

**THE SUCCESSORS OF
MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH
(PERIOD 1839 TO 1849 A.D.)**

Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780 - 1839 A.D.) established a great Sikh State in the Punjab, the land of five rivers, a territory which stretched from river Sutlej in the East to Khaiber Pass in the North West and Kashmir in the North to Sind in the South. He ruled over his kingdom for forty years from 1799 to 1839 A.D.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Punjab's benevolent ruler, passed away at Lahore on June 27, 1839. There was universal mourning in the country. According to Fakir Syed Waheeduddin, there was a gentle shower after sometime. A pair of Pigeons came out of the sky and fell into the flames.

In the words of R.C. Majumdar, the Sikhs were at the height of their power at the time of Ranjit's exit from this world, but then it exploded, as General Sir J.H. Gordon puts it, "Disappearing in fierce but fading flames". "After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there was no one strong and competent enough to succeed him. Consequently, there came a period of turbulence and anarchy inseparable from a series of disputed successions. One weak ruler after another was deposed in quick succession till 1843, when Duleep Singh, the youngest son of the late Maharaja, was crowned. Two strong factions, that is, Dogra brothers and Sandhanwalia Sardars, emerged soon after the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Faqir brothers and Raja Dina Nath remained loyal to the Lahore Durbar. The above-mentioned two factions turned away from their duty to the Lahore Durbar and became

faithless and disloyal to the Sikh Kingdom. (“Where wealth accumulates, men decay, and disloyalty on the Empire did prey”, said S.K. Shanna). When the Princes of the royal blood fought among themselves, they acted hypocritically to gain their selfish personal ends. They wanted to become the real rulers of the country. According to Khushwant Singh, in doing so, few of them had any scruples about the methods they used to gain their ends, murder by poison, or by hired assassins, betrayal of friends and relations after the most solemn vows, forging documents to discredit their rivals and, worst of all, negotiating with the British who were then known to be planning the annexation of Punjab. Anarchy, turbulence, disputed successions and assassinations followed.

The following were the successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They ruled over the Sikh Kingdom for a period of ten years from 1839 to 1849 A.D. :

1. Maharaja Kharak Singh
(Elder son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh)

Birth	February 20, 1801
Accession	June 27, 1839
Deposed	October 8, 1839
Poisoned to death	November 5, 1840
2. Maharaja Naunihal Singh
(son of Maharaja Kharak Singh)

Birth	February 11, 1820
Became a Maharaja (De-facto ruler)	October 8, 1839
Death (Suspected to have been killed).	November 6, 1840
3. Maharaja Sher Singh.
(Second son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh)

Occupied the throne (for 23 days)	November 9, 1840
Dethroned	December 2, 1840
4. Maharani Chand Kaur .

MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH – THE KING IN EXILE

(Widow of Maharaja Kharak Singh)	
Proclaimed Malika Mukaddas	December 2, 1840
(Queen Empress)	
Capitulated	January 17, 1841
Deposed	January 18, 1841
Killed	June 9, 1842
5. Maharaia Sher Singh	
(Again returned to power)	
Birth	1807
Accession	January 18, 1841
Killed	September 15, 1843
6. Maharaja Duleep Singh	
(Youngest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh)	
Birth	September 6, 1838
Mounted the throne.	September 15, 1843
*Deposed	March 29, 1849
* Exiled	December 21, 1849
Death (in Paris-France)	October 22, 1893

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* On the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, the British had planned to seize Punjab, the Sikh kingdom. They fought two Wars with the Sikhs, namely: The First Anglo - Sikh War (1845 - 46) and The Second Anglo - Sikh War (1848 - 49) and won them. The Treaty of Lahore dated 29-3-1849 was signed, which deprived Maharaja Duleep Singh of his sovereignty, kingdom and fortune. The boy king also surrendered the most dazzling and peerless gem 'Koh-i-noor' (Mountain of Light) (Appendix A), to the Queen of England under the terms of the above-said treaty.

The Punjab was annexed on March 29, 1849, and Maharaja Duleep Singh was dethroned. The Sikh kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780 - 1839), which he established in 1799 AD, came to an end and became a portion of the British Empire.

The infant Maharaja Duleep Singh, helpless and forlorn, was deposed and banished. He was taken away from Lahore on December 21, 1849, to Fatehgarh in U.P. and then to England in May, 1854, to live there in exile for the rest of his life.

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