

MAHARAJA RANJITDEV

AND

THE RISE AND FALL

OF

JAMMU KINGDOM

FROM 1700 A.D. to 1820 A.D.

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**MAHARAJA RANJITDEV
AND THE RISE AND FALL OF
JAMMU KINGDOM**

by the same author:

"Gulabnamah"

*An English version of the Persian
biography of Maharaja Gulab Singh
by Diwan Kirpa Ram.*

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O. Nangra

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MAHARAJA RANJITDEV
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THE RISE AND FALL
OF
JAMMU KINGDOM
FROM 1700 A.D. to 1820 A.D.

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(‘barg-e-sabaz ast tuhfa-e-darvesh’)

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To

Dr. Karan Singh

an ardent votary of Dogra-Pahari
History & Culture.

(‘barg-e-sabaz ast tuhfa-e-darvesh’)

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Chapter One

ANCESTORS OF MAHARAJA RANJIT DEV.

1. ORIGIN OF DOGRAS.

The Dogra State of Jammu is comparatively of recent origin. But it seems to have inherited the antecedents of an ancient principality named differently from time to time. The present name of the country 'Dugar'—an apbhransha of 'Durgar'—first finds mention in its original form in two Chamba copper-plate title-deeds¹ of the eleventh century referring to events which took place in the early part of the tenth century, probably between 930 and 940 A.D. The word seems to have become popular, and might have been wide-spread by the fourteenth century, as has been borne out by couplets of '*Nuh Sipihr*' of Amir Khusru, a well-known Indian poet, which were written in the reign of Kutbu-d Din Mubark Shah containing historical notices of his times. The poem 'The Nine Heavens' (*Nuh Sipihr*) was probably completed in 1320 A. D. In its 'Third Sphere' the poet, while delving on India's Climate, Animals, Learning and Languages, writes:

"There is at this time in every province a language peculiar to itself, and not borrowed from any other—Sindi, Lahori, Kashmiri, the language of Dugar²"

The learned commentator remarks that "This (Dugar) may be considered a country between Lahore and Kashmir. Though now used by us in a more restricted sense, the natives assign it wider limits".³ The country and its name was well-known throughout the following centuries as well, and did not suddenly appear in the time of the 'Dogra Rajas' of Lahore Court. But Muslim historians seldom mention it as they were concerned with the small hill States with their chief cities which they invariably mention, such as Basohli, Lakhanpur, Jasrota, Samba, Jammu, etc. There was little occasion for them to mention the Dugar country or the Dogra people as a whole. Yet we may hope to find further mention of this land in the Sanskrit literature so abundantly produced in these hills and awaits scientific research which is till now quite a neglected field in the Dogra annals.

1. *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pt.1, pp. 99 & 182 et. seq.
2. Amir Khusru: *Nuh Sipihr* in Elliot's *Hist. of India*, Vol iii, p. 562.
3. Elliot's *History of India* Vol. iii .p. 562 : (f. n. 1.).

Chapter Two .

MAHARAJA RANJIT DEV: EARLY CAREER.

1. ANTECEDENTS AND CHRONOLOGY.

Ranjit Dev was perhaps the most notable ruler who ever ruled in Jammu¹ before the rise of Maharaja Gulab Singh. He adorned the throne of Jammu during the most crucial period of the history of the Panjab and the DOGRA-PAHARI Hill States. The anchor of the political power in these territories had been disrupted and the ship of State-craft tossed precariously on the tumultuous waters of chaos. On the one hand Mughal Emperors of Delhi frantically tried to maintain their loosening hold on the Panjab plains and the Siwalik Hills through their self-seeking governors overcome by centrifugal tendencies. On the other side, the inspired soldiers of the Khalsa were seeking to materialise Guru Gobind's ideal of the Commonwealth in order to secure the Dharma against Muslim encroachment. In this hot contest entered the third element—the inflating Afghan power of Kabul boosted up by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Durrani. Ranjit Dev had to cope with all the three claimants to sovereignty over the Panjab and the Hill States. He cherished his own pretensions to independence encouraged by the chaotic state of affairs.

“with the full advent of Mughal rule the Muhammadan supremacy, which had previously been intermittent, became firmly established, and from the time of Akbar (A.D. 1556-1605) onwards for two hundred years the Hill States were completely subject to Mughal authority²”. Even then, however, this submission was not accepted willingly, for we read of frequent outbreaks in which Jammu and other States were invariably involved. One such outbreak occurred in A.D. 1588-89, in the 35th year (A.D. 1591) of Akbar's reign which was led by Raja Bidhi Chand of Kangra.³ Jammu was then ruled by Raja Parasram. The imperial army under

1. Hutchison and Vogel: *Hist. of the Panjab Hill States* (1933), p. 540.

2. *Ain-i-Akbari*, Eng. Tr. Blochmann, I. p. 344 ; *Maasirul Umara*, Vol. ii. p. 368.

3. Hutchison and Vogel : *History of the Panjab Hill States*, p. 536.

Chapter Three

THE DURRANI INVASIONS AND RANJITDEV

Ranjit Dev at once strengthened his hold on his territories and equipped himself fully with material required for him to play an important role in the political history of the Panjab and the Hills. The times were ripe for his ambition. With the decline of the Mughal power and the attendant chaos, the Panjab and the adjoining areas had become target of marauding hordes, and there was no security of life and property. In the words of Anandram,¹ who was then present in the Panjab "Lawless men, plunderers and adventurers now peeped out of their holes.....the peace and prosperity given by the just rule of Zakariyah Khan were destroyed. The disorder is raging throughout this province even at the time of my writing this, 13 August, 1746, one year, one month and twenty-three days after Zakariya Khan's death." A struggle for governorship of the Panjab between Yahiya Khan and Shahnawaz Khan made the matters worse in the Panjab. Disturbances cropped up every-where. The Raja of Jammu, Ranjit Dev, revolted and stopped paying tribute.² He led his troops against the neighbouring chiefs and extended his sway upto the Chinab in the west, and in the plains upto the present border of Jammu State towards Sialkot. From now onwards Ranjit Dev had to play a very important as well as an interesting role in the Panjab affairs.

Although Yahiya Khan had been officially appointed Deputy Viceroy of Panjab on 3rd January, 1746 yet the conflict between him and his rival Shahnawaz had continued with the result that the latter, on the advice of Adina Beg Khan,³ invited Ahmad Shah Durrani to support his cause on the condition of "crown to Ahmad Shah and Wazirship to Shahnawaz.,⁴ When the Durrani had arrived in Lahore,

1. Anand Ram: *Tazkira-i-Anandram Mukhils*, E.D., VII. 76-98., J.N.S.MS P-150-11
2. Anandram, 289. Cf. Sarkar, J.N.: *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Calcutta 1938, Vol-P-193
3. *Siyar-ul-mutakhirin*; of Sayyad Ghulam Hussain, 1827, III P-16
4. *Miskin*, 40; *Siyar*. III

RANJIT DEV'S CONQUESTS & TERRITORIAL POSSESSIONS

"A little after the middle of the last century we find that the power of the Jammu ruler, exercised either directly or through the feudatory chiefs owing allegiance, extended eastwards to the Ravi river or nearly so, westwards to some miles beyond the Chinab, southwards for some little way into the plains, and northwards as far as the beginning of the Middle Mountains. The feudatory chiefs, those for instance of Akhnur, Kirmachi, etc., governed their own subjects, but to the ruler of Jammu they paid tribute and did military service."¹

Ranjit Dev was a man of great ability, force of character and administrative talent, and he soon began to make his power felt in the Hills.² Times were also favourable for the ambitious. With the cession of the Punjab to Ahmad Shah Durrani, Mughal supremacy over the Hill States came to an end, after having been in existence for nearly 200 years. But the condition of anarchy resulting from the Maratha invasions and the predatory operations of Sikhs, rendered it impossible for the Afghans to entrench strongly their authority in their new acquisitions. The Princes of Hill States remained only nominally attached to the kingdom of Kabul.

Taking full advantage of this situation Ranjit Dev asserted his independence, and also claimed his supremacy over the surrounding hill chiefs between the Chinab and the Ravi.³ He subdued most of the petty Hill Rajas around Jammu, notably Nahar Singh, Raja of Kistwar, Shamsher Chand, Raja of Chaneni, Kirchipal, Raja of Bhadarwah, and Amrit Pal Raja of Basohli.⁴

W.B. Cunningham observes that "in 1760, when the Mughal

1. Drew : *Jammu and Kashmir Territories*, p. 9.
2. Hutchison and Vogel: *Hist. of Pb. Hill States*, p. 542
3. *Ibid.*
4. K.M. Panikkar: *The Founding of Kashmir State*, p. 10.

RANJIT DEV AND THE SIKH MISLS

“During the 16th century in India many opportunities presented themselves to tact and ambition for carving out principalities.”¹ It was during this century that tact and ambition had the maximum scope in the Panjab where hill rajas like Ranjit Dev of Jammu, Ghammand Chand and Sansar Chand of Kangra, and scores of other contending zamindars of Panjab plains gave unfettered vent to their political ambition and converted this land into a cauldron of simmering rivalries. Many adventurous leaders rose and fell, like rising waves to be engulfed by whirling storms. Like advancing waves, every leader submerged the territories of his neighbours only to be hurled back the other time. The romance of shifting frontiers and intermittent dominance created an atmosphere of political unrest and social insecurity in which the only ‘paradise’ for the masses lay within the frontiers of Jammu principality which had wisely and studiously been made secure by its rulers against marauders and political opportunists and adventurers. The Sikh leaders in the plains had, however, made a bold bid against the Afghan rulers, and had imperceptibly but steadily built themselves into a political power which ultimately ousted the Afghan out of the Panjab to supplant their power in this land.

The Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Durrani had returned to Kandahar after his discomfiture in 1767. In the course of another attempt made by him in December, 1768 he had to beat a hasty retreat from the Chenab without achieving anything, never to return to the Punjab again. Thus the field was left open to the Sikhs who extended their territorial possessions rather rapidly and succeeded in establishing their control over both the plain and hill territories of the Panjab.² About a dozen

- I. DR. H. R. Gupta; *Studies in the Later Mughal History of the Panjab*, p. 58,
2. Dr. H.R. Gupta: *History of the Sikhs*, iii. P. I.

RANJIT DEV'S ESTIMATE & ACHIEVEMENTS,

Jammu was under Ranjit Dev for over half a century till 1782. He was a man of great administrative ability. Taking advantage of the confused political state of the Panjab owing to the decline of the Mughal rule, the Durrani invasions and the rise of the Sikhs, Ranjit Dev extended his authority over the hills situated between the Chenab and the Ravi, and over some of those lying to the west of the Chenab; while the rest maintained political relations with the Durrans.¹ One of the redeeming features of this period of constant upheaval and chaos was the peace that prevailed in the city of Jammu, the capital of Ranjit Dev, a ruler noted for justice and impartiality.² He was an enlightened ruler "who acquired world renown in distributing justice and equity, and echo of his fame resounded in the four quarters of the world."³ He was, with general consent, a just judge and liberal administrator. Many anecdotes about his justice and equity were current in his country, some of which have been mentioned by Lala Ganesh Dass Wadehra in his *Rajdarshani* and copied from him by the author of the *Gulabnamah*.⁴

George Forster, who visited Jammu in 1783, a year or two after Ranjit Dev's death, stands testimony to the lofty ideals, impartiality, religious toleration, wise administration and paternal character of the ruler, inspired by high ethical values. He deservedly acquired the

1. H.R. Gupta : *Hist of the Sikhs*, iii. 26

2. H R. Gupta : *Studies in the Later Mughal Hist. of the Punjab*, 142.

3. *Gulabnamah*, P. 71.

4. *Gulabnamah*, PP. 72-8, narrates an interesting story of Ranjit Dev's diligent concern for justice "Once a washerman went to the bank of the Tawi river. His wife therefore cooked food and carried it from home to the said person. As soon as he ate, his life escaped from the envelope of his body. People suspected the said woman of administering poison. The Maharaja thereupon ordered this matter to be investigated and the enquiries to be made from the relatives and neighbours about the conduct of the washerman's

Continued

Chapter Seven

SUCCESSORS OF RANJIT DEV.

1. BRAJRAJ DEV (A. D. 1782 to 1787 A. D.)

1. THE AGGRAVATION OF FAMILY FEUD

Maharaja Ranjit Dev had married four wives, two from Katoch family, and one each from the Salaria and the Rakwal families. From the two Katoch wives he had two sons, Brajraj Dev from the eldest and Dalel Dev from the second. He had two daughters, one of whom he married to Amrit Pal, the Raja of Basohli, and the other to Raja Prithvi Singh of Nurpur.

Brajraj Dev was, as described above, of dissolute character, and therefore Ranjit Dev thought of disinheriting him of the throne in favour of his second son Dalal Singh. This created resentment in Brajraj Dev and led to an open hostility between the father and the son resulting in interference of the Sikhs in Jammu affairs.

After the death of Ranjit Dev, Brajraj Dev ascended the throne of Jammu "on the ninth day of Besakh of the year 1839 Bikrami¹ (22nd. April, 1782 A. D. But with his peaceful accession the family feud did not cease; rather it turned sanguinary. The new ruler cherished strong hatred against his step-brother Dalel, and conspired to kill him. He first insinuated Mian Zorawer Singh to kill Dalel in return for the Jagir of Dansal, but he refused to be enticed into the crime. But Mian Mota, another cousin, undertook to perpetrate the deed, and was on the outlook for an opportunity which soon presented itself when Dalel Singh set out on pilgrimage to the shrine of goddess Bhagwati on the Trikota hill. He was accompanied by his son Bhagwant Singh. Mian Mota followed them with a force. Near the village of Charanpadika there was an encounter in which both Dalel Singh and his son

1. *Gulabnamah*, p. 82. Maharaja Ranjit (cont) Dev was living at least till the end of May, 1781, is borne out by his letter he wrote to the Governor-General,.....which is dated 29th. May, 1781. (*Calendar of Persian correspondence* vol, VI. 175.)

Chapter-Eight

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DOGRAS IN THE FIELD OF ADMINISTRATION, ART AND LITERATURE (1700 TO 1820)

Section 1 Administration

1. JAMMU CITY.

Jammu has the honour of being the capital of the Dogra State at least from the days of Raja Mal Dev who shifted the headquarters of his government from Babbapura to the present site in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. He laid the foundation of the extant Purani Mandi buildings. The site of Jammu may have been founded in the remote past by Raja Jambu-Lochan, but it had remained obscure as an insignificant village for long, and acquired historical importance only during the fourteenth century. No ancient foundations have so far been found there, and no site exists there which tradition can take back beyond the middle ages.

Situated on the high cliff on the right bank of the Tawi river in the foot of the hills, the city possessed a strategic position and a commanding look. It defended the Tawi Valley Pass which leads to the inner hills. During the Mughal period the city became a renowned trade market to which traders from Kabul, Multan, Lahore and Delhi flocked. The good government and security which prevailed there attracted much of the trade from the plains and in due course the trade route from the Indus to Delhi became diverted to the hills which entered the outer hills near Nahan, passed through Bilsapur, Haripur and Nurpur to Basohli and then on to Jammu,

Jammu has not been a walled town throughout its history, "though partial defences have at different times been erected. Towards rivers the steep bank has been trusted to, though it is by no means inaccessible.

Chapter—Nine.

THE DOGRA-SIKH RELATIONS

(Upto the Rise of Gulab Singh)

The history of Sikh relations with the Dogra-Pahari people goes back to the days of Guru Govind Singh and Banda Bahadur when both of these leaders were compelled to take refuge in these hills on account of persecution at the hands of the Mughals. Banda was a Dogra Rajput himself and was well acquainted with the Basohli Hills. But regular political relations between these two people grew up during the fifth decade of the eighteenth century under the shadow of Mughal-Afghan struggle for the possession of the Lahore Province.

When the Afghan rule in the Hills lying between the Chenab and the Sutlej had come to an end by 1767, the political power of the Sikhs was established in the plains of the Punjab. The Sikhs now turned their attention to these Hills.¹ They were already familiar with the Hill country as they had frequently taken shelter there during the Mughal persecution and the Durrani invasions. But it was the financial prosperity of Jammu which attracted the attention of the Sikh hordes in the early period of their rise to political power.²

The confusion and disorder on the plains, recurring Durrani inroads and the menace of the plundering Sikh hordes had diverted trade to the Hills. As discussed above, many wealthy merchants, nobles and corpulent Mughal and Afghan officials had sought an asylum at Jammu. To all alike, Hindu or Muhammadan, the Raja extended welcome, and his capital grew and progressed.³ He was distinguished for his courage and valour and was so "just and kind to his ryots", runs the despatch received by the Governor-General at Calcutta on the 19th April,

1. H.R. Gupta; *Hist. of the Sikhs*, Vol. iii. p. 22.

2. *Ibid.* See also DREW: *Jammu and Kashmir Territories*, p. 10.

3. Hutchison and Vogel: *The Hist. of the Punjab Hill States*, p. 542.

Appendix A

Footnote No. 27. page-34

Kapur Dev (died about 1560 A.D.), the Raja of Jammu, had two wives from whom he had a son each, named Jagna or Jag-dev and Smail-Dev. On their father's demise, a strife for succession started among them. Consequently, the State was divided into two portions, with the river Tawi as boundary. Jag Dev held his court at the Bahu fort and his descendants were called Bahuwals. Smail-Dev ruled at Jammu and his descendants took the name of Jamwal. (Hutchison and Vogel, p. 532)

Jag-Dev, the Bahuwal, was followed by Parasram Dev (A.D. 1585), Krishan-Dev, about A. D. 1610; Azmat-Dev, c. A. D. 1635; and Kripal-Dev, c. A.D. 1660, all of whom ruled in Bahu. The latter was succeeded by Anant-Dev, and afterwards the Bahuwal Rajas seem to have retired or been expelled from Bahu. This is said to have occurred in the reign of Hari-Dev of Jammu, A. D. 1650-75. (Hutchison and Vogel, p. 538).

Meanwhile, the descendants of Smail-Dev continued to rule in Jammu. He was succeeded by Sangram-Dev who ruled till about A.D. 1625. He was followed by Bhupat-Dev who probably ruled up to 1650,

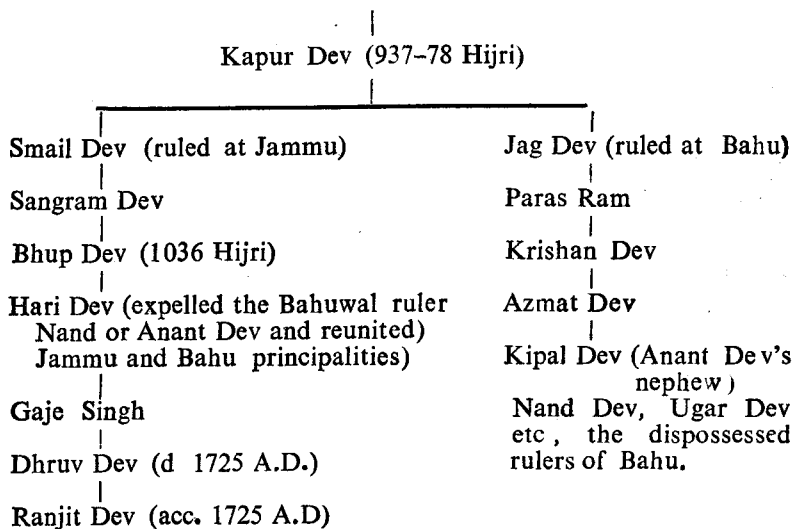
His signature occurs on a Persian Sanad in the Chamba archives. There he is called Rai Bhupat Jamwal. He was followed by Hari Dev in whose reign the two portions of Jammu State were united under one Chief. After him the united kingdom of Jammu-Bahu passed on to Gajai-Dev (A. D. 1675-1703), and Dhruv Dev, A.D. 1703 to 1725. But it seems probable that the Jammu-Bahu struggle had once again been revived by Anant Dev Bahuwal's descendant, Ugar Dev, who took advantage of the renewal of hostilities between the Jammu State and the Mughal power on the accession of Ranjit Dev in A. D. 1725 (Hutchison and Vogel, pp 537 -40). In this struggle Ugar Dev sided with the Muhammadan rulers against Ranjit Dev, and thereby revived

RISE AND FALL OF JAMMU KINGDOM

his claims on Bahu for some time (Narsing Dass Nargis : *Tarikh-i-Dogra Des*, pp. 82-84) The Mughal officials supported his claim and seated him on the chiefship of Bahu. But this possession could not be maintained by the Bahuwals who were at last extirpated by Ranjit Dev once for all

The *Gulabnamah* gives the following genealogy of the Jamwal and the Bahuwal lines, so called after the seats of their sovereignty at Jammu, and Bahu respectively :

KHOKHAR DEV



Appendix B

Footnote No. 12: page 62

MUGHLANI BEGAM : Mughlani Begam was an interesting character of the Mughal-Afghan period of the Punjab history. She was the daughter of the late Governor of the Punjab, Nawab Abdussamad Khan's daughter. She was married to Muin-ul-Mulk, son of Qamar-ud-Din, the Mughal Prime Minister. Her husband was the governor of the Punjab from 1748 till his death on the 15th September, 1753. At the time of her husband's death she was only eighteen years old. On Muin-i-Mulk's death their son Muhammad Amin Khan, a child of one year, was appointed Governor of Lahore by the Emperor, and the administration was entrusted to the Mughlani Begam. But the boy-governor died in May, 1754, and Momin Khan now became Governor of Lahore, but soon Khwaja Mirza Khan usurped all power at Lahore. The Mughlani Begam continued to play important role in the administration till 1756 when she was made powerless. She sought Ahmad Shah Durrani's help who arrived at Delhi on 28th January 1757. He granted her the fief of Doab Jullundhar, Jammu and Kashmir. (Cf. Ganda Singh : Ahmad Shah Durrani, p 168.) She appointed Khawaja Ibrahim Khan as her deputy for Kashmir. Jammu was confirmed in the name of the Raja of that territory. The Doab was handed over to Adina Beg Khan. (See Tahmas Nama. Eng. Tr. p. 47.) In the beginning of 1758 Ahmad Shah appointed his son, Taimur Shah, his viceroy at Lahore and offered an allowance of Rs. 30,000 per month to Mughlani Begam instead of her fief. But she declined to accept that offer. Soon afterwards she made allignment with Adhina Beg Khan who became Governor of the Punjab in February 1758 and died on the 15th September 1758. "At this happening the Begam very much distressed. She said : 'We must go to Jammu now. I do not see any place as safe as Jammu. She considered this course to be the only proper one and started for Jammu.'" (Cf. Miskin: Tahmas Nama, Eng. Tr. p. 74)

RISE AND FALL OF JAMMU KINGDOM

She stayed at Jammu till 1760 when she left for Delhi which had been occupied by Ahmad Shah Durrani. She helped him discover the treasures of the Mughal nobles, and in return for this service he gave her a jagir of Rs. 30,000 at Sialkot. But when the Durrani left Punjab in 1761, the Sikhs imprisoned Mughlani Begam's agent at Sialkot and occupied that city. Mughlani had now to face financial bankruptcy and she was in strained circumstances. In her fallen fortunes she fell in love with one of her servants, Shah Baz, whom she married at Samba. After this scandal she had to leave Jammu and to live in obscurity for 18 years. At last she appeared at Delhi in 1779 and then returned to Jammu a few months after, where she died, probably in the middle of 1780 at her house, Haveli Begam.

Appendix C

Footnote No. 24 ; page 64

Cf. *Gulabnamah*. pp. 71-73. The author, Diwan Kirpa Ram, delving on Ranjit Dev's honesty and liberality (virtues rare in the period under review), mentions the following happenings the Raja's reign :

"They say that during the auspicious reign of the deceased Raja a rich Sahukar left this fickle world, but he had no son to succeed him. People from all quarters therefore, supplicated to the Maharaja's pleasure that his immense wealth was worthy of government treasury. The Maharaja told them in reply that an escheat was a right of the mandicants and the poor, and not fit for a Sultan's exchequer. The proper course lay in issuing a circular order to the managers of towns and districts to the effect that if there be any heir of such and such a Sahukar living, he, coming to the Jammu town, may obtain possession of the property without delay. It is well known, therefore, that an old woman from the suburbs of Multan, who was helpless and belonged to the family of the deceased Sahukar, arrived, and became the master and occupant of the said property." (Page 71-2)

One of the pious Malikas (Queens) of Muhammad Shah who came carrying the dead body of her daughter, did not find it advisable to go to Shahjahanabad in the Panjab on account of the insurrection and anarchy of the Singhs (Sikhs), but took shelter in the citadel of Jammu considering the glorious Maharaja as her protector, with all her wealth and property she possessed. It is said that men of vile and mean disposition submitted to the presence of the Maharaja that countless wealth and immense gold had arrived for nothing like pudding into the mouth. The far-sighted Maharaja addressed in a tone of reproof that worldly possessions had no value and wealth no worth in the eyes of the one fond of justice, and that it had been said that it was not wise to discard goodness." (*Gulabnamah*. p. 73.)

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This appendix does not purport to give a comprehensive and complete bibliography on the history of the Dogras. In this the author has categorised the sources he consulted in the preparation of the present work.

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