

THE POTHOHAR ASSOCIATION UK

Maharaja Ranjit Singh

THE RISE AND FALL OF A SECULAR EMPIRE

CELEBRATING
100 YEARS OF
POTHOHARIS
IN GREAT BRITAIN

GUEST SPEAKER

FAKIR SYED AIJAZUDDIN, OBE
Honorary British Consul, Lahore

FRIDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2016

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POTHOHAR ASSOCIATION UK

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I take pride and great honour to extend my warm personal greetings and hearty welcome to each and every one at our second Master Tara Singh Memorial annual Lecture this evening.

As last year, I am glad to note a rejuvenated vigour and enthusiasm in our events like this and appreciate all the support and work done by all to make it a success. The major contribution of Mr Jasminder Singh & Mr Inderneel Singh's family and the management of The May Fair Hotel have been again instrumental in today's successful event. We recognise their generosity and thank them heartily.



The Rise and Fall of The Sikh Empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh can only be the obvious choice of topic today, for us all to revisit our roots and talk about the unparalleled glory in the Punjab region that was achieved by a Sikh King in the nineteenth century. There are very learned speakers tonight to enlighten us on the subject. We are also proud to keep up the tradition of honouring again tonight some of our prominent Pothoharis with **Late Mr B M Singh's *Pride of Pothohar Award***.

We are making slow but continuous progress in taking the Pothohar Association to new heights and I urge you all to get our younger generation involved as much as possible who can do better than us and also bring all the communities together.

Pushpinder Singh Khandpur
President
23 September 2016

Remembering...



Mr. Bal Mohinder Singh
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he touched and won millions of hearts
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MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH A SECULAR KING OF PUNJAB

I cannot think of a better way to celebrate 100 years of Pothoharis in Britain, than reflecting on life and achievements of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Maharaja was a secular leader whose most trusted courtiers included three Muslim brothers, Sikhs, Hindus as well as European mercenaries from France, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Spain, Russia and from British India. During his 40 year reign, he ruled over a large territory, which covered Punjab, Kashmir, Sind Peshawar & North west Frontier; consequently trade and commerce flourished. The Maharaja was himself illiterate, but recognised the importance of education. During his reign, he invested resources to educate his subjects, so that they could read and write Persian (the official language of his kingdom); towards the end of his empire very large percentage of population could read and write Persian.



He co-operated with the British to use waterways for trade, using the Indus River to travel to Bombay and beyond. During his regime, Punjab saw relative peace and living standards improved. For the first time in nearly two centuries, people could practice their religion without being persecuted. There was no capital punishment during his reign & soldiers were forbidden to loot and plunder. Art, culture and architecture flourished and he was responsible for restoring many a Mughal structure as well as building several forts, gardens, museums and religious places.

The lecture today, will focus on and analyse, how an uneducated warrior could achieve so much in such a short time and bring harmony and tranquillity in an area which was subjected to invasion from Afghanistan. He effectively blocked the invasion from North West, and signed the Treaty of Sutlej with the British, enabling him to expand his kingdom. The Pothohar region was his launching pad for his expansion to North West & Kashmir.

It is our pleasure to have Mr. Fakir Syed Aijazuddin as our guest speaker who will reflect on the real Ranjit Singh.

Chanchal Singh Chowdhry
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HOST

POOJA DASSAN

Dr Pooja Dassan is a consultant neurologist, working at Ealing Hospital and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust. She is the Neurology Clinical Lead at London North West Healthcare NHS Trust.

From 1995-2001, she studied medicine at Guy's and St Thomas' Medical Schools. During this time she attained a Bachelor of Sciences degree in Neuroscience, which is when she first became fascinated by the nervous system.

From 2005-2008, she undertook a period of postgraduate research at the Institute of Neurology at Queen Square, London. The results from this research have been published in neuroscience journals.

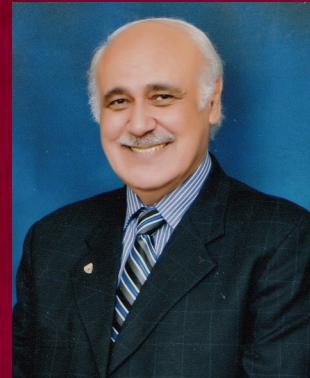
She has now developed an interest in obstetric-neurology and runs a specialist clinic at Queen Charlotte's Hospital, where she reviews pregnant women with complex neurological problems. This is a highly specialised area of neurology and there are only a handful of similar clinics in the UK.



GUEST SPEAKER

FAKIR AIJAZUDDIN

Fakir Aijazuddin is one of Pakistan's leading art-historians. He belongs to the illustrious Fakir family of Lahore. His forebears – Azizuddin, Imamuddin and Nuruddin - held senior positions of trust and enjoyed the confidence of the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh. His recent biography of their lives and careers at the Sikh Darbar – titled *The Resourceful Fakirs: Three Muslim Brothers at the Sikh Court of Lahore (2014)* - has been acclaimed as the definitive account that period of Punjabi history, when the Punjab became an independent nation-state.



Aijazuddin is a specialist on 19th century paintings in the subcontinent, having written 17 books on Pahari miniatures, Sikh paintings, on early maps of Pakistan, on Dr Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China in 1971, on US-Pak relations 1969-74, and contemporary politics.

He has had a distinguished professional career as a Chartered Accountant, working in senior management positions in Pakistan and abroad. He has served as Interim Minister of Culture, Tourism and Environment in the Punjab Government (2007-8).

He has been the British Honorary Consul in Lahore since 1994. His services were recognized when H.M. the Queen awarded him the OBE during her visit to Lahore in 1997.

PANEL DISCUSSION: MODERATOR

SUE STRONGE

SUSAN STRONGE is a Senior Curator in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Asian Department. In a career of over three decades she has become recognised as a leading scholar of Mughal court art, of the arts of the Panjab under Sikh rule, and of the South Indian court of Tipu Sultan. She is the award-winning curator of the V&A exhibitions *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* (1999) and *Bejewelled Treasures - The Al Thani Collection* (2015). Her books and articles cover a wide range of subjects. She lectures frequently in the UK and abroad, and has contributed to BBC radio and tv programmes including Radio 4's *In our Time*.



PANEL DISCUSSION: PANELIST

CHARLES ALLEN

Historian, broadcaster and traveller Charles Allen was born in 1940 in Cawnpore (today Kanpur) in India, where five generations of his family had lived and served since 1790. With more than twenty-three books to his name, Charles is today an acknowledged authority on British Indian and South Asian history, and in 2004 was awarded the Sir Percy Sykes Gold Medal by the Royal Society for Asian Affairs for his contribution to Asian studies. He is a Council Member of the Kipling Society, an active Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society and Royal Geographical Society, and a Member of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs and the Frontline Club.



Charles's recent published work since 2000 includes: *The Prisoner of Kathmandu: Brian Houghton Hodgson in Nepal 1820-43* (2015); *Ashoka: the search for India's lost emperor* (2012); *Kipling Sahib: India and the making of Rudyard Kipling* (2007); *The Buddha and the Sahibs: the men who discovered India's lost religion* (2002); and *Soldier Sahibs: the men who made the North West Frontier* (2000). He is currently working on an exploration of Dravidian India under the working title of *Coromandel*.

PANEL DISCUSSION: PANELIST

BOBBY BANSAL

Bobby Singh Bansal is a British born Sikh historian, writer and documentary filmmaker who studied Business Management and Economics in England. After, completing his studies he joined the family clothing business until 1990. In 2008 he decided to solely concentrate on his hobby – researching and writing about Sikh History. He is married to an artist from Punjab and has two sons – Aman and Reuban Singh.

In 2010, his maiden publication, *The Lion's Firanghis – Europeans at the Court of Lahore*, which charts the careers of European officers to the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the 19th century, was received positively by critics and audiences worldwide. His other notable works include the award-winning but poignant documentary *The Sikhs of Kabul* which was screened at the British Houses of Parliament and voted the best factual documentary at the Guanajuato International Film Festival in Mexico City in 2013. This was then followed by *The Road to Mandalay – the Burmese Sikhs* released in 2014, which gave a rare insight into the lives of the elusive proud Sikh community of Myanmar. His latest publication *Remnants of the Sikh Empire – Historical Sikh Monuments in India and Pakistan* which catalogues major Sikh structures in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan was released in late 2015 which has been a huge academic success.

His forthcoming documentaries *Kapurthala: A Glowing Heritage* and *Legacy of the Sikh Empire* are releasing in late-2016.





THE REAL RANJIT SINGH

“The children of the mountains are too free and independent to bear with any patience the restraints of civilization. But the Sikh is always the same; in peace and in war, in barracks or in the field, ever genial, good-tempered and uncomplaining: a fair horseman, a stubborn infantry soldier, as steady under fire as he is eager for a charge.”

LEPEL H. GRIFFIN, RANJIT SINGH

The Real Ranjit Singh was perhaps the first biography of the Punjabi maharaja written not as a dull historical narrative but as a lively memoir by a family friend.

The author Fakir Syed Waheeduddin belonged to the famous Fakir family of Lahore, which achieved prominence during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and reciprocated his favour by serving him and his descendants with devotion and loyalty until the fall of the Sikh Durbar.

Fakir Waheeduddin drew upon family papers preserved in the Fakir collection, and supplemented his fascinating narrative with authentic anecdotes that etched a portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a warm, trusting, shrewd, and if necessary ruthless leader who held a multi-religious Punjab together as a model of secularism.

The popularity of Mr Waheeduddin's book (it has been reprinted many times on both sides of the Wagah border) has endured since its first publication in 1965. Over the past 50 years or so, it has been recognised and lauded as a work of seminal importance in the study of the life and times of an unparalleled Sikh maharaja, who gave the Punjab a political identity and a national persona.

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DR SHIVANA ANAND

Dr Shivana Anand has always focussed on broadening her professional and personal development; she uses her time organising extra-curricular educational dental events, attending dentistry exhibitions and involving herself in dental charity work. She is an honorary lecturer at Kings College, London and her lectures are aimed at helping young dental students prepare for life after university. She has also written a book.

As well as her position at Harley Street Dental Studio, Shivana also works at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. She regularly contributes to dental magazines and journals and has made her mark on the dental industry, earning herself several awards. Shivana received the Dentistry FMC Fast Track4 accreditation for innovative new dentists and the 'Dental Prodigy' award at Dental Showcase as well as being shortlisted for 'Best Young Dentist' at the Dental Showcase.

Supporting charities and helping children across the world is very important to her which is why she is an ambassador for the dental charity Heart Your Smile and was the UK ambassador for Global Brigades.



DR SARNEET SINGH

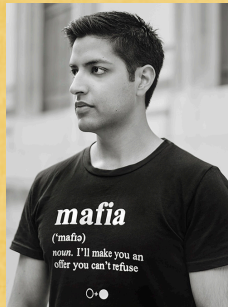
Dr Sarneet Singh graduated from of Cambridge University, and Imperial College Medical School with distinction., She has pursued a career in hospital medicine where she was ranked first in London for her Geriatric Registrar training post. Sarneet's other passions include teaching and improving the quality of care delivered in hospitals. Sarneet has given lectures to over 300 students and has run national teaching courses. She has also presented and published her work internationally in high profile journals. Outside of work, Sarneet enjoys charity work and writes Medico Legal reports for asylum seekers. She also enjoys outdoor pursuits and has climbed to Base Camp Everest amongst other peaks in the world.

B.M. SINGH MEMORIAL ANNUAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE PRIDE OF POTHOHAR AWARDEES



BOBBY SINGH BANSAL

Bobby is a successful and celebrated Sikh historian, writer and documentary filmmaker with many honours, prizes and achievements to his name. After completing his studies he joined the family clothing business until 1990. In 2008 he decided to solely concentrate on his hobby – researching and writing about Sikh History. More about him can be read elsewhere in this brochure.



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PAUL CHOWDHRY

Paul is a highly talented, internationally acclaimed, London born comedian who is now a household name on the comedy circuit.

He has performed some of the leading venues internationally, including the Apollo, O2 and many others. He also has a passion for acting and has acted in several feature film roles. During Edinburgh 2016 Paul was asked to headline a session for the Ted Talks. In November 2016, Paul can be seen in series three of Taskmaster on the Dave channel, alongside Greg Davis & Al Murray amongst others.



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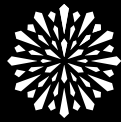
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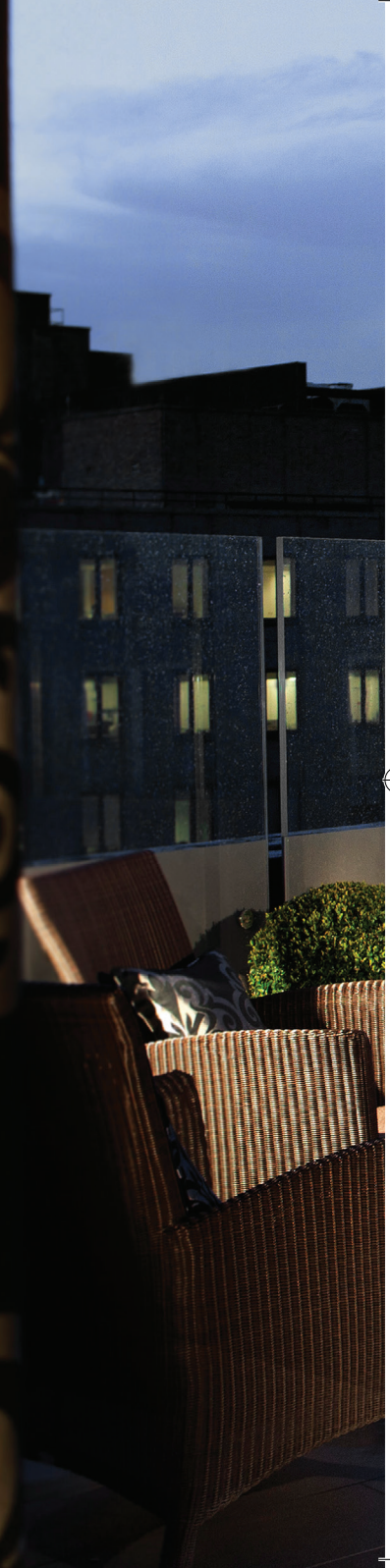
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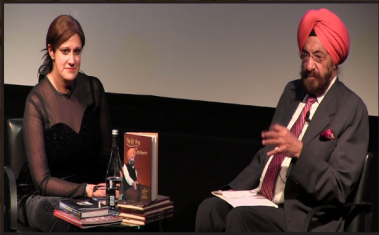
23 JANUARY 2015



"What the Sikhs desire today is only a respectable and dignified citizenship. They expect no favour and they ask for no concession. It must be clearly and definitely understood that the Sikhs do not desire a separate state, nor even necessarily a Sikh majority area."

Master Tara Singh





RANJIT SINGH: LION OF PUNJAB

Lord (Indarjit) Singh of Wimbledon

Think of the romantic image that Richard the Lionheart has in English history: add to it the judgement and wisdom of Solomon and you have some idea of the place that Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lion of Punjab, born on 13 November 1780, holds in the heart of every Sikh, Hindu and Muslim in Punjab.

It is an image richly deserved. There are countless stories of his courage, wisdom, generosity and humility. One example that has always stuck in my mind begins with Ranjit Singh walking with one of his advisers, a Muslim in the outskirts of Lahore. They see an old man walking alongside a bullock cart laden with an enormous book. The ever-curious Maharaja asked the man what was in the book and where was he taking it.

The man replied that he was a Muslim and the book was a beautiful hand written copy of the Koran and his life's work. He was on his way to the Muslim king of Hyderabad, in the hope that he might buy it. The Maharaja smiled at his companion and said "*this man seems to think that there is no generous person this side of Hyderabad who respects both religion and enterprise.*" He gave the man all he asked, and then he gave the beautiful book to his surprised companion.

It was not only Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who enjoyed his generous patronage. Among his advisers in the highest ranks of his army, were French, English, Scots, Americans, Hungarians, Russians, Spaniards and Greeks. The Maharaja, illiterate but thirsty for knowledge would spend hours with these 'firangees', as they

were called, learning about their country and their way of life. As a child, Ranjit Singh would sit for hours in the gurdwara, listening to the stories of the Gurus and their sacrifices for human rights and the respect they showed to the people of other religions. These teachings became a huge influence on the young Ranjit and the way in which he behaved to both his subjects and his vanquished foes.

Ranjit Singh was powerful enough to have ruled in a totally autocratic way. Instead, he saw himself as the head of a commonwealth and took decisions only after consultation with other Sikh and non-Sikh leaders. It was fine while he lived. He was the hub at the centre; the referee between selfish and often conflicting interests. Ranjit Singh's own personality was the glue that kept together a vast and sprawling empire. In military terms, Ranjit Singh's commonwealth was so strong that even the all powerful English to the South, though keen to establish their influence northwards, hesitated to face him on the battlefield. For some two generations, Punjab enjoyed previously unheard of, peace, prosperity and religious harmony, and for the first time in its entire history, truly secular government.

And then in 1839, Ranjit Singh died and it all fell apart. Internecine feuding between warring factions took place. There was treachery and betrayal. The English saw their chance. Two hard fought wars between the largely leaderless Sikhs and the English ensued and, within ten years, nothing was left of Ranjit Singh's vast empire.

And so ended India's first experiment with democracy. How and why did the vast empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh collapse so dramatically? What sustained it in the first place? Is democracy itself flawed? What are the lessons for us all today, Sikhs and non Sikhs alike?

First, a word about democracy itself, which is often defined as '*majority rule*', But majority rule that ignores the rights and aspirations of minorities is in reality nothing less than majority tyranny. Hitler, after all, was voted into power by pandering to baser prejudices against the Jews, and in more recent times in India, often termed the world's largest democracy, campaigns of hate and violence against India's Muslim, Sikh and Christian minorities have paid rich dividends in electoral terms.

True democracy must be rule by the people for the benefit of all the people. And in this respect, the Khalsa rule of Ranjit Singh was a truer democracy than that found in many a country today. Major H Lawrence, political agent to the Darbar in Lahore, wrote in his memoirs: '*Ranjit Singh almost invariably provided for the families of his conquered enemies*'. He never sought to x the rulers of conquered territories and often gave them endowments of generous land revenues'.

The Maharaja made it an *ironclad rule that his armies would not indulge in carnage, burn holy books or destroy places of worship*. The civilian population would remain free to carry on with their normal activities and no women were to be molested. When Ranjit rode through Peshawar after wresting it from the Afghans, the holy people of the city prayed openly for his long life. The Maharaja gave full freedom of worship to people of all faiths and made generous grants to ensure the upkeep and beauty of Hindu and Muslim holy places as well as those of Sikhs. Moreover, he often went about incognito to ensure that officials did not usurp their authority.

The strength of the Khalsa under Maharaja Ranjit Singh lay in the power source of Sikh teachings. The Khalsa was and is a community freed from the shackles of ritual and superstition and fired by the ideals of equality, selfless service, humility and concern for the less privileged. When those that followed Ranjit Singh, ignored these ideals, inevitable decay followed.

While celebrating Maharaja Ranjit Singh's tremendous contribution to the life of Punjab and to human history, we need to remember the power source of Sikhism from which he drew his strength. The lesson of the decline and fall of the Ranjit Singh empire is that if we remain true to the totality of our Guru's teachings, we can move mountains. Ignore those teachings and we are bound to suffer both as individuals and as community. Even worse, if we stifle the Guru's message we deprive wider humanity of sane and uplifting guidance clearly needed in the world of today.



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Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Darbar

JEWELS AND RELICS FROM MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S TOSHAKHANA

Dr Mohinder Singh

Director, National Institute of Panjab Studies, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi
and Professor of Eminence, Punjabi University, Patiala

After consolidating his victories and establishing an independent kingdom in Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh built a unique collection of jewels and relics. The world famous Koh-i-Noor is the most precious in the category of jewels and the Kalgee of Guru Gobind Singh in the category of relics. Apart from the relics of the Sikh Gurus, in the Toshkhana of the Maharaja were also preserved shoes, staff and prayer book of Prophet Mohammad which his father Maha Singh had acquired from Pir Mohammad Chhatha after the latter's defeat in the battle of Rasulnagar.

According to the popular tradition, the Maharaja showed same reverence for the relics of Prophet Mohammad which he showed for the relics of the Sikh Gurus. The Maharaja used to start his day after listening to the recitation to Gurbani in the morning and taking a Wak from the famous Kartarpuri Bir.



Ranjit Singh did not wear a crown or sit on a throne in keeping with the egalitarian tradition of the Khalsa Panth. The Maharaja's fabulous wealth and relics were the envy not only of contemporary Indian rulers but also those of the officials of the East India Company. The following account of the nephew of Henry Edward Fane, an ADC of Colonel Wade, the British Political Agent posted in Ludhiana, describes the British astonishment over the fabulous collection of the Maharaja: "*The dresses and jewels of the raja's court were the most superb that can be conceived; the whole scene can only be compared to a gala night at the Opera. The minister's son, in particular, the reigning favourite of the day (Hira Singh) was literally one mass of jewels; his neck, arms and legs were covered with necklaces, armlets and bangles, forms of pearls, diamonds and rubies, one above the another, so thick that it was difficult to discover anything beneath them.*"



Maharani Jindan and her son Duleep Singh bedecked with jewels

During the marriage of Maharaja's son Kunwar Nangunh Singh, the Britishers not only saw the Maharaja wearing the world famous Koh-i-Noor and his sons and nobles' jewels of fairy tales description, they also discovered to their dismay the unique training and skill of his troops, both traditional and those trained on European lines by the French generals employed by the Maharaja. Gifts assembled for the entourage of Lord Auckland, the newly appointed Governor General in 1838, also give an idea of the Maharaja's generosity and hospitality for his state guests.

According to the account given by Misr Beli Ram, incharge of Maharaja's Toshakhana, Macnaughten, the senior most officer accompanying the Governor General, was given 15 garments, a pearl necklace, a jewelled armlet and a jewelled pair of gold bangles, an elephant with a silver saddle and a jewelled sword.





More than his sons, nobles and distinguished guests, the Maharaja showed respect for the religious places dear to his Hindu, Muslim and Sikh subjects. The Maharaja gave tax-free endowments for religious places and gave costly gifts to Jawalamukhi temple and Baba Farid shrine at Pak Pattan. The Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar received Maharaja's special attention and reverence. It was under the orders of the Maharaja that the entire shrine was re-decorated by beautiful inlay and floral work and walls and canopies of the Harmandir Sahib were inlaid with gold plating, which then onward came to be popularly known as Swarn Mandir

or the Golden Temple. Whenever the Maharaja visited Harmandir to seek Guru's blessings, he offered invaluable gifts, which are now preserved in the Toshakhana of the Golden Temple.

A canopy embedded with 20 pounds of gold and studded with diamonds, emeralds, pearls and rubies, a bejewelled arm band, a sword with a gold handle studded with jewels and pearls, a peacock made of sapphire and gilded with diamonds, rubies and other precious stones and other invaluable jewelry items were presented to the temple by the Maharaja.



After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839 and the annexation of the kingdom to the British Empire in 1849, Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India, took keen personnel interest in taking possession of the jewels and relics in the Toshakhana of the Maharaja.

A panoramic view depicting Naulakha in the Lahore Fort, the Badshahi Mosque, the samadh of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Lahore.

An idea of the intrinsic value of the relics in the Toshakhana of Maharaja Ranjit Singh can be formed from the following remarks which Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India, made when these objects were being dispatched to England for presentation to the Queen:

“It would not be politic to permit any Sikh institution to obtain either by way of gift (for the intrinsic value of them is significant) or by means of sale of these sacred and warlike symbols of a warlike faith.”

After getting approval from the secretary of state, the following relics of Guru Gobind Singh were sent to England by ship after getting them heavily insured: “Shumsheer-wa-Sipar (Sword with Shield). The were presented on 30th Bysakh, 1880 sumbat (1823 A.D) by one Dya Singh of Peshawar to Maharaja Ranjit Singh who gave him a well and a suit of clothes (on return).



World famous Koh-i-noor, which was taken away from Maharaja's collection by Lord Dalhousie and now forms part of the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London





Dae-I-Ahinee (An iron weapon). A hill man brought this to the Maharaja 28 years ago.

Neza (a lance) was presented to Maharaja Ranjit Singh by the Singhs of Ubchnagar.

Chukker-I-Ahinee (A circular missile weapon of iron). An Akali Singh presented this to Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Utuk.

Shumsher Tegha (A scimitar). Taken from one Baba Bhartee on 25 Muggar 1878 (or 1821 A.D) and made over to the Toshakhana, by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Kalgee-I-Kuch (A crest of glass in a silver case). A Sahibzada (descendent of Nanak) of Vyrowal brought this to Maharaja Ranjit Singh on 7th Chet 1881 (1824 A.D).

Burchee (A small spear). This belonged to Kumalgarh Raja (Chief of Mundee) who used to worship it. General Ventura got it, when he took the fort of Kumalgarh and presented it to the Kunwar Nau Nihal Singh in the month of Magh 1896.

Burcha (A large spear) The Khalsa army got this at Jummo when they invaded that place. The whole army used to worship it."

Ranjit Singh's golden chair along with boxes full of jewels was also dispatched for the Board of Directors of the East India Company and the Queen. To ensure that young Duleep Singh, the last Sikh ruler of the kingdom of Ranjit Singh, should not become a rallying point for the people of Punjab, he was surreptitiously converted to Christianity and hurriedly sent to England.



To minimise all chances of his return to Punjab and claiming sovereignty after becoming of age, he settled in Elveden Estate, near Cambridge especially purchased for him. A facade of a ceremony was arranged in which the young prince was shown the famous Koh-i-Noor by Queen Victoria and he returned it to her. The remaining jewellery in the Toshakhana of the Maharaja was either taken over by the British officials in India or auctioned to public thus putting to an end of the glory and grandeur of the mighty empire of a mighty ruler of Punjab.

With the 350th anniversary of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh which is being celebrated at home and abroad, a renewed attempt should be made to locate the missing Kalgi of Guru Gobind Singh and other precious relics of the Sikh community.





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THE LION'S FIRANGHIS

Bobby Singh Bansal

European adventurers in the 19th century India were often shady characters in search of a fortune and attracted by the riches of independent native kingdoms. But not all were rogues, in my maiden publication *The Lion's Firanghis – Europeans at the Court of Lahore*, published in 2010, we meet talented men at the glittering Sikh court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh “the lion of the Punjab”.

Its extravagant ceremonies were colourfully captured on canvas by Auguste Theodor Schoefft, the talented and little known Hungarian artist, who spent the winter of 1841 at the Lahore court. Other travellers included the German Dr John Martine Honigberger, one of the first people to experiment with vaccination against smallpox who eventually became the chief physician of the Maharaja in 1829. The Parisian botanist Victor Jacqueumont, whose Indian nickname was Jakman Sahib Bahadur, described the Maharaja as a miniature version of Napoleon Bonaparte, but was an immensely powerful man who had welded together the first – and last – Sikh kingdom from a post-Mughal mess of warring tribes. Not surprisingly some of the best known ‘firanghis’ (foreigners) were mercenaries who had trained the Maharaja's raw Punjabi recruits in modern European warfare.

The ferocious Italian Paolo Avitabile had already spent six years training the Persian army, when he was persuaded by a fellow countryman General Jean Baptiste Ventura to travel further east to the Maharaja's kingdom, later becoming the governor of Peshawar in 1838. Together with the Frenchmen General Court and General Allard, these four men transformed Ranjit Singh's army, raised the ‘Fauj-i’Khas’ or the ‘Royal Brigade’ which became the elite unit of the Sikh army and were handsomely rewarded for their work, picking up enormous salaries, grants of land and beautiful Indian women. Even the English diplomat, Lord William Osborne, on a brief mission to Lahore in 1838 came away with a string of pearls, priceless Kashmir shawls, diamond armlets, a jewelled sword and a horse with gold and velvet trappings.



Osborne described the Maharaja, as sitting cross-legged on a golden chair, dressed simply in white, with a belt of enormous pearls and the Koh-i-Noor diamond securely wrapped on his arm. All this is fascinating stuff, but what makes this story unique, is that Bobby had doggedly tracked down the descendants of these legendary characters to the present day. On the British annexation of the Ranjit Singh's kingdom in 1849, a decade after his death, there was little scope for the European adventurers in the chauvinistic British East India Company. Most returned home with little to show for, like the Spanish soldier Signor Colonel Domingo Hurbon de Alcantara, who had rescued the young Duleep Singh from a rebellion within the Lahore fort was deprived by the British of his salary, his pension and even the jewels he had collected. He sank into poverty and even his burial place today is unknown, according to his descendant Maximino Hurbon.

General Henry Charles van Cortlandt, of Dutch descent, was exceptional in that, after leaving the Sikh court, he was employed by the British as an administrator, who ended his career as Deputy Commissioner of Multan and later retired successfully to London, one of few to do so.

Others suffered mixed fortunes, the charismatic General Ventura left behind his Armenian wife, but brought his daughter home to France where she married a Belgian nobleman but died a pauper. General Court was chased across the Sutlej River by his insubordinate and rebellious soldiers of his regiment where he sought British protection in Ferozepore. General Allard, having settled his Indian wife Bannu Pan Dan and children with his family in the south of France, returned to Lahore in 1837, where he fell ill and died in the company of his fellow Frenchmen while on duty in Peshawar in 1839. Very few relics from the Sikh kingdom remain with the families of the adventurers, as with many exotic heirlooms, they have been lost, sold, stolen, or are simply unrecognised.

This is the first time that the spicy story has been told of what happened to Ranjit Singh's mercenaries when the party was well over and they had to return back to normal life in Europe.



THE TREATY OF AMRITSAR (SUTLAJ TREATY) 1809

Dr. Sukhbir Singh Kapoor OBE
Vice Chancellor, World Sikh University London

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, the lion of Punjab, established the great kingdom of Punjab in 1799 when he defeated Zaman Shah, the Afghan ruler. Ranjeet Singh was declared Maharaja in 1801. He expanded his territories and took control of most of the central and north of Punjab. His next goal was to conquer Malwa on the south side of Sutlej river, but the Sikh rulers in that area called Cis-Sutlej states including Kaithal, Patiala, Jind, Thanesar, Maler Kotla, and Faridkot, appealed to the British, who by that time had conquered most of the India, for protection. Maharaja invaded Malwa in September 1808. The British forces check mated Maharaja's forces in February 1809 and offered Maharaja a hand of friendship to avoid any further direct conflict. Maharaja agreed to sit around the table to discuss Khalsa and British relationship. This resulted in Amritsar treaty, also called Sutlej treaty, signed on 25th April in 1809. It was concluded between Charles T. Metcalfe representing the British East India Company and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, head of the Sikh kingdom of Punjab.

Under the treaty, Maharaja agreed not to expand his empire south of the Sutlej, but retained complete freedom of action north and west of it. His empire, later expanded up to Peshawar, Afghanistan and Kashmir in the north. Maharaja Ranjit Singh died in 1839 and Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849.



The Satluj treaty had 4 articles signed both by the Maharaja and CT Metcalfe. Extract from the treaty are as follows:

ARTICLE 1

Perpetual friendship shall subsist between the British Government and the State of Lahore.....

ARTICLE 2

The Rajah will never maintain in the territory occupied by him and dependents, on the left bank of the River Sutlaj.....

ARTICLE 3

In the event of violation.....the treaty shall be considered to be null and void.

ARTICLE 4

This treaty, consisting of four articles having been settled and concluded on 25 April 1809.....

Signed
CT Metcalfe

Signed
Rajah Ranjeet Singh

The treaty settled Khalsa and British relations for a long time to come. This accord was certainly a master stroke of diplomacy. Thus having made southern borders firmly secured, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh concentrated on expansion of his empire towards the North East and the North West establishing a vast Khalsa Empire.





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THE ANGLO SIKH WARS

Amarpal Singh

Historian and author of two books on Anglo-Sikh Wars.

The two Anglo-Sikh wars were arguably the most important wars fought on Indian soil in the nineteenth Century. The reason for their importance lies in their close run nature and the fact that in both, British rule could have ended almost hundred years earlier than it actually did changing the future of the sub-continent entirely.

The first war broke out in late December 1845 with the first action taking place at the little village called Mudki on the 18th December. The much more important second battle took place at Ferozeshah village less than ten miles to the west of Mudki. The first day of the battle produced a draw which suited the Sikh army for the British had run completely out of ammunition. As darkness descended on the battlefield, the British Commander-in-Chief pondered on whether to retreat or move towards Ferozepore to enable him to procure more ammunition. Meanwhile the Governor-General, Hardinge, accompanying the force, fully realizing the danger of the situation sent his son away from the battlefield and burned his private papers to prevent them being captured. It was treachery in the Sikh camp that would save the British however. Lal Singh, the Lahore Vizir, realizing the Sikh army was in the ascendant decided to give the order to retreat and the whole of the force would move back across the Sutlej with nothing being accomplished despite the advantage. Meanwhile Tej Singh leading another Sikh army would fail to order his force to attack the tired British. The campaign would continue but with wins at Aliwal and Sabraon, the British achieved a victory with Lal Singh offering surrender even though much of the Sikh army had not still not been engaged.

The Second Anglo-Sikh War would break out two and a half years later. A rebellion at the city of Multan triggered wholesale uprisings by Sikh army units across the country. The Sikh army would be led by a General called Shere Singh Attariwalla. After skirmishes at Ramnuggar and Sadulpore, a large scale contest took place near the banks of the River Jhelum west of the battle of Chillianwalla. The battle ended in a most confusing fashion with half the British line repulsed by the Sikh army and in a state of chaos. Had Shere Singh known the advantage he held, the British force would have suffered a devastating defeat. The British would defeat Shere Singh at Gujrat ending the war a few weeks later however. All the battlefields of the second war lie in Pakistan now.

It's imperative that these famous sites are now preserved just as battlefields in the west are. The plains of Ferozeshah are now gradually being overrun by new houses being built by locals away from the village itself. Much more research and archaeological work also needs to be done on these sites and the increasing number of houses or other building being constructed is going to make this difficult if not impossible in the future. It's the same situation with the other sites. It is my earnest hope that the Indian and Pakistani Punjab Governments get their act together and do something to preserve these important places for posterity.

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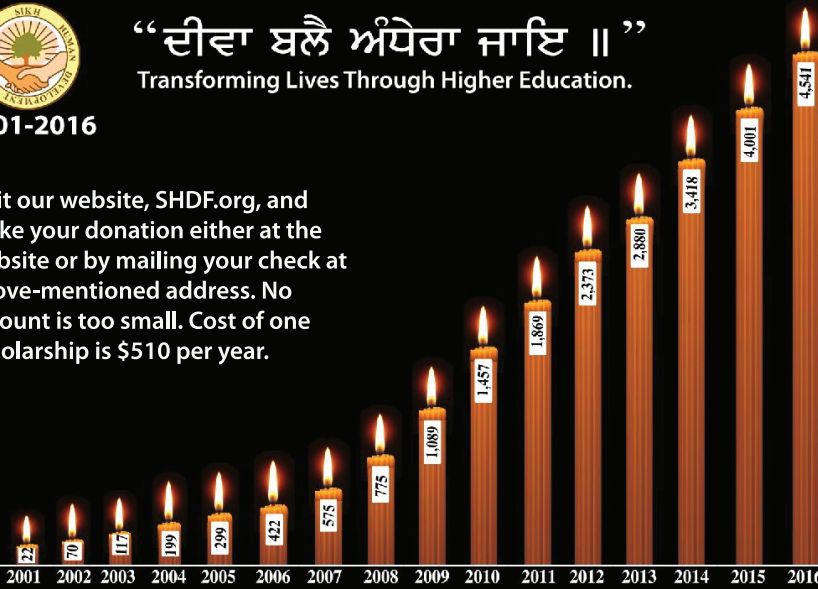


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