

## UNIT 42 – UPSC - The Second Anglo-Sikh War

**India's History : Modern India : Second Anglo-Sikh war : (Rise of Sikh Power)  
British annex Punjab as Sikhs are defeated : 1848-1849**

### The Second Anglo-Sikh War



ANGLO-SIKH WAR II, 1848-49, which resulted in the abrogation of the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab, was virtually a campaign by the victors of the first Anglo-Sikh war (1845-46) and since then the de facto rulers of the State finally to overcome the resistance of some of the sardars who chafed at the defeat in the earlier war which, they believed, had been lost owing to the treachery on the part of the commanders at the top and not to any lack of fighting strength of the Sikh army. It marked also the fulfillment of the imperialist ambition of the new governor-general, Lord Dalhousie (1848-56), to carry forward the British flag up to the natural boundary of India on the northwest. According to the peace settlement of March 1846, at the end of Anglo-Sikh war I, the British force in Lahore was to be withdrawn at the end of the year, but a severer treaty was imposed on the Sikhs before the expiry of that date.

Sir Henry Hardinge, the then governor-general, had his Agent, Frederick Currie, persuade the Lahore Darbar to request the British for the continuance of the troops in Lahore. According to the treaty, which was consequently signed at Bharoval on 16 December 1846, Henry Lawrence was appointed Resident with "full authority to direct and control all matters in every department of the State." The Council of Regency, consisting of the nominees of the Resident and headed by Tej Singh, was appointed. The power to make changes in its personnel vested in the resident. Under another clause the British could maintain as many troops in the Punjab as they thought necessary for the preservation of peace and order. This treaty was to remain in operation until the minor Maharaja Duleep Singh attained the age of 16. By a proclamation issued in July 1847, the governor-general further enhanced the powers of the Resident. On 23 October 1847, Sir Henry Hardinge wrote to Henry Lawrence: "In all our measures taken during the minority we must bear in mind that by the treaty of Lahore, March 1846, the Punjab never was intended to be

an independent State. By the clause I added the chief of the State could neither make war or peace, or exchange or sell an acre of territory or admit a European officer, or refuse us a thoroughfare through his territories, or, in fact, perform any act without our permission. In fact the native Prince is in fetters, and under our protection and must do our bidding."

In the words of British historian John Clark Marshman, "an officer of the Company's artillery became, in fact, the successor to Ranjit Singh." The Sikhs resented this gradual liquidation of their authority in the Punjab. The new government at Lahore became totally unpopular. The abolition of tigers in the Jalandhar Doab and changes introduced in the system of land revenue and its collection angered the landed classes. Maharani Jind Kaur, who was described by Lord Dalhousie as the only woman in the Punjab with manly understanding and in whom the British Resident foresaw a rallying point for the well-wishers of the Sikh dynasty, was kept under close surveillance. Henry Lawrence laid down that she could not receive in audience more than five or six sardars in a month and that she remains in purdah like the ladies of the royal families of Nepal, Jodhpur and Jaipur.

In January 1848, Henry Lawrence took leave of absence and traveled back home with Lord Hardinge, who had completed his term in India. The former was replaced by Frederick Currie and the latter by the Earl of Dalhousie. The new regime confronted a rebellion in the Sikh province of Multan, which it utilized as an excuse for the annexation of the Punjab. The British Resident at Lahore increased the levy payable by the Multan governor, Diwan Mul Raj, who, finding himself unable to comply, resigned his office. Frederick Currie appointed General Kahn Singh Man in his place and sent him to Multan along with two British officers P.A. Vans Agnew and William Anderson, to take charge from Mul Raj. The party arrived at Multan on 18 April 1848, and the Diwan vacated the Fort and made over the keys to the representatives of the Lahore Darbar. But his soldiers rebelled and the British officers were set upon in their camp and killed. This was the beginning of the Multan outbreak.

Some soldiers of the Lahore escort deserted their officers and joined Mul Raj's army. Currie received the news at Lahore on 21 April, but delayed action. Lord Dalhousie allowed the Multan rebellion to spread for five months. The interval was utilized by the British further to provoke Sikh opinion. The Resident did his best to fan the flames of rebellion. Maharani Jind Kaur, then under detention in the Fort of Sheikupura, was exiled from the Punjab. She was taken to Ferozpur and thence to Banaras, in the British dominions. Her annual allowance, which according to the treaty of Bharoval had been fixed at one and a half lakh of rupees, was reduced to twelve thousand. Her jewellery worth fifty thousand of rupees was forfeited; so was her cash amounting to a lakh and a half. The humiliating treatment of the Maharani caused deep resentment among the people of the Punjab. Even the Muslim ruler of Afghanistan, Amir Dost Muhammad, protested to the British, saying that such treatment is objectionable to all creeds."