

THE SIKH GENERALS

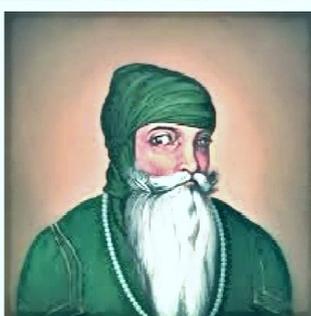
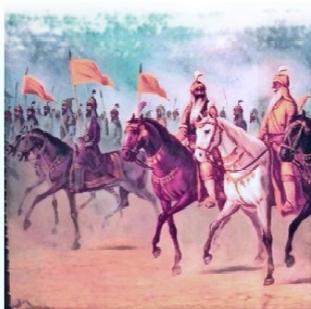
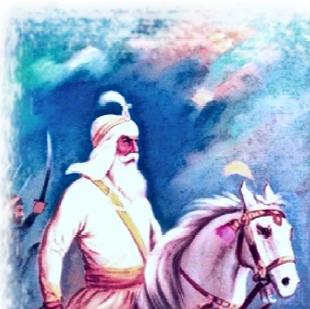


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BABA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR



The Early Life

Baba Banda Singh Bahadur (also **Bhai Gurbaksh Singh**) was the first Singh who established Sikh rule in a large part of Punjab. Lachhman Das was his childhood name. He was born to Rajput parents. He was very fond of hunting in his early life. Once he hunted a she deer who was pregnant. The dying animal gave birth to two kids who also died along with their mother before the eyes of Lachhman Das.

He was thoroughly shaken by the incident and overcome with grief, he renounced the world and became a Bairagi Sadhu (Bairagi = renunciate, Sadhu = ascetic) adopting first one Janki Das as his Guru, and later some others, but none of them being true Guru, could provide him peace of mind. He turned to tantric sadhus and acquired some miracle powers. With the help of these miracle powers he was able to recruit a number of persons as his agent disciples. Through them, he established his popularity among the simple minded people around his Ashram on the bank of river Godavri. None benefitted from his miracles. He rather used those miracles to sub due and at times humiliate religious leaders and other famous saints of the area who ever happened to visit his Ashram.

The Prevailing Circumstances in 1704

Guru Gobind Singh Ji left Anandpur Sahib in Dec 1704 along with his family and the Sikhs in the most compelling and incomparable circumstances. The 1 million forces of Mugal and their aiding Pahari Rajas/Kings (Hill chiefs) had assured the Guru that no one will be harmed when he left Anandpur, but had attacked him from all sides and on one side the river Sarsa was in spate. Even though Guru Gobind Singh Ji lost his four sons and unlimited Sikhs, he was still in high spirits and took all this as Will of God. His determination - never to compromise with the circumstances - but stand erect like a rock while doing his duty towards mankind was unshakable. While moving from North of Punjab towards South of Punjab he sent "Zaffar Nama" a letter of victory to Aurangzeb, the king of India through Bhai Daya Singh. This made Aurangzeb to repent for his sins. This is clear from his last letter to his son Kaam Bakash. It stated- "I came alone in this world but without blemish. Now I am going with full of sins. I do not know about myself what will happen to me-my soul. I am full of evil deeds. When arrested in the court of God, I do not know what punishment I will meet." These lasting words of Aurangzeb had been engraved on his grave at his Makbra in Aurangabad.

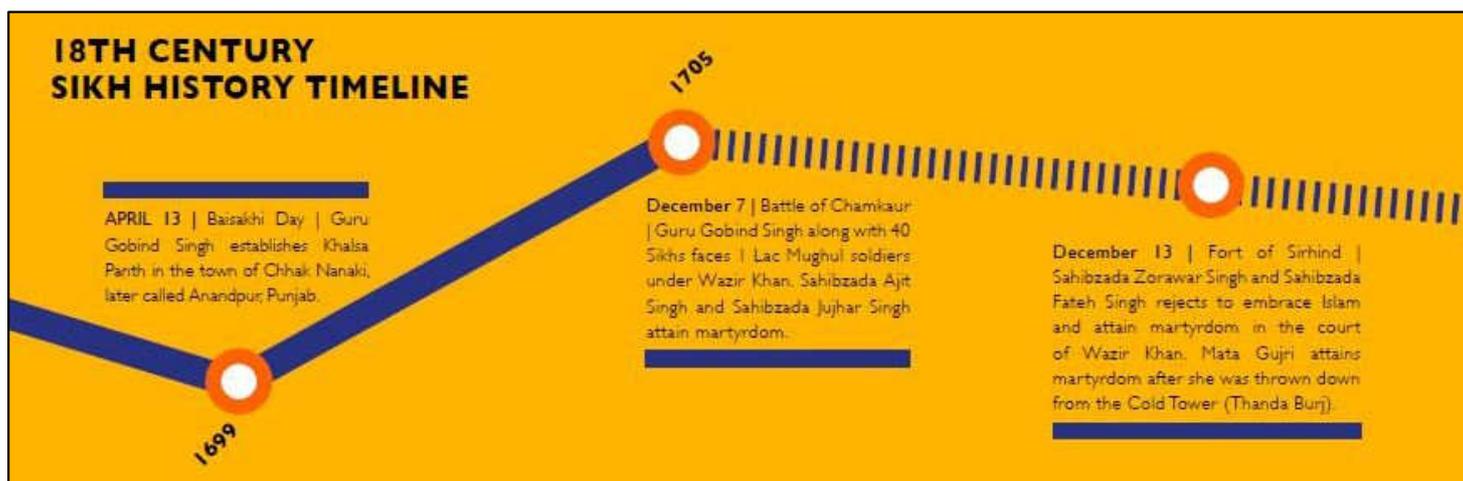
Aurangzeb died in 1707 AD. An in-fight for the throne occurred in between his sons. His eldest son Bahadar Shah sought Guru's help. He promised Guru Gobind Singh Ji to hand over all who committed atrocities and were guilty. With the help of Guru, he became the next king of Hindustan/India in 1707. Even after that atrocities were going on in Punjab unabated and Bahadar Shah failed to fulfill his promises to the Guru perhaps for fears of unrest among the Muslim masses.

In South, people revolted against Bahadar Shah. The king requested the Guru to accompany him. While reaching at Agra from Delhi Guru Gobind Singh Ji became clear of the intentions of Bahadar Shah and separated his caravan from that of Bahadar Shah, but kept on moving towards South. The movement was perhaps his foresightedness and farsightedness.

Banda Singh coming in the fold of Guru Gobind Singh Ji

Guru Gobind Singh while travelling towards South India from North along with some Sikhs visited Lachhman Das's Ashram and in his absence and sat on his beautifully decorated cot.

On his return to the Ashram, Lachhman Das could not tolerate Guru Gobind Singh occupying his seat. He along with his disciples tried all their tantric miracles to overturn the cot occupied by Guru Gobind Singh, in order to humiliate and punish him for his daring act but failed to cause any harm to the new unknown visitor. No trick worked on the Guru. He kept sitting on smilingly. Accepting defeat, Lachhman Das Bairagi fell at the feet of Guru Gobind Singh and asked forgiveness and said, "O, Guru Ji, I am your Banda (Slave)".



Show me light and put me on the right path. I am at your service and am prepared to do anything at your bidding.

Guru Gobind Singh taught him the basic principles of Sikh dharma and administered Amrit to Lachhman Das, admitting him to Sikh fold. The Guru renamed him as Banda Singh (some historians say Gurbhakhsh Singh). Guru Ji's Amrit changed Lachhman Das's life completely. He was no longer a wicked bairagi troubling or humiliating innocent people, but was now a brave Sikh of the tenth Master.

Banda Singh's March towards Punjab

When the time came Guru Gobind Singh ji sent Banda Singh Bahadur (Bahadur = brave) on a mission to Punjab to punish the guilty and cruel rulers of the time and advised him to fight for human rights, uplift and strengthen the poor, the low and slave like people who could not even imagine freedom.. He was provided with necessary weapons and five brave Sikhs as advisors.

1. Bhai Daya Singh
2. Bhai Binod Singh
3. Bhai Kahan Singh
4. Bhai Bijay Singh
5. Bhai Ran Singh

The Guru also blessed him with:

1. Guru's order (Hukamnama) to Sikh Sangats.
2. Five arrows.
3. A double Edged sword (Khanda).
4. A big leather mounted drum (Nagaara).

Fully armed and accompanied by brave Sikhs and Guru Ji's blessing, Banda Singh proceeded on his mission towards Punjab. With the help of Guru's Hukumnamas (Orders) to Sikh community to help and join Banda Singh in his assigned mission, thousands of armed Sikhs joined him. The rulers of Punjab were already well aware of fighting qualities of the Sikhs and were thus terrified to face them.

Within a short time, Sikh forces, under the leadership of brave Banda Singh, put to death many tyrant rulers, including Nazab Wazir Khan of Sirhind who was responsible for putting to death the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh in a most inhumane manner. Cruel rulers and their associates were singled out systematically, picked up and punished for their crimes against humanity.

Banda Singh issued a hukamnamah, showing the spirit which swayed the Sikhs during those arduous times.

"Deg O Teg O Fateh o nusrat bedirang Yaft Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh"

The kettle and the sword (Symbols of charity and power), Victory and blessing have been obtained from Guru Nanak-Gobind Singh. God is one! Victory to the Presence!! This is the order of Sri Sachcha Sahib (The great master) to the entire Khalsa. The Guru will protect you. Call upon the Guru's name. Your lives will be fruitful!. You are the Khalsa of the great immortal God. On seeing this letter, repair to the presence, wearing five arms. Observe the rules of conduct laid down for the Khalsa. Do not use Bhang, tobacco, Poppy, wine, or any other intoxicant...Commit no theft or adultery. We have brought Satyug (the golden age) Love one another. This is my wish. He who lives according to the rules of Khalsa shall be saved by the Guru.

Even in war, Banda Singh Bahadur had instructed not to harm or damage any religious places including Mosque, Madrassa, temples and/or Makbras (Graves). Irrespective of their religion, the old, women and children were protected from any harm. Sheikh Ahmed Sirhind was the main conspirator for the death of fifth Guru - Guru Arjan Dev ji. Even his grave was not destroyed. All attempts were made to avoid to give any religious colour to these wars. As and when an area was conquered Banda Singh appointed one of his trusted lieutenants to govern these places and who in turn appointed other local people for administration.

Banda Singh captured large part of Punjab and established Sikh rule there. He minted coins in the name of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Guru Gobind Singh ji, It was for the first time in 700 years that Banda Singh broke the believe of Mughals that they could not be conquered by any one. He established a democratic rule. The poor and down trodden got a sense of living with dignity. Those who tilled the land became its owners. **HE HAD POWER OF SOLDIERS BUT HEART OF SAINTS.** He protected the poor and low, did not harm those who surrendered. Clear example is the army of Afghan fighters who did not want to fight Banda Singh and accepted his leadership.

Arrest and sacrifices of Banda Singh and his men

In the meantime, Faruksaiyar became the Emperor at Delhi. He was angered by the defeat of Mughal forces at the hands of Banda Singh everywhere. He sent a large force from Delhi and mobilised forces from elsewhere in Punjab to defeat and capture Baba Banda Singh.

The Sikh forces were ultimately besieged by overwhelming number of Mughal forces in the fortress of Gurdas Nangal (Punjab, India). The Sikhs fought valiantly under the leadership of Baba Banda Singh inflicting heavy casualties on the Mughal army. However, due to prolonged encircling (8 months) of the fortress by superior number of forces, the Sikh forces were left with no rations. They were forced to eat tree leaves to sustain themselves. Due to this, they became too weak to fight the enemy. Even at this stage the Sikhs offered heavy resistance. It is said Banda Singh alone had killed about 50 to 60 soldiers of the Mughal army before he could be captured.

Hazi Karam-war Khan writes in his book 'Tazkiratu-Sulatin Chughtian' that arrest of Banda Singh and his men was not the result of wisdom or bravery of the rulers, but it was the Grace of God that Kafir (Non Muslim) Banda Singh and his men were weakened by hunger.

The Nawab was surprised at the wealth- Banda Singh had and the determination with which they were fighting. Hardly rupees 600 and 23 gold coins and a few weapons were found with them. The Mugal soldiers thought that the Sikhs had swallowed gold coins, in fact few of the Sikhs were killed, their stomachs torn open, but nothing was found.



Ultimately in Dec 1715, the brave Sikh general Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was arrested along with seven hundred Sikh soldiers and brought to Delhi, where they were mounted on ponies, insulted and paraded in the Bazars (markets) of Delhi.

Banda Singh and some of his remaining men were interrogated for months to find out about their war strategies, wealth and ammunition. He had, in fact, never buried any wealth or currency. Whatever he got he used to distribute among his soldiers and needy. His weapons were only swords, spears, bows, arrows, daggers etc. His army was on foot and horses. He had no elephants or cannons or any other sophisticated weapons.

The Sikhs were offered amnesty if they accepted conversion to Islam. Not one among them accepted this offer of lease of life. As such they were tortured and done to death publicly. They died in high spirits, sticking to their faith.

At last in June 1716, Banda Singh and his 26 companions were moved in the streets of old Delhi in the form of a procession and then taken to the Makbra (Grave) of Khawaza Kutub-ud-deen Bakhitayar Kaki near Kutub Minar. 26 Sikhs were beheaded in the presence of Banda Singh, hoping that he may still ask for mercy. Now it was the turn of Banda Singh. He was asked to accept Islam or face death. He accepted death.

Execution of Banda Singh Bahadar

Finally before Baba Banda Singh was butchered most mercilessly by the tyrant rulers, his four years old son was put to death in front of Baba Banda Singh, by cutting open his abdomen. His heart was taken out and thrust into the mouth of Baba Banda Singh. But even this most inhuman and cruel act of tyrant rulers failed to break Baba Banda Singh Ji's resolve and determination. He remained composed as ever. Finally, he was put to death most mercilessly by pinching the flesh from his body, bit by bit, by means of heated pincers.

Whosoever, a Muslim, Hindu or Christian, saw this felt that the souls of those, who sacrificed their lives had miraculous powers that did not allow them to accept defeat.

The English historian Conningham wrote that it was inhumane, unsocial and forest ruled activity of the Mughals for having treated the Sikhs in such ill manners. Such dreadful were the scenes, perhaps nobody except those who saw could believe.

Farakh-Seyer, who tortured and killed Banda Singh and his men in June 1716, met with the similar fate just after three years at the hands of his own men. There was a revolt against him. He hid himself in the dark rooms of Red Fort. He was chased, and his eyes similarly notched off and then killed.

Thus came to an end and eventful chapter of Sikh History when the tyrant Moghul rulers tasted defeat after defeat for a number of years at the hand of Sikhs under the leadership of the first Sikh General Baba Banda Singh Bahadur which also broke the yoke of 700 years rule of India by foreign invaders..

The sacrifices of Banda Singh and his men did not discourage the Sikhs but prepared them for the worst future fights. Passing through very difficult times for the next 40 years, the Sikhs ruled at Lahore under the leadership of Nawab Kapoor Singh and then by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in 1756.

Later on they ruled all over Punjab in the form of 12 Sikh Misels (groups) under different names which ultimately led to establishment of Khalsa Raj under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (The Lion of Punjab) in 1799 AD.

The Guru thus demonstrated to the people the true strength of mind and body of those who had partaken Amrit and how a Bairagi (renunciate) who was notorious and aimless, could turn out to be a brave person with credible achievements.

September 4 | Madho Das Bairagi of Nanded town was baptized (given Khande ki Pahul) by Guru Gobind Singh and was named Banda. Banda Singh Bahadur as he was later called, turned out to be one of the most famous Sikh Generals after the Gurus.

October 6 | Gurugaddi Diwas | Guru Gobind Singh ends the chain of human Gurus to declare Granth Sahib as eternal Guru of the Sikhs.

October 7 | Jyoti Jot. Guru Gobind Singh | Guru Gobind Singh dies of the wounds inflicted by the hired Pathaan assassins, but not before he killed one and wounded the other.

Jathedar Nawab Kapoor Singh ji



ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਪਰ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਪੰਥ ਕਰੀ॥ ਭਲੀ ਬੁਧਿ ਆਇ ਤਿਸ ਮੈਂ ਪਰੀ॥
 ਬਹੁਤ ਸਿੰਘਨ ਕੇ ਆਦਰ ਧਰੈ॥ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਪੁਛੇ ਪੰਥ ਗੱਲ ਨ ਕਰੈ॥
 ਟਹਲ ਅਗੈ ਤੇ ਕਰੈ ਸਵਾਈ॥ ਬਹੁਤ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਉਸ ਮਨ ਆਈ॥
 ਜਿਮ ਜਿਮ ਪੰਥਹਿ ਟਹਿਲ ਕਮਾਵੈ॥ ਤਿਮ ਤਿਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਗੁਰਮਤ ਆਵੈ॥

- ਪ੍ਰਾਚੀਨ ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼

*"The Khalsa Panth then blessed Kapoor Singh (with Nawabi).
With Khalsa's grace, he aquired wisdom (to lead the Panth).
All the Singhs were given utmost respect by him.
He would first consult the Singhs (Panth) before making any decisions.
He then increased the selfless seva (of the stables) even further,
and has been blessed with utmost humility (after being a Nawab).
As he continued the seva in service of the Panth,
the further he was blessed with the fruits of Gurmat"
- Pracheen Panth Parkash*

Sardar Kapoor Singh was born in 1697 in a village near Sheikhupura, now in Pakistan. His father, Chaudhri Daleep Singh was a devoted Sikh, whose virtues were passed on to the young boy. The boy memorized Gurbani Nitnem, and was taught the arts of war. He became an Amritdhari (baptised) in 1721. When the Governor of Punjab offered the Sikhs the Nawabship (provincial governor or viceroy of a subah (province) or region) and a valuable royal robe, the Khalsa accepted it all in the name of Kapoor Singh. Henceforth, he became known as Nawab Kapoor Singh.

Background

Sardar Kapoor Singh Nawab Kapur Singh is considered one of the most revered, pivotal and legendary figures in Sikh history post 1716. Under his leadership decisions and courage, the Numerous Sikh community went through some of the darkest periods of its history.

At the time Zakarya Khan, who had become the Mughal governor of Lahore in 1726, launched a policy of aggressive persecution against the Sikh masses of Punjab. Assessing the situation the Sikhs united and organized themselves under the able leadership of Jathedar Darbara Singh and Sardar Kapoor Singh who strengthened the Khalsa and provided them with the confidence and the strength to respond to state repression against them.

Sardar Kapur Singh headed a band of Sikh warriors who, with a view to paralysing the administration and obtaining food for their companions. They were forced to seek shelter in the *laksi* jungles ('The forest of a hundred thousand trees') of Central Punjab. From here, adopting guerilla warfare tactics they launched a series of sudden surprise attacks on government treasuries and caravans moving from one place to another. Due to the success of these campaigns, such was the effect of their depredations that the governor was soon obliged to make terms with them.



Sikhs befriended

The rulers and the commanders lost all hope of defeating the Sikhs through repression. To develop some other strategy, Zakarya Khan went to Delhi where it was decided to befriend the Sikhs and rule in cooperation with them.

Accordingly, in 1733 the Delhi rulers withdrew all orders against the Khalsa. Their torture and killing was stopped. They were permitted to own houses and lands, and to move freely without any state violence against them. To cooperate with the Khalsa Panth, and win the goodwill of the people, the government sent an offer of an estate and Nawabship through a famous Lahore Sikh, Sardar Subeg Singh. After some mutual discussion and to give peace a chance the offer was accepted and this honor was bestowed on Kapoor Singh.

As a mark of respect, he placed the robe of honour ('Siropa') sent by the Mughals at the feet of five revered Sikhs - Baba Deep Singh (Shaheedan Misl), Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia (Ramgarhia Misl), Bhai Hari Singh Dhillon (Bhangi Misl), Bhai Karam Singh and Bhai Buddha Singh (great-great-grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, whose son, Naudh Singh founded the Sukerchakia Misl)- before putting it on.

During this truce, Kapoor Singh guided the Sikhs in strengthening themselves and preaching Gurmat to the masses. As a strategy for the future, regular communication links were developed among Sikhs to unite them. They were encouraged to freely visit the Gurdwaras (Sikh Temples) and meet their relatives in the villages. Sikhs, thus, were able to create strong ties among themselves and with the general population.

Nawab Kapoor Singh consolidated the disintegrated fabric of the Sikh Jathas (groups) and merged into a single central fighting force (The Dal Khalsa) divided into two sections - The Budha Dal, the army of the veterans, and the Taruna Dal, the army of the young. Budha Dal had the responsibility of the management of the Gurdwaras and Gurmat preaching. They were to keep track of the movements of the government forces to plan their defense strategies. They also provided a reserve fighting force for the Taruna Dal (which provided the main fighting force).

Khalsa for self-rule

Nawab Kapoor Singh undertook several measures to secure firm footing for the Khalsa among the people and to prepare them for self-rule in the Punjab. To establish internal rules of discipline and mutual understanding, it was jointly decided that:

1. All money obtained from anywhere by any *Jatha* (groups) would be deposited in the Common Khalsa Fund. All provisions for different Jathas regarding their arms, horses, clothes, etc. would be met out of that fund.
2. The Khalsa would have their common Langar for both the Dals.
3. Every Sikh would respect the orders of his Jathedar. Anyone going anywhere would get permission from him and report to him on his return.

Preaching by the Budha Dal helped many persons to connect with Sikhi roots and many young Sikhs joined the Dal Khalsa. The membership of the Taruna Dal quickly increased to more than 12000. To ensure efficient control, Nawab Kapur Singh split it into five divisions, each with a separate centre.

These five divisions were stationed at five sarovars (sacred pools) around Amritsar, namely Ramsar, Bibeksar, Lachmansar, Kaulsar and Santokhsar. The divisions later became known as Misls and their number increased to eleven. Each took over and ruled a different region of the Punjab replacing the Mughal rulers in many parts of this region.

Nawab Kapoor Singh, being the leader of the Khalsa, was assigned another responsibility by Mata Sundar Kaur, wife of Guru Gobind Singh. She sent him an emissary along with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who was then a young boy. Her instructions were that Jassa Singh was like a son to her and the Nawab should raise him as an ideal Sikh. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, under the guidance of Kapoor Singh, was given a good education in Gurbani and thorough training in managing Sikh affairs. Later, he became the founding Jathedar of the Ahluwalia Misl and played an important role in leading the Sikhs to self-rule.

Campaign against Sikhs

The entente with the Mughals did not last long and, before the harvest of 1735, the rulers of Lahore attacked and repossessed the Sikh estates only two years before. This was intended to check the growth of the Sikhs. However, it only acted as a further stimulant. Kapoor Singh decided that the whole of Punjab should be taken over as their estate. This was endorsed by the Khalsa and all the Sikhs assured him of their full co-operation in his endeavor for self-rule.

The decision was taken against heavy odds. Zakariya Khan sent roaming squads to hunt and kill the Sikhs. Orders were issued to all administrators down to the village level officials to seek Sikhs, murder them, get them arrested, or report their whereabouts to the government. One year's wages were offered to anyone who would murder a Sikh and deliver his head to the police station. Rewards were also promised to those who helped arrest Sikhs. Persons providing food or shelter to Sikhs were severely punished.

It was a time of unspeakable state violence against the followers of Guru Nanak Dev ji. These orders forced the committed Sikhs into the woods. Becoming a Sikh was like signing one's own death warrant. This was the period when the Sikhs were sawed into pieces, burnt alive, fed to dogs, their heads crushed with hammers and young children were pierced with spears before their mother's eyes. To keep their morale high, the Sikhs humorously developed their own high-sounding terminologies and slogans. For example:

Tree leaves boiled for food were called green cask, the parched chick-peas were almonds, the Babul tree was a rose a blind man was a brave man; getting on the back of a buffalo was ruling an elephant.

When Mir Mannu intensified his attacks for the genocide of the Sikhs, they responded with the rhyme, "*Mannu is our sickle, we are his weeds all know. The more he cuts us the more we grow.*"



Sikhs respond

The army pursued the Sikhs hiding near the hills and forced them to cross the rivers and seek safety in the Malwa tract. When Nawab Kapoor Singh reached Patiala, Baba Ala Singh took Amrit and Nawab Ji helped him increase the boundaries of his state. In 1736 the Khalsa attacked Sirhind, where the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh were murdered. The army fought frantically to protect the city. However, the advancing tide of the enraged Sikhs could not be checked, and the *Khalsa took over the city and the treasury. They established the Gurdwaras at the historical places and withdrew. After this expedition Kapoor Singh returned to Amritsar.

These victories of the Sikhs naturally upset the government of Lahore. A huge army was sent to recover the treasury and punish the Sikhs. Khalsa troops were camping near Amritsar when the army attacked them. Kapoor Singh entrusted the treasury to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and told him to take it to a safe place. He himself had sufficient Sikhs with him to keep the army engaged. When Jassa Singh was out of the reach of the army, the Nawab ordered a strategic retreat, and they reached Taran Taaran without the army being able to do any serious damage to them.

To fight the advancing army, the Nawab sent messages to the Taruna Dal to join them in the fight. The Sikhs dug themselves into trenches and waited for the army to attack. When they were within range, the Sikhs showered bullets on them. The fight lasted the entire day without either side gaining the upper hand. Finding the army exhausted and the commanders in low morale by the evening, Kapoor Singh attacked the commanding posts. This swift and daring attack by two hundred Sikhs stunned the enemy. Three generals, along with many officers, were killed. Whereupon the army retreated to Lahore realizing that they were no match for the adventurous and committed Sikhs.

Zakarya Khan called his advisors to plan another strategy to deal with the Sikhs. It was suggested that the Sikhs should not be allowed to visit the Amrit Sarovar, the fountain of the"- lives tad source of their strength. Accordingly, strong contingents were posted around the city and all entries to Harmandar Sahib were checked. The Sikhs, however, risking their lives, continued to pay their respects to the holy place and take a dip in the Sarovar (water tank) in the dark of night. For some Sikhs, the price of doing so was their lives.

One time, when Kapoor Singh went to Amritsar, he had to fight with Kazi Rehman. He had declared that Sikhs, the so-called lions, would not dare to come to Amritsar and face him. In the ensuing fight Kazi was killed. When his son tried to save him, he too lost his life. Later, Massa Rangar took over the control of Amritsar. While smoking and drinking in the Harimandar Sahib, he watched the dances of the nautch (dancing) girls.

The Sikhs who had moved to Bikaner, a desert region, for safety, were outraged to hear of this desecration. ***Bhai Sukha Singh and Mehtab Singh*** went there disguised as revenue collectors. They tied their horses outside, walked straight into the Harimandar Sahib, cut off his head, and took it with them. **It was a lesson for the rulers that no tyrant would go unpunished.**

Delhi challenges Sikhs

A senior royal commander, Samad Khan, was sent from Delhi to subdue the Sikhs. Kapoor Singh learned of this and he planned his own strategy accordingly. As soon as the army was out to hunt the Sikhs, a Jatha of commandos, disguised as messengers of Samad Khan, was sent to the armory. The

commander there was told that Khan was holding the Sikhs under siege and he wanted him, with all his force, to go and arrest them. The few guards left behind were overpowered by the Sikhs, the arms and ammunition were looted and brought to the Sikh camp. It helped the Khalsa win the big battle against the royal army.

Samad Khan sent many roaming squads to search for, and kill Sikhs. He was responsible for the torture and murder of Shaheed Bhai Mani Singh, the administrator of the Harimandar Sahib. The Sikhs had not forgotten this violence against them. He was so afraid of the Sikhs, that he remained far behind the fighting lines to keep himself safe. However, Kapoor Singh had a plan to punish him. During the battle, he ordered his men to retreat, drawing the fighting army with them. He then wheeled around and fell upon the rear of the army. Khan and his guards were lying dead on the field within hours. The death of the commander of such a strong army was a message to the Punjab governor that his turn was next. He was so scared that he started living in the fort. He would not even dare to visit the mosque outside the fort for prayers. *The governor knew that even his best guards would not be able to save him once the Sikhs located him.*

Protecting the innocent from the invaders

On the request of the Budha Dal members, Sardar Kapoor Singh visited Patiala. The sons of Sardar Ala Singh, the founder of the state, gave him a royal welcome. Kapoor Singh stormed and subdued all local administrators around Delhi who were not behaving well towards their people.

Nadir Shah of Iran was a terror for the Delhi rulers. In 1739 when he invaded India, he murdered more than 100 000 people in Delhi and carried off all of the gold and valuables. Zakaria Khan on failing to defend himself offered a gift of two million rupees to Nadi shah and thus was retained as his governor at Lahore. However Nadir Shah took as hostages a son of Zakaria and a son of the minister Lakhpat Rai, and thus secure against revolt.

On his return Nadir Shah added to his caravan hundreds of elephants and horses, along with thousands of young women. When Kapoor Singh came to know of this, he decided to warn Nadir Shah that if not the local rulers, then the Sikhs would protect the innocent women of Muslims and Hindus from being sold as slaves.

The returning caravan was closely watched by the Sikh informants. They planned to get the women released and to recover as much of the wealth as possible before Nadir left the Punjab. While crossing The river Chenab, Nadir relaxed his vigilance, and the Sikhs suddenly attacked the rear end of the caravan, freed many of the women, and recovered part of the treasure. The rescued girls were safely escorted back to their families. The Sikhs continued to harass him and lighten him of his loot until he left Punjab.

Nadir Shah was surprised at this dare-devil acts by Sikh raiders and inquired who the men with beards and turbans were, against whom he could not protect himself although he had already crushed the royal army. Nadir asked Zakaria Khan who those Sikhs were. *On being told that they were all bands of poor fakirs, who visit their Guru's tank (at Amritsar) twice a year and after bathing in it disappear".* he further asked;

Nadir Shah wanted to know where they live. Zakariya said: *"Their houses are their saddles; they can last long periods without food and rest. They are known to sleep on horseback. We have put prizes on their heads, but their number keeps increasing. They are never despondent, but are always*

singing the songs of their Pirs...A drop of nectar from their Guru transmutes a coward into a lion — so wonderful is its effect”.

After hearing about them he observed, *"The Sikhs will soon be the rulers of the land."*

The Chota Ghalughara (The lesser holocaust)

Meanwhile, Zakarya Khan and his minister, Lakhpat Rai, again launched an all-out campaign and set forth with a large army. The Sikhs were brought to bay in a dense bush near Kahnuwan, in the Gurdaspur district. They put up determined fight, but were overwhelmed by the superior numbers of the enemy and scattered with heavy losses.

They were chased into hills; more than 7000 died. "To complete revenge" says Syed Mohammad Latif, a historian of Punjab "They took approx 1000 Sikhs to the horse-market outside Delhi Gate, and there beheaded one after another without mercy." So indiscriminate and extensive was the killing that the campaign is known in Sikh history is known as the "Chhota Ghalughara" or the lesser holocaust. The "Wadda Ghalughara" or the greater holocaust was to come later.

Zakaria Khan died in 1745. His successor tightened the security around Amritsar. Kapoor Singh planned to break the siege of Amritsar. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was made the commander of the attacking Sikh forces. In 1748, the Sikhs took a do or die decision. The commander at Amritsar also had a large army to fight the Sikhs. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, with his commandos behind him, dashed to the army commander and cut him into two with his sword.

To be recognized as a power, the Sikhs built their first fort, called Ram Rauni, at Amritsar. This sent the message to the government that their days were numbered and that Sikh rule over Punjab was imminent. In December 1748, Governor Mir Mannu had to take his forces outside of Lahore to stop the advance of Ahmed Shah Abdali. Kapoor Singh took advantage of his absence from the capital and led a contingent of top Sikh fighters to the police station in Lahore. The Sikhs quickly overpowered the police defending the station and confiscated all of their weapons. The Nawab then occupied the office and ordered the sheriff to release all the political prisoners. Before leaving, he told the sheriff to inform the Governor that Nawab Kapoor Singh, the "sheriff" of God, the True Emperor, came and did what he was commanded to do. All of this was accomplished in a very short time. Before the stunned policemen could report the matter to the authorities, or the army could be called in, the Khalsa were already riding their horses back to the forest.

*In 1753, Kapoor Singh took control of Amritsar and called a general meeting of the Sikhs to organize the Khalsa forces for the future. He thanked them for their co-operation and told them that his end was near and suggested Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's name as the supreme commander of the Dal Khalsa which was readily accepted by the Khalsa. The sword he had received from Mata Sundar Kaur Ji was also handed over to Ahluwalia. Before he breathed his last, the beloved jathedar thus passed on the responsibility to another able general. **The body of Nawab Kapoor Singh, the great leader who lead the Khalsa to the threshold of self-rule, was cremated near Gurdwara Baba Atal.***

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia: Sultan of Punjab



ਸੁਰਦਾਰ ਜੱਸਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਹਲੂਵਾਲੀਆ

Nawab Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was a legend in his own lifetime, which inspired the people of Punjab to fight against the tyranny and injustice of invaders and ruthless rulers. He was an embodiment of courage, bravery and self-sacrifice.

Early life

This great son of Punjab was born on May 3, 1718, in Ahlu village, near Lahore in West Punjab. Ahlu village was established by his ancestor, Satta Singh, a disciple of the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Har Gobind Sahib ji. Hence, the name Ahluwalia (meaning from Ahlu village). His father, Badar Singh, died when he was only five.

There after his mother moved them to Delhi where they stayed and performed Kirtan of the highest order. Mata Sundri Kaur ji (wife of Guru Gobind Singh ji) was much pleased with the young Singh

and bestowed upon him great blessings. He studied Persian, Arabic, Sikh scriptures and mathematics at Delhi. After seven years in Dehli, at the age of 12, Jassa Singh and his mother moved back to Punjab at the insistence of Jassa Singh's uncle – however not before Mata Sundri would make a prophecy – that Jassa Singh would become a worthy leader of the Sikhs.

Sardar Jassa Singh and his mother settled in the vicinity of Jalandhar in Punjab and began performing Kirtan in the early mornings (*Jassa Singh was a great Rabab instrumentalist and 'Kirtan Kaar', who later patronised the Kapurthala Rababi Gharana*). On one *Gurpurb* (festival), along with his uncle, mother and child went to visit Nawab Kapur Singh in Kartapur. While singing the hymns of 'Asa ki Var' in the early morning, Nawab Kapoor Singh ji was so impressed with the melody of Kirtan, that he persuaded them to stay for one month. After this period, the Nawab recognised the conduct and potential of Jassa Singh, hence requested the uncle and mother that they leave the boy with him for some time. *It should be noted, that Nawab Kapoor Singh was the leader of the Khalsa Panth for a reason; he was a true Sikh of the Guru; both incredibly brave and spiritual while remaining humble.* From this moment, Jassa Singh's guidance began under the great Nawab Kapoor Singh. Jassa Singh's personal valour, cool judgment and other qualities created a deep impression on the Sikhs.

Jassa Singh undertook each task designated to him with commitment like no other. One account recites that on one stormy night in torrential rain, the Nawab would call out to the watch guards, asking who was on duty – on each occasion, the steadfast Jassa Singh's voice could be heard. Jassa Singh also began his training in the art of war, and became adept in horse riding, sword play and archery.

The formation of the Dal Khalsa and the Misls

Until 1745, the Sikh forces were divided into 65 *jathas* (bands). Baron Nawab Kapur Singh reorganised them into eleven bands, each with its own name, flag and leader. These Armies or 'jathas', which came to known later on as Misls (literally "equals", also "an example") together were, however, given the name of the Dal Khalsa (or the Army of the Khalsa).

The soldiers of this army were not salaried servants. But they joined the Khalsa army spontaneously in the name of the Guru. There were no distinctions of high and low, or of caste and creed Since they were to serve the country strictly according to the discipline of the *Guru Panth* (Guru's way), the taking of 'Amrit'(Khanda Pahul) or baptism was essential for them. *This ceremony of administering 'Amrit' to the new recruits in the Khalsa Dal signified the decimation of their original religion, family lineage, caste considerations and religious superstitions.* After taking 'Amrit' from the same vessel all of them became one with the Khalsa Dal, members of a single brotherhood.



They were raised to the status of pure beings of God, and it was for the victory of God, or of the moral principle which sustains this universe that they were fully and finally united, and entered the battlefield of life. And in case of disagreement/disobedience the *Panj Piaras* (the five beloved Sikhs) would intervene, bring about a reconciliation between the two parties, imposing fine on the defaulter, who would accept this verdict, for the Panj Piaras were nominated in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and they announced their verdict and imposed the fine also in the presence of the Holy *Granth* (Spiritual Scripture). Since the Singhs were engaged in the service of the people and the country in the name of the Guru, there was a very little scope for any dispute after that.

Sardar Jassa Singh was declared the head of the Ahluwalia misl and supreme commander of the Dal Khalsa. It was because of Jassa Singh's bravery, humility and service to the community that Nawab Kapur Singh, before his death in 1754 appointed Jassa Singh Ahluwalia as his successor.

In January, 1746, a jatha (band) of the Dal Khalsa led by Jassa Singh was moving through the Shivalik hills. Diwan Jaspat Rai (Diwan is a high official especially of cabinet rank) of Lahore, along with his royal army, chased the jatha members and trapped them. During this battle, Jaspat Rai was killed. Diwan Lakhpat Rai, the brother of Jaspat Rai, pledged to take revenge of his brother's death. Lakhpat Rai, under the orders of Yahya Khan (Mughal viceroy) of Lahore, launched a big battle against the Sikhs.

The royal forces started a general massacre of the Sikhs in Lahore, and afterwards in Khanuwan village. Thousands of Sikhs were killed. The Sikhs suffered heavy losses. This period is known as the 'Chhota Ghallughara' (the Small Holocaust) in Sikh History.

In March, 1761, the King of Afghanistan and Persia and one of the supreme conquerors of his time Ahmad Shah Abdali (Durrani), was returning to his country victorious after defeating the Maratha power at Panipat. He took along with him 2200 Hindu women for selling them in Kabul as slaves. *The Sikhs were at their bi-annual meeting at Amritsar when the relatives of the women pleaded for succor. Jassa Singh, along with the Dal Khalsa left immediately with a volunteer force, caught up with the Afghans at the River Sutlej at Goindwal, rescued the women and had them gallantly escorted to their families.* This action which required great audacity, swift and faultless execution and a complete indifference to danger, made him a household name in north India. Henceforth he was also known as Bandhi Chhor or Liberator.

Finally in 1761, Jassa Singh and his forces attacked and occupied Lahore. Elated at his success, the Khalsa honoured Jassa Singh with the title of *Sultan-ul-Quom* (King of the Community).

1740

August 11 | Bhai Mehtab Singh and Bhai Sukha Singh, on hearing the disrespectful acts inside Harimandir Sahib, killed a Chaudhri named Massa Rangard. Bhai Mehtab Singh was later arrested in his village Mirankot. He chose martyrdom instead of accepting Islam and was publicly broken on the wheel.

July 1 | Bhai Taru Singh of Pooaha village, in Amritsar district of the Punjab refused to convert to Islam and attained martyrdom as Zakriya Khan; ordered to scrap off his scalp along with the hair.

1745

1746

May 1 | Chhota Ghallughara (Lesser Holocaust) - Lakhpat Rai, a minister of Yahya Khan who was the governor of Lahore, to avenge the death of his brother killed 10,000 Sikhs and their family members.

The Sixth Afghan Invasion, 1762: The Great Holocaust

Ahmad Shah Abdali(Durrani), in what was yet another in a stream of unending invasions of India commencing with Mahmud of Ghazni in 1001 AD made a total of nine incursions into India from 1747 to 1769. He destroyed the Mughal Empire and gave a crushing defeat to the Maratha power.

During all these invasions, the Dal Khalsa always resisted his attacks on the Sikhs and Punjab, and actually managed to retrieve much of his booty. Abdali was upset with the Dal Khalsa. In February, 1762, the Sikhs were especially the target of Ahmad Shah Abdali's sixth invasion into India. News had reached him in Afghanistan of the defeat of his general, Nur-ud-Din Bamezai, at the hands of the Sikhs who were fast spreading themselves out over the Punjab and had declared their leader, Baron Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, king of Lahore. To rid his Indian dominion of them once and for all, he set out from Kandahar. Marching with alacrity, he overtook the Sikhs as they were withdrawing into Malwa after crossing the Satluj.

The moving caravan comprised a substantial portion of the total Sikh population and contained, besides active fighters, a large body of old men, women and children who were being escorted to the safety of the interior. Surprised by Ahmad Shah, the Sikhs threw a cordon round those who needed protection, and prepared for the battle. In this formation and continuing their march, they fought the invaders and their Indian allies (The Nawabs of Malerkotla, Sirhind, etc.) desperately. Baron Charhat Singh Sukerchakia (the grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh), Baron Hari Singh Dhillon and Baron Jassa Singh Ahluwalia led their forces with skill and courage.

Ahmad Shah succeeded, in the end, in breaking through the cordon and carried out a full-scale massacre. About 25,000 to 30,000 Sikhs were killed. Ahmad Shah had then marched to the Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple) at Amritsar, the holiest place of worship of the Sikhs, blew it up with gunpowder so that not a single brick remained, and then to add insult to injury, proceeded to fill the holy tank with the carcasses of dead cows. This battle is known in history as the 'Wadda Ghallughara' (the Great Holocaust).

Nawab Kapoor Singh was the leader of the Khalsa Panth for a reason; he was a true Sikh of the Guru; both incredibly brave and spiritual while remaining humble.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia sustained 22 wounds on his chest, but he survived

Despite the Ghalughara disaster, by the month of May 1764, the Sikhs were up and ready again. When later in October, Ahmad Shah was at Lahore and realized that the Sikhs were gathered in strength for their annual meeting, he decided to deal with his greatest detractors, a death blow. It was Diwali-the 17th October and a full solar eclipse was in progress. Ahmad Shah was confident. He had 50000 well-trained battle hardened Afghans. The Sikh army realizing that their quest for freedom and sovereignty would be shattered with defeat, fought with a primeval ferociousness. Shouting 'Bole so Nihal Sat Sri Akal' and 'Wahe Guruji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guruji ki Fateh', their battle cry, charged the Afghans. George Forrester (1783) recounts this engagement... "the Sicque(sikh) nation amounting to 60,000 cavalry, had formed a junction at the ruins of Amritsar, where they resolved to... pledge their national existence...the Sicques roused by the fury of a desperate revenge, in sight also of the ground sacred to (them), whose monuments were destroyed by the enemy they were to combat, displayed during a bloody contest, which lasted from morning until night, an enthusiastic and fierce courage, which ultimately forced Ahmad Shah to draw off his army and retire with

precipitation to Lahore.” **Whilst Jassa Singh’s victory was not complete it shattered the myth of Abdali’s invincibility.**

Later Jassa Singh Ahluwalia commanding the Khalsa armies defeated the Afghan *faujdar* (garrison commander) of Sirhind, Zain Khan at Harnaulgarh as punishment for aiding Ahmed Shah Abdali in the holocaust. Dal Khalsa got Rs 900,000 cash as share from the Sirhind treasury, and promptly used the entire amount for the *karseva* (voluntary contribution of physical labour or service towards constructing, cleaning, renovation) of Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. The kar seva was carried out under Jassa Singh’s supervision. The gurdwara of Fatehgarh Sahib was also built by him.

Jassa Singh never took undue advantage of his high position, and was not greedy. This great act of generosity referred to as *Guru ki Chaddar* endeared him forever to his religious minded people.

These are but some of the actions that caught the attention of the people of Punjab who joined the cause in droves. Jassa Singh translated this energy and enthusiasm into military and diplomatic victories against both the Mughals and, after 1752, the Afghans.

The Eight Afghan Invasion- 1766

In November 1766 Abdali came to the Punjab for the eight time with the vowed object of "crushing the Sikhs". The Sikhs had recourse to their old game of ‘Dhai-phut’(‘hit, run and turn back to hit again’) tactics (later made famous at the Battle of Chillianwala against the British). They vacated Lahore, but faced squarely the Afghan general, Jahan Khan at Amritsar. Inflicting a humiliating defeat and forcing him to retreat, with five thousand Afghan soldiers killed.

Jassa Singh continued with his campaigns and gradually the Sikh rule extended from Lahore, Multan to Jammu, Kashmir, the Kangra hills to the environs of Delhi. Their influence extended even further- to the Ganga Doab, Rajasthan and Agra. Abdali invaded again in 1769 but could go no further than the River Sutlej. After his death in 1772, his son Shah Zaman, was equally unsuccessful with respect to Punjab. The Mughals had been suppressed; the Afghans repulsed and Punjab now belonged to her people.

How was all this achieved? And how did the misl leaders, who were themselves competing against each other, display unison under a single command? And more importantly, why was Jassa Singh’s army when it fought alone or jointly, so successful?

The answer lies partly in the great generalship of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia along with the other misl sardars like Charat Singh and Maha Singh Suckerchakia, Hari Singh Bhangi, Jai Singh Kanhahiya and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in particular showed strategic boldness and good sense. But for a successful commander of a protracted campaign- in this case lasting over two decades- much more than generalship is required. As Clausewitz describes this quality “*As the moral forces in one individual after another become prostrated, the whole inertia of the mass rests on the Will of the Commander; by the spark in his breast, by the light of his spirit, the spark of purpose, the light of hope, must be kindled afresh in others*”. **This is the kind of leadership required- the exercise of psychological power by one individual over the rest, this quality was possessed by Jassa Singh in full measure.**

Jassa Singh was charismatic. His physical presence inspired awe- he was tall, broad shouldered and muscular with penetrating dark eyes. His proficiency in the use of arms was legendary, his unusually

long arms giving him an edge as a swordsman. He was known to challenge opposing generals in a one-to-one contest in his booming voice, this display of confidence being a great morale booster to his troops.

He was able to instil in the Sikhs, faith in God and the belief that, given the justness of their cause, ultimate victory would be theirs. The misl leaders realised the extent of his determination and that he was the only one among them who felt certain of victory. This was so even when all appeared to be lost. Their further awe of him was not only because of his closeness to Guru Gobind Singh ji's family, but also because morally he stood tall. **At a time when revenge against their oppressors was foremost on the minds of his co-religionists, he ensured there were no cases of prisoners murdered in cold blood or any maltreatment of women in areas where his armies operated.** Enemy soldiers were allowed to go free if they laid down their arms. He never allowed any pressure to be put in the name of religion on the basis of his belief, central to Sikhism that there are many ways leading to God. He was against tyranny, never Islam.

Jassa Singh further kept the chiefs loyal to him through his statesmanship and diplomacy. He showed dramatic self restraint (and sometimes excessive generosity) – he could easily have added more territories but preferred to let the other misls take a greater share for the sake of unity; similarly he could have ruled Lahore from 1765 onwards having a greater claim to it and even having conquered it in 1761 but let Hari Singh, Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh Kanahiya do so for the same reason. He ensured timely help for the misl sardars

There was no misl chief who was not beholden to him and so he got them to unite when most required. He helped Charat Singh defeat Ubed Khan, the governor of Lahore; he helped the Bhangis defeat the Afghans at Qasur(1779) and saved Patiala from Abdul Ahad Khan (1779)

Epilogue

After the execution of Baba Banda Singh Bahadar, the Sikhs were in great shock. The Mughals, in conjunction with some local Hindu elements, had issued an edict that all Sikhs were to be slaughtered. All types of atrocities and cruelties were committed on them. This period is called the period of struggle. The Sikhs had to go away to jungles, mountains and the wilderness for refuge. In these dark times, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia provided leadership to the Sikhs.

The Dal Khalsa, under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, inflicted humiliating defeats on Nadir Shah, Mir Mannu, Adena Beg, Zakria Khan, Salabat Khan and Jahan Khan.

In 1783, Sardar Jassa Singh along with Baba Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia captured Delhi and hoisted the Sikh flag on the Red Fort at Delhi.

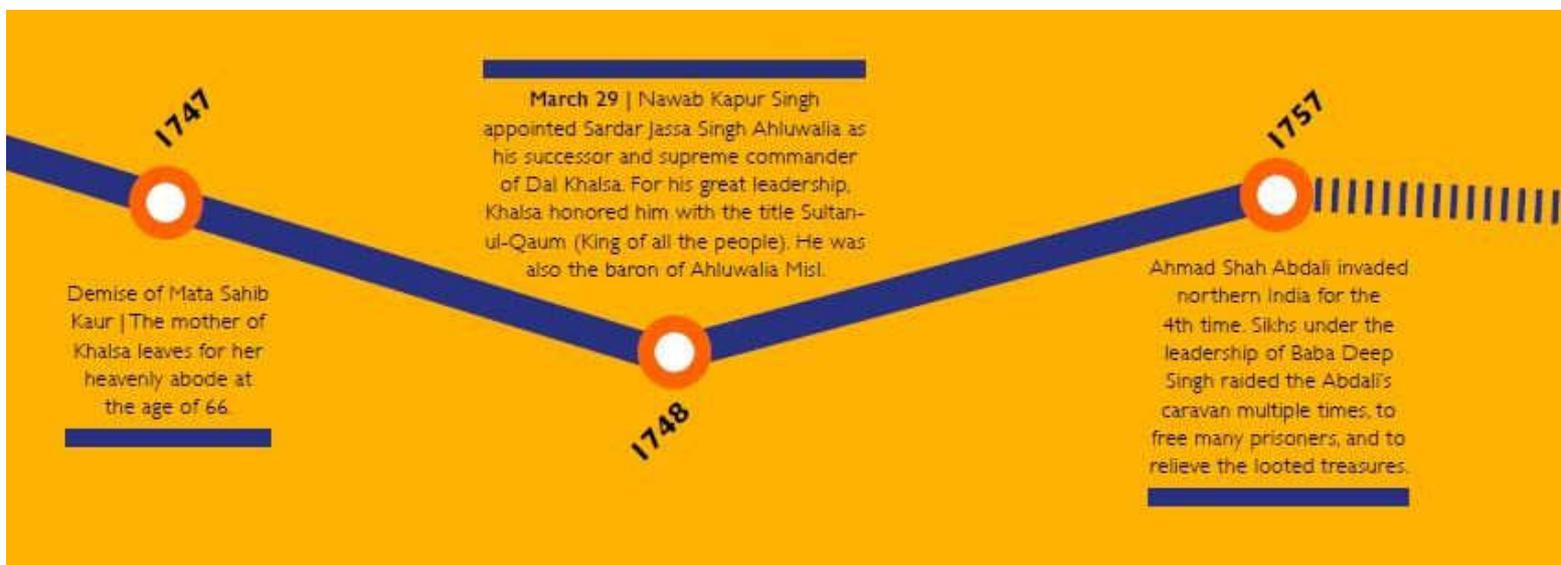
His personality, moral superiority, diplomatic skills and military strategy made the chiefs and the Dal Khalsa look up to him as their supreme and revered leader and as the true successor to Guru Gobind Singh ji's mission. He was regarded as the warrior saint as he was as much a saint as a soldier.

A true follower of the Gurus, he combined his quest for freedom with a deep sense of tolerance and respect for all religions, which showed in the generosity of his character.

Besides being a great '*Sant Siphai*' (Saint soldier), **Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was a compassionate leader and deeply religious.** He would visit Sri Darbar Sahib every Diwali and Vaisakhi. Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia died on October 20, 1783 AD on his way to Amritsar. According to his will he was cremated in Amritsar near Burj Baba Atal and spot is preserved on the western side of the *Parikrama* (surrounding) of Baba Atal.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was succeeded by Sardar Bhag Singh Ahluwalia, whose son, Fateh Singh became a close collaborator of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

Thus this valiant warrior leader of Punjab who dedicated himself body and soul to the service of the community and his faith and who spent his resources freely and generously in the cause of his country's freedom died after having led a life of action and sacrifice. He left behind a Punjab that could look forward to a great future He lived, fought and died for Guru Gobind Singh ji's beloved Khalsa.



Sardar Baghel Singh



ਸਰਦਾਰ
ਬਘੇਲ
ਸਿੰਘ

Sardar Baghel Singh

(1730 - 1802) was born in village Jhabal Kalan, Amritsar District of Punjab, around 1730's. He was the descendant

of Chaudhary Bhai Langaha, the Sikh chief of 84 villages in the Majha, who along with his younger brother Bhai Pero Shah the grandfather of the famous Mai Bhago, had been a Sikh of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, in the 1580s.

From humble beginnings he arose to become a formidable force in the area between River Sutlej and River Yamuna. He aligned himself with Karor Singhia **misl** led by Sardar Karora Singh and after the early demise of Karora Singh, Bhai Baghel Singh succeeded as a leader of Karora Singhia misl in 1765. He is celebrated in Sikh history as the vanquisher of Mughal Delhi.

(**Misl** – An arabic word misl means 'like'. The Sikh misls were 'alike', in the sense that they were considered equals)

Background

Karora Singhia misl had 12,000 fighting men according to Syed Ahmad Latif, a Muslim historian. As well as being a good soldier, Baghel Singh was a very good political negotiator and was able to win over many an adversary to his side. The Mughals, the Marathas, the Rohillas, and the British sought his friendship, but above all, he was a devout Sikh; *amrit prachar(baptism)* was his passion.

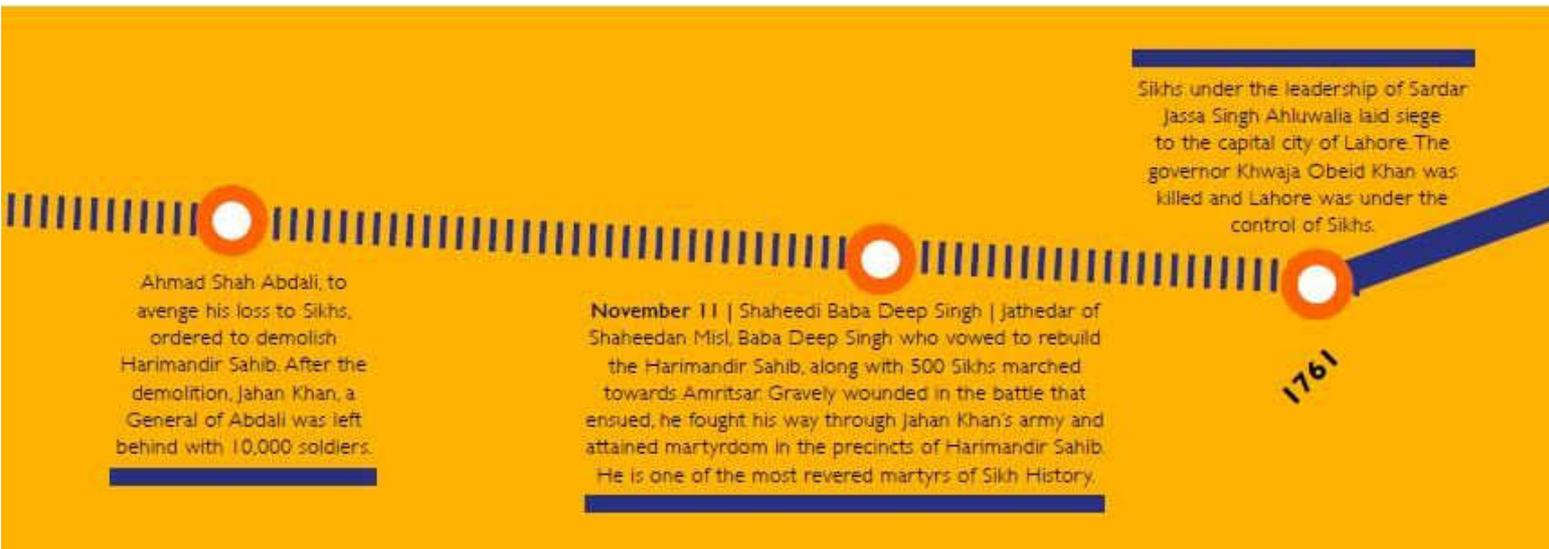
Political Situation

NADIR Shah's (Shah of Iran's) brutal offensives and nine invasions by Ahmed Shah Abdali (rulers of Afghanistan and founder of the Durrani Empire) had made the Mughal Empire fragile and weak. Sikhs had emerged as a strong and powerful force in northern India and eventually halted Abdali's invasions. Under the leadership of Dal Khalsa chief Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the Sikhs refused an alliance, and instead challenged Abdali for battle. They were anxious to avenge the killing of over 30,000 Sikhs, mostly women, children and elderly, and also destruction and desecration of the holiest Sikh temple – Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Amritsar. Sensing defeat, Abdali called it a day, and finally returned to Afghanistan, never to come back again. The vast area of the Indian subcontinent lying between the Indus and the Yamuna was free from foreign rule.

With no enemy in the North, and Shah Alam II at the head of the decaying Mughal Empire at Delhi, the powerful 12 Sikh misals had a free run in increasing their influence in all directions, from the river Indus to the (river) Yamuna.

The Marathas, after their defeat by Abdali in the third battle of Panipat in 1761, were marginalised, and the Rohillas were a spent force. The English were in the process of finding their place at Delhi. It was easy for the Sikh misals to cross the Yamuna and make forays towards Delhi and beyond. The Sikh misals would always come together when the *Sarbat Khalsa* (Khalsa Commonwealth), through a *Gurmatta* (the decisions/ resolutions of the Sarbat Khalsa), resolved to attack a common target. Baghel Singh's Karor Singhia Misal was operating in south-east Punjab.

Baghel Singh's KarorSinghia misl, along with other Dal Khalsa Misls and under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's leadership fought head on with Ahmad Shah Abdali (also known as Durrani) near Kup at Malerkotla, where in one day of battle alone 30-40000 of women, children and old Sikhs were martyred. After Durrani's invasion, Sikhs started consolidating the territories between Yamuna and Indus by incorporating into Misls and misls reporting to Chief of Dal Khalsa, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia about territory won at Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar.



Ahmad Shah Abdali, to avenge his loss to Sikhs, ordered to demolish Harimandir Sahib. After the demolition, Jahan Khan, a General of Abdali was left behind with 10,000 soldiers.

November 11 | Shaheedi Baba Deep Singh | Jathedar of Shaheedan Misl, Baba Deep Singh who vowed to rebuild the Harimandir Sahib, along with 500 Sikhs marched towards Amritsar. Gravely wounded in the battle that ensued, he fought his way through Jahan Khan's army and attained martyrdom in the precincts of Harimandir Sahib. He is one of the most revered martyrs of Sikh History.

Sikhs under the leadership of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia laid siege to the capital city of Lahore. The governor Khwaja Obeid Khan was killed and Lahore was under the control of Sikhs.

1761

Whereas Sukarchakia misal (of Ranjit Singh's grandfather) won the territory of Gujranwala, and other areas of Ravi and Chenab Doab and Ramgarhia Misal won the areas of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Bhangi around Lahore and Kasur, Karor Singhia misal (under Baghel Singh) declared their ownership of territories now including Ambala, Karnal, Hissar, Rohtak, Chandigarh, etc. Baghel Singh took possession of portions of the Jalandhar Doab and established himself at Haryana, near Hoshiarpur. Soon after the Sikh conquest of Sirhind in 1764, he extended his army beyond Karnal and liberated number of villages including Chhalaudi which he later made his headquarters.

Then Baghel Singh turned his attention towards the cis-Yamuna territories. Karor Singhia was one of the strongest misals with 12,000 well-trained horsemen. The combined strength under Baghel Singh, including soldiers of a few sardars who joined him, was well over 40,000. Soon the Sikhs were winning territories around Delhi and beyond, including Meerut, Awadh, collecting tribute from the Nawabs of each area.

In March 1776, Baghel Singh's forces gave a crushing defeat to the Mughal army near Muzaffarnagar; thus Sikhs extended their influence on the whole of the Yamuna-Gangetic *doab* (Doab - tract of land lying between two converging or confluent rivers).

When Sikhs captured the Red Fort

The Sikhs attacked the Red Fort on March 11, 1783, and hoisted the Nishan Sahib(Sikh nation Flag). The Emperor offered a treaty, and accepted their terms.

Baghel Singh first entered Delhi on January 18, 1774, and captured the area up to Shahdara. The second occurrence was on July 17, 1775, when the Sikhs captured the area around the present-day Pahar Ganj and Jai Singhpura. Bulk of the fighting took place where present-day New Delhi is located. Sikhs temporarily withdrew due to shortage of supplies, but they kept the agenda of the Red Fort alive, and continued domination and intrusions into the Emperor's territory surrounding Delhi.

By early 1783, the Sikhs commenced preparations for the capture of the Red Fort. A force of 60,000 under the leadership of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Sardar Baghel Singh assembled at Ghaziabad, continuing their attacks and capturing towns around Delhi.

On March 8 the Sikhs captured Malka Ganj and Sabzi Mandi. Prince Mirza Shikoh, on orders from the Emperor, tried to stop the Sikhs but suffered defeat, and fled. On March 9 they captured Ajmeri Gate. There was a panic in the city; many took shelter in the fort. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia joined the Sikh forces at the last moment with 10,000 soldiers. As many as 30,000 Sikh horsemen of Baghel Singh's army were camping at a place now known as *Tees Hazari* ('*Tees*' meaning Thirty & '*Hazari*' meaning Thousand), present location of the Delhi High Court.

Sardar Baghel Singh is celebrated in Indian history as the vanquisher of Mughal Delhi

The Sikhs finally took over the Red Fort on March 11, 1783. The Emperor and all his guards, in fact every one in the fort, hid themselves. The story goes that an insider informed Sikhs of a weak spot in

the wall of the fort, where the soldiers made a hole by ramming it with wooden logs; the place is named as *Mori Gate* (*Mori* - punjabi for 'Hole'), the present location of Inter State Bus terminus (ISBT).

The Sikhs entered the Red Fort, hoisted the Kesri Nishan Sahib (Sikh nation flag), and occupied Diwan-e-aam, a key location in the fort, where the Emperor, sitting on the throne, used to have audience with the public. In a symbolic gesture, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was made to sit on the throne, which made him the Emperor.

The Mughal Emperor was quick to reconcile with the Sikhs; he offered a treaty and accepted their terms. The Emperor was to pay Rupees 3 hundred thousand as *nazrana* (an offering, gift or present).

The *kotwali* (police station) area was to remain the property of the Sikhs. Rights were granted to Sardar Baghel Singh for constructing seven historic *Gurdwaras* (Sikh temples). Baghel Singh was to retain 4,000 soldiers till this task was completed; and was entrusted with maintenance of law and order and collection of octroi to meet his expenses and raise funds. His men patrolled the city streets day and night. The citizen saw the kind of peace and order which they had not experienced for decades.

The construction of seven gurdwaras was completed in seven months, as stipulated in the agreement and he retired from the capital in early December 1783. At the time he had sufficient force in the city and was enjoying great prestige and goodwill of the public. He had the necessary force and could have decided to stay on and continue his control of the city. He stood by the agreement and left Delhi at the end of the stipulated period. When persuaded by one Munshi Ram Dyal not to abandon Delhi once the Mughals had conceded to his authority and supremacy, Baghel Singh replied, "*We have been endowed with Kingdom and Destiny by our Guru. Whenever we wished, we could capture Delhi. It won't be difficult for the Khalsa.*"

Monument of Victory of Sikhs on Delhi (in 1783)

The coronation marble slab of the Mughal Throne (from Red fort), while sitting upon which emperor Aurangzeb passed edicts for conversion of Hindus, Charges were framed against Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Matti Das and the Ninth Master, Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib and Sentences were pronounced, was removed by S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and brought to Darbar Sahib, Amritsar duly chained and tied with ropes as a prisoner, a war trophy and presented before the Guru, Guru Granth Sahib ji. This slab is 6ft. 3 inch long 4 ft. 6 inch broad and 9 inch thick and is still available duly caged on the first floor of the Bunga (Bunga means Mansion). This slab can be seen, passage from the Langer Side.

Sardar Baghel Singh once again decided to march towards Delhi in 1785. Shah Alam, scared of Singh's, signed a treaty with the Marathas. The Marathas initiated an agreement with the Singhs and consented to pay one million rupees as gift.

After this KHALSA RAJ Known as Sarkar KHALSA was established by Maharaja Ranjit singh which lasted till 1839 in whole of Punjab extending from Tibet to Sindh and from the Khyber pass to the Sutlej (territories in present day India, Pakistan and Afganistan) KHALSA stood as a strong wall on the Indian borders.

Later, Baghel Singh retired to Doaba and settled at place called Hariana, now in the Hoshiapur district of Punjab, India. He passed away in 1802.

March 8 | the Sikhs entered the Red Fort in Delhi under the leadership of Sardar Baghel Singh. Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II, made a settlement to allow Sikhs to raise Gurudwaras on Sikh historical sites.

1783

1799

July 7 | Ranjit Singh, Misldar of Sukerchakia Misl along with Sada Kaur, Misldar of Kanhaiya Misl occupied the city of Lahore.

April 12 | Establishment of Sikh Raj | Ranjit Singh was crowned as Maharaja of Punjab

1801

Maharaja Ranjit Singh



The most notable trait of Ranjit Singh's polity was the complete freedom of expression and worship enjoyed by all his subjects. Though he was born and brought up in the Sikh faith and listened to the recitation from Sikh scriptures every day, he did not proclaim Sikhism as the religion of the state. His broad religious outlook was reflected in his according due respect to all religions. The spirit of forbearance displayed by him was in sharp contrast to the inhuman practices of the Mughal rulers, their plunder, and forced conversions

Maharaja Ranjit Singh also known as **Sher-e-Punjab** ("The Lion of Punjab"), became the first

Sikh Emperor, after uniting the 11 Sikh Kingdoms of Punjab together to form an Empire, from 1799-1839.

Early life

Ranjit Singh was born on 13th November 1780 in Gujranwala City, Punjab, now in modern day Pakistan, into a Sikh family of Sandhawalia Clan, to Sardar Maha Singh Sukerchakia and Sardarni Mai Raj Kaur, the daughter of the Raja Gajpat Singh, of Jind Kingdom. At the time, large parts of the Punjab was ruled by the Sikhs, who had divided the territory among factions known as *misl*s, each having their own powerful Sikh Chieftains. Ranjit Singh's father Maha Singh was the *misaldar* ("commander", "misl leader") of the Sukerchakia misl and controlled a territory in west Punjab based around his headquarters at Gujranwala

Ranjit Singh father died while he was 12 years old. At a young age, Maharaja Ranjit Singh became a Champion Swimmer, an Expert Horse-Rider and an Able Swordsman. He was greatly inspired by the fact that Guru Gobind Singh ji's two elder sons had fought the Mughals very bravely at the tender age of 14 and 17.

A fearless warrior

It was under Ranjit Singh's leadership, the various Sikh Chiefs were united and on Vaisakhi day of 1801 they conferred the title of 'MAHARAJA OF THE PUNJAB' on him. Maharaja Ranjit Singh systematically extended the frontiers of Punjab and brought the regions around Amritsar, Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar under his rule. He was a liberal ruler and did not bother about the colour, creed, caste or nationalities of his employees.

Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were treated equally. He banned the discriminatory religious tax the "jizya" on Hindus and Sikhs which had been imposed by the various Muslim rulers.

Respect from all quarters

The most notable trait of Ranjit Singh's polity was the complete freedom of expression and worship enjoyed by all his subjects. Though he was born and brought up in the Sikh faith and listened to the recitation from Sikh scriptures every day, he did not proclaim Sikhism as the religion of the state. His broad religious outlook was reflected in his according due respect to all religions. The spirit of forbearance displayed by him was in sharp contrast to the inhuman practices of the Mughal rulers, their plunder, and forced conversions - Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon.

A note-worthy feature of Sikhism is the welding of the spiritual and the temporal realms of human existence. In the integrated vision of the Gurus, politics without religious and moral backing is pure opportunism. Likewise, religion without socio-political responsibility is simply negativism.

A healthy socio-political environment cannot be created without the moral basis supplied by religion. According to the Gurus, a sane society is essentially a pluralistic one in which everyone gets the opportunity to realize his potential to its fullest. They were conscious that the role of the State in enforcing a particular faith on the people violates man's inherent desire for freedom. But it was the conviction of the Gurus that a sound socio-political order could be built and preserved only through moral and ethical imperatives --- the abiding values of tolerance, humility, charity and compassion that constitute *Dharma*. Such a philosophy sustains the concept of a State, not of a religious-communal nature, but of a welfare State with wide ranging obligations and the general good of all as the basis of political governance.

Ranjit Singh was the ruler of a powerful State extending from Tibet to Sindh and from the Khyber pass to the Sutlej. Kingdoms and empires have almost invariably been founded and maintained on the strength of arms. However, it goes to Ranjit Singh's credit that while fulfilling his ambitions, he used bare minimum force. Barron Charles Hugel records: "*Never perhaps was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality.*" Unequaled for the daring and originality of his many-sided genius, Ranjit Singh gave to Punjab four decades of peace, prosperity and progress. Benefits of this were enjoyed equally by all communities — Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. To unite the three principal communities — Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs --in a common enterprise and reconcile them to the new political order through liberalism was no mean achievement.

The most notable trait of Ranjit Singh's polity was the complete freedom of expression and worship enjoyed by all his subjects.

There are numerous stories that remain current till today about the easy accessibility of Ranjit Singh and his high sense of imparting justice. No matter was too small or big to be brought before him. A story survives that a young woman entered the durbar crying '*Dohai Sarkar dohai*' (Cruelty, Your Highness, cruelty). With repeated sobs she related that she had been raped by Maharaja's soldiers. The Maharaja held his head down in shame and threw his unsheathed sword towards the woman and asked her to kill him as he had not protected her honour. 'This is the job of the King' replied the lady. The legend has it that Maharaja got the culprits identified, dismissed them and put them in prison for life.

For the first time in Indian history, a landmark was created. *Mazhabis*, the centuries-old untouchables of Hindu society, far from being discriminated against, become a regular component of Ranjit Singh's army.

Recruitment to all posts in his state was to be made on merit. Some of his closest advisers were Muslims and yet they had an intense loyalty towards him and his Sikh's. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the first Asian ruler to modernize his army to European standards and was well known for filling the leadership positions in his 'Darbar'(Courtroom) with men of varied Religions. People were recognized and promoted on their ability and not their religion.

During the Rule of Sher-e-Panjab, the Sikh Population, was around 10 million, Sikhism, was mainly based in the central parts of the Punjab, such as areas of Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Lahore, Kasur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur.

The respect shown by those who worked for the Maharaja is best highlighted, perhaps, by the Sikh Empire's foreign minister, a Muslim named Fakir Azizuddin, who when meeting with the British Governor-General George Eden, 1st Earl of Auckland was asked, which of the Maharaja's eyes was missing, he replied, "the Maharaja is like the sun and the sun has only one eye. The splendor and luminosity of his single eye is so much that I have never dared to look at his other eye." (The Maharaja had lost the sight of one eye from an attack of smallpox as a child. In a land and time when being blinded disqualified one from ruling, having the sight of only one eye was never a problem for Ranjit Singh, who remarked that it gave him the ability to see things more acutely.)

Truly secular leader

The Governor General was so pleased with the reply that he gave his gold wrist-watch to the Maharaja's Minister during their meeting at Simla. The Empire was effectively secular as it did not give preference to Sikhs, or discriminate against Muslims, Hindus or even atheists.

It was relatively modern and had great respect for all religions and non-religious traditions of the Empire's citizens. He did not declare any religion as a state religion. Therefore, toleration and co-existence of all communities was ensured. The only main prominent religious symbols of the empire were the Maharaja and royal family being Sikh and the Army being dominated by Sikh nobles and the Khalsa warriors. *In case of Maharaja Ranjit Singh secularism was an article of faith. Sikhism never taught him to use political power to bring adherents to his religion.*

The Maharaja never forced Sikhism on his subjects. This was in sharp contrast with the attempted ethnic and religious cleansing of past Muslim rulers - Afgani or Mughal. Ranjit Singh had created a state based upon Sikhi's noble traditions, where everyone was equally and worked together, regardless of their background. One where its citizens looked at the things they shared in common, e.g. being Punjabi, local traditions etc rather than any religious differences.

The magnificent Maharaja

Ranjit Singh was a man of profound knowledge. He was inquisitive about everything — ranging from politics and methods of warfare to the customs and manners of European— from guns, forts, wines, medicines and horses to hell, Paradise, God and the devil. His name commanded respect and honour, both among his courtiers and his subjects

Victor Jacquemont, a French traveller, observed: "He is better obeyed by his subjects than the Mughal Emperors at the zenith of their power." His genius was conspicuous from the moment he uttered the first word, conversed with the wisest or the manner in which he bestrode a horse or

handled his opponents. His memory was phenomenal, and like Napoleon Bonaparte, he could recall at will, the names of persons and places without straining himself.

The etiquette and discipline of the Maharaja's court was quite akin to that of the Victorian times, and impressed the foreign dignitaries, one of whom remarked that all that the imagination could conceive of human grandeur, all that the most exorbitant fancy could desire in its endeavour to portray the scene of royal splendour was embodied in the court of the Maharaja. The rich treasure of paintings bequeathed to us by August Theodar Schoefft, Emily Eden and Godfrey Vigne, the court painters of the Maharaja, bear testimony to this.

The Maharaja loved to remain in the lap of nature for as long as he could. Beautiful gardens at Amritsar, Lahore, Gujranwala and Dinanagar were laid out. He restored the Shalimar garden to its old Mughal glory and renamed it as Shalabagh, as the former name in Punjabi meant "the killer of love".



The Maharaja's Military

Maharaja Ranjit Singh is included in the list of "Undefeated Military Commanders", at Wikibin - a list of known military commanders who did not lose any significant engagement against the enemy as the commander-in-chief of a significant portion of a country's military forces.

The Maharaja developed a formidable military machine that helped him carve out an extensive kingdom and maintain it amid hostile and ambitious neighbors. The creation of this empire was a

result of God's grace and his own genius. From the scanty force that he inherited, comprised almost solely of horsemen, a force where everyone brought his own horse and whatever weapon he could afford or acquire, without any regular training or organization the Maharaja developed Asia's only modern army, well ahead of the Japanese restructuring of the 1880s, one which was able to stop the British advance at the Sutlej.

What held his troopers together was their personal loyalty to their leader. The guerrilla warfare system had stood the Khalsa in good stead during the turbulent and anarchic eighteenth century, but was unsuited to the needs of the changing times and to Ranjit Singh's ambition to establish a secure kingdom.

According to author George Forster (*A Journey from Bengal to England, Volume I*, London: 1798) : *"They were armed with a matchlock and a sabre. Their method of fighting was queer indeed."* However, *"towards the end of the 18th century, a strong man of genius and commanding personality was born among them, who taking a lesson from the deplorable situation prevailing in the community and the country at the time determined to build up a strong, centralised and effectively controlled military system by amalgamating the best element in the foreign with the best element in the indigenous fighting mechanism."* It was none else than Ranjit Singh, who emerged not only as a great ruler but also a great general. He was convinced that the army, modelled on medieval lines, was no match for the forces he was anticipating to fight. Until it was modified, he could not hope to emerge victorious over regular troops like the English, whose drill and tactics he studied with infinite patience or even over the Afghans who were always a source of anxiety in the north-west.

While he was keen on adopting European methods, Ranjit Singh never completely wanted to discard the system which he had inherited from his forefathers. It was a system well-known for its skirmishing and manoeuvring ability, dash and gallantry. Moreover, the Sikhs too were reluctant to change for the new arms proposed to be raised under European discipline. The military system of Ranjit Singh as it finally evolved was a blend of best of both, the old and the new ideas. ***"He was not a blind imitator of the West, exactly as he was not an orthodox follower of the East."***

With these ideas, Ranjit Singh changed the entire organisation of the Khalsa army. The cavalry ceased to be the most important arm and the infantry became the favourite service. Creation of the artillery was started from scratch. The change was facilitated by the employment of European Officers, Frenchmen, Italians, Greeks, Russians, Germans, Austrians and the English. Of the foreign officers who entered the Maharaja's service, Ventura and Allard had served Napoleon in his campaigns against Spain and Italy. Court, another Frenchman, commanded two battalions of Gurkhas. Colonel Gardner, an Irishman of considerable ability, was employed in the artillery. All these officers were basically engaged by Ranjit Singh for modernisation of his troops.

General Allard was made in charge of Cavalry and General Ventura was to supervise the infantry. Together, the two French men were responsible for the 6000 strong Fauj-i-Khas a kind of elite commando unit. Fauj-i-Khas was a hard core military unit with one of the finest and toughest men on board and earned the respect of the one and all in subsequent battles.

It is very significant to note that when Ventura and Allard reached Lahore in 1822, Ranjit Singh had almost completed the fabric of his empire. He had conquered Multan in 1818, Kashmir in 1819, Dera Ghazi Khan in 1820 and Dera Ismail Khan in 1821. Peshawar was subdued in 1834. According to

Cunningham, "It has been usual to attribute the superiority of the Sikh army to the labours of these two officers and of their subsequent coadjutors, the generals court and Avitabile, but in truth, the Sikh owes his excellence as a soldier to his own hardihood of character, to that spirit of adaptation which distinguishes every new people and to that feeling of a common interest and destiny implanted in him by his great teacher. However, it cannot be denied that these European generals gave a moderate degree of precision and completeness. There is no denying the fact that during the early phase of military organisation, under Ranjit Singh, every branch of army considerably gained in size, shape and strength."

No wonder in 1845-46 when efficiency of the Khalsa army was put to an acid test during the war with the British, their reckless valour was the subject of high admiration even among the British commanders.

Army History

Ranjit Singh's military career can mainly be divided into three phases.

1799 – 1809: Consolidation of the Sikh forces, leading to the capture of Lahore and the establishment of the Sikh Kingdom.

After securing his position in Lahore, Ranjit Singh thought of expanding the boundaries of his empire to become the Maharaja of Panjab in the real sense of the term. There were a number of hostile elements that the Maharaja had to subdue. The nawab of Kasur had not reconciled himself to Ranjit Singh being declared the ruler of Lahore. In conjunction with Sahib Singh, chief of the Bhangi Misl, he thought of challenging Ranjit Singh's authority. Ranjit Singh himself led an army to chastise the Bhangi ruler of Gujarat and another contingent was dispatched under his trusted ally, Fateh Singh Kallianwala. Both the Bhangi chief and the nawab of Kasur were defeated and they accepted Ranjit Singh's sovereignty.

Ranjit Singh next turned his attention to the holy city of Amritsar. With the help of his own forces and those of his mother-in-law, Rani Sada Kaur, he marched to Amritsar and besieged the Gobindgarh fort where the Bhangi forces had entrenched themselves. Noticing the invading army, Bhangi forces started firing at Ranjit Singh's forces. To avoid any damage to the *Harmandir Sahib* (The Golden Temple) and the *Akal Takhat* in fierce fighting, Ranjit Singh did not return the fire but succeeded in securing the surrender of the Bhangi forces through negotiations with the help of **Akali Phoola Singh**. He annexed Amritsar to his empire and took away the famous Zamzama gun to Lahore, which proved very useful to the Maharaja in his future military campaigns. He paid homage at the Harimandir and the Akal Takhat and made valuable offerings as thanksgiving.

1809 – 1823: Expansion of the Sikh Empire to include Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir, and the defeat of the Afghans

i) Friendship Treaty with the British

Ranjit Singh's conquests of the nearby territories in quick succession greatly alarmed the British Government, which had by then conquered the rest of the subcontinent, having been only stopped in their tracks at the River Sutlej by the Sikhs. Thus the British intervened to prevent Ranjit Singh's move to further expand towards the east by subjugating the Sutlej states. These states also feared the expansionist policies of the Maharaja and took shelter under the British by signing

subsidiary alliances with the British Government. In 1809 Ranjit Singh signed a treaty of friendship and peace with the British by which he agreed not to interfere in the affairs of the Sutlej chiefs. In return, the British Government acknowledged Ranjit Singh's sovereignty over Punjab and, by implication, agreed to his expansion towards the North-west.

ii) Conquests in the North-west

Checked in the East by the treaty of 1809, Ranjit Singh made successful inroads into the territories to the North-west of his empire. After consolidating his hold over Kasur, Sialkot and Sheikhpura, Ranjit Singh turned to Multan, which, apart from its strategic military importance, was also a leading commercial centre. Ranjit Singh dispatched a force of 20,000 men under the joint command of his son Kharak Singh and General Diwan Chand. The artillery, which included the Zamzama gun, was under the command of General Ilahi Baksh. Ranjit Singh's army succeeded in capturing the forts of Muzzafargarh and Khangarh. Muzzafar Khan put up stiff resistance but was killed in action and Multan was captured by the invading army. He then marched to Hazara and, a little later, captured Peshawar. It was for the first time in Indian history that tables had been turned against the Afghan invaders when one of the native Indian rulers subdued the most ferocious tribesmen on the North-west frontier through his tact and heroism. In 1819 Ranjit Singh also annexed the beautiful valley of Kashmir.



It is in this phase that Hari Singh Nalwa, his trusted General, extended the empire's reach to Khyber pass, along the Afghanistan border. This was a historic achievement as only thereafter no foreign invasion to the sub-continent would happen from Afghanistan.

1823 – 1839 : Consolidation and further expansion.

It is in this phase that General Zorawar Singh, operating under the military leadership of Gulab Singh (the Dogra minister in Ranjit Singh's cabinet), led expansionary military expeditions to Ladakh (1834), Baltistan (1840) and Tibet (1841).

During the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh Punjab enjoyed international reputation mainly on account of the Sikh Army, which was equal to any armed force in the world at that time.

Once Mohanlal Kashmiri, a young man of 20 during his travels in Central Asia in 1832 happened to attend a royal durbar at Mashad in Iran, on a national festival day. The presiding prince was Abbas Mirza, father of the king of Iran. The prince asked Mohanlal whether Ranjit Singh's court vied in magnificence with what he now saw before him, and whether the Sikh Army could compare in discipline and courage with His Highness's Sirbaz (regular Iranian troops).

Mohanlal replied modestly but firmly that Maharaja Ranjit Singh's durbar tents were made of Kashmir shawls and that even the floor was made of the same expensive material; and as for his army, if Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa were to cross the Indus, His Highness would soon be glad to make good his retreat to his original government of Tabriz.

Generals of Maharaja

Among some of the most important and illustrious names(among others) include:

- Hari Singh Nalwa
- Dewan Mokham Chand
- Gulab Singh Pahuwindia - The Famous General Belonging to the Family Tree of Shaheed Baba Deep Singh Ji of Saheedan Misl[1]
- Akali Phula Singh
- Jassa Singh Ahluwalia
- Shaam Singh Ataariwala



Jewels and Relics from Maharaja Ranjit Singh's 'Toshakhana' (treasure-house)

AFTER consolidating his victories and establishing an independent kingdom in Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh built a unique collection of jewels and relics. The world famous Koh-i-Noor is the most precious in the category of jewels and the *Kalgee* of Guru Gobind Singh in the category of relics. Apart from the relics of the Sikh Gurus, in the Toshkhana of the Maharaja were also preserved shoes, staff and prayer book of Prophet Mohammad which his father Maha Singh had acquired from Pir Mohammad Chhatha after the latter's defeat in the battle of Rasulnagar. According to the popular tradition, the Maharaja showed same reverence for the relics of Prophet Mohammad which he showed for the relics of the Sikh Gurus. The Maharaja used to start his day after listening to the recitation to Gurbani in the morning and taking a Wak(Hukamnama – order of the day) from Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Before starting the day's business, the Maharaja would place over his eyes and forehead the sacred kalgi of Guru Gobind Singh with great reverence. So deep was his faith in the Guru Granth Sahib that he would never take any major decision without seeking guidance from the Spiritual scripture.

Ranjit Singh did not wear a crown or sat on a throne in keeping with the egalitarian tradition of the Khalsa Panth.

The Maharaja's fabulous wealth and relics were the envy not only of contemporary Indian rulers but also those of the officials of the East India Company. The following account of the nephew of Henry Edward Fane, an ADC of Colonel Wade, the British Political Agent posted in Ludhiana, describes the British astonishment over the fabulous collection of the Maharaja: "The dresses and jewels of the raja's court were the most superb that can be conceived; the whole scene can only be compared to a gala night at the Opera. The minister's son, in particular, the reigning favourite of the day (Hira Singh) was literally one mass of jewels; his neck, arms and legs were covered with necklaces, armbands and bangles, forms of pearls, diamonds and rubies, one above the another, so thick that it was difficult to discover anything beneath them."

The Maharaja always showed great respect for the religious places dear to his Hindu, Muslim and Sikh subjects. The Maharaja gave tax-free endowments for religious places and gave costly gifts to Jawalamukhi temple and Baba Farid shrine at Pak Pattan. The Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar received Maharaja's special attention and reverence. It was under the orders of the Maharaja that the entire shrine was re-decorated by beautiful inlay and floral work and walls and canopies of the Harmandir Sahib were inlaid with gold plating, which then onward came to be popularly known as Swarn Mandir or the Golden Temple. Whenever the Maharaja visited Harmandir Sahib to seek Guru's blessings, he offered invaluable gifts, which are now preserved in the *Toshakhana*(treasure-house) of the Golden Temple. A canopy embedded with 20 pounds of gold and studded with diamonds, emeralds, pearls and rubies, a jewelled arm band, a sword with a gold handle studded with jewels



and pearls, a peacock made of sapphire and gilded with diamonds, rubies and other precious stones and other invaluable jewellery items were presented to the temple by the Maharaja.

He was responsive to the scientific advances and encouraged industry and trade. The Kashmiri pashmina shawl industry was revived and shawls began to be exported to the European countries. Multan silk became popular. Existing roads were repaired and made safe and newkacha roads were laid to open up villages. The conditions of small towns like Adina Nagar (Gurdaspur), Phillaur, Eminabad were considerably improved. Punjab saw prosperity and glory under Ranjit Singh.

Gurdwaras built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh

At the Harmandir Sahib, much of the present decorative gilding and marble work date back from the early 19th century. The gold and intricate marble works were conducted under the patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of the Punjab. The *Sher-e-Punjab* (Lion of the Punjab) was a generous patron of the shrine and is remembered with much affection by the Sikhs. Maharaja Ranjit Singh deeply loved and admired the teachings of the Tenth Guru of Sikhism Guru Gobind Singh, thus built two of the most sacred temples (among others) in Sikhism. These are Takht Sri Patna Sahib, the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh, and Takht Sri Hazur Sahib, the place where Guru Gobind Singh left his human form, in Nanded, Maharashtra in 1708.

The king who refused to sit on a throne

Although crowned King of the Punjab, he refused to wear the emblem of royalty in his turban. He refused to sit on a throne, and continued as before to hold durbar seated cross-legged in his chair, which looked more like a bathtub than a fauteuil, or, more often received visitors in the oriental fashion, reclining on cushions on a carpet. *"I am a peasant and a soldier, and do not care for external pomp and show. My sword is enough to win me all the distinction I need,"* said the Maharaja.

When he ordered new coins to be struck, these did not bear his portrait or his name but were named the Nanakshahi coins. The seal of government, likewise, bore no reference to him. On the contrary, the coins he issued bore the inscription:

Degh-o-Tegh-o-Fateh Nusrat Bedrang Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh
(*Hospitality, sword, victory and conquest unfailing have been received from Guru Nanak - Gobind Singh.*)

The government was not a personal affair but the Sarkar Khalsaji of the people who brought it into being; the court for the same reason came to be known as the Darbar Khalsaji. The only title he preferred to be addressed was plain and simple Singh Sahib. Ranjit Singh did not want to, nor ever did, lose the common touch.

He acknowledged no earthly superior. He was impelled by the weight of tradition that had grown up over the years, that it was the destiny of the Sikhs to rule (Raj Karega Khalsa) and that perhaps he had been chosen by the Gurus to rule.

Withal, the Maharaja was a Sikh of the Sikhs, writes Dr Ganda Singh. He ruled under the "protection of the Timeless one" — *Akal Sahai*. His coinage bore a legend that proclaimed that fact. It also acknowledged the realm had come to him through the ten Gurus :**Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh**. His army saluted him with the Sikh war-cry: Wah-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa ! Wah-i-Guru Ji Ki Fateh

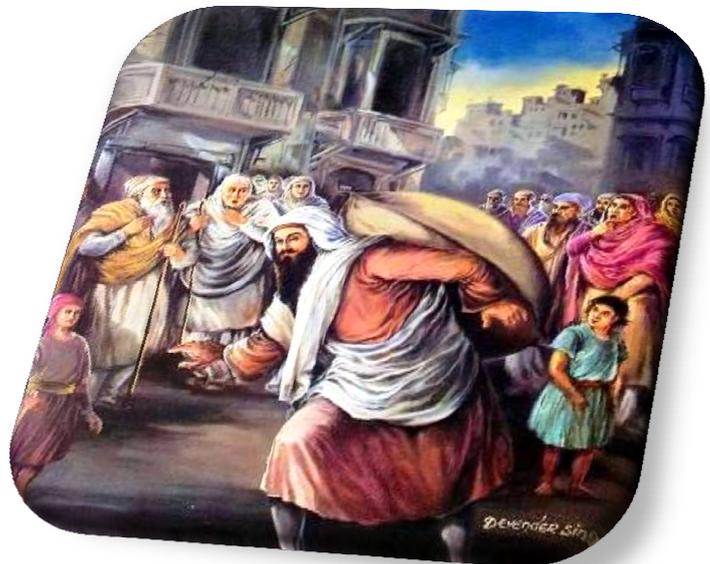
Ranjit Singh in the Panjabi Folklore

Ranjit Singh was one of the few rulers who became a legend in his lifetime. There are number of stories in the Panjabi folklore still popular among the people of Panjab on both sides of the India-Pakistan border. It is said that soon after the Maharaja established his control over Lahore, a deputation of Sikhs waited upon the Maharaja and complained that they were finding it difficult to put up with the loud sound of the muezzin five times a day and made a forceful plea to stop the practice of azan. The Maharaja told the deputation to take up the responsibility of knocking at the door of each Muslim house in their vicinity to summon them for prayers five times before he could order the stoppage of azan. The Sikhs agreed to this arrangement. After doing this for a week they approached the Maharaja, looking more worried than before, and prayed for restoring the old practice. This was Maharaja's way of helping religious communities understand each other's point of view.

Two other stories shed light on about Maharaja's concern for his poor subjects. At one time during a famine, the Maharaja ordered free distribution of ration from the royal granary. To ensure that his orders were faithfully implemented, the Maharaja used to visit various distribution points incognito. One day as he was walking past a hovel he saw an old man sitting on a sack, "Night is approaching, old man, why are you sitting here in darkness?" asked the Maharaja. The old man replied that the sack was too heavy for him to carry home. The Maharaja carried the sack to the old man's house and was blessed.

In another incident when the Maharaja was going out in a procession, an old woman rushed to him and banged her old iron pan on the Maharaja. On being arrested, she was produced before the Maharaja and asked to explain her mad act. She explained that she had heard that the Maharaja was like a paras whose mere touch would convert iron into gold. Being very poor and old, she thought this might end her misery. The Maharaja is said to have ordered his officials to give the old woman gold equivalent to the weight of her old iron pan.

There are stories which demonstrate Ranjit Singh's wit and sense of humour. Once Akali Phoola Singh noticed the Maharaja riding on an elephant and shouted, "You one-eyed man, who gave you this buffalo to ride on?" Rather than lose his temper and teach Phoola Singh a lesson, the Maharaja smiled and said in mocking humility, "It is a gift from Your Honour." In another incident, Moran,



while exchanging pleasantries with him asked, "Maharaj where were you when God was distributing good looks?" "I was busy conquering territories and building an empire," retorted the quick-witted Maharaja.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death

When Ranjit Singh died in 1837 at the age of fifty nine, he was the undisputed ruler of a compact Kingdom. He left in Punjab, an army which was capable of fighting the British on equal terms. He could dodge and confound the British envoy Metcalfe who had come to parley with him. He drove back the Afghans across the Indus, into the mountains, and stemmed for all time to come tide of the Afghan marauders pouring into Northern India and committing arson, pillage and slaughter.

But for him, Kashmir would have continued to be a part of Afghanistan. He brought under his sway, three Muslim provinces: Peshawar in the west; Multan in the south west; and Kashmir in the north. He incorporated also the numerous petty states into his kingdom. It was only the growth of British power and its strength in India that prevented the Sikhs from succeeding the Mughals as the controlling authority in India but it is a speculation whether they would have succeeded in this venture.

What kind of a Kingdom did Ranjit Singh establish? Was it a military monarchy? Monarchy was the only form of government in India for centuries, and the Sikhs, in spite of their attachment to democratic ideals, could not think of representative government. Ranjit Singh refused to sit on the throne. His name was never inscribed on the coin (but in the name of the Guru). He kept the army under control, and never used it as an instrument of tyranny. He set up a Sikh state in the sense that the ruler was Sikh who held power in the name of the Khalsa, and the army was predominantly Sikh. His was indeed a heterogeneous state based on harmony of religious faiths, and cooperation of communities with a rapport with the common man. There was no dictatorship of one community over other. He told Faqir Aziz ud Din, 'God intended me to look all religions with one eye, that is why he took away the light from the other'.

Ranjit Singh's rule was in fact characterised by scrupulous observance of rare norms of public conduct and social ethics for example When the victorious Khalsa army passed through the streets of Peshawar, he issued strict instructions to his *Sardars* (title of nobility – used to denote a chief or leader of a tribe) to observe restraint in keeping with the Sikh tradition, not to damage any mosque, not to insult any woman and not to destroy any crops. He tried his best to follow the Guru's injunction: "*Exercise forbearance in the midst of power, be humble in the midst of honour*".

By any standards, Ranjit Singh was statesman who out of anarchy and chaos had created order and stability and made Punjab a power to reckon with.

Known for religious tolerance, social harmony and justice, Ranjit Singh's state was the most progressive state in India.

Destined by nature...

Ranjit Singh was one of that order of minds which seem destined by nature to win their way to distinction, and achieve greatness. His courage was of that cool and calculating sort, which courted no unnecessary danger, and shunned none which his purposes made it expedient to encounter; and he always observed a just proportion between his efforts and his objects.

Gifted with an intuitive perception of character, and a comprehensive knowledge of human nature, it was by the overruling influence of a superior mind, that he contrived gradually, almost insensibly, and with little resistance, not only to reduce the proud and highspirited chiefs of his nation to the condition of subjects, but to render them the devoted adherence of his person, and the firm supporters of his throne.

*—From W.G. Osborne,
Military Secretary to Lord Auckland Governor-General of India, written in May 1838 when Osborne met Ranjit Singh*

Akaali Baba Phoola Singh ji



Phoola Singh ji was born in 1761 to Bhai Isher

Singh ji and Mata Raj Kaur ji. Bhai Isher Singh ji was from 'Dal' (group) of Jathedar Baba Deep Singh ji Shaheed. Few months after Babajis birth, Bhai Isher Singh ji attained *Shaheedi* (martyrdom) in *Vadda ghallughara* (bigger holocaust), in Feb 1762. Before dying, he gave responsibility of his son to his best friend in Dal, Baba Naina Singh ji.

Mataji (Mother) lived with her sons in village Sheeha(n) in Amritsar. When Phoola Singh was 7 years old, her mother took her to Akaal Bunga sahib that time and dedicated his Son in service of Khalsa Panth. '*Mukhi*' (Leader) Singhs of Misal Shaheedan that time, Baba Karam Singh ji, Baba Natha Singh ji, Baba Sadhu Singh ji and others who were at Akaal Takhat Sahib that day, placed child Phoola Singh under guidance of Baba Naina Singh ji. In *Jatha* (group) of Baba Naina Singh ji, young Phoola Singh learnt '*Gurbaani Vidya*' (learning scriptures), *Shastar Vidya* (martial arts) and spent his time in meditation and *sewa* (selfless service). In few years time, young Phoola Singh was a well known name in whole Dal Panth. As times changed and Sikhs started ruling over

Punjab, Misal Shaheedan also created its independent territory in Shahzadpur (Ambala) and '*Grihasthi*' Singhs (those with families) of Misal settled down and took to farming and other occupations. *Bihangam* (celibate) Singhs of Misal continued with their Chakkarvarti Jeevan (*Chakkarvarti - universal ruler, who rules ethically and benevolently over the entire world*) and roamed around countryside, punishing tyrants and oppressors, looking after Gurudwaras, doing Sikhi

Parchar (missionary work) and giving '*Pehra*'(going on rounds) in true Khalsa Traditions. With time, Jathedar Baba Naina Singh ji became 5th *Jathedar* (leader) of Misal Shaheedan and Baba Phoola Singhji became his deputy.

Jathedar of Misal Shaheedan

Baba Naina Singh ji lived a Chakkarvarti Jeevan, visiting and looking after Damdama Sahib, Anandpur Sahib and other important places, but main '*Chhauni*' (post) of Misal was at Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib in Amritsar. When Babaji grew old, he gave Chakkarvarti Sewa to Baba Phoola Singh, who was main caretaker of Damdama Sahib and Anandpur Sahib. In 1799, when Babaji, along with 2000 soldiers of Misal was camping on Banks of River Satluj, a Singh informed Babaji about a Cavalry regiment of British Army approaching towards Satluj, to cross in Punjab and conquer certain areas, as Dals had broken and some Misals of Sikhs were divided and fighting within them to control areas. Babaji saw it as a threat to hard earned freedom of Punjab and aroused his brave Akali warriors for '*Dharamyudh*'(meaning fighting in the defence of righteousness), to which Singhs responded with battle cries, sounding of trumpets and battle drums. Battle standards were raised and as the British troops approached the Bridge over Satluj, Akali warriors pounced upon them like lions. That was the first time British had seen chivalry, war-spirit and fury of Akali Nihangs. Within hours, whole cavalry was cut down and only people who survived were Commanding Officer and his Lieutenant, who were severely injured in this battle.

When news of this bravery reached Akali Baba Naina Singh ji, he was pleased so much that he chose Baba Phoola Singh ji as 6th Jathedar of Misal Shaheedan.

In 1800, Baba Phoola Singh ji started his Sewa of Akaal Takhat Sahib and other 'Takhts'. With him remained 2200 '*tyar bar tyar*'(ever ready) Akali Nihang Singh Soldiers of Misal Shaheedan who were loyal only to Guru Granth Sahib ji and *Charhdi Kala* of Khalsa Panth. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh (The Lion of Punjab) recognized this power, charisma and bravery of Akali Singhs and requested Baba Phoola Singh ji to assist him in creation of Khalsa Raaj. It was due to will of Singhs like Babaji and Baba Sahib Singh ji that Kingdom of Punjab was known as '*Sarkar Khalsa*' (Government of Khalsa).

Babaji's Military Expeditions

After his glorious victory against British Army (a battle mischievously hidden by British sources), Sikhs developed a great amount of respect and honour for Babaji. Sikh Sardars irrespective of Misal Politics respected him and He was seen as supreme Leader due to his selfless *Jeevan* (lifestyle) and Sewa. In 1802, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh moved with his army to conquer Holy City of Amritsar, which was under control of Bhangi Misal. Sardars of Bhangi Misal fortified their defences, but they were weak against superior military power of Maharaja. When Babaji came to know about this, he mediated between two Misals and impressed upon Maharaja Ranjeet Singh that it would be a 'sin' to

fire canons on “*Guru Nagri*” (Guru’s city – Amritsar) and it would be bigger sin for both Misals if a Sikh killed a Sikh in Holy City. At Babaji’s persuasion, Bhangi Sardars agreed to give control of Sri Amritsar to Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, who in turn gave them a big ‘*Jagir*’ (royal property) in Multan Area and assured protection and goodwill for generations.

In 1807, Khalsa *Fauj* (army) marched towards Kasoor to take control of the city from its Muslim Governor Kutub-ud-din and after a bloody battle in which Babaji led Khalsa Army from front, Governor was killed and Kasoor became part of Khalsa Raaj.

In 1814, Multan was attacked for first time and Governor of Multan accepted Khalsa Supremacy and promised to pay tax to Lahore Darbar.



In 1818, Ruler of Multan revolted against Khalsa Raaj and Maharaj Ranjeet Singh, assisted by Akali Baba Phoola Singh ji and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa attacked Multan, to merge it in Khalsa Raaj. The Main Battle Gun, ZamZam, was stationed towards Southern wall of Multan fort to break the wall so that Khalsa Army could enter the fort and conquer the enemies. As the battle raged, one wheel of ZamZam Canon broke down and it became useless, but without ZamZam, it was virtually impossible to break the wall. Akaali Baba Phoola Singh ji exhorted his Akaali Nihang Warriors to

place their shoulder in place of Gun. It was sure death, as the after shock of fired bomb was sure to break neck and shoulder bone of anyone who placed their shoulder in place of wheel, but the fearless and brave Akali warriors chose death at call of their beloved Jathedar. One by one, Singhs jumped in front to place their shoulder, and with each shot fired, one Singh kept falling, but that didn’t stop and one by one, 23 singhs placed their shoulders under the wheel of Canon ZamZam. As the 23rd shot was fired and Singh fell, Wall of Multan fort came crashing down. Akali Nihang Warriors of Misal Shaheedan jumped in the fort and within minutes, enemies were annihilated and Khalsai flag the ‘**Nishan Sahib**’ raised on Multan Fort. It was exemplary bravery of Akali Baba Phoola Singh ji and his Singhs which helped conquer Multan, the second state of Khalsa Raaj.

1819-Khalsa Army moved to Kashmir and after war which continued for 3 months, in which many battles took place, Kashmir became third state of Khalsa Raaj. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh offered Baba Phoola Singh ji with governorship of Kashmir, which Baba ji refused and Sham Singh Attariwala was appointed first governor of Kashmir.

These were some of the glorious battles fought for creation, expansion and defence of Khalsa Raaj which will be remembered forever, especially for the bravery shown by selfless saint-soldier, Akali Baba Phoola Singh ji and His Dal

Immortal Jeevan

He was the one who always saw his life as debt of Panth, forever ready to lay it down at altar of Dharam. He was the real 'Nihang'- above the filth and impurities of this world, imbued in Naam of Waheguru, with a divine glow on his face and shine in his eyes, forever ready to protect the Dharam.

He was part of Khalsa Fauj, but was not under command of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, instead he always lived as Saint-Soldier of Guru, directly under command of Guru Gobind Singh ji, maintaining his freedom and sovereignty as Army of Akaal Purakh (The Timeless).

He is, till today, most honoured and respected Jathedar of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib. For him, Sikhi values and principles mattered most, more than his life or anything else. He didn't fear anyone, whether it was Maharaja Ranjeet Singh or British (who tried to capture him with help of princely states of Patiala and Nabha when he came to Sri Anandpur Sahib in 1804). Guru and Sikhi was everything for him and protecting Sikhi and propagating teachings of Gurus was main mission of his life. He loved the peace, the purity and sanctity of Darbar Sahib Sri Amritsar sahib so much that, during a meeting of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh and British officials in Amritsar, Shia soldiers of British Army tookout their Moharram Procession in Amritsar and when their procession passed from the lane behind Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib, Babaji sent some Singhs to request Muslims to pass silently from near Darbar Sahib as their cries and screams were disturbing peace of Sri Darbar Sahib. But the Muslims instead became aggressive, upon which Babaji asked Singhs to teach them Khalsa way of Peace. There was a fight and 25 were killed by Akali Singhs in this clash. Upon hearing news of fight, Maharaja Sahib and British officers reached the spot and seeing 'Mahakaal saroop' of Babaji and his Akali warriors, asked Babaji for forgiveness. < Mahakaal saroop is blue banha(dress), blue dastaar(turban) bunge, with shastar(arms) all through out, in the dastaar, kamr kassa(waist band), etc. proper militant basically. Often Nihang singhs are referred to as Mahakaal ji, because of their bana(dress), rehit(lifestyle), bani, and the respect that goes with it all is considered mahakaal's (god's) very incarnation on earth >

The Vision of a Mighty Akaali Baba Phoola Singh ji, holding a Giant Tega(Kirpaan - Sword) in his hand was enough for enemies to shiver with fear. For Babaji, distinct identity, freedom and prosperity of Khalsa Panth was of utmost importance. He was born at a time Panth was struggling and he saw how elders of Panth had given their lives and shed their blood for 'Charhdi Kala' (upliftment) of Sikhi and he took it upon himself that this Kingdom created after a million sacrifices was protected at any cost.

When Maharaja Ranjeet Singh planned to marry a Muslim dancer, Moran, Babaji was furious. Maharaja had agreed to give half of his kingdom to Moran and there was uproar and every possibility of a revolt against him by Khalsa Fauj. Babaji, in his power as Jathedar of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib, summoned Maharaja to Takhat Sahib and gave him *Tankhah* (punishment) for having relations with Moran. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh was tied to a tree near Akaal Takhat Sahib and Babaji himself gave him 25 cane-beats, a punishment which Maharaja humbly accepted. **After that Singh Sahib Babaji reminded Ranjeet Singh that this Kingdom was result of thousands of Sacrifices by Sikhs and it didn't belong to him, but to entire Khalsa Panth and he was just a servant who was given Kingship**

by Panth. There were tears in eyes of Maharaja Sahib and he was ashamed of his deed. This was the *Jeevan*(life), the courage, the determination which made him the most honoured figure of 19th century. Elders of Panth saw in him light of Baba Deep Singh ji. **While Baba Deep Singh ji (first Jathedar of Misal Shaheedan) was the pillar of Sikh struggle and ideologue in 18th century, Baba Phoola Singh ji (Sixth Jathedar of Misal Shaheedan) held the same position, power and respect in 19th century.**

Shaheedi

In March 1823, Pathan tribes of North West frontier province (then known as State of Peshawar) revolted against Khalsa Raaj with help from Afghan Ruler, Dost Mohammed Khan. A 40,000 strong Pathan Army, with help of Afghan Artillery ravaged through parts of Northern Hills, killing innocents and murdering Sikhs living there. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh ji quickly moved with Khalsa Fauj to take on Pathan Army with Generals like Akali Babaji, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa and Kanwar Kharak Singh ji. Sardar Khushal Singh was ordered to bring Heavy Artillery from Lahore while Hari Singh Nalwa commanded elite forces. Akali Baba Phoola Singh ji, who generally used to stay at Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib on New year day (Chaittar Di Sangrand), decided to lead Misal/Akaal Regiment in this Battle.

At Amritvela, on 14th March 1823, standing in 'Hazoori'(presence) of Guru Granth Sahib ji with Maharaja, Sikh Generals, soldiers and his loyal Akali Warriors, Babaji did Ardas at feet of Satguru(True Guru) Granth Sahib ji to bless Khalsa Fauj with Fateh(victory) and Shaheediyan(martyrdom), and also asked for Hukamnaama (order/permission) for Army to move. After Hukamnaama, Babaji readied to move to battlefield. Battle Standards were raised and as Akali Fauja beat battle-drums to move to battlefield, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh told Babaji that heavy Artillery had still not reached and Sikh army was around 25,000 against Afghan Army of 40,000. He requested Babaji to wait for a day as till then more Army and Artillery would reach, but Babaji reprimanded Maharaja Ranjeet Singh for forgetting his 'Ardas' (Sikh prayer that is done before performing and/or after undertaking any significant task). Babaji said 'Shere Punjab, you can wait for artillery and Army, I can not. I have done ardas at feet of Satguru Granth Sahib ji and I will not back off from my ardas. Its not in tradition of our Misal to back off after Ardas, so no matter what, I will go to battle with my *Fauj*(army), if you wish, you can follow. No matter what, Victory will be ours''. These words were enough to infuse spirit in Maharaja's heart and he ordered entire Sikh Army to move to battlefield. Legend has it that when Sikh Army neared River Attock, it was flooding and there was no chance that Sikhs could cross the river. Babaji asked Maharaja Ranjeet Singh to do Japji Sahib Paath and Ardas, and as Maharaja Ranjeet Singh did Paath and Ardas and moved his horse in river, Attock became silent and water level fell miraculously.

On one hand was Khalsa Fauj, and in front lines were standing Immortal Warriors of Akaal Purakh, dressed in Blue, with tall turbans decorated with Shastars, holding Khalsa Nishans and in front of them stood the Legendary warrior, Akali Baba Phoola Singh ji. As the Akalis saw enemies, war cries of *Bole So Nihal- Sat Sri Akaal- Gurbar Akaal- Har Har Akaal* pierced through the skies and there

was a heavenly roar, as gods were responding to war-cries of Akaali Nihangs. Babaji pulled out his Tega and charged at enemies, as if he was going to meet someone beloved and his immortal warriors followed him. Pathans responded with canon fire, but Akali warriors, tore through the enemy lines and turned the gun barrels towards enemies. Rest of the Army followed, while Maharaja Ranjeet Singh saw battle scene from a distance. Some Pathan battalions were stationed atop hills looking at the 'Battlefield of Tarki ', and they started firing canons at charging Sikh Army. Akali Nihangs played the game of death and blood in battlefield and each Sikh killed scores of enemies. Babaji, at age of 62, were fighting like a lion cutting every enemy coming in his way, when suddenly from hilltop, hundreds of bullets hit his body. Enemy had been looking for him, and as Babaji came into their hitting range, they hit him with a volley of bullets. But that barrage of bullets wasn't enough to bring him down, as the battle ensued and blood flew from his body, Babaji got numerous cuts of swords from his enemies on his body, but with every cut, glow on his face increased. As if her mother was looking at her from heavens and saying 'Son, I had wished this Shaheedi for you, and today Maharajhas fulfilled my wish'. There was a peace, a joy, a bliss in his heart, of being able to die as a Shaheed for Guru and Panth, of being worthy of *Dasmesh Pita's*(Guru Gobind Singh ji's) love after Shaheedi. With every passing moment, a bullet was hitting and a sword was cutting his body, but Babaji didn't fall from his horse, till the enemy hadn't retreated, till the victory flag was not raised, till ardas of 'Waheguru ji ki Fateh' hadn't been fulfilled in battlefield.

Enemy fled from battlefield of Tarki, and as Sikhs celebrated victory, Babaji came down from his horse and looking at his brave knights, fell on battlefield, as he wished to kiss the battlefield which honoured him with title of Shaheed. Maharaja, Generals and Akali warriors surrounded Babaji's Holy body, purified by his holy blood, having hundreds of bullets and cuts in it. It was first time Maharaja Ranjeet Singh cried in Battlefield, each and every eye there was wet with tears of love, of devotion, of respect to great Sikh General of 19th century.

Babaji's Antim Sanskaar(last rites) was done on banks of River Landa in Naushera. A Gurudwara was built along with a cantonment of Nihang Singhs. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh attached vast Jagir(property) with this holy place, where Great Akali Babaji's holy and pure memorial stood.

Generations of Sikhs will come and go, but Legend of Baba Phoola Singh ji is and will be Immortal. He held the title of Akali- Immortal, and he is immortal.

SHAM SINGH ATTARI



It is recorded in the history of Punjab that if the test of patriotism is to lay down one's life for one's country knowingly and willingly then surely Sardar Sham Singh Attari was one of the greatest men of India, who, careless of worldly benefits and personal comforts, sacrificed his all to save the Punjab's independence. He preferred death to thralldom and by his own example made it clear to his countrymen that nothing was more precious than independence and freedom from the foreign yoke. He testified to the saying of bhagat Kabir ji that *'he is really great who is cut to pieces but does not leave the battlefield.'*

Sham Singh's father Sardar Nihal Singh was very loyal to his master Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Nihal Singh's son Sham Singh had caught Ranjit Singh's eye at an early age by his dash, vigor and soldierly qualities. Soon he made his name in his first campaign when in command of a battery of guns at the siege of Multan in 1818 and in spite of being wounded, he was the first to storm the breach in the fort and take it. Thereafter he served with distinction in many other campaigns in the North and gained as great a name for courage as his illustrious father.

In the absence of a strong hand after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the rot which set in the Kingdom of Punjab is too well known to the students of Sikh history. The intrigues of selfish and treacherous dogras at the court so disgusted Sham Singh that he retired from the court and settled down at Attari to spend the last days of his life in prayer and meditation. The intrigues at the Lahore Durbar culminated in a plan to divert the powerful Khalsa Army towards the British. Sham Singh was called by Maharani Jindan for advice. He strongly protested against this mad venture but to no avail.

Historians are of the opinion that the battle of Sabraon of the First Anglo-Sikh War (1846) where Sham Singh was in command of troops should never have been lost. The morale of the soldiers was high, some were seasoned veterans of many campaigns, and were led by devoted soldiers. But that was not the intention of the traitors at the Durbar who did everything possible to starve them of ammunition and other administrative support.

The night previous to the battle, it had rained heavily and the river Sutlej was in spate. (traitor)Tej Singh, a court noble, came to Sham Singh's camp at night and tried to persuade him to beat a retreat while the pontoon bridge was still intact. Sham Singh was infuriated. At this Tej Singh taunted him by saying that if he considered himself so brave and upright why doesn't he take a pledge to fight till the last. Sham Singh bowed to Guru Granth Sahib ji and standing before in all humility took a vow that he will return victorious or perish. But again ... Lal Singh and Tej Singh had already given British their positions of guns, etc.

As the dawn was breaking, the troops moved into attack. Sham Singh ji along with Ranjodh Singh Majithia and Ajit Singh Ladwa's forces decided to move in.

Sham Singh, tall and handsome with flowing grey beard, donned saffron robes, the garment of a shahid, and mounted his white charger. Drawing the sword in his right hand and shouting Sat-Siri-Akal, he charged at the enemy, with his followers at his heels. For a moment the British troops were flabbergasted for they had never seen anything like this charge before. Soon they recovered their wits and the firing became intense. Sham Singh's followers started dropping and soon mere handfuls were left. The old Sirdar fell at last. When his body was examined, seven bullets had pierced his chest. His courage inspired the Sikhs to make a determined bid to save the day, but the odds were against them. Sham Singh fell fighting in the foremost ranks. So did his dauntless comrades. The battle of Sabraon was lost but out of respect for the gallant adversary, the British ordered ceasefire and allowed Sham Singh's followers to take his body away.



Cunningham, who was present as an additional aid-de-camp to the governor-general, describes the last scenes of battle vividly in his book History of the Sikhs : "...although assailed on either side by squadrons of horse and battalions of foot, no Sikh offered to submit and no disciple of Guru Gobind Singh asked for quarter. They everywhere showed a front to the victors, and stalked slowly and sullenly away, while many rushed singly forth to meet assured death by contending with a multitude. **The victors looked with stolid wonderment upon indomitable courage of the vanquished...**"

THE BRAVE PUNJABIS

General Thackwell, who had personally led his dragoons in the battle wrote in The Second Sikh War (1851): "**It is due to the Sikhs to say that they fought bravely, for though defeated and broken, they never ran, but fought with their talwars to the last and I witnessed several acts of great bravery in some of their Sirdars and men**". Henry Hardinge, Governor General of India, who, alongwith Hugh Gough was rewarded with peerage, had seen the action. Arthur Hardinge, son of the Governor

General, wrote: "*Few escaped; no one, it may be said, surrendered. The Sikhs met their fate with the resignation which distinguished their race.*" Hugh Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief could not suppress his admiration of the bravery and resoluteness of Sikhs and paid rich tributes to the Punjabis : "*Policy prevented me publicly recording my sentiments of the splendid gallantry of a fallen foe, and I declare, were it not from a conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, **I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body.***"

The hard, Shah Mohammad, immortalised the heroic stand of the men of Sham Singh Attariwala at Sobraon thus:

'They squeezed the blood out of the Whites,
As one squeezes juice out of a lemon;
If only Ranjit Singh were there,
He would have been proud to see,
How the Khalsa wielded their swords.

About the sad result of the campaign, he wrote;

'Oh Shah Mohammad, without Ranjit Singh, such was our plight
We won the battles, but lost the fight.'

The traitors to the Khalsa were not only taken note of by the British or the Khalsa themselves, but were immortalised in doggerel verse punning on their names:

'Lallu dee Lallee gae, Teju da gia tej
Ran vich pith dikhaik modha aie pher.

'Lallu lost the blush of shame, Teju lost his lustre, by turning their Backs in the field, they turned the tide and battle yield'.

Please note the TRUE comments by the British on the Khalsa Forces Bravery under great odds....Simialr TRUE comments have been made by the MUSLIM Historians...Even the ENEMY couldnt stand aside and NOT admire the Khalsa Spirit...

Hari Singh Nalwa



Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was born in 1791 to Gurdial Singh Uppal and Dharam Kaur at

Gujranwala (now in Pakistan), the capital city of the Sukharchakias (misl) before Lahore came into Ranjit Singh's possession. Gurdial Singh accompanied Charrat Singh and Mahan Singh (Ranjit Singh's grandfather and father respectively) and on all their expeditions, and received in jagir the village of Balloke near Shahdera. He died during a campaign fighting Afghans in 1798, when Hari Singh was only seven years of age.

Hari Singh Nalwa was the Commander-in-chief at the most turbulent North West Frontier of Ranjit Singh's kingdom (known as *Sarkar Khalsaji*). He took the frontier of the Sarkar Khalsaji to the very mouth of the Khyber Pass. For the past eight centuries, marauders, who had indulged in looting, plunder, rape, and forcible conversions to Islam had used this route into the subcontinent. In his lifetime, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa became a terror to the ferocious tribes inhabiting these regions. He successfully thwarted the last foreign invasion into the subcontinent through the Khyber Pass at Jamrud, permanently blocking this route of the invaders. Even in his death, Hari Singh Nalwa's formidable reputation ensured victory for the Sikhs against an Afghan force five times as numerous.

Hari Singh Nalwa's performance as an administrator and a military commander in the North West Frontier(Afghanistan) remains unmatched. Two centuries on, Britain, Pakistan, Russia and America have been unsuccessful in effecting law and order in this region. Hari Singh Nalwa's spectacular achievements exemplified the tradition established by Guru Gobind Singh such that he came to be hailed as the "Champion of the Khalsa".

Early Life

After his father's death his mother, Dharam Kaur, moved to her parental home to live under the care of her brothers. There Hari Singh learnt Punjabi and Persian and trained in the manly arts of riding, musketry and swordsmanship

Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to organize sports events involving martial arts and in one of these events around 1805 Hari Singh displayed such martial skills that Ranjit Singh immediately hired him as one of his personal attendant. Hari Singh earned a reputation for bravery quite early on. He was only with the Maharaja for a few months when one day he was asked to accompany the Maharaja for a hunt. During the course of hunting expedition he happened to be a victim of a sudden attack of a tiger. The attack was so subtle and unexpected that he did not gain time to pull out his sword. Sardar Hari Singh faced the crucial situation with such boldness that he managed to catch hold of the jaw of the beast and with great force flung the tiger away, and withdrawing his sword, with one blow severed the tiger's head. From that day onwards Hari Singh was given the appellation of "Nalwa" by the Maharaja, who acknowledged that Hari Singh had killed the tiger similar to the way King Nall used to hunt (King Nall was a very brave king and was known for his audacity to kill lions and other dangerous animals with his bare hands, and hence the Maharaja adorned Hari Singh with that title. The very next day the Maharaja appointed Hari Singh as a captain of a regiment called the "Sher-dil Regiment".

This was the beginning of the great exploits of the highest esteemed person in the Maharaja Court - Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. His first assignment and victory was the conquest of Kasur in 1807CE. The Maharaja, conferred to him the title of Sardar and presented him with a considerable estate, again acclaimed his bravery in this hard fought battle.



Ballad speaks:

In his tenth year, he was initiated into the fold of the Khalsa (Pahul/Sikh baptism) which was a source of joy for all.

In his eleventh year, he displayed expert horsemanship, could roar like a lion, and was blessed with immense God-gifted strength.

By the age of twelve, he displayed leadership qualities. By the age of thirteen, he could recite the Gurbani (Sikh Scriptures) from memory.

At fourteen, said Sitarama, he aspired to become an expert swordsman and destiny fully favoured him.

By the age of fifteen, fully armed he wrestled a tiger to its death. He was extremely good-looking and his aura sparkled.

So formidable was the reputation he had gained since childhood that the mere mention of his name was enough to make the enemy forsake food and water.

By the age of sixteen, says Sitarama, Sardar Hari Singh had gained a great reputation. (Sitarama in Amar Singh, 1903)

Hari Singh went on to participate in many glorious victories of the Sikhs before becoming the Commander-in-Chief of the army along the North Western Frontier of the Sikh Kingdom.

Battle of Sialkot (1808)

Ranjit Singh nominated Hari Singh Nalwa to take Sialkot from its ruler Jiwan Singh. This was his first battle under an independent command. The two armies were engaged for a couple of days, eventually seventeen year old Hari Singh carried the day

Battle of Multan

It was on the 24th of February 1810, that the Maharaja, along with Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, attacked Multan. This was a very hard battle where the Multan Fort was fortified by the Nawab of Bahawalpur, and even after considerable bombardment the walls of the fort held on. It was suggested that if some warriors could reach the fort and place dynamite near the walls and blow the wall apart, the army then could enter the fort. This was a suicidal mission, but Sardar Hari Singh was the first volunteer to jump and except the challenge. He, along with 74 others did the needful and the Sikh army entered the fort and the battle was won, but Hari Singh was very seriously wounded, and had no hope of living. But after some time he recovered, to the delight of the Maharaja and the Sikh army, who now considered him an exceptional soldier, and was duly honored by the Maharaja with more estate and money. His further conquests included Mitha Tiwana, Uch, and the historic win over the Afghans at the Attock Fort.

Kashmir

Later in 1819, the Sikh army under the command of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa marched towards Kashmir. A very ferocious battle was fought but eventually Kashmir became a part of the Sikh Empire.

Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed the first Khalsa Governor of Kashmir in 1820. Sardar Hari Singh governed Kashmir in such an excellent manner that the Maharaja was highly pleased with him, and to reward him, the Maharaja instructed the Kashmir mint to name the currency after Hari Singh Nalwa. The "Hari Singh Rupee" can presently be seen in museums.

He governed the province for a little over a year when the pull of the Sikh Forward Policy compelled his recall from the province.

While returning from Kashmir Sardar Hari Singh conquered Mangli on the way, which was another great win. He reached Lahore on 28th November 1821, and the Maharaja was extremely overjoyed to see him and learn of the triumph of Mangli. The Sikh army started their campaign with taking Mungher, Hazara and Hari Pur, which was named after Sardar Hari Singh.

Battle of Nowshera

The Sikhs forayed into Peshawar for the first time in 1818, but did not occupy the territory. They were content with collecting tribute from Yar Mohammed, its Barakzai governor. Azim Khan, Yar Mohammed's half-brother in Kabul, totally disapproved of the latter's deference to the Sikhs and decided to march down at the head of a large force to vindicate the honour of the Afghans. Azim Khan wanted to avenge both, the supplication of his Peshawar brethren and the loss of Kashmir.

These news reached Lahore Darbar as well. In order to settle the issue with Pathans once for all, the cantonment commanders were instructed to leave just sufficient army to look after the cantonment and mobilise the remainder to participate in the battle. On hearing the order, S. Hari Singh marched with his army to Attock. Prince Sher Singh also reached there and met S. Hari Singh. They constructed a boat bridge over river Attock. When they learnt that the enemy had taken up defensive position in the field of Jahangira, they launched an attack the next morning. The Pathan army was four times more than the Khalsa army. But the sheer bravery and audacity of the Sikh warriors was enough to overcome such a powerful force.

When Prince Sher Singh advanced deep into the hills in hot pursuit of the enemy and got trapped by the Pathans, Sardar Hari Singh lost no time in breaking the encirclement. But Mohammad Azim Khan seized the opportunity in this chaos and taking some soldiers along cut loose the ropes of the boat bridge. The boats were washed away by the swift current of the river. As a result the route of re-inforcement of the Khalsa army was cut off.

When the Maharaja and Baba Phoola Singh Akali reached river Attock at the head of their army, they were surprised to see the bridge washed away and damaged. Hearing the din of battle coming from across the river, in the surge of emotion of love for the nation, Akali Phoola Singh spurred his horse into the waters of river Attock. Maharaja Ranjit Singh followed him suit. Afghans were

completely struck with horror as to how the Sikhs could cross the flooded river. A Muslim faquir who witnessed the whole arena, said "*Toba Toba, Khuda Khud Khalsa Shud*" (God himself was fighting in the garb of Khalsa, and who could fight with God?)

Before the Khalsa army could join the fray, the battle had already been won. But a bigger battle was yet to take place. Countless Pathans assembled in the battlefield of Naushehra under the flag of Jihad. They were approximately 40,000. Mohammad Azim Khan provided 15,000 men and 30 guns to his brother Dost Mohammad Khan and ordered him to join the Pathan forces at Naushehra. Pathans were now moving like swarm of locust.

A supplication prayer was made by the Sikhs and Lord's permission was sought to attack the enemy. Thereafter the Khalsa forces marched towards the battlefield and charged at the enemy. Eventually, the field fell into the hands of the Khalsa but at the heavy cost of life of Baba Phoola Singh Akali.

The inheritors of Ahmed Shah Abdali's legacy fled the scene in the direction of Jalalabad chased by Hari Singh Nalwa and his men to the very mouth of the Khyber Pass.

S. Hari Singh was asked to stay there for sometimes to set the administration in order.

Governor Greater Hazara (1822-37)

The possibility of consolidating the North West Frontier of the Indian sub-continent into a province was presented by the relentless efforts of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. What he achieved in this region in a span of 15 years with limited resources and in the midst of a turbulent population, was nothing short of a miracle. Hazara, the crown of the Sindh Sagar Doab, was the most significant of all the territories under his governance. His proceedings in this area present the finest example of his skill as a military commander and as an administrator.

Meeting with the British Governor-General

In 1831, Hari Singh was deputed to head a diplomatic mission to Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of British India. The Ropar Meeting between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the head of British India followed soon thereafter. The British desired to persuade Ranjit Singh to open the Indus for trade. Hari Singh Nalwa expressed strong reservations against any such move. The most compelling reason for the Sardar's scepticism was the scenario visible across the Satluj — namely, the proceedings in British Hindustan. As a "wide awake" military man and an efficient administrator, Hari Singh Nalwa clearly understood both the military and trade designs of the British.

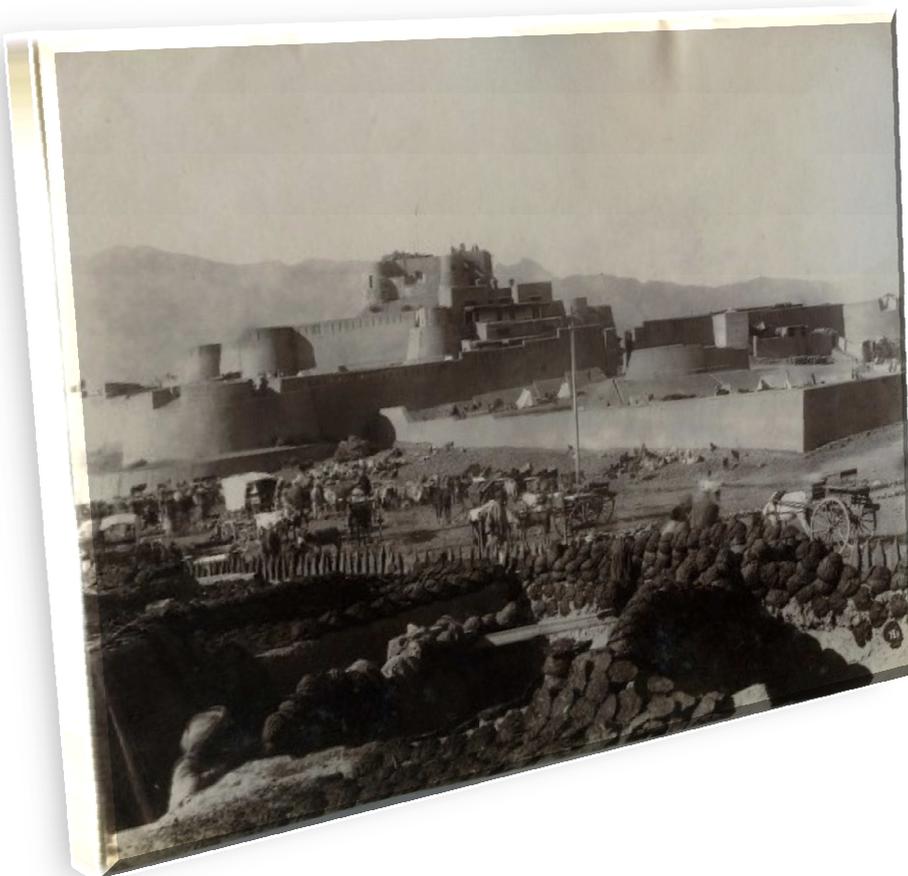
Peshawar

The ancient city of Peshawar, an Afghani stronghold for more than 800 years was liberated by the Khalsa army twice in early 19th Century but it was only in 1834 that Peshawar was firmly brought

When Hari Singh Nalwa was born, the word 'Afghan' was a terror in the Punjab. At the time of his death, each Sikh was a match for a multitude of Afghans.

into the commonwealth of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. A letter dated 12th May 1834 from Maharaja Ranjeet Singh to Captain Wad, Political Agent Ludhiana, states:- "By the Grace of God at present auspicious moment I have been delighted by the arrival of happy news. The Barkzai Sardars destitute of foresight had arrayed at the dawn of the day with about 12000 horse and foot in hostility against my troops. "Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh took a spear in his hand and prepared to oppose them with great presence of mind in concert with Hari Singh Nalwa and Mr. Court with a discharge of artillery. At length the Barkzais repining at their timidity sought safety in flight and being dispersed on all sides. Peshawar fell in the hands of officers of my Government who extended their protection to the inhabitants of that place and their property. In the evening there was illumination in the city which was hailed both by Hindus and Mohammedans of the country as the harbinger of their deliverance from the hands of their tyrants." The victory of Peshawar is one of the greatest victories of the Sikh Raj and it was mostly due to the generalship and boldness of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa.

Final Frontier—Jamraud



Jamraud is near the border with Afghanistan. Hari Singh sensing this had quite a few forts build in that area, but the main Fort of Jamraud has a great significance in history, as it was here that the great General Hari Singh met his death. Sardar Hari Singh was called to defend the fort, which was undermanned and was subsequently attacked by the Afghanis from Kabul. The battle was nearly lost when Hari Singh arrived and turned the

tables. It was his very name, which sent shudders of panic in the spines of the assailants. It was whiles chasing the enemy into the Khyber Pass, that Sardar Hari Singh was hit by two bullets in his chest. Hari Singh, though hit badly did not give any impression of being wounded, and returned straight to the Fort, where he was taken down from his horse. As soon as he dismounted from his

horse, he gathered all commanders inside the Fort and told them that the news of his death should not go out of the Fort till help arrived from Lahore. His wounds were tended but he did not survive and the Sikh Raj was deprived of an exceptional man of distinguished valor.

Sir Lepel Griffin, in his book 'The Punjab Chiefs' writes:-

"Hari Singh was struck by two balls, one in the side and the other in the stomach. He knew he was mortally wounded, but fearing to discourage his men, he turned his horse's head, and managed to ride as far as his tent. He swooned as he was taken from his horse, and half an hour later the bravest of the Sikh Generals, the man with the terror of whose name Afghan mothers used to quiet their fretful children was dead."

The Fort Jamrod continued to remain in the custody of Khalsa till 1849 when Punjab was annexed by East India Company and they converted it to a Postal Chowki till 1947, when the Subcontinent was partitioned.

The Battle of Jamrud (30 April, 1837) was a milestone in the history of the Indian subcontinent. It not only reflected how far the power of the Sikhs had progressed in 38 years of Ranjit Singh's rule, but was a complete reversal of eight centuries of its history. This battle confirmed the new boundary of the Sarkar Khalsaji (Sikh Confederacy) at the mouth of the Khyber Pass, the foothills of the Hindu Kush Mountains — striking terror in the heart of the Kingdom of Kabul.

When Hari Singh Nalwa was born, the word 'Afghan' was a terror in the Punjab. At the time of his death, each Sikh was a match for a multitude of Afghans. Following Hari Singh Nalwa's demise, despite the paucity of troops, the fear of Hari Singh Nalwa's name alone had kept the entire army of the Kingdom of Kabul at bay for over a week — the time it took reinforcements (Maharaja Ranjit Singh's forces) to reach Jamrud from Lahore.

The Afghans retreated from Jamrud without achieving any of their stated objectives. "Even if the victory had been more decided", observed the author of the British Peshawar Gazetteer 60 years later, "it would have been dearly purchased by the Sikhs, with the loss of so brave a warrior as Hari Singh."

Quote

Around 1881, a debate ensued in English and French papers as to who was the most successful military general in the world. Some names which were much talked about then were Napoleon, Marshal Handenberg, Lord Kitchner, General Carbuiser or Duke of Wellington. After mention of the generals from European sub continent, Halaku Khan, Changez Khan, Alaudin of Asia were also counted in. But when the mention of S. Hari Singh Nalwa came, the British writer bowed his head in reverence to the most successful army General of the world. For his ability to triumph over Afghanistan where the British rulers had failed despite unlimited resources of manpower and money available to them was unmatched. If S. Hari Singh had resources and artillery of Bristish, he could have conquered Europe and the Middle East. He was not only a capable General but an administrator

of high caliber, a man of very high and noble character, a scholar, a farsighted person endowed with unique quality of self sacrifice. He spent his whole life in the service of Khalsa Panth.

The editor of the Tit Bits newspaper of England wrote in one of his columns around 1881:- *"Some people might think that Napoleon was a great General. Some might name Marshall Hendenburgh, Lord Kitchener, General Karobzey or Duke of Wellington etc. And some going further might say Halaku Khan, Changez Khan, Richard or Allaudin etc. But let me tell you that in the North of India a General of the name of Hari Singh Nalwa of the Sikhs prevailed. Had he lived longer and had the sources and artillery of the British, he would have conquered most of Asia and Europe...."*

Nature Lover

Hari Singh Nalwa was an ardent lover of nature. The highest appreciation for Hari Singh Nalwa's garden at Gujranwala comes from Baron Charles Hügel. This German devoted his life to the study of natural history, particularly botany and horticulture (Ciolek, 1997: Internet). He established the famous Rococo Garden that can still be seen on his estate in Hiebing (near Vienna), Austria. He visited the Sardar in his house in Gujranwala in 1836. This is what he had to say:

"The splendour of the rooms in the palace did not excite my admiration nearly so much as the garden, which was the most beautiful and best kept I had seen in India. The trees were loaded with oranges, of the same kind known in China as Mandarin oranges, but much larger and finer, here called the Santreh orange; Hari Singh has also transported the plane-tree from Kashmir, which seems to flourish exceedingly well in its new locality. An odour almost overwhelming ascended from the jonquils, which were in immense abundance, and of an incredibly large size. Nothing, in fact, could be more carefully adorned with lovely flowers and plants of various kinds, than this garden, which evidently formed one of the chief delights, and sometimes the occupation of its owner: it reminded me of my own at home." (Hügel, 1845: 253-4)

Character

During the times of Sher-e-Panjab, Raja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh Raaj (kingdom) stretched from Delhi to Kabul, Afghanistan. Raja Ranjit Singh's key general was Sardaar Hari Singh Nalwa (b. 1791), who was a Rehatvaan (strict observant) Sikh of the Guru.

Once Hari Singh Nalwa had set up camp with his army in Jamraud in Afghanistan when a local Muslim woman called 'Banno' watched the Sikhs set up camp. She found Hari Singh Nalwa very handsome and attractive, and wished to have an illicit relationship with him.

One day Banno came to see Hari Singh Nalwa. He was sitting in his tent, when the Sikh guards told him that there was a local woman who wished to see him. Not knowing whom this lady was or what she wanted, Sardaar Hari Singh gave permission to come and see him. Banno said, *"I had heard of the Sikhs. You are remarkable people. I have been watching you from a distance. I am not married and have no children, but desire to have a son who is like you."*

Sardaar Hari Singh did not understand the motivation or intention of Banno and said, *"May Waheguru bless you that you may have a son with the qualities of a Sikh."* Bano irritably said, *"I want to have a son with you Sardaar jee."*

Hari Singh Nalwa said, *"O sister! I am already married. I am sorry I cannot marry you or give you what you want."*

Banno's eyes welled up with tears of disappointment. About to leave, she said, *"I had heard your Guru Nanak (Dev ji) was great and that no one leaves empty handed from Guru Nanak's House, but today I am being turned away without the wish of a son being fulfilled."*

Hari Singh Nalwa, a true example of a Sikh of the Guru, replied, *"It is true that no one goes empty handed from Guru Nanak's House. I cannot give you a son, but if you desire a son to be like me, then instead if you accept, from now on I will be your son, and I will consider you my mother."* Banno was shocked and overwhelmed by Hari Singh Nalwa's sincerity, high moral character and faith in the Guru. She said, *"I had heard that Sikhs of the Guru are great honourable people, but today I have seen it with my own eyes."* From that day on Hari Singh Nalwa addressed Begam Banno as *"Maa"* (Mother) and she addressed Hari Singh as *"Putar"* (Son).

Sir Henry Griffin (1838-1908), the famous British dignitary and a prominent writer of significant treatise on the Sikhs, appropriately called Sardaar Hari Singh Nalwa as *"Moorat (Image) of the KHALSA"*. Sardaar Hari Singh Nalwa's strength, power and success came from his commitment to Guru Sahib, keeping strong *Rehat* (discipline) and faith in *Akaal Purakh* (Timeless Lord).



Epilogue

Hari Singh Nalwa was an accomplished military commander who expanded the territorial boundary of the Sikh Kingdom taking it into the very heart of the Kingdom of Kabul, modern day Afghanistan. He dexterously employed strategy and military preparedness in his various campaigns, at the same time infusing zeal and fervor in his soldiers by always leading the command. His moral commitment to his duty as the Governor of Greater Hazara and Peshawar (today, the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan) was exemplary because of his administrative acumen, which rested in his ability to uphold the values of integrity and justice in governance. His governorship equally protected the rights of disparate communities in fair measure.

It is such a tragedy that Sardar jee was not alive in 1839, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh jee died. If he had been alive, then he along with Sardar Sham Singh Atari would have never let Sikhs become slaves of the British.

APPENDIX:

A SIKH PERSPECTIVE ON VIOLENCE

- Gurbhagat Singh

*No one is my enemy
No one is a foreigner
With all I am at peace
God within us renders us
Incapable of hate and prejudice*
- Guru Nanak Dev ji (Guru Granth Sahib)

Guru Nanak Dev ji proved to be a significant prophet of change who initiated, caused and introduced an objective and universal vision of human rights in the sixteenth century Punjab, which Sikhs live by all over the world in society today. With this awareness began the construction of a new society based on an objective system of moral values, social justice and individual rights, which resulted in the emergence of the Sikh path to meet the historical challenges of the time.

The evolution of the Sikh view

From the time of the fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan Dev, Sikhi became increasingly revolutionary, but only in response to oppression and attempts to suppress minority communities living within India. The sixth Nanak, Guru Har Gobind, thought that military action would sometimes be needed to promote the cause of justice and protect the innocent from attack. The tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, gave the Sikhs the mission of fighting against oppression and formed the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh made it clear that military action was to be the last resort, but emphasised that it should not be avoided if proved necessary.

If all other means fail, recourse to violence and war as the last resort is fair and just. – Zafarnama, Guru Gobind Singh (Tenth Nanak)

Clearly, violence is not just a physical thing, and there are three ways of responding to violence:

Firstly, we could witness acts of violence and become a silent spectator or become depressed at our inability to cope with the situation.

The second scenario is to observe the act of injustice but run away, pretending nothing happened or denying the truth.

The third option is considered the Sikh way, which is to acknowledge the state of affairs, stand up to the truth and do something about it.

A last resort

Violence itself does not have great significance in Sikhi. It is more about using every possible resource to avoid confrontation and maintain peace. Violence is considered the option after the last option.

At Sunday School and in community workshops I grew up listening to stories through which it was constantly reiterated that to turn a blind eye or walk away from a situation in which someone or something was being taken advantage of was very unSikh-like. I never really understood or valued what that meant until I reached secondary school and was bullied every day in the playground for my colour, my height and my long hair. Was this part of the violence or injustice that I was taught to stand up against? Why was it then that those around me in no way felt obliged to help me?

One who does not frighten anyone, and who is not afraid of anyone else, says Nanak, listen, mind: call him spiritually wise. – Sri Guru Granth sahib Ji

In the face of evil you can't stand by and do nothing

It was then that Guru Nanak Dev ji's principle of sanctioning the use of force for a righteous cause gave me hope and strength to seek help and not blame myself for who I was or the predicament I found myself in. Thereafter, reference to the words, 'You need to be cruel to be kind,' were suddenly not as alien to me as I reached university.

It was both the duty and responsibility of religious people to resist aggression and brutality. Guru Nanak Dev ji's spiritual system involved the use of all available tools including reason and judicious use of force for the purposeful progression of humans.

In Guru Nanak Dev ji's time Babar invaded India and brought much carnage, destruction and humiliation to the Indian people. Guru Nanak Dev ji was a witness to Babul's massacre at Ennead (now in Pakistan). In his great vision on the destiny of nation, Guru Nanak Dev ji raised his voice in divine indignation at Babar's invasion. He lamented the loss of nation and deplored the brutality of the invaders and unpreparedness of the local Afghan rulers. He went to the extent of voicing a protest to God, as the guardian of man, for allowing the weak to be oppressed by the strong.

In doing so he was in fact clearly laying one of the basic principles of his religion. It is implied that in the vision of Guru Nanak Dev ji, if in any field of life there is aggression or injustice, the religious man cannot remain neutral; he must react in a righteous way. Sikhs are not expected to walk away from problems or troubles and are in fact invited to act as saint soldiers in life. In the home or in a social setting the community must address issues and offer positive answers based on the truth regardless of personal interests. This is the logical corollary to the householder's life he advocated. Therefore, the traditionally created barriers of socio-political segments and religious particularism were deemed artificial and were, once and for all, broken for the religious man.

The Guru's existing social system and the oppression of the political set-up provided the Sikhs with a meaning for their existence and motivated them to change their attitudes and life values and brought them awareness of their self-respect, human rights and social responsibilities.

Relevance today

A clear example of this was after 9/11. I was part of a team invited by Scotland Yard to voice their concerns about mistaken identity and hate crimes and 'race relations'. The first person to be killed in the USA as a result of a hate crime was in fact a Sikh husband and father called Balbir Singh Sodhi who was attacked at his petrol pump by a group of young Americans. Immediately a campaign was set up worldwide.

At this meeting, much to the surprise of the inspectors involved, our concerns were not to assist Sikhs or protect them alone as a result of the violence but to set up a hate-crime reporting line for all minority communities, especially Muslim and Hindu brothers and sisters. A community-led effort was initiated to act as volunteers at mandhirs, mosques and gurdwaras alike. As a teacher, I was part of a team of youth workers going out educating schools, youth groups and teachers about restoring trust and refusing to pay attention to messages or scenarios of hate and violence disseminated by the media and other groups.

It is fair to say that the concept of the Just War does appear in the Sikh faith and is Dharam Yudh, meaning war in the defence of righteousness. In such a war:

- the war must be the last resort – all other ways of resolving the conflict must be tried first the motive must not be revenge or enmity
- the army must not include mercenaries
- the army must be disciplined
- only the minimum force needed for success should be used civilians must not be harmed there must be no looting, territory must not be annexed, property taken must be returned

This is similar to the ideas contained in the western Just War theory. Sikhs also believe that treaties and cease-fires must be honoured, places of worship (of any faith) should not be damaged, and soldiers who surrender should not be harmed. The crucial difference from Just War theory is that Sikhs believe that, if a war is just, it should be undertaken even if it cannot be won.

The Guru's use of a liberative and restorative aspect of violence to rupture history and its established power system created a new way of life with determined 'spirit-born' people in a radically recognized environment.

ONE GRANTH, ONE PANTH, ONE SIKH REHAT MARYADA



**United We Stand
Divided We Fall**