Maharaja Ranjit Singh was like a meteor who shot up in the sky and dominated the scene for about half a century in the History of India. His greatness cannot be paralleled by any of his contemporaries. He was a benign ruler and always cared for the welfare of his subjects irrespective of their caste or creed. The Maharaja had full faith in the broad based harmony and cooperation with which the Hindus and the Muslims lived and maintained peace and prosperity. The evidence of the whole hearted co-operation of the Hindu Courtiers, Generals and Administrators is not far to seek. The spirit of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule was secular.

In the present thesis I have selected only the Hindu Courtiers and Officials at the Lahore Darbar. For working on such a topic entitled, "Role of Select Courtiers and Officials at Lahore Darbar 1799-1849" one is bound to study Archival records and Khalsa Darbar Records available in various forms, such as Foreign Department, Home Department, translated work and sources based on Khalsa Darbar Records available in Punjab State Archives. During the four and half years period of my research, various places like Punjab State Archives, Patiala and Branch Office Chandigarh, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti, New Delhi, Secretariat Library, Chandigarh; Punjab University Library, Chandigarh; Dawarka Das Library, Chandigarh; Bhai Kahn Singh Library, Punjabi University, Patiala; Guru Nanak Dev University Library, Amritsar; Bhasha Vibhag Library, Patiala were visited to find out relevant material for the present thesis. Despite many difficulties, however attempt have been made to build this thesis on the present subject with the help of available primary and secondary sources.

A large number of Hindu Courtiers and Officials were serving at the Lahore Darbar under the command and eye of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Some of them were of
great importance, considerable note and caliber. A few of them had earlier occupied ministerial/high ups posts in the Mughal Darbar of Delhi and under Kabul Government also. Doubtlessly, their contribution, role and achievements in the military and civil administration of the Lahore Darbar were not simply important, rather they also proved helpful in strengthening and consolidating the Sikh kingdom under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Though many valuable research projects have been undertaken and completed on various aspects and achievements of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and even his successors, yet to the best of my knowledge, no independent and systemic study of the Hindus, in his court, has been undertaken by the scholars hitherto. Thus the present work is an attempt to fill up this void in the history of Punjab of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s time and of the period after his demise till 1849, when Punjab was annexed by the British Government. It is true that the Hindu Courtiers and Officials were important figures at the Lahore Darbar. Quite a few of them began their career as clerks or as troopers but with in a short span through their intelligence, caliber, hard work and ability rose to the highest positions at the Lahore Darbar.

Thus the present study examines their antecedents leading to their recruitment as well as the policy adopted by the Lahore Darbar particularly during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in this respect. Also an attempt has been made to present a detailed account of the most prominent/selected Hindus at the Lahore Darbar, such as Diwan Mohkam Chand, Misr Diwan Chand, Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Dina Nath, Misr Beli Ram, Diwan Sawan Mal, Diwan Moti Ram, Misr Rup Lal, Diwan Ram Dayal, Diwan Kirpa Ram and Diwan Ajodhia Parshad and some others, who were working in average and ordinary capacities. Their role in the establishment of the Central Secretariat, in financial department and in commanding campaigns of Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar, Mankera, Jalandhar and Malwa region in particular have been discussed. Also, the performance of these Hindus in the Civil
Administration has been examined at length but critically. Their relations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and after his death with his successors as well as with the nobility at Lahore Darbar have been examined thoroughly and also analytically.

As Stated above, the number of Hindus in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Darbar was large. No historian has been able to provide any particular record as to, how many Hindus were employed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in one capacity or the other. Undoubtedly, some of them were men of great eminence, they were not only active, but efficient also. They were of invaluable importance to the regime as they had practical experience to their credit. This practical experience had been gained through their earlier experience under Kabul and Delhi Governments so they helped Maharaja Ranjit Singh to the best of their ability in the establishment, expansion and consolidation of his kingdom by their valuable service, suggestions and interest with which they worked. They worked up to the expectations of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors.

Though many useful and valuable research work has been carried out on the subject of Ranjit Singh's rise and on his achievements in the various fields like military, civil and general administration as well as on the political, economic and socio-cultural conditions of this period but no independent research work or study on the Hindus as civil and military generals or officials of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Darbar has been undertaken. If at all there is a work of this nature it is neither focused nor comprehensive in its scope. It is worth mentioning that the Hindus as civil and military generals at Ranjit Singh's court worked with dedication, honesty and commitment.

The Hindu Courtiers and Officials who served in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign and under his successors were of two categories i.e. Brahmans and Khatris. There are many Hindu Courtiers and officials who worked at Lahore Darbar but no account about them has hitherto appeared in any form. Their careers, contributions, achievements, and importance have been traced out from various contemporary sources available in Persian,
Urdu, Punjabi and English. Their role and position have been studied keeping in mind the functioning of the Lahore Darbar during and after Maharaja Ranjit Singh so as to reveal their relation with other Dogras, Sikhs, Muslims and European Commanders, Generals and Courtiers.

The twelve Hindu Courtiers and Officials in question contributed to a great extent in building the Sikh kingdom and their contribution was not less than the Dogras, Muslims, Europeans and Sikh Generals, ministers and nobles. During the course of the present study, it has been felt that there was a large scope to include details about the role of these Hindu Courtiers and Officials in the establishment of the Central Secretariat and in the organization of the Financial Department of Sikh administration which as largely modeled on Kabul and Delhi Government. In this work efforts have also been made to trace out the role of number of the lesser known Hindu Courtiers and Officials at central and State level in general and to study their contribution in the establishment and growth of the Sikh empire.

We studied a large number of primary and secondary sources available in various languages such as Persian, Urdu, English and Punjabi related to the study of our present subject. Sohan Lal Suri’s Umdat-ut-Tawarikh is a contemporary, authentic and official chronicle of the history of the Sikhs. Its Daftar II, III and IV deal effectively with the events of the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. These events throw an ample light on the activities and services rendered by these officers. There is another important work, The Sikhs and the Afghans by Shahamat Ali which provides an eye witness account of Ranjit Singh’s administration, revenue and the principal ministers and officials of the State. W.G. Osborne’s famous work, Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh describes both the court as well as the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He has traced the life of the leading Sikhs in the court of the Maharaja as also the notable developments of this period. Events at the court of Ranjit Singh (1810-17) edited by H.L.O. Garrett and G.L. Chopra
is another important work. It has given an account of the day to day functioning of Lahore Darbar but does not contain a detailed account of the officials of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Punjab in 1839-40 edited by Dr. Ganda Singh has been studied. It depicts the life at the Maharaja's Court, in addition to the political and administrative system of the Sikh kingdom but much is not stated about the life style and working of the Hindu Courtiers and Officials of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's court. Some useful material about the court and courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was accessed in Dr. Bhagat Singh's work, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times. Similarly, Prem Singh Hoti's books, Khalsa Raj De Usariaye (Do Jilda Vich) and Maharaja Ranjit Singh supply some information about the lives, position and status enjoyed by the Hindus at Lahore Darbar who served at the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh but their impact on the political and administrative set up of the Sikh kingdom is completely absent in these works. Gulcharan Singh's Ranjit Singh and His Generals was also part of research study but this work also provides a skeletal account about the Military services of these officers. The other related aspects of their lives, careers and achievements have not been discussed and examined analytically. Dr. J.S. Grewal and Dr. Indu Banga edited Civil and Military affairs of Maharaja Ranjit Singh which deals with the role of officials in civil and military affairs only. Similarly, B.J. Hasrat's work Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and G.L. Chopra's The Punjab as a Sovereign State (1799-1839) has given good account of conquests and Civil and Military administration and court and Courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Barkat Rai Chopra's work Kingdom of the Punjab 1839-45 gives a detailed account of the Khalsa Darbar after the death of Ranjit Singh and N.K. Sinha's work, Ranjit Singh throws some authentic light on conquests, administration, army and the position and status of different officials at Lahore Darbar. Though these works through considerable light on life, career and achievements of Maharaja Ranjit Singh but there is need to explore new sources to examine the role of
Hindu Courtiers and Officials in the Lahore Darbar. No doubt, many new sources material have come to light which throw ample light not only on the careers of the Hindu courtiers but also tell us about their relations with the nobility of Lahore Darbar as well as with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors. Thus, it is clear that the scope of further investigation on this theme is not only self-explanatory and immense but also necessary in order to understand independent contribution of Hindu Courtiers and Official's at the Lahore Darbar in detail. Some notable works have been written by scholars on the other courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh like Dogras, Attariwalas, Sandhawalas, Europeans and Muslims who served in different capacities at Lahore Darbar but Hindus were somehow ignored though they deserved attention. These and other such factors motivated me to select this topic for research purpose to reflect the life, role and contribution in civil and military fields of Hindu Courtiers and Officials at Lahore Darbar.

Thus the present study is an attempt to fill up this gap in the history of Punjab of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time till the period after his demise till 1849, when Punjab was annexed by the British Government. It will not be out of place if the aims and objectives of present study are also cited here, of course, in brief.

It is true that Hindus were important figures at the Lahore Darbar. The purpose of this study is to examine critically the Maharaja's aims and objectives behind recruiting Hindus in his court. It is also to study what prompted them to join service under him and even to continue during the time of Maharaja's successors. In the present study effort has been to trace out and discuss their relations with the Maharaja, his successors and the other members of the nobility on one hand and their relations with the British Government on the other. The Privileges, power and position enjoyed by them as well as the restrictions put on them by the Maharaja have been examined critically. Also we have studied, at length their services and contribution in the civil and military
administration of the Lahore Darbar. The reforms which were introduced by them in the provincial administration and what impact did it leave is also discussed. The significance of their presence and role in the day to day activities of that period under Ranjit Singh and even after his death till the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849 has been highlighted as it is one of the objectives of the present study. Their role in the conspiracies and intrigues at Lahore Darbar especially after the death of Ranjit Singh has been examined critically as well. The impact of their characters, careers and caliber in various walks of life, such as political, military, socio-cultural has too been discussed analytically. Another objective of this study has remained to study if their presence in any way helped the Maharaja and his successors in keeping the indigenous elements under effective control. The merits of their war services and services in the military and civil administration during the period under review have been discussed and examined critically. How did they perform their duties which were entrusted to them and to what extent did they prove useful to the Lahore Darbar as well as their habits, likings and disliking also form the part of the present study. In this work efforts have also been made to trace out the role of number of the lesser known Hindu Courtiers and Officials at central and State levels in general and to study their contribution in the establishment and growth of Sikh Empire. Undoubtedly, they contributed constructively in building up the Sikh Empire.

Lastly, it will be meaningful if the chapterization of the present thesis is narrated here to just give an idea about the total plan of this study. Chapter-I deals with the early life and career of these twelve prominent Hindu Courtiers and Official in particular and some less important Hindus of Ranjit Singh’s Darbar in general; when and why were they recruited by the Maharaja; also the criteria of their selection has been discussed. In this chapter, a brief account of their position under Maharaja Ranjit Singh; formers relation with the nobility and the British has been examined critically but briefly.
Chapter II deals with the establishment of the Central Secretariat; to what extent did they help the Maharaja in its establishment; what methods were used by them to organize it and how the daftars came into being. During the course of the present study, it was felt that there was a great scope to include details about the role of these Hindu Courtiers and Officials in the establishment of the Central Secretariat as also in the organization of Financial and Civil administration and in the strengthening of the Sikh Kingdom.

Chapter III deals with the role of the Hindus in the financial administration. It studies their contribution in efforts to improve and enhance the financial resources. Land Revenue was the main source of income. Besides this main source others sources of income are also considered. The new methods introduced by the Hindus for financial regulation are also discussed critically.

Chapter IV deals with the Hindus as military Commanders and Generals, their rank, status and position; their military services, their participation in various campaigns and contribution made in the battlefields. Their role in the establishment and expansion of the Sikh kingdom particularly in the early career of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s also discussed. The nature and composition of the Khalsa army is also highlighted to establish the utility and merits of their presence in the Lahore Darbar during the life time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and after his demise till the annexation of Punjab in 1849.

Chapter V discusses the role of Hindu Courtiers as provincial Nazims or Governors. Some of them along with their services in the military department were also assigned different duties in the civil administration of the State. Hindus have been estimated keeping in mind their caliber, commitment and loyalty towards the Lahore Darbar and the Sikh State. The extent to which they came up to the expectations of the
Maharaja also form a part of this chapter. The chapter endeavours to resolve if they were able to leave any imprint and that has been discussed and estimated.

Chapter VI deals with the activities and role played by Hindu Courtiers and Officials at Lahore Darbar after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839. Their loyalty to the Lahore Darbar; their participation in conspiracies and intrigues along with other Sardars against the successor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh have been analysed. The position and privileges they enjoyed in the Lahore Darbar after the death of the Maharaja; the difficulties and problems they experienced; their role during the time of the first and second Anglo-Sikh Wars, their relations with the nobility and also the Sikh army have also been discussed in this chapter. Their relation with the British till the annexation of the Punjab is also discussed analytically.

Chapter VII tries to narrate the conclusions and findings of the whole study.

The present thesis is based largely on primary sources such as contemporary Persian works of Sohan Lal Suri, Ganesh Das Wadehra, Bute Shah, Amarnath and Kanhiya Lal; accounts of the contemporary travellers, memories of foreign officers, etc. Secondary sources have also been made use of. Annual administrative reports and Gazetteers are also important sources of information and reference. The conclusions arrived at in this study are only such as primary and contemporary evidences have yielded. In case of all information, rigorous historical methodology has been applied and proper historical balance has been constantly kept in mind.

Words are often a mode of expression for one's deep feelings and I feel my words are not enough to express my heartiest gratitude and indebtedness to those who have assisted me in one or other way in writing this project.

With folded hands, I want to thank the 'Almighty' who is the guiding sources of my life.
Therefore first and foremost, my extensive gratitude to my supervisor, most erudite and most esteemed Dr. Kulbir Singh Dhillon (Professor), Head and Dean Students Welfare, Punjabi University, Patiala for his perennial support and encouragement. No words would adequately express my supervisor's motivational qualities. He provided me with much required dose of inspiration and encouragement from time to time for which I am extremely indebted to him. Without his valuable guidance and critical observation, this work would probably not have been completed in the present form. He watched my progress over the years and very kindly spared time for discussing my problems for weeks together and also going through all my drafts with his habitual thoroughness. He also graciously allowed me the use of his personal library. I feel a sense of pleasure while acknowledging the love and encouragement shown by Dr. Pushpinder Kaur Dhillon, Reader and Incharge evening, Department of Law, the better half of my supervisor.

I shall always remember with deep gratitude the benign interest, Dr. Muhammad Idris, Senior Lecturer in History, Punjabi University, Patiala for his support and placing me in the hands of known teacher and scholar of history of this part of the country.

I also convey my sincere thanks to the esteemed faculty and the staff of Department of History Dr. Sukhinder Kaur Dhillon (Professor), Dr. Jaspal Kaur Dhanju (Professor), Dr. Balraj Singh (Lecturer) for their active assistance, valuable suggestions and cooperation during the course of my research.

I am also thankful to Prof. Ajay Verma, Lecturer in English, who helped me in the translation of some Punjabi sources into English.

I would also like to sincerely thank all my friends who have also gone through this draft; they too helped me in the collection of material which enabled me to finally draft this thesis.
I am beholden to the authorities of the following institutions for allowing me ready access to the relevant records and books as well as for extending courtesy and cooperation: National Archives of India, Jan Path, New Delhi, Punjab State Archives, Patiala and Chandigarh, Libraries like Bhai Kahn Singh Library, Punjabi University, Patiala, Central Public Library, Patiala; Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala; Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi; Dwarka Dass Library, Madhya Marg, Chandigarh; Panjab University Library, Chandigarh; Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; Punjab Bhasha Vibhag Library, Patiala.

On personal plane, I offer my heart felt gratitude to my father S. Shamsher Singh Sahi and Mother Smt. Balvir Kaur Sahi, who have always been pillars of strength in my life and without whose constant love and support I would not have realized my academic potential. My sisters Jatinder and Neetu and My brother Aman vied with one other in providing me with constant flow of love and affection which was needed the most to sustain my uninterrupted involvement in this work. My little niece Prabhlin and nephew Tanraj brought whiffs of fresh air whenever monotony threatened to set in. I must thank all the members of my in-laws family especially my parents and my fiancé Manipal Singh Shergill for his encouragement, strength, mental support during the time of research. Words and gestures can spur a person in many meaningful ways and my fiancé has also proved to be a fountain head of inspiration. My thanks to my friend and sister-in-law Kiran for her support and cooperation. My indebtedness to each one is too deep for words.

I shall be failing in my duty If I do not thank S. Paramjit Singh, office incharge, Department of History, for his co-operation in getting all the formalities fulfilled in connection with the procedure since the day I submitted my request for registration till the last day of submission. My thanks to S. Avtar Singh (Prop. Kamal Computers, Opp.
Punjabi University, Patiala) without whose efforts in type setting, this thesis would not have been appeared in its present form.

Dated: 

Rajinder Kaur