INTRODUCTION

The period from 1750 A.D. onwards in the Punjab has been labelled as ‘Misaldari Period’ by the historians of the Sikhs. According to them, after the decline of the Mughal power the Punjab was occupied by the twelve Sikh Sardars known as Misaldars who divided it into twelve Misals and started ruling over their respective areas. Instead of uniting and forming a state, these Misaldars were almost constantly engaged in civil war, grouping and regrouping in the struggle for pre-eminence. It needed a ‘strong hand to check these internecine disputes and fortunately, for the Punjab, Ranjit Singh appeared on the scene’, he occupied their territories and unified the whole of the Punjab. However, the new evidence collected during the last three decades has made it clear that the Sikhs were not the only rulers of the Punjab during the late eighteenth century, there were Muslim rulers in the lower doabs and Rajput rulers in the hills of the Punjab. The appended map of the late eighteenth century Punjab showing territories under the possessions of the Sikh chiefs makes it clear that the Sikhs were the rulers of nearly one-fourth part of the Punjab only whereas more than three-fourth was under the possession of the non Sikhs: Muslim Chiefs and the hill chiefs. Thus, during the late eighteenth century, the Punjab came to be divided into a large

3 Some of them have been identified for the first time by Indu Banga in her work Agrarian System of the Sikhs: Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1978, pp. 11-60 (cited hereafter as Agrarian System of the Sikhs). In her work published nearly fifteen years later Veena Sachdeva not only located the territories of nearly one hundred chiefs but has also discussed their administrative arrangements, land revenue, urban as well as agrarian economy; for detail see, Polity and Economy of the Punjab during the Late Eighteenth Century, Manohar, New Delhi, 1993, (cited hereafter as Polity and Economy).
number of independent political units numbering, in fact, about one hundred and fifty. Nearly forty of these were in the hills, thirty-one in the lower doabs, fifty-six in the middle doabs and twenty-five in the cis-Satlej region of the Punjab. The late eighteenth century rulers of the Punjab had come from different political backgrounds. But once they acquired power, all of them started ruling as autonomous rulers. They appointed officials to collect land revenue, alienated it to their jāgīrḍārs and dharmarth grantees, using their own discretion without interference of any one. Most important of the non Sikh Chiefs to establish their rule in the hills of the Punjab were Ranjit Dev, Brij Raj Dev and Jit Dev of Jammu; Ghamand Chand, Tegh Chand and Sansar Chand of Kangra; Umed Singh, Raj Singh, Jit Singh and Charhat Singh of Chamba; Pritam Singh, Bikramjit Singh and Ajit Singh of Kulu; Amrit Pal, Bijai Pal and Mahendra Pal of Basohli; Abhiria Singh, Jagrup Singh and Umed Singh of Jaswan; Devi Chand and Mahan Chand of Kahlur; Ranjit Sen and Bikram Sen of Suket; Surma Sen, Ishwari Sen and Shamsher Sen of Mandi; Prithvi Singh and Bir Singh of Nurpur and Parkash Singh of Guler.4

Some of the Muslim chiefs to establish independent principalities in the Punjab during the late eighteenth century were: Bahawal Khan and Mubarak Khan of Bahawalpur, Walidad Khan, Sahib Khan, Kabir Khan and Ahmad Khan Sial of Jhang, Shuja Khan and Muzaffar Khan of Multan, Sa'adat Muhammad Yar Khan Kharal of Kamalia, Allahyar Khan of Sahiwal, Ghulam Muhammad and Jan Muhammad Chattha of Rasulnagar, Nizamuddin Khan and Qutbuddin Khan of Qasur, Murad Bakhsh, Muhammad Yar and Jalal

4 The non-Sikh chiefs who established themselves in the hills were actually the members of dynasties older than the Mughals. They had lost their independence during the Mughal rule and were paying regular tribute and serving them with contingents when required. They accepted the suzerainty of Ahmad Shah Abdali when he ousted the Mughals from the province of Lahore. But with the removal of the Mughal and Afghan authority from Punjab the rulers of the hill principalities soon declared themselves autonomous. In fact, rulers of the hills had only to withhold the payment of tribute to become independent, for them, it was the re-establishment of their independence: for detail, see: Sachdeva, Polity and Economy, pp. 1-15.
Khan Bhatti of Pindi Bhattian and Sahib Khan and Ahmad Khan Khokhar of Pind Dadan Khan, Muhammad Khan and Sher Khan Sadozai of Mankera, Muqarrab Khan and Mansur Khan of Rawalpindi, Mahmud Khan and Shahbaz Khan of Taiwan. 5

The Sikh chiefs to establish independent principalities in the Punjab during the late eighteenth century were more than ninety in number, fifty-six of them were in the trans-Satlej region whereas twenty-five of them were in the cis-Satlej area. The prominent among the Sikh chiefs of trans-Satlej region were: Charhat Singh Sukarchakia at Gujranwala, Gujjar Singh Bhangi at Lahore and Gujrat, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia at Sri Hargobindpur, Jai Singh Kanhiya at Batala, and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia at Fatehabad. But there were others also like Amar Singh Bagga of Sujanpur, Bagh Singh Hallowalia of Zafarwal, Dal Singh Akalgarhia of Akalgarh, Dhanna Singh Kalalwala of Bhera, Dharm Singh Amritsaria, Gurbakhsh Singh Dodia of Doda, Karam Singh Chhina, Karora Singh of Hariana, Natha Singh Shahid of Sialkot, Sahib Singh of Taragarh, Sahib Singh Sialkotia, Tara Singh Dallewalia and Tara Singh Dallewalia. 6 The chiefs of the cis-Satlej region were Sahib Singh and

5 The Muslim chiefs of the plains belonged to three categories: the former Afghan governors who became independent due to political upheavals in Afghanistan like the rulers of Multan and Mankera; influential individuals belonging to different religious groups who raised forces, acquired territories, collected revenues and became chiefs; the rest of them were the former jagirdars and intermediary zamindars under the Mughals. During the eighteenth century, when the hold of the Mughal power weakened, these intermediaries rather than paying revenue to the government started keeping it with themselves and acquired more resources and power. They paid tribute to Ahmad Shah Abdali to be confirmed in their possessions. But when Abdali was unable to come to the Punjab, these chiefs had only to withhold tribute and to defend themselves against their neighbours to become independent: Sachdeva, Polity and Economy, pp. 16-63. For detail of the revenue-free grants given by them, see Chapter 2 of this thesis.

6 The political background of the Sikh chiefs of the Punjab during the late eighteenth century was different from the Rajput and Muslim rulers. The Sikh rulers had actually been descendants of ordinary subjects of the Mughal empire belonging to the cultivating class or to the classes associated with it. They had to wage a long struggle against the Mughals and the Afghans to establish their principalities. In this process, the institutions which they evolved—gurmata, dal khalsa, rakhi, and misl helped them in their political process: for detail see, Sachdeva, Polity and Economy, pp. 16-63. For detail of the revenue-free grants given by them see, Chapter 2 of this thesis.
Karam Singh of Patiala, Ranjit Singh and Bharpur Singh of Nabha, Bhag Singh, Fateh Singh and Sangat Singh of Jind, Gurbaksh Singh, Lal Singh and Udai Singh of Kaithal, Bhanga Singh and Fateh Singh of Thanesar, Gurdit Singh and Ajit Singh of Ladwa, Rai Kalha, Rai Alias and Rai Ahmad of Raikot.7

After the death of his father Mahan Singh in 1790, Ranjit Singh became the ruler of Sukarchakia principality. He ousted the Bhangi Sardārs from Lahore in 1799 and made it his capital. The conquest of Lahore marked the beginning of the process of establishment of kingdom of Lahore by Ranjit Singh. He occupied the territories of the adjoining doabs, including Amritsar which he made his religious capital.8 He also tried to increase his influence across the river Satlej. But his expansion in the cis-Satlej area was checked by the British who made him sign the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809.9 Ranjit Singh turned his attention to the hills and made the rulers of the hill principalities to acknowledge his suzerainty. It was part of his general policy to claim suzerainty over autonomous hill chiefs as a prelude to annexation of their territories.10 Thus, with the exception of three, all the hill principalities were annexed by him. He also occupied Multan and the Afghan province of Kashmir. Similarly, Dera Ghazi Khan, Peshawar, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan were also taken over.11 Till his death in June 1839, Ranjit Singh had become the master of whole of the Punjab except some principalities in the hills. The struggle for throne ensued among the sons of Ranjit Singh which led to Anglo-Sikh wars and the annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

Joseph Davey Cunningham in his book, A History of the Sikhs (1849) was the first to take notice of the religious grants alienated in the Punjab. According to the figures given by him in Appendix, the

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7 For detail of the revenue-free grants given by them see, Chapter 2 of this thesis.
8 Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, p. 141 fn 87.
10 Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, p. 57.
11 Hari Ram Gupta, Panjab on the Eve of First Sikh War, Panjab University, Hoshiarpur, event on eve of first war, 1956, p.viii-ix (cited hereafter as Eve of First War)
State of Lahore gave to Sodhis, Bedis, Akāls etc. an amount of twenty lakhs of rupees which amounted to little more than six per cent of the total revenues collected from land by the State in 1844. Cunningham did not elaborate but through these figures, though unintentionally, he made an attempt to convey the catholic outlook of the rulers of the Punjab who gave land grants not only to the Sikh individuals but also to the non-Sikhs like faqirs and brahmans. The relevance of the figures given by Cunningham could not catch the imagination of the historians of the Punjab for the next 130 years.

In Hari Ram Gupta’s work, A History of the Sikhs (1944), we come across only one statement relating to the State Patronage, where the secular outlook followed by the Sikh rulers while assigning dharmarth grants has been mentioned. In his another work written jointly with K.S. Narang, The History of the Panjab, there is a single statement on the patronage provided to educational institutions like pathshalas and madrasas by Ranjit Singh. In both these accounts, the State Patronage has not been given its due importance. N.K. Sinha in his work Ranjit Singh (1968) has discussed Ranjit Singh’s virtue of being above the communal prejudices and also the fact that he liberally gave grants to the ulemas and holy men. Thus, he has only discussed the State patronage as a virtue of the Maharaja and ignored the other details of the institution.

In The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707 (1963), Irfan Habib has discussed in detail the functioning and nature of the madad-i-ma‘āsh grants, various categories of recipients along with the privileges enjoyed by them. Since the focus of this study is on the Mughal period, we do not get to know anything about the later Mughal period and more specifically of the Punjab.

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The relevance of the religious endowments made in the Punjab could be discussed in detail only after the discovery of documents from two religious establishments of the Punjab. The detailed examination of these documents has been done by B.N. Goswamy and J.S. Grewal in their works, *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar* and *The Mughal and Sikhs Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori*. The former is an explicit study of seventeen *madad-i-maʿāsh* documents in Persian of the Jakhbar Collection out of which sixteen belong to the Mughal Period and one belongs to an eighteenth century Sikh ruler. The other collection comes from a single religious establishment—Pindori, and is more varied, consisting of fifty-two documents. These documents come from the Mughal governors of Lahore and other Mughal administrators, the autonomous Sikh rulers of the late eighteenth century, Ranjit Singh and his successors, Sikh Princes and the officials, and in one case, the British administrator. Out of these fifty-two documents, thirty-four belong to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. These thirty-five documents (including the one from the Jakhbar Collection), on the whole, give us the details of the procedures adopted and the inclination of the rulers and the officials to ensure that the grantees get what is granted to them. They also provide fresh data on Sikh polity and government. But both these works are area specific as well as establishment specific and therefore, do not cover the entire Punjab. In another piece of work by the same writers, entitled ‘Religious Land grants from Kangra’, three documents: two belonging to Sansar Chand, a Hindu ruler of Kangra, and one of the Ranjit Singh, have been brought to light. This article not only acquaints us with the procedure followed for giving away the

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grants by the hill rulers but also brings out the fact that Ranjit Singh generally confirmed the grants given by his predecessors.

Indu Banga in the chapter on Dharmath grants in her work *Agrarian System of the Sikhs* (1978), has discussed the various features of dharmarth grants given by the rulers of the Punjab, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. She has talked about the various stages involved while assigning the dharmath grants like issuing of formal orders, confirmation of old grants, collection of revenues, insistence on non-interference by the officials and so on.\(^\text{17}\)

Though she has adequately dealt with dharmarth grants under the Sikh rulers of the Punjab, she has largely left out the patronage given by the non-Sikh chiefs of the Punjab as well as the patronage given by the rulers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to physicians, teachers, artists, poets, literary figures, musician and destitute women etc.

Another attempt in the field of the State Patronage has been made by Veena Sachdeva in her work on *Polity and Economy of the Punjab: during the late Eighteenth century*.*\(^\text{18}\) She has dealt with dharmarth grants, made by the Sikh and the non-Sikh rulers of the trans-Sutlej region of the Punjab, but she has neither covered the cis-Satlej area of the Punjab nor dealt with the other aspect of State Patronage that is dharmarth grants given to non-religious individuals and institution.

Jigar Mohammed in his *Revenue Free Land Grants in Mughal India-Awadh Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (1658-1765)* (2002) has made a comprehensive effort to discuss the practice of revenue-free land grants in Mughal India. This study sheds light on various aspects of the assignment of madad-i-

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grantee in the society. This is the first detailed study of a particular region, and hence, the model for the present study.

The foregoing review of the existing literature reveals that State Patronage has been studied by various historians from different perspectives, but none of the works gives a full-fledged account of the State patronage. In most of the works done on the State patronage only the religious aspect of patronage and has been covered, the patronage provided to learned men, artists, musicians, craftsmen has been neglected. Similarly, adequate attention has not been paid to the grants given by the successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. An attempt has been made in the following chapters to discuss in detail the State patronage given by the rulers of the Punjab during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

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