



CHAPTER SIX



The Last Maharani of Lahore Jindan Kaur



Mja.Ranjit Singh



Rani Jindan

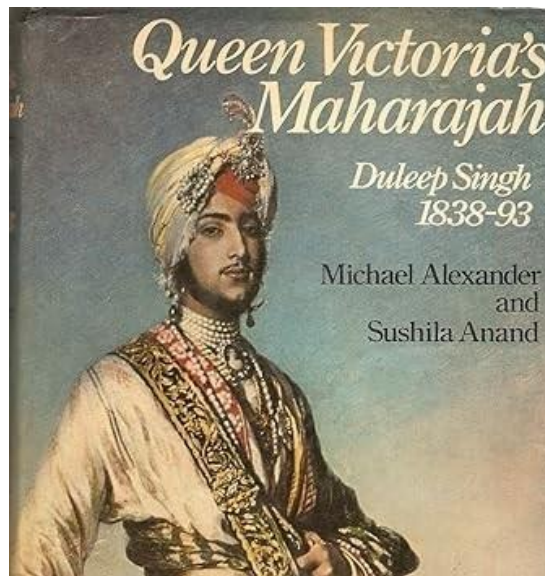


Mja.Duleep Singh

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 recut Koh-i-Noor diamond, obtained from the young deposed, exiled Sovereign in '***Queen Victoria's Maharaja***' by Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand, (*based on archives in Windsor and the Indian Office Library. ...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 doorkeeper, who was adopted by Ranjit Singh at a young age. Her ready wit and lack of sexual inhibitions, making her qualified for the more out-landish 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 a divided ambitious 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. Naturally Suchet thought that he should be Wazir, and not Hira. So 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 had a vast sum of wealth being held in British territories, and since he had *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 all 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 Hestor Stanhope, hostess to her Prime Minister uncle Wm.Pitt living in the Middle East, tells the tale of Mohammed Ali dressed as a common Egyptian, 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 justify to the 10 year old Duleep that his parentage was in question because of Jindan's behavior. (*So don't feel too bad, the Koh-i-Noor wasn't rightfully yours anyway?!*) Nevertheless, this book provided an invaluable portrait of a young ***Jindan in Amritser's Rambagh Museum***, not commonly shown.



Leslie

Jindan: Rambagh Museum

Jindan: 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, and never having heard of *Jindan Kaur*. "Who was it?" *Vasant*, my Indian assistant, insisted it was *Mumtaz Mahal*, the beloved wife of *Shah Jahan* who he built the *Taj Mahal* for. 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, which makes this revelation all the more painful. The *coup de grace*, for hanging all the blame for the Anglo-Sikh War on Rani Jindan, was revenge for the assassination of her brother, *Raja Jawahar Singh*. When actually it was the astute manipulation of the anti-hero *Gulab Singh Dogra, the Jammu Fox, the future Maharaja of Kashmir, and by the 'divide and conquer' policy of the expansionist British!* (*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, Dhian Singh and then in 1844 Hira, *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. Jawahar dispatched artillery against him. Prince Peshora capitulated and Rani Jindan pardoned him, sending him home with an increase in land. After first approaching the British, who were already negotiating with Gulab, Peshora made alliances with Dost Muhammed of Afghanistan, and with the Pathans help, he took the wealthy fort of Attock declaring himself ruler of the Punjab. So Jawahar sent *Chatter Singh Attariwala* to retake the fort and defeat Peshora. (Chattar was Duleep's future father in law, as of 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 over her brother, she and Duleep would share the same fate!***



On Sept. 21, 1845, escorted by 1,000 men, Jawahar rode his elephant, holding Duleep and distributed coins. As he reached the tents, the soldiers held the elephant, pulled Duleep from his arms, dragged him down, shot and speared him to death, all before the eyes of his agonized 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, making 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, accumulating troops and constructions across the Sutlej river, with visions of conquest of Delhi and whole subcontinent, the army insisted on going to war, with guns held to the heads of their terrorized leaders, many who hoped their power would be neutered by collision with a more powerful enemy. And so on Dec.13,1845, Gov. 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 all 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 Maharani Jindan, well aware of the chaotic 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. ...**Clearly, she did not want the army to lose!!** (Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh Intro pp 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*

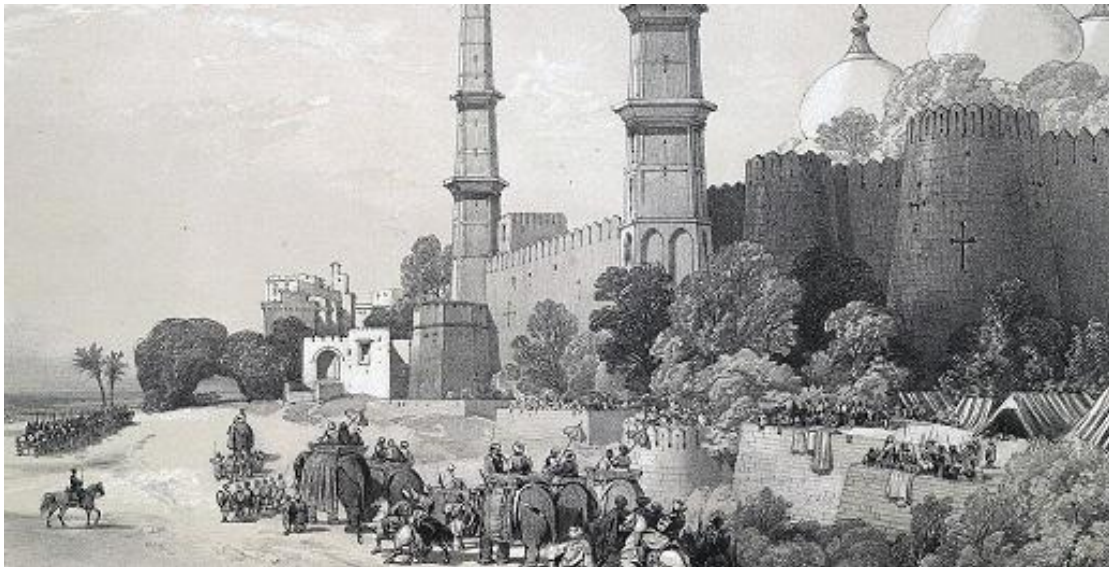
Sardar won't be coming back home"...Hearing the news, knowing the War was lost, she prepared her *sati*. Had there been more chiefs like *Sham Singh* the Great Sikh Nation would have preserved their independence — which in madness they threw away.



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 16 years 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, plus demanded arrears from Multan, so its ruler *Mulraj* resigned, leaving the governorship to his son. The British rejected this option, assigning their own appointment. Lt. Vans Agnew and Anderson were sent with an escort to install appointee Sardar Kahan Singh. When Mulraj handed over keys to the fort, they were attacked by irregular troops and murdered by a mob the next day! Their escorts defected, and rebellion broke out throughout the Punjab, with Sikh soldiers deserting their regiments. *Gov. General Dalhousie* declined to move troops as it was *'the hot season'*. *Amir 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 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. Living under tight restrictions, Duleep was escorted to the British cantonment of Fatehgarh, and 4 years later he was exiled 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.

The *2nd Chinese Opium War* had ended, and Sikh troops were returning home through Calcutta. When word passed that the deposed Sovereign son of Ranjit Singh was in the city, thousands flocked to *Spence's Hotel*. They were so demonstrative in their joy, that the British officials became exceedingly alarmed. Afraid of renewed rebellion, they wanted Jindan out of India, offering the return of her jewels as incentive. London, hearing that she was half blind, *from years of tears*, and convinced 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 his mother... ***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/ladyloginsrecoll00logirich>

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, in Lancaster Gate Kensington.



Mulgrave Castle, Yorkshire England

In their precious time together, Jindan told her son of his stacks of family estates, the enormous palaces, jewels and heirlooms, jagirs/villages, worth untold billions, and about the stupendous income from their salt mines, that

alone was worth £100,000 gbp per annum, (£10,500,000 per year today) along with the legendary *Koh-i-Noor* diamond. All of these were private family property. And 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 due 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 her 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 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, Oct.18,1863, Sir John Spencer Login, on his return to Britain after overseeing the Indian Railways, died suddenly, we may even say *suspiciously*, at just 54 years... **And now Duleep was completely, and utterly alone!**