CHAPTER IV

ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH ASCENDANCY, 1798–1823

1. Anglo-Marātha Relations and Fall of the Marāthas

A. The Marāthas after Kharda and the Second Anglo-Marātha War

The victory of the Marāthas at Kharda enhanced their prestige and the influence of Nānā Fadnavis at Poona. But they were not destined to reap any permanent advantage out of it. It was at Kharda that the Marātha chiefs assembled under the authority of the Peshwā for the last time. Soon they spoiled all their chances by unwisely indulging in internal quarrels. The young Peshwā, Mādhava Rāo Nārāyan, grew tired of Nānā’s dictatorship, and, in a fit of despair, committed suicide on the 25th October, 1795. The next in succession was Raghōba’s son, Bāji Rāo II, a bitter foe of Nānā Fadnavis, whose claims were opposed by the minister. This led to various plots and counter-plots till at last Bāji Rāo II was recognised as the Peshwā and Nānā Fadnavis as his chief minister on the 4th December, 1796. Taking advantage of these dissensions among the Marāthas, the Nizām recovered the territories that he had been compelled to cede to them after his recent defeat at Kharda.

Devoid of military qualities, and fond of intrigue, Bāji Rāo II accentuated the rivalries of the Marātha leaders of the time, by setting one against another. Unfortunately for the Marātha nation, able leaders like Mahādāji Sindhia, Malhār Rāo Holkar and Tukoji Holkar had already left this world for ever. Their descendants, like Daulat Rāo Sindhia, a nephew and adopted son of Mahādāji Sindhia, and Jaswant Rāo Holkar, a natural son of Tukoji, utterly devoid of wisdom, only occupied themselves in mutual quarrels, to the prejudice of national interests, at a time when the Company’s policy of non-intervention had given place to one of aggressive imperialism with the arrival of Lord Mornington (subsequently Marquess Wellesley) as Governor-General on the 26th April, 1798.

An imperialist to the tips of his fingers and possessed of experience of Indian affairs as Commissioner of the Board of Control, Wellesley came to guide the destiny of the Company in India at a time when
the political situation in this country was "extremely critical", as he himself said; and the Company was exposed to grave dangers, due largely to Shore's policy of neutrality. Tipu, the "ancient enemy of the Company", had greatly improved his resources, while his spirit of hostility was unabated; the Nizām was "reduced in reputation as well as in real strength" and had welcomed French support, being alienated by the English neutrality in 1795; the power of Daulat Rāo Sindhia "had arrived at a most alarming eminence"; the Rājās of the Malabar region, with the exception of the Rājā of Coorg, were hostile; there was constant apprehension of an invasion of the Indian plains by Zamān Shāh, the ruler of Kābul; and the finances of the Company were in an unsatisfactory condition. The influence of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Europe added to the gravity of the situation. The French had allied themselves with Tipu, and Napoleon had undertaken an expedition into Egypt with a view to threatening the British position in India.

To save the Company's position in this menacing situation, and to safeguard and further the interests of the British Empire as a whole, Wellesley followed the policy of subsidiary alliances with regard to the Indian powers. Indeed, the defence of England's Empire formed the keynote of Wellesley's policy. His system of subsidiary alliances implied that the Indian powers "were to make no wars and to carry on no negotiations with any other state whatever, without the knowledge and consent of the British Government. The greater principalities were each to maintain a native force commanded by British officers for the preservation of the public peace; and they were each to cede certain territories in full sovereignty to meet the yearly charges of this force. The lesser principalities were to pay a tribute to the paramount power. In return the British Government was to protect them, one and all, against foreign enemies of every sort or kind". Only a weak power would submit to such an arrangement, and the Nizām, the feeblest of all the Indian powers, readily accepted it. Some other Indian States were also conquered or mediatised by Wellesley.

The Marāthas had not come into any close contact with the English since Wellesley's accession to office. He had asked them on several occasions to enter his system "of defensive alliance and mutual guarantee" but got no response. "Hitherto," wrote Wellesley in 1800, "either the capricious temper of Bāji Rāo, or some remains of the characteristic jealousy of the nation with regard to foreign relations, have frustrated my object and views." But suddenly the course of affairs, even in Mahārāshtra, took such
a turn as to afford an opportunity to the English to intervene. The shrewd old Marātha statesman, Nānā Fadnavis, who had so long done his best to preserve in some form the solidarity of the Marātha confederacy and had hitherto resisted British interference in Marātha affairs, died at Poona on the 13th March, 1800. "With him," remarked Colonel Palmér, the British Resident at Poona, with prophetic truth, "departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Marātha Government." Though Nānā Fadnavis' attempt to establish hegemony at Poona, and his neglect of the north, have been considered by a modern Marāthi writer as shortcomings in his policy, yet it must be admitted that "he was", as Grant Duff observes, "certainly a great statesman... he is entitled to the high praise of having acted with the feelings and sincerity of a patriot". He understood the danger of English intervention in the affairs of the Marāthas and was opposed to any alliance with them. He "respected the English, admired their sincerity; but as political enemies, no one regarded them with more jealousy and alarm". His death meant the removal of the barrier that had checked to a great extent the disruptive activities of the Marātha chiefs. Both Daulat Rāo Sindhia and Jaswant Rāo Holkar now entered upon a fierce struggle with each other for supremacy at Poona, and the weak-minded Peshwā made matters worse by his incessant intrigues. Sindhia at first prevailed, and while he was engaged in fighting against Holkar's troops at Mālwa, the Peshwā murdered Vithuji Holkar, brother of Jaswant Rāo Holkar. This highly incensed Jaswant Rāo Holkar, whose power and position had recently improved, and on 23rd October he defeated the combined armies of Sindhia and the Peshwā at Poona and captured the city. After running from place to place, the Peshwā took refuge at Bassein, Jaswant Rāo Holkar placed Vināyak Rāo, son of Amrita Rāo, adopted son of Raghoba, on the Peshwā's mahānd. The Peshwā had for long declined to accept the Subsidiary Alliance, but now in his helpless situation applied for protection to Wellesley. This was what Wellesley wanted, because it fitted in with his plan of establishing control over the Marāthas. Bāji Rāo II consented to accept the Subsidiary Alliance and signed the Treaty of Bassein on the 31st December, 1802. As provided by this treaty, a subsidiary force, consisting "of not less than 6,000 regular infantry, with the usual proportion of field-artillery and European artillery-men", was to be stationed within the Peshwā's territory in perpetuity; and for its maintenance, territories yielding revenues worth twenty-six lacs of rupees were surrendered by the Peshwā. Bāji Rāo II further agreed not to entertain any European
hostile to the English and subjected his relations with other States to the control of the English. Thus he "sacrificed his independence as the price of protection". A British force under Arthur Wellesley conducted the Peshwa to his capital and restored him to his former position on the 13th May, 1803.

The Treaty of Bassein forms an important landmark in the history of British supremacy in India. "It was without question", to quote Dean Hutton, "a step which changed the footing on which we stood in Western India. It trebled the English responsibilities in an instant." It brought the Company into definite relations with the formal head of the Maratha confederacy, and henceforth it "had either to control the greatest Indian power, or was committed to hostilities with it". But there is no reason to overestimate its importance by holding, as Owen has done, that "the Treaty by its direct and indirect operations gave the Company the Empire of India." The British suzerainty over India was certainly not a foregone conclusion in 1803: a great deal had still to be achieved before it could be thoroughly established. The weak points of the Treaty of Bassein were criticised in England in a contemporary paper entitled Observations on the Treaty of Bassein, written by Lord Castlereagh, the successor, in May, 1801, of Dundas as President of the Board of Control. He was right in pointing out that it appeared "hopeless to attempt to govern the Maratha Empire through a feeble and perhaps disaffected Peshwa". He especially attacked that article of the treaty by which the Peshwa had to accept British arbitration in his disputes with other powers, and he had a just apprehension of the tendency of the treaty to involve the English "in the endless and complicated distractions of that turbulent (Maratha) Empire". Wellesley wrongly calculated that after the treaty there existed no reason "to justify an apprehension" of hostility with the Maratha chiefs, though at the same time he realised that even if any war actually broke out the advantages gained by the English as a result of the Treaty of Bassein would help them to meet their opponents successfully.

War was not long in coming. The Treaty of Bassein was, as the Governor-General's brother, Arthur Wellesley, aptly remarked, "a treaty with a cipher (the Peshwa)". It wounded the feelings of the other Maratha leaders, who saw in it an absolute surrender of national independence, and by sinking their mutual jealousies for the time being tried to present a united front to the British. The Peshwa, now repentant of his action, sent them secret messages of encouragement. Daulat Rao Sindhia and
Raghují Bhonsle II of Berār at once combined and also tried to win over Jaswant Rāo Holkar to their party. (But even at this moment of grave national peril the Marāthā chiefs could not act together.) Though Sindhiā and Raghují Bhonsle II mobilised their troops, Holkar “retired to Mālwa with the real design of being guided by the issue of events” and took the field when it was too late, and the Gāikwār remained neutral.

Hostilities commenced early in the month of August, 1803. The total strength of the Marāthā armies was 250,000 besides 40,000 troops trained by Frenchmen, while the British troops in different parts of India numbered about 55,000. But Wellesley was adequately prepared for the coming war. His measures in Mysore and at Surāt, his treaties with the Gāikwār and Oudh, and, above all, the Treaty of Bassein “afforded the most efficient means of opposing the confederacy with success”. (The English decided to attack the enemy at all points, and the war was conducted in two main centres, in the Deccan under Arthur Wellesley and in Hindustān under General Lake—and simultaneously in three subsidiary centres in Gujarāt, Bundelkhand and Orissa. The French-trained battalions of the Marāthās did not prove very useful, and the European officers in Sindhiā’s army mostly deserted him.) (The Marāthās had certainly committed a mistake in abandoning the harassing tactics of their predecessors and in giving preference to Western methods of fighting for which they had to depend on foreigners. It resulted in quick reverses.)

In the Deccan, Arthur Wellesley captured Ahmadnagar, on the Nizam’s frontier, on the 12th August, 1803, and on the 23rd September gained a complete victory over the combined troops of Sindhiā and Bhonsle at Assaye, situated about forty-five miles north of Aurangābād.) Grant Duff described this battle as “a triumph more splendid than any recorded in Deccan history”. (Burlānpur and Asīrgarh were captured by the English on the 15th October and 21st October respectively. The Bhonsle Rāja’s forces were completely defeated at Argāon, about fifty miles east of Burlānpur, on the 29th November, and the English captured the strong fortresses of Gāwilgarh on the 15th December, 1803.) In Hindustān, also, success attended British arms. Lake captured Delhi and Āgra, and the northern army of the Sindhiā was severely routed at the battle of Delhi in the month of September and at Laswari, in Alwar State, in the month of November. The English gained further successes in Gujarāt, Bundelkhand and Orissa.) Thus, (in the course of five months, Sindhiā and Bhonsle had to own severe defeats and conclude two separate treaties
with the English. By the Treaty of Deogāon, concluded on the 17th December, 1803, the Bhonsle Rājā of Berār ceded to the English the province of Cuttack, including Balāsore, and the whole of his
territory west of the river Warda. The English were henceforth to arbitrate if he had any disputes with the Nizām or the Peshwā: and "no European or American or a nation at war with the English
or any British subject, was to be entertained without the consent of the British Government”. On his agreeing to maintain a British Resident at Nagpur, the Honourable M. Elphinstone was sent there. Sindia concluded the Treaty of Surji-Arjangaon on the 30th December, by which he gave to the victors all his territories between the Ganges and the Jumna and his forts and territories to the north of the Rajput principalities of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Gohad. To the westward he ceded to them Ahmadnagar, Broach and all his territories west of the Ajanta Hills. He renounced all his claims on the Mughul Emperor, the Peshwa, the Nizam and on the British Government; agreed not to admit into his service Europeans of enemy countries or British subjects without the consent of the English; and Sir John Malcolm was appointed Resident at his court. By another treaty, concluded on the 27th February, 1804, he entered into a subsidiary alliance, according to which a defence force of 6,000 infantry was to be stationed not in Sindia’s territory, but near its frontier. As a reward for his loyalty to the English, the Nizam got, from the old possessions of the Raja of Berar, all territories to the south of Narnulla and Gawilgarh and west of the river Warda, and, from the dominions of Sindia, districts south of the Ajanta Hills such as Jalnapur and Gondapur.

As a result of the Second Anglo-Maratha War, the English secured important advantages in various ways. “With all the sanguine temper of my mind,” confessed Wellesley, “I declare that I could not have hoped for a completion of my plans at once so rapid and so secure.” The British possessions in Madras and Bengal were linked up and were expanded also in other directions. The titular Mughul Emperor, Shah Alam II, came under their protection and treaties of alliance were concluded with the States of Jodhpur, Jaipur, Macheri, Bundi and the Jat kingdom of Bharatpur. The French-trained battalions in the service of the Marathas were removed. The Nizam and the Peshwa fell more under their influence than before. Munro, a critical writer, asserted: “We are now complete masters of India, and nothing can shake our power, if we take proper measures to confirm it.” But Wellesley showed an “almost wilful” error of judgment in believing that the treaties afforded the “only possible security for the permanent tranquility and prosperity of these valuable and important possessions”. The Ministry in England, as is clear from the contemporary despatches of Lord Castlereagh, thought otherwise. The situation in India was rightly diagnosed by Arthur Wellesley, who thought that his brother, the Governor-General, put “a too exacting interpretation on the Treaties of Peace”. He wrote
on the 13th May, 1804: "Our enemies are much disgusted, and complain loudly of our conduct and want of faith; and in truth I consider the peace to be by no means secured."

\*B. War With Holkar\*

In fact, the peace had already come to an end with the commencement of hostilities (April, 1804) between Holkar, who had so long kept himself aloof from the war, and the English. Holkar pursued the old tactics of the Marathas and defeated Colonel Monson, who had in an illjudged manner advanced too far into the plains of Rājputāna, at Mukundārā Pass, thirty miles south of Kotah, and compelled him to retreat to Āgra towards the end of August. Flushed with this success, Holkar marched northward and besieged Delhi from the 8th to the 14th October, but the city was successfully defended by the local British Resident, Lt.-Colonel Ochterlony. A band of Holkar’s troops was defeated at Dig on the 13th November and another band, personally commanded by Holkar, was routed by General Lake on the 17th November. But the English soon suffered a serious reverse owing to Lake’s failure to take the fortress of Bharatpur early in 1805. The Rājā of Bharatpur, however, concluded a treaty with the English on the 10th April, 1805, and the war might have taken an adverse turn for Holkar but for Wellesley’s sudden recall.

For some time past the authorities in England had been rather dissatisfied with the aggressive policy of Wellesley, and his conquests, though brilliant and of far-reaching consequence, “were becoming”, it was believed by many, “too large for profitable management” and raised the Company’s debts from seventeen millions in 1797 to thirty-one millions in 1806. Further, Wellesley’s manners were imperious and overbearing, and he dealt with the home authorities in a rather masterful way, often disregarding their orders and instructions and not informing them of his actions. So long as Wellesley’s policy was crowned with success, the home authorities did not interfere. But the news of the disastrous retreat of Monson and the failure of Lake before Bharatpur having reached England, his “war-loving” policy began to be severely condemned by a strong public opinion. Pitt is said to have declared that Wellesley “had acted most imprudently and illegally, and that he could not be suffered to remain in the government”. Lord Wellesley resigned his post and sailed for England.

Lord Cornwallis being appointed Governor-General for the second
time at the age of sixty-seven reached Calcutta on the 30th July, 1805, with instructions from Castlereagh to stop aggrandisement and "to bring back things to the state which the legislature had prescribed" by the Acts of 1784 and 1793. But, before anything could be done to reverse the subsidiary treaties, Lord Cornwallis died at Ghazipur on the 5th October, 1805, and Sir George Barlow, the senior member of the Council, became the acting Governor-General. Barlow carried out the policy of his predecessor. Peace was finally concluded with the Sindhia on the 23rd November, 1805. Gwalior and Gohud were restored to him; he was to claim nothing north of the river Chambal and the Company nothing to the south of it; and the Company pledged itself not to enter into treaties with the chiefs of Rajputana. Meanwhile Lord Lake had hunted Holkar up to Amritsar, where the latter had appealed to the Sikhs for help, who, however, did not accept his proposals. He thereupon opened negotiations with Lord Lake for peace, which was signed on the 7th January, 1806. Holkar gave up all claims to Tonk, Rampura, Bundi, Kooch, Bundelkhand and places north of the Chambal, but he got back the greater part of his lost territories. Further, in spite of strong protest from Lord Lake, Sir George Barlow published Declaratory Articles whereby Tonk and Rampura were practically surrendered to Holkar and British protection was withdrawn from the other Rajput States. Thus the Rajput States were left to their fate, to be distracted by Maratha inroads into their territories. As an envoy of the Raja of Jaipur observed, the Company now made "its faith subservient to its convenience".

C. The Third Anglo-Maratha War and the Fall of the Marathas

With the last quarter of the eighteenth century the Marathas had begun losing all those elements which are needed for the growth of a power, and so could not profit in the least by the British policy of neutrality in the beginning of the nineteenth century. (The political and administrative conditions of all the Maratha States came to be hopelessly confused and gloomy, and their economic condition anything but satisfactory.) Jaswant Rao Holkar secretly assassinated his brother, Kasi Rao, and his nephew, Khande Rao. The course of events, however, so affected his mind that he became insane, and died on the 20th October, 1811. The real ruler was now the deceased Holkar's favourite mistress, Tulsi Bai, a clever and intelligent woman, who had the support of Balaram Seth, Jaswant Rao's minister, and of Amir
Khān, the leader of the Central Indian Pathāns. These unworthy men failed to administer the State properly.

So far as Daulat Rāo Sindhis was concerned, the financial resources of his State could not suffice to meet the cost of his army, and his soldiers were permitted to collect money on their own account from the districts. The morale of the army thereby deteriorated and Sindhis could not maintain a strong control over his generals.

Exposed to the inroads of the Pindaris and the Pathāns, the territory of Raghūji Bhonsle was in the midst of disorder. So none of the three Marātha chiefs were in a position to oppose the English openly; and the Gāikwār of Barodā manifested no desire to violate the treaty of subsidiary alliance into which he had entered on the 21st April, 1805. Referring to the Marātha princes Prinsep believed that “as far as they were individually concerned, the objects of the settlement of 1805–1806 seem to have been attained; their weakness afforded a security against any one of them meditating a separate hostile enterprise; at the same time the balance that had been established remained unaltered, and the mutual jealousies relied upon as the guarantee against a second coalition were yet unextinguished”.

But another trial of strength between the English and the Marāthas took place before the latter finally succumbed. Though apparently friendly, the Marātha chiefs, including even the Peshwā, who had been restored to the masnad through the help of the English, nurtured in their heart of hearts feelings of jealousy and hostility against the English, which they could not then openly manifest owing to the distracted condition of their kingdoms, but which might burst forth on the appearance of a favourable opportunity. Largely under the influence of his unscrupulous favourite, Trimbakji Dangia, Bāji Rāo II engaged in intrigues with a view to leading once more a confederacy of the Marātha chiefs against the English. To settle some disputes between the Peshwā and the Gāikwār, the latter sent to Poona in A.D. 1814 his chief minister, Gangādhar Shāstrī, a friend of the English. Shāstrī was conducted by the Peshwā to Nāsik and was murdered there apparently at the instigation of Trimbakji. After a good deal of hesitation, Bāji Rāo II surrendered Trimbakji to Mountstuart Elphinstone, the British Resident at Poona since 1811, who placed him under confinement in the fortress of Than. But he escaped a year later, it was believed with the connivance of the Peshwā, though there is no definite proof of it. Matters became most threatening by the year 1817. The Peshwā now made serious attempts to organise against the English a confederacy of
the Marātha chiefs and opened negotiations with them as well as with the Pathān chief, Amir Khān, and the Pindaris. He also tried to increase the strength and efficiency of his army.

The English did not fail to take prompt measures to check the Peshwā's designs. With the arrival of the Earl of Moira, better known as the Marquess of Hastings (1813–1823), the British policy of neutrality had been thoroughly reversed. The new Governor-General was determined “to render the British Government paramount in effect, if not declaredly so” and to “hold the other States vassals in substance, if not in name...”. Mountstuart Elphinstone, instructed by the Governor-General on the 10th May, 1817, to circumscribe the powers of the Peshwā in such a way as to “prevent the evils apprehended from the course of policy pursued by the Court of Poona for several years”, induced Bāji Rāo II to sign most reluctantly the Treaty of Poona on the 13th June, 1817. The Peshwā had to renounce the headship of the Marātha confederacy; to commute his claims on the Gāikwār to four lacs of rupees and to promise not to make further demands on him; and to surrender to the English the Konkan and some important strongholds. Daulat Rāo Sindhis was also compelled by the English to sign the Treaty of Gwālior on the 5th November, 1817, by which he bound himself to co-operate with the English to suppress the Pindaris and gave the Company full liberty to enter into engagements with the States beyond the Chambal. Thus the English could conclude a number of treaties with the Rājput States, so long greatly harassed by Marātha inroads. Meanwhile, internal quarrels about the succession to the kingdom of Nāgpur had given an opportunity to the English to bring that kingdom under their influence. Raghūji Bhonsle II died on the 22nd March, 1816, and was succeeded by his imbecile son, Parsoji. Parsoji had an able but ambitious cousin, Appa Sāhab, who aspired to the government and wanted as a preparatory measure to secure the regency. The English recognised this on his signing a treaty of subsidiary alliance on the 27th May, 1816. The Treaties of Poona, Gwālior, and Nāgpur added greatly to the influence of the English at the cost of the Marāthas. The first dealt a severe blow at the power and prestige of the Peshwā; the second checked the pretensions of Sindhis over the Rājput States, which fell under British control; and the third cost the Nāgpur State its independence and brought it under the subsidiary system, which had been evaded by Raghūji Bhonsle II but had been “so long and so earnestly desired by the British Government”. The “defensive means” of the English were now greatly improved, and Malcolm observes.
that “in the actual condition of India no event could be more fortunate than the subsidiary alliance with Nāgpur”.

But none of the Marāṭha chiefs were sincerely reconciled to the loss of their independence and they had full sympathy with the Peshwa’s desire to make himself free from British control. On the very day that Sindhia signed the subsidiary treaty, the Peshwā sacked and burnt the British Residency at Poona and attacked with about 27,000 men a small British army of 2,800 under Colonel Burr at Khirki; but he was completely defeated. Appa Sāheb of Nāgpur and Mālhar Rāo Holkar II, son of Jāswant Rāo Holkar, rose in arms against the English. The Nāgpur troops were defeated at Sitābaldi on the 27th November, 1817, and Holkar’s forces were routed at Mahidpur by Hislop on the 21st December, 1817. Appa Sāheb fled to the Punjab and then to Jodhpur where he died in A.D. 1840. The districts lying to the north of the Narmadā were annexed to British territories and a minor grandson of Raghuji Bhonsle II was established as Rājā over the remnant of the state. Holkar was forced to sign the Treaty of Mandasor on the 6th January, 1818, by which he gave up all claims on the Rājput States, ceded to the English all districts south of the Narmadā, agreed to maintain a subsidiary force within this territory, submitted his foreign relations to the arbitration of the British, and recognised Amīr Khān, a mercenary commander, as Nawāb of Tonk. A permanent British Resident was henceforth stationed at Indore.

As for the Peshwā, after his defeat at Khirki, he fought two more battles with the English—at Koregāon on the 1st January, 1818, and at Ashti on the 20th February, 1818. He was defeated in both, his able general Gokhale being killed in the second. Bāji Rāo II at last surrendered to Sir John Malcolm on the 3rd June, 1818. The Peshwāship, which served as the symbol of national unity among the Marāṭhas even in its worst days, was abolished; Bāji Rāo II was allowed to spend his last days at Bithur near Cawnpore on a pension of eight lacs a year; his dominions were placed under British control; and “British influence and authority spread over the land with magical celerity”. Trimbakji was kept in life-long confinement in the fort of Chunār. The small kingdom of Sātārā, formed out of the Peshwā’s dominions, was given to Pratāp Simha, a lineal descendant of Shivāji and the formal head of the Marātha Empire. The State of Sātārā did not become the centre of a hostile Marātha confederacy, as Thornton apprehended. As a matter of fact, as Roberts records, “the rule of the new dynasty proved an evil and incompetent one, and Sātārā was one of the States to which subsequently the Doctrine of Lapse was applied by Dalhouzie.”
D. Causes of the Downfall of the Marathas

Thus was foiled the last attempt of the Marathas to build up their political supremacy in India on the ruins of the Mughul Empire. The fabric of the Maratha Empire, which the genius and military ability of Shivaji the Great had brought into existence, and which, after a short period of decline, was revived by Baji Rao I, and competed with the English for political supremacy for about forty years, now collapsed most ignominiously. This was primarily due to certain inherent defects in the character of the Maratha State, particularly during the eighteenth century, though there were other factors which accelerated it. In the Maratha State, "there was", Sir J. N. Sarkar asserts, "no attempt at well-thought-out organised communal improvement, spread of education, or unification of the people, either under Shivaji or under the Peshwa. The cohesion of the peoples of the Maratha State was not organic but artificial, accidental and therefore precarious". Another drawback of the Maratha State was its lack of a sound economic policy and satisfactory financial arrangements, without which the political development of a nation becomes impossible. The sterile soil of Maharsbtra held out no prospects for flourishing agriculture, trade and industries, and the Maratha State had to depend on uncertain and precarious sources of income like chauth, which again cost them the sincere co-operation of the other indigenous powers. Further, the revival of the jagir system after the death of Shivaji introduced a highly disintegrating force into the State; the Maratha jagirdars, blind to all but their personal interests, ruined the national cause by plunging their country into intrigues and quarrels. With some exceptions like Shivaji, Baji Rao I, Madhava Rao I, Malhar Rao Holkar, Mahadaji Sindhia and Nanaj Fadnavis, the Maratha chiefs, particularly those of later times, indulged more in finesse or intrigue than well-calculated statesmanlike action, which produced a disastrous reaction on the destiny of their State, especially when they were confronted with superior British diplomacy during the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Lastly, the Marathas of the eighteenth century, while discarding their old tactics of war, could not develop, even under Mahadaji Sindhia and Nanaj Fadnavis, a military system organised on the scientific lines of the West. Opposed to them were the English, possessed of an efficient military organisation, based on up-to-date methods and varied experience of European wars. It is indeed a pity that the Marathas depended upon foreign adventurers "for
a most vital means of self-protection", and thus ultimately lost
their independence.

2. Anglo-Mysore Relations

A. The Fourth Anglo-Mysore War

Lord Cornwallis optimistically estimated the results of the war
with Tipu in his time by saying: "We have effectively crippled
our enemy, without making our friends too formidable."

But the hope of a lasting peace was soon belied. A man like
Tipu could never accept for long the humiliation that he had

suffered at the hands of the English, against whom he nursed
a deep resentment. "Instead of sinking under his misfortunes,
he exerted," writes Malcolm, "all his activity to repair the ravages
of war. He began to add to the fortifications of his capital—to
remount his cavalry—to recruit and discipline his infantry
—to punish his refractory tributaries, and to encourage the culti-
vation of his country, which was soon restored to its former pros-
perity." France was then involved in a deadly war with England
in Europe; and as an astute diplomat, Tipu tried to secure the
alliance of France against the English in India. He enlisted himself
as a member of the Jacobin Club and permitted nine Frenchmen in his service to elect "citizen Ripaud", a Lieutenant in the French navy, as their President, to hoist the flag of the recently established French Republic and to plant a Tree of Liberty at Seringapatam. With a view to securing allies for himself in the contemplated conflict, Tipu also sent emissaries to Arabia, Kābul, Constantinople, Versailles and Mauritius. The French governor of the Isle of France, Monsieur Malartic, welcomed the envoys and proposals of Tipu, and published a proclamation inviting volunteers to come forward to help Tipu in expelling the English from India. As a result of this, some Frenchmen landed at Mangalore in April, 1798.

Lord Wellesley on his arrival at Madras on the 26th April, 1798, quickly realised the hostile intentions of Tipu and at once determined to wage war on him, overruling the timid suggestions of the Madras Council. He held in his Minute of 12th August, 1798, that "the act of Tippo's ambassador, ratified by himself, and accompanied by the landing of a French force in his country is a public, unqualified and unambiguous declaration of war; aggravated by an avowal, that the object of the war is neither expansion, reparation, nor security, but the total destruction of the British Government in India. To attempt to misunderstand an insult and injury of such a complexion would argue a consciousness either of weakness or of fear." Besides other preparations for the war, Wellesley tried to revive the Triple Alliance of 1790. The Nizām at once concluded a subsidiary alliance with the English on the 1st September, 1798, but the Marāthas gave rather vague replies to the Governor-General's overtures. Nevertheless, to show the "disinterestedness of the British Government to every branch of the Triple Alliance", Wellesley engaged to give the Peshwā a share in the conquests of the war.

This war against Tipu was of a very short duration, but quite decisive. He was defeated by Stuart at Sedaseer, forty-five miles west of Seringapatam, on the 5th March, 1799, and again on the 27th March by General Harris at Malvelly, thirty miles east of Seringapatam. Tipu then retired to Seringapatam, which was captured by the English on the 4th May. The Mysore Sultān died while gallantly defending his metropolis, which was, however, plundered by the English troops. Thus fell a leading Indian power and one of the most inveterate and dreadful foes of the English.

Mysore was at the disposal of the English. The members of Tipu's family were interned at Vellore. They were suspected of being involved in the abortive mutiny of the sepoys at Vellore.
in 1806 and were deported to Calcutta. As a sort of diplomatic move, Wellesley offered the districts of Soonda and Harponelly, lying in the north-west of the Mysore kingdom, to the Marathas, who, however, refused to accept these. To the Nizām was given
the territory to the north-east near his dominion, that is, the
districts of Gooty and Gurramkonda and a part of the district of
Chiteldrug except its fort. The English took for themselves Kanara
on the west; Wynaad in the south-east, the districts of Coimbatore
and Daraporam; two tracts on the east; and the town and island
of Seringapatam. A boy of the old Hindu reigning dynasty of
Mysore was given the rest of the kingdom. This new State
of Mysore became virtually a dependency of the English. A
subsidiary treaty, which the minor ruler had to accept, pro-
vided for the maintenance of a protecting British force within
the kingdom. A subsidy was to be paid by its ruler which could
be increased by the Governor-General in time of war; and the
Governor-General was further empowered to take over the entire
internal administration of the country if he was dissatisfied on any
account with its government. This arrangement, Wellesley hoped,
would enable him "to command the whole resources of the Râjâ's
territory". The Governor-General "acted wisely", in Thornton's
opinion, "in not making Mysore ostensibly a British possession. He
acted no less wisely in making it substantially so". Because of
misgovernment, Lord William Bentinck brought Mysore under the
direct administration of the Company, and it remained so till
1831, when Lord Ripon restored the royal family to power.

The settlement of Mysore, as effected by Lord Wellesley, secured
for the Company substantial territorial, economic, commercial and
military advantages. It extended the Company's dominion "from
sea to sea across the base of the peninsula", encompassing the new
kingdom of Mysore on all sides except in the north. When in 1800
the Nizâm transferred his acquisitions from Mysore to the Company,
this kingdom "was entirely encircled by the Pax Britannica". This
achievement of the Governor-General was enthusiastically applauded
in England; he was elevated to the rank of Marquis in the peerage
of Ireland and General Harris was made a baron.

B. Estimate of Tipu

Tipu is, in many respects, a remarkable personality in Indian
history. A man of sound moral character, free from the prevailing
vices of his class, he had an intense faith in God. He was fairly
well educated, could speak fluently Persian, Kanarese and Urdu,
and had a valuable library. A valiant soldier and a tactful
general, Tipu was a diplomat of no mean order. This is proved
by his clear perception of the fact that England and not any
Indian power was the enemy; by his study of politics, particularly
the relations between England and France in Europe; by the embassies he sent to France and other places; and the correspondence that he carried on with Zamān Shāh of Kābul. He placed independence above everything else, and lost his life in trying to preserve it. Unlike many of his Indian contemporaries, Tipu was an able and industrious ruler. Some of his English contemporaries, like Edward Moore and Major Dirom, were favourably impressed with his administration and have unhesitatingly stated that he enjoyed sufficient popularity in his kingdom. Even Sir John Shore observes that “the peasantry of his dominions are protected and their labours encouraged and rewarded”. Some writers, old as well as modern, have wrongly described Tipu as a cruel and sanguinary tyrant, an oppressive despot, and a furious fanatic. He cannot be held guilty of systematic cruelty, and, as Major Dirom remarks, “his cruelties were in general inflicted only on those whom he considered as his enemies”. Also he was not a fierce bigot. The discovery and study of Tipu’s Shringherī Letters prove that he knew “how to placate Hindu opinion, and religious intolerance was not the cause of his ruin”. Though a pious Muslim, he did not attempt any wholesale conversion of his Hindu subjects, as Wilks’ account would lead us to believe; but he forced it only on those recalcitrant Hindus on whose allegiance he could not rely. In one respect, he compares unfavourably with his father; politically he was less sagacious and practical than the latter. He often tried to introduce useless innovations in the name of reform. “A restless spirit of innovation, and a wish to have everything to originate from himself, was,” wrote Thomas Munro, “the predominant feature of his character.”

3. Disappearance of the French Menace

The fall of Tipu was a source of immense relief to the English, who were much worried by French intrigues. Tipu was indeed, as the Governor-General’s brother, the Duke of Wellington, observed, “the certain ally of the French in India”. As a matter of fact, the battle of Wandiwāsh did not finally shatter the ambitions of the French in India. There still remained a French peril throughout the rest of the eighteenth century. The French now tried to pursue their ambitious designs by establishing their influence in the courts of Indian powers like the Nizām, the Sultān of Mysore and the Marāthas. They joined their

1 Kirkpatrick, Wilks, Rennell and others.
2 Bowring, Roberts and Dean Hutton.
armies, and incited them against the English. Chevalier, Governor of Chandernagore from 1767 to 1778, and Governors of Pondicherry, Law de Lauriston (1765–1776), Bellecombe (1777–1778), and military adventurers like Madec, Modave and Gentil, who were in the service of the Indian Princes, and St. Lubin and Montigny, two agents sent by the Minister of Marine and Colonies, formed certain diplomatic projects which could not be carried into effect fully for various reasons. In 1777 St. Lubin negotiated a treaty with Nānā Fadnavis with a view to stirring up the Marāths against the English, and the French considered an alliance with Hyder ʿĀli to be necessary “for regaining the ascendancy which they have lost in India and to despoil their rival of it”. Disgusted by English neutrality at the battle of Kharda, the Nizām sought French help, and maintained a trained body of 14,000 men under a French commander, named François Raymond, who had organised a definitely “anti-British, pro-French and pro-Tipu” party in the Hyderābād court. Daulat Rāo Sindhis also maintained in his northern armies 40,000 disciplined men under Perron, a French general, whose influence over the Sindhis was so great that Wellesley could without much exaggeration say that he had built a French State on the banks of the Jumānā. We have already noted the nature of Franco-Mysore relations, which were undoubtedly antagonistic to English interests.

The French further tried to utilise the opportunities afforded by wars in America and Europe to regain what they had lost in India. Thus when the War of American Independence broke out, besides allying themselves with the revolted colonies, they sent, in 1782, three thousand men under Bussy and a fleet under Admiral Suffren to help Hyder ʿĀli; but Bussy’s expedition was unable to further French interests. Again Hyder’s son sought the French alliance when England was engaged in a deadly war with revolutionary France. Though on the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars the French possessions in India were seized by the English, the Egyptian campaign of Napoleon, and the projects of the French to establish their influence in Egypt and then undermine the British position in India, were sources of deep anxiety to the English officers in India.

It did not take a long time for Wellesley, who possessed penetrating insight and a clear vision, to realise the nature of the French peril. He took immediate steps to remove it. Besides trying to destroy French influence in Indian courts and armies and disbanding the European-trained armies of the Nizām, he planned expeditions against the Isle of France, as from the beginning of the Revolutionary Wars French privateers used it as a
base to prey upon English shipping in the Indian Ocean; but they could not be carried into effect owing to the refusal of Admiral Rainier, commander of the British squadron, to co-operate with him. He also contemplated the capture of Batavia, the capital of the Dutch East Indies. In response to an order from home, he sent an expedition to the Red Sea under the command of Sir David Baird in 1801. The French at Alexandria had already capitulated before Baird’s party reached Cairo. Wellesley did not restore to the French their settlements in India after the Peace of Amiens, which was but a temporary truce of thirteen months.

The French still persisted in their anti-English intrigues in India. Deccaen, the newly-appointed Captain-General of the French in India, tried fruitlessly to secure Indian allies and also encouraged French privateers to capture British vessels in the Indian seas. The English were, however, finally freed from the French menace by the year 1814–1815. This synchronised with the attempt of Lord Hastings to establish British paramountcy in India.

4. Hyderābād

We have seen that after his defeat at Kharda, the Nizām in utter disgust turned to the French for support and freely admitted Frenchmen into his court and army. When Lord Wellesley arrived in India, Frenchmen “of the most virulent principles of Jacobinism”, as Wellesley himself said, dominated the Nizām.

But Wellesley was determined to exterminate French influence and intrigues in India and to extend British control over the Indian powers. Circumstances favoured his policy. The Nizām had been somewhat pacified by British assistance given him during the rebellion of his son Āli Jāh in 1797; he had by this time become suspicious of the growing French influence; and his minister Mir Ālam, a friend of the English, had been urging him to form an amicable settlement with the English. Wellesley’s first step was to persuade the Nizām to conclude a subsidiary treaty on the 1st September, 1798, which provided for the maintenance and payment of a force of six battalions by the Nizām, the subordination of his external relations to the control of the English, and the expulsion of European officers belonging to other nationalities from his territory. The French-trained troops of the Nizām were disbanded by Malcolm and Kirkpatrick, and he proved to be a sincere ally of the Company in its war against Tipu, for which, as we have already noted, he was rewarded with portions of the Mysore kingdom. As the treaty of 1798 was of a temporary nature,
a "perpetual and general defensive alliance" was formed between the English and the Nizām on the 12th October, 1800, whereby the subsidiary force was increased, for the maintenance of which the Nizām surrendered to the English all the territories he had got as spoils of the Mysore Wars in 1792 and 1798. He also agreed not to enter into political relations with other powers without the permission of the English. Nizām 'Āli died in 1803, and his successor, Sikandar Jāh, had no hesitation in confirming all the previous treaties with the English. By a treaty concluded in the time of Lord Hastings, on the 12th December, 1822, readjustment of territories was effected, and the Nizām was exempted from the payment of arrears of tribute to the Peshwā.

The subsidiary alliance guaranteed protection to the Hyderābād State against external aggression; but it produced some disastrous consequences in its internal administration. As a natural sequel to the habit of dependence on another power, the Hyderābād rulers of this period lost all initiative for good and efficient government, and their country became subject to various disruptive forces, as was also the case with many other provinces of contemporary India, like Bengal, Oudh and the Carnatic, while the kingdom of Tipu, who was not a subsidiary ruler, was in a flourishing condition. "Conceive of a country," observed the Duke of Wellington, "in every village of which there are from twenty to thirty horsemen, who have been dismissed from the service of the State, and who have no means of living except by plunder. In this country there is no law, no civil government . . . no inhabitant can, or will, remain to cultivate, unless he is protected by an armed force stationed in the village. This is the outline of the state of the countries of the Peshwā and the Nizām."

5. The Carnatic

The existence of dual government in the Carnatic, no less disastrous and oppressive to its people than the dual government of Bengal, could certainly not be tolerated by Lord Wellesley, a man of strong determination and highly imperialistic instincts. To bring the Carnatic under the supreme control of the Company by cutting out this "fostering sore" seemed to him to be an almost imperative need for the extension of his favourite principle, which he thus enunciated later on: "The Company with relation to its territory in India must be viewed in the capacity of a sovereign power." But "the method he employed was unfortunate and laid him open to the charge of sophistical dealing". Certain documents discovered
at Seringapatam proved, according to the Governor-General, that both Muhammad 'Āli and Omdut-ul-Umarā, who died on the 15th July, 1801, carried on secret and treasonable correspondence with Tipu Sultān. He declared that they had thus "placed themselves in the condition of public enemies" and had forfeited their right to the throne of the Carnatic. He ignored the claim of 'Āli Husain, son of the deceased Nawāb, to his father’s territory, and on the 25th July, 1801, concluded a treaty with 'Āzīm-ud-daulah, a nephew of Omdut-ul-Umarā, who was thereby installed as the nominal Nawāb of the Carnatic. He was guaranteed a pension of one-fifth of its revenues, and the entire civil and military administration of the province was taken over by the Company. The assumption of the Carnatic government was declared by Wellesley as "perhaps the most salutary and useful measure which has been adopted since the acquisition of the Dewanny (Dīwānī) of Bengal"; and writers like Thornton, Owen, and some others, have tried to vindicate his policy in every way. But it earned Mill's severe criticism. The documents in question did not prove the treachery of the Carnatic Nawābs. Wellesley could have frankly declared what his object was, and could have given effect to it in a more straightforward manner.

6. Tanjore and Surāt

The rulers of Tanjore and Surāt were also compelled by Wellesley to surrender their administrative powers to the Company, and to remain content with "empty titles" and "guaranteed pensions". As for Tanjore, a Marātha principality founded by Shivāji's father, Shāhjī, a disputed succession gave Wellesley an opportunity to intervene in its affairs and thus persuade its ruler to conclude a subsidiary treaty on the 25th October, 1799. By this treaty the whole civil and military administration of this kingdom passed to the Company in return for a pension of £40,000 per annum. A similar fate befell the principality of Surāt. Since 1759 the Company had undertaken its defence on behalf of the Mughul Emperor, while its Nawāb retained the civil administration. But the Nawābs of Surāt were unable to pay all the sums required by the Company for the expenses of the garrison it maintained in that State. When the old Nawāb of Surāt died on the 8th January, 1799, Lord Wellesley, in a high-handed manner, forced his brother and legitimate successor, to surrender the whole administration of the territory to the Company in March, 1800. Thus Wellesley committed, in the opinion of Mill, "the most unceremonious act of dethronement."
which the English had yet performed, as the victim was the weakest and most obscure”. Beveridge unhesitatingly declares that “the whole proceeding was characterised by tyranny and injustice”.

7. The Fate of Oudh

Loss of independence was the price which the kingdom of Oudh paid for her long-continued internal bankruptcy, in the time of Wellesley. The Governor-General was convinced that, for the effective security of the north-western frontier, Oudh must be brought definitely under British control. In his private letter to John Lumsden, the Company’s Resident at Oudh, he expressed his determination to take possession of the Doāb with a view to strengthening the Company’s north-western frontier; to substitute for the Nawāb’s troops “an increased number of the Company’s regiments of infantry and cavalry, to be relieved from time to time and to be paid by His Excellency (the Nawāb); and to dislodge from Oudh every European excepting the Company’s servants”. The immediate execution of these projects was obstructed by an unfortunate incident at Benares, where, on the 14th January, 1799, Wāzīr ‘Āli, bitterly resentful of his position, massacred several Englishmen, including Mr. Cherry, the British Resident. He was in fact trying to organise a widespread conspiracy against the Company, had confederates in Bihār and Bengal, and even sought to secure the help of Zamān Shāh of Kābul, who threatened an invasion of Hindustān. But he was captured by a British force and sent to Fort William, where he spent his days in confinement till his death in A.D. 1817.

It was not possible for Wellesley to charge the Nawāb of Oudh, who had all along been faithful to the Company, with treason or insubordination, as he had done in the case of the ruler of the Carnatic. But he had a convenient pretext, in the threat of Zamān Shāh to invade Hindustān, for demanding from the Nawāb of Oudh the disbandment of his own army and the increase of the Company’s forces. After some resistance, the Nawāb, under pressure from the British Resident, Colonel Scott, announced his intention to abdicate. Considering this proposal to be an excellent means for the establishment of “the sole and exclusive authority of the Company within the province of Oudh and its dependencies”, the Governor-General wrote to the Court of Directors that it was his intention “to profit by the event to the utmost practicable extent”. But when Wellesley sought to exclude the Nawāb’s sons from succession to the masnad of Oudh, the Nawāb withdrew his
announcement of abdication. This made the Governor-General furious. He declared himself "extremely disgusted at the duplicity and insincerity which mark the conduct of the Nawāb-Vazir on the present occasion", and now presented to the Nawāb a draft treaty which considerably increased the number of Company's troops and the amount of the subsidy that was to be paid. The Nawāb advanced some reasonable objections on the strength of former treaties; but Wellesley rejected these and forced him to submit to his demands. This was not enough to satisfy the Governor-General. He again compelled the Nawāb to conclude a treaty on the 10th November, 1801, by which the latter had to surrender the rich and valuable tracts of Rohilkhand and the Lower Doāb, that is, the territories lying between the Ganges and the Jumnā, covering almost half of his dominions. Thus Oudh was encircled by British territory except on the north; and the British possessions now confronted Sindhia along the entire line of his dominions in Northern India. These were indeed advantages of great importance for the Company. "The rectification of our military frontier, and the territorial isolation of the Nabob (Nawāb)," as Owen rightly says, "were not only parts of a larger scheme, but in themselves measures of obvious importance, especially at such a crisis."

Wellesley's treatment of Oudh has been condemned not only by Mill but also by most of the other historians. Even Dr. H. H. Wilson admits that the negotiations with the Nawāb were carried on in an objectionable manner. Sir Alfred Lyall, not indeed always a hostile critic of Wellesley, considered that, in his dealings with Oudh, Wellesley "subordinated the feelings and interests of his ally to paramount considerations of British policy in a manner that showed very little patience, forbearance, or generosity". The Court of Directors also condemned it. British intervention did not at once bring peace and good government to the kingdom. The evils of administration were aggravated here, as in the other States which had accepted subsidiary alliances, till the kingdom was annexed subsequently on the charge of misgovernment. It may be said that the subsidiary treaties of Wellesley in a sense prepared the ground for Dalhousie's annexations in certain cases.

8. Anglo-Gurkā Relations and the Nepāl War (1814–1816)

Taking advantage of internal struggles among the old ruling clans of the Nepāl valley, the Gurkhās, a tribe of-the Western Himālayas, conquered it in A.D. 1768. They gradually built up
a powerful State possessing considerable military strength and naturally seeking outlets for expansion. Their attempts at a northern push being checked by the great Chinese Empire, they advanced towards the south, and during the early nineteenth century they extended their dominion as far as the River Tista on the east and the Sutlej on the west, so that they were then "in actual possession of the whole of the strong country which skirts the northern frontier of Hindustān". With the occupation of the Gorakhpur district by the Company in 1801, the territories of the Gurkhās in the Tarāi became conterminous with the uncertain and ill-defined northern frontier of the British dominion, and the border districts became subject to the incessant inroads of the Gurkhās. Sir George Barlow remonstrated without any effect, and in the time of Lord Minto the Gurkhās conquered Butwal, lying north of what is now known as the Basti district, and Sheoraj, farther to the east. These were regained by the English without open hostilities. But the conflicting interests of the Gurkhās and the English made an appeal to arms inevitable.

An unprovoked attack by the Gurkhās on three police-stations in Butwal in the month of May, 1814, was followed in October by a declaration of war against them by the Governor-General, Lord Hastings. Lord Hastings himself planned the campaign. He decided to attack the enemy simultaneously at four different points along the entire line of the frontier from the Sutlej to the Kosi, and also tried "to corrupt the fidelity of the Nepālese Government". But to vanquish the hardy Nepālese did not prove to be a very easy task, on account of their peculiar tactics and brilliant qualities as soldiers, the lack of knowledge on the part of the British soldiers of the geographical difficulties of the mountainous region, and the incompetence of the British generals with the exception of Ochterlony. So the British campaign of 1814–1815 was attended with reverses. Major-Generals Marley and John Sullivan Wood, who were required to advance towards the Nepāl capital from Patna and Gorakhpur respectively, retreated after some unsuccessful attempts; General Gillespie lost his life through his "indiscreet daring" in assaulting the mountain-fortress of Kalanga; and Major-General Martindell was defeated before the stronghold of Jaitak. But these losses of the English were more than retrieved when Colonels Nicolls and Gardner captured Almora in Kumāon in April, 1815, and General Ochterlony compelled the brave Gurkhā leader, Amar Singh Thapa, to surrender the fort of Malaon on the 15th May, 1815. In view of the hopelessness of further resistance, the Gurkhās signed a treaty at Sagauli on the 28th November, 1815.
Under the influence of the war party in Nepal, its Government hesitated to ratify the treaty and hostilities began again. Ochterlony, now in supreme command of the British troops, advanced within fifty miles of the capital of Nepal and defeated the Nepalese at Makwanpur on the 28th February, 1816. This led the Nepal Government to ratify the treaty early in March next. In accordance with this the Nepalese gave up their claims to places in the lowlands along their southern frontier, ceded to the English the districts of Garhwal and Kumāon on the west of Nepal, withdrew from Sikkim, and agreed to receive a British Resident at Katmandu. These were indeed important gains for the English. The north-west frontier of their dominions now reached the mountains. They obtained sites for important hill-stations and summer capitals like Simla, Mussoorie, Almora, Ranikhet, Landour and Naini Tal; and also greater facilities for communications with the regions of Central Asia. The Nepal Government has ever since remained true to its alliance with the English. By a treaty with the Rājā of Sikkim, dated the 10th February, 1817, a tract ceded by the Nepalese was given to him, and this created a barrier between the eastern frontier of Nepal and Bhutān.

9. Suppression of the Pindari and Pathān Hordes, and Extension of British Paramountcy over Rājputāna and Central India

While the principal Indian powers were falling one by one before the growing British supremacy, Central India remained steeped in utter confusion and anarchy due to the turbulence and nefarious activities of predatory hordes like the Pindaris and the Pathāns. In Rājputāna it was also partly due to the feudal rivalries among its different states, and partly to the ravages associated with the Marātha penetration into it during the second half of the eighteenth century. The continuance of this state of things over a wide area could not be tolerated by the English at a time when they were trying to establish their paramountcy over India. So after the close of the Nepal war, Lord Hastings turned to deal with these disturbed regions, particularly because the Pindaris had recently carried their raids into British territory and were also enlisted as mercenaries in the armies of the hostile Marātha chiefs.
A. The Pindari War

The Pindaris\(^1\) were a horde of cruel marauders, who from their headquarters in Central India ravaged and plundered the neighbouring regions as well as some distant areas. They were heard of towards the close of the seventeenth century during the Mughul-Marâtha wars in the Deccan. The general political disorders of the eighteenth century led them to take to organised plundering and robbery as a profession, just as the failure of the Dual Government and the consequent disorders in Bengal led to the rise and prevalence of widespread dacoities in that province for the greater part of the second half of the eighteenth century. The Pindaris were employed as auxiliary forces in the Marâtha armies and enjoyed the protection of Marâtha chiefs like Sindhia and Holkar. In 1794 Sindhia granted them some settlements in Mâlwa near the Narmadâ. We get an idea of their organisation from contemporary English writers. One of them, Sir John Malcolm, writes: “The Pindarries, who had risen, like masses of putrefaction in animal matter, out of the corruption of weak and expiring States, had fortunately none of those bonds of union which unite men in adversity. They had neither the tie of religion nor of national feeling. They were men of all lands and all religions. They had been brought together less by despair than by deeming the life of a plunderer, in the actual state of India, as one of small hazard, but great indulgence. . . . The Pindarries, when they came to a rich country, had neither the means nor inclination, like the Tartars, to whom also they have been compared, to settle and repose. Like swarms of locusts, acting from instinct, they destroyed and left waste whatever province they visited.” They generally avoided pitched battles; and plunder was their principal object, for which they perpetrated horrible cruelties on all whom they could get hold of. “They avoid fighting,” wrote Captain Sydenham in a memorandum on the Pindaris drawn up in 1809, “for they come to plunder, not to fight.” Under their powerful leaders, Hiru, Buran, Chitu, Wâsil Muhammad and Karim Khân, they extended their depredations far and wide. In 1812 they harried the British districts of Mirzâpur and Shâhâbâd. During 1815–1816 they devastated the Nizâm’s dominions and early in 1816 wantonly plundered the Northern Sarkârs.

\(^1\) “Many different conjectures have been offered as to the etymology of the term Pindarry. The most popular one among the natives is that they derived it from their dissolute habits leading them constantly to resort to the shops of the sellers of an intoxicating drink termed Pinda.” (Malcolm, Memoir of Central India, Vol. I, p. 433.)
But Lord Hastings had by this time formed a strong determination to suppress them, for which he received in September, 1816, the sanction of the Court of Directors. He was shrewd enough to come to an understanding with the principal Indian powers, before he launched his operations for the final extermination of the Pindaris towards the close of 1817. He effected careful and vigorous military preparations with a view to rounding them up from all sides — on the north and east from Bengal, on the west from Gujarāt and on the south from the Deccan. He assembled together a large army of 113,000 men and 300 guns and divided it into two parts — the northern force of four divisions being placed under his personal command and the Deccan force of five divisions under the command of Thomas Hislop, who had Sir John Malcolm as his principal lieutenant. By the end of 1817 the British troops succeeded in expelling the Pindaris from Mālwa and across the Chambal, and by the close of January, 1818, they were practically exterminated. Karim Khān, one of their powerful leaders, surrendered to Sir John Malcolm on the 18th February, 1818, and was given the small estate of Gawshpur in the United Provinces. Wāsīl Muhammad, who had taken refuge with Sindhia, was handed over by the Marātha chief to the English and died while in captivity at Ghāzipur. Chitū was chased from place to place until he was devoured by a tiger in a jungle near Asīrgarh. Thus Malcolm wrote about five years later: "... the Pindaries are so effectually destroyed that their name is almost forgotten." Most of the survivors "mingled with the rest of the population", and some became "active improving farmers".

B. Suppression of the Pathāns

Many Pathāns at this time took to the habits of a predatory horde like the Pindaris. "They commanded," notes Prinsep, a contemporary writer, "forces of a different description from those of the Pindaree chiefs. . . . Indeed, the grand difference between the two classes was, that the Pathans were banded together for the purpose of preying on Governments and powerful chiefs: to this end their force moved about with the materials of regular battles and sieges, so as to work on the fears of princes and men in power, extorting contributions and other advantages from them, by such intimidation as an efficient army could only impress: while the object of the Pindarees was universal plunder". They became powerful under their leaders, Muhammād Shāh Khān and Amīr Khān, and served as military adventurers under
of the Rājput and Marātha chiefs of the time. From about 1799 Amir Khān became intimately associated with Holkar’s government. Amir Khān became more formidable when, after the death of Muhammad Shāh Khān in 1814, the latter’s troops joined him; and his depredations and plunders were carried on with greater force. The Company’s Government decided to detach this powerful Pathān chief from the other predatory bands, and, after some negotiations, persuaded him to come to terms on the 9th November, 1817. He was recognised as the Nawāb of Tonk by the English and also by Holkar. The suppression of the Pindaris and the alliance with Amir Khān relieved India of a terrible pest, subversive of political order, public peace and social tranquillity.

C. Extension of British Paramountcy over Rājputāna and Central India

The Governor-Generalship of Lord Hastings also witnessed the establishment of British influence over the Rājput States and some minor states of Central India. Rājputāna had indeed a tragic history in the eighteenth century. The lords of Rājasthān had generally speaking lost the heroism and chivalry of their ancestors; and their land, distracted by dynastic quarrels (particularly between Jaipur and Jodhpur) and pseudo-chivalry, became a prey to external aggressions of the Marāthas, the Pindaris and the Pathāns. These inroads resulted in anarchy, plunder, economic ruin and moral degradation and “ended only with the total ruin and humiliation of this noble race (the Rājputs)”. Utterly bankrupt, the historic land of Rājasthān readily acknowledged British supremacy at a time when the English had vanquished the leading Indian powers.

Rājput alliance had been a potential factor in the consolidation of Mughul rule in India; the Marāthas under the third Peshwā failed to utilise it for their Hindu-Pād-Pādshāhī; and its value was realised by Lord Hastings even when the Rājputs had become “a played-out race”. The Governor-General was satisfied that an alliance with the Rājput States would give “immense strategic advantages for the Company’s military and political positions in Central India”, and would place at the disposal of the Company “the resources of the Rājput country, for defensive and offensive purposes, against the internal as well as external enemies of the Company”. So with the sanction of the home authorities he opened negotiations with the following Rājput States, which, one by one, entered into treaties of “defensive
alliance, perpetual friendship, protection and subordinate cooperation” with the Company: the State of Kotah, then under the able guidance of Zalim Singh, on the 26th December, 1817; Udaipur on the 16th January, 1818, Bundi on the 10th February, 1818; Kishangarh, near Ajmer, and Bikāner, in March, 1818; Jaipur on the 2nd April, 1818; the three kingdoms of Pratāpgarh, Banswārā and Dungarpur, branches of the Udaipur house and situated on the border of Gujarāt, on the 5th October, 5th December, and 11th December, 1818, respectively; Jaisalmer on the 12th December, 1818; and Sirohi in 1823.

Thus the Rājput States, who were, as Lord Hastings himself said, “natural allies” of the Company, sacrificed their independence for protection and accepted British paramountcy. It is difficult to agree with Prinsep that the “good government and tranquillity” of Rājputāna were “the exclusive aims” of the Company in interfering in its affairs. In fact, the guiding considerations of Lord Hastings in his relations with the Rājput States were political “expediency and convenience” and strategic advantages.

The Nawāb of Bhopal entered into a treaty of “defensive and subordinate alliance” with the Company, and Jaorā being created an independent entity by the Treaty of Mandasar with the Holkar was given to Ghafur Khān, a relation (their wives were sisters) of Amīr Khān, Nawāb of Tonk, in return for the help he rendered to Sir John Malcolm. The minor States of Mālwa and Bundelkhand also acknowledged British supremacy. A band of able British officers effected the work of reconstruction and administrative consolidation in these States: Elphinstone in the Western Deccan, Munro in Madras, Malcolm in Central India, and Metcalfe, Tod and Ochterlony in Rājputāna. Students of Indian history have special reason to be grateful to most of them for the valuable works they have left behind, particularly Tod’s Rājasthān and Malcolm’s Memoir of Central India.

Thus the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century saw the fall of those Indian powers which arose or revived on the decline of the Mughul Empire and contended for political supremacy; and as a result of a number of political and military transactions, the British Government became the paramount power over a dominion extending from the Himālayas to Cape Comorin and from the Sutlej to the Brahmaputra. Clive sowed the seed of the British Empire in India; Warren Hastings preserved it against hostile forces; Wellesley reared it; and Lord Hastings reaped the harvest. Delhi, Oudh, Mysore, Hyderābād, the Carnatic, Surāt and Tanjore
passed under British control, for all practical purposes, in the time of Wellesley. Lord Hastings pushed further the bounds of British imperialism. He shattered the Marātha power beyond any hope of recovery and extinguished the Peshwāship, established British control over Central India, and persuaded the weak and harassed Rājput States to barter away their independence for British protection. Another significant step taken by him was the formal abolition of the fiction of the Mughul Government. Mughul supremacy had ceased to exist in fact more than half a century earlier. All the attempts of the Emperor Shāh Ṭālam II to restore it proved futile; and he had to spend his days in pitiable circumstances, sometimes as a wanderer seeking help hither and thither and sometimes at Delhi amidst the ruins of its ancient greatness. His name and personality were utilised for their own purposes by the Marāthas, the English, and probably also by the French. Warren Hastings stopped the payment of the Bengal tribute to the Emperor on the ground that he had placed himself under the protection of the Marāthas; and his successors gradually declared the Company’s freedom from obligations to the descendant of the Great Mughuls. After Delhi had come under British control in 1803, Shāh Ṭālam II lived virtually as a pensioner of the Company till he closed his eyes for ever in 1806. His successor, Ākbar II, was asked by Lord Hastings to give up all ceremonial “implying supremacy over the Company’s dominions” and it was not long before the titular dignity of the Mughul Rāj finally disappeared.
CHAPTER V

EXPANSION OF THE BRITISH DOMINION BEYOND THE
BRAHMAPUTRA AND THE SUTLEJ, 1824–1856

1. Factors in the Political History of this Period

Referring to the achievements of Lord Hastings, who left India on the 1st January, 1823, Prinsep, a contemporary writer, observed: "The struggle which has thus ended in the universal establishment of British influence, is particularly important and worthy of attention, as it promises to be the last we shall ever have to maintain with the native powers of India." But this optimistic prophecy did not turn out to be wholly true. There is no doubt that by the year 1823 the greater part of India, extending from the Sutlej to the Brahmaputra and from the Himałayas to Cape Comorin, fell under British control. But there were beyond the western and eastern limits already reached by the British arms, powers whose activities had been a source of great anxiety to the Mughuls and whose subjugation was indispensably necessary for the rising British power before it could establish an all-India Empire on a firm and secure basis. In short, an Indian Empire, without effective control over the western and eastern frontiers of the country, was an idle dream. This was proved by the subsequent conflicts of the English with the Sikhs, the Sindhis, the Pathan and Baloch tribes of the north-west frontier, and the Afghans beyond the Khyber Pass, and with the Burmese and the Assamese to the east of the Brahmaputra. Further, the growth of the new political authority inevitably gave rise to varied problems. It clashed with the interests of some who continued to nurse against it a feeling of discontent. This was aggravated by the Company's policy of annexation and led to a violent outbreak in the Revolt of 1857–1859, when British supremacy in India was put to a severe test. The foreign policy of the Company during this period received a new orientation. Sir Alfred Lyall observes: "As the expansion of our dominion carried us so much nearer to foreign Asiatic countries, our rapid approach to the geographical limits of India proper discovered for us fresh complications and we were now on the brink of collision..."
with new races.” Hitherto the Company's external policy had been influenced by French projects and ambitions in the Near and Middle East and in India. The French menace disappeared with the fall of Napoleon, but Russia now stepped into the place of France. The expansion of Russia in Asia, and her various ambitious enterprises in the East, proved to be the dominating factor in the foreign policy of the East India Company in the post-Waterloo period.

2. The Eastern Frontier and the Burmese Wars

A. The First Anglo-Burmese War

When Lord Hastings left India, Mr. John Adam, a senior member of the Council, acted as Governor-General till the arrival of Lord Amherst, who took charge of his office on coming to India in August, 1823. The most important event of the new Governor-General's regime was the First Anglo-Burmese War.

The English had had commercial intercourse with Burma since the seventeenth century. But the growth of their Indian dominion, and at the same time the establishment of the sway of a Tibeto-Chinese race over Arakān, Pegu and Tenasserim, situated south of Chittagong, during the second half of the eighteenth century, brought the two powers into political relations in the nineteenth century. About 1750 a Burman chief named Ālomprā conquered the province of Pegu from the Tailangas in the delta of the Irrawaddy and established there a strong monarchy. His successors, notably Bodawpaya who reigned from 1779 to 1819 and was followed by Hpagyidoa, extended the kingdom in different directions. The Burmese seized Tenasserim from Siam in 1766; subjugated the hitherto independent kingdom of Arakān in 1784, and conquered Manipur, near the Surma valley, in 1813.

The advance of the Burmese towards the eastern frontier of the Company's dominion, which continued to remain "very ill-defined and variable", made an Anglo-Burmese conflict inevitable. But being engaged seriously in other parts of India, the Calcutta Government tried at first to prevent an immediate rupture by sending envoys to Burma—Captain Symes in 1795 and again in 1802; Captain Cox in 1797; and Captain Canning in 1803, 1809, 1811. The envoys were not treated well and the missions proved unsuccessful. The refusal of the Company's Government to comply with Burmese demands for the surrender of fugitives who, fleeing from the territories conquered by the Burmese, took shelter on the British border and from their new base made inroads into
Burmese territories, served to render relations more strained. Thus when the English were engaged in suppressing the Pindaris, the King of Ava sent a letter to Lord Hastings demanding the surrender of Chittagong, Dacca, Murshidabad and Cassimbazar, which in medieval times paid tribute to the ruler of Arakan. The Pindari menace was over before Hastings received this letter. The Governor-General returned it to the Burmese king with the comment that it was perhaps a forgery.

But the Burmese commanders soon conquered Assam in 1821-1822 and thus came directly in contact with the ill-defined British frontier on the north-east. They further captured in September, 1823, the Shahu-puri island, near Chittagong, belonging to the Company, drove away the British outposts from that island to Dudhati and made preparations for an attack on the Company's territories in Bengal. This was too much for the English to bear, and Lord Amherst, the Governor-General, declared war on the 24th February, 1824. The Burmese had the best means of defence in the physical features of their country, "which was one vast expanse of forest and morass, laced longitudinally by mountain ranges and the valleys of the Irrawaddy, Sittang and Salween." Further, though in open fighting the Burmese soldiers were a poor match for the trained British troops, yet they were expert in quickly preparing stockades of timber and in "throwing up earthworks and sinking rifle-pits". The British plan was to attack Rangoon by sea, and they sent an expedition under General Sir Archibald Campbell, with 11,000 men, mostly recruited from Madras, and with ships under Captain Marryat, the novelist.

The British troops were able to expel the Burmese from Assam, but Bandula, the ablest of the Burmese generals who had advanced to invade Bengal, repelled a British detachment at Ramu on the Chittagong frontier. This could not, however, prevent a British attack on Rangoon, which was captured by Campbell on the 11th May, 1824. Without resisting the invaders, the Burmese fled into the jungles of Pegu carrying with them all kinds of supplies. The British troops were put to great hardships for lack of provisions. Their difficulties were aggravated by the unhealthiness of the place due to the rains. Their sufferings were terrible till the close of the rainy season. In the meanwhile, Bandula had been recalled to relieve the Burmese and had arrived before Rangoon on the 1st December with 60,000 men. He was, however, defeated on the 15th December and retreated to Donabew, where he held out bravely till the beginning of April, 1825, when he was killed by a chance shot. This was indeed a terrible loss to the Burmese.
Campbell occupied Prome, the capital of Lower Burma, on the 25th April and spent the rainy season there. After some futile negotiations for peace, fighting recommenced towards the end of 1825. The British troops having baffled all the opposition of the Burmese marched to Yandāboo, within sixty miles of the Burmese capital. On the 24th February, 1826, the Burmese concluded a treaty, the terms of which, as dictated by Campbell, provided for the payment of a crore of rupees as war indemnity by the King of Ava; the absolute surrender by him of the provinces of Arakān and Tenāsserim; abstention of the Burmese from interference of any kind in Assam, Cachār and Jaintiā; their recognition of Manipur as an independent State; the conclusion of a commercial treaty "upon principles of reciprocal advantages"; and the admission of a British Resident at Ava, a Burmese envoy being allowed to come to Calcutta. A commercial treaty of a rather unsatisfactory nature was concluded on the 23rd November, 1826; and a British Resident was not accepted until 1830. From 1830 to 1840, the Residency was held successively by Major Burney and Colonel Benson. King Hpagyida, being seized with melancholia, was deposed in May, 1837, in favour of his brother Tharrawaddy and was kept in confinement till he expired.

There is no doubt that the English secured important advantages out of the First Anglo-Burmese War. They deprived the Burmese of the greater part of their sea-coast, and Assam, Cachār and Manipur became practically their protectorates. But this cost them much in men and money, owing largely to the inefficiency and blunders both of the Governor-General, who being a man of mediocre abilities could not pursue a strong and consistent policy, and of the generals, who did not possess sufficient initiative to act promptly according to the needs of the situation. But for the timely despatch of reinforcements in men and provisions by Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras, the British troops in Burma would have been subject to greater hardships and the whole expedition might have been a failure. Though ultimately defeated, the Burmese soldiers, who, as Phayre admits, "fought under conditions which rendered victory ... impossible" for them, deserve credit for the manner in which they tried bravely to resist the invaders and the skill they displayed in building stockades. A writer competent in such matters has asserted that "the position and defences at Donoobew, as a field-work, would have done credit to the most scientific engineer".

The early reverses and difficulties of the British in Burma gave rise to a conviction in certain quarters that the British dominion
was faced with impending ruin. This resulted in risings in some places. In Bharatpur, the claim of the minor son of a deceased ruler, who had been placed on the throne with the consent of Sir David Ochterlony, the British Resident at Delhi, was contested by his cousin, Durjan Sal. Lord Amherst at first followed a policy of non-intervention, and disapproved of the conduct of Sir David Ochterlony in trying to enforce his decision at the point of the sword, which led to the latter's resignation and the appointment of Sir Charles Metcalfe in his place. Sir David Ochterlony, an old man in bad health, soon died. The new Resident, Sir Charles Metcalfe, urged the necessity of vindicating the prestige of the British Government by opposing the pretensions of the usurper and won over the Governor-General to his view. An expedition was eventually sent under Lord Combermere, who in January, 1826, stormed the fortress of Bharatpur, which had resisted the attacks of Lord Lake in 1805. Durjan Sal was deported. Another disturbance that demands notice was the mutiny of the Sepoys at Bārrāckpore, which “was only quelled after the mutinous regiments had been fired upon by the British artillery and the parade-ground made a shambles”.

B. The Second Anglo-Burmese War

Something more was needed even after the gains of the First Anglo-Burmese War to establish effective British control on the eastern frontier of India. The new King of Burma, Tharrawaddy (1837–1845), refused to consider the Treaty of Yandabo to be binding on him, and technically his action was “within the Burmese constitution, whereby all existing rights lapsed at a new King’s accession until he chose to confirm them”. But this was opposed to British interests, which were affected also in other ways. The British Residents at the court of Ava did not receive courteous treatment, for which reason the Residency had to be finally withdrawn in 1840, and British merchants, who had settled on the southern coast of Burma after the treaty of 1826, complained of oppression at the hands of the Governor of Rangoon. The merchants asked the Calcutta Government to intervene in the matter in order to redress their grievances. Lord Dalhousie sent a frigate under Commodore Lambert to Pagan, the new King of Burma (1845–1852), who had succeeded to the throne after his father, Tharrawaddy, had been put under restraint on the ground of his insanity, to demand compensation for the losses of the British merchants and to ask for the removal of the governor of Rangoon.
If the Governor-General sincerely desired a peaceful settlement, his object was not fulfilled by the despatch of a Commodore, which has rightly been considered to be an unnecessarily provocative measure. Dalhousie himself observed later on that "these commodores are too combustible for negotiations".

The King of Burma, inclined to avoid war, gave a courteous reply to Lambert's demands, removed the old governor and sent a new officer to settle the matter peacefully. But when a deputation of some senior naval officers sent by Lambert to the new governor was refused admission on the pretext that he was asleep, the British Commodore felt insulted, declared the port of Rangoon to be in a state of blockade and seized a ship of the Burmese king's. At this the Burmese batteries opened fire on the British frigate and the British Commodore returned the fire.

It appears from some documents that Lambert acted contrary to the Governor-General's orders and the latter censured his precipitancy. But he did not disavow the Commodore's act but rather "accepted the responsibility" for it and sent an ultimatum to the Burmese Government demanding compensation and an indemnity of £100,000, to be paid by the 1st April, 1852. At the same time, vigorous preparations were made under his personal supervision for the impending conflict with the Burmese so that the blunders of the First Anglo-Burmese War might be avoided. His ultimatum received no reply, and on the day it expired, 1st April, 1852, British forces under General Godwin, a veteran of the First Anglo-Burmese War, and Admiral Austen, reached Rangoon. Martaban fell quickly; the famous pagoda of Rangoon was stormed on the 14th April; and Rassein, situated on the north-west corner of the Irrawaddy delta, was captured about a month later. Dalhousie went to Rangoon in September; Prome was occupied in October and Pegu in November. The Governor-General had no desire to advance into Upper Burma but stipulated that the conquests in the lower part of the country should be recognised by the King of Burma by a formal agreement. On the refusal of the King to conclude such a treaty, he annexed Pegu or Lower Burma by a proclamation on the 20th December, 1852.

By the annexation of Pegu the eastern frontier of the British Indian Empire was extended up to the banks of the Salween. British control was established over the whole of the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal, and access to the sea was closed to the attenuated Burmese kingdom. Major (afterwards Sir) Arthur Phayre was appointed Commissioner of the newly acquired British province extending as far north as Myede, fifty miles beyond
Prome, and with the co-operation of Captain (afterwards General) Fytche he tried to introduce necessary administrative reforms.

3. British Relations with the Sikhs and Annexation of the Punjab

A. Rise of the Sikh Power

The Sikh struggle for independence from 1708 to 1716 under the temporal leadership of Bāndā came to a disastrous end by the year 1716. Bāndā was tortured to death and his followers were subjected to relentless persecution at the hands of the Mughuls. But the repression could not kill, out and out, the military spirit of the Khālsā. Rather, the growing weakness of the Delhi Empire gave the Sikhs an opportunity to reorganise themselves. The invasion of Nādir Shāh in 1739, and the first three Abdāli inroads (1748–1752), by enfeebling Mughul hold on the Punjab and throwing this province into confusion, enabled the Sikhs to enrich themselves and to enhance their military power as well as political influence. In the course of the next few years they “passed through a series of reverses to complete victory”. They baffled all the attempts of the Abdāli invader to crush them, and defied him even after his victory at Pānīpat. When he left Lahore for his home on the 12th December, 1762, the Sikhs pursued him, hung about his army and harassed it in every way. Their aggressions were aggravated through the inefficiency of the Abdāli’s lieutenants in the Punjab, over which they began to dominate, and they occupied Lahore in February, 1764. “The whole country from the Jhelam to the Satlaj was partitioned among the Sikh chiefs and their followers, as the plains of Sārhind had been in the previous year.” They assembled at Amritsar and proclaimed the sway of their commonwealth and faith by striking coins to the effect that Guru Govind had obtained from Nānak degh, tegh, fateh, or grace, power and rapid victory. After the final retirement of Ahmad Shāh Abdāli from India in 1767, the Sikhs wrested his Indian conquests from his weak successor, Timūr Shāh; and by the year 1773, Sikh sway extended from Shāhrānpur in the east to Attock in the west, and from Multān in the south to Kangrā and Jammu in the north.

The independence of the Sikhs was thus realised, and they formed themselves into twelve misls or confederacies: the Bhangi, the Kanheya, the Sukerchakia, the Nakai, the Fyzullapuria, the Ahluwalia, the Ramgarhia, the Dalewalia, the Karora Singhia, the Nishanwala, the Sahid and Nihang, and the Phulkia. This
organisation of the Sikhs has been described as "theocratic confederate feudalism". But with the disappearance of a common enemy, jealousies and discords appeared among the leaders of the Sikh misls, who began to pursue a policy of self-aggrandisement at a time when British imperialism was rapidly expanding over India. To organise the Sikhs into a national monarchy on the destruction of feudalism was the work of a man of destiny, Ranjit Singh, whose rise must be briefly surveyed before we study the relations between the Sikhs and the English.

B. Ranjit Singh

Ranjit Singh was born on the 13th November, 1780. He was the son of Māhā Singh, the leader of the Sukerchakia misl, by his wife of the Jhind family. Unlike Shivājī, Ranjit spent his early life amidst uninspiring surroundings. He was but a boy of ten when his father died in 1790; and he was then the head only of a small confederacy with a little territory and very limited military resources, while there were many other superior chiefs. But the Indian invasions of Zamān Shāh of Kābul, during 1793–1798, exercised a decisive influence on his career. In return for the conspicuous services that Zamān Shāh received from Ranjit, he appointed him governor of Lahore at the age of nineteen, with the title of Rājā, in A.D. 1798. This grant of office by an Afghan ruler, against whose ambitious ancestor, Ahmad Shāh Abdālī, the Sikhs had fought stubbornly for mastery over the Punjab, marked the beginning of an "astonishingly successful military career", whose exploits resulted in the extinction of Afghan supremacy in the Punjab and the building up of a strong Sikh national monarchy. Ranjit threw off the Afghan yoke before long, and, taking advantage of the differences and quarrels among the chiefs of the Trans-Sutlej misls, gradually absorbed them into his kingdom. In 1805 Holkar, pursued by Lord Lake, sought Ranjit's help; but the Sikh chief did not comply with his request. Ranjit Singh was relieved of this new menace by the conclusion of the Treaty of Lahore on the 1st January, 1806, which excluded Holkar from the Punjab and left Ranjit Singh free to carry on his conquests north of the Sutlej.

But Ranjit Singh aimed at supremacy over all the Sikhs. He "laboured", writes Cunningham, "with more or less of intelligent design, to give unity and coherence to diverse atoms and scattered elements, to mould the increasing Sikh nation into a well-ordered state, or commonwealth, as Govind had developed a
sect into a people, and had given application and purpose to the general institutions of Nānak”. The realisation of this aim required the establishment of Ranjit Singh’s control over the Cis-Sutlej States lying between that river and the Jumna. The chronic disorders and discords among these Cis-Sutlej States brought upon them Marātha aggressions resulting in the establishment of Marātha influence in the Cis-Sutlej Sikh country after Mahādājī Sindhia’s treaty of 1785 with the Sikhs. But subsequently the British succeeded in driving out Sindhia and in bringing the Cis-Sutlej States informally under their protection. Neither the Marāthas nor the English had any sound claim upon them, but in those days of disorder the best claim was “that of the sword”.

The rapid successes of Ranjit Singh made his intervention in the affairs of the Cis-Sutlej States inevitable. Quarrels among the local Sikh chiefs, and an appeal for his help by some of them, gave him the pretext for undertaking Cis-Sutlej expeditions in 1806 and 1807 and occupying Ludhiana. This extension of Ranjit’s influence was not liked by some of the Sikh chiefs, who waited upon Mr. Seton, the British Resident at Delhi, in March, 1808, soliciting British help against Ranjit Singh. Their appeal passed unheeded.

But for strategic and diplomatic reasons, the English soon thought it necessary to check Ranjit Singh’s eastern advance to the Jumna. They could not, however, resort to force at once, because it would have been prejudicial to their interests to antagonise a power in the north-west of India in view of the possibility of a French invasion of the country in alliance with the Turks and the Persians. Lord Minto took recourse to diplomacy. With the double object of resisting Ranjit’s advance and enlisting his friendship against an apprehended French invasion, he sent Metcalfe on a mission to the Sikh king to negotiate for an offensive and defensive alliance against the French, if they should ever invade India through Persia. Calculating that the British Government stood badly in need of his friendship, Ranjit conquered as much of the Cis-Sutlej territory as he could; and also boldly demanded from the English acknowledgment of his sovereignty over all the Sikh States as the price of the proposed alliance. But in the meanwhile the danger of Napoleon’s invasion of India had disappeared owing to his engagement in the Peninsular War, and relations between Turkey and England had improved after the conclusion of the Treaty of the Dardanelles by these powers in January, A.D. 1809.

Encouraged by this change in the political situation, the British Government decided not to purchase Ranjit’s alliance at such a
high cost, but "to oppose the extension on the Indian side of the Sutlej of an ambitious military power which would be substituted upon our (British) frontier for a confederacy of friendly chiefs rendered grateful by our protection and interested in our cause." A body of troops was sent under David Ochterlony to enforce the demands of the English. The fear of British arms, and the apprehension that the jealous Sikh States on the east of Sutlej would throw themselves under British protection, led Ranjit to sign a treaty of "perpetual friendship" with the English at Amritsar on the 25th April, 1809. By this treaty, Ranjit's activities

ZAMZAMA

The gun employed at the siege of Multān

were confined to the right side of the Sutlej, and the Cis-Sutlej States came definitely under British protection. The British frontier was extended from the Jumna to the Sutlej and English troops were stationed at Ludhiana. Thus Ranjit had to give up the most cherished ideal of his life—that of undisputed mastery over all the Sikhs. Ranjit's "failure to absorb the Cis-Sutlej States was", remarks his latest biographer, "a tragedy of Sikh militant nationalism and the success of the Cis-Sutlej States with the aid of the British Government marked the disruption of the great creation of Guru Govind Singh".

Ranjit's ambition for eastern expansion being thus foiled, it sought outlets in the north, the north-west and the west. He
was successful in his conflicts with the Gurkhās from 1809 to 1811 and captured the Kangrā district. On the 13th July, 1813, he severely defeated the Afgāns at Haidāru and captured Attock, the key to the frontier, which he arranged to have strongly garrisoned. Driven from Afgānistān the Afgān king, Shāh Shujā, sought shelter at Lahore (1813-1814), when Ranjit took from him the world-famous diamond the Koh-i-nūr. Shāh Shujā succeeded in escaping from Lahore in April, 1815, and retired to Ludhianā within the British sphere of influence. After several attempts, Ranjit captured Multān in 1818 and occupied Kāshmir in 1819. Peshāwār also became his dependency in 1823. Thus by the year 1824 the largest part of the Indus valley was included within Ranjit’s dominions.

With a view to utilising the growing Sikh kingdom as a buffer state against the suspected Russian designs on India, Lord William Bentinck met Ranjit Singh at Rooper on the Sutlej in October, 1831, and managed to get the treaty of alliance with him renewed. On the 6th May, 1834, the citadel of Peshāwār was captured by the Sikh general Hari Singh Naola (Nalwa) and Peshāwar passed formally under Sikh control. But the further ambitions of Ranjit with regard to the Afgāns were restrained by the English. The kingdom of Sindh also felt the impact of Sikh expansion. As a matter of fact, the occupation of Sindh was important to Ranjit as it would increase the compactness of his dominions, because Sindh and the Punjab were “provinces of the Indus as Bengal and Bihār are provinces of the Ganges”. But here too he was forestalled and checked by the English. Nevertheless, Ranjit succeeded in establishing a kingdom large in extent and rich in fame, before he died on the 27th June, 1839, at the age of fifty-nine.

Ranjit Singh is one of the most important personalities in the history of modern India. Though his physical appearance was not particularly handsome and an attack of small-pox deprived him of sight in the left eye, he had delightful manners and address and inspiring features. He was, writes Cunningham, “assiduous in his devotions; he honoured men of reputed sanctity, and enabled them to practise an enlarged charity; he attributed every success to the favour of God, and he styled himself and his people collectively the ‘Khalsa’ or Commonwealth of Govind”.

A born ruler of men, Ranjit is entitled to fame chiefly for his success in effecting the marvellous transformation of the warring Sikh States into a compact national monarchy, though his ideal of Pan-Sikhism could not be realised owing to the intervention of the British on behalf of the Cis-Sutlej States. One of his biographers,
Sir Lepel Griffin, observes: "We only succeed in establishing him as a hero, as a ruler of men and as worthy of a pedestal in that innermost shrine where history honours the few human beings to whom may be indisputably assigned the palm of greatness, if we free our minds of prejudice and, discounting conventional virtue, only regard those rare qualities which raise a man supreme above his fellows. Then we shall at once allow that, although sharing in full measure the commonplace and worse vices of his time and education, he yet ruled the country which his military genius had conquered with vigour of will and an ability which placed him in the front rank of the statesmen of the century." Victor Jacquemont, a French traveller to Ranjit's court, described him as "an extraordinary man—a Bonaparte in miniature". Ranjit fully realised the need of a strong army for the task which he had set before himself and so radically changed the feudal levies of the Sikh chiefs, "brave indeed, but ignorant of war as an art", into a strong and efficient national army, which was thoroughly under his command, and which, according to Hunter, "for steadiness and religious fervour has had no parallel since the 'Ironsides' of Oliver Cromwell". The initiative for army reform came from Ranjit himself, and the bulk of his army was formed by the Sikhs. Though he was assisted in this work by European officers of various nationalities like Allard, Ventura, Court, Avitabile, and others, some of whom had experience of the Napoleonic wars in Europe, his army did not become denationalised, and he always maintained a strict control over it. His artillery was very efficient.

Though a great conqueror, Ranjit was not stern by nature but, on the other hand, showed kindness and consideration towards his fallen foes. Baron Carl von Hügel, a German traveller who visited Ranjit's court in 1835, tells us that he never "wantonly imbued his hands in blood. Never perhaps was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality". Ranjit was indeed a strong ruler with absolute control over his government, but he was not a tyrant "obsessed by the idea of over-centralisation". In his government "subordinate rights" were preserved; and his civil administration was far from being unduly severe, though it lacked certain features of a well-organised administration like elaborate laws, a fixed judiciary, or an efficient police. A contemporary British officer reports: "In a territory compactly situated, he has applied himself to those improvements which spring only from great minds and here we find despotism without its rigours, a despot without cruelty and a system of government far beyond the native institutions of the East, though far from the civilisation
of Europe." Manufactures and trade flourished in Ranjit's kingdom. English writers have praised the Sikh king for his "statesman-like recognition of the strength of the East India Company, the reliance he placed upon British promises, and his loyalty to his plighted word", in which respect he differed both from Hyder and Tipu. But it is noted by some critics that he displayed a lack of intrepidity and bold statesmanship in his dealings with the English. He created a Sikh kingdom but took no steps to prevent British dominion, of which he had a presentiment when he said "sab lūl ho jāyegā"; he chose instead the line of least resistance.

C. The First Anglo-Sikh War

The structure of the Sikh military monarchy built up by Ranjit was not destined to last long. As is the case with such systems, its continuance or growth depended on the guidance of a strong personality, particularly in view of the rapid march of British imperialism in India at that time. 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". As a matter of fact, the death of Ranjit was the signal for the beginning of anarchy and confusion within his dominions, which, being prolonged, greatly weakened the Sikh power and ultimately led to its submission to the English. One weak ruler after another was deposed in quick succession till in 1843 Dalip Singh, a minor, was acknowledged as king with his mother, Rānī Jhindān, as Regent. The struggles and convulsions of the period caused the collapse of the central civil government and resulted in the ascendancy of the Khālsā army through its delegates the Panchayets or Committees of five. Unrestrained by any strong authority, the army grew ungovernable and furious, and became the virtual dictator of the State. Unable to control the army or to defy it openly, the Lahore Darbār in its intense anxiety to get rid of this terrible incubus devised the plan of inducing it to invade British territory, in the belief that it would either be totally destroyed in the course of its war with the English or its "super-abundant energies" would be exhausted in a career of conquest. Thus the position was that the Sikh cause was almost doomed before the war broke out owing to the half-heartedness of its leaders; and the English, as Roberts points out, fought "against a fine army without a general, or, at any rate, without one supreme controlling mind".

Besides the activities of the Darbār, some provocative acts on the
part of the English, which served to convince the Sikh army of the desire of "their colossal neighbour" to take their country and destroy their independence, egged it on to enter upon a war. The English sent bodies of troops towards the Sutlej; during 1844 and 1845 they were preparing boats at Bombay with the object of constructing bridges across the Sutlej; troops were equipped in the newly-conquered territory of Sind for an attack on Multán; and the various garrisons in the north-west districts were being gradually strengthened. To the Sikh army, all this was "held to denote", writes Cunningham, "a campaign, not of defence, but of aggression".

Thus the Sikh army's apprehensions of a British attack on the Sikh territory, at a time when the East India Company had been definitely pursuing a policy of annexation, were not unfounded. The Khālsa crossed the Sutlej unopposed on the 11th December, 1845, not through any lack of preparations on the part of the English, whose army in the frontier districts had been already reinforced, and had increased to 40,000 men and 100 guns, but owing to the personal misconceptions and negligence of Major Broadfoot, the British commander at Ferozepore. The Governor-General, Sir Henry (afterwards Lord) Hardinge, promptly rose to the occasion. He issued a proclamation of war on the 13th December, 1845, and declared all Sikh possessions on the left bank of the Sutlej confiscated and annexed to the British dominions. The first battle, fought at Mudki, situated twenty miles to the south-east of Ferozepore, between the combined Ambālā and Ludhiānā branches of the British troops under the command of Sir Hugh Gough and the Sikh army under Lāl Singh, was sharp and bloody. The brave Sikh infantry vigorously charged the Sepoys and European soldiers, who at first reeled before the accurate fire of the enemy. But the supineness of Lāl Singh at a critical moment spoiled the chances of the Sikhs, who were in the end defeated with heavy losses. The English casualties were also heavy: 657 of their soldiers were wounded and 215, including Major-General Sir Robert Sale, the defender of Jalalābād, and Major-General Sir John McCaskill, were killed. The British army next attacked the Sikh entrenchments at Feroze Shāh (Firuzshuhur), about twelve miles from the Sutlej, on the 21st December, 1845. The Sikhs offered a stubborn and formidable resistance and repulsed battalion after battalion by furious firing. The English were indeed faced with a grave situation. "During that night of horrors," the Commander-in-Chief wrote later, "we were in a critical and perilous state." But the brave Sikh warriors were again betrayed by their
general, Tej Singh, who left the field all of a sudden. Thus the Sikhs ultimately gave up the battle, to the immense relief of their adversaries, and retreated across the Sutlej. "Had a guiding mind directed the movements of the Sikh army," observes Malleson, "nothing could have saved the exhausted British." The losses on both sides were heavy. On the English side 694 men were killed, including 103 officers, and 1,721 were wounded; and the Sikhs lost 8,000 men and 73 guns.

After their victory at Feroze Shâh, the British army remained somewhat "paralyzed" for some time waiting for guns, ammunition and stores from Delhi, when the Sikhs again crossed the Sutlej under Ranjur Singh Majhithia in January, 1846, and attacked the frontier station of Ludhiâna. Sir Harry Smith (afterwards governor of Cape Colony), who was sent to check the advance of the Khalsa, was defeated in a skirmish at Buddewal on the 21st January. Reinforced by additional troops, he defeated the Sikhs, in spite of their brave resistance, at Aliwal, to the west of Ludhiâna, on the 28th January, 1846. The vanquished army was deprived of sixty-seven guns and was driven across the Sutlej. The final battle took place at Sobrâon on the Sutlej, where the main body of the Sikh army was strongly entrenched. Here also the Sikh soldiers showed wonderful steadfastness and resolution and fought from the early dawn of the 10th February "with the valour of heroes, the enthusiasm of crusaders, and the desperation of zealots sworn to conquer the enemy or die sword in hand." But all this proved to be of no avail, owing to the half-heartedness and treachery of almost all the Sikh generals with the honourable exception of Shâm Singh; and by about one p.m. the Sikhs were defeated and their formidable entrenchments were stormed by the British army. A large number of Sikhs were slaughtered by the infuriated British soldiers, while crossing the Sutlej; on the English side 320 were killed and 2,083 were wounded.

The victory of the English at Sobrâon was of a decisive nature. They were relieved of the danger from "the bravest and steadiest enemy ever encountered in India," which almost shook to the very base the edifice of British dominion in the Upper Provinces. As a reward for these brilliant victories of great significance, the authorities in England, justly jubilant over the fall of the Sikhs, conferred peerages on the Governor-General, Sir Henry Hardinge, and the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Hugh Gough; and freely distributed honours and favours among all ranks.

The Governor-General with the victorious British army crossed the Sutlej by a bridge of boats on the 13th February and occupied
Lahore on the 20th February. The Sikhs, now utterly prostrate, had no alternative but to submit to any arrangement that Lord Hardinge might impose on them. He, however, shrank from complete annexation of the Punjab in view of the necessity of greater forces for this purpose than what he had at his disposal; and he also abstained from the expedient of subsidiary alliance in consideration of the future disadvantages of this course. He dictated a treaty to the vanquished Sikhs in their own capital on the 9th March, 1846. By it the Sikhs were required to cede to the British all territories to the south of the Sutlej, together with the extensive Jullundur Doāb, lying between the Sutlej and the Beas. A heavy war indemnity amounting to one and a half crores of rupees was paid by the Lahore Darbār, fifty lacs in cash and the balance by ceding to the British the hill districts between the Beas and the Indus including Kāshmir and Hazarā. The Sikh army was reduced to 25 battalions of infantry and 12,000 cavalry, and 36 guns, besides those already captured, were surrendered to the English. The Sikhs were prevented from employing any British, European or American subject, and from changing the limits of their territory, without the consent of the British Government. The minor Dalip Singh was recognised as the Mahārājā with Rānī Jhindān as his regent and Lāl Singh as the chief minister. The Governor-General agreed not to interfere in the internal administration of the Lahore State. But it was provided that a British force, sufficient to protect the person of the Mahārājā, should be stationed at Lahore till the close of the year 1846; and Henry Lawrence was appointed British Resident there. To reduce the Lahore State in size, Kāshmir was sold by the English to Golāb Singh, a sardār of the Lahore Darbār, in return for one million sterling, by a separate treaty concluded with him at Amritsar on the 16th March. This arrangement, remarks Cunningham, "was a dexterous one, if reference be only had to the policy of reducing the power of the Sikhs; but the transaction scarcely seems worthy of the British name and greatness, and the objections become stronger when it is considered that Golāb Singh had agreed to pay sixty-eight lacs of rupees as a fine to his paramount authority before the war broke out, and that the custom of the East as well as of the West requires the feudatory to aid his lord in foreign war and domestic strife. Golāb Singh ought thus to have paid the deficient million of money as a Lahore subject, instead of being put in possession of Lahore provinces as an independent prince".

The outbreak of some disorders, particularly an insurrection against Golāb Singh at the instigation of Lāl Singh, who was
dismissed for this offence, led to a revision of the original Lahore treaty on the 16th December, 1846, in such a manner as served to bring the Punjab under the more effective control of the English. It transferred the Lahore administration to the hands of a Council of Regency of eight Sikh sardārs, who were to act under the virtual dictatorship of the British Resident. A British force was to be maintained at Lahore, the Government of which was to pay twenty-two lacs of rupees for its expenses. It was laid down that the new arrangements were to continue till the Mahārājā attained his majority on the 4th September, 1854, or till such period as the Governor-General and the Lahore Darbār might think necessary. The British Resident, Sir Henry Lawrence, sailed for England with Lord Hardinge on the 18th January, 1848; and his office, being held, for a brief interval, by his brother Sir John (afterwards Lord) Lawrence, was given to Sir Frederick Currie on the 6th April, 1848.

D. The Second Anglo-Sikh War and Annexation of the Punjab

Lord Hardinge's arrangements in the Punjab with the Sikh chiefs lacked any "prospects of permanence". The defeat of the Sikh army did not mean the extinction of national aspirations among the Sikh people, who had behind them traditions of brilliant achievements and had so recently opposed the English with grim determination. They justly attributed their humiliation to the treachery of their leaders and chafed under the ascendancy of the English in the Punjab. The removal of the Queen-mother, Rāni Jhindān, from Lahore, on a charge of conspiracy against the British Resident, added to their discontent. A violent outburst in the shape of a national rising was imminent. Another trial of strength between the disaffected Sikhs and their victorious adversaries was inevitable, and it occurred very soon, the immediate occasion being supplied by an incident in the city of Multān.

Diwān Mulrāj, governor of Multān, was in financial trouble through a fall in the revenue-collection in his district, and on being pressed by the Lahore Darbār for a payment of one million sterling, as the price of his office, he resigned in anger in March, 1848. The Lahore Darbār appointed Sardār Khān Singh in his place and sent him to take charge of Multān in the company of two young British officers, Vans Agnew of the Civil Service and Lieutenant Anderson of the Bombay European Regiment. These two officers were murdered on the 20th April. It was believed that the crime was committed at the instigation of Mulrāj, who made preparations
for resisting the English. The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gough, and the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, did not adopt any immediate measures to suppress the rising but decided to wait till the cold weather. Their policy was approved by the home authorities but was subjected to much criticism in other quarters. It is, however, true that there were political motives behind their action. Besides taking into consideration the difficulties of distant campaigns and the movement of troops during the hot weather and the rains, they wanted to gauge the strength of the Lahore Government and its ability to quell the disturbance, which it was technically bound to do, and also not to risk much in trying only to reduce it when there were sufficient indications of a widespread Multān rising. Despite the “wait and see” policy of the Supreme Government, a young British lieutenant named Herbert Edwardes, who was employed under the Sikh Council of Regency, and the British Resident, Currie, made some unsuccessful attempts to suppress the rising and besiege Multān. Sher Singh, son of Chatter Singh, the Sikh governor of the Hazarā district, unwisely sent by the British Resident to join the besieging troops at Multān, went over to the side of Mulrāj on the 14th September, 1848. The activities of Rāni Jhindān added fuel to the fire of Sikh discontent, and the veteran Sikh leaders began to rally round Sher Singh. Thus the Multān revolt soon assumed the nature of a Sikh national movement, and the inevitable Second Anglo-Sikh War began. The Sikhs had this time won over their old foes, the Afghāns, to their cause by holding out to them the city of Peshāwār as a bait.

By this time Lord Dalhousie had resolved to meet openly the Sikh national challenge. He declared on the 10th October, 1848: “Unwarned by precedent, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nation has called for war, and on my word, sirs, they shall have it with a vengeance.” Lord Gough crossed the Rāvī with a British army on the 16th November and had an indecisive engagement with Sher Singh at Rāmnagar on the Chenāb. The Sikhs then entrenched themselves in a stronger position at Chilliānwalā, where a terrible battle was fought on the 13th January, 1849. The Sikhs “of all arms” fought desperately, and contested the field bravely. The British at last won a “Pyrrhic” victory at a high cost. Of their soldiers 602 were killed and 1,651 were wounded, and the colours of three regiments and four of their guns were captured. The Sikhs lost some brave soldiers and twelve guns. Better success, however, attended English arms at Multān, the citadel of which was stormed on the 22nd January, 1849. Mulrāj, after being tried by a military court, was transported for life beyond the seas, where he soon
expired. The news of British losses at Chilliānwālā gave rise to bitter criticisms against Lord Gough, both in India and England, and the Court of Directors appointed Sir Charles Napier to supersede him. But before the latter reached India, Lord Gough had been able to inflict a crushing defeat on the Sikhs and their Afghān allies, on the 21st February, 1849, at Gujarāt, a town near the Chenāb, where they had shifted themselves from their strong entrenched position at Chilliānwālā, owing to lack of supplies. In the battle of Gujarāt, which “was essentially an artillery action and is known as the battle of the guns”, the Sikh soldiers fought as before with resolute courage but were defeated through lack of efficient leadership. “No troops could have fought better,” remarks Malleson, “than the Sikhs fought, no army could have been worse led.” The Sikhs suffered immense losses and their defeat was complete, leaving no chance of further resistance. The British loss was comparatively small. Only 69 were killed and 670 wounded; and their victory was decisive. The battle of Gujarāt, observed the Governor-General, “must ever be regarded as one of the most memorable in the annals of British warfare in India; memorable alike from the greatness of the occasion, and from the brilliant and decisive issue of the encounter”. On the 12th March, Sher Singh, Chatter Singh and all the Sikh chiefs and soldiers laid down their arms, and the Afghāns were chased by Sir Walter Gilbert to the Khyber Pass and Kābul.

It was no longer possible for the Sikhs to preserve their independence. On the 30th March, 1849, Lord Dalhousie, on his own responsibility, annexed the Punjab by a proclamation, against the wishes of Sir Henry Lawrence and Lord Ellenborough and also of the Cabinet. He declared: “However contrary it may be to our past views and to our present views, annexation of the Punjab is the most advantageous policy for us to pursue. I firmly believe we shall not succeed in establishing a friendly Sikh power.” There is no doubt that the Governor-General’s bold policy secured a valuable advantage to the British Empire in India by pushing its frontiers to “the natural limits of India, the base of the mountains of Afghānistān”. The unfortunate young Dalip Singh had to suffer for the sins of others, and had to rest content with a pension of five lacs of rupees a year. Sent to England with his mother, Rānī Jhindān, he ultimately embraced Christianity and lived for a time as an English landowner in Norfolk. He subsequently came back to the Punjab and returned to his old faith but not to his old position. Rānī Jhindān died in London.

The success of arms in establishing British political supremacy in the Punjab was supplemented by the administrative measures
of a band of able British officers like Sir Henry Lawrence, his brother John Lawrence, Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, Richard Temple, and many others, who, under the supervision of the Governor-General, introduced reforms in various branches of administration, such as the army, the police, justice, land revenue, industry, agriculture, etc. The Governor-General at first constituted a Board of three, consisting of Sir Henry Lawrence, as its President, his brother, John Lawrence, and Charles G. Mansel, who had to make room for Robert Montgomery in 1851. But in 1853 the Board was abolished, Sir Henry Lawrence was sent to Rājputāna as agent to the Governor-General, and John Lawrence was made the first Chief Commissioner of the Punjab. The Sikhs henceforth became loyal to the British Empire and served its cause faithfully during the Second Anglo-Burmese War and the Revolt of 1857–1859.

4. Afghānistān and the Company

A. The Durrāni Menace and British North-West Frontier Policy

From 1757, or more definitely from the year 1765—when, after the English victory at Buxār (22nd October, 1764), the defence of Oudh, situated on the north-west frontier of Bihār, became a matter of vital necessity and fixed policy to the English in Bengal—till the close of the eighteenth century, the dread of Durrāni invasion constantly haunted the minds of British statesmen in India. The Company’s Government in Calcutta apprehended an Afgān dash upon Oudh and then upon Bengal. As a matter of fact, a collision between the Afgāns, aiming at political supremacy in Hindustān on the wreck of the Mughul Empire, and the English, trying for the same object, lay almost in the logic of history, as was the case with the Marātha-Afgān clash of 1761. It was fortunate for the English that Ahmad Shāh Abdālī, after his victory at Pānīpat, was prevented from pushing further east owing to troubles at home. There was an ebb-tide in the fortunes of the Durrānis after the death of Ahmad Shāh Abdālī in June, 1773, and his weak and indolent son and successor, Timūr Shāh (1773–1793), could not pursue the vigorous policy of his predecessor.

But Timūr’s fifth son and successor, Zamān Shāh, who ascended the throne of Kābul in May, 1793, was an able and ambitious ruler. After having suppressed the forces of disorder at home, he advanced to Lahore in 1798 and cherished the dream of invading the interior of Hindustān like Nādir Shāh and Ahmad Shāh Abdālī. Though the project of Zamān Shāh was treated “very lightly” by some of
his contemporaries, and most of the modern writers have pointed out the impossibility of its then being carried into effect in view of the changed political circumstances, the Company's Government in Bengal could not consider "the idea of an invasion from Cabul as a mere visionary danger". Zamān Shāh received invitations from Tipu Sultān, Wāzir 'Āli, then trying to organise a conspiracy against the Company, and Nāsir-ul-mulk, the discontented Nawāb of Bengal. In fact, the prospect of Zamān Shāh's invasion of Hindustān "kept the British Indian Empire in a chronic state of unrest" during the administrations of Sir John Shore and Lord Wellesley. Dundas, President of the Board of Control, being confirmed "in the belief of his (Zamān Shāh's) hostile designs", instructed Lord Wellesley "to keep a very watchful eye upon the motions of that Prince, whose talents, military force, and pecuniary resources, afford to him the means of being a formidable opponent". The Governor-General maintained a large British force in Oudh, under Sir J. Craig, to protect that kingdom against the apprehended Afghān invasion, and claimed to have averted it by sending two missions in 1799 to Persia, whose relations with Afghānistān were then strained. The first mission was that of Mehdi 'Āli Khān, a naturalised Persian then acting as the Company's Resident at Bushire, and the next that of Captain John Malcolm. Persian friendship was also necessary for the English, to counteract the Asiatic designs of France; and the missions of Wellesley proved successful from both points of view. The Persian pressure compelled Zamān Shāh to return from Lahore to Peshāwār, to the immense relief of the English. This is clear from Lord Wellesley's letter to the Secret Committee in London, dated the 28th September, 1801. Harassed by revolts at home, due chiefly to the strife between the Sadozāis (members of the royal family) and the Barakzāis under Payendah Khān and his eldest son, Fateh Khān, Zamān Shāh was ultimately overthrown and blinded and fled to Bukhārā, then to Herāt and finally to India, where at Ludhīnā he survived for many years under pathetic conditions as a pensioner of the British Government, which had once been so much perturbed by the threat of his invasion.

**B. Chronic Troubles in Afghānistān after Zamān Shāh**

The removal of Zamān Shāh was followed by a period of chronic troubles and disorder in the kingdom of Afghānistān. His brother, Mahmūd Shāh, the next ruler (1800–1803), became a puppet in the hands of the Barakzāi chief, Fateh Khān, and proved himself
utterly incompetent to suppress disorders in Kābul. In 1803 Shujā Mīrzā, a grandson of Ahmad Shāh Durrānī, seized the throne of Kābul. But Shāh Shujā also proved himself incapable of establishing an efficient rule. "His resources were limited, and his qualities were of too negative a character to render him equal to the demands of such stirring times. He wanted judgment; and above all, he wanted money." By the middle of the year 1809, he was defeated by the Barakzāis, the partisans of Mahmūd Shāh, who was thus restored to the throne of Afghānistān. After some fruitless attempts "to splinter up his broken fortune" Shāh Shujā reached Ludhiānā in 1816 to remain there under British protection like his brother, Zamān Shāh. Mahmūd Shāh, a tool in the hands of the Barakzāis, gradually grew impatient of their control, and caused their leader, Fateh Khān, to be killed most cruelly in 1818. This made the Barakzāis furious, and they in the course of a few years brought under their control the whole country of Afghānistān, except Herāt, where Mahmūd Shāh and his son, Kāmrān, found refuge and acknowledged the suzerainty of Persia. Kāmrān continued to hold Herāt after the death of Mahmūd in 1829.

C. Dost Muhammad

In the meanwhile, Dost Muhammad, an able member of the Barakzāi clan, had made himself king of Kābul in 1826 and had been proclaimed Amir with all the necessary formalities. More courageous and active than his contemporaries, Dost Muhammad frustrated an attempt of Shāh Shujā to regain Kābul in 1833 with the support of Ranjit; but about the same time Peshāwār was captured by the Sikhs owing to the support they received from Dost Muhammad's brother, Sultan Muhammad Khān. In fact, Dost Muhammad's position was beset with dangers on all sides. "On the north there were revolts in Balkh; on the south one of his brothers was holding out against him at Kandahār; on the east he was harassed by Ranjit Singh at Peshāwār with Shāh Shujā and the British Government in the background; on the west there was Mahmūd Shāh and Kāmrān at Herāt, with Persia plotting behind and Russia lurking in the distance." All this naturally made Dost Muhammad eager for friendship with the English. Thus after the arrival of Lord Auckland (1836–1842), as the Governor-General of India in March, 1836, Dost Muhammad sent him a congratulatory letter in the month of May and sought British help against the Sikhs and Persia. But the Governor-General declared the unwillingness of the British Government to interfere in the affairs of other States.
To put diplomatic pressure on the British Government, the Amir of Afgānīstān made overtures to Persia and Russia.

The course of European politics exercised at this time, as it had done before, since the middle of the eighteenth century, a profound influence on the history of Asia. From the early years of the nineteenth century, Russia was actuated by designs of expansion in the East, for which she concluded the Treaty of Gulistān with Persia in 1813. For the time being England succeeded in detaching Persia from her friendship with Russia, and signed the Treaty of Teheran with the former on the 25th November, 1814, according to which "all alliances between Persia and European nations hostile to Great Britain were made null and void, and all European armies were to be prevented from entering Persia, if hostile to Great Britain". But in the course of a few years, the new Shāh of Persia, Muhammad Mīrzā, son of 'Ābbās Mīrzā, who had died in the autumn of 1833, turned out to be a friend of Russia, and Russian influence became predominant at the Persian court. Russia, "making a cat's-paw of Persia", instigated the Shāh to besiege Herāt (November, 1837, to September, 1838), which occupied a position of strategic importance from the standpoint of the interests of the British Indian Empire. "Near Herat," writes Sir T. H. Holdich, "there exists the only break in the otherwise continuous and formidable wall of mountains which traverse Asia from the Bering Strait to the Caspian Sea. Near Herat it is possible to pass from the Russian outposts . . . to India without encountering any formidable altitude—and this is possible nowhere else." The heroic defence of the Afgāns, aided by the courageous efforts of a young British officer, Eldred Pottinger, who was then travelling in Afgānīstān, baffled the Persian attempt on Herāt. It served, however, to deepen the ever-increasing British anxiety about Russian ambitions in Asia.

D. The First Anglo-Afghan War

It would undoubtedly have been difficult for Russia to realise her Asiatic ambitions from distant Moscow, and to advance on the frontier of the British Indian Empire by traversing the frowning plateau of Afgānīstān and then by defeating the trained army of the Punjab, whose ruler was a British ally. Nevertheless the movements of Russia alarmed British statesmen. They largely influenced Lord William Bentinck's policy towards the Amirs of Sind and created much uneasiness in the mind of Lord Auckland, especially when the Amir
of Afghanistān, annoyed with the English for their refusal of help against the Sikhs, had begun negotiations with Persia and Russia. This "Russophobia" also deeply stirred the Whig Cabinet of Lord Melbourne in England. The enterprising Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, saw in Russian designs "imminent peril to the security and tranquillity" of the Indian Empire, and goaded on the Government of India to take effective steps to checkmate them. The Secret Committee of the Court of Directors wrote to the Governor-General on the 25th June, 1836, to "judge as to what steps it may be proper and desirable . . . to take to watch more closely, than has hitherto been attempted, the progress of events in Afghanistān and to counteract the progress of Russian influence in a quarter which, from its proximity to our Indian possessions, could not fail, if it were once established, to act injuriously on the system of our alliances and possibly to interfere even with the tranquillity of our own territory. The mode of dealing with this very important question, whether by despatching a confidential agent to Dost Muhammad of Kābul merely to watch the progress of events, or to enter into relations with this chief, either of a political or merely, in the first instance, of a commercial character, we confide to your discretion, as well as the adoption of any other measures that may appear to you desirable in order to counteract Russian advances in that quarter, should you be satisfied from the information received from your agents on the frontier, or hereafter from Mr. McNeill, on his arrival in Persia, that the time has arrived at which it would be right for you to interfere decidedly in the affairs of Afghanistān. Such an interference would doubtless be requisite, either to prevent the extension of Persian dominion in that quarter, or to raise a timely barrier against the impending encroachments of Russian influence".

On the strength of this despatch, the Governor-General sent Alexander Burnes from Bombay to Kābul in November, 1836, under the pretence of a commercial mission, but in reality, as Burnes himself says, "to see into affairs and judge of what was to be done hereafter". Burnes reached Kābul on the 20th September, 1837. Dost Muhammad, who obviously preferred the friendship of the English to that of the Russians, expressed his willingness to accept British overtures, provided the British Government agreed to put pressure on Ranjit Singh to restore Peshāwār to him. Burnes also recommended an alliance with the Amir. But Lord Auckland and his two secretaries, William Macnagthen and John Colvin, turned a deaf ear to his suggestion. The hope of an Anglo-Afghan alliance was thus destroyed, and Burnes' mission having failed, the
left Kābul on the 26th April, 1838. Disappointed in securing British friendship, the Amīr naturally sought Perso-Russian alliance, and the Russian envoy, Viktevitch, who had been hitherto treated "in a scurvy and discouraging manner", was received by him with much favour.

Lord Auckland, who had so recently pleaded the doctrine of non-intervention in the affairs of other States when Dost Muhammad solicited British help in the recovery of Peshāwār from the Sikhs now felt no scruple in taking steps to depose Dost Muhammad and to restore the exiled Shāh Shujā to the throne of Kābul with the help of Ranjit Singh. To carry this resolve into effect, he sent Macnaghten, Secretary to the Government, to Lahore, and a Tripartite Treaty was signed between Shāh Shujā, Ranjit Singh and the English on the 26th June, 1838. A war of the English with Afghānistān was a logical outcome of this step. On the 1st October, 1838, the Governor-General issued from Simla a manifesto by way of an official justification of the intended war, in which, as Herbert Edwardes writes, "the views and conduct of Dost Muhammad were misrepresented with a hardness which a Russian statesman might have envied". "Lies were heaped upon lies" in the Simla manifesto. The Governor-General's remark about Dost Muhammad's "unprovoked attack upon our ancient ally" has been aptly compared by Trotter "for truthfulness with the wolf's complaint in the fable against the lamb".

Lord Auckland's policy is indefensible from all points of view. As an independent ruler of Afghānistān, Dost Muhammad had every right to enlist Perso-Russian alliance on his side however prejudicial it might be to British interests. It should also be noted that Dost Muhammad decided to accept Perso-Russian alliance after the failure of his efforts to secure British friendship. "We had ourselves," observes Kaye justly, "alienated the friendship of the Barakzye Sirdars. They had thrown themselves into the arms of the Persian King, only because we had thrust them off." Further, the poor excuse of Perso-Russian aggression as a danger to British interests ceased to have any force whatsoever after the withdrawal of the Persians from Herāt in September, 1838; this "cut from under the feet of Lord Auckland all grounds of justification and rendered the expedition across the Indus at once a folly and a crime". Politically considered, the Governor-General's policy was ill-Advised and inexpedient. Dost Muhammad, whom he wanted to depose, was an efficient ruler having sufficient control over the unruly Afghān tribesmen, whereas his nominee, Shāh Shujā, though possessed of some capacity, had hitherto met with nothing but failure, and
had no prospect of gaining popularity among the Muslims of Afghānistān by being reinstated through the assistance of the Sikhs, the old enemies of the Afghāns, and of the Christian British power. Shāh Shujā was a man "whom the people of Afghānistān had repeatedly, in emphatic, scriptural language, spued out for these Barukzye (Barakzāi) chiefs, who, whatever may have been the defects of their Government, had contrived to maintain themselves in security and their country in peace, with a vigour and a constancy unknown to the luckless Suddozye Princes". In short, the Afghān war was launched, as Kaye pointed out, "in defiance of every consideration of political and military expediency; and there were those who, arguing the matter on higher grounds than those of mere expediency, pronounced the certainty of its failure, because there was a canker of injustice at the core. It was, indeed, an experiment on the forbearance alike of God and of man; and, therefore, though it might dawn in success and triumph, it was sure to set in failure and disgrace". Among the many contemporary critics of Lord Auckland's policy, the Duke of Wellington wrote to Mr. Tucker that "the consequence of crossing the Indus, once, to settle a Government in Afghānistān, will be a perennial march into that country". His remark was prophetic.

Regardless of these considerations, Lord Auckland, largely influenced by his private advisers, John Colvin and W. H. Macnaghten, passed orders to assemble "the army of the Indus" to invade the kingdom of Dost Muhammad. Owing to Ranjit Singh's objection to the passage of the British troops through his kingdom, and certain other reasons, it was arranged that the main British force under the command of Sir John Keane and Sir Willoughby Cotton, accompanied by Shāh Shujā, would advance from Ferozepore to Kābul by way of Bahawalpur, Sind, Baluchistān, and the Bōlān and Khojāk Passes over a distance of one thousand miles, while the Sikh army, accompanied by Colonel Wade and Shāh Shujā's son, Timūr, would march from the Punjab through Peshāwār and the Khyber Pass. As Dr. Smith observes, "the plan violated all the conditions of sound strategy, and was that of a lunatic rather than of a sane statesman". Further, the march through Sind meant a gross violation of the treaties of 1832 with the Amīrs of Sind. The British army was considerably reduced in numbers through lack of water supply and provisions before it reached Qandahār. Sir W. H. Macnaghten accompanied the expedition in charge of its political affairs with Sir Alexander Burnes as his principal lieutenant.

The allies at first gained successes. Under the supreme command
of Sir John Keane, they occupied Qandahār in April, 1839, stormed Ghazni on the 23rd July, and Kābul fell into their hands on the 3rd August, 1839, when Dost Muhammad evacuated it. Shāh Shujā was triumphantly enthroned in Kābul without any welcome, or even a "common salaam", from the people. "It was," remarks Kaye, "more like a funeral procession than the entry of the King into the capital of his restored dominions." For a while the British arms seemed to have received additional lustre. But by the end of the year 1841, "that lustre, such as it was, had been lamentably besmirched".

Serious dangers were lurking in the situation. Restored by force of British arms and Sikh help, Shāh Shujā failed to evoke national sympathy and support; and "it was necessary still to hedge in the throne with a quickset of British bayonets" even after Dost Muhammad had surrendered himself in 1840 and had been sent to Calcutta as a prisoner. But the British army was maintained in Afgānistān at a huge cost, entailing a heavy drain on the resources of India; and its presence there increased the prices of the articles of common consumption, which affected the rich as well as the poor people. The popular discontent at foreign domination was aggravated by lapses on the part of the British troops, stationed in the land of the freedom-loving Afgāns. In fact, the system of government imposed on the Afgāns "was becoming a curse to the whole nation".

When Shāh Shujā was not accepted by the nation, it would have been wiser for the British to withdraw with him. Considering the dangers of the situation in Afgānistān, the Court of Directors wisely suggested "the entire abandonment of the country, and a frank confession of complete failure". But Macnaghten, who fondly believed that British prospects were "brightening in every direction" and that everything was "couleur de rose", considered the proposal of withdrawal as "an unparalleled political atrocity" and rejected it. Lord Auckland also would not agree to confess the absolute failure of his policy and took recourse to half-measures, which were at once risky and discreditable. The British army of occupation was retained in Afgānistān and an attempt was made to economise by reducing the subsidies of the tribal chiefs of eastern Afgānistān, which alone had so long tempted them to adhere to the English. As a natural result of this "misplaced economy", the chiefs broke out in insurrection in different parts. Two other serious mistakes were committed by the Governor-General. His appointment of General Elphinstone, an elderly invalid, to succeed Cotton in April, 1841, as the commander of the
army in Kābul, against the desire of the Commander-in-Chief, who
preferred Nott, the commander at Qandahār, was a calamitous
step. It was also unwise on his part to permit Shāh Shujā to use
the citadel of Kābul, known as the Bala Hissār, for his seraglio,
while the troops were badly placed in ill-fortified cantonments out-
side the city at a distance from the commissariat stores. Further,
Sikh help for the British ceased to be forthcoming owing to the
prevailing disorders in the Punjab, after the death of their friend,
Ranjit Singh, on the 27th June, 1839.
Disturbances broke out by the autumn of 1841. On the 2nd
November a howling mob pulled Alexander Burnes out of his
house, murdered him, his brother Charles, and also Lieutenant
William Broadfoot. The English officers, civil as well as military,
and the troops betrayed a regrettable lack of promptness and
ability, and thus allowed "the little fire" to grow "by sufferance
into a wide conflagration", under the leadership of Akbar Khān,
son of Dost Muhammad. They quarrelled among themselves and
failed to realise the formidable nature of the outbreak. "There
appears to have been," comments Thornton, a contemporary writer
"an almost unanimous determination to shut the ears against all
intimations of danger, and indulge in a luxurious dream of safety
equal to that within the Marātha ditch." On hearing of these
disasters, Lord Auckland was greatly perturbed. He realised
rather too late the folly of wrestling "against the universal opinion,
national and religious", and became eager "to consider in what
manner all that belongs to India may be most immediately and
most honourably withdrawn from the country". The feeble
General Elphinstone allowed the stores depots to be captured by
the insurgents without striking a blow; and Macneghten, the
irresolute British political officer in Afgānistān, fearing to be
starved out, concluded a humiliating treaty with Akbar Khān
on the 11th December. It was agreed that the British forces should
evacuate Kābul as soon as possible, that Dost Muhammad should
return to Kābul, and that Shāh Shujā should either remain in
Afgānistān on a pension or should go to India with the British
army. But Macneghten, far from being sincerely disposed to
observe these terms, entered within a few days into objectionable
negotiations with the rival Ghizāli and Qizilbāšī chiefs. He was
paid back in his own coin for this unwise act, as these chiefs
betrayed him, inveigled him into an interview with Akbar Khān
on the 23rd December, and slew him with one of his companions,
Captain Trevor; his two other companions, Lawrence and Mackenzie,
got off with their lives but were made prisoners.
Macnaghten's successor, Major Eldred Pottinger, wanted to break off all negotiations with the Afghāns and either to occupy the Bala Hissār and hold out till help came or to proceed to Jalalābād which was bravely defended by Sale. But Elphinstone and other military officers, who had not the courage to stand and vindicate their national honour, disregarded his suggestions and stooped to make more concessions. They surrendered guns, muskets and ordnance stores and ratified the treaty on the 1st January, 1842. On the 6th January, the "crouching, drooping and dispirited" British troops and camp-followers, 16,500 men in all, set out on their return journey towards India, struggling through the stinging snow of the winter and a constant shower of bullets from the Afghāns, whose fanatical rage Akbar Khān was unable to check. Within a few days the women and children and some officers, including Pottinger, Lawrence and Elphinstone, were given to Akbar Khān as hostages. But the slaughter of British troops continued and on the 10th January only about a quarter of the force was left. In the pithy phrase of Roberts, "the retreat became a rout, the rout a massacre." Thus considerably thinned, the retiring troops made the last desperate stand at the Pass of Jagdalak on the 11th January only to lose twelve of their officers. Of the 16,500 men that had started from Kābul a week before, all were destroyed excepting 120 prisoners under Akbar Khān, and only one, Dr. Brydon, reached Jalalābād, severely wounded and utterly exhausted, on the 13th January, to narrate the painful story of the tragic retreat. The gallant defence of Qandahār by Nott and Rawlinson, and of Jalalābād by Sale and Broadfoot, may be considered as the only streak of light in the enveloping darkness of disaster. Naturally shocked and mortified by these calamities, Lord Auckland tried to conceal his lack of foresight by describing the terrible catastrophe in the General Order issued on the 31st January as "a partial reverse", which afforded "a new occasion for displaying the stability and vigour of the British power, and the admirable spirit and valour of the British-Indian army". He made some ill-fated efforts to retrieve British prestige, but was soon compelled to leave his office, and Lord Ellenborough (1842–1844) took charge of it on the 28th February, 1842.

1 There is, however, a reference in Macdonald's letter, dated the 17th June, 1842, to an account in the Journal of the Serjeant of the 37th Native Infantry, who was an eye-witness of the events that happened from the date of the departure of Elphinstone's force from Kābul till its final destruction, and made his escape to Jalalābād. "It is a far better account than Brydon's, who seems scarcely yet to have recovered his reason, which in his fright he certainly lost for the time being." J.I.H., August, 1933.
EXPANSION OF BRITISH DOMINION

There is no doubt that the Afghān War was an unjust proceeding on the part of the Company’s Government in India, and as such it merited, in the opinion of some writers, the “tremendous Nemesis” which overtook it. Kaye significantly observes: “. . . the wisdom of our statesmen is but foolishness, and the might of our armies is but weakness when the curse of God is sitting heavily upon an unholy cause.” Further, the feeble and unwise manner in which it was conducted made its failure inevitable. In critically examining the causes of the British reverses and disasters in connection with the Afghān War, Captain Trotter remarks that “the utter collapse of that (Lord Auckland’s) policy, baleful, lawless, and blundering as it was, sprang mainly from the choice of agents ill-fitted for their work. Macnaghten’s cheery trustfulness, Elphinstone’s bodily and mental decay, Shelton’s stupid wilfulness, chronic dissensions between the civil and military powers, Sale’s withholding of timely succour, all conspired with Lord Auckland’s half-measures and ill-timed economies, to work out the dramatic Nemesis of an enterprise begun in folly and wrong-doing”.

E. Lord Ellenborough (1842–1844) and Afghān Affairs

In view of the overwhelming disaster of the late Afghān War, Lord Ellenborough declared in a letter to the Commander-in-Chief, written on the 15th March, 1842, that the British Government would no longer “peril its armies and with its armies the Indian Empire” to support the Tripartite Treaty, but would aim at the establishment of its military reputation “by the infliction of some signal and decisive blow upon the Afghāns”. He changed this resolution, however, on hearing the news of General England’s defeat at Hakalzāi and Palmer’s surrender of Ghaznī, and ordered the immediate withdrawal of the British troops that still remained in Afghānistān, without thinking any longer of reprisals or of releasing the prisoners. This order fell on the army, as Outram recorded, “like a thunder-clap” and raised a storm of indignation both in England and India. Shāh Shujā ū had meanwhile been murdered. Both Nott and Pollock showed no disposition to retire but maintained their positions, pleading want of transport as a reason for their hesitation to withdraw. Lord Ellenborough at last “discovered a way to maintain a particularly empty show of consistency, and at the same time to satisfy the universal demand for the decisive reconquest of Kābul and recovery of the prisoners as a preliminary to withdrawal”. On the 4th July
he sent letters to Nott and Pollock repeating the order for withdrawal from Afghanistān, but at the same time gave Nott wide discretion to retire to India, not by the Bolān Pass, but by Ghazni and Kābul through the Khyber, and also ordered Pollock to act in concert with Nott in this matter of retreat. It is clear that the Governor-General thus threw the responsibility for decision on the generals, who, however, accepted it without any hesitation. On the 20th August, Pollock started from Jalalābād with 8,000 of his choice troops; defeated the Afghāns at Jagdalak on the 8th September and at Tezin on the 13th September, reached Kābul on the 15th September and once more hoisted the British flag at the Bala Hissār. On the 17th September he joined Nott, who had already destroyed the town and fortifications of Ghazni on the 6th September and had, according to the instructions of Lord Ellenborough, carried away the “so-called gates of Somnāth”, which Sultān Mahmūd was supposed to have carried off in the eleventh century. The English prisoners were rescued; but “the glory of the avenging army at Kābul was marred by acts of barbarity” when it blew up the great bāzār of Kābul with gunpowder and the city was ruthlessly sacked, many inoffensive people being subjected to great suffering, before it was evacuated on the 12th October. The returning army was welcomed by the Governor-General at Ferozepore with “triumphal arches and histrionic paens of victory”. In a proclamation issued from Simla on the 10th October, though it was dated the 1st October, Lord Ellenborough denounced in strong language the policy of his predecessor and expressed his willingness “to recognise any government approved by the Afghāns themselves, which shall appear desirous and capable of maintaining friendly relations with neighbouring States”. In another bombastic proclamation, addressed to the princes, chiefs and people of India, the Governor-General announced: “Our victorious army bears the gates of the temple of Somnāth in triumph from Afghanistān and the despoiled tomb of Sultān Mahomed looks upon the ruins of Ghaznee. The insult of 800 years is avenged.”

The unwisdom and uselessness of the second proclamation can hardly be doubted. “The folly of the thing,” observes Kaye, “was past all denial. It was a folly, too, of the most senseless kind, for it was calculated to please none and to offend many.” It wounded the feelings of the Muslims; and the Hindus remained indifferent about the gates, which, as the antiquarians rightly held, had been built much later than the eleventh century “of no wood more precious than deal or deodar”. The Governor-
General's "glorious trophy of a successful war" was in the end consigned to a lumber-room in the fort of Agra, and he made himself subject to ridicule and censure, though he was powerfully supported by the Duke of Wellington and Lord Hardinge. Dost Muhammad was allowed to reoccupy his throne unconditionally, and he held it till his death, at the age of eighty, in 1863. His friendly attitude towards the English and opposition to Persia showed that the "whole disastrous episode", which cost no less than 20,000 human lives and fifteen millions of money, was "entirely superfluous".

5. The Annexation of Sind

The Afghān War was very closely connected with the conquest of Sind, which followed it. Sind embraced the lower valley of the Indus and was included within the empire of Ahmad Shāh Durrānī. But, during the closing years of the eighteenth century, it owed only a nominal allegiance to Afghānistān and was governed in practical independence by the Mīrs or Amirs of the Tālpūrā tribe, which, coming originally from Baluchistān, had overthrown the last of the Kalorās in A.D. 1783. The three important branches of the Tālpūrā chiefs were seated at Hyderābad, Khairpur and Mirpur.

The English had had commercial interests in Sind for a long time; a factory established by them at Thāṭṭa in 1758 was abandoned in 1775 and their commercial mission to the Tālpūrā Mīrs in 1799 produced no important result. With a view to excluding French influence from Sind, the British Government concluded a treaty with the Amirs of Sind in 1809, which was renewed in 1820. The journey of Alexander Burnes in 1831 up the river Indus on his way to Lahore disclosed to the English the importance of Sind from the political as well as commercial point of view, and since then its absorption into the growing British Empire had been only a question of time. "Alas," observed a Seiād, "Sind is now gone since the English have seen the river." As we shall see, this proved wholly true as a prophetic prediction.

Sind had an ambitious neighbour in the Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh, who coveted it as a natural sphere of expansion for his empire. But his attempts were thwarted by his friends, the English, who in their turn lost no opportunity of increasing their influence over that territory. Thus in 1831 Lord William Bentinck opposed Ranjit Singh's proposal for a partition of Sind. But the Amirs of Sind had to conclude a treaty with the British Government, rather reluctantly, on the 20th April, 1832, which provided that "the rivers and roads" of Sind should be opened to the
"merchants and traders of Hindoostan", but that no "military stores" and "armed vessels or boats" should come through these. As a sort of precaution against the apprehended absorption of their territory by the British, the Amirs took care to include another stipulation to the effect that "the two contracting powers bind themselves never to look with the eye of covetousness on the possessions of each other". This treaty was renewed in 1834. Up to 1838 Ranjit Singh often contemplated the incorporation of Sind into his empire, but was thwarted by the English, who now with a view to strengthening the ties by which the Amirs of Sind were "connected with the British Empire", proceeded to extort from them favourable terms as a reward for their protection against Sikh aggression. By a treaty concluded on the 20th April, 1838, Lord Auckland forced on them an accredited British Resident. In fact, Sind soon fell out of the frying-pan into the fire. Sikh ambition in regard to it could not be realised, but it was to pay a high price for the uncalled-for British protection by being deprived of its independence through questionable means adopted by British officers.

On the outbreak of the First Anglo-Afghan War, the English, in violation of the treaty of 1832, took an armed force through Sind, and informed the Amirs that "while the present exigency lasts . . . the article of the treaty (of 1832) prohibiting the use of the Indus for the conveyance of military stores must necessarily be suspended". Greater humiliation and loss were inflicted on the Amirs when Lord Auckland demanded from them a heavy sum as a price for unsolicited British mediation in effecting a commutation of the pecuniary demands of Shāh Shujā on Sind. The Amirs, who had stopped the payment of any tribute to Shāh Shujā during his thirty years' exile and had also been granted an exemption by Shāh Shujā in 1833 from all claims, naturally hesitated to comply with Lord Auckland's demand. But they were given a warning to the effect that the British Government had the "power to crush and annihilate them, and . . . will not hesitate to call it into action, should it appear requisite, however remotely, for either the integrity or safety" of the Empire, or its frontiers. The Amirs had no other option but to submit to the Governor-General's exaction. Further, the threat of Sir John Keane's march on the capital of Sind compelled them to accept fresh terms from Lord Auckland in February, 1839, by which they were bound to pay a sum of three lacs of rupees per annum for the maintenance of a British force in their territories, and Sind was "formally placed under British protection". This treaty was
again revised by Lord Auckland and his advisers in their own way and was sent back for final signature to the Amirs, who “objected, implored and finally gave way, by affixing their seals to the revised documents”.

A worse fate was, however, in store for Sind. She had been intimidated and coerced by Lord Auckland; but his successor went further and imposed on her the yoke of British authority by sheer force. During the critical years of the disastrous Afghan War, the province had been utilised as a base of operations by the British Government, and its Amirs had remained steadfastly loyal to their agreements with the English. But far from being duly rewarded for their attachment, the Amirs were unjustly charged with disaffection and hostility against the British Government by Lord Ellenborough, who sought a convenient pretext to give effect to his design of annexing Sind. To make matters easy for himself, the new Governor-General removed Major James Outram, the Resident at Hyderabad, who had some experience of local affairs, and sent to Sind Sir Charles Napier with full civil and military powers as a representative of the Governor-General. Sir Charles Napier, a hot-headed and impulsive officer, who came to Sind on 10th September, 1842, acted on “the theory that the annexation of Sind would be a very beneficent piece of rascality for which it was his business to find an excuse—a robbery to be plausibly effected”. He took it for granted that the vague charges against the Amirs had been proved, and, besides arbitrarily interfering in a succession quarrel at Khairpur, dictated a new treaty by which the Amirs were required to cede certain important territories in lieu of the tribute of three lacs, to provide fuel for British vessels navigating the Indus, and to give up the right of coining money in favour of the British Government. He did not stop with these demands, which amounted to an absolute surrender of national independence by the Amirs, but acted as if Sind had already become a part of the British Empire and “as though the right of the Governor-General of British India to parcel it out at his pleasure was unquestioned and unquestionable; and, moreover, as if it were desired to exercise this right in a manner as offensive as possible to those who were to suffer privation from the exercise”. Thus before the acceptance of a fresh treaty by the Amirs, he occupied the territory in question, and issued proclamations in strong language. Further, while talking of treaties, he sought to intimidate the Amirs by marching upon Imamgarh, a famous desert fortress lying between Khairpur and Hyderabad, without formally declaring war, and destroying it early in January, 1843.

These high-handed acts of Napier sorely tried the patience of
the warlike Baluchis, and in a state of excitement they attacked the British Residency on the 15th February, 1843, whereupon Outram, who had returned to Sind as a British Commissioner, fled for refuge to a steamer. Thus war was now openly declared. A Baluchi army of about 22,000 men was defeated on the 17th February at Miāni, a few miles from Hyderābād, by Napier fighting with 2,800 men and 12 guns. This was followed by the immediate submission of some of the Amīrs, but Sher Muhammad, “the Lion of Mirpur”, still held out bravely. He was, however, thoroughly vanquished on the 24th March at Dabo, six miles from Hyderābād, whereupon Napier occupied Mīrpur on the 27th March, Amarkot on the 4th April and conveyed the news of his victory to Lord Ellenborough in the punning message, “Pecavi”, i.e. “I have Sind”. Sher Muhammad was driven out of Sind in June and the war came to a close. Sind was formally annexed to the British Empire in August, 1843, and the Amīrs were exiled. Napier unhesitatingly accepted £70,000 as his share of the prize money, while Outram, in spite of being a man of comparatively small resources, did not take his own share amounting to £3,000 but gave it to some charitable institutions. Outram, in fact, had no liking for Napier’s policy and wrote to him: “I am sick of policy; I will not say yours is the best, but undoubtedly it is the shortest—that of the sword. Oh, how I wish you had drawn it in a better cause!”

The policy of Lord Ellenborough, and the high-handed acts of Sir Charles Napier, with regard to Sind, have been justly condemned by most writers. There is no doubt that they acted on purely imperialistic motives and resorted to highly objectionable means, by cynical violations of treaty obligations, to reduce the Amīrs, who had inflicted no injury on the British, to a state of vassalage. “If the Afgān episode,” observes Innes, “is the most disastrous in our annals, that of Sind is morally even less excusable.” While trying to defend the policy by various laboured arguments, which are at once irrational and unhistorical, Napier has admitted in his Diary: “We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be.” Strangely enough, the Court of Directors, while condemning the policy of annexing Sind, did nothing to undo the wrong. Napier was appointed the first Governor of Sind, and he tried hard during his rule of four years to consolidate British authority in the province.
CHAPTER VI

THE COMPANY AND THE MINOR INDIAN STATES (1774–1858)

1. Early Relations, 1774–1823

The rapid strides with which British imperialism had advanced in India since at least the time of Wellesley, if not earlier, inevitably affected the destiny of the Indian States that had arisen on the ruins of the Mughul Empire. Their relations with the Company’s Government varied according to changing political conditions and the personal views and ambitions of the Governors-General; but the “conviction which developed with Wellesley and continued up to our own time, that the government of the whole of India directly or indirectly by the British is part of a preordained system” had a considerable influence in shaping British policy towards the Indian States. Warren Hastings, confronted with the task of safeguarding British territories against the encroachments of the Marāthas, and the militant rulers of Mysore, adopted the policy of a “Ring-Fence”, that is, sought to guard the frontiers of the neighbouring States by way of precaution. But some of his transactions, such as his demands on Chait Singh of Benares and the Begams of Oudh, and conduct towards Faizullā Khān of Rāmpur, involved breach of treaties or betrayed a lack of moral scruples. The subsidiary treaties of Lord Wellesley established in fact British predominance over some of the Indian States. But in theory these States did not thereby become subject to British paramountcy as they retained their independence in matters of internal administration. All the treaties of Wellesley, except that with Mysore, were negotiated on terms of equality. Being, however, dependent on the Company for self-protection, States like Oudh, the Carnatic and Tanjore began to suffer from all the evils of “double government” like those which had distracted Bengal since 1765. It was Lord Hastings who transformed the treaties of “reciprocity and mutual amity” into those of “subordinate co-operation”, and established British paramountcy over most of the Indian States by compelling them to surrender their sovereign rights of making war or peace and negotiating agreements with other powers. Formally, these States retained
internal sovereignty, but in actual practice they were subject to frequent interference in the affairs of internal government by British Residents, the quality and amount of this interference varying with the difference in “personality and temperament” of the officers concerned. Lord Hastings was not, however, “an annexationist”.

2. Relations between 1823 and 1858

The period intervening between the departure of Lord Hastings and the outbreak of the Revolt saw the weight of British influence falling more heavily on the Indian States, owing on the one hand to the growing executive and controlling authority of the British Residents in the sphere of internal administration of these States, and on the other to the frank enunciation of the policy of annexation by the British Government. This policy of annexation, formulated by the Court of Directors as early as 1834, and more clearly emphasised by them in 1841, was applied vigorously in the time of Lord Dalhousie. It was the outcome of two motives on the part of the Company’s Government, namely those of extending British political influence by incorporating new territories into the Empire and of securing greater facilities for the transport of merchandise and the collection of revenues. Both were intended to tighten the hold of British Paramountcy over India.

Lord William Bentinck was tied to the policy of “let alone” by the authorities in England, when he came to India. But he departed from it drastically in some cases and his masters also enunciated the policy of annexation in the course of a few years. Thus in 1831 he took over the administration of Mysore, which had been misgoverned by Rājā Krishṇa Udayar and consequently fell into disorder; the Rājā was pensioned off and the Mysore administration remained in the hands of the British Government till 1831. Bentinck also absorbed some other States into the British Empire. The principality of Cachar, where the royal line had come to an end on the death of its last ruler, was annexed in August, 1832, as the British Government did not accept as valid the claims of any candidate for the vacant throne. The lands of the Rājā of Jaintiā in Assam were incorporated in the British Empire in March, 1835, as the new ruler refused to accept the stringent terms imposed on him. Viraraja the younger, king of Coorg, was accused of monstrous cruelties towards his subjects and secret conspiracy against the British. Although these charges were not supported by any positive evidence, and later proved to be mostly unwarranted or false, British forces were sent to Coorg and it was annexed by a formal
proclamation dated the 7th May, 1834. Thus minor Indian States were annexed on pretexts which will not stand any serious examination. Lord Auckland, whose energies were preoccupied with the Afghan War, could not pay much attention to the States, but he annexed the territory of the Nawab of Karnul, in Madras, on suspicion of his hostile designs against the British Government.

His successor, Lord Ellenborough, had to deal with a formidable outbreak in Gwalior. At the close of the Maratha War of 1817–1819, Gwalior had remained under Daulat Rao Sindia as the most powerful Indian military State south of the Sutlej. Daulat Rao died in 1827, when one of his youthful relatives, Jankoji Rao Sindia, was installed as the Raja with an ambitious woman, Maharanee Baiza Bai, widow of Daulat Rao Sindia, as the regent. The weakness of the new ruler, and the activities of the regent, gave rise to various intrigues and disorders in the State, which did not end even when the latter was expelled in 1833. In the midst of these troubles Jankoji died in 1843 without issue. A minor named Jayaji Rao was then raised to the Gadi; but intrigues and counter-intrigues quickly multiplied, especially through the machinations of two rival parties over the selection of a regent for the boy king. The Governor-General’s candidate, Krishna Rao Kadam, the Mammah Sahib or the maternal-uncle of the deceased ruler, was removed from office by the youthful widow of the late ruler, who preferred the appointment of Khasgi-wala. As is natural during civil strife in a State, the Gwalior army, 40,000 strong, became restless, which caused anxiety in the mind of the Governor-General. The latter feared that the combination of this army with the Khalsa army, about 70,000 strong, in the Punjab, where also a civil war was about to break out after the assassination of Sher Singh, would prove to be a serious menace to the British Government. Haunted by this fear, Lord Ellenborough assumed a dictatorial attitude, and even though the Gwalior authorities accepted all his demands, which were unjust and unreasonable in the extreme, he personally led an army into the territory of Sindia. Not unnaturally, the Gwalior troops keenly resented this insult to their master, and advanced to oppose the British forces. But they were defeated on the 29th December, 1843, in two engagements—one at Maharaipur, north of Gwalior, by Sir Hugh Gough, and the other at Paniar, by General Grey. Gwalior, now reduced definitely to the status of a protected State, was placed under a Council of Regency, which was to manage its affairs during the minority of the Maharaja subject to the control of a British Resident. The army was cut down to 9,000 men and a
British contingent of 10,000 men was placed there. Curiously enough, during the Revolt, the Gwālior army under the command of Dinkar Rāo, minister of the State, supported the English, while the Company’s contingent there rose against them.

The Governor-Generalship of Lord Dalhousie was marked by a stupendous growth of the British Empire at the expense of many of the Indian States. Lord Dalhousie annexed a large number of States in pursuance of what is known as the “Doctrine of Lapse”, which means that, on the failure of natural heirs, the sovereignty of the “dependent” States, of those created by the British Government, or held on a subordinate tenure, lapsed to the Paramount Power, a position which, it was agreed, the British Government had acquired after the fall of the Mughul Empire; it also did not acknowledge the right of those States to adopt heirs, which had been a long-standing practice among the Hindus, without the consent of the suzerain authority. The doctrine did not apply to “protected allies”. Referring to the glaring abuses in the government of some of the Indian States, the Governor-General declared that the British Government “in the exercise of a wise and sound policy is bound not to put aside or neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territory or revenue as may from time to time present themselves, whether they arise from the lapse of subordinate states by the failure of all heirs of every description whatsoever, or from the failure of heirs natural where the succession can be sustained only by the sanction of the government being given to the ceremony of adoption, according to Hindu law. The government is bound, in duty as well as in policy, to act on every such occasion with the purest integrity, and in the most scrupulous observance of good faith. When even a shadow of doubt can be shown, the claim should at once be abandoned”. It is true that the principle applicable to adoption, and the policy of annexation, were not invented by Lord Dalhousie. Both of these had been asserted by the Court of Directors earlier since 1834 and had been applied in some cases. We have already noted earlier instances of annexation; as for the “Doctrine of Lapse” it had already been applied to Mandavi in 1839, to Kolābā and Jalāūn in 1840, and to Surāt in 1842. But there is no doubt that Lord Dalhousie advocated and applied the principles most vigorously. “There was,” observes Innes, “fully adequate precedent for every one of his annexations. But his predecessors had acted on the general principle of avoiding annexation if it could be avoided; Dalhousie acted on the general principle of annexing if he could do so legitimately.”

The States that were absorbed into the British Empire according
to the Doctrine of Lapse were Sātārā in 1848, Jaitpur and Sambalpur in 1849, Baghat, a Cis-Sutlej hill State, in 1850, Udaipur in 1852, Nāgpur in 1853, and Jhansi in 1854. It should be noted that the distinction between “dependent” States and “protected allies” was very subtle; and it is doubtful if all these States could be rightly regarded as “dependent” ones. The kingdom of Sātārā was a British creation in the sense that, after the fall of the Peshwā in 1818, it had been given by Lord Hastings to a member of the house of Shivāji. In 1839 the Rājā was deposed on a charge of misgovernment and his brother was raised to the Gadi. The latter having no issue adopted a son, before his death in 1848, without consulting the Governor-General or the British Resident. Lord Dalhousie, supported by all his leading colleagues, considered this adoption to be invalid and declared that the State of Sātārā lapsed to the sovereign power. The Court of Directors also agreed with his view as “being in accordance with the general law and custom of India”. Nāgpur also had fallen under British control in 1818, but Hastings had bestowed it on a member of the old ruling house. The Rājā died in 1853, leaving no lineal descendants or adopted son. Dalhousie annexed it on the ground of its being a creation of the Company. Whatever might have been the legal position of Sātārā and Nāgpur in relation to the British Government, it is clear that Dalhousie’s motives in annexing them were purely imperialistic. It has been admitted even by Lee-Warner, a strong apologist of Dalhousie, who writes that with regard to Sātārā and Nāgpur “imperial considerations weighed with him . . . they were placed right across the main lines of communication between Bombay and Madras and Bombay and Calcutta”. Further, the disposal of the State funds and treasures of Nāgpur by public auction, which has been characterised by Kaye in his Sepoy War as “spoliation of the palace”, was certainly an undignified and tactless measure. Jhansi, a district of Bundelkhand, was given to the English by the Peshwā in 1818, and the English placed a ruler on its throne on terms of “subordinate co-operation”. On the death of its last ruler in November, 1853, leaving no issue but only an adopted son, Dalhousie annexed it. A part of Sikkim, about 1,676 square miles, was taken over by the Company in 1850 as a punishment on its chief for capturing the representative of the British Government and ill-treating two British subjects. Sambalpur was annexed to the British Empire in 1849 on the death of its ruler Nārāyan Singh without any heir. Lord Dalhousie’s decision with regard to Baghat and Udaipur was reversed by Lord Canning; and the Court of Directors did not approve of his proposal.
for the annexation of Karauli in Rājputāna, on the ground that it was a “protected ally” and not a “dependent” State.

The principle of lapse was also applied to sweep away the titles and pensions of the rulers of some States, on the ground that “appearances without the reality of authority were sure to shake Native confidence” in the “good faith” of the Company. Thus on the death of the Nawāb of the Carnatic in 1853, Lord Dalhousie decided not to recognise any one as his successor. Similarly, when the Rājā of Tanjore died in 1855, leaving behind him only two daughters and sixteen widows, the Governor-General abolished the Rājāship of this State for good. He wanted also to abolish the title of the nominal Delhi Emperor, in which, however, he was not supported by the Court of Directors. On the death of the ex-Peehwā, Bāji Rāo II, in 1853, the pension of eight hundred thousand rupees, which had been granted to him by Sir John Malcolm, was not allowed by Lord Dalhousie to be paid to his adopted son, Dundu Pant, later on known as Nānā Siheb, on the ground that the pension had been a personal allowance of his adoptive father and so could not pass on to his successor. This measure has been described by Kaye as “harsh” and by Arnold as “grasping”. The Nizām of Hyderābād in the Deccan was in arrears with the payment of a British contingent, which he was not actually obliged to maintain by the terms of his treaty with the British. Dalhousie nevertheless coerced him into making territorial cessions for the regular payment of the “Hyderābād Contingent”. By an arrangement made in May, 1853, the cotton-producing province of Berar was given to the Company in lieu of the subsidy.

Besides conquest and lapse, the maxim of “the good of the governed” was also enunciated by the British Government in annexing some States whose administrations were “fraught with suffering to millions”. The case of Oudh is the most typical example of the application of this maxim. Since Lord Wellesley’s treaty of 1801, Oudh had been kept as a “protected feudatory State” with control over internal administration. It was indeed an unwise arrangement, under which the ruler of Oudh was invested with responsibility without power, and its natural consequence was that the administration of the State degenerated terribly, to the great suffering of its people. The British Government realised the evils of Oudh administration, and successive Governors-General, especially Lord William Bentinck and Lord Hardinge, warped its ruler; but none did anything to remedy the fundamental defect of the subsidiary system, which by guaranteeing British protection to the
ruler of Oudh made him unmindful of the real interests of the State and saved him from "justifiable revolt on the part of his subjects". The growing deplorable situation in Oudh, to which the attention of the British Government was drawn, more clearly than before, by Colonel Sleeman, Resident in Oudh from 1848 to 1854, and his successor, Colonel Outram, both of whom were opposed to the policy of lapse, convinced the Governor-General of the necessity of the adoption of a bolder policy with regard to Oudh. The existence of the ill-governed State of Oudh, almost in the centre of the rapidly expanding British Empire in India, could not but appear to the architects of the latter as a gross anachronism, which should be removed as quickly as possible to facilitate their own task. There could be no better or more convenient pretext than to hold out the prospect of good government, for the absorption of a kingdom whose subjection to British control dates back to the time of Warren Hastings. Lord Dalhousie was inclined to solve the Oudh problem not by annexing it but by merely taking over its administration and by allowing its ruler to retain only his palace, rank and titles. But the Court of Directors ordered its complete annexation, which was formally proclaimed by Outram on the 13th February, 1856. Wāzīd ‘Āli Shāh, the last ruler of Oudh, was deported to Calcutta, where he had to spend his last days on an annual pension of twelve lacs of rupees.

The annexation of Oudh was an instance of territorial aggrandisement which was "not warranted by international law", as Dalhousie himself expressed it in his letter to Sir George Couper, dated 15th December, 1855. It should be noted that for the misgovernment of Oudh, which was utilised as the ground for its annexation by the Company, then eager to consolidate its possessions in India, the responsibility lay mainly on the English, who had thrust upon that kingdom the impolitic arrangement of the subsidiary system and had unceasingly interfered in its affairs. "The facts furnished by every writer on Oudh affairs, all testify," Sir Henry Lawrence stated, "to the same point, that British interference with that province has been as prejudicial to its court and people as it has been disgraceful to the British name." Further, no consideration was shown for the unflinching loyalty of the ruling house of Oudh to the British Government. It has also been held by some that the annexation of Oudh meant a "gross violation of national faith" involving disregard of an old treaty. In 1837 Lord Auckland had concluded an agreement with the ruler of Oudh, which bound him either to introduce reforms or to make over the administration to the British Government while
retaining the sovereignty. Though this treaty was not sanctioned by the Court of Directors, Lord Auckland intimated to the Oudh ruler the disallowance of only one clause of it and, somehow or other, "the treaty was actually included in a subsequent Government publication and was referred to as still in force by succeeding Governors-General". When the Court of Directors decided on annexing Oudh, the British Government suddenly informed the ruler of Oudh that the treaty of 1837 was "a dead letter".