

## Celebrations of Festivals at the Sikh Court

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The present paper is about the celebration of festivals at Maharaja Ranjit Singh's court. In the Kingdom of Lahore festivals like Lohri, Holi, Baisakhi, Dussehra, Basant, Diwali, and New Year Day and besides this the Muslim festival like Id was also a part of celebration and enthusiasm. These celebrations had a set of pattern. Ranjit Singh visited these religious places on every occasions. On such occasion the Maharaja accepted customary *nazars* and gave rewards to functionaries and celebrities. Sarwarna and the presentations of *nazar* were the chief mode of expressing goodwill and allegiance at the Sikh court by princes, nobles and foreign dignitaries on all these occasions. Ranjit Singh ordered all kind of arrangements for such occasions.

Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* contains information on social matters like participation in festivals, the different ways in which he received *vakils* from various potentates, politicians or administration.<sup>2</sup> The *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* also gives us significant information on the social and cultural life in the early nineteenth century. Several important social customs also continued in the early nineteenth century. The present paper intends to look at celebration of different festivals at the Ranjit Singh's court, on the basis of information given in the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*. The present paper is taken up in two sections, the first describing the celebration of festivals at the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The second section attempts a detail note on it.

### I

In the Kingdom of Lahore, Baisakhi, Dussehra, Basant, Diwali, Lohri, Holi and New Year's Day and the Muslim festival of Id were a time of celebration and enthusiasm at the court. On such occasion the Maharaja accepted customary *nazars* and gave rewards to functionaries and celebrities. Sarwarna and the presentations of *nazar* were the chief modes of expressing goodwill and allegiance at the Sikh court by princes, nobles, and foreign dignitaries on all these occasions. Ranjit Singh ordered all kind of arrangements for such occasions.

The Court assembled usually for the celebration of Dussehra at Amritsar. The *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* records nine instances of such celebrations during Ranjit Singh's life time in years

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<sup>2</sup> J.S. Grewal "The Process of Consolidation", in *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: The State and Society*, (eds.) Indu Banga and J.S. Grewal, Guru Nanak Dev University, 2001, 58.

1811, 1814, 1818, 1820, 1824, 1825, 1832, 1833 and 1838.<sup>3</sup> The occasion was utilized for taking master of the *jagirdari* troops and inspection of troops on parade. The Maharaja on this blessed day worshipped the horse, the sword, and the elephant at the Baradari of Rambagh and thence the royal standards departed for the Kotha of Dussehra. All the chief then presented *nazars*, and the parade of horseman, footmen and the platoons took place. On the day of Dussehra on Sept. 26, 1811A.D. residents of Amritsar set up the effigies of Rawan, Kumbh Karan and others (heroes of Ramayan) according to the old established custom and in compliance with the emphatic orders of the Maharaja. With a view to see the public gathering the Maharaja came to the scene with his triumphant troops 'Zamburks' (swivels) and cavalry, and ordered them to fight a mock battle for the conquest of *Lanka*. In the hustle and bustle of public, hands fell upon swords and guns, and many people were killed, others were wounded. After seeing the conquest of *Lanka* the Maharaja retired to the fort and Dewan Hukum Singh was called from

<sup>3</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar II, translated by Vidya Sagar Suri, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2000, 172, 269, 329, 384-85, 455-56 and *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, translated by Vidya Sagar Suri, S. Chand & Co., Delhi, 1961, 151, 181, 207-08, 530-31.

Lahore to Amritsar for the purpose of treatment and healing the wounds of the causalities.<sup>4</sup>

On the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1838 A.D., on the Dussehra day, the *sarkar* visited *Darbar Sahib* and offered Rs. 500 as *ardas* at Harmandir Sahib Ji, Rs. 500 at Akal Bunga and Jhanda Bunga, made humble prostration at the places and returned from there. At the third quarter of the day, after the worship of the sword and horse, the *sarkar* entered the Dussehrawala Kotha. At first Kanwars Kharak Singh and Nau Nihal Singh offered Rs. Rs. 1,100 and five horses each. Sardar Fateh Singh, Mangal Singh and Chet Singh offered 21 ducats each. The Raja Kalan, Raja Gulab Singh and Raja Hira Singh offered two horses and 250 ducats each. Jamadar Khushal Singh, Sardar Attar Singh and Sardar Ajit Singh offered two horses and 500 sovereigns and Rs. 500 in cash each. Then an order was issued to the chief commandants and the *topkhana* to give a salute of the Dussehra. Rs. 500 was granted as reward to the apprentices.<sup>5</sup>

Dussehra celebrated continued after Maharaja Ranjit Singh death. In addition to these examples Dussehra was celebrated in a

<sup>4</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, II, 109.

<sup>5</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, III (iv), 530-531.

similar way in the years 1843, 1846, and 1847.<sup>6</sup> On the Dussehra Day, 17th October, 1839 A.D., at about the third quarter of the day the Maharaja (Kharak Singh) went to the Kotha Dussehrawala and inspected the silver bungalow with the tent without poles and huge canopy, which had been fixed up there under his orders, and the effigies of Rawan and Khumb Karan and enjoyed a discharge of the *topkhana* with great éclat. Raja Hira Singh, the Raja *Kalan*, (Dhyan Singh) *jamadar* Khushal Singh, Sardar Attar Singh, Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia, Nazim of Kashmir. Nazim of Multan, Sardar Ahulwalia (Nihal Singh) and the Raja of Nabha presented *Nazars* and the Raja of Nabha presented *Nazars* and merriment and joy took place.<sup>7</sup>

On the blessed Dussehra Day, on the 13th October 1842 A.D., the *shahzada* (Sher Singh) went to the open land of Mianmir, where the staff incharge of floorings spread out velvet, satin and other kinds of carpets and floorings with great enthusiasm and intelligence. Superintendents of the stables

brought their swift-footed horses decorated with saddles, with jewels and necklaces made of gold and silver and invalid with jewellery. The elephant drives showed forth the elephants drives sowed forth the elephants very well decorated and adorned with gold and other kinds of seats upon them and with their forehead painted with various kinds of colours. Dancing girls with faces like fairies, which were embodiments of blandishments and coquetry and were possessed of charm, presented themselves in very suitable clothes and with very appropriate garments. After that the glorious chieftains, and the associates, the well-meaning counsellors, great *munshies*, *daftries* and other *kardars* of the protected countries, the *vakils*, the attendants, the commandants of the platoons, the officers of the troops of horsemen and *charyari* secured everlasting felicity and pride of both the world by presenting *nazars*. After the glory of the market of music and singing took place and a great deal of pleasure and joy and was derived by the audience and the listeners on account of it.<sup>8</sup>

The Diwali was a day of festivities, illuminations, alms giving to the poor and the Brahamans, and bestowal of the

<sup>6</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar IV, translated by Vidya Sagar Suri, Punjab Itihas Prakashan, Chandigarh, 1972, 263 and *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar V, translated by Vidya Sagar Suri, Publisher Dr R.S. Bawa, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2002, 20, 134.

<sup>7</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, IV (i), 71.

<sup>8</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, IV (ii), 174.

Khilla's and monetary grants to the nobles and persons of the royal family. On this day illuminations took place at night "with great glory and the surface of the earth began to reflect the sky". Drinking parties took place, and dancing girls entertained the Maharaja with songs and dance. There are several references of the celebration of Diwali in the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* in the years of 1809, 1825, 1831, 1837, 1837 and 1838.<sup>9</sup> On the *Dewali* day the Maharaja had the honour of going into *Harmandar Sahib*, and saw the illuminations. The Maharaja invited the respected Raja, and in union with each other, they rode out to enjoy the festivity, the illuminations and the enthusiastic crowds of the ordinary people. At sunset illumination took place with great glory and pomp. The glorious Prince Khalsa Sher Singh showed the parade of his troops in perfect grandeur to the Maharaja. He received excessive kind attention.<sup>10</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1831, A.D., which was *amavas*, the *Dewali* day, the Maharaja listened to recitation from the *Grants Sahib*, made his *ardas*, and performed *sankalap* and gave away one elephant, two horses, ten cows, some buffaloes, some sheep, some

*Sehja* and some suits of clothes. At night illuminations took place there with great glory and decorations had fireworks were displayed.<sup>11</sup>

After the death of Ranjit Singh Diwali celebrated with great joy by his successors in the years of 1841 and 1843. In the year of 1841 A.D., The Shahzada (Sher Singh) came to Lahore after pastime and hunt and, on the *Diwali* Day, celebration took place with great joy and merriment, happiness and pleasure. All the special attendants put on fine garments and presented themselves before him. All the employees were ordered to present a large number of lamps with linseed oil and the wicks in the fort, while the staff incharge of floorings were ordered to spread out fine floorings in the octagonal tower. An order was issued to Misr Beli Ram to bring into the fort all the materials needed for celebrations and the jovial gathering such as, festoons, gold and silver candle stands and chairs and so on. After that orders were issued to dancing girls that they must present themselves before the Shahzada (Sher Singh) dressed in the garments of various colours and decorated with various kinds of jewellery along with the various

<sup>9</sup>. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar II, 82, 397-398 and *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, 103, 313, 384, 338.

<sup>10</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, II, 432-33.

<sup>11</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, III (i), 103

things required for music and singing, and secure everlasting, felicity by offering salute to the Shahzada (Sher Singh). Consequently all the dancing girls of Lahore presented themselves there, and with their music and songs filled the hearts of the grieved and sorrowful with happiness and joy. Thereupon excessive rewards and great compensations were granted to every one of them.<sup>12</sup> In 1843 also, a similar Diwali celebration took place.<sup>13</sup>

On the day of the festival of Basant great festivities took place, when the officers of platoons, commandants and *jamadars* were ordered to prepare yellow uniform for the troops for parade. A public assembly was arranged for the celebration-all the court officials and Sardars offered *nazars* Khill'ats or robes of honour were granted to everyone according to his rank and status. There are four references of Basant celebration in the years 1825, 1834, 1835 and 1837.<sup>14</sup> On the celebration of the *Basant* in the year of 1825 A.D., the celebration of the Basant day took place with perfect glory at the tomb of Madho Lal Hussain in the metropolis of Lahore. On the blessed day of

Basant the Maharaja conferred splendid robes of honour made of yellow Pashmina upon all the glorious chieftains, near attendants, *munshis*, *daftris*, and *vakils* Every one of them was given an emphatic order to present himself at that mausoleum at about the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the day, dressed in yellow garments, like brocade, satin and gold woven cloth. After that an emphatic order was issued to the Commandants of the "Compo-i-Maulla" (Royal Camp) to dress all the footmen in yellow garments to stand all along the way from Delhi gate to the mausoleum behind the footmen, horsemen of the triumphant troops should be stationed for the show, and they must be observed standing in rows just opposite to the troops of the glorious chieftains. Consequently all the soldiers, troops and footmen stood drawn in lines according to the orders of the Maharaja. At about the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the day the Maharaja came out of the fort with great pomp and show, passed through the Delhi gate and then went to the said mausoleum, surveying on the way the triumphant troops. There he took his seat upon a gold chair under a well-set canopy, with very valuable canopies around it. Besides there were variegated carpets and different kinds of floorings spread underneath. Nawab Sarfraz Khan (Nazim of Multan) came to visit the

<sup>12</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, IV (ii), 165.

<sup>13</sup>. *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>14</sup>. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar II, 438 and *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, III, 187, 218, 324-325.

Maharaja along with his brother, Zulfiqar Khan. For 2 or 3 hours talks about Afghanistan, Sindh, and other sides was carried on. After that discussion dancing girls came forward to erase the rust of grief and sadness from the mirror like pages of hearts with their happy songs and pleasant tunes. Handsome rewards were given to every one of them. After that the Maharaja went into the fort.<sup>15</sup>

Even after Maharaja Ranjit Singh death, Basant was celebrated at the Court in a similar way. There are other similar references of Basant celebrations in the years 1841, 1843 and 1844.<sup>16</sup> On the 20th January 1841 A.D., the day of Basant Panchmi the Shahzada (Sher Singh) took a sacred bath early in the morning according to instruction of the Brahmans and after finishing with his worship and distribution of alms and charities, took his blessed seta upon the throne. At first Raja Dhyana Singh, Raja Gulab Singh, Raja Suchet Singh, Sandhanwalias, Sardar Attar Singh Kalianwala, Jamadar Khushal Singh, Sardar Tej Singh, Sardar Lehna Singh Majitha, Attariwala Chieftains, Fakir Aziz-ud-in, Khalifa Nuruddin, the rest of the staff, the

pillars of the great Kingdom, and the Counsellors of the great Court presented one by one in their names swift footed horses with gold necklaces and harnesses, gold ductas, and several other wonderful and good things to the Shahzada (Sher Singh). After that the *daftries*, the *munshies*, the *vakils*, the Commandants of the platoons of the *garhnali* and the *jinsi*, the *ghubarchies*, gunners, adjutants, *jamadars*, and other office-bearers secured overlasting facility by presenting *nazars*. From the beginning of the sun rise up to the time when one-quarter of the day was left such a great crowd and such a huge gathering of the near attendants of the state continued in the fort and in its gates that all the passages were closed for the weak and the thin. As soon as the Shahzada (Sher Singh) finished with talking *nazars* he attended to the Court listening of music and dance of the dancing girls. After that the court was dispersed and all the servants and the staff of the state were granted rewards befitting the Position and rank of every one.<sup>17</sup>

At the commencement of the spring, the festival of Holi arrived with great rejoicings and marry-making. The court

<sup>15</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, II, 487-488.

<sup>16</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, IV, 212 and *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, V, 257.

<sup>17</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, IV (ii), translated by Vidya Sagar Suri, Punjab Itihas Prakashan, Chandigarh, 1972, 144-45.

celebrated it with great enthusiasm and special preparations were made for its requisites. Syringes of gold and silver were made, and lack-eye was ordered in large quantities. Merry-making and enjoyment of the festival was accompanied by the giving away of Khill'ats or robes of honour with large sums of money to the soldiers of the platoons. The *kardars* of Lahore and Amritsar were ordered to make adequate preparations for the celebrations of the festival, and visiting dignitaries were invited to join in the celebration. Holi was an important festival in the Lahore court there are seven references in the years of 1817, 1819, 1822, 1825, 1831 and 1832. This festival was even celebrated in 1839 when Maharaja Ranjit Singh died.<sup>18</sup> In the year of 1825 A.D., a gathering was arranged for the purpose of Holi merry-making. The Maharaja took his seat near the mosque in the Hazuri Bagh garden. All the chieftains and Ahlakars including Raja Sangat Singh, Raja Jit Singh and *vakils* of various sides took part in the Holi celebrations. On the following day, the 14th of the said month, much of lac dye was distributed among the soldiers of the platoons, commandants and the like of the troops. The troops were

granted two rupees per hand and the Maharaja came out to enjoy the sight of playing with the lac dye. A discharge of cannons in honour of the Holi took place.<sup>19</sup>

In the year of 1832 A.D., Misr Beli Ram was given a royal order to give Raja Hira Singh Rs. 500 every day in order to meet expense in connection with the Holi celebrations and the staff in charge of floorings was ordered to set up a happy tent in the garden of shah Balawal with great decoration and adornment. Dancing girls dressed in very appropriate clothes presented themselves before him and a happy. Darbar was held for some hours they remained busy in attending to music and dance of the dancing girls. Rs.1, 000 were given by way of reward to the dancing girls. From the 15-17<sup>th</sup> March 1832 A.D., the dancing girls remained busy in making merry during the Holi days and in enjoying the sight of fighting between the rows of the singers of the Camboo-i-Moalla in the play of lac dye and in listening to the notes and tunes of music. On the March 1832 A.D., The Maharaja arranged a *Darbar-i-Aam* in which he called all the *vakils*, great Nawabs and respectable chieftains and showed them great favors in the course of the celebration

<sup>18</sup>. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar II, 221, 289, 356 and *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III (i), 11.

<sup>19</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, II, 441.

of the happy and blessed Holi day and granted to them rewards and robes of honour.<sup>20</sup>

Holi was also celebration in 1841 and 1847.<sup>21</sup> In the year of 1841 A.D. as the day of *Holi* festival had drawn near, an order was issued to the *kardars* of Amritsar and of other various sides that they must prepare a few maunds of lac-dye of various colours of the very fine and first rate quality and send it over to the Shahzada (Sher Singh). They were further ordered to send over to him sprinklers of gold and silver after getting them prepared by themselves. Thereupon the aforesaid *kardars* got ready the aforesaid things with great care and effort and enthusiasm through very expert workmen and artisans and sent the same over to the Shahzada (Sher Singh). On the day of Holi the Shahzada (Sher Singh) engaged in merry making, a roof was set up on account of the dust which was raised on that occasion and it so appeared on account of the raining of the lac-dye that the horses began to look red like the earth itself. After finishing with the play of the lac-dye of Holi special dancing girls presented themselves and began to produce music and song with the result that

with their very interesting play of tunes the bodies of the audience became stupefied and wonder-struck as if they were fingers painted on a wall. A thousand kinds of pleasures were derived by the audience. After that rewards were granted to the dancing girls and they were allowed to depart, and the court was also allowed to disperse.<sup>22</sup>

Among other festival the day of Baisakhi was deemed blessed and celebrated enthusiastically at the court. For the *sankalpa* of the Maharaja money, silver utensils were kept ready. The day was a public holiday in the whole country, and charities were given to the poor and the Brahmas, charity also consisted of cows, horses, elephants, gold bangles and foodstuffs. There are three references in the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, which relate to the celebration of Baisakhi. Baisakhi was On the Baisakhi day, 1821 A.D., many horses and fine clothes were given to the Brahmans at the temple in Amritsar, and gratifying words were heard from every Brahman. Rs.1500 was donated at Harmandar Sahib. Rs.500 at Akal Bunga and the same sum was put before Granth Sahib. All through the day and night the Maharaja remained

<sup>20</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, III (ii), 134.

<sup>21</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, V, 60.

<sup>22</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, IV (ii), 167.



seated in his own *Bunga* and saw the crowd of people.<sup>23</sup> on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the *Baisakh* (March 25, 1831, A.D., a worth obedience order was issued to Jassa Misr of *toshakhana* by the Maharaja to get ready things worth Rs.25, 000, consisting of suits of clothes, silver bed-steads with canopies, gold and silver utensils, etc. for his *sankalap* on the blessed day of Baisakhi.<sup>24</sup> In addition to these examples Baisakhi was celebrated in a similar way in the year of 1838 A.D.<sup>25</sup> This festival was even celebrated in 1839 when Maharaja Ranjit Singh died.<sup>26</sup>

Besides all these festival New year was celebrated every year in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh i.e. on the March 21, 1818 A.D., on the new years, day, at about the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the day the Maharaja came out of the garden with great pomp and show, and entered the happy town and witnessed sprinkling of rose water and the throwing of coloured water among his subjects and the courtiers. After 4 hours the Maharaja again went back to the garden. On the March 22, 1818 A.D. *vakils* of Bahawalpur was Mankera and also these of Raja Lal Singh of

Jasrota and Raja Bhadoo and ministers of other Rajas and *munsi* Gobind Sahai, *vakil* of Raja of Basoli, and all the Daftries, *ahlkars* and *munshis* came to present themselves before the Maharaja. The Maharaja took his seat in a very happy mood in a gold chair and colors and the like were put near every one of them, and the Maharaja indulged in merry making and enjoyment and the market of comfort and pleasure become brisk. All the humble servants in the resplendent assembly offered *nazars* on the occasion of ‘Nov Roz’ (Celebration of New Year’s Day) and after securing everlasting felicity, took leave.<sup>27</sup>

In the year of 1825 A.D., on the blessed New Year’s Day, i.e., the Maharaja came out of the fort into the garden and afterwards went to impart glory by his stay to Kot Lakhpat Rai in the south of Lahore. Each one of the glorious chieftains, putting on fine and rich dresses, presented one horse with gold and silver harness, as usual, to the Maharaja. All the *vakils* from the various sides had the honor of paying respects through the author of this history and the commandants, Jamadars, Havildars, Naiks, and Officers of Platoons, *topkhana* and regiments and all the near attendants presented gifts to the Noble *sarkar*.

<sup>23</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, II, 340.

<sup>24</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, III (i), 19.

<sup>25</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, III (iv), 417.

<sup>26</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, II, 221, 289, 356 and *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, III, 11.

<sup>27</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, II, 242.

Needless to say these was a large crowd there.<sup>28</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1835 A.D., on the blessed New Year's Day all the chieftains secured the felicity of both the worlds by offering *nazars*. The Raja *Kalan* gave 100 gold ducats. *Jamadar* (Khushal Singh) 21 gold ducats and the other glorious chief made offerings according to their respective ranks.<sup>29</sup>

Lohri was another festival, which was celebrated in the Lahore Darbar. The *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* has only two references of the Lohri Celebration. On the 5th January 1832 A.D., the Maharaja arranged for the celebration of the blessed Lohri in a kingly manner and all the state dancing girls and also of the town presented themselves to the Maharaja dressed in yellow garments; and suits of clothes with pearl necklaces were granted to Raja Hira Singh, Jawahar Singh, Udham Singh, Kaisari Singh, Raja Sochet Singh, Jamadarji (Khushal Singh), Charat Singh and Karam Singh, sons of Pratab Singh.<sup>30</sup> On the 9th January, 1838 A.D., the Maharaja granted suits of clothes to the glorious chieftains, employees, clerks, *vakils* and others on the blessed Lohri day, when,

at the third quarter of the day, dancing girls, dressed in specially embroidered yellow garments, came forward, performed music and dance and were rewarded by the Maharaja.<sup>31</sup> On the 11th January 1844 A.D. the Maharaja distributed rewards among the *Khidmatgars* and attendants on the Lohri day, according to the usual custom and making a huge bonfire at night engaged himself in enjoying the dance of dancing girls and gave them rewards.<sup>32</sup>

There is also one reference of the celebration of Id-ul-fiter. On the August 4, 1818 A.D., on the occasion of Id-ul-fiter, the village of Sarakpur was granted as *jagir* to Nawab Sarafraz Khan. At about the third quarter of the day, on the aforesaid date, the Maharaja went towards the mausoleum of Shah Abdul Maali with indescribable pomp and glory to see the gathering of the people and stopped in the mosque founded by Chausa Khan. For three hours he remained busy in enjoying the display of the dancing girls. Lala Asa Nand and Ghaffoor Khan, *vakils* of the Nazim of Kashmir and other *vakils* of Maharaja had the pleasure and honour of presenting themselves before the

<sup>28</sup>. Ibid., 390.

<sup>29</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, III (ii), 223.

<sup>30</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, III (v), 714.

<sup>31</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar, III (iii), 396.

<sup>32</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, IV (iii), 273.

Maharaja and enjoyed the sight of this merry-making.<sup>33</sup>

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a social person. He participated in every festival of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. On these festivals he paid visits to the *Harmandar Sahib* in Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib, and tomb of Madho Lal Hussain in the metropolis of Lahore. The social custom of participation in festivals continued after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh by his successors. On these festive days the administrators and members of the ruling class presented *nazars* to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and received grant or gifts in return. The troops and horsemen were inspected. In the latter part of the day dancing, singing and 'merry making' was the norm. It seems therefore, that all festivals were celebrated in a similar manner. It is significant to note that Basant, a festival for all people, was celebrated at the tomb of Madho Lal Hussain in continuation of an earlier tradition. Customary celebration were thus, carried out by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the people collectively.

## II

<sup>33</sup>. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar, II, 259-260.

In social life at the court in the early nineteenth century all festivals were celebrated enthusiastically, Basant, Baisakhi, Holi, Diwali, Dusshera, Lohri, Id and New Year. These celebrations had a set pattern. Ranjit Singh visited a religious place on these occasions. On Diwali he visited Harimandar Sahib and on Holi the Maharaja visited tomb of Madho Lal Hussain in the metropolis of Lahore. On all these occasion he distributed money by way of charity. For example On the On the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1838 A.D., on the *Dussehra* day, the *Sarkar* visited Darbar Sahib and offered Rs. 500 as *ardas* at *Harmandir Sahib Ji*, Rs. 500 at Akal Bunga and Jhanda Bunga, made humble prostration at the places and returned from there. At the third quarter of the day, after the worship of the sword and horse, the sarkar entered the Dussehrawala Kotha. At first Kanwars Kharak Singh and Nau Nihal Singh offered Rs. Rs. 1,100 and five horses each. Sardar Fateh Singh, Mangal Singh and Chet Singh offered 21 ducats each. The Raja Kalan, Raja Gulab Singh and Raja Hira Singh offered two horses and 250 ducats each. Jamadar Khushal Singh, Sardar Attar Singh and Sardar Ajit Singh offered two horses and 500 sovereigns and Rs. 500 in cash each. . Then an order was issued to the chief

commandants and the *topkhana* to give a salute of the Dussehra. Rs. 500 was granted as reward to the apprentices. Baisakhi day, 1821 A.D., many horses and fine clothes were given to the Brahmans at the temple in Amritsar, and gratifying words were heard from every Brahman. Rs.1500 was donated at Harmandar Sahib. Rs.500 at Akal Bunga and the same sum was put before Granth Sahib. All through the day and night the Maharaja remained seated in his own Bunga and saw the crowd of people. He also organize specific celebration for each festival for example in the year of 1825 A.D., a gathering was arranged for the purpose of Holi merry-making. The Maharaja took his seat near the mosque in the Hazuri Bagh garden. All the chieftains and Ahlakars including Raja Sangat Singh, Raja Jit Singh and *vakils* of various sides took part in the Holi celebrations. On the following day, the 14th of the said month, much of lac dye was distributed among the soldiers of the platoons, commandants and the like of the troops. The troops were granted two rupees per hand and the Maharaja came out to enjoy the sight of playing with the lac dye. A discharge of cannons in honour of the Holi took place. It is evident that these celebrations involve interaction for the people and there was

collective celebration of festival. On these festivals the Maharaja inspected of troops on parade. Dancing girls also plays an important role in all festivals. Dancing girls entertained the Maharaja and their guest; they received rewards from the Maharaja.

Some minor changes can be seen in these celebrations for example in connection with Baisakhi 1821 A.D. Ranjit Singh offer 1500 in Harmandar Sahib in decade latter offering Rs. 25,000 and 50,000 in charities. It is obvious that the significant of Baisakhi increase in the eyes of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Another variation that can be seen that in 1824 Ranjit Singh gave 14,000 to Bhagat's of Lahore for the preparation of "Lanka" and the celebration of the *Dussehra* Day. There is no mention of in similar payment in *Umdat*, Which make this occasion seems like auspicious. The celebrations of festivals continue in similar way after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.