

Biographical Sketches of Sikh Empire; Islamic and Firangis Courtiers in Lahore Darbar

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Article History:

Received: 12-12-2024

Revised: 25-01-2025

Accepted: 05-02-2025

Abstract:

Ranjit Singh still lives, large as life, in the imagination of the people. He does so not only where the Sikhs now live, but also where they lived before; for the Muslim village-folk shared him as a legendary figure with all communities and they have not let him depart with the latter. The image that persists of him is that of a popular king well known to his people through his frequent appearances in their midst, ready to listen to them and to redress their grievances at all times, and looking upon all his subjects, irrespective of caste and creed, with one eye. Starting his career as a minor potentate he carved for himself a kingdom for which anyone can take pride. He gave the Punjab a sense of nationhood and evolved a truly state with Islamic and Firangis as his courtiers, advisers and generals.

The main objective of this study to discuss about the emergence of Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and role played by Islamic and Firangis courtiers who gave their best efforts in the expansion of the Lahore Darbar.

For this study Historical and Descriptive methods are used .The results of this research is that Islamic courtiers provided their good contribution in civil administration an Firangis courtiers administered their attempts in military administration.

IN this study, a vigorous energy is applied to write about the belongings areas, positions, physical appearance and role of Islamic and Firangis courtiers in Lahore Darbar.

The value of this study is that a lot of Knowledge and information is given in signal platform about Firangis and Islamic courtiers.

Keywords: legendary, governorship, expense, adventurer, rigorous.

Introduction:

The Sikh Empire has remained a major power in the Indian subcontinent from 1799 to 1849. It was established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the Punjab region.

Here are brief biographical sketches of key figures from the Sikh Empire:

Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, known as the "Lion of Punjab," unified various Sikh factions (Misls) and established the empire in 1799 after capturing Lahore. He created a strong, centralized state and fostered tolerance, employing a secular administration that included Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims. His military reforms, especially his disciplined Sikh Khalsa Army, made the Sikh Empire a powerful force.

Ranjit Singh is celebrated for his patronage of the arts, religious tolerance, and efforts to modernize the army. He managed to keep Punjab independent during the height of British imperial expansion.

Ranjit Singh was of the stuff that legendary characters are made of and legend has claimed him for its own. He continues to live and grow in the people's imagination and it has been history's unceasing task to make his historical personality live up to its legendary counterpart. There was a legend about the person which makes them more memorable than their achievements. Men's achievements. If there is something about the men themselves, something besides their achievements, that is worth preserving; the memory of mankind sees to it that it is preserved; and it has other means of doing so besides history. History is after all concerned primarily with events and deals with men only as they appear in the events- as counters on the chequer-board of politics and not as creatures of flesh and blood. As creatures of flesh and blood, some of them prove larger than history. Ranjit Singh was such a one.

Ranjit Singh was unquestionably a great man. As he swept through the Punjab, bringing more and more of its under his own control and he showed his understanding of men a great individual through building a team of exceptional administrators to become either his ministers or the holders of key positions, such as the governorship of newly- won territories.

On Ranjit Singh's rule Gordon comments that Guru Nanak awakened the people through religious and social reforms; Guru Gobind Singh developed their political consciousness through rigorous discipline; and Ranjit Singh, through mental acuity and physical prowess, made use of the opportunity to establish a monarchy and knit the Sikh nation together.

Ranjit Singh took his rise from a Misal by no means the most important when he began his career. He established his superiority before long and either destroyed his former rivals or turned them into subordinate allies as the occasion required, so he soon made his way at the expense of his rivals. In 1799, he occupied Lahore, assumed the title of 'Maharaja' and established a mint of his own. Hence forward his power was on the increase. He had a settled plan of action, especially in the early years of his career. The principal landmarks in the connection are his treaty with the British of 1809 by which the Sutlej became the southern boundary of his Kingdom, his conquest of Multan in 1818, of Kashmir in 1819, of extension beyond the Indus in 1821. In short in about thirty years Maharaja Ranjit Singh built an extensive Kingdom for himself which comprised the whole of the Punjab, north of the Sutlej, Kashmir, Peshawar and the Deras. It extended up to Leh and Iskardu in the north- east, Khyber in the north- west.

He has been judged as a commander who won innumerable battles and carved out a vast Kingdom. He has been called the "Lion of Punjab". Ranjit Singh never accepted the appellation "Sikh Kingdom" for his polity, even though he himself was called Sarkar-i-Khalsa by people. His rule was always described as Lahore Darbar. According to Fakir Syed Wahiduddin,

"Even though the ruler of the state was a Sikh, its administration was in the hands of an able council in which people of all faiths and form were represented. Even though the basis of Ranjit Singh's rule was religious, in practice it was wholly secular".

The Austrian traveller Baron Charles Hugel remarked that the state established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh was 'the most wonderful object in the whole world'. Like a skilful architect the Maharaja raised a 'majestic fabric' with the help of rather insignificant or unpromising fragments. In retrospect it is possible to see that Ranjit Singh did evolve a structure of power by which he could reconcile all important sections of his subjects to his rule and he could induce many of them to be enthusiastic in his support. He revived prosperity and minimized oppression. He created opportunities for members of several communities of the society to improve their social positions.

The Maharaja also dispensed with the medieval practice of selling public appointments. A one eye man UPSC, his only eye caught sight of merit wherever it was available. While public appointments he took care that each community received its due share not only in the subordinate or the middle level services but also in the top posts. There were no reservation of posts as such. The key posts of the Lahore Darbar, both in civil services and armed forces, were filled by people of all castes and communities who donned the Lahore court from all parts of the world. These courtiers worked their way up and most of them from the lowest rung of the, ladder, remained with him to the last.

The Maharaja was the sole director of the state affairs, he had a galaxy of courtiers, civil officers and a military hierarch whom he could consult whenever he liked. The courtiers under Ranjit Singh were mostly the creation of the Maharaja himself. The entire authority of conferring, increasing or diminishing the rank of any of his subjects laid with him. The rank of Maharaja's courtiers were open to those who could fulfil certain criteria of merit and competence.

Akali Phula Singh (1761–1823)

Akali Phula Singh was a Nihang leader and military commander. Akali Phula Singh was the head of the Nihang warriors, a highly disciplined Sikh military order. He played a crucial role in several of Ranjit Singh's campaigns, particularly in the northwest frontier and the conquest of Multan and Kashmir. Akali Phula Singh is remembered for his piety, courage, and devotion to Sikhism, as well as his significant contributions to the military success of the empire.

Hari Singh Nalwa (1791–1837)

Hari Singh Nalwa was Commander-in-chief of the Sikh Khalsa Army under Ranjit Singh. He was one of the most famous generals in Indian history. He played a key role in expanding the Sikh Empire to the northwest, conquering regions like Kashmir, Peshawar, and the Khyber Pass. His fearless reputation earned him the name "Nalwa" (meaning a tiger or a lion). His military campaigns kept the Afghan invaders at bay and strengthened the northwestern frontier. He died fighting the Afghans, cementing his reputation as a legendary warrior.

Diwan Mokham Chand (1750–1814)

Diwan Mokham Chand was General and trusted advisor to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was one of the early and most trusted military commanders under Ranjit Singh. He was instrumental in early victories, including the capture of Kangra Fort and campaigns in Multan and Kashmir. His strategic genius and loyalty contributed significantly to the consolidation and expansion of the Sikh Empire.

Jind Kaur (1817–1863)

Jind Kaur was Last queen of the Sikh Empire, mother of Maharaja Duleep Singh. She was often called Rani Jindan, was the youngest wife of Ranjit Singh and the mother of his last heir, Duleep Singh. After Ranjit Singh's death, she fiercely opposed British interference in the empire and played a key role in the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848–1849). She acted as regent for her young son and tried to rally Sikh forces against the British. Despite her efforts, the Sikh Empire fell to the British, and she was exiled. She is remembered for her defiance and resilience.

Maharaja Duleep Singh (1838–1893)

Maharaja Duleep Singh was the Last ruler of the Sikh Empire. Duleep Singh was the youngest son of Ranjit Singh. After the empire fell to the British in 1849, Duleep Singh was deposed at a young age and taken to England, where he converted to Christianity and lived as a British aristocrat. He struggled with his identity, and later in life, he attempted to return to India and regain his throne but failed. His life symbolizes the loss of Sikh sovereignty, but his legacy as the last ruler of the empire remains significant in Sikh history.

These royal figures represent the power and resilience of the Sikh Empire, which, though short-lived, played a crucial role in the history of the Indian subcontinent. The empire's fall to the British marked the end of significant regional resistance to British dominance in northern India.

The **Lahore Darbar** was the royal court of the Sikh Empire and it had centred in Lahore, the capital of the empire. The court was known for its cultural sophistication, administrative efficiency, and a diverse set of key figures. The courtiers of the Lahore Darbar were an eclectic mix of Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, and Europeans, reflecting Maharaja Ranjit Singh's secular and inclusive policies.

The courtiers of the Lahore Darbar included men of all communities denominations-

Sikhs Islamic Firangis Hindus

This study deals with the biographical sketches of Islamic and Firangis included the background, character and achievements of the courtiers in the Lahore Darbar.

Islamic

The most conspicuous figures in Ranjit Singh's courtiers were Islamic, which included Faqir brothers (Bokhara Family). They gave their best to establish Lahore Darbar.

1. Fakir brothers (Bokhara Family)

Fakir brothers, who were nearest to Ranjit Singh, both in his public and his private life. These Faqir brothers helped him to establish his kingdom on firm footing and were with him till the last. They were among his chief counsellors and assistants, not only in affairs of state but in many matters behind the scenes. They had valuable accounts, not only of happenings in and around the court, but of Ranjit Singh's day-to-day life. Of the three Fakir Brothers who held high office under Ranjit Singh the first to be introduced to him was **Fakir-Aziz-Ud-Din**.

Fakir Aziz-Ud-Din

The ancestors of Aziz-Ud-Din had originally migrated from Arabia, but before entering the Punjab, they had for a time lived in Bokhara and were therefore known as Bokhari's. In 1799 Aziz-Ud-din met the Maharaja in connection with the treatment of the latter's eye ailment being trained in Yunani by his father Hakim Ghulam Mohiuddin. Ranjit Singh an eye for the talent offered the young doctor employment. From the position of a physician, he became the Maharaja's confident, chief negotiator and Foreign Minister of the Lahore Darbar.

His ability gained him much popularity because he was extremely well read, an erudite scholar of Arabic and Persian and a poet, he was highly respected at the court for his wisdom and scholarship. All the secret documents of the Lahore Darbar passed through his hands.

It is said that the following duties were assigned to him:

- He was to give counsel to the Maharaja in all matters regarding diplomacy, war and peace.
- He was to receive and welcome the Europeans in the court.
- It was through him that negotiation with foreign powers, such as the Europeans and the Afghans, were carried out.
- The privilege of interpreting and explaining Ranjit Singh's words was enjoyed by him.



Fakir Aziz-Ud-Din

Source-Faqir Syed Waheeduddin, 'The Real Ranjit Singh'

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Faqir Aziz-Ud-Din exercised a profound influence on the foreign policy of Ranjit Singh. In 1809, when Metcalf insisted on Ranjit Singh's signing the treaty of friendship and the latter wavered, it was the influence and counsel of the Fakir Sahib, as Aziz-Ud-Din was called which finally made him sign the treaty.

In 1810, he was employed to annex the territory of Sahib Singh Bhangi and also took part in a few other minor campaigns. He attended Ochterlony on the occasion of the marriage of Prince Kharak Singh in 1812. He also accompanied Gurbaksh Singh and Jamadar Khushal Singh when they went to Shah Shuja to recover the world famous '**Kho-i-Noor**' diamond from him for the Maharaja. This Muslim courtier (foreign Minister) also contributed a lot when Dost Muhammed came to wage a holy war with Ranjit Singh but was compelled to fly without striking a blow.

Lawrence writes that Aziz-Ud-Din was, "trusted much by Ranjit Singh, both as a physician and counsellor" and designed him as "a second Dhyana Singh".

He styled himself as a **Fakir** and adopted the dress of a **Fakir**, this he regarded as an armour in the court of Lahore, which was in its later days so full of intrigues.

He was a fine-looking man with a pleasant and well-humored countenance, and his manners were so kind and unassuming that it was impossible not to like him.

Fakir-Aziz-Ud-Din had much respect for his master, during the stay of Maharaja's deputation in Shimla, the Governor General (Lord Bentick) asked Fakir-Aziz-Ud-Din one day as to which of Maharaja's eye was blind. He answered tactfully

'Your Excellency, the Maharaja's face is so powerful and glamorous that my eyes have never dared to cast the Maharaja's face. They are always fixed on his feet, I may be able to give it you'.

Lord Bentick was highly pleased at Aziz-Ud-din's reply that he took his gold watch out of his pocket and presented it to the Fakir.

Aziz-Ud-Din had personal attachment to Ranjit Singh. On the occasion of Ranjit Singh's attack of Paralysis, the Fakir was most unremitting in his attention. Ranjit Singh also had tremendous faith in his ability as a man of medicine. The Maharaja would not accept any medicine from the hands of any other person unless permitted by the Fakir. He had been rated as high-ranking physician of his times by all the contemporary writers.

During the last days of Maharaja, he served him with singular devotion. Like a wet nurse he attended on the dying emperor. "Had Ranjit Singh been his father", says McGregor, "he could not have evinced a greater solicitude". At the farewell ceremony the old lion presented the Fakir with a pen while all others courtiers got their share of swords and fire-arms. After the death of Ranjit Singh, Fakir-Aziz-Ud-Din suddenly became old by two decades.

'Fakir-Aziz-Ud-Din was one of the ablest and certainly the most honest of all Ranjit Singh courtiers'.

Nur- Ud-Din

Nur- Ud-Din was the brother of Aziz-Ud-Din. He was inducted into Maharaja's service in 1810 and was given the charge of Dhanni illaqa to administer. Pleased by his performance the Maharaja sent him to various places like Gujrat, Jalandhar, Sailkot, Daska and Wazirabad in succession. He was a trusted courtier of the Maharaja, from 1818 onwards he remained attached to the court and a whole host of duties were assigned to him. He was a royal physician, apothecary-general, almoner, director of royal palaces and gardens. He was one of the three custodians of the keys of the royal treasury and incharge of the arsenal of the Lahore Fort. He performed these duties with integrity and diligence and thus commanded the respect of the Maharaja as a pious man. Though he was not a member of the Maharaja's council, Nur- Ud-Din wielded a good deal of personal influence with him. Even members of the royal family sought his help when the Maharaja was annoyed with them. Once Prince Sher Singh was saved by Nur- Ud-Din's intervention from premature end of his princely career, when he displeased the Maharaja by taking one of his favorite horses, named Dooloo, without his permission. Nur- Ud-Din looked after the distribution of Ranjit Singh's charities to the poor. For several years, he controlled the gulabkhanas (laboratories at Lahore). There was a close resemblance between him and his elder brother particularly in adaptability, persuasive eloquence, polished conversation, refinement of manners and finally in understanding political-affairs.



Nur-Ud-Di

Source-Faqir Syed Waheeduddin, 'The Real Ranjit Singh'

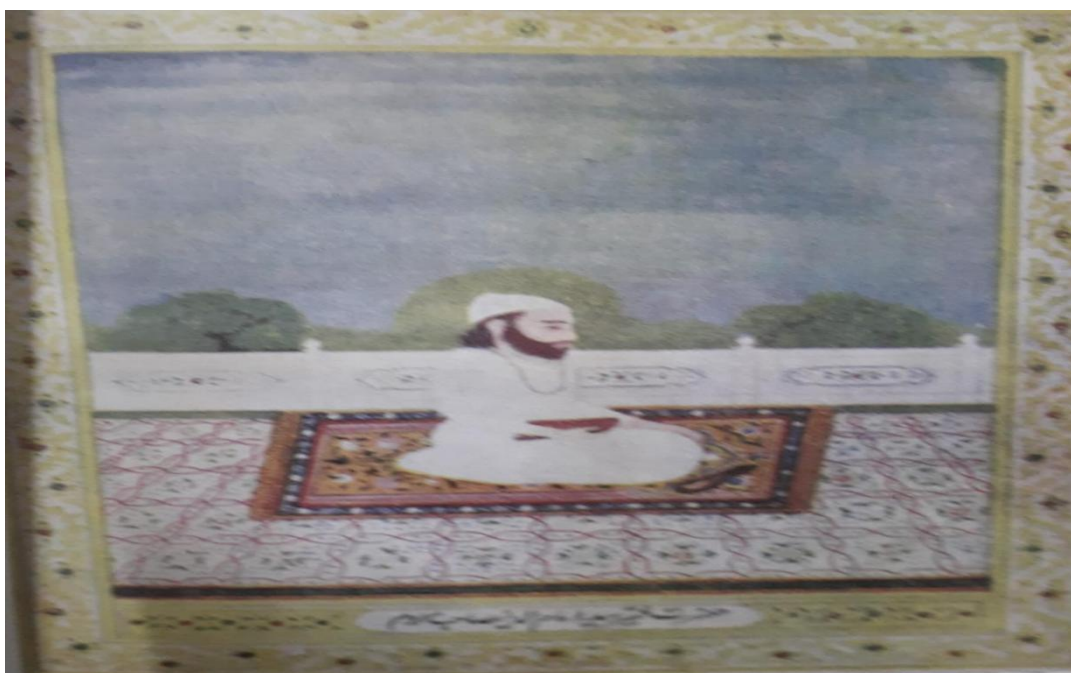
Nur- Ud-Din also worked as health officer of Lahore and was known as Hakim-i-Baghdad. All types of medicines required for the Maharaja were prepared under his supervision. He was a 'Apothecary-General' and again as 'Commissary General' and 'Head store -keeper'.

As Apothecary-General' he performed the most important duty to supervise the Maharaja' food. It was prepared under the supervision of Hakim Bishan Dass, a trusted assistant of Nur- Ud-Din and tasted in the presence of the latter by a team of professional tasters, having been served to them in special poison-detecting plates. The effect of the food on the tasters was watched and then it was sent to the Maharaja in locked containers under Fakir-Nur-Ud-Din's personal seal. The Maharaja never took any food without satisfying himself about the seal.

He was held in high esteem by the courtiers. He was also employed on diplomatic service which he discharged with equal integrity. For instance, he was assigned the duty of presenting foreign visitors to the Maharaja, arranging eatables for them and making arrangements for their comfortable stay and conveying Maharaja's good-will and friendly messages to them.

More-over he was lovers of the Britishers, and earnestly desirous that the two States of India and Lahore should always remain on the most-friendly terms After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he always tried to use soothing at the Lahore Darbar.

Imam-Ud-Din



Imam- Ud-Din

Source-Faqir Syed Waheeduddin, 'The Real Ranjit Singh'

Imam- Ud-Din, the younger brother of Fakir-Aziz-Ud-Din, was not a figure about the court but he held important administrative and military posts. He was the in-charge of fort Gobind Garh, the most important strong hold surrounding it.

This fort was built under the orders of the Maharaja who appointed Sardar Shamir Singh as its first governor and the next was Fakir-Imam- Ud-Din. Along with these duties, he also held charge of the magazines, arsenal and royal stables at Amritsar. The duty at this fort was important because greater part of the **toshakhana** was kept in it.

This post of responsibility kept him away from the capital. Twelve thousand soldiers were always kept ready to protect the fort. He also participated in a number of campaigns particularly in the operations against the forts of Sada Kaur and the Kanhyas.

Like his brothers he also acted sometimes as a channel of communication between the British visitors and Ranjit Singh. In 1827, he was deputed on a complimentary mission to Shimla. He always rendered faithfully all services assigned to him.

There is also the most prominent Islamic courtier in the Lahore Darbar:

Illahi Baksh

Illahi Baksh was one of the distinguished generals of Ranjit Singh who commanded his artillery. He joined the service of the Lahore Darbar in 1802. In 1810 when a separate corps for artillery was raised and placed under Mian Ghausia, he was transferred to it. In 1814 when a new battery was raised, he was appointed to command it.

As a gunner, Illahi Baksh participated in a number of campaigns and rendered effective artillery support. In the final expedition to Multan in 1818, Illahi Baksh commanded artillery along with a force of 20,000 under the overall command of Prince Kharak Singh and Misr Diwan Chand. The artillery included the famous Zam Zama gun, under the command of Illah Baksh. His guns kept on pounding the walls of the fort of Multan for about a month. He encouraged his gunners and they were able to breach the fort wall after eight of incessant bombardment and Multan was conquered.

Illahi Baksh with his Topkhana, along with Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Nihal Singh Attariwala and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed to teach a lesson to a Nawab Muin- ud- daula of Mankera, who had not paid the full amount of Nazrana. He with the help of his gunners, was able to conquest the fort Mahmood Kot.

Illahi Baksh was a capable general and the best artillery officer produced by the Lahore army. He was a skillful swordsman, good at sports and an expert horseman. Illahi Baksh was one of those generals who displayed his skill in a befitting manner during the meeting between the Maharaja and the Britishers at Ropar in 1831. The Maharaja had bestowed jagirs and awarded valuable gifts to him.

2. Firangis

In the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the interesting feature of the Lahore Darbar was that important positions in the government were also occupied by some Firangis. Ranjit Singh used his firangis mostly for purposes of training his army.

Jean Baptiste Ventura

Jean Baptiste Ventura, joined the service of Ranjit Singh in 1822 at Lahore along with his companion Allard. Little is known about his early life except that he was a colonel of infantry under Napoleon. He was one of those adventures who came to India via Afghanistan after the fall of Napoleon. The Maharaja checked the bonafides from the British authorities before inducting him in his service.

He was exacted written agreements from him about his sincerity to the Maharaja and he would not quit Lahore Darbar or his service without the Maharaja's permission. General Ventura has been employed chiefly with the infantry.

Indeed, his career in Punjab is marked more by organizing activity than by any great victories. Nevertheless, he took part in several important engagements, for example, Nowshahra, and in a few minor campaigns across the Indus and towards Sindh. Ventura also acted as 'Qazi or Governor' of the city of Lahore and this appointment allowed him a high place in the royal court. The Maharaja appointed him the in-charge of the Derajat on the condition that he would pay a revenue of eleven and a half lakhs of rupees annually to the state.

Latif, however, asserts that General Ventura made a great deal of money from his form at Derajat. He provided handsome salary, the Maharaja bestowed on him generous gift from time to time and was also granted a jagir, including two villages which he obtained as a gift for his daughter, Victorine. He was reasonably content with the bounties of his master.

He married an Armenian lady at Ludhiana. He was an important courtier of the Lahore Darbar, who lived in a magnificently built residence in the precincts of Anarkali's old tomb at Lahore. Hugel comments that his house though not big 'combines the splendor of the East with the comforts of a European residence'.

After the death of Ranjit Singh, he continued at his post for a time, but, realizing dangers against personal safety in prolonging his stay, he retired to Europe and passed the remaining of his life in Paris in ease and comfort. He served Lahore Darbar for twenty years with loyalty.

Jean Francois Allard,

Jean Francois Allard, a French officer, joined the service of the Maharaja with his companion Ventura in 1822.



Jean Francois Allard,

Source-Painting, www.alamy.com.

He had left Europe to seek his fortunes in the East, upon the death blow given at Waterloo, to the hopes of the military youth of France. He started in Kandahar, Kabool, and Lahore. Ranjit Singh suspected their bona fides, and after a great deal of negotiations and verification of his credentials from the British agent at Ludhiana, he agreed to employ him in army.

He married a Kashmiri woman. He respected the religion of his wife, who was a Hindu. He had five alive children by her.

1. Miss Heloise Francoise Allard, born at Lahore on 26 November, 1828.
2. Miss Amelie Victoire Allard, born at Lahore on 24 January, 1830.
3. Mrs. Jean Francoise Auguste Allard, born at Poul (Empire of Lahore), on 7 October 1832.
4. Mr. Tropez Theophile Allard, born at Lahore on 7 March, 1834.
5. Felicie Marie Allard, born at Calcutta (Bengal) on 2 February, 1835.

Besides his own children, General Allard had adopted a young boy, native of the province of Multan. "Seed -poor" son of one of the independent princes of the Multan, was only four years old when Ranjit Singh undertook the conquest of this province. His father and mother were killed in the looting of a town; but Ranjit Singh having perceived the child in the fight cried out 'Save the Child'! One of his officers therefore took him in his arms and saved him. Seed-Poor was brought to the Lahore Court by the Maharaja where he received an elementary national education.

Allard was allotted as his residence a commodious building, which stood where the house known as Kapurthala House in British times was subsequently constructed. The place was popularly known as Kuri Bagh (Girl's Garden) because it contained the tomb of Allard's daughter.

Allard went to France on leave and on his return to Lahore he brought back a friendly letter from Louis Phillippe (King of France) to Ranjit Singh who had accredited Allard as the envoy of the French Emperor. He was also received from the King of France the rank of a General of the French Army and the cross of the Legion of Honor.

In 1838, Allard was sent to Peshawar to help General Avitabile in the administration of the province, but differences soon arose between them. He suggested some improvements in the administration of Peshawar and an exemption of the octroi tax on wheat and grains. Avitabile strongly resented Allard's interference.

A man of highly refined manners and an amiable nature, Allard offered hospitality to all the European visitors to the Maharaja. Emily Eden writes of his appearance thus:

"Allard wears an immensely long beard which he is always stroking and making much of; and I was dead absent (sic.) he was all the time there, because his wings are beautiful white hair and his moustachios and the middle of his beard were quite black. He looked like a piebald horse."

He served Ranjit Singh before he succumbed to a heart attack at Peshawar in 1839. His body was embalmed and brought to Lahore.

General Paolo di Avitabile

General Paolo di Avitabile was one of the most remarkable European officials. He served as an artillery sergeant major in the regular army of the king of Naples. He also served as a lieutenant in the forces of Bonaparte and Murat. In 1827, he joined Ranjit Singh's service after hearing from his friend Ventura.

In appearance and dress, Avitabile is described as:

**A tall, stout man of sensual countenance,
with a large nose and lips,
somewhat of the Jewish type,
and well-whiskered and bearded.**

Ranjit Singh gave him the civil and military charge of the city of Wazirabad and several adjoining Ta'alluqas. Avitabile showed characteristic vigor and energy in dealing with people. He had improved the town of Wazirabad to remarkable extent. During his in-charge ship the town was rebuilt, the streets were well arranged, and cut each other in right angles, many buildings which stood in the way had been levelled to the ground. He established a good system of police and revenue throughout the territory, and made a great many improvements in the town.

Avitabile, in 1834, was sent to Peshawar and was made governor after Hari Singh Nalwa's death in 1837. To set things right in the turbulent province of Peshawar, Ranjit Singh had given him a free hand. He took a personal interest in each and every affair of the administration. He brought many reforms in the Peshawar. He established a rough and ready administration to curb the unruly activities of the turbulent province through a system of gallows and gibbets made of summary punishments, collective fines, and reprisals.

Avitabile was one of the few Europeans whom Ranjit Singh trusted fully, irrespective of the suspicious of the Maharaja that he was misappropriating the revenue of Peshawar. Alexander Burnes who visited Lahore Darbar in 1838 and the Maharaja told that Avitabile had managed the country of Peshawar so well that it had become prosperous. In-fact, he presented a character of contradiction of the highest order. He left his service after the death of his master He remained loyal and humble to the Maharaja, and he died in 1850 in his native country.

Claude Auguste Court

Claude Auguste Court was a Frenchman by birth and had been educated at the Ecole Polytechnique of Paris in 1812. A year later, he received a commission in the French Army, but he resigned in 1818 and left for Persia. Court came into contact with Avitabile and travelled with his company to Lahore. Both entered the service of the Maharaja in 1827.

In appearance,

**Court was a short, thick man pitted with smallpox,
well dressed and with simple habits.**

Court was a man of literary taste too. He had contributed several articles to the Journal of the Royal Asiatic society of Paris. He wrote 'Memoirs of Journey from Persia to Kabul' and also a paper entitled 'A Brief Narrative of the Anarchy in the Punjab 1839-45.

He was accustomed to live in a small house in the garden of the larger building occupied by his family. After the death of Ranjit Singh, he stayed in Punjab for two years and then returned to France.

Alexander Gardener

He was the son of a Scottish emigrant to the British Colonies in the North America, and after a short stay in Russia, he crossed the Caspian Sea and entered the career of an adventurer and a soldier of fortune in Central Asia. He then drifted to Afghanistan where he took service under Amir Habibullah Khan, was involved in the civil war and when in 1826 Dost Muhammad Khan defeated his master, he became a refugee wanderer among the Khirghiz and travelling through Yarkand to Leh and Srinagar, he appeared at Peshawar in 1831, where he remained with Sultan Muhammad Khan Barakzai for about a year. In 1832, he was summoned to Lahore by the Maharaja who desired his services.

On his way to Lahore Gardener remained for a few days with Dr. Harlan, in Gujrat. At Wazirabad he was the guest of General Avitable and at Lahore he met Court and Ventura. The Maharaja employed him as an instructor of artillery and it appeared that at that time no one was able to handle the two, which Lord William Bentick had presented to the Maharaja at Ropar. Gardener displayed his skill to Ranjit Singh and his court how the time-fuse shells could be fired from the guns and was employed as a colonel in the artillery in full command of an artillery derah or camp. At Lahore he was known as Gardon Sahib.

Thus, The Europeans officers were happy living in Punjab for they liked its mangoes and the monsoons, its rivers, its flora and fauna and above all its tolerant rulers. Their opinion can be summed in what Avitable told Major Mackeson: "We prefer the Sikhs because they are so simple- minded and have no religious prejudices as the Persians and the Afghans have". To conclude Ranjit Singh was a good judge of man. He instinctively realized the worth of a person and put him in a position where he would prove to be the most useful. In this way he collected about him a galaxy of courtiers, who although they might have been different from him in faith, religion or race, were very efficient in the discharge of the duties entrusted to them.

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