sense of loyalty to the British Crown.

In the same set of political circumstances—in fact those trends were sharper on the eve of the First World War than around 1900—Bingley published his book *The Sikhs* emphasising the need to recruit more Jat Sikhs in the army. The format of the book suggests as if it was a manual of military recruitment.[4] Here the history of the Sikhs has been condensed into a single chapter. The purpose before Bingley seems very limited *i.e.*, to explain the circumstances "which caused the race of peaceful cultivators to be transformed into a fraternity of warriors".[5] Although Bingley claims to have studied a great variety of sources, he heavily depends on Denzil Ibbetson's *Outlines of Punjab Ethnography* and Lepel Graffin's *Ranjit Singh* and blends them so nicely that he could make a strong case in favour of recruitment of Jat Sikhs. What he wished to communicate is clear from his introductory remarks. He writes :

> Before commencing an account of the Sikhs it is necessary to emphasize the fact that 'Sikh' is the name given to the members of

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-16.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 217-18.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-31.
4. Bingley, *The Sikhs* (Language Department, Patiala). There is a chapter on recruitment and appendices on districts and *tehsils* with their relative values as recruiting grounds etc.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

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a military order of Hindu dissenters and puritans, and not, as is sometimes supposed, to any particular race. Owing, however, to the social and political preponderance of the Jats throughout the Punjab and to the fact that considerably more than two-thirds of the Sikh population belong to this tribe, the history of Sikhism must necessarily be prefaced by an account of the Jats and of the circumstances which caused this race of peaceful cultivators to be transformed into a fraternity of warriors.[1]

Following the trend set by Gordon, of course with less dogmatism, Bingley tries to establish that, "it was from these Scythian immigrants that most of the Jat tribes are at any rate partly descended".[2] As regards the mythical concept of the origin of the Rajputs whose distinction from the Jats was "probably social rather than ethnical",[3] the author believes that they were given the title of fire-born by ready-witted Brahmins to distinguish them from the original Rajput races which claim descent from the Sun and Moon.[4]

Racially separated, the Jats had developed independent republics known as *Arashtra* (kingless). Bingley holds that the Jats of the Western Punjab were converted to Islam but Pathans and Baluchis looked upon the Hindkis, Muslim Jats, very contemptuously.[5] Being conquerred people, the Jat Muslims had no political importance. Thus making an attempt to appeal to the antipathy of Jat Muslims against Afghans and Pathans and to secure their support against the latter, despite their common religious bonds, the Hindu Jats originally followed Buddhism, but later on joined the ranks of Guru Gobind Singh. The rise of Jat Sikhs to political power was primarily due to Muhammadan persecution and the weakness of the Mughal Empire much in the same way as Marathas[6] rose to political power. But gradually the author asserts that their religious "fervour was entirely eclipsed by their military zeal, and thus, for the second time in

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
4. *Ibid.*, He gives due place in his narration to other stories which were prevalent among the Jats to explain their origin.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

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history, a religion became a political power, and for the first time in India a nation arose, embracing all races, all classes and all grades of society, and banded them together in face of a foreign foe".[1]

But opposition to established government could not be justified as it could as well apply to the British government which was also foreign. Therefore, Bingley justifies persecution of the Sikhs by the later Mughals in these words :

> "....it must be remembered that the Sikhs were mostly bandits and outlaws, and they brought punishment upon themselves by their excesses and defiance of the law. So long as they were merely a religious body, they were left unmolested ; but when they began to band themselves together for political purposes the Mughal authorities naturally took alarm, and commenced a series of repressive measures which increased in severity and eventually took the form of bitter religious persecution".[2]

However, Bingley reiterating the arguments of Gordon, underscores the point that the Sikhs supported the British because they were aroused by the thought of a combat "between Sikhism and Islam".[3] This explanation runs counter to his basic thesis.

Bingley is unable to explain how a religious movement which "originated in a desire to draw Sikhs and Muhammadans together, should have ended in exciting the bitterest animosity between them"[4] He believes that "broadly speaking Sikhism may be described as Muhammadanism minus circumcision and cow-killing and plus faith in Gurus".[5] He reiterates the arguments of Lepel Griffin while explaining the adverse effects of Hinduism on the Sikhs. The chief cause of "the decay of Sikhism is undeniably the strongly attractive force of Hinduism". While reproducing Griffin, he further adds, "The ivy-like vitality of Hinduism enfolds and strangles everything which it has once grasped." Again,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

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like Griffin, he believes that decline of Sikhism was due to women for whom the abstract faith of Sikhism was far less attractive than Hinduism.[1] He concludes that Hinduism had been always hostile to Sikhism and also warns the Sikhs that "In course of a few generations, Sikhism is likely to be superseded by some form of Vaishnavism which is always more popular in times of peace".[2]

After exhorting the Sikhs to remain away from the Hindus, Bingley goes on to explain the chief characteristics of the Jat Sikhs which made them soldiers par excellence and by virtue of which they ought to be recruited in the army in large numbers. In his own words : "There are many warlike races in India whose military qualities are of a high order, but of these the Sikh indisputably takes the leading place as a thoroughly useful and reliable soldier".[3] While explaining the cause of their superiority Bingley says that the Sikhs "possess in a higher degree the ardent military spirit which had its origin in the warlike precepts of Gobind Singh". Incidentally, he again closely follows the line of argument set by Lepel Griffin.

Considering them as natural leaders of the Punjab, because they were a dominant landowning and military class, Bingley tries to establish that the Jat Sikhs had been able to retain this position because the British gave them opportunities to join the army, their natural profession.[4] Not only the Sikhs increased in number and retained their social status but also they acquired education which improved their moral habits.

After the First Great War, C.H. Payne from the Bhopal State Service wrote *A Short History of the Sikhs*. This was another attempt in the same series which though different in execution is yet a highly politically motivated work. Like all other historians writing on local history, Payne sets his pattern or format synchronising with the provincial political

1. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

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pattern. The shock of the First World War, the Ghadr movement, the Russian Revolution and the stimulation which nationalist movement received therefrom in the Punjab were strong factors for a historian to change his outlook. The growing opposition of the Muslims due to British policy towards Turkey, known as the Khilafat movement, the opposition of the urban Hindu and Sikh communities and the strained relations with Afghanistan which culminated in war, caused Payne to fall back on the thesis which had inspired Gordon and Bingley.[1] The safety and maintenance of British imperialism hinged essentially on the support of army. "There were now", says Payne, "30,000 Sikh troops in the service of the Government and they constitute the flower of the Indian Army". Taking cue from the loyalty of the Singh Sabha movement which was represented by "Sirdars, military officers, graduates and other Sikhs of position, in other words the Sikh elite", he argues that :

> Of late years the increased demand for Sikhs in the Indian army and farther afield has given a new and powerful impetus to Sikhism. The revival has been assisted by the spread of education and by the establishment of the Singh Sabhas and the Chief Khalsa Diwan, and as a result the influence of the Khalsa has never, since the reign of Ranjit Singh, been stronger than it is to-day.[2]

Explaining what the Sikhs owe to the British after the annexation of the Punjab, Payne writes :

> "....and there is little doubt that had there been no army for the Sikhs to enlist in, they would ere now have been absorbed into the Hindu communities by which they were surrounded."[3]

In fact, the whole book is an attempt to establish that though the interests of the British and the Sikhs were different in nature and character, yet their welfare was interdependent. Separating the Sikhs from the Muslims and the Hindus, Payne tries to inspire mutual confidence through history. For this purpose, he culled out information from all sorts of writings, sometimes without even acknowledging

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1. In his bibliography, Payne has not included both of them.
2. C.H. Payne, *A Short History of the Sikhs* (Reprint, Department of Languages, Punjab, Patiala), p. 223.
3. *Ibid.*

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them. He asserts that the contemporary social milieu was that of tolerance and intimacy. The Mughals and Pathans had developed the exclusiveness of the Rajputs and the Sheikhs and Sayyads, of the Brahamins. There was an inter-mingling of the two communities at festivals,[1] which in fact was a later phenomenon. Like Luther, Guru Nanak tried to restore Hinduism "to its ancient purity".[2] He was essentially a reformer and never professed to be the founder of a new religion or a nation. His purpose was ethical, not political. The induction of some references to Christianity while explaining the teachings of Guru Nanak is deliberately[3] done to establish an identity between the two religions. After establishing a close affinity of interest between the Sikhs and the British, he provides a historical explanation for the idea that there was inherent conflict between the Sikhs on the one hand, Hindus and Muslims on the other. While tracing the history of the Sikhs, he establishes certain common points such as : "There was no peace for the Sikhs in the empire of the Mughals. Just as the Roman sought, by unremitting persecution, to stamp out Christianity, so the Mughal emperors sought to stamp out the Khalsa".[4]

But gradually, as the events proved, Guru Gobind Singh set before himself the end to overthrow the Mughal Empire and the establishment of the Sikhs as an independent power.[5] By creating the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh not only separated the Sikhs from the Hindus but also infused into them the spirit of nationality. At this change most Hindus left the Guru and in their place Jats who were "undoubted Scythic in origin" swarmed the ranks of the Khalsa. The author then tries to project Guru Gobind Singh as an enemy of the Hindus at social level and of the Musalmans at political level. Payne extends his thesis and says that the Mughals and Marathas both threatened the existence of the Khalsa[6] in the 18th century.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-64.

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Payne strenghthens his argument by saying that during the reign of Ranjit Singh the Sikhs "regarded Hindus and Muhammadans alike as the enemies of their faith and the legitimate objects of their oppression". He further says, they "were in many parts reduced to abject poverty".[1] However, he could not ignore the fact that the Hindus and Muslims held very high offices in the reign of Ranjit Singh. Commenting on this he writes : "Thus liberal policy, though it helped to heel the wounds of the conquered, was viewed with considerable alarm by the Sikh Sirdars who remembered the warnings of Guru Gobind Singh and looked upon the advancement of the Brahmin, the Rajput and the Musalman as a violation of the fundamental principles of their faith, and a menace to the very existence of Khalsa as a brotherhood of the Sikhs".[2] Condemning the administration of Ranjit Singh as disorganised (except the army) and his revenue policy as unsystematic and vexatious,[3] Payne like Griffin gives the following argument for comparative peace in the Punjab during Ranjit Singh's reign. He writes :

> "But the Government of Ranjit Singh, though undoubtedly oppressive, was not altogether unpopular. Whatever its faults, it was a settled government and that alone was an unwonted luxury in the Punjab".[4]

Reiterating the arguments of Cunningham and Lepel Griffin, Payne admired the sagacity of Ranjit Singh for realizing that the British were safe friends and dangerous enemies. They had swallowed the more powerful empire of the Marathas, a lesson which Ranjit Singh never forgot. Similarly, for the post-Ranjit Singh Sikh period which was full of political cataclysm, Payne argues that the British would have relied on the Lahore State as a buffer state against Russian designs but for the ephemeral nature of the Lahore barrier.[5] But for the British disaster in Afghanistan, "it is more than likely that the Sikhs would never have had the temerity to

1. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

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cross the Sutlej",[1] the cause of Anglo-Sikh Wars and ultimately of annexation of the Punjab. Anarchy which prevailed after the death of Ranjit Singh originated with the antagonistic elements of which his court was composed.[2] Squarely placing blame on the nobility, Payne absolved the army of having any animosity towards the British. "Consistent misunderstanding" of the aims and actions of the British authorities[3] led the Khalsa army to wage war against the British for that was considered to be the only remedy to meet the situation. It was a blunder and "the Second Anglo-Sikh War was an even greater blunder for it was irretrievable", observes Payne.[4]

Payne is at pains to show that the existence of the British as a factor was a boon for the Sikhs. "Had the British been conquered in the second Maratha War, had Delhi become a Maratha Capital and Malwa a Maratha country, the building up of the Kingdom of Lahore could never have been accomplished—could never even have been attempted."[5] With the exception of a short period immediately after the annexation when the future of the Sikhs was under cloud and they hesitated to enrol themselves in the British army,[6] their confidence was restored and the prestige of the Khalsa revived.

The works of Gordon, Bingley and Payne reflect how an average Englishman understood history or how they wanted the Sikhs to understand their own history. Since they were obsessively political, they felt the need to extol the Jat Sikhs generally for their preponderance in the Indian army which was considered the sole instrument for maintaining their political power. To meet the challenge of nationalism, they assiduously endeavoured to inject communal antagonism into the history and as a natural corollary they established that the welfare of the Sikhs was bound up with their unconditional support to the British in India.

1. *Ibid*.
2. *Ibid*., p. 111.
3. *Ibid*., p. 168.
4. *Ibid*., p. 210.
5. *Ibid*., p. 78.
6. *Ibid*., p. 222.

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If we keep in mind the political situation in the first two decades of the present century, we find that changes in the attitudes of European historians corresponded to the changing demands of their political situation. Gordon, inspired by ethnographic researches, tries to impart a separate identity to the Sikhs, more particularly to Jat Sikhs on racial and religious basis. Bingley, writing before the First World War when Muslims were not very hostile to the English and the loyalty of the army appeared to be in test, dilates upon the military qualities of the Jat Sikh and adds a new dimension *i.e.* Hindu-Sikh antagonism. Payne, having seen the War and the rise of the Khilafat movement, makes an attempt to project the Hindus and Muslims as inveterate enemies of the Sikhs. With the emergence of nationalist and revolutionary movements among the Sikhs, the interest of the British in their history ceased, as we do not find any serious study of Punjab history being made by any European from then ownard until 1947.

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CHAPTER X

SYAD MUHAMMAD LATIF*

Collingwood's view that historical knowledge consists in "the historian's re-enactment in his own mind of the thought which underlay past action",[1] amply demonstrates that history is a mental reflection of human actions, or in other words, "behaviour informed by thought."[2] Historians have tried to state past reality in terms of certainty but what they have been able to achieve is that they wrote nothing more than a mere impression of it. This applies also to Syad Muhammad Latif to whom, however, "the great end of history is the exact illustration of events as they occurred, and there should neither be exaggeration nor concealment, to suit angry feelings or personal disappointment."[3] Quoting from Gurwood's famous work, the *Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, to strengthen his belief, he further adds, "History should contain the truth, the whole truth and nothing but truth."[4] Closely

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*Unfortunately details about the life of Syad Muhammad Latif are not available. Effort has been made by the author to find out bio-data from the proceedings of the Home Department, Government of India, and the Civil Lists of Punjab but with marginal success only.

1. "History can be about only what the historian can know: not the real past, but the thought he can re-think." See article on "Collingwood's Theory of Historical Knowing", by Leon J. Goldstein, in *History and Theory*, pp. 3, 36.

2. *Ibid.*, also see R.G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History.* (Oxford paperback), pp. 282-302.

3. Syad Muhammad Latif, *History of the Punjab,* (Calcutta, 1891). Preface, p. vi. The author has consulted the Reprint published in 1964.

4 *Ibid.*

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following Ranke's theory of history,[1] Latif tried to be critical, to be colourless and to be new. However, his writings were critical and new but not colourless, although it is impossible for any individual to avoid personal ingredient in his writings, more so for an administrator. Derrett's simple observation is significant to note in this connection. He observes, "Administrators, as a class, have made a marked contribution to historical writing, as indeed to history itself, and it has not proved difficult to expose their principal bias, induced by their connection with the Government and the predispositions and tastes of their English public."[2]

The Punjab, like other major provinces of India, received the attention of European scholars, generally officials, because of crucial political developments before and after the annexation in 1849. Historical literature on the Punjab boldly synchronises with the process of political development in the Punjab. The first attempt was that of Malcolm dictated by the contemporary political obligation of knowing and appreciating the history of the Sikh State to win over Ranjit Singh to their side.[3] On 19 March, 1849, there appeared another important book, *History of the Sikhs*, by Joseph Davey Cunningham. Besides being an indictment against the policy of Lord Hardinge, the book was intended to stimulate change in the Punjab policy of the Government.[4] Turn of the last

1. "....Ranke stands before us as the great founder of the school of objective history. In the Preface to his very first book, written in 1824, when he was not yet thirty, he stated that he did not presume, as did most historians, to sit in judgement on the past ; that he only wanted to show what had really happened." He was charged for his objectivity and matter-of-factness by all succeeding historians including his great disciple Lord Acton. See Pieter Geyl's *Debates with Historians.* (The Fontana O'Collins paper first published in 1955), p. 9.

2. See article by J.D.M. Derrett on "J.H. Nelson : A Forgotten Administrator-Historian of India" in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London, 1962, Reprint), p. 354.

3. See article by the author on "European Historians on Guru Nanak" in the *Proceedings of the Punjab History, Conference*, 1969-70.

4. See article by S. S. Bal on "Joseph Davey Cunningham's Dismissal From Political Service" in *Essays on History, Literature, Art and Culture* (New Delhi, 1970), by K.S. Bedi and S.S. Bal (eds.), p. 129.

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century witnessed another publication by General Sir John J.H. Gordon, which if studied in the background of the national struggle for independence, appears to suggest to the British Government to win political support of the Sikhs and to operate it as a lever against the Indian National Congress.[1] Interesting enough that in the list of the first persons whom Gordon acknowledges, the name of Syad Muhammad Latif also appears.

Though an obscure figure amongst the nineteenth century historians, the study of Syad Muhammad Latif's works is very fascinating for various reasons. Neither a professional nor a philosophic historian, which in fact few were in the last century, Latif was a revenue official, first among Indians to write a conprehensive history of the Punjab in English. Like most of his contemporary English-educated Indian officials, he was liberal and well aware of the movement around him modernising Indian communities, and like all Muslims of his caste, he traced his genealogy back to Prophet Muhammad. He was not a fanatic Muslim. As a historian, he is generally believed to be appreciative of the Gurus.[2]

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1. General Sir John J.H. Gordon's book, *The Sikhs* (London, 1904), was published after the Coronation Celebrations in England in which Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi, lineal descendant in the fourteenth generation from Guru Nanak, was honoured. In his eulogising account, the author has attempted to prove that the Sikhs being originally Scythians, maintained their independent culture through the ages, *ipso facto*, they formed a separate nation (the word nation is not used in the sense strictly political). He wrongly asserts in his book that Guru Nanak and the rest of the Gurus were *Jats* (see pp. 2, 27). He unequivocally expressed his sentiments through the reproduction of Baba Sir Khem Singh's appeal, "...that the political object which led the Sikhs to adopt military life, *viz.*, the establishment of perfect government and the maintenance of a rule of justice and religious toleration has been completely realized under the reign of the British Government, and that the Sikhs, fully regarding that Government as a god-send, have accordingly placed themselves entirely at its service." See pp. 25-60.

2. S. S. Bal, *Guru Nanak in The Eyes of Non-Sikhs* (Chandigarh, 1969), p. 144. Author's terse but brief observation given below appears to be a hasty pronouncement rather than a serious assessment made after a deep study of European writers. He says that Latif "was trying to

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However, it may be noted that by profession an administrator, he could not ignore his obligation to the agency of which he was an employee. As an individual and a member of a backward community as compared to the Hindus, he could not but feel his responsibility to assist his brethren in the struggle for identity led by Sir Syad Ahmed. Working under the pressure of these two major realities, he tried through his writings to make them complementary to each other.

Syad Muhammad Latif was born in 1847[1] about two years before the annexation of the Punjab. Born under the shadow of British occupation of the Punjab, he was destined to justify and support the British rule in the Punjab. He belonged to the esteemed Syad community, supposed to be the highest in the social strata of the Indian Muslims. After having received a liberal education, he was appointed an Extra-Judicial Assistant Commissioner on a salary of five hundred rupees.[2] In 1892 and 1897, he was granted titles of *Khan Bahadur*,[3] and *Shams-ul-Ulema*[4] respectively for his meritorious services. For short periods twice he acted as the Divisional Judge of Lahore and Hoshiarpur.[5] He held this post till the beginning of 1901 and worked at most of the important places of the Punjab, *viz.*, Lahore, Jullundur, Gujranwalla, Multan, Hoshiarpur and Gurdaspur.[6]

It is regretted that we do not have any information about the life of Latif, particularly before he joined the government service. That must have been the formative period

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imitate great British administrators of the nineteenth century, such as Malcolm, Prinsep, Henry Lawrence, J.D. Cunningham, R.N. Cust and Sir Lepel Griffin in this lebour of love."

1. See *Punjab Civil List*, 1889, vol. I, January-March. He was probably born in Lahore.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Mentioned in the *Punjab Civil List*, 1892, vol. III, July-October.

4. *Punjab Civil List*, 1897, vol. III, July-October.

5. The Secretary of State's despatch to the Governor-General of India, 1 September 1898, in Home Establishment.

6. His name does not appear on the government records after March 1901.

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during which he developed a fascination and flair for writing history. It is presumed that he was a very close friend of Nur Muhammad Chisti and Rai Bahadur Kanahya Lal. The former belonged to the priestly class whereas the latter was an engineer.[1] Common to both of them was their interest in history. They wrote in Urdu and Persian. It is presumed that having been inspired by his association with them, Latif wrote first in Urdu. All of them were members of the *Anjuman-i-Punjab*, a provincial association of liberal Punjabees. Just two years after his appointment he published *History of the Punjab* from Calcutta, a copy of which was recommended by the Punjab Government for presentation to the Queen Empress of India with the following remarks.[2] "Sir James Lyall considers that the work in question is an exceedingly meritorious one, and it is notable as being the first work of its kind in the English language produced by a native of the Punjab." The book was despatched for acceptance of the Crown on 8 September, 1891.[3]

Muhammad Latif has left to us three valuable contributions, two of them trace the history and antiquity of Lahore and Multan and the third is a comprehensive study of the history of the Punjab. Reasons for selecting the Punjab as his special interest are given in the book itself. Beside being the place of his birth, the Punjab had played an important and crucial role in history. Moreover, he perceived it as the spearhead "of this (British) Empire, the guardroom of India on the North."[4]

Muhammad Latif distinguished himself as a pioneer in the writing of history and antiquity of cities.[5] He regretted that

1. For this piece of information I am indebted to Dr. Ganda Singh a foremost scholar of Punjab History.

2. From the Government of Punjab to the Government of India, 24 August 1891. Home (Public), September 1891, No. 33A.

3. From the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, September 1891. *Ibid*.

4. Syad Muhammad Latif, *Lahore---its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities* (Lahore, 1892), Preface, p. II.

5. Other tracts on the historic cities are, S.M. Jaffer's *Peshawar : Past and Present* (being an account of Peshawar compiled from original sources), Punjab University Press, Lahore, 1952, Punjab University Publication No. 34. On the occasion of Indian History Congress, Patiala Session, 1967, the Department of Punjab Historical Studies published a brief history, *Patiala and Its Surroundings*.

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Lahore, traditionally a political centre of the Punjab, did not find a place even in the guide books. Except a brief account brought out by T.H. Thornton, one did not find any contemporary literature in the English language on Lahore.[1] However, there were two important works on Lahore, one in Urdu and the other in Persian. Maulvi Nur Muhammad wrote *Tahqiqat-i-Chisti* in Persian and Kanahya Lal wrote *Tarikh-i-Lahore* in Urdu. But the latter work, observes Latif, "contains little that is new, and that of Chisti is full of stories of supernatural powers, supposed to have been possessed by local saints whose tombs are still numerous in the neighbourhood of Lahore."[2] But that it was not enough was the feeling of. Latif. His acccount of Lahore is full of details about the antiquity and location of both medieval and modern buildings with beautiful illustrations in half tone. It also includes the story of the world famous diamond *Kohinoor* which now adorns the crown of the British monarch Queen Elizabeth II, as well as inscriptions on the guns of the Khalsa Army and coins of Ranjit Singh. Much before he got official appointment at Multan, Latif, on the pattern of his Lahore account, got two articles published on Multan in the *Calcutta Review*.[3] However, he soon established himself as a historian of no mean calibre by writing the *History of the Punjab : From the Remotest Antiquity to The Present Time* (Calcutta, 1881).

We do not know how and when Latif got the idea of writing such a detailed account of the Punjab. Inspiration, if there was any, was certainly not indigenous for there was no tradition of scientific historical scholarship in any of the languages of India barring a few stereotyped historical narratives. In the absence of a tradition of historical scholarship or training therein, the Indian historian of the nine-

1. T.M. Thornton, *A Brief Account of the History and Antiquities of Lahore*, The author was then Secretary to the Government of Punjab and subsequently judge of the Chief Court. A revised edition of this publication of 1873 was brought out in 1876 by J.L. Kipling, Principal of the Mayo School of Arts, Lahore.

2. Latif, *op. cit.*, Preface, p. V.

3. Syad Muhammad Latif, *Early History of Multan*; reprinted from the *Calcutta Riview*, October 1890 and April 1891 by Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1891.

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teenth century was in the habit of aping the Western scholars. Therefore, in much of the historical literature of that century, one would only find an imitative historical bent rather than a mature historical philosophy. Neverthless, counting Latif in the latter category, it can be said with adequate justification that he was different from his contemporaries. His political awareness persuaded him to seek an explanation and solution of the problems of his times in history. Inspired by his association with writers in Indian languages and well informed of the historical literature produced by the Europeans, he presents in himself a reasonable synthesis of the two. Here he is radically different from his contemporaries.

Muhammad Latif combined in his personality three built-in characteristics which in their combination somewhat confuse the reader. He was an Indian, a Muslim and an official of the British Indian administration. A careful perusal of his writings would show his attitude and treatment changing from problem to problem and from chapter to chapter, sometimes obviously contradicting himself. His reviewers have not so far taken him seriously and brushed him off in a few lines. Underestimating Latif as a historian, Cantwell Smith writes, "An early writer, not professionally academic, but writing as British historians of that time......"[1] Elaborating his viewpoint, he adds that "the author treats the Sikh Wars and so on just as a British Official ; and even makes use of Latin tags."[2] Latif, therefore, deserves a better treatment not by way of favour but obligation. Placed as he was by national circumstances, his attitude and thinking were conditioned by the contemporary liberalism of Europe and the Muslim renaissance.

Though an admirer of Macaulay, particularly for his style,[3] Latif either deliberately ignores the underlying idea

1. See article by W. Cantwell Smith on "Modern Muslim Historical Writing in English" in C.H. Philips (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 324.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Latif, *op. cit.*, Preface, p. X. The author regrets that Macaulay did not write a history of India. "Had the great essayist taken up his pen to write a history of this country, he would not, in all human probability, have omitted to lay before the world the other side of the pictured

(f.n.--Contd. P. No. 206)

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of his writings or fails to comprehend it. Macaulay's assertion that the cause of British success was their moral superiority over the Indians does not find favour with Muhammad Latif. His problem was more political than moral or even cultural. Therefore, he followed the lead of his contemporary official historians like Richard Temple, Sir C. Aitchison, Sir A. Colvin and others. The tremendous upheavel of 1857 not only lifted from British mind the so-called 'whiteman's burden', but also reduced the British imperialism to a mere political concept. "Their political convictions, confirmed by Indian experience, were in favour of strong government directed by high intelligence and governing by means of scientific laws, fearlessly and efficiently administered",[1] observes Eric Stokes. Extending his support for having a strong government of that kind as against the demand for representation and equality by the members of the Indian National Congress, Latif warns Indians :[2] "Remember that you are as yet learning your alphabet in the great School of Progress, that you have only just set your foot on the threshold of that grand institution, that you are as yet but on the first step of the ladder which leads to the lofty palace of Human Glory, and that the ambitious ideas of some among you, of equality with the conquerors of the East, will in the end redound to your own discomfiture and hurt."

Thus, he not only provides a reasonable justification for his support to British rule in India, but also suggests that the change so eagerly sought after by the extremists could await till the institutions like rule of law, and peace and order were firmly established. He seems convinced like other liberals of the time, of the role of the British rule and the great destiny of India.

He would have informed us whence the wealth had come which enabled the Imperial Court to maintain its state, or the Viceroys of Provinces to decorate their palaces and entertain a countless host of retainers, and what means were employed in accumulating these vast treasures for Imperial exchequer," says Latif.

1. See article by E.T. Stokes on "The Administrators And Historical Writing on India". in C.H. Philips, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

2. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. XII.

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Moreover, contemporary political situation and the position of minorities therein led him to assist the British in maintaining stable and strong government. The Muslims after losing political power to the British suspected British design and, therefore, remained socially, economically and politically isolated from the mainstream of national life. After the Revolt of 1857, the lead was taken by Sir Syad Ahmad to raise the backward Muslim community to the level which the Hindus had achieved during the past few decades. Economic and cultural lag of the Muslims and political necessity of the British Indian Government helped in removing the gulf between the two. As a sort of epilogue to his major work, he once wrote, "the quick-witted Bengali and the thrifty Hindus have eagerly seized the opportunity for advancement approved by British Civilization which the Muhammadan and the Sikh has each in turn neglected."[1] He appealed to the leaders of public opinion in his community to devote themselves to the amelioration of the Muslims and shun politics.[2] Merely on the basis of common historical situation and coterminous interests of the British and the Muslims, it is certainly far fetched to assume that Muhammad Latif was just one of the many official historians. What was a conviction and objective with Muhammad Latif was just a political postulate with the British Indian Government. He visualised fulfilment of the Muslim renaissance in the assistance of the government whereas the latter sought a political lever in the minorities.

If at all, Latif is to be characterised as a historian, he can be described, though vaguely, as a liberal Muslim historian, rationally advocating the cause of his community. He is generally mistaken to be an official historian for apparent reasons, *viz.*, he was a government official of a fairly high rank ; he possessed information mostly available in the writings of the British official historians and like most of his contemporaries he ungrudgingly complimented the British rule. But his originality lies in projecting sharply the political problems of the Punjab through various stages.

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 630.
2. *Ibid.*

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One of the major problems which confront all students of history is the problem of finding the correct relationship between regional history and the intricate filigree of the history of the sub-continent. But the magnitude of the problem correspondingly decreases if the political boundaries of the regions are co-terminous with linguistic or cultural boundaries as is the case with Rajasthan. With regard to the Punjab, such a development started with Ranjit Singh culminating in the formation of the Punjabi Suba in 1966. The rise and fall of empires in the ancient and medieval periods from within the Punjab or its neighbourhood, not only corroded the frontiers of a distinct province but also gave birth to a fluid, and by and large, a flexible culture and institutions. Since the Punjab formed a base for invaders to establish empires in India, a home for communities migrating to India, a treasure house for free-booters and a rich market for traders to procure goods to carry them across the frontiers, it is neither possible nor desirable to separate completely the history of the Punjab from that of India. Nevertheless, Latif took great care to avoid entering into the broad subject of Indian history as far as possible. But his attempt to separate the two histories is, without any doubt, more artificial than natural. His conception of Punjab history does not emerge from within the cultural and social heritage of the area. Adopting the scissors and paste method Latif culled out large chunks of events having a bearing on the Punjab from the current available information on Indian history. This is a very conspicuous feature of the first two parts of his book, *History of Punjab*.

The book is divided into five major sections, the first dealing with the ancient Punjab. Having no pretensions of an original researcher of history, Latif entirely depends on English sources like James Mill, W.W. Hunter, General Cunningham and others, for the ancient period of Punjab history. Despite research in the ancient Indian literature and society conducted by H. H. Wilson, Prinsep, William Jones and Max Muller, the knowledge of the history of this period remained so miserably inadequate that a non-professional historian had no scope to give anything new. As Latif took

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liberty with the placement of historical data, he made certain changes in the treatment and explanation of his facts. Introduction of a chapter on 'Modern Hindus' in this section, though appearing superfluous, amply demonstrates the purpose which the book was to serve. Following the account of James Mill, whose knowledge of India was neither personal nor original, Latif lists some of the evil practices of the early nineteenth century Hindu society and their corrupting influence on the Muslims. If there was any perceptible identity between two the cultures of the Hindus and the Muslims, it was not primarily because of the former's influence over the latter but because of the fact the the two cultures were arrested by the same social, economic and also ecological conditions. Moreover, the proselytised Muslims no doubt embraced a new religion but could not do away with their own indigenous culture. As a matter of fact, Latif tried to view ancient India from the prespective of the nineteenth-century Hindu society. Unhistorical as this process of thinking is, observations emanating from such a process of thinking are sometimes wrong and generally superficial.[1] For instance, his reference that the Hindus in ancient India never lent money for gain. In other words, Latif asserts that there was no usury in ancient India, which is not supported by historical facts ; the principal profession of the ninteenth-century Hindus was money-lending or *Sahukara*.[2] As a large number of the Muslim cultivators were indebted to the Hindu moneylenders, it may be safely presumed that Latif here is giving expression to their grievance.

His assessment of Indian religions also suffers from defects. His contention that "Jainism is, properly speaking, a compromise between Hinduism and Buddhism" is too simple an explanation for a complex socio-religious phenomenon of the ancient period.[3] If viewed from the nineteenth-century situation in the Punjab where Jains operated more as a class than as a religious group, one finds identity between the two

1. See Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-52.

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communities. This identity is not of religious philosophy but of socio-religious practices which sometimes transcend religious barriers. About the decline of Buddhism in India, one witnesses again an emotional element operating in the author's analysis and receiving precedence over the historical. Latif observes : "In the abstract, it was atheism coupled with a system of rigid self-mortifications and penances ; it shunned the very idea of future state and declared annihilation or nothingness (*Nirvana*) to be the end of the present existence. A religion so barren in its results proved distasteful to the lively and imaginative people of India.[1]

Continuing in a similar strain in his section on medieval Punjab, Latif responded to Western thought as mediated by the British, "not by a convolution within Muslim culture itself."[2] It is not to suggest that Muslim historians such as Latif did not present problems and challenges in their writings. There are three major strands which one can easily discern in the Muslim writings, *viz.*, they provide justification for the medieval Muslim state, religion and institutions ; they show an urge for modernisation or an appeal to the Muslims to accept modern institutions ; and they are a sort of a commentary on the future of Muslims. It may appear to be an unhistorical approach since it implies re-interpretation of medieval times in terms of the nineteenth or twentieth century political problems. Latif was no exception to this phenomenon. But here again, as in the section on ancient Indian history, Latif has failed to project the medieval Punjab. Instead, he gives a narration of political events, historical myths and antecedents pertaining to the personal life of royal families. The dichotomy of his account is that on the

1. *Ibid.*, p. 49. The author, of course, is aware of the fact that Buddhism was a popular religion during the reign of Asoka and Harsha. Does the author mean that Indians were not imaginative and lively during those periods of history ? Does he mean the same for all the peoples who even now practise and preach this religion in the Punjab ? Did it not satisfy the imagination of the Punjabees ? Such problems are better understood with the grasp of cultural dynamism and social change.

2. See article on "Modern Muslim Historical Writing on Medieval Muslim India" by P. Hardy. See Philips, *op. cit.* p. 306.

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one hand he tries hard to justify the Muslim rulers, while on the other, he is critical of the Mughal absolutism or such-like institutions as stood in contrast to the liberal institutions of his own day.

To illustrate this attitude, mention may be made of two controversial issues, founding of *Din-i-Ilahi* by Akbar and responsibility of Aurangzeb for the downfall of the Mughal Empire. With regard to the first, Latif does not make a categorical statement that Akbar had a political objective in mind in the founding of *Din-i-Ilahi*. However, Akbar, in his opinion, declared himself the spiritual guide of Islam by innovating divine monotheism and consequently freed himself from the authority of the Caliph. Founding of *Din-i-Ilahi* no doubt offended the Mahomedans.[1] But reaction to this among the Muslims was not uniformly antagonistic. Since it was not obligatory for any one to join, its proper appraisal can only be made in view of the rapidly changing socio-religious phenomenon of the country, and the *Bhakti* movement, a movement of cultural synthesis. Alienation of *Ulemas* by Akbar did not substantially harm the stability of the Mughal state. Whereas, according to the author, Aurangzeb's "bigotry and intolerance towards Hindus revived religious animosities between the various classes of population and the disintegration of races to which his hypocrisy gave rise, paved the way for the speedly dismemberment of the once powerful Mughal monarchy in India."[2] The religious policy of the Mughals was not the sole factor in the decline of the Empire. In fact, Aurangzeb's policy, including religious policy, needs historical reappraisal. To Latif, study of history is purposive, teleological. On the basis of this assumption, though Latif's ideas are not clear, it may be presumed that the British rule of toleration, of regard for all races, and equality of treatment was not anti-Islamic. In this may be traced the reason for his unfair and unhistorical treatment of the medieval Indian history in general, and Akbar and Aurangzeb in particular.

1. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 146. The author also mentions a few other innovations.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

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The rise and growth of Sikhism was a significant factor in moulding the socio-political ferment of the Punjab. It was a reaction to the monolithic, rigid and close society of the sixteenth century. It corroded the fossilized social base of the political authority in the Punjab. Starting as a reform movement, it became an organised, well-knit, yet an open, society during the Guru period.[1] Dynamic as this movement was, Latif befittingly devotes the major part of his book to its study. For lack of historical source material, not much is known about this period. Contemporary historiography reflects two kinds of attitudes based on the grim struggle between the Muslims and the Sikhs. The *Janamsakhis*, Sikh sources of the history of the Gurus, are full of fictions and legends. Therefore, he does not attach much historical value to them.[2] Latif also wants the reader to remember "that the original writers of these sakhis were men who occupied a very low position in the scale of civilization and whose education and mode of life were far inferior to those of the growing generation."[3] Since these were biased, partisan and coloured accounts written in praise of the Gurus, Latif rejected them as inadequate material.[4] Nonetheless, he used them to reconstruct the life of the Gurus. "The Mahomedan writers may, on a point of difference, be safely consulted, as it is very unsafe to rely implicitly on all that the Sikh historians have said",[5] opines Latif. His partiality for the Muslim historians is as arbitrary as his rejection of the Sikh writers. It is not within the purview of this paper to asses the historical validity of the Sikh or the Muslim writers. But Latif ought to have examined all the sources and evidences of the Sikhs before rejecting them outrightly. Strangely enough, Latif, like all other historians of the Punjab, depends heavily on the *Janamsakhis* translated or

1. See two articles on "Foundation of the Khalsa Panth" by Fauja Singh, Bedi and Bal, *op. cit.*. p. 74; and the *Punjab: Past and Present*, April 1971, p. 197.
2. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 268. f.n.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 240 f.n.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 268, f.n.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

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related by Malcolm, McGregor or Trumpp, as the sources of information for the period of Guru Nanak.

Starting with a premise popular among the nineteenth century people of the Punjab that Guru Nanak was nearer to the Muslims, Latif tries to make us believe that "an idea generally prevailed among the Mohammedans that Nanak was a true follower of the Prophet."[1] Here he also refers to a dispute on the death of Nanak between the Hindus and the Muslims regarding the disposal of his dead body. Till the accession of Arjun Dev, the fifth Guru, who by establishing a system of *Masands* made the Sikhs accustomed to a regular system of government, the Sikh movement continued as a peaceful religio-social movement. If the whole movement was political, as the author believes, there was no reason for him to hold Chandu responsible for the martyrdom of the Guru. In the same way Latif should have explained the short-lived friendship between Guru Hargobind and the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. It is only in connection with Guru Teg Bahadur that Latif makes a categorical statement. He writes: "The aspirations of the Sikh Guru were high, and, though suppressed by the stern Aurangzeb, were fully exhibited during the latter part of Guru Teg Bahadur's life, as manifesting kingly rather than priestly, aims, changing eventually, inoffensive quietists into fanatical warriors."[2]

Since a gulf was created between the two, Latif becomes unreasonably harsh to Guru Gobind Singh who staked his all to fight the unjust and cruel government of the Mughals. Latif dubbed him as an "irreconcilable enemy of every Mohammedan".[3] Weak as he was to challenge the Mughal authority, says Latif, he became a staunch worshipper of *Durga*, a Hindu goddess. It is interesting to note that Latif on the one hand suggests that he derived inspiration to found the *Khalsa* and its symbols from *Durga*, and on the other, he asserts that it was the desire of the Guru "to give the Sikhs a distinct national character, and a spirit of opposition to

1. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

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Hinduism," as they were generally averse to blue clothes.[1] He goes further to prove that the children of Gobind Singh were bricked alive in the wall at the instance of the Hindu Dewan of Sirhind. As he wants the reader to swallow these facts without objection, he suggests that the non-Muslim historians "deliberately ignore the fact that the instigator of the crime was a Hindu Kuljas, the Governor's Dewan, who bore a personal grudge against Govind." The whole account is illogical, inconsistent, full of contradictions and unhistorical. When he could refute Sikh writers, without any valid argument, or when he failed to exercise his own historical sense in suggesting to the students of history to place more reliance on Muslim writers, it appears nothing more than an apologia in a historical study.

Bitter against the cruel government, Banda continued Guru Gobind Singh's struggle. Latif is extremely critical of the so-called barbarities perpetrated by Banda and holds, to a considerable extent, Guru Gobind responsible for his acts. "Gobind's selection of Banda," observes Latif, "as his successor, does not appear to have been the result of any very great opinion he had formed of his piety, or of his ability to propagate the religion of which he had been so long the leader, but rather to have been made with a view to his avenging the death of his father and two sons, for which purpose he could not have singled out a better instrument than this ruthless sucker."[2] Taking advantage of the schism among the Sikhs and Banda's inferior position in the eyes of the Sikhs to that of the Guru, Latif dubbed him as a "ruthless sucker." In this he not only minimises the mission of Guru Gobind Singh but alos ignores the fact that Banda could not have done anything else in the face of a cruel government which took the Sikhs for arch enemies. At another place Latif writes, "His triumphs are not remembered as heroic acts, but as malicious and cold-blooded atrocities. His ruling and insatiable passion was

1. *Ibid.*, p. 268, f.n.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

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that of pouring out Mahomedan blood."[1] The same may be said about the policy of the Mughal Government towards the Sikhs during the eighteenth century when mutual trust or respect for human beings was not or could not be the order of the day.

The vacuum created by political turmoil in the Punjab was filled up by the Sikh chieftains known as *misaldars*. With the increase in their authority in the regions forming a "theocratic federation", the suppressed Muslims and lower classes emigrated to the British territories where they enjoyed religious freedom. From the Sikh theocratic federation to the establishment of monarchy, rather to the annexation of the Punjab, Latif had one major point to emphasise like the British that it was a political struggle of the medieval type. It is in the same tenor that he describes the reign of Ranjit Singh. He appreciates the wisdom of Ranjit Singh in realising the superior strength of the British, and therefore maintaining friendly relations with them. Before going into the sources used by the author it appears necessary to elaborate some of the important points as given below :

(*a*) Latif's opinion about Ranjit Singh,

(*b*) and his policy *vis-a-vis* that of the British towards the North West Frontier.

After having increased his power, Ranjit Singh began to entertain a notion that he was the Lord of the whole Sikh nation. Latif says, "Ranjit Singh preferred to be called Khalsaji signifying the whole body of the Sikhs, and in all public, documents this word had the same signification as that of the *Maharāja* or *Sarkar*."[2] Whatever may be the true nature of his rule, as far as his pronouncements are concerned, he at least ostensibly believed himself to be a servant of the *Khalsa*. Moreover, he was depicted as a warlord whose main concern was fighting and maintaining his territory by force of arms. He submitted to the superior military strength and crushed the inferior one. The whole narrative brings out that there

1. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 372 f.n.

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were two classes, the nobility and the poor. Himself a simple man, his court and the nobles were very glamorous, suggestimg that the nobility was the base of his political power. After praising his religiosity, his broadmindeness, his vigour and his imagination, Latif makes a derogatory remark which has no relevance to diplomacy, politics and statecraft. He observes, "In his pursuit of ambition or pleasure, he was indifferent alike to the pledges of friendship and to the ties of blood or affection."[1]

. Being nearer to that historical phenomenon than any other modern historian, Latif could have dealt with the problems of administration and social conditions in the Punjab. Only then it could have been possible to see Ranjit Singh's reign in the proper historical perspective. It is understandable why the nobility of Ranjit Singh, after his death, betrayed the Khalsa cause. But it needs further research to find out as to why the Khalsa army put up a few of the most effective resistances to the British arms, why there were no revolts or challenges to the state of Ranjit Singh, why the state did not parcel out into small units despite conspiracies and conflicts, and why Ranjit Singh was feared by the nobles and revered by the people of the Punjab. Despite the researches which have been recently[2] conducted, we do not have a clear picture of his institutions. Therefore, in view of the limited information any judgement on Ranjit is either motivated or unhistorical. The composite character of his state and social institutions have so far been ignored in any historical study.

As regards the problem of the North-West Frontier, like all other official historians, Latif, admitting the British political motives in that region, follows a line of argument in defence of the British when the conflict of interest in Sind between the two powers crystallised in Colonel Pottinger's political mission. Latif abandoning his historical objectivity

1. *Ibid.*, p. 496.

2. A number of books have been published recently wholly or partly dealing with this period. Dr. Fauja Singh's *Military System of the Sikhs* is the only publication which deals with one of the major aspects of Ranjit Singh's administrative system.

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observes : "It was not thought proper to make any communication yet to the Maharaja, lest he should endeavour by secret working to counteract the peaceful and beneficial project of the British Government."[1] It implied that the British in India had never reposed their confidence in their friendship with Ranjit Singh, that they had political designs counteracting those of Ranjit Singh in Sind, that the British mission was a moral one, a kind of civilizing mission. This conflict did not lead to war over a region which Ranjit Singh had coveted for many years. The wily chief of Lahore, as Latif calls him, "had learnt to respect the power of the English,"[2] whereas the British object was to act with discretion and moderation, and to remain on friendly[3] terms with States having conflicting interests. It clearly reflects the attitude of the author which he maintains on the subject till the annexation of the Punjab by the British.

The British did not allow the fate of the Punjab to remain in suspense for a long time. The confusion caused by the two schools for and against the annexation of the Punjab closed in 1849. Differences among the officials over annexation have divided modern historians in their analysis of the causes leading to the annexation of the Punjab. Those who depend on the pronouncements of the officials in favour of annexation believe it to be a premeditated act.[4] Dr. Bal in his book, *British Policy Towards Punjab*, rejects the thesis that it was a premeditated step. In fact, he goes to say that the British government was not in favour of annexation.[5] What still remains to be studied is as to why the British vacillated for so long. Was it due to the opposition they expected from within the Punjab or due to some other

1. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 455.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
3. *Ibid.*, 473.
4. Ganda Singh, *The British Occupation of the Punjab* (Patiala, 1956) ; also see Introduction, *Private Correspondence Relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars* (Patiala, 1955).
5. S.S. Bal in doctoral thesis now published boldly asserts these conclusions. See *British Policy Towards the Punjab*, (1844-49).

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reasons ? It is certain that the people of the Punjab did not invite the Britishers.

The line of approach which Latif adopted is pro-British. Like other official historians, he thinks that "the British Government of India had throughout acted with utmost forbearance and moderation in their relations with the Sikh Darbar, and the policy of the Governor-General had, from the outset, been wholly unaggressive and entirely free from taint of greed and ambition."[1] But the question arises whether or not the main sentiment of the British or their desire to establish a strong empire was the motivating force to subjugate the whole of India. If it is true, the author has been clearly on the wrong side of the table. The rest of Latif's account till 1880, is nothing but a putting together of moral and material reports of the British Indian Government in the Punjab. Perhaps the author tried to place the Sikh administration in contrast to that of the British, showing the latter as based on justice, rule of law and social welfare.

Readers of Latif's *History of the Punjab* will be disappointed if they expect to find in it any historical theory or even objective history. Latif made no special effort to give a neat and clean formula to explain the problems of Punjab history. Nevertheless, there is also no reason to believe, as can be now clearly seen, that he wrote for mere fascination for history. Like many of his contemporaries he saw a close parallel between the interests of British rule in India and the Muslims of India. He, like all other liberals, found the redemption of his fellow brethren in the continuation of British rule in India. He deplored the Muslim backwardness and socio-political isolation. He did not take any active part in the social reform movement to promote the interest of his class. An admirer of the British values and modern institutions, Latif sometimes went even to absurd lengths in attempting to prove that British rule in India was nothing but beneficial. He laboured this thesis so ardently that he made countless references obliquely or directly to the contemporary situation in a polemical spirit.

1. Latif, *op. cit.*, pp. 571-72.

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But it was not so much for his selfish ends that Latif was trying to defend the British Empire in India ; nor was he writing for fame. He was neither a bigot nor an anti-national. As an individual he was one of those many educated Indians who did not approve of the methods of the Indian National Congress and who had complete faith in the British sense of justice. When he projected the crisis of identity of the Muslim community, he behaved in the way that any other liberal would have behaved irrespective of his religion. Therefore, while making any judgement upon Latif as a historian, it is necessary to keep in view the age he lived in. In spite of the distractions and demands of official work, he was the first Indian who wrote one of the most comprehensive histories of the Punjab, and two tracts on Lahore and Multan. By virtue of this he earned a well-deserved title of Syad Muhammad Latif the historian of the Punjab.

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CHAPTER XI

SITA RAM KOHLI

Scientific research in the field of history in the Punjab dates from the second decade of the present century. Two most memorable names associated with its start were Karam Singh and Sita Ram Kohli. Both started their work more or less simultaneously, but whereas Karam Singh derived his inspiration mainly from the Singh Sabha Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that had leavened the Sikh community and created among its members a new interest in the study of Sikh history, Sita Ram Kohli was indebted for his interest in historical research to his western education and European teachers and friends, such as H.L.O. Garrett and John Thompson.

Sita Ram hailed from the Shahpur district of the Punjab which is now in West Pakistan. He was born on February 28, 1889, at Bhera, a historical and flourishing town which was also the headquarters of the *tehsil* of the same name. He came of a middle class Kohli Khatri family and his parents, as was usual with middle-class families then, were most keen on providing the Western education to their sons. The result was that both Sita Ram and his brother Ganga Ram received education up to the M. A. standard and became teachers in colleges. The early education up to Matriculation was received by Sita Ram at the Government High School, Bhera. After that he shifted to Lahore and joined the D. A. V. College there. After a short stay at his College, he joined the Government College, Lahore, where he passed his B. A. and M.A. examinations. The subject in which he obtained his M.A. degree was History. As he was one of the best

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students in the batch that passed out, he was granted the Alexandra Research Scholarship by the Panjab University, Lahore, for conducting research in history. Happily, this saved him for history, for he was, after passing his M. A. examination, keen on the study of law and was about to join the Law College, Lahore, when the grant of the scholarship was announced.

In 1913-14 the eminent British historian Ramsay Muir came to Lahore as a visiting Professor in the department of History, Panjab University, Lahore. He remained at Lahore for a period of six months from October 1913 to March 1914. The visit of Ramsay Muir kindled great interest in historical research, particularly in the field of Punjab history. His scholarly address at the fourth annual meeting of the Punjab Histroical Society at Lahore on January 31, 1914 (now printed in the first issue of the history journal of the Punjabi University, *Punjab Past and Present*), spelt out the vast scope of historical research in India. Two positive results followed from this : (*i*) reinvigoration of the Punjab University Historical Society as a forum of discussion with a regular journal of its own where selected research papers could be printed; (*ii*) realization of the necessity of a thorough search for the records of the Khalsa period preceding the British rule in the Punjab. As the idea of promoting historical research had the active backing of some high-ups in the official hierarchy, the work was immediately taken up with zest and earnestness. The Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, ordered an all-out search in the Civil Secretariat for the Khalas Durbar Records. This resulted, before long, in the discovery of a huge mass of dust-laden records bound in bundles and lying neglected in an obscure corner of the Secretariat building. These records were all in Persian written in the *Shikasta* (running) hand, and as such presented considerable difficulty in their decipherment. But this could not be allowed to come in the way of work on them ; rather the greater the challenge, the greater was the incentive to meet it. Young Sita Ram, who was known for his proficiency in Persian and for his deep interest in history, was assigned in 1915 the difficult task of preparing a detailed

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catalogue of the newly discovered records. He worked on them with devotion and diligence for a period of five years from 1915 to 1919. During these years he scanned and catalogued nearly three lakh folios covering the greater portion of the Khalsa period, 1811 to 1849. Writing about them, he says in his Preface to his book, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, "These records had passed into the possession of the British at the time of the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 but for long seventy years they remained bound in bundles unused by any body. I was the first to untie the bundles and satchels of these records and it was with great labour that I became skilled in the art of reading the difficult *Shikasta* handwriting of Persian. Gradually, however, I was able to prepare a catalogue of the records of each department, giving date, number and other necessary particulars of each document. These catalogues were subsequently published by the Punjab Government in two volumes under the name, *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records*."

The tremendous success with which Sita Ram accomplished his first project, admittedly a difficult undertaking, brought him success in his personal career as well. After the expiry of the Alexandra Research Scholarship, he was taken into government service (not an easy thing in those days) and appointed a lecturer in History at the Government College, Lahore. He was at this College for many long years, during which period he not only carried on his own research activities, but by his mature guidance and first-hand knowledge of the abundant historical material available in the Punjab Government Records Office, also helped a large number of postgraduate students and scholars to write dissertations and monographs. In view of his good work he was subsequently appointed Deputy Records Keeper, Punjab. He was at this time also a permanent member of the Punjab University Hstorical Society and took keen interest in the organisation and deliberations of the Sikh History Society at Lahore in 1931. Taking advantage of his long stay at Lahore, he built his own house there. Apart from providing the facility of abundant research material, his continued stay at the capital enabled him to be near his kith and kin, for his

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brother Ganga Ram Kohli was a lecturer in Botany at the local Dyal Singh College and his father-in-law, Lala Ruchi Ram Sahney, was an eminent practising lawyer of Lahore. He was lucky to be connected with Ruchi Ram who had a deep interest in history. Ruchi Ram's daughter, Lilawati, married to Sita Ram, was a talented lady (she is alive yet) who was always of great help to her husband in his research projects.

While Sita Ram Kohli was in service at Lahore, he wrote besides the aforesaid two volumes, *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records*, two books, namely, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (Urdu) and *The Indus Valley Civilization*, and serveral papers. Besides, he edited a Persian source book, *Zafarnama* by Dewan Amar Nath and an English book, *Trial of Mul Raj*.

On his promotion to the higher cadre of class I, he was appointed Principal of the Government College, Hoshiarpur. From there, some years later, he was transferred to the Government Callege, Rohtak. It was here that he retired from government service. He wanted to settle down, after retirement, at Rohtak, and actually built himself a house there. But he was not allowed to lead a retired life yet, and was re-emploed in January 1946 as the Principal of Ranbir College, Sangrur, as well as Superintendent, Education Department, Jind State. On the 20th December of the same year he was asked to hold the post of the Secretary. Education Department, Jind State, concurrently with the post of the Principal he already held. With the creation of the Pepsu in 1948, he ceased to function as the Secretary of the Education Department but continued as Principal till 4 November, 1951 when he finally retired from service and settled down at Rohtak.

After Sita Ram became Principal about the beginning of of the forties, his research work suffered a serious set-back on account of the heavy administrative responsibilities assumed by him. In consequence, the period of his life from 1939 to 1949 was almost barren of literary activity, so that we do not come across any great work produced during these years. With his shifting to Sangrur in 1946 his interest in research was

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revivified and we witness another span of great literary activity which continued even after his final retirement from service in 1951. During this period, two Punjabi books, namely, *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsa Ji Ka* by Ganesh Dass and *Shah Muhammad's Var* on the First Anglo-Sikh War and one English book, *India House-Fort William Correspondence*, vol. XXI (not yet published) were edited, while the earlier Urdu work on Maharaja Ranjit Singh was revised and reproduced in Punjabi with some useful modifications. Besides, there was one original work on which he concentrated during the last years of his life. This was *The last Phase 1839-1849* which has been posthumously published under the title, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*.

Lala (better known as Principal) Sita Ram Kohli died in August 1962 at Rohtak which he had made his permanent place of residence since his retirement from service. Continued arduous labour over the years ever since he had entered upon a career of research had greatly undermined his health and during the later years of his life he was terribly afflicted by asthma, a disease which probably had its roots in his persistent work for several years on the archaic folios of the Khalsa Durbar, usually emitting awful smell. But such was his devotion to work that he never permitted his disease, or failing health to come in the way of either his personal research, or his guidance to, or discussions with research students and scholars. Vidhya Sagar Suri, formerly Director, Punjab State Archives, who had had life-long contacts with Sita Ram, writes in this conhection : "Though a man of retiring habits, Principal Kohli gave ungrudging guidance and assistance to all those engaged in research on Punjab history on which he was considered to be an authority. Even the rigours of asthma which afflicted him more in later years, could not make him desist from elaborating a point during a personal discucssion with him ...one had to cut short one's visit to spare him the heavy strain of prolonged discussion on the subject in which he became absorbed regardless of the time and trouble involved. His road-side house in Model Town, Rohtak, was a haven for research scholars. Weather

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permitting, he could be seen from a distance laboriously working on his manuscript of a new book. His mature judgment and mastery over the subject was always a source of inspiration for researchers and students of history."

A reference has already been made to Sita Ram Kohli's membership of the Punjab University Historical Society. This was, however, not the only learned society of which he was a member. He was associated with the Indian Historical Records Commission as a corresponding member till death. He not only attended its annual meeting regularly, but also presented a few research papers, the particulars of which are given below :

1. The Records of the Sikh Government in the Punjab Secretariat—presented in 1918 and published in vol. II, pages 23-31.
2. A Promissory Note of the Sikh Times—presented in 1950 and published in vol. XXVII, pages 32-35.
3. A Trained Infantry Battalion—presented in 1955 and published in vol. XXXI, page 1.
4. Document Regulating Succession to the Throne of Lahore, November 1840—presented in 1956 and published in vol. XXXII, page 1.

He was also associated with the Indian History Congress which, in recognition of his valuable researches in the field of Punjab history, elected him President of the Sikh History Section of the second session of the Indian History Congress held at Allahabad in 1938. His presidential address on this occasion gave a thought-provoking and analytical account of the different phases and sources of Sikh history. Besides the address, he read on this occasion a paper bearing the title "Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Sikhs (1748-65)". Two years later he presented another paper at the Indian History Congress Session held at Lahore in 1940, the title of the paper being "A Book of Military Parwanas".

It is evident from the foregoing account that Sita Ram's main field of interest and specialisation was the period of

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Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors. The earlier course of Sikh history including the Guru period, the period of Sikh struggle against the Mughals and the Afghans, and the rule of the Misals was untouched by him except for a few references in his *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (Urdu) and a single paper concerning Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Sikhs, 1748-65. Outside of his spacialised field, a few attempts were, no doubt, made, such as *History of India from beginning to A.D. 1526*, *Students' Historical Atlas of India*, and *The Indus Valley Civilisation*. Of these the first two were written as text books for school and college students and were naturally commercially motivated, as is the practice with most text-book writers. The third was a better attempt, although his study of ancient Indian history or archaeology was not of the level that he could make any significant contribution to knowledge, It was, at best, a monograph produced on the basis of secondary sources, but it must be said to the credit of the writer that the scholarship shown in its writing was high enough to induce the Punjab University to undertake its publication.

As for the area of his specialisation, he was fortunate to be initiated into it, at the very outset, by being assigned the task of examining the massive Khalsa Durbar Records preserved in the Punjab Government Secretariat, Lahore. As these primary records related to the annual files of the different departments for a period of thirty-eight years from 1811 to 1849, the greater part of the Khalsa rule, their close examination gave Sita Ram a unique grounding in the subject of his study. The grounding thus gained was subsequently improved by the study of some other primary sources, such as Munshi Sohan Lal's *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, Dewan Amarnath's *Zafarnama Ranjit Singh*, Ganesh Das's *Fatehnama Guru Khalsa Ji Ka*, *A Book of Military Parwanas*, Shah Muhammad's *Var on the First Anglo-Sikh War*, 1845-46, foreign travellers' and visitors' accounts and British intelligence reports. It was thus on account of his mastery of the original sources that he was considered, on all hands, an authority on the period of the Khalsa rule.

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We now proceed to have a critical review of the various works produced by Sita Ram. *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records*, volumes I and II, was the first work in point of time and may be so even in point of importance. Volume I, published in 1919, contains a summary catalogue of sixty-six bundles of Khalsa Durbar Records pertaining to the military department (Daftar-i-Fauj). There are three categories of records : (*i*) *brawurd taqsim talab* (pay rolls) ; (*ii*) *jam' kharch* (accounts) ; and (*iii*) descriptive rolls (*chihra*). Each category is sub-divided into two parts, one dealing with regular army (*Fauj-i-Ain*) and the other with irregular cavalry (*Fauj-i-Sowari*). There are in all four parts in the whole volume. Each part contains a summary catalogue of the various bundles grouped under that particular head. The papers of each bundle have been arranged and catalogued in a serial order, the date of the rolls for each separate unit as well as the total number of folios comprised within each set being also stated. The total strength of the army together with the monthly expenditure on the different arms respectively has been given at five-year intervals. Further details of pay and strength of individual units are given at ten-year intervals. From these statistics one may easily trace the growth and development of the army from period to period. Again, each one of the four parts of the book has been prefaced with a concise account of the main inferences emerging from the scrutiny of the records. The volume thus is much more than a mere catalogue, as it presents a more or less clear picture of the organisation of the Khalsa army, its growth and the administration of its chief branches as well as of the system of maintaining military records of the different kinds.

The army of Ranjit Singh was a very popular subject with the foreign visitors to the Khalsa Durbar during the period of the Maharaja and his successors, and their books are replete with meaningful references to the various branches of the Khalsa military organisation. But when these references are compared with the abundant evidence on the subject made available by Sita Ram in his *Catalogue of the Khalsa Durbar Records*, volume I, we are left with no doubt

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regarding the tremendous importance of the contribution made by him. Indeed, by it the way has been paved for a deeper probe into the subject. Later on, he himself utilized the newly discovered historical data for attempting a connected account of the army of Ranjit Singh in its various aspects. Between 1922 and 1935 a series of articles of his on the subject were published in the *Journal of Indian History*. To take only a few examples, one of them dealt at length with the artillery, tracing its growth from the beginning of its use by the Sikhs down to the close of the period of the Khalsa rule. Among the different aspects covered in it, the most important were : organisation and strength of artillery, *karkhanajat* (workshops), mode of casting guns, the method of preparation of the wax used in artillery, structure and working of foundries and naming of guns. Another article of the series discussed important aspects of the Maharaja's military administration, such as methods of recruitment, procedure of entering the service, descriptive rolls, pay and allowances, drill and discipline, punishments and pensions. Two more articles in this connection may also be mentioned. One was published in 1940 and was based on "*A Book of Military Parwanas*", which was a collection of 461 *parwanas* (letters) addressed by Ranjit Singh between 14 November 1833 and December 1834 to Sardar Tej Singh, General *Campoo-i-Muala* (the exalted camp). Unfortunately, the book has not been published, but from the paper written by Sita Ram it is clear how the Maharaja went into minute details in issuing instructions to the marching troops. The other article of the author related to a trained infantry battalion of Hari Singh Nalwa, a chief of the Lahore Durbar. This reveals that the practice of keeping trained infantry battalions modelled on the European system was not confined to the Central government, but was also followed by important chiefs of the Khalsa Durbar in the organisation of their private or *jagirdari* forces.

The second volume of the *Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records* published in 1927 related to the Revenue, Jagir and

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Toshakhana* Daftars (departments) of the Khalsa Durbar. The arrangement followed in this volume is similar to that adopted in volume I. The book has been divided into three parts dealing with revenue rolls, Jagirs and Toshakhana accounts, respectively. The first part dealing with revenue matters constitutes the main body of the book and covers 296 out of 315 pages. Next in size is the third part dealing with the Toshakhana accounts, which covers twelve pages. The smallest part is the second which concerns Jagirat and reorganisation of the Talquas or administrative units. As in the previous volume, each part has been prefaced with a short note giving the outstanding features of the particular department with which it is concerned. Each preface by itself is an exercise in research of a high order and the three put together present a fairly detailed account of the origin, development, organisation and functioning of the civil part of the central secretariat of the Lahore Durbar. It may be pointed out that as early as 1918 Sita Ram had published a paper in the *Journal of Indian History* on the land revenue administration under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. What has been incorporated here is thus continuation and an amplification of that paper.

The kind of analysis of this vital subject made by Sita Ram first in 1919 and then in 1927 could be possible only on the basis of an examination of the original records of the Khalsa government, and hence his work so far has not been equalled, much less excelled, by anyone else.

Dewan Amarnath's *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh* is now considered one of the most dependable sources for the period of Ranjit Singh. It was Sita Ram Kohli who discovered its manuscript and after editing it carefully with explanatory notes and an introduction published it in 1928. About the

*The term Toshakhana has been explained as a store-room, a wardrobe or a chamber where the objects of curiosity or value, not in daily request, were kept. The Toshakhana of Maharaja Ranjit Singh contained all the valuables, jewellery, precious stones, gold and silver ornaments as well as the *Khila't* pieces and other valuable articles of dress The important State Papers, such as treaties and documents concerning the foreign relations of the state were also consigned to the custody of the Toshakhana.

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historical value of this work, Sita Ram writes: "Dewan Amarnath's history is not only not inferior to any contemporary chronicle in point of accuracy of detail, it far excels even the diary of Sohan Lal and the history of Bute Shah in richness of facts of general interest. By virtue of his own position as the Bakshi or paymaster of the irregular cavalry of the Khalsa government and because of his family connections our author enjoyed special facilities for collecting valuable material for his narrative. His father, Dewan Dina Nath, was the Finance Minister of Ranjit Singh and as such had the entire charge of the civil, military and political records of the Maharaja's government. The author was personally acquainted with most of the influential men at the Court and this background of general experience of men and things around him stood him in good stead in writing his history......The book is, therefore, a most important original source of information concerning the reign of Ranjit Singh." It is the regret of Sita Ram that Amarnath did not carry his account beyond 1835-36, although he lived through the stormy period of the Sikh rule and till long after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. The Introduction of Sita Ram for this book contains, besides the note on the historical value of the book, much useful information about Dewan Amarnath and his family and about the title and manuscript copies of the work and also regarding the style of the writer.

Having mastered the important original sources of the period, Sita Ram wrote a book on Maharaja Ranjit Singh which for its authenticity, detail and presentation may easily be regarded as one of the best works on the subject. This was written in Urdu at the instance of the Hindustani Academy, Allahabad, and was published in 1933. After this work was completed, Sita Ram became anxious that its Punjabi version should also be brought out. But before he could take up this job in right earnestness, he was assigned the administrative work of a college principal. The heavy responsibilities which now devolved upon him left him no time to attend to his literary pursuits and it was till 1953 that his long-cherished idea of producing a book on Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Punjabi could be fulfilled. Sita Ram's interest in

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the study of the Maharaja's period was lifelong and he had written many things on the subject, but they were all piece-meal and did not present a complete picture of it. His work on Ranjit Singh in Urdu as well as in Punjabi was his first and only attempt to deal with the subject as a whole. Moreover, it represented the sum and substance of his prolonged deliberation on the subject.

Along with the Persian and English sources that were used by Sita Ram in the preparation of his work on Ranjit Singh, there was one important Punjabi, better say Hindi, original source written by one Ganesh Dass. The *Fatehnama Guru Khalsa Ji Ka*, as the source is called, was present with him in manuscript form at the time because to this effect a clear indication is given in the Introduction to his Urdu book on Maharaja Ranjit Singh. However, this work of Ganesh Dass was edited and published long after in the year 1952. According to the editor, Ganesh Dass had written it before 1831, and as such it has tremendous historical importance. Its scope is limited to three important events only, namely the siege of Multan (1818), the battle of Naushehra (1823), and the fighting against Khalifa Syed Ahmad of Bareilly (only the earlier phase), but even so, within the framework of its limited scope it far excels any other contemporary account, indigenous or foreign, in richness of detail, in graphicness of account and in liveliness of presentation. The value of the work has been enhanced by the editor with his footnotes, appendices and a critical introduction explaining its historical importance and the chief features of Ranjit Singh's career and administration.

After the reign of Ranjit Singh, the period that most claimed his attention was the last phase of the Khalsa rule, 1839-49. During this short period of one decade, things moved very fast. Between the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 and 1845 when the first Anglo-Sikh War broke out, a period of six years only, there were as many as seven changes of government, each accompanied by violence and bloodshed. As the result of these violent revolutions caused at once by internal factions and external intrigues, the central government of the Khalsa Durbar lost its balance and prestige,

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giving rise to conditions of dangerous political instability in the country. The British victory in the war of 1845-46 gave the winners a firm foothold on the soil of the Punjab. Once this happened, the foreign rulers were quick to exploit their position of strength and within four years of their first entrance in the Punjab, the independence of the Khalsa kingdom was gone and it was made one of the many provinces of the British Empire in India.

Sita Ram Kohli wanted to unravel the mysteries of the pressures and forces which brought on the deluge so soon after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In fact, his sole preoccupation during the last years of his life was to put forth his mature deliberations on this period in the form of a book. The failing health was a big handicap to him, but in spite of it he carried on his work and completed the manuscript before he died in 1962.

That Sita Ram had started studying the post-Ranjit Singh period of the Khalsa rule quite early in his career is evident from the publication of his monograph *Trial of Mul Raj* as early as 1932. This monograph, No. 14 in the series of monographs published by the Punjab Government, Lahore, puts together all the available papers and documents connected with the trial of Dewan Mul Raj, Sikh Governor of Multan. As the English proceedings of the trial had disappeared in some mysterious manner, Sita Ram had real difficulty in collecting the relevant papers. In the preface to the book he has explained how he chanced upon some vernacular proceedings at Lahore and how after that, he conducted his search for their corresponding English part, which he found, again by chance, at Calcutta. After comparing the two sets and explaining the discrepancies with foot-notes, he edited them giving a lengthy introduction in the beginning of the book. The records edited here set forth, in his own words, "the circumstances under which the out-break of Multan took place in April 1848, how the Revolt of Multan developed into the Second Sikh War and how eventually it led to the absorption of the Sikh kingdom into the British Empire in India." For the benefit of the reader,

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he has written, on the basis of the information given in the trial proceedings, an elaborate introduction which clearly explains the relevant issues. The account closes with the significant observations of John Login, John Lawrence and Lepel Griffin on the degree of Mul Raj's complicity in the revolt. According to these prominent contemprory Englishmen, Mul Raj was a man of timid and vacillating disposition, who lacked the requisite strength of will to resist what he was opposed to at heart and was hence a victim of circumstances rather than a willing party to the happenings that led to the revolt. Strangely enough, Sita Ram does not give any indication which may show his own thinking on the subject. He seems neither to confirm nor to reject the views of the Englishmen mentioned above.

Another edited work of Sita Ram pertaining to the last phase of the Khalsa rule was Shah Muhammad's *Var* (Punjabi) on the first Anglo-Sikh War, which was brought out in 1956. The ballad of Shah Muhammad is commonly known and oft-quoted. Historically, too, it is of immense importance being the Indian side of the picture given by a writer not far removed from the scene of action depicted in the work. But its authenticity has for long remained unverified, so that not unoften doubts have been raised about some statements of the writer, particularly those relating to Rani Jindan. Sita Ram has laboured hard to examine the veracity of the account given in Shah Muhammad's work. The total text of this work covers only 56 half-pages in this book of 204 pages, the other halves of these pages being filled with footnotes, whereas the Introduction alone runs into 119 pages. Among the different aspects discussed in the Introduction, the principal ones are concerned with the gradual weakening of the Khalsa state after the death of Ranjit Singh, circumstances leading to the outbreak of hostilities between the Sikhs and the British, various battles of the war, and historical and literary value of Shah Muhammad's writing. After a thorough examination of the work, the editor has arrived at the conclusion that despite the personal opinions of the writer, there is nothing historically incorrect in his work.

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The editing of the two above-mentioned books, Shah Muhammad's *Var* and *Trial of Mul Raj,* afforded Sita Ram the opportunity of recording his thoughts on the entire post-Ranjit Singh phase of ten years—up to the first Anglo-Sikh War in the first book and after that up to the end of the Sikh kingdom, 1849, in the second. But from the point of view of the interplay of diverse force during this period, his writings were sketchy and inadequate. Naturally, therefore, he felt persuaded, as previouly in the case of Ranjit Singh's reign he had felt, to attempt a connected and comprehensive study of the period as a whole. Thus the last years of his life were devoted, almost exclusively, to this work, and he was able to complete the job despite his poor health, but before he could send it to the press, he died. The manuscript was, after his death, edited by Khushwant Singh and published in 1967 under the title *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, which is the editor's substitute for the author's title *The Last Phase*, 1839-1849. Though, essentially, this is the author's own work, the chapter dealing with the battles of the Second Anglo-Sikh War has been taken ad verbum from the editor's own book *Fall of the Kingdom of the Punjab*, the relevant chapter of the author being missing.

The posthumous book of Sita Ram Kohli solves some of the knotty problems of the period immediately following the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, particularly those connected with the deaths of Kharak Singh, Nau Nihal Singh and Chand Kaur, and the killings of Maharaja Sher Singh and his Prime Minister Raja Dhian Singh. Similarly, the annexation of the Punjab to the British Empire has been put in a much better historical perspective as compared with other published works on the subject. The period between the two Sikh wars, however, has received, comparatively speaking, much less scholarly attention and here does not come up to level with the period preceding it. But the major weakness of the work lies in its being a more or less one-sided study, laying emphasis as it does mostly on the internal pressures and factors. The study is, no doubt, interspersed with references to British machinations in regard to the Punjab, but these references do not add up to being a scientific analysis of the changes in the

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British foreign policy from the thirties of the nineteenth century onwards.

We have had above a brief idea of the work done by Sita Ram Kohli. That it was considerable will be readily conceded by any fair-minded student of history. But most of it is editing work, from which it may be inferred that he was more of an editor than an original writer, and justifiably so, because he had to begin from a scratch and hence was faced, from the outset, with the problem of dearth of authentic source books. Therefore, for him, if he wanted to venture into the field of research in Punjab history, there were two immediate problems : (*i*) discovery of new sources ; (*ii*) authentication of new discoveries. The Persian chronicle of Sohan Lal, known as *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, was admitted on all hands to be a first-rate source for the period of the Sikh kingdom and there was no need of editing it. The Khalsa Durbar records available at the civil secretariat of the Punjab Government in numerous bundles were another primary source about the authenticity of which there was no doubt. But they had to be brought into public gaze, if they were to be useful for research. Hence, these had to be properly catalogued. This work was creditably accomplished by Sita Ram after many years of arduous labour. This experience, however, strengthened the urge in him to explore other possible historical sources of the period. What results followed from his efforts have already been noticed in our brief survey of his work in the foregoing pages.

In editing the source books he was always very careful and painstaking. His good linguistic equipment stood him in good stead in reading and comparing the texts of his manuscripts. Invariably, he gave footnotes, glossary of technical terms, appendices and introduction throwing light on the manuscript in hand, its historical and literary value and if possible, on the author as well. But his introductions were, in most cases, very lengthy and contained material which was repetitious and could as well have been avoided without any damage to the utility of the work. For instance, a brief account of Ranjit Singh's career of conquests and administration finds place in almost all his edited works, there being

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no material difference between one account and another. This, instead of adding to the value of his editing, has added some unneceassry length to his introductions. Furthermore, in assessing the historical importance of manuscripts, he just stops with the preliminary inquiries about the identity of the author and about the date and general importance of the work. He does not go deep and discuss the subject matter, so that the general approach of the writer as well as the extent of the contribution made by him remain practically untouched.

The constant preoccupation of Sita Ram with the editing of newly discovered sources left him little time to pursue the writing of original books. He wrote in 1933 a history of Ranjit Singh in Urdu at the instance of the Hindustani Academy, Allahabad , but failed to follow it up. The result was that the Punjabi version of the Maharaja's biography, on which he was all along so keen, could not be brought out till twenty years later in 1953. Thereafter, he started working on the *Last Phase, 1839-1849*. In his own words which he uttered to Khushwant Singh during the latter's visit to him in the summer of 1962, he had been working on the new book for the last ten years. It was not a huge project which required so many years, but the slow progress may be explained by his reduced capacity for work due to his protracted disease of asthma. In the opening paragraph of the first chapter of this book, now published, he mentions his original intention to write a comprehensive history of the rise, progress and fall of the kingdom of the Punjab, of which this book was to form the last volume. He has blamed the failure to carry out his intention on his other preoccupations and his indifferent health. This explanation of Sita Ram may not be questioned, but a more valid cause of his inability to translate his intention into reality seems to be that his love for editing of historical material out-paced his zeal for original historical writing.

As a historical thinker and writer, the approach of Sita Ram was characterised by logicality, balance of mind and intellectual honesty. He seldom indulged in surmises and

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generally left his facts to speak for themselves. He was not given to making any statement which was not warranted by reliable historical evidence. Logical thinking gave flow and readability to his style, and balance of mind largely kept his mind free from the sinister influence of personal prejudices and sentiments. It was not his habit to select the convenient and reject the inconvenient facts, as the pleader of a cause does. On the contrary, he weighed, like a judge, both sides of the matter before arriving at any conclusion. He was not cast in the polemical mould and was always at pains to avoid controversies in his writing. But in his mind he carefully weighed the different points of view, evolved his own thinking on them and then expressed his matured opinion without denouncing any particular individual or viewpoint. But he was no philosopher and has not written anything on concepts of history. If anything, he held the main aim of a historical researcher to be a search for truth. He possessed an analytical mind which always tried to probe things, whether they were political events or institutions. This quality of his mind gave a certain amount of depth to his writings. Moreover, the clarity of thought which springs from analytical and logical thinking enabled him to avoid confusion and to be precise and to the point in his historical statements. However, it may be said that his analytical mind did not penetrate far below the surface. The diverse forces which shaped the society and powerfully operated behind historical events and institutions, which catapulted Ranjit Singh into a position of power and glory for a short period and then dragged down the entire superstructure raised by him in the brief span of ten years, were not taken any notice of. Similarly, he failed to comprehend the inter-mechanism of the British foreign policy, which was a major factor in the disintegration and final extinction of the independent kingdom of the Punjab.

But this is not to belittle his contribution to historical knowledge, which is tremendous. His work on the Khalsa Durbar records by itself is monumental. It is a measure of his great achievement that it stands where he left it, and nobody since then has dared to resume it. His discovery and

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editing of some important new sources is also a valuable contribution. His original works may not be as great contributions but in attempting them he did blaze a trail to guide later writers on the subject. Particularly, his study of the military and administative institution of the Khalsa rule is a great feat of scholarship and his contribution in this respect will always be remembered. Thereby, he has laid down the foundation on which the edifice of advanced research may be built by subsequent researchers. He was essentially a pioneer—and a very competent one—and it will be as well if his wo k is assessed as that of a pioneer. It is in this particular sense that he has been often and ought to be called, by way of tribute, a doyen of Punjab historians of the last generation.

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CHAPTER XII

INDUBHUSAN BANERJEE

The late Professor Indubhusan Banerjee, who was one of the pioneers in the field of Sikh studies, belonged to a highly respectable and cultured Brahmin family of Vikrampur *pargana* in the district of Dacca (now in Bangladesh). He was born in November 1893, at Mekliganj in the then Princely State of Cooch Behar, now a district in West Bengal, where his father, the late Bhagabati Charan Banerjee, was an officer in the State Education Department. He passed the Matriculation Examination of Calcutta University in 1910 from the Kishori Lal Jubilee High School in the town of Dacca and then studied for six years in Dacca College which was then the premier educational institution in East Bengal and was affiliated to Calcutta University. He graduated from Dacca College with second class Honours in History in 1914 and took his M.A. in History from the same institution in 1916 in the first class, topping the list of successful candidates. In 1921 he secured the Premchand Roychand Studentship, one of the highest academic distinctions offered by Calcutta University, for his researches in Sikh history. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy was conferred upon him by Calcutta University in 1939.

In 1917 Sir Asutosh Mookerjee established the Post-Graduate Departments in Arts and Sciences for promoting post-graduate studies and researches in different branches of learning under the direct control of Calcutta University. For the Department of History he selected young and promising scholars like Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Surendra Nath Sen and Indubhusan Banerjee. Sir Asutosh made special provision for the teaching of Maratha history, Rajput history, and Sikh history. The last-mentioned subject was entrusted to Indubhusan Banerjee who joined the University as Lecturer

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in History in December 1917. After long years of devoted service, he rose to be Reader and Head of the Department. He was appointed Asutosh Professor of Medieval and Modern Indian History in 1948 as successor to Surendra Nath Sen. He retired from service in 1955.

The subjects which he taught in the post-graduate classes included, apart from Sikh history which he had made his own, the history of modern Bengal and of ancient Egypt. He had a deeply religious temperament and a serene philosophical view of life. This explains his deep interest in, and understanding of religious history. His interpretation of ancient Egyptian religion will be remembered long by his pupils. His exposition of the religious history of the Sikhs has received a permanent shape in his most important book.

Professor Banerjee thought much more than he wrote; he hated to present to the world of scholarship hastily collected facts and ill-digested conclusions. His principal works are the two volumes of *Evolution of the Khalsa* and a monograph on the early period of British rule in Bengal entitled *The Supreme Court in Conflict*. He published some interesting papers in *Bengal Past and Present* and the *Calcutta Review*. His presidential address at the Modern Section of the Indian History Congress, Annamalainagar session (1945), was published in its *Proceedings*. He might have made other contributions of abiding value if he had been spared for some years after his retirement from university service; but the end came too soon, quite unexpectedly, on November 13, 1956.

As a man Professor Banerjee has left in the minds of his friends and pupils a memory of sweet cordiality, of deep but unostentatious sympathy, and of strong but silent moral influence. He belonged to that vanishing generation of devoted scholars who accepted the advancement of learning as the mission of life and pursued it irrespective of prospects of worldly advancement.

The first volume of Professor Banerjee's *Evolution of the Khalsa* was published in 1936; the second volume followed in 1947. The first volume was dedicated to "the revered memory of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee at whose instance" the author "took

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up investigations in Sikh History". The first draft was made within three years of his appointment as Lecturer in the University and it won for him the much-coveted Premchand Roychand Studentship. But it was published 15 years later, primarily because he wished to collect new materials, to formulate fresh conclusions in the light of his developing ideas, and to give his narrative a finished literary form. He was not a scholar in hurry. He took another ten years to give his second volume its final form and even then he was not satisfied. "I have not been able", he said in the Preface, "to bring it out in a form in which I would have liked it to appear".

In the two volumes the author set himself to (to quote his own words) "the task of tracing the evolution of Sikhism till Guru Gobind Singh introduced his reforms and brought the Khalsa into existence". For the sake of convenience he split up the work in two volumes. The first volume covers the period till 1604 when the *Granth Sahib* was compiled and the peaceful evolution of Sikhism practically came to an end. His ambition was a modest one ; he would consider himself "amply rewarded", he stated in his Preface, if his book, "in some measure, paves the way to further discussion and clarification". The second volume covers three great tragedies of Sikh history ; it begins with the execution of Guru Arjan and concludes with the death of Guru Gobind Singh. It seems that Professor Banerjee selected the period of the Gurus for critical study because the regarded it—rightly—as the germinal period of Sikh history. Moreover, his religious temperament and philosophical outlook qualified him specially for meaningful interpretation of religious history.

In assessing the value of Professor Banerjee's contribution to Sikh studies we must remember that he was really a pioneer. The first English writer on the subject was Browne, the East India Company's representative at the court of the puppet Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II, whose *India Tracts* was published in 1788. Professor Banerjee observes : "The value of the work, so far as early Sikh history is concerned, would become apparent if we quote the author as our authority for stating that Guru Arjan was succeeded by Ram Rai

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and that in 1662 a son, named Tegh Bahadur, was born to Harkrishan". Forster, who travelled through the Punjab in 1783-84, included in the *A Journey from Bengal to England* (published in 1798) a short sketch about the Sikhs ; but it is "of little practical value" (to quote Professor Banerjee) so far as the earlier phase of Sikhism is concerned. Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs,* based on several historical tracts in the Punjabi language, "appears to have been written carelessly and does not help us much". M'Gregor (*History of the Sikhs*, 1846) made the first attempt to write a connected history of the Sikhs, but it was found by Professor Benerjee to be "hopelessly out of date". Then followed Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs* (1849), the first really careful and conscientious history of the Sikhs. But his earlier chapters were based on inadequate and uncritical material, and provided no trustworthy account of the development of Sikhism under the direct guidance of the Gurus. After the fall of the Sikh State Trumpp prepared an English translation of the *Adi Granth* (1877) under the auspices of the India Office. This pretentious work was, according to Macauliffe, "highly inaccurate and unidiomatic, and furthermore gave mortal offence to the Sikhs by the *odium theologicum* introduced into it". But Trumpp's *Introductory Essays,* particularly his translation of the old *Janamsakhi,* Professor Banerjee found to be "still useful" if handled with caution.

The modern phase of Sikh studies began really with the publication (1909) of Macauliffe's monumental six-volume work, *The Sikh Religion, its Gurus, Sacred Writings and their Authors.* One of his main objects was, as he himself said, "to make some reparation to the Sikhs for the insults which Trumpp offered to their Gurus and their religion." He deliberately adopted the role of an uncritical narrator : he wrote, as he frankly stated, "from an orthodox Sikh point of view, without any criticism or expression of opinion of his own". While acknowledging his indebtedness to Macauliffe's work Professor Banerjee says : "...his accounts of the Gurus have suffered greatly...There has been no attempt to discriminate between fact and fiction, contemporary and infinitely more reliable evidence has been mixed up with later myths

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and, on the whole, the accounts have emerged, more or less, as a jumble in which legendary matter predominates". But his version represented the best in the Sikh historical and religious tradition in the early years of the present century ; he placed before the public what the Sikhs had to say about their past. In recent years Macauliffe's translation of the hymns in the *Adi Granth* has been found to be unsatisfactory in many places and a full and more accurate translation of the holy book by Dr. Gopal Singh has been published.

Macauliffe's great service to Sikh studies was that he prepared the ground for a comprehensive study of the early phase of Sikhism by placing at the disposal of scholars an elaborate collection of Sikh traditions. G.C. Narang's *Transformation of Sikhism* (1912) was the first venture along this track. Professor Banerjee found it to be "interesting in its own way but superficial". Teja Singh's *Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism*, as also his careful English translation of *Asa di Var*, threw new light on the growth of the Sikh community under the Gurus ; but these were cursory studies of certain aspects of the early phase of Sikh history, not a full and balanced account of the development of Sikhism in its historical and religious aspects.

Professor Banerjee was the first modern historian to attempt a full, comprehensive and critical reconstruction of the development of Sikhism from the days of Guru Nanak to those of Guru Gobind Singh. It goes without saying that he did not share the anti-Sikh bias which had detracted from the value of Trumpp's work and offended the religious sentiment of the Sikh community. On the other hand, both as a historian and as an individual he had profound respect for the Sikh Gurus and their teachings. Moreover, he felt that it was not possible to understand Sikhism without attaching the greatest importance to what the Sikhs had to say about it. He remembered Malcolm's words : "In every research into the general history of mankind, it is of the most essential importance to hear what a nation has to say of itself...". References to Macauliffe are so frequent in his volumes that the reader is left in no doubt about his understanding and appreciation of the traditional Sikh point

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of view. But his criticism of Macauliffe, quoted above, shows that he did not surrender his own critical judgement—the historian's greatest asset—and allow himself to be infected by unprofessional zeal. His conclusions might not commend themselves to some other careful students of the period, but he never made a statement on the basis of a tradition without scrutinising it in the light of other sources and of reason. He laid a track for others in respect of rational treatment of Sikh history in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Reconstruction of the biography of the Sikh Gurus involved a peculiar difficulty which Malcolm explained in the following words : "There is no part of oriental biography in which it is more difficult to separate truth from falsehood, than that which relates to the history of religious impostors. The account of their lives is generally recorded, either by devoted disciples and warm adherents, or by violent enemies and bigoted persecutors. The former, from enthusiastic admiration, decorate them with every quality and accomplishment that can adorn men ; the latter misrepresent their characters and detract from all their merits and pretensions. This general remark I have found to apply with peculiar force to the varying accounts, given by Sikh and Muhammedan authors, of Nanak and his successors". Writing about the Sikh sources dealing with the biography of Guru Nanak, Professor Banerjee observes : "Our position is...a desperate one and...though there might be a very interesting study on the biographies of Guru Nanak, we have hardly any material for a satisfactory biography on critical lines. Indeed, when the attempt is made 'to get rid of the fable mixed up with the Sikh legends, and to work the residue of fact into some sort of historical order', difficulties crop up at almost every step." These difficulties he sought to solve primarily through a critical analysis of the Sikh sources, and the outline of the first Guru's life prepared by him more than thirty years ago has not been materially shaken by subsequent research. In the case of Guru Nanak "enthusiastic admiration" of "devoted disciples and warm adherents" created stories of miracles which were unacceptable to the scrupulous

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historian. In the case of Guru Tegh Bahadur there was misrepresentation of character by anti-Sikh writers. According to Ghulam Hussein, author of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, Guru Tegh Bahadur "united his concerns" with those of a Muslim *faqir*, and "forsaking every honest calling, they fell to subsisting by plunder and rapine, laying waste the whole province of *Punjab*". This statement formed the basis of what Cunningham and Trumpp wrote later about the ninth Guru. Professor Baner ee found it "difficult to accept the statement of a writer, who wrote more than hundred years after the event, and whose story that the Guru was executed as a disturber of the public and as an aspirant to power finds no corroboration elsewhere". He preferred Macauliffe's view (which is endorsed by a well-known statement of Guru Gobind Singh) and came to the conclusion that "the Guru fell a victim to religious bigotry and ... later Muhammadan writers sought to cloud the issue by giving it a political colour". Thus he escaped the two difficulties mentioned by Malcolm by maintaining an objective attitude to wards stories of all kinds.

In his first volume Professor Banerjee devotes three chapters to Guru Nanak, dealing with his age, his life, and his message. These are prefaced by an introductory chapter dealing with "several features of exceptional interest" in the history of Sikhism. After discussing such questions as the differences between the Sikhs and the adherents of other medieval *Bhakti* cults and the influence of race on religion, Professor Banerjee sounds a note of warning against "any tendency towards oversimplification" ; he was not prepared to prepetuate "the fraud of history made easy". The importance of sociology as a factor explaining historical development had not been recognised in his days, nor had the different aspects of the medieval *Bhakti* movement been studied in detail. Had Professor Banerjee been alive today his introductory chapter would probably have been written in a different manner and given us greater insight into the history of Sikhism from the standpoint of sociology and comparative religion.

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Professor Banerjee is on firm ground in his review of Guru Nanak's age, life, and massage. His summary of political developments in North India from the invasion of Timur to the establishment of Mughal rule by Babur is naturally based on Muslim sources. References to Sikandar Lodi's policy of religious intolerance provide the background for Guru Nanak's message of harmony and tolerance. "The Kal Age is a knife, kings are butchers": this pregnant statement of the Guru reveals the terror which clouded the lives of his contemporaries. The Guru had no sympathy for "the dogs of Lodis" who "spoiled the priceless inheritance", nor did he excuse Babur for the acts of devastation which accompanied his march through the Punjab. Professor Banerjee gives us a graphic picture of political degeneration as a background for his analysis of degradation in religious and social life. His argument is sustained by revealing quotations from Guru Nanak's hymns. The reader feels convinced that he does not exaggerate when he says : "...at the time of Guru Nanak's advent, religion there was none". The emphasis is on the essence of religion which formed the core of the Guru's teachings.

In reconstructing the story of Guru Nanak's life Professor Banerjee had to rely exclusively upon Sikh traditions unsupported by contemporary and semi-contemporary Hindu and Muslim sources. He sums up his difficulties by saying that "the materials which we possess are scanty when reliable, and unreliable when abundant". The author of one of the latest books on Guru Nanak, Dr. McLeod has not found himself in any better position. Apart from "the few vague references in Guru Nanak's hymns to possible incidents in his life" there is no contemporary account ; the *Var* of Bhai Gurdas was written not much more than sixty years after the Guru's death, but, as Macauliffe points out, he "did not write a complete life of the Guru". Professor Banerjee's critical discussion on the *Janamsakhis* illustrates his methodology. The only two known dates are those of Guru Nanak's birth and death, and even here there is scope for difference of opinion. As Professor Banerjee says, "throughout the huge interval of about seventy years we have to grope in the

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dark as best as we can with the assistance of the dim, reflected light of one or two independent references". Yet he has succeeded in giving us a fairly complete and convincing sketch of the biography of the first Guru, and it is a well-deserved tribute to his historical judgment to say that his conclusions have not been materially shaken by recent researches.

So far as the story of Guru Nanak's wanderings is concerned, Professor Banerjee rightly rejects Trumpp's "unduly gloomy view of the matter", but the evidence available in his time did not make it possible for him to clarify all obscure points. As a matter of fact a full and consistent account of the Guru's travels in India and in other countries is not available even today. Epigraphic evidence relating to the Guru's visit to Baghdad, utilised by Professor Banerjee, has recently been given a different interpretation by Dr. McLeod, but a recent archaeological discovery in Ceylon supports the tradition of his visit to the island. The chronology of the travels remains confusing ; we do not know when the *Udasi* period in the Guru's career came to an end and when he settled as a householder at Kartarpur.

Describing Guru Nanak's message as "a message of truth and a message of peace" Professor Banerjee leads his reader to the conclusion that the founder of Sikhism was a reformer and not revolutionary : "He was out not to kill but to heal, not to destory but to conserve". There are writers who take a different view, but it is necessary to remember that Professor Banerjee analyses the Guru's teachings strictly in its contemporary setting instead of making a retrospective appraisal. It is not quite clear whether those social customs, religious beliefs and organizational peculiarities which gradually cut off the Sikhs from the general body of the Hindus and converted them into a distinct community began to develop in Guru Nanak's time or could be traced directly to his teaching. Professor Banerjee does not accept the "sweeping conclusion" that Guru Nanak attempted total abolition of the caste system and rejects a literal interpretation of the well-known statement of Bhai Gurdas : "Guru Nanak had reduced the four castes into one". He criticises the view that Guru Nanak eschewed altogether current Hindu customs such as pilgri-

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mages. His comments on the place of Hindu divinities in the *Japji* are interesting and instructive. He contests the view that the Guru had totally rejected the sacred books like the Vedas, the Puranas and the Quran. His position may be stated in his own words : "Most of the difficulties about interpreting the message of Guru Nanak arise from the fundamental assumption that he had brought about something entirely novel and that all the later developments in Sikhism were implicit in his teachings......to insist on the latter contention is to take a view of history which can hardly be historical and as regards the former it can be shown that of the various features of Sikhism, taken separately, there are not many which we do not come across in the past history of Hinduism". How Sikhism developed slowly into an independent creed with its own theology and organization is explained in detail in the chapters dealing with the later Gurus. The role of historical events in shaping Sikhism and in regulating its response to new situations is stressed, but very little is said about the impact of socio-economic forces.

From the organizational point of view the most important step taken by Guru Nanak was the nomination of Angad as his successor, which Professor Banerjee rightly regards as "a fact of the profoundest significance in Sikh history". This succession marked the first cleavage between the Hindus and the Sikhs ; "it placed the movement under the guidance and control of a definite and indisputable leadership and gave it a distinctive turn at the very outset of its career". Guru Angad "adopted and modified" the *Landa* script which was then used in the Punjab for writing the vernacular and called it *Gurumukhi,* thus giving it "a characteristically Sikh name together with the seal of religious sanctity". He "initiated the process which led to the compilation of the *Adi Granth.* He "enlarged and expanded" the "characteristic Sikh institution of the Langar" which had already been set on foot by Guru Nanak. These measures saved the Sikhs from "total absorption by the Hindu mass".

From "the supernatural myths and the anticipatory legends that abound in the Sikh chronicles" Professor Banerjee draws some "sober facts" indicating the importance of the

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leadership of Guru Amar Das in the evolution of the Sikh *Panth*. The foundation of the *Bawali* at Goindwal provided for the Sikhs a centre of pilgrimage. Sikhism attracted so many converts—including Muslims—that the Guru found it necessary to "divide the Sikh spiritual empire into 22 bishoprics" or *manjis*. There was a split with *Udasis*; reforms in certain religious and social customs widened the gulf between the Sikhs and the Hindus. The foundation of Amritsar was laid by Guru Ram Das and the work was completed by his son and successor, Guru Arjan. As the number of the Sikhs was increasing, Guru Arjan introduced the *masand* system for collection of gifts. "The dues of the Gurus were paid more readily and unfailingly than even the Mughal revenues". This system stabilised the finances of the Sikh organization; what was more significant, the "Sikhs were gradually accustomed to a kind of government of their own, and began to feel themselves as a firmly organised and strong party within the State". These words of Trumpp are quoted with approval by Professor Banerjee.

Professor Banerjee's chapter entitled "Foundation of the Sikh Panth" gives us a clear picture of the different stages through which the four successors of Guru Nanak carried their disciples till they formed an integrated socio-religious brotherhood with a Guru, a central place of pilgrimage (Amritsar), a code of ideas and conduct, and a sacred book. The compilation of the sacred book "furnished the coping-stone to Guru Arjan's strenuous work of organisation". His efforts to foster trade and industry among the Sikhs have not received more than a passing reference in the narrative although the growing strength of the new community found a solid basis in economic enterprises.

The last chapter of the first volume deals with "Ideals and Institutions". Professor Banerjee is practically silent on the metaphysical aspects of Sikhism which, in a passing remark, he identifies with "the Vedanta of the Vaisnavite brand". It is a pity that he did not elaborate his views on the relation between Guru Nanak's teaching on the one hand and Vedanta in its *advaita* and *dvaita* forms. While recognizing the importance of Guru Nanak's contact with Muslim *faqirs* he rejects

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Carpenter's contention that the founder of Sikhism "attempted to establish a religion combining the higher elements of Hinduism and Islam alike". Instead of discussing the question he expressed his intention to return to it "in a separate monograph", but this promise was not fulfilled. He confines himself to the exposition of some of the essentials of Sikhism. He explains the concept of Guruship in Sikhism and the allied concepts of *Name*, *Word* and botherhood. He shows how the Guru "came to occupy the position of a sole and supreme religious teacher." His observations do not constitute a mere historical narrative ; he could practically soak himself in the spirit of *Gurbani* because devotion to religion and philosophy was an abiding feature of his own life and thought.

The 17th century was the period of conflict between the Sikh *Panth* and the Mughal *imperium*. This conflict forms the subject-matter of Professor Banerjee's second volume. By the year 1604, the position acquired by the Sikh community was "that of a separate polity within the Mughal Empire" and this "could not but disturb the equanimity of the established State". Sir Jadunath Sarkar ignored the basic antagonism between the Sikh *Panth* and the Mughal State and dismissed the execution of Guru Arjan by Jahangir as a case of "customary punishment of a political offender". Professor Banerjee quotes an extract from Jahangir's *Tuzuk* to show that it was basically a case of religious persecution. Guru Arjan's political offence was a minor one. To quote Jahangir's own words : "He behaved to Khusrau in certain special ways, and made on his forehead a finger-mark in saffron, which the Indians (Hinduwan) call *qashqa* and is considered propitious". This could hardly be treated as participation in the prince's rebellion and as an offence deserving capital punishment. Jahangir's real purpose was to put a stop to what he himself called the Sikh Guru's "vain affairs", *i.e.*, propaganda and conversion, "or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam". Neither of these purposes was fulfilled. Guru Arjan courted death, and from this tragic incident commenced the struggle which, to quote Trumpp, "changed the entire character of the reformatory religious movement."

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Instead of surrendering their faith, the Sikhs fortified themselves for resistance. This process reached its culmination in the days of Guru Gobind Singh.

The next phase of Mughal persecution was the imprisonment of Guru Arjan's son and successor, Guru Hargobind. After his release he found it politically wise to maintain friendly relations with the Mughal Government, although he could not avoid some armed clashes during the early years of Shah Jahan's reign. No open confrontation with the mighty Mughal Government was possible, but Guru Hragobind took cautious steps for militarising the Sikhs so that they could use arms for defensive purposes. He initiated the process which resulted in the emergence of the Khalsa under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh. Professor Banerjee's reconstruction of the career and policy of Guru Hargobind illustrates his skill and judgment in the use of scanty and obscure historical material. The large-scale conversion of the warlike Jats of the *Manjha* tract had imperceptibly brought a martial spirit into the Sikh community ; the policy of non-resistance that Guru Amar Das had adopted towards his aggressive and intolerant Muslim neighbours was not quite compatible with their temperament. Guru Hargobind noted and utilised this change in the character of the Sikh community ; he initiated a policy of defensive militarism in order to meet the new situation created by the hostility of the Mughal State. The role of the Jats in the transformation of the initially peaceful Sikh community into Guru Gobind Singh's *Khalsa* is a subject which Professor Banerjee is a pioneer in taking up for critical investigation.

Moderation was the chief characteristic of the policy pursued by Guru Hargobind's two sucessors, Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan. The former, indeed, maintained a small army and a court displaying "the pomp and circumstances of a semi-independent military chieftain" ; but he avoided open conflict with the Mughal State. History, however, repeated itself ; he implicated himself in the war of succession on the side of Dara and, like his great-grandfather Guru Arjan, exposed himself to punishment for "treason". Though

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Aurangzeb was far more intolerant than Jahangir, he seems to have considered it politically unwise to antagonise the Sikhs immediately after his accession. He tried to win over the Guru's eldest son, Ram Rai, who was virtually a hostage in the Mughal court. Ram Rai offended his father by his anxiety to please the Emperor. He was disinherited. His younger brother, Har Krishan, succeeded to the Guruship when he was barely six years old. He was summoned to Delhi where he died prematurely after three years of formal Guruship.

The uneasy truce between the *Panth* and the Empire came to an end with Aurangzeb's cruel blow, *viz.*, the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. As we have pointed out above, there are two contradictory versions of the ninth Guru's character—Sikh and Muslim—which Professor Banerjee analyses with remarkable objectivity. He comes to the conclusion that it was religious bigotry rather than political necessity which laybehind Aurangzeb's policy.

The situation in which the Sikhs now found themselves resembled the crisis which had threatened to overwhelm them after the execution of Guru Arjan. The major part of Professor Banerjee's second volume deals with Guru Gobind Singh's remarkable career and achievement. No summary can do justice to the patience, skill and discrimination with which he extracts sober facts from confused and legendary details about his relations with the Mughal Government and the Hill Rajas. Of far greater and more abiding importance is his interpretation of Guru Gobind Singh's reform of Sikh religion and organization. He makes full use of the *Bachitra Natak* and adds an English version of those parts of the work which Macauliffe left untranslated.

The tenth Guru's idea about his mission as also the objects that he sought to achieve are clearly and even emphatically stated in the *Bachitra Natak.* He resumed birth, he says, "for the purpose of spreading the faith, saving the saints and extirpating all tyrants". The methods of peace, the Guru felt, were no longer adequate ; the assistance of the "Holy Sword" was needed for destroying the armies of the wicked. In the *Zafarnama* the Guru wrote : "When all other means have

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failed, it is righteous to draw the sword". "God subdues enemies, so does the Sword ; therefore the Sword is God and God is the Sword". This is the background of the making of the Khalsa.

Professor Banerjee raises a very important question : Did the *Khalsa* arise "logically and naturally out of the foundations laid by Guru Nanak and his immediate successors", or was it "a superimposition which utilised the foundations for an entirely different purpose" ? In his view the tenth Guru did not give up the essentials of Guru Nanak's teaching, but "it would be idle to deny that in the Khalsa we breathe a new spirit". He goes back to the sociological interpretation of the transformation of Sikhism under Guru Hargobind and says that Guru Gobind Singh "united the religious fervour of the Sikh with the warlike temper of the Jat". Taken as a whole, the tenth Guru's reforms reorganized the Sikhs "within the tightest of limits" and made the community "more sectarian in character". On these grounds Professor Banerjee is inclined to support the view that the free and untrammelled growth of the Sikhs was arrested by the creation of the *Khalsa*. But he recognizes the compulsion of events which led Guru Gobind Singh in that direction. The large-scale entry of the Jats into the Sikh community had affected the peaceful character of the brotherhood nourished by the early Gurus. The second factor was the "hostile environment" which developed in the 17th century. The spiritual-*cum*-temporal leadership which emerged in the days of Guru Arjan, and was inherited by Guru Gobind Singh, could not ignore the realities, internal and external. The latter's constructive genius reinterpreted the teachings of the early Gurus in the light of new conditions and "forged a dynamic force which none could henceforward ignore".

Professor Banerjee tells us that "Guru Gobind Singh must be counted among the greatest of Indians of all ages" and challenges Sir Jadunath Sarkar's attempt to "belittle the achievements of the Sikhs". After Guru Gobind Singh's death the Sikhs had, as Trumpp says, "no other choice but to conquer or to be conquered". It was not the tenth Guru but

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the Mughal Emperors who had pushed them into that dangerous position. It was Guru Gobind Singh's great achievement to prepare the Sikhs for the grim struggle which awaited them in the 18th century. Their success in that struggle and the emergence of a Sikh State testify to the fruitful and enduring character of the Guru's work. Professor Banerjee says : "To our mind the Khalsa's greatest contribution to the cause of India was the wresting of the Punjab and the adjoining lands up to the frontier from the clutches of the Afghans. It is not improbable that if they had not done so, some of these tracts might have been lost, even geographically, to India as some other tracts had been in the past".

Professor Banerjee throws new light on the mystery of the murder of Guru Gobind Singh. He rejects the tradition that the attack on the Guru was self-invited on the ground that "the Sikhs who regarded the Guru as an instrument of God and sometimes, against the express injunctions of the Guru, even as an incarnation, could hardly reconcile themselves to the fact that Guru Gobind Singh had fallen a victim to the dagger of an assassin". He considers it much more likely that the murderous attack on the Guru was instigated by Wazir Khan of Sirhind who had been unnerved by the Guru's friendly relations with the new Emperor, Bahadur Shah.

In reviewing the first volume *The Statesman* made an interesting observation. "The historian's preoccupation with details", it said, was rarely "coupled with a philosopher's desire for a synoptic vision". It continued : "The two temperaments are indeed rarely found in the same person : where they are, the virtues of the metaphysician often appear as the vices of the historian, as notably in David Hume. Here at least we have a happy union of the two disciplines". This was a well-deserved tribute.

Although Professor Banerjee's primary interest lay in the Guru period of Sikh history, he had a "synoptic vision" of the later period of Sikh history as also of the significance of the role of the Sikhs in the history of this sub-continent. He had planned to write a volume on the fall of the Sikhs, but

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he could not complete even the preliminary work, *viz.* collection of materials. In his lectures, as also in his talks with the present writer, he emphasized his view that the democratic spirit inherent in Sikhism reasserted itself when—after the death of Ranjit Singh—the weak monarchy and the corrupt aristocracy proved to be ineffective protectors of the Khalsa's great inheritance.

The other major work of Professor Banerjee covers an entirely different field. In *The Supreme Court in Conflict* he deals in detail with two aspects of the historic quarrel between the Supreme Court and the Gȯvernor-General in Council, *Viz.*, the Court's assumption of temporary jurisdiction over the Zamindars and its interference with the *Nizamat.* He modestly describes it "as a preliminary clearing of the ground for a fuller and more ambitious work" which, however, he found no time to write. In this work he deals with legal and administrative issues of real complexity which had no affinity whatsoever with the religious and philosophical features of Sikh history. The sources of information are elaborate official documents in English, precise and objective, entirely unlike the floating legends relating to the Sikh Gurus recorded in archaic Punjabi. It is a high tribute to Professor Banerjee's capacity as a historian—to the sweep and depth of his knowledge and judgment—to say that he performed his task in two entirely different sectors of history with almost equal credit.

In the conclusion, it is necessary to refer to Professor Banerjee's presidential address at the Annamalainagar Session of the Indian History Congress (Modern Section) for some of his general ideas of history. He does not agree with those who say that "a historian must not have a point of view but should walk faithfully and patiently on the way that his materials might lead him to ; or that, in other words, he should adhere strictly to what is called the calm objective method". In his view "the objective method should be relentlessly pursued till at last a point of view emerges and and then the materials should be selected and sifted from this new angle and presented in a systematic and consistent form".

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Mere accumulation of facts would not satisfy him ; "discernment in the selection of significant facts" is more important, and this, he thinks, is not possible for a historian who has no point af view. His remarks relate particularly to the modern period of Indian history "where the rich crop of new facts of varied texture, revealed by the study of the records, often makes it difficult for the historian to resist the temptation of presenting as many of them as possible before his reader". He does not think it is worth a historian's trouble to write a book based on research in which "no new note is struck, no thought is provoked," and the reader is merely put in "passing contact with a mass of hitherto unrevealed facts which are mostly forgotten as soon as they are read". It is an exacting standard of historical writing which Professor Banerjee sets up for workers in the field.

Apart from objectivity as defined above, Professor Banerjee insists upon "the genetic conception of history". He says, "History is a continuous process, and however narrow and restricted the immediate field of a historian might be, it will not do for him to forget that his theme is a part of a bigger whole and logically connected with themes or events of a wider import. This contact with a broader context in the mental background of the historian gives him a true perspective and his presentation is enlivened because he is saved from constantly missing the wood for the trees". He is aware that such "contacted with a broader context" may not be possible, and may even be misleading, in the present stage of Indian historical studies. In that case, he says, "we should be modest with regard to our own achievements and realise the unpleasant truth that we are not historians in the proper sense of the term at all, but mere collectors of materials for the future historians".

Finally, Professor Banerjee issues a note of warning which has particular relevance to historical writing on modern India. Speaking in 1945 when freedom was not in sight he realised that it was "no easy matter to divorce the study of the past from the angry passions of the present". Some European writers on Indo-British history, he said, "appear

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as pitiful apologists for British rule in India, and we, on the other hand, have not unoften gone to the other extreme". In those days "angry passions" were sweeping over the country ; yet Professor Banerjee warned his fellow craftsmen that "a historian, especially of our period, should be constantly on his guard lest he forgets that his vocation is to worship only at the shrine of truth and that he should allow no temptation to deflect him from the straight and honourable path that is his". The lapse of time has mollified our "angry passions" and we are now in a better position to make an assessment of British rule in India as honest votaries at the shrine of truth.

So far as Professor Banerjee's special field—Sikh history—is concerned, new materials have come to light, and new points of view have emerged, since he completed his work more than a quarter of a century ago. The search for truth continues ; there is no finality in resuscitation of historical facts or in interpretation of historical developments. But no student of Sikh history in the foreseeable future will fail to find in *Evolution of the Khalsa* an indispensable guide and a source of inspiration.

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CHAPTER XIII

INDUBHUSAN BANERJEE'S EVOLUTION OF THE KHALSA

Indubhusan Banerjee (1893-1956) should be regarded first and foremost as an academician and a scholar. He graduated from the Calcutta University at the age of 19 and obtained Master's Degree in History two years later, in 1916. Three years later he became Lecturer in History at the Calcutta University itself and taught for over thirty years, retiring as the Asutosh Professor of Medieval and Modern Indian History in the early 1950s. He was encouraged by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee to take up serious investigation into Sikh history and by 1936 he had published the first volume of his *Evolution of the Khalsa*. In 1939 he obtained the degree of Ph.D. and continued his pursuit of Sikh history, publishing the second volume in 1947. Both these volumes have been reprinted twice in 1963 and in 1972. The *Evolution of the Khalsa* is still regarded as a standard work.

The *Evolution of the Khalsa* covers what is called the Guru period of Sikh history, from the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469 to the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. The first volume covers that history up to 1604 in over 250 pages and the second covers the remaining period in a little over 150 pages. The first volume is nearly equally divided between Guru Nanak and his first four successors. The bulk of the second volume is devoted to Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Hargobind, the treatment of the former taking up nearly two-thirds of the volume. Nearly half of the *Evolution of the Khalsa* is thus devoted to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Of the remaining Gurus, the largest number of pages go to Guru Hargobind. Chronologically, Banerjee looks upon the

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entire period as a succession of five phases : the ministry of Guru Nanak, the work of his first four successors till 1604, the pontificate of Guru Hargobind, his immediate successors, and the pontificate of Guru Gobind Singh.

The ministry of Guru Nanak is covered in three chapters, one each on the age, the life and the massage of Guru Nanak. Banerjee presents the age of Guru Nanak as an age of transition as well as disintegration. He underlines the oppression, the moral degradation, the ignorance, the tryanny and the strife prevalent in that age, relying largely on the strong moral reaction of Guru Nanak to his environment and, thus, confusing the response of Guru Nanak with the historical reality of his times.

For the life of Guru Nanak, Banerjee underlines the fact that we do not possess any contemporary account. The earliest compilation of *Janam-sakhis* and the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas come fifty to sixty years later. While the account given by Bhai Gurdas is scrappy, and yet not without its supranatural element, even the earliest *Janam-sakhis* are much below the minimum required for a rational biography. The later *Janam-sakhis* were practically useless ; in them, the personality of Guru Nanak undergoes a metamorphosis, thanks to the loose Flights of the imagination. Nevertheless, Banerjee attempts what may be called a hypothetical reconstruction of Guru Nanak's life in three phases : early upbringing and experience till his 'enlightenment' at Sultanpur towards the end of the fifteenth century, travels in India and abroad during the first quarter of the sixteenth century and settled life at Kartarpur (Dera Baba Nanak) in the second quarter.

In his discussion of the message of Guru Nanak, Banerjee points out that the essential teachings were only three : Unity of Godhead, worship through the Name and the Word, and the indispensability of the Guru. The concepts of *haumai*, *maya* and *nadar* are also discussed. But much more space is given to a discussion of the question whether Guru Nanak should be regarded as a reformer or as a revolutionary. In Banerjee's mind the alternative question is whether or not Guru Nanak founded a new religion. Banerjee concludes

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that Guru Nanak did not reject caste but only caste pride ; he did not reject the Hindu or the Muslim scriptures but only scripturalism. 'It appears that there is no satisfactory evidence to contend that Guru Nanak denounced almost everything that he had found in existence and that it was his object to build an entirely novel structure on the ruins of the old'. Guru Nanak's primary concern, according to Banerjee, was to provide a new viewpoint for a clear distinction between the fundamental and the secondary. Guru Nanak protested against conventionalism, and not against Hinduism. Sikhism in the hands of Guru Nanak was not an altogether new creed. It was a part of the *Bhakti* movement in general. Guru Nanak was a reformer who was asking Hindus to become true Hindus, and the Muslims to become true Muslims. Under the first four successors of Guru Nanak, nevertheless, Sikhism developed into a distinct religion and the Sikh Panth became virtually a state within the Mughal empire. Banerjee discusses the contribution made by each of the successors towards this socio-religious development and the significance of Sikh ideals and institutions in the development of the Sikh Panth, the nomination of Guru Angad in the lifetime of Guru Nanak ; the adoption of new pilgrimage centres, new festivals and new ceremonies ; the institutions of the *sangat* and the *langar* ; the system of *manjis* and *masands* ; the ideal of complete devotion to the Guru ; the conception of Sikh brotherhood as an association of the elect for mutual service ; the reciprocal relationship between the Sikh and the Guru ; the institution of Guruship with the equation of the Guru with God and the Word, the Guru as the mediator between man and God, the unity of Guruship and the divine sanction behind it ; the collection of the hymns in Gurmukhi, leading eventually to the compilation of the *Granth Sahib* by Guru Arjan. Banerjee seeks the basic causes of conflict between the Sikh Panth and the Mughal State precisely in the growth of the former into an autonomous socio-religious group.

Banerjee looks upon the pontificate of Guru Hargobind as the beginning of armed resistance. Reacting against the execution of his father and predecessor, he assumed the

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sword of *miri*, symbolizing his concern with temporal affairs, in addition to the sword of *piri*, symbolizing spiritual authority. Guru Hargobind's measures and attitudes obliged him to fight a few indecisive battles which were nonetheless important as showing the way to successful self-defence. In his assessment of Guru Hargobind, Banerjee presents him as an impressive person and a sagacious leader. In this connection, Banerjee puts forth the hypothesis that the Jats had joined the Sikh Panth in considerable numbers and it was necessary for Guru Hargobind to accommodate them with their innate traits and qualities.

The thirty years following the death of Guru Hargobind present to Banerjee a spectacle of disintegration at once confirmed and redeemed by the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. External threat or actual interference and internal disunity characterize the history of these thirty years : rival claimants to Guruship, supported by different cliques of *masands* ranged against one another and not all of them loath to invoke aid from the state, reduced the dignity of the Panth to its lowest level till the tide began to turn in the pontificate of Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh revived the measures of his grandfather, Guru Hargobind and came into conflict with the hill chiefs. His victory over the chief of Garhwal established his reputation as a commander and the hill chiefs now sought alliance with him. Guru Gobind Singh joined them against the Mughal *faujdars* in a battle but only to find that most of them were eager to return to their old allegiance. A few expeditions were sent against Guru Gobind Singh by the Mughal *faujdars* but they were all unsuccessful. The Guru thought deeply about his predicament and decided to institute the Khalsa for solving the twin problems of external interference and internal disunity. Guru Gobind Singh's mission was to uphold *dharma* and to fight against evil. For this purpose it was necessery to remove the *masands* and to derecognize the dissenting groups. Martial appearance and duties were added to the religious duties of the Sikhs through the institution of the Khalsa. Soon after, Guru Gobind Singh came into conflict with the hill chiefs first and then

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also with the Mughal *faujdars.* He evacuated Anandpur, fought the battles of Chamkaur and Khidrana, prepared a new recension of the *Granth Sahib,* entered into negotiations with the Mughal emperors without compromising his position and died in 1708 before the issue was settled with Bahadur Shah. Banerjee looks upon the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh as a synthesis of the Sikh and the Jat, and as a founder of the Sikh rule. For Banerjee, the best achievement of the Khalsa was to serve the cause of the nation by recovering the territories lost to the Afghans.

The most enduring part of Banerjee's *Evolution of the Khalsa* so far has been his treatment of the early successors of Guru Nanak under whom the Sikh Panth emerged as a distinct socio-religious entity with its distinctive ideals and institutions, its distinctive customs and ceremonies and its autonomous organization. Subsequent research has only presented Banerjee's basic thesis in a more sophisticated form. Banerjee has been modified in detail for the pontificate of Guru Gobind Singh, but his basic thesis remains acceptable. Banerjee's contention that Guru Hargobind accepted some kind of a service with the Mughal is no longer convincing. He has been corrected in detail. But his assessment of Guru Hargobind and the significance of his pontificate still holds good. Much more work has been done on Guru Tegh Bahadur and it is no longer possible to look upon his pontificate as the culmination of the phase of disintegration. But the basic thesis that due to external threat and internal disunity the fortunes of the Sikh Panth had reached their lowest ebb between the pontificates of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh still remains academically respectable.

More surely than any other part of his work, Banerjee's treatment of Guru Nanak stands dated. His presentation of the age of Guru Nanak is misconcieved and oversimplified to the point of distortion. His preoccupation with judging rather than understanding the milieu of Guru Nanak is responsible for making his presentation rather naive. Banerjee's treatment of Guru Nanak's life, in the light of his own

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analysis of the sources, does not carry him very far, though a more authentic biography has yet to appear. Banerjee's weakest point is his treatment of Guru Nanak's massage. In comparison with the logically coherent and comprehensive analysis of Guru Nanak's theology and his religious discipline in the pages of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* by W.H. McLeod, Banerjee's exposition of the message of Guru Nanak appears to be extremely inadequate, rather confused. His contention that Guru Nanak did not found a new system of religious belief and practice, rejecting all previous dispensations, is now a contention without convincing argument or evidence. In fact, Banerjee's blindness to the significance of the fact that *bani* of Guru Nanak was used for worship in the lifetime of Guru Nanak is a measure of his preoccupation with the idea that Guru Nanak was merely a representative of the *Bhakti* movement within Hinduism.

Indubhusan Banerjee is on the way to be ousted from the respectable position he has occupied in the field of Sikh studies, partly due to the limitations of conceptualization and partly due to the limitations of his source materials. It must be emphasized, however, that some of his ideas and hypotheses are being incorporated into the work of his sucessors in a more or less sophisticated form, just as Banerjee himself adapted and elaborated the ideas first presented by J.D. Cunningham. If he is on the way out, it is not because he is not a good historian ; it is only because even the best of historians are eventually dated. History, both as a form of knowledge and development, is progressive. Being dated in due course is no dishonour to a good historian.

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CHAPTER XIV

GOKAL CHAND NARANG

Gokal Chand Narang was the noted author of the well-known book on Sikh history; *Transformation of Sikhism*, which won him a doctorate of philosophy from the Swiss University of Berne.

As mentioned in his Preface to the first edition published in 1912, he had a mind to add to it a second volume dealing with the period following the decline of the Sikh Misals. But this desire of his remained unfulfilled and he had to bring out more editions of the same volume subsequently, making what additions he deemed fit and proper suiting his convenience and altered circumstances. Up to date, the book has gone into as many as six editions, the latest being dated 1972. Its popularity is still unexhausted and it is possible that a few more editions may be published.

Gokal Chand was born in 1878 at Baddoke Gosain, a small village named after a local saint of great holiness, Rama Nanda Gosain, and situated in the district of Gujranwala. He belonged to a Sikh Sahjdhari family of Narang Arora sub-caste. He got his first lessons in Sikhism from his father Lala Mool Raj Narang to whose memory he dedicated his book with "the deepest reverence", recalling that it was he "who was the first to have inspired me with an interest in Sikh scriptures and Sikh history". His interest in the subject was augmented by his early education at the local gurdwara school where he learnt how to read and understand the Granth Sahib. Then he went in for formal education and matriculated from the Mission School, Gujranwala in 1896. Pursuing higher studies he passed the M.A. examinations of

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Punjab and Calcutta Universities in 1901 and 1902 respectively. A brilliant student throughout, he stood second in his F.A. and B.A. examinations and topped the list of successful candidates in his M.A. examination. Immediately after getting M.A. degree, he was appointed lecturer in the D.A.V. College, Lahore. He held this position for a period of nearly five years. Here he came in close contact with some of the best Arya Smajist minds, such as Mahatma Hans Raj and the effect produced by them on his mind proved to be permanent. The impact of Arya Smaj on him is revealed by a small book, *Message of the Vedas*, written by him during this period.

Arya Samaj was a powerful reform movement which aimed at recapturing the purity of Aryan life in the Vedic Age and repudiated all those evil and degrading practices which had subsequently crept into Hinduism, *e.g.* idol worship, caste system, polytheism, divine incarnation, child marriage, prohibition of widow-remarriage, female infanticide etc., etc. Gokal Chand made a positive response to all these ideas of reform. His previous grounding in Sikhism had virtually prepared him mentally for such a response of mind. The combination of Sikh and Arya Samaj influences in him produced a kind of attitude which in some essential respects differed from the typical attitudes of both Arya Samajists and Singh Sabhites. Although there were many things in common between the two, they were at that time engaged in a bitter mutual controversy. The Arya Samaj leadership was critical of the Sikh Gurus and used disparaging language regarding Guru Nanak Dev, the founder, and the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib. Simultaneously, the Samaj was making vigorous attempts to reconvert, by means of *Shudhi* the lower class of Sikhs to Hunduism. To these actions of Arya Smaj, Sikhs retaliated by asserting their independent identity and denying that they had any connection with Hinduism. Gokal Chand effected a reconciliation of the two positions and held that the Sikh Gurus were great leaders of Hinduism, worthy of all respect, who rendered marvellous service to the cause of Hinduism. Such an outlook representing the golden mean between the two extreme points of view was,

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as indicated before, a natural outcome of the Sikh and Hindu influences operating on his mind.

Another thing which had a powerful impact on his mind was his anti-Muslim bias. The whole atmosphere in India at the time he first wrote the book was surcharged with bitter Hindu-Muslim controversies. By and large, Muslims had boycotted the Congress and were carrying on a virulent propaganda against Hindus. They were trying hard to worm themselevs into the good books of the officialdom. The Government was also keen on winning them over so as to take the wind out of the sails of the Congress, and a secret understanding between the two led to the foundation of All India Muslim League in 1906 with a host of favours to follow. The Congress leadership of the period, too, could not divest itself of its predominant Hindu bias and mostly conceived of Indian nationalism in terms of Hindu culture and civilization. Gokal Chand could hardly escape the impact of such acrimonious controversies. Rather, as in the case of most of the Hindus of the time, his prejudices against Muslims had deeper roots because they had come to him by inheritance. Although Muslims had been in India for more than 800 years, as yet they were not accepted as the natives of the land and were regarded as aliens and their rule in India was viewed as a brand of foreign rule which had spared no efforts to extirpate Hinduism. Significantly, in the heat of the prevailing controversies both Singh Sabhite Sikhs and Arya Smajists shared this thinking regarding the Muslim community.

The basic approach or thought-pattern adopted by Gokal Chand in the writing of *Transformation of Sikhism* needs to be seen in the light of his psyche shaped by the aforesaid influences and prejudices. His preface to the first edition makes a clear mention that he was "a devoted admirer of the Gurus" since his infancy and consequently had "made Sikhism his lifelong study". But Sikhism to him was a movement in Punjab having as its chief aim the raising of Hindus as a nation. He writes on page 18 (5th edition), "Guru Nanak seems to have thoroughly diagnosed the case of the Hindu community of his time and found out that a religious revival was the only remedy which could save it from impending

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destruction". Describing the deplorable condition of the Hindus of Punjab, he attributes it most of all to the persecution of Hindus by Muslims during the period of their political domination. "The wave of proselytism had spread there with an overwhelming force and the Punjab contained the largest number of converts to Islam. Hindu temples had been levelled to the ground. Hindu schools aud colleges had made room for mosques. All vestiges of Hindu greatness had been obliterated. During the four and a half centuries that intervened the overthrow of Anangpal and the birth of Guru Nanak, history does not tell us the name of a single Hindu in the Punjab. Those who had escaped conversion had lost almost all that lends dignity and grace to life and distinguishes religion from superstition and cant" (p. 19, edition 5). He remarks that Guru Nanak felt most unhappy at this state of affairs and "at once made up his mind to devote his life to the service of his nation and by precept and by example, bring his people back to a religion of simplicity and sincerity, to wean them from the worship of stock and stone, restore to them pure worship of their ancient forefathers and make them once more able to stand their ground as a nation" (p. 21). "Nanak", he adds, "leavened the whole Hindu thought in the Punjab and improved the moral and spiritual tone of the whole people. Here was now, for the first time after ages of dissension and discord, a hero whom every Hindu could call his own and of whom every Hindu could justly feel proud" (p. 26). He sums up the impact of Guru Nanak's teaching as follows : "When he died in 1538 (tincorrect date), he had already transformed the lives of thousands of Hindus who had come in his personal contact with him and by his noble life and inspiring teaching, had produced a new atmosphere in the country in which no one could breathe without being healthier and stronger in the spirit. Nanak left the Hindus of the Punjab immensely better than he had fonnd them" (p. 27).

The task undertaken by Guru Nanak was continued after him by his distinguished successors. To him they were all great Hindu heroes. Among them he makes special references to the 9th and 10th Gurus. "Guru Tegh Bahadur was the acknowledged head of the Punjab Hindus from 1664 to 1675 AD".

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(p. 49) and "was generally looked upon as a champion of the Hindus" (p. 70). Consequently his execution was universally regarded by Hindus as a sacrifice for their faith" (p.71). Writing about Guru Gobind Singh on page 78 he remarks: "The object that the Guru set before himself was to infuse a new life into the dead bones of Hindus, to make them forget their differences and present a united front against the tyranny and persecution to which they were exposed (obviously the references here is to the Muslim rule in the Medieval period), in one word, to make once more a living nation of them and enable them to regain their lost independence". Summing up the achievements of Guru Gobind Singh he mentions: "He had broken the charm of sanctity attached to the Lord of Delhi and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by the Muslim tyranny. Guru Gobind had seen what was yet vital in the Hindu race "and he relumed it with promethean fire" (p. 98). At another place he writes: "They (Hindus) had religion but not national feeling. The only way to make a nation of them was to make nationlism their religion. And Guru Gobind Singh did make nationalism a religion with them, and all that was calculated to foster a national sentiment was incorporated as articles of faith in this new creed" (p. 80).

Speaking in the same spirit, he regarded the Gurus' followers as "the advanceguard of Hinduism". Simple and uneducated though, they possessed the qualities of faith, devotion and earnestness, by virtue of which "they led the way and drew the whole Hindu Punjab after them" (p. 28-f.n. 2). They were compared to the Aryans of the Vedic period—"their Aryan ancestors unsophisticated by casuistry, untrammelled by caste, simple, manly, enthusiastic in their pure and primitive faith" (indicates Arya Samaj influence).

The author's view of Sikhism as a Hindu movement aiming at the national regeneration of Hindus led him into the problem of how to characterize and adjust in his thought-pattern the emergence of the distinctive personality of the Sikh community. He was well aware of the fact that as the Sikh fraternity advanced, it created independent institutions of its own, marking it off clearly from the general body of

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Hindus. But he did not feel baffled and solved the problem by saying that the development of organization was necessitated by the need to carry on the mission of Guru Nanak in an effective manner. He makes a clear-cut reference to it when he deals with the appointment of his successor by Guru Nanak. "Although the object of Guru Nanak was simply to leaven the social and religious thought of the Hindus, and to improve the general tone of their moral and spiritual life and he had never thought of founding a sect, yet he was anxious that his work should continue after his death. With this object in view he appointed as his successor a Khatri, Lehna by name..." (p. 27). As will be seen, this position is quite contrary to that of many of our writers like Indubhusan Banerjee, author of *Evolution of the Khalsa.*

This hurdle crossed, the author proceeds to trace what he calls transformation of Sikhism which has given the book its title. Judging from that, transformation of Sikhism appears to be the principal theme of the work but actually it is no independent theme but is just a part of the larger theme of Hindu national regeneration. Viewed as such, the process was inherent in the system of Guru Nanak. The non-sectarian character of his teaching and his emphasis on reconciliation of religion with secular life provided "the seed which under the fostering care of Nanak's successors grew into a gigantic tree of Khalsa power" (p. 26). This is clearly brought out in the very first paragraph of the first page of the text. "The seed which blossomed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been shown by Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly, forged by Govind Singh, but the steel had been provided by Nanak who had obtained it, as it were, by smelting the Hindu ore and burning out the dross of indifference and superstition of the masses and the hypocrisy and pharisaism of the priests" (p. 17). The point to be noted here is not so much that there was a process of evolution but his strong plea that what happened in the time of the later Gurus particularly Guru Gobind Singh, was "the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the inception of Sikh brotherhood" (p. 17). He has even

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gone to the extent of suggesting, by way of implication, that the founder of Sikhism approached the problem facing him from the national point of view though by the nature of things he had to restrict the immediate scope of his work to the spiritual and moral education of his people, that is to say, Hindus. All subsequent developments in the fold of Sikhism, in this way, are interpreted as springing from the original planning and chartering of the course of Sikh movement in the time of Guru Nanak. The author recognizes the important role played by the growth of institutions under the early successors of Guru Nanak, as also by the factor of persecution Sikhs suffered at the hands of the then Mughal government. But the role of all such factors is regarded as no more than that of certain helping circumstances which provided the necessary conducive climate in which the fulfilment of the founder's dream was aided, even accelerated. The term transformation used by the author, thus, signifies transfiguration rather than any radical break marking the change of Sikhs from peaceful devotees to fanatical warriors.

Tracing the process of transformation, he makes a brief review of the work of successive Gurus. Guru Angad developed the *langar* institution of Guru Nanak. His specific contributions, however, were the introduction (not reform) of Gurmukhi characters and the compilation of Guru Nanak's memoirs. "By these measures and active preaching work", writes the author, "Guru Angad succeeded in giving a sort of local habitation and a name to the mission of Nanak. The Sikhs now began gradually to drift away from the orthodox Hindu society and form a class, a sort of new brotherhood, by themselves" (p. 30). Guru Amar Das who succeeded him saved the infant Sikh society from the dangers of influence of the Udasi sect founded and also being led by Guru Nanak's eldest son Baba Sri Chand. He established as many as twenty-two *manjas* (author calls them *manjas*, which is wrong) which Gokal Chand says "must have gone a long way in strengthening the foundations of the Church and in carrying on the propaganda in all parts of the country" (p. 33). He founded the village of Goindwal on the bank of the Beas and afterwards built a splendid *Baoli* (well with steps) which

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formed, so to say, the first important place of pilgrimage of the Sikhs. Guru Ram Das, the fourth in the line of succession, founded the city of Amritsar under the name of *Guru ka Chak* and constructed a holy tank called Amritsar, from which the present name of the city has been derived. Under Guru Arjan, Sikhism made long strides. He gave the Sikhs their scripture, the Adi Granth, which "served as a code of sacred as well as secular law" (p. 43). He gave them their Mecca by building Harimandir Sahib (Temple of God) in the midst of the Tank of Immortality, Amritsar. He founded the town of Tarn Taran (makes no reference to other towns founded by him) where also he built a beautiful temple. This furnished the Guru with a Sikh centre in the heart of the Majha and greatly helped in spreading Sikhism in this tract lying between the Ravi and the Beas rivers. Guru Arjan founded the *Masand* System which, in the words of the author, was "the beautiful edifice of self-government for the Sikhs in the heart of the Mughal Empire" (p. 33). Another step taken by Guru Arjan Dev was the popularisation of horse-trade "which was calculated to encourage adventure and enterprise among his followers" (p. 43). The results of all these measures of the Guru were tremendous. In the words of the author : "The character of Guruship had already been changed by the adoption of the rule of hereditary succession. Now that the numper of followers multiplied, the resources increased and the Church was developed into a sort of State. Guru Arjan changed his mode of living so as to suit the present condition of the community over which he presided" (p. 44). "Though himself a man of simple habits and great humility, his *Durbar* became a place of splendour and magnificence and the palatial buildings and tents and horses and treasure gave it the look of a princely court" (p. 45). He further remarks : "As a matter of fact the Sikhs had made great advance under the pontificate of Guru Arjan. A state, peaceful and unobstrusive, had been slowly evolved, and with the Guru at its head as *Sacha Padshah*, the Sikhs had already become accustomed to a form of self-government within the empire" (p. 45).

The growing organization of Sikhism, according to Gokal Chand, brought it into direct confrontation with Mughal

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authorities. To this he attributes the real cause of trouble with the government. He writes : "The compactness which the rising community of the Sikhs was assuming under Arjan would of itself have brought the royal wrath upon the Guru's head" (p. 46). But the catastrophe was precipitated by two circumstances one of which, at least, was purely accidental. They were : (*i*) the rejection by the Guru of the offer made by Chandu Shah, Diwan of Lahore, of his daughter's hand for the son of the Guru : (*ii*) the Guru's reception and monetary help to the rebel Mughal Prince Khusrau in the course of the latter's flight in the direction of Lahore.

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev in 1606 introduced a new element affecting the transformation of Sikhism. Gokal Chand gives due importance to it and says : "The next great impetus which stimulated the growth of the Sikh power and proved the immediate cause of its transition into a political organization was that received from the persecution to which they were systematically subjected by the Muslim Government of the day". To prove the validity of his contention he devotes one full chapter to Sikh, or Hindu as he prefers to say, martyrdoms that occurred during the period of the Gurus as well as in the 18th century.

The prosecution, fine, torture and death which Guru Arjan Dev had to suffer were "signal blasts, as it were, to rally the physical forces of the Sikh theocracy" (p. 60). Guru Hargobind, son and successor of Guru Arjan Dev, put on two swords, representing *miri* (temporal authority) and *piri* (spiritual authority) respectively, indicating his firm determination to resist by arms, if necessary, the forces of tyranny. With this end in view, he entered upon a well-thought-out programme of militarization for his young community. As was expected, some armed clashes occurred with government authorities but despite his very slender resources he came out with flying colours in all of them. The results of the new line of policy were of far-reaching importance. The author says : "Not only was it made clear to them (Sikhs) that worldly pursuits were quite compatible with the deepest religious spirit and highest piety and to bear arms in defence of

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their homes and hearths was a paramount duty but that continued successes had made them realize their own power and the weakness of the Mughal Government" (p. 65).

The most radical steps in the transformation process were effected in the time of the Tenth and last Guru Gobind Singh. The execution of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, by Aurangzeb had given him a clear idea of the gravity of the situation facing the Sikhs. The reforms carried out by him fitted the rising community not only to overcome the immediate dangers of shock and consternation but also to work for the long-run solution of the problem. Comparing his achievements with those of his predecessors, the author has written : "Guru Nanak had considerably elevated the morals of the Punjab Hindus, and other predecessors of Govind had done something to make a peaceful organization of them. But the work of evolving a body of men inspired by the sane and high political aspirations was reserved for the exceptional genius of Govind" (p. 79). Obviously, the reference here is to the creation of the Khalsa by the Guru. Gokal Chand has given an elaborate account, in three chapters, of how he created this body, what motivated him in doing so and of the ordeals through which it had to pass under his leadership. This marked, according to the author, a very long stride forward in the process of transformation of the Sikh community. The Sikhs were now changed from a body of peaceful religious devotees to a national and political organization committed to strive for the good of Hindus and having "pugnacity and valour" as its "most important features" (p. 72). The Guru ransacked the ancient Hindu literature to sift and collect its heroic content and moulded it into a dynamic national ideology for his Khalsa. He taught his followers, to use the words of the author, "to regard themselves as the chosen of the Lord, destined to crush tyranny and oppression and look upon themselves as the future rulers of their land" (p. 98).

After Guru Govind Singh, the Sikh movement embarked upon an active political career. Banda Bahadur who was nominated by the Tenth Guru as temporal leader of the

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Khalsa to carry on his work after him and was commissioned to proceed to Punjab poste haste and deal with the Mughal authorities there, has been depicted by the author as a great Hindu hero. This aspect as well as Banda Bahadur's contribution in the transformation of the Sikh community comes out clearly when he sums up his achievements: "Guru Gobind Singh had diverted the attention of his followers from the plough to the sword and had set the seal of his sanction on war and bloodshed if the cause of justice and righteousness could not be otherwise vindicated. He had sown the seed, Banda reaped the harvest. The Guru had enunciated principles, Banda carried them into practice. Govind had destroyed the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism. Banda completely broke the charm of its invincibility. The Hindus, after centuries of subjection, realized under Banda that they could still fight and conquer, and when he fell, the dreams of Khalsa supremacy inspired by Govind were considerably nearer the point of realization" (p. 112).

Yet the process of transformation was left incomplete because of the ultimate defeat of Banda at the hands of the imperial forces. The execution of Banda and his redoubtable followers in 1716 was a mighty stunning blow indeed from which the Khalsa took quite a few years to recover. But it was a passing phase and the Khalsa was soon back in the field to resume its unfinished struggle against the Mughal rulers.

The history of Sikhism from the fall of Banda to the permanent occupation of Lahore is a record of a long life and death struggle between the declining power of the Mughals and the rising state of the Khalsa. Gokal Chand studies the ups and downs of this struggle at fairly good length and traces the story in his usual spirit of admiration down to the year 1768 when he thinks the Khalsa got firmly established in its supremacy in Punjab. To sum up the results of this titanic national struggle, he writes: "Thus in 1768 the Khalsa Commonwealth extended from the Jamuna to the Indus. The seed sown by Nanak had now, thanks to the talents of his successors, the great military genius of Govind and the unconquerable spirit of Banda, blossomed into a rich crop. The nation started with the rosary and

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ended by snatching the sceptre from the oppressing hands of its tyrannical masters. The political organisation of the Sikhs was now complete and the sovereignty of the Land of Five Waters had now completely passed to the children of the Khalsa" . . . (p. 44).

The subject of the study as the author planned it originally, really ends here with the completion of the process of transformation in 1768. All that comes after this, is the result of his larger plan of writing a two-volume history of the Sikhs. Preface to the First Edition clearly mentions : "The process of transformation was completed by 1768 A.D. when the Sikhs occupied Lahore, and the narrative might as well have been left there, but as the author intends to begin his second volume on Sikh history with the rise of Ranjit Singh, he has thought it advisable to fill up the gap between the occupation of Lahore and Ranjit Singh's accession by giving a brief account of the Misals which ruled simultaneously in various parts of the Panjab during that period."

Thus, the first edition of the book comes down to the year 1799 which marks the beginning of the period of Ranjit Singh's ascendancy. At the end three appendices were added to give the general reader an idea of the contents of Sikh scriptures and of the nature of Sikhism as a religious and social system. Of these the first appendix deals with the two sacred books of the Sikhs, *Adi Granth* and *Dasam Granth.* The second appendix entitled 'Is Sikhism a Mixture ?' brings out the basis of the main thesis which the author has put forth in the book. He argues that it is a myth to regard Sikhism as a mixture of Hinduism and Muhammadanism. He admits that Islam had its impact on Sikhism but that was of a different kind". It may be at once conceded that Islam had something to do with the advent of Sikhism. In fact there might have been no Sikhism or it would probably never have appeared in this form if Islam had not crossed over the boundaries of India. But it does not mean that Sikhism is Islamic to any extent whatsoever. It was on the other hand the embodiment of Hindu reaction against Islam". Islam stirred the Hindu community, he remarks, in its deepest foundations and gave a power-

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ful impetus to its thought and activity. Two methods were adopted to save the Hindus from the impending destruction. One was adopted by the Brahmin who fortified the social system and took shelter behind the barriers of caste. The other method was adopted by Guru Nanak and his successors. This was "to discard the vulnerable points, give up the rusty swords and battered armours of rotten beliefs and corrupted practices and fight in the open field with flashing swords and thrice-tempered steel of the theistic doctrines of vigorous, manly, moral and philosophical Hinduism". To make his point even more effectively, he gives an illustration from Indian history. "The doctrines of Islam had as little to do with the formation of Nanak's doctrines as the forces of Babar with the creation of the Rajput army that contested the sovereignty of India wtth him under the leadership of Rana Sanga. One necessitated the other but did not form part of it." He quotes Dr. Trumpp, Gordon and Mulk Raj Bhalla in support of his contention. He also critically examines the questions of monotheism, image-worship and caste-system and draws the conclusion that in the Sikhism of Guru Nanak and his successors there was nothing which was not already there in Hinduism.

However, when he says this he does not mean that Sikhism had no distinguishing features of its own, because this aspect forms the subject matter of Appendix III. He mentions some points which he thinks are special features of Sikhism and which distinguish it from Hinduism. They are unity of the Supreme Being, absence of idol worship, worship of none except God, emphasis on *Nam etc.* In social polity as well, he adds, there are very few differences between the Sikhs and the Hindus.

At this point, a few words about the merit of the author's original edition as a piece of historical writing may not be out of place. He starts with two major assumptions, namely (*a*) the Hindus used to be a nation in the past but somehow they had lost their nationhood ; (*b*) Guru Nanak as a Hindu had the national spirit of old and endeavoured to infuse the same high sentiment into the minds of his people. These assumptions have led him into a position

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where he has ignored the total social situation resulting from the interaction of the two civilizations, Hindu and Islamic, over a period of several centuries and singling out the Hindus from that total picture of the society, poses the problem which he believes Guru Nanak had to face. He remarks that while yet a boy Guru Nanak had made a thorough diagnosis of the malady of the Hindus and mapped out the course of his life. "He at once made up his mind," he writes, "to devote his life to the service of his nation", and to "make them once more able to stand their ground as a nation" (p. 21). How far such assumptions of his are valid, he has not bothered to mention ; nor has he anywhere referred to the grounds on which he bases them. As such, the whole thesis put forth by the author appears to spring from a few pre-conceived notions rather than from an objective examination of historical evidence.

The author claims in his *Preface to the First Edition* that he studied every important book or manuscript dealing with Sikh history that he could find in the Bodleian Library of Oxford and the libraries of India Office, British Museum and Royal Asiatic Society, London, and has given a select bibliography at the end. However, his documentation as given in the text is not always adequate and helpful. For instance, he often gives the names of the sources he has consulted without mentioning the exact places from where he has derived his information. He refers to *Panth Parkash* without saying which *Panth Prakash* he has in mind and without indicating the actual point of his reference. This is true of several other sources as well, such as *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, Cunningham's *A History of the Sikhs*, Ali-ud-Din's *Ibratnama*, and *Risala-i-Nanakshah etc., etc.*

The chief merit of the study from the historical angle lies in the thread of continuity that the writer has been able to trace and present in his work. He has been at great pains to show that what he has called transformation of Sikhism is indeed a transfiguration (though he has not used the term) because it is a study of continued development on the foundations laid down by the founder-Guru Nanak Dev. All

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that came to pass subsequently, particularly after the last Guru handed over complete charge to the Khalsa, was no intrusion of any extraneous element, but was a natural phenomenon of change, of course aided by changing circumstances, occurring within the conceptual framework of the founder of Sikhism. There was no such thing as a disruption in the basic character of the movement, as some of our writers on Sikh history have ventured to suggest.

II

Second edition of the book was brought out as late as 1945. The demand being very great, the entire stock was exhausted within a year, and still another edition had to be brought out in 1946. The author had promised at the time of the first edition that he would write a companion second volume on the later part of Sikh history but this promise could not materialize because of his heavy involvement in matters of public interest. All the same, he revised the earlier work in the light of later historical researches and added a few chapters at the end to bring the story down to the year of writing.

A brief idea of the author's interests and activities during the years since the book was first published in 1912, may be essential to understand the functioning of his mind at the time the second edition was being put through.

After his return from England, he practised for some years at the Calcutta High Court. Then he shifted to Lahore and started practising at the Punjab Chief Court. When the Rowlatt Bills agitation was on, he emerged as one of its local leaders and played an active part for which he was soon arrested and put behind the bars for a short period. This was followed by a brief spell of his association with the Indian National Congress. In 1920 he joined the Swaraj Party founded by C.R. Das and Moti Lal Nehru and later in 1923 was elected to the Punjab Council as a Swarajist. But he was not happy with the Congress on account of its policy to support the Khilafat movement. His deep-rooted prejudices against Muslims made him look upon the Congress support to the Khilafat movement as an imprudent and

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undeserved concession to Muslim communalism. Therefore, he resigned his membership of the Congress in 1924. Two years later he became an active member of the Hindu Mahasabha. For several years he was President of the Punjab branch of the All India Hindu Mahasabha and along with Bhai Parmanand dominated its politics. For his devoted services to the cause of this political organization he was elected President of the All India Hindu Mahasabha Session held at Akola. Another important thing which had great impact on his mind was his appointment in 1930 as Minister for Local Self-Government and Industries of Punjab Government. He continued to serve in that capacity till 1937. After that although he held no position at the ministerial level, he continued to serve as a member of the Punjab legislature till 1946. As a legislator he was a prominent leader of the opposition and he distinguished himself as a champion of Hinduism. Still another important factor in the shaping of his attitude was his deep involvement in industrial enterprise. He had made lot of money during the twenties and thirties and had developed much interest in business. In his own province he was one of the pioneering leaders of industry. In 1920 he started the Punjab Sugar Mills Co. Ltd. and established a sugar mill in the district of Gorakhpur. This was followed later by a few more mills of the same kind. Besides, to promote speedy industrialisation in Punjab, an Act was passed by the Punjab Council under his stewardship. By 1946 he had come to be recognized as a sugar magnate.

As the result of all these influences working on his mind, four things come out very clearly. His faith in Hindu nationalism was further reinforced. With his being thrown into the vortex of Hindu Mahasabha politics, it was no longer a matter of mere intellectual conviction with him, because he was now among the top Hindu leaders publicly and actively striving for what he thought to be the good of his community. Since the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha were mainly directed against the Muslim League, Gokal Chand's anti-Muslim feelings received a further dose of strength. Again, being influenced by the Hindu Mahasabha

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politics and also by his personal reactionary bourgeois interests, he developed a dislike for the Indian National Congress and its politics and began to advocate a pro-British line as the best policy under the circumstances for the Hindus. The Muslim League enjoyed certain advantages because it was bolstered up by the British as a counterpoise to the Congress. Therefore, if the Hindus, too, adopted a pro-British attitude instead of supporting the hostile attitude of the Congress, the Government might be persuaded to revise their sympathetic policy towards the Muslim League.

All of these tendencies are, directly or indirectly, reflected in the four additional chapters printed in the second and third editions. The first of these chapters depicts Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a great Sikh and Hindu hero. "Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the beau ideal of Sikh chivalry. In him the Sikh power was at its zenith. Not only the Sikhs but the whole Hindu nation felt that in him the sun of Hindu glory had once more risen in the political horizon of India. They showered upon him their heartiest blessings. They looked upon him as their liberator and their protector, one who after centuries of barbarious attacks from the North, hurled back the invaders and raiders to their mountain lairs. They bestowed their unstinted love and affection on him and revered him as a God-sent guardian of their hearths and upholder of their national honour" (p. 177). The author approvingly quotes one of his aunts as having remarked that "the Maharaja was an Avtarji, gifted with miraculous powers" (p. 177). "Even after half a century of British rule", he adds, "the hearts of the Hindus turned back to Ranjit Singh as a national hero" (p. 177). He recalls how in his childhood when senior members of his family used to tell him stories of the Maharaja's great feats of chivarly, he considered him unfortunate for having missed the opportunity of seeing him. Referring to his death, the author writes in the same vein : "When he died in 1839, there was universal mourning in the country and everyone felt as if he had lost his own father and guardian. With his death, it was said everywhere, the Punjab had become a widow" (p. 182). With this kind of bent of his mind, the author fails to see

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any weaknesses or frailties in the Maharaja and in his administration. The entire account runs into six pages and there is practically nothing about his administration, civil or military. This may well be explained by the fact that the author's principal concern was with the projection of the heroic image of the Maharaja and whatever did not appear to him to be directly essential to this end was ignored.

Whereas Ranjit Singh was a great hero, those who followed him were very small men, "sadly lacking", according to Gokal Chand, "in political sense" (p. 187). "The Sikh fighting forces consisted of illiterate ploughmen entirely devoid of any feeling of patriotism. Their leaders, with few exceptions, were either too selfish or too cowardly, miserably lacking in national spirit and patriotic sentiments. Like rats deserting a sinking ship they slunk away to save their own skins" (p.187). The fateful decade following Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, and ending in 1849 with total extinction of the Khalsa rule forms the subject of the second chapter entitled *After Him the Deluge.*

The third chapter, barely two and a half pages, deals with the Namdhari sect. The author paints a bright picture of the Namdhari movement. Speaking about its aims and objects he says : "The original movement was purely religious which aimed at reforming the Sikh life and restoring it to its original character. As, however, the sect grew in numbers, its ambition increased till at last it began to preach revival of the Khalsa, and as pointed out by Sir Lepel Griffin, the downfall of the British Government" (pp. 188-189). Towards the end of his account, the author makes two significant remarks which may give us a good insight into the working of his mind. Both of these refer to the Namdhari Guru Partap Singh and his policies in what may obviously be regarded as approving terms. One is related to his keeping "the Namdharis aloof from political agitation in connection with the Punjabi Suba as well as from linguistic controversy" (p. 189). The other points to his sect's loyalty to the Government under his guidance and his cooperation with the authorities.

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The last of these four chapters has for its theme loyalty of Sikhs to the British Government during the period 1849-1946. For eight years after Annexation (1849) the British were hostile to the Sikhs and were busy in crushing their power. When the "Mutiny" of 1857 created a difficult situation for the British they appealed to the religious sentiments of the Sikhs in the name of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Sikhs came to their rescue and rendered great services to them in that difficult hour. After that they became "famous for their loyalty and in fact became special favourites of the British Government" (p. 191). The author holds that this "wave of loyalty continued till 1913" when the outer boundary wall question of Gurdwara Rikab Ganj (New Delhi) gave a serious jolt to the Sikh attitude towards the British. Their mutual relations touched the nadir when over the issue of gurdwara reform, Akalis started agitation against the Government during the twenties. Gokal Chand writes: "The Sikhs thus triumphed in their agitation but the result was that the relations between the Sikhs and the Government were strained and British confidence in the devotion and loyalty of the Sikhs was apparently shaken" (p. 197). Quoting some statistics in support of his view, he remarks that "while formerly in the British Indian Army out of 47% of the Punjab, N.W.F.P., and Kashmir quota, the Sikhs represented 19.2%, in 1930, their strength was reduced to 13.58%" (p. 197). However, when the Second World War broke out in 1939, the relations between the two "underwent a change for the better", and once again the Government began to show favours to them.

Taking an overall view of the history of the Sikhs during the British period, Gokal Chand's account is very inadequate. He takes practically no notice of the great changes which occurred in the Sikh community under the impact of Singh Sabha movement. The Sikh community would not have been what it is today but for this movement. Another equally important, if not more, is the heroic role which the Sikhs played in our country's struggle for freedom. By his exclusive emphasis on the pro-government attitude of a section of the community, the author has provided the reader

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with an interesting insight into the functioning of his own loyalist mind.

Considered purely from the angle of historical discipline, the account given is no more than a journalistic exercise. No statement made herein is supported anywhere by historical evidence with the result that several factual errors have crept into it, as for instance in the chapter entitled *After Him the Deluge*.

In addition to the four new chapters already mentioned, the second and third editions contain a chapter on the future of Sikhs. Writing on this subject the author argues that although their future is "anything but dark", the best days of the Khalsa are altogether behind them" (p. 237). The main reasons advanced by him are their small numerical strength, strong Hindu opposition to further conversion of Hindus to Sikhism, reduced percentage of recruitment for Sikhs in armed forces and increasing indifference of the youth to religion, particularly its formal symbols. However, he expresses his firm view that these difficulties notwithstanding, the community has enough of reservior of internal solidarity and can easily face the future with confidence. The important point to be noticed here is the contradiction arising from what Sir Jogendra Singh in his *Foreword* has called the divided loyalties of the author. His basic approach identifying the Sikhs as the vanguard of Hinduism, now undergoes a change. Though not wholly unsympathetic to the Sikh community, he is now so swayed by the political controversies of the day that he changes his old position and views the Sikhs from the standpoint of a Hindu Mahasabha leader that he was. It is, however, worth remembering that in his *Preface to the Second Edition*, he strongly denies the allegation of Jogendra Singh in these words : "No such question can arise so far as the role as a writer of history is concerned. As historian his first loyalty is to truth. He cannot play the part of an apostle either to one community or the other, nor suggest or insinuate any measure to promote or hinder any particular movement". He calls himself "a humble missionary of Hindu-Sikh unity" and states that in

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the past the Hindus, by and large, have stood by the Sikhs. To emphasise his point further, he reiterates his old position on the subject saying : "Even one who has had the good fortune of being in touch with the original sources, cannot but reverently appreciate the beauty and grace with which the Gurus conveyed the ancient teachings to Hindu masses to whom in those dark days access to the original sources had become impossible. The Hindus of Punjab can never forget their obligation to Guru Nanak and his successors, imbued with the same spirit, for the spiritual succour they received at their hands in their hour of greatest need".

Apart from adding five new chapters, the second edition revises the first edition and makes a few improvements in the light of later researches. To give an instance, the publication of 1912 contained no reference at all to *Tuzk-i-Jahangiri* while discussing the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. The account was revised in the ligh of a passage from this Persian source which gained wide publicity for the first time in 1941 through an article in *Sher-i-Punjab*, an Urdu weekly of Lahore, dated 31 May 1941 (p. 47).

Ten years after the third edition, in 1956, the book was again revised and enlarged and brought out for the fourth time. Among the fresh additions were three full chapters and a portion of the last chapter on the future of the Sikhs. Between, themselves the new chapters namely, 'Struggle for Khalistan", "The Regional Formula' and 'Counter-Agitation by the Hindus' cover the years 1947 to 1956, a period described by the author as "*Akali Yug* in the history of the Punjab" for the reason that it was packed with Akali agitations for the setting up of a Punjabi-speaking state. In his account of these agitations and the events following upon them, Gokal Chand has cast himself in an entirely new role though not without its traces in the second and third impressions of the book. It is not the role, as claimed by him in his Preface to the Second Edition, of an historian whose "first loyalty is to truth", or of "a humble missionary of Hindu-Sikh unity". Nor is it the role of a writer who looked upon the Sikhs, as he did in his first edition, as the vanguard of the Hindu

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community and spearhead of Hindu nationalism. On the other hand, it is the role of a biased writer who completely identifies himself with the forces of resistance to the Akali demand for reorganization of Punjab on the basis of language. This comes out very clearly from the way he describes the agitation of the Hindus to the Regional Formula which the Government of India had offered to the Sikhs as a sop for the rejection of their demand for a Punjabi Suba by the States Reorganization Commission. Thus, it is a piece of political writing rather than a writing of history based on an objective study of the issues involved.

However, paradoxically speaking there was no real shift in the author's basic thinking. From the beginning he was a staunch votary of Hinduism. But being an Arya Samajist and a believer in religious reforms and also on account of pro-Sikh influences on his mind in his early days, he viewed the rise of Sikhism favourably, styling it as an institutionalised expression of Hindu nationalism. His attitude towards the Sikhs retained its wide sympathy and understanding so long as the Sikhs had not developed a fully self-conscious political identity of their own. When after Independence the Sikhs began to demand a linguistic state on the lines of other such states in the country, Gokal Chand regarded it as anti-Hindu, though it was not true, and thus showed that his loyalty to his own community was far stronger than anything else. Going deeper with the matter, even this loyalty was just a *veneer* for his anxiety for the economic interests of that bussiness section of the Hindus who had the fear, albeit wrongly, that their interests would he jeopardised by the formation of a Sikh-dominated Punjabi-speaking state.

But howsoever big the agitations of the Sikhs, Gokal Chand entertains no illusions about them. In the new portion added to the chapter on the future of the Sikhs, he makes a categorical observation that "the Sikhs have no political future as an independent community" (p. 242). The favourable circumstances in which they had some princely states and enjoyed special privileges of communal electorates and reservation of seats have disappeared and a new

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situation has emerged in which they will have to depend completely upon the central government. He sounds a note of warning that in case they failed to play their cards well, they may find themselves in a tight corner. "They have, however, nothing to fear as long as they keep on the right side of the Central Government and scrupulously refrain from any communal outburst. They must be fully conscious that their population in the Indian Union is not much more than 1% while Muslims and Christians, not to speak of the Hindus, are far more numerous than the Sikhs and if communal considerations have at all to be kept in view in making high appointments, all the other communities may legitimately claim their share" (p. 242). He notes with satisfaction that the Shiromani Akali Dal in October 1956, after the acceptance of the Regional Formula, solemnly resolved that it would "give up politics and would confine its activities to educational, cultural, religious and economic matters" (p. 242).

The author proved a false prophet. The Regional Formula was a total failure. The Sikhs realized that they had been over-reached, so that they left the Congress and resumed their political activities as usual. With that another wave of agitations for the creation of a Punjabi Suba set in to which a new chapter has been devoted in the 5th edition of the book brought out in 1960. That the author's sympathy lay not with those who were struggling for the Punjabi Suba but with those who were opposed to it becomes manifest from the laboured manner in which he tries to bring the weight of public opinion to bear against the Akali demand. He gives long quotations from the speeches and writings of Partap Singh Kairon, Chief Minister of Punjab, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru apparently with the object of showing that the demand had no prospect of being accepted by the Government. It is not without significance that his account concludes with an emphatic statement by Jawaharlal Nehru saying that "under no circumstances the demand for a Punjabi Suba would be acceptable to the country" (p.235). This statement, according to him, was made when a deputation of Arya Samajists and Sanatanists of Punjab headed by

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Mr. Virendra, Editor Daily Partap, Jullundur, waited upon him.

Apart from the new chapter on the Akali agitation for a Punjabi Suba, the fifth edition made no material changes in the text of the book. His retaining the chapter on the future of the Sikhs without making any change, shows that he clung to his old pessimistic view regarding the future of this community. Subsequent events have, however, shown that he was in the wrong and the Sikhs, though a minority, have a vigorous role to play in the nation's life and also have a well-secured future.

Still another edition appeared three years after the death of Gokal Chand on 23rd February 1969. This has dropped the earlier title of the book for what reason we are not told and has been renamed by its publishers as *Glorious History of Sikhism—From Spiritualism to Militarism*. Another significant feature of this edition is that all those chapters which related to the years after the annexation of Punjab to the British Empire in 1849 have been completely deleted. From the historical angle the edition carries no more significance.

Transformation of Sikhism is the only historical book written by Gokal Chand Narang. However, he wrote a number of other books, namely : *Real Hinduism*, *Message of the Vedas*, *Essence of the Gita* (English as well as Hindi), *Naghma-i-Javidan*, *Yad-i-Raftgan*, *Ahwal-i-Bazurgan*. Of these the last three were collections of his Urdu poems. The books on Hinduism, to which category belong the first three of this list, give us a good glimpse of the basic forces determining his attitudes on various matters and as such are vital in understanding his historiographical approach.

With this we come to the end. Broadly speaking, it may be said that the book has grown with successive editions except for the last one which applied the reverse gear. All the same, the work produced in 1912 is by far the best portion of the book. On the whole, it is an interpretation rather than a detailed analytical work. The interpretation, too, does not seem to flow from any objective study of historical data. Rather, the attempt seems to have been made

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in terms of certain pre-conceived ideas and tendencies. The early decades of the twentieth century were dominated by an upsurge of religious nationalism which, in the case of Hindu leaders such as Arbindo, B.P. Paul, B.G. Tilak and Lajpat Rai, was in fact Hindu nationalism. Gokal Chand, as an Arya Samajist, was powerfully influenced by the national thought of the period and his book on Sikhism bears an indelible imprint of that. As years rolled by and communal passions raged high and his interest in business developed, his outlook came to have an element of narrowness which is found abundantly reflected in the subsequent additions to the original text.

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