



Emergence of Akali Phula Singh In Sikh History

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During the later half of the 15th century, Punjab gave birth to a great person who brought not only the Punjab but also the whole of India out of darkness. This great person was Guru Nanak Dev. The political, social and religious condition of Punjab was extremely bad during Guru Nanak Dev's time. To eliminate the evils, Guru Nanak Dev waged a peaceful struggle. The revolutionary change that took place in India with Guru Nanak Dev's struggle of 70 years personified as Sikh religion¹.

Though the Sikh religion chose a peaceful path for religious and social reform, but the Sikhs adopted the policy of arms after some time. Guru Hargobind was first to adopt the policy of armed struggle². Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom was the reason for this change because the emperor Jahangir, due to his orthodoxy, could not tolerate the increasing influence of the Sikh religion. The Mughal emperors wanted to see only the Islam religion throughout India, therefore, Guru Arjun Dev was executed on 30th May, 1606³.

After the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Hargobind adorned the throne in a regal manner. He carried two swords, one of the spirituality and the other that of political power because the conditions at that time were very adverse⁴. All of the fanatic Sunni Muslims were provoking the emperor Jahangir to finish the existence of the Hindu and the Sikh religions. Therefore, Jahangir was in search of an opportunity to finish the Sikh religion⁵. But the Sikhs mustered great courage with Guru Hargobind's new policy. The Guru directed the Sikhs to bring arms and horses as offerings. To give a complete shape to his strategy, the Guru fortified Amritsar Sahib, which was termed as Lohgarh, and made the city strong in defense. In 1609, he built Akal Takhat Sahib opposite Harimandir Sahib. The Guru sat here and held deliberations for the security of the nation along with the religious propagation⁶. 52 Sikh soldiers were always with the Guru for his protection. After some time, 500 other Sikhs who were from different regions came to Guru's service with their arms and horses. The Guru paid no salaries to them. These Sikh soldiers became the foundation of the Sikh army. With the new policy of the Guru, the influence of Sikh

¹Dr. Ganda Singh & Teja Singh, *Sikh Itihas* (1469-1765), Punjabi University, Patiala, 2003, PP-2-6.

²Tarlochan Singh, Gill, *Sikh Itihas*, PP 5, Mauriya Enclave, Delhi, 1998, PP-14-15.

³ Mohanvir Kaur, *Ratan Singh Bhangu Da Sikh Shahidan Prati Nazariya*, Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2014, P-800.

⁴Gurmati Singh Sidhu, *Guru Arjun Dev ji Di Shahidi De Sikh Bhaichare Ute Parbhav*, Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2008, PP-776, 777.

⁵Khushwant Singh, *Sikh History*, (1469-1988), Navyug Publishers, New Delhi, 2003, PP-54, 55.

⁶Niharranjan Roy, *The Sikh Guru and the Sikh Society*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1970, P-39.

religion and number of Sikhs started rising⁷. The people from different religions started converting to Sikh religion by which the Guru built a personal army of the Sikhs and due to the rising number of the Sikh soldiers they were divided into five groups (jathas)⁸.

But the fanatic Muslims did not tolerate the rising strength of the Sikhs and complained to Emperor Jahangir about the Guru that the Sikhs were ready for a big revolt. The Mughals got scared of the preparation of the Sikhs and the Emperor Jahangir, therefore, arrested Guru Hargobind⁹.

The Emperor Jahangir stated the war preparations to be the reason for Guru Hargobind's arrest but in reality he was a fanatic Muslim and could not tolerate the rising influence of any religion other than Islam. That was why he arrested the Guru and imprisoned him in the Gwalior fort, where other kings were also undergoing their punishments¹⁰.

Guru Hargobind remained in the Gwalior fort for a long time. The Sikh followers used come to visit him. But since they were not allowed to meet him, they paid their obeisance to the fort walls¹¹. Therefore, due to the deep respect the Sikhs had for the Guru and upon Sai Mian Mir's insistence, Jahangir released Guru Hargobind. This incident established friendship between Jahangir and Guru Hargobind. On the Guru's demand, the incident other 52 kings imprisoned in the Gawalior fort were also released¹². Thus, the Mughal-Sikh struggle was halted for a short time.

Shahjahan enthroned the Mughal throne after Emperor Jahangir's death. He was a fanatic Muslim and did not tolerate the growing influence of any other religion except the Islam. This led to the sharpening of the Mughal-Sikh conflict. The Guru had fight four wars for self-defense¹³. Though the Guru fought these wars in self-defense but this made a big impact on the Sikhs because they realized that their Guru was capable of taking the Emperor's head on¹⁴. Thus, Guru Hargobind transformed the Sikhs into such saint-soldiers that who started to take part in the political affairs too along with the religious ones. GuruGobind Singh made

⁷ Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, (Tr. Bhagat Singh), *Sikh Itihas* (1469-1765), *op.cit.*, PP-35, 39.

⁸ *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Provincial Series Punjab, Ferozepur Distt., Vol II, Superintendent of Govt Printing, Calcutta, Usha Jain, New Delhi, 1984, PP-439, 440.

⁹ Surjit Singh Nanua, *Sankhep Sikh Itihas*, Manjot Parkashan, Patiala, 2008, P-33, 34.

¹⁰*Ibid*,P-34.

¹¹Joseph David Cunningham, *Sikh Itihas*, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, 1985, PP-68, 69.

¹²*Gazetteer of India*, Punjab State, Ludhiana, ed. V.S. Suri, Financial Commission Revenue Punjab, Chandigarh, 1970, P-643.

¹³M.L. Roy Chaudhary, "*Hindu-Muslim Relation During the Mughal Period 1526-1707*," Proceedings of the Indian History Conference, Patna, 1946, P-289.

¹⁴Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evaluation of the Khalsa*, Vol.-II, Calcutta, 1947, P-37.

the Sikh religion secure with his leadership¹⁵. The people of Punjab realized that only Guru Hargobind had the capacity to face the Mughal Emperor. Only he can salvage them from the tyranny of the Mughal rule¹⁶. After Guru Hargobind's passing away, there was a period of peace among the Mughals and the Sikhs for about 25-30 years. But Guru Har Rai was deft in horse-riding, the art of war, and the art of arms¹⁷. He used to keep 2200 soldiers with him so that the armed power could be used in self-defense whenever needed¹⁸.

During the period of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Sikh religion faced a dreadful era. This was the period of the rule of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb who was a fanatic Muslim. Therefore, he started perpetrating cruelties upon the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Mughal Emperor arrested Guru Tegh Bahadur and kept him in jail for some time. On the Mughal emperor's orders, the Guru was asked to change his religion. But he refused to do so and he was executed in Delhi¹⁹. This made the Hindus and the Sikhs hate the Mughal Government.

Guru Gobind Singh enthroned the Guru's seat after Guru Tegh Bahadur. He started keeping army as the situation demanded. This army comprised of people from all religions who were ready to fight against tyranny. Thus, the number of the soldiers kept increasing each day. Having seen the rising military strength of Guru Gobind Singh, the Kings from the hills could not tolerate it because they considered this Sikh strength as a danger to their rule. The relations of the Sikhs with the Mughal Government were already in bad shape. Due to this, Guru Gobind Singh had to fight battles of Nadaur and Bhangani, etc with the Paharhi (hilly) Kings and the Mughal Government. The Sikh armies badly defeated the Paharhi (hilly) Kings and the Mughal armies in those battles. Guru Gobind Singh built four forts of Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Fatehgarh and Kesgarh for protection against the external threats, so that the Paharhi (hilly) Kings and the Mughal Government could be opposed vehemently. These non-Sikh people could not tolerate the rising influence of the Sikh religion²⁰. Guru Gobind Singh took the Sikh movement to its peak. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh sent directions to the Sikhs living in Hindustan and outside Hindustan to gather in Anandpur Sahib in big numbers on the day of the Vaisakhi on 29th March, 1699. The Guru wanted to unite all Sikh strength and give it an identity of its own. For this reason, the Sikhs gathered in big numbers in Anandpur Sahib on the Vaisakhi

¹⁵Trilochan Singh Gill, *Sikh Itihas. Op.cit.*, P-95.

¹⁶Sarkar, Jadunath, *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, M.C. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1916, P-156.

¹⁷Daljit Kaur, *Sikh-Mughal Sangharsh (1581-1708)*, Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2007, P-883.

¹⁸Kanahaya Lal, *Tarikh-E-Punjab*, Victoria Press, Lahore, 1881, P-34.

¹⁹A.M. Ahuja and N.D. Ahuja, "Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadu vis-a-vis the Religious Policy of Aurangzeb," *Journal of Sikh Studies*, Vol. III, No. 2, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1976, August, PP-30-31.

²⁰Surjit Singh Nanua, *Sankhep Sikh itihas, op.cit.*, PP-53, 54.

festival day²¹. Guru Gobind Singh selected five representatives (panj pyaras) from the gathering and baptized them as Sikhs²². Any Sikh who got baptized attached Singh after his name and Guru Gobind Singh stated that the Khalsa will rule now²³. Every Sikh had to wear the five Ks which were Karha (the iron wrist band), Kachhehra (the underwear), Kangha (the comb), the Kirpan (the sword), and the Kes (the unshorn hair).

This way, Guru Gobind Singh transformed the Sikhs of Guru Nanak Dev's times into the combat ready Khalsa who were ready to fight against any kind of tyranny²⁴. The purpose of Guru Gobind Singh for founding the Khalsa was to prepare such gallants who were ready to make any sacrifice for stopping the excesses being committed against the poor people. The goal of making the Sikh armies strong was to stop the cruelties and not to revolt against the Mughal Government²⁵.

The influence of Sikh religion rose immensely after the founding of the Khalsa. People from far away places belonging to different religions started entering the Sikh religion. Within a short time, 80,000 people took Amrit (baptizement) and became Singhs. The rising number and strength of the Sikhs sent fears among the Paharhi (hilly) Kings. They wrote a letter to Guru Gobind Singh that either he should vacate Anandpur Sahib or pay tax as subordinates. But the Guru was not ready to submit to any condition of the Paharhi Kings. This resulted in a continuous conflict among the Sikhs and the Paharhi kings. The Paharhi Kings having seen no success against the Sikhs, they complained to Aurangzeb against the Guru that Guru Gobind Singh was trying to establish Sikh rule by organizing the Sikhs²⁶. The Emperor Aurangzeb was in Deccan at that time. He ordered the Governors of Lahore and Sirhind to take action against the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh fought battles against the Hindu Kings and the Mughal armies at Anandpur Sahib, Chamkaur Sahib and Muktsar Sahib. The Sikh armies fought bravely in those battles and the Mughal armies and the Paharhi Kings faced defeat²⁷.

When the Paharhi Kings were unable to achieve any success against the Guru, then they swore and promised Guru Gobind Singh that if they leave the Anandpur Sahib fort, the Mughal armies would not chase him. But they did not keep

²¹ Amritsar District Gazetter, Chandigarh, 1976, P-88.

²² *Ibid.*, P-89.

²³ For further detail, see article, "The True Impact of Raj Karega Khalsa," by Ganda Singh in the Sikh Review, Calcutta, 1968, P-102.

²⁴ Koer Singh, *Gur Bilas Padshahi Das* (175), ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1968, P-102.

²⁵ Harpreet Kaur, *Guru Gobind Singh's Relations with Aurangzeb*, The Punjab Past and Present, Vol. XVIII, Punjabi University, Patiala, April 1984, PP-23, 24.

²⁶ Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Punjab Da Sankhep Itihas*, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, 1981, PP-133, 134.

²⁷ Narinder Pal Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas* (1469-1839), Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1985, PP-40, 41.

any of their promise. Due to that, Guru Gobind Singh's four sons, Sahibzada Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh and many Sikhs lost their lives²⁸.

When the Emperor Aurangzeb could not achieve victory over the Sikhs in Punjab, he invited Guru Gobind Singh for negotiations. In reply to that, Guru Gobind Singh wrote him a letter in Persian which is called Zafarnama. It described the Sikhs' victory over the Mughals and the deceit committed against Guru Gobind Singh by Aurangzeb. The Guru wrote that though he had lost his four sons and many Sikhs in the struggle but the Sikh religion had become a wide movement and it cannot be suppressed anymore²⁹.

After reading the Zafarnama, the Emperor Aurangzeb came to know about the sins he had committed and he sent a letter to Guru Gobind Singh inviting him for a dialogue. He begged pardon for his sins in the letter and appealed the Guru to meet him. The Guru started for Deccan to meet him³⁰. The Guru was on his way still that he came to know that Aurangzeb had died in February 1707 at Ahmednagar. Therefore, he returned back towards Delhi.

With the death of Aurangzeb, a conflict arose between his sons Shahzada Muhazam and Azam. In this family feud, Shahzada Muhazam asked for Guru's help. For this, the Guru sent 300 horse-riders in 1707. This assured Shahzada Muhazam's victory. After Aurangzeb's death Emperor Bahadur Shah (Shahzada Muhazam) became the Mughal Emperor. He had good relations of friendship with the Guru. Therefore, the Guru asked for justice for his son's martyrdom. But the Emperor kept on making pretexts. This made the Guru unhappy with the Emperor and he went to Nanded³¹. In Nanded, he met a Bairagi ascetic Madho Das who was impressed with Guru's teachings and became Guru's disciple. The Guru named him Gurbaksh Singh who became famous as Banda Singh Bahadur in the Sikh history³². Guru Gobind Singh appointed him the first Jathedar of the Sikh religion and sent him to Punjab. The purpose of the Guru of sending Banda Bahadur to Punjab was to keep the struggle against the Mughal rule alive³³.

After the Guru sent Banda Bahadur to Punjab, two Pathan brothers sent by Wazir Khan stabbed the Guru and injured him very seriously. Wazir Khan had executed Guru's younger sons in Sirhind and he was scared of Guru's friendship with Bahadur Shah. Guru Gobind Singh passed away on 7th October, 1708³⁴.

²⁸ Lal Singh Giani Gujranwalia, *Punjab Da Sankhep Itihas (Aadi kaal Ton Adhunik kaal Takk)*, Dhanpat Rai and Sons, Jalandhar, Delhi, 1964, PP-115, 116.

²⁹ Dr. Mohan Singh, *New Light on Guru Gobind Singh, The Spokesman Weekly*, January 31, 1966, P-11.

³⁰ Bhagat Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas*, Punjab State University Textbook Board, Chandigarh, 1983, PP-322,323.

³¹ Sangat Singh, *Itihas Ch Sikh*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2003, P-86.

³² Ganda Singh, *Sikh Itihas Val*, Panj Daria, Nisbat Road, Jalandhar, 1946, PP-68, 69.

³³ Muhammad Latif, *History of the Punjab*, Calcutta, 1891, P-294.

³⁴ Lal Singh Giani Gujranwalia, *Punjab Da Sankhep Itihas (Aadi kaal ton Adhunik Kaal Takk)*, op.cit.,

When Banda Bahadur heard the news of Guru's passing away, he was still on the way. He was very pained by this news. But he moved towards Punjab as the Guru had directed him. Before he reached Punjab, he sent Guru's directives (Hukamnamas) to different Sikhs and told them that he was marching towards Punjab to punish Wazir Khan, the Fauzdar of Sirhind, and the Paharhi kings, the allies of the Mughal Government. With the receiving of these Hukamnamas, the Sikhs from all parts of the Punjab started gathering under Banda Bahadur's command. Within a short time, 40,000 horse-riders and pedestrian soldiers were under Banda Bahadur's command³⁵. As the Sikhs gathered, Banda Bahadur started attacking the Mughals and the Sikhs destroyed many Muslim cities. In the morning of November 1709, Banda Bahadur waged a surprise attack on Samana because it had a dense population of Muslims. The executioner Jalal-Ud-Din who executed Guru Tegh Bahadur lived here³⁶. Within no time, the Sikhs turned the beautiful buildings of Samana into ruins.

These attacks of Banda Bahadur and the Sikhs shook the foundations of the Mughal kingdom. In a short time, Banda Bahadur conquered Sonapat, Kaithal, Sadhaura and Kapuri. But his real target was to conquer Sirhind because the Subedar of Sirhind Wazir Khan had executed Guru's younger sons³⁷. He had created difficulties for the Sikhs at Anandpur too and attacked the Sikhs at Chamkaur Sahib where Guru's elder sons lost their lives. Therefore, the Sikhs harbored great hatred for Sirhind city. Banda Bahadur attacked Sirhind on 24th May, 1710 and conquered it. The Sikhs killed Wazir Khan. After the victory over Sirhind, Baz Khan the Comrade and Adviser of Banda Bahadur was appointed Governor of Sirhind³⁸. After the victory over Sirhind, the Sikhs conquered many Mughal areas and established the Sikh rule. But the Sikh rule established by Banda Bahadur could not exist for long time. The Mughal ruler Farukhsiyarencircled him and many Sikhs in the battle of Gurdas Nangal. The Mughal king and the Governor-General of Lahore Abdus Samad Khan kept the Sikhs in encirclement. This continued for many months. Banda Bahadur and the Sikh armies opposed the Mughals bravely. But due to the lack of food and water, the Sikhs had to surrender after a long conflict. The Mughal armies arrested Banda Bahadur and the rest of the Sikhs. The sun of the Sikh rule that had risen with the arrival of Banda Bahadur had set in 1715 with his arrest³⁹.

PP-114, 115.

³⁵Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-Ul-Lubab*, Vol-II (1772), Kessinger Publishers, Calcutta, 1874, P-562.

³⁶ *Ibid*, P-563

³⁷ *Dr. Ganda Singh as a Historian of Banda Singh Bahadur*, The Punjab Past and Present, Vol. XXII, Oct. 1988, Punjabi University, Patiala, P-74.

³⁸Tarlochan Singh Gill, *Sikh Itihas*, *op.cit.*, PP-22, 23.

³⁹ Veena Sachdeva, *Banda Bahadur in the Light of the Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, The Punjab Past and Present, Vol. XXXXIII, April 2012, ed. Balwinderjit Kaur Bhatti, Punjabi University, Patiala, P-29.

Banda Bahadur and his comrades were brought to Lahore after their arrest by Abdus Samad Khan. Later on, all the Sikh prisoners were sent to Delhi. Banda Bahadur, Baz Singh, Bhai Fateh Singh and some other Sikh leaders were taken out in procession in the Delhi streets. All the companions of Banda Bahadur gave away their lives but none of them abandoned their religion⁴⁰. Because of this, Banda Bahadur and about 200 of his companions were executed on 19th June, 1716.

After Banda Bahadur's death, Abdus Samad Khan got further emboldened because the Sikh strength had weakened after Banda Bahadur's death and many conflicts arose among the Sikhs due to their internal disunity⁴¹. The Sikhs had two groups at that time, the Tatt Khalsa and Bandai Khalsa. A number of difficulties were faced due to the mutual disunity of the Sikhs and due to the cruelties of the Mughal officials, because the Sikhs lacked an able leadership which could unite the Sikh forces. But the Sikhs took inspiration from their glorious history and used to hide in the forests in the day time and used to make surprise attacks in the night time and loot the Mughal officials. Though the Mughal Government did not allow the Sikh power to rise again for a long time but they did not sit passively and fought the Mughal Government by gathering their strength⁴².

Abdus Samad Khan made each possible attempt to wipe out the Sikhs but he did not succeed in this. To end the mutual opposition between the Tatt Khalsa and the Bandai Khalsa, Mata Sundri, who was Guru Gobind Singh's widow, sent Bhai Mani Singh to Amritsar as the Mukkh Granthi (Chief Priest) of Harimandar Sahib. Bhai Mani Singh weakened the opposition between the Tatt Khalsa and Bandai Khalsa through an agreement between them in 1721.

Zakaria Khan became the Subedar of Lahore after the death of his father Abdus Samad Khan. He threw his whole strength to wipe out the Sikhs from Punjab. He did not allow the Sikh power to rise again for a long time⁴³. But having gained no success for 7 years, he decided to have an agreement with the Sikhs. He decided an estate worth 1 Lakh and rank of Nawab for the Sikhs by the Delhi Government. But the Sikhs considered an ancestral right on Punjab, they, therefore rejected this offer⁴⁴. But later on, they accepted this deal because this gave them an opportunity to increase their armed strength. The honour of Nawab was given to Jathedar Kapur Singh who served at Harimandar Sahib. This agreement was done in 1733. With the offer of this Estate and with Jathedar Kapur Singh becoming the Nawab, the Mughal-Sikh struggle calmed down for a while. This was a golden opportunity for

⁴⁰J.T. Wheeler, *Early Records of British India*, London, 1878, P-180.

⁴¹ Makhn Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash' Anusar Athahrvin Sadi Vich Sikh Panth* ', Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2014, P-772.

⁴²Bhai Veer Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, Bhai Veer Singh Sahit Sadan, New Delhi, 1998, P-213.

⁴³ Giani Gian Singh, *Shansher Khalsa*, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, Patiala, 1970, P-100.

⁴⁴Bhagat Singh, *Sikh Polity in the Eighteen and Nineteenth Century*, Oriental Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1978, P-61.

the Sikhs to raise their strength⁴⁵. The Khalsa was divided into two groups - Budha Dal (the elderly group) and Taruna Dal (the younger group). The Budha Dal comprised of the Sikhs above 40 years of age who looked after the religious places. Nawab Kapur Singh was appointed Jathedar (leader) of this group. The Taruna Dal was the group of young Sikhs which was an armed group who protected these religious places from the external attacks. The number of Tauna Dal Sikhs being very large, they were divided into five groups. Each group had a separate Jathedar (leader)⁴⁶. The Taruna Dal extended its influence from Punjab to Delhi.

When Zakaria Khan saw the strength of the Sikhs was rising constantly, he took away the Estate given to Sikhs and the honour of Nawab of Kapur Singh because the Mughal power started feeling a threat from the Sikhs. But the strength of the Sikhs had risen very much by this time and they had tasted the political freedom. This gave a birth to the conflict between the Mughals and the Sikhs⁴⁷. Zakaria Khan started committing atrocities upon Sikhs. But the Delhi Government had become very weak by then because at this time Nadir Shah attacked India and shook the foundations of the Mughal rule and he had reached Lahore. After defeating Zakaria Khan in Lahore, he defeated the Delhi Emperor Bahadur Shah. Thus, Nadir Shah eliminated the central power of Delhi by defeating the Mughal Emperor. After plundering Delhi, when Nadir Shah was returning to his country via Punjab, the Taruna Dal groups attacked the Nadir Shah armies and seized much wealth from them. Nadir Shah got very disturbed from the Sikh attacks and he asked Zakaria Khan to eliminate the Sikh power with a strong hand, otherwise, the day was not far when they would conquer the whole of Punjab. The Iran Emperor was very much impressed by the bravery of the Sikhs⁴⁸.

After the return of Nadir Shah from Punjab, Zakaria Khan started committing atrocities upon Sikhs with a heavy hand. At this time, the religious leadership of the Sikhs was in the hands of Bhai Mani Singh and he was also the head priest at Amritsar. Therefore, the Mughals executed Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Mehtab Singh, Sukha Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Bhai Hakikat Rai, Bhai Bota Singh, Shabeg Singh and Shahbaz Singh and other Sikhs⁴⁹. The Sikhs, therefore, had to seek shelter in the forests to save themselves from Zakaria Khan's tyranny. In spite of all the efforts of

⁴⁵*Ibid*, P-62.

⁴⁶ Sukhdial Singh, *Akal Takhat Ate Gurmata*, Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1982, P-437.

⁴⁷Ganesh Das Badhera, *Char-Bagh-i-Punjab* (1865), Ed. Kirpal Singh, Khalsa College, Amritsar, 1903, P-124.

⁴⁸ G.S. Nayar, *Sikh Martyrs of Eighteen Century*, The Punjab Past and Present, Vol.XXXXII (Ed. Ganda Singh), Punjabi University, Patiala, 2011, PP-4,5,6.

⁴⁹*Ibid*.,PP-5,6.

defeating Sikhs, Zakaria Khan did not succeed in eliminating the Sikhs⁵⁰. In the end, he died in July 1745 during his struggle with the Sikhs.

After Zakaria Khan's death, a conflict erupted among his sons to become the Subedar of Lahore. The Sikhs came out of the forests to take advantage of this political upheaval. Nawab Kapur Singh gathered the different Sikh groups (Jathas) at Amritsar in 1745 on the Vaisakhi day to strengthen the Sikh power. It was decided there that all armies of the Sikhs be divided into 25 groups and the leadership of these be given to Nawab Kapur Singh. Thus, the Sikhs were divided into 25 groups and they continued with the tactics of guerrilla warfare⁵¹.

After Zakaria Khan, Yahia Khan became Subedar of Lahore in 1745. In place of reforming the management structure of Lahore, he gave all rights to Lakhpat Rai to eliminate the Sikhs. Lakhpat Rai resorted to strong measures to eliminate the Sikhs. Yahia Khan with his help, encircled the Sikhs in the Kahnuwan forests in 1746. The Sikhs sought help from the Paharhi (hilly) provinces to hide there, but the Hindu provinces did not help the Sikhs due to mutual opposition⁵². Sikhs had strong armies of enemy on one side and the Ravi river on the other. But they decided to confront the Mughal armies other than drowning themselves. About 15000 Sikhs hid in the Kahnuwan forests. After a long siege, the Sikhs had to come out into the plain which caused martyrdom of 4000 Sikhs. This is called Chhota Ghallughara (the small genocide) in the Sikh history because it was the first time in the Mughal-Sikh struggle that the Sikhs suffered this huge loss⁵³.

In 1747, Shah Nawaz defeated Yahia Khan and became Subedar of Punjab. He imprisoned Yahia Khan and also shut Lakhpat Rai in jail. On the advice of Dewan Kaurha Mal, who was a Sehjdhari Sikh, he had an agreement with the Sikhs because the Delhi Government was not ready to recognize him as Subedar of Lahore. At this time Ahmed Shah Abdali was making preparations for to attack Punjab and Shah Nawaz had no hope of help from Delhi. Ahmed Shah Abdali attacked Punjab in 1748 and when he reached Lahore, Shah Nawaz ran away from Lahore. Ahmed Shah Durrani appointed the Afghan ruler of Kasur as Governor of Lahore and moved towards Delhi from Lahore. But on the way Mir Mannu defeated Ahmed Shah Abdali and pushed him out of Punjab. After this, the Delhi Government appointed Mir Mannu as Subedar of Lahore because of being happy over his bravery⁵⁴.

Mir Mannu wanted to establish a strong Government in Lahore because the Punjab was passing through an upheaval because of the conflict among Zakaria Khan's sons and the attack of Ahmed Shah Abdali. Therefore, to strengthen his political power in Punjab, he started wiping out the Sikh power from Punjab because

⁵⁰Dr. Sahib Singh Arsi, *Athahrvin Sadi Da Sikh Itihas*, Arora Publishers, Chandigarh, 1987, PP-53-55.

⁵¹Sangat Singh, *Itihas Ch Sikh*, *op.cit.*, P-107.

⁵²Khushwant Singh, *Sikh History*, *op.cit.*, P-96.

⁵³*Ibid.*, P-97.

⁵⁴Dr. Ganda Singh, Principal Teja Singh, *Sikh Itihas*, *op.cit.*, P-130.

the Sikhs were taking advantage of the political rift in Delhi and Lahore. But when Mir Mannu came to know about Ahmed Shah Abdali's plan of attacking Punjab again, he directed his complete attention towards stopping Abdali⁵⁵.

This was a fine opportunity for Sikhs to strengthen their power. Therefore Nawab Kapur Singh called a Sarbat Khalsa (all Sikhs) in March 1748 on the Vaisakhi day⁵⁶. The more than 60 Sikh groups were divided into 11 Misals (counties/provinces) in the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Due to the old age of Nawab Kapur Singh, Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was appointed the Chief of the 11 Misals. These 11 Misals were put under the leadership of different Sardars (Chiefs)⁵⁷. Jassa Singh was made Chief of Ahluwalia Misal, who was from a village named Ahlu near Lahore. Jassa Singh became a powerful leader in Punjab due to his political acumen, religious passion and high views. That is why he got the opportunity to lead the whole Sikh nationality⁵⁸. In 1739, during Nadir Shah's attack on Punjab, Jassa Singh had taken away all his loot. In 1761, Jassa Singh plundered Sirhind and made the Sikhs occupy many parts of Punjab. Other than this, the Shukarchakkia Misal was under Naudh Singh of the Shukarchakk village which adjoined Gujranwala. He was a brave Sikh Sardar who had many scars of swords and bullets on his body. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a successor of Shukarchakkia Misal who established the powerful Sikh rule by uniting the Sikh forces⁵⁹. Sangat Singh and Mohar Singh were the founders of Nishanewalia. The leaders of this Misal used to carry the Sikh flags (Nishan) in front of the Sikh armies. That is why, this was called Nishanewalia Misal⁶⁰. This Misal had a strong military strength.

The Bhangi Misal got its name from the habit of taking Bhang (hemp) by its founders. This Misal was under Chajja Singh and Hari Singh Bhangis who were from the village Panjwar near Amritsar. The leaders of this Misal had taken a noteworthy part in the Sikh struggle during Banda Bahadur. After the martyrdom of Banda Bahadur, Chajja Singh gathered the Sardars outside the village and formed a group (Jatha). In 1762, Karial, Mirowal and Sialkot areas were under the control of this Misal⁶¹. The Kanahya Misal was under the control of Jai Singh of the Kanha village. It got its name Kanahya Misal from the name of this village. Jai Singh joined Dal Khalsa after baptism from Nawab Kapoor Singh. He played a noteworthy part in Afghan-Sikh struggle. Jai Singh plundered Kasur in 1763 and occupied Kangra fort in

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, PP-131,132.

⁵⁶ Sukhdial Singh, *Akal Takhat Ate Gurmata*, *op.cit.*, P-438.

⁵⁷ Dr. Bhagat Singh, *The Ahluwalia Ruling House*, The Punjab Past and Present, Vol.XVII (Ed. Ganda Singh), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1983, P-236.

⁵⁸ Vidya Sagar Suri, *Punjab Da Itihas (1469-1857)*, Haryana Hindi Medium Academy, Chandigarh, 1975, PP-131,132.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, P-133.

⁶⁰ Satbir Singh, *Sada Itihas - Vol. II*, New Book Company, Jalandhar, 1962, P- 307.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, P-306.

1774⁶². Other than this, Sardar Gulab Singh was founder of the Dalewalia Misal who lived in the village Dalewal near Dera Baba Nanak. This Misal was named after the name of this village. Gulab Singh lost his life during the battle against Ahmed Shah Abdali. Gaimba Singh of this Misal was very well known in the Sikh history who conquered Dharampal, Baddowal, and Gaho. After his death, Ranjit Singh merged the areas belonging to this Misal in the Sikh rule⁶³. Sardar Sudha Singh was the Chief of the Shahid Misal who was a priest (Mahant) at Damdama Sahib. He lost his life in the battle against the Muslim Governor of Jalandhar. For this reason, the Misal was called Shahid Misal. This Misal had also been under Baba Deep Singh. It had more number of Nihangs in the Misal. They wore blue clothes and were always armoured. Because of this reason, this Misal was also called the Misal of Nihangs. It had around 3000 soldiers. During the Sikh rule, the Nihangs of this Misal waged great battles against the Jihadi Muslims⁶⁴.

The Ramgarhia Misal was one of the most powerful Misals. The Chief (Sardar) of this Misal belonged to the Ghaga village of Amritsar who had undergone Amrit Paan by Banda Singh Bahadur. After him, Nand Singh became his successor. After Nand Singh's death, the rein of Ramgarhia Misal was in the hands of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who had conquered the King of Kangra Ghamand Chand, the King of Noorpur Prithvi Singh, and the King of Chamba Raj Singh. He was one of the most powerful Sardars of Punjab⁶⁵. The Karora Singh Misal was in the control of Karora Singh of village Painjgarh. This Misal was also called Panjgarhia Misal. This Misal controlled the areas between Yamuna and Markanda rivers. After Karora Singh, Baghel Singh became the Chief of this Misal. He had 12,000 Sikh soldiers with him⁶⁶. Other than these 11 Misals, the Fulkian Misal was under Ala Singh of Patiala. But this Misal was not part of the Dal Khalsa because it some times acted against Sikh interests. The leader Sardars of this Misal kept their independent existence during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time also.

Though all these Misals were under the control of different Chiefs (Sardars), but all these Misals were named Sarbat Khalsa as a collective unit. Therefore, all these struggled for the Sikh rule together⁶⁷. Other than these Misals, there was another valiant Sikh organization who were called Akali. These Akali (Nihangs) lived only according to Guru Grant Sahib's directives and were not in subordination of any individual Sikh leader. The Akali Sikhs always supported the

⁶²Giani Gian Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, Vol II, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, Patiala, 1987, PP-242, 246.

⁶³Kanhya Lal, *Tawarikh-E-Punjab*, Publication Bureau Punjabi University, Patiala, 1987, PP-98, 99.

⁶⁴Sangat Singh, *Itihas Ch Sikh*, *op.cit.*, P-109.

⁶⁵Giani Gian Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, *op.cit.*, PP-233, 234, 235.

⁶⁶Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1982, P-82.

⁶⁷J.D. Cunningham, *Sikh History*, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, 1994, PP-116-118.

Sikh Misals for the expansion of the Sikh rule. The main places of the Akali Singhs were Amritsar, Anandpur and Damdama Sahib⁶⁸.

At the time when the Sikhs were expanding their power, Ahmed Shah Abdali attacked Punjab at the same time. Mir Mannu confronted the armies of Abdali very bravely but having received no support from Delhi, he had to face defeat. Mir Mannu accepted the subordination of Ahmed Shah Abdali. Due to this, Abdali appointed Mir Mannu as Subedar of Lahore again. Thus, Punjab became a cause for conflict between the Mughals and Ahmed Shah Abdali, because both of them wanted to control Punjab⁶⁹. Therefore, a struggle between Mughal Emperor and Ahmed Shah Abdali continued from 1749 to 1761 to occupy Punjab. But the Delhi Government being very weak, it lost hope of occupying Punjab. After defeating the Delhi Government, Ahmed Shah Abdali pushed Marathas away from Punjab by defeating them⁷⁰. But during this political flurry, no one paid attention to the Sikhs. The Sikhs took advantage of this situation and captured different areas of Punjab by defeating all of the political officials of Ahmed Shah Abdali. The Sikhs turned the political arrangements of the Afghans upside down. Sardar Charhat Singh defeated Ahmed Shah Abdali's General Noor-Ud-Din and he had to take refuge in the Sialkot fort along with his armies. Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia captured Lahore. The eminent citizens of Lahore declared the victory of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia as Emperor. During this time, the Sikhs ran a currency in the name of Guru Nanak⁷¹.

Ahmed Shah Abdali faced numerous obstacles due to the rise of Sikh power in Punjab. Therefore, to wipe out Sikhs from Punjab, he launched the sixth offensive on Punjab in 1762. On the 3rd February, 1762, Abdali captured Lahore with the help of a large army. After capturing Lahore, he moved towards Sirhind⁷². Abdali surrounded the Sikhs at the place called Kup Rahira where about 30,000 Sikhs had pitched in along with their families, the most of them were women, children and the elders. During this time, Nawab Kapur Singh, Sham Singh, Karor Singhia, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Charhat Singh Shukarchakkia were leading the Sikhs. The Sikh Sardars cordoned off the women and the children and started moving ahead. But the strong assault from Abdali broke this cordon which started the massacre of the Sikhs⁷³. Around 10,000 Sikhs were killed in this battle. This incident took place on 5th February, 1762. It is called 'Vadda Ghallughara' (the bigger massacre) in the history.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, P-119.

⁶⁹ Bhagat Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas*, *op.cit.*, PP-442, 443.

⁷⁰ Franklin, *The Memories of George Thomas*, Calcutta, 1803, PP-71, 72.

⁷¹ *Gazetteer of Amritsar District*, Chandigarh, 1976, P-175.

⁷² *Op.cit.*, PP-71, 72.

⁷³ Qazi Nur Mohammad, *Jang Nawa (1765)*, edited by Ganda Singh, Amritsar, 1989, PP-51, 52.

After this Sikh massacre, Abdali moved towards Lahore. He plundered Punjab brutally on the way. To punish the Sikhs further, he attacked the Sikhs at Amritsar on 10th April, 1762, the day of the Vaisakhi festival⁷⁴. The Sikhs had gathered in thousands there at that time. But due to this attack, the Sikhs ran away. Abdali got Harimandar Sahib demolished and got the holy Sarovar (pond) filled with debris. The Sikhs could not tolerate the sacrilege of Harimandar Sahib (Amritsar) due to their religious sensitivities. Therefore, 7,000 daredevil Sikhs launched attack on the Abdali's armies. Due to a revolt in Afghanistan at the same time, Abdali returned back in December 1762⁷⁵. Immediately after Abdali's departure, the Sardars of Sikh Misals started attacking Lahore, Malerkotla, Kasur, and Sirhind. Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia captured Jalandhar and Charhat Singh Shukarchakkia took care of Gujranwala. When Ahmed Shah Abdali came to know about the activities of the Sikhs, he arrived at Lahore with 18,000 soldiers. The Sikh armies did not confront them but they hit him badly by launching guerrilla attacks in the night. Abdali did not succeed in taking any action against the Sikhs. Therefore, he turned back in 1765.

During 1766-67, Lahore and Punjab were in complete control of Sikhs. But Ahmed Shah Abdali launched his 8th attack to conquer Punjab. By this time, the Sikh Misals had become quite strong. Abdali had to face defeat due to this. After this, Abdali abandoned his dream of conquering Punjab. Thus, the Sikh Misals established their rule over Punjab⁷⁶. By this time, the enthusiasm of the Budha Dal was at its peak. They crossed the Yamuna river and recorded victories over Ganga Doab⁷⁷. The Taruna Dal was also bifurcated into two sections. One section was put under the control of Sardar Hari Singh Bhangi and the other under Sardar Charhat Singh. These Sikh groups started capturing different regions of Punjab⁷⁸. Thus, with the end of the Mughal and the Afghan power in Punjab, the Punjab was under complete control of the Sikhs. From 1767 to 1773, the Sikh rule spread over Saharanpur to Kattak in the North-West and over Jammu to Multan. In India, the Sikhs controlled the area between Delhi to Iranian empire⁷⁹. The Sikhs had established a kind of republic in India.

When the powerful Sikh Misals started spreading in Punjab, all of the three powers, Maratha, Afghan and the Mughals, had ended in Punjab. The Sikh Misals having controlled Punjab, they divided it into several parts. Since the Sikhs now faced no external threats, the Sardars of the Misals used to fight among themselves

⁷⁴Mohar Kaur, *Athahrvin Sadi Vich Azadi Lai Sikha Da Sangharsh*, Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2014, PP-105,106.

⁷⁵Ratan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, 1762, PP-370,373.

⁷⁶Narinder Pal Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas* (1469-1839), *op.cit.*, P-66.

⁷⁷*Ibid*, P-67.

⁷⁸*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Punjab, iii, (1888-89), PP-208, 217.

⁷⁹*Op. cit.*, P-70.

to widen the ruling area of their respective Misals. During this time, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia too could not emerge as a good leader and the Akali (Nihangs) were also unable to comprehend the conditions of that time. Therefore, the Sikhs could not make full advantage of the times, in spite of having complete power in their hands⁸⁰. By the end of the eighteenth century, the political situation in Punjab had deteriorated, because the Sardars of the powerful Misals had either passed away or had become old by this time. The mutual unity among the Misal Sardars had waned because the influence of the institutions such as the 'Sarbat Khalsa' and the 'Gurmata's' decayed. This resulted in a deterioration of the political management of the Misals. Therefore, the time demanded a big change which could stop this religious and political decay of Punjab⁸¹.

At the same time in 1797, when Ranjit Singh took over the reins of the Shukarchakkia Misal, he was not happy with the area of the Misal because he wanted to widen his rule by his farsightedness. The Punjab was divided into 14 small regions at that time which were ruled by the Sikh Misals, the Pathans, the British and the Afghans. But all of them had become weak. Therefore, it was a right time for Ranjit Singh to widen the rule, because there was no one so powerful who could challenge Ranjit Singh⁸². By this time, Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jai Singh, Gurbaksh Singh Kanahiya, Hari Singh and Jhanda Singh Bhangi, etc. had passed away. Gulab Singh Bhagi and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia were not in a position to face him. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was Ranjit Singh's opponent but he also was not able to confront him because of his old age. The Singhpuria, Nishanewalia, Karorsinghia, Shahidan, Nabhaiya and the Dalewalia Misals had become weak. The Sardars of the Phulkian Misal had become weak due to their own squabbles⁸³. At this time, there was no political power so strong which could challenge Ranjit Singh. But the external forces were trying to capture Punjab. These forces were the Afghan king Shah Zaman in the North-West. The Afghans advocated their right over Punjab since a long time. Earlier, Ahmed Shah Abdali attacked Punjab several times and now the Afghan King Shah Zaman wanted to capture Punjab. Similarly, the Rajputs of Kangra in the east were dreaming of capturing Punjab. But to the good fortune of Ranjit Singh, the Marathas and the British could not look toward Punjab because of their own conflicts. In the east, the British were preparing to capture Punjab. All these five powers, wanted to capture Punjab⁸⁴.

⁸⁰Gurcharan Singh, *Punjab Da Itihasak Sarvekhan (Aad kaal Ton 1947 Takk)*, Kapur Printing Press, Delhi, Ambala, 1962, PP-256-258.

⁸¹G.S. Chabra, *Advanced History of the Punjab*, Vol.-II, Parkash Brothers, Ludhiana, 1979, P-19.

⁸²H.T. Prinsep, *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, Language Department, Punjab, 1970, P-49.

⁸³Khushwant Singh, *Ranjit Singh Maharaja of the Punjab*, George Allen & Unwin, Bombay, 1973, PP-28,29.

⁸⁴ Henry Court, *History of the Sikhs*, Sushil Gupta (India) Pvt. Ltd. Calcutta-12, 1959, PP-67,68.

Therefore, when Shah Zaman, the grandson of Ahmed Shah Abdali, became the King of Afghan in 1793, he attacked Punjab four times. In the fourth attack, he reached up to Lahore, because he had to return to Afghanistan during the earlier attacks because of the revolts in Afghanistan. But during the fourth attack, Shah Zaman reached Lahore with a large army. No Sikh Sardar was ready to face the Afghan king. But Ranjit Singh fought against him bravely. Due to this, Shah Zaman returned back in 1798 having faced defeat. The Sikh armies chased Shah Zaman⁸⁵. In this, his 20,000 soldiers lost their lives and 15,000 of Sikh soldiers were also killed. The Sikh armies pursued the Afghan armies up to the boundaries of Lahore⁸⁶.

Ranjit Singh became famous in Punjab due to his struggle against the Afghans and defeating them. Therefore, the people of Lahore requested Ranjit Singh to capture Lahore. Lahore was then under the control of Bhangi Sardars Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh. During Shah Zaman's offensive, these Bhangi Sardars had deserted Lahore. The Bhangi Sardars troubled the common people a lot. For this, the people of Lahore were tired of them. Therefore, Ranjit Singh captured Lahore on 7th July, 1799⁸⁷.

After capturing Lahore, Ranjit Singh saw the situation in favour and he accelerated his struggle to widen the Sikh rule. First, he created friendship with the weak Misals and started capturing the weak Misals. When the military power of Ranjit Singh became very strong, he started controlling the strong Misals. In fact, his strength increased very much after conquering Lahore, because Lahore had remained the capital of Punjab for a long time. Thus, Ranjit Singh had become the most strong ruler in the North India due to his capturing of Lahore⁸⁸. Thus, the military and political power of Ranjit Singh started rising. In 1801, a large gathering of Sikhs were held in Amritsar on the Vaisakhi day to honour Ranjit Singh with the epithet of Maharaja. A large number of Sikh Sardars, eminent citizens, and respectful people participated in this gathering. Baba Sahib Singh Bedi performed the ritual of putting Tilak symbolizing Maharaja on Ranjit Singh's forehead. It was first time that a Sardar was bestowed with the honour of Maharaja. Having received the honour of Maharaj, the position of Maharaja Ranjit Singh got strengthened still further. To honour Ranjit Singh with the epithet of Maharaja was the first step for a strong Sikh rule⁸⁹.

With the force of his diplomacy and military power, Ranjit Singh merged the Sikh Misals and the areas up to Lahore, Amritsar, Kasur, Multan, Jhang, Kashmir, Peshawar and Ladakh in his rule in a very short span of time. Ranjit Singh widened

⁸⁵Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Dafter - II, S. Chand Co., New Delhi, 1961, P-39.

⁸⁶Prof. Kartar Singh, *Sikh Itihas*, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, 1961, PP-91, 92.

⁸⁷*Op.cit.*, PP-93, 94.

⁸⁸Narinder Pal Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas (1469-1839)*, *op.cit.*, P-77,78,79,80.

⁸⁹Bhagat Singh, *Punjab Da Itihas*, *op.cit.*, P-525.

the powerful Sikh rule and established its four centres - Lahore, Amritsar, Kashmir and Peshawar⁹⁰.

His powerful army was the force behind the establishment of the powerful Sikh rule. The Akalis (Nihangs) were the most powerful and brave in this. The Akali was an irregular army of Ranjit Singh. They numbered 3,000⁹¹. Akali Phula Singh and Sadhu Singh were the main leaders of the Akali army. The Akali Singhs made great contributions to spread the Sikh rule, which led to the development of a strong Sikh rule⁹².

Someone who recites the word Akal is called Akali in fact. The Akal word is used as a symbol for God in the Mool Mantra in Guru Granth Sahib. Akal is to be free from time or the death. Therefore, those Sikhs were called Akalis in the beginning who feared no death who were always ready to lay their lives for the protection of the Sikh religion. The Sikhs of this kind have been called Akalis from the times of Guru Gobind Singh⁹³.

In fact, Akalis were the Sikhs who have been adorning the same dress since the foundation of the Khalsa which Guru Gobind Singh had made the Sikhs to wear. Thus, the Akali or the Nihang was another form of the Khalsa. The Akalis largely comprised of the Rangreta Singhs, who have been protecting the Akal Takhat and the Harimandar Sahib since Guru Gobind Singh's times⁹⁴. When the Sikhs were divided into the Budha Dal and the Taruna Dal under the leadership of Nawab Kapur Singh, these were the Akalis (Nihangs) who used to carry the Nishan Sahib (the flag) of Khalsa. These Singhs would die but would not let the Nishan Sahib fall from their hands. Therefore, the Akalis were also known as the Sikhs who were willing to lay their lives. At the time of the bifurcation of the Khalsa, a group of these Akalis (Nihangs) was also formed, which was later called as Shahid Jatha or the Shahid Misal⁹⁵. At the time of the establishment of the rule of Misals in Punjab, it was only the Shahidan Misal of the Akalis who had not owned any land or property. Their aim, rather, was to look after the Gurudwaras. In the eighteenth century, the main colonies of the Akalis were at Akal Takhat Sahib, Amritsar Sahib, Kesgarh Sahib, and Damdama Sahib. During this time, the whole management had come in the hands of Akalis. With the rise itself of the Sikh Misals, Akalis came forward as the attendants of Akal Takhat Sahib. Therefore, all duties at Akal Takhat were led by the Akalis⁹⁶.

⁹⁰Giani Amar Singh, *Sikh Itihas*, Bhai Chatar Singh Jivan Singh, Amratsar, 1968, P-239.

⁹¹*Op.cit.*, PP-616, 621.

⁹²Surjit Singh Gandhi, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sikh Religion*, The Punjab Past and Present, Vol. XIV, Part 2, Oct 1980, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2002,P-49.

⁹³Ratan Singh Jaggi, *Sikh Panth Vishavkosh*, Vol. I, Guru Ratan Publications, Patiala, 2005, P-49.

⁹⁴Dr. Sukhdial Singh, *khalse Panth De Panj Takhat*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2002, P-49.

⁹⁵ Harbans Singh, *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, (In charge of K.S. Thapar), Vol.-1, Editing - 1992, P-588.

⁹⁶*Op.cit.*, PP-49, 50.

Thus the Akalis were the Nihangs who have been serving the Sikh religion since Guru Gobind Singh's times. Due to the reciting of Akal-Akal by these Nihang Singhs and due to their being protectors of the Akal Takhat, they started being called as Akalis. The fear of death was absent among them for the protection of their religion⁹⁷. Though the fearless Sikhs were called Akalis since Guru Gobind Singh's times, but Baba Narain Singh was the first to use this word and adorned a Dumala (cockade) on the head. After him, Akali Phula Singh, the attendant of Akali Narain Singh, started using the Akali alias with his name⁹⁸. The Akalis took the foremost part in the spread of the Sikh rule but the Akalis were not a part of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's armies. They were only part of Jathedar Phula Singh's Jatha. Akali Phula Singh was a Jathedar (priest) of Akal Takhat. Therefore, the Akalis had only one duty of protecting and looking after the Akal Takhat Sahib. They were called Akalis because of being attendants of Akal Takhat. The teams (Jathas) of these Akalis (Nihangs) also looked after Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib and Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib. The Akalis had their own free management. They were not under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in any manner and neither any Akali Singh was paid by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But they recognized Maharaja as their Government and were always prepared to offer any sacrifice for the Khalsa rule⁹⁹.

Thus, the Sikh religion that started with Guru Nanak Dev has now become a vast movement. It cannot be suppressed. Though the Gurus had chosen the path of peace, they had to adopt the policy of armed struggle due to the tyranny of the Mughal rule. The Sikh Gurus faced armed conflicts with the Mughal for their self-defense. After the Sikh Gurus, the political power of the Mughal rule waned but the influence of the Sikhs kept rising. Then, the Sikhs organized themselves into the Dal Khalsa to confront Ahmed Shah Abdali. The Dal Khalsa was further bifurcated into twelve Misals. The Afgan King had to face defeat in his fight with the Sikh Misals. Due to the end of the Mughal and Afgan power in Punjab, the Sikh rules started spreading and Ranjit Singh emerged as the Maharaja of Punjab. The Sher-e-Punjab united all the Sikh Misals and spread the Sikh rule. For this, the Akalis supported him. The Akali Singhs were always ready to sacrifice their lives for the spread of the Sikh rule. Due to this, the Sikh rule started spreading in 1800 after a long struggle.

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⁹⁸Ratan Singh Jaggi, *Sikh Panth Vishavkosh*, *op.cit.*, P-30.

⁹⁹Cunningham, J.D., *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to Battle of the Sutlej* (1849), S. Chand & Company, New Delhi, 1975, PP-156, 157.

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