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Grants by the early rulers and Maharaja Ranjit Singh for the Cause of Education: Scholars and Schools of Punjab (late 18th and early 19th Century)

Dr. Meera Nagpal

A power vacuum was created with the collapse of the Mughal imperial authority in Punjab after the death of Aurangzeb and the Afghan invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali. This political condition led to the rise of large number of independent principalities in the Punjab during the late eighteenth century under the Sikh, Muslim and the Hindu rulers. These states that numbered about one hundred and twenty-five weren't too large in size.

Some of the prominent Sikh chiefs were: Charhat Singh Sukarchakia at Gujranwala; Gujjar Singh Bhangi at Lahore and Gujarat; Jassa Singh Ramgarhia at Sri Hargobindpur; Jai Singh Kanhiya at Batala, and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia at Fatehabad but there were others also like Amar Singh Bagga of Sujanpur; Bagh Singh Hallowalia of Zafarwal; Dal Singh Akalgarhia of Akalgarh; Dhanna Singh Kalalwala of Bhera; Dharm Singh Amritsaria; Gurbakhsh Singh Dodia of Doda; Karam Singh Chhina; Karora Singh of Hariana'; Natha Singh Shahid of Sialkot; Sahib Singh of Taragarh; Sahib Singh Sialkotia; Tara Singh Dallewalia and Tara Singh Dallewalia. Though the late eighteenth century rulers of the Punjab had come from different political backgrounds but on acquiring power they started ruling as autonomous rulers.[1] With Ranjit Singh becoming the chief of his principality he set forth with his ambitious schemes and started

reducing the chiefs to the status of jāgīrdārs and expanded his dominions. After his death in 1839, Kharak Singh became the next ruler followed by Sher Singh and later Dalip Singh during whose reign Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849.[2]

As heads of their state the above-mentioned rulers gave away revenue-free grants to various religious institutions and individuals, a practice that has an ancient history in India. The Turkish rulers of Delhi Sultanate and Mughals Emperors were also generous in giving away *madad-i-maash* grants.[3] The new rulers of Punjab, who rose to power during the late eighteenth century after the weakening of the Mughal authority, too followed the example of their predecessors and started giving grants and called them *dharmarth* or *bhent*.[4] During the early nineteenth century, Ranjit Singh unified the Panjab and followed the Mughals in his procedures for making alienations to various faiths.[5] Sikh individuals and institutions received significant support from the rulers of that era, as did *purohits* and *brahmans*, *jogīs* and *mahants*. This patronage extended to Hindu temples, *vaishnava maths*, *thākurdwāras*, *derās*, *samādhis* and *dharmsālas*. State patronage was not just confined to the adherents and buildings of Sikhism and Hinduism but was also extended to the Muslim individuals and institutions by the new rulers of the Punjab.[6]

Though it is already an established fact that state patronage was provided by the rulers of Punjab to various religious sections of the society during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but grants could also be given for purposes other than religious. The non-religious sections of the society like the professional classes were given financial support by the ruler and officials by way of alienation of land revenue or giving cash grants as there are a large number of references available regarding the same. The present paper deals with the grants

and aid provided by the early rulers of Punjab who ruled in the late eighteenth century in Punjab, Ranjit Singh and his successors, to professional class of teachers that existed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The topic under review covers not only the teachers as grantees but also grants given for educational purposes and various educational institutions during the period under review. The additional support given by official class of the times also played an immensely important role in promoting education and hence is a part of the research paper.

The Mughals as predecessors have been generous in giving grants for education.[7] Likewise, the early Sikh rulers to give grants for educational purpose were Sahib Singh Bhangi, Tara Singh Gheba, Jodh Singh Wazirabadia and Sadda Singh of Sanehwal. These grants were given to educational institutes in Gujarat, Sialkot, Sanehwal and Nurpur.[8] For instance, Tara Singh Gheba fixed a daily allowance of wheat flour and pulses worth 700 rupees annually to Dasu Ram, a *brahmin*, in Nawashahr in Jalandhar District for about twenty students in 1784. The confirmation by Ranjit Singh proves support of the monarch for the same.[9] The said grantor is known not only to have endowed *brahmins* in support of education but also to have extended support to Muslims for teaching children to read, as he alienated a piece of land in *Pargana* Bharatgarh in Ludhiana District in 1794 to Ghulam Rasul for instructing children in a mosque.[10]

Grantee Akal Shah on receiving a grant in *Pargana* Nurpur from Tara Singh in 1783 is known to have used the proceeds for a charitable school.[11] Sadda Singh of Sanehwal is known to have supported two schools by way of alienation of plots of land, though small, in the years 1774 and 1784, in *Pargana* Sanehwal.[12] Devi Das, a teacher of Barnala, was assigned fifty-eight rupees yearly by the Patiala

State.[13] Sahib Singh of Gujarat, before being subordinated by Ranjit in 1807, was also a patron of educational institutions. He alienated a plot of land worth six rupees in Gujarat to Abdulwallah Waraich for an educational institution.[14] Jodh Singh Wazirabadia gave a piece of land in village Sheranwali in Sialkot to Fazl Ilahi.[15]

The Muslim chiefs of Raikot also gave a number of grants for schools and teaching of children in Raikot. For instance. A piece of land in village Kulliwal in *Pargana* Ludhiana was assigned for teaching boys in a mosque. Rai Ahmed, the ruler of Raikot assigned a plot of land in *Pargana* Ludhiana for a mosque and teaching boys.[16] Inayat Ullah Khan Sial of Jhang seems to be particularly interested in encouraging the education among children as is clear from the evidence available. He assigned a grant worth 100 rupees in Jhang in favour of a brahmin named Jawaya Ram for teaching children.[17] Evidence of hill chiefs being supportive of the cause of education is also available. Raja Shamsher Parkash of Sirmaur and Raja Jai Chand of Lambargaon maintained schools at their own expenses.[18]

Ranjit Singh endowed the *pāthshālas* and *dharmsālas*, the traditional centres of learning, to spread literacy. The Persian school at Lahore was liberally endowed.[19] He granted a *jāgīr* consisting of several villages to Mian Wada, devoted to teaching of Persian.[20] Ranjit Singh gave grants to teachers like Khair Muhammad, Gosain Shivram, Ghulam Qadir and Fazl Din for teaching children. They were assigned six grants worth 1,247 rupees.[21] One of the earliest grants given to the teachers by Ranjit Singh that is available is from 1813 when the Maharaja assigned a grant worth sixty rupees in *Pargana* Ramnagar to Khair Mohammad for instructing children.[22]

Fazl-ud-din, a Quraish who was learned man and a teacher, was assigned three separate grants by the above-mentioned grantor. In

1830, he was given a cash assignment of two annas per day from Wazirabad. Then in 1833 he was again given a well worth sixty rupees in Gujranwala. In the successive year he was given a rent-free land worth thirty rupees in Wazirabad which was later confirmed by Maharaja Sher Singh and Maharaja Dalip Singh. Ghulam Qadir was also assigned a piece of land worth sixty rupees by Ranjit Singh in *Pargana* Gujarat in 1834. The above-mentioned grantee, Ghulam Qadir, is also said to have received grants from later Maharajas of Lahore Kingdom, Sher Singh and Dalip Singh.[23] Interestingly an extremely generous grant of a village worth 1000 rupees in Amritsar had been assigned by Ranjit Singh to Gosain Shivram Das in 1824 for a *pāthshāla*, a Sanskrit school.[24] The above-mentioned Ghulam Qadir also received grants worth 310 rupees from Sher Singh and Dalip Singh.[25]

Princes of the royal family in the Punjab during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth also supported teachers by assigning grants to them. For instance, Prince Kharak Singh, son and successor of Ranjit Singh, gave a grant of sixty rupees in *Pargana* Shaikhupura to Gobind Sahai for instructing children in 1837 when he was still a prince. The same was later confirmed by Maharaja Dalip Singh.[26] Kharak Singh's tutor Bhai Ram Singh, also ran a Gurumukhi *pāthshāla.*[27]

Among *jāgīrdārs*, Jamadar Khushal Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa gave grants to teacher Fazl-ud-din.[28] In 1840, Gulab Singh granted twenty-five *ghumaōns* of land for a temple erected by himself in Gujarat for teaching children. The service of teaching by the *pujārīs* known to have continued even by the time of annexation of Punjab.[29] A *pāthshāla* at the temple of Sudamapuri in Amritsar received a dwelling house with adjacent shops and a garden with half a share of well and

land worth 175 rupees in the city of Amritsar from Jwala Singh Padhania in 1833.[30] Grant could also be given to a teacher for educating a relative. Sawan Mal gave a cash grant in Dera Ghazi Khan to Jattu for teaching son of Ram Chand, grand-nephew of the grantor.[31] Diwan Ram Chand himself is known to have opened a Sanskrit school at Amritsar.[32] Teachers were given grants by women also for imparting instructions to the grantees or to their relatives. For instance, Rani Nakain gave food allowance worth forty rupees to Nand Singh in 1834 for instructing the Rani in Gurumukhi.[33] Similarly, Mai Ram Kaur of Chiloundi, gave fifteen *bighas* of land to Bahadur Ali in 1822 for teaching her grand nephews.[34]

Certain religious personages were given grants for their support and maintenance but they are known to have used it for imparting education to children as well. A *qāzī* of Village Sherpur in *Pargana* Ludhiana used the proceeds of the land, assigned by Rai Ahmed of Rai Kot, for his support for instructing children in mosque.[35] There are instances where an individual was given grants for maintenance of religious institution but the grantee was endowed so handsomely that he is known to have maintained a school too.

One such case is of Mian Fazl-ud-din, a learned man with a talent of calligraphy, who is known to have tutored several individuals who later became influential at the court of Lahore and endowed him with and later got them confirmed from royal authority. He is said to have maintained a school for instructions for youth at Wazirabad at his own expense. An early Sikh ruler to find mention as a grantor to the above-mentioned Quresh teacher is Jodh Singh Wazirabadia (1776-1809), the ruler of Wazirabad who lost his territories to Ranjit Singh in 1810.[36] Wazirabadia gave a well worth eighty-six rupees in Village Sheranwali in Sialkot. Ranjit Singh assigned three grants to the above-

mentioned Quresh at three different times. In 1833, the Maharaja alienated a well worth sixty rupees in Gujranwala to Mian Fazl. In 1834, the same grantee was given a piece of land worth thirty rupees in a different village of *Pargana* Sialkot by the same grantor. But the very first grant to Fazl-ud-din from Ranjit Singh was in form of cash allowance of two *annas* per day in 1830. The renowned general of the Kingdom of Lahore, Hari Singh Nalwa, too played the part of the patron to the teacher when he assigned a well worth fifty rupees from *Pargana* Sohian in 1837. Similarly, another famous courtier of Ranjit Singh's court, Jamadar Khushal Singh, also gave a well worth ninety rupees in Sialkot to Fazl-ud-din in 1838 on getting the charge of the Taluqa.[37]

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The grants were also given to the family members of the teacher. For instance, Diwan Sawan Mal gave grant in Gujranwala to Ahmad Bakhsh, a son of his teacher Muhammad Sallah.[38] At times, grants were made for providing meals to the students. In a very interesting grant, Tara Singh fixed a daily allowance of *atta* and *dāl* for twenty students in Nawan Shahr in 1784, the grant was later confirmed by Ranjit Singh.[39]

Proficiency in literature was also a reason for grants given by the early rulers. Pandit Tara Singh Narotam, a scholar of Sanskrit, was kept respectfully at the court of Narinder Singh of Patiala.[40] In the mid-eighteenth century, Gulera chiefs, Badal Khan, Qadir Baksh, Muhammad Khan, are known to have given a village worth sixty-five rupees in village Mir Sambal in Rawalpindi to Khan Kulla for his proficiency in literature. The grant was later confirmed to the family of the original grantee during the reign of Ranjit Singh.[41] The scholars were respected and encouraged. In Jammu, Dattu who wrote his famous Sanskrit work *Krishna Mahima Stotra* during the reign of Brijraj Dev was patronized by him. Another Sanskrit scholar who rose during his reign or that of his immediate successor was Pandit Ganga Ram whose two works *Mamalakshtaka* and *Sri Krishnashtaka* are known. But most of his literary career evolved under the patronage of Prince Ranbir Singh who brought him to Jammu from Kangra where he had been adopted as Guru by the ruler thereof.[42]

The translation of scholarly work also interested the patrons during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century for which they readily made endowments. Bhai Udai Singh of Kaithal gave grant of a

village worth 600 rupees in *Pargana* Pehowa to Santokh Singh for translation of *Balmiki Ramayan* from Sanskrit to Gurumukhi.[43] Similarly, Dal Singh was given a well in *mu'āfī* in 1827 in reward for his services by Karam Singh of Patiala for translating *Akhlaq-ul-Mohsani* into Panjabi and named it *Satarkash*. It is interesting to note that in the *sanad* the donee was asked to cultivate the land and pray for the donor's everlasting rule.[44] Ranjit Singh instituted a centre for calligraphy in Urdu and granted a *jāgīr* consisting of several villages.[45] Pandit Daya Ram alias Tota and his son Raja Ram, the Persian writers and calligraphists, from Kashmir, who had settled in Lahore was patronized by Ranjit Singh.[46] There is an interesting case of a learned man who maintained a school for giving instructions to youth at Wazirabad at his own expenses. The same individual, Fazl-ud-din, had a beautiful handwriting and is known to have been a teacher to such persons who later on became very influential at the Lahore court. He was given

by his influential pupils who later got these confirmed from the royal authority. Jamadar Khushal Singh & Hari Singh Nalwa figure among his grantors.[47]

Besides giving grants to the teachers for teaching pupils or to the educational institutions, one could offer help to the scholars who wanted to pursue studies too. For instance, in 1834 Prince Kharak Singh gave cash grant worth twenty rupees to Brahmin Kashi Ram to enable him to support himself while studying *shāstras*. Similarly, a cash grant of forty-five rupees was assigned to another *brahmin*, Hardial, to enable him to study *shāstras* by the same grantor in 1835. Another brahmin to have received a cash grant for the same purpose was Jawahar who is known to have received cash grant of sixty rupees from Prince Kharak Singh in 1837.[48]

At times the grant was not directly given to the institution and

yet we find example of grantee using proceeds of the rent-free land for instructing children inspite of the absence of any order by the ruler to do the same. For instance, Rai Ahmed of Raikot, gave a piece of land in Village Sherpur in *Pargana* Ludhiana for a *qāzī's* support. The latter used the proceeds for the mosque and teaching children.[49.]

In retrospect, it can be stated that the powerful and influential individuals of Punjab, like early rulers of late eighteenth century, Ranjit Singh and his successors along with jāgīrdārs and courtiers of times, used their status to promote education imparted by religious personages and non-religious professional by way of grants. The early Sikh rulers to give grants for educational purpose were Sahib Singh Bhangi, Tara Singh Gheba, Jodh Singh Wazirabadia, Sadda Singh of Sanehwal, Karam Singh and Narinder Singh of Patiala, Raja Shamsher Parkash of Sirmaur and Raja Jai Chand of Lambargaon, Muslim chief of Raikot Rai Ahmed, Inayat Ullah Khan Sial of Jhang, Gulera chiefs like Badal Khan, Qadir Baksh, Muhammad Khan and Bhai Udai Singh of Kaithal. Princes of the royal family in the Punjab also supported teachers by assigning grants to them. Prince Kharak Singh, son and later successor of Ranjit Singh, gave grants to teachers when he was still a prince. Among *jāgīrdārs* from the period under review, Jamadar Khushal Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa, Gulab Singh, Jwala Singh Padhania and Diwan Sawan Mal were some of the grantors for the said purpose. They sometimes gave grants on getting the charge of a Taluqa. Teachers were also given grants by women like Rani Nakain and Mai Ram Kaur of Chiloundi. The students who became successful and influential later also gave grants to their teacher after attaining high posts within the government.

Grants were given to teachers for teaching boys. At times, grants were given for schools teaching a particular language like

Persian, Sanskrit or Gurumukhi. The Persian school at Lahore was liberally endowed by Ranjit Singh. Grant could also be given to a teacher for educating a relative eg a grandson or a grand-nephew or for being given instruction themselves. At times grants were given to scholars also like Pandit Tara Singh Narotam, a scholar of Sanskrit, Khan Kulla for his proficiency in literature, Fazl-ud-din, a learned man and calligrapher. Grants were also given for helping scholars who wanted to pursue studies like for studying *shāstras.* At times, grants were made for providing meals to the students as Tara Singh is known to have fixed a daily allowance of *atta* and *dāl* for twenty students.

Sometimes, the powerful people themselves established schools as it's known that even rulers got centres of calligraphy established and supported them by way of grants. For instance, Ranjit Singh instituted a centre for calligraphy in Urdu and granted a *jāgīr* consisting of several villages. Even the *jāgīrdārs* are known to have opened schools for children as Diwan Ram Chand himself established a Sanskrit school at Amritsar. At times the grant was not directly given to the school or the scholar and yet we find example of grantee using proceeds of the rent-free land for instructing children inspite of the absence of any order by the ruler to do the same. Cases of learned men like Fazl-ud-din, who maintained schools at their own expenses are also available. Certain religious personages were given grants for their support but they are known to have used it for imparting education to children as a *qāzī* of Village Sherpur in *Pargana* Ludhiana used the grant for instructing children in mosque. In an instance a teacher was given grants after his students became influential and a school could be maintained out of the proceeds from the grant. Tutor and calligrapher Mian Fazl-ud-din, maintained a school for instructions for youth at Wazirabad at his own expense from the grant received from grantors

like Jodh Singh Wazirabadia, Ranjit Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa, Jamadar Khushal Singh. The grants were also given to the family members of the teacher as Diwan Sawan Mal is known to have given a grant to Ahmad Bakhsh, a son of his teacher Muhammad Sallah.

The translation of scholarly work also interested the patrons during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century for which they readily made endowments. *Balmiki Ramayan* from Sanskrit to Gurumukhi, for translating *Akhlaq-ul-Mohsani* into Panjabi.

Grants to teachers and for purpose of teaching were given in *Pargana*s Amritsar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Gujarat, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Nurpur, Pehowa, Ramnagar, Sanehwal, Shaikhupura, Sialkot and Sohian. The grants were given in various forms like daily allowance of food items like wheat flour and pulses, plots of land, share of wells or cash assignments like few *annas* per day. At times the grant could be extremely handsome like a *jāgīr* consisting of several villages. In rare cases a grantee could receive a house, attached shops and a garden.

In few cases, the same teacher could be given many grants at different times. The most generous grant given for the purpose of teaching during the period under review was of 1000 rupees assigned by Ranjit Singh to Gosain Shivram Das for a Sanskrit school. In rare cases the donee was asked to cultivate the land and pray for the donor's everlasting rule. In some cases the service of teaching the pupils by the *pujārīs* in temples to have continued even at the time of annexation of Punjab by the British.

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Assistant Professor
Department of History
Panjab University Regional Centre
Ludhiana