Chapter-II

Himachal Pradesh and Outside Powers
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As described in the previous chapter, the early political history of Himachal Pradesh is not fully known. This is mainly due to the absence of adequate archaeological and literary sources. The hills of Himachal Pradesh were dotted over with numerous Rajput states which enjoyed varying degrees of independence till the eve of the Turkish invasions. Moreover, the hill states of Himachal Pradesh were also a source of attraction due to wealth and sanctity of its temples viz. Brijeshwari Mata and Jwala Mukhi temples (now in the present Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh). These were plundered by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, Sultan Muhammad Tughluq and Feroz Tughluq due to their fabulous wealth.

However, the annexation of Himachal hills was never seriously thought of partly due to the difficult geographical conditions and partly due to the Sultans involvement in the subjugation of the plains. Thus, the hilly areas did not attract serious attention of the Sultans of Delhi and the hill states of Himachal virtually remained independent during the Sultnate period.

During the Mughal period, the political situation, however, underwent a substantial change. The hill chiefs of Himachal more or less acknowledged the suzerainty of the Mughals from Akbar onwards. At the same time they remained busy in military exploits in the adjoining areas, such as during the rule of Maharaja Sansar Chand of Kangra. But this did not remain a permanent feature because we find that during the close of the eighteenth century, Kangra and its adjoining states were subjugated by the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
Himachal and the Sikhs

It may be recalled here that the Kangra fort passed on to Sansar Chand after the retreat of Jai Singh Kanhaiya in 1786 A.D. The fort had remained in Mughal possession for about a century and a half and subsequently it was retained by Kanhaiya misal dar for about a decade before it finally passed on to Sansar Chand, its legitimate owner.

With the recovery of the Kangra fort in 1786, Sansar Chand was able to prosecute his ambitious designs. Supported by his large army, he completely overawed the hill chiefs, made them tributary and compelled them to attend his court on fixed occasions, and send contingents for his military expeditions. Sansar Chand also demanded, from the hill chiefs the surrender of all the fertile tracts that had been included in the imperial domain, attached to the fort in the time of the Mughals. In pursuance of this policy Raj Singh, the Chamba Chief, was required to make over Rihloo, and on his refusal, the country was invaded and he was killed in the battle at Nartee,\(^1\) a frontier village near Shahpur (Kangra), in defending his rights. As a consequence of this battle Sansar Chand succeeded only in retaining a few of the border villages. The Rihloo fort, however, remained under the control of the Chamba forces. Mandi was also subdued, and the minor prince Ishwar Sain made prisoner and kept at Nadaun for twelve years. Sansar Chand also annexed the southern half of Kullehr northern half having already been taken by Ghamand Chand. The raja of Kutlehr was almost entirely dispossessed.\(^2\)

In this way, for twenty years (from 1786 to 1806 A.D.) Sansar Chand ruled as undisputed monarch of the hills. During this period, he administered his territories without any external influence and as such this period may be
regarded as the climax of Sansar Chand's career. Had he remained content with these successes, he might have bequeathed a princely inheritance, but his dream was to regain the far-reaching dominions of his ancestors, and even to establish a Katoch Kingdom in Punjab. This aggressive policy was about to bring him in collision with powers mightier than himself, and sow the seeds of his decay.

In 1803 A.D., Sansar Chand invaded the region of Bari Doab, but was defeated and driven back by Ranjit Singh who was then rising into power, and brook no rivals. In 1804 A.D. Sansar Chand again attempted to establish himself at Hoshiarpur in the Jalandhar Doab and again was driven back by Ranjit Singh with other Sikh confederates. Disappointed in his designs on the plains, Sansar Chand in 1805 A.D., turned his arms against the Hill State of Kahlur (Bilaspur) and annexed the pargana of Batee contiguous to his own district of Mahal Morian, and built a fort to protect his conquests. He also captured two fortresses named Tiwan and Sariwan on Kangra border with many neighbouring villages belonging to the state of Bilaspur. Upon this, Kulwant Rai an official of Bilaspur State left for Sujanpur, the then capital of Kangra, and to do his utmost to request Raja Sansar Chand to give back the fortresses and other neighbouring villages belonging to the State of Bilaspur. But the Raja, on the contrary, turned a deaf ear to his request, and so Kulwant Rai returned in despair to Bilaspur. On reaching Bilaspur, he took an oath not to return to Bilaspur unless he had destroyed the Kangra State. On the other hand, Raja Sansar Chand's action against the Kahlur (Bilaspur) aroused keen resentment among the other hill states and smarting under the many wrongs
they had endured at this hands, as well as fearing for their own possessions, the chiefs formed a coalition against Raja Sansar Chand. They sent a united invitation, through Mahan Chand, the Raja of Bilaspur, to the Gurkha Commander, Amar Singh Thapa to invade Kangra. The Hill Chiefs further promised to aid Amar Singh Thapa, with their own contingents whenever latter crossed the river Sutlej.

Amar Singh Thapa gladly responded to the call and crossed the Sutlej with fifteen other Chiefs of the Gurkha army and with thirty two thousand men.

The first encounter took place in Muhul Moree (Mahal Morian in Kangra) in May 1806 A.D. and Sansar Chand was defeated and fled to Tira-Sujanpur, where there were fortified palaces belonging to the Raja. After a short halt at Tira-Sujanpur, he took refuge in Kangra fort, along with his family. The Gurkhas then advanced into the Kangra State and laid siege to the fort, where Raja Sansar Chand had taken refuge. The fort was invested for three years, but all their efforts to capture it were fruitless. During this period of three years the Gurkhas plundered and laid waste the country, which adversely effected the agriculture and economy of the surrounding states. The inhabitants deserted their homes and fled to the neighbouring states. The country was thus partly depopulated, the land was uncultivated, wild animals roamed about the towns, and the grass grew in the deserted streets.

Sansar Chand Appeals to Ranjit Singh

At last, rendered desperate by the misery and distress which had come upon his state, and seeing no hope of relief, Raja Sansar Chand, in
1809 A.D., appealed to Maharaja Ranjit for help. This was readily promised, but on the condition that fort should be surrendered. Maharaja Ranjit Singh then advanced into the hills, being met at Jawalamukhi by Sansar Chand, who had escaped from the Kangra fort in disguise. At last, after much discussion the treaty was signed at Jawalamukhi on July 20, 1809 between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sansar Chand of Kangra.

Soon after this treaty, the Sikhs fought their first battle (in August 1809 A.D.) with the Gurkhas, defeated them, and drove them across the river Sutlej. With this battle, the independence of Sansar Chand set forever. According to an agreement Maharaja Ranjit Singh then took possession of the fort and of the sixty-six villages in the Kangra valley for the maintenance of the garrison; leaving the rest of the State in the hands of Sansar Chand, who was now reduced to the position of a feudatory. As years passed Ranjit Singh departed from his engagements. Year by year he encroached more and more on the Katoch and Hill Chiefs' independence, till in 1828 A.D. the Sikhs seized many Hill States.

After the retirement from Kangra in 1809 A.D., Gurkhas came to Bilaspur and settled there for some time. Thence they proceeded to the State of Baghal and established themselves in the Arki palace, whose chief Jagat Singh was driven into exile. The Gurkhas built many fortresses in the Bhagal State and one of these, in the Jagatgarh fortress, they kept their goddess Kali. The fort of Subathu was also built by the Gurkhas. After having established themselves at Baghal, the Gurkhas began to overrun the neighbouring Hill States.
In pursuance of this policy, Amar Singh Thapa sent a force under his son Ranjor Singh to attack Sirmaur. Its ruler Karam Prakash was defeated and fled. Ranjor Singh then sacked the capital, Nahan, demolished many state buildings and got constructed a fort on the hill of Jaitak towards north of Nahan where he lodged himself. This Jaitak became important Gurkha post in the years immediately ahead.¹⁴

By the year 1810 A.D., the Gurkhas had conquered Hindu, Jubbal and Pundar, Joog Raj, the Thakur of Balson¹⁵ proved especially refractory, and the Gurkhas suffered three repulses when trying to reduce his fort, Nagana. At this juncture, Joog Raj joined with several of his neighbours viz. the Thakurs of Theog, Kotgarh and other petty states requested the Bushahr chief for help against the growing menace of the Gurkhas. Ugar Singh, the Raja of Bushahr, foreseeing a threat to his own state, dispatched a strong force of 10,000 men to check the Gurkha advance. Amar Singh Thapa dealt with this new threat from the north in person. In May 1811, Amar Singh Thapa marched personally from Sabathu with a large force. He captured Nagana and advanced on to the valley of the middle Sutlej, where stood the Bushahr capital, Rampur.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the untimely death of Ugar Singh, the Raja of Bushahr, eased the task of Amar Singh Thapa, who took advantage of the minority of the new ruler, Mahinder Singh and marching with a large force took possession of Rampur Bushahr. The minor raja who could not withstand the invasion fled away along with his mother, to Kinnaur, leaving the accumulated riches of the capital behind as a prey to the conquerors. The Gurkhas looted the treasuries and completely destroyed the records of the
state. An attempt was also made by the Gurkhas to reach the State treasures of Kamru, whither the young raja had fled, but the Gurkha force was surprised by the Kinnaura guerilla force at Sholtu Bridge and severely mauled in the night attack. This reverse and the difficulty of obtaining supplies compelled the Gurkhas to retreat.17

From 1811 to 1815 A.D., most part of the erstwhile Bushahr State was held by the Gurkhas. The invaders were, however, not successful in occupying Kinnaur. It is only after the British declaration of war against the Gurkhas at the end of 1814 A.D., the hill people got the encouragement and joined in an attempt to drive out the Gurkhas from all the hill states.

**Anglo-Gurkha War and the Himachal Hill States**

On the eve of the war with the British, the Gurkha Empire was at its zenith. The Gurkha hill-possessions were bounded on the north by the river Sutlej, on the west by Hoshiarpur and the State of Nalagarh, on the east by the river Ganges, and on the south by Kalka and Dehra Dun.

When the Gurkhas had a powerful footing in the hills, they thought of extending their possessions by conquering the plains in the vicinity of Arki. In pursuance of this policy, they proceeded southward, and occupied the hill forts of Malaun and Ramgarh with many neighbouring villages belonging to the Raja of Nalagarh. Raj Ram Saran Singh was much distressed at being deprived of his territory, and he presented himself before the British Government and asked for the restoration of his possessions. In compliance with the Raja's request, the British Government ordered a party of the British forces, with Sir David Ochterlony at their head, to march against the Gurkhas.18
Brigadier General Ochterlony entered the foot hills of Himalaya in the direction of Nalagarh fort which surrendered on 2 November 1814. This was followed by the Surrender of Taragarh, a small hill post in the neighbourhood. Both these position were garrisoned immediately by small parties of troops. From thence the British army moved towards Ramgarh fort, which was well garrisoned by the Gurkhas, and which it was necessary to reduce before proceeding to attack the positions of Gurkhas near Malaun.

The Battle of Ramgarh in 1814

In November 1814 A.D., the battle between the British and the Gurkhas took place at the fort of Ramgarh. The fort was taken by the British and the Gurkhas were completely defeated and fled to their another fort, Malaun. Soon after the battle of Ramgarh, General Ochterlony, captured the Gurkha posts of Raila, Dionthal and Ratanpur.

The Battle of Malaun in 1815

As the General Ochterlony had a mind to rout the Gurkhas, he attacked the fort of Malaun in April 14, 1815 A.D. and a great battle took place between the British and the Gurkhas. After a prolonged and hard struggle for four days, Bhagti Thapa, one of the Gurkha chiefs, was killed. This man was seventy years of age, and the Gurkha army were proud of the bravery of such a chief as Bhagti Thapa. It is said that Bhagti Thapa's widows burnt themselves with his funeral pyre as satis.

After this complete defeat of the Gurkhas, General Ochterlony ordered all the Hill Chiefs to expel the Gurkhas from their territories or otherwise their States would be annexed to the British Government. As every one was displeased with the Gurkhas, the Hill Chiefs of Jubbal, Bushahr and other
principalities unhesitatingly obeyed the orders, and expelled the Gurkhas from their territories.

The Battle of Baheli (Baghal State) in 1815

This battle took place between Raja Jagat Singh of Bhagal and the Gurkhas. All the Hill Chiefs, overrun by the Gurkhas, offered the services of their troops to the Raja Jagat Singh. The Gurkhas were completely defeated and thus they were expelled from the hills.²³

The whole campaign proved to be completely successful and General Ochterlony was able to compel the Gurkha Commander Amar Singh Thapa to sign a treaty at Segouli on 2nd December 1815.²⁴ It will thus be seen that Amar Singh Thapa had steadfastly refused to listen to the solicitations of his followers, and concede defeat. However, the news of the fall of Kumaon and some desertions in his army left him with no choice but to surrender. A convention was thus entered into, by which Amar Singh Thapa and his son Kazi Runjor Singh Thapa then defending the fort of Jaitak against Major General Martindell's force, were to be allowed to return with their followers and private property to Nepal leaving all the rest of the hill country, from the river Kali to the river Sutlej, in the hands of the British.²⁵

(British and Sikh Supremacy in the Himachal Pradesh(1815-1845)

A. British Supremacy

After the conclusion of the Anglo-Gurkha War in 1815 A.D., twenty one Simla Hill States³⁹ passed under the British paramountcy. Before Anglo-Gurkha War, the British had promised to the hill chiefs the restoration of their territories after the expulsion of the Gurkha. It was on this promise that the hill chiefs had given all the required assistance to the British in defeating the
Gurkhas. To begin with, the British appeared to be less interested in acquiring the hill states and with this end in view, a conference of the hill chiefs under General Ochterlony was held at Plassia, the residence of the Raja of Nalagarh in the Shiwalik hills.

The object of this conference was to determine the territories held by each chief prior to the Gurkha occupation. The English, however, did not keep the promise made to the hill chiefs. No doubt, the legitimate Chiefs Jagat Singh, Ram Saran Singh, Mahan Chand, Mahinder Singh and Fateh Prakash (Son of Karam Prakash), were restored respectively to their states of Baghal, Hindur, Bilaspur, Bushahr and Sirmour which came partly or wholly under the occupation of the Gurkhas either before or after the year 1805 A.D. But a complete restoration of territories was not permitted. The British retained possession of some of the important portions under the pretext that they were compelled to do so in the interest of the hill chiefs to enable them to maintain their guarantee of protection not only against the foreign enemy but to retain these chiefs in their territories also.

The British Government thus modified the original policy and was determined to retain some of the favourable military positions. It was also declared that all lands, the ruling families of which had become extinct or the right of possession of which was disputed between different States, would come in the British possession. In pursuance of this policy, the pargana of Kotguru (now Kotgarh, also famous for apple), was among the first of British territorial acquisitions within the hills.

After negotiations, possessions of many chiefs were approved and confirmed. The chiefs whose states were restored to them were granted
sanads, which thus came under the British overlordship between 1815 and 1819 A.D. It appears that the exigencies of their position to submit to a more powerful neighbour, the superior chief was recognized as the overlord of the inferior ones. It is therefore, the thakurais of Kumarsain, Balsan, Kuthar, Mangal and Dhami were constituted separate chiefships and granted independent sanads. While the thakurais of Khaneti and Delath were conferred upon Bushahr and those of Koti, Madhan, Ghund, Ratesh and Theog upon Keonthal.

The sanads granted to the hill chiefs conferred on them and their legitimate heirs in perpetuity the domains of their states with all the rights belonging there to on the condition of their paying annually a fixed nazrana or tribute for defraying the expenses of protection of these states by the British troops and of joining the British army with their sepoys and Begarees in time of war or when called upon to do so. The hill chiefs were also required to promote the welfare of their subjects. They were also asked to construct new roads and maintain the older ones and also to look to the security of the roads within their territories. In every sanads that was granted during the period of 1815 to 1819 A.D., the British Government clearly laid down that the hill chiefs should pay strict obedience to the British Government and to abstain from encroaching on land beyond their territories. In case of not fulfilling these obligations the British Government had every right to dethrone them.

After the conclusion of the Anglo-Gurkha War, the British, as noted above, guaranteed independence to the hill chiefs in their internal affairs as well as security against foreign aggression. Gradually, the British departed
from this practice in several ways. This departure from the declared policy was stated to be due to mis-rule, oppression of the people and non-fulfillment of the terms of the sanads and treaties by the hill chiefs.

Meanwhile the British acquired a few footholds, particularly in the Simla Hill States or the territory east of the Sutlej. The hill chiefs, during this period, were mostly busy either setting their own internal affairs and conflicts with the native rulers or dealing with the Sikhs and their occasionally undesirable and exorbitant demands for tribute or marriages. The relations of the British with the hill States during the period 1815-1845 A.D. centred mainly around issues like complaints about the retention of territory, exchange or acquisition of territory, asylum to the chiefs, intervention on the side of the hill rulers, problems of succession and the British intervention and secret communications with the British.\textsuperscript{32}

After having gone through the work so far, the reader can for himself imagine what results might have followed the Gurkha rule at their expulsion from the hills. The state of the country was very miserable. Most of the lands, though very fertile, were left barren. The hill-subjects, though as in their very nature, were very obliging and yielding, but the tyrannies done to them by the Gurkha army, made them very mutinous and fearless, so much so that, at the close of the Gurkha rule, it was very difficult for the Hill Chiefs to bring them to their level. The Gurkha army had no law to guide them, nor did they care for peace and prosperity. They valued their luxuries far above the rights of others, and hence their rule in the hills is regarded nothing but a plague-infection, ruinous to the hill subjects under them and eventually to themselves.
In short the impartial rays of peace and prosperity, cast by the British Raj over the hill subjects, gave out a dazzling light after such a dark rule of the Gurkha army. It is needless to say any more on the subject, for there is none among us who is unaware of the blessings we now enjoy.

B. Sikh Supremacy

After the retreat of the Gurkhas and the annexation of Kangra fort, which was formally handed over by Sansar Chand to the Sikhs in August 1809,33 led to an easy capture of the adjoining territories. Sardar Desa Singh Majithia, who had played a prominent part in this victory, was appointed the qiladar of the Kangra fort as well as the nazim (governor) of the Kangra and the adjoining hill states.34

From that day onwards, Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s hold over the hill areas continued increasing till he finally subdued the major part of present Himachal Pradesh, as we shall observe in forgoing pages. After the capture of Kangra by Ranjit Singh, the Sikh influence became supreme in all the hill states which were annexed to Lahore Durbar, one after the other in the subsequent years.

In 1811 A.D., Ranjit Singh dispatched the Sikh forces under the command of Desa Singh Majithia to extract tributes from the hill chiefs. In this year the fort of Kotila, on the high road between Kangra and Nurpur fell into the hands of Sikhs. In 1813–14 A.D., Ranjit Singh began to disclose his expansionist design upon the hill states. The first victim to the Sikh rapacity was Raja Bhup Singh of Guler (Haripur). He was treacherously arrested by the Sikhs and told that he should surrender his Kingdom and accept a jagir. But without waiting for his reply, Desa Singh was sent off with an army of ten
thousand Sikhs, and the Kingdom of Raja Bhup Singh of Guler was annexed to the growing Sikh empire. Raja Bhup Singh was restored to liberty, but spurned the offer of a *jagir*. He had, however, assigned 20,000 rupees during his own incumbency for the support of his female household, and Maharaja Ranjit Singh left that maintenance untouched.\(^{35}\)

In the winter of 1815, Ranjit Singh summoned all the Sardars and feudalary chiefs to a great military assembly at Sialkot. Every Hill Chiefs and petty *jagirdars* were expected to attend at the head of their respective contingents. The Chiefs of Nurpur and Jaswan, however, failed to obey this imperious summons of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. As a penalty for their disobedience, Ranjit Singh imposed fines deliberately fixed beyond their ability to pay. Umed Singh, the Chief of Jaswan, submitted quietly to his fate and surrendered his principality to the Sikhs and accepted a small *jagir* of 12,000 rupees per annum. In case of Nurpur, its Raja, Bir Singh, found himself unable to pay the enhanced demand even to the extent of mortgaging and selling his family idols etc. The state of Nurpur was thus attached to Lahore Durbar. A *jagir* was offered to him which he refused and escaped towards Chamba territory, and his people rallied around him. But he was completely defeated by the armies of Ranjit Singh and fled in disguise through unfrequented mountain paths into the British territory.\(^{36}\)

In December 1816, Bir Singh was found plotting at Ludhiana with Shah Shuja, the exiled ruler of Kabul, against Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This gave enough cause to the Sikh Chief to protest to the British authorities and Bir Singh was advised to leave Ludhiana. After this intimation Bir Singh retired to Arki, the capital of the petty Simla Hill State of Baghal, where he
lived for ten years. During this period he was in constant correspondence with his wazir and other officials, and never abandoning the hope of ultimate success. In 1818 A.D., the Chief of Datapur, Govind Chander died and his principality too was annexed. The new successor was given a jagir for his subsistence by Ranjit Singh.

Finally came the turn of Siwan whose Chief agreed to marry his daughter to Dhian Singh, the Maharaja's minister. Thus, Siwan was saved from direct annexation and it remained attached to Dhian Singh. In 1825, the Sikh troops encircled the Kotla fortress and captured it after a siege lasting for two months. The Chief was given a jagir of 2,000 rupees and the fortress was annexed to Ranjit Singh's Kingdom.

Meanwhile Sansar Chand, in alliance with Raja Kishan Singh of Suket, tried to conquer Mandi but the Chief of Mandi received timely assistance from Ranjit Singh. The Suket chief was imprisoned and his forces were compelled to retreat. Sansar Chand's protests to Ranjit Singh did not yield any result because of the latter's skilful diplomacy and superior tactics.

Sansar Chand, whose power was once dreaded by the adjoining hill states and who had dreamt of a supremacy extending from Yamuna to Jhelum, sank into the position of an insignificant dependent. William Moorcroft, who visited Kangra in 1823 met Raja Sansar Chand in reduced and desperate circumstances.

Raja Sansar Chand died in December 1823 A.D. His son, Anirudh Chand, succeeded him and six months later was summoned to the Sikh Court, then at Dinanagar, which was a favourite resort of the Maharaja. Anirudh Chand presented a nazarana or fee of investure, of one lakh and
twenty thousand rupees, and received a suitable khillat in return. This visit was repeated in the following year, but on the third occasion in 1828 A.D., Anirudh Chand was met by a very unacceptable demand. On this occasion Ranjit Singh demanded the hand of his sister in marriage for his favourite, Hira Singh, son of Raja Dhian Singh. The young Rajput chief of Kangra portended to agree, but on returning to the hills safely, he refused to submit to the disgrace of marrying the Katoch princess to a Rajput of Jammu and sought a refuge from oppression within British territory. Shortly after reaching Haridwar, his chosen retreat, Raja Anirudh Chand married the princess to Sudarsein Shah, the Raja of Garhwal and died four years later, leaving two sons, Ranbir Chand and Parmudh Chand. In 1833, at the request of the British Government, conveyed through Captain Wade at Ludhiana, Ranjit Singh recalled them, and granted a jagir of worth 50,000 rupees in Mahal-Morian, where they took up their residence.

In 1826 A.D., after a period of ten years (1816-26 A.D.) of self-exile, Bir Singh of Nurpur made another attempt to gain the fortress of Nurpur and laid siege to it. When the news reached Lahore, Maharaja Ranjit Singh dispatched a force under Desa Singh Majithia: On the approach of the Sikh forces, Bir Singh fled towards Chamba, whose chief promptly delivered him to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Nurpur chief remained confined in the Gobindgarh fort at Amritsar for seven years. Thus, all attempts on the part of Nurpur chief to regain his territory met with a complete failure.

In the case of the state of Mandi too, its chief, Raja Isri Sen was compelled to pay a nazrana of rupees 30,000 to Lahore Durbar since 1809 and the same continued to be realized till 1815 A.D. During this period,
Zailim Sen, the brother of Mandi Chief, out of ill-will against Isri Sen, went over to the court of Ranjit Singh and sought the latter’s assistance in securing the Mandi seat for himself. The Maharaja espoused the cause of Zailim Sen and a tribute of one lakh was imposed upon Isri Sen to retain possession of his territory.\

In 1816 the Maharaja sent *jamadar* Khushal Singh to Mandi for collection of the annual tribute. The Mandi Chief quietly retired into Kullu territory with his retainers in a bid to oppose the Sikhs with the help of the Kullu wazir. Later, however, he returned to Mandi and after bribing Khushal Singh, obtained a reduction in the annual tribute to rupees fifty thousand. This arrangement continued till the death of the Mandi chief in 1826 A.D. During this period Sardar Lehna Singh was stationed at Mandi with a Sikh force to keep a watch over the hill Rajas.

The next chief of Mandi, who succeeded Isri Sen was Zailim Sen who had to pay one lakh rupees as succession duty to the Lahore Durbar. Zailim Sen also continued to pay the tribute of rupees seventy five thousand till his death in 1839 A.D., after which the state administration passed on to Raja Balbir Sen, who too continued as a tributary chief on the same terms and conditions.

In case of the state of Bilaspur, it has already been stated that in 1805 A.D., its chief Mahan Chand invited the Gurkha leader to invade Kangra whereupon Raja Sansar Chand was obliged to seek military assistance from Maharaja Ranjit Singh in expelling the Gurkhas. After the Gurkha retreat, the claim of Bilaspur was disallowed by the British government. The state was brought directly under the British control. In 1819 A.D., Sardar Desa Singh
Majithia, the governor of Kangra, invaded the right bank of the Sutlej, where the Sikhs were powerful. When the Sikh forces crossed the Sutlej, the British intervened and forced the Sikhs to retire. The state of Bilaspur, however, continued to pay a tribute to Lahore Kingdom for the territory on the right bank of the Sutlej.46

It will thus be seen that during the entire medieval period, the Mughals, the Afghans, and the Sikh *misaldars* claimed a shadowy supremacy over the hill states of the present Himachal Pradesh. The various hill chiefs were never completely subject to any of the above powers during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. It was only during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that all the big and small hill states succumbed to the mighty military pressure of the Lahore Kingdom.47

The only hope for the hill chiefs for their deliverance from the Sikh dominance during Ranjit Singh’s rule, rested towards the Katoch ruler Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra. The latter, however, miserably failed in his political moves. In an attempt to exert his supremacy over the adjoining hill states, he incurred their wrath. Some of the hill chiefs, fed up with the ambitious designs of Sansar Chand, rallied round the Raja of Kahlur and invited the Gurkhas.

The unwise policy of Raja Sansar Chand was responsible for the Gurkha havoc in the Kangra hills. They looted and plundered the valley and compelled the Katoch chief to seek protection from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It was Sansar Chand’s unwise policy which brought final subversion not only of his own state but also of all the adjoining hill states of Nurpur, Jaswan, Siba,
Suket, Mandi, Chamba, Kullu, Haripur (Guler) and Datarpur, which were all reduced and annexed to Lahore Durbar by the well organized Sikh forces.

The relationship of the hill chieftains of Himachal Pradesh with Maharaja Ranjit Singh are important not from the point of view of their quality or nature but because of the adverse effects they produced on the territorial possessions of the hill chiefs. There is also no denying the fact that the hill states did not possess a unitary government or a singular defensive system. Their mutual jealousies and animosities had exhausted them so much that any attempt on their part to resist the Sikh pressure met with complete failure.

The position may be summed up as follows:

Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s insistence on payment of tribute or surrender of the hill states, made the position of the hill chieftains vulnerable and quite often they were compelled to seek protection from the British. But the Britishers took benefit of their infightings and used the opportunity in subjecting them to their political control. This was, however, possible only after the defeat of the Sikhs in Anglo-Sikh Wars.

Anglo-Sikh Wars and the Himachal

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had kept friendly relations with the English. But after the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 A.D., there started a period of anarchy and confusion. The Khalsa army grew ungovernable and became the virtual dictator of the state. Such a state of affairs led to the long avoided conflict with the English. It was also partially provoked by the latter. As a result the Sikhs fought with the British at Mudki and Ferozshah in December, 1845 A.D., at Aliwal in January 1846, and at Sabraon in February 1846 A.D.48
The rulers of the hill states of Himachal, were tired of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s policy of annexation and extinction. They, therefore, sympathized with the English. They were in fact looking for an opportunity to regain their lost territories from the Sikhs.

In the autumn of 1845, when the Sikh forces invaded the British territory by crossing the Sutlej, some of the hill chiefs joined on the side of the English and rendered valuable support to them in expelling the Sikhs from the territories or post earlier held by them. Shamsher Singh of Guler raised a force from among his retainers and turned the Sikhs out of Haripur fort. Bir Singh of Nurpur laid a siege to the fort of Nurpur. But he was not fortunate enough to witness the success of his aims. He died before the walls of fort. The only consolation granted him was that his enemies had been overthrown and that to this extent at least, his wrongs had been avenged. Raja Narain Pal of Kutlehr also expelled the Sikhs from Kotwalbah.

Even before the first Anglo-Sikh War, Raja Balbir Sen of Mandi had been in secret communication with the British, with a view to securing British protection. Though Raja Balbir Sen was compelled to send a contingent of 300 men to the Sikh army for the campaign on the Sutlej, yet his sympathies were with the English. Raja Balbir Sen of Mandi boldly attacked the Sikh garrisons in the state and captured all the forts except Kamlagarh, which the Sikhs did not surrender till the war was over. Immediately after the battle of Sabraon he and the Raja Ugar Sen of Suket sent a confidential agent, named Sibu Pandit to Erskine, tendering their allegiance to the British Government, and requesting an interview. This was granted, and the two chiefs, on 21st February, 1846 visited at Bilaspur, and
tendered their allegiance in person. The other rulers of hill states, however, did not join the British either due to their internal problems or their rulers were minor in certain cases or due to lack of will and resources.

**The Treaty of Lahore (9th March, 1846)**

On the conclusion of the first Anglo-Sikh War, the treaty of peace signed at Lahore on 9th March, 1846 A.D. transferred to British Government in perpetual sovereignty, the Jalandhar Doab and the Hill country between the Beas and the Sutlej. A war indemnity of a crore and a half of rupees was also demanded by the Britishers. This heavy war indemnity was paid by the Lahore Durbar, fifty lakhs in cash and the balance by ceding to the British the hill territories between the Beas and the Indus including Kashmir and Hazara as the equivalent of one crore. Instead of restoring the ceded territory to the hill chiefs, the English retained the portion between the Sutlej and the Ravi as British territory, and inclined of the rest to Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu. Thus, the hill states of Kangra, Guler, Jaswan, Datarpur, Nurpur, Suket, Mandi, Kullu and Lahaul & Spiti, came under the British control.

**II - Himachal and the British**

The British policy of retaining the territories of the Kangra group of states, led to great disappointment as the hill chiefs of these territories had expected that after the conclusion of the Anglo-Sikh War, their territories would be restored to them. However, it turned out to be different. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that during the second Anglo-Sikh War, these states became anti-British in their attitudes and some even openly supported the cause of the Sikhs.
However, such an arrangement of the ceded territory which deprived the hill chiefs of the chance of restoration of their dominions came to them as a bolt from the blue. They all became disaffected and when approached by the Sikh leaders in the early summer of 1848 A.D. they all stirred up to join the rebellion which was then maturing. They were promised that their states would be restored in the event of the British being expelled from the Himachal hills. The hill rulers who revolted in 1848 were mainly from Nurpur, Kangra, Jaswan and Datarpur. The English, however, dealt with them harshly. A force was sent against the rulers of Kangra, Jaswan and Datarpur under Mr. Lawrence, who secured easy surrender of them. The rebellious chiefs were captured and banished to Almora and detained as political prisoners. However, Ram Singh Pathania, the Wazir of Nurpur, proved to be a difficult person to deal with. He made two attempts to throw off the oppressive rule of the British government. For this, he entered into understanding with the other rulers in the Kangra hills and raised rebellion against the British.

**Revolt of Wazir Ram Singh Pathania**

The Pathanias, Katochs, Dogras and other ancient communities inhabiting the hilly region from Kishtwar and Jammu to Sirmaur and Mandi are known for their bravery, steadfastness of character and honesty of purpose. Nurpur State was first to rise in rebellion against the British during the middle of the nineteenth century under the leadership of Ram Singh Pathania in Kangra hills. The life of Ram Singh Pathania, a Rajput of Nurpur, during the nineteenth century is a shining example of these qualities. The story of his life should also be of interest for the scholars of history, as it
provides information about the way the Rajputs of Nurpur in Himachal Pradesh had reacted to the mechanizations of the British imperialists following the disintegration of the Sikh empire built up by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact date of birth of Ram Singh Pathania, beyond the point except when he says that from the time he was six years old, he attended Ranjit Singh's court and he grew up in the favour of that monarch. He also says that for thirty years he was the servant of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Khalsa till he was imprisoned by the British in February 1849 A.D. From the narrations of incidents we may roughly place the year of Ram Singh Pathania's birth in 1812 A.D. The ancestors of Ram Singh were the hereditary wazirs of the Rajas of Nurpur. He was the son of Shama Singh the ex-wazir of Nurpur.

It may be noted here that the Britishers, had their covetous eyes upon Punjab and even on the whole of India. The opportunity was provided by the defeat of the Sikhs in the first Anglo-Sikh War. The British, were also conscious of the equally great strategic importance of the Kullu-Kangra region from the point of view of the over all British imperial interests and as such they took the earliest possible opportunity to annex these.

The British government, while taking over these regions and territories was confident of the fact that all the Rajput chiefs of the area were deeply anti-Sikh and would, as such, welcome the British with open-arms. However, the Rajputs of Himachal Pradesh were quick to realize the altogether different intentions of the imperialists. Therefore, the British authorities had
to face stiff resistance both from the local population, led by Ram Singh, as well as the officials and the garrisons of the Sikhs posted there.

The British officials especially Erskine who was the Superintendent of Hill States, motivated the hill chieftains to revolt against the Sikhs on the plea that they will be better compensated under the British. It is because of this reason that some of the chieftains did help the British in 1846-47 under a false notion of enjoying a greater autonomy under the British than the Sikhs. Raja of Nurpur was one of them who helped the British. However, to his surprise his wazir Mian Shama Singh Pathania and his son Ram Singh Pathania sided with the Sikh government.

To punish the Nurpur Raja the British decided to annex the territory of the Raja against the annual pension of rupees 20,000 and that too the Raja was to receive in cash, only on the condition of leaving his hereditary residence and stay across the river Sutlej. The Raja being very young, his wazir Ram Singh and his father Shama Singh refused to accept these terms. The negotiation between the Pathania and the British continued for a year and half, but Mian Shama Singh and his son Ram Singh refused to accept such humiliating terms for their ward, Jaswant Singh, the Raja of Nurpur. The result was John Lawrence, the Commissioner of Jallandhar Doab and Superintendent, Hill States, adopted more harsh attitude towards the Hill Rajas. In the case of Nurpur Raja, he announced more severe conditions.

John Lawrence would agree to the Raja of Nurpur staying wherever he desired, provided he agreed to dismiss Mian Shama Singh and his son Ram Singh from his service. Moreover, the offer was latter on reduced to rupees 5,000 by Sir John Lawrence who was not favourably disposed
towards the old chief, and this the Raja had to accept a year later. The Raja had to remain without any provision for about a year before he was compelled to accept the offer. Finally a pension of 5,000 rupees per annum to the Young Raja, Jaswant Singh and 2,000 rupees per annum to the widow of Bir Singh with leave to reside where they pleased was sanctioned by British government. The *jagir* of Basa (*pargana*) Nurpur worth 1,000 rupees per annum which Mian Shama Singh’s family had enjoyed for generations was confiscated by the British and both Shama Singh and his son Ram Singh were prevented from meeting their Raja and his mother.  

Due to the pressure from the Pathanias and the local population John Lawrence was, however, forced to agree that Mian Shama Singh, being considered harmless on account of his age and permitted to remain in quiet. But he refused to allow this concession to Ram Singh. Ram Singh accepted the British challenge and organized his people to oppose the British. Early in 1848, when the British army was operating against the garrisons of the Lahore Durbar in Mandi, Kullu and other places, Ram Singh organized a revolt against the British and inspired the Rajputs of Kangra hills to come out openly on the side of the besieged garrison of Lahore.  

Even when the Sikh garrisons had to surrender, being unable to hold on against the British for long, Ram Singh continued to uphold the cause of the Lahore Durbar with the help of Sikh priest, Bedi Bikram Singh of Una and other Chiefs and influential persons in the area. In the meantime during 1847-48, the anti-British forces in Punjab were able to assemble sufficient strength and start a widespread open revolt against the British, under the leadership of Dewan Mul Raj, the Governor of Multan, Sardar Chattar Singh
Attariwala, the Governor of Hazara, and Bhai Maharaj Singh, the then most respected Sikh Saint.

In April, 1848, Ram Singh was driven from Kangra hills. His father, Shama, was considered harmless on account of his age and permitted to remain in quiet. But Ram Singh was allowed no rest. In his own words, he was repudiated by the government, stigmatized as a turbulent character, his jagir resumed, his office alienated. In despair he turned his back upon the hills, just at the time that Mul Raj revolted and rebellion began to show itself in the Punjab.

On the 3rd September, 1848 Ram Singh made his appearance with a few followers at Shahpur, a deserted fort on the Ravi in British territory. After garrisoning the fort with a party of his men, and proclaiming by beat of drum Jaswant Singh son of Bir Singh as Raja of Nurpur and himself (Ram Singh) as his wazir. The news of this insurrection reached Hoshiarpur, before it arrived at Kangra and Mr. C.B. Saunders, with captain Davidson’s and Major Fisher’s Irregular Horse hastened out with gallant promptitude, and invested the fort. Ram Singh set off over night with the rest of his followers to the hills of Basa. Here on a height surrounded by a belt of deep wood, he took up his position, planted sentries, occupied the roads, and sent off written messages to influential people to join his standard. From the 3rd to the 18th September, he maintained his post, partly by promise, partly by threats and partly by recourse to open violence, he succeeded in collecting between 400 to 500 men from the surrounding villages, some of them Rajputs of his own family. Shortly afterwards Mr. J. Lawrence, the Commissioner and Mr. Barnes, District Officer came up with reinforcements. On the morning of the
18th September, Ram Singh was driven after a short resistance from his position. The troops sent to dislodge him were fired upon, and the loss on British amounted to 1 man killed and 9 wounded. Ram Singh fled and joined the camp of Raja Sher Singh at Ramanagar on the river Chenab.

On the 3rd January 1849, Ram Singh again appeared at Shahpur with two Regiments each 500 strong and 100 sawars whom he had procured from Sher Singh to organize a rebellion in Kangra Hills. In this irruption, he levied 1,300 rupees from the Chaudharies of Shahpur and rupees 60 from the lumbardars of village Kote. From Shahpur he went to Chowbarra, and resisted the Government troops led by Captain Williams of the 29th N.I. and Mr. Melvill Assistant Commissioner. From Chowbarra he moved to the Dalla-Ke-Dhar, a position almost impregnable except to the ardour and bravery of the British troops. He had a skirmish with the regiment stationed at Surgalee. Both sides suffered a little, but Ram Singh took 14 prisoners whole and hearty and 6 wounded men. The 14 men he dismissed after feeding them, and giving them each a rupee to their Regiment and the wounded men he kept and attended, doing his best to heal their wounds. On 16th January General Wheeler came up with all his force, an engagement took place, Ram Singh was dislodged with great loss on both sides. Rebels lost 1 Commandant, 2 Subedars, 1 Naib Subedar and some of their sepoys and the British troops lost lieutenant Peel of the Sikh Regiment and Cornet Christie of the 7th Cavalry fell in this engagement.68

As regards John Peel, there is a monument at Matti Kot about 2 kilometers from Dalla-Ke-Dhar. The monument is erected on the top of small
mountain surrounded by thick bushes and bears the following inscription which is engraved in English:

“SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
LIEUTENANT JOHN PEEL
1ST. SIKH LOCAL INFANTRY
WHO SUCCumbed ON 17TH JANUARY 1849
TO WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION
NEAR DALLAH ON 16TH JANUARY
WHEN ENGAGED WITH INSURGENTS UNDER RAM SINGH
WHILE GALLANTLY LEADING HIS MEN
THIS TABLET IS PLACED IN HIS MEMORY BY THE OFFICERS
51ST SIKHS F.F. 167

Ram Singh and his followers were vanquished and they fled to the Mow jungle in the Nurpur hills. On the road they were challenged by some troops at Khumri, but the British troops did not attempt to stop them, when they got to Mow. The troops with Ram Singh refused to fight any more. So Ram Singh took them across the Ravi, there he told them to go where they pleased. He turned fakir and was proceeding to Purmandal a famous shrine, when he was recognized by some of Maharaja Gulab Singh’s (Jammu) sepoys who seized him at Jasrota. He was brought to Kangra in fetters where he was tried by the Deputy Commissioner G.C. Barnes. But later he was sent to Burma and kept imprisoned in the jail in Moulmein. He died there on 11 November, 1856 at a comparatively young age, but never bent himself before the British.68 His name is still remembered in the Himachal Pradesh as the first freedom fighter who tried to liberate Nurpur State from the British, and his exploits are sung by the hill bards.69

As we shall see in the following pages wherein wazir Ram Singh Pathania has given the full account of the revolt during his trial in his own version.
Ram Singh Pathania's Version

As already noted above that Ram Singh’s family were the hereditary wazirs of the Rajas of Nurpur. When the Sikhs conquered Nurpur, provision was made for all the dependents of the Raja. Some got 5,000 rupees and some even 10,000 rupees a year. Ram Singh’s family as a wazir were given a jagir worth 10,000 rupees per annum. They served the Sikh government and lived honourably. From the time when Ram Singh was six years old he attended Ranjit Singh’s court and he grew up in the favour of that monarch. Latterly his family incurred the displeasure of Ranjit Singh. Their jagirs were confiscated and in lieu a money pension of 15 rupees a day or 450 rupees per month was allotted to Shama Singh (father of Ram Singh) and Ram Singh for their maintenance.70

Ram Singh was sent on service to Diwan Kirpa Ram, at that time Governor of Kashmir. Five years after, he recovered his position in the court of Ranjit Singh, who recalled him to his presence and conferred on Ram Singh’s family a jagir of 3,500 rupees and 500 rupees a month money pension. He was placed at the disposal of Sardar Attar Singh Sandhanwalia71 and served under his command. When Ranjit Singh died and the Sandhanwalia murdered Raja Sher Singh and Dhian Singh,72 and were in their turn killed. Ram Singh’s father Shama Singh the friend and ally of the Sandhanwalia was thrown into prison at the instance of Hira Singh the son of Dhian Singh. When he was released, their jagirs were resumed, but a money pension of 500 rupees a month still continued to them, and they were led to except the sepoy restitution of their jagirs.73 On Hira Singh’s death Ishwar Singh, the maternal uncle of Maharaja Dalip Singh of Jammu gave
them (Ram Singh’s family) a jagir of 1,000 rupees, and continued the same pension. To this jagir Sardar Ranjodh Singh added another piece of land, worth 700 rupees per annum, so that they enjoyed jagirs to the value of 1,700 rupees and an additional pension of 500 rupees a month.

In 1845, the petty Rajas on the Ravi revolted. Ranjodh Singh directed Ram Singh to raise 1,000 men and put down the rebellion. Then followed the actions on the Sutlej between the British and the Sikhs. These hills were stirred up during that period by Mr. Erskine the Superintendent at Simla, who encouraged them to rise and expel the Sikhs. All the Rajas wrote to Bir Singh, Raja of Nurpur, to the same effect, and encouraged them to hope that if they exerted themselves on behalf of the British, they should recover their rights. From his (Ram Singh) earliest years he had ever hoped for the supremacy of the British arms, and took advantage of this opportunity to assemble an army. He took the forts of Mustgarh Sikhimpur tehsil and Shahpur from the Sikhs and invested the fort of Nurpur.

Raja Bir Singh of Nurpur died during the siege. When the campaign was finally closed, Ram Singh sent a vakil to Ludhiana to Mr. John Lawrence, he was told to wait on Lieut. Lake about to be deputed to Nurpur. When Lieut. Lake came near, he took the Raja Jaswant Singh of Nurpur and met him at Katgarh on the Beas. Ram Singh invited Mr. Lake to Nurpur and gave him the four forts that he had taken from the Sikhs. Then, the Sahib was gracious promised them all their rights, and bade them be at ease. When Mr. Lake got possession of Nurpur, he told them to go, and present themselves to Mr. Lawrence, who alone had power to do anything for them.
Ram Singh went to Kangra and met Colonel Lawrence, who promised the Raja a *jagir* of 20,000 rupees per annum and added that some arrangement would be made for the respectable parties. Ram Singh represented that the Hon'ble Company were proverbially just, and restored every body to their rights, and begged either that the Raja might be allowed the farm of his own territories, or be permitted to hold his country on a quit rent of six *annas* or eight *annas* in the rupee. Upon this Col. Lawrence got incensed, and ordered Ram Singh to accompany the Raja of Nurpur to Simla, where final arrangement would be made. At Simla the same offer of 20,000 rupees in *jagir* was renewed and Ram Singh accepted the terms. Col. Lawrence then explained that this sum of 20,000 rupees would be paid in cash on the condition of taking the Raja Jaswant Singh across the Sutlej. Ram Singh begged for delay until he consulted with his father and other old adherents of the Raja.

Ram Singh returned to Nurpur and Col. Lawrence went to Lahore. When Lord Hardinge came through Kangra, Ram Singh brought the Raja to Kangra, but they did not obtain an interview, at Jawala Mukhi. He met Mr. Lake who sent them on to Hoshiarpur. From Hoshiarpur they had to go on to Bhyrowal, where Ram Singh had an interview with Mr. John Lawrence, and afterwards the Raja was introduced to the Governor General. The same order and the same conditions were reiterated, all the brotherhood were then assembled. They all decided on declining the terms, and Ram Singh expressed this determination to Mr. John Lawrence, who replied that if they tried force they might perhaps succeed in obtaining their wishes. At Hoshiarpur Ram Singh became much straitened for expenses and signified
to Mr. Lawrence that they were ready to accept of any terms that government
might dictate. Ram Singh was told to take the Raja to Nurpur and that Mr.
Lawrence would send his answer from Kangra. *1

Finally a pension of 5,000 rupees per annum to the young Raja, and
2,000 rupees to the widow of Bir Singh with leave to reside where they
pleased was sanctioned by British government. Ram Singh’s father Shama
Singh’s jagir of Basa pargana (Nurpur) worth 1,000 rupees per annum was
confiscated. Ram Singh petitioned and received a refusal. He rejoined that
if his jagir was resumed, “he must starve”. The Sahib replied, “Starve what
matter to me”. Ram Singh then reflected that the Raja might be able to give
him a little out of his pension. He was disappointed, however, even in this
refuge he received orders not to attach himself (Ram Singh) to the Raja nor
to frequent his court. He then went to the Rani, widow of Bir Singh, who
retained him, and promised to provide for him. But the Rani received an
order form the Zillah court prohibiting her from retaining Ram Singh on pain
of forfeiting her pension. Ram Singh was obliged to leave. He was worried
by creditors and his means of subsistence were confiscated. He was
repudiated by the government, repudiated by the Raja and compelled to
leave the Rani. He left the hills for Moqueempur, a village inhabited by his
clan of Rajputs. Hence, he wrote to Chand Kaur, Maharani of Lahore and
asked if she could assist him. She referred Ram Singh to her brother Hira
Singh residing at Sujanpur. *2

Soon after the revolt of Multan search was made for Ram Singh by the
police at Pathankot. He fled to Jammu fearing for his honour. A message
from Maharani Chand Kaur of Lahore came to him with her instructions to
join Maharaj Singh and to do as he might direct. He obeyed as he was her servant. He over took Maharaj Singh at Jhung. Maharaj Singh gave him funds and 500 men, and bade him as he was a hill man to return to the hills, and raise a rebellion there. He was a servant and only obeyed instructions. So he returned to Nurpur, and took up a position on the Basa Hill. The people would not join him readily. So he had to seize and frighten them into obedience. He got about 150 or 200 or the country people, whom he fed and paid. The others were soldiers of the Khalsa paid by the Lahore State. These people occasionally rallied out and pillaged the country.

Finally, Ram Singh and his followers were driven from the Basa Hills by the British troops and Ram Singh and his followers fled. For many days they kept in ravines and unfrequented paths and made their way to Sher Singh’s camp and placed themselves under his orders. After an interval of two months, Sher Singh gave him (Ram Singh) a detached command, and directed him to proceed again to Nurpur with two regiments each 500 strong and 100 swars. Ram Singh crossed the Ravi below Shahpur and made his way to Chowbarra, dismounting his swars and leaving their horses on the right bank of the river Ravi. He had a small engagement with the British troops at Chowbarra when they were driven back. He levied 1,300 rupees from the tradesmen at Shahpur giving them a bond for the amount. He levied 60 rupees also from the lumberdars of Kote, and moved off from Chowbarra to Dalla-Ke-Dhar.

Ram Singh had a skirmish with the regiment stationed at Surgalee. Both sides suffered a little, but Ram singh took 14 prisoners whole and hearty and 6 wounded men. The 14 men he dismissed after feeding them,
and giving them each a rupee to their regiment and the wounded men he kept and attended, doing his best to heal their wounds. General Wheeler came up with all his force, an engagement took place, Ram Singh and his followers lost 1 Commandant, 2 Subedars, 1 Naib Subedar and sepoys. They were vanquished and Ram Singh fled to the Mow jungle. On the road they were challenged by some troops of British at Khumri, but the British troops did not attempt to stop them, when they got to Mow jungle. The troops with Ram Singh refused to fight any more. So he took them across the Ravi, there he told them to go where they pleased. Ram Singh himself turned fakir and was proceeding to Purmandal a famous shrine, when he was recognized by some of the Maharaja Gulab Singh's (of Jammu) sepoys, who seized him and eventually brought him to Kangra.

During trial Ram Singh disclosed, "I am now a prisoner of the British Government which may either give me occupation, or do with me as it thinks fit. I have done only what I was driven to do by want and being a soldier by profession; and an old dependent of the Lahore Darbar; in raising troops and fighting I have, but obeyed the orders of the Rani, whose written orders and those of Sher singh I possessed but have lost them. I can offer in further justification. I ask but for subsistence. From the first I have been a sufferer and now government may do as it thinks fit. I have been guilty of offences; but what will a man not do, when constrained by hunger. I was for two years left destitute and my jagir of 1,000 rupees resumed. What could I do? I travelled about to Simla and elsewhere in the hope of gaining a hearing from the Commissioner, the Resident or the Governör General. But none would do any thing for me. I acknowledge, too, that when the Nurpur Chief formerly
opposed the Sikh government, I aided him and shared his fate, but such was
my duty”. 87

Ram Singh further stated that he was the ancient servant of the
Khalsa. What he did was in remembrance of long standing service. He had
no place of refuge and he repained to the Khalsa. A starving man, is a
desperate man; and is regardless of consequences. He obeys without
reflecting the impulse of his will. 88

From the account of the brave struggle of wazir Ram Singh Pathania it
becomes clear that the British administrators tried to mislead the nature of his
revolt and even went to the extent of reporting to the Governor-General that
Ram Singh’s conduct was more criminal than that of the Sikh chiefs. It was
also asserted that wazir Ram Singh “did not join in a struggle for native
independence but for self-aggrandizement”. This was a clever move on the
part of the Board of Punjab Administration as their above statement was
quite contrary to what Ram Singh Pathania had admitted during the course of
his trial by Barnes as well as by Macleod. Be as it may, the fact was that the
Board of Administration could not actually afford to treat such a dare as Ram
Singh more leniently. They, therefore, recommended that Ram Singh be
imprisoned for life, and that he was to spend his remaining life in irons
beyond the High Seas. He died in the jail in Moulmein (Burma) on 11
November, 1856 at a comparatively young age, but never bent himself
before the British.

Firstly, the misfortune of this land, and the internal treachery stood in
the way of Ram Singh’s successful execution. Secondly, Shamsher Chand,
the then ruler of Guler, engaged side to the British and disclosed them the
whole strategy. Even the Maharaja of Jammu, Gulab Singh, also helped the British. This may have dealt a death blow to the Ram Singh’s dreams of independence. Thus, the brave struggle of Ram Singh Pathania provides us information about the way the Rajputs of Nurpur in Himachal Pradesh had reacted to the mechanizations of the British imperialists following the disintegration of the Sikh Empire built up by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. His name is still remembered in the Himachal Pradesh as the first freedom fighter who tried to liberate Nurpur State from the British.

Among other rebels, who had been awarded such severe punishment, were Bhai Maharaj Singh and Diwan Mul Raj. Diwan Mul Raj, of course, died, before, he could be sent out of India. But Bhai Maharaj Singh had died in Singapore jail on 5 July, 1856 A.D.

It may be concluded from the above account that the relationship between the British and the rulers of the hill states entered a new phase with the success of the British in the Anglo-Sikh Wars. Thus, soon after the conclusion of Anglo-Sikh wars, we find a shift in the British attitude towards the hill chiefs. Instead of having a casual and intermittent relationship, the British now got themselves consolidated as the paramount power. The salient features of the British overlordship included granting of sanads through which the hill chiefs were given possession over their lands but were required to fulfill certain obligations. These included payment of nazrana, military assistance and supply of begarees etc. Henceforth their rights to settle their own conflicts ceased and they were required to seek British arbitration regarding the dispute over their territories or succession issues etc.
Notes and References


9. In this battle the Sikhs proved their bravery by saying, "Bhaiya ina ne ki larai karni hai, ik hath da hathyar, derh hath da jawan", (My brethren! How can they fight, their weapons are one cubit long, while they themselves are cubit and a half high). See Udhab Singh, Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 9.


11. The ruling family traces its descent from Ajab Dev, who came from Ujjain, and acquired possession of Baghal by conquest.

12. Jagatgarh fortress giving rise to the modern Jutogh, a hill cantonment, 4 miles from Shimla and then a small village, was included in the Baghal State territory.


15. It was an offshoot of Sirmaur and was founded by Alak Singh. Prior to the Gurkha invasion, it was tributary to the Sirmur State.


26. Sirmur, Kahlur (Bilaspur), Bushahr, Hindur (Nalagarh), Keonthal, Baghal, Baghat, Jubbal, Kumarsain, Bhajii, Mahlog, Balsan, Dhami, Kuthar, Kunihar, Mangal, Beja, Darkoti, Tharoch and Sangiri.


29. For details of the dates of sanads granted to the hill states, see C.U. Aitchison, *op.cit.*, pp. 71-110.

31. Ibid., pp. 71-110.

32. For details see S.K. Gupta, 'From the Anglo-Gurkha War to 1914' in Himachal Past, Present and Future, (Simla, 1975), pp. 96-99. also see Mian Goverdhan Singh, History of Himachal Pradesh, (Delhi, 1982), pp. 163-177.


35. G.C. Barnes, op.cit., pp. 36-37; also see Punjab District Gazetteers, Kangra District, 1924-25, pp. 82-83.


39. Raja Sansar Chand is a tall well formed man of about sixty. His son Anirudh Chand has a very handsome face. He (Sansar Chand) is now poor and in danger of being wholly subjected to Ranjit Singh. Moorcroft, William and Trebeck, George, op.cit., pp. 126-27.


41. G.C. Barnes, op.cit., p. 43; also see Punjab District Gazetteers, Kangra District 1924-25, p. 76.

42. G.T. Vigne, who travelled through Nurpur in June 1835, and again in the spring of 1839, met Bir Singh at Chamba and has written about the chief's anxiety to regain his ancestral territory. He even requested Mr. Vigne to plead his case before the King or the East India Company. See G.T. Vigne, Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo, the Countries Adjoining the Mountain Course of the Indus and the Himalaya, North of the Punjab, Vol. I, (New Delhi reprint, 1981), pp. 157-58; also see, G.C. Barnes, Ibid., p. 39.


45. G.C. Barnes, *op.cit.*, p. 34, also see *Punjab District Gazetteers, Kangra District* 1924-25, p 71.

46. M.S. Ahluwalia, *op.cit.*, p 166, also see J. Hutchison and J. Ph. Vogel, *op cit.*, p 507.

47. The only exception were the hill states of Nalagarh, Bilaspur (partly), Sirmur and Simla Hills, which came under the British protection after the Anglo-Gurkha War of 1815 A.D. For details see, *Gazetteer of the Simla District, 1888-89*, pp 15-23.


55. *Foreign Political Consultations*, dated 20 October 1849, No. 113.


60. In 1847-48 Dewan Mul Raj, the governor of Multan, was the first in revolt to restore the sovereignty of Maharaja Dalip Singh. He was son of Dewan Swan Mal. John Lawrence, officiating for his brother (Henry Lawrence) at Lahore, wrote about Mul Raj in October 1846 – “He is, however, the only popular administrator throughout the Punjab. His force is estimated at about 6000 men and guns drawn by horses and bullocks, in which of course those in the forts are not included”. Dewan Mul Raj died on 11 August, 1851, at the early age of 36 years. For details see M.L. Ahluwalia and Kirpal Singh, The Punjab’s Pioneer Freedom Fighters, (Calcutta, 1963), pp. 29-43.

61. Chattar Singh Attariwala was the son of Jodh Singh, a member of the younger family of Attari. During the reign of Ranjit Singh, Chattar Singh had title hold over the affairs of administration. But his family had gained interference in the Lahore Durbar. The fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar was occupied on July 29th, 1848, by the orders of the British Resident. Captain James Abbott, the assistant of British Resident instigated the Muslims of Hazara against Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala. The Sikh Governor of Hazara was forced to revolt. On August 6th, 1848, the Muslims of Hazara assembled in great numbers and surrounded the town of Haripur, where Sardar Chattar Singh encamped. In self-defence, the Sardar directed the Lahore troops to bring guns. But he had to leave Hazara and to move towards Hassan Abdal, Panja Sahib and Attock. Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala died on 27th December, 1855. For details see Ibid., pp. 58-69; see also Bakshish Singh Nijjar, Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845-49), (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 33-34.

62. Bhai Maharaj Singh also known as Nihal Singh, led the anti-British campaign as part of his moral obligation towards his people, and unlike others, he had neither any axe to grind nor any personal score to settle with the British. For him it was a divine mission for the success of which he staked his personal freedom, comfort, reputation and ultimately his life. Unfortunately not much is known about his early life and career, except that he was one of the trusted followers of Bhai Bir Singh and that during his later years was himself revered by a vast following, including most of the Sikh Chief at Lahore Darbar. The first revolutionary act in his career was to bless the famous Prema conspiracy. The plot was to murder the British Resident Lt. Col. Henry Lawrence and the pro-British Chiefs of the Darbar when they assembled at the meeting scheduled for 21 April, 1847 A.D. in the Shalimar Garden. Prema, an ex-A.D.C. of Maharaj Gulab Singh, along with Sardar Lal Singh Adalti was to lead the attack. Bhai Maharaj Singh is said to have given his sword and his blessing to the leaders. Bhai Maharaj Singh died on 5 July, 1856. For details see M.L. Ahluwalia and Kirpal Singh, op.cit., pp. 44-57.

63. Foreign Political Consultations, dated 20 October 1849, Nos. 110-118.
64. Ibid.; see also G.C. Barnes, *op.cit.*, p. 48, and also *Districts and States Gazetteer of Undivided Punjab (Prior to Independence)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 193-96.


68. *Foreign Political Consultations*, dated 20 October 1849, No. 113 and dated 2 January 1857, Nos. 91-93.

69. For ballads relating to Ram Singh Pathania, see Appendix No. II. In order to commemorate the memory of this freedom fighter, a college has been started by the public after his name at Dehri in the Nurpur tehsil. The college was started in 1971 and the foundation was laid by Mahant Purshotam Dass of Bathu Mandir. The college is known as Wazir Ram Singh Memorial Public College, Dehri. Now it has been taken over by the Government of Himachal Pradesh. Comrade Ram Chandra and Gian Singh Pathania, being social reformers collected funds for this institution.

70. *Foreign Political Consultations*, dated 20 October 1849, No. 113.

71. Attar Singh, a brother of Budh Singh Sandhanwalia, who had come into prominence after the latter's death; see Gulcharan Singh, *Ranjit Singh and his Generals*, (Jullundar, n.d.), p. 161.

72. Dhian Singh was Prime Minister of Sher Singh; see *Ibid.*, p. 152; for Sher Singh see B.S. Nijjar, *Anglo-Sikh Wars 1845-49*, (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 56-58.

73. *Foreign Political Consultations*, dated 20 October 1849, No. 113.

74. Ranjodh Singh, the youngest son of Sardar Desa Singh Majithia, also held high rank in the army of Ranjit Singh, *Ibid.*; also see Gulcharan Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 179.

75. *Foreign Political Consultations*, dated 20 October 1849, No. 113.

76. John Lawrence, British Commissioner of Punjab.

77. Lieutenant Lake, Assistant Agent to the Governor General.
78. Sir Henry Lawrence, then agent to the British Governor General at Lahore.


80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. For example the facts of the seizure and subsequent death of Bhungee *patwari* are as follow. His father and Bhungee himself were old adherent of Ram Singh’s family. On the accession of the Sikhs he parted from Ram Singh’s family. When Ram Singh came to Basa, he wrote to Bhungee as an influential man to assist him. Bhungee on the contrary did his best to dissuade the people from joining Ram Singh. Those who did come complained of his exertions. Ram Singh directed his seizure, and sent a party to bring him to his camp. The men sent to fetch him mal-treated him, and when he arrived Ram Singh put him under duress, but treated him well and gave him milk and sugar. On the first skirmish between British troops and Ram Singh’s men, Bhungee attempted to make his escape. The men followed but were unable to overtake him. When one fired his gun and Bhungee fell; see *Ibid*.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid., No. 117.

88. Ibid., No. 113.