CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the early life and career of twelve prominent Hindu Courtiers and Officials in particular and also some lesser important Hindu Courtiers at the Lahore *Darbar* during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's regime. An attempt has been made to cite how, when and why they were recruited by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The criteria followed by the *Maharaja* to select and appoint them and also assign them different portfolios in the administrative machinery of the Sikh kingdom is also the subject of study.

As we knew the court of Ranjit Singh was secular in character and the *Maharaja* was the central figure. As merit was the main criterion for appointment, persons belonging to different religions and races were appointed to high posts without any discrimination. 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 assess the candidate's real worth. He was an absolute despot and nobody could interfere with what he desired to do. The persons, that he kept around him were generally men of the world, trained in the struggle of life, expert at getting ahead at the cost of others, designing and astute 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 included the Dogras, the Muslims, the Europeans, the Sikhs, and the Hindus and to this list may be added the Brahmins. The Brahmins formed a separate group because the Brahmins distinguished 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.

Here, in this chapter broadly speaking, a large number of Hindu courtiers and officials, who served the Maharaja and also his successor's regime are discussed. The Hindus were drawn from several groups like the Rajputs, the Brahmins the Khatris, the Ghurkhas and the Purbias. The discussion in this chapter deals with the Hindus who belonged to the Brahmin and Khatri castes. 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 Prashad, Misr Diwan Chand, Misr Beli Ram and his brother Misr Rup Lal. Some of them were prominent commanders, generals, administrators and provincial Governors.

It is interesting to note that some of Ranjit Singh’s Hindu Courtiers and Officials were people who had escaped from their previous situations because they felt dissatisfied and mostly belonged to normal/common families. Diwan Mohkam Chand was a fugitive from Gujrat where Sahib Singh Bhangi was after his life. Diwan Ganga Ram and Diwan Bhawani Das, both of them came to Lahore under difficult circumstances. The Misr brothers, Diwan Sawan Mal, Misr Diwan Chand also belonged to
common family. Full respect was shown to the religion of the Hindus. Notably, the people holding the highest jobs in his government, like the Dogra brothers, the Misrs and several others strictly adhered to their Hindu forms of religion. The Maharaja entrusted the talented Hindus with jobs involving very important responsibilities related with the state. Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Dina Nath and Beli Ram headed the revenue and finance departments of the State of Lahore. Diwan Mohkam Chand, Misr Diwan Chand and Ram Dyal worked as top ranking military officers. Diwan Sawan Mal, Diwan Moti Ram, Misr Rup Lal were some of his best provincial Governors.

**DIWAN MOHKAM CHAND**

The most distinguished of the generals by whose skill and courage Ranjit Singh rose from a chief-ship to the stature of Emperor of the Punjab was Diwan Mohkam Chand. Mohkam Chand was no soldier by birth. He was the son of a Kochhar Khatri trader named Baisakhi Mal of Kunjah in Gujrat (Pakistan)\(^1\) and previous to joining the Maharaja’s service, he worked as a Munshi under Dal Singh Gill of Akalgarh.\(^2\) He remained with Dal Singh till 1804, when that chief died and his estates were seized by Ranjit Singh. Sehju, the widow of the Sardar, disliked Mohkam Chand and demanded his accounts, as for many years he had held the entire management of the Akalgarh property. However, the Diwan did not care to expose them to a close and unfriendly scrutiny, and thus left the job and joined the service of Sardar Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat.\(^3\) The Bhangi Chief appointed him Diwan. After three years, he

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quarreled with the Sardar and was imprisoned. The Sardar ordered that the Diwan was to be executed. But due to the intervention of the Sardar's wife Chand Kaur, he was released and got employment under Ranjit Singh in 1806. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, appreciating the talents of Mohkam Chand and made him the Chief of his army, much to the chagrin of the Sikh Sardars. He proved an able general and fully justified the confidence of the Sikh Sardars.

From 1806 to 1814 he was associated with almost all the military campaigns of the Maharaja. During the period of consolidation of power by Ranjit Singh, and until his death Diwan Mohkam Chand was a constant companion of the Lahore Monarch. The Maharaja acknowledged his military ingenuity by conferring on him the titles of Diwan and Fateh Nasib in 1812. He joined the expeditions of the Maharaja to the Cis-Sutlej territory in 1806 and 1807, Sialkot in 1808, Kangra in 1809 Jalandhar in 1811, against Kashmir in conjunction with Fateh Khan in 1812 and against Fateh Khan himself in 1813, where he defeated the Afghan Wazir at the battle of Haidaru. Besides these he got the Nazrana from Basoli, Rajauri, Kulu and Multan.

Diwan Mohkam Chand was an excellent administrator as the Governor of Jalandhar Doab. Between 1806 and 1814, Mohkam Chand

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10 Ibid., p.117
12 Ibid., p.117
was the man next in importance to the Maharaja. His advise was sought on various issues. When Metcalf visited the Lahore Darbar in September 1808, Mohkam Chand with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia was sent to receive the English envoy at Kasur.\textsuperscript{15} During 1808 and 1809 Ranjit Singh was critically analysing the political situation and was in a fix whether to adopt a policy of peace or war vis-a-vis the cis-Satluj states. He utilized the unique position occupied by Diwan Mohkam Chand to devise a very clever strategy. He himself talked of peace while Mohkam Chand made preparations for war. It is said that one day when Diwan Mohkam Chand, Sardar Mit singh and Fakir Aziz-ud-Din called upon Charles Metcalf, Diwan Mohkam Chand remarked that the British had not seen the Sikh fighting to which the British envoy retorted that the Sikhs had also not seen the English fighting in the battle field, and probably that was why they were talking like that.\textsuperscript{16} The Maharaja in his shrewdness told Metcalf that "the Diwan for his advanced age and general control he had all over all affairs was a privileged character and very difficult to manage".\textsuperscript{17} Metcalf, of course discerned the diplomatic behaviour of Ranjit Singh and never made the mistake of thinking that the Maharaja was being thwarted by his officer.\textsuperscript{18} After the treaty of Amritsar was signed on April 25, 1809, Diwan Mohkam Chand went further and called it a piece of treachery and an insult.\textsuperscript{19}

At the time of Mehtab Kaur’s death Ranjit Singh was at Amritsar where the death of the former had taken place. Ranjit Singh got annoyed

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Foreign Department; Political Consultation}, 13th March 1808, No. 45, National Archives of India, New Delhi (hereafter read it NAI).
\textsuperscript{19} Waheed-ud-Din, \textit{The Real Ranjit Singh}, p. 54.
with Sada Kaur for some reason and he chose not to attend the cremation and other condolatory ceremonies. After a lot of appeals and persuasions, Diwan Mohkam Chand was able to take the Maharaja to Sada Kaur’s derah, where he performed some of the important ceremonies of condolence.\textsuperscript{20}

Diwan Mohkam Chand had strained relations with prominent courtier called Fakir Aziz-ud-Din. In 1811, the Khatris of Gujrat complained that Fakir Imam-ud-din, brother of Fakir Aziz-ud-din, had killed a cow in order to propitiate a Pir and the thigh of a cow was thrown in the house of a Hindu. The Hindu produced the thigh and asserted that in the administration of the Fakir Imam-ud-Din such things were happening. Diwan Mohkam Chand, who bore animus towards Fakir Aziz-ud-Din, sided with the Hindus. As a repercussion of this incident, the shops were closed at Amritsar, Lahore, Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Gujrat and Jalalpur. At last the dispute was settled through the appointment of a Hindu Amil at Gujrat by the Maharaja and Imam-ud-Din was appointed as Amil at Jalandhar.\textsuperscript{21} In 1813, during the battle of Haidaru, the discord between Diwan Mohkam Chand and Bhai Ram Singh came to the surface. They even resorted to getting each other insulted by their subordinate sowars.\textsuperscript{22}

Diwan Mohkam Chand died on October 29, 1814, on Saturday, at Phillaur\textsuperscript{23} and his tomb was erected in a garden at that place. At the time of his death he held a Jagir worth Rs. 642, 161 of annual income\textsuperscript{24}. He left behind an illustrious son Diwan Moti Ram, and grandsons Diwan

\textsuperscript{20} Bute Shah, Tawarikh-i-Punjab pp. 53-54.
\textsuperscript{21} Ali-ud-Din Mufti, Ibratnama, p. 494.
\textsuperscript{22} Ram Sukh Rao, Fateh Singh Partap Parbhakar, MS M/774, Punjab State Archives, Patiala ff. 246b.
Kirpa Ram and Diwan Ram Dyal who too rendered a significant service to the Sikh State. Ranjit Singh had held Diwan Mohkam Chand in high esteem throughout his career. In August 1831 when Captain Wade visited the Maharaja the latter articulated his admiration of Mohkam Chand's faithfulness and ability before the visitor and again in May 1833 Ranjit Singh remarked, "Today I am reminded of the intelligence, faithfulness and courageous assurances of Diwan Mohkam Chand."26

About his character Murray writes, "the Diwan was liberal, upright, and high minded he enjoyed the confidence of the troops placed under his command and was popular and much respected amongst the entire Sikh community."27

26 Ibid. p. 171.
27 Murray, History of the Punjab, Vol. II, Patiala, 1970, p. 23; Lepel Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, Lahore, 1865, p.556; says as a general he had been almost always successful; his administrative talents were as great as his military ones and in his death the Maharaja lost his most loyal and devoted servant. According to W.L. Mc' Gregor, History of the Sikhs, Vol. I, p. 174. The Diwan was a man of the greatest military tact and had always been successful in various important commands bestowed on him by the Maharaja.
**DIWAN MOTI RAM**

Diwan Moti Ram was the only son of the famous Diwan Mohkam Chand the greatest general of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When Mohkam Chand was assigned some other duties, the *Doab* was managed by his son Moti Ram.\(^\text{28}\) He was a man of great ability and after the death of Diwan Mohkam Chand, he succeeded in his *Jagirs* and the title of *Diwan* was confirmed upon him.\(^\text{29}\) He was appointed the first Governor of Kashmir in 1819.\(^\text{30}\) He served as Governor of Kashmir from 1819 to 1826 with a small gap in between which was filled up by Hari Singh Nalwa. He was one of the most respected, efficient and honest officers of Ranjit Singh. He was a wise and cautious administrator. He was keen to do something positive to ameliorate the condition of the poor Kashmiris but the *Dogra* brothers who were not in favour of Diwan Mohkam Chand's family and who had great influence at Lahore always placed obstacles in the way of this family and never allowed them a free hand in the administration of the territory. As a result of the machinations of the *Dogras* he was ousted from power in 1827.

Diwan Moti Ram was always sent on political missions by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In 1826, when Lord Amehersat visited Shimla, Diwan Moti Ram with Fakir Imam-ud-Din and Vakil Ram Dayal went there to meet him on behalf of the *Maharaja*.\(^\text{31}\) In 1830, he was appointed a member of the mission which waited upon Lord William Bentick at Shimla.\(^\text{32}\) He was given the dependency of Kunjah in December 1831 including the estates worth amounts as mentioned: Haveli and Kabula, Rs. 5,000; Pakka


\(^{29}\) Amarnath, *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*, p. 85.


Sudda, Rs. 40,000; Maroof Rs. 40,000; Pak Pattan Rs. 13,000; Jaithpur Rs. 15,000; Mari Anandpur Rs. 21,000; Baloch estate Rs. 21,000; Centre of the Defender of the Faith Rs. 5,000; Thuthawala Rs. 11,000; Harind and Dajal Rs. 40,000; Chutala Rs. 10,000; Estate of Amar Singh, Thanedar of Anandpur in the Doaba Rs. 7,000; Parmanad Rs. 40,000 and the total areas Rs. 3,07,000.  

Though Diwan Moti Ram was a Nazim yet he also participated in the final expedition of Multan in 1818. He was not only a good soldier, but was also well versed in politics.

The family of Diwan Mohkam Chand gradually fell from the grace of the Maharaja. He went to Banaras and his Jagirs lapsed to the State. The family Jagirs of Diwan Mohkam Chand had already been taken back by the Lahore government. Disgusted and disappointed Diwan Moti Ram died at Banaras in 1837. Ranjit Singh had good opinion of the Diwan and once remarked that he was not like Diwan Mohkam Chand his father, yet he was better than others.

**DIWAN KIRPA RAM**

Diwan Kirpa Ram was the younger son of Diwan Moti Ram, son of celebrated Diwan Mohkam Chand. He performed multifarious duties as a Nazim, a Diwan, a soldier and an administrator. However, amongst the Sikh Governors, Diwan Kirpa Ram enjoyed the best reputation.

Diwan Kirpa Ram commanded the forces many a time. He took part in the expedition of Mankera with Misr Diwan Chand. In 1823, he took

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part in the battle of Naushehra in which the Afghan army under Mohammad Azim Khan of Kabul suffered a heavy defeat.\footnote{Ibid. p. 220; Ali-ud-Din Mufti, Ibratnama, p. 542.}

Although Diwan Kirpa Ram participated in minor expeditions he was mainly reputed as a good administrator or Governor. He acted as the \textit{Nazim} of the Jalandhar Doab on behalf of his father Diwan Moti Ram who was holding Kashmir as well as the Jalandhar Doab in \textit{Nizamat}.\footnote{W.E. Purser, \textit{Final Report of the Revised Settlement of the Jalandhar District in the Punjab}, p. 41.} In 1826, Diwan Kirpa Ram was appointed the \textit{Nazim} of Kashmir.\footnote{Ali-ud-Din Mufti, \textit{Ibratnama}, p. 578; W.L. McGregor, \textit{History of the Sikhs}, Vol. I, p. 196.} He administered Kashmir in an excellent manner and paid the revenue regularly.

Intelligent and having exquisite ideas of magnificence, he beautified Kashmir with many fine buildings. In Srinagar, Ram Bagh was built by Diwan Kirpa Ram. In his home town Kunjah, he had constructed many fine buildings and gardens. A fine masonry tank and a handsome \textit{baradari} garden and fountains in the vicinity preserve the name of Diwan Kirpa Ram in the memory of the people.\footnote{J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, (Trans. and ed.) \textit{Early Nineteenth Century Punjab}, p. 71; \textit{District Gazetteer of Gujrat}, 1883-84, p. 120.} Diwan Kirpa Ram loved luxury, especially boating. Hence his name commonly popular in the valley was \textit{Kirpa Shoriyan} on account of the jingling noise of small bells emanating from the women's hand and feet\footnote{G.T. Vigne, \textit{Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo}, Vol-II, pp. 74-75.} and for his indulgences in 'Char Chinar' an islet in the Dal Lake.

In 1824 and 1831, Diwan Kirpa Ram and his father Diwan Moti Ram incurred the displeasure of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Both the times he was heavily fined. Infact, Diwan Kirpa Ram greatly suffered in the estimate of the \textit{Maharaja} due to the intrigues of the \textit{Dogras} and was made to pay fines and to suffer sequestration of the property. He asked permission to join his father in Banaras which was refused. Disgusted
and disgraced, in December 1834, he went on an assumed pilgrimage to Jawala Mukhi and from there crossed to the British territory across the Sultej\textsuperscript{44} and joined his father at Banaras.

During the life time of Maharaja Kharak Singh, Prince Nau Nihal Singh, Rani Chand Kaur and Maharaja Sher Singh sent emissaries to urge Diwan Kirpa Ram to return to Lahore as a rival of Raja Dhian Singh, but the shrewd Diwan was wise in keeping himself out of the Lahore politics. Kirpa Ram died at Banaras. In 1837, once Maharaja Ranjit Singh while talking to Wade remarked about Diwan Kirpa Ram’s bravery and qualities as a commander and said that "he was very obedient and loyal to the Maharaja".\textsuperscript{45}

**DIWAN RAM DAYAL**

Diwan Ram Dayal was grandson of Diwan Mohkam Chand and son of Diwan Moti Ram. He was employed on a number of minor campaigns. Like his grandfather he was an expert in military activities. He rose to the rank of a divisional commander at the youthful age of 21. He distinguished himself as commander of the Sikh division in the Kashmir expedition of 1814\textsuperscript{46} against which his grandfather had remonstrated in vain in view of the difficulties ahead, in which, although the Sikhs were routed yet the bravery of Diwan Ram Dayal was highly appreciated even by the Afghans. He also participated in the conquest of Multan in 1818\textsuperscript{47} and acquitted himself well. In 1819, Diwan Ram Dayal participated in the final and successful expedition against Kashmir.\textsuperscript{48} He was sent to Hazara in 1820 after the killing of Bhai Makhan Singh and the recall of

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\textsuperscript{44} Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar-III (Part-II), pp. 216, 223.  
\textsuperscript{46} Ganesh Das Wadehra, *Char Bagh-i-Punjab*, p. 1.  
Hukam Singh Chimni, the Governor. This young and cautious general, accompanied by Prince Sher Singh, as nominal commander and Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, marched through the hills as far as the fort of Gandgarh to crush the Yusafzai tribes. At Hazara he gave tough time to Afghans and died fighting against them at the young age of 28. He was extremely popular with his troops.

**MISR DIWAN CHAND**

Misr Diwan Chand was one of the courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who rose from the position of a petty clerk to Chief of artillery and commander-in-Chief of the armies. Misr Diwan Chand was a Brahmin by caste and belonged to Gondlanwala village in Gujranwala District. Earlier he had served under Nakai Chief Nodh Singh in his Modikhana as a weigher (tola) of grain. Once Diwan Chand was found short by ninety rupees in his accounts. Nodh Singh punished him for this lapse. He placed a musket on Misr Diwan Chand's shoulder and made him stand in the sun. This incident came to the notice of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he paid the short credits to Nodh Singh from his own Toshakhana and got the Diwan released. Maharaja Ranjit Singh took him into his service and initially appointed him as a clerk in the Topkhana of Mian Muhammad Ghaus Khan at the age of 15 or 16 in 1812. He was very punctual in performing his duties. Due to his efficiency and loyalty his status was elevated and he was appointed as Naib (Assistant) incharge of artillery. In 1814, after the death of Mian Ghaus Khan, Misr Diwan Chand was appointed on his post by the Maharaja as a Chief of artillery.

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49 Ganesh Das Wadehra, Char Bagh-i-Punjab, p. 6.
52 N.K. Sinha, Ranjit Singh, p. 175.
or ordnance department.\textsuperscript{55} It was a good opportunity for him to prove his ability and sincerity to the Maharaja.

Between 1814 to 1825, Misr Diwan Chand was the officer on whom Ranjit Singh largely depended for the success of his military operations. In 1817, he was sent to deal with Mitha Tiwana. Misr Diwan Chand is famous in history as the victor of Multan (1818)\textsuperscript{56} and Kashmir (1819).\textsuperscript{57} He was also instrumental in reducing and capturing the fort of Bhakkar, Khangarh, leiah, Manjgarh and Mankera in 1821.

Misr Diwan Chand was also appointed Governor of Kashmir during 1819. His administration of Pahkli and Damtaur was not however, successful.

The Dogra brothers were greatly patronised by Misr Diwan Chand. He was not only instrumental in the appointment of Dhian Singh as Chamberlain in 1818\textsuperscript{58}, but also due to his aid and support, the wily brothers obtained the grant of Jammu in 1814 by dispossessing Jamadar Khushal Singh of it.\textsuperscript{59}

Misr Diwan Chand died broken hearted on 19th July 1825 after a two day illness from an attack of colic.\textsuperscript{60} According to Ali-ud-Din Mufti, the Maharaja, in need of money, ordered the auditors to check the accounts of the farmers of various districts for revenue. They engaged themselves in the process and unjustly showed a large amount

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\textsuperscript{58} Jamadar Khushal Singh quarreled with Misr Diwan Chand, whom he stopped at the Deorhi and refused admission. This so incensed the Maharaja, that he relieved him of the post and refused admittance to the court. Shahamat Ali, \textit{The Sikhs and the Afghans}, Patiala, 1987 (reprint), p. 42; According to S.M. Latif, \textit{History of the Punjab}, p. 414. The Maharaja also fined him 50,000 rupees.
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outstanding to be payable by them. As the farmers had taken the farm through the good offices of the Misr, they approached him. The Misr represented to the Maharaja for justice and appealed for the realization of money justly payable by them. The Maharaja made a curt remark about his rise from a pimp to a high rank on account of his kindness and enjoined upon him not to neglect his duties and thus cause loss of revenue to the Government. This outburst of rage hurt the feelings of the Misr, who died within two days as a result of this insult.  

The Maharaja had great regard for the Misr. Once the Maharaja bought a costly hukkah for the Misr and also gave him the permission to smoke. On his death Maharaja Ranjit Singh was deeply grieved and said, "Misr was a unique personality of the age and had no equal or parallel in sincerity. At the time of the Misr's death his wealth was estimated to comprise eleven lakhs in cash, ten necklaces of Pearls, two lakhs worth of ornaments and four to five lakhs worth of sundry goods. He was an able general, an excellent commander and a gifted man. His brother Sukhdial succeeded him after his death.  

DIWAN DINA NATH (RAJA)  

Dina Nath was a civil administrator and counsellor of considerable influence at the Sikh court for well over three decades. Shahamat Ali observes, "He is a shrewd, sensible man and possessed great statistical and financial information regarding every part of the Punjab". The family of Raja Dina Nath came originally from Kashmir, where in the reign of Shah Jahan (the Mughal King), some members of it held offices

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64 Gulcharan Singh, Ranjit Singh and His Generals, p. 63.  
about the court.\textsuperscript{66} He was the son of Bakhat Mal, a Kashmiri \textit{Brahmin} who had served under Perron, the Maratha Deputy at Delhi.\textsuperscript{67} In 1815, Diwan Ganga Ram, a near relative of Dina Nath and head of the state office at Lahore invited him to Punjab and placed him in that office.\textsuperscript{68} He worked with intelligence and diligence. Dina Nath because of his intelligence and business like approach soon attracted the attention of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He first attracted the notice of the \textit{Maharaja} after the capture of Multan when he made out the lists of those entitled to rewards with great rapidity and clearness and adjusted the accounts of the province of Multan, which the first \textit{Nazim}, Sukhdayal had thrown into great confusion.\textsuperscript{69}

Dina Nath by his ability and political acumen, rose to the highest position of power and influence in the affairs of the State. He exhibited energy and intelligence of an extraordinary kind. In 1826, on the death of Diwan Ganga Ram, Dina Nath succeeded him as the keeper of the Royal seal and head of Military accounts department. In 1834, on the death of Diwan Bhawani Das, he was made head of the finance department.\textsuperscript{70} Thus, he became finance minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and was in charge of twelve \textit{daftars} or offices of civil and military business of the Lahore Government towards the end of the Maharaja's reign and possessed great influence during the latter years of his life. The title of \textit{Diwan} was bestowed upon him in 1838. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had great faith in the ability judgement of the \textit{Diwan} and consulted him on all important occasions. According to Shahamat Ali, he received twenty rupees a day, besides a \textit{Jagir} of six thousand rupees, and enjoyed

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\item \textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 20.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Amarnath, \textit{Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh}, p. 80.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Lepel Griffin, \textit{The Punjab Chiefs}, p. 137.
\end{itemize}
assignments in Kashmir and Multan, besides many other fees and emoluments which he readily derived from his official stations.  

Besides this he received *Jagirs* in Amritsar, Dinanagar, and Kasur districts to the value of Rs. 9,900. The result was that Diwan Dina Nath known for his sobriety had a platoon of forty rose-limbed concubines with whom he played in the tank of his garden filled actually with rose water. The Diwan's garden was considered a model of beauty, elegance and splendor. It was adorned with reservoirs of water, tanks splendid summer houses and buildings for the accommodation of visitors.

During the reign of Maharaja Kharak Singh and Sher Singh Diwan Dina Nath retained his office and received new *Jagirs*. In the uncertain struggle between Mai Chand Kaur and Kanwar Sher Singh, he was the only person who stood aside. Diwan Dina Nath retained his influential position during the fatal and inept *wazart* of Hira Singh who relied on the counsels of Pandit Jalla, a detractor of Diwan Dina Nath. The differences of Gulab Singh with Hira Singh also did not affect his position.

Dina Nath was also the founder and leader of the *Mutsaddi* faction which comprised the moderate old-guard of Ranjit Singh's time. He was one of the most trusted officials of Rani Jindan whom he resembled in several respects. Both survived all stages of revolutions and crises in which kings rose and fell and most of the prominent statesman perished. He was the member of Council of Ministers reconstituted by Rani Jindan on 28 December, 1844.
After the first Anglo-Sikh War, Diwan Dina Nath was one of the signatories of the treaty of 9th March 1846. He also played an important part in the Council of Regency. On account of his services in the council, in November 1847, the Diwan was raised to the stature of Raja of Kalanaur with a Jagir worth 2,000 rupees annually.

After the annexation of the Punjab, Raja Dina Nath confirmed all his Jagirs. His eldest son Amarnath received a Jagir during his father's life worth Rs. 4,000 and on Amarnath's death his pension was resumed and his son received a Jagir of Rs. 4,000 retain in perpetuity according to the rules of primogeniture.

Griffin calls him, "The Talleyrand of the Punjab and his life and character bear a strong resemblance to those of the European statesman. Revolutions, in which his friends and patrons perished passed him by; dynasties rose and fell, but never involved him in their ruin; in the midst of turmoil when confiscation and judicial robbery were the rule of the state, his wealth and power continually increased. His sagacity and farsightedness were such that when, to other eyes, political sky was clear he could perceive the coming storm, which warned him to desert a losing party or a falling friend". In conversation with the Europeans he expressed himself with boldness which was unusual among most of the Asiatics.

**MISR BELI RAM**

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79 *Foreign Department; Secret Consultation*, 31 December 1847; No. 185, NAI; Ganesh Das Wadehra, *Char Bagh-i-Punjab*, p. 55.
Misr Beli Ram was a *Brahmin* by caste and belonged to the village named Kahan near Kitas in Jhelum.\(^8^2\) His father Misr Diwan Chand came to Lahore along with his sons in 1809. Misr Beli Ram and his four brothers, Rup Lal, Ram Kishan, Megh Raj and Sukh Raj got employment with the Lahore *Darbar* and commanded the confidence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with the help of Basti Ram a treasurer of the *Maharaja*. Misr Beli Ram entered the service of the *Maharaja* at the age of eleven through his grand uncle Basti Ram as assistant to him in the treasury. He soon became a great favourite of the *Maharaja* and on the death of Basti Ram in 1816, inspite of the opposition of Dhian Singh he was appointed his successor as *Thoshakhana*\(^8^3\) or treasurer at the age of 19. Dogra brothers who constituted a group were against Misr Beli Ram and his brothers. Raja Dhian Singh wanted his replacement by his protege Misr Jassa.\(^8^4\) This was the cause of the enmity between them.

In 1837, a dispute arose between Sardar Lehana Singh Majithia and Misr Beli Ram regarding the country of the Jalandhar Doaba. Bhai Gobind Ram explained the whole situation to the *Maharaja* as a piece of good service of Misr Beli Ram with many words about the faithfulness loyalty, sacrifice and well-wishing of the *MISR*.\(^8^5\) Bhai Gobind Ram's words always left an indelible mark on the mind of the *Maharaja*. The *Maharaja* gifted/presented Misr Rup Lal who was the cause of the dispute between Majithia and Misr Beli Ram, an elephant, a *Doshala* and a sword and he was allowed to leave for Jalandhar.

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Misr brothers served their master with loyalty and efficiency. The family held a *Jagir* of 60,000 rupees and the farmed districts worth 2,00,000 rupees annually.\(^{86}\) He remained in possession of this Jagir till after the death of the *Maharaja*.

After Ranjit Singh's death Nau Nihan Singh became displeased with him for having supported Kharak Singh's favourite Chet Singh and kept him in prison for three months.\(^{87}\) Maharaja Sher Singh, however, restored the *Misr* to his old position of *Toshakhana*. After Sher Singh's murder Beli Ram was again imprisoned in September 1843.\(^{88}\) In fact, in domestic politics and court intrigues the *Misr* was arrayed against the Jammu Brothers.\(^{89}\) He died on 16 September 1843 and was succeeded by his brother Megh Raj as the Chief *Toshakhania*. Misr Beli Ram had three sons viz; Ram Das, Thakur Das and Khurram Rai. According to Griffin, "The sons of Beli Ram, who escaped to Ludhiana at the time of their father's arrest remained under British protection till 1845 when they returned to Punjab."\(^{90}\) Of all his brothers Beli Ram is considered the most sensible. Shahamat Ali observes "he is an intelligent and amiable man, but from the high favour he enjoys, he is much envied about the court and had many little differences with the Sardars, who tried to injure him; but as the *Maharaja* is aware of his worth and devotion to his interests, their enmity is harmless".\(^{91}\) He was considered one of the notable chiefs of the Lahore *Darbar*.

**MISR RUP LAL**

Misr Rup Lal like his brother Misr Beli Ram, joined the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as an assistant in the *Toshakhana* or treasury under Misr Basti Ram in 1809. In 1832 he earned prominence as an efficient administrator when he was appointed *Nazim* of Jalandhar Doab after the removal of Shaikh Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din who was an oppressive *Nazim*.\(^\text{92}\) He brought great prosperity to *Doaba* Bist Jalandhar.\(^\text{93}\) He was a conscientious and popular administrator with an instinctive abhorrence for oppression.\(^\text{94}\) He took special interest in the prosperity of the territory under him. He made the assessment light and relieved people of heavy taxation. He was an upright and a just man whom people remembered long after him with affection and respect. The *Maharaja* directed Misr Rup Lal to confiscate the property of Shaikh Gulam Mohi-ud-Din at Hoshiarpur.\(^\text{95}\) The *Misr* held this post till 1839.

After the death of Ranjit Singh he became the victim of the Lahore Darbar and was replaced by Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din. He was imprisoned by Prince Nau Nihal Singh\(^\text{96}\) and was later released at Maharaja Kharak Singh’s intercession.\(^\text{97}\) Maharaja Sher Singh, appointed Rup Lal Governor of Kalanaur and the lands of the Lahore *Darbar*, south of the Sutlej, with orders to resume the fort and domains of Bhatpur from Jamadar Khushal Singh. When Hira Singh Dogra succeeded his father, Raja Dhian Singh, as minister, he immediately ordered the arrest of Misr Rup Lal in September 1843. He remained in confinement till the death of

\(^{95}\) When Kanwar Sher Singh was appointed Governor of Kashmir, Gulam Mohi-ud-Din was appointed the agent and lieutenant of Prince Sher Singh. The Prince knew little of business and the *Shaikh* acquired more wealth than ever, which he used more ruthlessly than before. The people cried out bitterly against his oppression and to add to their distress, in 1832 Kashmir was visited by famine. The *Shaikh* was recalled to Lahore and fined. He protested against the amount of the fine, which he said he could never pay. Lepel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 158.
\(^{97}\) *Foreign Department: Secret Consultations*, 15 March, 1840, No. 40, NAI.
Raja Hira Singh in December 1844. Soon after that the new minister Sardar Jawahir Singh, not only released him, but also made Misr Rup Lal Governor of Jasrota. He was at Jasrota in 1846 when that country was made over to Raja Gulab Singh Dogra by the treaty of Amritsar dated 16th March, 1846. He lived up to 80 years of age and died at this native place Dalwal in September 1864.

**DIWAN SAWAN MAL**

Sawan Mal governor of Multan from 1821 to 1844, was a *Khatri* of Chopra sub-caste from Akalgarh in Gujranwala district. His father Hoshnak Rai was a servant of Sardar Dal Singh Akalgarh. Sawan Mal was youngest of three brothers. He commenced his public career in the office of his brother Nanak Chand who worked with Diwan Mohkam Chand. In 1820 he joined as the head of the account office under Governor Bhaiya Badan Hazari at a salary of Rs. 250 per month at Multan. In a very short time he set right the Multan finance which were in an almost inextricable confusion. Badan Hazari could not handle the 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. A good scholar of Persian and Arabic he won the appreciation of the *Maharaja* for his intelligence and administrative skills and quickly rose to higher positions.

A new era dawned in 1821 when Diwan Sawal Mal was appointed as *Kardar* of the half province of Multan by Ranjit Singh. In 1829 he was

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made the governor of the whole\textsuperscript{102} and remained in this post till 1844. He was conferred the title of Diwan in December 1832\textsuperscript{103} within a short period he changed the whole appearance of Multan by Introducing agricultural reforms of far reaching consequences.

Diwan Sawan Mal administered justice firmly and impartially. He devoted all his energies to the improvement of his charge and its recovery 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. He was a very sympathetic and benevolent administrator. Ranjit Singh was always pleased with Sawan Mal's service to the people.\textsuperscript{104} But the Dogra brothers were jealous of his popularity and had feelings of bitter hatred for him.

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh he had to deal with the intrigues of the Dogra brothers. He died on 29th September, 1844.\textsuperscript{105} Thus perished the wisest and best of all Sikh governors. He continued in office till his last breath.\textsuperscript{106} He was a wise, honest and a merciful man.\textsuperscript{107}

Diwan Sawan Mal left an enormous sum of seventy lakhs of rupees, amassed by the old Diwan during twenty three years of unblemished government service. His bequest was divided among his sons. He left behind six sons.\textsuperscript{108} During his life time, the Diwan had assigned the administration of some of the territories of Multan to his two sons. The eldest Mulraj ruled Shujabad and Jhang while Karam Narain was made incharge of Laih. It was a common saying amongst the people that while Multan had been blessed with monsoon showers Sawan (the summer rain) and Leigh with Karam (kindness), Jhang got

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\textsuperscript{102} Sohan Lal Suri, \textit{Umdat-ut-Tawarikh}, Daftar II, pp, 461, 496.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Ibid}, Daftar III (Part-II), p. 206.
\textsuperscript{104} Ganesh Das Wadehra, \textit{Char Bagh-i-Punjab}, p. 381.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Foreign Department : Secret Consultation}; 26 October 1844, No. 90, NAI.
\textsuperscript{108} Ram Das, Diwan Mulraj, Karam Naryan, Sham Singh, Ram Singh and Narayan Singh.
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only *Mula* (which eats the roots of the corn). Diwan Sawan Mal was succeeded as the governor of Multan by his son Mulraj. Diwan Sawan Mal could wield pen and sword equally well and it was a matter of great credit to him.

**DIWAN BHAWANI DAS**

Bhawani Das was a *Khatri* and the second son of Thakar Das. He joined the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809.\(^\text{109}\) The Diwan himself, his father and his grandfather had held the very important post of *Diwan* or revenue minister under the Kabul Government.\(^\text{110}\) He was popularly known as *Kubba* or hunch-backed. In the Kabul Government, Diwan Bhawani Das was employed chiefly for collecting the customs of Multan and Derajat. In 1808 he came from Kabul to collect revenue from Multan province and Derajat. On some account Shah Shuja got annoyed with him.\(^\text{111}\) Since he had come away he availed himself of this opportunity to try and obtain service with Ranjit Singh. Diwan Bhawani Das was well received by the Maharaja who was already looking for a person of ability with a reputation of a competent financier, to keep his accounts. Diwan Bhawani Das presented himself before the Maharaja with a *Nazrana* of one thousand rupees and some presents.\(^\text{112}\)

The Maharaja appointed him to the position of *Bakshi*\(^\text{113}\) and also *Wazir-i-Mal*.\(^\text{114}\) Before his joining as a *Wazir-i-Mal*, there was no state treasury or regular system of accounts at Lahore. Diwan Bhawani Das established a regular treasury and organized different departments to deal with various items of income and expenditure.

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\(^{110}\) Amarnath, *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*, p. 81.


From 1810 to 1818, moreover, he was often sent to newly conquered places to re-organize the work of revenue assessment and collection. The military services of the Diwan were also considerable. He took part in the siege of Multan, Kashmir, Jammu and Attock.

Diwan Bhawani Das was generally put on the committees appointed to receive foreign dignitaries. When Shah Zaman visited Punjab, Diwan Bhawani Das along with Devi Das were appointed to welcome him. He was sent to meet the Governor General in 1814 to strengthen the friendship between the Maharaja and the British.115

In 1810 Diwan Mokham Chand and Diwan Bhawani Das's relationship got strained when the latter examined the accounts of the former.116 In 1816, he was made the Diwan of Kanwar Kharak Singh.117 In 1817, being disgusted with the conduct of affairs by the Prince, the Diwan left the assignment and began to engage himself in the work of the Maharaja.118 "But although the appointments filled by Diwan Bhawani Das were many and lucrative", writes Griffin, "his Chief work was as head of the Finance Department".119 For a time he lost the favour of the master on account of his differences with Misr Beli Ram by whom he was accused of misappropriation of funds. Ranjit Singh angrily struck the Diwan with his sheathed sword and fined him a lakh of rupees. He was sent to hills but on account of his invaluable services was recalled after a

115 Sohan Lal Suri, Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Daftar II, pp. 119, 199, 301.
116 Ibid., p. 103; Diwan Mohkam Chand submitted the papers of the collections made from the country of the Nakkais to the Maharaja and received the order that in the first place all the accounts of the income and expenditure regarding the country of Nakkais must be explained carefully to Diwan Bhawani Das and that income and expenditure of the mountainous regions must be investigated in the best possible way by Mohkam Chand from Diwan Bhawani Das and a report submitted to the Maharaja. Accordingly, Diwan Bhawani Das made Diwan Mohkam Chand understand satisfactorily all the papers relating to the extortion of money from the mountainous regions. After that Bhawani Das prepared a list of the collections from the territory of the Nakkais and submitted the same to the Maharaja. At the time of checking and auditing hot words passed between the two Diwans; but with a view to save them from unnecessary discouragement the matter was not pursued any further.
few months. He accordingly reappointed him to his former position which he occupied till his death in 1834.\textsuperscript{120}

**DIWAN GANNA RAM**

The family of Diwan Ganga Ram was of the *Brahmin* caste, and originally his ancestors hailed from to Kashmir.\textsuperscript{121} Ganga Ram was born in 1775, at Rampur near Banaras. His family emigrated to Delhi in the middle of the eighteenth century. His father Pandit Kishan Das had held a lucrative post under the Mughals. He joined the service of the *Maharaja* of Gwalior and was placed with Colonel Louis Burquien, one of the French officers in Sindia's service. The young-man distinguished himself by his honesty and ability and he was entrusted with many important political assignments. In 1803 Burquien was defeated by Lord Lake and Ganga Ram retired to Delhi and remained there till 1813. He was of great assistance to General Octorlony when, in 1809, that officer was busy setting the relations between the Cis-Sutlej States and the British Government his knowledge of their past, political history, their treaties and their relations with other states was of immense help to the General. Ganga Ram was introduced to the *Maharaja* by Bhai Lal Singh and Himmat Singh Jalwasia. Maharaja Ranjit Singh who had heard of his ability invited him to Lahore in March 1813\textsuperscript{122} and put him in the military office\textsuperscript{123} and made him the keeper of the royal seal.\textsuperscript{124} Then he was made one of the pay master-in-chief of the irregular forces. Ganga Ram rose in *Maharaja*'s favour very rapidly.\textsuperscript{125} He brought many of his relatives and friends from Delhi and other parts of India and gave them

\textsuperscript{125} Amarnath, *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*, pp. 92-93.
jobs in the Lahore government.\textsuperscript{126} Important among them were Raja Dina Nath, Pandit Daya Ram and Pandit Hari Ram. He died in 1825.\textsuperscript{127} Diwan Ganga Ram was one of the few men of great integrity and administrative ability in the court of Lahore.

**Diwan Ajodhia Prashad**

Diwan Ajodhia Prashad born in 1799, was an adopted son of Diwan Ganga Ram. Ganga Ram had no son born to him, so he adopted his wife's nephew Ajodhia Prasad. Diwan Ajodhia Prashad and Diwan Dina Nath were cousins, their mothers being real sisters. He came to Lahore in 1814, when he was 15 years of age. He studied in Lahore for two years and then was sent to Kashmir, where he was placed in the military office, on a salary of 1000 rupees per annum.\textsuperscript{128} In 1819, he was placed under Ventura and Allard as paymaster of the troops and as a medium of communication between the commanding officers and the Maharaja.\textsuperscript{129}

After the death of his father in 1825 the Maharaja appointed him in charge of the office for regular troops and artillery. He being on very good terms with the French officers begged to be allowed to remain on his original appointment.\textsuperscript{130} As a result of his refusal, the vacant post was given to Tej Singh. Ajodhia Prasad was given the title of Diwan\textsuperscript{131} and the Jagir of Nain Sukh and continued to serve with Fauj-i-Khas.\textsuperscript{132}

In 1831, Diwan Ajodhia Prashad was sent to Multan to receive Alexander Burnes, who was carrying with him the presents for the Maharaja from the King of England and remained attached to him till his

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\textsuperscript{128} Lepel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{129} Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh Daftar II*, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{130} Lepel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{131} Amarnath, *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh* p. 170.
\textsuperscript{132} Lepel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 125.
arrival at Lahore. After Ranjit Singh’s death, he served under Kharak Singh and Sher Singh. After the retirement of Ventura Ajodhia Prasad himself held the command of the French Brigade. After the treaty of March 1846, he was appointed commissioner along with Captain Abbot to determine the boundary line of the Lahore Darbar and Jammu territories. A man of versatile intellect, Ajodhia Prashad was by all accounts eminently successful in performing all kinds of duties, administrative, judicial, military and diplomatic. Ajodhia Prashad was appointed to take charge of the young Maharaja Dalip Singh in conjunction with Dr. Login. He always demonstrated an upright and honourable conduct. He was a man of considerable learning. He died in 1870.

**Other Hindu Courtiers and Officials at Lahore Darbar:**

There were a few more Hindu Courtiers and Officials in the Lahore Darbar who served under Maharaja Ranjit Singh till his death in 1839 and as also under his successors. Those courtiers and officials were employed in different capacities but almost invariably held positions of some importance. All of them were sincere to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It will be meaningful if we discuss some of them under separate heads.

**DIWAN DEVI DAS**

Devi Das was the elder brother of Diwan Bhawani Das. In 1809, he joined the service of the Maharaja and contributed in the task of revenue and financial organization. He had earlier served under the rulers of Kabul and was in reality an agent of Wazir Sher Mohammad.

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134 *Journal and Dairies of the Assistants to the Agent, Government General, North-West Frontier and Regident at Lahore*, 1846-1849, Vol.III-IV, Allahabad, 1911, p.3.
Khan Bamizai, son of Wazir Shah Wali Khan, who was minister of Ahmed Shah Durrani. At the time of the death of his master, Devi Das was on a mission to the Nawab of Mankera for the realization of revenue payable. In his absence, Shah Shuja had emerged victorious and would not spare him. He wrote a letter to the Nawab of Mankera to apprehend Devi Das. The Nawab acted accordingly. Devi Das reached Lahore and joined the service of Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja appointed him in the finance department with his brother. Both the brothers Devi Das and Bhawani Das planned the system of farming the Privy seal and established a finance office for the State.

Devi Das has been described as a man of ability and far greater integrity than his brother. He did not, however, became so prominent in the council of his master because of his gentle and retiring disposition. Both the brothers worked together and always got on well. They always acted in concert as is evident from the news from the Deorhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh dated 6th February, 1816. On that day, Hakim Ruhulla Khan accused Munshi Devi Das of taking bribes from everybody. The Munshi who was present there repudiated the accusation by saying he had obtained everything through the blessing and glory of his master. Diwan Bhawani Das requested the Maharaja to forbid Hakim Ruhulla Khan from quarrelling with everybody. The Maharaja replied that he would be asked to abstain.

A number of confidential duties were assigned to Devi Das by the Maharaja. He was also entrusted with military duties. In 1823, he was appointed to receive and escort Nawab Shah Nawaz Khan and the Vakils.

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140 Raja Ram Tota, Gulgashat-i-Punjab, p. 64.
from Hyderabad to Lahore.\textsuperscript{143} This shows that the \textit{Maharaja} had great regard for Devi Das. Once when Diwan Devi Das was upset due to the misbehaviour of the trainers of horses and he was not ready to appear in the \textit{Darbar}, Ranjit Singh, himself went to him and taking his hand in his own hand, brought him inside the fort and told him to present his demands before him in the court.\textsuperscript{144}

According to Ali-ud-Din Mufti Devi Das, who was incharge of Finance office and the farmer of Privy seal was never a defaulter in the payment of revenue and regularly paid the money to the banker. However, when, in 1825, the \textit{Maharaja} ordered the auditors of the finance office to audit his accounts, the auditor reported that a large amount was payable by him. Devi Das prayed for justice, and pleaded innocence but his request was not acceded to. He was ordered to be kept in strict confinement. The custodians, who were under obligation, did not keep surveillance over him. He was allowed to visit the Palki of a saint, who was greatly respected and was given rupees twenty daily for maintenance from the \textit{Toshakhana} by the \textit{Maharaja}. The custodians were severely punished for this lapse of duty. One day the \textit{Maharaja} visited the saint, the latter dwelling upon the qualities of justice handed over Devi Das to the \textit{Maharaja} in order to mete out justice to him. The \textit{Maharaja} swore by religion before the saint and caught the hand of the \textit{Diwan} from him. The \textit{Diwan} went to his house happily. On the other day, an official of the \textit{Maharaja} waited on him in order to realise the money but the latter offered excuses. Devi Das was imprisoned and brought to the official’s dwelling place. He began to beat him with a stick and his

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\textsuperscript{143} Sohan Lal Suri, \textit{Umdat-ut-Tawarikh}, Daftar II, p. 384. \\
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 399-400.
beard was brunt. Finally, the Diwan was unable to pay the money. Hence he died in prison.\textsuperscript{145}

LALA KARAM CHAND

Lala Karam Chand was one of the important Munshis of Ranjit Singh.\textsuperscript{146} His forefathers had held administrative positions at the court of the Mughals. When the Sikhs rose to power, Jawala Nath, his father entered the service of Sardar Charat Singh Shukarchakia as a Munshi and remained with him and his son, Mahan Singh, till his death. Karam Chand was first employed by Bishan Singh Kalal, one of the confidential agents of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.\textsuperscript{147} After the Sardar's retirement to Banaras, he entered Ranjit Singh's service and in the due course of time was promoted to the office of trust. He accompanied the Maharaja on his secret visit to Hardwar in 1805.\textsuperscript{148} In 1808, the seal of the Maharaja was given to him. He was employed as an agent of the Maharaja in the negotiations concluded between the Maharaja and the Sikh Chiefs of Cis-Sutlej States. His name is also associated with the drawing up of the articles of the Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1809. He later worked with Diwan Bhawani Das as his subordinate. He accompanied Bhawani Das to Shah Shuja to pay his one thousand rupees sent by Ranjit Singh for his expenditure and to recover from him the Kohi-i-Noor dimond as promised by his wife.\textsuperscript{149} He was a trusted fellow of Ranjit Singh and was associated by him in almost all tasks and matters of confidence. For the greater part of his career, he remained attached to the revenue department in which he was acknowledging expert. He died in 1836.

\textsuperscript{147} Raja Ram Tota, \textit{Gulgashta-i-Punjab}, p. 64.
RATTAN CHAND DARHIWALA

Rattan Chand was also one of the courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was the third son of Lala Karam Chand and was a great favourite of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When he was quite a boy he used to be in constant attendance at court. He was styled Darhiwala or bearded man by the Maharaja to distinguish him from another courtier of the same name, Rattan Chand Duggal, who was younger to him by four years and at that time was without a beard. Once the Maharaja was holding a beard show and granted suitable rewards according to the length of their beards. Among the non-Sikhs Rattan Chand of Lahore won the first prizes. He was already known as Darhiwala. He was in 1829 appointed to the postal department on Rs. 200 a month, with certain assignments related with the revenues of Peshawar and Hazara. He remained in this department during the reign of Ranjit Singh and his successors and he received Rs. 2,610 cash allowances and Jagirs in Dinanagar, Khanowal, Yuhianagar, Tiwan, Bhindan, Hazara and Peshawar, worth Rs. 13,600. The garden of Diwan Rattan Chand Darhiwala outside Shah Alami gate, was beautiful. It was furnished with the buildings, elegant reservoirs and fountains of water and luxuriant walks. After the first Anglo-Sikh War Rattan Chand was appointed postmaster - General in the Punjab. He died in 1872.

RATTAN CHAND DUGGAL

Rattan Chand Duggal was the son of Kanhiya Lal Duggal of Wazirabad. He was a Darbar Munshi from 1831 to 1849. He alongwith his brother Shankar Das was in favour at court, and received Jagirs

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151 Lepel Griffin, Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab, p. 310.
152 Foreign Department : Political Proceedings, 3 April 1850, No. 194, NAI.
153 J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga (Trans and ed.), Early Nineteenth Century Punjab, p. 94.
which in 1850 amounted to Rs. 10,000.\textsuperscript{154} He was, when quite young, appointed incharge of Maharaja’s private seal and held the office for several years. In February 1845, Rattan Chand Duggal accompanied Sardar Fateh Singh Mann, Sardar Sher Singh Attariwala and Baba Mian Singh Bedi’s deputation sent to Jammu to negotiate settlement with Raja Gulab Singh, regarding claims of the Lahore Darbar on him.\textsuperscript{155} During the second Anglo-Sikh war of 1848-49, he was suspected of being complacent against the English and his Jagirs were resumed with the exception of two gardens. These were released in perpetuity and he also received a life pension of Rs. 3,600. He died in 1857.

**BAKSHI BHAGAT RAM**

Bakshi Bhagat Ram is also known as Lala Bhagat Ram. He was the son of Baisakhi Ram a money changer in a very small way of business, in the city of Lahore.\textsuperscript{156} He was first recruited as an assistant in 1818 in the treasury of Misr Beli Ram, the Chief of Toshakhana or treasure. He was 19 years old at that time and his pay was fixed at Rs. 60 per month. In 1824, he received the post of assistant writer of the accounts of the Privy Purse, with Rs. 50 per month as additional pay.\textsuperscript{157} In 1832, he was appointed Bakshi or paymaster of the army. He held this appointment throughout the reign of Maharaja Kharak Singh. During the reign of Sher Singh he was considered a leader of the Punjabi secretariat party or Munshi or Mutsaddi party as they were popularly known.\textsuperscript{158} He was one of the council members in the Council formed by Rani Jindan on 28

\textsuperscript{154} Foreign Department : Political Proceedings, 3 April 1850, No. 194 NAI; Lepel Griffin, Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab, p. 310.
\textsuperscript{155} Sita Ram Kohli, Khushwant Singh (ed.), Sunset of the Sikh Empire, New Delhi, 1967, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{156} Lepel Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, p. 255.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
December 1844. In 1844-45, he was incharge of the regular army. In 1847, Mr. John Lawrence, directed Bakshi Bhagat Ram to render the army accounts, which he had not done for several years. When he failed to render the accounts, the Jagirs of Bhagat Ram were resumed. He died at Lahore in 1865.

**MISR BASTI RAM**

Misr Basti Ram *Brahmin* by sub caste was a holy man and charitable physician of Lahore as an auspicious beginning was given charge of the *Toshakhana*. Misr Basti Ram was uncle of Misr Diwan Chand father of Misr Beli Ram and was treasurer of Mahan Singh, father of Ranjit Singh and continued his service under Ranjit Singh as well. On the conquest of Amritsar and Lahore, the *Maharaja* entrusted him with the charge of Amritsar. After some time, he was appointed chamberlain in charge of the *Deorhi*. Finding him absent from duty one night, he was removed from the post in 1811 and Jamadar Khushal Singh was promoted to his position. However, several Sardars came forward to recommend his case, but the *Maharaja* did not think it proper to reinstate him. Sohan Lal Suri gave a different reason. He mentions that the *Maharaja* dismissed Basti Ram because, "he showed great courage and daring in putting before the *Maharaja* the requests and petitions of all people." The *Maharaja* strictly warned Jamadhar Khushal Singh that he, too, must fully understand every matter before showing courage in presenting the case of everybody. Misr Basti Ram was seized and confined but he was released after some days and restored to employment on paying a fine of Rs. 2000. He died in 1816.

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MISR RALLIA RAM (RAJA)

Misr Rallia Ram was the eldest son of Chhaju Mal, a Brahman of respectable family and an influential officer of Kanhiya Misal. He was a good scholar of Sanskrit, Hindi, Persian, Mathematics and Physical Sciences. In 1811, he was placed incharge of the Amritsar District\textsuperscript{164} at the age of 16 and showed great initiative in the suppression of dacoity and highway robbery. Ranjit Singh was so pleased with his zeal, that he made him, in 1812, Chief of the department of customs.\textsuperscript{165} Rallia Ram's energy and uprightness earned his many enemies at the court and due to their intrigues, he fell into disgrace and in 1830, he was fined rupees one lakh. In 1833, he was appointed keeper of records. In 1847, he was appointed *Kardar* of the district of Jhang.\textsuperscript{166} In September 1847, all the affairs of the customs of the country were placed under the superintendence of the Misr Rallia Ram and his son Sahib Dayal. During the second Anglo-Sikh war of 1848-49 he remained loyal to the British which means that he was one of those *Hindus* who deliberately desisted from open opposition of the British. In 1849, both Rallia Ram and Sahib Dyal left the Punjab on a pilgrimage to the holy cities. Rallia Ram who had been made *Diwan* by the Sikh Government in 1847, was in 1851 (when he was still on pilgrimage) elevated to the position of a *Raja* by the British Government. He never returned to Punjab and died at Banaras in 1864. The Lahore Government had few servants as able as Rallia Ram and Sahib Dyal, and it certainly had none as honest. They were, in the last corrupt days of the administration, almost the only men, who fully supported it, and faithfully performed their duty. They possessed the wisdom to understand and support the enlightened policy of the British

\textsuperscript{164} Lepel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
Resident, the only policy that could have saved the country from the evils that afterwards befell it.

**MISR SAHIB DAYAL (RAJA)**

Sahib Dyal was the second son of Misr Rallia Ram, born in 1801 and first entered the Sikh service as a *Munshi* in the customs department under his father. He bore a high character for honesty and ability as did his father. In 1832, he was transferred to the office of the Paymaster of the regular army. In 1839, he was made chief of the customs of Jalandhar and held this post till the close of the First Anglo-Sikh war in 1846. In 1847, both the father and son received Persian titles of honour and the whole customs of the country were placed under their superintendence. In November 1848, he was selected by the Resident, to accompany the head-quarters camp of the British army on the part of the *Darbar*. He remained loyal to the British Government during the second Anglo-Sikh War. He left the Punjab along with his father Rallia Ram, and did not return till 1851. In 1851, he received the title of *Raja* by the British Government and settled down at Kishankot in Gurdaspur district, a town of which he may be said to have been the founder. He died at Amritsar in 1885. He was extremely honest and a very capable man.

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MISR MEGH RAJ (RAI BAHADUR)

Megh Raj was the son of Misr Diwan Chand, brother of Misr Beli Ram and Misr Rup Lal. When Misr Rup Lal and Misr Beli Ram joined the service as assistants in the treasury of the Maharaja, Misr Megh Raj received about the same time the charge of the treasury in the Gobindgarh fort at Amristar. He held this post during the reminder of the Maharaja's reign. He also with his brother became the victim of the intrigues of Dhian Singh Dogra. After the death of his brother, he succeeded him as the chief Toshakhania. After the first Anglo-Sikh War he was appointed treasurer to the Lahore Darbar. In 1849, he was appointed treasurer of the Lahore Division, a post which he held till his death on the 1 August, 1864.

MISR RAM KISHAN

Misr Ram Kishan, brother of Beli Ram entered the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1826 and was made chamberlain by Ranjit Singh and constantly, remained in attendance at the court. The Maharaja always treated him with special kindness. The Misrs and the Rajas had a differences which were scarcely healed. This started between Raja Dhian Singh and Misr Ram Kishan, on account of Misr Beli Ram having been stopped on his entrance at the Deorhi when he proceeded as usual to the Darbar and angry words were exchanged on either side. The audacity of stopping Misr Beli Ram was committed out of jealousy as Misr Beli Ram was more influential as the chief treasurer. This went so far that the Raja proposed to resign, but the officers of the court interposed and brought about a partial reconciliation.

In October 1937, a series of fresh differences burst out between Misr Ram Kishan and Raja Dhian Singh. Chanda Singh Deorhiwala

168 Lepel Griffin, Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab, p. 362.
submitted to Misr Ram Kishan verbally on behalf of Raja Dhian Singh the need for the demolition of a well in a certain territory. The Misr spoke harshly in reply. When Raja Dhian Singh heard about this, he grew angry and displeased and the matter reached the ears of the Maharaja, who expressed great displeasure to Misr Ram Kishan.\footnote{Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III (Part-IV), p. 380.} The rebuff of Misr Ram Kishan had so greatly enraged the Raja and he had left for Jammu. Maharaja Ranjit Singh ordered Misr Ram Kishan to follow the Raja Dhian Singh to Jammu and beg pardon from him for his faults and not to enter the court of the Maharaja until he had done so.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 381-82.} Accordingly the Misr went to Jammu, presented himself to the Raja and prayed for pardon. Raja Dhian Singh accepted the apologies granted him pardon. Finally, on 21 October, 1837, Misr Ram Kishan presented himself before the Maharaja in the village of Badiana with a letter of satisfaction from Raja Dhian Singh.\footnote{Ibid., p. 382.}

Misr Ram Kishan *Kardar* of the district Gujranwala in 1839. He had to pay a lakh of rupees annually.\footnote{Ibid., p. 55.} His administration was just and efficient.

However after the death of the Maharaja he faced the intrigues of the Dogra family and was put to death with his brother Misr Beli Ram on 16 September, 1843.\footnote{Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar-IV (Part-III), p. 260; Murray, *History of the Punjab*, Vol. II, p. 229.}
MISR SUKHRAJ

Misr Sukhraj was the youngest among the Misr brothers. He was a brave and daring officer. He joined the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a petty officer and rose to be a commander of several battalions of infantry. In 1836, he was elevated to the position of a General by the Maharaja and was given separate division of his army.176 During the reign of Maharaja Kharak Singh he continued his service for the Lahore Darbar but was imprisoned with his brothers due to the insidious intrigues of Dhian Singh and Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh. He died in 1842.

RAI KISHAN CHAND

Rai Kishan Chand was a Lahore agent, the youngest son of Rai Anand Singh Bhandari of Batala. In 1809, through the recommendation of Diwan Mohkam Chand, his father Anand Singh was appointed Vakil or agent of the Lahore court at Ludhiana, which had recently been occupied as a military station. Anand Singh was afterwards sent to Delhi, while his eldest son Govind Jass occupied his place at Ludhiana177, his youngest son, Kishan Chand was made agent at Karnal and Ambala.178 He was endowed with a Jagir of Rs. 15000 per annum in the Jalandhar district and one rupee per annum on each of the villages belonging to Lahore Darbar on the left bank of the Sutlej. The title of 'Rai' was granted to Kishan Chand by Prince Nau Nihal Singh in 1840.179 He was an able politician and superior in every respect, being possessed of extraordinary tact and cunning with great presence of mind. He was a very able man, possessed of great capabilities and often styled by Englishmen as a genius, "sometimes more than a match for some of our British

178 Lepel Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, p. 269; Raja Ram Tota, Gulgashta-i-Punjab, p. 170.
179 Ibid., p. 270.
diplomats”. According to Bhai Ram Singh, “Lala Kishan Chand was a wise and intelligent person.” Similarly his brother Gobind Ram observed that “Kishan Chand was endowed with good abilities and was an active person.” He was a tactful politician, well aware of the successful means of scoring over the British by assuming mild and yielding manners. After the death of the Maharaja, Sher Singh bestowed on Rai Kishan Chand and his brother and son great influence and power. In 1839, he accompanied Colonel Wade on his political mission to Peshawar.

Rai Kishan Chand did his best to maintain a good understanding between the Lahore Darbar and the British Government and protested strongly against the first Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46 when it became imminent. At the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, his cash allowances were resumed. He died in 1872 at Banaras.

**DIWAN HAKIM RAI**

Diwan Hakim Rai was a Khatri of Sialkot and was born in 1803. The ancestors of Diwan Hakim Rai were in the service of the Kanhiya Chiefs. He was the son of Kashi Ram who was employed in the judicial office under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In 1824, he joined service with Ranjit Singh in the Charyari regiments. He was an able man, and rose quite rapidly to favour. In 1826, he was made incharge of the estates of the young Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh and received an allowance of 1 per cent on all collections from the districts under him. He was later given the title of Diwan. He attended the court in the company of his master Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh. He took part in many expeditions. He was made the Governor of Bannu, Isa Khel, Dera Ismail Khan, Tonk and

178  *Foreign Department: Secret Consultations*, 17 February, 1840, No. 30, NAI.
182  *Foreign Department: Secret Consultations*, 18 May, 1840, No. 230, NAI.
Kohat and in 1836 he became the first Governor of the Northern-Western Frontier under the Maharaja. Maharaja Nau Nihal Singh appointed him Chief justice of Lahore. During the first Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46 and second Anglo-Sikh War of 1848-49, he was loyal to the Sikh Government. After annexation of the Punjab he was held prisoner. In July 1853, he was released and permitted to retire to Banaras.

**GENERAL HARSUKH RAI**

Harsukh Rai born in 1810, was son of Sardar Gurdit Singh Kapur, a Khatri of Hafizabad in Gujranwala district. He went to Multan in 1833, and was made adalati or judge by Diwan Sawan Mal and soon afterwards received a military appointment. At that time Diwan Sawan Mal was the Governor of that province. But he remained there for only two years, when failing to get leave, he threw up his appointment in disgust and came to Lahore where Maharaja Sher Singh made him Kardar of Shaikhupura on a salary of Rs. 1800 per annum and in 1841 he was appointed Kardar of Haweli near Pakpattan. When Raja Lal Singh came into power, he was made general of the newly created brigade and also made Kardar of Patti. Soon after the outbreak of revolt in Multan in 1848, Harsukh Rai was sent as per the desire of Colonel H. Lawrence, to the Majha as Kardar on Rs. 4310 per annum. He died in 1867.

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DIWAN DEVI SAHAI

Devi Sahai was son of Diwan Radha Krishan of Bhera, District Shahpur, who had died in Ranjit Singh’s service in 1828 and, therefore, he received from the Darbar the appointment held by his father. He rose high in the service of the State. He took in several campaigns as commander both of the Derah Pindiwala and ghorcharahs regiments. In his military capacity, he went through the Multan and Afghan campaigns. He was further employed on the frontier in realizing arrears of revenue and in administering justice. In 1837, he was sent to Bombay to acquire knowledge of the conditions and state of the province with special regard to its military and merchantile resources. This mission was accomplished to the Maharaja’s satisfaction, for he was presented a valuable Khillat and assigned a Jagir in Shahpur yielding about Rs. 20,000 per annum. In 1846, he accompanied Raja Gulab Singh and Raja Dina Nath to Kasur, where the treaty which concluded the First Anglo-Sikh war was signed. In 1849, he joined Mulraj and was present through the siege of Multan. He fought the battle of Chillianwala also. After annexation his Jagirs were forfeited but he was given a compensation allowance of Rs. 240 per annum. He died in 1858.

DIWAN SHANKAR NATH

Diwan Shankar Nath was born in 1805 at Delhi. He originally belonged to Kashmir. His grandfather Ragunath Kaul worked with the Maharaja of Gwalior and became Mir Munshi of Colonel Louis Burqien, one of the French officers of Maratha army. Shankar Nath’s father Hari Ram also worked with him. After the downfall of the Maratha power Hari Ram was invited to Lahore by a relative Diwan Ganga Ram and he joined

188 Lepel Griffin, Chiefs and Families Note in the Punjab, p. 238.
190 Lepel Griffin, Chiefs and Families Note in the Punjab, p. 238.
191 Sita Ram Kohli, Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records, p. 112.
as a *Munshi* in Diwan Ganga Ram’s office. Shankar Nath also came to Lahore along with his father Hari Ram in 1820 and was placed in Kanwar Kharak Singh's treasury office. After sometime he was transferred to the Central Record Office, in which he remained under the successors of the *Maharaja* till the annexation of the Punjab. He had much influence at the Lahore *Darbar* because he was married to the sister of Diwan Dina Nath.

**MISR JASSA MAL**

Jassa mal, son of Dhanpat, of the village of Dalval, in Jehlum district. He was a poor *Brahmin* who ran a small shop in village Singhuran in Jehlum District. Having failed in business, he wandered with his wares as a peddler. By chance, he came into contact with Basti Ram, a treasurer of Ranjit Singh's father Mahan Singh and was appointed under him, on three rupees per month and his food. Gradually, he rose to be an accountant under Mahan Singh after whose death, he returned to his village and reopened his shop. When Ranjit Singh became master of Lahore, Jassa Mal again employed by Basti Ram in 1809 as a clerk on five rupees per month. On the death of Basti Ram in 1817-18, Dhian Singh's influence produced for him the appointment to the charge of the *Behla Thoshakhana*. The following year he promoted *darogha* or custodian of the *Toshakhana*. On the conquest of Kashmir in 1819, he became the treasurer of the new province. In 1832, he was given the contract for the revenues of Jehlum.
and Rohtas districts which he held till his death in 1836. After his death his son Lal Singh appointed in his place as a treasure of Behla Thoshakhana.

**SUKH DYAL**

Sukh Dyal was also important Hindu courtier of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Jhang was given to Sukh Dayal for an amount to Rs. 4,00,000 and again in 1820 for Rs. 4,10,000. Sukh Dyal got the *Ijara* of the *sairat* for 13 lakh rupees and similarly, the *sairat* of Kashmir were given in *Ijara* in 1822. Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Sukh Dayal the first Hindu *Nazim* or Governor of Multan.

Thus, it becomes clear that Maharaja Ranjit Singh employed many Hindu Courtiers and Officials at Lahore *Darbar* for many reasons. He wanted to expand and establish his Kingdom by consolidation and also used their services in civil administration. Probably, he wanted to infuse the spirit of competition, discipline and efficiency in other courtiers and officials at the Lahore *Darbar*, as he held that it would consolidate his position and he would be able to expand his Kingdom without much difficulty. By employing them he could also exhibit that the nature of his state was secular. The Maharaja made full use of the merits and caliber of these Hindu Courtiers and Officials as per his requirements. It will be worth mentioning that when these *Hindus* came into Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s service some of them were unhappy and dissatisfied with their previous services. It is equally important that they could get any position though a clerk or a General on the basis of merit.

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