

Maharaja Ganga Singh

Maharaja Ganga Singh (1880-1943) was the 21st ruler of the erstwhile State of Bikaner. The State had an area of 23, 317 square miles and was the sixth largest State area wise amongst all Indian States and the second largest in Rajasthan.

The Maharaja had ascended his ancestral *gaddi* at the age of seven. His early education was conducted at Bikaner under the guidance of Pandit Ram Chandra Dubey, and then at the Mayo College, Ajmer from 1889-94; and thereafter under Sir Brian Egerton from 1895 to 1898. He also received military training at Deoli Cantonment under the guidance of Lt. Col. J. D. Bell in 1897. By scrupulous attention given by his tutor, the Maharaja imbibed the best combination of what the East and the West could offer.

In 1899, at the age of eighteen, Maharaja Ganga Singh assumed full powers as the ruler of Bikaner. At that time the State was in the grip of medievalism. The revenue of The State was a bare Rs. 2.00 lakhs. The economic and f communicative infrastructure were inadequate. The Maharaja was determined to overcome all hurdles in the transformation of the State. He reorganized the executive machinery of government and established a secretariat to cope with the problems of modern administration. He introduced Hindi as court language and strengthened the Police and the Army. Lands were properly settled and assessed. Education and medical services were expanded.

The Maharaja's greatest achievement was the completion of Gang Canal Project in 1927. Apart was this Maharaja Ganga Singh was very closely associated with the Banaras Hindu University which he had always been helping with donations from time to time. He was the Pro-Chancellor of this University from 1922 to 1928; and Chancellor from 1929 till his demise in 1943.

For his developmental activities in the State, Maharaja Ganga Singh received the 'Freedom of the city of Edinburg' and an honorary degree of 'Doctor of Laws' from Edinburg University in 1917. He also received the honorary 'Freedom of the city Manchester' and the 'Freedom of the city of London' in the same year. He was conferred the degree of Doctor of Civil Laws, '*honoris causa*', by the University of

Oxford in 1919. Thereafter, in 1939, the Osmania University, Hyderabad, conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws, '*honoris causa*', on the Maharaja of Bikaner. In 1937, the Maharaja was promoted to the rank of full General - a rank which no other Indian ruler had attained. Maharaja Ganga Singh's services to the cause of Indian nationalism gave him an honoured place among the great Indian patriots.