

**The Tale of
Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's
Education System in Punjab**

(A Path to Social Harmony)



Iram Khalid

II

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(A Path to Social Harmony)

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Pro. Dr. Iram Khalid

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Dedication

To all those wants to follow the path of Justice and Harmony

Table of Content

List of Tables	5
Preface.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter 1: Origin of Sikh Rule in Punjab	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Introduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Historical Significance of Punjab	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Significance of Sikh Rule in the Context of Indian History	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Structure of the Chapter.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Historical Background.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Political and Social Structure of Punjab Before Sikh Rule.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Key Rulers and Dynasties	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Emergence of Sikhism	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Influence of Guru Nanak and Subsequent Sikh Gurus.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Rise of Sikh Power	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Establishment of the Khalsa in 1699.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Military and Social Reforms	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Early Military Campaigns and Conquests	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Establishment of the First Sikh State	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Formation of Sikh Confederacies.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Explanation of the Misl System.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Key Misls and Their Leaders.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Territorial Expansion under the Misls	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Governance and Administrative Practices	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Maharaja Ranjit Singh: The Consolidation of Sikh Rule.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Background and Early Achievements of Ranjit Singh **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Consolidation of Power.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Major Military Campaigns and Territorial Expansions **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Administrative Reforms and Modernization Efforts **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Society and Culture under Sikh Rule**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Social Hierarchy and Caste Dynamics during Ranjit Singh's rule.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Patronage of Arts and Culture**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Impact on Language, Literature, and Architecture **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Conclusion**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

References**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Chapter 2: Ranjit Singh as an Administrator **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Introduction**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Chapter Overview.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Civil Administration.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Financial Administration.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Judicial Administration.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Religious Tolerance and Inclusivity**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Military Administration.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Relations with the British.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Patronage of Arts and Education.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Conclusion**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

References 69

Chapter 3: Education System in Punjab During the Reign of Ranjit Singh**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Introduction**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Historical Background of Indigenous Education in the subcontinent **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Education system in Punjab under Ranjit Singh **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Types of educational institutions in Punjab during Ranjit Singh's rule **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

A. The Gurmukhi Schools **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

B. The Mahajani and Landā schools (*Chatshalas*) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

C. Persian schools (*Maktabas*) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

D. Quran schools and Arabic schools (Madrassas) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

E. Sanskrit Schools (*Pathshalas*) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Female education in Punjab under Ranjit Singh's rule **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Impact of annexation on the education system of the Punjab **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Conclusion **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

References **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Chapter 4: Features of Education System of Ranjit Singh **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Introduction **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Political background of the Maharaja's period **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Courtiers of Raja Ranjit Singh **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Economy of the Punjabi Empire **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Method of teaching common people before Maharaja's time **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Background to Maharaja's concept of education system **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Beginnings of a Secular Education **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Curriculum preparation **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Source of education.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Faqir Nooruddin	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Quida Noor	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Literacy method	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Participation of women in literacy campaign.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Primary Education Centers	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Preparation of Baked Roti Quida.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Popularity of Punjabi language and Shahmukhi script.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The most literate region of the subcontinent.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
References	113
Chapter 5: An Assessment of Ranjit Singh Education System	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Introduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Decision to ban Quida Noor	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The tradition of Punjabi literacy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Secondary and Higher Education System....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Curriculum of Institutions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Educational reforms of Akbar's time.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Educational Institutions of Punjab	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Educational Institutions of Punjab	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Ranking of local schools.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Madrasas	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Skill Education.....	128
Education of women.....	128
English education.....	129
Teaching Mathematics and Astronomy.....	129
Importance of new trade requirements	130

Higher medical education.....	131
A critical review of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's system of education.....	131
Printing press.....	133
British period	134
References	134
Chapter 6: Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Index	143

List of Tables

Table No	Table Name	Pg. No
Table 4.1	Quida Noor Educational method	109
Table 4.2	Categories of Schools	113
Table 4.3	Social and Religious Impact of Education System in Punjab	116
Table 5.1	Comparison of education system in Punjab	125
Table 5.2	Summary of Muslim Madrasas	133

Preface

Punjab, one of the largest provinces famous as "Land of Five Rivers", possesses a long history of civilizations and cultures. This book aims to explore the rich and complex history of Punjab, with a particular focus on a transformative period when the Sikh community rose to power and established a dominant state. This book explores the evolution of Punjab from ancient civilizations to the zenith of Sikh sovereignty under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, providing insight into the socio-political transformations that shaped the region's identity.

Chapter 1 outlines the historical importance of Punjab province, tracing the rise of Sikh rule during the 18th and 19th centuries. It explores the religious, socio-political, and historical developments that laid the groundwork for the establishment of a powerful Sikh state. Key events that empowered the Sikh community, transforming it from a persecuted minority into rulers of a significant portion of northern India, are highlighted. The chapter introduces the Misl system, detailing the prominent Misls and their leaders, while examining territorial expansion and governance under these confederacies. A significant section is dedicated to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign, focusing on his administrative reforms and modernization efforts, which cemented his role as a nation-builder. The chapter concludes by reflecting on society and culture under Sikh rule, particularly during Ranjit Singh's time, discussing the patronage of the arts and the broader impact of Sikh governance on language, literature, and architecture.

Chapter two explored the history of Punjab, starting from the Harappan civilization and followed by the influence of the Greeks, Persians, and Mughals. These interactions introduced new governance models, architectural styles, and cultural practices, all of which merged with indigenous traditions to create the unique cultural tapestry that defines Punjab. The rise of Sikhism, rooted in the teachings of Guru Nanak, marked a significant shift in the region's religious and social fabric. Sikhism's evolution from a spiritual movement to a political and military force, culminating in the formation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, is thoroughly examined. The chapter connects these historical currents to the rise of Sikh power, leading to the eventual establishment of a unified Sikh state under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, also known as the "Lion of Punjab", remained one of the most formidable leaders of Punjab. Chapter 3 elaborated on the life and governance strategies of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The regime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is characterized by an inclusive administration, as Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were incorporated into influential positions to value the diversity of religions. Singh's policies for agriculture, military, and taxation were progressive, with a forward-thinking approach that aimed to enhance financial stability and sustain prosperity in the region. To maintain Punjab's independence during imperial expansion, Singh's approach of inviting European military advisors to modernize the Sikh army was pragmatic. Overall, this chapter reveals how the governance system of Ranjit Singh left a lasting legacy in Punjab, and discusses the Singh's diplomacy, highlighting the balancing act with the British Empire as well as his patronage of arts, culture, and education, which helped shape Punjab's cultural landscape during and after his reign.

Next, this book highlights the education system of Punjab during the Singh's rule as Singh's decentralized governance approach fostered a diverse and inclusive educational environment. The chapter explains the various types of academic institutions, such as Gurmukhi schools, Persian and Arabic institutions, and Mahajani schools, each serving different communities with a wide range of subjects, including religious teachings and practical skills like arithmetic and bookkeeping. The challenges and limitations related to educational systems are also highlighted, including the informal settings where women received religious education. However, it also discusses the crucial role education played in fostering a sense of identity among Punjab's diverse population. Under the patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, scholars, teachers, and institutions received substantial support, resulting in a flourishing of educational and intellectual life in Punjab. However, with British annexation, many of these institutions lost the financial support that sustained them, leading to their decline. This shift from locally managed schools to British colonial education brought changes to the cultural and intellectual environment in Punjab. This chapter offers a reflection on how these changes not only impacted the educational infrastructure but also altered the artistic and intellectual fabric of the region, with long-lasting effects on future generations.

The last chapter provides a conclusion, discussing the overall insights gained from the previous four chapters. It revisits themes such as the evolution of Punjab from ancient civilizations, Sikh sovereignty, social, political, cultural, and religious transformations. The conclusion also highlights the enduring legacy of Sikh rule on the region's language, literature, and architecture. The chapter presents a comprehensive view of

Punjab's rich historical journey and its cultural resilience, providing readers with a thorough understanding of the region's past and its enduring impact on present-day Punjab.

Through these chapters, this book aims to provide readers with a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of Punjab's history. By weaving together the political, religious, and social strands that shaped the region, it provides a comprehensive narrative that pays homage to the resilience, adaptability, and creativity of its people. The legacy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in particular, stands out as a testament to what visionary leadership can achieve in the face of external pressures and internal complexities. His contributions to governance, military strategy, culture, and education continue to resonate in today's Punjab, making his reign a pivotal chapter in the broader story of South Asia.

Rulers periodically revise, distort, and even destroy historical evidence to create narratives that sustain empires. The 19th-century ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule, which was replaced by the British in 1849, suffered from historical amnesia under the manipulative maneuvers of imperial designs. In 2020, "BBC World Histories Magazine" surveyed the learned opinions of its 5000 readers and voted Maharaja Ranjit Singh as the "Greatest Leader of All Time." The focus shifted to the underlying factors that contributed to his greatness. However, for familiar readers, it was not easy to reconstruct the real narrative, as history books glossed over what was not conducive to the foundational structure of the British Empire.

Without the support of my family, this task would not have been possible. I am genuinely grateful to my dear husband for his unwavering support, my daughters for their valuable feedback, and both my sons, who have remained a source of strength. Academically, I am grateful to Awais Ali Samad for his diligent work in editing and refining the draft to make it more comprehensive and eloquent. Asma Shabir has been a valuable source of help in creating tables, and special thanks are due to Asma Tanveer for creating the title.

Iram Khalid

Commentary by Experts on the Book

Iram Khalid's book, *The Tale of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's Education System in Punjab (A Path to Social Harmony)*, is a groundbreaking contribution to the study of sovereign Punjab during the first half of the 19th century. Mr. Khalid delves deep to base his inquiry on factors that were purposefully distorted and destroyed by the British to colonize Punjab and implant a fabricated and elitist education system. Contrary to the British assumption of power in Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh emerged as a unifier, a force of stability, prosperity, and tolerance at a time when the subcontinent was plagued by chaos due to imperial rivalry, religious bigotry, and wars driven by greed and ambition. The collapse of the Mughal empire, the rise and fall of Banda Singh Bahadur, the invasions of Nadir Shah, and Ahmad Shah Abdali left Punjab fractured and soaked in the blood of the innocents. The establishment of the Sikh Misal system firmly resisted sectarian oppression and initiated the process of stabilization that culminated in the institution of the Lahore Darbar, 1801-1839.

The author highlights how the East India Company perceived a serious threat to their colonial interests from the educational reforms introduced by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, which aimed to achieve the highest literacy rate in the region. His education system had a transformative effect on Punjab's female population, who rose as agents of social harmony, diversity, and inclusivity. The female literacy was higher than that of their male counterparts. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh liberally funded schools that were affiliated with religious places of Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, and this funding was far greater than that of the East India Company on education.

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's vision was far ahead of his time in governance, revenue collection, military achievements, and the promotion of education. It was due to his profound insight into the region's demographic history, diverse cultures, ethnic traditions, and languages. Punjab became the safest place in the Indian subcontinent where the best minds engaged in creating opportunities for citizens to realize their human potential. The reforms reversed the sectarian divisions that elites in society had kept in the forefront to maintain their power over the masses. Christian Missionaries did not receive much support for their conversion campaigns in Punjab, as the spirit of inclusivity and coexistence often overrode their efforts.

The education system during the Mughal period was deeply rooted in Varna Ashrama Dharma, which provided access only to the ruling and privileged sections of society. However, Maharaja Ranjit Singh extended the right to education even to the most disadvantaged, who had been denied their human dignity for thousands of years.

The community wisdom was at the center of the justice system. Although the caste was immaterial in decision-making at the highest level, at the grassroots level, communities were encouraged to resolve their disputes by community traditions. Punjab was divided into eight provinces. Each was governed by a Nazim (governor), and subdivisions by a Kardar (deputy commissioner), who was further subdivided into a Chaudhary and a Mukkadam. The Maharaja set high standards for accountability and oversight. The decentralized system of governance was subjected to its citizens' keen vigilance. The government offices were required to have a complaint box accessible to the public for reporting any incidents of corruption. The *Waquanawis* (journalists) were encouraged to file their daily reports regularly to Lahore Darbar. The Maharaja created conditions for cultural preservation, social harmony, and access to education, all combined with moral and ethical values. Maharaja, according to Mr. Khalid, made Punjab the most literate region in the world before the Industrial Revolution.

It is fascinating to read Maharaja's vision for preparing the curriculum first, and thereafter drawing the female population in the majority across religious, racial, and class divisions. Why did the British make sure that no copy of the "Qaida Noor" escaped their notice after 1849? It is evident from the vast amounts of money the British spent to destroy "Qaida Noor" so their rule could be made relevant to the new elites, and oppressive to the rural and depressed sections of the society.

Maharaja, according to the author, was not only a military genius but also a visionary ruler with incisive insight into the diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural traditions of his subjects. "His unification of Punjab was not just about territorial expansion but about creating a cohesive and centralized state capable of resisting external aggression and maintaining internal order."

The author has conducted rigorous and insightful research that challenges long-standing assumptions based on books written by European authors. Mrs. Khalid's findings will further spark scholars' interest in relying on primary sources available in the Persian and Punjabi languages in Pakistan. This book assumes a greater value in the context of rising tensions in the Indian subcontinent due to religious rigidity, chauvinism, and narrow nationalism.

Dr. Amrik Singh,

Adj. Professor, California State University, Sacramento

Book Review:

The Tale of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's Education System in Punjab

(A Path to Social Harmony)

The Tale of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's Education System in Punjab (A Path to Social Harmony) is a captivating and scholarly exploration of a lesser-known but profoundly impactful aspect of Indian history: the educational reforms and social harmony under Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule in 19th-century Punjab. The book provides a meticulous examination of the socio-political landscape of the region before Sikh rule, delving into the conditions that laid the groundwork for the emergence of Sikhism and the rise of the first Sikh state.

The book begins with a historical backdrop that traces the political and social structure of Punjab before the influence of Sikhism. It offers valuable insights into the rulers and dynasties that once governed the region, such as the Mughal Empire and its preceding states, capturing the volatile period that shaped the region's identity. The exploration of Guru Nanak's teachings and those of his successors, along with the momentous establishment of the Khalsa in 1699, forms a crucial part of the narrative, underscoring the religious and social movements that laid the foundation for the Sikh Empire.

The narrative then seamlessly transitions into Maharaja Ranjit Singh's ascent, detailing how this astute and strategic leader transformed the fractured landscape of Punjab into a unified and powerful state. The author vividly recounts how, through military skill, diplomacy, and unmatched leadership, Ranjit Singh earned early victories and laid the groundwork for a prosperous and relatively stable kingdom. The book deftly highlights the social hierarchy, cultural diversity, and intricate administration of the state, touching on aspects such as financial governance, judicial reforms, and military strategy. The author's examination of Ranjit Singh's nuanced relationship with the British Empire adds depth to the discussion, illustrating both cooperation and contention.

Where this book truly stands out is in its examination of the education system under Ranjit Singh's reign. The narrative shifts from political and military conquests to social policies, showcasing how the ruler's vision extended beyond military and economic achievements to social reform. The book reveals how Ranjit Singh pioneered a more inclusive education system that catered to people of all religions and linguistic backgrounds. Notably, the focus on education for women and the equitable access to schooling underscore Ranjit Singh's commitment to fostering an informed and harmonious society.

Chapter 3 marks the turning point, diving into the details of the educational system Ranjit Singh established, its curriculum, and the rationale behind it. The author explains the banning of *Qaida Noor* as part

of a broader policy aimed at promoting a more comprehensive and balanced approach to education. The book also examines the secondary and higher education structures, emphasizing the ways they were tailored to meet societal needs. This historical examination provides readers with a unique perspective on how Ranjit Singh's educational reforms were shaped by prior historical precedents, such as Akbar's academic policies, yet were also distinctly forward-thinking.

The narrative is rich in historical anecdotes and scholarly references, lending credibility to the author's arguments. The author's analytical approach helps readers understand not only the "how" but also the "why" behind these policies, showing how education was viewed as a critical vehicle for social cohesion and progress in the Sikh Empire. This focus on education and its role in promoting social harmony is not just an academic insight. Still, it serves as an inspiring story of visionary leadership that resonates with contemporary discussions on inclusivity and educational reform.

In conclusion, *The Tale of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's Education System in Punjab (A Path to Social Harmony)* is an essential read for anyone interested in the history of Punjab, the Sikh Empire, and the broader canvas of Indian history. The author presents a compelling case for understanding how Maharaja Ranjit Singh's educational policies contributed to social unity and set a precedent for equitable learning. This book successfully blends history, social analysis, and academic theory, making it an invaluable contribution to the literature on Sikh history and South Asian education.

Reviewed by Dr. Khushwinder Kaur Gill

Assistant Superintendent of Personnel Services

Santa Clara County Office of Education

Book Review:

A Deep Dive into Sikh History and Education in Punjab

This book offers a compelling and accessible exploration of Sikh history, with a particular focus on the cultural, religious, and educational evolution of the Punjab region. It provides an engaging overview of how Sikhism, founded by Guru Nanak, evolved into a socio-political force under leaders such as Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Readers unfamiliar with Sikh history will find it an excellent starting point, as it not only introduces key figures and milestones but also situates these within the broader historical context of the region, including interactions with Hindu, Muslim, and British influences.

One of the book's standout themes is the role of education in Sikh society, emphasized as both a spiritual and societal obligation. From the earliest teachings of Guru Nanak, who advocated for wisdom as integral to faith, to the literacy campaigns under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, education emerged as a cornerstone of Sikh values. Remarkably, Punjab became one of the most literate regions in the world during his reign, with an emphasis on gender equality in education—a groundbreaking achievement for its time. Women's literacy rates in Punjab exceeded those of men, highlighting the progressive nature of the Sikh approach to education.

The book also explores the transformative policies that transformed religious institutions, such as gurdwaras, mosques, and temples, into centers of primary education. This model, blending religious and secular learning, ensured that literacy reached even the most rural communities, making Punjab's educational framework not only innovative but also highly inclusive. The comparison between Punjab's agricultural society and Europe's industrial revolution underscores the uniqueness of this achievement, as literacy in Punjab was driven by societal values rather than economic necessity.

However, the narrative does not shy away from the challenges brought by external forces, such as the British East India Company's disruptive influence. British educational reforms often marginalized indigenous systems, replacing them with structures that failed to respect local traditions. The book critiques this shift, highlighting how the erosion of traditional schools left lasting gaps in Punjab's educational landscape.

A key highlight of the book is its detailed examination of Sikhism's openness to pluralism. While deeply rooted in its religious ideals, Sikh governance under leaders like Ranjit Singh demonstrated remarkable tolerance and inclusivity, fostering peaceful coexistence among diverse communities. This pluralistic ethos offers a valuable lesson in leadership and societal cohesion, resonating with the democratic ideals cherished in modern societies, particularly in countries with significant Sikh diasporas, such as the U.S. and Canada.

The book's conclusion is particularly effective, as it effectively summarizes its five chapters to provide a cohesive overview of the complex interplay between education, religion, governance, and external influences. It encapsulates the resilience of Sikh culture and its lasting impact on the Punjab region and beyond.

For anyone seeking an insightful and readable introduction to Sikh history and its enduring legacy, this book is an invaluable resource. Its thoughtful exploration of education, governance, and pluralism offers lessons not just for understanding the past but also for envisioning how these ideals can enrich contemporary societies.

Dr. Charles F. Young

Retired Superintendent

Benicia Unified School District

Chapter 1:

Origin of Sikh Rule in Punjab

Introduction

Historical Significance of Punjab

Punjab, with its mighty rivers, has always been a land of vibrant life and culture in the Indian subcontinent. From generation to generation, its waters have nourished not just the land but the people who lived there. Its name, derived from the Persian words "Punj" (five) and "Ab" (water), reflects the five rivers – Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej – that flow through its fertile plains. The region's geographical position made it an agricultural heartland as well as a crossroads of cultures and civilizations (Gosal, 2004). Punjab stands as the gateway to India. It is situated on the path of conquerors and traders who left their marks on its soil.

The early history of Punjab is closely tied to the ancient Harappan Civilization that developed around 2600 BCE. This early urban culture laid the foundation for the region's extensive history of settlement and cultivation (Grewal, 2004). Over the centuries, Punjab was influenced by a succession of empires and invaders. These included the Persians, who incorporated it into their empire during the reign of Darius I in the 6th century BCE, and the Greeks under Alexander the Great, who marched through Punjab in 326 BCE (Gandhi, 2013). These invaders introduced new ideas and practices that contributed to the cultural diversity in this region.

During the Mauryan period (322 BCE to 185 BCE), Punjab became a center for the spread of Buddhism under Emperor Ashoka. Taxila, also known as Takshashila, emerged as a renowned seat of learning during this period (Ejaz, 2020). The following empires, including the Indo-Greeks, Kushans, and Guptas, each had a unique impact on the cultural heritage of Punjab. The Indo-Greeks, who arrived around the 2nd century BCE, brought with them Hellenistic ideas and culture. These ideas blended with local traditions, especially in art and architecture (Grewal, 2004). The Kushans, who ruled from the 1st to the 3rd century CE, embraced and promoted Buddhism. They established trade routes that connected Punjab to Central Asia and beyond. Gandhara art, which combined Greco-Roman and Indian styles, flourished in this era (Grewal, 2004). The Gupta Empire is widely regarded as a golden age of Indian civilization, bringing advancements in science, mathematics, and literature to this region during the 4th to 6th centuries CE.

After the decline of the Gupta Empire, Punjab came under the influence of the Huns in the 6th century CE. Their rule, however, was short-lived, and they were eventually absorbed into the local population (Grewal, 2004). Muhammad bin Qasim arrived in the Indian subcontinent in 712 CE. He

initially conquered Sindh and later extended his conquest into southern Punjab, including the important city of Multan. His conquests introduced Islam to the subcontinent. However, his influence did not extend to all of Punjab. Much of the area remained under the control of local rulers. The Rajput dynasties held sway in parts of Punjab for several centuries. During this time, the Ghaznavid Empire, led by Mahmud of Ghazni, launched repeated invasions. He eventually captured Lahore and integrated parts of Punjab into the Ghaznavid Empire.

Punjab continued to hold strategic importance through the medieval period. It was especially vital under the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire, where it played a critical role in the administration and economy of the empire. Lahore, in particular, grew into a vibrant center of trade, culture, and political activity (Mir, 2020). The Mughal era was a period of prosperity for the Punjab. Cities like Lahore, Multan, and Sialkot became manufacturing centers that produced textiles, weapons, and other goods (Mir, 2020). The prosperity of Punjab attracted people from different parts of the subcontinent. However, the decline of the Mughal Empire in the early 18th century caused political instability and division. This created a power vacuum that paved the way for the emergence of new regional powers, including the Sikhs.

Significance of Sikh Rule in the Context of Indian History

The rise of Sikh rule in Punjab during the 18th and early 19th centuries is one of the most outstanding chapters in Indian history. Punjab descended into chaos after the decline of Mughal authority, with various factions vying for control. The factions included local chieftains, remnants of the Mughal administration, Afghan invaders, and emerging Sikh groups. During this turmoil, the Sikhs, guided by the teachings of their Gurus and later by the establishment of the Khalsa, began to emerge as a potent force.

The Sikh rule in Punjab is important not only for its military achievements but also for its impact on governance and society. The establishment of the Sikh Empire under Ranjit Singh was the first time since the Mughal period that Punjab was united under a single, strong political entity. This unification was achieved through a combination of military strength, strategic alliances, and administrative reforms that strengthened the state.

Secular governance and religious tolerance are notable features of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule (Duggal, 1989). Despite being a Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh did not marginalize people belonging to other faiths. He appointed people from different religious backgrounds to key positions in

his administration (Duggal, 1989). Besides maintaining internal stability, this approach also facilitated the economic and cultural progress of Punjab. The Sikh Empire under Ranjit Singh became a model of governance that combined traditional values with modern administrative practices.

The Sikh Empire played a crucial role in repelling external invasions, particularly from Afghan forces. The repeated invasions by Ahmad Shah Abdali had devastated Punjab. However, under Sikh rule, it regained its stability and became a bulwark against further invasions (Grewal, 1991). The Sikhs also managed to establish control over territories beyond Punjab, including Kashmir, the regions of Peshawar and Multan, and the northwestern frontier areas (Grewal, 1991). This territorial expansion under Sikh rule strengthened the empire and elevated its importance in the regional politics of the era.

The Sikh Empire represents one of the last indigenous powers to challenge British colonial expansion (Singh, 2014). The British annexation of Punjab in 1849 marked the end of the Sikh Empire and initiated complete British control over the Indian subcontinent. The legacy of Sikh rule in Punjab remained a defining factor in the social, cultural, and political identity of Punjab long after the empire fell. The institutions, reforms, and cultural contributions from the Sikh period left a lasting imprint on Punjab.

Structure of the Chapter

The primary aim of this chapter is to explore the origins and rise of Sikh rule in Punjab and to trace the historical, religious, and socio-political developments that led to the establishment of a powerful Sikh state. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how a religious movement, initially driven by a quest for spiritual renewal, evolved into a formidable political and military force capable of challenging the Mughal Empire's might and later the British East India Company's.

This chapter also aims to highlight the key figures and events that were instrumental in the rise of Sikh power. From the teachings of Guru Nanak and the later Sikh Gurus, through the establishment of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, to the unification of the Sikh Misl under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, this chapter examines the transformation of the Sikh community from a minority to rulers of a larger portion of northern India.

The chapter began with an introduction that offered a brief overview of the historical importance of Punjab and the importance of Sikh rule in Indian

history. The introduction is followed by a historical background section, which provides context by exploring the political and social structure of Punjab prior to the rise of Sikh rule. It introduces the key dynasties and rulers who influenced Punjab and discusses the emergence of Sikhism as a remarkable religious and social movement. The influence of Guru Nanak and later Sikh Gurus is examined.

The chapter then moves on to discuss the rise of Sikh power, beginning with the establishment of the Khalsa in 1699. It covers the military and social reforms introduced by the Sikh leadership, as well as the early military campaigns and conquests that set the stage for the establishment of the first Sikh state. Following this, the formation of Sikh confederacies, or Misl, is explored. The chapter explains the Misl system, introduces key Misl and their leaders, and discusses the territorial expansion and governance practices under these confederacies. The following section focuses on the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It discusses his efforts to unify the Sikh Misl and establish a centralized state, along with the administrative reforms and modernization efforts that solidified his legacy as a nation-builder. The chapter concludes with an examination of society and culture under Sikh rule, particularly that of Ranjit Singh. It reflects on the patronage of arts and culture and considers the impact of Sikh rule on language, literature, and architecture.

Historical Background

Political and Social Structure of Punjab Before Sikh Rule

Punjab has always been a prominent region in the processes of state formation in South Asia due to its strategic location between the states of Afghanistan and the Gangetic plains of North India. This positioning meant that Punjab was both enriched by and often bore the brunt of invasions and influences from both sides.

By the medieval period, Punjab had already established itself as a key region with major urban centers that were connected to important trade routes (Grewal, 2004). These routes linked the Arabian Sea, Persia, and Central Asia in the west to Kashmir, Rajputana, the Gangetic plains, and the Deccan in India. Lahore and Multan became hubs of commerce and culture, attracting a diverse population and boasting a vibrant urban life (Mir, 2020). The economic importance of Punjab was amplified by its fertile lands and the development of agriculture. It was primarily achieved through the transformation of the bars (upland forested and uncultivated

areas) within the five doabs (land between two rivers) during the Mughal period (Habib, 1963).

Before the Mughal period, Punjab was a region where various religious and cultural traditions coexisted, including practices associated with different spiritual paths. Numerous shrines and religious centers were found across both rural and urban areas (Singh, 2020). By the fifteenth century, a significant network of Sufi shrines had emerged along the trade routes. These routes had been developed earlier under the Ghurid and Ghaznavid rulers and were later expanded under the Tughluq dynasty (Singh, 2020). The Sufi tradition has had a profound influence on the religious and cultural life of the region. These Sufi shrines also contributed to the transformation of the Jats from an agro-pastoral to a settled agricultural lifestyle (Eaton, 2002).

The Tughluq dynasty, which ruled during the Sultanate period, contributed to the political and economic development of Punjab. They founded new cities such as Hissar, expanded canal networks to support agriculture around Multan and Hissar, and established marital relationships with local Rajput clans, particularly the Bhattis (Ali et al., 2023). However, the Tughluq's state formation efforts faced many challenges, especially after the devastation caused by Timur's invasion in 1398. The decline of the Sultanate under the Lodhi dynasty further weakened the region, making it vulnerable to external threats and internal chaos.

By the time of Babur's conquest in 1526, Punjab was already in a state of transformation. The collapse of the Lodhi dynasty and the advent of Mughal rule brought about more changes. The construction of the Grand Trunk Road by Sher Shah Suri, which connected Peshawar and Multan to Delhi via Lahore, Sirhind, and Thanesar, enhanced the connectivity and economic integration of Punjab with the rest of the subcontinent. The emergence of this road network also facilitated the rise of new urban centers and the growth of Punjabi castes such as the Jats, who became important players in the economic and social life.

Punjab experienced a period of agrarian expansion and increased centralization under Mughal rule. The introduction of sound irrigation systems, including the Persian Wheel, transformed agriculture, particularly in the Chaj, Rachna, and Bari doabs (Habib, 1963). During this period, the Jats emerged as major agrarian producers and zamindars, becoming key contributors to the Mughal land revenue system (Habib, 1963). However, the centralizing tendencies of the Mughal state often clashed with the traditional autonomy claimed by local chiefs. This led to tensions and

rebellions by local chiefs, who resisted Mughal authority in the latter half of the sixteenth century.

Key Rulers and Dynasties

Muhammad Bin Qasim laid the foundation of Muslim rule in Punjab in 712 CE, and, under the Umayyad Dynasty, became the first Muslim commander to establish a lasting foothold in the subcontinent. However, it was not until the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni (997-1030 CE) that the Muslim influence in Punjab was solidified. Mahmud's seventeen invasions into Punjab, particularly his defeat of Raja Jaipal in 1001 CE, signaled the beginning of a more entrenched Islamic rule in the region.

Following Mahmud, the Ghurids, under Muhammad Ghori, expanded Muslim rule in Punjab. He captured Punjab in 1186 CE after defeating Prithvi Raj of Ajmer. After he died in 1206, his general, Qutubuddin Aibak, declared himself the sovereign ruler of India. This was the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate. During the period from 1206 to 1526 CE, known as the Sultanate period, Punjab was governed by a succession of five dynasties: the Mamluks (1206-1290 CE), the Khiljis (1290-1320 CE), the Tughlaqs (1320-1414 CE), the Sayyids (1414-1451 CE), and the Lodhis (1451-1526 CE).

Under the Delhi Sultanate, Punjab served as both a military stronghold and an important administrative division. The Sultans relied heavily on local chieftains and landholders to maintain control over the region (Awan, 2016). They integrated them into the administrative framework by granting jagirs (land grants). These landholders, in return, provided military support and maintained order in their respective territories, thus creating a feudal system that became deeply entrenched in the social fabric of Punjab (Awan, 2016).

Under the Mughals, Punjab enjoyed a long period of stability. Good governance, religious tolerance, and economic prosperity were key attributes of this period. The Mughal emperors, particularly Akbar (1542-1605), implemented administrative reforms, including the Mansabdari system, which further strengthened the feudal structure of Punjab (Awan, 2016). This system integrated local chieftains into the Mughal administration by granting them ranks (mansabs) and responsibilities, thereby helping to consolidate Mughal control over the region. Cities like Lahore became centers of learning, art, and architecture, with the construction of Mughal forts, mosques, mausoleums, serais (inns), and gardens. The social structure remained largely feudal, with local

landholders wielding considerable power and influence over the rural population.

As the Mughal Empire began to decline following Aurangzeb's death in 1707, Punjab once again became a center of political turmoil. The weakening of central authority led to the rise of local chieftains who asserted their independence. This period also saw the penetration of foreign powers, particularly Ahmad Shah Abdali (1722-1772 A.D.), whose repeated invasions caused major disruptions. Abdali's invasions, along with those of Nadir Shah (1688-1747), exacerbated the decline of Mughal power in Punjab. This created a power vacuum that the Sikhs would eventually fill.

Emergence of Sikhism

The emergence of Sikhism in the late 15th century marked a significant religious and social development in Punjab. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469 in the village of Talwandi (now Nankana Sahib in Pakistan). His teachings encompassed the oneness of God, the equality of all human beings, and the rejection of the caste system and ritualistic practices prevalent at that time (Dhillon, 1988). The message of Guru Nanak resonated with the people of Punjab, especially the marginalized sections of society. It attracted a growing number of followers who became known as Sikhs, or disciples (Dhillon, 1988).

Guru Nanak's approach to social and religious issues was revolutionary. He rejected the authority of Brahmins and rituals prescribed by the Vedas. He advocated instead for a direct and personal relationship with God through devotion, meditation, and ethical living (Dhillon, 1988). His message of universal brotherhood and his critique of social inequalities found a receptive audience among the diverse population of Punjab, which included Hindus, Muslims, and people from various castes and tribes.

After Guru Nanak, the leadership of the Sikh community passed on to a succession of nine Gurus. Each of these Gurus contributed to the development and consolidation of the Sikh faith. The Gurus not only provided spiritual guidance but also played an active role in addressing the social and political challenges faced by their followers. Several important Sikh institutions, such as the langar (community kitchen) and the sangat (congregation), were established in this period (Dhillon, 1988). These institutions reinforced the principles of equality and community service.

The influence of Guru Nanak extended beyond his immediate followers. His teachings, including compassion, humility, and service to humanity, transcend religious and social boundaries. His hymns, composed in the Punjabi language, became a source of spiritual inspiration and were later compiled into the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs (Dhillon, 1988).

Influence of Guru Nanak and Subsequent Sikh Gurus

The Sikh Gurus continued to build on the teachings of Guru Nanak. They institutionalized the Sikh faith and its practices. Guru Angad, the second Guru, introduced the Gurmukhi script, which became the script for writing the Punjabi language and the Sikh scriptures (Dhillon, 1988). This development was important for preserving the teachings of the Gurus and promoting literacy among the Sikh community.

Guru Amar Das, the third Guru, strengthened the social and religious institutions of Sikhism. He introduced the concept of Manji, a system of decentralized administration that helped in organizing the growing Sikh community. He also stressed the importance of women's participation in religious and social life, challenging the patriarchal norms of the time (Dhillon, 1988).

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru, laid the foundation for the city of Amritsar, which would later become the spiritual and cultural center of Sikhism. He also established the Harmandir Sahib, known as the Golden Temple, which became the holiest shrine of the Sikhs (Dhillon, 1988). Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, consolidated the Sikh community by compiling the Adi Granth, the first version of the Sikh scriptures, and by completing the construction of the Harmandir Sahib (Dhillon, 1988).

The successive Gurus, particularly Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, introduced the concept of Miri-Piri to represent the dual responsibility of temporal and spiritual authority (Dhillon, 1988). This concept led to the militarization of the Sikh community in response to the increasing persecution by the Mughal authorities. The creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, in 1699 was the culmination of this process. It is transforming the Sikh community into a distinct and self-reliant group with a strong martial tradition.

Rise of Sikh Power

Establishment of the Khalsa in 1699

The establishment of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 was a watershed moment in Sikh history. On April 13, 1699, during the Baisakhi festival at Anandpur Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh called upon his followers to come forward and sacrifice their lives for the faith (Dhavan, 2011). Five brave men answered his call, and they were initiated into a new order through the Amrit Sanchar ceremony. These five Sikhs, known as the Panj Pyare, became the first members of the Khalsa, a community of saint-soldiers committed to upholding justice and defending the oppressed (Dhavan, 2011).

The Khalsa was more than a religious order; it was a revolutionary social and political force (Dhavan, 2011). Guru Gobind Singh mandated that members of the Khalsa adopt the five Ks: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (a wooden comb), Kara (a steel bracelet), Kachera (cotton undergarments), and Kirpan (a ceremonial sword). These symbols represented the Khalsa's commitment to both spiritual purity and martial readiness. The formation of the Khalsa was also meant to abolish of caste distinctions within the Sikh community and promote the ideals of equality and brotherhood (Dhavan, 2011). This new identity transformed the Sikhs into a formidable force that was prepared to challenge the Mughal Empire. The Khalsa became a symbol of resistance and a beacon of hope for the oppressed. It was an essential step in the rise of Sikh power in Punjab.

Military and Social Reforms

After the creation of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh implemented extensive military and social reforms to strengthen the Sikh community. These reforms were essential in preparing the Sikhs for the challenges they would face against the Mughal rulers.

Militarily, the Khalsa was organized into a disciplined force that was trained to fight with both traditional weapons and modern techniques. The

adoption of the Kirpan as one of the five Ks symbolized the commitment of the Khalsa to defending the weak and maintain justice. Guru Gobind Singh also stressed unity and collective decision-making within the Khalsa. The principle of Sarbat Khalsa, where the entire community gathered to make decisions, was established. This reinforced the idea that the Khalsa was a sovereign entity that was accountable only to God (Dhavan, 2011).

Socially, the Khalsa represented a radical departure from the established norms of Indian society. The caste system, which had long dominated social relations in the subcontinent, was explicitly rejected within the Khalsa. The reforms introduced by Guru Gobind Singh ensured that all members of the Khalsa were treated as equals, regardless of their social background (Dhavan, 2011). This egalitarian approach not only unified the Sikh community but also attracted a diverse following, including many from the lower castes who sought refuge from the oppressive social order of the time.

Early Military Campaigns and Conquests

The rise of Sikh power in Punjab began with a series of early military campaigns led by Banda Singh Bahadur, one of Guru Gobind Singh's most trusted disciples. Banda Singh Bahadur, known initially as Lachhman Dev, was transformed from an ascetic into a warrior under the guidance of Guru Gobind Singh (Jain, 2003). After receiving the Guru's blessings and a mission to avenge the atrocities committed by the Mughals, Banda Singh Bahadur set out for Punjab in 1708 with a small band of Sikhs (Grewal, 1991).

His first significant military success came in 1709 with the capture of Samana. Samana was known for its association with the executioners of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh (Grewal, 1991). The victory at Samana was not just a military triumph but also an act of retribution. It avenged the injustices inflicted upon the Sikh Gurus. This victory was followed by the conquest of several other towns, including Ghuram, Thaska, and Sadhaura (Grewal, 1991). Each of these towns had been strongholds of Mughal power and sites of oppression against Sikhs and Hindus.

Another crucial military achievement of Banda Singh Bahadur was the capture of Sirhind in 1710, after the Battle of Chappar Chiri. Wazir Khan, the governor of Sirhind, had been directly responsible for the brutal execution of Guru Gobind Singh's sons (Chabra, 1960a). His defeat was a significant blow to the Mughal authorities in Punjab. The capture of

Sirhind marked a turning point in the struggle between the Sikhs and the Mughals. It demonstrated the Sikhs' ability to challenge and defeat a mighty Mughal stronghold.

Banda Singh Bahadur's military campaigns were swift and strategically brilliant. He employed guerrilla tactics, striking at the Mughal forces with speed and precision, and then retreating before the Mughals could regroup (Chhabra, 1960a). This approach not only allowed the Sikhs to achieve victories but also spread fear and confusion among the Mughal ranks. Banda Singh Bahadur's successes inspired many in Punjab to join the Sikh cause, swelling the ranks of his army and further strengthening Sikh power in the region.

Establishment of the First Sikh State

The conquests led by Banda Singh Bahadur culminated in the establishment of the first Sikh state in Punjab. After the fall of Sirhind, Banda Singh Bahadur set up his capital at Mukhlispur (Chhabra, 1960a). He renamed it Lohgarh, which became the first Sikh capital. Lohgarh was located in the Shivalik hills. Its strategic location provided a natural defense against potential Mughal counterattacks. It also served as the center of Sikh administration and governance.

Banda Singh Bahadur introduced several revolutionary reforms in the territories under his control. One of his most remarkable achievements was the abolition of the zamindari system, which had reduced the peasants to mere serfs under the Mughal landlords (Chhabra, 1960a). Banda Singh Bahadur redistributed the land to the tillers, making them the owners of the land they cultivated. This move not only won him the support of the rural population but also struck a severe blow to the traditional power structures that had upheld Mughal rule in the region.

In addition to land reforms, Banda Singh Bahadur issued new currency and introduced a new calendar, which signified the sovereignty of the Sikh state (Chhabra, 1960a). The coins bore the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, symbolizing the spiritual authority under which Banda Singh Bahadur governed. His administration was committed to justice and equality, reflecting the principles of the Khalsa. His government held regular *darbars* where grievances were heard, and justice was administered impartially (Chhabra, 1960a).

Despite the eventual fall of Lohgarh and the capture of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1715, his establishment of the first Sikh state had a lasting impact on the Punjab region. It demonstrated the viability of Sikh rule and

laid the foundation for the later expansion of Sikh power under the Misls and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The legacy of Banda Singh Bahadur, as the first Sikh ruler, and the revolutionary reforms he introduced continued to inspire the Sikh struggle for sovereignty in the decades that followed.

Formation of Sikh Confederacies

Explanation of the Misl System

The Misl system, which emerged in the 18th century, was a landmark development in the political and military organization of the Sikh community. The term "Misl" refers to a confederacy or group of warriors bound together by shared allegiance and purpose. These confederacies were not centralized states in the traditional sense. They were loosely organized groups, each having its chief (Grewal, 1991). The word "Misl" is derived from the Persian term "Misaal," meaning "alike" or "equal." This highlights the egalitarian ethos of these groups. Each Misl operated independently, yet they shared common religious and cultural ties based on Sikh traditions. The formation of Misls enabled the Sikhs to consolidate their power in a fragmented Punjab after the decline of Mughal authority (Jain, 2003). The Sikhs had been under constant pressure from both Mughal and Afghan forces. They found in the Misl system a means to organize their military efforts and protect their communities.

The structure of a Misl was inherently flexible. Unlike the rigid hierarchical structures of contemporary empires, the Misls were more democratic. Chiefs were chosen based on their leadership abilities, military prowess, and contributions to the community (Chhabra, 1960a). This decentralized form of governance enabled adaptability and swift decision-making. While each Misl operated autonomously, they would occasionally unite under a common cause, such as defense against external threats (Grewal, 1991).

Key Misls and Their Leaders

Among these Misls, some were more prominent due to their size, influence, and the leadership qualities of their chiefs. Each Misl controlled specific territories. One of the most prominent Misls was the Ahluwalia Misl, which Jassa Singh Ahluwalia led. Jassa Singh was known for his bravery, diplomatic acumen, and leadership skills. Under his guidance, the Ahluwalia Misl became one of the most powerful Sikh confederacies

(Chhabra, 1960a). It played a key role in the territorial expansion and consolidation of Sikh power in Punjab.

Another influential Misl was the Bhangi Misl. It derived its name from the use of cannabis (bhang) by its soldiers for their supposed invincibility in battle (Chhabra, 1960a). The Bhangi Misl was one of the largest and most powerful Misls. It controlled vast territories, including the critical city of Lahore, at various times. Its leaders, such as Hari Singh Bhangi, were renowned for their military capabilities.

The Kanheya Misl was led by Jai Singh Kanheya, who was known for his strategic alliances and territorial ambitions—the Kanheya Misl controlled areas in the Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts. Jai Singh formed partnerships with other Misls, thereby expanding his territories (Chhabra, 1960a).

The Phulkian Misls held the states of Patiala, Nabha, and Jind. These Misls, led by chiefs such as Ala Singh of Patiala, were known for maintaining balanced relations with the Mughals, Afghans, and later the British (Chhabra, 1960a). The Phulkian chiefs established Sikh rule in the Malwa region of Punjab, and their legacy continued well into the British colonial period.

The Ramarghia Misl was another notable confederacy. Jassa Singh Ramarghia led it. He was a strong military leader who played a key role in the defense of Amritsar and the construction of fortifications, including the Ramarghia Bunga near the Golden Temple (Chhabra, 1960a). The Ramarghia Misl controlled territories in central Punjab.

Territorial Expansion under the Misls

Different Misls strived to expand their control over the fertile and strategically important regions of Punjab through continuous campaigns. These ambitions were driven by both the need to secure resources and the desire to establish Sikh sovereignty in an area that foreign powers had historically dominated. These expansions were achieved most of the time through military conquests. At times, marriages and alliances also worked. The territorial expansion of Misls can be divided into two main phases: the consolidation of power within Punjab and the expansion into neighboring regions.

During the first phase, the Misls focused on consolidating their control over Punjab. This involved wresting control of key cities and areas from the Mughal and Afghan rulers who had dominated them. The capture of

Lahore by the Bhangi Misl was an essential milestone in this process. Lahore, being the traditional capital of Punjab, held immense symbolic and strategic importance. Control over Lahore enabled the Bhangi Misl to assert its dominance over the central regions of Punjab (Chhabra, 1960a).

In the second phase of expansion, the Misls extended their influence beyond Punjab into areas like Kashmir, Multan, and the North-West Frontier. This expansion was not uniform. Some Misls, such as the Ahluwalia and Kanheya Misls, were more successful in expanding their territories than others (Chhabra, 1960a). The expansion into these areas was met with fierce resistance from local rulers. However, the Misls maintained a flexible and decentralized command structure, which allowed them to adapt to the challenges of governing these newly acquired territories. The territorial ambitions of the Misls were not without conflict. They often came into conflict with each other over control of strategic territories (Chhabra, 1960a). These internal conflicts were detrimental in the short term. However, they played a role in the eventual unification of Sikh territories under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who emerged as the most powerful leader from the Sukerchakia Misl.

Governance and Administrative Practices

The governance and administrative practices of the Misls were meant to manage the diverse and volatile territories they controlled. In the Misl, power was distributed among various chiefs and local leaders. Each Misl had its administrative apparatus, which was responsible for collecting revenue, maintaining law and order, and administering justice (Chhabra, 1960a). The chiefs of the Misls acted as the supreme authority in their territories. They delegated administrative responsibilities to trusted lieutenants and local leaders.

Revenue collection was a critical aspect of Misl governance. The Misls relied on a combination of agricultural taxes, customs duties, and tributes from subordinate chieftains to fund their military campaigns and administrative activities (Chhabra, 1960a). The chiefs of the Misls were also responsible for distributing land to their followers. This served as both a reward for loyalty and a means of ensuring control over the territories (Dhavan, 2014).

The administration of justice within the Misls was based on the principles of fairness and the protection of the weak. The Misls established courts to adjudicate disputes and ensure that justice was administered impartially. These courts were presided over by the Misl chiefs or their deputies, and both Sikh teachings and customary law guided them. The efficient justice

system was a key factor in the Misls' ability to maintain the loyalty of their followers and the support of the local population. The governance practices of the Misls also included maintaining law and order. The Misls maintained their militias. These militias were responsible for enforcing the law and defending the territories from external threats. The militias were composed of Sikh warriors bound by the code of the Khalsa, which consisted of discipline, courage, and loyalty.

The Misls were also instrumental in promoting Sikh culture and religion. The chiefs of the Misls were patrons of Sikh religious institutions. They constructed and maintained gurdwaras (Sikh temples) and other religious buildings. They also supported the dissemination of Sikh teachings and the preservation of Sikh traditions.

The governance and administrative practices of the Misls laid the foundation for the later unification of Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. While the Misls were initially independent and competed with each other, their shared cultural and religious ties, along with their common governance tactics, facilitated the unification of the different Misls. The legacy of the Misl system continued to influence the governance of Punjab even after the establishment of the Sikh Empire. It remains an essential chapter in the history of Sikh rule in the region.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh: The Consolidation of Sikh Rule

Background and Early Achievements of Ranjit Singh

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, also known as the "Lion of Punjab," emerged as a formidable leader despite humble beginnings. Born in 1780 in Gujranwala, the young Ranjit Singh was thrust into leadership at an early age due to the untimely death of his father, Maha Singh. Maha Singh was the leader of the Sukerchakia Misl. Despite being struck by smallpox at a young age, which left him blind in one eye, Ranjit Singh demonstrated remarkable resilience and leadership qualities that would define his rule (Gandhi, 2013).

Ranjit Singh inherited a relatively small and fragmented territory from his father. Various Sikh Misls dominated Punjab. These Misls often engaged in internecine warfare, resulting in a fragmented and unstable region. Singh had a vision of uniting Punjab under a single, decisive leadership. His early achievements reflect this ambition.

One of Ranjit Singh's first and significant military successes was the capture of Lahore in 1799. It was a strategic victory that laid the foundation for his future empire. Lahore, which had been under the control of the Bhangi Misl, was of immense strategic and symbolic importance. By taking Lahore, Singh not only secured a vital urban center but also established his authority over one of the most important cities in Punjab (Gandhi, 2013). This victory was followed by the conquest of Amritsar in 1802, where Ranjit Singh took control of the city, which housed the Golden Temple, the holiest site in Sikhism. This victory was vital as it solidified his position as the leader of the Sikh community.

Ranjit Singh's early achievements were not limited to military conquests. He also demonstrated astute political acumen by forging alliances with other powerful Misls through marriage and diplomacy. For instance, his marriage to Mehtab Kaur, the daughter of the Kanheya Misl's leader, was a strategic move that helped to consolidate his power base (Jain, 2013). These early achievements set the stage for Ranjit Singh's consolidation of power and the expansion of his empire.

Consolidation of Power

After securing Lahore and Amritsar, Ranjit Singh embarked on a campaign to unify the various Sikh Misls under his leadership. This process of consolidation consisted of both military conquests and strategic alliances. The Misls, which had traditionally operated with considerable autonomy, were gradually brought under the control of Ranjit Singh. This unification was not without resistance. Several Misl leaders opposed Ranjit Singh's efforts, leading to conflicts such as the Battle of Bhasin in 1800, where Ranjit Singh successfully defeated a coalition of the Kasur chief and leaders of the Bhangi and Ramgarhia Misls (Chhabra, 1960b).

Ranjit Singh's ability to consolidate power was not solely based on military might. He was also a shrewd diplomat who understood the importance of maintaining stability within his realm (Chhabra, 1960b). For instance, he allowed defeated rivals to retain their territories as vassals, a policy that helped to minimize resistance and encourage loyalty among the defeated chieftains. This approach is exemplified by his

treatment of Nizamuddin Khan, the ruler of Kasur, whom Ranjit Singh defeated but later reinstated as a vassal (Chhabra, 1960b).

By 1809, Ranjit Singh had effectively brought most of the Sikh Misl under his control. This was the ending of the Misl system and the beginning of a centralized Sikh state (Grewal, 1991). This centralization of power was crucial in transforming Punjab from a collection of autonomous regions into a unified kingdom. Ranjit Singh's consolidation of power also involved administrative reforms, which were essential for the efficient governance of his expanding empire.

Major Military Campaigns and Territorial Expansions

Ranjit Singh undertook many military campaigns that expanded the boundaries of the Sikh Empire and secured its position as a significant power in the region. One of his earliest and most important military campaigns was the conquest of Multan in 1818. Multan, a city of great historical and strategic importance, had long been under Afghan control. The capture of Multan was a key victory for Ranjit Singh, as it not only expanded his territory but also secured his southern flank (Grewal, 1991).

Following the conquest of Multan, Ranjit Singh turned his attention to Kashmir, another region of strategic importance. In 1819, after a series of failed attempts, Ranjit Singh's forces successfully captured Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. The conquest of Kashmir was a significant achievement, as it brought a region of immense economic and strategic value under Sikh control. The rich resources in Kashmir, particularly its famous shawl industry, became a valuable asset for the Sikh Empire (Chhabra, 1960b).

The military campaigns of Ranjit Singh were not limited to the south and the north. He also expanded his empire to the west, into the frontier regions of Peshawar and the North-West Frontier Province. These regions, inhabited by fiercely independent Pashtun tribes, posed a significant challenge to Ranjit Singh's forces. Despite facing stiff resistance, Ranjit Singh's army managed to secure Peshawar in 1823. Peshawar was formally annexed in 1834 (Grewal, 1991).

In addition to these major campaigns, Ranjit Singh also undertook several smaller military expeditions to consolidate his control over the hill states

of Punjab. These campaigns, though less grand in scale, were crucial in securing the empire's borders and ensuring the loyalty of the hill chieftains (Chhabra, 1960b). By the mid-1820s, Ranjit Singh had successfully expanded his empire to include not only the plains of Punjab but also the mountainous regions to the north and west, making the Sikh Empire one of the largest and most powerful states in the Indian subcontinent.

The military successes of Ranjit Singh were not merely the result of his leadership but also the effectiveness of his army. His army was one of the most modern and disciplined forces in India at the time. Ranjit Singh placed great emphasis on modernizing his military, incorporating European military techniques and technologies into his army (Grewal, 1991). He employed several European officers, including French and Italian generals, to train his troops and introduce modern artillery and infantry tactics. This modernization of the Sikh military was the core factor in Ranjit Singh's ability to expand and defend his empire (S. Singh, 2014).

Administrative Reforms and Modernization Efforts

Ranjit Singh's success in building and maintaining the Sikh Empire was not solely due to his military prowess. His administrative reforms and modernization efforts were equally crucial in ensuring the stability and prosperity of his kingdom (Kaur, 2019). One of Ranjit Singh's most important administrative reforms was the centralization of revenue collection and the establishment of an efficient tax system (Singha, 1990). Under his rule, revenue collection was standardized across the empire, with a primary focus on agricultural taxes, which were the primary source of state income. This reform not only increased the state's revenue but also helped to reduce corruption and inefficiency in the administration (Singh, 1990).

Ranjit Singh also took steps to modernize the administration of justice in his empire. He established a system of courts to adjudicate disputes and ensure that justice was administered fairly and impartially. These courts were presided over by judges appointed by the Maharaja, who were guided by both Sikh principles and customary law (Chhabra, 1960b). The emphasis on justice and fairness in the administration helped maintain social order within the empire.

In addition to his administrative reforms, Ranjit Singh was also a patron of infrastructure development. He invested in the construction of roads, forts, and irrigation systems, which facilitated trade and agriculture in the empire (Ahluwalia & Singh, 2001). The construction of the Grand Trunk

Road, which connected Lahore with other major cities in India, is one of the most notable infrastructure projects undertaken during his reign. This road not only improved communication and trade within the empire but also enhanced its strategic defense capabilities.

His modernization efforts extended to the cultural and educational spheres as well. He was a patron of the arts, supporting the development of Punjabi literature, music, and architecture. The construction of the Darbar Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple, in Amritsar, which was completed under his patronage, is one of the most enduring legacies of his reign (Ahluwalia & Singh, 2001). The Golden Temple, with its distinctive blend of Sikh and Mughal architectural styles, has become a symbol of Sikh identity and spirituality.

Ranjit Singh also recognized the importance of education in the development of his empire. He established several schools and educational institutions, where subjects such as Persian, Arabic, and Punjabi were taught (Chhabra, 1960b). These institutions helped promote literacy and learning among the people of Punjab, contributing to the cultural and intellectual development of the region.

Ranjit Singh adopted a policy of religious tolerance and inclusivity. Despite being a devout Sikh, Ranjit Singh did not impose his religion on his subjects. Instead, he allowed people of different faiths, including Muslims and Hindus, to practice their religion freely and participate in the administration of the empire (Kaur, 2019). This policy of inclusivity helped create a sense of unity and loyalty among the diverse population of the Sikh Empire, contributing to its stability.

Ranjit Singh's ability to combine military might with effective governance and modernization made him one of the most successful rulers in Indian history. The legacy of his reign continues to be remembered and celebrated in Punjab.

Society and Culture under Sikh Rule

Social Hierarchy and Caste Dynamics during Ranjit Singh's Rule

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the social hierarchy in Punjab reflected the traditional caste system. However, it allowed for greater social mobility within specific contexts (Judge, 2002). The Jats, a dominant agrarian community, continued to hold more power, particularly

within the Sikh society. They formed the backbone of the Khalsa army, and many of them held prominent positions in the administration (Judge, 2002). The caste system, while prevalent, did not dictate the course of governance or societal interactions as rigidly as it did in other parts of India. Ranjit Singh's approach to governance was pragmatic, and he valued loyalty and competence over caste identity.

The Maharaja's administration consisted of a diverse group of individuals from various castes and religious backgrounds. Hindus and Muslims were integrated into the ruling class and played essential roles in the administration. For instance, prominent Hindu and Muslim families were granted key positions and were entrusted with substantial responsibilities. The Sikh aristocracy itself was not homogeneous; it included individuals from various castes. It reflected a certain fluidity in social mobility that was facilitated by service to the state.

This inclusivity extended to religious minorities as well. Ranjit Singh's court included Muslims, Hindus, and Europeans, each contributing to the administration, military, and cultural life. This created a society where merit and loyalty to the state could elevate an individual's status, sometimes superseding the traditional caste hierarchies (Kaur, 2019). The Maharaja's secular approach in governance allowed different communities to coexist and contribute to the prosperity of the Sikh Empire.

However, the caste system was not entirely dismantled. It continued to influence social relations and interactions within the society. Marriages, for instance, largely followed caste lines, and caste-based occupations continued (Judge, 2002). Despite the inclusivity in the upper echelons of society, the lower castes, particularly those involved in manual labor, continued to face social discrimination (Judge, 2002). Nevertheless, the relatively flexible caste dynamics under Ranjit Singh provided a contrast to the more rigid structures observed in other regions of India.

Patronage of Arts and Culture

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule was a golden era for the arts and culture in Punjab (Cheema & Ahmad, 2021). As a patron of the arts, Ranjit Singh created an environment that fostered culture and creativity. His court at Lahore became a hub of cultural activities, attracting poets, musicians, artists, and scholars from different regions (Kapuria, 2023; Cheema & Ahmad, 2021).

Ranjit Singh supported Sikh religious music, particularly through the development of the tradition of Gurbani Kirtan (devotional singing). This

musical form, which involved the singing of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib, became an integral part of Sikh worship and cultural expression (Aujla, 2017). The Maharaja's patronage ensured that Gurbani Kirtan flourished during his reign, with skilled musicians being appointed to perform at the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras across the region (Aujla, 2017).

In addition to music, Ranjit Singh encouraged the development of painting and literature. The court painters at Lahore produced works that depicted scenes from Sikh history, religious themes, and portraits of the Maharaja and his courtiers (Cheema & Ahmad, 2021). A distinct style of Sikh painting emerged, which combined elements of Mughal and Rajput art with local influences (Cheema & Ahmad, 2021). These artworks not only served as a means of documenting history but also played a role in reinforcing the cultural identity of the Sikh community.

Literature also thrived under Ranjit Singh's patronage. The Maharaja supported the production of historical texts, religious commentaries, and poetic works in Punjabi, Persian, and Urdu (Gogia, 2017). This multilingual literary output reflected the diverse cultural milieu of the Sikh Empire. Prominent scholars and poets were encouraged to write on a wide range of subjects, including Sikh theology and history.

Ranjit Singh's patronage extended to the construction and renovation of religious and cultural sites. Ranjit Singh undertook an extensive renovation of the Harmandir Sahib temple, adorning it with gold, which gave the temple its iconic appearance and earned it the name 'Golden Temple'. Beyond the Golden Temple, Ranjit Singh funded the construction of numerous gurdwaras, mosques, and temples across his empire (Chhabra, 1960b). His support for religious institutions was not limited to Sikhism; he also patronized Hindu and Muslim places of worship.

Impact on Language, Literature, and Architecture

The reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh had a profound impact on the language, literature, and architecture of Punjab. Punjabi, which was the language of the ordinary people, gained prominence as the medium of administration and cultural expression. The Maharaja encouraged literary works in Punjabi. Both religious and secular works were produced. Sikh religious literature, including commentaries on the Guru Granth Sahib and historical narratives, was made during this period (Gogia, 2017). Secular literature, including poetry, prose, and historical chronicles, was also produced. The Maharaja's support for poets and scholars ensured that the

literary heritage of Punjab was enriched and preserved for future generations.

In architecture, Ranjit Singh's contributions were significant and enduring. His rule was marked by the construction of numerous forts, palaces, and religious buildings that combined traditional Sikh architectural elements with influences from Mughal and Rajput styles (Bhatti, 2023). The architectural style that emerged during this period included red sandstone, marble, and gold, with intricate carvings and decorative elements that reflected the artistic sensibilities of the time (Bhatti, 2023). The architectural legacy of Ranjit Singh's reign extended beyond the borders of Punjab. The forts and palaces he constructed in regions such as Multan, Peshawar, and Jammu served as symbols of Sikh power and influence. These structures not only fulfilled defensive and administrative functions but also represented the aesthetic and cultural values of the Sikh state.

Conclusion

The history of Punjab, particularly the rise of Sikh rule, demonstrates how spiritual, social, and political transformations converged to shape the region. At the heart of this was the emergence of a new social order, created by the teachings of Guru Nanak and the efforts of later Sikh Gurus, which challenged the prevailing norms of caste and religious orthodoxy. The Sikh movement, initially based on spiritual reform, evolved into a powerful socio-political force that redefined the contours of governance in Punjab.

The establishment of the Khalsa in 1699 marked a significant milestone, signifying a shift from spiritual leadership to a more organized and militarized community capable of defending its values and territory. This transformation was not merely about survival but about asserting a distinct identity that was both inclusive and egalitarian, in stark contrast to the rigid hierarchies that had long dominated the subcontinent. The Khalsa embodied the principles of justice, equality, and collective responsibility.

As the Sikh confederacies, or Misls, began to consolidate power, they operated in a fragmented Punjab. They strived to maintain their autonomy and to expand their territory. The Misl system, with its inherent flexibility and decentralized governance, enabled the Sikhs to maintain control over a volatile region. This period of confederation ultimately led to the emergence of a central authority under Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh's rise to power and the unification of Punjab under his rule were the culmination of social, military, and political efforts that had been

underway for over a century. His leadership not only solidified Sikh rule but also brought about reforms that made Punjab into a stable and prosperous state. Ranjit Singh's ability to integrate various religious and ethnic groups into his administration was a testament to his pragmatic and inclusive approach to governance. He maintained a balance between traditional values and modern administrative practices, ensuring the longevity of his empire.

The Sikh rule made significant contributions to arts, literature, and architecture. The patronage of arts and culture under Ranjit Singh created a vibrant and diverse society that celebrated its heritage. This period of cultural renaissance left a lasting legacy that continues to influence the identity of Punjab to this day.

However, the legacy of Sikh rule in Punjab is not without its complexities. While the Sikh Empire under Ranjit Singh represented a period of relative peace and prosperity, it also faced significant challenges, both internal and external. The eventual decline of the empire and its annexation by the British in 1849 marked the end of an era. However, the impact of Sikh rule on the social, cultural, and political fabric of Punjab endured long after.

Reflecting on these developments, it is evident that the rise of Sikh rule in Punjab was more than a mere sequence of military conquests and territorial expansions. It was a profound reordering of society, based on spiritual ideals that transcended the boundaries of caste and ethnicity. The Sikh rulers, particularly Ranjit Singh, demonstrated that governance could be both just and effective, blending traditional wisdom with modern statecraft. Their legacy offers valuable lessons on leadership, inclusivity, and the importance of cultural patronage in building a cohesive and resilient society.

The next chapter will focus on exploring governance and administration practices during the rule of Ranjit Singh. The reforms introduced during this era will be examined in the context of how these principles were translated into the everyday functioning of the Sikh state. The challenges and successes of the Sikh administration under Ranjit Singh will offer lessons regarding the influence of Sikh rule on the governance of Punjab and its legacy in India's history.

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Chapter 2:

Maharaja Ranjit Singh as an Administrator

Introduction

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, widely known as the "Lion of Punjab," was not only a military genius but also a visionary ruler who significantly impacted the political, social, and economic arena in Punjab. His leadership extended far beyond military victories, embodying a deep commitment to unity, peace, and governance. His reign, beginning with his coronation in 1801, marked the start of a new era of prosperity and stability in Punjab, following years of internal strife and foreign domination.

Ranjit Singh's coronation on Baisakhi was not only a religious ceremony but also a pivotal political event that symbolized the consolidation of Sikh power under a single leader. Unlike previous rulers, he viewed his role as a custodian of all people in his dominion, including Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, and democratic principles characterized his administration. His vision for the Sikh Empire was not limited to military supremacy but focused on creating a just and prosperous society.

The unification of Punjab under his leadership brought an end to the fragmented rule of the Sikh Misls and integrated the region into a powerful and centralized empire. Ranjit Singh's success lay in his ability to balance military strength with diplomatic acumen. His diplomatic skills helped him forge alliances, such as the notable alliance with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia in 1802, which bolstered his influence in the region. Over the years, he expanded his empire and incorporated regions like Amritsar, Kasur, Kangra, and Multan by securing the loyalty of diverse populations through his policy of inclusivity.

A significant aspect of Ranjit Singh's administration was his modernization of the military. Recognizing the importance of a disciplined and well-trained army, he employed European officers to train his forces, particularly the elite Fauj-I-Khas. This modernization helped him maintain internal stability while securing the borders of his empire. His military reforms, combined with efficient governance, created a stable and

peaceful environment for his subjects, which allowed trade and agriculture to flourish.

However, Ranjit Singh's true genius lay in his administrative reforms. He reorganized the governance system, streamlined revenue collection, and established a fair tax system. His policies were aimed at improving the lives of his people and ensuring that resources were used efficiently for the state's growth. His establishment of Panchayats for local governance and the inclusion of diverse communities in his administration reflected his commitment to justice and inclusivity. This made him a ruler admired not just for his conquests but also for his fairness and wisdom.

Chapter Overview

This chapter examines the administrative genius of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, highlighting how he governed a vast and diverse empire with fairness and inclusivity. The chapter begins by discussing his efforts to centralize governance, moving away from the fragmented Misl system to establish a unified and stable state. The role of key officials and Ranjit Singh's delegation of power to trusted governors is discussed. Next, the chapter discusses his revenue and tax reforms, which were designed to create a fair and efficient system of taxation, with a particular focus on agricultural revenues. These reforms ensured the economic stability of the empire. The discussion then moves to legal reforms. Ranjit Singh established an impartial justice system based on Sikh principles, but inclusive of people from all religious communities. His efforts to promote religious tolerance and inclusivity are highlighted.

The chapter also examines the military administration and how Ranjit Singh built a modern army. The diplomatic acumen of Ranjit Singh is discussed with a special focus on his relations with the British. Ranjit Singh's support for the arts, culture, and education is also explored, particularly his patronage of learning in Persian, Punjabi, and other regional languages. Finally, the chapter concludes with an assessment of the administrative legacy of Ranjit Singh, discussing how his policies and governance laid the groundwork for a prosperous and united Punjab. His ability to blend military prowess with administrative efficiency, coupled with his inclusive approach to governance, made him one of the most remarkable rulers in Indian history.

Civil Administration

The civil administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a significant achievement, particularly in the context of unifying a fractured and diverse Punjab under centralized rule. Before his rise to power, Punjab was a disunited region, with independent principalities, chiefdoms, and Sikh confederacies known as Misl. These Misl-dars, who ruled areas like Lahore, Amritsar, Patiala, and Gujranwala, operated independently and frequently engaged in conflicts with one another. This internal fragmentation left the region vulnerable to external threats, especially from neighboring states and the expanding influence of the British.

Recognizing the danger posed by this disunity, Ranjit Singh embarked on a mission to consolidate these territories into a unified state. He understood that the Misl system, which had outlived its purpose, was inadequate for ensuring the security and prosperity of the Khalsa or the people of Punjab. Through a combination of diplomacy, military campaigns, and strategic alliances, Ranjit Singh brought these independent entities under his control. He abolished the Mughal system and laid the foundations for a strong, centralized Sikh Empire.

Ranjit Singh's vision of governance extended beyond the mere consolidation of Sikh power. He aimed to create a stable and prosperous state where all communities—Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, and others—could coexist peacefully. His unification of Punjab was not just about territorial expansion but about creating a cohesive and centralized state capable of resisting external aggression and maintaining internal order. By the early 19th century, he had successfully achieved this goal and established himself as the undisputed ruler of a mighty empire.

One of the key features of his governance was the establishment of a stable and consolidated government structure. He replaced the fragmented rule of the Misl with a more structured and efficient administrative system, allowing him to maintain effective control over his vast and diverse empire. The empire was divided into eight provinces: Lahore, Jalandhar, Kangra Hills, Jammu, Kashmir, Peshawar, Gujrat (also known as Wazirabad), and Multan. Each of these provinces was further subdivided into *parganahs* and *talukas*, creating a hierarchical system of governance that extended from the provincial level to the village level.

Ranjit Singh carefully selected provincial governors, known as *Nazims*, to manage the administration of each province. These governors were responsible for overseeing civil, financial, judicial, and military matters within their regions. They were expected to collect revenue, maintain order, and remit a fixed sum to the central treasury. Although the Nazims were given significant autonomy in managing their provinces, they were

ultimately accountable to Ranjit Singh, who maintained strict oversight through regular inspections and surprise visits.

At the district level, *Kardars* were appointed to oversee local administration. The *Kardars* wielded significant power, acting as revenue collectors, magistrates, and judges within their districts. They were responsible for maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, and ensuring that justice was administered fairly and impartially. Although some *Kardars* were accused of corruption and favoritism, Ranjit Singh employed a system of checks and balances to prevent the abuse of power. A network of newswriters, known as *Waqanawis*, was established to report regularly on the activities of provincial and district officials, ensuring accountability.

In addition to the *Nazims* and *Kardars*, local governance was overseen by *Chaudharys* and *Muqaddams* at the village level. These officials were responsible for managing local disputes, overseeing agricultural production, and maintaining peace within their communities. This decentralized system of governance allowed Ranjit Singh to retain control over the most remote areas of his empire while ensuring that local concerns were addressed effectively.

The governance system of Ranjit Singh was further strengthened by his involvement in the administration of the state. He remained deeply involved in the day-to-day affairs of the empire, frequently traveling to different regions to inspect the work of his officials and ensure that his policies were being implemented effectively. His active participation in governance, combined with his keen understanding of the needs of his subjects, helped maintain a high standard of administration throughout the empire.

Ranjit Singh placed a strong emphasis on inclusivity and merit. He appointed individuals from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds to key positions within his government. This promoted a sense of shared responsibility among all subjects of the empire. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and even Europeans were appointed to key roles, with their appointments based on merit rather than religion or caste. This approach contributed to the overall stability of the state and helped ensure that all communities felt included in the governance of the empire.

The role of financial administration was another critical aspect of Ranjit Singh's governance. Early in his reign, he appointed Diwan Lakhpat Rae, who managed both civil and military matters, to oversee revenue collection, expenditure management, and account maintenance. This early system of administration was rudimentary, with little emphasis on record-

keeping, but it laid the groundwork for more formal structures in the years to come.

The conquest of Lahore in 1799 marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of the empire's financial administration. Ranjit Singh appointed Missar Basti Ram, a physician from Lahore, to manage the *Toshakhana* (treasury), which had begun to accumulate significant wealth in the form of coins, bullion, and other valuables. As the state's wealth grew, the administration of revenue and expenditure became more complex. This required the appointment of skilled officials, such as Rama Nand Sahu, a banker from Amritsar, who managed the empire's finances. Over time, the treasury was split into two parts: *Toshakhana Khas* for Amritsar and *Toshakhana Bahia* for Lahore, each serving distinct functions but collectively managing the wealth of the empire.

In 1808, Ranjit Singh further formalized the financial administration by appointing Bhawani Das, who introduced systematic record-keeping for income and expenditure across the districts. His reforms transformed the loosely controlled financial system into a more centrally administered unit. Bhawani Das also introduced five central administrative departments, which were later expanded to twelve.

After Bhawani Das, Ganga Ram, and Dina Nath took over the financial administration. Ganga Ram simplified the economic system by replacing Turkish terms with Indian ones and organizing the excise department. Dina Nath, who joined the revenue department in 1811, became Finance Minister after Ganga Ram's death and introduced further reforms to streamline financial management. Under the supervision of Dina Nath, departments such as the *Daftar-e-Maliyat* meticulously tracked land revenue, customs, excise, tributes, and other forms of income, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Military and financial systems were closely linked. Military accounts were managed meticulously, with separate accounts kept for the army to ensure that resources were allocated efficiently for defense. The role of *Tahwildars* (cash-keepers) and *Zakhirajat* (storekeepers) was crucial in ensuring that military supplies were properly accounted for, with detailed records of provisions stored in forts and military outposts.

One of the most striking features of Ranjit Singh's administration was his accessibility to the ordinary people. He held a daily *darbar* where citizens could present their grievances directly to him, and he reviewed complaints to ensure that justice was served. A special petition box was placed near his palace to allow individuals to submit grievances, which the Maharaja took seriously. This approach to governance helped to create a sense of

fairness and justice within the empire, as the people had direct access to their ruler.

Ranjit Singh also employed a variety of methods to ensure that his officials remained accountable and that corruption was kept in check. In addition to the *Waqanawis* reporting system, he conducted surprise inspections of his provinces and personally reviewed the decisions made by provincial and district officials. His system of confiscating the property of corrupt officials upon their death, while providing for their heirs, acted as a deterrent against malfeasance.

Financial Administration

Maharaja Ranjit Singh adopted a pragmatic approach to financial administration, based on the agrarian economy of his empire. The economic health of the state primarily depended on land revenue, which formed the backbone of the government's income. Out of the total annual revenue of three crores, two crores came from land revenue alone. The agricultural foundation of the empire was critical, and the peasant class was regarded as the pillar of the state treasury. The system of land revenue collection, while innovative and adaptive, also reflected the complexities of governance in an agrarian society.

Land revenue in the empire was collected through various methods, which evolved. In the earlier part of his reign, the *Batai* system was predominantly used. This method involved sharing the produce between the state and the cultivator, with the state typically taking one-third to one-half of the gross produce. However, the system had inherent flaws, requiring constant vigilance by state officials to prevent misappropriation by the cultivators. This required a large workforce to monitor the crops from sowing to harvesting, which made it both resource-intensive and prone to inefficiencies.

As the empire expanded and matured, the *Kankut* system was introduced. This method was an improvement over the *Batai* system, as it involved government officials estimating the gross produce of the land while the crop was still standing. Based on these estimates, the state's share was determined and collected after the harvest. However, despite being more efficient, this system could sometimes yield less than expected if the estimates were inaccurate or if the harvest fell short of projections.

In the later years of Ranjit Singh's reign, around 1835, the system of auctioning land revenue collection was implemented. Under this method, the right to collect revenue from a specific area was auctioned to the

highest bidder for a period of three to six years. The contractor was responsible for collecting the produce or its monetary equivalent from the cultivators and submitting it to the state. The auction system reduced the direct involvement of the state in the collection process and was generally beneficial to cultivators, as it allowed for more flexibility in the payment of revenue, either in cash or in kind.

Another aspect of land revenue collection in the empire was the option for *zamindars* to pay either in cash or in kind. This flexibility was crucial for crops where yield estimation was difficult, such as sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, and indigo. In such cases, the state levied a fixed monetary charge based on the land area under cultivation, such as one rupee per *kachcha* bigha, or took a specific portion of the produce, as in the case of mango orchards, where the produce from one out of every ten trees went to the state.

Land was also assessed based on the plough or the sound system. In regions where irrigation was dependent on wells, revenue was calculated on the amount of land that a single well could irrigate. Similarly, in areas with fertile soil, a unit of land was determined by how much a team of bullocks could plough, and revenue was calculated accordingly. The system reflected Ranjit Singh's attention to the diversity of agricultural practices across his empire, ensuring that revenue collection was equitable and adaptable to local conditions.

The government collected revenue twice a year, after the spring harvest (Rabi) and the autumn harvest (Kharif). Revenue collectors, known as *Kardars*, were responsible for ensuring that land revenue was collected promptly and deposited into the state treasury. Failure to collect revenue on time often led to severe consequences for the *Kardars*, who were expected to manage their districts efficiently and report directly to the provincial governors.

In addition to land revenue, the Maharaja's administration provided *Taqavi* loans to peasants during times of distress, such as famine, floods, or locust infestations. These loans were intended to help peasants purchase seeds, cattle, and implements to continue farming. In extreme cases, such as the famine in Kashmir in 1833, Ranjit Singh took direct action by sending donkeys laden with grain to the famine-stricken region for free distribution. This shows his concern for the welfare of his subjects.

Another significant feature of the financial administration was the farming system. To focus his attention on military matters and maintaining law and order, the Maharaja introduced a system in which specific regions were farmed out to contractors for a fixed annual payment. These contractors,

often local moneylenders or officials, were responsible for collecting revenue from the cultivators and ensuring the prosperity of their assigned areas. The system was profitable for the state, as it ensured a steady flow of revenue. Still, it also opened the door to corruption and exploitation, as contractors could charge more than the fixed rate without fear of reprisal, provided no complaints reached the Maharaja.

While the farming system allowed for more efficient revenue collection, it also had its drawbacks. Reports of abuse by contractors

They were not uncommon, with some regions, such as Kashmir under Sirdar Hari Singh Nalwa, facing excessive taxation and exploitation. Similarly, in the Jalandhar Doab, revenue officers were notorious for their heavy-handed methods of collection, which often left the peasants impoverished and their lands barren.

Ranjit Singh's administration also implemented a *Jagirdari* system, granting lands or *jagirs* to loyal courtiers, military commanders, and nobles in return for their services. The *Jagirdars* were responsible for maintaining a contingent of troops proportional to the size of their *jagir*. They were also tasked with managing the lands under their control, collecting revenue, and ensuring the prosperity of the area. However, this system, like the farming system, was not free from corruption and inefficiency, as many *Jagirdars* neglected their duties, exploiting the peasants under their charge for personal gain.

Taxation was another critical aspect of the financial administration. Besides land revenue, the state earned income through customs, excise duties, monopolies, and the sale of salt. The salt monopoly was particularly lucrative. It brought in approximately eight lakhs of rupees annually. Additionally, customs duties on goods such as shawls, opium, indigo, and sugar significantly contributed to the state's income. Ranjit Singh also implemented various other taxes, including professional taxes on artisans, lapsed *jagirs*, and *nazarana* (tributes) from defeated princes or vassals.

The system of currency was built around three key coins: the gold *mohar*, the Nanakshahi silver rupee, and the Mansuri paisa. The *mohar* was worth fifteen Nanakshahi rupees, which were widely circulated throughout the empire. The Mansuri paisa, a crude copper coin, was initially imported from outside the empire, but production was later brought under the Maharaja's control.

Despite the innovative and efficient nature of Ranjit Singh's financial administration, there were notable defects in the system. The state's

income was not fixed and varied from year to year, making long-term financial planning difficult. Furthermore, the system of revenue collection, particularly under the farming and *Jagirdari* systems, was prone to corruption. The heavy burden of taxation in some regions led to widespread dissatisfaction, with some areas being "squeezed dry" by revenue officers.

In the latter part of his reign, Ranjit Singh recognized the need for more structured financial management and invited Bhawani Das, an experienced administrator, to formalize the economic administration. Bhawani Das introduced systematic record-keeping at central district headquarters like Lahore, Amritsar, Jalandhar, and Gujrat, ensuring that a regular account of all income and expenditure was maintained.

The economy of Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh was robust and diversified, driven by agriculture, industry, trade, and commerce. Agriculture remained the foundation of the economy, with land revenue being the primary source of income for the state. However, industry and trade flourished under Ranjit Singh's rule, creating a dynamic and prosperous environment.

Industry played a crucial role in supporting both the military and the civilian population. The production of arms was vital to meet the demands of Ranjit Singh's large army, with state-run foundries manufacturing swords, guns, bullets, and cannons. The leather industry also thrived, supplying equipment for the cavalry, while textiles and luxury goods, such as the famous Kashmir shawls, were highly valued. Ranjit Singh took personal interest in promoting industries that benefited both the military and the people. Industries such as textiles were traditionally dominated by women, who produced items like khaddar, blankets, and intricate phulkari embroidery.

The textiles sector was particularly prominent, with the production of cotton, silk, and woolen fabrics accounting for a significant portion of the economy. Towns like Multan, Jalandhar, and Amritsar were known for their cloth production, while Kashmir continued to produce world-renowned shawls, which were exported to Europe. The woolen goods from regions such as Kashmir, Peshawar, and Multan also contributed significantly to the economy, with blankets, rugs, and carpets in high demand both within and outside the kingdom.

Trade and commerce flourished during Ranjit Singh's reign, both internally and externally. The Grand Trunk Road, though in disrepair in parts, remained a vital artery for trade, connecting the Punjab to the rest of India. Additionally, trade routes extending into Afghanistan, Iran, and

Central Asia facilitated the exchange of goods, including horses, shawls, woolen fabrics, spices, and luxury items. Goods were transported via camel caravans, particularly by the Pawindahs, a community of traders who moved between Punjab and Central Asia.

Despite the challenges posed by poor infrastructure and political instability in surrounding regions, the administration successfully created a stable and secure environment for trade. The establishment of mints in cities like Lahore, Amritsar, and Multan further strengthened the economy, as did the introduction of the Nanakshahi currency. Taxes on goods and customs duties provided additional revenue, although Ranjit Singh ensured that they were reasonable to encourage trade.

Ranjit Singh's focus on trade routes, industry, and agriculture allowed Punjab to become a thriving economic hub during his reign. The peaceful conditions he maintained within his borders, combined with his policies of encouraging commerce, industry, and fair taxation, laid the foundation for economic prosperity in Punjab.

Judicial Administration

The judicial system, while not adhering to any formal or codified legal framework, was based on the prevailing socio-political fabric of early 19th-century Punjab. To modern observers, his administration of justice might appear rudimentary, but for the people of that time, it was both efficient and effective. His system provided a sense of justice, peace, and order that had not been seen in the region for many years. The absence of written laws did not hinder the dispensation of justice, as cases were often settled swiftly, with an emphasis on practical outcomes rather than lengthy legal procedures.

The judicial system under Maharaja Ranjit Singh reflected the values and customs of the time. There was no distinction between civil and criminal cases; disputes of all kinds were handled using a combination of local traditions, religious laws, and the wisdom of community elders. The Maharaja placed great trust in the community-based Panchayat system, which served as the primary forum for resolving disputes at the village level. These village councils consisted of respected elders, and their decisions were almost universally accepted as fair and just.

There was a strong emphasis on oral testimony. Witnesses were often asked to swear on religious scriptures, and their sworn statements were given significant weight in court decisions. In this context, the honesty of individuals was paramount, as it was believed that few people would dare

to lie under oath. This reliance on oral testimony made the judicial process swift, as cases were often settled on the spot, with punishments administered immediately.

In rural areas, most disputes were resolved at the village level, where the Panchayat played a central role. The Panchayat was a court of five respected men, chosen for their reputation and integrity. The head of the Panchayat, known as the Sirpanch, was responsible for presiding over the proceedings and ensuring that both parties were heard. Cases typically involved land disputes, family matters, and minor crimes, and the community accepted the decisions made by the Panchayat as final. In the rare event that a party was dissatisfied with the Panchayat's decision, they could appeal to the local Kardar, though such appeals were uncommon.

The Panchayat system operated on the principle of consensus. Decisions were often reached through lengthy discussions, and while these debates could be loud and passionate, the ultimate goal was always to achieve a unanimous verdict. The sense of communal justice was so strong that even the most obstinate offenders would accept the Panchayat's ruling. For those who refused to comply, the threat of excommunication from the community served as a powerful deterrent.

In addition to village Panchayats, there were caste-based Panchayats that dealt with disputes within specific social groups. These caste Panchayats operated across multiple villages, with representatives from each community coming together to settle disputes. This system of arbitration enabled a high degree of self-regulation within the caste structure, thereby reducing the need for state intervention in local matters.

In urban areas, the judicial system was more formalized, with appointed officials known as Adaltis responsible for administering justice. These officers handled both civil and criminal cases, relying on local customs and religious laws to guide their judgments. For example, Muslim Qazis decided instances by Islamic law, while Hindu Pandits used the Manusmriti to resolve disputes among Hindus. This religious pluralism in the legal system showed Maharaja Ranjit Singh's inclusive approach to governance, as he sought to ensure that all communities felt represented and respected.

The judicial system was further divided into several levels of courts, each with its jurisdiction and responsibilities. At the provincial level, the Nazims acted as the chief judicial officers, handling severe cases and appeals from lower courts. The Nazims were responsible for ensuring that justice was administered fairly within their regions, and they often

consulted local Panchayats or other community leaders to assist in their decisions.

For the most serious cases, such as those involving theft, robbery, or murder, the Maharaja himself would sometimes preside over the proceedings. Ranjit Singh was known for his accessibility, and it was not uncommon for ordinary citizens to bring their grievances directly to him. In such cases, he would act as the final arbiter, often rendering swift judgments. His involvement in the administration of justice helped to maintain a sense of fairness and accountability, as corrupt officials knew that they could be removed or punished at any time if found guilty of wrongdoing.

Despite the lack of formal legal training among many of the judicial officers, the system was remarkably effective in maintaining law and order. Punishments were typically swift and harsh, particularly for crimes such as theft or robbery. Mutilation, such as the cutting off of hands, noses, or ears, was a common punishment for thieves, as it served as both a deterrent and a means of public humiliation. Fines were also a common form of punishment, with the amount determined by the severity of the crime and the offender's financial status.

One of the unique aspects of Ranjit Singh's judicial system was the emphasis on fines and compensation rather than imprisonment. Criminals were allowed to pay a fine instead of a more severe punishment, and in some cases, their property would be confiscated to cover the cost of the crime. This approach was not only pragmatic, as it avoided the need for large prisons, but also enabled the state to recover some of the financial losses incurred due to criminal activity.

Capital punishment was rare, and Ranjit Singh was known for his reluctance to impose the death penalty. In cases where execution was deemed necessary, it was typically reserved for the most egregious crimes, such as murder or treason. Even then, Ranjit Singh would personally review the case before making a final decision. His preference for leniency was evident in his interactions with his officials; for instance, when a group of thieves was hanged by one of his governors without his explicit approval, Ranjit Singh expressed his disapproval.

The judicial system also included mechanisms for checking the abuse of power by local officials. Officials were keenly aware that their positions were dependent on the favor of the Maharaja, and any misuse of authority could result in their dismissal or the confiscation of their property. To ensure accountability, Ranjit Singh frequently conducted surprise inspections of his provinces. Most of the time, he traveled incognito to

observe the behavior of his officials and to hear complaints from the local population.

While the judicial system was generally effective, there were instances of corruption and miscarriage of justice. The combination of executive and judicial powers in the hands of local officials sometimes led to abuses, particularly in remote areas where communication with the central government was limited. Wealthy individuals could sometimes bribe their way out of punishment, and there were cases where innocent people were held responsible for the crimes of others. However, the system as a whole functioned well enough to maintain a high degree of social stability and public order.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's judicial administration was a product of its time, shaped by the social, cultural, and political realities of early 19th-century Punjab. While it may appear unsophisticated by modern standards, it was highly effective in meeting the needs of the people and ensuring justice in a vast and diverse empire. Through a combination of local autonomy, religious pluralism, and personal oversight, Ranjit Singh successfully established a judicial system that was both efficient and fair, thereby significantly contributing to the peace and prosperity of his reign.

Religious Tolerance and Inclusivity

The Maharaja's rule in Punjab stands as a beacon of religious tolerance and inclusivity. It exemplified a model of governance that was ahead of its time. In an era when the Indian subcontinent had seen centuries of spiritual conflict and division, Ranjit Singh, though a devout Sikh, adopted a distinctly secular approach to administration. His policies promoted harmony among Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, and Christians alike, creating a peaceful and cohesive society during his reign. This inclusivity, based on his personal beliefs and the Sikh tradition, became one of the defining characteristics of his leadership.

One of the first points to note about Ranjit Singh's religious policy is that it was far from being a theocracy. While he was a Sikh and greatly respected his religion, his government did not impose Sikhism as the state religion. He followed a secular policy where merit, rather than religious affiliation, determined appointments to key positions in his administration. His ability to create an environment where individuals of different faiths could coexist peacefully set him apart from many rulers of the time.

Ranjit Singh's respect for all religions was a cornerstone of his governance. He showed great reverence for the holy books and places of

all faiths, issuing orders to his soldiers and officers to treat these with respect, regardless of the religion. This attitude of respect extended not only to the majority religious groups in his kingdom but also to the smaller ones, such as the Christian community. His Christian officers, such as Ventura, Allard, Court, and Avitabile, held important military and administrative positions, and their faith never hindered their advancement in his court.

Ranjit Singh's inner circle of advisors and administrators reflected his policy of inclusivity. His most trusted minister, Faqir Aziz-ud-din, a Muslim, served as both his advisor and personal physician. His brother, Faqir Nur-ud-din, was appointed as the governor of Lahore. At the same time, his finance department was managed by Hindu officers, such as Bhawani Das, Ganga Ram, and Dina Nath. This multi-religious composition of his court ensured that policies were crafted with input from various religious perspectives.

One of the most telling examples of Ranjit Singh's religious tolerance is his magnanimity towards his Muslim adversaries. After defeating Muslim rulers in battles, Ranjit Singh allowed them to retain their lands and titles, and in many cases, he awarded them generous jagirs (land grants). For instance, after conquering Kasur, he granted a jagir worth two lakhs annually to the deposed chief. Similarly, after the conquest of Multan, he awarded jagirs to the sons of the defeated Nawab Muzaffar Khan. This compassionate treatment stood in stark contrast to the fate of deposed rulers in Delhi and Kabul, who lived in poverty after losing their thrones.

His commitment to inclusivity is also evident in the substantial grants he made to both Hindu and Muslim religious shrines. He restored and funded Muslim mosques and tombs that had fallen into disrepair. For example, upon his occupation of Lahore in 1799, he returned the Sunahri Masjid, which had been taken over by the Sikhs, to the Muslims. Similarly, he repaired the grand tombs of Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan, ensuring their historical and religious significance was preserved. The Maharaja also made annual grants to Muslim shrines, including the famous tombs of Data Ganj Bakhsh and Mauj Darya at Lahore, and he made offerings on the occasion of their yearly urs (death anniversaries).

Not only did Ranjit Singh support Muslim institutions, but he was also deeply respectful of Hindu temples and religious practices. His pilgrimage to the Jawalamukhi temple is well-documented, where he made lavish offerings of gold and cash, and stood for hours in prayer before the goddess. In 1826, he sent a sum of Rs. 25,000 to fund the construction of the golden roof of the Jawalamukhi temple. His contributions to the

Vishwa Nath temple in Banaras, which had been converted into a mosque during Aurangzeb's reign, further emphasized his support for Hindu religious sites. Ranjit Singh's final days also reflected his devotion to Hindu beliefs, as he requested that Ganga water be placed on his chest and distributed goblets of the sacred water among Brahmins.

Although some European writers questioned Ranjit Singh's commitment to Sikhism due to his broad-minded approach to religion, his actions demonstrated a profound respect for the faith of his forebears. His coins bore the name of Guru Nanak, and he consistently referred to himself as a humble servant of the Khalsa, the collective body of the Sikh faith. When it came to decisions about public works, he often chose to honor Sikh traditions, as seen when he named a garden after Guru Ram Das instead of accepting the suggestion to name it after himself.

Furthermore, Ranjit Singh held the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, in the highest regard. He listened to its recitations daily, even during military expeditions. His humility in the presence of the scripture is exemplified by an incident in 1838, when, after being seated on a chair while listening to the Granth Sahib, he suddenly realized the inappropriateness of the gesture and immediately stood up to seek forgiveness.

Despite his devotion to Sikhism, Ranjit Singh never imposed his faith on others. There were no forced conversions to Sikhism under his rule. Those who did convert did so of their own volition, out of admiration for Ranjit Singh or the Sikh way of life. The Maharaja personally welcomed these converts, rewarding them generously for their new commitment, but he never pressured anyone to change their faith.

One of the distinctive features of Ranjit Singh's religious tolerance was his acceptance of criticism and his willingness to submit to Sikh institutions, even when he violated social norms. A notable instance of this was his marriage to Moran, a Muslim dancing girl. This action brought him before the Akal Takht, the highest Sikh temporal authority, where Akali Phula Singh publicly chastised him for breaking the rules of the Khalsa. Instead of resisting, Ranjit Singh humbly accepted the reprimand and submitted himself to the punishment decreed by the Panth, thus reinforcing his belief in the authority of Sikh institutions and his dedication to the principles of humility and equality.

Ranjit Singh's legacy of religious tolerance had far-reaching effects in Punjab. His fair and impartial treatment of all religious communities won him the loyalty and admiration of his subjects. When Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed launched a jihad against the Sikh state, he found little support

among the Muslims of Punjab, who had come to respect Ranjit Singh as a just and benevolent ruler. His inclusive policies helped minimize religious tensions, and the region experienced a period of unprecedented peace and stability during his reign.

Military Administration

Ranjit Singh was a visionary leader not only in statecraft but also in military administration. His military reforms transformed the Sikh army into one of the most disciplined and formidable forces in Asia, rivaling contemporary European armies in both structure and effectiveness. Under his leadership, the military played a crucial role in consolidating the Sikh Empire, maintaining internal stability, and defending the kingdom against external threats.

Ranjit Singh inherited a respectable military force from his father, Mahan Singh, which included both cavalry and infantry. However, this force was largely irregular and lacked the discipline and organizational structure of a modern army. The early Sikh military tradition, developed in the *misls* (confederacies), relied heavily on voluntary soldiers, primarily Sikhs, who fought in a somewhat disorganized manner. Ranjit Singh recognized the limitations of this approach and sought to modernize his army to meet the challenges posed by external powers, particularly the British and Afghans, as well as internal dissent.

One of the key factors that motivated Ranjit Singh's military reforms was the proximity of the British East India Company on his eastern border. The British had demonstrated their military superiority through their disciplined infantry, artillery, and the use of European military tactics. Ranjit Singh, a shrewd observer of military trends, recognized the need for a standing army trained in the European style to counterbalance the British threat. Additionally, the constant threat of Afghan invasions from the northwest, combined with internal unrest and banditry, called for a strong, organized military force.

Ranjit Singh's military reforms were far-reaching and transformative. He created a new model army that blended traditional Sikh valor with European military discipline. This army, referred to as the "*Fauj-e-Ain*" (Regular Army), became one of the most formidable military forces in the region. Ranjit Singh's reforms touched every aspect of military organization, from recruitment and training to the use of modern weapons and artillery.

Unlike the misls, which primarily recruited Sikhs, Ranjit Singh's new army was more inclusive, drawing soldiers from various castes, creeds, and religions. This diversity was a departure from the traditional Sikh military structure, which had been more homogenous. Ranjit Singh's decision to recruit soldiers from all backgrounds was both practical and strategic. It allowed him to build a larger, more diverse army while also creating a sense of unity and loyalty among his troops, regardless of their religious or ethnic background.

One of the most significant changes Ranjit Singh introduced was the shift from guerrilla warfare to more formalized, steady fire tactics, primarily using guns and muskets. This was a departure from the traditional hit-and-run tactics that had characterized Sikh warfare under the misls. The use of modern artillery and firearms became a cornerstone of Ranjit Singh's military strategy, and he invested heavily in the development and maintenance of artillery units.

In 1809, Ranjit Singh established a separate Military Department, known as the "Daftar-e-Fauj," to oversee the administration of the army. This department was responsible for maintaining detailed records of the military, including payrolls, credit and debit accounts, and descriptive rolls of military personnel. The meticulous record-keeping ensured that the army operated efficiently and that soldiers were held accountable for their conduct and performance.

The Military Department was divided into two main sections: the Fauj-e-Ain (Regular Army) and the irregular cavalry. The regular army was organized into infantry battalions, cavalry regiments, and artillery units, all of which were trained and disciplined in the European style. Each battalion consisted of approximately 900 men, divided into companies, with a transparent chain of command. The regular infantry wore scarlet uniforms, a distinctive feature that set them apart from the irregular troops. The introduction of a regular standing army, paid by the state every month, was a significant departure from the irregular, unpaid forces that had characterized the misls.

Ranjit Singh's approach to recruitment was both rigorous and inclusive. Soldiers were carefully selected based on their physical and mental attributes, with an emphasis on loyalty, discipline, and endurance. Ranjit Singh personally oversaw the recruitment process, ensuring that only the most capable and reliable men were admitted into his army. Soldiers were expected to demonstrate courage, remain cool under pressure, and possess a strong sense of duty.

In terms of training, Ranjit Singh placed great emphasis on drill and discipline, particularly in the infantry and artillery units. He employed European officers, including French and Italian veterans of the Napoleonic wars, to train his troops in modern military tactics. Notable figures such as General Jean-François Allard and General Jean-Baptiste Ventura played key roles in shaping the Sikh army's training regimen. They introduced European-style drill, weaponry, and battlefield tactics. The introduction of bayonet exercises and the use of artillery were particularly significant, as they brought the Sikh army in line with contemporary European military practices.

Artillery became a cornerstone of Ranjit Singh's military strategy. Before his reforms, the Sikh army had relied primarily on cavalry, with artillery playing a secondary role. However, under Ranjit Singh's leadership, artillery was elevated to a position of prominence. He established a dedicated artillery department, known as the "Topkhana Khas," which oversaw the production and maintenance of cannons, guns, and other artillery pieces. Ranjit Singh's foundries, located in Lahore and other key cities, produced a range of artillery pieces, from heavy cannons to lighter, more mobile field guns.

The cavalry, traditionally the pride of the Sikh army, was also restructured under Ranjit Singh. The regular cavalry, known as the "Fauj-e-Baquaaid," was organized into regiments, with state-provided horses and modern equipment. However, Ranjit Singh also maintained an irregular cavalry force, known as the "Ghorcharha Sowars," who provided their horses and equipment. These irregular troops, often drawn from the aristocratic families of Punjab, were known for their bravery and reckless courage. They played a crucial role in many of Ranjit Singh's early conquests, including the annexation of Multan and Kashmir.

Discipline was a central tenet of Ranjit Singh's military administration. Soldiers were expected to adhere to strict codes of conduct, and insubordination was punished severely. European officers, such as Ventura and Allard, were instrumental in enforcing discipline, introducing a range of punishments for offenses including desertion, disobedience, and cowardice. Soldiers who demonstrated exceptional courage or loyalty were rewarded with promotions, land grants, or cash bonuses.

Ranjit Singh's personal charisma and leadership style also played a crucial role in maintaining the loyalty of his troops. He took a personal interest in the welfare of his soldiers, often visiting them during training exercises, rewarding their efforts with gifts and honors. His ability to inspire loyalty

and devotion among his men was a key factor in the success of his military administration.

Relations with the British

Maharaja Ranjit Singh adopted diplomacy, caution, and pragmatism. From his earliest interactions with the British Empire to the critical moments of the Treaty of Amritsar and beyond, Ranjit Singh dealt with the British expansion in India with remarkable foresight. While his ambitions for territorial expansion were curbed by British influence, his ability to adapt and preserve his kingdom in the face of British dominance stands as a testament to his political acumen.

The first significant encounter between Ranjit Singh and the British occurred after the Second Maratha War (1802-1803), during which the British emerged victorious over the Maratha Confederacy. At this time, Jaswant Rao Holkar, a Maratha leader, sought refuge in Punjab, hoping to garner support from Ranjit Singh. Holkar, having faced defeat at the hands of the British under Lord Lake, fled to the northern regions of India. His arrival in Punjab raised concerns for both the British and Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh, then still consolidating his power in Lahore, understood the delicate position he was in. Though Holkar attempted to forge an alliance with him against the British, Ranjit Singh carefully avoided direct involvement. He recognized the strength of the British forces and the futility of opposing them at such an early stage in his reign. Instead of aligning with Holkar, Ranjit Singh maintained a friendly yet non-committal stance. He placated Holkar with polite gestures but refrained from providing any military assistance. This cautious approach signaled his pragmatic understanding of the political environment.

The British, recognizing the importance of keeping Ranjit Singh from allying with Holkar, acted swiftly. Lord Lake advanced to the Beas River, putting pressure on both Holkar and Ranjit Singh. Eventually, Holkar was forced to negotiate with the British, leading to the Treaty of December 1805. This marked the first official interaction between Ranjit Singh and the British, as he agreed to prevent Holkar from seeking refuge in Punjab and promised not to engage in future communication with him. In return, the British assured Ranjit Singh that they would not interfere in his territories north of the Sutlej River. This agreement, though modest in its scope, laid the foundation for the future relationship between Ranjit Singh and the British Empire.

Following this initial contact, Ranjit Singh's ambitions grew. His desire to unite the Sikh territories under his rule led him to expand his influence into the Cis-Sutlej region, an area populated by various Sikh and non-Sikh chiefs. Between 1806 and 1809, Ranjit Singh launched several expeditions into this region, subduing local chiefs and demanding tribute. His actions alarmed the Cis-Sutlej chiefs, who, fearing for their autonomy, sought the protection of the British. This led to the British sending Sir Charles Metcalfe as an envoy to negotiate with Ranjit Singh.

The British, facing threats from Napoleonic France and Russia, were eager to prevent Ranjit Singh from expanding his influence into the Cis-Sutlej region. At the same time, they sought to secure his cooperation as a buffer against any potential European invasions from the northwest. The British needed Ranjit Singh to play a key role in defending India's northern frontiers, but they also needed to curtail his expansionist tendencies.

The negotiations between Metcalfe and Ranjit Singh culminated in the Treaty of Amritsar, signed on March 25, 1809. This treaty was a turning point in Ranjit Singh's relations with the British. Under the terms of the treaty, Ranjit Singh agreed to respect the sovereignty of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs and to refrain from further military campaigns in that region. In return, the British formally recognized Ranjit Singh's control over the territories north of the Sutlej River and agreed to maintain friendly relations with him.

While the Treaty of Amritsar limited Ranjit Singh's ambitions in the Cis-Sutlej region, it also provided him with a sense of security on his eastern front. With the British guaranteeing the protection of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs, Ranjit Singh could now focus his military efforts on expanding his kingdom to the west and south. This allowed him to conquer Multan, Kashmir, and Peshawar. The treaty, though a compromise, gave Ranjit Singh the breathing room he needed to consolidate his power and pursue his conquests without fear of British interference.

However, the treaty also marked the beginning of a more cautious phase in Ranjit Singh's relations with the British. He was well aware of the growing power of the British Empire and the limitations it imposed on his expansionist ambitions. Although he had succeeded in securing his eastern frontier, he knew that the British would not tolerate any further encroachment into territories they considered strategically necessary, such as Sindh or the Cis-Sutlej region.

Singh's diplomatic skill was further tested during the British campaigns in Nepal (1816-1818) and Burma (1824-1826). During these wars, the British suffered significant losses, raising hopes among many Indian rulers

that the British Empire was vulnerable. Ranjit Singh, however, remained cautious. Although he was pleased to hear of British difficulties, he did not take advantage of the situation. Instead, he maintained his policy of non-interference, recognizing that the British were still a formidable force. His decision to refrain from confronting the British during their moments of weakness demonstrated his long-term strategic thinking.

In the years that followed, his attempts to extend his influence into Sindh and Shikarpur were thwarted by British diplomacy. In 1832, the British signed a treaty with the rulers of Sindh, opening the Indus River to British commerce and effectively bringing Sindh under British influence. This was a blow to Ranjit Singh's ambitions, as he had hoped to incorporate Sindh into his empire. Once again, he found himself outmaneuvered by British diplomacy, but he chose not to confront them directly.

The question of Shikarpur further strained relations between Ranjit Singh and the British. Shikarpur was a key trading hub, and its control was of great strategic importance. Ranjit Singh had long coveted the city, but the British made it clear that they would not allow him to extend his power along the Indus River. Despite his frustration, Ranjit Singh ultimately yielded to British pressure, recognizing that a military confrontation over Shikarpur would be futile.

The final chapter in Singh's relationship with the British was marked by the Tripartite Treaty of 1838, signed between the British, Ranjit Singh, and Shah Shuja, the exiled ruler of Afghanistan. This treaty aimed to restore Shah Shuja to the throne of Kabul, with the support of British and Sikh forces. Although Ranjit Singh was reluctant to become involved in Afghan affairs, he eventually agreed to the treaty, recognizing that British influence in the region was inevitable. The Tripartite Treaty marked the culmination of Ranjit Singh's pragmatic approach to relations with the British. By joining forces with the British, he ensured that the kingdom would remain secure, even as British power continued to grow.

Patronage of Arts and Education

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a great patron of the arts and education. Despite being illiterate himself, Ranjit Singh held a deep reverence for knowledge, culture, and artistic expression. His reign witnessed the flowering of art and the rise of education in the Punjab region, which were crucial to the legacy of the Sikh Empire.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Ranjit Singh's patronage was his interest in promoting various forms of art. His art appreciation was deeply influenced by his conquests, particularly in the Kangra region. In Kangra, he came into contact with the rich tradition of Pahari painting, known for its lyrical themes and vibrant depictions of Hindu gods, goddesses, and mythical scenes. The annexation of Kangra in 1809 brought Ranjit Singh into close contact with the Rajput artists of the region, who soon began working for the Sikh court. These artists contributed to the flourishing of art under Ranjit Singh by blending the local Pahari style with the emerging Sikh aesthetic.

The rejection of idol worship by Sikhism did not impede the development of visual arts, as Ranjit Singh and his court embraced artistic expression in the form of portraiture and religious scenes. Portrait painting became a notable feature of Ranjit Singh's reign. Though he was initially reluctant to have his likeness captured, he eventually came to appreciate the role of portraiture in diplomacy and political relations. By allowing artists to depict him, even with his physical imperfections, such as his blind left eye, Ranjit Singh demonstrated a remarkable openness to artistic interpretation. Foreign artists, such as Emily Eden, the sister of Governor-General Lord Auckland, captured his likeness, and his court became a hub for both local and foreign painters.

This era witnessed the emergence of a distinct Sikh school of painting, influenced by Kangra art and incorporating elements from other regions. Painters in Ranjit Singh's court, such as Kehar Singh and Mohammed Baksh, created works that reflected the social and religious life of the Sikh Empire. These artists not only produced portraits of Ranjit Singh and his courtiers but also depicted scenes from daily life, including farmers, jugglers, and *nihangs* (Sikh warriors). Their work extended beyond the confines of the court, with murals adorning temples, *gurdwaras*, and palaces across the Punjab. The murals, featuring religious themes or battle scenes, reflected the rich cultural and artistic milieu that Ranjit Singh promoted.

His secular approach to patronage was evident in his support for Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh artists alike. He appointed a Muslim craftsman to build a fortification around Amritsar and enjoyed the music of a Muslim sitarist, Attar Khan. His court was a melting pot of artistic traditions, blending Islamic, Hindu, and Sikh influences, and it attracted artists from various backgrounds. The cultural exchange between the hills and plains of Punjab, initiated through Ranjit Singh's conquests, resulted in a fusion of artistic styles that enriched the cultural life of his empire.

In addition to visual arts, literature and education flourished under Ranjit Singh's rule. The Maharaja had a profound respect for the written word, despite his limited formal education. He played a significant role in promoting Punjabi literature and ensuring that the Gurmukhi script was used to propagate Sikh teachings. During his reign, Amritsar grew into a center of Sikh learning and philosophy, while Lahore became the political and administrative capital of the empire. Under his influence, Punjabi began to gain prominence alongside Persian, which remained the official language of administration.

Ranjit Singh's court was home to notable scholars and poets who produced works of lasting significance. Persian and Urdu literature continued to flourish, with genres such as the *ghazal* and *masnavi* making their way into Punjabi culture. Pandit Ram Lekhari, for instance, compiled a version of the Ramayana in Gurmukhi script, contributing to the growing body of Sikh literature. Similarly, the works of Muslim scholars, such as Mirza Gholam Mehdi Mujrim's "Diwan-i-Mujrim," beautifully discussed the social conditions of the time. This era of literary production reflected Ranjit Singh's open-minded approach to culture, where religious and linguistic boundaries were transcended in favor of a more inclusive intellectual environment.

His reign also saw innovations in other forms of art, including the creation of medals and decorations. One of the most notable examples of this was the establishment of the Order of Merit, known as the Star of the Prosperity of the Punjab, which he introduced on the occasion of his grandson Nau Nihal Singh's marriage in 1837. This medal, awarded in three classes, was a reflection of Ranjit Singh's desire to honor those who served the empire with distinction, including courtiers, army generals, and civil servants. The star-shaped medal, adorned with precious stones, was a symbol of prestige and recognition, and its design was innovative for its time.

Education was supported during his reign. The Maharaja's government was primarily military in nature, and as such, the primary emphasis was on military training and organization. However, Ranjit Singh's patronage extended to supporting traditional educational institutions, particularly those associated with religious instruction. Sikh institutions, such as the Akal Takht in Amritsar and Damdama Sahib, played a crucial role in imparting education in Gurmukhi, while madrassas and pathshalas provided instruction in Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit.

Despite the lack of a formal system or state-sponsored education, Ranjit Singh's reign saw a proliferation of indigenous schools across Punjab.

These schools were affiliated with religious institutions and offered basic instruction in language, arithmetic, and religious texts. The village schoolhouse, often a mosque, dharamshala, or temple, was a vital part of the educational fabric of Punjab, and the Maharaja's support for these institutions helped preserve traditional forms of learning.

Higher education, though limited, was not neglected. Schools in places like Amritsar and Lahore offered instruction in subjects such as philosophy, astronomy, and medicine. Fakirs and scholars played a central role in the dissemination of knowledge, and their influence extended across religious boundaries. Bhai Juna Singh, for example, ran a school that provided free instruction in religious and secular subjects, attracting students from across the region. Similarly, scholars like Bhai Budha and Bhai Santokh Singh made significant contributions to the translation of Sanskrit texts into Gurmukhi, enriching Sikh literature. Although Ranjit Singh's government did not prioritize the establishment of a formal educational system, his patronage of religious institutions and his support for scholars of all backgrounds helped sustain a vibrant intellectual culture in Punjab. His recognition of the importance of education, particularly in preserving religious and cultural traditions, was a key aspect of his legacy as a ruler.

Conclusion

The importance of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in history rests not only on his military prowess but on his ability to unify a fractured region and establish a stable and prosperous kingdom in the Punjab. In a time of political chaos and the Mughal Empire's collapse, Ranjit Singh emerged as a leader who could rise above the divisive forces that had weakened the subcontinent. His remarkable ability to bring together diverse groups under his rule, including the Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims, set him apart as a ruler who understood the need for inclusivity and harmony in governance.

The context in which Ranjit Singh came to power was one of disunity and fragmentation, where rival princes and regional powers were more focused on personal gain than the collective needs of their territories. The East India Company steadily gained control, playing one faction against another. However, Punjab, under Ranjit Singh's leadership, was able to halt the British advance, at least temporarily. His capture of Lahore in 1799 marked the beginning of a new era in the region, as he consolidated his power and established an empire that spanned 14,000 square miles.

His ability to harness the energies of the disparate misls and bring them under one banner was a remarkable feat. His diplomatic acumen was

evident in his handling of both internal and external challenges. While he fought numerous battles to subdue Pathan, Afghan, and Rajput resistance, he also understood the importance of maintaining a balance with the British, avoiding direct conflict where possible and focusing on strengthening his territories. The Treaty of Amritsar in 1809 was a turning point, as it allowed him to focus inward, building the military, economic, and social foundations of his kingdom while keeping British forces at bay.

One of Ranjit Singh's most notable achievements was his modernization of the military. Understanding that the British forces were well-equipped and disciplined, he sought to reform his army by incorporating Western military tactics and technology. He employed European officers, such as Generals Allard, Ventura, and Court, who trained his forces in modern warfare. Under his leadership, the Punjabi army grew from a modest force to a formidable one, with 75,000 soldiers and a well-equipped artillery. This modernization not only ensured the defense of Punjab from external threats but also created economic opportunities for the region's artisans and laborers, as industries catering to the military's needs flourished.

Beyond his military achievements, Ranjit Singh was a visionary administrator who understood the importance of peace and stability for prosperity. Unlike many rulers of the time, he did not make radical changes or introduce complex administrative innovations. Instead, he focused on continuity, ensuring that life for his subjects continued smoothly. His reign was characterized by law and order, and he was renowned for his fairness in dispensing justice. Highway robberies, armed conflicts, and communal strife were rare under his rule. His vigilance and personal involvement in governance—often conducting surprise inspections and redressing grievances on the spot—set him apart from other rulers. Ranjit Singh's sense of responsibility toward his people stemmed from his conviction that a ruler's legitimacy derived from serving the people and protecting their well-being.

Economically, Punjab thrived under Ranjit Singh's rule. The kingdom was self-sufficient, with no external drain on its resources. The peasantry was well-treated, and unemployment and beggary were almost non-existent. Taxes were fair, and whatever was collected was reinvested into the state, ensuring that the people directly benefited from the kingdom's wealth. Prices remained low, and the economy was stable, providing a strong foundation for the prosperity that Punjab enjoyed during this period.

Ranjit Singh's approach to kingship was unique. Unlike many rulers who sought grand titles and symbols of power, he remained humble, referring to himself as a servant of the Sikh Gurus. His government, Sarkar-i-

Khalsa, reflected his deep connection to his faith and his commitment to the principles of equality and justice. However, his rule was secular in practice, with individuals from various religious and ethnic backgrounds holding key positions in his administration. He gave generously to religious institutions of all faiths, ensuring that mosques, temples, and gurdwaras flourished under his patronage.

Ranjit Singh had an inclusive and meritocratic approach to governance. His court comprised individuals from all walks of life, including Dogras and Brahmins, as well as Europeans, and each person had the opportunity to rise to the highest levels of power based on merit. This inclusivity extended to his military as well, where officers were recruited based on their abilities rather than their backgrounds. This cosmopolitan character of his court and administration was one of the key reasons for the stability and prosperity of his kingdom.

While Ranjit Singh wielded considerable power, he was not a despot. He was a moderate ruler. He governed with the participation of his nobles and advisors. He did not engage in vindictive actions against his rivals and was known for his clemency, often providing for those he had defeated rather than punishing them. This sense of fairness and humanity extended to his officials, whom he held accountable for their actions. Corruption and abuse of power were not tolerated; even his most trusted generals, such as Hari Singh Nalwa, were reprimanded when necessary.

He abolished capital punishment, a progressive step that even modern democracies have not fully embraced. His sense of justice, compassion for the poor, and ability to maintain peace during turbulent times earned him a place among the great rulers of history. Comparing him to figures like Akbar or Ashoka is tempting, but Ranjit Singh was unique in his approach. He did not seek to impose Sikhism as a state religion, nor did he attempt to build a religious or political empire beyond the capacity of his kingdom. Instead, he focused on building a strong, just, and prosperous Punjab.

After all this discussion, it becomes clear that his vision extended beyond military conquests and governance. His emphasis on stability, justice, and prosperity laid the groundwork for the intellectual and cultural growth that would follow. In the next chapter, we will examine the education system in Punjab during Ranjit Singh's era, a period marked by the promotion of learning and the expansion of institutions that fostered knowledge and enlightenment throughout the region. Ranjit Singh's reign, while primarily focused on military and administrative strength, also paved the way for a

flourishing of education and culture that would leave a lasting impact on the people of Punjab.

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Chapter 3:

Education System in Punjab During the Reign of Ranjit Singh

Introduction

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839), Punjab underwent significant changes in many areas, including governance, military organization, and cultural life. One often overlooked aspect of his reign, however, is the state of education during this period. While Ranjit Singh is primarily remembered for his military conquests and the unification of Punjab under Sikh rule, his time as a ruler also allowed traditional education systems to thrive.

At that time, education in Punjab was largely informal, driven by religious and local institutions. Schools were found in mosques, temples, and *gurdwaras*, where religious leaders served as teachers. These schools focused on imparting religious and moral teachings, and their influence on the social order was immense. Educational institutions in Punjab were supported by local patrons, including wealthy individuals and religious organizations, as they believed that supporting education was both a moral obligation and a means of gaining spiritual merit.

In this traditional setting, religious education was at the forefront. Depending on their faith, students were taught by Maulvis (Muslim scholars), Pandits (Hindu scholars), or Sikh *Gurus*, learning the holy texts of their respective religions. However, education extended beyond religious texts; subjects such as Persian, the administrative language of the time, and basic arithmetic were also taught. Persian was critical, as it was the official language of governance and commerce in Punjab and much of northern India. Therefore, proficiency in Persian provided access to social mobility and political influence, making it an essential part of secular education.

Sikhism, the dominant faith during Ranjit Singh's reign, placed a special emphasis on learning. The Sikh Gurus, particularly Guru Nanak, encouraged literacy and intellectual growth as key virtues. Education in

the Sikh tradition involved not only religious instruction but also learning the Gurmukhi script, which Guru Angad developed to document Sikh teachings. The widespread use of Gurmukhi in the region became a symbol of Sikh identity, closely tied to the religious and cultural life of the Sikh community.

Despite the prominence of Gurmukhi within the Sikh community, Persian remained the *lingua franca* for most administrative and official purposes. As such, students of all faiths—Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs—learned Persian to improve their chances of securing employment in government offices or trade. While religious institutions were the backbone of education, secular schools also taught subjects such as astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy. However, these schools were fewer in number and catered mainly to the elite.

Ranjit Singh himself was known to be illiterate, yet he was a patron of education. He recognized the importance of education and ensured that various educational institutions were supported during his reign. However, his approach to teaching was indirect; he did not impose any formal educational policy or centralized system. Instead, he allowed local communities to manage their academic institutions. This decentralized system flourished under state and private patronage, particularly through the donations and support of the wealthy.

Following the annexation of Punjab in 1849, the British sought to replace traditional systems of learning with Western-style education, which prioritized English and modern subjects such as mathematics and science. This shift not only disrupted the religiously driven educational system but also signaled the decline of Persian and the traditional schools attached to religious institutions. The educational reforms introduced by the British fundamentally altered the purpose of education in Punjab, moving it from a tool of moral and spiritual development to a mechanism for producing a class of administrators loyal to the colonial state.

This chapter explores the evolution of indigenous education in the subcontinent, with a particular focus on Punjab during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It begins by providing historical context and tracing the roots of traditional education systems that existed before the influence of colonialism. The chapter then examines the unique features of the education system in Punjab under Ranjit Singh. Various types of educational institutions, including Gurmukhi, Sanskrit, Persian, and commercial schools, are discussed. The state of female education during this period is also examined, revealing how women's access to learning, although limited, was shaped by religious and societal norms. Finally, the

chapter looks at the impact of British annexation on the educational system of Punjab, which marked a shift from indigenous systems to colonial structures. This analysis provides a comprehensive view of how education in Punjab evolved during this transformative period.

Historical Background of Indigenous Education in the Subcontinent

The educational heritage of the subcontinent is closely tied to its religious and cultural history. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Sikhism influence it. Besides promoting religious practice, these traditions helped build an educational system that reflected the social structures and beliefs of the region. Education in the subcontinent was not just about acquiring knowledge, but also about fostering moral development, promoting social harmony, and cultivating spiritual understanding. This system was based on centuries of tradition.

In early Hindu society, education was primarily the responsibility of the Brahmins, who occupied a high position in the caste hierarchy. While the Kshatriyas were focused on governance and warfare, legislative and educational duties were assigned to the Brahmins. Their lives were divided into four stages: studentship, teaching the Vedas, asceticism, and meditation. This was a strict and obligatory framework that was accompanied by a rigorous moral and ceremonial code.

The Brahmins established themselves as the intellectual leaders, and education became a tool to secure their dominance. Education was deliberately made neither too cheap nor too easily accessible to maintain the exclusivity of sacred knowledge. While Shudras (the lowest caste) were excluded from religious instruction, they were sometimes allowed to receive secular education if they approached it with humility and respect. Brahmins occasionally expanded their circle of disciples beyond their caste and allowed individuals from any caste to elevate themselves spiritually through education and virtuous living.

The intellectual monopoly of the Brahmins faced challenges from religious reform movements led by figures such as the Buddha and Guru Nanak. These movements aimed to promote equality across all social classes and make education more accessible to the general public. A key aspect of their reforms was the translation of sacred Sanskrit texts into vernacular languages, which allowed ordinary people to access religious and moral teachings. For instance, the Sikhs translated many works into dialects that combined Punjabi and Hindi. This expanded the reach of

previously exclusive knowledge. These efforts aimed to break the Brahmin-dominated barriers to learning.

Education also served as a path to social mobility. People who wanted to improve their social status pursued education in the languages of the ruling powers—Persian during earlier periods and English under British rule. By mastering these languages, they secured positions in government and gained political influence and social prestige over higher castes. Educational qualifications became a valued asset. It enhanced social status and sometimes even affected marriage prospects. Education allowed people to rise in stature, both politically and socially. This reinforced the idea that knowledge could provide a means to transcend traditional caste boundaries.

Community efforts supported the indigenous educational system. Members of various castes contributed to the endowment of Sanskrit learning, primarily through grants of land. These endowments were given independently or in association with temples to sustain educational institutions. In many cases, families would dedicate their property to temples or schools to prevent the fragmentation of ancestral assets. The eldest son was often appointed the hereditary custodian of these assets to ensure continuity in the family's support of education. Similarly, village communities allocated portions of communal land to priests and teachers to recognize their essential roles in society.

Indigenous education was based on personal relationships between teachers and students. This connection created respect and affection. Most of the time, schools were located in the homes of generous patrons, temples, or communal spaces such as village halls. Teachers, especially those in religious institutions, were typically freed from financial concerns, which allowed them to focus entirely on educating their students. It was common for Brahmin teachers to inform members of their caste without charge, sometimes even providing for the basic needs of their students.

Instructional methods in indigenous schools were both practical and idealistic. Teachers paid close attention to discipline and respect. They enforced dress codes, schedules, and forms of address to cultivate the right environment for learning. The instruction was designed to support the moral and mental development of students, taking into account their societal roles and responsibilities.

Education was not just an intellectual pursuit but was deeply connected with moral and spiritual growth. Sacred texts from Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam stressed the importance of learning as a transformative tool for

personal and societal development. For instance, Islamic teachings emphasized the importance of knowledge. The Quran states, "The learned and the ignorant are never equal in rank" (Surah 39:9). A well-known Hadith echoes this sentiment, saying, "One hour's teaching and learning is more righteous than a whole night's prayer."

In Hinduism, the *Hitopadesa* declares, "Knowledge is the best among all things, for it can neither be lost, nor sold, nor destroyed." Similarly, the *Niti Mala* states, "Knowledge gives humility; from humility one obtains ability, from ability wealth, from wealth virtue, and virtue happiness." The *Manu Smriti* outlined a structured approach to education: ""Those who have read books are superior to the illiterate; those who have committed to memory what they have read are superior to mere readers; those who understand the meaning are superior to those who merely memorize; and those who follow the precepts are superior to those who merely know them"".

In Sikhism, education was also viewed as a spiritual journey. The *Adi Granth* states, "After completing his education, he feels his interest to be in doing good to others"". Another passage explains, "As he studies deeply, so shall he find precisely what truth is, and shall thereafter meditate and pray to the true God"". These teachings stress that education is not only a personal duty but also a religious obligation that benefits society.

The educational heritage of the subcontinent, rooted in the sacred teachings of various religions, fostered a deep respect for learning across all levels of society. This respect extended even to the humblest occupations, inspiring individuals like Kabir, a weaver, and Ravidas, a leather worker, to become revered figures.

Indigenous education in the subcontinent emphasized individualized instruction, group recitations, and personal study. These methods encouraged independent thought and reflection, promoting a deeper understanding of the material. As students advanced, they often traveled to learn from different scholars, creating a collaborative and progressive academic environment. The educational system in the subcontinent offered a holistic approach that prepared individuals not just for practical life but also for spiritual enlightenment and moral development.

The education system in Punjab under Ranjit Singh

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839), education in Punjab flourished under the progressive and inclusive governance of Ranjit Singh. He actively supported education across different communities. His active support created a fertile environment for both religious and secular learning. Education during this era was accessible to Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims alike. This fosters a diverse intellectual environment that encourages growth and scholarship across multiple disciplines.

The commitment of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to education was evident through his generous patronage, particularly in the form of *jagirs* (land endowments) to schools and scholars. These land grants provided the financial resources necessary for educational institutions to operate independently, allowing them to offer free education to students. This patronage ensured that schools flourished, and scholars could focus on teaching without financial concerns. In return, many teachers, often religious figures such as *granthis*, *pandits*, and *maulvis*, viewed education as a spiritual and social duty, imparting knowledge with a sense of devotion. The relationship between teacher and student during this period was one of mutual respect, and many students went on to become scholars themselves. This created a perpetual cycle of learning.

The Maharaja's patronage extended beyond just financial support. He was known to respect and honor scholars by inviting them to his court and seeking their counsel on various matters. This royal recognition of intellectuals elevated the status of teachers and scholars, rendering education a highly esteemed profession in the region. The atmosphere of respect for knowledge and learning created a thriving intellectual culture where scholars felt valued and supported.

The educational framework under Ranjit Singh was decentralized, with numerous institutions operating independently under the guidance of learned scholars and religious figures. In Sikh communities, education in Gurmukhi was widespread, even among carpenters and artisans. This emphasis on literacy in Gurmukhi enabled the working class to participate more fully in religious and cultural life, as literacy was a crucial component of Sikh identity and practice. Despite the decentralized nature of education, Ranjit Singh's government maintained a level of oversight. He ensured that scholars and institutions received the necessary support to continue their work.

In the Sikh community, the widespread use of the Gurmukhi script played a crucial role in promoting literacy and education. Gurmukhi schools were prominent, teaching religious texts, such as the *Granth Sahib*, alongside

secular subjects like arithmetic, astronomy, and poetry. Examples include Bhai Juna Singh's school in Amritsar, which provided free education and food, making learning accessible to both the elite and the working class. Bhai Lakhun Singh's institution focused on religious education, while Bhai Ram Singh's school was renowned for its advanced curriculum. These institutions attracted students from distant regions to study literature, ethics, and astronomy. These schools exemplified Ranjit Singh's vision to make education accessible to all, regardless of social standing. In higher education, Sikh centers of learning, such as the Akal Bunga in Amritsar and Damdama Sahib, played a significant role in imparting advanced knowledge. Damdama Sahib was known as the "rural university of the Sikhs," where subjects like philosophy, astrology, and religious scriptures were taught. These institutions helped ensure that students were well-rounded and capable of contributing to both the intellectual and administrative needs of the state.

In addition to Gurmukhi schools, Persian and Arabic institutions thrived under Ranjit Singh's rule, especially in Muslim communities. Persian was the administrative language of the kingdom, and its study was widespread among both Muslims and Hindus who sought practical knowledge for careers in administration and diplomacy. The schools of Mian Sahib in Batala and Maulvi Sheikh Ahmed in Sialkot became renowned centers of learning, offering instruction in literature, poetry, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. These institutions were highly respected and attracted students from as far as Iran and Khorasan. Mian Faiz's school in Gujranwala, for example, was celebrated for its exceptional Persian instruction, supported by a *muafi* (stipend) that allowed it to provide education free of charge. Khwaja Suleman's institution in Saingrosa, located in the Dera Ghazi Khan District, attracted students from regions such as Khorasan and Hindustan. Mian Abdul Hakim's school in the Gujranwala District, known as Miran-Wali, was highly respected for its Persian instruction and provided sustenance to students.

Education among Muslims was not confined to religious instruction. Persian institutions were well-integrated into the broader intellectual landscape of Punjab, with scholars teaching a wide range of subjects, including logic, mechanics, and philosophy. A school run by Bara Mian in Lahore, known for its high-level education, functioned almost like a college. Khalifa Sahib's school at Moran's Mosque attracted students from Persia and Arabia. These schools, generously funded during Ranjit Singh's reign, offered an inclusive and advanced curriculum that contributed to the intellectual life of Punjab.

Hindu educational institutions, such as *pathshalas*, were also active during this period, teaching Sanskrit and other classical subjects. These schools were led by respected scholars who provided education in both religious texts and secular disciplines, such as grammar and mathematics. Notable Hindu scholars included Pandit Bullo Mai from Kapurthala, who taught astronomy and geography. The Maharaja's patronage ensured that these schools could continue to thrive, promoting intellectual diversity across religious and cultural lines.

Ranjit Singh's approach to education was shaped by his respect for all religions and his desire to elevate the intellectual fabric of his kingdom. He ensured that educational grants and stipends were distributed fairly across Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim communities, so that an environment where scholars of different backgrounds could flourish. This inclusive attitude extended to the curriculum, with schools offering instruction in multiple languages—Gurmukhi, Persian, Sanskrit, and Arabic—allowing students to engage with a wide range of scholarly traditions.

The Udasis, a sect of ascetic Sikhs tracing their lineage to Baba Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's son, were instrumental in preserving and promoting education during Ranjit Singh's reign. The Udasis managed a vast network of educational institutions, including *deras*, *akharas*, and *gurdwaras*. These centers offered religious education alongside secular subjects, such as arithmetic and basic sciences. Udasi institutions received significant financial support from the state in the form of *dharmarths*—revenue-free land grants—which allowed them to provide free education. By the mid-19th century, the Udasis managed around 250 centers of learning, many of which were attached to significant religious sites associated with the Sikh Gurus. Notable Udasi institutions included the Akhara Brahmbuta of Mahant Santokh Das in Amritsar, as well as the *dharmasalas* at Dera Baba Nanak, Bhai Pheroo, and Phuman Shah.

Medical education also thrived during Ranjit Singh's reign. Practitioners of *Yunani* and Ayurvedic medicine made significant contributions to medical knowledge. Notable figures included Hakim Abdul Aziz of Kot Udho, whose works, *Aksir Azim* and *Zamurrad Akhzar*, were widely regarded in *Yunani* medicine. Similarly, Ayurvedic practitioners such as Pandit Madhusudan and Pandit Bhairav Nath were celebrated for their knowledge and practice. These medical experts contributed to Punjab's healthcare system and passed their knowledge on to apprentices.

In Sikh aristocratic families, such as the Sindhanvalias, private tutors provided high-level education in subjects like Arabic, Persian, and the

sciences. Sirdars such as Lehna Singh Majithia, known for his mastery of mathematics and engineering, translated works like Euclid's geometry from Arabic into Punjabi. He also invented new technologies, including a leather gun, which earned him recognition from his European contemporaries. These achievements reflect the advanced level of education available to the Sikh elite during this period.

Science and literature also thrived under the Maharaja's rule, with scholars from diverse religious backgrounds making significant contributions. Karam Singh Nihang was renowned for his proficiency in languages such as Arabic and Sanskrit. Akhund Ahmad Shah was invited to the Maharaja's court from the north-west frontier. He taught mathematics and astronomy. Poets like Hashim Shah were highly regarded. His works in Arabic and Persian earned him land grants from the Maharaja. Ranjit Singh also promoted Gurmukhi literature and encouraged scholars like Baba Amir Das and Bhai Budh Singh to translate classical texts into Gurmukhi, making learning more accessible to the people. Bhai Bishan Singh was offered a *jagir* for his scholarly services, but he refused it. Bhai Santokh Singh's *Suraj Parkash* is becoming a significant work of Sikh literature. This period was characterized by a rich intellectual environment, where scholars were highly regarded and education was encouraged for all communities.

The Maharaja's wife, Moran Sarkar, played an active role in promoting education and established two *madrastas* in Lahore—one attached to her mansion in Papad Mandi and the other near the shrine of the Sufi saint Madho Lal Hussain. These *madrastas* catered to both boys and girls.

Despite the vibrant educational environment during Ranjit Singh's reign, the British annexation of Punjab in 1849 led to a decline in the quality of academic institutions. The Punjab Administration Report for 1849-51 indicated that there were 3,372 indigenous schools in Punjab, serving hundreds of thousands of students. In the most advanced areas, there was one school for every 1,141 inhabitants. However, under British administration, the ratio declined to one school for every 9,028 inhabitants, indicating a decrease in access to education after the British resumed rent-free lands and educational grants.

The decline was not limited to the number of schools but also affected the quality and diversity of education. The resumption of financial support and *jagirs* under the British led to the closure of many institutions, particularly those that had thrived under Ranjit Singh's patronage. This decline had a lasting impact on the intellectual and cultural life of Punjab.

Types of educational institutions in Punjab during Ranjit Singh's rule

Indigenous education in Punjab evolved in tandem with the region's religious, cultural, and social changes. Vernacular education played a crucial role in shaping the lives of the masses. During Ranjit Singh's rule, the Punjab region boasted a rich and diverse educational system that catered to various communities and social needs. Each type of school served a specific purpose. Gurmukhi schools promoted literacy and spiritual education among Sikhs while Sanskrit Pathshalas preserved Hindu teachings. Commercial communities relied on Mahajani and Landā schools for business education, while Persian and Arabic schools offered training for administrative and religious roles. Together, these schools played a crucial role in preserving the cultural and intellectual heritage of Punjab.

1. The Gurmukhi Schools

Sikhism emerged as a challenge to the rigid caste system of Hinduism. Along with rectifying other social ills, it sought to democratize knowledge. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, stressed that education should be accessible to everyone, not just the privileged few. By promoting the Gurmukhi script, Sikh leaders sought to break the Brahminical monopoly on learning and make knowledge accessible to ordinary people. Sacred texts like the *Granth Sahib* were written in Gurmukhi, which allowed Sikhs to access spiritual and intellectual knowledge in their language. This move removed the barriers posed by elite languages such as Sanskrit and Persian. It also reinforced the idea that education was a communal asset open to all who sought it.

In Gurmukhi schools, education typically began when children were around five or six years old, with both boys and girls included. It shows the progressive stance of Sikh society on gender equality. Students began by learning to form letters and words, using simple materials such as soot-covered wooden slates known as *pati*. Pens made from reeds, which were readily available in Punjab, made learning tools accessible to children from all backgrounds. This emphasis on using practical materials ensured that education was not limited to the wealthy.

The foundation of Gurmukhi education was moral and religious instruction. Early on, students were introduced to proverbs and moral sayings that highlighted core values such as honesty, truthfulness, and humility. For example, the typical lesson "*Juth mat bolna*" (do not lie)

stressed the importance of integrity. As students progressed, they learned to read and understand sacred Sikh texts, including the *Rehras* and *Sidh Gosht*, which taught lessons on humility and spiritual wisdom. Daily readings or recitations from the *Granth Sahib* were an integral part of their routine, encouraging spiritual growth and discipline.

In addition to religious education, Gurmukhi schools also taught practical skills that could be applied to everyday life. Subjects such as arithmetic, history, and prosody were part of the curriculum. Advanced students could study logic, Vedanta, and the teachings of Patanjali, often adapted from Sanskrit into Gurmukhi. Those who mastered these subjects could become *Gyani*, or scholars, who were capable of explaining complex religious and philosophical ideas to the community. Family involvement was another key aspect of Gurmukhi education. Parents, particularly those who were literate in Gurmukhi, reinforced lessons at home and ensured that education was not confined to the classroom. This connection between home and school fostered a deeper understanding of Sikh culture and religious practices.

Gurmukhi education emphasized both intellectual and physical development. Alongside academic learning, physical education was prioritized, with practical skills such as horse riding and military training included in the curriculum. The teachings of the *Granth Sahib* stressed that true scholarship was measured by one's ability to live according to spiritual principles, rather than by social status or birth.

Despite its strengths, Gurmukhi education faced challenges during the British colonial era. The introduction of English and Urdu-based education systems, combined with pressures to replace Gurmukhi with Hindi or Nagri scripts, weakened the traditional schools. However, there remained strong support for Gurmukhi education within the Sikh community. Religious institutions, such as *Dharmshalas*, continued to serve as centers of learning. Community leaders, such as *Numberdars* and *patwaris*, also played a role in preserving Gurmukhi education and ensured that its legacy endured.

1. The Mahajani and Landā schools (*Chatshalas*)

The Mahajani and Landā schools in Punjab were indigenous institutions that educated children from commercial and trading backgrounds. These schools focused on practical skills essential for business, such as bookkeeping and mental arithmetic, and their instructional methods were tailored to the needs of the trading community. The Mahajani and Landā systems were particularly important for merchants and traders who needed

to keep accurate records of transactions and manage business operations efficiently.

The Mahajani and Landā systems of writing were prevalent in the commercial life of Punjab and spread to trading communities across India. The Landā script, also known as "Mundā" or "tail-less," was a practical shorthand used for business purposes. While some viewed Landā as a mere trade cipher, it was, in fact, a sophisticated system that allowed for elementary education in commercial skills. Children attending these schools learned how to manage accounts and conduct trade-related calculations, skills that were vital for the smooth functioning of businesses. These schools provided a form of education that was practical and directly applicable to the everyday lives of their students.

The curriculum in these schools placed a strong emphasis on mental arithmetic. Students were taught multiplication tables, including advanced methods like "*bara gyāra*" (multiplication tables from 11 to 30) and fractional multiplications. This training was essential for children who would later manage grain market fluctuations and other trade-related tasks. What stood out in these schools was the students' ability to perform complex calculations mentally and orally, faster than those educated in more formal systems, who relied on written materials or tools.

Teachers, known as *Padahs*, taught in the Mahajani and Landā schools. Many of these educators came from hereditary lines, belonging to the Brahmin, Kayasth, or even Muslim communities. These teachers provided flexible instruction, traveling from town to town, teaching bookkeeping, ciphering, and arithmetic. This adaptability meant that schools operated according to the rhythms of rural life, opening when agricultural work slowed and closing when children were needed in the fields.

The relationship between teachers and students in these schools was highly personal. *Padahs* would visit the homes of students who were absent or send senior students to fetch them, ensuring regular attendance. This close connection extended beyond the classroom. Parents would trust the *Padah* to discipline their children both in school and at home. The collaboration between teachers, students, and families created a strong educational environment where learning was seen as both practical and moral.

Teachers were also compensated in unique ways. In addition to receiving fees, *Padahs* were given gifts of food and other necessities during religious festivals and significant occasions. This practice reflected the respect and social standing that these teachers enjoyed. Their success was tied to the

future achievements of their students in the business world, which further increased their value within the community.

A distinctive feature of the Mahajani and Landā schools was their focus on specific trade-related knowledge. The Landā script was not only used for writing but also for preserving secret trade practices and information. The ability to keep business transactions confidential made the script valuable for traders and merchants. Students learned how to manage trade efficiently, ensuring the prosperity of their family businesses.

1. Persian schools (*Maktabas*)

Persian schools in Punjab were a cornerstone of the educational and intellectual life in Punjab during the pre-British era. These schools played a significant role in shaping the minds of students, not just through linguistic and literary education but also by instilling moral values and social manners. Persian, being the language of administration, culture, and scholarship, held a prestigious position in Punjab, similar to the role French played in Europe as the language of diplomacy. As a result, Persian was highly sought after and attracted students from diverse backgrounds, including Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs.

The structure of education in Persian schools was systematic. It began with teaching students the fundamentals of reading and writing. Children were first introduced to the Persian alphabet, which they learned to read, write, and pronounce correctly. From the outset, writing was given special importance, with a focus on mastering penmanship. Students were taught to form Persian characters according to precise artistic rules, which emphasized proportions and the aesthetic beauty of the script. This skill in calligraphy was particularly valued, as it was necessary for clerical roles in courts and offices where well-written documents were highly prized.

Instruction in Persian schools was mainly imparted with the help of classical texts. Early on, students were introduced to fundamental moral and ethical teachings through works like the *Pandnama* by Saadi, which conveyed lessons about virtues such as honesty and humility, and warned against vices like greed and deceit. These texts, written in verse, were easy to memorize and provided students with a strong moral foundation. As students progressed, they moved on to more advanced literary works, such as *Gulistan* and *Bostan* by Saadi, which combined prose and poetry. These texts taught not only language but also life lessons about human behavior, ethics, and governance. The reading of these texts was initially done without translation. This was intended to allow students to familiarize themselves with the language before fully understanding the content's meaning.

Another essential element of Persian education was the study of practical skills, particularly writing. Students were trained in various forms of writing, including drafting letters, petitions, and official documents. This valuable application of writing skills was essential for students aiming for administrative roles. Letter writing, in particular, was a critical skill, as the ability to communicate clearly and effectively in Persian was necessary for any form of government service. As students advanced, they were also encouraged to compose verses and develop their writing styles, which their teachers critiqued.

In addition to these classical texts and practical skills, Persian schools incorporated other important texts into their curriculum. One of the foundational texts was the *Khalīq Bārī*, a trilingual vocabulary list that introduced students to Persian, Arabic, and Hindi words. This book, attributed to the poet Amir Khusro, helped students build a strong vocabulary in multiple languages and served as a key tool in their linguistic development. The *Khalīq Bārī* was taught in stages, first without translation and later with explanations, helping students deepen their understanding of both the language and its meaning.

Persian schools also placed a strong emphasis on discipline and moral instruction. The relationship between teachers and students was one of mutual respect. Teachers were referred to as *Mianji* or *Maulvi Sahib*. They acted as both educators and moral guides. Teachers not only provided academic instruction but also modeled proper behavior and social etiquette for their students. This comprehensive approach to education ensured that students not only learned facts and figures but were also shaped into well-rounded individuals with a strong sense of morality and social responsibility. The daily schedule in Persian schools was rigorous. Lessons started early in the morning and continued late into the evening. Students engaged in both rote memorization and practical exercises.

Persian schools were not only centers of learning for Muslims but also attracted a significant number of Hindu and Sikh students. These students enrolled in Persian schools to acquire the skills necessary for government service, as Persian was the language of administration under both the Mughals and the Sikh rulers. Hindu and Sikh students were welcomed into these schools, and there was no pressure to convert to Islam. Teachers respected the religious beliefs of their students and ensured that the education provided was inclusive, focusing on the practical and intellectual benefits of learning the Persian language.

Despite their rigorous curriculum, Persian schools were also places where students learned the social graces required for success in public life. In

wealthier families, students were often assigned an *Ataliq*, a tutor responsible for teaching them how to behave in society. The *Ataliq* ensured that students learned the proper ways to address superiors, interact with their peers, and conduct themselves in social settings. This focus on manners and social behavior was a crucial aspect of Persian education, as it prepared students not only for academic success but also for their roles in society.

Quran schools and Arabic schools (Madrassas)

In Punjab, Quran schools and Arabic schools were vital institutions within the classical indigenous education system. These schools served the religious, intellectual, and moral needs of the Muslim population. These schools were integrated into the daily lives of communities. They provided foundational education in the Quran and Arabic language, which were essential for religious practice and scholarship.

Quran schools, often attached to mosques, were the first point of formal education for Muslim children. Education typically began with a special initiation ceremony when the child was around four years old. This ceremony marked the start of the child's journey into religious learning and was a significant cultural and spiritual event, attended by family and community members. The child would begin with the Arabic alphabet and short, easy-to-memorize verses from the Quran, such as those from the 96th Sura, the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This initial exposure to the Quranic text was intended to impress upon the child the sacred nature of their studies.

The primary focus of Quran schools was on teaching the recitation of the Quran. Students were trained to read the Quran with proper pronunciation, known as *tajweed*, which was a vital part of their religious education. Memorization played a central role in this process, with students committing large portions of the Quran to memory. This emphasis on memorization was seen as a means to develop not only religious knowledge but also intellectual discipline. It sharpened the student's ability to retain and recall information. In some larger Quran schools, students aimed to become Hafiz, those who memorized the entire Quran. This accomplishment was highly revered and brought great respect within the community.

Teachers in Quran schools, known as *Qari Sahib*, *Moulvi Sahib*, or *Maulana*, were responsible for guiding students through the recitation and understanding of the Quran. While many teachers were not formally trained in advanced Arabic grammar or exegesis, they were proficient in guiding students through the correct recitation and basic understanding of

Quranic text. Their role extended beyond instruction; they performed other religious duties such as leading prayers and officiating at weddings and funerals.

Students in Quran schools were taught in a disciplined environment. Older students assisted in managing younger ones, which created a system of mutual responsibility and learning. The curriculum also included other religious texts in vernacular languages, such as Urdu and Persian. These texts, such as *Kanz-ul-Musalli* and *Rah-i-Nijat*, provided instruction on prayers and Islamic moral teachings. Stories of the prophets, contained in books like *Qissas-ul-Anbia*, introduced students to the lives and virtues of key Islamic figures. This created a deeper understanding of Islamic history and moral lessons.

Arabic schools, on the other hand, provided more advanced education and were focused not only on religious instruction but also on other intellectual pursuits. Arabic was the language of Islamic scholarship and science, and the study of Arabic grammar and literature was essential for anyone aspiring to become a scholar, religious leader, or jurist. The curriculum in Arabic schools was comprehensive, beginning with the basics of Arabic grammar, known as *Sarf* (morphology) and *Nahw* (syntax). Texts like *Mizan-us-Sarf* and *Nahw Mir* were standard, which provided students with a solid foundation in the mechanics of the language.

Once students had mastered the fundamentals of Arabic grammar, they progressed to more advanced studies in Arabic literature, philosophy, law, and science. Classical texts, both religious and secular, were part of the curriculum. Works by famous Islamic scholars and philosophers, such as Avicenna (Ibn Sina), were studied, particularly in fields like medicine and astronomy. These subjects were considered critical to a well-rounded education, with Arabic schools serving as centers for the study of both the sciences and the humanities.

Arabic schools were also a place where students learned the religious law (*Fiqh*) and theology necessary for becoming *Maulvis* or Islamic scholars. The study of Arabic was essential for understanding the Quran, Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW), and other foundational Islamic texts. Thus, these schools played a crucial role in training future religious leaders and ensuring that Islamic knowledge was accurately passed down through the generations.

In addition to grammar and religious texts, Arabic schools integrated other subjects such as history, geography, and arithmetic, offering a more comprehensive education than Quran schools. The focus on Arabic as a

language of both science and religion meant that students were not only learning to read religious texts but were also exposed to a broad spectrum of knowledge that included medicine, logic, and philosophy. This multidisciplinary approach was a hallmark of classical Islamic education.

Teaching in both Quranic and Arabic schools was typically conducted in small groups, often in the teacher's home or within the mosque. The environment was informal, but structured around a deep respect for the teacher. Discipline was maintained through traditional methods, and students were expected to be attentive and respectful of their teachers. The teacher-student relationship was one of reverence, and teachers were highly respected figures in the community. While formal tuition fees were not always required, families often compensated the teacher with gifts or small tokens of gratitude, particularly during religious festivals or upon completing the Quran.

These schools not only educated students in religious knowledge but also shaped their moral character and social behavior. The teachers were seen as moral guides who instilled virtues such as humility, piety, and respect for older people. The completion of Quranic education was celebrated by a community celebration, which symbolized the importance of religious education in the social and spiritual life of the Muslim community.

1. Sanskrit Schools (*Pathshalas*)

Sanskrit schools in Punjab played an essential role in the education of Hindu disciples. These schools were primarily connected to religious instruction and focused on teaching Sanskrit, the classical language of Hinduism. The primary objective of these schools was to preserve and transmit religious, philosophical, and literary knowledge through the study of sacred texts, rituals, and other traditional subjects.

Sanskrit schools in Punjab were mainly small and often operated out of the homes of teachers, known as *Pandits*. These teachers were typically Brahmins, a caste revered as the custodians of sacred knowledge. The schools were not formal institutions in the modern sense; instead, they were informal centers of learning where students of different ages and levels of understanding would come to study under a teacher. There was no fixed curriculum or examination system. Instead, education was personalized, and students progressed at their own pace depending on their abilities and the subjects they chose.

The schools operated in a highly traditional manner. Education was primarily oral, relying on rote memorization and the recitation of texts. The role of the teacher was not just to impart knowledge, but also to

cultivate a respect for learning and a sense of religious duty toward education.

The curriculum in these Sanskrit schools covered a wide range of subjects. Students typically begin their education by learning the Sanskrit alphabet and mastering basic reading and writing skills. After mastering the basics, they would progress to more complex subjects. One of the first and most important subjects taught in these schools was grammar, utilizing comprehensive texts such as the *Kaumudi* or *Paniniya Vyakarana*, the latter being a foundational text for understanding classical Sanskrit grammar. Advanced students might study *Siddhanta Kaumudi* and *Manorama*, both critical texts in the field of Sanskrit grammar. Students would study classical Sanskrit poetry and literature, including famous works like *Raghuvamsa* by Kalidasa, *Meghaduta*, and other epics. These texts were not just literary works but also tools for reinforcing grammar and teaching moral and ethical lessons.

Another core area of study was Indian philosophy, particularly the *Vedanta* system, which focuses on metaphysics and the nature of reality. Students also studied logic (*Nyaya*) and rhetoric, subjects that helped them engage in intellectual debates and develop critical thinking skills. A significant portion of the curriculum focused on the study of religious scriptures, including the *Puranas* and *Itihasas* (historical epics), as well as other sacred texts that form the basis of Hindu religious education. These texts were essential for students preparing to become priests or religious scholars. Many schools also offered instruction in astrology and astronomy. Texts like *Jyotisha* were commonly studied, helping students understand both the spiritual and practical applications of astrology. Some schools provided instruction in the Vedic system of medicine, focusing on classical medical texts such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, which are foundational works in Ayurveda, the ancient system of Indian medicine.

Learning was primarily oral, with students memorizing vast amounts of text. The teacher would explain the meaning of the texts and their philosophical or grammatical nuances. Students were expected to internalize this knowledge and demonstrate their understanding through recitation and discussions. In some schools, Sanskrit was treated as a living language, and students were encouraged to converse and discuss philosophical ideas in Sanskrit itself. The aim was not just to impart knowledge but also to cultivate a disciplined mind capable of deep reflection and rigorous intellectual debate.

One notable feature of Sanskrit schools was the system of *Shastrartha* (intellectual debates), where students and teachers would engage in formal discussions on various topics related to philosophy, law, or religious doctrine. These debates were an essential part of the learning process, helping students sharpen their reasoning and analytical skills. As students advanced in their studies, they would seek specialized instruction from different Pandits, each of whom might be an expert in a particular field, such as grammar, logic, or philosophy. It was common for a student to study one subject under one Pandit and then move to another teacher for further instruction in a different field.

Some of the most learned Pandits in Punjab, such as Pandit Kaka Ram of Ludhiana and Pandit Ram Lal of Amritsar, were known to teach a wide range of subjects, including all the major *Shastras* (scriptural texts) of Hinduism. However, it was rare for a single teacher to cover all subjects at a single school. Instead, students would travel to learn from different Pandits, each specializing in a particular discipline.

The Pandits who ran these schools were typically Brahmins and saw their work as a religious duty. Many of them taught for free or for very little compensation, relying on the support of the community or gifts from students' families. These gifts were given during festivals or milestones in students' education, such as on completion of primary school.

Despite the reverence for Pandits and their essential role in society, many faced financial difficulties. The British annexation of Punjab and the resumption of rent-free lands that had previously supported these schools worsened their financial situation. In some cases, Pandits maintained their schools through personal sacrifices, relying on donations from wealthy patrons or religious endowments. However, these resources were limited, and many Pandits struggled to continue their teaching activities.

Female education in Punjab under Ranjit Singh's rule

During the time of Ranjit Singh, women's education in Punjab was characterized by a more traditional and informal structure. Although not as widely formalized as men's education, female literacy and learning were prevalent among higher social classes and specific communities. The education of women was home-based, with the primary aim of providing religious and moral instruction.

In many families, particularly among the higher castes of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, girls were taught basic literacy and religious knowledge by their mothers, fathers, or sometimes even by brothers. The emphasis was on religious education, which was seen as the most essential preparation for a woman's role in the household. For instance, Muslim girls learned to recite and read the Quran under the instruction of their mothers or other female relatives, such as widows who took it upon themselves to pass on this sacred knowledge. Hindu girls were educated in reading religious texts in the Nagri script, and Sikh girls were expected to learn to read the Granth Sahib.

The education of women was primarily focused on their religious duties and household responsibilities. In Sikh households, women were expected to be able to read the sacred Granth Sahib, a key marker of their spiritual role within the family. Similarly, Muslim girls were taught not only to recite the Quran but also to understand and observe their religious obligations. This religious education encompassed a moral framework that women were expected to uphold and pass on to their children.

The structure of female education was informal and largely dependent on the family resources and commitment to religious teachings. The focus was less on academic subjects and more on preparing women for their roles in domestic and spiritual life. Women from more affluent families, particularly in cities like Lahore, had access to better resources, sometimes even having private tutors or small neighborhood schools led by educated women. In some cases, educated women from these families also took on the role of teachers within their communities, helping to educate other girls in basic literacy and religious texts.

Among the higher classes, especially in Muslim and Sikh families, literacy in Persian and Arabic also held value. Some women from these communities, particularly those from the frontier regions, were known to be proficient in Persian poetry and calligraphy, reflecting a certain level of intellectual engagement that extended beyond mere religious instruction. However, societal norms often dictated that these skills were kept private, especially for respectable women.

Despite the informal nature of education for women, there was an unspoken expectation that they would be literate enough to fulfill their religious duties and manage household affairs. Women were taught practical skills alongside literacy, such as cooking, sewing, and basic accounting, which were necessary for running a household efficiently. These skills were considered just as important as religious instruction, as

they prepared women to manage family life and pass on knowledge to their children.

In Sikh tradition, education was inclusive, with women playing a vital role in the overall educational framework. The Amritsar Gyani Singh Sabha ensured that women had the right to participate in meetings and voice their opinions. This reflects the progressive nature of Sikh society in terms of gender equality. Literacy was not just encouraged but considered essential for all Sikhs, regardless of gender.

Women were expected to be educated in Gurmukhi, and this expectation extended across various social classes. Many Sikh carpenters, both men and women, were proficient in reading and writing in Gurmukhi, illustrating that education was not exclusive to the elite. The ability to read and write was considered a fundamental skill, ensuring that even those from working-class backgrounds had access to education and religious knowledge.

Sikh society also placed great importance on the safety and moral conduct of women, with a strong emphasis on their protection and well-being. A saying from the period of Sikh governance highlights this: "virgins could walk alone by day and night," showing the sense of security and moral integrity that prevailed during this time. This environment of safety and respect further supported women's participation in education, reinforcing their role in both religious and social life.

Interestingly, the Punjab Administration Report for 1849-51 mentioned that female education was found in all parts of Punjab, and educated female students and teachers could be observed among Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims. Although the numbers were not vast, the report considered it encouraging, as such a level of female education was not common in other parts of India at that time. This suggests that Punjab was ahead in promoting literacy for women across different communities and areas.

Impact of annexation on the education system of the Punjab

The annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849 led to a rapid decline in the indigenous education system of the region, which had flourished for centuries. Before British rule, Punjab had a vibrant network of schools that were integral to local communities, providing education in languages such as Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and Gurmukhi. These schools were sustained mainly by grants of rent-free land, which supported teachers and school

operations. However, British policies severely disrupted this system. These policies stripped the indigenous schools of their financial foundations and contributed to their gradual disappearance.

A significant turning point occurred with the British decision to resume control of these rent-free lands. The British colonial administration, to increase revenue and establish a more centralized governance structure, reclaimed much of the land that had previously been granted to schools and religious institutions. This policy, known as the resumption of rent-free lands, had devastating effects on indigenous education. These lands had been a crucial source of income. It allowed schools to operate without charging fees and provided sustenance to teachers, many of whom were religious figures within their communities. Once the British reclaimed these lands, schools lost their financial lifeline, resulting in closures or drastic reductions in their operational capacity.

The British approach to education further compounded the decline of indigenous schools. The colonial government sought to impose a Western-style education system that prioritized subjects like English, arithmetic, and history, while sidelining traditional curricula. This was not just a shift in subject matter but a complete restructuring of how education was delivered. In indigenous schools, learning was often conducted on a one-to-one basis, and the curriculum was deeply tied to religious instruction or practical skills, such as account-keeping, especially in the case of Mahajani schools that served local traders. The new British system introduced standardized classes, modern subjects, and a stricter disciplinary framework, which alienated students and teachers who were accustomed to the more flexible and locally relevant education offered by indigenous schools.

Additionally, the British administration provided limited support to help indigenous schools adapt to these changes. While government-run and missionary schools received financial aid and grants, most indigenous schools were excluded from this support. Even those that tried to modernize by incorporating subjects like arithmetic or history into their curriculum found it challenging to compete with the better-funded government schools. The few indigenous schools that received aid were seen as inferior by the British, and their teachers lacked the formal training required to meet the standards of government inspections and examinations.

Another issue was the lack of formal training and support for teachers in indigenous schools. Many teachers were hereditary, often Brahmins or Mullahs, and their qualifications were typically based on their experience

or religious standing rather than formal education. This was in stark contrast to the British system, where teacher training and qualifications were more systematically organized. Indigenous teachers, who had traditionally commanded respect in their communities, saw their influence and standing erode as the government system sidelined their schools.

The British annexation also brought about significant cultural and political changes that affected indigenous education. Many British officials, unfamiliar with or dismissive of local traditions, viewed indigenous education systems as outdated and irrelevant in the modern world. For instance, the Mahajani script, used in *Pathshalas* for account-keeping, was seen as archaic, and Persian, once the language of administration, lost its prominence as the British replaced it with English and Urdu. The British Educational Department, rather than integrating or improving the indigenous schools, worked to absorb or suppress them, thereby consolidating control over education and reducing the role of local, traditional institutions.

The decline of indigenous schools in Punjab was not just the result of economic policies like the resumption of rent-free lands, but also the cultural and political shifts imposed by British rule. The new education system, while offering some benefits in terms of modernization, failed to accommodate the local needs, traditions, and structures that had sustained education in Punjab for centuries. The exclusion of indigenous schools from government aid, the undermining of traditional curricula, and the lack of support for local teachers all contributed to the gradual erosion of these schools. Without a more inclusive and flexible approach that respected local educational practices, the British system effectively marginalized and replaced a once-thriving network of indigenous schools, leaving many communities in rural Punjab without access to education tailored to their needs and traditions.

Conclusion

The education system in Punjab during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh offers lessons in indigenous learning, inclusivity, and the preservation of cultural identity through education. This chapter has explored the varied and decentralized educational practices that were prevalent under his rule. The chapter highlighted the close relationship between education, religion, and community. The key outcomes of this era include the importance of maintaining and nurturing local traditions, languages, and personalized systems of learning, which allowed education to be both accessible and relevant to the people of Punjab.

One of the most significant takeaways from the education system under Ranjit Singh is the value placed on indigenous education. These schools—whether based in gurdwaras, mosques, or temples—were integral to the communities they served. They were not just places of learning but also centers of cultural preservation and moral instruction. The schools offered a broad range of subjects that went beyond religious education, including Persian, arithmetic, astronomy, and philosophy, ensuring that students were equipped with both spiritual and practical knowledge. This system demonstrates how indigenous education, grounded in local customs and languages, can be highly effective in promoting intellectual and moral growth.

Ranjit Singh's approach to education highlights the benefits of a personalized learning system. Unlike the centralized, standardized models introduced by the British later on, the educational framework under Ranjit Singh allowed for flexibility. Schools operated independently and adapted their teaching to the needs and traditions of their communities. Teachers had close, personal relationships with their students, guiding them in both academic and moral matters. This personalization of education meant that students were not just recipients of knowledge but active participants in their intellectual and spiritual development. The connection between teacher and student fostered mutual respect and responsibility, ensuring a strong foundation for learning.

Inclusivity in education was another hallmark of Ranjit Singh's era. His reign established an environment where education was accessible to people of diverse faiths and social backgrounds. Schools were not restricted to any single religious group; Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim communities all had access to education. In particular, the role of female education, though informal, cannot be overlooked. While societal norms limited formal schooling for women, many girls were taught basic literacy and religious knowledge at home, especially within wealthier families. In Sikh communities, both boys and girls were educated in Gurmukhi to show a progressive stance on gender equality. This inclusivity ensured that education remained a communal asset rather than an elite privilege.

A critical factor contributing to the success of education during Ranjit Singh's rule was the respect for local traditions. Schools were strongly connected to the religious and cultural practices of their communities. Whether it was the Gurmukhi script for Sikhs, Persian for Muslims and Hindus aspiring to administrative roles, or Sanskrit for Hindu religious scholars, each educational institution preserved its unique linguistic and cultural heritage. This respect for tradition not only ensured the preservation of cultural identity but also made education more

accessible and meaningful to the students. Education in the mother tongue played a crucial role in this system, as it enabled students to engage with their learning in a language they were comfortable with, thereby further enhancing comprehension and retention.

The introduction of British colonial education marked a shift from this personalized and inclusive system. By prioritizing English, modern subjects, and a centralized, Western-style curriculum, the British disregarded the local context in which education had thrived for centuries. Indigenous schools, which had relied on local support and endowments, were gradually replaced by missionary and government-run institutions that failed to accommodate the needs of the local population. The British system also imposed a more rigid structure, which stifled the flexibility and creativity that had characterized education under Singh's rule. This shift highlights the importance of understanding and integrating local educational practices before introducing new systems, as a failure to do so can disrupt the existing cultural and intellectual fabric of a society.

The education system under Ranjit Singh's reign also reflects the interconnection between education and social mobility. Proficiency in languages like Persian, which was the administrative language, provided opportunities for individuals from various religious backgrounds to secure positions in government and commerce. Education was not just a tool for personal development but a means of improving one's social standing and gaining political influence. These dynamics underscore the role of education as a vehicle for social progress, which was later undermined by the British emphasis on producing a class of administrators loyal to the colonial state.

In the next chapter, we will explore the impact of education on the social life of Punjab during and after Ranjit Singh's reign. The educational institutions of this period had a profound influence not only on intellectual development but also on social relations, gender roles, and community cohesion. Understanding how education shaped social life in Punjab offers key insights into the transformative power of learning. It highlights the long-term effects of both indigenous and colonial education systems on the social life of Punjab.

Chapter 4:

Features of the Education System of Ranjit Singh

Introduction

Maharaja Ranjit Singh is remembered in many contexts in history; he is remembered as the first local ruler in the history of Punjab. Many aspects of his governance style are discussed. An essential element of them is their education system. Before Maharaja Ranjit, attention was never given to making ordinary people literate; no one thought that there should be a curriculum that would enable ordinary people to read and write. It is considered a remarkable achievement of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign that he prioritized the literacy of the ordinary people.

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Punjab became one of the most literate regions in the world. Another notable thing was that the literacy rate among women was much higher than that of men. It gradually increased during the reign of this Maharaja. The second thing was that special attention was paid to the education of ordinary people. A center of basic education was established adjacent to every temple, mosque, and Gurdwara. Separate basic education centers were also established for girls in Punjab, and the region far surpassed other parts of the subcontinent in terms of basic education. Special attention was paid to girls' education in Punjab, and separate secondary and higher education institutions for girls were opened. Unfortunately, this incident could not be investigated in this way in Pakistan. However, it is believed that there must be evidence in the Punjab archives that can further verify this claim.

Among the evidence, the most significant testimony is the renowned educationist G. D. B. Lanter's book, "Local Education System of Punjab," in which he provides a detailed overview of the education system of Punjab. Gee, Dubelo. Lantern is believed to be the founder of two major institutions of Lahore, Punjab University and Government College Lahore.

Apart from this, reports have been compiled on the educational situation in various districts of Punjab following the British occupation.

Other books, interviews, and oral testimonies have been used to understand the educational situation in Punjab. This research provides a brief overview of the education and literacy system in Punjab during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, utilizing available sources. However, one thing must be mentioned here that the educational policies of Maharaja Ranjit Singh can only be compared with those of other regions in the subcontinent. The Industrial Revolution was underway in Europe at that time, and new inventions were being developed. There, education became a necessity that led to employment opportunities, so comparisons with the agrarian and artisanal economy of Punjab would not be correct.

Political background of the Maharaja's period

Before the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Punjab had gone through a period of severe civil war. Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir died at the beginning of the 18th century. After this death, the farmers of Punjab started a rebellion. This revolt was led by a Sikh leader, Banda Bahadur Singh. After that, till the beginning of the 19th century, there was an atmosphere of severe civil war in Punjab.

On the other hand, due to the attacks of Ahmad Shah Abdali from the north, there was also a severe test. The reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a period of political stability in Punjab. Indeed, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not able to read and write in any language. However, he possessed the ability to speak and understand various languages, and he had a deep knowledge of different arts and cultures, acquired through oral tradition.

He possessed a profound ability to understand the nuances of people. He had a great understanding of state affairs and management; he was capable of making timely decisions on important economic, political, and military issues, as well as the affairs of the empire. After consolidating his position, Ranjit Singh implemented administrative reforms. He did not discriminate based on ethnic and religious affiliations in selecting the El people in his administration.

Courtiers of Raja Ranjit Singh

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had not only done such a great work in the field of education in Punjab, but he had also gathered a team of great advisors around him. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's court was full of talented people.

There were not only local people in the court, but European advisors to Maharaja Ranjit Singh also held important positions in the court. These Europeans were called to train their army. However, he also advised the Maharaja on foreign affairs, the judicial system, and the educational system. They included people like Jean-François Allard, Baptiste Ventura, Paolo d'Eutebelle, and Claude August Court. Many of them had worked with Napoleon, the king of France. No religious or linguistic affiliation was given preference for a place in the Maharajah's court; instead, the individual's abilities and experience were taken into account. Muslims were also present in this court, where three members of the Fakir family — Faqir Azizuddin, Faqir Nooruddin, and Faqir Imamuddin — are considered to be very close associates of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Hakeem Ghulam Mohiuddin, father of Faqir Syed Nooruddin, was an eminent physician and educationist of his time. His son, Faqir Azizuddin, was summoned to the Maharaja's court as a physician, where the Maharaja was impressed by his proficiency in the Persian, Arabic, and English languages. The Maharaja assigned him his first diplomatic role. Due to Faqir Azizuddin's diplomacy, Maharaja Anjit Singh and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809. After that, Faqir Azizuddin became the foreign minister of Amla Maharaja. On some occasions, he also had to work as the Prime Minister. The Maharaja also assigned essential responsibilities to his elder brothers, Faqir Syed Imam Din and Faqir Nuruddin. Faqir Syed Imamuddin was also in charge of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's treasury.

Apart from this, Ghous Khan and Elahi Bakhsh were critical military commanders, while Dhyan Singh Dogra was the Prime Minister. Gulab Singh Dogra was the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. Sachit Singh and Hira Singh had essential responsibilities. Dina Nath, Khushal Singh, Ganga Ram, Tej Singh, and Lal Singh were Hindu Brahmins in charge of the Punjab administration. Apart from them, Dewan Mukhak Chand, Moti Ram, Ram Dayal, Dewan Bhavanidas, Dewan Devi Das, and Dewan Karamchan belonged to other caste Hindus. There were also Sikh chieftains, such as Lehna Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa, and Sham Singh. Persian script was used in his court, but Punjabi was spoken. The traditional Bikrami calendar of Punjab and the Islamic Hijri calendar were used.

Economy of the Punjabi Empire

This remarkable literacy drive for Maharaja Ranjit Singh was made possible because, during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Punjab

economy was built on a strong foundation. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh Empire was a wealthy and stable empire with a strong revenue system. There was a large city, such as Lahore, in Punjab. Punjab was a region with a predominantly agricultural economy, and Punjabi handicrafts were highly prized. Punjab was a highly prosperous region due to its thriving farm economy and skilled handicrafts. Punjab was a big center of textiles. After the establishment of the Punjabi Empire, special attention was paid to the economy of Punjab. The fertile lands of Punjab were extensively cultivated, resulting in a significant increase in agricultural production. The empire also encouraged the expansion of industries such as metalworking, textiles, and handicrafts, which added value to its economy.

Punjab production included a wide range of goods – among them fine cotton cloth, metalwork in iron and brass, as well as copper, gold, and silver. Swords and weapons made in the Punjab were highly valued; copper and brass utensils, as well as gold and silver ornaments, were also renowned. But the most critical industry was textiles. The centers of the indigenous textile industry in Punjab were Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Ambala, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Sialkot, Lahore, Gujarat, and Rawalpindi – among these cities were Ghazipur, Langar, and Sasi/Sosi. Khes, salu kharva, chador, chauthi, dhoti, dasuti, chosi, pansi, a cotton quilt, mattress, dari, turban, khadar, and many other types were woven.

In the case of producing good cloth, the cost of preparation and labor was high. There were lakhs of khadis in different cities of Punjab. As a result, there was prosperity in Punjab. A significant source of income for the Punjabi Empire was its location. Punjab was situated on a crucial trade route. Other regions of the Indian subcontinent were connected to Afghanistan and the Middle East through the Punjabi Empire. This location enabled the empire to engage in lucrative trade while maintaining good relations with its neighbors. The revenue of the Punjabi kingdom exceeded that of the established kingdom of the East India Company (1838-39), which collected about £1.85 million in revenue. At the same time, the English managed to collect 1.45 million pounds this year.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire had more revenue than any other kingdom in the subcontinent. The Maharaja earmarked a particular portion of these revenues for education. The Maharaja was spending more money on education than the East India Company. This is said to be due to the instruction given by the Fifth Guru to the Sikhs that the Sikhs were to spend dasundha, or the tenth part of their income, for charitable works. Following this instruction from his Guru, Maharaja Ranjit Singh allocated

one-tenth of the income from his kingdom to philanthropic works, most of which was spent on education.

Method of teaching ordinary people before the Maharaja's time

Punjab was an agrarian society where people connected with the agricultural economy lived apart from artisans. Reading and writing had no special importance in the lives of these people. Therefore, there was no concept of ordinary people reading and writing in Punjab. Before the Maharaja, ordinary people had limited education. In every mosque, temple, and Gurdwara, boys received religious education, but they did not need to read and write; they only received oral education, which was deemed sufficient for them.

The pre-Maharaja Ranjit Singh education system in Punjab was highly decentralized, community-based, and deeply intertwined with religious practices. It was not a state-sponsored system but rather an organic network of traditional institutions catering to the educational needs of different religious and social communities.

Background to the Maharaja's concept of the education system

Maharaja Ranjit Singh wished that any person of the Sultanate could convey his complaint to him. There should be a system whereby every person in his kingdom could convey his message to the Maharaja in one way or another. Maharaja Ranjit Singh consulted his courtiers to determine the best strategy that would enable everyone in his kingdom to approach him directly with any grievances. This desire of the king was a strange desire for the courtiers. There was no concept of reading and writing among the ordinary people in the subcontinent, so there was no answer to this question in the understanding of these courtiers. However, there were European advisers in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Where the Industrial Revolution was underway, reading and writing had become a necessity for the people. Also, he worked with Napoleon. Napoleon's educational reforms were known. Napoleon believed that through education, people's loyalty to the empire could be increased. These advisers suggested to Maharaja Ranjit Singh that if every person in his kingdom were literate, he could directly communicate with the Maharaja through letters and convey his message not only to the Maharaja of the kingdom. A direct contact can be made with each individual, but

also the love and loyalty of the people towards their Maharaja and the kingdom will increase. Ranjit Singh liked this proposal.

There was no standard or formal teaching method in place. Education was given on a needs basis. For instance, Persian was the official language and the language of literature. It was essential to obtain an executive job, which is why many schools began teaching Persian as a result. Three percent learned Persian and Urdu, 41 percent learned English, and 3 percent learned Hindi or Nagri.¹¹ All these languages, like Sanskrit, Arabic, and Gurmukhi, were keys to religious education and employment. These schools were open to all regardless of caste or creed.

It was a seemingly impossible task, as the Maharaja had to build an education system from scratch. Moreover, Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself had received little formal education as he chose the path of a warrior and a leader while still in his teens. The empire he founded lacked a tradition of learning, and education was limited to the royal class and the wealthy. The most prominent institution catering to these classes was the **Mian Wadda da Madrasa**, a traditional school affiliated with the Muslim religious leader Mian Wadda in Lahore. Opened centuries before Sikh rule began, it was meant only for the sons of royals, aristocrats, and the wealthy, and imparted a Quranic education.

Much of what we know about the Maharaja's educational reforms comes from the work of British scholar and traveler Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, author of *"History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab: Since Annexation"* (1882). In his work, Leitner states that there was no shortage of funds to establish schools and other educational institutions in Punjab. Leitner writes,

"Punjab has this tradition whereby the most unscrupulous chief, the avaricious money-lender, and even the freebooter, vied with the small land-owner in making peace with his conscience by founding schools and rewarding the learned. There is not a mosque, a temple, a dharmshala that does not have a school attached to it."

Funding also came from royal families and the Maharaja's treasury. These grants were distributed to educational centres affiliated with various faiths across the empire. The Sikh rule was preceded by centuries of Mughal rule in Punjab, during which the most famous schools in the region were madrassas, where students of all faiths received education. Thus, Ranjit Singh, despite being a Sikh ruler, didn't change the popular setting, and many of the early schools he set up were madrassas, which had already been a popular form of educational institution during his reign. Ranjit

Singh not only made generous donations, but he also commissioned a few in Lahore.

Beginnings of a Secular Education

While the early institutions were primarily religious, the Maharaja recognized the need to expose the people of Punjab to secular education and contemporary trends in the field of learning. Leitner, in his work, states that, along with languages and religion, the study of grammar, literature, philosophy, rhetoric, astronomy, law, logic, arithmetic, and geometry, all of which could be termed secular education in the existing religious schools of the kingdom. However, he fails to provide the exact timeline of these developments.

At the end of his rule in the 1830s, Ranjit Singh took another leap forward and started to encourage the learning of English in the schools of Lahore, including the royal Mian Wadde da Madrasa, for which he hired a Christian teacher. Unlike the religious freedom enjoyed by Hindus and Muslims in schools run by their respective communities, the Christian teacher, whose faith was alien to the majority of the masses, was barred from promoting Christianity in any way.

Not only was education promoted extensively in the Sikh Empire, but it also sparked the imagination of the people, who were eager to learn. The *Lahore District Report (1860)* states that on the eve of colonial control of Punjab (1849-50), the capital city of Lahore alone had 576 schools with 4,225 students on their rolls. It notes that in all of Punjab, there were at least 3.3 lakh students "learning high-standard Oriental literature, Oriental law, logic, philosophy and medicine in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit in various institutions." Moreover, Lahore had 18 formal schools for girls, in addition to specialist schools for technical training, languages, mathematics, and logic, affiliated with Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh institutions.

Curriculum preparation

Ranjit Singh asked his advisors what the best way was to make all the people of his kingdom learn to read and write. These advisers advised Maharaja Ranjit Singh that a curriculum was needed for this. If an effective curriculum is developed that can be understood by the general public, they can learn to read and write. And write to the Maharaja to inform him that he has learned to read and write. The Maharaja liked this advice and asked the advisers how such a curriculum could be prepared and what kind of person was needed for it. The Maharaja was told that a

man who had mastered languages and had experience in teaching children would be a suitable candidate for the job.

Source of education

During the reign of the Maharajas, the official language was Persian. During this period, there were Persian teaching institutes where individuals aspiring to government jobs could learn the language. It used to be a limited number. The majority of the people spoke Punjabi. Punjabi was written in two different scripts, the Shahmukhi script and the Gurmukhi script. Gurmukhi was taught in Sikh gurdwaras while Muslim scholars taught Punjabi in the Shahmukhi script. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was advised by his advisers not to bind the people to a single language or script. Instead, they should be given the option to learn to read and write in one of the languages, either Persian or Punjabi, as per their wish. They should be allowed to read and write in any of the Gurmukhi or Shahmukhi scripts. Maharaja Ranjit Singh liked this proposal and decided to implement it.

Faqir Nooruddin

The problem now was to develop a rule that would achieve all these objectives. In this regard, the services of a person who not only had full command of Persian and Punjabi but also mastered both the Punjabi scripts were required. Apart from this, he should also have teaching experience. Fortunately, there was such a person in the Maharaja's court, who was his closest associate and the younger brother of Foreign Minister Faqir Azizuddin, who was the Governor of Lahore at that time. Maharaja Ranjit Singh charged Faqir Noor-ud-Din with the task of preparing a rule that would fulfill all these objectives. Faqir Syed Nooruddin was chosen because he had deep experience in teaching, and his family was running a Madrasa at Takiya Ghulam Shah near Bhati Door. Faqir Syed Nooruddin was a teacher at this seminary. Apart from Persian, he was equally proficient in both the Punjabi scripts, Shahmukhi and Gurmukhi.

Quida Noor

Faqir Syed Nooruddin laid down a rule for the literacy of the ordinary people. This rule was named Quida Noor. Noor was used in the sense of light. The purpose of which was to spread light in Punjab. This Quida Noor originally consisted of four parts. In one part, the Persian alphabet was introduced, along with simple sentences. The second part introduced the identification of the Gurmukhi alphabet and taught how to make

simple sentences in the Gurmukhi script. In the third part, the alphabet of the Shahmukhi script was identified, and simple sentences were taught. It was up to the reader to learn to read and write in one of these three scripts. The fourth part consisted of an introductory course in day-to-day accounting. By this rule, one would acquire the skills of reading and writing in either Punjabi or Persian, along with basic arithmetic. He became so proficient in writing in any language and in any script that he could write to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and inform him that he had learned to read and write in multiple languages.

Literacy method

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, after establishing the Quida Noor for literacy, asked his advisors to prepare a program through which the people of Punjab could be educated and written through this rule. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's advisors believed that the literacy program could not succeed unless the administrative force of the Sultanate were effectively involved at the grassroots level. At that time, a Numberdar was considered an important post at the lower level. Without the practical and active involvement of these Numberdars, the literacy program cannot be made successful. These consultants also opined that the valuable and active participation of Numberdars is only possible if their employment is made conditional on this achievement. The Maharaja found these suggestions feasible. Maharaja Ranjit Singh decided to conduct a literacy campaign among the people through these Numberdars. An elaborate program was devised in this regard to maximize the influence of Numberdar.

The most significant aspect was that Maharaja Ranjit Singh made it a mandatory requirement that to become a new Numberdar, the desired person must be able to read and write. Along with this, Maharaja Ranjit Singh also made it a law that already serving Numberdars could continue in their post only if they learned to read and write within a given period. Additionally, it will be mandatory for each Numberdar to arrange for the reading and writing of five people from their respective areas. Those who fail to do so will be removed from office. Approximately 5,000 copies of the booklet were produced and distributed to Numberdars all over Punjab.

Every Numberdar was required to learn to read and write in one of the languages, Persian or Punjabi, within three months from a teacher in the village, according to their convenience, along with basic arithmetic. When the Numberdar had learned to read, write, and calculate, he should prepare five copies of this Quida Noor and select five people from his area to distribute these copies to, so that they too could learn to read and write. Every Numberdar was required to personally write a letter to Maharaja

Ranjit Singh, in which he wrote to the Raja that he had learned to read and write in Shahmukhi or Gurmukhi script of Persian or Punjabi through this rule and that he had distributed five copies of Quida Noor to five selected people of the village. The names of these five people have also been provided in this letter, with no distinction made between women and men, or between any religion or race. Those who receive this Quida from the Numberdar should also learn it within three months, and they should also write a personal letter to the Maharaja and tell them that they had received this Quida Noor from the Numberdar through which they had learned Persian or Shahmukhi from such and such a servant. He has learned to read, write, and calculate in one of the Gurmukhi scripts. Now, he has prepared five more copies of it from the Numberdar and has given these copies to the five servants above. Through this rule, such and such servants will teach these servants to read and write in that language or script and do basic calculations.

Thus, the people of Punjab began to read and write under this rule, and in this way, a chain process started to inform Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Initially, many Numberdars did not take the exercise seriously and failed to send letters to the Maharaja. These individuals violated the mandatory law established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, which required them to read, write, and calculate according to Quida Noor to maintain numeracy. As a result, they were removed from their posts to set an example for others.

Table 4.1 Quida Noor Educational method

Step	Details
1. Initiation	Maharaja Ranjit Singh initiates a literacy campaign for rural Punjab.
2. Design of Quida Noor	Fakir Syed Nur-ud-Din creates the Quida Noor booklet with basic alphabets (Gurmukhi, Shahmukhi, Urdu, Persian) and elementary math.
3. Initial Distribution	Around 5,000 copies of Quida Noor are printed and distributed to Numberdars (village heads).
4. Numberdars Learning	Each Numberdar is instructed to learn the Quida Noor within three months .
5. Numberdars Distribution	Each Numberdar distributes 5 copies of the Quida Noor to five villagers in their area.
6. Reporting to Maharaja	Numberdars write a letter to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, confirming their learning and distribution.
7. Villagers' Learning	The five villagers who receive the booklet learn its contents and further distribute 5 copies each.
8. Multiplicative Spread	The process continues in a chain reaction, spreading literacy exponentially across the region.

9. Enforcement	Numberdars who fail to comply are removed from their positions as a deterrent to others.
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Sources: Mufti Ghulam Server, *Tarikh e Makhzan e Punjab*. (n.p: Munshi Nok Shor Man, 1859), Singh, K., & Singh, K. (2009). *Ranjit Singh*. Penguin Books India. Griffin, L. H. (1892). *Ranjit Singh* (Vol. 18). Clarendon Press.

Participation of women in the literacy campaign

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's personal interest and constant supervision had brought this practice to every village in the Punjab. However, the campaign was more successful when women participated in it. This method of literacy gained popularity among women more than men, and a large number of women in Punjab became literate through this process. A significant reason for the success of this method among women was the traditional system of education available to them. During this period, girls were not sent to any educational institution for education. In every village and neighborhood, there was a woman who made arrangements for the education and training of girls on her own. She used to arrange as much education as she could within her circumstances and resources. Before Quida Noor, this education was given orally. No regular payment was taken from the girls for this education; it was all done free of charge.

Along with this education, the children were also taught all the household chores. However, the girls used to willingly take on many of these women's jobs in exchange for this education. Girls used to come to study twice a day. These girls also learned to clean the house and do all the work. These girls used to knead the dough and cook vegetables. She used to learn to cook. These girls also learned to wash clothes. They were also trained in sewing and embroidery, a tradition of that time. These women used to teach their religious book, but it was all taught orally.

The literacy campaign gained momentum when these women joined the campaign. After Quida Noor, when the Numberdars became stricter, one of the Numberdars started teaching a woman in her house. After reading and writing, this woman chose these five women. Who used to teach girls in her home? They could teach their home-schooled girls to read and write in addition to their oral religious education. This experiment was successful. Not only was it easy for these women to teach five girls to write, but it was also easy for them they take this series to the second stage. And involve more women and girls in the literacy process. When the news of this success reached the neighboring villages, the model was adopted in other towns, and a wave of literacy spread among the women. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh was informed of this success, he declared Quida Noor a must for every woman. Maharaja Ranjit Singh made it a law that women who educated girls in their areas must learn to read and write

through Quida Noor. As a result, all girls who came to their homes were taught to read and write. This process resulted in a significant increase in women's literacy in Punjab.

Primary Education Centers

These literacy efforts during the Maharaja's era led to the concept of imparting elementary education to common boys and girls. It was an ancient custom in Punjab for children to receive oral religious education in every mosque, temple, and Gurdwara. As literacy among girls increased, an idea occurred to a Numberdar to incorporate religious education into mosques, temples, and gurdwaras as part of this campaign. The experiment was successful. Every Numberdar was worried about saving his job, so when he heard about this experience, every Numberdar adopted this method and the temple in his area. The mosque started teaching Quida Noor to the religious figure associated with the Gurdwara. These spiritual teachers could continue this line of thought. When he began teaching children through Quida Noor, a system of basic literacy education for children was established with every temple, Gurdwara, and mosque in Punjab. At that time, no such system of primary schooling existed in any part of the subcontinent. There was no such concept here, but in Europe, it was present. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh was informed of this success, he consulted his European advisers on how to carry out this method successfully. He opined that all these centers could be termed primary education centers. As centers for girls are already functioning, a legal ban can be imposed on all these centers. Maharaja Ranjit Singh accepted this advice, and it became law that every mosque, temple, monastery, dharamshala, and Gurdwara should teach children to read, write, and calculate through the Quida Noor system.

With the implementation of this law, every temple, mosque, and Gurdwara became a formal center of primary education. It was the first time in Punjab that, in every neighborhood, village, or area with a mosque, temple, or Gurdwara, there was a formal arrangement for children to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, in addition to basic religious education. In this way, separate primary education centers for girls and boys were established throughout Punjab, making it possible for every boy and girl in Punjab to receive primary education.

On the one hand, temporary adult education centers were functioning in Punjab, where adults were being taught to read and write. On the other hand, a center of elementary education was established in every mosque, temple, and Gurdwara. Maharaja Ranjit Singh fully supported these

educational institutions and created an efficient system for their maintenance.

In this way, four thousand educational institutions had been established in Punjab. Where millions of students studied, all these schools were attached to Gurdwaras, Masjids, and Temples, and provided free primary education to children in these institutions. The center of all these educational activities was Lahore, where a large number of schools, students, and teachers were located, as mentioned in the administrative report of Punjab. Between 1849 and 1850, and 1850 and 1851, there were 576 schools in Lahore alone. Four thousand two hundred twenty-five students were studying in these institutions. Apart from Lahore, schools were also established in other cities and areas of Punjab. A certain proportion of students were admitted to a school. Leitner mentioned in the Settlement Report of 1852. There was one school for every 1,965 students in the Hoshiarpur district. Education was almost free throughout the Punjab.

Table 4.2 Categories of Schools

Category	School Type	Primary Language	Primary Students	Purpose
Maktab	Persian Schools	Persian	Muslims	General education, open to all sects
Madrassah	Arabic Schools	Arabic	Muslims	Religious and secular education from primary to higher levels
Patshala	Sanskrit Schools	Sanskrit	Hindus	Religious and cultural education, open to all sects
Gurmukhi Schools	Gurmukhi Schools	Gurmukhi	Sikhs	Language and cultural education specific to Sikhism
Mahajani	Trading Schools	Local dialects	Trading community	Commerce and trade education, focusing on business skills

Sources: Lafont, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lord of the Five Rivers, 76.

Moulana Iltaf Hussain Hali, Hayat e Javaid, (n.p: National Book House, 1986),38

Mufti Ghulam Server, Tarikh e Makhzan e Punjab.(n.p: Munshi Nok Shor Man, 1859), 216.

H.R. Mehta, History of the Growth of the Western education in Punjab (n.p: Vintage Books,1996), 6. Server,218.

The phenomenon of state-in-person carries the contradiction of the Sikh society and the Punjabi culture. Some aspects of Maharaja Ranjit Singh approach towards the languages or texts.

Lafont, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lord of the Five Rivers, 76.

School management: When these centers of basic education were established in every village and neighborhood of the city of Punjab, it was necessary to create a series of management systems to run them. The Maharaja established a comprehensive system for these schools. Local people were fully involved in the management of these schools. The landowners and moneylenders of the area used to contribute to the school's expenses.

In these schools, teachers were paid in various forms, the most common being in kind. Some teachers also received a "daily" ration. In this context, special mention is made of Sialkot, where the local landlords also provided them with daily rations, which included meat, fruits, and vegetables.

The classroom: Special attention was paid to the number of students in these centers of basic education. The number of students in each class was not more than 50. To ensure the implementation of this restriction, the responsibility was given to the area Numberdar. He should regularly monitor these centers of basic education established in his area, and it was his responsibility to take special care of the number of children.

Baked bread rule: Due to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's literacy efforts, others also attempted to create regulations in the Punjabi language. Among them, a unique effort was that of Maulvi Ghulam Rasool, who prepared Pucci Rotti Quida in simple Punjabi for the religious education of Muslims.

Maulvi Ghulam Rasool: The story of Maulvi Ghulam Rasool is an interesting one. Maulvi Ghulam Rasool was born in Qila Mihan Singh, a village in the Sheikhpura district. Maulvi Ghulam Rasool was a famous Punjabi poet, writer, and religious scholar. Maulvi Ghulam Rasool had pledged allegiance to Syed Ahmad Barelvi against Maharaja Ranjit Singh and participated in the war. However, after Syed Ahmad Barelvi's defeat, he came to Lahore, where Maharaja Ranjit Singh went to great lengths to honor him.

Preparation of Baked Roti Quida

The success of Quida Noor gave Maulvi Ghulam Rasool the idea of developing a simple Quida for religious education. For this, he compiled a rule in the Punjabi language called Pakki Roti, which proved to be very successful. It provided religious information in straightforward Punjabi. The 'cooked bread' rule has been included in the curriculum of all primary education centers for Muslim boys and girls in Punjab. It was written in the Shahmukhi script of the Punjabi language.

Popularity of the Punjabi language and the Shahmukhi script

Before this stream of literacy, there was no program to teach Punjabi writing to the general public. In Gurdwaras, only those Sikhs who wanted to become religious scholars were taught Gurmatkhani. But this literacy program on the one hand strengthened Punjabi as a language of reading and writing, on the other hand, in this campaign, Muslims had the option to read and write Punjabi in the Shahmukhi script, which not only the drive to read and write the Shahmukhi script among the Muslims gained strength, but Hindus and Sikhs also became interested in learning the Shahmukhi script.

Because even before that, Sikhs and Hindus who had to take government jobs used to learn the Persian language. There used to be some Hindu or Sikh elder in the family or region who had learned a little Persian language. The script of the Persian language was similar to Shahmukhi, so it was not entirely alien to Hindus and Sikhs. Another reason was that most of the words of Punjabi poets were written in Shahmukhi script. People who learned to read and write Punjabi tried to read Punjabi poets. Hence, the Shahmukhi script gained more popularity.

The most literate region of the subcontinent

Due to this literacy campaign, Punjab became one of the most literate regions not only in the subcontinent but also in the world. This was amazing for the time. In Europe, the Industrial Revolution was underway, and literacy and education had become a necessity; therefore, the spread of literacy and education was also a necessity. However, on the contrary, Punjab was an agricultural society where industrial work was conducted at the craft level, so literacy and education were not necessary. There was no such tradition regarding literacy and education of the ordinary people in the subcontinent. For this, he wanted to build his empire on such strong foundations that it could stop the advance of the British. For this,

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had prepared a strong army. In preparing this army, he sought the assistance of French army experts who had worked with Napoleon. Although we do not have direct evidence to confirm our claim, it was these European experts who gave suggestions to Maharaja Ranjit Singh to increase literacy and improve the quality of education in the empire.

So that his state could be built on a strong foundation, a close bond and loyalty to Maharaja Ranjit Singh developed among the ordinary people. From Maharaja Ranjit Singh's educational reforms, one often thinks of Napoleon's. Perhaps Maharaja Ranjit Singh also sought to strengthen the connection between the ruler and the ordinary people through education.

Table 4.3 Social and Religious Impact of Education System in Punjab

Aspect	Social Impact	Religious Impact
Cultural Preservation	Education in <i>pathshalas</i> , <i>madrasas</i> , and <i>gurdwaras</i> preserved cultural traditions and values of each community. Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic languages were preserved.	Religious literature and teachings reinforced religious beliefs and practices among Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims. Encouraged the study of Sikh, Hindu, and Islamic scriptures to ensure religious continuity.
Social Harmony	Maharaja Ranjit Singh's secular policy promoted	Institutions were allowed to operate freely, fostering

	<p>intercommunal respect and minimized religious tensions.</p> <p>Cross-cultural respect grew as education promoted moral principles among different communities.</p>	<p>a tolerant religious environment.</p> <p>Different religious communities could educate their members without interference, leading to a pluralistic society.</p>
Access to Knowledge	<p>Education was for all communities of Punjab. Knowledge was primarily accessible to males and female.</p>	<p>Religious education strengthened religious identities, with each group deepening its understanding of faith. Encouraged loyalty to religious communities and their teachings.</p>
Moral and Ethical Values	<p>Education systems emphasized ethical conduct, promoting honest and moral behavior aligned with cultural norms. Teachers (gurus, maulvis, pandits) were respected figures in society.</p>	<p>Religious teachings established values such as compassion, respect, and charity, which influenced moral behavior.</p>
Administrative Preparation	<p>Knowledge of Persian and mathematics prepared individuals for roles in administration and trade, supporting societal stability.</p>	<p>Islamic law (taught in madrasas) and Hindu ethics (from pathshalas) reinforced community-specific norms. Strengthened the role of religious institutions in governance and community life.</p>
Encouragement of Secularism	<p>Maharaja Ranjit Singh's sponsorship of all religious organizations promoted secularism and cultural harmony. Education promoted unity among religious groups.</p>	<p>The state's secular approach allowed religious teachings to flourish, fostering a society where diverse religious traditions were respected and preserved.</p>

Sources: Lafont, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lord of the Five Rivers, Moulana Iltaf Hussain Hali, Hayat e Javaid, (n.p: National Book House, 1986), Mufti Ghulam Server, Tarikh e Makhzan e Punjab.(n.p: Munshi Nok Shor Man, 1859), Grewal, J. S., & Sharma, H. C. (1987, January). Political Change and Social Readjustment:

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Conclusion

After analyzing the entire education system, the most important features were the social harmony achieved through the educational methodology. This harmony was a unique outcome of education. Another important feature was the response and reaction by the Britishers. The coming years saw the introduction of new educational methodologies for the people of the subcontinent. Punjab was not an exception.

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Chapter 5:

An Assessment of Ranjit Singh Education System

Introduction

In the 38 years of his rule, Maharaja Ranjit Singh established a robust education system in Punjab. However, after he died in 1839, the fate of Punjab changed forever. Ranjit Singh's successors were deposed and killed in quick succession due to several assassination plots carried out by the ambitious ministers, and also due to the internal dissatisfaction among the members of the royal family with each other. This led to a period of significant instability. It was the chance the British East India Company had been waiting for, and it took control of the empire's territories, assimilating them with the colonial territories after winning the two decisive Anglo-Sikh Wars, which concluded in 1849.

It was a death blow to the fabulous system of learning founded by Ranjit Singh. The new British government wanted to focus on a secular and modern system of education and did not allow classical languages, such as Persian and Sanskrit, to be taught in Punjab's schools. These were replaced with Urdu and English as the medium of instruction. The new political dispensation also halted all funding to traditional, religious schools. They called their teachings unscientific and claimed that they were spreading outdated ways of thinking. Grants-in-aid were henceforth given only to schools and colleges run by European managements.

The quaint but effective *Quida* system was also crushed. Government officials confiscated the few *Quidas* they could find; most of them had been hidden away by the people of Punjab in their homes, as a remembrance of their late king and lost kingdom. The rest was brutally wrenched from families during the Revolt of 1857 and burnt by the government, thus bringing the golden era of educational growth in Punjab to an end. In the following decades of the 19th century, a new model of education was introduced in Punjab under the British. Critics argue that, although it produced many educated geniuses, education among the masses declined because the new system was beyond the commoner's

reach. Even as regions like the Bengal Presidency were making strides in education, Punjab was mourning its rich but forgotten legacy.

The first English school in Punjab was established in Lahore only a few months after the British took control of the Sikh Empire in March 1849. They allowed two American Presbyterian missionaries, Reverends John Newton and Charles Forman, to set it up in Lahore in December of the same year.

Decision to ban Quida Noor

Following the War of Independence in 1857, British rule replaced the East India Company. In the War of Independence, there was significant resistance in Punjab. When the strong resistance of the people of Punjab was analyzed, it was concluded that the increased literacy in Punjab by the Quida Noor had bound the Punjabis to a center over which they loved their empire and were loyal to it. Therefore, it is necessary to ban Quida Noor. The literacy program should be abolished. Basic education centers should be abolished. The new British also stopped all funding for traditional schools and literacy programs. The East India Company and later the British government banned Quida Noor. During the War of Independence in 1857, British soldiers announced the submission of Quida Noor to people throughout Punjab. For this, on the one hand, the British government created an atmosphere of fear, and on the other hand, they also gave financial incentives. Those who did not submit, on being informed, Quida Noor was taken away from these families. All copies of it were burned. Wilhelm Leitner, formerly Professor of Arabic and Islamic Law at King's College, London, was also instrumental in founding the Government College and Punjab University.

In 1882, Leitner published his detailed report titled "History of Native Education in the Punjab," in which he lamented the decline of traditional, native education in the Punjab. He described how a great literacy system was established in Punjab and how it was subsequently discontinued.

The tradition of Punjabi literacy

The literacy system established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh was highly effective. Despite the decision to ban Quida Noor, Punjabi literacy continued in Punjab. Evidence of this can be found in the Punjabi books printed in Punjab. Tales and stories in the Punjabi language were prepared almost daily and sold by hawkers in cities and villages. Ordinary people, especially women, used to read these stories with great interest. This series

continued for several decades even after the establishment of Pakistan. It was the tradition established by Quida Noor that maintained the tradition of Punjabi literacy for a century even after Quida Noor. Despite the ban on Quida Noor, the teaching of Punjabi literacy continued in mosques through the use of baked bread, while women continued to teach girls at home using the same method.

The tradition of Punjabi literacy in Punjab is evident in many ways. An important thing among them is the continuity of Punjabi poets and storytellers. Following the advent of the press, the publication of books by Punjabi poets began. In the late nineteenth century, a poet like Mian Muhammad Bakhsh emerged, gaining unprecedented popularity in Punjab. The birth of such a great poet and gaining so much popularity is proof that Punjabi literacy continued. Mr. Javed Iqbal has also written in *Zinda Rood* that newspapers were not so common in those times. Stories were published in Punjabi, and women read them with great interest. These stories were sold by hawkers in the main squares of the city. Allama Iqbal used to buy these stories in his boyhood and would go home and read them with great pleasure.

Secondary and Higher Education System

Secondary education and higher education existed in Punjab before the reign of the Maharaja. Still, this education was confined to a few large cities, where only a limited number could receive an education. Apart from this, elite families used to arrange home teachers for their children. Secondary and higher education in Punjab was restricted to specific sections of the elite. Even among the aristocracy, many people were not interested in it.

Curriculum of Institutions

The traditional purpose of these institutions was to train scholars of their respective religions. The Mahajani schools, in particular, were designed to educate the children of their community in accounting and prepare them for trade. Therefore, the curriculum of these institutions was limited to the books of their respective religions and their religious languages. However, during the reign of Akbar in the subcontinent, the curriculum of these institutions was reviewed, and some sciences were added to it.

Educational reforms of Akbar's time

Before Maharaja Ranjit Singh, secondary and higher education in Punjab was reserved for the elite and wealthy, resulting in limited educational institutions in the major cities, where Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian were predominantly taught. Books were read or recited. However, it was once a religious curriculum. During the reign of Akbar, the educationist Fathullah Shirazi came to India. Fathullah Shirazi advised Akbar to include other sciences in the curriculum of educational institutions, besides religious books, so that not only religious scholars are prepared from these institutions, but also experts in other sciences are available. Therefore, he assigned the duty to Fathullah Shirazi to identify the sciences that should be taught in these institutions. On the advice of Fathullah Shirazi, these educational institutions were reformed during the reign of Akbar. In Ayin Akbari, Abul Fazl has provided a list of topics and subjects for this curriculum, which was given to these educational institutions to arrange education and teaching on these topics as well. Books and religious languages of their respective religions were already being taught in these institutions along with ethics, history, politics, and accounting. Some higher studies in mathematics, agriculture, engineering, astronomy, home affairs, logic, philosophy, and medicine were part of the curriculum. Fathullah Shirazi was an expert in mechanics. During the reign of Akbar, mechanical sciences were specially made a part of the curriculum. Geometry, economics, grammar, law, physics, and geography were included in the curriculum.

Educational Institutions of Punjab

During the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, several institutions of secondary and higher education existed in Punjab, which were run by Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh religious institutions. Some of these institutions were so famous that boys from other areas also came to study there. Lahore was a great center of these educational activities. Here, the best academic institutions of the subcontinent were doing their work. Many educational institutions of Hindus and Muslims maintained their reputations here, while many famous Sikh educational institutions were located in Amritsar.

Before Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there was a system of secondary and higher education in Punjab, where educational institutions were run on a religious basis. But ethnic and religious hatred did not grow because of these separate institutions; instead, it was a general part of Punjab's culture, which was normal. Even after the British introduced the modern schooling system, Muslims formed their institutions, such as Anjuman-e-Islam. At the same time, Hindus established the Arya Samaj and Sikhs founded the

Bhai Singh Sabha, all of which made efforts to promote education among their co-religionists. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh advised his advisors on this matter, his European advisors believed that for the strength and stability of the empire, all members of the imperial elite and their children needed to have access to secondary and higher education. All officials of the Sultanate must have at least some secondary education. For the stability and strength of the empire, the administrative machinery must be literate. Maharaja Ranjit Singh encouraged Punjabi elites of all religions to provide their children with secondary and higher education. For this, many new schools were established in Lahore and Amritsar.

During this period, the general public did not have access to secondary and higher education. They did not feel the need for this kind of education in their work and employment. Still, the Maharaja provided the children of the elite with maximum opportunities for secondary and higher education. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire had more revenue than any other kingdom in the subcontinent. The Maharaja earmarked a particular portion of these revenues for education. The Maharaja was spending more money on education than the East India Company.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh made generous donations to Madrasas and Pathshalas. Apart from the Maharaja, other members of his family and other nobles associated with the court also participated in the patronage of secondary and higher schools. Thus, various educational initiatives were launched in Punjab for secondary and higher education, fulfilling the diverse academic needs. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, several educational centers were established in Punjab to provide secondary and higher education.

Table 5.1 Comparison of education system in Punjab

Aspect	Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1801-1839)	Under British East India Company (Post-1849)
Educational Philosophy	Emphasis on grassroots learning and practical literacy for all.	Focus on secular, Western-style education prioritizing English.
Medium of Instruction	Multilingual: Gurmukhi, Shahmukhi, Urdu, and Persian.	Replaced with Urdu and English as the primary languages.
Key Educational Initiative	Quida Noor system for basic literacy distributed to village heads and villagers.	Western-style schools focusing on English language and subjects like science, mathematics, and Western literature

Scope and Reach	Widespread, accessible to common people, including rural areas.	Limited access, mostly urban-based; higher education out of reach for rural masses.
Funding and Support	Government-funded traditional schools, religious institutions (pathshalas, maktabas).	Funding stopped for traditional schools; grants-in-aid only to European-managed institutions.
Languages Taught	Persian, Sanskrit, Punjabi, and Urdu.	Persian and Sanskrit banned; focus shifted to English and Urdu.
Impact on Indigenous Systems	Indigenous knowledge systems were preserved and promoted.	Traditional schools and the Quida system were suppressed; materials confiscated and destroyed.
Establishment of English Schools	No formal Western-style English schools; focus on local learning systems.	First English school established in Lahore (December 1849) by American missionaries, John Newton and Charles Forman.
Educational Access	Broad access due to community-based learning models like Quida Noor.	Education became more exclusive, focusing on creating an English-educated elite.
Criticism of Educational Change	N/A (System was homegrown and adapted to local needs).	New system seen as alien and out of reach for common people, causing a decline in mass literacy.
Overall Impact	Widespread literacy and cultural education throughout Punjab.	Decline in traditional learning; growth of an elite, English-educated class, but reduced educational access for the rural population.

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Educational Institutions of Punjab

During the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, several institutions of secondary and higher education existed in Punjab, which were run by Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh religious institutions. Some of these institutions were so famous that boys from other areas also came to study there. Lahore was a great center of these educational activities. Here, the best academic institutions of the subcontinent were doing their work. Many educational institutions of Hindus and Muslims maintained their reputations here, while many famous Sikh educational institutions were located in Amritsar. Even before Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a system of secondary and higher education existed in Punjab, where academic institutions were run on a religious basis. But ethnic and religious hatred did not grow because of these separate institutions; instead, it was a general part of Punjab's culture. And this was considered normal. Even after the British introduced the modern schooling system, Muslims formed their institutions, such as Anjuman-e-Islam. At the same time, Hindus established the Arya Samaj and Sikhs founded the Bhai Singh Sabha, all of which made efforts to promote education among their co-religionists. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh advised his advisors on this matter, his European advisors believed that for the strength and stability of the empire, all members of the imperial elite and their children needed to have access to secondary and higher education. All officials of the Sultanate must have at least a secondary education. For the stability and strength of the empire, the administrative machinery must be literate. Maharaja Ranjit Singh encouraged Punjabi elites of all religions to provide their children with secondary and higher education. For this, many new schools were established in Lahore and Amritsar.

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Ranking of local schools

At the time of the Maharaja, separate schools for each religion were established in Punjab. These schools were divided into the following categories. School was the official language in the subcontinent from the time of the Muslim Sultans. To secure an official position in the empire, it was necessary to know the Persian language. Therefore, there were many schools in Lahore and other major cities where Persian was taught regularly; these were called maktab. Individuals from any religious background can study Persian at these institutions. 37.0% students were learning Persian during the Maharaja's era. Although the Maktab schools were run by Muslims, not only Muslims studied in these institutions, but Hindus and Sikhs also studied in these institutions. Religious education was not imparted in these institutions, but people were trained to master the Persian language. Mostly boys studied here, but no age was prohibited. One could enroll in a school to study the Persian language.

Madradas

With the arrival of the Muslims in the subcontinent, a system of Islamic and Arabic Madrasas was formed. Where Muslims were given advanced education in the Arabic language and Islamic studies. Arabic was the primary language of Muslims, and proficiency in Arabic was necessary to secure employment in Muslim religious institutions. During the era of the Maharaja, there was no prejudice against Muslims; the number of Muslim students in these institutions proves this. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 41 percent of students were learning Arabic. There were good madrassas along with some mosques and monasteries in big cities. In many of these madrasas, the Dars Nizami curriculum, compiled by Mulla Nizamuddin, was applied, which was established during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. Farangi Mahal was an Islamic seminary established in Lucknow, where this curriculum was first taught. Farangi Mahal was a complex of five buildings built by Dutch or French traders that were confiscated by Emperor Aurangzeb and given to Mulla Nizam's father. A great seminary of Islamic studies was constructed here, for which Mullanazam prepared a complete curriculum. It was modeled after the Madrasa Nizamiyyah of Baghdad, and its curriculum was also based on the Madrasa Nizamiyyah. Although Islamic studies were taught in the madrassa, which was attended only by Muslim students, the madrassa also offered Arabic language classes in which people of any religion could enroll to learn the language.

Famous Muslim Schools of Lahore:

Many madrassas were established in Punjab, and they were renowned for their excellent academic reputation. Mufti Ghulam Sarwar has recorded the details of some famous Muslim institutions in his book, *Makhzan Punjab*. Some of these essential institutions are detailed below.

Madrasah of Mianwade

The most prominent was the Madrasa of Mian Wade, a traditional school attached to the shrine of the religious saint Mian Wade in Lahore. This madrasa was established centuries before the beginning of Sikh rule. Until the time of the Maharaja, it was reserved only for noble families and the sons of the rich, and Quranic education was provided in this madrasa. Wade Mian's school in Lahore was as large as a college, and this seminary was very famous. A very high standard of education was imparted here, and Maharaja Ranjit's government fully supported it. Students from Iran, Afghanistan, and the Arabian Peninsula used to come here for higher education. This magnificent house is situated one mile south of Bagh Shalamar. This magnificent seminary was built by Sheikh Muhammad Ismail, also known as Mian Wada, during the Akbar era, and he continued to teach the Holy Qur'an there. However, Sheikh Muhammad Ismail is different from other scholars of religion because he did not come from outside. Pothu was born in the house of Fathullah, a respected member of the Khokhar tribe, in the village of Tadgaran in the Har area.

Moran Wali Government Madrasas

Moran Wali Sarkar was the beloved wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Moran Wali government showed a great interest in promoting education and other welfare initiatives. Maharaja's wife, Moran Wali Sarkar, established two madrassas in Lahore. The first madrassa was adjacent to her mansion, situated in the Papar Mandi area, near Fasail Shahr. Along with her mansion, Moranwali Rani had not only built a mosque but also established a madrasa attached to it. This seminary was run by the renowned religious scholar of that time, Maulvi Ghulam Rasool. Although his mansion no longer exists, a modest girls' training school still runs on the mosque's premises. The second madrassa he built was attached to the shrine of the 16th-century Sufi saint Madhav Lal Hussain in Baghbanpura, Lahore.

Madrasah of Maulvi Jan Muhammad

Maulana Jan Muhammad was born in 1779 in the city of Sialkot. Maulana Jan Muhammad left Sialkot and came to Lahore. Maulana Jan Muhammad became engaged in lecturing at a mosque (Noor Muhammad Imanwala) in Kashmiri Bazaar, Lahore. He had established a madrassa with this

mosque. It was known as an excellent Madrasah during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit.

Madrasa of Masjid Khorasian

In Lohari Darwaza of Lahore, there was a mosque located on the south side, known as Masjid Khorasian. The original name of this mosque was Masjid Sadr Jahan, which was built by Sadr Jahan in 1015 AH (1606 CE), during the reign of Jahangir. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a large Madrasah was established here

Faqir Family Madrasa

The Fakir family was the Sadat family who came to Chunian Tehsil of Kasur District from Uch Sharif in the 18th century and then settled in Lahore. During this period, he established a Madrasah outside Bhati Darwaza, where religious and secular education was imparted. This pillow was known as Ghulam Shah.

Kashmiri Bazaar Madrasa

This mosque in Kashmiri Bazaar was built in 1750 with three beautiful golden domes. At the Kashmiri Bazar Masjid School, there was a teacher named Allah Jiva who taught the Quran and all subjects in Arabic.

Chabak Swaran Madrasa

After the Kocha Takiya Sadhu in the cobblestone door comes the Kocha Chabak Swaran. The Chinese mosque was built in 1671. The founder of this mosque was Sarfraz Khan, also known as Afraz Khan, Nawab of Shah Jahan Badshah's criminal province of Lahore. At the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there was a Madrasah next to this mosque. The Kacha Chabakswaran school had a teacher named Muhammad Abdul Aziz who taught in Persian and Arabic.

Madrasah of Faizullah

In the nearby mosque of Faizullah, Ustad Mahmood Khawajsara was running a madrassa. Ustad Mahmood was proficient in Persian and Arabic; he taught secondary and advanced education in Arabic and Persian to students.

Madrasah of Anarkali Masjid

An advanced Arabic madrassa was established next to the Anarkali Masjid. This seminary was taught by Maulvi Noor Ahmed, who taught grammar, logic, Muslim law, and mathematics.

Sutra Mundi School

There was an educational institution in Sutra Mandi, located inside Lohari Gate, taught by Pandit Gauri Shankar, who was well-versed in mathematics, logic, medicine, and literature.

Madrasah of the Qadri chain

The Qadri family used to run their educational institution in Lahore. He also used to give scholarships to students.

Madrassa of Batala city

Some madrassas were very famous even outside Lahore. A standard school was established at Batala, where students from Iran and Afghanistan also attended. The Maharaja donated a large jagir (estate) for the maintenance of this institution.

Madrassa of Sialkot

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sialkot was also renowned for its higher education, and a very famous madrassa was located here as well. Maulvi Sheikh Ahmed, famed for his knowledge and teaching methods, taught at this seminary.

Madrasah of Khwaja Sulaiman

Khawaja Sulaiman also ran a famous school in the Sangrosa area of Dera Ghazi. Where students from Khorasan and other parts of India used to study, it was the government's responsibility to arrange free books and food for the students who came from far away to study in these madrasas.

Table 5.2 Summary of Muslim Madrasas

No.	Madrassa Name	Location	Established By	Key Features
1	Madrassa of Mian Wade	Near the Shrine of Mian Wade, Lahore	Sheikh Muhammad Ismail	Prestigious institution known for high standards; students came from Iran,

				Afghanistan, and Arabia.
2	Moran Wali Madrassas	Papar Mandi and Baghbanpura, Lahore	Moran Wali Sarkar	Two madrasas established by Maharaja's wife, focusing on Quranic studies and attached to mosques.
4	Madrasa of Masjid Khorasian	Lohari Darwaza, Lahore	Sadr Jahan (Masjid Founder)	Large madrasa established during Jahangir's reign; expanded as a key learning center during Sikh rule.
5	Faqir Family Madrasa	Outside Bhati Darwaza, Lahore	Faqir Family	Provided both religious and secular education; part of the Sadat family's educational initiatives.
6	Kashmiri Bazaar Madrasa	Kashmiri Bazaar, Lahore	Local Muslim Scholars	Featured a renowned teacher named Allah Jiva; focused on Quranic and Arabic education.
7	Chabak Swaran Madrasa	Kocha Chabak Swaran, Lahore	Sarfraz Khan	Featured Persian and Arabic teaching; known for its high academic standards during Ranjit Singh's rule.
8	Madrasa of Faizullah	Faizullah Mosque, Lahore	Ustad Mahmood Khawajsara	Specialized in advanced education in Persian and Arabic.
9	Madrasa of Anarkali Masjid	Anarkali, Lahore	Maulvi Noor Ahmed	Offered advanced studies in grammar, logic, law, and mathematics.
10	Sutra Mundi School	Sutra Mandi, inside Lohari Gate, Lahore	Pandit Gauri Shankar	Taught a variety of subjects including mathematics, logic, medicine, and literature.
11	Madrasa of the Qadri Chain	Various Locations in Lahore	Qadri Family	Provided scholarships to students; focused on religious education.
12	Madrasa of Batala City	Batala (outside Lahore)	Supported by Maharaja Ranjit Singh	High standard of education with students from Iran and

				Afghanistan; funded by a large estate.
13	Madrasa of Sialkot	Sialkot (Punjab)	Maulvi Sheikh Ahmed	Known for higher education; attracted students from across the region.
14	Madrasa of Khwaja Sulaiman	Sangrosa, Dera Ghazi	Khwaja Sulaiman	Supported by the government with free books and food; attended by students from Khorasan and India.

Sources: Kaniya Lall, Tarikh e Lahore (Ujala Printers Lahore: Lahore, ND),⁵⁴ Singh, Fauja, History & Culture of the Punjab, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2010.

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Hindus Pathshala School

While the Muslims had established madrasahs for the higher education of Arabic and Islamic studies, the Hindus had established Pathshalas for the teaching of Sanskrit and Hindu religious studies for Hindu scholars and Sanskrit for employment in Hindu institutions. Expertise was essential. However, jobs in Sanskrit and Hindu studies were limited, so 8 percent of students learned Sanskrit and Devanagari script. Some large cities had a large Pathshala with one or two large temples where secondary and higher education was imparted to Hindus. Many Pathshalas of Lahore and Punjab were very ancient. However, the caste division among Hindus was deep for the caste the temple belonged to. There Madrasah was also reserved for the people of this caste. There were some Pathshalas where people of other religions could also learn Sanskrit. A huge donation was made to the Pathshala attached to the temples in Lahore.

Gurmukhi School

The Sikhs also had a Padi Pathshala in the big cities with their big Gurdwaras where Sikh students were taught Gurmukhi and secondary and advanced education in Sikhism. Learning the Gurmukhi script was mandatory for employment in Sikh religious institutions. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was keen that the Sikh chieftains and their children should be attracted to secondary and higher education as much as possible, so he made large donations to these institutions. As far as the students learning Gurmukhi are concerned, jobs were limited for them so 6.7% students were learning Gurmukhi. Many bungalows were once built on the road to Darbar Sahib of Amritsar. The purpose of these bungalows was to secure the way to Darbar Sahib.

During the reign of Ranjit Singh, the road to Darbar Sahib was secured, so these bungalows were converted into schools of secondary and higher education run by Sikhs. These schools were fully subsidized. Many institutions of secondary and higher education were functioning under the auspices of the Sikhs throughout the Punjab. The following three institutions were more famous among them, “Bhai Jona Singh School, Bhai Lakhan Singh School, Bhai Ram Singh School”. These three institutions were considered as quality institutions of secondary and higher education. These were attached to Babe Beri's gurdwara in Sialkot was heavily donated by the Maharaja.

Buddhist and Jain educational institutions

Buddhist and Jain scholars had also established their own institutions in Punjab. Buddhist and Jain institutions were limited but were among the oldest educational institutions in Punjab. Children belonging to Buddhism and Jainism were educated here.

Mahajani School

These were the institutions where commerce and economics were taught, in these institutions the children of the trading communities studied. It was an old tradition of Punjab that communities who were engaged in trade and market used to educate their children in these institutions. These institutions did not provide any kind of religious education, they only taught about accounting and business affairs.

Famous scholars and teachers

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh there is a long list of very learned and able teachers and academicians. These people were given rewards, honors and lands by the government. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, no distinction was ever made between the scholars and the nobles on the basis of religion. Scholars and nobles of every religion were given special respect. Therefore, among these scholars we see people of every religion. There are also Hindu scholars among them. There are Sikhs and a large number of Muslims too. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, we also find a large number of Punjabi poets. Many of the ruling class were famous for their literary status and services in Lahore and other areas. Among them, the Fakir brothers are specially mentioned, many educational institutions and other welfare institutions were being run under the auspices of the Fakir family. Apart from these people, Fariduddin, Elahi Bakhsh, Mufti Imam Bakhsh and Syed Israr Shah Geelani were included. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Ustad Pir Baksh and Mian Fazaluddin were very famous for their poetry and calligraphy. Eminent people like Ahmad Yar, Qadir Yar Shah, Ghulam Rasool and Imam Bakhsh were included. Many have written about the Maharaja's conquests, although Maharaja Ranjit Singh kept

Persian as his official language, Punjabi had a strong status as a literary language in his court. Maharaja Ranjit Singh patronized Punjabi poets and writers. Hashim Shah was a famous poet of Punjabi language. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had given him special respect and honor and given him a jagir as a reward for his academic services. Punjabi poets and various writers wrote a lot for the Raja out of their interest. The famous Punjabi poet Qadir Yar belonged to the Maharaja's court

He described many of the Maharaja's battles in Punjabi poetry. Maulvi Ghulam Rasool had pledged allegiance to Syed Ahmad Bareilvi against Maharaja Ranjit in his youth and also participated in the battle, but after the defeat of Syed Ahmad Bareilvi, he came to Lahore where he was given special respect by the Maharaja, Munshi Sohan. Lal was asked to write Umdat al-Tawarikh and Maulvi Ahmed Yar Khan wrote Shahnama in Persian while Dewan Amarnath wrote Zafarnama in Persian. Dewan Amarnath was the son of Dewan Deenath, a courtier of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Ratan Singh Bhangu was a famous historian during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who wrote Prachen Panth Prakash Di Rachna in 1841. It was a history book in which Sikh history was written.

Skill Education

The Maharaja also realized the need for skill education. During this period, people lived in the traditional occupations of their families. In Punjab there was a system of communities based on professions. Under this system, people were learning the skills related to their professions from back-to-back. In this period there was no concept of formal institutions where formal education of any skill was imparted. Because there was no tradition of establishing institutions for skill education in the subcontinent. Therefore, the establishment of these skill institutions may be the result of their consultation. Maharaja Ranjit Singh also established vocational craft schools throughout the empire, and these institutions taught miniature painting, sketching, drafting, architecture and calligraphy. Maharaja Ranjit Singh to increase the subjects and scope of these schools

Education of Women

Before the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, only a limited section of the aristocracy gave secondary and higher education to their girls. This education was arranged in homes. There was no concept of reading and writing for common women. On the one hand, during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there was an extraordinary increase in the literacy rate of women. On the other hand, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was urging the Punjabi elite to make their women secondary and attract towards higher education. There were no separate schools for girls in Punjab, now the need was felt to establish separate secondary and higher education centers for girls. It was a progressive step for that time. Eighteen schools were

established for the education of girls in Lahore alone. However, this should not be taken to mean that it created educational opportunities for ordinary girls. This created opportunities for elite and upper-class girls whose homes were not provided with education.

English Education

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a far-sighted and mature ruler. He had realized that learning English was necessary for modern education. English education had started in many areas of the subcontinent, even in other states of Punjab, English educational institutions had been established in Patiala, Nabha, Kapurthala, Faridkot, and Orjand. But all these institutions were started by Christian missionaries. While Maharaja Ranjit Singh realized the importance of English language teaching, he also felt the need to separate English language teaching from Christian religious preaching and Bible teaching. For this purpose, he hired John C. of American Presbyterian Machinery. It was Maharajah's effort to contact Lori to arrange English language education in Lahore That the people of the Punjabi elite should learn the English language was Maharaja Ranjit Singh's effort to appoint English language teachers to teach people English in the institutions that are providing secondary and higher education in the kingdom, but Maharaja Ranjit Singh in his life. It didn't work. But it could have been a revolutionary step to appoint a Christian teacher to teach the English language to the children in institutions run by religious scholars of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. In this regard, he had also selected some schools in Lahore. If it had happened, English language would have been taught in schools here in Lahore even before the occupation of the East India Company. It was Maharajah's effort to start English language teaching for his courtiers and their children and gradually other classes of aristocracy also got the facility of English education. But he tried not to preach Christian teachings and the Bible in his kingdom. He banned the preaching of Christianity and the teaching of the Bible in his kingdom

Teaching Mathematics and Astronomy

Although Maharaja Ranjit Singh was illiterate, he was fully aware of the importance of secondary and higher education. Maharaja Ranjit Singh realized in the last days of his reign that the curriculum of the secondary and higher educational institutions prevailing in his kingdom was not in keeping with the needs of the times. Therefore, he was thinking of establishing such institutions which can provide higher education according to modern requirements. There were many Europeans in his army and court and he learned from them that the concept of education had changed. It was Maharaja's effort that his courtiers and their children should get modern education. In this regard, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was aware of the need to establish a higher educational institution. In this regard, Maharaja Ranjit Singh established an institution in Lahore to

impart knowledge about mathematics and modern science. Not only modern teaching of astronomy should be given but there should be an observatory for students where they can observe astronomy. In this regard, he called a well-known teacher, Akhund Ali, to teach mathematics and astronomy. Maharaja Ranjit Singh ordered the educated people of his court to participate in the teachings of Akhund Ali and create awareness about modern education. Therefore, many of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's courtiers were directly educated by Akhund Ali. The purpose of this initiative was that the Maharaja wanted to create awareness among his courtiers about the importance of modern education. So that his close associates give modern education to their children. This was a limited step. This step of the Maharaja was not fully fruitful. Akhund Ali was not so successful in establishing a modern school. However, it should be remembered here that this institution was established only for the courtiers and their children. Other people did not have access to it. In some places, the name of this institution has been written as Lahore Darbar School, where courtiers and their children were educated.

Importance of New Trade Requirements

From the way the East India Company had progressed during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign, Maharaja Ranjit Singh realized that his people needed to learn the modern requirements of trade and economy. There were lakhs of taxil mills in Punjab and huge profits were being made. And there were large traders of other agricultural commodities, many handicrafts were produced. Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to get information about the modern world from his European advisors. He realized that new markets could be found for Punjabi products and handicrafts if the elite of Punjab established a trading body. By which the income of the Punjab Empire can be very high and the employment and prosperity of the common people can also increase. He wished to have a personality who could teach the elites of Punjab about modern economic requirements. Establish elite modern trading institutions of Punjab and trade according to modern principles. At that time, Amin-ul-Mulk Khwaja Farid had received the title of Debir-ud-Daula from the Delhi court. Apart from the court, he also had experience of working with East India and was considered an expert on East Indian affairs. He resigned from the Delhi Darbar job. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh heard about him, he invited him for his employment. They wanted him to come and guide the elite in Punjab about modern trade and economy. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had sent a huge sum of thirty thousand to Debir-ud-Daula for his travel expenses. Debir-ud-Daulah consulted his friends in this regard, all of whom advised him to accept the job. Dabir al-Dawlah consulted his daughter Aziz al-Nisa. Aziz-e-Nisa said that we live under the rule of English and you will do Ranjit

Singh's job no matter what happens tomorrow, it is not appropriate to do your job. You are old anyway.

Dabir-ud-Daula accepted his daughter's advice and resigned from Maharaja Ranjit Singh's job due to ill health and returned the money sent by the Maharaja. It is worth mentioning here that Dabir-ud-Daula was the paternal grandfather of the famous Muslim leader Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Aziz-ul-Nisa was his mother. However, the Maharaja's aim here was to strengthen the elite of Punjab, especially the big businessmen. He believed that when the income of the big businessmen would increase, the financial position of the state would be more stable. It could also provide better employment to common people

Higher Medical Education

When Maharaja Ranjit Singh came in contact with Hakims and Ayurveda for his treatment, he realized that in those days people learned medicine only from their family. The Maharaja tried to provide higher education in medicine in Muslim Madrasahs. Students should be taught wisdom and wisdom. While in Hindu and Sikh institutions also higher education in Ayurvedic medicine should be given. After medical education, students examine patients with physicians, surgeons and Ayurved and get practical training in treating them. During the reign of the Maharaja, a German homeopathic doctor, JM Honigberger, had started his practice in Punjab. The Maharaja had also treated him, which convinced him of the efficacy of homeopathy. The Maharaja ordered his minister Faqir Azizuddin to select some children of doctors in the kingdom who would also learn the method of homeopathic treatment. This is how homeopathy started in Punjab

A Critical Review of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's System of Education

The steps taken by Maharaja Ranjit Singh for the promotion of education in Punjab can be divided into three parts. One is the steps he took for the literacy of the common people. This program of Maharaja Ranjit was a great success. Due to this program, the literacy rate of people in Punjab, especially women, has increased dramatically. It was a remarkable phenomenon that literacy increased so much in an agricultural economy and a craft society. Here the Maharaja made a curriculum. A whole system was created and the local people were included in it. Local landlords and moneylenders were added to his expenses. This was the most successful step in Maharaja's educational promotion works on the other hand, the Maharaja took measures for the education of the elite. These were measures for secondary and higher education in that it did not change the traditional system but tried to provide opportunities for secondary and higher education to every section of the elite. For this he supported

institutions under the auspices of scholars of every religion. Encouraged to open new institutions. And tried to make the elite of Punjab more and more inclined towards secondary and higher education. However, in this regard, the Maharaja fully depended on the traditional system. He did not make any changes in the curriculum or system. Mission institutions were opening up during this period but the Maharaja did not allow any mission institution to function in his kingdom, he continued and strengthened his traditional system of education.

In addition, Maharaja Ranjit Singh encouraged the elite class to give secondary and higher education to their girls as well. For the first time during the reign of the Maharaja, separate schools were opened for secondary and higher education of girls. But this too was education under the traditional system. And it was limited only to elite girls. Some of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's educational reforms were limited to the Maharaja's courtiers and the Khawas class. It was Maharaja Ranjit Singh's effort to make his subjects aware of the requirements of modern education. He also arranged English language education for him. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's effort was to establish a mission-style school in Lahore Darbar, where Christianity and Bible teaching would not be taught, but English language and modern curriculum would be taught. For this, the Maharaja had also contacted a missionary organization. In addition, he specially invited a well-known educationist, Akhund Ali, to Lahore and taught him especially to the courtiers and their children. This educational institution of the Maharaja is remembered by the name of Lahore Darbar School. But this educational effort of Maharaja is considered as the most unsuccessful effort. This was because such an educational endeavor required an expert who understood the demands of modern education. Which was not possible for the local academics. Just as the Maharaja had sought the help of European experts for his army and administrative structure, there was also a need for a European expert, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was aware of this and for this he contacted a mission in the subcontinent. But Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not ready to preach Christianity and teach the Bible in his area, so he could not get any kind of support from the mission. It was not possible. There is no doubt that the Maharaja was far ahead of any other ruler of his time in promoting education in his region, but Maharaja Ranjit Singh's system of secondary and higher education was limited to the traditional curriculum and traditional style. But while criticizing Maharaja Ranjit Singh in this regard, one should keep in mind that education and learning of other sciences is a cultural process in the society.

When Europe was developing scientifically and intellectually, its social, cultural and intellectual foundations were different from Punjab. In the subcontinent, the East India Company was ruling in Calcutta. The East India Company also did not establish any modern educational institutions.

English educational institutions were established by Christian missionaries. The Maharaja did not allow Christian missionaries to work in his area. He wanted Christian teachers to be employed in Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious institutions in schools in the traditional education system of Punjab where they could not preach any religion. All English language teachers at that time were Christian preachers and they did not approve of it. Therefore, this attempt of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was unsuccessful. The Sikh Empire in Punjab lasted from 1799 to 1849. This period is recognized as the period of development of knowledge in Europe. The modern industrial revolution had arrived there. Modern education had started there. It is also interesting to compare here that the industrial revolution was progressing in Europe where literacy and education created employment opportunities for the common people but Punjab was an agrarian economy where there was prosperity due to handicrafts and textiles but for these jobs there was no need for literacy or education. There was no scope for such education in the society of Punjab based on traditional economic structures. The Maharaja wanted this kind of education for Khawas. Hence to evaluate the impact much indepth study is needed.

Educational institutions were established in Punjab on religious basis. Religious identity was a reality in Punjab. Sikhism played a major role in the rise and development of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire. Even during the British era, the institutions that played an important role in the spread of modern education were built on religious foundations. Among them, Arya Samaj among Hindus, Bhai Sangh Sabha among Sikhs and Anjuman Sahak Islam among Muslims played an important role. These institutions realized the need for modern education and curriculum due to the missionary institutions after the British occupation, the traditional education system during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not face this kind of challenge. Secondly, it should be noted that during the Maharaja's era, the facilities of higher education and secondary education were only for the elite and the upper class. The setback of the system was the gap between the education system and financial or economic need of masses. No industrial or scientific revolution was coming in Punjab that there would have been such a great need for secondary and higher education.

Printing press

One thing that even a far-sighted ruler like the Maharaja could not foresee was the use of the printing press for educational purposes. Important role of printing press in European education Our local rulers, could not understand the role of printing press. In the subcontinent in the 16th century, the Paringalis established some printing presses in Goa and started printing books in local languages. However, the local ruling class

of the subcontinent did not accept the new technology. Punjab was dominated by orthodox and traditional forces who feared that the printing press would diminish their influence. Maharaja Ranjit Singh could not take any step in this regard because till that time the printing press was being used in the subcontinent for the promotion of Christian teachings and the publication of the Bible. However, neglecting to use the printing press was a fatal error that could not be ignored.

British period

In the next decades of the 19th century, a new model of education was introduced in Punjab under the British rule. The first English school in the Punjab was established in Lahore in March 1849, a few months after the conquest of the Sultanate. After the British occupation, two American Presbyterian missionaries Reverend John Newton and Charles Forman were allowed to establish an educational institution in Lahore in December. In the early 1860s, the British established several colleges, including the Government College, Lahore; Glancy Medical College and Forman Christian College; Lawrence College, Murree; and King Edward Medical University were included. It is true that during the British period, although Maharaja Ranjit Singh's tradition of literacy among the common people, especially women, ended and the access of the common people to basic education became very different. But it is also true that opportunities for secondary and higher education for the general public and for girls increased tremendously which was not possible in the traditional education system of Punjab.

Education developed through a process and phase of struggle. The contributions of Maharaja are remarkable, reflection of harmony given by Sikh religion.

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Chapter 6:

Conclusion

The land of five rivers, Punjab, has a rich and complex cultural and civilizational history that has shaped its identity over the years. This book discusses explicitly the transformation history of Punjab during Ranjit Singh's regime. The Sikh community established a flourishing state under the dynamic leadership of Ranjit Singh. This book is primarily divided into four chapters, each discussing a distinct set of activities that occurred during Singh's rule. These chapters uncover the developments, policies, and changes that happened during the Singh's rule and will also discuss the lasting impact of Singh's legacy.

Chapter One begins with the historical background of Punjab, stating that Punjab was a hub for trade and culture, and had significant value due to its location between Afghanistan and the Gangetic plains. During the Mughal

era, agricultural development remained crucial to the economy. Therefore, under Mughal rule, Punjab was a prosperous state. After the decline of the Mughal Empire, Punjab experienced internal invasions, which created a power vacuum, and the Sikhs took control to fill it. In the late 15th century, Sikhism emerged with the teachings of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Later in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa, a transformation in Sikh history that promoted equality and rejected caste distinctions, thereby serving as a resistance against the Mughal Empire.

The book begins with a discussion of various religious, social, political, and historical events that led to the minority ruling in Punjab. The chapter further highlighted that in 1715, the establishment of the Sikh state laid the foundation for further Sikh expansion under the Misl and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and his legacy continued to inspire the Sikh struggle for sovereignty—the Misl system, followed by the administrative policies of Ranjit Singh. Singh became a nation builder after his modernization efforts united various religious and caste-based communities.

Under the leadership of Singh, Punjab became one of the stable and established states, characterized by a balance between tradition and modernization. Ranjit Singh implemented inclusive policies that refused to favor any specific caste or religion, ensuring that every religious and ethnic group was treated equally. Singh emphasized loyalty, competence, and merit instead of caste or religion, yet the caste system remained influential. Such inclusive policies ensure the longevity of his empire and create a model of governance rooted in justice and pragmatism.

Singh was a patron of the arts, architecture, and culture; thus, he provided funds for the renovation of religious sites, such as the Golden Temple, and also supported the construction of forts, palaces, and religious buildings that combined Sikh, Mughal, and Rajput styles. Before Singh's rule, Persian was the official language, though the majority spoke Punjabi. Singh supported Punjabi, and it subsequently became the primary language for administrative communications, encompassing both religious and secular literature in Punjabi. It is worth mentioning that Punjab experienced a flourishing period under Singh's regime; however, internal and external challenges ultimately led to the British annexation of Punjab in 1849. Yet, the social, cultural, and political impacts of Sikh rule remain ingrained in history.

In conclusion, the rise of Sikh rule went beyond mere territorial conquest—it was a profound reordering of society based on spiritual ideals that transcended caste and ethnic divisions. Ranjit Singh's governance exemplified a model of justice and inclusivity that merged traditional

wisdom with innovative statecraft. His legacy offers enduring lessons in leadership and cultural patronage, and continues to resonate within the resilient society he helped forge. In continuation of this, Chapter Two discusses the Singh's governance and administration, while exploring the policies that left a lasting impression on Punjab and Indian History.

Chapter Two emphasizes the civil, financial, judicial, military, and religious administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The civil administration of Singh ensured the unification of Punjab by establishing a centralized state. Before Singh, Punjab was divided into conflicts; therefore, Singh used diplomacy, military strength, and strategic alliances to consolidate a single and strong empire. A centralized governance replaced the old Misl system to ensure stability and security of the region. Singh divided the empire into eight provinces, each managed by a Nazim, who was directly accountable to Singh. Kardars were responsible for managing taxation, law, and the judiciary. Singh appointed people from different religious and ethnic groups based on their abilities and merits to show the stability and unity. Singh demonstrated his interest in governance and remained accessible to ordinary people, listening to their grievances. This holistic approach to governance allowed Ranjit Singh to maintain a mighty, centralized Sikh Empire.

The chapter then discussed the financial administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Primarily, the economy relied on the agrarian sector, with land revenues serving as the primary source of income. Singh proposed various land revenue collection methods, including the Batai system, the Kankut system, and auctioning land revenue collection to contractors. Another source of revenue was taxation, as well as industries such as arms production, textiles, and leather. The currency included the gold mohar, Nanakshahi rupee, and Mansuri paisa. Despite the system's innovation, it faced challenges such as fluctuating income and corruption. Ranjit Singh promoted trade by improving security and infrastructure, and facilitating trade routes into Central Asia, thereby creating a stable environment that fostered economic prosperity in Punjab.

Thirdly, the judicial system under Singh's rule was effective, although there was no formal or legal framework in place for maintaining peace. Local traditions, religious laws, and community-based systems were some of the ways to impart justice. Panchayats played a vital role in resolving land disputes, family matters, and minor crimes, with oral testimony often being sworn on religious scriptures, which was a key element, making the system swift and efficient. Overall, Ranjit Singh's system was shaped by the social and cultural context of the time, striking a balance between local

autonomy, religious inclusivity, and personal oversight, which contributed to stability and prosperity during his reign.

Religious tolerance and inclusivity set a foundation for the progress of governance. Singh maintained a powerful administration based on merit and respect for all religions. For him, all religions were equal, and he made appointments based on merit and capability, including members from Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim faiths. He was committed to the Sikh religion, but he never imposed it on anyone to accept the Sikh religion or follow the rules.

Singh was a visionary leader, and his military reforms transformed the Sikh army into one of the most disciplined armies in Asia. He modernized the army to address both internal and external unrest. His reforms introduced modern tactics, including steady fire and the use of artillery, which moved away from guerrilla warfare. The chapter also discussed the relationship between Singh and the British Empire. He exhibited careful avoidance behavior for the sake of his state. Through his strategic adaptability, he prioritized the stability of his kingdom while acknowledging the influence of the British. The chapter concluded with a discussion on Singh's patronage of the arts and education. He supported religious and secular education through various educational institutions, including religious institutes. Through his patronage, Ranjit Singh fostered a vibrant intellectual culture in Punjab, bridging cultural and religious divides and preserving the region's traditions of learning.

The third chapter highlighted the details of the education system, policies, and procedures that took place during the regime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This chapter summarizes the significant changes that Punjab experienced during Ranjit Singh's reign (1780–1839). Military achievements and the unification of Punjab were not the only memorable aspects related to Singh; the support he showed for the education system will remain impactful. Ranjit himself was illiterate, but he understood the importance of education; thus, he supported the literacy campaign in the Punjab, encouraging people to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. However, his death was a landmark, and the British shifted the education system to a Western model, which led to the decline of Persian and religiously affiliated schools in Punjab.

The chapter has brought attention to the early history of education, where Brahmins controlled access to education, making it inaccessible to lower castes. The reforms suggested by Buddha and Guru Nanak ensured that education is accessible to all, without any distinction of caste or religion.

The educational system of Punjab not only supported religious education but also practical education for the sake of employment.

During the Singh reign (1780–1839), the educational landscape underwent significant, yet progressive and inclusive, changes. The support provided by Singh for education laid the foundations for an intellectual environment in Punjab. Singh used to invite scholars to his court for their suggestions and advice on different matters. He allocated land for schools and ensured free education. There was no discrimination based on caste, religion, or language. Multiple languages were being taught at schools, including Persian, Punjabi, and Arabic.

Along with the religious education, secular education was also prioritized. Medical education, including Yunani and Ayurvedic medicine, makes a significant contribution. Hakim Abdul Aziz and Ayurvedic practitioners, such as Pandit Madhusudan, were highlighted. The Maharaja's wife, Moran Sarkar, supported education, establishing madrasas for boys and girls in Lahore. This vibrant, community-centered model starkly contrasts with the rigid, standardized British colonial education system introduced later. The British model disrupted the existing framework by sidelining local traditions, prioritizing English, and centralizing education, undermining the flexibility and inclusivity that had defined Ranjit Singh's era.

Education during Ranjit Singh's reign was not just about learning but also about strengthening social cohesion and enabling upward mobility. As we explore the next chapter on the social impact of education during and after his reign, the interplay between learning, community relations, and cultural identity becomes clear. Ranjit Singh's educational legacy serves as a reminder of the enduring value of systems that prioritize local relevance, inclusivity, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Chapter Four provides a detailed discussion of the education system in Punjab during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule. Before Singh, Punjab endured a prolonged period of civil war and instability following the death of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the early 18th century. The key issues include rebellion led by Sikh leader Banda Bahadur Singh and continued unrest until the early 19th century; Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasions from the north added further turmoil. Political Stability under Ranjit Singh marked a period of peace and political consolidation in Punjab. Despite being illiterate, Ranjit Singh possessed exceptional skills in languages, arts, and culture, as conveyed through oral traditions. His understanding of statecraft enabled him to address critical political, economic, and military matters effectively.

This chapter highlighted that Singh built a diverse and capable team of advisors and officials, reflecting his inclusive and merit-based approach to governance. His court included local talent and European advisors, such as Jean-François Allard and Claude August Court, many of whom had served under Napoleon. Europeans trained the army and advised on foreign affairs, the judiciary, and education. He chose his team members based on merit and expertise, thus including prominent Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Europeans in key positions in his administration.

This chapter sheds light on the educational reforms implemented by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and elaborates on their impact. Before the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, education in Punjab was decentralized and oral, focusing on religious teachings in mosques, temples, and gurdwaras, with little emphasis on literacy or formal state-sponsored systems. Punjab emerged as the most literate region due to the educational reforms of Singh, the significant highlights of educational policies include; the literacy of ordinary people to make them enable to read and write; focus on women's literacy and separate facilities for girls; accessible center for basic education established near temples, mosques and Gurdwaras.

European advisors inspired Singh; thus, he recognized literacy as a means to enhance direct communication, loyalty, and unity in his kingdom. Multiple languages, including Persian, Urdu, Arabic, Nagri, Gurmukhi, and Hindi, were taught in schools for both religious and practical purposes. Ranjit Singh expanded upon the Mughal-era madrasa model, establishing schools for various faiths and generously funding them from royal resources.

By the 1830s, Ranjit Singh had expanded education in the Sikh Empire, promoting the learning of the English language and ensuring a developed educational landscape in Punjab. It is worth mentioning that Lahore had 18 formal schools for girls, in addition to specialist schools for technical training, languages, mathematics, and logic. Curriculum development was one of the foremost steps towards literacy. Singh sought advice on curriculum development and hired an expert to assist with this task. During this time, Persian was the official language; however, the majority of the population spoke Punjabi. Singh was advised to allow people to choose a language for learning and communication. Maharaja Ranjit Singh entrusted Faqir Noor-ud-Din, a skilled linguist and educator, to develop an inclusive rule for achieving educational objectives.

Quida Noor was developed as a literacy standard for teaching Persian and Punjabi. This Quida has four parts, allowing people to learn to read, write, and basic arithmetic skills. Singh made it compulsory for Numberdars to

learn Quida Noor and teach it to five other people, creating a chain process to execute the literacy strictly. This campaign also gained popularity among women of Punjab, as Singh made it compulsory for females to learn Quida Noor. Under Singh's rule, Quida Noor was integrated with religious education in mosques, temples, and gurdwaras, and these became primary education centers for boys and girls. This initiative expanded literacy, with over 4,000 free educational institutions serving millions, making Punjab a model of widespread basic education in the region. There were maktab, madrasah, Patshala, Gurmukhi Schools, and Mahajani as some of the categories of schools. Local people were involved in managing these schools. Teachers were paid in the form of daily groceries. There were a maximum of fifty students in each class. Numberdar was responsible for keeping a check and balance in these terms.

This chapter covers the decline of the education system following Singh's death in 1839. The education system in Punjab crumbled due to political instability and British colonization. The languages were replaced with Urdu and English, and Quida Noor was banned. A new British-led education model was introduced, which was not even accessible to the majority. Yet the people of Punjab managed to learn through their efforts.

The chapter mentions all the madrasas and educational institutions' details that were present during and after Singh's rule. These educational institutions, including schools, madrasas, and higher educational institutions, not only contributed to the intellectual and cultural development of the region but also laid the foundation for a more literate and informed society. Despite the challenges faced after Ranjit Singh's death, the legacy of these educational systems remains an important chapter in Punjab's history, reflecting the profound impact of the Maharaja's vision for education.

Last but not least, this book has comprehensively studied the governance, military achievements, cultural patronage, and educational reforms that took place during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule in Punjab. His policies and leadership bring about a transformation in Punjab, laying the foundations for an established and stable society. During his reign, he brought diverse religions and communities under one umbrella, ensuring inclusivity and a strong sociopolitical identity. This book has also shed light on the educational reforms and policies of Singh, which enhanced literacy among people and promoted their intellectual growth. The decentralization of the education system, introduction of Quida Noor, financial and moral support to schools, scholars, and communities were some of the most highlighted events under his rule. Despite the decline of Singh's empire after his death and the imposition of British colonial education, the legacy of Ranjit

Singh's progressive policies continues to resonate in the cultural and educational fabric of the region.

The purpose of this book is to illuminate the lasting contributions of Ranjit Singh's rule, providing valuable insights into the strengths of inclusive leadership and the transformative power of education. By presenting these historical dynamics, the book offers both historical scholars and contemporary readers a deeper understanding of how Ranjit Singh's reign shaped the region and provides enduring lessons in governance, cultural preservation, and societal development.

Index

A	
Adaltis.....	68
B	
Banda Singh Bahadur ..	19
<i>Batai</i> system.....	58
Bhangi Misl	See Misl System, See Misl System
Bhawani Das	56, 63, 73
C	
<i>Chatshalas</i>	121
Cis-Sutlej.....	84
D	
Daftar-e-Fauj	79
Damdama Sahib	112
Data Ganj Bakhsh.....	74
F	
Fauj-e-Ain.....	79
Fauj-e-Baquaid.....	81
G	
Golden Temple .	29, 34, 38
Grand Trunk Road	64
Granth Sahib	111, 119
Gurbani Kirtan.....	37
Gurmukhi	118, 120
Guru Amar Das	15
Guru Angad	15
Guru Gobind Singh.....	16
Guru Granth Sahib	75
Guru Hargobind.....	15
Guru Nanak	14
Guru Ram Das	15, 75
Guru Tegh Bahadur	19
H	
Harappan Civilization ...	1
J	
<i>Jagirdars</i>	62
Jats	35
Jawalamukhi temple	74
K	
Kangra.....	87

Kanheya Misl *See* Misl System

Kankut system 58

Kanz-ul-Musalli 129

Kardars 53, 60

Kashmir 31

Khalīq Bārī 125

Khalsa 16

L

Landā 121

Lion of Punjab 28, 48

Lohgarh 20

M

Madrassas 127

Mahajani 121

*Maktab*s 123

Manusmriti 68

Misl 22

Misl system 21

Moran Sarkar 116

Muqaddams 54

N

Nanakshahi 62, 65

P

Padahs 122

Panchayat 67

Panj Pyare 16

pathshalas 113

Pathshalas 132

Pawindahs 65

Phulkian Misls *See* Misl System

Q

Qazis 68

Qissas-ul-Anbia 129

R

Ramarghia Misl *See* Misl System

S

Sarbat Khalsa 17

Sikh Empire 5

Sirpanch 67

Sukerchakia Misl *See* Misl System

Sunahri Masjid 74

T

Tahwildars 56

Taqavi 60

Taxation 62

Topkhana Khas 80

Toshakhana 55

Treaty of Amritsar 84

Tughluq 9

U

Udasis 114

Umayyad Dynasty 11

W

Waqanawis 53

Z

Zakhirajat 56

zamindars 59

