

Mahārāja Ranjit Singh As A Symbol Of Egalitarianism And Philanthropy: A Case Study In Perspective of Secular

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Abstract

Ranjit Singh continued the Sovereign realm and domains dependent on the intensity of arms. Because of his challenging and unmatched innovation of masters, he gave four decades of harmony, success, and progress to Punjab based on religious equality. Each Community of his realm, whether it was Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims, completely appreciated the advantages. To join these three classes into a typical endeavor, it was his key accomplishment and settled their issues through a balance of religio-political requests. This paper examines how Mahārāja showed the astonishing limit, to get a handle on details of authoritative and instinctual inclination to attract the ability of the Muslims and Hindus. It also portrays why his managerial framework, which ran under his position, demonstrated advantageous, proficient, and equipped towards the enthusiasm of the individuals especially Muslims. In this research, it has also been depicted that his excellent standards of Public mainly Social and moral standards were the principal attributes of his system. This article, for the most part, manages Ranjit Singh as an image of Egalitarianism and philanthropy for the Muslims, Hindus, and other non-Sikh communities.

Key words: *Ranjit Singh, Egalitarianism, Philanthropy, Fundamental and moral status, Multi-religious recruitment.*

Introduction:

The realm of Ranjit Singh was set up on the deterioration of the Mughals and was stretched out from Kabul to Sulej and Tibet to Sindh. The Muslim populace was almost 80% and others like Sikhs and Hindus were just 20%. The Maharaja is exceptionally famous throughout the entire history of Punjab. He governed here autonomously for about forty years and established a solid kingdom in the form of civil and military administration. To comprehend Maharaja's arrangement, it is important to remind that his solid and superb ruling period was the aftermath of the noble teachings of Sikh Gurus. Other than this, he was profoundly affected by the Punjabi Culture which indicated its impact on his character and approaches. The reason is that his religion was not related to political issues rather it deserves the designation of the Secular Sense of the word.¹

Significance of the Study:

Ranjit Singh, the first Maharaja of the Sikh state, was a master planner, a model leader, and an executive whose mainstream thoughts and political characteristics provided a reasonable and well-secured administrative framework. His rousing dream was to connect the individuals of Punjab in mind and the spirit. Getting this fantasy he developed such an egalitarian state where the exhortation of each minister used to give importance and each resident was honorable holding equivalent possibilities for progress. Poor people and the scholars were helped by the Maharaja with no segregation of caste and ideology. The egalitarian authoritative style of Maharaja was the great approach of the administration currently instructed in military and civil administrations.

Objectives of the research:

To describe Ranjit Singh's broad-mindedness about all communities on an equal basis.

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To highlight the Maharaja's thinking behind the appointments of Hindu, Muslim, and European mentors on key posts.

Research Methodology:

Different disciplines of social and natural sciences are inquired through the most popular research methodologies. Here, the method of 'Case Study' is adopted which is more flexible to explore state studies than the quantitative method. This method regards the how and why decision-making situation instead of only what, when, where, and who. Various types of literature have been used to collect relevant material.

Theoretical and Conceptual framework:

Egalitarianism means a way of thinking within governmental issues that are disassociated from religion and not limited to religious rules. It is imperative to comprehend the 'Egalitarianism' in the American and Indian perspective before applying it to a specific situation of the administration, state issues, or its behavior towards peoples. In the American perspective, Egalitarianism is supreme segregation among the state and religion. However, in India, it has an alternate meaning because the country is strictly dominated and different implications came out which implies that there should be no state religion and the state should treat all the religions equally. So, Maharaja embraced a similar idea in his kingdom.²

Before the governing period of Ranjit Singh, Misal³ was the Chieftain of Punjab under whom Punjab was administered. They used to search out their political affairs while holding religious congregations on the events of Baisakhi⁴ and Diwali⁵. But after coming into power, Ranjit detached the religion from governmental issues. He completely changed the method of enlistment in the military and the technique for deciding political issues. Not after this, any religious gathering was assembled to choose the political issues as it was done previously. After becoming the head of Sukerchakia Misal⁶, Ranjit Singh felt that he had to establish a liberal and charitable approach towards non-Sikhs because they were in majority and their support was very important to him. In all areas from Sutlej to Khyber, Ranjit Singh embraced leniency towards his grieved adversaries who were 2/3 part of the entire population. In 1799 A.D. an appeal was received by major residents of Lahore for its capturing because they were exhausted from the horror of Bhangi⁷ Sardars. So with the collaboration of Lahore residents, he was succeeded in capturing Lahore on July 7, with any difficulty.⁸

Maharaja provided full opportunity to Muslims particularly in religion and their solicitation to hand over Sunehri Mosque to their hands which were under the Sikhs. His administration was totally under his secular strategy. Any appointment did not depend on caste, color, or faith and his suitability was evaluated on merit and his steadfastness was explored towards the state. As a result, Lahore Darbar¹⁰ offered services to exemplary persons who became fruitful to run a proficient government. The most noticeable Muslim officials were three Faqir brothers as Noor-ud-Din, Aziz-ud-Din, and Imam-ud-Din, who were providing their significant services to the state. In the military, different colonels and generals were Muslim including forty-one high-ranked officials. In Judiciary, police, and legal institutions, 92 different senior Muslim officials had been appointed.¹¹

Maharaja did not tyrannize towards his enemies but he provided Jagirs¹² to defeated rulers so that their loyalty could be maintained and stable. The example of the Governor of Peshawar and Nawab of Kasor can easily be seen.¹³ The logic behind this was that his co-religionists were courageous and individualistic in disposition would not be a willing instrument to his tyrannical will and, for the execution of his ambition, he should investigate others. Besides this, a bureaucratic personality is required for effective government. He knew about the confusion which was spread in Punjab.

Maharaja was not a strict visionary who used to meddle in the strict exercises or privileges of various areas of society. Faqir Waheed-ud-Din narrated an event related to Maharaja's broad-mindedness. Once deputation of Sikhs of Kashmiri Bazaar complained about the

uproarious cry of the Muazzin¹⁴ calling the devotee to Namaz¹⁵ five times a day used to upset them. Be Maharaja said to them that they guaranteed him to take the responsibility to call each Muslim from his home five times Namaz. They understood their mistake and Azans remained proceeded¹⁶

Ranjit Singh was much intrigued to visit sacred places of each religion. He also paid his reverence to the 'Badshahi Mosque' which was begun after he fell in Lahore in 1799. All religious celebrations like Moharram¹⁷, Eid-ul-fiter¹⁸, Dusherra¹⁹, Diwali and Holi²⁰, etc were celebrated by Maharaja with full dedication. He announced huge money for repairing of the tombs of Data Ganj Bukhsh and Mauj-e-Darya. He also restored the Sunehri Mosque in Kashmiri Bazar which had been in the ownership of Sikhs from the Misaldari period. A Calligraphist transcribed the Holy Quran in a splendid hand yet he did not meet any purchaser who could give him ideal cash. When he interacted with Maharaja, he got a decent amount of worth one lac rupees.²¹

The Punjab Government kept the records of the complete consumption of Maharaja as a noble cause to various religious places evaluated as Rupees 12 lac every year. To maintain sacred places, different Jagirs were assigned to the temples, Mosques, and Gurudwaras²². During any recruitment, he did not weigh under communalism. Everybody would try to the noteworthy position of the ladder of success and get a top position with his capacity His most significant thing was his smooth-running government and at this cost, he was prepared to hand over his significant offices to various religious people whether it was identified with military and civil affairs.²³

Maharaja's most trusted officials were Diwan Bhawani Das, Bhai Ram Singh, Diwan Mohkam Chand, Faqir Noor-ud-Din, Faqir Aziz-ud-Din, and so on. The concept of his governance was never to be called a theocracy. According to him, God has taken his one eye so that I could treat each religion with uniformity. During his attack at Peshawar in 1834, he ordered Hari Singh Nalwa not to demolish the Library of Hazrat Omar Sahib and granted special grants to the shrines of every religion. For the Buildings of Emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan, he announced a huge amount for them which were in a ruinous condition. He gave severe guidelines to his officials that no damage would be given by them to the virtue of ladies and no lack of respect would appear to religious or sacred books of other religions.²⁴

Maharaja's judicial setup was also with no segregation. Unprejudiced Justice was given to everybody. He used to roam in streets to listen to the issues of people and, to solve the problems, issue orders on the spot. To know the public problems, he fixed a complaint box in front of his royal palace and its key was in his custody. That complaint box was used to open in the front of him in open court and ordinary issues were perused and the reasonable solution was given them.²⁵ He fined one hundred rupees to his dear one, Hukm Singh Chimni for assassinating Said Khan due to individual hatred. Unique awards were given to Said Khan's family. Ranjit Singh instructed his son Kharak Singh not to damage the people and the crops when he was on a journey to Multan with his armed forces.²⁶

Because of the capacity and reliability of Dogra Brothers Gulab Singh and Dhian Sing, Maharaja gave them exceptional posts and granted them the title of 'Raja-e-Rajan' as an honor when they succeeded to capture Jammu. Cavalry office was under Raja Suchet Singh in which numerous Brahman like Tej Singh, Jamadar Khushal Singh, Diwan Ganga Ram, and Misar Dhian Singh, etc., were included. The significant triumph of Multan and Kashmir was vanquished by Misar Diwan Chand and he was given the titles of 'Fateh Nusrat' and 'Jafar Jang' by the Maharaja. From 1821 to 1844, Diwan Sawan Mal governed at Multan who was Khatri Chopra by caste. Besides this, some noticeable Sikh Sardars like Hari Singh Nalwa, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Desa Singh Majethia, and Sham Singh Attarwalia were not only bold warriors but also holding higher positions in civil and the military administration.²⁷ Maharaja had special consideration on public welfare and checked on the abuses with strictly. If he issued an illegal order and when it was brought to his notice he immediately

ordered to make justice in the light of holy books. Nizam-ud-Din was appointed as Qazi-ul-Quza²⁸ while Muhammad Shahpur and Saidullah were delegated as 'Muftis'. Nur-ud-Din was appointed as Chief Medical Officer who provided his services in the Unani dispensaries of the town. Imam Baksh was designated as Kotwal of Lahore. Maharaja had full trust in the military officials of different religions so, he sent a Hindu general Diwan Chand along with 20000 warriors to assault Multan. Moreover, Diwan Chand was helped by a Muslim General Ilahi Baksh. Muzaffar Khan, the Nawab of Multan, fought a war boldly at the end yet the victory fell into the hands of the Sikhs. With the assistance of his competent official, he triumphed Mankera, Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan. Tactfully, he controlled the approaches of Imperialists and kept defeated Muslim rulers under control. To modernize his military, he utilized Englishmen, Germans, Frenchmen, and Italian Military officers on much-characterized terms.²⁹

Ranjit Singh never viewed himself as an enthusiast ruler rather he was constantly prepared to battle for the public who made him a pioneer leader. Bakshi quotes Vincent Smith's narrative that:

Punjab was neither customary nor the fascism of one community over another. The associative ideas appear amongst various communities. He was not bound to just his religion. He offered inclination to Rajput, Brahmin, and Khatri in the civil administration. In a diplomatic policy, persons from the upper class and the landed nobility, who paid their obligations sincerely and energetically, were appointed on various posts. This term indicated that his administration was cosmopolitan and secular.³⁰

Maharaja was an extremely far-sighted administrator who had no trust in the old Sikh chiefs in managerial issues due to their negligence and unscrupulousness. He did not appoint them in any post of the state matters or campaign against his foes. No occasion occurred during his rule which caste lewdness of bias on him. He also did not permit the Sikhs to harm the religious and sacred places of Muslims. Griffin quotes Faqir Aziz-ud-Din reference in these words:

Maharaja's conduct towards Muslim Master depended upon the principles of Islam. By resting such kind of confidence in him, Aziz-ud-Din was sent to Afghanistan in 1835 to the Amir Dost Mohammad. Faqir's diplomatic strategy worked well and the Afghans were surrendered. On this occasion, Aziz-ud-Din's demands were so amazing towards strategic missions of East India Company that he introduced himself fit for the crisis.³¹

Due to the best training and exercise of General Ventura, Allard Court, and Avitabile, the Sikh armed force was prepared in such a way that they gave incredible trouble to the British armed forces during the First Anglo-Sikh War. It is another issue that some of them became double-crossers which became the reason for their defeat. Maharaja allowed Umaras³² and Ulamas³³ to continue their religious conventions with no deterrent. He neither made any misconduct with his non-Sikh subjects nor permitted the Sikhs to behave badly with other religionists.³⁴ To know the doctrines of Christianity, he said welcome to Christian Missionaries with incredible enthusiasm in 1830 and asked them to provide a copy of the Bible. He was also loyal to the native language and fond of classical writings that were interpreted into Punjabi.

Ranjit Singh patronized the researchers and scholars of Muslim, Sikhs, and Hindus. In Lahore, Mian Wada received the financial support of Maharaja which taught the Persian Language. For the promotion of the judicial setup, he supervised numerous capable judicial officials. Different courts were set up and special courts were built up for Muslims related to Sharia. The most renowned Qazi and Mufti³⁵ were resuscitated by Maharaja which were also present during the Mughal era. While arranging the revenue setup, he established a finance department in which Misr Bhawani Das assumed the liability of that office.³⁶

The last wish of Maharaja was to handover the Koh-e-Noor to the Jagannath Puri temple which was foiled by the Dogras. Cow Slaughter was forbidden during his regime. He demanded Shah Shuja's restoring the doors of the sanctuary of Somnath removed by

Mahmud of Ghazni. During his entire period, he governed under the title of Sarkar-e-Khalsa as well as Singh Sahib and later on, Akal Shahi. He received the kingdom through the gift of the Guru Sahiban. He was neither a strict fanatic nor an extremist but his whole dedication towards Khalsa was grasping. He realized that Muslims and Hindus are equivalent to the Sikhs. He did not give as much as rights to any specific class that it would rule to another community. He was the originator of such a libertarian state where the exhortation of each pastor used to give priority. It would be an incredible strain on the faithfulness of his Muslims and Hindus subjects that he had attempted to run over them by the religious decree issued from the Mecca of the Sikhs.³⁷

Because of his fair-minded conduct towards education was the outcome of the incredible advancement of schools and almost 4,000 schools with one lakh and twenty thousand pupils were set up for various classes of society. He was anxious to help the overseers of these Centers of learning. Other than this, calligraphy of Gurmukhi³⁸ and Persian Scripts were also empowered so that individuals could attach with their religious book's lessons.³⁹ He was an image of pride for his subjects as he was the first person who sought such an interesting arrangement which was neither embraced by any ruler for such a profound way. As a result, he could able to accomplish the status of honorable residents of the State which stayed energized for the government assistance of each subject of his society. His liberalism had affected his governance whose strides concerning aimlessness were received by other Sikh states. In those days, the monarchial prevalence was pervasive under certain conditions and somewhat his administration was not away from this approach.⁴⁰

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had understood that each state wanted an adequate amount of secularism since this was the main route through which each segment of society could be joined into one string. However, before his rising intensity, the circumstance was diverse each emperor established his realm dependent on his religious rules. Each state had diverse religions and confidence which was overwhelming over different religions.⁴¹

On the analysis of his regime, once in a while contradistinguish circles were made on the Sikh religious tradition from the Punjabi custom. The premise of such perspectives is a religious nation and a liberal character. This idea demonstrated that the liberal strategy of the custom became extraordinary in the Punjabi convention. He was so progressive individual that his system has comprised of a Socio-Political premise yet his substitution in this idea was the consolation of Punjabi patriotism concerning the Sikh communitarian awareness. However, some powerless purposes of such contention were seen that after his demise, Punjabi national forces were not noticeable as helping themselves and mobilizing behind the Raj against the inner attack and internal harm.⁴²

Because of this egalitarianism, the Sikh religion presented a kitchen that gives meals free to one and all such thoughts made the Sikh religion not quite the same as others. The egalitarian's impact was across the board with the solicitation to Hindus and Muslims so they should extend their business in the Guru-Ka-Bazaar. When Misaldars came into power they did not give any consideration towards it rather Maharaja demonstrated wrongs the religious thoughts in the soul of altruism and pacification. As a general rule, he was a man of forces like a ruler with an oblivious idea of position, doctrine, and shading. For sure the one standard which he set while making the arrangement of his officials on high posts was the wellness of the officeholder for the obligations of his office. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a genuine Indian ruler who segregates ability from communalism and nepotism.⁴³

The impact of his egalitarianism was seen considerably after his demise when British and chiefs of Lahore Darbar remained against Khalsa Darbar and the Situation became so critical and to wage war against one another's armed forces became obligatory then not only Sikhs rather men of all classes as Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus battled together and ungrudgingly blended their blood for the security of their adored state. Maharaja Ranjit Singh got love, fondness, and regard from every single sectional people. His egalitarianism was one of the

unique attributes of his organization because of which was adored by not just Sikhs rather Hindus and Muslims had pleased at their lord.⁴⁴

Conclusion:

We can perceive that without a common approach of Maharaja he would not accomplish such name and notoriety from his kin which he got inside forty years of his system. Because of this approach, he had the option to set up such a solid and ensured state wherein he got the trust and confidence of the Muslims and other people. All the religious limits of cast, doctrine, and religion were crossed by Maharaja that is the reason he was fit for choosing diverse religious people for the administrations of State. The example of Maharaja's egalitarianism can be found in the civil and military organization which made patriotism towards their concerned state. While embracing the secular state, he made the stride towards understanding a non-religious polity visualized in Sikhism. The portrayal of Maharaja's realm as Sarkar Khalsa was not insignificant representative of religious propensity rather he utilized secular in it.

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- 3A commandant or a holder of a Misl
- 4A festival which was held in the 2nd month of Bikrami Sammat or Luni-solar Calendar (April-May)
- 5A five-day festival observed by the Sikh, Hindu and Jains.
- 6Misal was a group of strict soldiers or a Sikh confederacy or petty State. Sukerchakia Misal was an important Sikh confederacy and Ranjit Singh belonged to this confederacy.
- 7 Addicted to taking bhang or hemp-an intoxicant, also the name of a Sikh Misal. Bhangi is also known as a sweeper in Multan and Punjab
- 8 Pritam Singh Gill, History of Sikh Nation(Jalandhar: W. Academic Publishing Co., 1978), 342-43.
- 9Golden Color
- 10A court, an audience hall presided over by the king or the premier.
- 11 Kirpal Singh, The Historical study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's times(Delhi: National Book shop, 1994), 59.
- 12Grant of a land without revenue
- 13 Kuldeep Singh Dheer, Warriors of Sikh Nation(Patiala: Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, 1984), 14.
- 14A person who call Muslims five-time a day for prayers.
- 15 Prayer of Muslims
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- 17A Muslim event commemorates the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A)
- 18 A Muslim religious festival which is celebrated after fasting Ramzan (9th month of Lunar calendar).
- 19A Hindu festival commemorates the victory of god Ram over the demon king Ravana.
- 20A Hindu colour festival in which they play with different colours and enjoy.
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