Chapter III

MAHARAJA GULAB SINGH AND THE TREATY
OF 1842 WITH TIBET
The forces of disintegration which Aurangzeb had kept at bay began to work with full force soon after his death. The policy of religious intolerance had sapped the vitality of the once mighty Mughal Empire and the princes of inferior stamp who succeeded Aurangzeb could not arrest the decline that had set in. Provincial Viceroyals rebelled against the central authority and set up splinter kingdoms. The Marathas and the newly risen powers like the Jats and the Ruhelas and the Sikhs set the authority of the Mughals at naught. The balance of power between Persia and India was upset by the fall of the Safavids followed by the meteoric rise of Nadir Shah, who thought more of plunder than civilized administration. He ascended the throne of Persia in 1736, and ransacked the Punjab and inflicted untold miseries on the citizens of Delhi in 1739, killing thirty thousand people in cold blood. On his assassination in 1747, Ahmad Shah Abdali emerged as the ruler of an independent splinter kingdom of Persia. He made successful attacks on India in 1749, 1751-52 and captured Delhi in 1757. He met Marathas at the battle of Panipat on 14 January 1761 and inflicted upon them a crushing defeat. He, however, went back to Afghanistan leaving behind a puppet Afghan chief to rule Delhi in the name of the Emperor. Thus in 1761 the collapse of the Mughal empire was nearly complete and the central authority was
practically non-existent. With certain exceptions, strife and
anarchy spread over the length and breadth of India. The local
authorities kept order in their immediate districts to some extent,
"... but, in general, the absence of a government strong enough to
protect its innocent subjects from internal vice or external
aggression, was manifested in the fearful audacity with which the
Pindary Dacoity, and Thug, the trained marauder, thief, and
assassin, pursued their murderous avocations, in the blaze of noon
as in the darkness of midnight." (1)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh

The opportunity thus offered by the chaotic condition of
India was seized by a young man Ranjit Singh who became Zaman Shah's $
Governor of Lahore in 1798 and afterwards master of Lahore on
6 July 1799. (2) He was "brave in battle, enterprising in action
and a born leader of men in a degree surprising in a lad not yet
out of his teens". He conquered Kashmir from the Afghan Governor
in 1819, and annexed it to his own kingdom. Three years later,
in 1822, he entrusted the governorship of Jammu to a military
adventurer of his times, the Dogra Chief Gulab Singh.

(1) R. Montgomery Martin, The Indian Empire (London, no date),

$ Zaman Shah (1792-1800).

(2) Tarikh-i-Sikhan, p. 139 as quoted by N.K. Sinha, Ranjit Singh
(Calcutta, 1951), edn. 3, p. 12.
Rise of Gulab Singh

Gulab Singh, son of Kishore Singh, was a direct descendant of the Raja Dhrou Dev who first established the Dogra family as rulers of Jammu after the invasion of Nadir Shah in the first half of the eighteenth century. He was born on 4 October 1792 (6 Katik, 1849 Vikram Samvat). (3) At the time of an unsuccessful Sikh invasion of Jammu in the year 1807, Gulab Singh a boy of fifteen distinguished himself in military skill. On the annexation of Jammu to the Sikh empire, he joined the forces of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809 as an ordinary trooper. As warrior he attracted the attention of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the year 1813, the latter led a force in person into Kashmir. He soon distinguished himself at the siege of Jullundhar, at the conquest of Multan in 1819, in the frontier campaigns of Ranjit Singh between 1815 and 1820 and in the subjugation of the bandit chief, Mian Dedo, who controlled the hills around Jammu. His personal magnetism, dazzling victories and ever ready smile made him the idol of his soldiery. As a warrior his fame had reverberated throughout Punjab. For the meritorious services rendered to the Lahore Government, Maharaja Ranjit Singh awarded Gulab Singh the principality of Jammu in fief (jagir) with a right of raising an army of his own, when he presented the rebel Agar Khan at Akhrur on the banks of river Chenab. (4)


(4) Sapru, n. 3, p. 5; Panikkar, n. 3, p. 29.
In 1821, Gulab Singh undertook the conquest of Khistwar, which he acquired by a stratagem rather than by force of arms. Next year, he was entrusted with the reduction of Rajouri, in which he was successful. These distinguished services were rewarded by Maharaja Ranjit Singh with the grant of the principality of Jammu to Gulab Singh and his successors, with the hereditary title of Raja, on 27 June 1822 A.D. (4 Ashad, 1879 Vikrami). (5) Gulab Singh thus started as an ally of the Lahore Government and soon embarked upon the task of building up his own state. He conquered the hilly tracts lying in the interior of Jammu and added Reasi, Khistwar, Rajouri and Samarth prior to the conquest of Ladakh and Baltistan. (6)

Zorawar Singh and his Military Campaigns

Zorawar Singh Kahluria, who earned an undying fame by his conquest of Ladakh and Baltistan and his invasion of Tibet, was native of Kussal near Reasi in Jammu. He began his career as a private soldier. He brought himself to the notice of Gulab Singh by pointing out the manner in which great reductions might be made in the expenses of the army. Gulab Singh empowered him to give

(5) Amulya Chandra Banerjee's Chronological Tables (Calcutta, 1913) have been used for the change of dates from Samvat to A.D. era. Copy of the Samādī is given in Panikkar, n. 3, pp. 32-34; E. Rehatsek, A notice of the Gulabnama, Indian Antiquary, vol. 19, p. 294.

effect to the scheme he had proposed. Zorawar Singh conducted himself so admirably that he gained the fullest confidence of his master. In 1815, after the capture of Reasi a small principality near Jammu, Gulab Singh entrusted the defence of it to Wazir Zorawar Singh. (7)

**Ladakh**

Ladakh, a tributary of Mughal Empire, ceased to pay the tribute to Kashmir soon after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. During the period of chaos which began with the attack of Nadir Shah and till the rise of Ranjit Singh it was a tributary of the Abdalis, who had established their rule in Kashmir in 1752. It was only after the expulsion of Abdalis from Kashmir in 1819, that Kashmir became a part of Lahore Kingdom and with it came Ladakh, the ruler of which began to send tribute to Ranjit Singh. (8) Except Kashmir, "Ladak had no relation with China of a political nature, had no connection with Lhasa save that which arose from community of religion, language, manners and close proximity." (9)

Gulab Singh who became King of Jammu on 27 June 1822 began to consolidate and expand his kingdom. While his master Ranjit

(7) C.E. Bates, Gazette of Kashmir (Calcutta, 1878), pp. 112-14; Panikkar, n. 3, p. 24; Rehatsek, n. 8, pp. 293-4.


(9) Sinha, n. 2, p. 133; Moorcraft to Traill, 11 June 1822, Asiatic Journal, No. 5, vol. 21, September-December, p. 141.
Singh was occupied with the affairs of Afghanistan, his general Zorawar Singh probed the possibilities of capturing Ladakh. The administration of Ladakh was far from satisfactory. Raja (Gyalpo) Tshepal Namgyal, (Tshe-dpal-mi-hgyur-don-grub-Rnam-rgyal) who came to power in 1790, was not only peculiar in his personal habits but was also the reverse of the Ladakhi traditions in matters of administration. He had taken over the Privy Seal from Khalone (Prime Minister) and had dismissed all the old counsels and governors. He appointed upstarts as his counsels and governors. This resulted in the practical breakup of the administration. Feudal clashes began between Spiti, Kulu; and Kunawar, Zanskar; the King of Zanskar and the Minister of Burig were imprisoned. The people requested the King for help but the latter treated the request with contempt and punished them instead of offering any help. (10)

Taking advantage of this maladministration Zorawar Singh marched his forces into Ladakh in March 1834. (11) This created

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(11) Captain Wade, Political Agent Lodhiana to J.J. Metcalfe, 27 January 1835, Foreign Political, 19 February 1835, No. 7; Col. H.J. Tapp, Political Agent at Sabathoo to J.J. Metcalfe, Agent to Lt. Governor, N.W.P., 10 November 1836, Foreign Political, 9 January 1837, No. 24; Clerk to Hodgson, 10 June 1841, Foreign Secret, 5 July 1841, No. 95; Cunningham to Clerk, 30 July 1842, Foreign Secret, 5 October 1842, Nos. 73-76; G.J. Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, 1855-95 (London, 1963), p. 20.

(cont'd. on next page)
consternation in different parts of Ladakh. Wazir Mohammed Ali Khan of Ruskýum fled away from the seat of his power out of the fear of the Dogra army. But the Wazir Salam Khan of Soundh collected an army of 3,000 men and gave a battle to Zorawar Singh. He was, however, captured and made prisoner by the Dogras. Soon after this initial victory Zorawar Singh sent a message to the Gyalpo (King)

(contd. from back page)

Dogra war has been variously described by different writers. A.H. Francke in his Antiquities of Indian Tibet, vol. II (Calcutta, 1926) has given two versions. One of them is Ladrag-regyal-rabs (The Chronicles of Ladakh), pp. 127-38, and the other is Tshe-brtan’s account which appears on pp. 245 to 256. This Tshe-brtan of Kha-la-rtse, in his younger days had done military service in the Dogra wars of 1834-42. His account was written in the early years of the present century and hence may be considered as a soldier’s reminiscences. Alexander Cunningham, in his book Ladak, Physical, Statistical and Historical: With notices of the Surrounding Countries (London, 1854), pp. 333-54, has written an account mainly based on the information furnished by Basti Ram, a general of Zorawar Singh. K.M. Panikkar in his book The Founding of the Kashmir State, A Biography of Maharaja Gulab Singh 1792-1858 (London, 1933), edn. 2, pp. 74-89, has written an account, which it seems, he has taken mainly from Gulabnama of Diwan Kirpa Ram, which is really an official account of Kashmir, relating to the life of Gulab Singh. Arjun Nath Sarup, in his The Building of the Jammu and Kashmir State (Punjab Government Record Office Publications, Monograph No. 12, Lahore, 1931), pp. 23-29, has given an account, the information of events he has derived mainly from the travel accounts of Moorcroft, Vigne and Cunningham’s Ladak. N.K. Silb, in his book, Ranjit Singh (Calcutta, 1951), edn. 3, pp. 123-7 has described the conquest of Ladakh in little detail and has made a passing reference to the conquest of Iskardu. Margaret W. Fisher, Leo E. Rose and Robert A. Huttenback, in their Himalayan Battleground (London, 1963) pp. 42-59 have given a description, perhaps after consulting all the possible sources. A reference may also be made to Alastair Lamb’s, Britain and Chinese Central Asia (London, 1960), p. 60; J.D. Cunningham’s History of Sikhs (Delhi, 1956), p. 181; Robert A. Huttenback, “Gulab Singh and the Creation of the Dogra State of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh”, Journal of Asian Studies, vol. 20, 1960-61, pp. 477-88; Zahiruddin Ahmad, Tibet and Ladakh: A History, St. Antony’s Paper No. 14, Far Eastern Affairs (edited by G.F. Hudson, London, 1963), pp. 50-55. I have based my narrative on a deposition of the vakil of the Raja of Ladakh before Col. H.T. Tapp, Political Agent, Subathoo on 22 November 1936, as it is the more reliable account being nearest to the event.
demanding Rupees 30,000 as tribute. On hearing this message, King commanded the Wazir of Bazgo to meet the Dogra army. Chamuck Buidun, the Wazir of Bazgo along with Bankah Sallerd collected an army and gave a battle to Dogras. Dogras lost the battle and fled, abandoning the forts of Paskum and Soundh. The Ladakhi wazirs came back to Shergol and Mulbik. Zorawar Singh halted at a distance of about 45 miles and reorganized his forces once again. King now commanded Kunmajee and Josum to meet the Dogra troops. Ladakhi forces once again killed some thirty men of the Dogra army, prior to the final showdown. It so happened that at that time all of a sudden the day became dark and visibility became difficult, when they were preparing to give battle. Zorawar Singh seized this opportunity quickly and made a strong attack on the Ladakhi army. The sons of Sumbhoo Kotwal and Bankah Wazir were made prisoners and on their refusal to surrender they were killed. The Dogra army then marched to Mulbik and plundered the fort there.

Zorawar Singh once again sent a message from Mulbik to the King to the effect that if he would pay a tribute (Nazarana) of Rupees 30,000 he would quit his country and will return to Jammu. The King, however, paid Rupees 15,000. The Dogra Sardar left Mulbik but, unmindful of the partial payment of tribute, plundered another fort and a temple (Thakurdwara) nearby. From that place Zorawar once again repeated the same message of tribute to the King. Ultimately it was settled that the King should come to Mulbik and pay 30,000 Rupees tribute, and Dogra Sardar would pay his respects to him and leave his country. On arrival of the King, Zorawar Singh expressed his desire to see Leh. After gratifying
this wish and fixing the annual tribute he once again promised to retire to his country through Suru Valley.

No sooner did Zorawar Singh came back from Leh, than Wazir Sher Ali Khan, another Ladakhi chieftain, assembled forces for battle. This was immediately communicated by Sumbhu Kotwal the Dogra Sardar who returned with his forces to meet the challenge and take the King's son as a captive. Before Zorawar could reach Leh, the King's son fled from the capital and came to Bashahr. Zorawar Singh ejected the Raja from his territories and placed Sumbhu Kotwal on the throne. (12) A fort was erected at Leh and Dalel Singh was appointed its Thanadar (Superintendent). He, however, was soon murdered by Ladakhis. The next five years of Zorawar Singh were wasted in suppressing revolts in various parts of Ladakh and in search of suitable puppet ruler, before he could make an effort towards the subjugation of Baltistan. (13)

**Baltistan**

Like Ladakh, Baltistan, a territory between Gilgit in the West and Ladakh in the East, was tributary to the Mughals. It became the part of the Mughal Empire in the reign of Shah Jahan (1628-1658). During the later Mughal period it became independent, and like Kashmir and Ladakh went into the hands of Abdalis for some time. With the disappearance of Abdali power it became

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independent, only to come back in the Dogra fold in the forties of the nineteenth century.

After the conquest of Ladakh in 1834, Gulab Singh wrote a letter to Ahmed Shah, the ruler of Baltistan, extending his hand of friendship but the reply of the ruler was most discouraging. (14) Meanwhile Gulab Singh learnt that his designs towards Baltistan had no approval of the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh, hence he suspended the project for a more appropriate occasion. (15)

While Gulab Singh was looking for the opportunity to subjugate Baltistan, a quarrel in the ruling family of that principality took place. King Ahmed Shah had appointed his younger son Mohammad Ali as heir of the estate and incharge of the fort of Iskardo, in preference to his elder son Mohammad Shah. The latter being offended by this arrangement entered into a conspiracy with the nobles, with a view to overthrow his father's authority. Failing in this attempt Mohammad Shah left the country in search of external assistance. On 7 September 1836, he met Mian Singh the Sikh Governor of Kashmir at Srinagar. He was offered protection and an allowance of Rs. 3 per day. (16) Mohammad Shah made

(14) Wade to Macnaghten, 30 December 1836. Foreign Political, 30 January 1837, No. 25.

(15) Political Agent Loodhiana to Secretary, Government of India, 3 October 1837. Foreign Political, 20 October 1837, No. 62.

(16) Wade to Macnaghten, 30 December 1836. Foreign Political, 30 January 1837, No. 28.
several unsuccessful attempts in collaboration with the ruler of Chilas and Gilgit to overthrow his father. Ultimately he approached Wazir Zorawar Singh and was promised assistance at an appropriate time.

Soon after the death of Ranjit Singh on 27 June 1839, Wazir Zorawar Singh made active preparations for the attack of Baltistan. While Lahore Court was busy in internal struggle for poower, Zorawar Singh attacked Baltistan in the month of March 1840 with a force of 1,000 strong along with Mohammad Shah in the front. Ahmed Shah had collected about 3,000 troops in separate columns. After a skirmish Ahmed Shah carried off his son as a prisoner. He was followed up by Zorawar Singh closely and was defeated. After three days he was arrested and Mohammad Shah was proclaimed as the ruler of Baltistan. Zorawar Singh demanded a tribute of Rs. 7,000 from Ahmed Shah and assured that on the payment, he will be restored to power. (17) After a few months Ahmed Shah was restored to power on payment of tribute and sending off one of his sons to reside at Jammu. (18) At this stage the small principalities of Hunza and Nagar also accepted the overlordship of the Dogras. (19)


The British Government, with whom Ahmed Shah had been in friendly correspondence since 1826, could not render any help to him in spite of several appeals. (20) The centre of British concentration at this time was on the bigger gains in the anarchy of Sikhs at Lahore, rather than towards a remote hilly principality.

Thus, by the middle of 1840, the Dogras had firmly established their authority throughout Ladakh and Baltistan, and looked forward for fresh conquests. From Leh Zorawar Singh wrote to the ruler of Yarkand to the effect that he should depute an agent with tribute to him as a token of his submission to Dogra Government. The ruler of Yarkand declined to comply and wrote back to him:

... This country, be it known to you, is one of the dependencies of China and if the Sikh Government has really arrived at that pitch of power as to covet its possessions, it would be as well that it should first depute their agents to demand a tribute from China and after having fixed the amount of the tribute with the ruler of the empire we then shall have no objection to follow his example. In any other case it will be better for the Sikhs to desist from vain boasting, which is always detested or at least slighted by wise man and having closed their lips against begging, remained satisfied with their place, without boasting so arrogantly of their bravery. (21)

This Yarkand rebuff compelled Zorawar Singh to look to the east, on Tibet for territorial gains. He renewed his correspondence with the officer at Gartok, in which he had failed at the time he took over Ladakh in 1834. (22) He requested the officer and other

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(20) Clark to Forrest, n. 18.

(21) Agent N.W.F. to Henry Forrrers, Officiating Secretary to Government of India, 25 August 1840, Foreign Secret, 1 March 1841, No. 126 and enclosures.

(22) Clark to Henry Thomas, 21 September 1840. Foreign Secret, 12 October 1840, Nos. 107-108.
feudal lords (Thakurs) for friendship and alliance. The officer at first refused the proposal but subsequently yielded to the request on some monetary payment. In the meanwhile Zorawar Singh, clever as he was, surveyed the entire area of western Tibet through his confidential agents. He really wanted to consolidate his hold before it was known to Lhasa. But in consequence of his subsequent proceedings with his troops in the direction of Gartok, its officer, notwithstanding this new alliance, assembled as a precaution, about four to five thousand troops and remained constantly on the alert. (23)

Tibet

Rudok, Guge and Purang in western Tibet formed the part of Ladakhi kingdom prior to 1684. Zorawar Singh first asserted the ancient claims of Ladakh’s supremacy on the three territories which were given over to Tibet by the treaty of 1684. He demanded the surrender of Rudok, Gartok and the holy lakes of Mansarowar, from the priestly King of Lhasa with a view to controlling its lucrative shawl-wool trade. (24) Shawl-wool was reaching British factories at Ludhiana and Delhi through passes in control of the British Government due to unsettled state of affairs in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

The time in 1841, seemed ripe for the attainment of his ambition. Ranjit Singh’s death in 1839 had left the Lahore Kingdom


(24) Cunningham, n. 8, p. 218.
only a hot bed of feudal intrigues, and thus Sikhs were absorbed in their own internal dissensions. The interests of Gulab Singh were properly watched by his brother Raja Dhian Singh at Lahore Court. Nepal with the fall of Bhim Sen Thapa in July 1837 presented a sorry spectacle and "the internal administration of the state was in a flux, chaotic and unstable". (25) Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, was also shaken by the power struggle between the Regent of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Ministers. (26) China was busy at two fronts; at sea in the first opium war, and at Sinkiang where there were regular Muslim rebellions. (27) The British were preoccupied in Afghanistan, China and Burma.

Under such favourable international situation, Zorawar Singh with a force of about 6,000 men, largely Ladakhis, Baltis, and Kishtwaris, around a Dogra nucleus advanced up the Indus valley into Tibet in the month of May 1841. (28) He tried to disguise his invasion as a pilgrimage to mount Kailash and holy lake of Mansarovar. The Tibetan border officials, alarmed by the size of his forces, sent a warning to Lhasa. (29) Zorawar Singh had

(28) Clark to Maddock, 30 July 1841. Foreign Secret, 16 August 1841, Nos. 34-38; Sapru, n. 3, p. 28; Panikkar, n. 3, p. 80.
divided his forces into three divisions. One moved up the Indus valley towards Tashigong, another through Rupshu. These two contingents plundered Buddhist monasteries at Hanle in Ladakh and Tashigong in Tibet in the way and moved towards Mansarowar lake. The third contingent moved into Rudok district via the route south of Pangong Lake. This unit first captured Rudok and then moved south where it joined forces with the first division and captured Cartok. The district officer of the place offered resistance with the local people but failed in the face of better equipped Dogra army. (30) After these initial victories and capture of the headquarters of western Tibet, Zorawar Singh announced his intention to conquer in the name of the Jammu Raja Gulab Singh, all the territories west of Mayam Pass, on the plea that this territory had rightfully belonged to Ladakh since ancient times. He advanced along the old caravan route between Ladakh and Central Tibet, and cut the trail between west Tibet and Bashahr. One of his contingents reached Taklakot, on the western extreme of the Nepal-Tibet border, by 6 September 1841, after garrisoning several forts along the way. The Tibetan general who offered resistance at Taklakot was unable to hold it with the help of the local forces then at his disposal, and had to pull back behind the Mayum Pass. (31)


(31) Hodgson, British Resident in Nepal to G. Clark, Agent N.W.F., 3 August 1841. Foreign Secret, 16 August 1841, Nos. 43-44; Hodgson to J. Erskine, 4 August 1841. Foreign Secret, 23 August 1841, No. 65.
The British Apprehensions

So far Zorawar Singh's conquests in the mountain areas around Kashmir were concerned, the British had not been greatly bothered about it. In fact disorders in Ladakh had been advantageous to the British protected Bashahr from the commercial point of view. But with the invasion of Tibet, the benevolent British attitude towards Gulab Singh changed, because it threatened both commercial and political interests of the East India Company in India.

The Dogra attack on Tibet was accompanied by the presence of Sikh troops in Lahaul, Kulu and Spiti, on the southern side of the Tibetan frontier between Ladakh and the Sutlej. The commercial benefits resulting from the unrest in Ladakh promptly evaporated, and the flow of wool into Bashahr and other border areas was immediately stopped. (32) Apart from this, Gulab Singh was trying to spread his influence on the hill states under British protection, through matrimonial negotiations. He had negotiated the marriage of the daughter of the Raja of Bashahr to his son. Moreover, he was claiming the customary presents from Lahul, Kulu and Spiti which these principalities were making to the Ladakhi kingdom in the past, in order to increase his influence. (33)

(32) Thomason, Secretary N.W.F. to Lushington, 31 July 1841. Foreign Secret, 16 August 1841, Nos. 34-38.

Besides the commercial loss and the spread of the influence of Gulab Singh on the border states, there were greater political complications, which might have endangered the British Government in India. From the Gorkha War of 1814-16, the cardinal point of the British policy towards Nepal was the political isolation of Nepal from other Indian states. This object was threatened from the fall of Bhim Sen Thapa in 1837. The issue at stake before Nepal court was whether they should follow a policy of hostility or of neutrality towards the British. The situation was grave by the approach of Dogra forces near the border of Nepal. (34) The British fears towards Nepal were gaining ground from 1837, when a Nepali delegation had been well received in Lahore. (35) In 1839, a Nepali delegation headed by Matabar Singh had again been very warmly welcomed by Ranjit Singh, which apparently confirmed the British fears. (36) The establishment of a Dogra post at Taklakot made the situation grave and the British Government decided not to allow the Lahore and Nepal dominions to march with one another behind the Himalayas. It was also thought that the pending negotiations at the distance of half the earth's circumference in the opium war with China might be effected by the presence of Dogras in Tibet. Before the combination of all these events could prove


(35) Foreign Political Proceedings, 20 October 1837, No. 6.

(36) Cunningham was of the opinion that Matabar Singh was an refugee in Lahore Court, and that Nepal Government herself was apprehensive of him. Cunningham, n. 8, footnote p. 219.
a real threat to the British Empire in India, the Government on the
suggestion of Clark, decided for an representation to the Lahore
Durbar. (37)

The British Intervention

Auckland, whose policy had met a disaster at Kabul was in no
mood to take chance and hence he immediately asked his Agent G. Clark
to represent to the Lahore Court for the withdrawal of Zorawar Singh
from Tibet. Maharaja Sher Singh took it easy and his minister
Dhian Singh gave ample tome to his brother Gulab Singh to take as
much territory as was possible. The impatient British Government
could not wait for the results of the representation to Lahore Court.
They fixed 10 December 1841 as final date for the withdrawal of Dogras
from Tibet. Lieutenant Joseph Davey Cunningham was asked to proceed
to frontiers and to watch the events. (38)

Death of Zorawar Singh

The Providence had different things in store. It was in
November 1841 that a superior Lhasa force came to meet the Dogras. (39)
A small force which was sent by Zorawar Singh to oppose the enemy

(37) Clark to Maddock, 23 September 1841. Foreign Secret;
18 October 1841, Nos. 67-72.

(38) Clark to Cunningham, 20 October 1841. Foreign Secret,
8 November 1841, No. 45.

(39) J.H. Balton, Almora to Secretary N.W.F., 19 November 1841.
Foreign Secret, 6 December 1841, No. 59.
forces, and for ascertaining their strength was cut to pieces by the Tibetans. On 9 November 1841, Taklakot was taken by the Tibetan forces after severe fighting. Several Tibetan detachments were sent forward to cut Dogra communications and invest their fortifications. Zorawar Singh was obliged to take command of the army in the Taklakot area. Fighting continued indecisively for about three weeks. Ultimately Tibetans, aided by a heavy snowfall, were able to defeat the Dogra forces and Zorawar Singh himself was killed on 14 December 1841. (40) After the death of Zorawar Singh, the Dogra army suffered untold hardships. A great portion of the army was annihilated in snow. Out of the 5,000 fighting men, few were arrested and about a thousand could escape, the rest were all dead. (41)

The death of Zorawar Singh let loose the disgruntled elements in Ladakh. Raja and Wazir of Ladakh joined Tibetans. With the help of Tibetans, they rose into a revolt in Ladakh, and seized the Dogra garrison. (42) Gon-Po of Hemis monastery requested the British Government for help. (43) He was told that the British

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(40) Cunningham to Clark, 4 March 1842. Foreign Secret, 13 August 1842, No. 10; Panikkar, n. 3, p. 81; Fisher, Rose, Huttenback, n. 26, p. 53 and Appendix 165; Sapru, n. 3, p. 28.

(41) Panikkar, n. 3, p. 83; Fisher, Rose, Huttenback, n. 26, p. 53.

(42) Cunningham to Clark, 2 February 1842. Foreign Secret, 30 March 1842, No. 101; Cunningham to Clark, 13 March 1842. Foreign Secret, 31 August 1842, No. 11; Clark to Maddock, 7 March 1842, Foreign Secret, 30 March 1842, Nos. 89-90; Cunningham to Clark, 19 May 1842, Foreign Secret, 14 September 1842, Nos. 49-51.

(43) Gumbo to Cunningham, 18 April 1842. Foreign Secret, 6 July 1842, Nos. 40-44.
Government was desirous of peace in Ladakh, but as the Sikhs were also friends, they were unable to do anything. (44) In the meantime the ex-King of Ladakh sent a petition on behalf of the people of Ladakh to the King of Lahore. (45) At the same time he appealed to the Emperor of China for help. (46) Nothing came out of these appeals and petitions of the King and people of Ladakh.

No sooner did the news of Ladakhi revolt reach Jammu, then Gulab Singh raised a new army and despatched it to Leh under the command of Dewan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratamu. (47) The Tibetans were also preparing for a fight and had assembled troops near Gartok area. (48) Neither side was willing to settle the issue without a trial of strength. By the end of August both parties were in the battle field near Leh. Two battles were fought in early September. In the first the Tibetans lost about 1,000 or 1,200 men, while in the second the loss was equal on both the sides. (49) On 27 September Cunningham reported that the Dogras had decisively defeated

(44) Cunningham to Gumbo, 3 May 1842, ibid.

(45) Raja of Ladakh to Raja of Lahore, 27 May 1842. Foreign Secret, 3 August 1842, No. 29.


the Tibetans (50) and captured their commander Surkhang. (51) Soon after a treaty was signed between the two parties on 24 September 1842. (52) This treaty provided that the Dogras were to be the rulers of Ladakh, but that their control was not to extend to Tibet, and that the boundaries of Ladak and Lhasa would be constituted as formerly. "That in conformity with ancient usage Tea, Pusham and Shawal wool shall be transmitted by the Ladakh road. That no person from Ladakh to Tibet and vice versa will be obstructed. That war will not be renewed between Ladakh and Tibet. That whatever customs were prevalent in old shall prevail." (53) Barring minor local

(50) Clark to Maddock, 31 August 1842. Foreign Secret, 26 October 1842, Nos. 89-99.

(51) Cunningham to Clark, 27 September 1842. Foreign Secret, 9 November 1842, No. 61.

(52) Clark to Maddock, 28 October 1842. Foreign Secret, 21 December 1842, Nos. 63-64. I have taken this date as it was reported by J.D. Cunningham, who was near the scene of action. Gartok Governor writing on 2 October 1842 to Bashahr Raja told him that the peace was made (Clark to Maddock, 21 October 1842 Foreign Secret, 11 January 1843, No. 43). But as per Hindu calendar date given by Cunningham 10 Asuj, it should be 29 September 1842. The copy of the treaty forwarded by Raja of Bashahr gives the date 17 October 1842 (28 Asuj 1899). Erskine to Clark, 1 April 1843, Foreign Secret, 26 May 1843, Nos. 61-63.

This date has been adopted by Lamb. N. 34, p. 70-7. Fisher, Rose, Huttenback, n. 26, p. 55 17 September 1842; J.D. Cunningham in his book, n. 3, p. 221, gives no date; Panikkar, n. 3, p. 85 gives 15 August 1842. Gulabnama of Dewan Kirpa Ram, p. 264 gives 2 Asuj 1899 which is 22 September 1842, but Aitchison, Treaties, Engagements and Sanads give it 17 September 1842.

(53) Erskine to Clark, 1 April 1893. Foreign Secret, 24 May 1843, Nos. 61-63; Ramsay to Nisbet, 23 June 1893, Foreign Secret F, September 1889, Nos. 211-217; Panikkar, n. 3, pp. 84-89; Sapru, n. 3, Appendix I; Cunningham, n. 8, pp. 220-1; Lamb, n. 34, p. 70; Fisher, Rose, Huttenback, n. 26, p. 55; Huttenback, n. 6, p. 487; Zahiruddin Ahmed, Tibet and Ladakh: A History, St. Antony's Papers, Number 14: Far Eastern Affairs (London, 1965), pp. 51-58. For a text displayed at temple wall in Tibet see Appendix III.
disputes, which were settled amicably, the treaty of 1842 continued unchallenged. (54) Only recently after the triumph of communist China over Tibet, this treaty was challenged.

Ranjit Singh was the last independent ruler of India who tried to consolidate the political authority over the far flung areas of India. In this task he was supported by several gifted generals of the time. Notably, among them were Gulab Singh and Zorawar Singh. Under the patronage of Gulab Singh, Zorawar Singh had not only conquered Ladakh, Baltistan, but had humbled Hunza and Nagar. Hunza and Nagar had accepted Zorawar Singh's supremacy in 1841. Apart from the known extent of the states of Ladakh and Baltistan, Zorawar Singh sought to incorporate even Guge and Purang in western Tibet, where lies the mount Kailash and lake Mansarowar. The area was ceded to the Tibetans in 1684. Although Zorawar's attack of Tibet in 1841 earned him an undying fame for himself, yet it proved very costly to him. He was killed in Tibet on 14 December 1841. The war of 1841-42 was fought only between Gulab Singh and the Tibetans. The suzerain powers - the Sikhs and the Chinese - had nothing to do with it. (55) At that time in China the Anglo-Chinese war of 1840-42 was going on. Hence the British in India were conditioned with Chinese fears! Therefore, whatever was written during this period in regard to Tibet was denoted by the name of China. J.D. Cunningham who was deputed by the British Government to

(54) Agreement of 1858, Ramsay to Nisbet, 23 June 1893, Foreign Secret F, September 1889, Nos. 211-217. For text see Appendix VI.

the scene of war used the word "Chinese" in all his dispatches, in the first instance, but subsequently he used the words 'Tibetans'.

(56) The latter was in fact the correct description. (57) The treaty of 1842 was signed by Tibetans and Dogras. Peking or Lahore was not party to it. It seems K.M. Panikkar is not correct in producing the third version of the treaty, which in his opinion was ratified by Peking and Lahore. (58) The Chinese authority in Tibet after 1792 was in reality non-existent. The Chinese Amban in Lhasa Meng Pao had reported the events in the area to the Emperor of China. Hsi-Tsang Tsou-Shu (Tibetan Memorials and Reports) contains nothing more than reports and the reply thereto by the self-styled protector, the Manchu Emperor of China. (59)

(56) All the dispatches of Cunningham referred in this chapter are the best examples, where he had used "Chinese" and Tibetans indiscriminately.

(57) H.E. Richardson, Tibet and Its History (London, 1962), p. 72. Richardson has said that "A Dogra invasion of west Tibet in 1841 was repelled by a force which was purely Tibetan, although it has sometimes been wrongly described as 'Chinese'."

(58) Panikkar, n. 3, p. 87; Ahmad, n. 53, p. 52. Footnote 100 "Panikkar wrongly described the third treaty as one 'on behalf of the (Sikh) Government of Lahore' - the suzerain of the Dogra Government of Jammu - 'and the Emperor of China' (the suzerain of Tibet."