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Lesson No.

- 2.1 : Relations of the Sikh Gurus with the Mughals (1605-1708 A.D.)
- 2.2 : Banda Singh Bahadur - Establishment of Independent rule of the Sikhs
- 2.3 : Political struggle of the Sikhs against Zakariya Khan, Yahia Khan and Mir Mannu
- 2.4 (A) : Origin and Development of the Dal Khalsa
- 2.4 (B) : Rise of the Sikh Misls : Their Nature and Administration

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LESSON NO. 2.1

Relations of the Sikh Gurus with the Mughals (1605 A.D. - 1708 A.D.)

During the pontification of Guru Hargobind (1606-1644), the relationship between the Mughal state and Sikh community was one of unstable equilibrium. Guru Arjan Dev's execution (1606) was a great turning point in the history of the Sikhs. Whereas it inflamed the religious passion of the Sikhs, it brought about a change in a general tenor of the Sikh community. According to some writers the need for the change had even been felt by Guru Arjan Dev when he was in Lahore jail. This was the reason that he sent to his eleven years old son and successor Hargobind, a coconut with five pieces as a token of his nomination with his last injunction through a Sikh, "Let him sit fully armed on the throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability."

Guru Hargobind succeeded the pontification at the age of eleven (A.D. 1606). He addressed himself forthwith to fulfil the parting message of his father. He wore two swords simultaneously, one symbolizing *Miri*, the temporal power, the other *Piri*, the spiritual power. He told his followers : "In the Guru's house spiritual and mundane power shall be combined". "My rosary shall be the sword-belt and on my turban I shall wear the emblem of royalty." He instructed the Sikhs to keep a sword and a horse. Hargobind carried the torch lit by Nanak, he added to it the challenge of a hero. He recruited troops. He armed and drilled some of his sturdy disciples. In due course, he came to possess a stable of 700 horses, three hundred horse-men and sixty gunners. He demanded a gift of arms and horses. He built a fort at Amritsar called Lohgarh (fortress of steel). He started construction of Akal Takhat or God's throne. There he sat on a raised platform, 12 feet high in princely attire. Harmandir was the seat of spiritual authority and Akal Takht, the seat of temporal authority. There he administered justice like a king in court, accepted presents and awarded honours and punishments. He narrated stories of deathless bravery while some professional bards, the most notable of whom was Abdulla, sang ballads of unrivalled heroism especially of Rajput chivalry. This was, in fact, the beginning of militarism or the transformation of Sikhism. To the symbols of sainthood was added the paraphernalia of sovereignty including the umbrella and the crest. "The genial disposition of the martial apostle." says Cunningham, "let him to rejoice in the companionship of a camp, in the dangers of war, and in the excitement of the chase."

The official reports against king-like and war-like activities of the Guru led Jahangir to take stringent actions against the Guru. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta "The Emperor was persuaded to believe that Guru Hargobind intended to raise the standard of revolt. He had visited Punjab in 1606, 1607 and 1608. The Guru's enemies

(possibly Shaikh Ahmed Sarhindi) must have lodged complaints against him personally."

Accordingly, Guru Hargobind was summoned to Delhi. Jahangir did not feel satisfied with Guru's explanation and he was imprisoned in the Gwalior fort, reserved only for political prisoners of high status.

Various factors operating together were responsible for his release and the restoration of friendly relations between the Mughal state and the Sikhs. The foremost was the change in the religious policy of Jahangir. With the passage of time, Jahangir's attitude in religious matters underwent a change. He discovered that for the stability of the Mughal state, it was only righteous to follow liberal policy towards all religious groups in the country. Moreover, he and his wife, Nur Jahan began to respond positively, in affirmative terms to the philosophy and teachings of Mian Mir, the head of Qadiri Sufi order. Secondly Mian Mir, who was a great friend and admirer of Guru Arjan Dev interceded on behalf of the innocence of the Guru and if Gokul Chand Narang is correct, it had a desired effect upon the Emperor. Wazir Khan, a Mughal noble of great influence, also pleaded the innocence of the Guru and harmless nature of his mission. Most of the Sikh writers who vaguely confine the Guru's imprisonment to a period of 40 days, state that a pious Sikh, named Bhai Jetha succeeded in soothing the Emperor, who had been troubled with fearful visions and as a reward for this, Jahangir issued order of Guru's release. The exact nature of the work done by Bhai Jetha is not known but one thing is certain that important Sikhs did manouvre hard to persuade the Emperor to release the Guru.

Since his release from the Gwalior fort till the beginning of the reign of Shah Jahan, the relations between the Mughal Government and the Guru remained cordial even friendly. A.C. Banerjee says, "Young as he was, he was wise enough to realise that open rebellion was out of question. The Mughal empire was at the height of its power and glory and he was the leader of a small community of peasants. So after his release, he adopted towards the Mughal government a policy of friendly co-operation."

In 1621, Jahangir left for Kashmir on his second visit to the valley. Guru Hargobind met the Emperor on the bank of river Beas. The Emperor was pleased with the young man, who was in full bloom of youth at the age of twenty five and persuaded him to accompany him to Kashmir.

Historians hold divergent views regarding the period of confinement of Guru Hargobind at the Gwalior Fort. The author of *Dabistan* mentions that the Guru remained there for twelve years but I.B. Banerjee does not agree with this view. On the basis of the birth of children of Guru Hargobind, Banerjee had tried to prove that the Guru could have, in no way, spent such a long period in the Gwalior Fort. According to him the Guru might have remained there for five years at the most

from 1607 to 1612. But Teja Singh and Ganda Singh hold the view that he might have remained in the fort for two years only from 1612 to 1614 A.D. According to the Sikh tradition the Guru's period of confinement at the Gwalior fort was only 40 days. On account of such wide disagreement among historians, it is difficult to determine the exact period of Guru's confinement but this, however, is certain that the period of confinement was very short and it should and could not be 5 years or 12 years.

After his return from Kashmir, we find Hargobind playing the role of a friendly collaborator of Jahangir. Mohsinfani says, "Hargobind never separated himself from the stirrup of victorious Jahangir." At another place, the same writer states that the Guru attached himself to Yar Khan, the eunuch, who held the office of a Faujdar in the Nawabi of the Punjab, and assisted in the administration. From these two statements, it is sometimes surmised that the Guru entered into the service of Mughal Government. This conclusion is altogether wrong. According to I.B.Banerjee, "This, on the face of it, seems absurd and is positively disproved by almost decisive negative evidence of *Tuzak-i-Jahangir*. The fact that even the name of Hargobind does not occur in Jahangir's Memoirs seems to prove that Guru could not have been employed."

The fact that the Guru enjoyed the respect of Jahangir led some persons to conclude the way Mohsinfani did. Another incident is stated to prove that the Guru was in government service. That incident related to Raja Tara Chand of Nalagarh. The Guru while in the fort of Gwalior had made friends with Dharam Chand a prince of Nalagarh, then called Hindur. He sought Guru's help in recovering the control of the state. The Guru fought against Tara Chand and installed Dharam Chand on the *gaddi*. The Guru did so not that he was commanded by the emperor but because he wanted to oblige his friend. The Mughal Emperor remained quiescent of regard he had for the Guru.

In this period of friendly relations or co-operation the Guru did not discontinue the old policy which he had adopted towards the beginning of his pontificate. He was anxious to have, by his side an army, however small which he might use for defensive purposes in times of emergency. Guru Hargobind also enlisted bands of Pathan mercenaries, and a Pathan Chief named Pains Khan who became one of his most able and trusted adherents. The Guru also spared no pains in spreading Sikhism, and, in fact, he was the Guru, only next to Guru Nanak who travelled so much outside the Punjab to spread his religion. It is mystery that Jahangir did not take care of the fast-developing Sikh community under the guidance of Guru Hargobind. The Emperor's decision might have been, a great extent, influenced the fact that Mian Mir was somehow involved in this affair for whom Jahangir entertained the highest respect. Off and on, the Sikh records state Mian Mir had been a very great friend of Guru's family.

Guru Hargobind and Shahjahan

Jahangir fell ill in 1626. He went to Kashmir for a change of climate. His

condition deteriorated. While returning, the Emperor died at Rajauri in October 29, 1627 and Shahjahan was crowned as Emperor on February 4, 1628.

Shahjahan was an orthodox Muslim. The Naqsbandi revivalists were also quite active during this time and had much influence on the Emperor and in the court. In 1632, when Shahjahan was returning from Kashmir, he found that some Hindus of Rajauri-Bhimber and Gujrat accepted Muslim girls as wives and converted them to their own faith. The Emperor stopped such marriages and Muslim women already married were seized from their husbands who were fined and in certain cases, they were executed.

They could retain their wives only on their embracing Islam. As many as 4500 such women were recovered. In 1635 it was reported to Emperor that a Muslim girl, Zinab had been converted, given the new name of Ganga and was taken as wife by Dalpat, a Hindu of Sarhind. Kaulan, a daughter of Rustam Khan, the Qazi of Lahore, and disciple of Mian Mir had also run away from home at the age of seventeen, embraced Sikhism and taken shelter with Guru Hargobind. There temples were demolished in Punjab and mosques were erected on their places. The Baoli of the Guru Arjan Dev situated in the Dabbi bazar, Lahore was filled up with rubbish and the larger building attached to it was converted into mosque.

The emperor, with this frame of mind was, obviously, not prepared to tolerate Guru Hargobind who had stepped up his missionary as well as military activities. Accordingly on very minor issues the Mughal Government picked up quarrell with the Guru. Guru Hargobind had to fight four battles against the imperial forces. Though in all these battles, the scales remained in favour of the Guru yet it was impossible for him to maintain a constant struggle against the government. Mohsin Fani writes, "After the battle of Kartarpur, he went to Phagwara. As this place was also not far from Lahore, it was difficult for him to stay there. He hurried to Kiratpur situated in the Punjab hills where he passed the rest of his life."

Guru Har Rai and Mughal Government

The next Guru was Har Rai (1644-61). He was attached with Dara Shikoh who was Sufi by faith and a great admirer of Sikhism. In 1648, the Guru had saved his life sending him a rare medicine. According to some historians, in 1658, when Prince Dara was being pursued by Aurangzeb's army, he went to Goindwal, and asked the Guru to save him from being captured. The Guru sent out a detachment of his men to hold the passage of the river Beas against the pursuing army. But it is difficult to endorse this view, as Guru Har Rai, by temperament was opposed to war, and besides his grandfather had definitely told him not to fight the Mughals.

Aurangzeb ascended the throne in 1658, after imprisoning his father and wading through the blood of his kinsmen and brothers. As soon as he was established on throne, he summoned the Guru to his presence. His real motive was to see if

any thing could be discovered in Sikhism which went against Islam and which could therefore, be used as a pretext for prosecuting the guru. The Guru did not answer the summons in persons but sent his elder son, Ram Rai to satisfy the Emperor. Ram Rai instead of satisfying the Emperor, chosen to play a second fiddle to the Emperor. As a matter of fact, Aurangzeb wanted to weaken Sikhism and in Ram Rai, he found a good instruments to achieve his object. Therefore, Har Rai declare him unfit for the responsible position of Guruship and chose his younger son, Har Krishan to succeed him.

Guru Har Krishan and Aurangzeb

Guru Har Krishan succeeded his father in October, 1661. He was summoned to Delhi by Aurangzeb to justify his claim to the gaddi which Ram Rai demanded on hereditary principle. The Guru went and stayed at the bungalow of Mirza Jai Singh at Raisin. The Emperor was convinced that the choice made by Guru Har Rai was fit and proper. Ram Rai's suit was dismissed.

Guru Tegh Bahadur and Aurangzeb

After the premature death of Guru Har Krishan at Delhi, the gaddi was occupied by Tegh Bahadur (1664-75). This opened a new chapter in the Sikh Guru's relations with Mughals. It is difficult to understand why Aurangzeb took no decisive step against the Sikh Gurus during the period of Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan.

Possibly, he was content with creating dissensions among the Sikhs. But this was not to believe the fact that Sikh religion, other than Islam, was repugnant to the intolerant emperor, Aurangzeb. This was the reason that Guru Tegh Bahadur's activities were minutely and closely watched by the government. Guru Tegh Bahadur after just accession to Gaddi, in keeping with the tradition of Guru Nanak and Guru Hargobind undertook an extensive missionary tour of the eastern provinces of India in 1665 to 1670. On reaching Dhamdhan, Guru Tegh Bahadur was extended warm welcome by the people. Emperor issued orders that Guru should appear before him. The Guru paid no heed to this and continued his work as usual. According to the recently discovered *Bhatvahi's* account the Emperor commissioned Alo (Alam) Khan Pathan to apprehend him which he did. The Guru might have suffered death imprisonment, if Raja Ram Singh, a Rajput protege of the Mughal court with considerable influence had not taken full responsibility for the Guru's conduct. He impressed upon the Emperor's mind that the Guru was a saint and that it did not behove his majesty to punish him. After this, the Guru set out on his uninterrupted eastern journey.

Aurangzeb became quite safe upto A.D. 1666. He had liquidated his patent enemies. Now he vigorously embarked on the course which was dear to his heart. He had come under the influence of the head of the *Naqshbandis* and like his mentor he wanted to revive Islam which according to Naqshbandi order has suffered a setback

because of the liberal religious policy of Akbar and Dara. As a governor and later as Emperor, he remained in close touch with the revivalists and no wonder when he felt safe on the throne, he addressed himself with greater vigour to see that India should become the land of Islam (Dar-ul-Islam). The policy also suited his political purpose. It diverted the people's attention from the murders he had committed. Besides this, it filled the sunnies to line up with the Emperor and consequently enabled the Emperor to win over the total allegiance of Sunni section of the Muslim population.

In April, 1669, the Emperor, issued order to all governors of provinces to destroy, school and temples of the infidels, and thus were strictly enjoined to put entire stop to the teaching and practising idolatrous forms of worship.

While this general order of the Emperor was having its effect in the country, the Sikhs also, had their share, Aurangzeb having received information regarding them had ordered that their deputies to be turned out and there places of worsip to be destroyed. Mirza Inayat-ullah-Ismi tells in the *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* that in compliance with the orders of the Emperor and with the consent of the local Qazi, the Sikh Temple in the town of Buriya in the paraganah of Khizrabad in Sarkar of Sirhind had been domolished and a mosque had been raised on its platform.

Guru Teg Bahadur who at this time was on religious tour in Assam when he heared all about this, he did not think it proper to stay away from his people and his headquarters, Punjab. He undertook an extensive tour of the Malwa and southern part of the country, assuring the people that he was with them. The Sikhs from all over the country came to see him and there was always a large assemblage of disciples and followers at his congregations, particularly on the occassion of festivals when considerable offering were also made to the Guru.

The royal intelligencers, without understanding the real nature of the relationship between the Guru and the Sikhs, probably with the intention of demonstrating his over flowing zeal in implementing the Emperor's order, reported to the Emperor that like, Hafiz Adam of Banoor. Guru Teg Bahadur, with many followers had become a man of influence and many thousand men moved along with him, collecting money from the Hindus and no wonder that if their power increased, they might sally forth in hostile manner.

The author of *Siyar-ul-Mukhrin* has also mentioned that Hafiz Adam during time of Guru Tegh Bahadur, was his companion and that the two roam about together, exacting money from Muslims and Hindus. But this is incorrect on the very face of it. Hafiz Adam had been turned out of country in 1642 by Shah Jahan, on the recommendation of his minister, Sadullah Khan with orders not to be allowed to return to the east of the river Attock, and he had left for pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, where he had died in December, 1643.

But for Emperor-Aurangzeb, the hint of his reporters suggesting a similarity

between the activities of Guru Tegh Bahadur and those of the late Hafiz Adam during the days of his father was enough to excite suspicious and apprehensions.

In another event happened in those days was a deputation of Brahmans of Kashmir approached the Guru at Anandpur for help to mitigate their sufferings on account of the oppression of the imperial policy to convert them to Islam against their will. They were led by Kirpa Ram. He was direct ascendent of Brahm Das who had met Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism. He suggested to the Brahmans that none else except Guru Tegh Bahadur, a fearless man with broad universal sympathies could be of help to them. They might have come thinking that Guru had easy access to Aurangzeb through Ram Singh and his intervention would enable Guru, to be relieved of the oppressive religious policy of Iftikhar-ud-din, popularly own as Sher Afghan, the viceroy of Kashmir. Little did the Pandit knew that during the last days of Guru's absence in the east and since his return, there had been a marked change for the worse in the socio-religious policy of Emperor Aurangzeb and that adverse reports of the imperial intelligences against the Guru and the Sikh had been poisoning the Emperor's mind against him. The Guru, however, gave a patient hearing to the Brahmans and sympathised with their cause saying "Guru Nanak will protect them." The Guru at the same time felt that the cause needed a sacrifice which should shame the Mughal rulers into reason.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's sympathetic response to the appeal of the Brahmans and his readiness for supreme sacrifice in their cause was a thing unique in history. He was neither a Brahman himself nor did he subscribe to their way of life which prescribed the wearing of sacred thread and putting distinctive marks on the forehead - *Janeau* and *Tilak*. These had no place in Sikhism. The founder of Sikhism had not only refused to accept them himself in his early days and had also discarded them for his followers. But their forcible removal by Muslim fanatics and conversion of the Brahmans to Islam against their will were acts of great high-handedness and abuse of political power. He was not against any one accepting Islam with a willing heart. It was entirely the private concern. But if any one forcibly dragged him into it, it deserved according to Sikh ethics to be protested against and remedied. Emperor Aurangzeb, however, took it in a different light. He had already no sympathy for Sikhism. Now Guru's sympathy with the idolatrous Brahmans added fresh fuel to the fire already smouldering in the mind of the Emperor.

According to the account in the *Bhat-vahis*, the following were the circumstances under which the Guru was arrested, and martyred. Aurangzeb issued order to Governor of Lahore to have Guru arrested, fettered and detailed in prison. The Governor passed an order to faujdar of Sarhind, Dilawar Khan who in turn asked the circle kotwal of Ropar, Mirza Nur Muhammad, in whose jurisdiction lay Anandpur to arrest the Guru. The order was kept secret and when the Guru, accompanied by only few Sikhs

left Anandpur on July 11, 1675 and arrived at the village of *Malikpur Ranghran* near Ropar on his way to cross the river, Sutlej for his onward journey, he was arrested by Mirza Nur Muhammad who later sent him to Sirhind where he seems to have been detained in prison for three and a half months. After this, he was sent to Delhi in an iron cage on receipt of a *Parwana* from the imperial headquarters. He was executed on November 11, 1675 in Chandni Chowk, obviously he fell a victim to the fanaticism of Aurangzeb. Guru Gobind Singh has narrated in the *Bachittar Natak* that Guru Tegh Bahadur gave his life to save *Tilak* and *Janeau of Hindus*.

The Guru's martyrdom was a unique event in the history of the Punjab as well as in the history of the Sikh religion. It focused the attention of the people in the cause for which the Guru courted death, since the cause was for the downtrodden and affected section of the people, he became extremely popular. Sikhs felt justly proud of the stand taken by their Guru. This realization inducted compactness among them, apart from enthusing them with determination to put the teachings of the Guru into practice.

Aurangzeb after the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur did not pay much heed to the activities of the Sikhs, presumably under the impression that their power had been broken.

Guru Gobind Singh succeeded his father in A.D. 1675. The death of father had deep effect on his mind. He felt that a great and unpardonable wrong had been done to him and his people. The echo of such sentiments can be heard in quite a large number of lines in "Bachittar Natak". In one of his lines, he conveys that his mission in life is to that evil-mindedness is to be eliminated, undoubtedly the Mughal Government committed to convert the whole population of India to Islam by force was an evil to be knocked out, yet the Guru controlled himself. He had to make necessary preparations before embarking upon the course of open assertion which was sure to invite the wrath of the Government. He did engage himself to the task. He made his followers conscious of their responsibilities and rights vis-a-vis humanity through various means such as intensive preaching and military training. He left Anandpur for Paonta for some time to mature his plan un-encumbered. In course of all this, he aroused suspicions in the minds of hill rajas that if Guru was allowed peaceful time, he would prove to be a danger to their respective principalities. His preachings aiming at building a society based on social equality and committed to oneness of God would bring about new awareness among the people and compel the people to rise in revolt against them. This being their state of mind, they combined together and made an attack on the Guru. The battle was fought at Bhangani in which the hill rajas were routed. They now changed their attitude towards the Guru. They became for some time at least his admirers. The Guru left Paonta for Anandpur

after the battle and felt only to be pleased to extend his hand of co-operation to them. It is likely that the Guru with their co-operation had a mind to struggle against the unjust and oppressive policies of the Government in cooperation with the hill rajas. It is possible under this impulse that the Guru extended help to the hill rajas when they were threatened by Mian Khan, the governor of Jammu who had come to realise the arrears from the defaulting hill rajas. In the battle of Nadaun, the Guru fought side by side with the hill chiefs and the imperial armies suffered a severe defeat. The victory was generally regarded as that of the Guru. The repulse of the imperial armies at Nadaun and the daily increasing power of the Guru made it necessary for the Governor of Sirhind to bring the matter to the Emperor's notice. It is on record that in November 1693 Aurangzeb received news from Sirhind that Guru Gobind Singh was declaring himself to be Guru Nanak and was creating trouble. The Emperor issued orders to Faujdar (Governor) that the Guru should be admonished and prevented from assembling his Sikhs. According to another report that the Sikhs had caused a good deal of disturbance round Lahore and a general order of massacre was issued.

Perhaps as an offshoot of this order the Guru was attacked once more by some of the hill chiefs and imperial forces. This was in 1694-95. The battle of *Guler* or *Hussaini* as the Guru calls it in the *Bachittar Natak* resulted in a decisive victory for the Guru.

The news of these repeated disasters to the imperial armies caused anxiety to the Emperor. He himself was too busy in the Deccan. Therefore he sent his eldest son prince Muazzam afterwards known as Bahadur Shah, to set right the matters in the Punjab. This was in 1696. The prince himself took his position at Lahore. He sent Mirza Beg with a strong force to chastise the Guru and the hill chiefs. The latter were severely punished, but the Guru was left alone. That was owing to the intercession of Bhai Nand Lal, who was a devout Sikh and a Mir Munshi of Prince Muazzam.

In 1699, the Guru created the Khalsa. The purpose of creation of the Khalsa was to give the mankind a prototype of the society on social equality and dignity of man, at once assertive and committed to just cause. The Hill Rajas saw in Sikhs a threat to their power and privileges as well as to their ancient religion. Hence they vowed ceaseless uncompromising opposition. Accordingly, they approached the Mughal government for help against the Guru, which, in its turn considered it a golden chance to nip the power of the Sikhs. As a matter of fact, the politico-feudal interest of the hill chiefs, and those of the Mughal Government demanded joint action against the Guru and no wonder, Guru Gobind Singh had to fight against the combined armies of the hill chiefs and Mughal. He was forced to evacuate city of Anandpur in December 1705. He fought the battle of Chamkaur with unparalleled courage with

only forty Sikh soldiers. Ultimately he left the mud fortress of Chamkaur but was pursued relentlessly by the soldiers of Wazir Khan, the Subedar of Sirhind. The Guru fought the last battle at Muktsar, in which the Mughal forces suffered defeat. At the Chamkaur, his two eldest sons were killed. His two younger sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh who were taken hold by Wazir Khan while the Guru was separated from a part of his family in the wake of the evacuation of Anandpur. They were bricked up alive in the wall under the order of Wazir Khan.

After staying for some time at Muktsar, the Guru left for Talwandi, Saboke. At Dina, he wrote *Zafarnama*, name given to his long letter written specially for Aurangzeb. This letter contained certain facts and principles involved in Guru's fight against the Mughal forces as also the promises thrown to winds by the Mughal officials. The Guru detailed the Wazir Khan's ghastly act of bricking up alive his two younger sons. The letter also contained a sort of appeal to the conscience of the Emperor to make amends for the past sins. It is said that the letter had profound effect on Aurangzeb who invited the Guru to have heart to heart take with him. He issued orders that the Guru should be provided safe conduct through out the empire on his way to Ahmednagar.

The Guru started towards the Deccan. When he reached Baghaur in Rajasthan, he heard the news that Aurangzeb had died in his camp at Ahmednagar on February 20, 1707. On hearing the news, the Guru retraced his steps to the north. It appears that Guru had to fight not that he wanted to avenge the death of his father but because he had to do so for survival and vindication of his stand of resisting the evil doers at all costs. He felt no hesitation to go to Aurangzeb, if only he and his Sikhs were permitted to live with their heads high and Wazir Khan and other officials guilty of committing excesses were duly punished.

At the death of Aurangzeb (February 20, 1707) there ensued a war of succession among his three sons. Bahadur Shah invited the Guru to his aid who sent a detachment of his trusty soldiers under the command of Bhai Dharam Singh with instructions to help Bahadur Shah in the war of succession. As a matter of fact, the Guru found nothing wrong or objectionable in helping Bahadur Shah, who was a better man and would prove to be a better ruler than his usurping brother.

The war of succession ended in favour of Bahadur Shah. He became undisputed monarch of India and returned to Agra. The Guru in response to the invitation of Bahadur Shah went to Agra to see him. Bahadur Shah, as a token of thankfulness to him, made him costly present a rich dress of honour and a jewelled scarf worth sixty thousand rupees. The emperor was deeply impressed by the Guru's personality. Guru was hopeful that through persuasion, he might be able to usher in an era of peace and better understanding between the Mughals and the Sikhs and other non-

Muslims. He also thought that he would get Wazir Khan punished for the excesses which he had committed against him, his family and his Sikhs.

Negotiations to these effects were started with the Emperor. But while these were yet in progress, the Emperor had to march into Rajputana in November, 1707, where from he had to march further south to suppress the insurrection of his brother, Kam Bakshish. The Guru accompanied him because he wanted to continue the negotiation and to bring them to a successful conclusion. For about eleven months, the Guru remained with Bahadur Shah in his travels in the southern India. All this time the Emperor went on making evasive replies to the Guru's suggestion about punishing the wrong doers. At least the Guru was convinced that there was no prospect of the Emperor's agreeing to any proposal for the redress of his wrongs. The Guru at long last, went to Nander in September 1708. The Guru was stabbed by a Pathan, supposed to be hireling of Wazir Khan. The Guru expired on, 1708. During the intervening period between the stabbing incident and the death, the Guru sent Banda Singh Bahadur to the Punjab with instruction to punish Wazir Khan and liberate it from the oppressive rule of the Mughals.

Banda Singh Bahadur - Establishment of Independent rule of the Sikhs

Early Career

Banda Singh Bahadur was born on 27th October, 1670 at Rajauri, a village in the Poonch district of western Kashmir. His original name was Lachman Dev. His father, Ram Dev, was a Rajput of Dogra tribe, and was an ordinary ploughman. Being a Rajput Lachman Dev was very fond of hunting in his early days. One day, as he killed a doe and cut her open, the young ones came out alive and died before his eyes. The sight proved too painful and became a turning point in his career. He not only gave up hunting, rather renounced the world and became a Bairagi. Changing his name to Madho Das, he set out on pilgrimage. He wandered from place to place until he came to Nasik on the bank of river Godavari, where he met an old yogi, Aughar Nath and learnt black magic from him. After his Guru's death, he moved to Nander (Hyderabad) and established a monastery of his own. Soon hundred of followers flocked him, and he lived in a grand manner.

Meeting with Guru Gobind Singh : It was at Nander that Guru Gobind Singh met Madho Das in 1708 A.D. Guru Gobind Singh while travelling in the south happened to halt there, and hearing a great deal about Madho Das went to see him. Guru Gobind Singh and Banda were soon drawn closer. The former by his eloquence and religious zeal, made such a deep impression on the mind of Banda that he agreed to become the disciple of the Guru. Banda dedicated himself to the service of the Guru and called himself Guru's slave. Guru baptised him that is why he is known as Banda Singh Bahadur in Sikh history.

Thereafter, impressed by his devotion and hard work, Guru asked Banda Bahadur to continue his struggle for the freedom of the Punjab, and avenge upon the enemies of the *Khalsa*. Guru enlightened him about his aims or ideals. He also explained the sufferings and hardship that he might have to face in the purchase of the great task that he might face. After that Guru gave him a sword and five arrows from his own quiver and also as pointed by Dr. Gokul Chand Narang, asked him to follow the following five commandments :

1. Do not approach a woman;
2. Always think, act and speak the truth;
3. Regard yourself a servant of the of *Khalsa* and always act in accordance with it wishes;
4. Do not try to establish any sect of your own; and

5. Do not let the victories elate you.

Banda received the arrows and the sword with profound reverence, and solemnly promised to obey the commands of the Guru. Then the Guru gave him a drum and *banner* and *Hukamnamas* (letters) addressed to the Sikhs of the Punjab, calling upon them to acknowledge Banda as their leader and fight under his flag. Guru also placed twenty five chosen folowers at his service. Thus Banda was sent to Punjab to take revenge upon those who had put to death Guru's father and innocent children and also the staunch enemies of the *Khalsa*.

Banda Singh Bahadur in Punjab and his military exploits

On reaching Punjab, Banda despatched to the leading Sikhs the *Hukamnamas* calling upon them to join him. He told them that he had come to punish Wazir Khan, the Faujdar of Sirhind and his assistant Sucha Nand, who were directly responsible for killing Guru's two sons mercilessly. Declaring further, he said that he would also chastise the Hill Chiefs who had ill-treated Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs gathered under his banner from all quarters. Bhai Fateh Singh, Karam Singh, Dharam Singh, Nighahia Singh and Chuhar Singh were the first to join him. Ali Singh and Mali Singh with other Sikhs of Sakraudi, were the next to follow. Ram Singh and Tirlok Singh of Phulkian family also contributed to his resources. Thus within a few months the whole Sikh peasantry was up in arms.

Attack on Sonapat

Banda marched in the direction of Sirhind, plundering and destroying the important Muslim places on the way. When he reached Kaithal (now in Haryana) reports were brought to him that a large treasure was being taken to Delhi. He atonce fell upon the guards incharge of the treasure near the village of Bhoona. He cut them to pieces and carried away every penny. It was distributed among the followers. The success was a pleasant surprise to them. Then the town of Kaithal was plundered.

Attack on Samana and Kapuri

On 26th of November, 1709 he advanced upon Samana, the native place of Jalal-ud-din, who had been employed to kill Guru Teg Bahadur. The town was looted and 10,000 Muslims were put to death. *Enroute* to Sirhind to towns of Ghuram, Ambala, Kunjpura, Mustafabad etc. were ransacked and destroyed. Next he attacked Kapuri, its Faujdar, Qadam-ud-din was notoriously known for his lustful campaigns. Banda determined to punish this depraved *Hakim*, set the city on fire and the strong holds of Qadam-ud-din were leveled to the ground.

Conquest of Sadhaura and Mukhlispur

After this Banda turned his attention to Sadhaura, which was another centre of oppression, the Hindus of this place complained and maltreatment by the Muslim officers. Usman Khan, the ruler of the place had tortured Pir Budhu Shah simply

for the reason that he had helped Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs marched upon Sadhaura and put to sword all those Muslims who had sheltered themselves in the mansion of Pir Budhu Shah. The place since then is called 'Qatalgarhi' (fortress of massacre). After the fall of Sadhaura, Banda took possession of the fort of Mukhlispur and named it Lohgarh. The Muslims of Chhat and Banur which attracted Banda's attention by their bigotry and slaughter of the cows, were next to be punished. Muslim inhabitants to these places were put to sword.

Conquest of Sirhind

The victories encouraged the followers of Banda and attracted thousands under his banner by the time he advanced upon Sirhind. It is significant to recollect that the two sons of Guru Gobind Singh had been bricked alive in Sirhind. It was here that Guru's mother had given up her life because of the shock of the death of her grand-children. Therefore, Sirhind was the most accursed place in the eyes of the Sikhs. In fact the Sikhs were searching for an opportunity to destroy this murderous town. It was considered a sacred duty to take part in this crusade. Wazir Khan, the Faujdar of Sirhind, being informed about this, sent a detachment of troops to punish the marauders, but they were repulsed with great casualties. Now Wazir Khan assisted by Sher Muhammed and Khwaja Ali of Malerkotla, marched in person along with a number of field-guns, and a long line of elephants. Banda, on the other hand had no gun or elephants and not even sufficient supply of good horses or weapons.

The famous battle was fought near Sirhind on the plains of Chappar Chiri on 12th May, 1710. As soon as the battle began, Mughal artillery opened fire. As a result most of the followers of Banda whom love of booty had brought to the battle field, took to their heels. Nephew of Sucha Nand (Diwan of Sirhind) was also one of them, leaving behind the faithful Sikhs alone to fight the battle. Banda personally led his followers into the battlefield and fought like true Rajput. Religious zeal triumphed over the superior number of the Mughal forces. Wazir Khan was killed. Sikhs fell upon the enemy ferociously and completely routed the imperial forces.

Estimate of the sack of Sirhind

In his book 'History of the Sikhs', Latif gives a vivid account of the deeds of Banda and his followers, and of the sufferings of the Muslims who inhabited the town of Sirhind. He writes, "Banda entered Sirhind and punished the city in a vindictive manner. He commanded it to be fired and the inhabitants to be put to death. While the city was in flames, the followers carried on the work of carnage. They slaughtered the inhabitants indiscriminately without any regard for age and sex. They butchered, strangled, shot down, hacked to pieces and burnt alive every Mohammedan in the place. This was not all. The dead too were made to contribute their share towards gratifying the rage of voracious ravens. The corpse of Wazir Khan was hanged on a tree, and left to the mercies of crows and vultures. The sanctity of graveyards was

violated. The Mosques were polluted and burnt down and Mullas and Maulvis were subjected to greatest indignities and tortures. The plunder of Sirhind continued for three days. The city was spared of complete destruction at the intervention of local Hindus who appealed to Banda for mercy, and amnesty was granted to the inhabitants on their paying a large ransom." The curse, however, is still attached to the city and even now the pious Sikhs give seven shoe beatings on the ruins of Sirhind. But Dr. Gokal Chand Narang says that there is exaggeration in what Latif has said in his book. Latif has given a free translation of the accounts of Khafi Khan and other writers contemporary of Banda whose opinions were biased and partial as they were writing against Banda who punished the Mohammedans. Dr. G.C. Narang further supports his viewpoint with the argument that the Mausoleum of Ahmed Shah, the most magnificent of all places, still stands as it did before the battle. The Sikh chronicles mention the digging up of one grave only and that too for performance of the last rites of Bibi Anup Kaur, a Sikh woman, who had been carried away by Sher Mohammad Khan. She had committed suicide to save her honour.

Rising at Saharanpur, Behat and Jalalabad

Banda was now looked upon as the champion of Hinduism and marched eastward on receiving a complaint from the Hindus who were being cruelly treated by Jalal-ud-din, the Faujdar of Jalalabad, Banda, on his way to Jalalabad fell upon Saharanpur, which was deserted by its Faujdar Ali Hamid Khan was sacked by the Sikhs. His attention was next drawn to Behat, the Sheikhzadas of which seemed to take particular pleasure in slaughtering cows in the heart of the city right before the Hindu inhabitants. The city was looted and destroyed. Three hundred Sheikhzadas were killed. The town, Naunauta was levelled to ground. It is still called *Phoota Shahr* (demolished town), Jalalabad was besieged by Banda Bahadur. The Afghans fought bravely. As the rainy season set in and the country around was exhausted of food supplies, Banda gave up the siege. After this he took Karnal, and subjugated the whole country up to Panipat. As a result of above discussed victories, the Sikhs under Banda Bahadur became supreme from Sirhind to Panipat and there was no one daring enough to march from Delhi against them.

Revolt of the Sikhs of Jalandhar Doab

After the fall of Sirhind, people felt that the day of their deliverance had arrived. Banda was still in the Gangetic plains when the Sikhs of Jalandhar Doab rose up in arms to throw off the yoke of the Mughals. Being nearer to Sirhind, they were the first to be inspired with the spirit of revolt and independence. Initially the revolt began by ousting a number of Mohammedan officers and replacing them with the Sikhs. They addressed a letter to Shamas Khan, the Faujdar of Jalandhar, calling upon him to undertake certain reforms and to hand over his treasure personally

to the Khalsa. Sieged by fear, he appealed to the fanaticism of the Muhammedan population for a Jihad (religious war) against the Sikhs and was able to collect about 1,75,000 Muslims who, according to Khafi Khan, proceeded to attack the Sikhs. The Sikhs retreated towards the town of Rahon which was besieged by the crusaders. The Sikhs escaped during the night and next morning attacked Rahon, and there was fierce fighting between the Sikhs and Mohammedan force. Shamas Khan's forces were defeated and the result was that the Sikhs occupied Jalandhar and Hosiarpur without much resistance.

Capture of Amritsar, Batala, Kalanaur and Pathankot

Encouraged by these successes, the Sikhs occupied Amritsar, Batala, Kalanaur and even Pathankot. Turning out government officials, the Sikhs established their own thanas and tehsils. The main body of the Sikhs carried their arms to the very walls of Lahore. Sayyad Aslam Khan, the Governor of Lahore, was so frightened that he did not move out to meet them. The Mullas took the lead. They appealed to the religious sentiments of Muslim population and raised the Haidri flag for a Jihad (religious war) against the Sikhs. But so heavy was the defeat inflicted by the Sikh upon these people at Bheelowal that with the exception of the city of Lahore, practically the whole of Majha and Rairki fell into their hands. The Sikhs were now the master of the Punjab. Latif says "horrible crimes were committed." Treachery and cruelty stalked through the land.....The bearded ruffians forbade the shaving of the hair of the head and beard and they were joined by thousands of low caste Hindus.

Mughal Emperor's step against Banda Singh Bahadur

At the time when Banda fought the above battles with the Mughals, the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah was in Deccan and the Mughal officers were all afraid of Banda. They dared not move against him, because they considered him a great magician. The Emperor on hearing so, marched with a large army from Deccan in June, 1710. At Ajmer thousands of people, who had been rendered homeless and had emigrated from Sirhind presented themselves before the Emperor. He was greatly moved by their miserable plight and did not even enter the capital to rest and pause but marched straight towards Sirhind to punish the Sikhs. He called the Subedars of Delhi and Oudh, the Faujdar and Nazims of Morabadad and Allahabad and the Sayyad of Barha to march towards the Punjab. He hated the Sikhs so much that he looked at every bearded man with suspicion. On 8th September, he issued an order that "all Hindus employed in the Imperial offices should get their beards shaved." In the meantime the Sikhs were turned out of Sirhind and other neighboring territories by the Imperial forces. Feroz Khan Mewati was appointed the Governor of Sirhind.

Battle of Lohgarh and the Escape of Banda

Having heard of the March of Bahadur Shah towards Sirhind, the Sikhs under Banda retired from Thanesar and Sirhind. They took up their stand at the fort of

Lohgarh. The imperial forces reached its neighborhood on 5th December and encamped at Sadhaura where the Sikhs fell upon them with volleys of arrows and musket balls.

Then the fort was besieged by the Imperial army under the direct command of the Mughal Emperor who had joined the expedition with his four sons. The Emperor now ordered his men not to attack the Sikhs in their strong positions under any pretence, but to use every means in their power to induce or dislodge them from their strongholds. The fort was so well fortified that the Emperor dared not attack it for some time. After the contending armies had remained inactive for quite some time, Amin Khan advanced to attack the fort. He led his troops up the most difficult heights.

The Sikhs, on the other hand, ran short of provisions and had no hope of surviving the siege. They are said to have even eaten their horses and other animals. But inspite of these heavy odds, they fought bravely. Banda made a determined attack on the night of 10th December and disappeared with all his men into the hills of Nahan.

Next morning, the fort was taken by Amin Khan. But to his disappointment "the hawk had flown leaving only substitute in the person of Gulab Singh and a few dead and dying." The emperor's displeasure knew no bounds and he ordered his nobles to search for Banda and present him alive if possible. But all efforts to capture him proved futile.

Banda in the Hills

Within a fortnight of his escape, Banda issued a circular letter called Hukamnama to the Sikhs of various places, calling upon them to join him at once. In response to Hukamnama the Sikhs flocked to him at Kiratpur. Thence he led an expedition against the Hill Chiefs who had troubled Guru Gobind Singh. They were reduced to submission within a short span. Raja Udhai Singh of Chamba allied himself with Banda and also gave a girl of his own family in marriage. A son was born from this union.

Soon Banda appeared near Pathankot. The Faujdar of Jammu with his nephew Shamas Khan advanced to face him but they were defeated and killed in action. Therefore, the Sikhs overran the towns of Raipur, Kalanaur and Batala. The emperor now hastened towards Lahore and sent Amin Khan and Rustam Khan against the Sikh leader. Banda, however again fled into the hills. The Emperor passed about six or seven months peacefully in Lahore yet he developed signs of insanity and died on February, 1712.

Farrukh Siyar and Banda

As usual, Bahadur Shah's death was followed by a war of succession for the throne. It offered a favourable situation to the Sikhs which they did try to utilize,

to re-establish their power in the Punjab. Lohgarh once again became the centre of Sikh activities. On the imperial side, Jahandar Khan became the Mughal Emperor. He reigned for a few months and appointed Zabardast Khan as the Governor of Lahore. Both were, however, incompetent to rule. Farrukh Siyar dislodged Jahandar from throne and himself became the Mughal Emperor. He appointed Abdul Samad Daler as the governor of Lahore

Battle of Gurdas Nangal

In the beginning of 1715 Banda reappeared in the plains. He moved towards Kalanaur and Batala. Both these towns were taken by Banda after heavy fighting. Many Mohammedans were put to death. Farrukh Siyar was furious on hearing the news of fresh disasters. He sent strict orders to the *Nizam* of Lahore to destroy the power of Banda. Abdul Samad Khan, accordingly set out in pursuit of the Sikhs with a large army of chosen warriors and a powerful artillery. Ultimately, Banda was forced to take shelter in the *Kachi Haveli* (mud house) of Bhai Duni Chand at Gurda Nangal. He was besieged so heavily that nothing could be conveyed to him from outside. As the Sikhs could not get any provisions. They ate horses, asses and other animals. These conditions were further worsened by a dispute between Banda Bahadur and Baba Binod Singh about the future course of action. As Banda did not agree with Binod Singh, he left Garhi with his men and fought his way through the besiegers.

Conditions did not improve even after that, as the Sikhs were starving to death. About eight thousand had died and remaining were reduced to skeletons. The imperialists attack the Garhi on December 7, 1715 A.D. and Banda surrendered with his existing followers.

Execution of Banda Singh Bahadur

Banda and all other Sikhs were chained and sent to Lahore where they were paraded in the streets. Thence they were despatched to Delhi where they reached on February 29, 1716. Banda and his followers were marched through the main streets of Delhi. At the head of the procession were carried two thousand heads of Sikhs, raised on bamboo poles, their long hair streaming with the wind. Along with them was a body of a cat hung at the end of the pole to symbolise that every living creature found in the enclosure, had been destroyed. Banda was first tied with chains and kept in a cage. The cage was put on the back of an old elephant and behind him stood a Turani Officer, with a drawn out sword in hand. He had the orders to kill him, if Banda tried to escape. Banda was dressed in royal dress and golden red turban out of mockery. Other Sikh prisoner followed his elephant. Tied into pairs, they were placed on camels. Long caps made of sheep's skin and adorned with glass beads were put upon their heads. People of Delhi mocked at the appearance of the prisoners. The Mohammedans could hardly contain themselves with joy. But the victims also seemed quite happy and contented with their lot. Not the slightest dejection or

humiliation could be found on their faces. They were merely singing the sacred hymns.

Executions started on 5th March, 1716. One hundred Sikhs were put to death as per order of the Mughal Emperor. Life was promised to everyone who would renounce his faith and become Mohammendan "but they met their doom with utmost indifference and they even clamoured for priority of martyrdom." Banda was taken out for trial in June 19, 1716. All the Amirs of court asked him why he, a man of such unquestionable knowledge and ability had committed outrageous offences. After placing his son in his lap, he was asked to cut his throat. A knife was given to him for this purpose. When he refused, his flesh was torn with red hot pricker and finally his head was chopped off. Banda remained calm up to the last, put up undying faith in his Guru. This took place on June 19, 1716.

Administration of Banda Bahadur

The Victory of Sirhind as noted earlier, had placed at the disposal of Banda, the entire country extending from Karnal to Ludhiana. Though he had no time to organise to regular administration, but he did make necessary arrangements.

Banda made Mukhlispur, a pleasant hilly place near Sadhaura, his headquarters. It was repaired and given new name after Guru Gobind Singh. He also introduced an official seal which was affixed on state documents and letters. It bore the inscription whose English rendering is, "The kettle and the sword (symbols of charity and power respectively) victory and ready patronage have been obtained from Guru Nank-Gobind Singh."

Banda Bahadur appointed Baj Singh as the Governor of Sirhind with Ali Singh of Saloudi as his deputy. Fateh Singh of Bhaikian family, was given charge of Samana Ram Singh (brother of Baj Singh) and Baba Binod Singh were appointed the co-incharge of Thanesar. The Mughal Hakims of all the twenty-eight Parganas of Sirhind were replaced by Hindu officers.

Abolition of Zamindari (feudal system)

One of the achievements of Banda as an administrator was the abolition of Zamindari system. The Zamindars exacted large amount of money from the peasants, practically peasants were no better than slaves. The affairs were mismanaged throughout and no control was exercised over the officers or Zamindars. What inspired Banda to abolish zamindari is revealed by a local tradition narrated hereafter. Peasants from the neighborhood of Sadhaura, came to Banda and complained against their landlord. Banda ordered Baj Singh to open fire on them. They were astonished as the strange reply to their representation and asked him very timidly what it meant. Banda told them that they deserved no better treatment. Speaking further, he said, they were thousands in numbers, still they allowed themselves to be cowed down by a handful of Zamindars. Why would not Khalsa of the Guru fell strong enough to

redress his own wrongs? The result was that peasants of that area revolted and Zamindars were rejected. The example was followed by the suffering peasantry in the rest of the Punjab. Consequently Zamindari system was put to an end. The tillers of the soil became the owner of the land and Banda became their champion.

Character and Estimate of Banda Singh Bahadur

Banda Bahadur was one of the most inspiring leaders in the history of Sikhs. His grand success gave Sikhism such a prestige and power as had never yet been associated with it. Those who had never heard the name of the Gurus were impressed with the grand victories of Banda and joined his ranks in thousands. But this character and achievements have been viewed differently by historians. Now we will examine their opinions.

Banda was an able and enterprising leader and not a blood-sucker

Gokal Chand Narang says, "It is of course, undeniable that the man who brought about a revolution in the character of the Sikhs and breathed a new life into them, was Guru Gobind Singh. But it may be said without any fear of contradiction that it was Banda who taught them first how to conquer." Discussing further, Dr. Ganda Singh says, "It was he who effectively organised and used it as a political force to pull down the Mughal edifice and gave a foretaste of independence to the people of the land." Latif on the other hand writes that his triumphs were not remembered as heroic deeds, but as cold blooded atrocities and women. Khafi Khan also depicts Banda Bahadur as a 'Monster who stripped open the wombs of pregnant women and cut the puppies to pieces. Ibadat Khan and Mohammad Qasim have also attributed all sorts of cruelties to Banda.

Perhaps no other man has been treated with so much hatred by the Persian writers as Banda Bahadur was. European historians also repeated the same approach. But the contemporary writers could not be, free from their bias. They were official reporters of Mughal rulers and therefore, cannot be trusted. They have wrongly tried to supprot their view with the letter of Mata Sundari in which she had reprimanded Banda for his atrocities because these were against the principles of the Guru.

But judging him in historical perspective, he does not appear to have been a monster. To cite an example of his kindness in his early days when he killed a doe, he was so moved by her pain that he renounced the world. Even afterwards when he had been converted to Sikhism he never touched meat. In fact Banda was the symbol of self sacrifice. All writers bear witness to his coolness of courage and dauntless bravery against heavy odds. His personal magnetism was so great and his extraordinary values bounds his followers closely to him. The fact, that not a single Sikh, out of thousands who were captured and executed by the Mughal renounced his faith, speaks a lot of inspiration that Banda gave to his followers by his own pious and lofty character.

While Guru Gobind Singh had sown the seeds by diverting the attention of his followers from plough to the sword and approved war and bloodshed if the cause of justice could not be otherwise vindicated, it was Banda who reaped the harvest and completely exploded the myth of the Mughal invincibility. The Hindus, after centuries of subjugation realise that they could still fight and conquer. Thus he brought about a revolution in the minds of the people of the Punjab. A strong determination was created in ordinary masses to resist tyranny and live and die for freedom.

Emphasising the point, Dr. Ganda Singh says, "The example set by Banda was to serve as a beacon light in the darker days to come. The ideas of national state long dead, once again became a living aspiration of the people and they were successful in achieving it in the end."

As an Administrator

Banda was not only a conqueror or a great warrior, he was also a good administrator and organiser. It is a fact that after the fall of Sirhind he made efficient arrangement for all the territories lying between Sirhind and Panipat. He appointed deputies to run the administration and turned out all the Mughal officers. He issued coins and stamps and symbols of the royalty of the Sikh Kingdom. As a good reformer, he realised the sufferings of the downtrodden peasantry of Punjab. He infused in them the spirit of revolt which, enable them to get rid of cruel Zamindars.

As a warrior

He had no rival in the battlefield. Even with scant resources at his disposal he set up Sikh Kingdom within no time. He created such a terror in the minds of Mughal officers that even though they numbered thousands they dared not act against him. It was the reason that forced the Mughal Emperor to come to Punjab from Deccan. He was the first man, who gave the taste of freedom to the people of the Punjab. He was an expert in battle tactics and a great leader of men. He could handle weapons with great ease. But while he made successful conquests he never forget the name of the Guru. Banda tried to translate the principle of Guru in practice. He issued coins in the name of Guru. He never thought that he could become a king of the Punjab. Whatever he did, it was in the name of Guru. There is another notable quality that is though he waged an endless struggle against the Mughal Emperor, yet he did not condemn Islam. He had given complete religious freedom to the Mohammedans in the territories governed by him.

Though his successes were temporary and he was tortured to death by the Mughal Emperor Farruk Siyar still none can deny that he has a high place in the history of the Punjab because it was under his leadership that the Punjabis, for the first time, learnt the path of conquests and freedom.

**POLITICAL STRUGGLE OF THE SIKHS AGAINST ZAKARIA
KHAN, YAHYA KHAN AND MIR MANNU**

The period between the 1716 A.D. to 1747 A.D. was that of complete black-out and sacrifices of the Sikhs in the history of the Punjab. During this phase the Mughals were determined to annihilate the Sikhs. Prices were fixed for their heads. The Sikhs had to leave their houses and took shelter in the forests. They made many sacrifices for their religion. In spite of persecution and cruel measures the Mughals failed to crush the Sikhs.

The Execution of Banda Singh Bahadur and division among the Sikhs

The Execution of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716, dealt a severe blow to the power of the Sikhs. They were left without any leader. It resulted in their division into two distinct groups, namely the *Tat Khalsa* and the *Bandai Khalsa*. The *Tat Khalsa* did not recognise Banda as their spiritual guide, and repudiated his salutation and war cry. They wore blue dress and adopted non-vegetarian diet. They greeted one another with *Wahe Guru ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru ji ki Fateh* (the Khalsa belongs to the Lord and the victory too belongs to Him), the salutation introduced by tenth master Guru Gobind Singh. The *Bandai Khalsa* considered Banda Bahadur as their spiritual leader. They put on red dress and discarded non-vegetarian diet. They continued the salutation and war-cry of Banda, 'Fateh Dharam and Fateh Darshan.'

Farrukh Siyar and Abdus Samad Khan's determination to exterminate the Sikhs

The Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar decided to root out the Sikhs. He issued a decree that any Sikh falling into the hands of Muslims should, on his refusal to embrace Islam, be put to the sword. Abdus Samad Khan, the Governor of Lahore, fully enforced the royal Firman (order) and intensified the persecution of the Sikhs. The disunity in the ranks of the Sikhs coupled with the above order of Farrukh Siyar greatly demoralised the Sikhs and forced them to take shelter in the hills and forests.

Sikhs re-unite

With the passage of time and the death of the Mughal Emperor Farruk Siyar in 1719 A.D., the Mughal Governor of the Punjab Abdus Samad Khan, who had grown old also, became slack in the enforcement of the above orders.

Gradually the Sikhs came out of their hidings and re-settled in towns and villages. In 1720 A.D. they assembled in large number at Amritsar on the occasions of Baisakhi and Diwali. Availing the opportunity, Mata Sundri (widow of Guru Gobind Singh) detailed Bhai Mani Singh, the head *Granthi* (or high priest) of Golden Temple to settle the differences of the *Tat Khalsa* and *Bandai* Sikhs. He called the leaders of the both

and tried to settle their claims by casting lots. Two chits were prepared : one bearing *Fateh Darshan* and other *Wahe Guru ji Ki Fateh*. Then there were submerged in water at *Har Ki Pauri*. It was agreed upon by both the parties that if the chit carrying *Fateh Darshan* rose to the surface first, the Tat Khalsa would merge themselves with the Bandai Sikhs. But if the other chit came to the surface first then Bandai Sikhs would join the ranks of the Tat Khalsa. To the good luck of the Tat Khalsa, slip with *Wah Guru ji Ki Fateh*, come up first. At this, though some of the Bandai Sikhs joined Tat Khalsa, others refused with the plea that the slips were not cast in a fair manner. Then it was decided to settle the claims through a wrestling match in front of the Akal Takhat. In the contest Miri Singh of the Tat Khalsa overthrew Sangat Singh of the Bandai Sikhs. As a result many Bandai Sikhs joined Tat Khalsa. Those who still persisted were driven out of the precincts of the Darbar Sahib and the scuffle that followed, Mahant Singh, the leader of the Bandais was killed. This incident demoralised the Bandis and most of them joined the ranks of the Tat Khalsa. The re-union was solemnized by simple ceremony in which the vegetarian Bandais took a little soup of the cooked meat.

The immediate result of the re-union was that the Sikhs began to assert themselves even organized to defy the harsh measures of the Mughal government. They took the offensive and inflicted a crushing defeat on a Muslim force sent under Aslam Khan by the Governor of Lahore to help the Chaudhari of Patti and his Diwan, Har Sahai. At this movement, the Mughal Government at Delhi transferred Abdus Samad Khan to Multan and Zakariya Khan was appointed the Governor of Lahore, with instructions to punish and root out the Sikhs.

Struggle of the Sikhs against Zakariya Khan (1726-1745 A.D.)

Zakaria Khan took charge of the Lahore in 1726 A.D. He adopted harsh measures. Prices were fixed for the heads of the Sikhs. They were hunted and captured in large number and brought to Lahore. They were tortured to death at a place called *Nakhs* or horse-Market (outside the Delhi Gate of Lahore). Now it is called *Shahid ganj*. As result, the Sikhs again went back to the forests and hills and braved all the hardships. It was during this period that they coined special names for their eatables and moveable property in order to prevent the enemy from knowing their real position. Onions were called silver pieces and parched gram were called almonds. But inspite of their persecution, they did not lose hearts because they were confident that one day the Khalsa would rule.

Martyrdom of Bhai Tara Singh Van

Bhai Tara Singh was resident of the village Van. He incurred the enmity of a Hindu official, Sahib Rai of Naushera Dalla. Sahib Rai while abusing Tara Singh said, "Your talk of my horse trespassing into your field? I tell you, my scissors will trespass into your beard and long hair." Accepting the challenge, Tara Singh took

away one of his mares and sold it. He deposited the sale in Guru's Langar (free kitchen). Sahib Rai, thereupon asked Jaffer Beg, the Faujdar of Patti, to help him. Faujdar sent over hundred men, but in the skirmish that followed even the nephew of Jaffer Beg was killed. That defeat enraged Jaffer Beg who begged Zakriya Khan to send a large force of Zamburaks and elephants to fight against Tara Singh. Tara Singh with his 22 men kept the whole Mughal Army of over 3000 at bay during the night. But at last he was killed with his men.

The Martyrdom of these Sikhs touched the hearts of all and removed the fear of other Sikhs. They descended from their retreat and attacked the Mughal officials when they were taking treasures from one place to another. Murtaza Khan, a royal merchant of Kandhar, who used to supply horses to the Mughal emperor, was also deprived of his animals.

The Haidari Flag

Zakaria Khan was getting exasperated with the surprise attacks of the Sikhs, sought the help of the Muslim population and raised the Haidari flag (*Jehad*). Several thousand Mohammedans proceeded under the command of Mir Innayat Ullah to crush the Sikhs. When the Sikhs learnt about this, they first retired to their distant retreats and then, after a few days, took the Muslims by surprise and took away huge quantities of ammunition, and a large number of horses. The Sikhs also fell upon the Gazis who had raised the Haidari flag in the neighbour-hood of Bhilowal and completely annihilated him and his followers. Bhagat Lachhman Singh described the last scene of the bearer of the Haidari flag as follows :

“Some Turks were cut down while fleeing, some struck against the trees..... some broke their limbs and some lost their eyes.”

“In rage, the standard bearer tore down
the Haidari flag and set it on fire.”

Zakriya Khan's policy of placating the Sikhs and the Sikhs organised themselves

Falling in his policy of persecution. Zakariya Khan set out to placate the Sikhs. In 1733 A.D., he asked the Sikhs that their leader should accept from the Mughal Government the title of Nawab and a Jagir (estate) with an annual income of rupees one lakh. In a meeting at Akal Takhat, the Sikhs discussed the proposal in detail and decided that the title of Nawab and the Jagir should be conferred upon Kapur Singh Faizulpuria.

Zakariya Khan had expected that after accepting the title and the Jagir they Sikhs would give up the life of loot and plunder and take to plough. But in that he was sadly mistaken. On the contrary, this gave a little breathing time to the Sikhs. They invested this money and time in strengthening their organisation. Nawab Kapur Singh divided the Khalsa in two groups, namely, the Budha Dal and Taruna Dal. The Budha Dal was the army of the elders and the Taruna Dal was the army of the youth.

Taruna Dal was further subdivided into five sub-groups or Jathas. Each one of these comprised of 1300 to 2000 men, had its own Sardar (leader), drum, banner and a headquarters at Amritsar. The five headquarters were :

- (a) Ramsar
- (b) Kaulsar
- (c) Bibeksar
- (d) Santokhsar
- (e) Lachmansar

All the *Jatha* collectively constituted the Dal Khalsa with Nawab Kapur Singh as the leader of both the Budha and Taruna Dals.

Confiscation of the Jagir and Persecution of the Sikhs

Between 1730 A.D. and 1739 the Sikhs continued to be a source of great trouble to the Mughals. They overran the whole of Bari-Doab. They assisted Ala Singh in establishing a small state, of Patiala in the Malwa region. Furious, Zakaria Khan confiscated the estate and sent a force under Diwan Lakhpal Rai to crush Dal Khalsa. But inspite of these harsh measures, the Sikh bands could not be eliminated.

Mughal Occupation of Harmandir Sahib

After this, Zakariya Khan forcibly took the possession of Harmandir Sahib and posted troops on all its approaches. The Chaudhars of the surrounding *Pargana* were ordered to be on look-out for the Sikhs and arrest them and send them to Lahore.

Bhai Mani Singh's Martyrdom

The circumstances resulting in the martyrdom were that on the occasion of Diwali, Bhai Mani Singh obtained the permission of Zakariya Khan to hold the fair in Amritsar. As per agreement he undertook to pay rupees ten thousand out of the offerings of the Sikhs. But one day before the fair, Zakariya Khan sent a large force and frightened away the pilgrims and thus the fair, was disturbed. But unscrupulously Zakariya Khan demanded the agreed sum from Bhai Mani Singh which he was unable to pay. On his refusal, he was arrested and offered to choose between Islam and execution. When Bhai Mani Singh stoutly refused to barter his religion, his body was cut to pieces. Thus he was martyred in 1738 A.D. and his close associates like Dewan Singh were also meted out the same treatment.

Defeat of Zakariya Khan's Army

After this Zakariya Khan sent a big force to arrest Nawab Kapur Singh, but the Sikhs inflicted a crushing defeat. Thereafter Sikhs migrated to cis-Sutlej area and collected revenue of the places of Jhajar, Dadri, Dajna etc.

Sikhs Defy Nadir Shah and Zakariya Khan's Stern Measures

In 1739, when Nadir Shah was retreating with the looted treasure of Delhi, the Sikhs fell upon the rear of his army and took away a part of the plunder. At this Nadir Shah was deeply impressed by the boldness and fearlessness of the Sikhs.

He asked Zakariya Khan about the whereabouts of the Sikhs. On hearing from Zakariya Khan that their homes were the horse backs, he warned Zakariya Khan in the following words "Take care, the day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of the country."

These remarks of Nadir Shah made Zakariya Khan think seriously. He invaded Sikhs in the fort of Dallewal and levelled it to the ground. He organised mobile columns and issued a graded list of prizes for those who assisted in the work of crushing the Sikhs. According to the list he who cut off the hair of a Sikh was awarded a blanket and a bedding, he who supplied information about the whereabouts of a Sikh got ten rupees; thus the Sikhs were obliged to quit the plains and retire to the old resorts in the forests. But even the policy of persecution did not pull down the spirits of the devoted Sikhs and they gladly faced death. Details of these martyrdoms are given below :

The Martyrdom of Mehtab Singh

Bhai Mehtab Singh Mirankotia, who was then living in Bikaner, came to know that Chaudhri Massa Ranghar had turned the central temple of Amritsar into a stable and dance-house. Outraged at the profanation, he immediately left for Amritsar with his companion Sukha Singh Kamboj and cut off Massa's head. After sometime Bhai Mehtab Singh was arrested and tortured to death.

The Martyrdom of Bota Singh

Similarly, Bota Singh also defied Mughal power. He belonged to village Bharavan in Majha. He used to visit Harmandir Sahib secretly alongwith his friend Garja Singh in order to have a holy dip in the sacred tank. Once he overheard some one remarking that the one who moved in disguise was not a true Sikh. At this he set up a post near Sarai Nur-ud-din on the Grand Trunk Road between Lahore and Amritsar and started collecting toll at the rate of one anna per cart and a piece per donkey load. Zakariya Khan, when informed of this, sent a force of 100 horse-men under the Command of Jalal-ud-din to arrest Bota Singh. But the brave Bota Singh though he had few companions, did not submit. On the contrary, he fought to his last.

Martyrdom of Bhai Taru Singh

The cause of his torture to death was that he was a Sikh who used to help his brethern. He cultivated his fields and whatever was produced he offered it to his exiled brethern. But it was considered a treason by the Mughal Government. He was handed over by a Naranjni leader Harbhagat of Jandiala to Zakariya Khan for punishment. He was asked to choose between Islam and death. As it could be any body's guess, he accepted death. As a result he was brought to the Nakhas or Shaidganj. His scalp was scrapped off. But Taru Singh tolerated the inhuman punishment courageously and continued reciting Japji.

Martyrdom of Haqiqat Rai (1742 A.D.)

Haqiqat Rai was the only son of Bhag Mal, a Khatri of Sialkot. His mother's name was Gauran. By all standards, Haqiqat was a Nanak-Panthi. At young age he was married to a Sikh girl, the daughter of Kishan Singh of Batala. Regarding Haqiqat's respect for Sikhism though he was not a baptised Sikhs, it is admitted by all that in religious zeal and the devoutness, and in regard for the honour of his creed and country, he was second to none of the professed baptized Sikhs.

The circumstances responsible for his martyrdom were that according to the tradition of that period, he had been given to the care of a Muslim teacher for the study of Persian. One day that teacher uttered a few derogatory remarks about the Hindu deities. Becoming red with anger he retorted and said few words against Bibi Fatima. As a result, he was arrested and sent to Lahore. This caused a great stir among the Hindus of the Punjab. In a bid to save his life, some of the leading Hindu officials approached the Governor of Lahore. But all efforts proved futile. After a mock trial, death sentence was passed against him. Thereafter he was tied to a pillar and flogged until he became unconscious. Then his body was cut off, and taken to a lonely place near Shah Bilawal (Lahore) and cremated.

On hearing the sad news, the entire non-Muslim people of the Punjab were in tears. His relatives and particularly his father-in-law, Sardar Kishan Singh requested the Khalsa to avenge upon the Muslim tyrants. Becoming furious the Khalsa invaded Sialkot. All such Qazis and Mughals as were responsible for the torture and martyrdom of Haqiqat Rai were put to sword.

Zakariya Khan's death

In 1745 Zakariya Khan died. To sum up his policy it would be apt to say that in spite of his policy of persecuting the Sikhs, he miserably failed in his mission even though he had to sacrifice some of his best officers. On the other hand the Sikhs had become rather powerful.

Struggle of the Sikhs against Mir Mannu**(Governorship of Mir Mannu 1748-1753)**

The history of the 18th century is a long record of conspiracies, Shameless plots, counter plots, brutal massacres and slaughters. The Sikhs, the Lahore Government and the Durrani were involved in life and death struggle. The chaos, confusion, anarchy and lawlessness had overwrap the life of the people of the Punjab.

Muin-ul-Mulk popularly known as Mir Mannu was the worthy son of Qamar-ud-din, a Minister of the Mughal Emperor, Muhammad Shah. Wazir Qamar-ud-din was leader of the Turanni Party and was able to keep hold in the affairs of the Punjab for more than a quarter of the century as he was closely related to Abdul Samad Khan and Zakariya Khan, governor of the Punjab. His son Mir Mannu was the last

strong governor of the Punjab. He was a brave general and a good organiser. In 1747, a civil war broke out between Zakariya Khan's sons. Yahiya Khan and his brother Shah Nawaz Khan. In it, Shah Nawaz Khan was in a position to overthrow his brother with the help of Kaura Mal and some other friends. Kaura Mal was appointed the Dewan with governorship in his own hand. The new Dewan being a Hindu, had sympathy with the Sikhs and so the persecutions slackened. The Sikhs got the time under Nawab Kapur Singh to regain their strength. This change in the Punjab Government was disliked by Qamar-ud-din Khan, who was also father-in-law of Yahiya Khan. So the Mughal Emperor refused to confirm Shah Nawaz Khan as a lawful governor of the Punjab. Fearing the wrath of the Delhi Government, Shah Nawaz turned to Ahmed Shah Durrani and invited him to invade India. Alarmed by the new turn of events, the Delhi Wazir won Shah Nawaz Khan to his side. Ahmed Shah, in the meantime reached Khyber, and sent his ambassador Mohammed Navin Khan to Lahore to form out the further plans. Shah Nawaz was displeased in the manner, the messenger had behaved and was sent back with unsatisfactory reply. From Rohtas, Ahmed Shah sent another messenger Sabir Shah to Lahore. Shah Nawaz asked the messenger in a very careless manner. "How is your brother, Ahmed Shah"? Sabir was angry at the insolent question and indignantly rebuked the youth for his vanity. Shah Nawaz was enraged and put the messenger to death by pouring molten lead into his mouth. On it, the Shah advanced towards Lahore. Shah Nawaz sent his army under Julle Khan, who instead joined Ahmed Shah. Shah Nawaz Khan moved ahead to face Ahmed Shah but was defeated and fled away to Delhi. Adina Beg, his pay master general also precipitely took to his heels. Ahmed Shah crossed Ravi on the 10th and 11th January, 1748 and plundered many parts of Lahore. After crossing Sutlej at Ludhiana, Ahmed Shah plundered Sirhind. The Delhi wazir marched towards Manupur, near Sirhind, and a battle was fought in which the wazir was killed. On it, his son Muin-ul-Mulk took command and inflicted a crushing defeat on Ahmed Shah Abdali, who beat a hasty retreat towards Kabul in the middle of March 1748. Now the governorship of Lahore and Multan fell into the hands of Mir Mannu on 13th April, 1748. He was also granted the title of Rustam-i-Hind. Shortly after this, however the emperor Mohammad Shah died.

Mir Mannu

The new Subedar had enormous difficulties to contend with. During this period chaos and anarchy had prevailed. In order to restore order, he reformed the whole administration. He confirmed Kaura Mal as the Dewan of Lahore and Adina Beg Khan as the Faujdar of Jalandhar Doab. The new Governor of the province, Muin-ul-Mulk, was a man of vigour and activity.

The Sikhs regain power

At the time of the appointment of the new government, confusion and lawlessness were prevalent everywhere in the Punjab. The Sikhs took full advantage of it and again became troublesome. The invasion of Abdali was a matter of all absorbing interest, upon which the attention of the whole empire was conscribed and it afforded the very vigilant Sikhs a favourable opportunity of renewing their acts of depredation. They again began to pay visits to the holy tank and shrines at Amritsar. It was at this time that Dal Khalsa was organised under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.

Organisation of Dal Khalsa

On Baisakhi day, in 1748, the 65 jathas of the Sikhs came to Amritsar. They were further united and re-divided into eleven sections. These eleven sections were merged into 'Dal Khalsa'. On the appeal of Nawab Kapur Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was appointed the Supreme Commander of Dal Khalsa. These sections were under the following leaders :- 1. Ahluwalia Jatha under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, 2. Bhangi under Hari Singh Bhangi, 3. Kanheya under Jai Singh, 4. Faizulpuria under Nawab Kapur Singh 5. Dallewalia under Gulab Singh 6. Karor Singhia under Karora Singh 7. Nishanwala under Desoundha Singh 8. Nakai under Hira Singh 9. Ramagarhia under Nand Singh 10. Shahid under Deep Singh 11. Sukerchakia under Nand Singh. These were to come for the meeting of Sarbat Khalsa, twice a year at Amritsar, where common decisions were to be carried on strictly. The booty was to be distributed equitably according to the strength of a jatha. The organisation of Dal Khalsa gave the Sikhs an efficient organisation.

Measure against the Sikhs

After assuming power in the Punjab, Mir Mannu defeated Zahid Khan, a representative of Durrani. Then he subdued the raja of Jammu and thus he consolidated his power in the Punjab. At that time the Sikhs had occupied Amritsar and had built up a fort, named Ram Rauni. They had also plundered the different parts of the province. Then his tussle with the Sikhs began. He sent troops to all the sides to crush the Sikhs. These measures being rigorously enforced, compelled the votaries of the Guru to conceal themselves in the mountains and jungles. Mir Manu issued strict orders to the hill rajas to seize the Sikhs and send them in chains to Lahore. Consequently hundreds of Sikhs were brought daily to Lahore and butchered at the Nakhas or Shahid Gunj outside the Delhi Gate. The young Mannu became irreconcilable for the Sikhs and was determined to destroy them. The Sikhs retired to the jungles, they refused to fight in the open but plundered the provision of supplies of the government. Whenever the troops came to chastise them, they would either settle down as cultivators or fly to the mountains or jungles. When the troops returned, they would commence their depredation again. Many times the governor himself

went on hunting expeditions and put many Sikhs to death.

Siege of Ram Rauni

When the rainy season was over, the Sikhs came to Amritsar to celebrate Dewali. Mir Mannu was not a man to miss this opportunity and he marched against the Sikhs. He ordered Adina Beg to join him. The Sikhs about 500 in number kept themselves inside Ram Rauni. The Sikhs troubled the enemy from inside and outside. In the siege of about three months in 1748, about 200 Sikhs were killed. Inside the fort, the Sikhs were in shortage of food and ammunition. Then, they decided to die by fighting and uttered famous exclamation of Sat Sri Akal. On hearing it Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who was in the rank of Adina's army sent a message for forgiveness and permission to join them. The permission was granted and he joined his brethren with his hundred followers. The Sikhs resumed to fight with greater enthusiasm. In the meanwhile, Shah Nawaz Khan, helped by Sufdar Jung, the wazir at Delhi, to Multan to harass Mir Mannu. At the same time, the news for the second attack of Ahmed Shah Abdali was also floating. Dewan Kaura Mal, then convinced Mannu by saying, "The Sikhs always cause confusion or disorder. It will be advisable if you reach a settlement with these people. They will not then create disturbances." It is said that Adina Beg, did not subscribe to that view and wanted to continue the war against the Sikhs. But Mannu, acting on the advice of Kaura Mal, made peace with Sikhs and granted 1/4 of the revenue of the Parganna of Patti. Thus peace prevailed between the two parties for some time.

Second Invasion of Ahmed Shah

In December, 1748 Ahmed Shah Abadli crossed Indus and encamped his soldiers at Sodhara. Mir Mannu himself reached Sodhara with his army. The Shah addressed a letter to Mannu, demanding the territory of four Mahals and the areas of the revenue since the time of Nadir Shah's invasion. Mannu forwarded the letter to Delhi, and also asked for help to meet the invader. Wazir Safdar Jang, at Delhi, was not in a mood to help Mir Mannu. So Mir Mannu with the help of Adina Beg of Jalandhar and Mehdi Ali Khan of Sialkot, marched against Abdali.

On the other hand the Shah divided his army into two parts. One was kept under himself at Sodhara on the Bank of Chenab and the other was sent to Lahore under Jahan Khan. The presence of the Afghan general at Sodhara caused confusion at Lahore. Taking advantage of the situation, Nawab Kapur Singh entered Lahore and sat on the platform of the Kotwali but retired on hearing the news of the approach of Iqbal Khan, the Deputy Governor of Lahore. Jahan Khan failed to enter Lahore and so went back to join his master. For about two months both the armies remained face to face without fighting any decisive battle. Then both the parties came to terms.

Shah got the territory lying to the west of Indus and the revenue of four Mahals, Sialkot, Aurangabad, Gujarat and Pasrur, amounting to 14 lakhs a year. Then Abdali retired by making Mannu as head of the territory of the Afghan king.

Campaign against Shah Nawaz

Safdar Jang, the New Delhi Wazir, had been a rival, of wazir Qamur-ud-din. Hence he was jealous of Mir Mannu and encouraged conspiracies and plots against the newly appointed Subedar Nasir Khan. Instigated by the wazir, Nasir Khan collecting about 18 thousand cavalry soldiers rose in revolt. He also recruited one thousand soldiers of Mannu with a promise of higher pay. Mannu marched against him with Dewan Kaura Mal, Adina Beg, Mehdi Ali Khan, Mir Bhikhari Khan etc. Near Sialkot, a battle was fought in which Nasir Khan was defeated and fled towards Delhi. Safdar Jang also sent Shah Nawaz Khan to Multan to create disturbances against Mannu. Shah Nawaz crossed Lakhi jungle and even asked the Sikhs to disturb Mannu. He reached Multan with an army of 15,000 horses and foot, and wrote to Mannu asking for permission to visit his father's tomb at Lahore. Mannu saw through the game and sent Kaura Mal with the army towards Multan. The Dewan also sought the help of Sikhs under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. The latter were paid at regular rate of payment. Besides this they were allowed to retain whatever was got in booty near villages Langara and Durana. Shah Nawaz was killed in the battle and his head was brought to Lahore. Mannu was pleased with the Dewan and appointed him the Deputy governor of Multan with the title of 'Maharaja Bahadur.'

Peaceful Period

Dewan Kaura Mal presented eleven thousand rupees as a thanks giving present to the Darbar Sahib Amritsar. He began to be called by the Sikhs as 'Mitha Mal'. The holy tank was dug up and cleaned. In 1749, the Dewali was celebrated. The Dewan spent three lakh of Rupees at Nankana Sahib also. The Sikhs utilized the peaceful time in strengthening and consolidating their organisation. The oppressed peasants also joined Sikhism. The Dal Khalsa gained more strength. On the other side, Mir Mannu began to take effective measure again to crush the Sikhs, thinking that the Sikhs would be a grim danger to his government. One thousand Jizails (new type of light guns) were cast and the intensive training was given to the soldiers under his personal supervision.

Persecution Renewed

Mir Mannu began the persecution policy of the Sikhs again with greater vigour. Each Sikh's head brought a reward of Rs. 10. The State provided free horse to soldiers, who had lost it during the campaign against the Sikhs. Mir Amanullah and Mumin Khan drove the Sikhs to the deserts of Malwa and Bikaner and the forests of the Eastern Punjab. The hill chiefs drove the Sikhs out of their respective territories on the orders of the Lahore government. Many Sikhs were brought to Lahore and

slain at Shahidganj. Adina Beg and Dewan Kaura Mal did not take effective measure against the Sikhs. Thus for many reasons, Mir Mannu failed to crush the Sikhs.

Third Invasion of Ahmed Shah Abdali

In 1751, Ahmed Shah began his expedition with great earnestness. He charged Mannu that no regular payment of the tribute was made to him. Towards the end of 1750, he had also sent his agent Sukh Jiwan for the purpose, but Mannu had played him off with a small amount. In October, 1751 he sent his agent Harun Khan at Lahore, but in the meanwhile, two of his generals, Abdul Khan and Jahan Khan started preparing a bridge on the river Attack. In November 1751, Ahmed Shah Abdali himself reached Peshawar and sent a message to Mannu to pay him three years arrears amounting to twenty four lakhs of rupees. Mannu sent nine lakhs of rupees stating that the rest had been appropriated by Nasir Khan, who had fled to Delhi. Mannu prolonged the negotiations also in order to gain time for the arrival of Dewan Kaura Mal, who had been asked to come with his forces. On his arrival he sent the evasive reply to the Shah, through the messenger. He also threatened Ahmed Shah that the issue could be decided by the sword. Mir Mannu sent his family to Jammu and marched towards Shah Daula Bridge at the head of 50,000 horse and foot and 40 guns. Abdali also reached there. One day Abdali played a game and cut Mannu's rear, reached Lahore and encamped at the Dera of Shah Bilawal. He began to loot and plunder the area. On hearing it, Mir Mannu hastened back and entrenched himself in the city. He was besieged. The surrounding areas were destroyed. Dewan Kaura Mal got the help of 20,000 Sikhs on the promise that after the departure of the invader from the Punjab the Sikhs would get the hilly tracts-Kathuha, Basoli, and the surrounding valleys. The Sikhs took their position near Shalimar Gardens at Lahore under Sangat Singh and Sukha Singh. Then they reached Yakki gate. Some petty skirmishes took place and in one of them Sukha Singh with some of the Sikhs was killed. The remaining Nihangs retreated under fire, which they received through some misunderstanding from the city wall. Being disgusted with this treatment at the hands of those for whose defence they had risked their lives, these Nihangs and some others left the city for their headquarters. During this period, the flour became exceedingly dear and the fodder was not available. Mir Mannu called a meeting of the council of war. Some like Bhikari Khan favoured peace at all cost. Adina Beg supported an all out attack on the enemy. Dewan Kaura Mal realising the position, told that till summer, the time be passed because the army of the Shah would not tolerate the heat of the sun. This wise counsel was, however, brushed aside by the impetuous and youthful governor, who decided for immediate action. In March 1752 the army of Mir Mannu fell upon the force of Ahmed Shah Abdali at Mahmud Boti. During the fight, Adina Beg advised Mannu to call back Dewan Kaura Mal with the detachment of his troops so that a joint attack might be made on the enemy. The

Dewan, however, refused to comply with it, stating that if he did so, it would be considered as a sign of retreat by the enemy and thus the Shah would destroy entire detachment of his soldiers. Mir Mannu on the advice of Adina Beg, strictly ordered the Dewan and he left his position. As expected the worst happened. The enemy attacked and confusion prevailed in the ranks of Dewan Kaura Mal. The presence of Kaura Mal encouraged his soldiers and the enemy began to be pushed back. At this crucial time, the elephant of Dewan fell on the ground by an accident. Adina Beg was watching the development when the Dewan tried to mount the elephant of Mehmata Khan, One Bazid Khan, an agent of Adina Beg fired the Dewan on receiving the signal from his master. The Dewan fell down dead-A Durrani cut off the head of the Dewan and carried it away. Mannu shut himself up in the fort. By finding further resistance fruitless, he made his submission to the Shah and the town was occupied by the Afghan troops in the spring of 1752. Mir Mannu was arrested and brought before the Durrani king. An interesting anecdote of Mannu's interview with Afghan conqueror is told by Mufti Ali-ud-din in his Ibrat Nama. The following conversation took place between the Durrani King and Mir Mannu :

Durrani— "Why didn't you come to make your homage to me before?"

Mir Mannu— "Because I had, then, another lord to serve."

Durrani— "Why didn't that lord now come to your succour?"

Mir Mannu— "Because he thought his servant could take care of himself."

Durrani— "What could you have done, if I had fallen in your hands?"

Mir Mannu— "I would have cut your head and sent it to Delhi, to my master."

Durrani— "Now that you are at my mercy, what do you expect from me?"

Mir Mannu— "If you are merchant, sell me : if a tyrant, kill me, if a king, pardon me."

The Shah was struck with the address and frankness of this youthful adversary, and not only spared his life but conferred upon him the title of Ferzand (son) Khan Bahadur Rustam-i-Hind, and confirmed him in the Governorship of Lahore. "Mir Mannu was to send the surplus revenue of the Punjab and to receive the final orders of Abdali in all important matters. A colony of Suddozai Afghans was planted in Multan. In this expedition he also conquered Kashmir and left Sukh Jiwan Mal, a Khatri, as his governor there. Ahmed Shah also got the treaty signed with Mir Mannu, which was subsequently approved by the Delhi Government. Thus, Lahore and Multan became part of the Durrani Kingdom. Adina Beg Khan who wanted the governorship for himself was put under restraint for sometime. Thirty lakhs of rupees were to be paid by Mannu to the Shah, 10 Lakhs for the grant of life to him and his people, 10 lakhs for the territory granted to him and 10 lakhs for sparing the rest of India. Out of these 26 lakhs were paid down at once, and the remaining 4 lakhs were to be remitted to the invader before he retired beyond the Indus.

Renewal of Persecution

During the Mannu-Abdali war, anarchy and confusion prevailed in the Punjab. It was long sought opportunity for the Sikhs. The Sikhs plundered the whole of the Bari Doab and punished the Mohammedan families of repute, who had played some part against the Sikhs. The Jalandhar Doab was also sacked by the Sikhs and the Sayyids and Pirzadas, were plundered. The war of independence gained more momentum. The absence of Adina Beg to Lahore provided opportunity to the Sikhs, who crossed Satluj and savaged the territories of Sirhind, Thanesar and Jind. In December, 1752, Kamgar Khan, the governor of Sonapat and Panipat checked the advance of the Sikhs and pushed them back. At the same time, Sikhs under Charat Singh Sukarchakia went north-wards beyond Jhelum. Mubarak Khan, the Gakkar chief of Gujarat yielded and handed over his territory to the Sikhs beyond the Chenab. So the Sikhs led their depredations in Chaj and Rachna Doaba also.

Feeling secure against intrusion from Kabul or Delhi, Mir Mannu began to concert measure to remove the causes of disturbances with the country. He now stood in need of the Sikhs, whose last link with the government and snapped with the death of Dewan Kaura Mal. He resumed his old attitude towards them and withdrew the Jagir which they had been enjoying since the early months of 1749. Prices were fixed up once again, for the heads of the Sikhs and strict orders were issued against giving shelter to them any where. Adina Bag was deputed to bring them to book. Adina welcomed this commission as an opportunity to undo the suspicion which attached to his inaction and treachery at the recent battle of Lahore, and to his alleged temporising with insurgent peasantry of the Punjab and Sadiq Beg fell upon the Sikhs during festival at Makhawal called Anandpur Sahib, where they had assembled from all quarters, and inflicted a total defeat on them. Mir Mannu sent Mir Mumin to the Lakhi jungles for the destruction of the Sikhs but he failed. Another force under Hussain Khan was despatched. The Sikhs were engaged in an open fight in which they suffered defeat because of their unequal number and the shortage of food. In the central districts, Mir Mannu, himself took the task of destroying the Sikhs root and branch. Once, he had encamped himself at Batala, when he came to know that some Sikhs blocked the traffic are disturbing the people. The forces under Sayyid Jamil-ud-din Khan and Bakhshi Ghazi Beg, were despatched at once. The Sikhs faced them bravely. Then they took refuge in the fortress of Ram Rauni and about 900 were killed. On reaching Lahore he sent the moving column under Khwaja Mirja to chastise the Sikhs. Every day he generally covered a distance of about thirty miles and killed all the Sikhs he had come across. Those who captured were hammered to death with wooden clubs. Adina Beg used to send about forty or fifty Sikhs daily from Jalandhar Doab to Lahore. They were also executed in the same manner. In spite of these harsh measures, Mir Mannu failed to draw out the Sikhs

from their hideouts. Then the women and the children of the Sikhs were arrested. Unspeakable tortures were inflicted upon them. Mir Mannu made a frantic appeal to about three hundred women and one hundred children which were kept at Lahore for embracing Islam but of no use. Then Mannu flew into rage and ordered that each one of the women should be given one and quarter of a maund of grains daily to grind. In case any one did not do that, she was to be caned. The children were snatched away from the breasts and thrown up like balls, to fall upon spears and other sharp edged weapons. They were cut into pieces before the very eyes of their mothers and their flesh was thrown into the mother's laps. The able bodies were killed fighting the non-combatants including women and children were brought in chains to Lahore and decapitated at the horse market. In spite of such atrocities their spirit did not fail. Rather the iron spirit of the Sikhs women and men became bolder than before. The number of the Dal Khalsa increased. The Sikhs would repeat the following song of their bravado of their coming down of the days :—

“Mannu is our sickle,
And we are a crop for him to mow,
The more he cuts us the more we grow.”

On November 2, 1753, Mannu rode out from his camp at Malikpur, for hunting the Sikhs. His horse fled at the sound of Sikhs firing and threw him off his seat. While falling he got his foot caught in the stirrup and he was dragged along the ground for some distance. As a result of this accident he breathed his last on November 4, 1753.

On hearing the news of the death of Mannu on 9th November, 1753, a strong Sikhs detachment attacked Lahore. The ladies were rescued and escorted to their homes by the Khalsa. The informers, officials and jagirdars who had helped in the arrest of ladies, were caught hold of and were all put to the sword. The Turks of Pathankot, the Jat informers of Majitha, and Mahant Akil Das of Jandiala, were similarly chastised. The Mir Mannu, in spite of vast resources, failed to crush the Sikhs.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE DAL KHALSA

Introduction : Mounting oppression of the Mughal Government compelled the Sikhs to leave their hearths and homes and take shelter in jungles and mountains. They faced all these atrocities cheerfully. In order to protect their lives and property, and to face the cruel rulers, they organised themselves into small mobile bands thereby posing a serious challenge to the Mughal empire. Zakaria Khan, in 1726, with his appointment as Governor after Abdus Samad Khan, started persecuting the Sikhs. In order to annihilate the Sikhs, he organised military columns; the latter were entrusted with the task of hunting the Sikhs in the mountains and jungles and putting them to death. Not only that, price for their heads was fixed, and they were brought to Lahore and then outside the Delhi Gate at 'Nakhas' (named after horse market) and were tortured to death. Further in order to destroy the Sikhs, Zakariya Khan got help from the Muslims of the Punjab and threw a challenge to the Sikhs. The Sikhs not only defeated the Muslims who had gathered under the Hyderi flag at Bhilowal.

Thus, when all his plans to subdue the Sikhs failed, Zakaria Khan abandoned the heretic policy and started negotiations with the Sikhs.

Sikhs Organise Under the Leadership of Nawab Kapur Singh

To please the Sikhs, Zakariya Khan offered a *jagir* and the title of *Nawab* to them. The Sikhs accepted the offer. That is why their leader Kapur Singh was given the title of *Nawab* and an annual *Jagir* of rupees one lakh. So, after 25 years of strained relations, the Mughal Government compromised with the Sikhs. Zakariya had thought that after his compromise, the Sikhs would adopt the peaceful profession of farming but his hopes were not fulfilled. By this time the Sikhs had become perfect soldiers. As soon as they got respite, they started organizing themselves

into columns, in a better way. In the year 1734 at Amritsar, in order to consolidate the entire disintegrated fabric of the Sikh Commonwealth, Nawab Kapur Singh divided them into two parts, the one was named *Budha Dal* and the other *Taruna Dal*. The Budha Dal was to consist of all the old Sikhs who had witnessed the days of Guru Gobind Singh, and it was entrusted with the duty of looking after the Sikh holy places. Kapur Singh was made incharge of it. The Taruna Dal was to consist of youthful Sikhs and it was to undertake the defence of the community. But soon after, when the strength of *Taruna Dal* grew to as many as 12000, for efficiency and convenience of administration, it was divided into five sections and their respective leaders were :

1. Baba Dalip Singh
2. Karam Singh and Dharam Singh
3. Kahan Singh and Binod Singh
4. Dasoundha Singh
5. Bir Singh and Jiwan Singh

Each of these sections had its own drum and flag. At Amritsar, their respective headquarters were Ram Sar, Lachhman Sar, Kaul Sar and Santokh Sar. Nawab Kapur Singh was the common leader of both the Dals and because of his humility and strength of character, he was held in high esteem by all the Sikhs and his orders were diligently obeyed.

Policy of the Dal Khalsa Against the Mughals : Both the Dals followed united policy towards their common foes-the Mughals, especially the Taruna Dal had put the Mughals in great trouble. They looted the entire Bari Doab and reached upto Hissar. These proceedings of the Sikhs created fear in the mind of Zakariya Khan. Under the leadership of Diwan Lakhpat Rai he again sent an army to exterminate the Sikhs. At Basarke, near Amritsar, the Mughals clashed with the Budha Dal. The latter was defeated and it marched towards Chunian. But soon after the Taruna Dal arrived and defeated the Mughals. Lakhpat Rai's nephew and

Faujdars Jalal Khan and Tatar Khan were killed in this action. Kapur Singh was the leader of the Sikhs in the battle.

Zakariya Khan's Death and the Reorganization of the Sikhs

After Zakariya Khan's death and taking advantage of the civil war the Sikhs gathered at Amritsar on the Diwali day in 1745. There they passed a resolution (Gurmata) and divided themselves into 25 columns (jathas) of one hundred each. This Gurmata was passed after a long period of oppression. The columns, in addition to having the same religion, had many other things common in life. The two prerequisites for a person to enlist himself in any of these columns were to know house-riding and fighting. To have a horse and match-lock were even more desirable. Treatment of the leader of a columns with the Dal Khalsa as a whole was equal. The booty was also equally divided among all. This system produced many brave leaders. Any person who was fearless, brave and quick decision maker used to attract pride. Thus, the division of the Sikhs into *Jathas* on permanent lines was an important milestone in their period of struggle. These military columns adopted guerilla mode of fighting, which proved quite useful and in which their losses were minimum. These columns also laid the foundation of the army of the Khalsa Commonwealth.

These military bands continued to make small raids. They did not have any common leader. In 1746, at the time of smaller holocaust (Chhota Ghallughara), although they assembled their forces, even then they did not have any common leader. Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Singh Bahadur had impressed upon the Sikhs to unite. With the passage of time and Sikhs also felt the necessity of having a common leader. Now they had 65 'jathas' and it was feared that instead of uniting they might indulge in selfishness and jealousy.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia becomes Common Leader of the Khalsa Dal

According to Hari Ram Gupta, luckily at that time the Sikhs found a capable leader Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who had been trained under Nawab Kapur Singh.

The latter was now an old man and was looking for an opportunity to entrust the command of the Dal Khalsa to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. This opportunity came after the invasion of Ahmed Shah Abdali. In 1748, on the Diwali day when the Sikhs gathered at Amritsar. Nawab Kapur Singh laid emphasis on the unity of the Sikhs Panth and appointed Jassa Singh as common leader of the Sikh army. Sixty five bands were now grouped into 12 units (Misls) and each unit was to have a separate name, separate flag and separate army.

Division of the Khalsa Dal into 12 Main Units (Misls)

1. **The Ahluwalia Misl :** Its commander was Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and he was also the common leader of the entire army.
2. **The Faizalpuria or Singhapuria Misl :** It was under the command of Nawab Kapur Singh Faizalpuria.
3. **The Sukerchakia Misl :** It was under the command of Naudh Singh, who was a residence of village Suke chak in Gujranwala district.
4. **The Nishanwalia Misl :** It was under the leadership of Dasoundha Singh.
5. **The Bhangi Misl :** It was under the command of Hari Singh Bhangi.
6. **The Kanheyia Misl :** It was led by Jai Singh Kanheyia who was resident of village Kahna in Lahore district.
7. **The Nakai Misl :** Its leader was Hira Singh Nakai who was a resident of village Bharwal-Chunian in Lahore Tehsil.
8. **The Dallewalia Misl :** It was being led by Gulab Singh.
9. **The Shaheed Misl :** It was under the leadership of Sardar Dip Singh.
10. **The Karor Singhia Misl :** Karor Singh was a resident of Panjgarh.
11. **The Ramgarhia Misl :** It was under the leadership of Nand Singh.
12. **The Phulkian Misl :** Leader of the Phulkian Misl was Chaudhary Phul.

Every Sikhs, who believed in the principles set by Guru Gobind Singh was considered a member of the Dal Khalsa and it was compulsory for every Sikh to join any of the Misls. He was also expected to know horse-riding and use of the

weapons. At the time of war or peace, all the Misls fought unitedly under the command of a common leader, who used to be elected before hand. The rest of the eleven Misldars continued the advisory council or in other words as the 'war council'. In order to maintain unity among the Misls, meetings were held on the Diwali and Baisakhi days in Amritsar. On these occasions all Sikh Sardars gathered under their leaders and convened a special council they discussed important problems of the Panth and passed resolutions. The work of the Akalis was to fight and defend the religion. They also looked after the religious problems at Amritsar. They were the staunch followers of their religion. Their primary duty was to maintain tradition among the Sikhs. They used to take active part in the national councils and administrated 'pahul'. They fined those persons who violated the principles established by the Gurus; they also did not allow those to attend Durbar Sahib who did not obey the rules. In this way a Federal union came into existence among the Sikhs. Leader of the Dal Khalsa was considered head of the nation and church. When there was no emergency, every Misl solved its own problem and at the time of fighting, the Misl Sardar was its leader. A Sardar was respected by his companions but if any action of the Panth or Misl was disapproved or if the Sardar showed indifference to a particular problem, the Sikhs joined the other Misl. That is why head of a Misl always kept in mind, the needs and aspirations of his companions. He always treated them well, so that he might remain popular with them. Thus every Sikh of the Dal Khalsa was happy and a Misl chief could not act with highhandedness. This made the Sikhs freedom loving.

Not only they were treated well but also given equal share in the booty and land. They had also gone through the ceremony of 'Khande di Pahul' which imbibed a spirit of brotherhood and unity among them. Due to common interests, they fought against the common enemy. That is why the temperament and character of all of them was the same. The leaders of the Dal were really brave soldiers and were quite sensible. They played an important role in strengthening the Sikh power.

Results of forming the Dal Khalsa

Its main and important results was that after a period of 32 years, the Sikhs were again united and they bravely faced the hardships. They considered that to obey their leader was a religious duty and decision made by the Panth was an order of the Guru. Sacrifice for the cause of the Panth was a sacrifice for the Guru. They became a military power and thus paved the way for establishing their political power.

Modes of Fighting

Methods of fighting of the Khalsa Dal were quite wonderful. They generally adopted guerilla mode of fighting. At the time of offence, the Dal was bubbling with the enthusiasm and the lightening speed and thunder of the clouds. Their methods of plundering had frightened the people.

The Sikh soldiers were not given regular training in drill or how to take offensive and defensive position yet they were quite adept in fighting. Their lack of military training was substituted by their deep attachment to religion, service to the Panth, spirit of revenge, self respect, etc. They were good horse-riders. Every Sikh kept with him provisions for himself and his horse, his bedding and weapons of offence and defence etc. Even after traversing 50 to 100 miles a day, they were ready to take an offensive against the enemy. Horse and weapons were the most precious possessions of a Sikh.

Forty or more than forty soldiers dashed towards the enemy with a lightening speed. They stopped at once on reaching the enemy and emptied their guns by continuous firing. Then after retreating about 100 paces they repeated the action. The quickness with which they loaded these guns has no parallel in Indian History. This swiftness put their enemies at their wits and made them helpless. The Sikhs continued this mode of fighting until the soldier and the horse were tired. Then, soldiers fighting in the front lines went back and vice-versa. After feeding their horses with grass and themselves taking parched grams, they were again ready

to fight. The enemy thought they had fled but the Sikhs pounced upon the enemy after a sudden halt. Every Sikh fought hand to hand, and many a time strangled his enemy to death.

RISE OF THE SIKH MISLS : THEIR NATURE AND ORGANISATION

Origin and Growth of the Misls

As we have already discussed in the first part of this lesson that sixty-five jathas further reduced to twelve big jathas (Misls) and each jatha had its separate leadership, name and a banner, but they varied in strength. These divisions, in course of time began to be called 'Misls'. It must be remembered that these Misls were deliberately not formed at one particular time but were, on the other hand, allowed to grow gradually to meet the exigencies of the time. It is desirable to explain the word "Misl" before we discuss them.

Meaning of the Word Misl

According to Cunningham Misl is an Arabic word meaning equal. Because the important feature of the Sikh Jathas operating in the Punjab during 1716-99 was the sense of equality that prevailed amongst that jathedar and members of the same Misl. Besides, according to the Sikh religion, all Sikhs are absolutely equal and, therefore, in peace time, all members claimed social equality. Of course, the orders of the Sardar (Jathedar) were obeyed in time of emergency when there was war, but beyond that there was no obligation. Payne, therefore, says, "As membership in such a jatha or group confined to political, religious and social equality to all its members, they began to be designated as Misls."

Origin and growth of the Misls

We have discussed in detail about the origin of the Misls in the first part of this lesson. But it is desirable to give a brief account here also. The exact origin of the Misls is somewhat uncertain and unclear. The Misls emerged out of the disturbed political conditions of the Punjab after the death of Aurangzeb. They took roots during the Pathan invasions and emerged as masters of the Punjab after Abdali's death.

The tradition of armed opposition of the Mughals has been set by Guru Gobind Singh himself. Banda Singh Bahadur sharpened this opposition and instead of remaining on the defensive he was mostly on the offensive. The disturbed political conditions of the Punjab, the loose hold of Delhi upon Lahore, the various districts, helped Banda in undertaking raids on various seats of Mughal authority in the Punjab. The choice of the place from where he started is also striking. Sirhind was the place to begin the religious crusade to avenge the wrongs done to the Guru and the Khalsa. The appeal was striking. A large number of Sikh leaders flocked to his banner. Sikh peasantry in the Punjab was in arms. Wazir Khan, the

notorious Naib Subedar of Sirhind was killed and the Mughal army was routed. Sirhind was plundered. Banda held the country between Karnal and Ludhiana. He abolished the Zamindari system. At his instance the peasants forcibly turned out the landlords and became the masters of lands they tilled. Abolition of the Zamindari system and turning out the landlords had far reaching consequences. A Zimindar was an agent and a symbol of the legal government and it is through him that the land revenue was collected from the peasantry. And as such the peasantry joined the revolt started by Banda. It was also in their interest, for future, to aid Banda and his successors for fear of restoration of the system. It is these sturdy peasants who joined the ranks of misls later on. Caste system was abolished thus giving the low caste Hindus a mission in life and a sense of dedication. The victory at Sirhind was a signal for revolt in other parts of the Punjab notably Jalalabad, Jalandhar Doab and Sadhaura. Banda was, however, defeated and cut to pieces at Delhi. Banda provided the Sikhs their dream of a national state and showed the way to achieve the same. As stated earlier, the Sikhs divided themselves in jathas in order to protect themselves and their number of the jathas later rose to 65. Because of the large number of armed Sikh bands operating in different parts of the Punjab, these bands were reorganised and number was reduced to 12.

Amongst these 12 Misls, eight were of great strength and prosperity; four were of lesser importance. In fact, some historians consider only eight misls proper, the rest four to be merely jathas, or 'Dehras'. The Nishanwalias, the Nakais, Karorsinghias of Panjgarhias and the Shahids were never of much consequence. Ibbetson also does not give them place of misl. Now we shall study in brief the history of each Misl.

1. The Ahluwalia Misl

It was founded by Sadda Singh Kalal. The most important leader of this misl was Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. He was brought up by Kapur Singh, the greatest of the Sikh contemporaries of the period. Jassa Singh not only became the leader of the Ahluwalia misl but of the entire Dal Khalsa. He was the leader of the Sikh misl after the invasion of Nadir Shah. He tortured the Mughal faujdars and plundered Kasur and Jalandhar Doab. His misl suffered a heavy loss in the *Wada Ghulughara* in 1762, but soon regained the strength and the lost territory. The misl had a strength of about 7000 and a territory of 4 lakhs revenue. Jassa Singh was the leader of the Khalsa from 1748 to 1783. This was the most crucial period in the struggle of the Sikhs against the Mughals and the Durranis. Jassa Singh died in 1783 and was succeeded by his son Fateh Singh Ahluwalia who ruled upto 1837. After his death his descendants ruled till 1949.

2. The Bhangi Misl

This was the most important misl on the north-west of Sutlej. The name Bhangi was given to it because of the addiction of Bhang (opium) by their founder. He was

Chajja Singh of Panjwar. Chajja Singh initiated three of his relatives, namely Bhim Singh of Kasur and Malla Singh and Jagat Singh. They plundered and conquered vast territories in the Punjab. The misl required great strength during the leadership of Hari Singh who established his headquarters at the village Gilwali in Amritsar District. He captured Karial, Mirowal, and Chiniot in Jahng, Rawalpindi and a large tract in Majha and Malwa. He also captured a large ammunition belonging to Khawaja Ahmed, Governor of Lahore. He also pillaged Jammu and forced Raja Ranjit Deo to pay him the Rakhi. He with the Ramgarhias and the Kanheyas attacked Kasur twice. Hari Singh was succeeded by Jhanda Singh under whom the misl reached its peak of strength and glory. He was also able to capture the prestigious town of Multan after three attempts. He was murdered by a *mazhabi* Sikh at the instance of Jai Singh Kanheya. In 1782, Gulab Singh became the leader of Bhangi Misl.

3. Ramgarhia Misl

It was founded by Khushal Singh of Guga village of Amritsar. This misl took its name from Ram Rauni or the Fortress of God which was named Ramgarh by Jassa Singh Ichhogillia. The famous leader under whom the misl got its shape was Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. He was born at Ichhogil in 1723. According to Kanhya Lal, as he originally belonged to Ichhogil and his parents were carpenters by profession, Jassa Singh, before taking the title of 'Ramgarhia' was known Jassa Singh Ichhogillia to distinguish himself from other great leader Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. He conquered the fort of Ram Rauni and named it as Ramgarh. He was able to conquer Kalanaur, Qadian, Ghuman, Dina Nagar, despite his defeat at the hands of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. After his death the misl became weak and ultimately Ranjit Singh seized the Ramgarhia possession in 1814.

4. The Sukerchakia Misl

It was founded by Charat Singh. He established his supremacy in Rachana Doab (between Ravi and Chenab). Gujranwals was the headquarters of this misl. Later on, a marriage with Kanheyia Misl greatly strengthened the misl because Sada Kaur of the Kanheyia greatly helped her son-in-law Ranjit Singh to strengthen his position. Under Ranjit Singh the misl absorbed almost all the other misls and established Sikh kingdom in the Punjab.

5. Kanheyia Misl

It was founded by Jai Singh of Kahna village, about ten miles from Lahore. Jai Singh captured the fertile lands known as Riarki. Later, he captured Haripur, Mukerian, Pathankot, Gurdaspur and Kangra. The misl was involved in internal war against the Bhangis and the Ramgarhias. The position of this misl was strengthened by the matrimonial alliance with the Sukerchakias as discussed before. After the death of Jai Singh Kanheyia in 1781, the affairs of the misl passed on to the hands

of his widow Mai Sada Kaur. Ranjit Singh seized the Kanheyia possessions in 1822.

6. The Nakai Misl

It was founded by Hira Singh. He started his career while he was still very young. He captured the Nakai territory between Lahore and Gogira on the Multan side. The misl became weak after Hira Singh's death. Ranjit Singh captured its possessions.

7. The Dallewalia Misl

The misl acquired its name from the village Dallewal on the Ravi. Tara Singh Gheba was its most important leader. The misl possessed greater portion of upper Jalandhar Doab and northern portion of Ambala and Ludhiana with some estate in Ferozepur. Tara Singh Gheba was a great friend and supporter of Ranjit Singh. He died in Naraingarh campaign. Immediately after his death Ranjit Singh annexed territories of this misl.

8. The Nishanwalia Misl

Sangat Singh and Mohar Singh, two jats are said to have founded this misl. They were the standard bearers of Dal Khalsa and hence the name. After the Durrani invasions, the Nishanwalia sacked the country east of the Sutlej upto Meerut. Ambala was their headquarters. After Sangat Singh's death, Ranjit Singh attacked the misl and their possessions were annexed. However, because of the British intervention resulting in the treaty of Amritsar in 1809, the possessions went to the British with the exception of Shahbad which remained in the hands of subordinate chief of the Nishanwalias.

9. The Shahid Misl

The founder of the misl was Sadda Singh, the mahant of the Talwandi Shrine. He became a martyr at the hands of the Muslim governor of Jalandhar and hence the name. The members of this misl were the religious devotees of Guru Gobind Singh and used to wear the traditional blue dress with iron rings on the turban. They used to join raids organised by others rather than undertaking raids of their own. They were very fearless, courageous and brave soldiers. They formed the backbone of most of the resistance during the Muslim atrocities. Despite heavy precautions they kept the spirit of resistance alive. Later they formed the most trusted and valiant part of Ranjit Singh's troops.

10. The Karor Singhia or Panjgarhia Misl

It was founded by Karor Singh of village Panjgarh. Their territory mainly lay between Jamuna and Markanda. His successor was Bhagel Singh who was a great leader. The misl helped Ranjit Singh in the expansion of his kingdom. Later on most of their possessions were annexed by Ranjit Singh into his state.

11. Fazalpuria Misl

It was founded by Nawab Kapur Singh who was the leader of the Sikhs and

the founder of the misl system. The territory of this misl was on both sides of the Sutlej. Nawab Kapur Singh who was made the Nawab by the Mughal governor and was succeeded by Khushal Singh. He had under his control Bharatgarh, Nurpur, Behrampur and Jalandhar. Khushal Singh was succeeded by Budh Singh but under him the misl started declining in power and its territories on the west of Sutlej were annexed by Ranjit Singh. The territory on east remained under British protection.

12. The Phulkian Misl

According to one account this misl was blessed by Guru Har Rai. But the actual founder appears to be Phul, Bhatti Rajput of Jaisalmer who later on converted to Sikhism. Phul left behind his seven sons who formed seven different families of the Phulkian groups. The famous amongst them were Patiala, Nabha and Jind Houses. Baba Ala Singh, the founder of the Patiala House, was a famous figure of his times. By the treaty of 1809, the Misl came under the British Protection.

Nature of the Organisation of Sikh Misls : Different historians have expressed different views about the organisation of the Sikh Misls which are being discussed below :

Cunningham's view : Historian like Cunningham describes this organisation as theocratic, confederate and feudalistic. It was theocratic because God was their helper and only Judge. Community of faith was their moving principle, and the devotion to the sword of Guru Gobind was their material instrument. It was their firm belief to maintain their religion at all cost. Thus twelve Misls were knitted together by this common cause. Besides they used to assemble at their sacred city Amritsar on Baisakhi and Diwali days for drawing up their future plans amidst the holy Guru Granth. As religion was dominating in words and needs, Cunningham views it as theocratic.

Commenting on the confederatic character of this organisation he explains that the Misls were not quite independent but were loosely knitted together by the institution of *Sarbat Khalsa*. The *Sarbat Khalsa* (a sort of central assembly), as discussed before, used to meet at Amritsar in times of foreign danger or otherwise to formulate the future policy of the Sikhs for the common cause. The decisions thus arrived at, in the meeting of *Sarbat Khalsa*, were embodied in the form of Gurmata, the compliance of which was obligatory on the part of each misldar. Besides under this system the vassal could change his master without any hesitation which lends support to the views that the Misl organisation was one.

As to the feudalistic character, he says that the federated chiefs divided their joint conquests among themselves, and they divided their respective shares in the same way among their own leaders of the bands, while again their leaders further divided their portion among their own dependants.

A.C. Bannerjee's views : Dr. A.C. Bannerjee, however, challenges this view

and asserts that the Sikh Misl organisation was “democratic in composition and religious in its cohesive principles”. Supposing this view, he explains that it was not theocratic because the Misl organisation was not absolutely based on religious principles nor the Sikh priests had complete sway in their policy. It was not feudalistic either, because feudalism cannot exist apart from monarchy. And the subordinate Sikh Sardars did not owe military or fiscal obligation to their chief. They could easily transfer their service from one chief to another. So it was, writes Dr. A.C. Banerjee, democratic in composition and religious in cohesion.

Ibbetson's view : According to Ibbetson, it was a curious mixture of 'Theocracy, Democracy and Absolutism.' Explaining this view, he remarks that the Sikh Sardars and soldiers were all fighting for the Guru Granth Sahib, they did what the Sarbat Khalsa decided in the form of Gurmata. It was democratic because every member of the Misl enjoyed social and political equality. In the absence of monarchy, there was none to check the Sardars and thus every Misldar was absolutely supreme in matters of his Misl.

Conclusion

Thus different views have been expressed regarding the nature of the organisation of the misls. The reality is that it would be wrong to assign any definite constitution to this organisation at all. If we are called upon to define, at the best we may agree with Ibbetson that the Misl organisation was a “curious mixture of Theocracy Democracy and Absolutism.”

Sarbat Khalsa and Gurmata

The central organisation of the Sikh Misls was *Gurmata*. This word consists of two Punjabi words 'Guru' and 'Mata'. Guru meaning the spiritual teacher, and Mata meaning the advice of the teacher or Guru. After the death of the Tenth Guru the Sikh confederacy known as Khalsa used to meet twice a year on the Baisakhi and Diwali at the holy Akal Takhat in Amritsar. The high gathering of military leaders (Sikh Parliament) assembled for the purpose of deliberations and decisions were known as the Gurmatas. Amidst religious ceremonies the leaders discussed their past problems, future programmes and took decisions about the new military campaigns to be undertaken. The disputed successions and the mutual differences between the misls were settled amicably. The discussions were free and frank and even the humblest soldiers could participate in the discussions, the prevailing idea being that before the holy Granth at the Akal Takhat, all are equal. The Sarbat Khalsa also elected the leader of the Dal Khalsa who was to be their coordinator and leader in the coming campaign. Nawab Kapur Singh and later on Jassa Singh Ahluwalia were elected leaders in this matter. Contributions levied by the various misldars were reported to the Sarbat Khalsa and the income was redistributed on the basis of armed strength which each misldar was required to maintain. In the meetings of the Sarbat

Khalsa, the chiefs who had been entrusted a particular mission or the leaders of a single misl would chalk out a programme of action.

Gurmata being a collective decision arrived at before the holy Granth, thus attached with the religious sanctity and was the only binding force to carry it out. However, these decisions were never disregarded. Though there is no conclusive proof regarding the start of 'Gurmata', yet it is said that the first Gurmata was held by Guru Gobind Singh. The last Gurmata was called by Ranjit Singh in 1805, and after this, it ceased to be a political institution. Ranjit Singh set up an absolute Government and took all the functions of the Gurmata in his own hands. But the collective decisions by the Sikhs, however, contributed on the social and religious problems and not on political ones. Ranjit Singh abolished the Gurmata in view of his political gains, because it was not possible for him to consolidate his kingdom in the presence of such an institution.

INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE MISLS

At the head of each misl was a chief, a petty sovereign called misldar, who administered his subordinates in the territory under him and also conducted relations with non-Sikhs-states. The territory was sub-divided amongst his subordinate chiefs. The plunder obtained in a particular raid was sub-divided in the same manner. The misl was essentially a military set up.

A soldier in misl organisation could transfer his master of his own. Though the misl chief was a petty sovereign and absolute in the internal matters of his misl, yet their lot was better than those living in the adjoining states. The Sikh Misl chief, as stated above was quite independent in his own territory and had complete sway even on the life and death of his subjects.

The unit of Misl administration was the village and its affairs were managed by the Panchayat. The members of the Panchayat were elected and it enjoyed a great deal of autonomy in local matters which gave it a republican character. Its decisions were obeyed not because it had any force at its disposal but for the social pressure on the people inhabiting the village under its charge. Besides, the villagers held the panchayats in great esteem and common belief among them was that *Panchayat Main Parmeshwar* (God acts through Panchayats.) From the contemporary writings, we know that the Panchayats maintained a sufficiently high standard of efficiency and integrity.

FINANCIAL SYSTEM

The main source of income was land revenue, realised in two instalments after the harvesting of Rabi and Kharif crops. It appears that the village headmen were responsible for collection of the land revenue. But the villages, comprising Misl were of two types, the villages which were directly administered and the villages which were only taken under protection (Rakhi). In the first type of village, the main mode

of assessment was 'Batai' under which the state share could be ascertained only after the harvesting was over. From the irrigation lands the revenue was one fourth and on the barren lands revenue was one fifth of the produce.

Rakhi : Another important source of income was the Rakhi. It resembled the *Chauth* of the Marathas. During the later Mughal rule, there was anarchy in the Punjab. Invasions and civil wars frequently occurred. The country side was left unprotected and villages were looted by all including the Sikhs themselves. The Sikh chiefs realising the dangers of such lawlessness introduced the 'Rakhi System'. The villages seeking protection were required to pay one fifth on the land revenue as Rakhi to the Sikh chief, who in return for this payment assured protection against plunder by his own troops as also against outsiders. Incidentally introduction of Rakhi system had far reaching consequences.

Other Sources of Income : Besides the land revenue, the Sikh Sardars also raised money in many other ways. Octroi duty was also prevalent. Heavy duties were imposed on merchandise by each misldar when it passed through his dominion. Justice was also considered as a source of income and at every step they would raise money. For example, when a plaintiff particularly in case of theft, wanted to file a suit, he was to pay the magistrate or thanedar a sum of money equal to one fourth of the value of the article and on the recovery of the stolen property, he was to pay again *Najarna*. In case a man was found guilty, he was to pay heavy *jurmana* or fine, if he was acquitted, he was to pay *Shukrana* or gratitude money. If the trial was prolonged he was to pay money called *Tai Khana*. The shawl trade, the horse trade and the arms trade also yielded a good deal of income to the Sikh chief.

LAND TENURE SYSTEM DURING THE MISLS

Pattidar : Under this system, any one who got land from the Misldar was required to be a soldier having his own horse and thus named a Pattidar. But Pattidar did not have the right to sell it though he could mortgage. It was the duty of the Pattidar to help his master (Misldar) in time of need and vice-versa.

Misldar : Under this system, the Misldar distributed and to his subordinate chief who pledged to help his chief in times of need. The subordinate chief enjoyed complete freedom in all matters. The misldar did not interfere in his affairs. Such a subordinate chief could change his master at any time.

Tabedari : The Tabedari land tenure applied to the land held by retainer or tenant at will.

Jagirdari : Under this system, the land was allotted by a misldar to his dependants or relatives out of his own portion and hence they were entirely under the personal control of the misldar himself.

JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MISLS

The lowest unit of judiciary was a village panchayat or a council of elders of

the village. It decided all civil cases and even minor criminal cases. Above the panchayat was the court of the Misldar where appeal could be taken. But the murder cases were only heard by the Misldar. The murders were either punished by the Misldar himself or were handed over to the relations of the deceased. In serious criminal cases, incorrigible culprits were punished with loss of ears or nose or some other parts of body. Mutilation of limbs could, however, be attoned by money. In case of thefts of cattle, the village chief in whose village the cattle were presumed to be, was either required to show the track of the stolen cattle leading to some other village, or permit search of his village or pay for stolen cattle. A person filing a suit for loss of property, had to pay one fourth of lost property as Nazrana and a fee called 'Shukrana on the successful recovery of the property. In prolonged cases both the parties were to pay fee called Taikhana (Taj-Khana). A person turning approver was pardoned and his share of theft was also to be paid by persons guilty in addition to what they themselves had stolen. The responsibility for tracing highway robbers was that of the chief of the village, the place where robbery had taken place, the robbers had to be traced, and the goods restored or the sufferer had the rights to raid the concerned village and drive away with some hundred of the cattle, he could lay his land on. The highest court was the Sarbat Khalsa. The mutual disputes amongst the Misl Sardars were placed before the Sarbat Khalsa.

MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

It is very difficult to determine the exact number of the army of the Sikh Misls. Some big misls, e.g. the Bhangi Misl, maintained as many as 20,000 soldiers. Whereas the number of the smaller misls varied from three to five thousand soldiers. The Europeans like George Thomas, Brown and Franklin have given varying account about the military strength of the Sikh misls. But it can be safely concluded that the Sikhs during the misl period had more than one lakh soldiers. The Sikh army under the misl mainly comprised of infantry and cavalry. But the great mass of the Sikhs were horsemen and every horseman had his own horse. According to Griffin, the infantry was considered lesser important than the cavalry and they were left behind to look after the garrison forts or to look after the women. The Sikhs used to invade the Mughal territories all of a sudden, after devastating took the loot to their hilly retreats before the enemy could overtake them. Under such a mode of warfare cavalry was best suited to them. The popular weapons amongst the Sikh soldiers were swords, spears, daggers, matchlocks and sabres. Some defensive weapons were also used by them. Though the Sikhs under the Misls did not have field-guns, but in the later eighteenth century, they had captured a few heavy field-guns. But it is difficult to determine the exact number of such guns.

Recruitment and Discipline : The recruitment in the Sikh forces was entirely voluntary. Anyone could get himself recruited of his own and there was no provision for regular training to the soldiers. They were not taught how to march and how

to make offensive and defensive plans. The serious shortcomings were, however, compensated by their religious fervour and devotion to the Panth. It was this factor which ultimately led to their repeated victories.

Payment : The Sikh soldiers did not receive any monthly salary. The most common mode of payment was in kind at the time of harvest, they also received a share in the booty, which fell into their hands at the time of conquest.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Narang K.S. and Gupta, H.R. : History of Punjab (1503—1858 A.D.),
2. Narang, G.C. : Transformation of Sikhism,
3. Cunningham, J.D. : History of the Sikhs,
4. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : Short History of the Sikhs,

SELF CHECK EXERCISE

1. Fill in the blanks
 - (i) Misl is an.....word which means equal.
 - (ii) The Dal Khalsa went on fighting against the Mughals under the command of.....from 1734-48.
 - (iii) The command of Dal Khalsa was given to.....in 1748.
 - (iv) The Ahluwalia Misl was founded by.....
 - (v) Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was born at Ichhogil in.....
 - (vi) Ranjit Singh belonged toMisl.
 - (vii) The Dallewalia Misl acquired its name from the village.....
 - (viii) Phul left behind his.....sons who formed seven families.
2. Mark (✓) the correct statements :
 - (i) When did the Phulkian Misl come under the British protection?
 - (a) 1809 (b) 1813
 - (ii) In which year the dissolution of the Dallewalia Misl took place?
 - (a) 1809 (b) 1807

KEY TO ANSWERS

1. (i) Arabic (ii) Kapur Singh (iii) Jassa Singh Ahluwalia
 (iv) Sada Singh Kalal (v) 1723 (vi) Sukerchakia
 (vii) Dallewal (viii) Seven
2. (i) a (ii) b

CHECK UP YOUR POSITION

Excellent : Above 6 correct answers. Good : 5-6 correct answers.
 Satisfactory : 4 correct answers. Unsatisfactory : Less than 4 correct answers.

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