SUMMARY

In the present thesis I have selected only Hindu Courtiers and Officials at the Lahore Darbar. As we knew the court of Ranjit Singh was secular in character and the Maharaja was the central figure. As merit was the criterion for appointment, the persons belonging to different religions and races were appointed to high posts. His penetrating look read with great precision the underlying qualities of a man, and he did not care much about the fact that whether the one whom he had chosen was a Sikh, Hindu or Muslim. A single ordinary test was all that he required to form an estimate about the candidate's real worth. He was an absolute despot and nobody could interfere with what he desired to do. The persons he kept around him were generally men of the world, trained in the struggle of life, expert in getting ahead at the cost of others, designing and active in the fulfillment of their duties. No ruler of ancient or medieval Indian History could match Ranjit Singh who had appointed, to important posts, more than forty persons, hailing from more than a dozen foreign nationalities.

Ranjit Singh's courtiers did not form a homogeneous body. They represented various creeds, diverse races and different traditions. They comprised the Dogras, the Muslims, the Europeans, the Sikhs, and the Hindus and to this may be added the Brahmins. The Brahmins formed a separate group as they considered themselves distinct from Hindus in general. This approach of the Maharaja clearly established that the nature and character of the Sikh state under him was secular.

The Maharaja inducted men belonging to different categories and creeds into his service, who later formed influential and powerful
factions. But in so doing he inadvertently tilted the balance in favour of the Dogras which created trouble for the state after his death. Soon after the departure of the magnetic personality of the Maharaja these groups entered into internecine collisions and thus hastened the fall of the Sikh Kingdom. The main objective of these different and rival groups was to self-aggrandisment and accumulation wealth and power, while doing so the Dogras outclassed the rest. Most of its members felt actuated more by selfish motives than by patriotism, the jealousy and rivalry among the different families was bound to arise. During the life time of Ranjit Singh there could be seen no signs of open mutual jealousy and rivalry but after his death the conflicts between the various member of the court nobility became more violent to the utter detriment of the interests of the Lahore Darbar. Hence, the various factions were incapable of any agreement on political matters and required for their harmonious intercourse the supervision of a predominant mind. This was illustrated by the disgusting conduct of the Darbar soon after the death of the Maharaja in 1839.

But if such a heterogeneous court was detrimental to the interests of the state, it was in a way a source of strength to its ruler. It provided him with men of his own choice, who he himself had raised to eminence and who depended for their position, wealth and even life on his pleasure alone. Moreover, they could never forge a combined opposition to his will as there were natural differences among them and they had no vested interests or hereditary prestige. In such circumstances, the motive of selfish gain in itself induced the ministers to work well and efficiently under an impulse of loyalty to their master. The motley crowd consisting of the officials of Ranjit Singh’s central government secretaries, ministers
and others, therefore, existed on the breath of the pleasure of the Maharaja. But on the whole the Maharaja's nobles were loyal to him.

There were broadly speaking a large number of Hindu Courtiers and Officials, who served the Maharaja and also his successor's regime. The Hindus were drawn from several groups like Rajputs, Brahmins, Khatris, Ghorkhas and Purbias. The Hindus who belonged to the caste of Brahmins and Khatris formed quite a large group. In the group of Khatris, there were Diwan Mohkam Chand, his son Moti Ram and grandsons Ram Dayal and Kirpa Ram, Diwan Bhawani Das and his brother Diwan Devi Das, Diwan Sawan Mal, and Diwan Karam Chand. In the group of Brahmins there were Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Dina Nath, Diwan Ajodhia Prasad, Misr Diwan Chand, Misr Beli Ram and his brother Misr Rup Lal. They are appointed to high posts in civil and military department. They produced great warriors and administrators whose more or less exhaustive memories appeared in the historical records of the past. But there were also some other Hindu courtiers and officials who worked at Lahore Darbar, but no accounts about them have hitherto appeared. Their careers, roles, achievements, work, contribution and significance also had exceptional merits.

The Hindu Courtiers and Officials in the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were according positions of great eminent. They were integrated to the functioning of the Darbar and also to the functioning of the Sikh State. Their responsibilities and activities ranged from legislation, conquest, matters of revenue and administration. Full respect was shown to the religion of the Hindus also and the people holding the highest jobs in his government, like the Dogras brothers, the Misrs and others strictly adhered to their Hindu forms of religion. The Maharaja entrusted the talented Hindus with Jobs involving very high
responsibilities related with the State. Diwan Mohkam Chand amongst the most prominent courtier. Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Dina Nath and Misr Beli Ram headed the revenue and finance departments of the State of Lahore. Misr Diwan Chand, Diwan Ram Dyal and Diwan Ajodhia Prashad worked as top ranking military officers. Diwan Sawan Mal, Diwan Moti Ram, Misr Rup Lal and Diwan Kirpa Ram were some of his best Provincial Governors. They held in expending and consolidating in its efficient functioning. Without their participation Ranjit Singh would not have risen to the heights of supremacy in the Punjab.

It is notable that the Central Secretariat of Ranjit Singh's Kingdom was the centre of his empire. He allowed the Hindus virtually to monopolise appointments in the Central Secretariat because the upper classes of the Hindu community had acquired over the centuries a high degree of proficiency in revenue administration and general secretarial work. As compared with them, the other communities like the Sikhs and the Muslims were just novices. Therefore, the Maharaja who attached so much importance to merit, had preference to recruit the majority of personnel for his central offices from the single community of the Hindus. The efficiency with which it was run by highly trained and accomplished Hindus like Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Dina Nath, Misr Beli Ram etc. is an example in itself who worked in the finance department of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Diwan Bhawani Das organized twelve departments or Daftars of the State connected with finance. He brought about a sort of specialisation in civil and military accounts and organised every department. He had full authority over the accounts of Kardars and other sources of income. He was not honest enough to be impartial towards his own brethren and relatives. However
dark he may be painted, it is true that he was an able man and ability was the only test with Ranjit Singh in the selection of his servants. Some of the major Daftars of the Central Secretariat like Daftar-i-Abwab-ul-Mal, Daftar-i-Abwab-ul-Tahwil, Tazuihat, Roznamacha and Toshakhana etc. were not only highly organized but were also thoroughly professional in their functioning. On the whole the balance of the secretariat was heavily titled in favour of one community. Misr Beli Ram worked as a Toshakhania or treasurer under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja places great confidence in him.

The third chapter attempts to analyze the role of Hindu Courtiers and Officials in the financial administration. Ranjit Singh’s Sikh empire had well developed and efficient system of financial management. The expenditure and revenue were managed according to well-defined systems. The functioning of finance departments was very well regulated. This was owing to the fact that the sources of income and revenue were systematically explored. The collection of revenue and the regularization of expenditure were carried out by the most experienced financial administrators like Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Dina Nath, Diwan Ganga Ram and helped them by Provincial Governors like Diwan Sawan Mal and Misr Rup Lal. Diwan Bhawani Das’s contribution and services at Lahore Darbar were uncountable, remarkable and unforgettable. The whole financial system was organized by this intelligent and experienced Hindu. Diwan Ganga Ram were also among the most important courtier. He was an experienced and talented person and due to this reason he served the Lahore Darbar to the best of his abilities. He became the head of the Military office and keeper of the royal seal. Diwan Ganga Ram simplified the system of keeping records. He organised the Abkari (excise)
system. After the death of Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Dina Nath became head of Finance Department of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Hence, during the reign of Ranjit Singh, we find that the revenue and secretariat departments were entrusted to Hindus who had always served in this capacity even in the Muslim court of Delhi and Kabul. In civil administration, Ranjit Singh gave preference to Hindus.

In the next chapter analyze Hindu Courtiers and Official's role as military Commanders and Generals, their rank, status and position; their military services, their participation in various campaign and contribution made in the battlefields. As stated earlier in the main text of this thesis Maharaja Ranjit Singh in particular and a few of his successors in general simply liked them and depended on them for their conquests and also their proficient administration in the conquered areas. They also assigned them various tasks of responsibilities in the field of civil, judicial, economic and revenue administration as well. Maharaja's relations with them were never unfriendly. He took them into confidence especially in matters of planning military campaigns, setting up boundaries, revenue and finance policies etc. It is quiet important to note that many of the Generals did not have a military background and performed dual roles as administrators and Generals. His earlier conquests were undertaken, when Ranjit Singh was consolidating his power, with the help of these Courtiers. His conquests in Malwa region, Jalandhar, Multan and Kashmir in particular and also those of Attock, Mankera, Hazara were the direct result of their hard work, boldness, courage, passions and farsightedness of these Hindu Generals. Maharaja Ranjit Singh at his disposal some of the most distinguished Generals like Diwan Mohkam Chand, Misr Diwan Chand, Diwan Ram Dayal and Diwan Bhawani Das and Diwan Ajodhia Prashad.
Diwan Mohkam Chand was a shrewd general of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He had a sound knowledge of Military tactics and strategy. It was because of their experience under different rulers that these Hindu Courtiers and Officials played a very important role in the establishment of the Sikh Kingdom. He had not seen a defeat; he was an ever victorious general. He was equally talented in conducting civil administrative affairs. From 1806 to 1814 he remained with almost all the military campaigns of the Maharaja as the chief military advisor and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Diwan Mohkam Chand led some very important conquests like Malwa region in 1806 and 1807, Kangra in 1809, Jalandhar in 1811, Kashmir in 1812, Attock in 1813 etc. Mohkam Chand was one of the ablest Generals of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was the most loyal, devoted and trustworthy subordinates. He was one of the architects of the Sikh Empire who rose by dint of merit to the post of Diwan and virtually the commander-in-chief of the Sikh forces.

Following him other Hindu General Misr Diwan Chand who was hardworking, courageous and brave general of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He extended the borders of his empire far and wide by conquering Multan in 1818, Kashmir in 1819, and Mankera in 1821. He proved to be a very sincere throughout his life and played a very important role in the growth, development and consolidation of the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. No doubt his military activities can not be questioned but he was not a good administrator. Misr Diwan Chand had the support of Dogras, one of the most important figures at Lahore Darbar, because he introduced the Dogras to the Maharaja. Above all he was an excellent soldier and military commander with a professional skill of a high degree.
Diwan Ram Dayal perform highly significant roles in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He held in expanding and consolidating in its efficient functioning by participating as a divisional commander in the expeditions of Kashmir in 1814 and 1819, Multan in 1818 and Hazara in 1820. However, one unfortunate event shadowed in his career which was the death of his son, Ram Dayal in 1820 who was also a brave commander. Without their participation Ranjit Singh would not have risen to the heights of supremacy in the Punjab.

Diwan Bhawani Das, who though professionally a civil administrator had all the genius for military activities. He took part in the siege of Jammu in 1809, Attock in 1813 and Kashmir in 1814 and 1819. Thus he was a man of great ability. Diwan Ajodhia Prashad was worked as pay master of Fauj-i-Khas. His relations with Europeans especially with Ventura and Allard, were on excellent terms. He was very popular with the Sikh soldiery especially after the demise of the Maharaja. He was from all accounts eminently successful performing all kinds of duties: administrative judicial, military and diplomatic. The Hindu Generals after making the conquests were made the Governors of the conquered territories and most of the cases governed their territories most efficiently.

Their role as provincial Governors is also significant. As pointed out, most of the Generals of Ranjit Singh performed the dual task of military expansion and administration. They not only conquered these areas, rather, when they were appointed Governors of the conquered territories maintained peace, law and order in those regions like Diwan Mohkam Chand. Besides them Ranjit Singh had some of the best Hindu provincial administrators like Diwan Sawan Mal, Misr Rup Lal, Diwan Moti Ram, Diwan Kirpa Ram etc. under him. They won over the hearts
of the inhabitants of these areas because of the treatment they meted out to them, particularly in the field of revenue and justice. Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s whole administrative machinery (revenue and finance) fully depended on Hindus. There was an elaborate system of territorial division in place which helped in making civil administration regulated and organized. The territories were divided into Pargnas, Subas, Talluqas and villages. These were placed under various administrative officers like Kardars and Nazims. The Hindu Civil administrators under Ranjit Singh proved to be capable and wise. The most important civil administrators like Diwan Sawan Mal and Misr Rup Lal also introduced innovative administrative reforms.

Diwan Moti Ram son of Diwan Mokham Chand served the Lahore Darbar in civil as well as military capacity. But his work in the civil administration is highly notable. Diwan Moti Ram as a Governors of Jalandhar and Kashmir introduced many reforms for the welfare of the people.

Diwan Sawan Mal’s contribution in the provincial administration is remarkable. As a Governor he displayed a tremendous capacity for hard work and effected great improvements during a long reign. Diwan Sawan Mal is stated in every account to have been efficient and progressive who he did great work in the judicial field. During his administration a number of masonry wells for irrigation were sunk. He caused canals to be dug round Multan and gave an impetus to commerce and industry. He promoted colonization by giving people land and protection. Thereby he converted a desert into a cultivated region. His revenue reforms were based on the principles of low taxes, moderate assessment and reduction in extra charges imposed on the cultivations. The prosperity brought about by such efforts of Diwan Sawan Mal attracted the notice of some
contemporary British officials and travellers who happened to pass a number of times through the Governorship of Diwan Sawan Mal. Though, during the quarrel between Sawan Mal and the Dogras, Maharaja Ranjit Singh always favoured the Dogras but Sawan Mal never became a rebel and he was always royal to the Maharaja. He never misused his power. The time of Diwan Sawan Mal is still regarded by the people with esteem. Every segment of the population gained from his administration whether it was the Hindu, the Muslim peasants or the Pathans. Some people say that he had prejudices against the Mohammedans. It is most probably untrue. He was just and did his best to give good rule to the people. He deserves to be called one of the greatest Governors. He could wield pen and sword equally well and it was a matter of great credit to him.

Misr Rup Lal was also recognized the among best Governors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He proved himself not only an excellent administrator but a great reformer as well. He was upright just and beyond corruption.

Diwan Kirpa Ram performed multifarious duties as a Nazim, a Diwan, a soldier and an administrator but he was well known as a Governor. However, amongst the Sikh Governors, Diwan Kirpa Ram enjoyed the best reputation. Intelligent and having unique ideas of magnificence, he beautified Srinagar with many fine buildings. His time of viceroyalty is compared by the people of the valley to those pleasant days when Jahangir used to make an annual visit.

No doubt they were given special privileges and perks. Their contribution and service especially in the military and civil administration were worth a lot, their presence and role in day to day activities and the impact they left in various walks of life, such as
political, military, social, cultural, judicial etc. was not only great but ever lasting.

No doubt they were given special privileges and perks. Their contribution and service especially in the military and civil administration were worth a lot, their presence and role in day to day activities and the impact they left in various walks of life, such as political, military, social, cultural, judicial etc. was not only great but ever lasting. Indeed their presence helped the Maharaja and his successors in keeping the indigenous elements under effective control.

Intrigues have always been inextricably linked with politics. In a desire of greater power and influence courtiers often indulge in conspiracies and intrigues. Here, it is worth mentioning that after the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the role of Hindu Courtiers and Officials in intrigues and treacheries at the Lahore Darbar was crucial and significant. They decidedly assisted in improving the civil administration as well as military. Being men of varied talents and tastes they were interested in duties of various natures. We have seen how efficiently they performed their duties and to what extent they proved helpful/useful to the Lahore Darbar during the life time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and also in the times of his successors. Throughout their presence at the Lahore Darbar they remained relevant either because of their relations with the British, with other nobles and even sometimes with the common people. The Hindu Courtiers and Officials of Ranjit Singh’s Darbar were also sometimes constrained to indulge in intrigues and conspiracies.

Amongst the court nobility of the Sikh Darbar Diwan Dina Nath was unique. He was in fact an accomplished person, courteous and considerate, well educated, though nothing of a scholar. Dina Nath soon
distinguished himself, but it was not till the later days of the Maharaja that he came to be regarded as a prominent figure. He was an expert in statistics and financial information regarding the Punjab. Though, basically he was interested in civil administration yet he performed many jobs in military activities as desired by the Maharaja and his successors. He also came up to their expectations. The secret of Diwan Dina Nath's success lay in the fact that he studied closely every changing political situation of his country like a true diplomat or rather an opportunist and availed himself accordingly. He had no scruples and no convictions. His opportunism, however was of a different kind. He was a man who had to work against unscrupulous and ambitious leaders. Thus it was natural for him to set his own welfare above abstract principles. But to secure this he never betrayed the cause of his masters. On the other hand, he laboured hard for the good of the state. Among the Sikh barnos who stood around the throne of the young Maharaja Dalip Singh, there was not one who honestly laboured for his country or who would have made the smallest sacrifice to save it. If Dina Nath was not more honest than his contemporaries he was at least more patriotic. Without his clear head and business like habits it would have been almost impossible to disentangle the Darbar accounts during the time of Regency. He was respected for his financial ability, his moderation and reserve. Diwan Dina Nath was bold, morally courageous and free from the vices of the time. It was his position and his intimate knowledge of the financial affairs that rendered Diwan Dina Nath indispensable to the early British administrators for sometime after the annexation of Punjab in 1849.

Misr family was also prominent, Misr Beli Ram being its most important representative at the Court. He was one of the most trustworthy courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and worked as a
Thoshakhania during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and after his demise. His master never doubted his ability, work and contribution at Lahore. He had served with dedication never betrayed his master. Misr Beli Ram was a man of great intelligence and the Maharaja was fully aware of his worth.

As Hindu Courtiers and Officials enjoyed greater prestige and prominence in Ranjit Singh's court, they were often victims of jealousy. This made them easy targets of other factions like those of Sardars and Dogras. A couple of Hindu courtiers like Misr Beli Ram and Misr Ram Kishan even lost their lives due to intrigues. A few others like Misr Rup Lal either lost their jobs or fell out of the favour of the Maharaja and Kirpa Ram were to retire to places like Banaras. Diwan Mohkam Chand's family for three generations had rendered good and brilliant service for the Maharaja but this did not save them from the ingratitude of their Master. Diwan Mohkam Chand, the eldest member of the Diwan family, was the best and most successful general and it was in great measure owing to his military ability that the Maharaja established himself as the sole ruler of the Punjab. But this did not save his son Moti Ram or his grand son Kirpa Ram from constant slights, fines, confiscations and eventual ruin. An important evidence of the loyalty of the Hindu Courtiers and Officials can be found in the fact that like many others they did not shift loyalties during the Anglo-Sikh wars.

Infact, by dint of hard work, their caliber, sincerity, loyalty, their military services, their participation in various campaigns and the contribution which they made in the battlefield and their contribution in improving the civil administration they won over the hearts of everyone at the Lahore Darbar. The evolution of the Lahore Darbar's Central Secretariat under these officials was of great value and result oriented.
Thus the character and nature of the financial system got new orientation and proved to be of great utility to the Sikh State. The role played by these Hindus in directing campaigns at Malwa region, Kangra, Jalandhar, Multan, Kashmir, Attock, Mankera were most significant and unforgettable. Some of them along with the military services, rendered notable services in the civil administration of the state also. Particularly the services of Diwan Mohkam Chand, Misr Diwan Chand and many others in the service of civil administration were of high quality. Similarly some of those who performed their duties in the civil administration also directed the campaigns in the military field. Particularly the contribution Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Dina Nath, Diwan Moti Ram, Diwan Kirpa Ram and many others is notable. It was the result of their commitment, discipline, way of life and loyalty towards the Lahore Darbar that the Darbar was noted for its greatness.

Their relation with the nobility carried importance because these relations continued to have a deep impact even after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Let it be noted that the other factions of the nobility at Lahore Darbar were not less important; these factions were given due place, status, position, duties, responsibilities, privileges and perks sometimes, even more than those of the Hindu Courtiers and Officials. It was chiefly due to their having similar qualities and merits which the Hindus were having that they were jealous of these Hindus as the latter enjoyed extraordinary confidence of their ruler.

Lastly, after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh the Hindus who remained loyal to the Lahore Darbar began to take active part in political conspiracies and started indulging in treacheries and intrigues along with Sardars against the successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Dogras. Their relations with the British remained fluctuating according to the changing political circumstances. Most of the time relations with
the British were dictated by the relations between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the British. Thus, Maharaja Ranjit Singh succeeded, when he enlisted them in the service of Lahore *Darbar* running the military and civil administration efficiently.

To conclude, Diwan Devi Das, Misr Basti Ram, Bakshi Bhagat Ram, Rattan Chand Duggal, Rattan Chand Darhiwala, Diwan Karam Chand, Misr Megh Raj, Misr Ram Kishan, Misr Sukhraj, Diwan Shankar Nath, Misr Rallia Ram, Misr Sahib Dayal, Rai Kishan Chand, Diwan Hakam Rai, General Harsukh Rai, Diwan Devi Sahai, Misr Jassa Mal and many more Hindu Courtiers and Officials served the Lahore *Darbar* during the life time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and even after his demise. They worked according to the needs of the *Maharaja* and as per the expectations of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lahore *Darbar* as well as the successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They were always active and absorbed in performing their duties and responsibilities till 1849.