



The Last Maharani of Lahore Jindan Kaur



Mja.Ranjit Singh



Rani Jindan

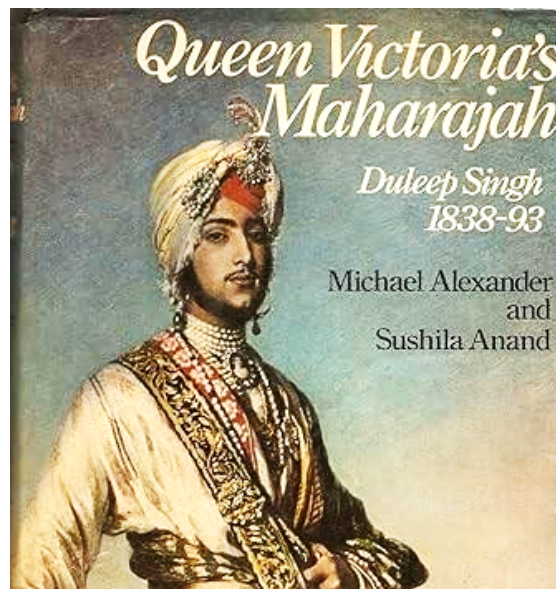


Mja.Duleep Singh

Chapter 6

I was finding out why absolutely no one would want to be *Maharani Jindan Kaur!* Aside from being portrayed as the sexually insatiable, manipulative ***Messalina of the Punjab***, she is accused of being responsible for losing the *Sikh Kingdom of The Great Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, losing *Kashmir*, the *Koh-i-Noor* diamond, ***AND—she lost her son!*** Even more than defending one's life, I was having to defend *my very soul!* Since this is 175 years later, it will require a deep dive through history's propaganda. But thanks to the *Library Angel* and tech philanthropist *Brewster Kahle*, there's *archive.org!*

My research continued where I left off, with the re-cut *Koh-i-Noor* diamond, acquired from the young deposed, exiled sovereign in ***Queen Victoria's Maharaja*** by Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand. ***Based on archives in Windsor and the India Office — clearly, it's the colonialist's view!***



<https://archive.org/details/queenvictoriasma0000alex> pp:2-3

'Duleep's mother (born 1817) was Jindan Kaur, daughter of the palace door-keeper, who was adopted by Ranjit Singh at a young age. Her ready wit and lack of sexual inhibitions made her qualified for the more outlandish entertainments of the court. The aging Maharaja took perverse pleasure in her lovemaking with his favorite, formerly a bhisti. (water carrier)

‘On the birth of Duleep, Sept. 6, 1838, Ranjit accepted the flattering pretense that the boy was his, officially recognizing him as such, making his dynasty’s continuance more certain. But he died on June 27, 1839, leaving an ambitious divided family, an opium-addicted heir, intriguing politicians, and a disintegrating army command. Governor General Ellenborough said, ‘The breakup of Punjab will probably begin with murder. It is their way.’ In fact, no member of the ruling family would be sure of his life over the next four years. During those desperate days, the young Duleep could hardly be considered a candidate for head of state. His ambitious mother removed him to the countryside until her intrigues could influence the dynastic struggle. By the time the boy had reached the age of six, most of his relatives had died or been murdered.

‘First was the poisoning death of Maharaja Kharak Singh, then his heir, Nau Nihal, was crushed by a stone arch while leading his father’s funeral procession. Next were the murders of Maharaja Shere Singh and Wazir Dhian Singh Dogra. Hira Singh Dogra, son of the murdered Dhian, rallied the troops against the assassins and became Wazir, supporting Duleep as Maharaja as the fourth recognized son of Ranjit Singh.

‘On Sept. 18, 1843, Duleep was proclaimed Maharaja with the Koh-i-Noor fastened to his arm. But real power lay with the military. Even if they recognized Duleep as Maharaja and Rani Jindan as regent, their demands for privileges and more pay undermined the fabric of the state. The treasury was depleted, and there were repeated threats to replace Duleep with the infant son of the last Maharaja, Shere Singh, whose wives were either murdered or committed sati (self-immolation). Hira made constant clandestine threats on Rani Jindan’s life. She invited Suchet Singh Dogra, Hira’s uncle, to be Wazir. Suchet Singh was the youngest and most handsome of the Dogra Rajas, who had supervised Jindan’s affairs while she lived under Dogra care in Jammu. So naturally, Suchet Singh thought that he should be Wazir, and not Hira. He gathered supporters among the army at Lahore. Though Hira loved his uncle, he was advised by his tutor Pandit Jalla. With an army behind him, they encircled Suchet and killed him.’

*(*Suchet Singh Dogra had a vast sum of wealth being held in British territories, and since he had 5 wives and *no offspring, the Lahore State repeatedly made pressing claims to it.)*

Propagandist sound bites ruled much of the narrative about Jindan! (***His ambitious mother removed him to the countryside until her intrigues could influence the dynastic struggle.***) ... But it's absurd to think that a 20-something Jindan could possibly manipulate the murder and mayhem after the death of the Great Maharaja. As far as Jindan's profligacy, the very reason rulers had harems is for confirmed parentage and safe sex! (Antibiotics didn't exist back then.) Besides, the handsome *Suchet was a safe choice, as he had 5 wives and no offspring!* ... (Lady Stanhope, living in the Middle East, tells the tale of Mohammed Ali, dressed as a common Egyptian, had tried to procure from a pimp one of his own concubines to see if it was possible. Ranjit Singh, who suffered no fools, expelled one of his wives for unacceptable behavior and even killed his own mother when he discovered her with a lover.) Still, *Rani Jindan as the Messalina of the Punjab* remains the predominant story. The British endorsed this fierce narrative while Duleep's wealth was being stolen. They justified to the 10-year-old Duleep that his parentage was in question because of Rani Jindan's behavior. (*So don't feel too bad; the Koh-i-Noor wasn't rightfully yours anyway?!*) However, this book provided an invaluable portrait of a young ***Jindan in Amritsar's Rambagh Museum***, not commonly shown.



Leslie

Jindan: Rambagh Museum / Ivory miniature

Back in the 1990s, I was in a curio shop on *MI Road*, across from *Jaipur's Pink City*, where I purchased this *ivory miniature*, using the artwork for a logo on an accessory collection. Then I mounted it in silver to wear as a medallion, and never having heard of *Jindan Kaur*.... ***"Who was it?"***

(*What I couldn't have known at the time is that Lal Singh, Jindan's prime minister and rumored lover, was exiled to Agra/Jaipur after the 1st Anglo-Sikh War. And that's where my ivory miniature found me a century and a half later—decades before I knew of the existence of Jindan.)

Vasant, my long-haired, longtime Indian assistant, insisted it was *Mumtaz Mahal* — the beloved wife of *Shah Jahan*, for whom he built the *Taj Mahal*. Although it's stylized art, *Empress Mumtaz Mahal's* look is quite different.



Mumtaz Mahal



Mumtaz Mahal

I don't know what one calls the angels who sent *Vasant* to me. The company placed ads in a Delhi paper that attracted so many applicants I rarely raised my head as each failed to measure the mannequin correctly. So when *Vasant* simply and accurately did the needful, the entire hundred-plus design force erupted into applause! He was the son of an artist and also very beautiful. And that makes this revelation all the more painful. ...The *coup de grâce*, for hanging all the blame on Jindan for the Anglo-Sikh War, was revenge for the assassination of her brother, *Raja Jawahar Singh*. But actually it was the astute manipulation of the anti-hero *Gulab Singh Dogra*, the *Jammu Fox*, the future *Maharaja of Kashmir*. And of course, by the 'divide and conquer' policy of the expansionist British Empire!

(*In August 1845, Gulab invited the British to raise an uprising against the Sikhs, offering his support in exchange for receiving Jammu and Kashmir, via letters to Major George Broadfoot.)

Kunwar (Prince) *Peshora Singh* was said to be born of a slave girl but was accepted by Emperor *Ranjit Singh* as his son. Soon after the 1843 deaths of *Maharaja Shere Singh* and *Dhian Singh*, and then *Hira* in 1844, *Peshora*

Singh made repeated bids for the throne. He traveled around the Punjab seeking support. Peshora owned *jagirs*, income lands prized by Gulab Singh, who encouraged him to take the throne from Duleep. So Jawahar dispatched artillery against him. Peshora capitulated, and Rani Jindan pardoned him, sending him home with an increase in land. ... At first, he approached the British, who were already negotiating with Gulab. He then made alliances with Dost Muhammed of Afghanistan. So with the Pathans' help, Peshora took the wealthy fort of Attock, declaring himself ruler of the Punjab. ...Jawahar sent *Chatter Singh Attariwala* to retake the fort and defeat Peshora. (Chattar was Duleep's future father-in-law; at 6 years old, he was engaged to Tej Kaur, the daughter of the powerful Attariwala family chief.) Chattar recaptured the fort with safe passage granted to the prince. So whether by directives, bribes, or general chaos, Peshora was strangled. As the murderer of a reputed son of Ranjit Singh, the Khalsa demanded Jawahar present himself before them. —***Jindan was told if she did not hand him over, she and Duleep would share the same fate!***



On Sept. 21, 1845, escorted by 1,000 men, Jawahar rode his elephant, holding Duleep and distributing coins. As he reached the tents, the soldiers held the elephant, pulled Duleep from his arms, pulled him down, shot, and speared him to death. All before the agonized eyes of his sister Jindan. The soldiers guarded Duleep, afraid of what in her grief the Rani might do. She was inconsolable for weeks, tearing her hair out, with daily displays of her torment. ***At this point, the Khalsa assumed total control of the state.***

Inspired by the warlike or defensive intentions of the British, who were accumulating troops and constructions across the Sutlej River, with their *visions of conquest of Delhi and the whole subcontinent, the army insisted on going to war*. While holding guns to the heads of their terrorized leaders. Many of whom hoped their collision would neuter them with a more powerful enemy. So, on *Dec. 13, 1845, Governor-General Henry Hardinge declared war on the Sikhs*.



Raja Jawahar Singh

Vasant

Even 175 years later, it stops my heart and takes my breath away. A united Sikh/Indian coalition could have driven the British out of India 100 years earlier. But in this cesspool of anarchy, greed, and utter madness, it was *impossible!* Court chronicler *Sohan Lal Suri*, then and until death, was under British pay. He loaned Capt. Edwardes the records of the Darbar chronicles before and during the war, but they never resurfaced. — *Probably burned!* However, we know from contemporary eyewitnesses in **‘Some Original Sources of Punjab History’** (*see Appendix) that both *Sham Singh Attariwala* and *Rani Jindan*, well aware of the disloyalties, had dissuaded the Khalsa from going to war. Sham Singh went home to Attari for a wedding, yet when the Sikhs were in desperate trouble, Jindan called on him for help. ...

So clearly she did not want the army to lose!! (Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh Intro XXI)

https://archive.org/details/UMDAT-UT-TAWARIKH_Volume_4/page/n32/mode/1up

On Feb. 10, 1846, *Sham Singh Attariwala*, dressed in white, gallantly martyred himself on the battlefield of Sobraon. ***‘Tell my Sardarni, her***

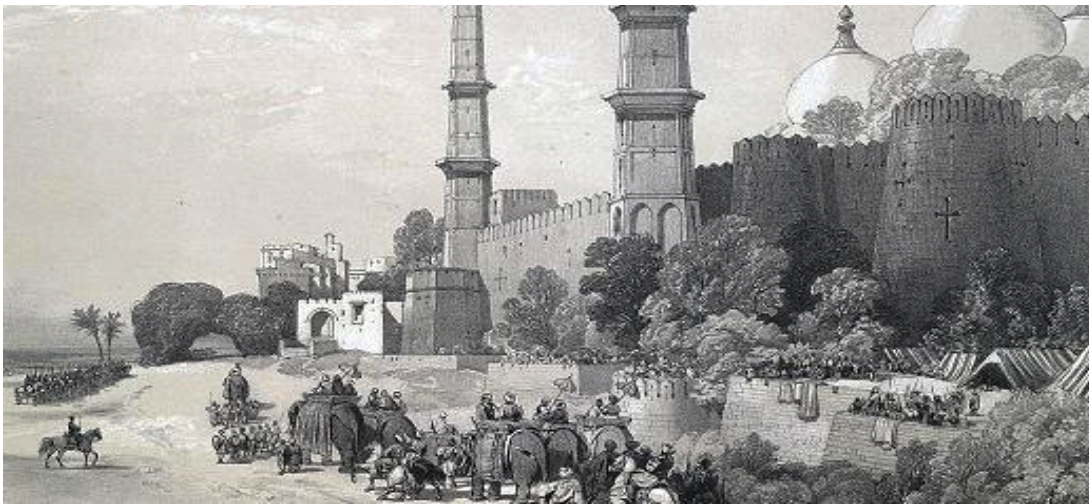
Sardar won't be coming back home. Hearing the news, and knowing that the war was lost, she prepared her sati....***Infected with hatred and greed, the great Sikh Empire of Ranjit Singh combusted from within!*** Had there been more chiefs like *Sham Singh Attariwala*, the *Sikh Nation* would have preserved their independence — which, in their madness, they threw away.



Gen. Sham Singh Attariwala 'Battle of Sobraon'

Although the *1846 Treaty of Bhairawal* authorized the British Resident to oversee the *Council of Regency* and the *Sikh Empire of Maharaja Duleep Singh*, it was only for his minority. At the age of 16, Duleep was to assume power. BUT, as we know, a *2nd Anglo-Sikh War* erupted in 1848 with the British cooling their heels in Simla, *basking in their arrogance that all was well*. The British raised exorbitant taxes and also demanded arrears from Multan. So its ruler, *Mulraj*, resigned, leaving the governorship to his son. The British rejected this option, assigning their own appointment. To install the appointed *Sardar Kahan Singh*, Lt. Vans Agnew and Anderson went with armed escorts. When Mulraj handed the officers the keys to the fort, they were attacked by irregulars and murdered by a mob the next day! All their escorts defected, and rebellion broke out throughout the Punjab, with Sikh soldiers deserting their regiments. *Gov. Gen. Dalhousie* declined to move troops as it was *'the hot season.'* *Dost Mohammed Khan* of Afghanistan rebuked the British exile of the Maharani and joined the Sikh rebels. The bloody war raged on until the final *battle of Gujrat* in March of 1849, when Chattar Singh Attariwala and his son Shere Singh surrendered.

...Lord Dalhousie proclaimed the complete *annexation of the Punjab*, depriving 10-year-old Duleep of his crown and empire.



Duleep escorted by British to the Lahore Palace

From prison, during the 2nd Anglo-Sikh, Jindan supported the rebellion with a hidden crore of rupees to pay the troops. But her letters were intercepted and the funds confiscated! Then in April 1849, she escaped from Chunar, trekking 800 miles to Nepal for refuge. While Duleep, living under tight restrictions, was escorted to the British cantonment of Fatehgarh. He was exiled 4 years later to Great Britain. Mother and son were not to meet for 13 years, when, after diligent spying and rigorous interception of letters, the government finally permitted Duleep to meet his mother in Calcutta.

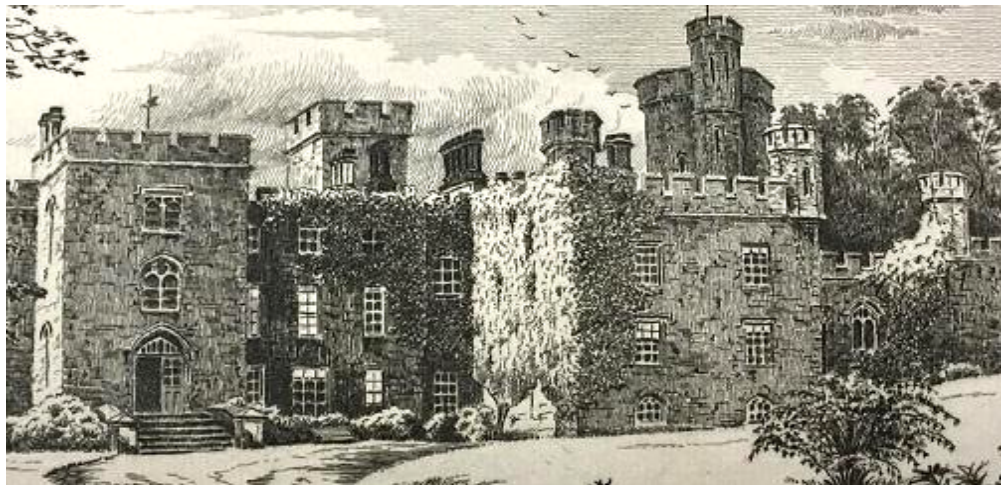
'Let us give the Chinese a good thrashing,' declared Palmerston in 1840, endorsing the *1st Opium War*. ...By 1861 *the 2nd Chinese Opium War* had ended, and Sikh troops were returning home through Calcutta. When word passed that the deposed son of Ranjit Singh was in the city, hundreds flocked to *Spence's Hotel*. The Sikhs were so demonstrative in their joy that the British officials became exceedingly alarmed. They were so afraid of renewed rebellion that *they wanted Jindan out of India*, even offering the return of her jewels as an incentive. In London, hearing that she was *half blind, from years of tears*, and convinced that she was no longer a threat, gave permission for Rani Jindan to travel to Britain. They requested Duleep forgo his tiger-shoot and return to England with the Rani ***on the very next steamer!***

Lady Login's Recollections, Court Life and Camp Life 1820-1904:

'It was with some natural curiosity, awe, and trepidation that I looked forward to my first interview with the woman who had wielded such power in India. The stories told in those days of her beauty, her talent for diplomacy, her strength of will were as universal as the Great Dowager Empress of China. Therefore, it was with a sense of compassion and disillusionment when escorted by attendants into heavily curtained semi-darkness, I found a half-blind woman, huddled on a heap of cushions on the floor. With health broken, her beauty vanished, it was hard to believe in her former charms of person and conversation. Yet the moment she grew interested in a subject, through the torpor of advanced years, revealed the shrewd and plotting brain of she who had once been known as The Messalina of the Punjab' ...(Login, Lena Campbell, Lady, 1820-1904 by Login, Edith Dalhousie)

<https://archive.org/details/ladyloginsrecoll00loginrich>

The Maharani did not want to be separated from her son, living with him at his rented Mulgrave Castle. Login did not think it wise for Duleep to spend so much time with his mother: *'Our only hope of saving him was to get him to live apart from her.'* So suitable arrangements were made with an English lady to look after the Rani at Abington House, Lancaster Gate, Kensington.



Mulgrave Castle, Yorkshire, England

In their precious time together, Jindan told Duleep about the stacks of his family estates. The enormous palaces, jewels, and heirlooms, the jagirs, (income villages) worth untold billions, and about the stupendous income from their salt mines, which alone was worth £100,000 GBP per annum.

(worth £10,500,000 per year today) Along with the *Koh-i-Noor diamond*, all of these were private family property. She told him about the '**Guru's Prophecy**', of how a dethroned prince regains his empire! ... So Duleep wrote to Login requesting the **Punjab Blue Book** and a suitable artist to paint a likeness of his mother. ... '**This would not do at all! — He was prying into some very delicate matters!**' The British considered locking Jindan up. '**What to do about the Rani?**' ... Letters flew back and forth between officials who strove to bundle her back to India, where she could do less harm. **But the India Office most emphatically did not want her back in India!**

Meanwhile, Duleep commissioned Jindan's portrait by George Richmond.



Rani Jindan

Jindan became unwell soon after moving to the Kensington residence with her cheery English lady caretaker. Duleep came down from Scotland to look in on her. He sent word to Login: '*She said she was feeling better at my arrival.*' The very next day, **Aug. 1, 1863**, at just 46 years, Jindan died in her sleep. ... **Duleep never would have let her leave Mulgrave, nor would she have left, if she was unwell... Obviously, Jindan was assassinated—murdered!** ... Then two months later, on Oct. 18, 1863, *Sir John Spencer Login*, on his return to Britain after overseeing the Indian railways, (and looking into Duleep's affairs) died suddenly; we may even say *suspiciously*, at just 54 years. ... **And now Duleep was completely and utterly alone!**