



Rani Chand Kaur's regime: An epitome of turbulence (1840AD-1841AD)

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Abstract

The main objective of this empirical paper is to focus on how after the sad demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, the interests of the State were thrown away and conspiracies were envisaged by the egotistical rulers and their disgruntled and peeved courtiers to downplay the other contenders for enthronement. Enthronement of Rani Chand Kaur came through mechanization and bloody path was followed to remain adhered to the throne. Contemporary and secondary sources were exhausted to make a fair and comprehensive account of the theme under study. Governor- General's Government of India's Foreign Department proceedings covering day to day information of the Lahore Durbar activities through their diplomatic channels along with intelligence reports available at National Archives of India, New Delhi, have been considerably exhausted while penning down this research oriented paper. Press list of Old Records documents available at Punjab State Archives, Patiala have also been consulted. At places, day to day reports from sources such as the Chronicler of Lahore Durbar, Sohan Lal Suri's Umdat-Ut- Tawarikh and the standardized works of the then serving military officers related with the British and Lahore Kingdom are extensively quoted for achieving fair reflection of the subject under study.

Keywords: kingdom of Lahore, conspiratorial mechanism, hobnobbing, sandhawalia sardars, dogra family, astute british, laxity of administration, succession enthronement, centrifugal forces, self-centered interests

Introduction

Throughout the reign of Rani Chand Kaur centrifugal forces were in full play. Interests of the Lahore Kingdom were brushed aside in order to promote self-centered interests. Individual concerns got the front seat. She was party to various designs which finally culminated in her own destruction. Her compromised enthronement and melancholy demise was through mechanization.

Objective of Study

The main motive of this research oriented study is to examine how the contenders for the enthronement of Lahore Kingdome brushed aside the interests of the state just to promote their own interests and also to discern how the brief spell of her regime remained administratively turbulent.

Methodology

Governor- General's Government of India's Foreign Department minutes covering day to day information of the Lahore Durbar activities through their ambassadorial channels along with intelligence reports available at National Archives of India, New Delhi, were utilized to prepare this research oriented monograph. Historical research methodology has been practiced in order to give the theme an objective look. Primary and secondary sources have been exhausted to have a fair and comprehensive picture of the subject matter.

Discussion

After the poignant demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh on 27th June, 1939 sympathies and sorrows of the courtiers towards Maharaja's family were overpowered by their personal

ambitions and lust for power. They could sacrifice the interests of the State for their self-centered ends. The Sikh rulers of the time were involved in one way or the other in their intriguing intricacies. Melancholic demise of Maharaja Kharak Singh, Rani Chand Kaur, Maharaja Sher Singh were the outcome these conspiratorial mechanism either on the part of the rulers or their disgruntled high powered courtiers. The rulers by conniving with the courtiers provided political legitimacy to the political murders which finally proved catastrophic not only for the Lahore Durbar rather for themselves as well. Even army which remained neutral during the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was made involved in the court intrigues which was very awful for the future developments. Rani Chand Kaur reigned over the Kingdom of Lahore as Regent from 30th November 1840 to 18th January 1841 but during her regime turbulence became high-flying and centrifugal forces were having full play. Her intriguing nature caused her dethronement and even her fatal but despondent end.

Chand Kaur, born in 1802, was the daughter of Jaimal Singh Kanehya of Fatehgarh, near Gurdaspur ^[1], whom Maharaja Ranjit Singh had dispossessed of his fortress of Pathankot and at whose death he had become the master of all his territories. She was only ten years old when she became the first wife of Kanwar Kharak Singh ^[2], the imbecile son and the heir apparent, of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Her wedding ceremony was fêted with great magnificence at Fatehgarh on February 6, 1812 and David Octorlony, the British envoy at Ludhiana, attended it ^[3]. In February 1821, Chand Kaur was blessed with a son, named Nao Nihal Singh in 1821. At the time of her husband's death on November 5, 1840 she was about 39 years

of age but her persona was still pleasing although podgy^[4]. It is alleged that Maharaja Kharak Singh's demise was on account of slow poisoning being administered to him. After the cremation of his father Maharaja Kharak Singh, Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh, after having bathed in the Ravi, was on track back towards the fort. As he was toward the inside archway of the portal (*Roshnai Darwaja* in Lahore minutes after the funeral pyre of Kharak Singh) a collide was sounded. The weighty ramparts of the gateway fell upon both youths, Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh and Mian Udham Singh, the elder son of Gulab Singh Dogra, who died at the spot while Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh was allegedly 'made dead' after some machinations by the evil designers^[5]. With him died the great expectations associated with that 'Alexander like Prince'. Both father and son expired on the same day. The race for the occupation of throne of Lahore Kingdom through designs then kicked up. Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh's death not only destabilized the State machinery so ably built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh but it also hastened a crisis which was first of the series of internal commotions which finally culminated in the eclipse of Lahore Kingdom^[6].

After the passing away of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh, there were two probable adversary claimants for the throne of Lahore Kingdom, viz., Prince Sher Singh and Mai Chand Kaur and their attributes are described here. Sher Singh was the son of Mehtab Kaur (wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh), who was the daughter of Gurbux Singh Kanaya. She was wedded more than ten years without bearing a child. As her husband neglected her, correspondingly her widow mother Sada Kaur's weight with Maharaja Ranjit Singh had been declined considerably. Sada Kaur was an able but unscrupulous woman, who was aware that should her daughter bore sons to the Maharaja, her influence would be augmented^[7]. Then she did her best to remove the defect through plan. As Maharaja Ranjit Singh left the Lahore Kingdom for his Sutlej campaign in 1807, it was declared that Mehtab Kaur was in the stage of her pregnancy. When the Maharaja returned, he was presented by the Maharani with twin sons Sher Singh and Tara Singh. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not deceived in this case. But he acknowledged the children as his own sons^[8]. The other claimant to the throne was Mai Chand Kaur, the first wife of Kharak Singh but was not popular with the army and was in hope to succeed to the throne through maneuverings: In this game of clever unscrupulous politics, Raja Dhian Singh, Prime Minister of the Lahore Kingdom, was in favour of Kanwar Sher Singh because of own ulterior motives and he was being counseled in this significant affair by Faqir Aziz-ud-din, Jamadar Khushhal Singh and some other notable courtiers^[10]. The unexpected and premature death of Prince Nao Nihal Singh in 1840, caused the Lahore Kingdom throne vacant^[11], along with unleashing bloody pathway, with claims of actually six princes to it, the legitimacy all whom like that of Kanwar Sher Singh, was in doubtful proposition^[12]. Of all these, Prince Sher Singh was the eldest and only one who had been privileged to a seat in the Durbar with the heir apparent, Kanwar Kharak Singh. He, however, had already been failed in his attempt to take precedence over Kanwar Kharak Singh after the melancholy demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1939^[13].

Lahore Durbar courtiers were divided over the claim to the

throne. Raja Dhian Singh was playing a diplomatic but designed game. While he sent for Kanwar Sher Singh through his special emissaries to reach Lahore speedily from Batala with a view to make his claim on the throne solidified, at the same time strategically in the course of his conversation with Rani Chand Kaur, he promised that she should reign in place of her son. His instantaneous and main objective was to ensure her trouble free silence until the arrival of Kanwar Sher Singh. Raja Dhian Singh's invitation to Kanwar Sher Singh was not only his alone wish but with the active consultation of pivotal courtiers Faqir Azizudin and Jamadar Khushhal Singh of the Council^[14]. In this environment Kanwar Sher Singh appeared to be the fittest person to succeed to the throne as he was popular with the army, courteous and amiable and the English opinions also seemed to be approvable to him^[15]. The British, who always aspired for unsettled state of affairs in all parts of India for their imperial instinct, expressed 'sincere and deep regret' through Governor-General in Council, of the premature death of the Prince Nao Nihal Singh under circumstances of so melancholy nature^[16].

After a few days of bereavement ceremonies, Kanwar Sher Singh with a view to set aside the claim of Chand Kaur to the throne of Lahore Durbar addressed Raja Dhian Singh in a diplomatic tone in the presence of ministers and nobles:

"Now we have got leisure from the morning ceremony and have finished with dispatch of the ashes towards Ganga ji. The enforcement of the affairs of the Kingdom and Kingship, the control and the administration of the countries and various sides, settlement of various passages and directions, strengthening of the foundations of unity with the great men of world and the Chiefs of the times, looking after the troops and the other affairs of the Government, taking care of the accounts of the office and the work of the Kardars of various places, the careful handling of the various financial and administrative problems is quite impossible for the ladies to cope with and carry on. You are a man of great wisdom and intelligence by the grace of immortal God. Therefore you must think of some wise and suitable plan by reason of which the garden of Kingship and Kingdom and the rule and sovereignty of the deceased Noble Sarkar may begin to flourish and prosper and be safe against the storm of misshapeness brought about by disunion in such a way that it may become well known all over the world that since the death of the Noble Sarkar, the garden of Kingship and rule had been looked after with the correct plans of the wise ministers and foresighted courtiers purporting to make it flourish and prosper so well."^[17]

Raja Dhian Singh who was already hobnobbing with his classified courtiers, became delighted on listening the tactful speech of Kanwar Sher Singh. Thereafter Raja Dhian Singh, Jamadar Khushhal Singh and other ministers sat down with Kanwar Sher Singh to consider the affairs of the State and observed to Kanwar Sher Singh that they were prepared to place him on the throne conditionally on his going in an written agreement sealed by him self-building himself never to act in the public affairs except with the counsels of Raja

Dhian Singh, Jamadar Khushhal Singh and Bhai Ram Singh. The scheme was not to ignore the counsellors. This agreement was immediately written by Raja Dhian Singh with a hand mark of saffron in the presence of the Holy Guru Granth Sahib^[18]. In fact Raja Dhian Singh was well aware of this fact that in case Rani Chand Kaur became the sovereign of Lahore the positions occupied by them would be in the control of antagonistic Sandhawaliala Party^[19]. Chand Kaur then thought of frustrating the desire of Kanwar Sher Singh by strategically enlisting the support of Sandhawaliala Sardars who were having almost equal weight-age in the Lahore Durbar. Both by age and ability, Attar Singh was the head of the Sandhawaliala family. His brother Lehna Singh Sandhawaliala was energetic but illiterate and debauched. One of their nephew, Ajit Singh was brave but headstrong and rash. Another nephew, Shamsheer Singh was by nature averse to politics and was stationed away at Peshawar^[20]. It was to counterpoise the influence of Dogra family in the Lahore Durbar.

Various schemes to handle the predicament of succession were initiated. Firstly Chand Kaur and Bhai Ram Singh, with a view to detach Raja Dhian Singh from Kanwar Sher Singh's coterie, sponsored an enigmatic scheme to win the Empire along with Raja Dhian Singh, by adopting Dhian Singh's son Raja Heera Singh and placing him on the vacant throne of Lahore Kingdom^[21]. But this sort of arrangement did not suit the mental make-up of Dhian Singh and his coterie. Then Chand Kaur put another proposal to acknowledge Attar Singh Sandhawaliala in the collateral branch as heir^[22]. However this plan again did not bear the fruit with having more bad results than the previous offer. At this juncture the Chiefs and ministers in a conference with Kanwar Sher Singh, proposed to draft out a declaration that the Chiefs should enjoy the privileges allowed to them by late Maharaja and that letters to the British functionaries should be written as usual in concert with the ministers. An annual jagir of Rs. eight lacs was to be fixed for Chand Kaur with all sorts of honours and respects due to her rank. This sort of draft was confirmed after solemn oaths on Holy Guru Granth Sahib by seals and signatures and hand marks of saffron. As Kanwar Sher Singh was already willing for such type of suggestions so he raised no objection to it not only with a view to become more popular with the principal Sardars but also with maintaining order and peace in the Lahore Durbar along with having an edge over the claim of Chand Kaur. A new seal inscribed with the title of Maharaja was produced for him by Beli Ram and all the Chiefs, ministers and people almost acknowledged him as Nao Nihal Singh's successor^[23]. The senior line of succession had been cut off, and Kanwar Sher Singh's claim was thus admitted. He was presented with traditional embossed seal bearing the title of Maharaja before his name. It was proclaimed throughout the territories that Kanwar Sher Singh, being the heir to the throne, was to be installed on the propitious day. Nazars were presented to him on November 9, 1840 indicating his enthronement very shortly^[24]. Raja Dhian Singh communicated Russel Clerk, the then British representative at Ludhiana that Kanwar Sher Singh had been unanimously elected as Maharaja and he would serve as minister. The British had already favoured the claim of Prince Sher Singh^[25]. The astute British placed no condition on Kanwar Sher Singh except that the Durbar would make

mutual concessions and adjustments between the two parties while devising means for preserving the integrity of the Khalsa. The British agent, Russel Clerk gave the tacit approval to the claim of Kanwar Sher Singh as the successor of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh and the King of Lahore Kingdom^[26].

It was ill-fated for Kanwar Sher Singh that Sikh traditions prohibited him to take part in public affairs during the twelve days of mourning and during this time Mai Chand Kaur's candidature as a rival candidate appeared on the stage for the claim to the throne with more self-reliance. His claim to the throne was thus confronted with a serious opposition^[27]. Before the grief period expired, Attar Singh, the head of the Sandhawaliala family, arrived in Lahore to take Chand Kaur's side. Ajit Singh Sandhawaliala also reached to help her^[28]. Rani's punctuality to face the challenge of Kanwar Sher Singh even amazed her own kith and kin. After diagnosing the object of Raja Dhian Singh in calling for Sher Singh speedily, she in fact had decided to frustrate the design of Dhian Singh right from the beginning. Bhai Govind Ram on the pattern his brother Bhai Ram Singh also decided to put Kharak Singh's widow as the rival candidate to the throne for their own interests^[29]. She then put forward another claim, the claim to rule on behalf of her impending grandchild. She demonstrated that Sahib Kaur, the widow of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh was in third month's pregnancy and until the child is born she should be considered as regent on behalf of the unborn legal successor to her husband's throne. Then she was having plausible contention to support to her claim to reign as regent on behalf of the unborn legal successor to her husband's throne^[30]. Raja Dhian Singh Dogra further urged that it would be highly inadvisable to have woman at the helm of affairs while the conditions were unsettled specially emphasizing the fact that the British were continually sending troops, stores and ammunition across Punjab to Kabul. The Rani's supporters insisted, however, that the interests of the unborn child would hardly be considered safe in the hands of the ambitious Sher Singh. But the story of pregnancy was considered by the rivals as prevaricated^[31]. They further argued that nothing could be guessed as to the sex of the impending child^[32]. Thereafter Mai Chand Kaur started using much obstinacy in regard to the succession and was no longer prepared for any compromise. She assumed an attitude of scorn towards Sher Singh. Apart from the Bhai's adjacent to her, she was being prejudiced by other persons, e.g. Tek Chand, her Toshakhana-keeper who had so long been striving to supplant Beli Ram and Bakkar Khan, the Droga of her late son's stables^[33].

Raja Dhian Singh then provided a counter blast to her rising influence. He daunted the opposite group by bringing into notice of the courtiers and soldiers the existence of Kanwar Dalip Singh, a child of the great Maharaja, born to Rani Jinda in September, 1838. It was for the first time the British got the knowledge of the existence of Prince Dalip Singh^[34]. He also degraded her position before the Sikhs often by saying, "*O, Sikhs! This does not appear good that the sect of the Khalsa should obey a woman! This does appear proper that you should seat Maharaja Sher Singh who is son of our Lord, Maharaja Ranjit Singh on the throne of the Lahore Kingdom*".³⁵

The position of the Jammu Rajas was remarkably enigmatic. There should be no doubt about the fact that as usual, the Jammu Rajas were of one mind and they had only one end in view i.e. to occupy the whole of the Lahore Kingdom. The family of the Jammu Raja pretended to be divided among them to complicate the matters with the sole end to destroy the both claimants^[36]. By appearance of opposition, these Dogra brothers fructified themselves to be the leaders and controllers of the both contending parties and finally also succeeded in their aim. This apparent split in the Jammu camp has puzzled the chroniclers^[37].

In these circumstances a consideration of compromise was the necessity of time. Mourning period was to come to close on 17th November but nothing was finally settled. By this time Chand Kaur was much more emboldened to get more concessions, especially to get the supreme control in the formation of the government. Another type of compromise was then submitted that she should marry Kanwar Sher Singh or being childless adopt Sher Singh's son, Partap Singh. This mode of adjustment had the peculiar recommendation of securing Sher Singh's attachment to the government in the elevation of his family while in effecting this by admitting the Hindu latitude of adoption in the mother or widow it removed the objection that might be felt or offered to Sher Singh and his family on the score of his spurious birth. Chand Kaur rejected the proposal of matrimony as she considered him the bastard son of a low caste. She parried the suggestion of adopting Partap Singh, son of Sher Singh, by offering instead to adopt Dhian Singh Dogra's son, Hira Singh. Raja Dhian Singh did his best to bring to reason but in vain.³⁸

Raja Dhian Singh then brought out the last significant proposal to break the persisted stalemate which was decided to be forced on the contending parties whether they liked it or not. On the 16th day of Maghar, 27th November, 1840, an agreement was envisaged by the unanimous consent of the grandees to the effect that till such time as Nao Nihal Singh's widow would deliver her child, Sher Singh was to retire to his estate leaving his minor son, Partap Singh to represent him on the council. If Nao Nihal Singh's widow bore a son or otherwise then a new arrangement would be drawn up. Sixteen leading noblemen, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims signed the agreement and Chand Kaur was formally installed with the title of Malika Mukhdas (Queen Empress) and the decision was announced on 30th of November, 1840^[39]. Chand Kaur then became the regent with four ministers—Dhian Singh, Attar Singh Sandhawaliala, Khushal Singh and Lehna Singh to advise her^[40]. The document which was drawn to regulate the succession was as follow;

“At this time, we all, with one heart and one tongue, swear to abide by the stipulations agreed upon among us that Singh Sahib Sher Singh ji shall remain on his jagir and that Partap Singh ji, son of Singh sahib, take his place ;if Sher Singh shall agree to this, it is well; if not, we taking joint action, will compel him to agree. Likewise we will make the exalted Bibi Sahiba (Rani Chand Kaur) consent what has been above arranged will hold good until the birth of a son or otherwise when we will make our arrangements”^[41].

Kanwar Sher Singh felt so helpless that he did not show the least resistance on his being dislodged. Chand Kaur's assertion to her claim to the Lahore throne through the pregnancy of her daughter in law compelled him to reconcile with Chand Kaur being regent. Some historians discerned that that might be due to the Kanwar's consciousness of the nature of his birth. Rani Chand Kaur at the moment succeeded to exclude Sher Singh from the administration configuration and she became able to assume the position of supreme authority in governance. Faqir Azizudin intimated George Clerk, the British political agent at Ludhiana the sort of arrangement then taken place^[42]. Bibi Chand Kaur was a very shrewd lady and that could be gauged from this fact when the opposite party raised an objection as a woman to be ruler she gave rejoinder in inflexible words: *“England is ruled by Queen; why should it be a grace to the Punjab to be governed by a Rani?”*^[43]. This sort of understanding did not suit Kanwar Sher Singh although he could not resist it openly. In this scheming struggle of succession, personal ambitions and lust for power on the part of the claimants subjugated the interests of the Lahore Kingdom. Chand Kaur and Sher Singh played on the tunes of Court notables. Chand Kaur's aver to rule on behalf of her daughter-in-law's impending child appeared totally strange when nothing could be predicted as to sex of the child. She was obsessed with the succession enthronement to such an extent that she even made a futile attempt on the life of Kanwar Sher Singh who was at one time privileged to a seat in the Durbar with the heir apparent, Kanwar Kharak Singh. It was the tragedy of the Lahore Durbar that from Kharak Singh to Sher Singh all its rulers became a victim to the crafty designing of unscrupulous Dogra and Sandhawaliala brothers and Rani Chand Kaur bearing shady semblance also became a prey to the same. Her enthronement came through mechanization. A compromise had been arrived at between the two factions but the truce did not last long. Inwardly Kanwar Sher Singh was disillusioned and was planning to outwit her when the opportunity occurred^[44].

Though Rani Chand Kaur's party seemed to have won, when it came to actual working, the administration was found to be still impeded by a factional spirit on the part of the courtiers. With the retirement of Kanwar Sher Singh from the Durbar to his jagir at Batala, the State began to show signs of disquietude as a result of the laxity of administration^[45]. Although a bold and energetic woman, she could not last her government for long. The administration soon began to slip out of her hands^[46]. Good administration was beyond the hands of Rani Chand Kaur and Kanwar Sher Singh because both were impelled by ideas of self-aggrandizement without the ability to achieve a clear victory or the wisdom to leave things in the hands of competent ministers. Each one neglected the public welfare and provided only for his private interest. Gradually there arose a general dissatisfaction. In addition Raja Dhian Singh Dogra was not liked by his colleagues. Power corrupted even Mai Chand Kaur herself. She regarded the supreme authority as a means of indulging in her passions and vices which was tolerated during the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. She governed the kingdom under the guidance of twenty principal men who called themselves counsellors. She showed her much preference to Raja Gulab

Singh and Jamadar Khushhal Singh. They accused Raja Dhian Singh of misusing his authority and finally obtained a decision that all the decisions be signed by Rani Chand Kaur so that she should not remain dependent upon only Raja Dhian Singh^[47]. Indeed all the acts of Mai Chand seemed to be those of a grasping indiscreet woman. The Punjabis were heavily loaded against her. They were unable to reconcile themselves being ruled by a woman who could not leave the veiled seclusion of the *Zenana*. Bedi Bikram Singh of Una, who had come to Lahore to carry out the investiture, stated categorically; *"I have come to give the tikka to Kanwar Sher Singh and not a woman, for no woman has, or can ever, reign at Lahore"*. She did not even care much for the army which had placed her on the throne. She not only forgot to distribute gifts among them but curtailed their liberties as well^[48].

Mai Chand Kaur was unpopular because of her relativity with Bhai Ram Singh. She did not prefer even to go out of her palace. She was vain, ill-tempered and given to using language that became a bazaar woman than a Maharani. She proved to be singularly inept in the art of diplomacy. Above all Rani Chand Kaur was not a woman of strong character and ability who could be successful in reconciling the Sikhs to her control. She used her power as a means of ministering to her depraved desires and her own shortcomings even disgusted her own supporters^[49]. As the colleagues of Dhian Singh were jealous of him of his sharp intelligence and quick grasp of confused administrative problems, they, instead of stimulating cooperation, incited them to put as many obstacles as possible in his way. Once while going to the private apartments in his capacity as Chamberlain, he was stopped by the guards posted by Ajit Singh Sandawalia^[50]. In a mood of despair and having a sense humiliation he refused to come out to his office for five weeks. Even his stoppage as Chamberlain led to an exchange of abuses between the Dogras and the Sandhwalias. The Rani supported Ajit Singh Sandhwalia making it crystal clear that Raja Dhian Singh was no longer to consider him *Deodidar*^[51]. Apart from it there were some other instances which gloomed Raja Dhian Singh's state of mind^[52]. Therefore the Raja started hesitating in attending the Durbar and the country grew unquiet day by day. The crimes increased and no security was prevailing on the roads. The outlying districts were ready to rebel. Discontent soon fielded throughout the country and insurrection broke out in various parts of Punjab Kingdom. The Raja was so much disgusted with her inner attitude that he desired permission to go to his native country, Jammu for two months to heave a sigh of relief. Meanwhile the intense rivalry and struggle going on between the parties of Mai Chand Kaur and Raja Dhian Singh for the command of the army impelled Raja Dhian Singh to proceed to Jammu though excuse he had given that he wanted to take rest at his native place^[53]. The Rani permitted him leave and outwardly commenting that if he delayed longer, she would give up the charge of the government and return to Fatehgarh. The Raja also superficially promised to return within stipulated period of fifteen days^[54]. For about thirty days, Raja Dhian Singh remained stationed at Jammu during which time the emissaries he had left behind at Lahore secretly to ply the Sikh soldiery, had so well played their part as to have received promises from the different corps that as soon as the minister and Kanwar Sher Singh should present

themselves at Lahore, they would place the later upon the throne^[55]. In the absence of Raja Dhian Singh, however, the whole administrative apparatus went out of control. And it became soon evident that with Rani Chand Kaur the government could not be carried on in an efficient manner. The dice was heavily loaded against Rani Chand Kaur as the feelings of confusion and dismay came to possess the minds of the people^[56]. The adversaries of Chand kaur argued that in spite of helping Rani Chand Kaur by the army in her accession to the throne, she had not given any reward to it. They exploited the situation even remarking that the Sandhwalias were the allies of the British and have the full sway over the whole administration and further alleged that they were planning to hand over the Punjab to the foreigners^[57]. To add fuel to the fire, there was Hira Singh, the son of Dhian Singh, who took full advantage of the situation and pointed out curtly in his verbal communication against Rani Chand Kaur; *"When the second son of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh, is here in person and is competent to take the country in to his charge, why should he be deprived of his chance of kingship. I give my word to you (army) that on his becoming the ruler, you (army) will be rewarded amply and have a raise in pay both. I fail to understand that being men, why you have agreeable to be ruled over by a woman?"*^[58]

George Russel Clerk, the British Political Agent, Ludhiana, painted the situation in a grave manner and expressed a conviction that the interference of the British would be necessary. Governor-General-in-Council articulated their great regret at the prospects of instability and disappearance of law and order in the governance of Punjab^[59]. The crimes unfolded to such an extent that the Rani failed to control the situation which had turned finally to be muddled. Restlessness soon fielded throughout the countryside, gave chance to insurrections to break out in different parts of Punjab kingdom which finally culminated in the attack of Kanwar Sher Singh on Lahore to outwit Rani Chand Kaur in which he had been fructified^[60].

At Batala, Kanwar Sher Singh was desperately waiting for an opportunity to mould his destiny. Actually at the time of the succession of Rani Chand Kaur, he wanted to detest her claim but on the counsel of Raja Dhian Singh he refrained himself from doing so^[61]. Unfortunately Raja Dhian Singh's emissaries in his absence geared up the situation in favour of Kanwar Sher Singh. After listening rabble-rousing speeches of Sher Singh and Raja Dhian Singh's emissaries, the army was won over and was readily available to fructify Sher Singh's endeavour to dethrone Mai ChandKaur^[62]. A meeting of Army *panches* and notable courtiers of the Durbar was conducted in the Mian Mir cantonment and after a long conversation it was observed that this great Raj, which was established with the precious blood of the Khalsa, then for lack of administration had fallen to deteriorated condition and with it the prestige of the Lahore Kingdom had been lowered in the eyes of the others. Accordingly five *panches* of the Army and five Chiefs of the Khalsa Durbar reached at Batala and presented Kanwar Sher Singh a request-letter asking him to reach Lahore to save the Khalsa Raj from further annihilation^[63]. Rani Chand Kaur and his partisans were also well aware of the efforts being geared by Kanwar Sher Singh to mould his luck. She was also anxious to enlist the support

of the British to retain power. She deputed Ajit Singh Sandhawalia to see George Russel Clerk, the British political agent at Ludhiana, investing him with full discretion to negotiate on her behalf. She even entrusted him with signed and sealed engagements, proposing that the friendship with the late Maharaja Ranjit Singh be unrelenting. She would also wish to have a Resident with one or two battalions at Lahore to protect her rights. Ajit Singh Sandhawalia then crossed the Sutlej at *Manjerry* unattended on 13th January 1841 under his uncle's charge, Lehna Singh Sandhawalia and sought an interview with Clerk by suddenly arriving at Ludhiana on 18th January. However Clerk curtly refused to entertain him as he had crossed the river without regarding the time-honoured rules and directed him to go back to Lahore through the Durbar Vakils at Ludhiana. The Rani thereafter tried to utilize the opportunity provided by the reaching of Colonel Weeler at the Chenab on the way from Kabul to Ludhiana. But the Rani's party was again botched in their desired mission as the Colonel was already instructed by the British Government to remain neutral. The invitation to the British to become involved in the infighting in Lahore Durbar was another reckless move made with complete unconcern for consequences. Its future omen was to be disastrous and proved right as well. Every possible means were being practiced to retain the power. Interests of the Lahore Durbar were treated secondary by both the parties. Great consternation was caused to the inmates of the fort of Lahore by unexpected arrival of Kanwar Sher Singh at the Shalimar Gardens. Kanwar Sher Singh had probably been induced to come by observing the many unequivocal signs lately shown by army of fidelity to Raja Dhian Singh. But it might be imagined by the assurances of the Generals, particularly of JB Ventura and Colonel CA Court that he himself also enjoyed the popularity of the army.⁶⁴ Rani Chand Kaur earlier appointed Tej Singh as Commander in Chief and through him assured the army men that their wages would be paid regularly on the 25th of every month. He made the men and officers pledge of allegiance to her. But none these measures helped her. She then dismissed unproductive Tej Singh who was ostracized by the soldiers and appointed Gulab Singh Dogra as new administrator and defender of the city^[65].

Kanwar Sher Singh, after getting the full confidence of the army and courtiers and according to the need of the time, with 70,000 soldiers and 200 tops, invaded Lahore at 8 P.M on 15 January 1841^[66]. By the evening of 16th January, 1840 the leading Sardars including Sham Singh Attariwala, Faqir Azizudin and the two Bhais Govind Ram and Ram Singh, who instigated the Rani to stake claim, made their submission and shifted their loyalty. In this way, like the troops, almost all the Sardars abandoned the Rani's cause. Gardner mentioned: "*the treachery of Tej Singh was conspicuously and pointedly base, the having prayed us to leave the gates of the upper fort open for the Sardars. The whole garrison had therefore sworn to a man to kill Tej Singh if fate put him in their way*"^[67]. In the course of ongoing hostilities, Kanwar Sher Singh called on the defending troops to surrender and offered the Rani safe conduct. She, however, pinned her hopes upon the fidelity of Raja Gulab Singh, Teja Singh and Attar Singh Sandhawalia^[68]. Both sides were making their best efforts in turning the

fortune in their side. It is estimated that Gulab Singh gave away three lacks of rupees and Sher Singh five, during the twenty four hours before hostilities commenced. Love of gold had so corrupted the Khalsa soldiers that they abandoned any attempt at discrimination between right and wrong and sold their blood to the highest bidder sometimes avowing allegiance to each side in turn. Each one claimant in turn offered donations and more liberal salaries to any troops aiding each one's cause^[69]. At this juncture the Khalsa troops behaved in the most savage and brutal way. Seizing the women from the private houses in the city, they compelled these unfortunate creatures to stand in front of their guns and around them. Many were forcibly bound to the wheels of the artillery. The object of the barbarians in thus forcing the tender sex to surround their guns and occupy a place in front of their own ranks was to divert the direct effect of the enemy's fire^[70]. During the 17th January, the firing continued with little operation and the walls of the citadel suffered considerably but the soldiers of Raja Gulab Singh within were said to direct their matchlocks with great effect on the besiegers. When the bombardment ceased by noon, the circle of guns stood around the fort, around which it is said no less than 2000 dead men lay, accompanied by some thousand cattle. In the evening Sham Singh Attarwala, Faqir Azizudin, Rao Singh Thappa and Bhai Ram Singh waited on the Kanwar and presented their Nazars. Faqir was received by Kanwar Sher Singh with great indness^[71]. In this battle for supremacy, fortune finally turned the table in favour of Kanwar Sher Singh and Rani Chand Kaur's challenge to retain the power was jeopardized.

Rani Chand Kaur then realized that her fate had been sealed. Her maneuvering, however, went on secretly disturbing the rhythm of sacrosanct administrative instinct. Sardar Ajit Singh Sandhawalia who had been deputed by Rani Chand Kaur to ask for aid from the British agent at Ludhiana, had also returned with disappointment and empty hands. They then tried to enlist British assistance through Lala Harsarn Dass who was the British news writer at Lahore. The Rani communicated Harsarn Dass what she had proposed in her letter to Clerk. Resultantly Harsarn Dass wrote in detail that the Rani apparently had declared herself willing to accept a British Resident at Lahore and to be guided by him in forming a ministry. She offered if the British would come to her help, she was ready to transfer to them either the province of Kashmir or one fourth of the annual revenues of the entire Punjab and one year's revenue from Kashmir as a personal gift for Russel Clerk which was nothing but a complete betrayal with the Kingdom of Lahore by its master. She added that state troops in Lahore numbered no more than 20,000 and it would take only eight British battalions to bring them under control. Bhai Ram Singh while pressing the Rani's suit, found fit to interpolate an idea on his own that Chand Kaur herself being without an heir and Sahib Kaur's expected child, a doubtful proposition, the British would have a chance of obtaining it by escheat-a further sell out just to remain in power. Clerk, however, refused an intervention as Governor-General was not in favour of being party to the domestic affairs of the Sikhs^[72]. Rani Chand Kaur then thought of resorting peace and wrote a letter to Raja Gulab Singh to stop

the method of fighting in which from 14th January to 18th January 1841, four thousand men were slain and hostilities be terminated^[73].

On this Raja Gulab Singh opened negotiations and he made the following three conditions:

Firstly the Rani Sahiban should be honoured and given a suitable position.

Secondly, all the Sardars on her side be pardoned.

Lastly Gulab Singh and other leading nobles should be taken into favour.

Kanwar Sher Singh acceded to all these conditions and wrote to Raja Gulab Singh a letter, signed by himself and all the leading nobles on his side^[74]. In response to the issue of the said letter and the conciliatory message of Raja Dhian Singh, the fire ceased from inside the fort as well. When fighting remained suspended for about ten hours near the gate, then Baba Mian Singh Bedi, one of the famous Sardars, came to Raja Gulab Singh bearing the royal mandate in order to mediate for the evacuation of the fort and opening the door of peace thereby^[75]. Raja Gulab Singh responded that if an agreement be finalized with Rani Chand Kaur, for whose sake all this battle had embroiled, guaranteeing her person honour and dignity and the sanction of jagir worth seven lacs of rupees, the fort would be readily evacuated. Consequently letters bearing assurances in response to every interrogation were received one after the other. The propositions were submitted to the Rani in Gurmukhi character and she signed them. It was proposed and agreed to that all the servants of the late Maharaja and Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh if serving the present Maharaja with fidelity, should be allowed to enjoy their estates and hold their ranks, that all the usual respect be shown to the Rani, that the Toshakhana at Fategarh and Sheikhpur should belong to the present Maharaja together with all the jewels precious stones and other things in the Summon Burj. All the demands of Rani Chand Kaur were compromised in accordance to her sweet desire and an agreement was obtained containing *sanad* for jagir worth nine lacs of rupees and the sanction of other demands, Raja Gulab Singh received the honour of attending on the Rani^[76].

Now the Kanwar thought of a plan with which internal conflicts regarding the plans to the throne between her and him could be sorted out. After long contemplation, he thought of marriage with Chand Kaur. He consulted about it with Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Sardar Jawala Singh, Pandit Beli Ram, Ajudhia Parshad and they approved it. Baba Bikram Singh, being the go-between of this proposal, set it before the Rani who because of the depressing demise of Kharak Singh and Nao Nihal Singh, showed little bit dithering in accepting the offer at this moment. Baba Bikram Singh and the Kanwar understood the Rani's hesitation in compliant the proposal. After some time they again reminded the Rani with the same suggestion. Thereafter the day was fixed for the proposed marriage. But the matter was leaked to Raja Gulab Singh by a lady named 'Tehlan'. Raja Gulab Singh apprehended in this settlement of losing her nine lakhs jagir and the treasury of the fort looted by him. Raja Gulab Singh through Sardar Chanda Singh, who was the brother of Mai Chand Kaur, succeeded in breaking this design^[77].

The very short days of Mai Chand Kaur's misrule turned out to be significant. Turbulent soldiers, the Achilles heel of Sikh

Kingdom, the vulnerable point in the body of politics which the British were to discover and turn to their own advantage. The main supporters of the Rani, the Sandhwalias sensed that they would be treated loathsome by the new ruler, resultantly Attar Singh and Ajit Singh crossing Sutlej, managed to effect their escape clandestinely along with his jewellery from the capital into the British territories at Ludhiana in 1841 to seek help and protection but Lehna Singh and the other principal Sardars however continued to serve the division of the army which commanded in the hills of Kulu and Mandi believing that there was some possibility that she might again come to power one day and had involved in intrigues against Kanwar Sher Singh^[78]. Sher Singh's popularity also did not last long. Rani was again becoming the hope. There was again possibility of turning the wheel. However, Kanwar Sher Singh again decided to thwart the designs of the Rani. He communicated Russel Clerk that the pregnancy of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh was actually plot to make a claim for the throne which was evident from this fact that at the time of Nao Nihal Singh's sad demise, Kanwar's unfortunate widow was only of 10 years of age and strategically a few pregnant women were brought together round her in order to show the birth of a boy to Kanwar's wife. Besides she conspired to kill him (Kanwar) and actually ordered the barbarians to shoot him as well^[79]. The Maharaja then concluded that that so long this ambitious and scheming lady survived, he could not be safe and sound and resolved on her destruction. Raja Dhian Singh, his core backer equally preferred her fatality^[80]. As a first step Dhian Singh arranged a *daee* (midwife) to get Sahib Kaur killed. She was forcibly aborted and by the feeling of immense pain, she died. This ended whatever hopes Chand Kaur had of resurrecting her claims. But courtly intrigue had not ceased^[81]. Thereafter he conspiratorially handled the question of Rani Chand Kaur.

It was true that Rani Chand Kaur though under constant surveillance, was at the head of the Sandhwalia party which was countenance, could be at any time rendered formidable. Sher Singh resultantly conferred and conspired with Raja Dhian Singh, the Prime Minister about this matter. Having agreed to the death of Mai Chand Kaur, which Kanwar Sher Singh believed would free him from the fear of the hated Sandhwalia, Dhian Singh successfully plotted to kill her in union with Mahan Singh, the Thanedar of Lahore and certain other persons^[82]. He further asked him to confer with Icchar Singh who was a brother of Budh Singh and Dewa Singh Mehra who were appointed under the orders of Maharaja Sher Singh to keep watch and guard over Rani Chand Kaur and to make them arrange somehow that the maidservants of *Rani Sahiban* might agree with him in spirit and expression of feeling them that in case they would engage themselves in the destruction of that lady, they would be true in expecting various kinds of favours and daily increasing patronage of the Kanwar^[83]. Subsequently Mahan Singh first held conference with Icchar Singh who was always ready to render his services and was quiet ready to abide by the orders of the Kanwar promptly. In privacy, he replaced the maidservants of Rani with hill women of his own country namely Hiro Ganj, Asu, Phri Mochan and Hassu. These maid servants who were quite deprived of the traits of nobility and good nature, did not make any distinction between good and evil and fixed their

attention to the allotted mission as well as upon their own destruction^[84]. They first infused poison in a beverage as the Rani was in the habit of taking (*arq gulab-o-bed mushq*). The Rani tasted it, threw it away and began to find faults with the slave girls. One sultry day, in the month of June, while the Maharaja was in Batala, Rani Chand Kaur got an attack of migraine. At night while she was taking rest, the same women stole into her apartment and smashed her skull with grindstone^[85]. The servants of the deceased perpetuated this atrocity by striking her several blows with stones, one of which fractured her skull. They were interrupted in their savage attack by the fourth who was Hindu. After three days of agony, she expired on 12th June, 1842^[86]. According to Harbans Singh, these maid servants finished her off smashing her head with wooden pikes from the kitchen. Dhian Singh however had had their tongues cut off to prevent them divulging the plot. In the end they were executed under his own orders. Sohan Lal Suri, the Court Chronicler blamed Dhian Singh and Maharaja Sher Singh for this dastardly act and observed that Mahan Singh, Thanedar of Lahore, had hired four women to arrange her assassination. Khushwant Singh considered Raja Gulab Singh Dogra as having stronger possibility of being at the back of crime. For he had taken away immense treasure^[87]. According to a *Lahore Akhbar* of September 6, 1843, Maharaja Sher Singh incautiously acknowledged that he was the author of the Rani's death. Having been informed shortly before his own assassination, that Ajit Singh Sandhawaliala was mechanizing against him, he declared that if he found this to be true, he would put him to death "as he had done with Chand Kaur". Amrinder Singh in his publication *The Last Sunset* opined that the seed of bitterness was sown in Sher Singh's mind and nurtured to such an extent that finally he ordered her execution. Her maid servants who killed her were to be given Rs 5000 for this dastardly act^[88].

Conclusion

Be that as it may, the Rani's disappearance from the scene was a big relief to Maharaja Sher Singh for, as long as she lived, the Sandhawaliala brothers continued to scheme for her restoration, by which they again looked to rebuild their own fortunes, if not to secure possession of the throne itself which in the absence of any male direct descendant of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, would pass by law of inheritance to the Sandhawaliala family. The Rani's death completely wrecked their plans, and soon afterwards through the diplomatic mediation of the British Government, they manage to obtain the Maharaja's pardon and were once more received at the Court of Lahore, though did not remain trust worthy and were ready to ditch to their Master at an appropriate time^[89]. The connivance of the Rani with Sandhawaliala Sardars was at the crest during her last days. Though the British remained lukewarm in their support to her, but she made every possible effort to turn the table in her favour though her mechanization and messengers. Alarmed by her threatened activities, her adversaries resolved to put her obliteration and finally fructified in their game. A maneuvered character from the violent stage of turbulent politics of Punjab had been detached. The short spell of the regime of Rani Chand Kaur was the most turbulent period in the history of Lahore Kingdom in which intrigues and rivalries became the order of

the day. In short, it can aptly be stated that Rani Chand Kaur succeeded by scheming, reigned by collusions and croaked by conniving. Though she remained controversial throughout her life but her assassination certainly exhibited loss of grace and grand eour of Sikh monarchy. She bore manifestation of shaded appearance.

References

1. Griffin Lapel H, The Punjab Chiefs, C. Maccarthy, Chronicle Press, Lahore, Hereafter cited as Griffin, Lapel H., The Punjab Chiefs. See also: Dharmjit Singh, Turbulent Milieu and Melancholic Demise of Sikh Monarchy (1839-1849) cited in Charan Kanwal: A Journal of Advance Studies, Vol. 1 (2014-15), Sikh National College, Banga, ISSN 2394-6245, pp. 1-14. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature, Part 1, Bhai Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar (revised 2004), p.360, 1865; 1:7.
2. Chopra, Barkat Rai, Kingdom of the Punjab 1839-1845, Vishveshvaranand Institute, Hoshiarpur (1869), 7. Hereafter cited as Kingdom of the Punjab, 1839-1845.
3. Lapel Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, 7. See also: Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature, Part 1, Bhai Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar (revised 2004), 360.
4. Thornton, Thomas Henry, History of the Punjab and the Rise, Progress and Present Condition of the Sect and the Nation of the Sikhs, Allen, London (1945), p.226. Hereafter cited as Thornton, Thomas Henry, History of the Punjab and the Rise, Progress and Present Condition of the Sect and the Nation of the Sikhs
5. Chopra, Barkat Rai, Kingdom of the Punjab 1839-1845, 95) See also: Dharmjit Singh, Rani Chand Kaur in the Turblent politics of Punjab, Twentyfirst Century Publications, Patiala, 2015, 3. Grewal JS. The Sikhs of the Punjab, Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 1991, 120. Sangat Singh. Ithas Vich Sikh, Singh Brothers, Amritsar 2008, 131.
6. Khushwant Singh, The Fall of the Kingdom of the Punjab, Eastened Ptinters, Calcutta (1962), 27. See also: Bal, SS, British Policy towards Punjab, New Age Publishers, Calcutta, 1971, 2. It was suspected that Nao Nihal Singh was still alive when extricated from the debris and brutally done to death soon afterwards (Bikramjit Hasrat, Anglo Sikh Relations 1799-1849, VV Research Institute Press, Hoshiarpur (1968), 197. J S Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 1991, 120.
7. Griffin, Lapel, H., The Punjab Chiefs, 7.
8. It was remoured that the Rani actually never bore any child. Her mother Sada Kaur took them from their parents and proclaimed them as off springs of Mehtab Kaur. She had even earlier experimented such a thing. In 1804, a son was presented to the Maharaja by her, whose name was Isher Singh, the child died a year and a half after his birth. It was, however, certain that neither his mother was Mehtab Kaur nor his father, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. So far as Kanwar Sher Singh was concerned he was the son of Chintz weaver, named Nihala, native of Mukerian, Hoshiarpur District, in the jagir of Sada Kaur and was the

- son of a Muhamadan woman, Manki, a slave girl. Griffin, Lapel H., *The Punjab Chiefs*, 7.
9. Thornton, Thomas Henry, *History of the Punjab and the Rise, Progress and Present Condition of the Sect and the Nation of the Sikhs*, 226. See also: Patwant Singh, *The Sikhs*, Rupa and Co. New Delhi, 2002, 146.
 10. Faqir Azizuddin was the son of Sayyad Gholam Mohaiuddin who was posted at the subordinate rank under Nawab Abdul Samad Khan and Zakria Khan, Governors of Lahore. Khushal Singh or Khushhal, as he was first called, was the son of a poor Brahman shop-keeper of Ikri, District Meerut.
 11. Panikar KM. *Gulab Singh*, Martin Hopkinson, London Hereafter cited as Panikar, KM, *Gulab Singh*, 1930, 44.
 12. Kohli SR, *Sun Set of the Sikh Empire*, Orient Longmans, Bombay, Hereafter cited as Kohli, *Sun Set of the Sikh Empire*, 1967, 30. The names of six Princes were Sher Singh and his twin brother Tara Singh born in 1807; Peshaura Singh born in 1818 and his brother Kashmiri Singh born in 1819; Multana Singh born in 1819 and Dalip Singh born in 1838. Their legitimacy was in doubt as it was being suspected that many of them were purchased from their parents under stratagem and were proclaimed as the offspring of Mehtab Kaur (the wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh) (Kohli, SR, *Sun Set of the Sikh Empire*, 30). It is important to note that with the death of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh, also expired the legitimate line of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Pearse, Major Hugh, *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner*, William Blackwood, London Hereafter cited as Pearse, Major Hugh, *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner*, 1898, 227).
 13. Ibid.
 14. Khushwant Singh, *A History of The Sikhs*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Hereafter cited as Khushwant Singh, *A History of The Sikhs*, 1966; 2:13. On 5th November, 1840, Thursday, in the darkness of night, Raja Dhian Singh with a signed letter deputed Bhai Mahim Singh and certain other special Khidmatkars (devoted persons) to Kanwar Sher Singh acquainting him of the occurrence of unexpected event and asking him to come at once with his happy intention and his heart giving full assurance as well indicating that the chair of his desire has been rendered vacant so he should not delay even for a minute (Kanhaiya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, Victoria Press, Lahore (1888), translated by Jit Singh Seetal, Punjabi University, Patiala (1968), p346 Hereafter cited as Kanhaiya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*)
 15. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, 13.
 16. *Punjab Intelligence*, Lahore, 7th November, 1840, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 23rd December, 1840, No.69, Secret Consultations, Governor –General’s Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
 17. Suri, Sohan Lal, *Umdat-Ut-Twarikh*, Translated by Suri, VS., from Persian to English, Daftar I, part II, Punjab Ithas Parkashan, Chandigarh, 1972, 129. Hereafter cited as Suri, Sohan Lal, *Umdat-Ut-Twarikh*,
 18. *Punjab Intelligence*, Lahore, 1st to 9th November, 1840, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 7th December, 1840, No.116, Secret Consultations, Governor -General’s Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
 19. There were two rival groups in the Lahore Durbar. The group of Sandhawalia Sardars was deadly against the group of Dogra brothers who had monopolized almost all the high ranking offices of the Kindom of Lahore. The Sandhawalia group, the 2nd powerful group in the Lahore Durbar, mainly consisted of Attar Singh, Lehna Singh, Ajit Singh and Shamsheer Singh who espoused the claim of Mai Chand Kaur to the throne.
 20. Smyth, Major G, Carmichael, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, W. Thacker and Co., Calcutta, 1847, 37 Hereafter cited as Smyth, Major, G. Carmichael, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*. See also: Latife, Syed M., *History of the Punjab*, Caxton Printing Works, Lahore, Lahore, 1916, 389. Hereafter cited as Latife, Syed M., *History of the Punjab*
 21. Raja Heera Singh, son of the Chief Minister, Raja Dhian Singh was a great favourite with Maharaja Ranjit Singh than any other of his chiefs, ever not excepting his father" Smyth, Major, G. Carmichael, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, 51.
 22. In reality after the direct descendants of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Attar Singh Sandhawalia was nearest to the claim for throne Thornton Thomas Henry, *History of the Punjab and Rise, Progress and present condition of the Sect and Nation of the Sikhs*, 221.
 23. Beli Ram Singh was another high ranking noble in the court of late Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh who after the death of the latter ardently favoured enthronement of Kanwar Sher Singh Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 23rd November, 1840, No.78, Secret Consultations Governor-General’s Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
 24. Sher Singh mentioned these facts in his letter addressed to Russel Clerk, Agent to the Governor- General at Ludhiana who communicated further to his Government on 11th November, 1840 Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 23rd November, 1840, No. 80, Secret consultations Governor-General’s Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
 25. George Russel Clerk to T H Maddock (Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 23rd November, 1840, No. 81, Secret Consultations, Governor-General’s Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. Raja Dhian Singh wrote to Russel Clerk, The term of fate has now hurled on us the heart of undoing calamity of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh but having with a view to our future welfare and sincerity, acknowledged the right of Kanwar Sher Singh to succeed to throne. We have made him the Maharaja and seated him on the throne in a manner that he may remain in obedience and subjection to Mai Chand Kaur, the mother of lamented of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh. He may perform the duties of State concert and consultation with his ministers. These arrangements have been adopted by the whole Khalsa in concerned and unanimity that nothing else shall come to pass and there is every type of friendship from British

- Government at such a sad crisis Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 23rd November, 1840, No.79, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
26. Seetal, Sohan Singh, *How Fell The Sikh Kingdom*, Lyall Book Depot, Ludhiana 1970, 43. Hereafter cited as Seetal, Sohan Singh, *How Fell The Sikh Kingdom*. See also: Thornton, Thomas Henry, *History of the Punjab and Rise, Progress and Present condition of the Sect and Nation of the Sikhs*, 222.
 27. Payne, CH, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London 1915, 142. Hereafter cited as Payne, CH, *A Short History of the Sikhs*
 28. Thornton, Thomas Henry, *History of the Punjab and Rise, Progress and present condition of the Sect and Nation of the Sikhs*, 223.
 29. Khilnani, NM, *British Power in Punjab*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1972, 18. See also: MacGregor, WL, *History of the Sikhs*, London 1840, 78. Hereafter cited as MacGregor, WL, *History of the Sikhs Bhai Govind Ram and Bhai Ram Singh were the sons of the Harbhaj Rai*. Khushwant Singh, *The Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab*, Eastened Printers, Calcutta 1962, 27.
 30. The British discerned that she fully exploited the sympathy that the tragedy had generated and solidified her claim to the throne Thornton, Thomas Henry, *History of the Punjab and Rise, Progress and present condition of the Sect and Nation of the Sikhs*, 142. See also: Kohli, SR, *Sun Set of the Sikh Empire*, 31. Raja Dhian Singh also communicated to Russel Clerk that one of the widow of Nao Nihal Singh was pregnant and Mai Chand Kaur was demonstrating that until the child was born, she should be considered as regent. She might even gain her ground by repudiating the birth of Kanwar Sher Singh (Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 23rd November, 1840, No.81, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. Harbans Singh, *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, 1, A-D, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1992.
 31. Kohli, SR, *Sun Set of the Sikh Empire*, 31. See also: Steinbach, Lt. Col., *Punjab being a brief account of the country of the Sikhs*, Smith, Elders and Company, London, 29. British intelligence report reflected a different picture about the pregnancy. In its report it mentioned "the story of pregnancy of Nao Nihal Singh's widow was said to be a gross fabrication. Several contemporary and later writers alleged that it was merely a ruse on Chand Kaur's part for intruding her own right to rule and suspected that Sahib Kaur was not actually pregnant Punjab Intelligence, Lahore, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 23rd November, 1840, No.81, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
 32. Singh, OP, *Ranjit Singh & His Successors*, Surjit Book Depot, Delhi, 1955, 146. But it is a fact Sahib Kaur did bear a still born child in 1841. It is possible that Chand Kaur might have assembled some pregnant women near Sahib Kaur. This might have been done to ensure the procuring of a male child if Sahib Kaur gave birth to female child. Nevertheless there was little doubt about the fact that Sahib Kaur was pregnant and she did bear a child. Moreover the circumstances resulting in the dead child being born to Sahib Kaur and following it the death of the later created serious suspicion regarding the part played by Kanwar Sher Singh in the matter Suri, Sohan Lal, *_Udmat-Ut-Twarikh*, Daftar I, part II, 31.
 33. Toshakhana-keeper meant in charge of the 'Royal treasury' and 'Droga of her stables' meant 'Controller of her stables'.
 34. Kanhaiya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, 31. An information regarding the existence of Dalip Singh was also sent to the British authorities through a letter to Faqir Shadin, the Lahore Wakil at Ferozepur. It bore the seal of Raja Dhian Singh and was in the handwriting of Faqir Azizudin Punjab Intelligence, Lahore, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 12th November, 1840, No.65, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
 35. Court Henry, *History of the Sikhs*, Lahore 1888, 21. Hereafter cited as Court Henry, *History of the Sikhs*
 36. Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 21st December, 1840, No.105, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. See also: Pearse, Major Hugh, *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner*, 228. Smyth, Major, G. Carmichael, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, 41.
 37. Payne, CH, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p.142. See also : Sangat Singh, *Ithas Vich Sikh*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar 2008, 131-132.
 38. Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 7th December, 1840, No.117, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. Clerk reported to the British Government about the prevailing contentious deliberations in the Lahore Durbar on the question of succession to the throne as it arose over the adoption by Chand Kaur, of Partap Singh, son of Sher Singh. This sort of adjustment was favourable to the family of Sher Singh's attachment to the government in the elevation of his family Ibid., See also: Chopra, Barkat Rai, *Kingdom of the Punjab, 1839-1845*, 104.
 39. Khushwant Singh, *The Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab*, Eastened Printers, Calcutta, 1962, 30.
 40. The great men of the Kingdom spent several hours in deliberating which of the two should ascend the throne till at length on the 30th of November, 1840. The thunders of the artillery announced to Kanwar Sher Singh that Rani Chand Kaur had been chosen Queen- Orlich, C.L., *Travels in India including Sindh and the Punjab*, Longman, London, 1945; 1: 176. Hereafter cited as Orlich, C.L., *Travels in India including Sindh and the Punjab*
 41. Kanwar Sher Singh communicated to Faqir Azizudin that he was forced actually to accept the terms of agreement and sign by Diwan Dina Nath who came a Gorkha Battalion from the village, named Campu-i-Muala-Clerk

- to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 14 December, 1840, No. 84, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
42. Clerk informed that Thakur Shaboodin has given him a letter of Faqir Azizudin stating that the terms for carrying on the Government of the Punjab during the pregnancy of one of the widows of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh had been agreed to, that Chand Kaur, the mother of the deceased Prince should be the Chief authority in the State, and they felt that they could not do better at present without visiting a collision with the Mai- Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 14 December, 1840, No. 84. Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
 43. Thornton, Thomas Henry, History of the Punjab and Rise, Progress and present condition of the Sect and Nation of the Sikhs, 224-225. See also : Kalsiwala, Giani Karkar Singh, Durbar Khalsa, Bhai Jwahaar Singh, Kirpal Singh and Co., Amritsar, 33. Hereafter cited as Kalsiwala, Giani Karkar Singh, Durbar Khalsa Kanwar held his Durbar in the Baradari and observed to Bhai Ram Singh, Jamadar Khushal Singh, Faqir Azizudin and Raja Gulab Singh, that they had held so many conferences in which nothing was decided. He therefore would prefer being dismissed in order to avoid his further ruin-Punjab Intelligence, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 21st December, 1840, No. 107. Secret Consultations. Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. It is remarkable to note that even during the conferences of the Sardars in the fortress while the efforts were being made to solve the stalemate of succession, Rani Chand Kaur attempted to take the life of Sher Singh but did not succeed. Honigberger, J.M., Thirty Five Years in the East, Bangabasi, office, Calcutta 1905, 107. Hereafter cited as Honigberger, J.M., Thirty Five Years in the East
 44. Dharmjit Singh, Rani Chand Kaur in the turbulent politics of Punjab, Twenty first Century Publications, Patiala, 2015, 25. Dharmjit Singh, Enthronement of Mai Chand Kaur- 1840, Zenith International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research - ISSN 2231-5780 6(2), February 2016, 99-105, online available at zenithresearch.org.in. Harjinder Singh Dilgir, Sikh Tawarikh (1708-1849AD), Part Second, Sikh University Press, Belgium, 2008, 643.
 45. Clerk to Maddock, 11th December, 1840, 309, Press List of Old Records in Punjab Secretariat, Vol. VII, 75, Punjab State Archives, Patiala From the very beginning it was being anticipated that the new arrangement would not prove conducive (Ibid.) See also: Kohli, SR, Sun Set of the Sikh Empire, 33.
 46. A general order was issued by the Rani to all the Khalsa servants directing them to call her Maharanee Sahebah Punjab Intelligence, Lahore up to 30th December, 1840, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 25th January 1841, No. 101, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. See also: Kohli, SR, Sun Set of the Sikh Empire, 33
 47. Honigberger, J M, Thirty Five Years in the East, I, 108 See also: Orlich, L P, Travels in India including Sindh and the Punjab, 176-177. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature, Part 1, Bhai Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar revised 2004, 360.
 48. Clerk communicated to Maddock that all the acts of Rani Chand Kaur appeared to be of an imprudent woman. His principal advisor, Bhai Ram Singh, though having deep understanding of the government of the Sikhs, had rivals in her court. There were however two of the three individuals of discernment and influence whose writ then running the State. Raja Dhian Singh was not in favour of these Sardars and there was no unanimity between them. Faqir Azizudin had no influence or desire to express opinion on important matters Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 28th December, 1840, No. 104, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 28th December, 1840, No. 105, Secret Consultations. Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 23rd November, 1840, No. 81, Secret Consultations. Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
 49. Ibid.; See also: Kanhaiya Lal, Tarikh-i-Punjab, Victoria Press, Lahore, 1888, Translated by Jit Singh Seetal, Punjabi University Patiala, 1968, 356. Payne, CH, A Short History of the Sikhs, 142 .
 50. Kohli, SR., Sun Set of the Sikh Empire, 33.
 51. Khushwant Singh, The Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab, Eastend Printers, Calcutta, 1962, 32.
 52. One day Raja Dhian Singh brought swift footed horses into the garden for the sake of Gharwal cannons. Jawahar Mal, who was superintendent of the Top Khana of Garwal, was invited by him and was ordered to take care of them and hand them to any one of the canons wherever they needed. At that time Jamadar Khushhal Singh insisted that those horses must be handed over to him for his Top Khana against the will of Raja Dhian Singh and asked him further to give other horses from the stable to Jawahar Mal Sandhwalia; and others also said that Raja Dhian Singh must hand over those horses to Jamadar Khushhal Singh. Although Raja Dhian Singh conceded to this proposal with shilly shally instinct but it seemed that Lahore Durbar had become an amphitheater of designing intrigues against him and downsizing his authority (Suri, Sohan Lal, Umdat –Ut –Twarikh, Daftar IV, Part II, 130.
 53. 417/2, Clerk to Maddock, 21st January, 1841, Press List of Old Records in Punjab Secretariat, Vol. VII, p.17, Punjab State Archives, Patiala
 54. Punjab Intelligence, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 1st February, 1841, No.64, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. See also: Suri, Sohan Lal, Umdat –Ut –Twarikh, Daftar IV, Part II, 133.

55. Latife, Syed Muhammad, History of the Punjab, 389.
56. M'Gregor, WL, The History of the Sikhs, 7. See also: Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, 7.
57. Seetal, Sohan Singh, How Fell the Sikh Kingdom, 45.
58. Ibid., 28-29.
59. 331, Clerk to Maddock, 14th December, 1840, Press list of Old records Punjab Secretariat, Vol. VII, 76, Punjab State Archives, Patiala See also: Maddock to Clerk, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 28th December, 1840, No. 105, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
60. Dharmjit Singh, Rani Chand Kaur in the Turbulent Politics of Punjab, Twentyfirst Century Publications, Patiala, 2015, 35.
61. Russel Clerk, British representative at Ludhiana, was wrong to observe that Sher Singh with his love of ease, which excessive dissipation had induced, might have tamely submitted, had his dismissal from the Durbar been softened by a liberal addition to his estates.
62. Seetal, Sohan Singh, How Fell the Sikh Kingdom, 45.
63. Hotimardan, Baba Prem Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, 1946, 135-136. Hereafter cited as Hotimardan, Baba Prem Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh,
64. Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 1st February 1841, No.63, Secret Consultations. Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi. See also: Patwant Singh, The Sikhs, Rupa and Co. New Delhi (2002), 147. It is said that General Ventura did not join Kanwar Sher Singh having taken an oath of fidelity to the Rani. So the version that 'General Ventura went to Kanwar Sher Singh immediately with 6000 men, according to Thornton Thomas Henry' did not appear to be correct. No doubt, Ventura returning to report to the Lahore Durbar his success in the Mandi and Kulu Hills, arrived at Batala early in January, and had a long interview with Kanwar Sher Singh. He then had passed on to Lahore, where he was asked by the Rani to assume command in the events of operations against Sher Singh, a request to which he evaded a direct reply-Grey, C. and Garrett, H.L.O., European Adventures of Northern India 1785-1849, Lahore 1929, 29.
65. Rani Chand Kaur dismissed disgruntled Tej Singh, who was hated by the soldiers and fixed Gulab Singh Dogra as administrator and defender of the city-Khushwant Singh, The Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab, Eastened Printers, Calcutta 1962, 33.
66. Hotimardan, Baba Prem Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh, 133. See also: Pearse, Major Hugh, Memoirs of Alexander Gardner, 233.
67. Khushwant Singh, The Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab, Eastened Printers, Calcutta, p.36. See also: Pearse, Major Hugh, Memoirs of Alexander Gardner, 233-234.
68. Kohli, Sita Ram, Sun Set of the Sikh Empire, 35-36. See also: J S Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, Cambridge University Press, Delhi (1991), 120, Sangat Singh, Ithas Vich Sikh, Singh Brothers, Amritsar 2008, 131-132.
69. Kohli SR, Sun Set of the Empire, 34. See also: Scott, GB, Religion and Short History of the Sikhs, The Mitre Press, London 1930, 43.
70. Latife, Syed Muhammed, History of the Punjab, 394.
71. Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 1st February, 1841, No.65, Secret consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
72. Panikar, KM, Gulab Singh, 46. See also: Punjab Intelligence, Lahore, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 8 February, 1841, No.91, Secret Consultations. Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
73. Panikar, K.M, Gulab Singh, 46-47. See also: Padam, Piara Singh, Sankhep Sikh Ithas, Sardar Sahit Bhawan, Patiala, 1963, 207.
74. Panikar KM, Gulab Singh, 47.
75. Panikar KM., Gulab Singh, 47-48.
76. Diwan Kirpa Ram, Gulab Nama, translated by Sukhdev Singh Charak, Light and Life Publishers, New Delhi, 1977, 188. See also: Sangat Singh, Ithas Vich Sikh, Singh Brothers, Amritsar 2008, 131.
77. Hotimardan, Baba Prem Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh, 132.
78. Kohli SR, Sun Set of the Sikh Empire, 28. See also: Harbans Singh, Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. 1, A-D, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1992.
79. Sardar Karm Singh Historian, Bau Mule Ithasic Lekh, Singh Brothers, Amritsar (1963), 229. Some of the historians are of the opinion that she was certainly aborted, while others say that she was never pregnant-Samsher Singh Ashok, Sikh Raj Da Ant, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, 1951, 20.
80. Clerk to Maddock, Foreign Department, Secret Progs., 8 February, 1841, No. 90, Secret Consultations, Governor-General's Government of India Available at National Archives of India, New Delhi.
81. Griffin, Lepel H. The Punjab Chiefs, 337. See also: Harbans Singh, Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. 1, A-D, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1992
82. Griffin, Lepel H., The Punjab Chiefs, 337. See also: Suri, Sohan Lal, Umdat-ut-Twarikh, 169.
83. Suri, Sohan Lal, Umdat-ut-Twarikh, 169-170. Icchar Singh was the brother of Budh Singh and Dewa Singh. Kanwar Sher Singh had much intimacy with them. They are termed as the connivers for the death of Rani Chand Kaur.
84. Ibid., 170-171.
85. Khushwant Singh, The Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab, Eastened Printers, Calcutta, 1962, 36. The physicians of Lahore and the others believed that the brain and the skull covering it had been broken altogether and a great deal of weakness had overtaken all the limbs. At that time it was very difficult to recover the lost health. As the treatment was necessary and essential for them, they would attend on her according to the advice and proposals of Khalifa Nurudin. At once Khalifa Sahib came in and with his advice and plan necessary balms and paints were prepared for this decease and the wounds were covered up. Rani Chand Kaur remained rolling in the bed of decease for

- three days and after that cosigned her life to the Creator-Suri, Sohan Lal, Umdat-ut-Twarikh, 171.
86. Suri, Sohan Lal, Umdatt-ut-Twarikh, 172. See also: Kohli, Sita Ram, Sun Set of the Sikh Empire., 24. Hotimardan, Baba Prem Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh., 132. Patwant Singh, The Sikhs, Rupa and Co., New Delhi, 2002, 147.
87. Kushwant Singh, The Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab, Eastened Printers, Calcutta, 1962, 36. See also: Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature, Part 1, Bhai Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar revised 2004, 360. Harbans Singh, Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Vol. 1, A-D, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1992.
88. Amrinder Singh, The Last Sunset; The Rise and Fall of the Lahore Durbar, Lotus Collection, New Delhi, 2010, 56.
89. Payne CH. A Short History of the Sikhs, 146.