

Part 2: Background History:

Amrit Udyan Vs. Mughal Gardens

The British called the gardens- 'Mughal Gardens', because the British regime visualized itself as the successor of the Mughals. This vision was a part of the distortion of India's history, with the **ulterior objective** of establishing the falsehood that India was always ruled by outsiders. The facts are that **the British took over a large part of India from the Marathas and the Sikhs.**

FACTS: Part 1: 27-year Maratha-Mughal wars from 1680-1707 had enfeebled Mughals. In the next few decades Marathas became a major power in North West India in the area to the south of Delhi.

PUNJAB: At Aurangzeb's orders, in North-west India, forcible conversions were going on. When Guru Tegh Bahdur opposed it, he was brutally beheaded along with his three followers - Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Dayala, and Bhai Sati Das at the site in Chandani Chowk, where Gurudwara Sis Ganj stands today. During November 1675, Guru Tegh Bahadur and the three followers were first tortured and then beheaded for their refusal to renounce Hinduism and embrace under duress Islam. Guru Gobind Rai (born on 22nd December 1666 at Patna) was 9 years old. Aurangzeb issued an order to exterminate Guru Gobind Singh and his family.

On Vaisakhi day on 29th March 1676, he was anointed as the tenth Guru. Due to Aurangzeb's order to kill Guru Gobind Singhji, Mata Gujri, the mother of Guru Gobind Singhji took care to keep him safe while continuing his education both of the scriptures as well as of a warrior.

On Vaisakhi day in 1699, the tenth Guru established Sikhism and became known as Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Gobind Singhji had to fight many battles. At the second battle of Anandpur in May 1704, Mata Gujari and Guruji's two younger sons Zorawar Singh, aged 8, and Fateh Singh, aged 5 years, were captured by the Mughals. Both the children were executed by burying them into a wall. Mata Gujari also died.

At the battle of Chamkaur in 1704, the two elder sons of Guruji – Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh were killed. When at the battle of Muktsar, forty famous soldiers called Chalis Mukte were killed, Guruji decided to take a break.

After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, there was a battle of succession. Guruji supported Bahadur Shah in the battle of Jajau on 20 June 1707 and killed his rival Muhammad Azam Shah. Bahadur Shah was going to the south to fight the Marathas. He invited Guruji to meet him. Guruji went to Nanded and set up a camp, while waiting for the meeting, where he hoped to get back Anandpur Saheb and other territories. But two assassins stole into the Guruji's camp and stabbed him. Guruji died from the wound in his heart on 7th October 1708.

FACTS: Part 2: The Rise of Maratha Power: Peshwa Bajirao took over Gujarat and Malwa and in 1737, Marathas defeated the Mughal emperor in a battle at the outskirts of Delhi and brought the area in the south of Delhi under Maratha control.

The Mughal Emperor bought his safety by seeking and getting guarantee of security against Rajput kings from the Marathas. The powerful Nabobs of Awadh and Bengal paid their respect to the emperor in Delhi only in name. In 1757, the Nabob of Bengal, who had antagonized the Hindus by his pursuit of radical Islam, was defeated by the British at the battle of Plassey. Then the British sought and obtained the approval of the 'emperor' for taking over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

The Maratha empire had become extensive. Baji Rao's son, Balaji Baji Rao (popularly known as Nana Saheb), further increased the territory under Maratha control by invading Punjab in 1758. This brought the Marathas into direct confrontation with the Durrani empire of Ahmad Shah Abdali.

In 1759 Ahmad Shah Abdali raised an army from the Pashtun tribes and made several gains against the smaller Maratha garrisons in Punjab. He then joined with his Indian allies—the Rohilla Afghans of the Gangetic Doab—forming a broad coalition against the Marathas.

The Nawab of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daulah had aligned himself with Marathas against the Rajputs. But in late July, Shuja-ud-Daulah also made the decision to switch his support to the Afghan-Rohilla coalition, preferring to join the 'army of Islam'. Without Shuja's funds, the Muslim coalition could not have fought the battle.

The Marathas, under the command of Sadashivrao Bhau reached Delhi in August 1760. Between August 1760 and January 1761, the two armies tried to consolidate their positions. The Maratha camp had about 250,000 non-combatant pilgrims to

north Indian holy sites. When the Muslim coalition succeeded in cutting off the supplies to the Maratha camp, cattle died by thousands by January and the Marathas had severe shortage of food. At the 3rd battle of Panipat on 14th January 1761, Sadashivrao Bhau, a brave warrior, was killed in the battle. According to historian Shejwalkar's monograph 'Panipat 1761', 100,000 soldiers and non-combatants were slaughtered in the next two days.

EAST INDIA COMPANY TAKES OVER A LARGE PART OF INDIA: The battle of Panipat was a big setback for the Marathas. In the next 10 years, Peshwa Madhavrao tried to reorganize the Marathas. But the ten years gave the British crucial time for strengthening themselves around both of their strongholds in Calcutta and Madras.

PUNJAB, SINDH AND AFGHANISTAN AREAS: The Afghan King was too weak to be able to establish a long-term presence in Punjab.

In Punjab, Nabobs in different areas were independent, though nominally under the Mughal emperor in Delhi. They and the emperor in Delhi had been using force to convert Hindus to Islam.

Sikhs organized themselves in 16 Groups, called Misals, and provided local resistance. Maharaja Ranjit Singh succeeded in merging the 16 Misals and create a powerful army. In 1799, he captured Lahore city from Bhangi Mais and made it the capital of his empire. It was on Baisakhi day, 12 April, 1801, that Ranjit Singh assumed the title of Maharaja after having united many fringe Sikh groups into one powerful state. He focused on its expansion. Soon his empire extended from the Khyber Pass in the west, to Kashmir in the north, to Sindh in the south and Tibet in the east.

The Afghans were defeated in a succession of battles in 1813, 1823, 1834 and 1837 and were pushed to Kabul. They became weak and were in no position to face Maharaja Ranjit Singh's armies. The Sikh empire had four parts: Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir. Muslims formed around 70%, Hindus formed around 24%, and Sikhs formed around 6–7% of the total population living in the Maharaja's kingdom.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh neither smoked nor ate beef, and required all officials in his court, regardless of their religion, to adhere to these restrictions as part of their employment contract. cow slaughter was punishable by death under his rule.

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH's LEGACY: Ranjit Singh ensured that Panjab manufactured and was self-sufficient in all weapons, equipment and munitions his army needed. His government invested in infrastructure in the 1800s and thereafter, established raw materials mines, cannon foundries, gunpowder and arm factories.

He rebuilt the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar as well as other major gurdwaras, including Takht Sri Patna Sahib, Bihar and Hazur Sahib Nanded, Maharashtra.



Harmandir Sahib (The Golden Temple)

Ahilyabai Holkar had re-built Kashi Vishwanath temple in 1780 in a small area adjacent to the ancient temple. (The ancient temple had been converted to a mosque by Aurangzeb in 1696.) In 1835, Maharaja Ranjit Singh donated 1 tonne of gold for covering two domes of the temple, built by Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar.



Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi

Maharaja Ranjit Singh died in his sleep on 27 June 1839.

He was succeeded by his son Kharak Singh, who was known to be not in good health. He was dethroned after a few months. He died on 5th November 1840.

His successor Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh also could not last long.

In 1841, Sher Singh was installed but by that time Khalsa, the Sikh army, had ballooned and had also multiplied its influence. Sher Singh could not go well with Khalsa. He was murdered by an army officer.

Jind Kaur, the youngest widow of Ranjit Singh, became regent of her son, Duleep Singh. Her brother, Jawaher Singh, became Vazir but he was also murdered in September during an army parade. Jind Kaur vowed publicly to take revenge of her brother's death.

These unstable conditions encouraged the British to take advantage. They enhanced their military presence on the other bank of Sutlej and also annexed Sind in 1843. As the tension grew, their diplomatic relations were also broken. The company started moving towards Ferozepur that was followed by Sikhs crossing the Sutlej in December 1845. An encounter took place at Ferozepur where the Sikh army was routed completely though they demonstrated great courage and bravery. Tej Singh was a Sikh commander who was responsible for betraying the Sikh Empire, leading to its defeat at the hands of the British during the first Anglo-Sikh War. The treaty of Lahore was signed in March 1846. The Sikhs had to surrender huge territories and an indemnity of 15 million rupees. Failing to pay this heavy amount was to be compensated by ceding of Kashmir, Hazara, and some other places between Indus and Beas to the company. Daleep Singh was to continue as the ruler of the Punjab and her mother as the regent. However, at request of the council the company officials signed another treaty known as the Treaty of Bhyroval. This treaty provided the maharani a pension of 150,000 but she was to be replaced by a British resident in Lahore, aided by a Regency council. This gave them an effective control over the government.

Henry Lawerence became the resident but he fell ill and left for London. He was replaced by Sir Frederick Corrie. He adopted a stiff policy because of which the relations turned quite strained. As a result, the second Anglo-Sikh war broke out.

Sher Singh revolted at Multan on September 14, 1848. The Sikhs repelled a British attack in the battle of Ramnagar. The war continued for sometime but the final battle took place at Gujrat where the Sikhs were utterly defeated and their power was razed to ground. On March 30, Daleep Singh held his court for the last time at Lahore at which he signed away all claim to the rule of the Punjab. In this way annexation of the Punjab was accomplished.

The Sikh empire was finally dissolved at the end of the Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849 into separate princely states and the British province of Punjab.

As the Mughal Gardens become the Amrit Udyan, a part of the grand Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, the roses in the Rashtrapati Bhavan will bloom just as brightly and smell just as sweet.



Jan 29, 2023: President Smt. Droupadi Murmu at the Opening of the Amrit Udyan

TWO TWEETS

All should read

1. Rahul Shivshankar tweeted at @RShivshankar: Mughals & Brits weren't the only garden designers. Historians from 7th century (Xuanzang) talk of lotus temple gardens. There were Udyans where kings enjoyed performances. Paramadodvanas for royal courtship. Vrikshavatikas for the gentry. Nandanavanas for the faithful.
2. Hypocrsy&Democrsy tweeted at @hpocrsydemocrsy: We had researched thousands of plants in Ayurveda, categorized several flowers for specific deities & rituals, we predict eclipses, weather, planetary movements without western instruments. Gardens are just elementary. Moreover, Mughal Gardens occurred after Invasion & Genocides.
