CHAPTER-V
CIVIL ADMINISTRATORS

Though most of the Hindu Courtiers and Officials joined Lahore Darbar as military personnel, even so a few of them were also asked to look after the civil administration as well, in those regions which had been conquered by the Maharaja, such as Jalandhar, Kashmir, Multan etc. So, along with their services in military field they had to perform various duties in civil administration of the Sikh Kingdom as well. Thus, the chapter deal particularly with the services rendered by Diwan Mohkam Chand, Diwan Moti Ram, Diwan Kirpa Ram, Misr Rup Lal and Diwan Sawan Mal etc. in the civil administration and their services have been examined analytically, of course, keeping in mind their caliber, farsightedness and credibility due to their commitment, modesty, sincerity and loyalty towards Maharaja Ranjit Singh as well as the Lahore Darbar.

The Kingdom of Punjab had several divisions and sub divisions of varying sizes. At the primary level there were Subas and in areas where there were no Subas, there were districts. The Maharaja had divided his Kingdom into four provinces: I. Suba-i-Lahore- consisting of the territory between the Jehlum and the Sutlej; II. Suba-i-Multan, also known as Dar-ul-Aman (the abode of peace)- consisting of the present districts of Multan, Muzzaffargarh, Jhang, and parts of Montgomery and Dera Ismail Khan; III Suba-i-Kashmir, popularly called Jannat Nazir (Paradise of the Earth); IV Suba-i-Peshawar -consisting of the Valley of Peshawar. The large districts\(^{601}\) which did not really fall under any of these Subas

\(^{601}\) Such a district was larger than a Pargna and smaller than a Suba, something intermediate between Pargna and the Suba. Under the Mughals probably there was no such unit as the Suba of Lahore, or any
were Kangra, Jalandhar Doab, Majha, Wazirabad, Pind Dadan, Gujrat, Rajauri, Punchh, Hazara, Bannu-Tank, Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan. His hill principalities were allowed to be continued under vassal Chiefs on specific terms. They paid tributes to the State.

The secondary level units were composed of Pargnas which also widely differed in size depending upon whether they fell within a big Suba or a mere district. The Pargnas were further split up into Talluqas, each of which contained from 50 to 100 mauzas or villages and they could be equated to the modern tehsils. Between the Pargna and the mauza or village which was the lowest unit, there were a few other units, such as tappa and tope. ⁶⁰² ⁶⁰³ The number of tappas in a Pargna varied according to its size. There are also references to the units called Chaklas and Mahals.

Whether Subas or districts, they were all governed by Nazims who naturally did not enjoy the same status and powers. The Nazim was appointed to look after the administration of the province. The Nazim enjoyed large powers and probably had a voice in the appointment of Kardars who worked under them. ⁶⁰⁴ He was directly accountable to the ruler and held his office in accordance with the approval of his master. ⁶⁰⁵ Nazim was the Maharaja’s vice-regent or representative in the province.

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⁶⁰² Suba for that matter, was divided into Pargans and then into smaller units coming down to the mauza or village. Under Ranjit Singh a new situation arose as until 1818 his whole kingdom was little more than the erstwhile Mughal Suba of Lahore. Whereas then he was the supreme ruler of all of his territories, he felt the need of creating a new territorial unit which should be larger than the size of the Pargna. It is not definite what name was given to this new unit but on the basis of some references found in the contemporary accounts it may be said that the term used for it was Ilaka. This term was in use even before but mostly in the geographical sense. Under the Sikhs it acquired a new connotation and came to represent a new administrative division. For details see Fauja Singh, Some Aspects of State and Society under Ranjit Singh, New Delhi, 1982, p.81.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.


Very responsible, intelligent and experienced persons of the highest calibre and suitability were appointed as Nazims. Sometimes the Princes were also posted as Nazims to gain administrative experience but they were always assisted by very efficient and seasoned advisers and administrators.

The Nazim was allowed to wield considerable powers in the territory under his jurisdiction. For every important decision regarding his province the Nazim had to secure the prior approval of the Maharaja. His main duty was to maintain peace and order in his territory and to deposit regular installments of revenue in the royal treasury. When a Governor was appointed, the Maharaja invested him with suitable honours; an instrument of instructions was also issued to him at the time of his departure to take charge. He was specially educated about the nature of his work, his responsibilities, powers, privileges and limitations. "The provincial Governor, remunerating himself with the surplus of the revenue which he had contracted to pay the sovereign, seldom at a lower rate than four annas in the rupee, or one-fourth of the estimated annual value of the cultivated land (about 2,50,000/ sterling), was unscrupulous as to the means by which he wrung their substance from the landholders." The Nazims were sometimes allowed to administer their territories through a deputy or a mukhtar-i-kar. If and when the Nazim was found incapable or guilty of deliberate neglect or dereliction of duty he was removed from his office. It was a regular practice with the Maharaja to make enquiries about the administration

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606 According to John Lawrence, the Nazim was required to punctually send the revenues collected from the territory under his charge: Foreign Department; Secret Consulation, 26 December, 1846, No. 1325-27. National Archives India, New Delhi (Hereafter read it NAI).
in Kashmir, Peshawar and Multan from foreigners who met him after passing through these areas. He is known to have made enquiries from Baron Hugel and Vigne about Kashmir in 1836 and from Court about Peshawar in 1836 and again in 1838.610

The *Nazim* had a large number of *Kardars* as his subordinates. *Kardar* was an officer incharge of the *Pargna*.611 Like the *Nazims* they were also centrally appointed612. The *Nazims* and the *Kardars* could be used as checks upon each other. The *Kardar* was generally appointed by the ruler and normally had to submit a formal deed of acceptance before he was appointed. There was no fixed tenure of the *Kardar*. The position and importance of the *Kardars* depended on the extent of the territory under their charge. In the local Government, the *Kardar* was more important than the *Nazim* due to his executive role. He was endowed with extensive powers and performed multifarious and multi-dimensional duties. He was a revenue collector and supervisor of land settlement, a Treasurer as well as Accountant, a Judge and Magistrate, an Excise and Custom’s officer and general supervisor of the people on the behalf of the Government. The *Kardar* was allowed a small establishment consisting of one *sandukchi* or treasurer on 15 to 20 rupees a month and a writer or *Mutasadi* on 20 to 25 rupees a month.613

Unlike the *Kardar*, the *Qanungo* performed his functions in the *Talluqa* more or less permanently. He was the registrar of the department of land revenue. Under the Mughals there used to be one *Qanungo* for a *Pargna* but under the Sikhs there were sometimes two or three *Qanungos*

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612 Dr. Indu Banga, *Presidential Address*, delivered at the XIV session of Punjab History Conference held at Punjabi University Patiala in 1980, p. 90.
in a Pargna. All information regarding the arable land, its possessions, produce, State share and the market prices of the grains and other crops was collected and preserved in his office. His office maintained a record of the local revenue rates and the revenue receipts also. During the Sikh period, he was, at places, paid a certain percentage of the produce or a monthly salary of 30 rupees.\footnote{Ibid., p. 452.}

During Ranjit Singh’s time each Pargna or a Talluqa was divided into a number of tappas. In each tappa a Chaudhari was appointed for the collection of revenue. The Muqadam (the village headman) was entrusted with the general superintendence of the affairs of the village and among other things settled the disputes, attended to the Government officials visiting the village and collected the revenues from his village. Infact, more than one Muqadam (or lambardar or panch) could be found at places in a single village for each of its major subdivisions generally known as tarafs and pattis.\footnote{Leuis W. Dane, Final Report on the Revised Settlement of the Gurdaspur District, Lahore, 1892, p. 57.} For their services rendered to the State the Chaudhris and Muqadams were generally given revenue-free lands. They also received a certain percentage of revenue collected. There is frequent reference in the records to the 5 per cent of commission paid to these functionaries. The Patwari’s\footnote{According to Walter Lawrence, The valley of Kashmir, Srinagar, 1967, pp. 447-48, The Patwari’s post normally hereditary.} main duty was to maintain revenue records for every village that fell in his jurisdiction. During Ranjit Singh’s time, generally, three to eight villages comprised a tappa and a single Patwari maintained the records of the whole of the tappa. As a record keeper of the village, he was supposed to work in coordination with the village muqadam and the Pargna qanungo. The
remuneration of the *Patwari* was, generally, 1 per cent to 2 per cent of the collection made from the villages under his jurisdiction.

In Civil administration Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Hindus as *Nazims* which were the following: Diwan Sawan Mal, Misr Rup Lal, Diwan Mohkam Chand, Diwan Moti Ram, Diwan Kirpa Ram, Diwan Chunni Lal and Sukh Dayal. Diwan Sawan Mal, *Nазim* of Multan and Misr Rup Lal *Nazim* of Jalandhar enjoyed long term of office and were also considered to be the best *Nazims*.

Jalandhar was an important district or *Ilaka* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The district of Jalandhar was named after the demigod *Jalandhara*. Hoshiarpur was a district of Jalandhar. The Bist-Jalandhar *Doab* was the smallest *Doab*, and with its rich agricultural resources, it was fairly well cultivated throughout its length and breadth. In 1811 it fell in the hands of Ranjit Singh. Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh it was governed by several Governors: Diwan Mohkam Chand, Diwan Moti Ram, Avitable, Nuruddin, Diwan Kirpa Ram, Shaikh Ghulam Muhiud-Din and Misr Rup Lal. Most of them were Hindus who administered Jalandhar efficiently.

Under Ranjit Singh the condition of Jalandhar *Doab* did not differ from that of the rest other monarch dominions of those time. The petty Sardars of the early Sikh times were gradually swallowed up and the country was placed under the care of officers, *Nazims*, appointed from Lahore. The first of these *Nazims* was Diwan Mohkam Chand. His administration of the Jalandhar Doab was the most efficient and thus most popular. As the Governor of the Jalandhar *Doab*, he was the

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most regular in his payments to the royal exchequer at Lahore. He faithfully carried out instructions from his master which made him popular among the people.\textsuperscript{620} It is said that within a few months of his taking over the Governorship he remitted to his king a sum of rupees 50,000 and a large sum in goods.\textsuperscript{621} His administration was the most human also. Under an order from Ranjit Singh, Diwan Mohkam Chand engaged an Italian engineer for converting Phillour imperial Saran/Sarai into a fort. The Maharaja ordered Diwan Mohkam Chand to built a fort on the bank of the Satlej for security purpose. Mohkam Chand suggested the Maharaja that there was a Saran, which was built by Sher Shah Suri, now under Dharam Singh, converted in to a fort. The Maharaja agreed with his suggestion. Mohkam Chand sent a force against Dharam Singh and seized the Saran.\textsuperscript{622}

Under Diwan Mohkam Chand the collection of revenue was universally made in kind. Here and there money assessments were fixed, but only from year to year, and liable at any time to give way to the customary system of division of produce no matter, if harvest should fail, or, on the other hand turn out to be exceptionally good. Such money assessments, however, were more successful in Jalandhar than in Hoshiarpur. In the latter district the people could not be induced to continue cash payments for more than one or two harvests; and the ordinary system was to farm out the villages from year to year to bankers, who obtained the kind from the cultivators and paid in coin to the Government treasury.


The British Government was sensitive to the appointment of Diwan Mohkam Chand whose attitude was definitely anti British, as the Governor of Jalandhar Doab. Diwan Mokham Chand was evidently against the Britishers. He always advised the Maharaja against placing confidence in the foreigners. Griffin writes that General Ochterlony, the resident at Ludhiana, "did not find Mokham Chand a pleasant neighbour, for he hated the English who had made the Sutlej the boundary of his master's ambition. In 1812 when General Ochterlony came to attend the marriage ceremony of Prince Kharak Singh, he requested the Maharaja to show him the fort of Phillaur. The Maharaja agreed. When the shrewd Diwan learnt about this decision he strongly protested against the fort being shown to a farangi and a covert enemy of the Raj. The Maharaja realizing the sense in his General's arguments had to retrace his steps and disappoint General Ochterlony.

After the capture of Kangra he was also appointed the Nazim of this place. As the Diwan was required for other expeditions, the full charge of Kangra hills was entrusted to Desa Singh Mijithia.

When Diwan Mohkam Chand was assigned some other duties the Doab was managed by his son Moti Ram. In October 29, 1814, Diwan Mohkam Chand died and was succeeded by Moti Ram. He held the appointment till he was appointed Nazim or Governor of Kashmir in 1819 and his place in Jalandhar was taken by his son Kirpa Ram. Soon after on the advice of Dhian Singh who was jealous of Moti Ram and his

sons, Maharaja asked Kirpa Ram to join the Peshawar expedition with his whole contingent. As Kirpa Ram brought with him only fifty horseman, he became the target of the Maharaja's anger. The reason behind this Diwan Kirpa Ram had not collected revenue properly from his jagir and he had not gave the salary to his soldiers. Due to this reason he had not prepared his army for expedition. Kirpa Ram was imprisoned and fined him two lakh rupees. His father Diwan Moti Ram was recalled from Kashmir and submitted Rs. 70,000 thousand as Nazrana. Ranjit Singh at once withdrew the charge of Jalandhar from Diwan Kirpa Ram and made it over at first to Fakir Aziz-ud-Din and then to Sardar Desa Singh Majithia. Murray gave different view. He mention "The bad management of the jagirs and the inefficient contingent kept up by this agent, were the assigned reasons. Moti Ram himself being left in his Government of Kashmir and subjected to no indignity or diminution of favour, consequent upon the sequestration." In a year and a half, Diwan Kirpa Ram was again taken into favour and was appointed to Kashmir where he remained till 1831, when he again was victimized by the perniciousness of Dhian Singh.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Shaikh Gulam Muhi-ud-Din as the next Nazim of Jalandhar. The man was the first of a line of Nazims known as Shaikhs who were of evil repute on account of the merciless ways in which they exacted the last faithing from the people. After one year of Muhi-ud-Din's term the people raised such an outcry against his oppressive administration that he was recalled and Misr Rup Lal another
object of dislike to Raja Dhian Singh was sent in his place to Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur.635 Misr Rup Lal was appointed the Nazim of Jalandhar Doab in 1832.636

The new Governor was of a very different character from his predecessor. Misr Rup Lal's works in the Jalandhar Doab had also elicited much praise for his promotion of agriculture. He is described as, "an able and human ruler, true to his word and engagements, loved by the agriculturists and dreaded by evil-doors."637 His head-quarters were at the town of Hoshiarpur. A better man could not have been chosen. He was wealthy and for this reason free from any powerful inducement to oppress others and being connected, moreover, by marriage with a Jalandhar family, he had an interest in the prosperity of the country. He was more successful than his predecessors in introducing cash payments of revenue. He brought great prosperity to Doaba Bist Jalandhar.638 In Jalandhar Doab the practice of farming out a village or a group of villages was the common unit of assessment.639 The Doab "was well and equitably"640 governed by him and his assessments were generally light"641 According to John Lawrence, "He convert a perfect wilderness into the Garden of the Punjab".642 Misr Rup Lal compounded in one sum the revenue and all extra dues and cesses leviable by the State; and his rates were such that holders of his leases, seldom

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641 *District Gazetteer of Hoshiarpur*, 1883-84, p. 130.
642 *Foreign Department; Political Proceedings*, 31 December, 1847, No. 2443, NAI.
hesitated, at a later period, to produce them before the British settlement officers -a sure sign that they would not object to pay his assessments. Even in the famine year of 1833 there were very few unpaid balances.\textsuperscript{643} On the other hand, he was known for his tyranny and high-handedness because the Zamindars were became wancterers and fugitives and escaped across the river Satlej.\textsuperscript{644}

Misr Rup Lal was a popular and conscientious administrator and did not approve oppression of any kind. The amount of the revenue collected by him from Doab of Jalandhar was about rupees 18,72,902\textsuperscript{645}. His process of collecting revenue was methodical and honourable. He would never accept the smallest presents and kept a close watch upon the conduct of his subordinates. It is even said that "among the long rule of Sikh Nazims, who as a rule, considered the people under them as seated for their private profit, it is refreshing to meet with a man like Misr Rup Lal upright and just whose name is to this day remembered by the people with respect and affection."\textsuperscript{646} His name was almost universally revered and spoken of with gratitude. Sohan Lal Suri recorded at many places the words of praise used by Ranjit Singh, Darbar Courtiers and some British officials for the administration of Misr Rup Lal. For example in 1834 and 1838, Captain Wade appreciated the prosperity of the Doaba Bist Jalandhar by Misr Rup Lal.\textsuperscript{647} Fakir Aziz-ud-Din also praised Misr Rup Lal for his good administration.\textsuperscript{648}

\textsuperscript{645} Shahamat Ali, The Sikhs and the Afghans, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{646} S.A. Abbot, Deputy Commissioner, Memorandum of the first eight years' British rule in the District Hoshiarpur from its annexation in 1846-47 to the close of 1853-54, Selection from the Public Correspondence of the Punjab Administration, Vol.IV, No.3, p. 362, cited in Punjab District Gazetteer, Jalandhar District, Vol-XIV, 1904, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{647} Sohan Lal Suri, Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Daftar III, (Part-II)and (Part-IV), (English Translation), V.S.Suri, pp. 195, 448.
\textsuperscript{648} Ibid, (Part-V), p. 569.
Probably, Misr Rup Lal's praises would not have been sung so universally and spiritedly if he had not officiated between the two administrative tenures of two Shaikhs, one of whom had ground down the people before him and the other who had raised his demands largely, besides levying extra dues as he saw fit. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh Misr brothers experienced a turn in their fortunes mainly due to the enmity of Dogra brothers. A few months after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh Misr Rup Lal was recalled and the old oppressor of the Doab Shaikh Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din was reappointed in his place. Misr Rup Lal ruled the Doab from 1832 to 1839.⁶⁴⁹

Multan was another important Suba which was conquered by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1818. When the Maharaja conquered it, the condition of this Suba was far from satisfactory. People of the city had been wantonly despoiled by the Sikh soldiery: the farmers had abandoned the fields and the population had deserted the town; the weavers and silk manufactures had ceased to perform their activities, and trade was at a standstill⁶⁵⁰. Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Sukh Dayal the first Hindu Nazim or Governor of Multan.⁶⁵¹ He, as a Nazim of Multan received rupees 36,000 per annum,⁶⁵² but he could not collect revenue efficiently and the Maharaja removed the Nazim and imprisoned him on the charges of misappropriation of State dues. The country was then farmed out to Sham Singh for an annual sum of Rs. 6, 50, 000. He and his successor Bhaiya Badan Hazari could also not manage the

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province. He failed to render an account and was dismissed soon after. Sawan Mal who had already attracted the attention of the Maharaja was promoted in his stead.

Great may thy name be, Lala Sawan Mal
thou last repopulated a ruined country.653

A new era began in 1819 when Diwan Sawan Mal was appointed as Kardar of half the province of Multan by Ranjit Singh.654 In 1829 he was promoted as the Nazim of the whole.655 By degrees other ilakas were added to the Diwan's contract until he held the greater part of the areas which fell under the Governorship of Multan. These were Jhang656 Muzaffargarh,657 Dera Ismail Khan658 (Montgomery) and Dera Ghazi Khan659. The title of Diwan was conferred on him in December 1832660. He also worked as the Kardar of Pargna Hafizabad and Pargna Ram Nagar.661

Diwan Sawan Mal first of all turned his attention to establish peace and order. He had at his command a force of eight hundred Sikhs, under

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657 In 1837, the whole district of the present district of Muzaffargarh was united under Diwan Sawan Mal; *District Gazetteer of Muzaffargarh*, 1883-84, p. 40.
Gandar Singh, besides the garrisons sprinkled over the country. He appointed Daya Ram a native of Gujranwala, to the task of suppressing robberies and thefts. He immediately attacked the notorious freebooter Basehu Sangrial and killed him. The other thieves and robbers so severely punished the name Sawan Mal became a law by itself.

When Diwan Sawan Mal took the charge he kept power tightly concentrated in his own hands and subjected subordinate officials to minute supervision. He stopped the raids of the Kathias in the east of the district. His Naib Daya Ram, a native of Gujranwala suddenly attacked and killed Baku langrial a noted free-booter in the neighbourhood of Tulamba. After this, the Zamindars were made to pay revenue punctually and the Diwan’s remittances to Lahore were always complete. The amount of revenue submitted by him was about Rs. 38,98,550.

The country which thus came under his rule, comprising the districts of Multan, Leiah (Dera Ismail Khan), Dera Ghazi Khan, Khangarh (Muzaffargarh) and parts of Jhang was almost a desert. He faced a daunting task when he assumed office. Multan was largely desolate as a result of decades of misrule and warfare. Life and property were insecure and the population which once had been numerous and wealthy had become scanty and impoverished.

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664 Besides, one incident had taken place on April, 1835, Kanwar Naunihal Singh complaint to the Maharaja that Sawan Mal had not made any payment of salaries. On this the Maharaja said to the Kanwar, Fateh Singh Mann and Diwan Hakim Rai on 20 August 1835, “Diwan Sawan Mal was honest, humble man and always ready to serve. Therefore his reputation must be guarded and regards should be paid to his views in every matter and it would be advisable for them to make collections in easy installments according to his wish.” Sohan Lal Suri, _Umdat-ut-Tawarikh_, Daftar III (Part-II) pp. 226, 245, 247.
666 _District Gazetter of Multan_, 1883-84, p. 30.
Sawan Mal possessed considerable administrative experience. As a Governor he displayed a tremendous capacity for hard work and effected great improvements during a long reign. A productive but reasonable revenue system was introduced, extensive measures for agricultural improvements were carried out and equal justice was meted out to all classes. He replaced the disorganised Government of the Pathans by a system of rule conducted on the principles which benefited both the State and the people. Due to these endeavours, cultivation, population and prosperity expanded substantially. Though he himself was a Hindu, yet he appreciated the virtues of the Pathans and these supplied his army with its most distinguished and dashing officers.

During these twenty three years Diwan Sawan Mal through his great executive abilities, raised the province of Multan to a higher State of prosperity than it had perhaps ever before attained and while giving satisfaction to his Government by regular remittances of revenue, he continued to accumulate an enormous private fortune for himself.\textsuperscript{667} In the district of Dera Ghazi Khan he appointed several Kardars for collect the revenue. They were : Jawahar Mal, Rang Ram, Kirpa Ram, Bahadur Chand, Radha Kishan, Linga Ram.\textsuperscript{668}

Diwan Sawan Mal improved the lot of the cultivators by giving them relief from the pressure of exorbitant exactions. He introduced land reforms which without disturbing the propitiatory rights of the Zamindars encouraged the Chakdars and the Sillundars - the real cultivators of the soil, to reclaim and improve the land and dig wells in the uncultivated portion of the land.\textsuperscript{669} Sawan Mal’s agricultural reforms in the Suba of Multan were based on the principle of lower taxes, better facilities for cultivators to get adequate price for their produce, and a regular supply of water to their fields. He organised a fresh revenue system and fixed the taxes on the land actually under cultivation.

\textsuperscript{668} District and State Gazetteer of Undivided Punjab, District of Dera Ghazi Khan, Vol. I, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{669} B.J. Hasrat, Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh p. 97.
according to the nature of crops grown.\(^{670}\) It was simply an excise on agricultural produce, levied in the form of an average tax in money or a fixed proportion in kind, according the choice of the Zamindar. On the 1st class crops, as tobacco, sugar, poppy money rates were invariably charged and no option was allowed.\(^{671}\)

The prosperity brought about by such efforts of Diwan Sawan Mal attracted the notice of some high contemporary British officials and travellers who happened to pass a number of times through the Governorship of Diwan Sawan Mal and Maharaja Ranjit Singh also appreciated the administration of the Diwan.\(^{672}\)

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\(^{672}\) On 15 August, 1836 the Maharaja observed that "Sawan Mal could wield pen and sword equally well." Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-at-Tawarikh*, Daftar-III, Part-II, p. 426; On 16 April, 1838, Maharaja Ranjit Singh observed that "Diwan Sawan Mal was an honest man and one who made his country ever more prosperous"; Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-at-Tawarikh*, Daftar-III, Part-V, p. 608; On 2 January 1839, the Maharaja again praised Diwan Sawan Mal's faithfulness and capability; On 16 September 1835, Captain Wade, who had travelled right across the whole province of Multan remarked that Sawan Mal was an honest and faithful man, who took great interest in making the country prosperous and the people were very grateful to him. He said that "there was no other man with the Maharaja, the Diwan and would never be". Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-at-Tawarikh*, Daftar-III, (Part-II), p. 247; On 11 January 1836, Macksen told the Maharaja that Sawan Mal "was incomparable in the control and administration of his own". *Ibid*, pp. 246-247; James Douie describes Sawan Mal as an oriental ruler of the best type who did much to restore the prosperity after the century of anarchy; James Douie, *Punjab Settlement Manual*, p. 20; According to Munshi Hukam Chand Diwan Sawan Mal was a wise administrator and the people of Multan mentioned his name with great respect. He was regular in attending to the affairs of his office and used to sit there daily for several hours. Besides administering justices personally, he paid very careful attention to revenue papers; Munshi Hukam Chand, *Tariikh-i-Multan*, Lahore, 1884., p. 470-71 cited in Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, p. 74; Charles Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Blochistan, Afghanistan, the Punjab and Kalat*, Vol. I, p.398, observes that Diwan Sawan Mal was a popular ruler, and many anecdotes relate accounts of his liberality and indulgence even on matters connected with religion. He further observes about his administration that "the Sikh authority over the conquered provinces held by the subedar being firmly established, the administration is mild, owing partly, perhaps, to his personal character and two Sikhs are located at every village and hamlet on the part of the Government. The peasantry make over a third of the produce of their lands: neither do they complain"; Vigne writes in *A Personal Narrative of a Visit of Ghuzni, Kabul and Afghanistan*, Vol. II. London 1840, p. 23; about his personal appearance and Government that he was a thin man, with a good tempered character and for a native a superior expression of his countenance and was said to have distinguished himself at the taking of the city. His Government was well spoken of by the Lohani merchants who gave him an excellent character for justice in his dealings with them. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had also been heard to have said that he was one of the best officers in his service; According to G.L. Chopra, *The Punjab as a Sovereign State (1799-1839)*, p. 87, Diwan Sawan Mal was Stated in every account to have been efficient and progressive. He succeeded in introducing agricultural reforms of a for reaching character, and thereby changing the whole appearance of the country; E.D. Maclagan describes that Diwan Sawan Mal was one of the very few men in India, who had been able to combine the exaction of a very full revenue with the complete contentment of
The system of land revenue assessment prevalent under the Sikhs in the *Suba* of Multan functioned on the basis of Governmental share either in cash or kind of the gross produce. Four methods of collection of revenue were employed 1. *Jinsi* or *Batai* 2. *Naqdi-Jinsi* 3. *Zabti* or cash assessment 4. *Qorari* or cash lumpsum assessment.673

Diwan Sawan Mal handled the revenue affairs of Multan with commendable ability. O'Brien in his account said about the Sikh rule in Multan, "Diwan Sawan Mal's Government was better than anything that had proceeded it. Its sole object was the accumulation of wealth for the Diwan. The execution of public works, the administration of justice and security of life and prosperity were of secondary consideration and were insisted on only because without them agriculture would not prosper and the revenue would not be paid".674 The revenue deposited by him in the central exchequer was nearly twenty-two lakhs which had been collected by him from the three districts of Multan, Muzaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan and from parts of Montgomery, Jhang and Dera Ismail Khan. Diwan's system was well suited to the agricultural conditions of the country under his rule and it is interesting to note the experience of his system has led us in many cases to methods of assessment very similar to those which he adopted.

The revenue collected by the *Kardars* from the *Talluqa* and *Munshi* helped him largely. Several instructions were issued to the *Kardars* of Multan by Diwan Sawan Mal for proper collection of revenue. They were expected to send the revenues punctually in six installments. Three each for the *Kharif* and the *Rabi*.

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673 For more details about revenue assessment methods see chapter III.
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The policy of extensive cultivation attained its highest watermark of success in the Suba of Multan under the management of Diwan Sawan Mal. The Diwan succeeded in bringing vast tracts of waste land under cultivation. There were plenty of such waste lands there. The owners were not only small in number but also did not possess the means to cultivate all their lands. Their difficulties were increased manifold by the scarcity and uncertainty of rainfall.

Diwan Sawan Mal promoted the colonization of waste lands by offering favourable terms of assessment to individuals who brought new lands under cultivation. A large number of colonials were settled in Jhang and Muzaffargarh by Diwan Sawan Mal and he gave them land and protection. 675 He seems to have made special efforts to colonise the Leiah Thal, and granted very favourable terms to those who built wells there. 676 The Diwan decided to support them and assured them that if they developed any lands they would not be ousted from them rather they would be recognized as virtual owners of those lands (adna malik) while the real owners (ala malik) would only be nominal owners.

Diwan Sawan Mal introduced many reforms. He induced the people to combine to dig new and restore old canals. He excavated canals (in the

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Multan district alone of the length of 300 miles), he favoured commerce and acted in every way as a wise and beneficent ruler. Multan was studded with a system of old and new canals as under:

1. The Diwanwah, a canal 35 miles in length, irrigating Ladhran, Khai and Mailsi, was an old disused canal re-excavated by Mustafa Khan under Sawan Mal. It was navigable for boats up to 40 miles from Multan.
2. The Sardarwah, 38 miles in length, irrigating Kehror and Sardarwah. It was navigable for about 25 miles along the highway from Multan to Bahawalpur.
3. The Muhammedwah, a canal having a length of 30 miles, irrigating Kehror. It was navigable for 12 miles from its mouth at Shahpur Jussa.
4. The Bahawalwah, length 30 miles, irrigated Mailsi and Kehror. It was navigable for about 15 miles from its mouth.
5. The Sultanwah, length 25 miles. It was a branch of the Bahawalwah, which irrigated Mailsi and Kehror and was navigable for about 3 miles.
6. The Qabulwah, length 20 miles. It irrigated Mailsi and was navigable for 3 miles.
7. The Jamwah, length 30 miles. It irrigated Mailsi and was navigable for 8 miles from its mouth at Niamat Ali.
8. The Jamwah and the Qutubwah, length 30 miles. It irrigated Mailsi, and was navigable for about 10 miles.
9. Canal Wali Muhammad, length 30 miles. It irrigated Multan and its environments, and was navigable beyond Suraj Kund.
10. The Shahpur canal, length 12 miles. It irrigated Multan.
11. The Doorana canal, length 10 miles. It irrigated Multan and Sitlamarhi.
12. The Sikandarwah, length 30 miles. It irrigated Multan and its suburbs and was navigable for 15 miles.
13. The Gujhala canal length 12 miles. It irrigated Shujabad and was partly navigable.
14. The Bakhtwah, length 12 miles. It irrigated Shujabad and was navigable for about 8 miles.
15. The Dhundhu canal, length 16 miles. It irrigated Shujabad and was navigable for about 8 miles.

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The system of farming out the revenue to the highest bidder was successful under Sawan Mal in Multan. Each village was assessed in the way that gave the largest return to Government, but whenever possible the interests of the cultivators were also safeguarded. If a man had no capital to build a well or to buy oxen, the State promptly supplied the capital and recouped as best as it could, not according to any rigid system but by taking as much from the owner each year as he could spare without injury to the cultivation. The Hindus who wanted to invest money in land were given uncultivated land to reclaim and when it had been reclaimed the cultivators were made to pay full annual revenue for it. Useless expenditure on jagirs and Mu'afis was reduced to the minimum and everything able to yield revenue was productively utilized.

Diwan Sawan Mal held regular Darbars and dispensed justice to all without any discrimination of cast and creed. He used to receive written petitions, which he either disposed of himself or handed them over to his Kardars for disposal. He administered justice firmly and impartially and channellized all his energies to the improvement of his charge and its restitution from the decay into which it had fallen owing to the wars and tumults of late years. Diwan Sawan Mal's justice was renowned for its even handedness. A peasant once charged that his crop had been ruined by a nobleman's horses that had been allowed to run loose. When one of the Diwan's son Ram Das proved to be the guilty party, Sawan Mal imprisoned him for several days. According to Herbert Edwards "Between the poor he did justice with great pains and impartiality; but a rich man, even if in the right never got a verdict from Sawan Mal without paying for

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679 B.J. Hasrat, *Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, p. 108
Cattle thieves were invariably executed. When on one occasion a local dignitary pleaded for the life of a robber, the Diwan caused the thief to be strung up in front of the man's door. In order to avoid sex offences, Diwan Sawan Mal issued strict orders in 1836 that under no circumstances the parents should keep their grown up daughters unmarried. In case of disobedience they were severely punished. State officers were instructed to arrange marriages of grown up girls and not to leave the matter in the hands of their parents.

The Diwan evidently possessed the gift of inspiring respect and admiration. Several years after his demise a Multani notable informed Herbert Edwards, "he served Sawan Mal for three years, and sat before him in Darbar where he transacted business everyday during that period, yet never heard one foolish word come out of his mouth". Possibly in response to a probing question from Edwards, the dignitary was able to recall one bad habit of Sawan Mal's. When a soldier offended him, he was prone to shout for the man to be stripped of sword and shield and be thrown out of the service. He was a man who knew when to be strict and when to be lenient.

Diwan Sawan Mal's military activities were also considerable. He took steps against the tribes to subdue them. Sawan Mal built forts at Dajal, Harrand, Amarkot and strongly garrisoned them. In the district of Dera Ghazi Khan, one of the Diwan's first acts was to proceed against the Mazari tribe, who being cut off from the rest of the district by the Harrand-Dajal county, did not come under the influence of the Sikhs till

682 District Gazetteer of Multan, 1901-02, p. 277.
the annexation of that county in 1827. They, then refused to
acknowledge their supremacy and continued the predatory habits for
which they were notorious. Diwan Sawan Mal marched against them
with an army of 7,000 men, drove them into the Hills and made them
surrender all the stolen cattles in their possession. They soon
retaliated and sacked the town of Mithankot. The second expedition
proved more effective as a result of which Bahram Khan, the Mazari
Chief, attended the Diwan's Darbar at Multan in 1833-34. After this the
Gurchani tribe rose in rebellion and attacked rose the great fort at
Harrand which was built by the Sikhs and murdered the warden of the
fort. Now this rebellion had also to be put down.

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh Diwan Sawan Mal's
power increased day by day but he never turned into a rebel. He paid his
tribute with regularity even in adverse circumstances; there was no
cause of complaint. The Mazari, who were notorious robbers maintained
a semi-independence and continued to plunder their neighbours until
1833 when their chief attended Diwan Sawan Mal's Darbar at Multan.
Dogra brothers were inimical towards him. Diwan Sawan Mal was the
arch opponent of the minister Raja Dhian Singh and his brothers Gulab
Singh and Suchet Singh whose influence at the court of Ranjit Singh was
all powerful.

In April, 1834, a vexatious altercation broke out between the
Zamindars of Qadirabad in the territory of Diwan Sawan Mal and the
villagers of the suburbs of Pindi Bhatian in the Talluqa of Raja Gulab
Singh. In this quarrel the Zamindars of the latter territory were wounded
and many others were killed. The Maharaja ordered Diwan Sawan Mal to
hand over the village to Raja Gulab Singh and deduct its income from the
account of the Maharaja.\textsuperscript{690}

In the month of June, another disturbance occurred between the Kardars of Raja Gulab Singh and Diwan Sawan Mal. The Maharaja reprimanded the Diwan and sent Devi Dayal to settle the dispute. The Diwan was warned that, "if he wanted to spend his days in joy and health, he was to withdraw his hand from mischief."\textsuperscript{691} Even then the dispute did not end. In 1835 the flames of enmity and disturbance were rekindled. The Maharaja then appointed some of his important courtiers such as Jamadar Khushal Singh, Bhai Ram Singh, Bhai Gobind Ram, Fakir Aziz-ud-Din, Jawand Singh Mokhal and Misr Beli Ram to intervene and bring about reconciliation between the two parties. Through their efforts it was settled, "that the Kardars of both the groups would remain firmly established upon their own boundaries, that property and cattle of both sides would be mutually restored and that they were too strengthen their undertaking that none of them would create mischief of disturbance, adding further that in case of breach they would be considered offenders against the Maharaja."\textsuperscript{692} Still the quarrel persisted in one form or another.

In April 1837, the Maharaja ordered Raja Gulab Singh to establish his rule in the four Talluqas of Lalalpur, Chaniot, Pindi Bhatian and Jhang Sial hitherto included in the territory of Diwan Sawan Mal. Misr Sukhraj was appointed to realize the money from the country.\textsuperscript{693} Additional revenue for the four Talluqas of the country of Diwan Sawan Mal were fixed at 1,25,000 rupees and his grandson Rama Chand


\textsuperscript{692} Sohan Lal Suri, \textit{Umdat-ut-Tawarikh}, Daftar III, (Part-III), (Punjabi Trans.), pp. 242-43

accepted this arrangement in writing. Henceforth, a letter was also sent to Raja Gulab Singh not to interfere with the territory of the *Diwan*. Nevertheless, Raja Gulab Singh with his troops reached near Rampur and asked the *Diwan’s* soldiers to hand over the fort to him. A fight started and several soldiers were killed and wounded on both sides. The warning, this, did not produce the desired effect and shortly afterwards a complaint was received from Devi Dayal, stating that on account of the continuing quarrel between Diwan Sawan Mal and Raja Gulab Singh a great deal of good land was running to waste. Immediately an order was issued to Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh to settle their boundaries and to bring about reconciliation between them.

In October 1837, Dhian Singh complained to the *Maharaja* that "the flame of disagreement between the *Kardars* and *Zamindars* of Sahiwal in the territory of Diwan Sawan Mal and Raja Dhian Singh had grown aloft". The *Maharaja* ordered Raja Tej Singh to suppress the dissensions completely. Notably, only a year earlier, in 1836, the *Maharaja* had strongly defended Diwan Sawan Mal when Raja Dhain Singh and Jamadar Khushal Singh both had indulged in open criticism of the *Diwan* before the *Maharaja*.

Diwan Sawan Mal died on September 29, 1844. Thus perished the wisest and best of all Sikh Governors. He continued in office till his last breath. He never misruled his power. Ranjit Singh was always pleased with Sawan Mal’s service to the people. The period of Diwan Sawan Mal was regarded by the people with esteem and affection. Every

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699 For more details about Diwan Sawan Mal’s death see Chapter VI.  
700 Ganesh Das Wadehra, *Char Bagh-i-Punjab*, p. 381.
segment of the population benefited from his administration whether its Hindu or Muslim peasants or Pathans. The Multan Suba was known throughout the kingdom as Dar-ul-Aman (the abode of peace). The peace and tranquility he established in the territory of Multan surpassed that of Hindustan which is governed by a body of law. On the whole "He was strict, but not according to native notions, cruel; he took from the cultivators and traders all he could take without killing the nest egg; but he allowed no ravaging by murree or mazari plunders or by more lawless Sikh soldiers. He kept both his own people and his wild neighbours in hand by combined energy and moderation."

Diwan Sawan Mal left behind an enormous sum of ninety lakhs of rupees amassed by the old Diwan during twenty three years of unblemished career. His Government was apportioned by his sons. He left six sons. During the Diwan's life time his eldest son Mulraj ruled Shujabad and Jhang while Karam Narain was made incharge of Leah (Dera Ismail Khan). It was a common and amusing saying amongst the people that while Multan had been blessed with monsoon showers Sawan (the summer rain) and Leah with Karam (kindness), Jhang got only Mula (an insect which eats the root of the corn). Diwan Sawan Mal could wield the pen and sword equally well and it was a matter of great credit to him. Diwan Sawan Mal was succeeded by his son Mulraj as Nazim or Governor of Multan.

Mulraj was later confirmed in the Nizamat of Multan by the British also. The British raised his annual tribute from Rs. 25,000 to 30,000. He expressed his inability to pay this amount and he resigned from the post in December, 1847. Sardar Kahan Singh was appointed in his place as

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703 Ram Das, *Diwan Mulraj, Karam Narayan, Sham Singh, Ram Singh and Narayan Singh*. *Foreign Department ; Secret Consultation*, 10 October, 1844, No. 90, NAI.
Governor and he was sent to Multan along with two British official’s viz., Agnew and Anderson to take charge. But when the party reached Multan, Agnew and Anderson were killed and Kahan Singh made prisoner by the Sikh soldiers of Multan. They then forced Mulraj to revolt against the British.705

Another important Pargna or province was Kashmir which had been conquered by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1819. The Sikh rule lasted from 1819 to 1846 when the valley of Kashmir was handed over by the British to Raja Gulab Singh Dogra of Jammu. The conquest of Kashmir had been a significant addition to the Sikh Kingdom as Kashmir was the richest province of the Sikh Kingdom next only to Multan.706 The conquest of Kashmir added an annual revenue of 40,000,00 rupees to the Kingdom of Lahore and brought under Sikh rule an extensive area inhabited by varied races like Aryans and Turanians in the valley and its loftier recesses.

Kashmir proved a far tougher problem and a number of Nazims or Governors were appointed in quick succession because the Maharaja was not happy with them. Under Sikh supremacy Kashmir was ruled by ten Governors; Misr Diwan Chand 1819 Diwan Moti Ram, 1819-20, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa 1820-23, Diwan Moti Ram 1823-24 (second term), Diwan Chunni Lal 1824-25, Diwan Kirpa Ram 1826-1830, Bhima Singh Ardali 1831-1833. Kanwar Sher Singh 1833-1834, Colonel Mian Singh 1834-1841, Shaikh Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din 1841-46, Shaikh Imam-ud-Din 1846-1846. It is interesting that out of these, five were Hindus, three Sikhs and two Muslims. Diwan Moti Ram, Hari Singh Nalwa, Diwan Kirpa Ram, Kanwar Sher Singh ruled for short periods only. During his

kingship Ranjit Singh never visited Kashmir. In 1831 the Maharaja in his conversation with Captain Wade referred to the names of his Chiefs who had brought ruin to Kashmir. Diwan Moti Ram and Kirpa Ram were once even severely penalized. Most of these Nazims, whose average tenure of office was about two years, were either recalled for mal-administration or were constantly grilled for non-fulfilment of their engagements.

Sikh rule in Kashmir lasted for 27 years. Misr Diwan Chand in 1819 was appointed the first Nazim or Governor of Kashmir. Diwan Devi Das was appointed assessment and revenue farmer. Belonging to the Hindu trading class, Misr Diwan Chand was the conqueror of Multan in 1818 and the leader of the successful expedition to Kashmir in 1819. Excepting for his mopping up operations in the hilly tracts of the valley, there is nothing worthy of note in Misr Diwan Chand’s brief Governorship. Soon he was replaced by Diwan Moti Ram son of Diwan Mohkam Chand a well known minister of the Maharaja, who governed Kashmir for a year and two months in 1819-1820. Diwan Moti Ram established military posts at important places and continued mopping up operations until all the Afghan pocket had been cleared. In order to devote himself exclusively to the restoration of law and order and to administer equal-handed justice to all. He was assisted by Pandit Birbal Dhar, the collector of revenues during his short tenure of fourteen months. Diwan Moti Ram farmed out Kashmir to Birbal Dhar for 52

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The contract for the manufacture of shawls was given to Jawahar Mal for Rs.10 lakhs yearly. Diwan Moti Ram was kind hearted and liked by the people. "By his just and human conduct he restored confidence in the valley".

During the first term of Diwan Moti Ram, Cholera broke out and assumed epidemic proportions and took a heavy toll on life. Diwan Moti Ram had also to contend with the chronic poverty of the country, aggravated by unfortunate visitations of nature in the form of famine and pestilence. He might have succeeded in improving the condition of the country, had he been granted full liberty of action. But there was the hostile faction of the Dogras at Lahore, who always thwarted his schemes through their influence with the Maharaja. Diwan Moti Ram was a wise and cautious administrator and with the help of Pandit Birbal Dhar he realized revenue amounting to 53,00,000 rupees by encouraging shawl trade which alone fetched 10,00,000 rupees annually.

Moti Ram who possessed considerable talent was keen to do something positive to improve the condition of the poor Kashmiris. Cowslaughtering, prevalent for centuries, was declared a crime punishable by death and Muslims were actually hanged and dragged through the city of Srinagar and even burnt alive for having slain cattle.

In 1819, Diwan Moti Ram struck in the Srinagar mint Nanakshahi rupee. Kashmir was previously divided into 22 pargnas. Diwan Moti Ram reduced their number to 20. The Afghan soldiers used to seize the pretty girls for their ever expanding harems. This cruel practice came to an end.

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713 Amarnath, Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, p. 114.
715 Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p. 199.
717 Syed Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, p. 419.
under the Sikhs. Further the terror of the Sikh name brought thefts and robbery almost to a complete stop.

Accustomed to facing stiff opposition from Muslims in the Punjab and Frontier district, Sikhs looked at the Kashmiris in the same light and promulgated orders with a view to checking the emergence of a Muslim opposition in the valley. Consequently, in the tenure of Diwan Moti Ram, the Jama Masjid of Srinagar was closed to Public prayers. Many other Mosques were converted into Nazul property. Jagir grants attached to mosques and shrines were generally revoked. The Azan or the Muslim call for prayer was also prohibited. Although the motive may have been political rather than religious, the closure of the mosque upset the local Muslim Kashmiris. It was rumoured that Moti Ram was also planning to destroy another mosque, the Khanqah-i-Mulla, but Pandit Birbal Dhar dissuaded him. The stone mosque (Pathar Masjid) at Srinagar built by Empress Noor Jahan was converted in to a ware house. In other religious matters Muslims were given full freedom.

Diwan Moti Ram's mild but sympathetic administration could bring about any major administrative reforms. He, however, remained in office for only fourteen months and wishing to retire to Banaras, resigned the appointment on the death of his eldest son, Ram Dayal, who was killed in Hazara in 1820. The Maharaja sent as his successor, the fighting general, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. But his ideas of governance were so primitive that there was widespread distress in the land. Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, could not, due to his misgovernance of the province, remain incharge of the administration for long. Maharaja Ranjit Singh

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recalled him and Moti Ram, a man of pacific and devotional habits was re-appointed *Nazim* of Kashmir.\(^\text{721}\)

Diwan Moti Ram, during his second Governorship continued the agricultural reforms of his predecessor.\(^\text{722}\) He tried to ameliorate the miserable condition of the people. When Moti Ram returned as *Nazim*, Birbal Dhar was still working as a revenue collector. It was soon discovered that Pandit Birbal Dhar indulged in intrigues and large scale corruption. He ordered a throughout audit of the accounts which had been submitted by Pandit Birbal Dhar. This revealed that large sums recovered as revenues had neither been deposited in the treasury nor accounted for. Pandit Birbal Dhar was imprisoned for misappropriation of State revenues. All of his property was confiscated and he was put in prison, where he died. Diwan Moti Ram was dismissed from the post of the *Nazim* of Kashmir in 1824 and Chunni Lal was appointed in his place.\(^\text{723}\)

Moorcraft visited Kashmir during the *Nizamat* of Diwan Moti Ram. He criticized the administration of the *Sikhs* and exposed the condition of the Kashmiri people and wrote a detail account about Kashmir.\(^\text{724}\).

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\(^\text{724}\) Moorcraft mention, "everywhere the people were in the most abject condition, exorbitantly taxed by the Sikh Government, and subjected to every kind of extortion and oppression by its officers... not one-sixteenth of the cultivable surface is in cultivation, and the inhabitants, starving at home, are driven in great numbers to the plains of Hindustan" William Moorcraft and Mr. George Trebeck, *in the Himalayan provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab in Ladakh and Kashmir: In Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara 1819-1825*, Vol. III, p. 343; Every shawl was stamped and the stamp duty was 26 percent, upon the estimated value. Besides this a considerable sum is raised by duties upon the import of wool, and a charge upon every shop or workman connected with the manufacture; Likewise, every trade was taxed, "Butchers, bakers, boatmen, vendors of fuel, public notaries, scavengers, prostitutes, all paid a sort of corporation tax. A portion of the singhara (water-nut) crop, to the extent annually of a lakh of rupees was claimed by the Government. Even the chief officer of justice paid a large gratuity of 30,000 rupees a year
At the time of Moorcraft's visit the sum paid by the farmer was 36 lakhs of Punjab rupees, equal to twenty nine lakhs of Sicca rupees or about two hundred and ninety thousand pounds; but a much larger sum was extorted from the people, although it was only to be realized by the greatest rigour and oppression. Since the days of the Sikhs the pressure has been a little relaxed and wanton acts of oppression are rare, but life must still be hardly worth living when cultivators are selling whole villages with such rights as they have for no other equivalent than the protection of a powerful Pandit.

Moorcraft wrote about the prevailing methods of land tenures during the Sikh period.

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725 Moorcraft mention, "The Khalsah lands are now, as heretofore, let out for cultivation. Those near the city are termed sar-kishti, those more remote pai-Kishti, or head and foot, upper and lower cultivation. When the grain has been trodden out, a division takes place between the farmer and the Government. This was formerly an equal division, but the Government has advanced in its demands until it has appropriated about seven eights of the sar-kishti and three-fourths of the pai-Kishti crop. The straw falls to the share of the cultivators, but his case would be desperate if it were not practicable to bribe the overseer or watchman to let him steal a portion of his own produce. He has also a house to live in; he can keep his cattle on the mountains during summer, can cut wood and bring it to the city for sale, can sell wild greens and buttermilk, and can support himself and his family upon the wild fruits of the forest. Still the cultivators of Kashmir are in a condition of extreme wretchedness and, as if the disproportionate demand of the Government is not sufficiently oppressive, the evil is aggravated by the mode adopted in disposing of the Government share. It is sent into the market at a high price and no individual is allowed to offer the produce of his farm at a lower rate, or sometimes to dispose of it at all until the public corn has been sold". Ibid., pp. 344-345.

726 Ibid., p. 345.
Diwan Moti Ram and Hari Singh the first two Governors did not enjoy much popularity; they had no acquaintance with the problems of Kashmir and except for the collection of revenue with the inadequate means at their disposal, they adopted inhuman and harsh measures; but so impoverished was the country, and so indigent the people, that the two Governors could hardly satisfy their own avarice or that of the State requiring them to send a fixed revenue of 40,00,000 rupees annually.

_Nazim_ Chunni Lal who succeeded Moti Ram was remembered as an ineffective _Nazim_ whose punishments were severe. During the _Nizamat_ of Diwan Chunni Lal, Kumedan Gurmukh Singh, a Sardar of strong views and rash decisions, was appointed as the Chief administrator and collector of Revenue to keep a check upon the _Nazim_727 and they would pay 27 lakhs and 50 thousands rupees as revenue.728 Gurmukh Singh reduced the _Nazim_ to a non-entity. He implicated Khwaja Muhi-ud-Din, a respectable citizen in a cow-killing case. He treated the Khwaja most shabbily on specious pieces of evidence. The _Nazim_ and the revenue farmer Gurmukh Singh, did not pull on well together and this resulted in deteriorating economic condition of the people and a serious drop in revenue. Chunni Lal was recalled by the _Maharaja_, but fearing a harsh treatment at the latter's hands, he committed suicide by consuming poison while on his way to Lahore.729

After a short period of rule by Gurmukh Singh in 1826 Diwan Kirpa Ram was appointed the _Nazim_ of Kashmir on the condition that he would pay 14 lakhs for shawl trade and 26 six lakhs for the revenue of the area730 and was granted a special robe of honour _Nadar-ul-Maham_.731 He

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like his father and grandfather was very honest and incorruptible. Diwan Kirpa Ram was an efficient and easy going official of the State; he took measures for the regular payment of the Lahore dues of Rs. 40, 00,000, out of which he was allowed to retain, Rs. 20,00,000 for the maintenance of troops in Kashmir. It was not Ranjit Singh's custom to give a regular salary to officers who were engaged in the collection of revenue, however, he gave Kirpa Ram a hefty and fixed salary of two lakhs a year. Shaikh Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din was appointed his chief secretary or *Naib*. According to G.T. Vigne, "The Sikh Governor who enjoys the best reputation amongst the inhabitants of Kashmir is Kirpa Ram".

While Kirpa Ram was serving as *Nazim*, a severe earthquake shook the valley. The natural upheaval lasted for two months in Kashmir. Hence, Kirpa Ram could not realise the revenue of the *kharif* crop properly. He accounted twelve lakhs as loss of revenue. After that, he administered Kashmir in an excellent manner, subdued the Khakka tribes and paid the revenue regularly. His chief advisor Shaikh

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732 H.L.O. Garrett (ed.), *The Punjab-A Hundred Years Ago*, Monograph No. 18, Patiala, 1971, p. 120.
735 Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar-II, p. 428; G.T. Vigne describes "on the night of June 26, 1828 (Twenty-fourth of Zilheja, year of the Higira, 1244) at half past ten a very severe shock was felt which shook down a great number of people; many houses, and killed perhaps 1000 persons were killed, and 1200 houses shaken down; although, being built with a wooden framework, the houses were less liable to fall than edifices of brick or stone. The earth opened in several places about the city; and fetid water, or rather warm, rose rapidly from the clefts, and then subsided. These clefts being in the soil, soon closed again and left scarcely any traces. I saw the remains of one, fifteen yards long and two yards wide; but it was filled up, by nearly huge rocks and stones came rattling down from the mountains. On that night only one shock took place, but just before sunrise there was another, accompanied by a terrific and lengthened explosion, louder than a cannon. On that day there were twenty such shocks, each with a similar explosion…. The inhabitants were of course, in the open country. The river sometime appeared to stand still, and then rushed forward. For the remaining six days of Zilheja, and whole of the next two months of *Moharram* and *Safur*, there were never less than hundred, and sometimes two hundred or more shocks in the day, all accompanied with an explosion ……. At the end of the two above mentioned months, the number decreased to ten or fifteen in the twenty-four hours and the noise became less, and the earthquakes gradually ceased. About this time the cholera made its appearance. A census of the dead was taken at first, but discontinued when it was found that many thousands had died in twenty one days." G.T. Vigne, *A Personal Narrative of a Visit of Ghuzni, Kabul and Afghanistan*, Vol. II, p. 305
737 Ibid.
Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din made a rough settlement of land and introduced the system of farming out to the highest bidder the revenue of various Pargnas or districts. Forty lakhs was the sum paid annually in the treasury of Ranjit Singh by Diwan Kirpa Ram. The shawl trade was in flourishing condition. The tax on shawls brought about 12 lakhs of the whole revenue\(^738\). The rest was obtained from taxes on produce and a number of direct and indirect impositions.

Diwan Kirpa Ram introduced crows into Kashmir, considering that they were necessary to the due performance of funeral rites, as it is the customs in the Punjab to feed crows on such occasions and this valuable contribution to the fauna of Kashmir forms perhaps the most important act of Kirpa Ram's idle rule.\(^739\)

Diwan Kirpa Ram loved luxury especially boating. Hence his name commonly used in a modified way in the valley was *Kirpa Shoriyan* to denote the jingling noise of small bells on woman's hand and feet\(^740\) for his indulgences in 'Char Chinar' an islet in the Dal Lake. He also spent time with dancing girls and prostitutes. On summer evenings Diwan Kirpa Ram was accustomed to enjoying feasts, drinking, listening to the singing of the dancing girls. The blaze of fireworks threw a brilliant glare over the scene. The term of his viceroyalty was compared by the people of the valley to those pleasant days when Jahangir used to make an annual visit there and when the valley was:

"All love and light

vision by day and feasts by night."\(^741\)

\(^739\) W.R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 200.
Diwan Kirpa Ram administered the province well. He was a man of considerable ability. He possessed an affable and gentle disposition. The administration of the valley improved during his tenure of office. Under his mild rule the people of Kashmir were able to improve themselves economically. Intelligent and having unique ideas of magnificence, he beautified Srinagar with many fine buildings. Ram Bagh, now holding the remains of most of the Dogra rulers on the Dudh-Ganga stream in Srinagar was built by Diwan Kirpa Ram.\(^\text{742}\) He was the only official in the country against whom the Kashmiris had no complaint. He remained the Nazim for four years and was the kindest and the best of all.\(^\text{743}\)

In the military field, Diwan Kirpa Ram had to lead a punitive expedition to Muzaffarabad where Raja Zabardast Khan, had raised a banner of revolt. In the initial stages the rebel forces, hiding in mountain recesses, inflicted severe losses on the Sikh army but the commander Ganesh Pandit Dhar created dissensions among several hill chiefs and defeated them one by one. Zabardast Khan ultimately surrendered and was pardoned on his undertaking to pay annual tribute regularly to the Maharaja.\(^\text{744}\)

Diwan Kirpa Ram’s popularity at Lahore was dependent on his punctual payment of the State dues every year, which excited the jealousy of Raja Dhian Singh, who was a powerful minister of Ranjit Singh. In 1831, Diwan Kirpa Ram again became the victim of the Dogras and was accused of embezzlement. He was recalled because the Maharaja had been prejudiced against Kirpa Ram for his protection to the Raja Faiz Talab Khan of Bhimbar who the Dogra Rajas hated and

wished to capture.\textsuperscript{745} The courtiers poisoned the Maharaja's mind saying that the Diwan would revolt and never come into the presence of the Maharaja.\textsuperscript{746} The Maharaja sent repeated orders to Shaikh Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din to present Kirpa Ram. When the Diwan reached Lahore, he was asked to pay twenty five lakhs of rupees as the pending revenues and forty lakhs as fine.\textsuperscript{747} The Diwan was unable to pay and hence he was imprisoned.\textsuperscript{748} The Toshkhania or the treasurer of the Diwan was also captured. Sham Singh, the Jamadar of Deorhi was sent by the Maharaja to sequester the Diwan's property at Kunjah. Of all the Sikh Governors of Kashmir, Diwan Kirpa Ram gave the people the least cause of complaint. Yet the news of his disgrace was a signal for public rejoicing. According to Garrett, it was justified; for the least oppressive of the Nazims or Governors was in fact a cruel tyrant.\textsuperscript{749} On Diwan Kirpa Ram's recall to Lahore, the Maharaja appointed Bhima Singh Ardali as Nazim or Governor of Kashmir.

On 22 February 1831, all the glorious courtiers told the Maharaja about the release of Diwan Kirpa Ram. They said to the Maharaja that, "The Diwan had always been a well-wisher of the Maharaja from the core of his heart, had always faithfully stuck to the path of loyalty and had never committed any blunder and had about his neck the cord of obedience and servitude for generations".\textsuperscript{750} On this the Maharaja approved the release of Diwan Kirpa Ram. The Maharaja granted him one silvery white horse, eight garments, a turban gem, a plume, an under-turban, a pearl necklace and some pairs of chadars of pashmina. Diwan

\begin{footnotes}
\item[747] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 581.
\item[748] \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 581-82.
\end{footnotes}
Moti Ram presented nine lakhs of rupees to the Maharaja. But Diwan Moti Ram began to feel upset over the ways and means of its payment.

Diwan Kirpa Ram felt disgusted and applied for permission to join his father at Banaras. The request was turned down. Diwan Kirpa Ram then sought permission to visit Jawalamukhi. It was granted. To console him the Maharaja granted him the jagir of Kunjah worth 3 lakhs on 14 December, 1831. This was a princely offer. But Kirpa Ram could not forget his imprisonment like an ordinary criminal. He spurned at it. From Jawalamukhi the Diwan crossed into British territory and joined his father at Banaras and never returned to the Punjab.

Kashmir during the twenty seven years of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule, had its period of prosperity and adversity both. His Hindu Nazims or Governors Diwan Moti Ram and Diwan Kirpa Ram to some extent discharged their duties properly. Human failures were sometimes intensified by natural calamities. Diwan Kirpa Ram tried to alleviate the suffering of the peasantry but they could not perform the Herculean task of clearing out all the abuses of revenue and the judicial system of Kashmir. Ranjit Singh was always cages help the valley out of its difficulties. On the one hand, he never hesitated to penalize corruption, oppression and inefficiency; on the other, he established colonies of Kashmiris in Punjab to help them in their days of adversity. The administration of Multan and Jalandhar was better than that of Kashmir. The system of farming out the revenues to the highest bidder so successful under Sawan Mal in Multan, miserably failed in Kashmir on account of the in competency and avariciousness of the successive and indifferent Nazims or Governors and their opportunistic satellites.  

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751 Ibid.,
752 B.J. Hasarat, Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, p. 108.
The Nazims or Governors of Kashmir were at regular intervals reprimanded for their maladministration by the Maharaja.

Another Hindu Misr Ram Kishan the younger brother of Misr Beli Ram farmed Gujranwala District for a little more than a lakh of rupees which is a fertile and productive district.\(^{753}\) He also administered the District of Gujarat for one year alongwith Diwan Shiv Dayal.\(^{754}\) For sometime Diwan Devi Sahai alongwith Aziz-ud-Din were sent Attock as commissioner to settle the country surrounding.\(^{755}\) Diwan Ganga Ram appointed to administer the territories in and around Gujrat in 1821 for two years.\(^{756}\) Another Hindu Sukhdayal also administered the Ilaka of Jhang for rupees 1,60,000.\(^{757}\)

Other Hindu Courtiers and Officials served the Lahore Darbar in one capacity of the other but none of them contributed or played any significant role in shaping or reorganizing the civil administrative set up of the Sikh kingdom, particularly under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. However, we have noticed in the preceding chapter that they were definitely supporting the Maharaja in various campaigns.


\(^{754}\) J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, (Translated and ed.), *Early Nineteenth Century Punjab*, p. 66.


\(^{756}\) J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, (Translated and ed.), *Early Nineteenth Century Punjab*, p. 66.