

The Sikhs

1716-1801

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Introduction

It is important for everyone, especially the youth to know about the present times to prepare oneself for the future. It is equally important to know how we got here, be it culturally, religiously, politically, economically etc. knowing the history provides one with the bearings to navigate the world.

As for as the Sikh history is concerned, it can be divided into following distinct periods of time.

Period	Details
Pre 1469	Before Prakash (birth) of Guru Nanak Dev ji
1469 - 1708	Guru period
1708 - 1716	Baba Banda Bahadur
1716 - 1801	Misl Period
1801 - 1849	Sikh Raaj Maharaja Ranjit Singh
1849 - 1947	Under British Rule
1947 - present	Since independence of India

There is plenty of literature available regarding Sikh history for various periods of time except for 1716-1801. An attempt has been made to provide details for this link. Hopefully, youth will find it useful.

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1. Darbara Singh

Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was martyred on June 9, 1716. After this, life for Sikhs continued to be more and more difficult. The governor of Lahore, Daler Jang, created army patrols whose mission was to hunt down the Sikhs. He issued a proclamation "All Sikhs who believe in the faith of Nanak are to be killed. Whoever brings in the head of a Sikh will be rewarded"

Greedy people started murdering Sikhs wherever they could find them, so they could collect the bounty. This forced the Sikhs to move out of cities and villages and into jungles, hills and marshes just to stay alive. They did not have a political leader and survived by forming small groups for companionship and safety.

The political situation in Delhi was often chaotic with different people fighting for the Mughal thrones. In 1717 this fighting was intense. This distracted the Delhi government and the Governor of Lahore from chasing down the Sikhs. There were mutinies in Kasoor, Kashmir and Multan that kept the Governor busy. The Sikhs were able to slowly leave the hills and jungles and begin moving back into the villages and towns.

The Sikhs were finally able to gather in Amritsar in 1720 after many years. A division had developed within the Khalsa. One group, the Tat Khalsa, believed that Sri Guru Sahib was the Guru and the others, such as the Bandais, Ganga Shahis, Gulab Rais etc. believed personal Guruship had not been abolished by Guru Gobind Singh. Both groups believed it was their right and responsibility to serve and maintain the Gurdwaras. Kahn Singh, son of Bhai Binod Singh worked and pleaded with both groups and was able to avoid, or at least postpone, a clash.

Bhai Mani Singh was able to very diplomatically broker a peace deal between the two groups on Vaisakhi 1721. Most of the Bandais joined the Tat Khalsa, but their Guru Mahant Amar Singh and a few followers refused to join. They were thrown out of Harmandir Sahib by the Tat Khalsa. In the Diwan (congregation) that day Bhai Mani Singh was made Chief Granthi (reader of Sri Guru Granth Sahib) and Darbara Singh was appointed Diwan or Chief Minister

Relative peace had come back to Punjab and Sikhs who had moved to other areas started returning. People were tired of the injustices and excesses committed by the government and Bhai Mani Singh was encouraging the people to become Singh. The population of Sikhs continued to grow. They were able to assemble at Amritsar on their festival days like Vaisakhi.

The local leaders of the villages around Amritsar did not like the Sikh gatherings. Groups of Sikhs started having small clashes with these leaders. Even though

some Sikhs were not having to hide themselves there was still a lot of atrocities and discrimination against them, particularly by the government and local leaders of towns and villages. They often mistreated Sikhs and there was really no recourse for Sikhs as the government was not supportive. Sometimes it was petty discrimination and other times it was real violence. Sometimes, Sikhs had to behave like outlaws to survive.

In 1726, the Sikhs decided they would take decisive steps against the government. They felt the governments excesses needed to be answered. Diwan Darbara Singh gathered the Singh at Amritsar and proposed three resolutions:

1. Any money bound for the Government treasuries would be looted on the way.
2. Police stations would be attacked to obtain horses and weapons.
3. Informers and spies for the government would be eliminated.

The Sikhs passed these resolutions because they were being persecuted by the Government. They wanted to fight back and for that they would need organization and resources. Singh broke up into small groups and spread out in the surrounding areas. They decided to raid government resources. From 1726-1727 the Sikhs were able to intercept several shipments of money, horses and arms that were meant for the government treasury. The armies from Delhi and Lahore combined forces to search for the Singh. However, the people in the local area (except for the army officers and the leaders of the villages) had become sympathetic to the Singh. They would help protect them by informing them in advance of the army's arrival

The Singh did not take money and goods from ordinary people, they only raided the government's treasuries. In 1727, the Singh suspected that a man named Partap Chand was taking a large quantity of government goods to Delhi. Singh attacked Partap Singh. When the Singh found out that he had not yet received any money from the government, they returned all his property to him. In June 1730, Haibut Khan, who had been governor of Lahore for 3 years, was traveling back to Delhi. He had hundreds of thousands of rupees worth of government revenue with him. The Singh forcibly took this money from him near Sarai Noor Din.

The Governor of Lahore, Zakria Khan, stepped up army patrols to prevent looting by the Singh but the Singh continued to prevent money from reaching the government treasury at Lahore. He ultimately became tired of the looting and decided that using diplomacy and developing good relations with the Sikhs would be a better course of action. He asked the Emperor to grant the Khalsa a substantial estate of land. This would be their source of income.

On Vaisakhi 1733 the Khalsa gathered at Amritsar. Zakria Khan sent a peace message with Subeg Singh. "The governments of Delhi and Lahore hereby make

peace with the Khalsa and offer these accommodations:

1. An estate of 100,000 rupees for the Khalsa's livelihood.
2. The title of Nawab for the Khalsa
3. Total freedom for the Khalsa to visit and maintain the Gurdwaras

At first the Singh were unwilling to take the title of Nawab. But Bhai Subeg Singh argued that if there was peace with the Government the Khalsa could grow and progress. So, the Khalsa agreed to accept the Nawabi (title of Nawab) being offered. Diwan Darbara Singh refused the position citing his advanced age. He continued to help the Khalsa in times of trouble until his death in July 1734. Bhai Kapur Singh was chosen and given the title of Nawab, which he reluctantly accepted.

2. Nawab Kapur Singh

Kapur Singh was born in 1697 AD at village Kaloke, district Sheikhpura. His father was Choudhary Dalip Singh Virk. As a child, he learned Gurbani from his mother who also told him many stories of the Gurus. His father was fond of raising good horses. Thus, he effortlessly obtained training in riding, use of spears and other weapons in his home. He took Khande Di Pahul (Amrit/Baptism/Initiation) from Bhai Mani Singh on Baisakhi at Amritsar in 1721 AD. In 1726, Kapur Singh joined the squad of Diwan Darbara Singh.

In 1726, Zakria Khan became the Governor of Lahore. He made it his mission to get rid of Sikhs in his territory. He passed orders to kill any Sikh his men could see. He announced a reward of fifty Rupees (which was a very large sum of money at that time) for each Sikh head brought to him. These extreme atrocities, however, made Sikhs more resolute to retaliate by killing government officials, intercepting treasuries, and arsenal. Soon, Zakria Khan realized that he would not be able to achieve his goal of killing all Sikhs. He thought of a different strategy. He would make peace with Sikhs by offering them a jagir (principality). The Sikhs agreed. Kapur Singh was a unanimous choice for Nawab. Kapur Singh was very wise. He made the best use of the truce by organizing the Sikhs

Kapur Singh sent messages to Singh who were hiding in jungles, hills and marshes along river banks because of oppression of the government. Singh returned in great numbers. He organized Khalsa into two Dals (army groups) - Budha Dal & Taruna Dal. Budha Dal was formed consisting of Singh over forty years of age and was entrusted with the service of upkeep of Gurdwaras, and preaching Sikh thought. Taruna Dal consisted of Singh below forty and their duties consisted of helping the suffering, fighting enemy who attacked the Sikhs and establishment of Khalsa government in the country. Budha Dal would help the Taruna Dal in wars or other times of need

With the peace treaty came an estate of land. This provided some income for the Khalsa. Many young people started taking Khande Di Pahul and becoming Singh. The numbers of Taruna Dal greatly increased in a short time. Kapur Singh divided Taruna Dal into five squads.

However, with the increased numbers in the Dals, income of the estate was insufficient to take care of the Khalsa. To meet the expenses, the squads of Taruna Dal started raiding into areas outside the province of Punjab such as Hisar, Hansi and up to Delhi. The government of Delhi held Zakria Khan responsible for the looting by the Singhs in the country and reprimanded Zakria Khan for this. In retaliation, in May 1735, Zakria Khan took back the estate given

to the Khalsa.

After confiscating the estate, Zakria Khan captured the revered head priest of Sri Harmandir Sahib - Bhai Mani Singh. He got Bhai Sahib martyred by cutting him into pieces. He also got sarovar of Harmandir Sahib filled with carcasses of dead animals. Harmandir Sahib was burned as well. He expected to destroy the Sikhs by torturing them and destroying their religious places. Instead, the Sikhs determined to face the Mughals with even greater resolve.

In 1739, help came to Sikhs from an unexpected place. Nadir Shah came from Persia and invaded India. He came mainly to loot and planned to return with the bounty. Unfortunately for Nadir Shah, his path of invasion passed through Punjab. On his return, Sikhs attacked Nadir Shah's caravan carrying the loot. Sikhs tactic was to attack rear of the convoy in guerrilla warfare mode and they were successful. Nadir Shah was surprised by Sikhs daring moves and was impressed with their bravery. He was, however, not familiar with Sikhs. He asked Zakria Khan, who these people are and where they live. Zakria gave a very casual answer. He said, these people have no home, they live on horses' saddles, and come down twice a year to take a dip in Harmandir sarovar and disappear. Nadir Shah warned Zakria to be careful as these people might be rulers of Punjab one day.

Nadir Shah's warning made Zakria Khan angry. He decided to teach Sikhs a lesson. He encouraged Massa Ranghar, landlord of areas around Amritsar to occupy Harmandir Sahib for personal use. Massa Ranghar used the rooms in the perimeter of Harmandir Sahib as stables and for storage. He converted the central hall for personal use. He would have dancing-girls perform and would consume alcohol. One evening, two Sikhs - Mahtab Singh and Sukha Singh came all the way from Rajasthan to stop all these actions of disrespect for the revered Harmandir Sahib. While one stood as a guard, the other beheaded Massa Ranghar and walked away with his head. Nawab Kapur Singh even attempted to capture Zakria Khan from a mosque to hold him responsible for these acts of insult. A daring raid on a mosque in Lahore was executed as planned. Unfortunately, Zakria Khan missed visiting the mosque on that day and escaped getting caught.

Along with such acts of collective heroism, even individuals would dare to show examples of Sikh self-esteem. An example worth mentioning is Bota Singh who set a check-post on the busiest highway and started collecting tax in the name of Sikhs. He enforced the tax using a big stick. People complained to the governor of Lahore. Government enforcement was to handle the situation. Bota Singh and his assistant Girja Singh put up a tough fight but eventually sacrificed their lives in

honor.

In 1745, Zakria Khan died. His second son - Shah Niwaz Khan - became governor of Lahore. He further escalated torture of the Sikhs. In June 1746, first ghalughara (holocaust) of Sikhs took place. About 17,000 Sikhs died in the fight. Another 3,000 were taken prisoner and were publicly executed. Shah Niwaz Khan's successor - Mir Mannu - inflicted even more torture upon Sikhs including women and children.

In 1747, Ahmad Shah Abdali assassinated Nadir Shah and proclaimed himself ruler of Afghanistan. From 1748 -1768, Abdali invaded India eight times. In Feb 1748, Abdali defeated the Mughal viceroy of Lahore and merged Lahore with Afghanistan. Thus, he destroyed the superiority of Mughals. This enabled Nawab Kapur Singh to face Mughals with greater determination. Sikhs took control of large part of Punjab.

Nawab Kapur Singh left his earthly body on 7th October 1753 AD after leading the Khalsa for 27 years.

3. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was born on May 3, 1718 in village Ahlu. His father's name was S. Badar Singh. His mother was Amritdhari and a devoted Sikh. She would do her nitnem banis (daily prayers) both in the morning and in the evening. She would also do Shabad Kirtan on Dilruba (a string musical instrument). She would always ask Jassa Singh to join her for the paath (prayers) and Kirtan. Jassa Singh learned Gurbani and learned to enjoy Kirtan from a very young age. S. Badar Singh died suddenly when Jassa Singh was only 7 years old.

In 1723, Sikhs from the village of Ahlu went to Delhi to meet with Mata Sundri Kaur Ji (the widow of the Guru Gobind Singh ji). Jassa Singh and his mother were part of this group. They did Shabad Kirtan for Mata Sundri ji. Mata ji was so pleased she asked them to stay with her in Delhi. She gave many blessings to Jassa Singh. Jassa Singh stayed in Delhi for 6 years and was able to learn Gurbani, religious history and Persian.

Jassa Singh's uncle was Bhag Singh. He brought Jassa Singh and his mother back to Punjab in 1729. They settled near Jalandhar and began to perform Kirtan regularly. Jassa Singh was a great Rabab (a string musical instrument associated with Guru Nanak) player. At this time Nawab Kapur Singh and his squad of Sikhs were staying at Kartarpur. Bhag Singh went to meet Nawab Kapur Singh and took his sister and Jassa Singh with him.

It was a Gurburab and Jassa Singh and his mother sang Asa Ki Vaar at the camp's morning Diwan. Nawab Kapur Singh and his Sikhs were very impressed with the Kirtan and asked the two of them to stay at the camp for a month. Jassa Singh was mild mannered had a pleasant personality. Nawab Kapur Singh came to like Jassa Singh and recognized his great potential.

Nawab Kapur Singh adopted Jassa Singh as his son. Jassa Singh received 'khande di pahul' (Amrit) from Nawab Kapur Singh and learned how to live as a Khalsa. Nawab Kapur Singh directed Singh of his squad to train Jassa Singh. They taught him how to use weapons and trained him in horsemanship. He was a quick learner and soon became an expert. He was a hard worker and promptly completed tasks assigned to him.

Nawab Kapur Singh gave Jassa Singh the responsibility of feeding the horses. This helped teach Jassa Singh patience, humility and love. Nawab Kapur Singh was incredibly brave, spiritual and humble. Jassa Singh imbibed these traits from his adopted father.

On October 14, 1745, which happened to be Diwali Day, Jassa Singh was given his own squad to command. In January 1746 Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and another commander - Sukha Singh took their squads towards the hills. They had stopped at a place called Rori Sahib to eat. Jaspat Rai, who was the commander of Aminabad attacked them. Jaspat Rai was riding an elephant. A Khalsa named Nibahu Singh cut off Jaspat Rai's head.

Jaspat Rai's army witnessed this and fled the battle. Singh used the opportunity to enter the marshes of the River Ravi. When Diwan Lakhpat Rai found out that his brother had been killed by the Singhs he vowed revenge. On March 10, he killed all Sikh businessmen and government employees in Lahore. He then marched with an army and artillery into the marshes of Kahnuwan jungle, where many Singh were staying. His wanted to kill all Sikhs in the area. This event came to be called the Chhota Ghalughara (lesser holocaust). Seven thousand Sikhs were killed and three thousand were taken prisoner and brought to Lahore. The prisoners were tortured and killed.

Ahmad Shah Abdali's attacks:

First attack (December 1747): Abdali defeated the governor of Lahore, Shah Nawaz, who fled to Delhi. Because of the disarray of the government in Lahore, the Khalsa were able to take control of Amritsar. Sikhs had a large gathering at Harmandir Sahib on March 29, 1748. They laid the foundation stone and started construction on their fort, Ram Rauni. They named Jassa Singh Ahluwalia joint chief of all the jathas (squads) and set up a 10-member committee to advise him. These committee members later became heads of the misls.

Mir Mannu was appointed Governor of Lahore and Multan on April 9, 1748. He named Kaura Mal his Diwan (minister). He imposed a huge fine on the previous Diwan, Lakhpat Rai. Lakhpat Rai was able to pay only a part of the fine. Diwan Kaura Mal paid the balance of the fine and took custody of Lakhpat Rai. He then handed Lakhpat Rai over to the Singh. Chief Jassa Singh Ahluwalia ordered that he be tied up on the toilet, where he suffered for six months.

Adina Beg, who was the commander of Jalandhar offered Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia a position in his organization. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and his Jatha joined Beg's service but Ahluwalia turned down the offer.

The Khalsa got together in Amritsar in October 1748. Mir Mannu sent an army to surround the Sikhs and ordered the Commander of Jalandhar to help with the siege. 500 Sikhs took shelter in the Ram Rauni fort and the rest moved into the jungles. The forces of Jalandhar and Lahore surrounded and laid siege to the fort. They continued with the siege for two months but could not defeat the Khalsa and

take the fort.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was with the forces of Jalandhar and were attacking the Ram Rauni fort, but one day he and his squad joined the Singh inside. From inside the fortress, he sent a message to Diwan Kaura Mal asking him to lift the siege.

Second attack (1749): Abdali attacked Lahore. Mir Mannu decided to focus on that front. He listened to Diwan Kaura Mal's advice and made peace with the Khalsa. He gave them additional land as jagir (part of their estate)

Shah Nawaz captured Multan in May 1749. Mir Mannu gave Diwan Kaura Mal the mission of re-capturing Multan. He recruited the Khalsa forces. Chief Jassa Singh Ahluwalia joined Diwan Kaura Mal with 10,000 Singh. Shah Nawaz forces could not face the Khalsa army for long. Shah Nawaz was killed and Diwan Kaura Mal took over Multan. The Diwan asked Mir Mannu to give the Khalsa even more land as a reward for their service.

Third attack (1751): Abdali attacked yet again. Mir Mannu again asked for the Khalsa's help. This time the Khalsa was driven back to Amritsar by heavy cannon fire from Abdali's forces. Mir Mannu was defeated by Abdali in this battle. Mir Mannu blamed the Khalsa for this defeat and confiscated all the Khalsa's land. He was so angry he again deployed army forces to eliminate the entire Khalsa.

Fourth attack (1756): Mir Mannu died in November 1753. His widow Murad Begum became governor of Lahore. The government of Lahore was in disarray and chaos. The Singh took advantage of the situation and the weakness in Lahore and returned to Punjab. The situation in the Lahore government deteriorated so much that Murad Begum invited Abdali to attack India. Abdali did attack Delhi and looted the city. He left Delhi with 16 Mughal princesses, thousands of slaves, and millions of rupees worth of stolen valuables.

Chief Jassa Singh Ahluwalia organized the Khalsa forces to free the prisoners. As soon as Abdali crossed the River Jamuna, the Singh attacked. They looted his treasures and freed the prisoners.

When Abdali reached Lahore, he appointed his 11-year-old son, Taimur Shah, the Governor of the newly captured territory. Jahan Khan was his assistant. Abdali returned to Kabul. Taimur Shah organized the government of Lahore to his satisfaction and then turned his attention to the Sikhs. Jahan Khan was sent with an army to Amritsar to finish the Sikhs. In 1757 Jahan Khan destroyed Ram Rauni and many gurdwaras in Amritsar. He filled the Sarowar surrounding Sri Harmandir Sahib with sand.

In Jalandhar, the Khalsa was working with Adina Beg. He was planning to

recapture Jalandhar and attack Sirhind. Along with the Khalsa forces, the Marathas were also working with him and he captured Sirhind on March 21, 1758. On April 11, 1758 the Marathas captured Lahore from Taimur Shah and handed it to Adina Beg. Once Adina Beg was ruler of Punjab, he became enemy of Sikhs. He died a few months later on September 15, 1758. Hassan Beg, his son, fought and was defeated by the Khalsa on October 30. He fled and the Khalsa took over the land he was governing.

Fifth attack (October 1759): Abdali attacked to get revenge on the Marathas. Marathas suffered a humiliating defeat from Abdali at Panipat in January 1761. Abdali went on to Delhi and was merciless in his attack and looting. When he left Delhi, he had a big stolen booty and 22000 Marathas as prisoners. However, when he crossed the Sutlej river, the Singh attacked snatching the booty and freeing the prisoners. They were successful in freeing all the prisoners by the time Abdali reached the river Jhelum.

The Khalsa gathered at Amritsar on October 22, 1761. They passed a Gurmatta (resolution) and in which they decided to surround Lahore. The leaders of Lahore decided to make peace with Chief Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and opened the gates of the city. The Khalsa entered the city and captured the government mint - where coins were made. The Khalsa honored chief Jassa Singh Ahluwalia with the title "King of the Nation". They minted and circulated coins that had the same inscription in Persian that Banda Singh Bahadur had inscribed on his coins.

Sixth attack (February 1762): Abdali reached Lahore on February 3, 1762. Dal Khalsa had moved towards Malwa to shift their families before his arrival. Abdali followed them and attacked their caravan from the rear. In that Vada Ghalagara greater holocaust, the Khalsa suffered heavy casualties. Abdali gave up the pursuit of the caravan at dark and returned to Lahore on March 3rd via Sirhind. He reached Amritsar one day before Vaisakhi, demolished Harmandir with gun fire and filled up the sacred pool with the debris. He went to Kalanaur in June to spend the summer.

After the wounds suffered in the greater holocaust had healed, the Khalsa attacked Sirhind in May. Governor of Sirhind made peace with Khalsa. The Khalsa came to Punjab and started collecting protection tax. The Singh gathered on October 17, 1762 on Diwali Day. Abdali sent his agent to Amritsar to make peace with the Khalsa. The Singh looted the messenger and sent him back. Abdali could not tolerate this dishonour. He marched on Amritsar reaching on the evening of October 16th. The Khalsa attacked Abdali early in the morning on October 17th. The Singh inflicted heavy casualties on Abdali. Taking advantage of darkness, he fled to Lahore during the night and returned to Kabul.

The Khalsa again took over their respective territories after the return of Abdali. They started reconstruction of the Gurdwaras demolished by Abdali. The Khalsa attacked Sirhind on January 13, 1764 under the command of Chief Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. The governor was killed in the battle. The Khalsa divided the territory of Sirhind among themselves.

Seventh attack (December 1764): When Abdali came to know of the occupation of Lahore and Sirhind by the Khalsa, he attacked again. All the chiefs except Charat Singh were out of Punjab. After occupying Lahore without any resistance, Abdali reached Amritsar where thirty odd Singh engaged in upkeep of the gurdwara came to face his thirty thousand strong army. They fought bravely to martyrdom. Abdali moved towards Delhi. When he reached Kunjpur, he learned that settlement has been reached between the two parties. Abdali turned back from Kunjpur. To deal with Abdali, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia called other chiefs. The Khalsa gathered on the bank of river Sutlej near Phillaur and waited there for Abdali. When Abdali came to know of the Singh blocking his way at Phillaur, he crossed the Sutlej at the ferry crossing at Ropar. The Khalsa clashed with him the next day. Harassed by continued guerilla attacks by the Singh for seven days, Abdali crossed river Ravi in March 1765 without resting at Lahore. On April 10, 1765, the Vaisakhi' day, the Khalsa passed a resolution at Amritsar to take over Lahore. The Bhangi chiefs occupied Lahore without any battle. The Khalsa again started minting their coins.

Last attack (November 1766): Abdali reached close to Lahore without a challenge. The Singh slipped away before his arrival. Abdali realised that the Khalsa did not allow the governor appointed by him to stay at Lahore and the public of Punjab was happy under the rule of the Khalsa. He sent his messengers to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Hari Singh Bhangi. They refused to talk to Abdali. On getting a negative reply from the Khalsa, Abdali started towards Delhi. However, Abdali turned back on March 17, 1767. Fearing guerilla attacks by the Khalsa, Abdali, at this time returned to Kabul via Kasoor instead of Amritsar - Lahore route avoiding Khalsa.

Khalsa who spent their days in jungles, marshes and mountain caves, became the master of the country. This achievement was the result of the blessings of the Guru, guidance of leaders like Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and bravery of the Singh. The territory controlled by the misl of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia comprised of area between river Sutlej and Beas, Jalandhar, some villages in Amritsar and Tarn Taran and thirty to forty villages towards southern bank of Sutlej. He captured Kapurthala in 1780 and annexed it to his state.

He died on October 20, 1783, near Amritsar after eating a bad melon. He leads the Khalsa for 35 years during which the Khalsa who spent their days and nights in jungles and mountains became the master of the territory between rivers Indus and Ganges.

4. Sukha Singh

Sukha Singh was born in January 1707 at Mari Kamboki, district Lahore. His father Sri Ladh Kalsi was a carpenter. The Khalsa assembled at Amritsar to celebrate Vaisakhi of 1721. This was the first big gathering of the Khalsa after the martyrdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. Sikh devotees reached from distant places for this assembly. Sukha Singh also had a chance to come to that gathering. He liked the Sikh way-of-life and decided to become a Sikh. He stayed back at the gurdwara after the fair to serve the Sikhs. The Sikhs gathered at that fair organized themselves in small squads. Those squads started going to villages and disciplining those who had looted homes of the Singh and had committed atrocities on them. Getting news of the bloodshed, the governor of Lahore ordered the village headmen to arrest the Sikhs. The headmen started handing the Sikhs over to the government for fear of the governor.

Sukha Singh returned to his village Mari Kamboki after staying at Amritsar for nine months. Seeing his long hair and turban, the village headman told his mother, "Your son has become a Singh. If someone informs the governor, he will send an army to surround the village. Please advise him to give up long hair and turban." Sukha Singh's parents requested him accordingly, but he did not agree. Afraid of the atrocities of the government, his mother gave him dumplings with cannabis. When he became senseless with intoxication, she got his hair trimmed. When, on coming to senses, Sukha Singh found his hair trimmed, he jumped into a well to die. The water of the well was not deep, and he did not die. The villagers tried to save him and took him out of the well. He told them, "Let me remain in the well. I prefer death to being without my hair."

Hearing these words of Sukha Singh, one of the persons trying to rescue him said, "Die doing some good deed if you want to die. Nobody will gain anything if you drown yourself in this way," On being advised this way, Sukha Singh came out of the well. After a few days, he joined the squad of Sham Singh Attari who passed by the village, taking the mare of the village headman with him. Sukha Singh became a Singh in the true sense after taking baptism at the hands of Sham Singh. Sukha Singh was barely fifteen when he joined the squad. Chief of the squad, Sham Singh came to love him like a son on seeing his devotion to service. In the squad, Sukha Singh, learnt recitation of Guru's word with musical instruments besides the use of weapons.

Once Sukha Singh's squad was passing by the village Mari Kamboki. With the permission from his chief. Sukha Singh went and met the village headman whose mare he had taken. He asked forgiveness for his mistake and placed before him

money as price of the mare. The headman declined to take the money and said, "I cannot take money from one who is fighting the atrocities of the government at a great risk to his life." At these words of the headman, Sukha Singh thanked him and joined his squad.

Adventures of Sukha Singh

Diwan Lakhpat Rai attacked the Khalsa assembled to celebrate Diwali of 1736. When the Khalsa retaliated bravely, he fled to Lahore. Governor of Lahore put a two thousand strong army for a strict watch on Harmandir. In spite of the guard, one day Sukha Singh and Tharaj Singh reached Harmandir early in the morning and had a dip in the sacred pool. While departing, they shouted the slogan "Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji ki Fateh" at the top of their voice. Listening the slogan, Qazi Abdul Rehman attacked the Sikhs. Abdul Rahman was killed in the fighting and the Sikhs joined their squad.

In October 1738, Massa Ranghar became police chief of Amritsar. He turned Harmandir into a dance hall consuming liquor. He made dancing girls perform while he himself sat on his bed and smoked hookah (to smoke tobacco). First, he finished Sikhs living at Amritsar, then he started harassing the Hindus. After the home of Tej Ram had been looted, he reached Bikaner. He narrated to Sham Singh, the chief of the squad, the misdeeds being carried out at Harmandir. Hearing about these misdeeds, Sukha Singh and Mehtab Singh reached the holy shrine to punish Massa Ranghar. With agility and valour, they presented the head of Massa Ranghar to their chief on the third day.

In January 1746, Sukha Singh and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia were moving to the hills with their squads. When they stopped at Rori Sahib to cook their food, Jaspat Rai, the commander of Aimanabad attacked them. Jaspat Rai was killed in the battle and his army fled. Following this, the chiefs joined the other squads camping in the marshes of Kahnuwan with their own squads. When Diwan Lakhpat Rai got the news of death of his brother at the hands of the Sikhs, he murdered the Sikhs in Lahore and attacked those hiding in jungles. In that lesser holocaust a gun shell hit the leg of Sukha Singh when he was going forward to attack Lakhpat Rai. His leg was broken by that cannonball due to which he could not succeed in his objective. Sukha Singh got treatment for his leg on reaching Jaito. After six months of treatment he was back on his feet and he again started showing his accomplishments in the battles.

In spite of heavy guard at Harmandir, Sukha Singh went and bathed in the sacred pool at will. At the time of first attack, Abdali had moved to Delhi leaving a small

Pathan army at Lahore for administration. Sukha Singh had deflated the ego of that army by killing Girja Pathan, the bravest of them. Abdali mounted his third attack on India in December 1751. Mir Mannu asked Diwan Kaura Mal and called the Khalsa for help to Lahore. One day Sukha Singh attained martyrdom when he was trying to reach Adbali by crossing the Ravi with a few Singh of his squads before he could reach him.

5. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was born in 1723 in the Lahore District of Punjab. His grandfather, Bhai Hardas Singh had taken Khandey Di Pahul (Amrit) from Guru Gobind Singh. He fought in battles alongside the Guru as well as Banda Singh Bahadur. Jassa Singh's father was Giani Bhagwan Singh Jassa Singh grew up learning about religion, Persian, and weapons training from his father.

Nadir Shah marched from Iran in May 1738 to invade India. Zakria Khan was the governor of Lahore and he started preparing to defend the city. There had been many restrictions placed on Sikhs because they were treated as rebels. Zakria Khan removed some of these restrictions so that he could recruit Sikhs into the army. Jassa Singh's father, Giani Bhagwan Singh joined the governor's army. He was so competent that he was given command over 100 soldiers. Giani Bhagwan Singh died in a battle with Nadir Shah's army in January 1739. Jassa Singh fought alongside his father. Zakria Khan was so pleased with Giani Bhagwan Singh's service that he gave 5 villages to Giani Bhagwan Singh's family as a reward. Jassa Singh left military service to manage his estate. On one occasion he got into a skirmish with Adina Beg who was a commander in Jalandhar, a city nearby. Jassa Singh easily defeated Adina Beg with his excellent swordsmanship.

Zakria Khan died in 1745 and a struggle began between his sons to take over the governance of Lahore. Because the government was in disarray, Sikhs who had left Lahore because of oppression were able to start organizing themselves in groups. Many returned to Lahore and many people who were tired of government oppression joined the Khalsa.

Jassa Singh decided to leave his land and join the squad of a man named Nand Singh. He became famous for his bravery and took over the squad after the death of Nand Singh.

Ahmad Shah Abdali attacked India for the first time in 1747. He defeated the Governor of Lahore, Shah Nawaz and decided to move on to attack Delhi. He took the army from Lahore with him.

Since there was no government army in Lahore, the Khalsa became free to do as they wished. They gathered at Amritsar to celebrate Vaisakhi, in 1748. They decided to construct the Ram Rauni fort to protect Amritsar. It took one month to construct the fort and Jassa Singh was involved in the construction. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was appointed joint chief of the Khalsa, and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia

was a member of the committee.

Mir Mannu became Governor of Lahore in April 1748. He wanted to end the growing power of the Sikhs, and deployed patrols to finish them off in Lahore. Many Singh left Lahore province and moved to other areas.

Adina Beg, the governor of Jalandhar, wanted to befriend the Sikhs and he asked Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia to join his forces. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia refused but Jassa Singh Ramgarhia thought it would benefit him, so he and his squad joined with Adina Beg. He was given the position of General but was removed from the Dal Khalsa for joining the Royal Army. Following the lead and influence of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, many Sikhs in the area got jobs with Adina Beg.

In October 1748 the Dal Khalsa gathered in Amritsar. When Mir Mannu found out about the Sikh gathering, he sent his Army to surround Amritsar. He asked Adina Beg to join them for reinforcement. When the Sikhs heard about the armies coming after them, many of them fled to the jungles and about 500 Singh took shelter in the Ram Rauni fort. The siege went on for two months, but the Royal Army could not capture the Fort. The Sikhs were running out of food and supplies and decided that they would rather be martyred in battle than die of starvation. They decided they would open the gates of the fort in the morning and fight the Army. They were raising their victory calls (jaikaras) that evening in preparation for the morning.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia heard the battle cry of the Sikhs inside the fort. It caused him to have a change of heart about the course he was taking. He tied a message to an arrow and shot it into the fort. He asked that the doors of the fort be opened to him.

The Sikhs inside agreed and he went in with his squad and a large amount of supplies. He then sent a message to Mir Mannu through Diwan Kaura Mal. He asked that the siege be lifted. At about the same time Ahmad Shah Abdali attacked for the second time. Diwan Kaura Mal advised Mir Mannu that if he made peace with the Khalsa, they could be helpful at this difficult time.

Mir Mannu lifted the siege and gave the Dal Khalsa an estate near Amritsar, as a source of income for them. The Dal Khalsa was very pleased with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, for his help at a time of need. Because of this Jassa Singh's men, who were expelled from the Dal Khalsa, were accepted back in. They appointed him

commander of the Ram Rauni fort and the fort's name was changed to Ramgarh.

Abdali attacked India for the 3rd time in December 1751. Mir Mannu lost this battle and blamed the Sikhs. He turned on them and ordered that everyone in his province with long hair be killed. He again attacked the Ramgarh fort and destroyed it.

Mir Mannu died in November 1753. Jassa Singh returned to Ramgarh and rebuild the fort. Murad Begum, Mir Mannu's widow ran the government in Lahore. But she was not able to control territory outside Lahore. The Khalsa were able to control the territory outside the city and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia controlled part of this area.

Between 1756 and 1764 Abdali invaded India 4 times. He had clashes with the Governments in Lahore, Delhi as well as the Khalsa Army. They would often loot his retreating forces, or clash with him directly. He became convinced that only the Khalsa could rule Punjab. The Sikh Misls ruled much of Punjab after his departure. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had control over a substantial area. After establishing his control in Punjab, he took on neighboring hill chiefs. He took over several small kingdoms and became Maharajah, the first Misl chief to get this title.

At times, the Misls would have skirmishes with each other, over land and power. There was one incident where Jassa Singh Ahluwalia entered Ramgarhia territory while hunting. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia's brothers arrested him. When Jassa Singh Ramgarhia found out he asked forgiveness, since Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was "Chief of the Nation".

However, this created tension between the Ramgarhia Misl and the other Misls. They joined forces and eventually Jassa Singh Ramgarhia lost most of his territory and had to retreat south of the Sutlej river. He formed alliances with the Raja of Patiala, Raja Amar Singh. He worked with him to settle disputes with other Nawabs in the area. During this period, there was much fighting over different territories.

While Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was aligned with Raja Amar Singh, the latter got into a dispute with the Government in Delhi over some land. When there was a battle between Abdul Ahmad Khan from Delhi and Amar Singh, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia joined forces with Raja Amar Singh. Even Jassa Singh Ahluwalia reached Patiala in time to help fight against the Delhi force. This led to Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Baghel Singh working together to capture areas near Delhi

and eventually conquering the Red Fort in March 1783.

After the death of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in 1783, the different Misls continued to fight for power and land in Punjab. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia eventually was able to regain most of the territory he had lost, but continued to battle with other misls, especially the Khaniya misl. He lost significant battles to Rani Sada Kaur and Ranjit Singh near the end of his life, in 1803.

6. Sardar Baghel Singh

Sardar Baghel Singh was born in a village called Jhabal, near Amritsar, in Punjab. In the mid 1700's Sikhs had divided themselves up into groups called Misls. The misls covered different geographical areas. These were like small states within the larger Punjab. Sometimes the misls would fight amongst each other to expand their power, but they often united against the enemy.

Sardar Baghel Singh had joined the KarorSinghia misl which was led by Sardar Karora Singh. After the death of S. Karora Singh, S. Baghel Singh became the head of the Karor Singhia misl. Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was the head of the Ahluwalia misl.

Ahmad Shah Abdali had been invading India from 1747 to 1769. He attacked a total of 9 times. The Mughal power in Delhi had been fighting Abdali as well as other invaders like Nadir Shah. Delhi had control over Peshawar and Afghanistan until 1738, when Nadir Shah attacked. They were weakened and fragile and had very little power in Punjab. He had also beat the Marathas back from Punjab. In this way the Sikh misls became the strongest power in Punjab.

In 1764 S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and S. Baghel Singh joined forces. The area around Saharanpur was ruled by a man named Najib-ud-Daulah, who had allied himself with Abdali during his attacks. The Ahluwalia's and the Karor Singhias attacked Saharanpur and were able to take over the city and all the surrounding areas. By 1776, he had great influence.

When Abdali made his 8th invasion in 1767 the Sikhs fought him. They both suffered heavy losses, but ultimately Abdali left Punjab. Abdali's final invasion was in 1769. The Khalsa Army united against him. The combined armies of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Sardar Charat Singh Sukerchakia fought him and were able to drive him from Punjab once and for all.

S. Baghel Singh's Karor Singhia misl was one of the strongest ones. He had over 40,000 men under his command. Because of this strength he was able to capture many territories and expand his range of rule and influence.

He was considered to be a great leader, a fearless warrior, a good administrator and political negotiator. He was also a devout Sikh. It was considered an honor to take Khande Di Pahul from him. The Sikhs had ambitions of making advances into Delhi. The first incursion into Delhi was in January 1774 and he was able to take

some Delhi territory. He attacked again in July 1775. He also continued fighting for some of the Emperor's territory surrounding Delhi.

The 12 Sikh misls continued to expand their power in Punjab and near Delhi. They continued to make incursions in to Delhi. The next one was in 1781.

The Emperor Shah Alam in Delhi was weakened from the fighting with Abdali. The other potential challengers to the Sikhs, the Marathas and Rohillas had also been beaten back. The Sikhs attacked Delhi several times, and most of the attacks were led by Sardar Baghel Singh.

In 1783 he led a very large army of 30000 men into Delhi. They split their forces and had several battles with the Mughal forces. They ultimately were able to surround the Red Fort, which was an extremely important strategic and psychological target. Emperor Shah Alam sent his son Prince Mirza Shikoh to stop the advancing Khalsa Army, but they were defeated several times and had to retreat and hide in several buildings of the Red Fort. On March 11, Sardar Baghel Singh led the Khalsa Army into the Red Fort. They advanced through the Fort to the place where the Emperor ruled from – Diwan-i-Am. This is where the Mughal emperors held their court. After occupying Diwan-i-Am they hoisted the Khalsa flag at the entrance of the Red Fort. S. Baghel Singh appointed five of his generals Panj Pyaras to occupy the “throne”.

Emperor Shah Alam was now reduced to begging for his life and a compromise from S. Baghel Singh. His Advocate Ram Dayal and his wife Begum Samru spoke for him. Begum Samru was an intelligent and farsighted politician. It was ironic that Emperor Shah Alam was reduced to begging for his life from a Sikh Sardar at the very spot where Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was martyred 67 years earlier.

Begum Samru spoke to Sardar Baghel Singh with great honor and respect and referred to him as her “brother”. She asked for two things: that Shah Alam's life be spared and that he be able to rule over the Red Fort.

Sardar Baghel Singh wanted to establish Gurdwaras all over Delhi in memory of the Sikh Gurus. His conditions in response to Begum Samru's request were that the Mughals hand over to the Sikhs all areas where - Sikh Gurus had visited - Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib was martyred - Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur had stayed He also demanded that the Mughals pay a “tax” to Sikhs to finance the construction of these Gurdwaras. Further, he required that 4000 Sikh soldiers would be in Delhi to oversee the construction and the Mughal treasury would pay

for this contingent of soldiers.

It is worth noting that S. Baghel Singh did not ask for anything for himself. He did not ask to rule over Delhi, he only asked that Gurdwaras be built in memory of Sikh Gurus and Sikh history. Shah Alam agreed to Sardar Baghel Singh's demands and the Khalsa Army then vacated the Red Fort. Sardar Baghel Singh appointed Lakhpat Rai as the Ambassador at the Mughal Darbar.

Sardar Baghel Singh met with select Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims whose families had settled in Delhi during the time of Guru HarKrishan. They helped identify the locations where Guru Nanak, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sundri had stayed in Delhi. They also helped identify the exact location of Guru Teg Bahadur's execution.

Sardar Baghel Singh identified 7 locations where the following Gurdwaras were built: Gurdwara Nanak Piao, Gurudwara Majnu Tilla, Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, Gurudwara Moti Bagh, Gurudwara Mata Sundri Ji, Gurdwara Sis Ganj and Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. These Gurdwaras still exist and are active today. Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, Sis Ganj and Rakab Ganj are particularly large and vibrant.

Sardar Baghel Singh stayed on in Delhi for another six months to oversee the establishment of these Gurdwaras. Shah Alam ruled only inside the red Fort while most of Delhi was controlled by the Sikh Army. Sardar Baghel Singh met Shah Alam for the last time in November 1783. The Emperor gave him several precious gifts, as befitting a ruler of equal status.

However, soon after S. Baghel Singh returned to Punjab, Shah Alam started plotting against the Sikhs. Sardar Baghel Singh, Sardar Gurdit Singh and Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had to return to Delhi in 1785. They overcame the combined forces of the Mughal and the Marathas who had joined forces together.

After this Sardar Baghel Singh because of advancing age stayed mostly in Punjab. He passed away in 1802 but his legacy will endure for all time.

7. Hari Singh Nalwa

Hari Singh Nalwa and Akali Phoola Singh were two brave soldiers in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army. Hari Singh Nalwa was born in 1791. His father had taken part in many battles of the Sukerchakia Misl. He was seven years old when his father died. His mother, Dharam Kaur, made sure he got a good education as well as training in horseback riding and weapons.

In 1805, Maharaja Ranjit Singh saw him at a recruitment test for admission to the Sikh army and was so impressed with his ability with weapons that he recruited him to be one of his personal guards.

One day Hari Singh was on a hunting expedition with the Maharaja. Suddenly a tiger came out of the bushes. Hari Singh came face to face with the tiger and drew his sword. As the tiger pounced, he grabbed the tiger by the jaw and cut off his head with his sword. Because he killed a tiger with his bare hands, he was given the title of Nalwa. He was appointed commander of the Sher Dil (lionheart) regiment. Hari Singh was an extremely brave in battle and a very good strategist.

Once, when the Maharajah had attacked Kasoor, the army was unable to get past the fort. Hari Singh placed gunpowder under the walls and was able to blow it up in three places. The Maharaja's Army entered through the gaps and captured the fort. The Maharaja was so impressed that he promoted Hari Singh to General and put him in charge of 800 horsemen.

Hari Singh volunteered to place the gunpowder again at the walls of the fort in another campaign in Multan. He was seriously injured in the attack and was rewarded very handsomely by the Maharaja.

In 1819, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was able to annex Kashmir and bring it under his rule. There had not been a strong ruler in the state and there was discontent and disorder. Hari Singh proved to be a visionary leader and administrator as well. He instituted seven reforms that improved the life of Kashmiris as well as brought peace to the area.

1. He arrested people who were defying the rule of the new Maharaja.
2. He reduced the amount of share that landowners had to pay the state. They started paying on their own, without having to be forced.
3. He abolished forced labor that farmers had to do for government officials. They were able to work on their own land instead.
4. He abolished taxes on marriages, births and engagements.
5. He gave government assistance to increase production of saffron and wool.

6. He standardized weights and measures, making trade and commerce smoother.

7. He abolished the law that said only Muslims could wear shoes or turbans.

After the Sikh misl groups were well organized and running well in Kashmir, Hari Singh handed over the Governorship of Kashmir to Diwan Mori Ram and rejoined Maharaja Ranjit Singh in his military conquest.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh pushed to extend his rule all the way to Kabul. He started a campaign to capture Peshawar and was successful annexing it in 1834. He appointed Hari Singh governor of Peshawar. Hari Singh made several important reforms in the governance of Peshawar. He abolished Jazia tax, which was a tax on non-Muslims. He also had many irrigation canals and wells dug, at government expense. This increased the agricultural output of the whole area.

He also strengthened many of the forts at the borders of Peshawar province. One of these forts was at Jamraud and he put Mahan Singh in charge of the garrison there. He built a second fort called Shabdkadar. Jamraud and Shabdkadar were on either side of the Khyber Pass.

The Khyber Pass was the way through the mountains into Afghanistan. The Governor of Kabul, Dost Mohammad thought that the building of these forts indicated that the Sikh forces might attack Afghanistan.

Hari Singh fell ill when he returned to Peshawar. Dost Mohammad took this opportunity to attack the Jamraud fort. Their artillery attacks destroyed the fort. The Sikhs dug trenches and kept the Pathans at bay for four days. They sent a message to Peshawar through a Sikh woman dressed as an Afghan.

When Hari Singh received this urgent message for help from Mahan Singh he rushed to Jamraud. He and his forces reached Jamraud. The Afghans were frightened by the return of Nalwa and retreated from Jamraud to the Khyber Valley. When Nalwa realized the Afghans were afraid to fight, he advanced his Punjabi Army, and drove the Afghans back.

Marching from Srinagar, Hari Singh joined Maharaja Ranjit Singh on 28th November 1821 AD at Khushab. On 21st December 1821 AD, they captured the territory of Munghar with an annual income of ten lakh Rupees and annexed it to the Khalsa rule, Appointing Amar Singh the governor of Munghar, both returned to Lahore. There, the Maharaja got the news of death of Amar Singh while quelling the rebellion of Hazara. The Maharaja sent Hari Singh as governor of Hazara. Reaching Hazara, he blew those who had murdered Amar Singh with deceit with

cannon. This made people afraid and there was peace in the area. To consolidate peace, he got roads constructed in the area, constructed forts at many places and found a city named Haripur.

During a meeting with the Governor General, Lord William Bentinck in October 1831 AD at Ropar, Maharaja Ranjit Singh said, "Prince Kharak Singh will succeed me after my death." Many courtiers endorsed Maharaja Ranjit Singh, but Hari Singh said, "Who will succeed the Maharaja? This decision should be left to the five beloved ones' because this kingdom belongs to the Khalsa. The Khalsa have sacrificed their lives to maintain it and are still doing it without any pay." All the courtiers heard the views of Hari Singh but many had selfish motives and did not pay much attention to Hari Singh's proposal.

The Maharaja had captured the province of Peshawar and entrusted it to Sultan Khan. Deciding to extend the limits of Khalsa rule to Kabul. the Maharaja captured Peshawar on 6th May 1834 and annexed it with the Khalsa rule with Hari Singh its appointed governor. First, Hari Singh abolished Jazia, a tax imposed on Hindus by Aurangzeb in 1658. His second step was to get canals constructed from river Kabul for irrigation. Third, he got wells dug at government expense at places where canal water could not reach. This resulted in great increase in agricultural production. The revenue from crops rose to twelve lakh Rupees and from octroi to four lakhs. The Maharaja was very pleased and allowed Hari Singh to mint coins bearing his name.

After setting right the administration of Peshawar, Hari Singh paid attention to the borders of the area. He felt that a fort was a necessity on the Khyber Pass. So, he converted the earthen fortress of Jamraud into a strong fort in October 1836 and appointed Mahan Singh as garrison commander. As per requirement, he got many other forts such as Bar and Sukargarh constructed. After completing the work of the forts, Hari Singh came to Peshawar in 1837, where he fell ill.

Thirty thousand Pathans surrounded the Jamraud fort on 27th April 1837. After second day's battle, Mahan Singh sent a message to Hari Singh, "If no help is received today, it will be our last message." Getting the message, Hari Singh reached Jamraud still suffering from illness. He reached in time and made the Pathans flee saving the fall of the fort. But he himself fell to the bullets of a Pathan hiding behind a hillock on 30th April 1837.

8. Akali Phoola Singh

Akali Phoola Singh was born in 1761 in the area that is currently Haryana. His father Bhai Ishar Singh was a member of the Shahidan Misl. Sardar Isher Singh was seriously wounded in the Greater Ghalughara. Before he died he asked the chief of the Shahidan Misl, Narain Singh to look after his son. Phoola Singh learned Gurbani from his mother, got military training in horsemanship and weapons from Sardar Narain Singh. Later, after the death of Sardar Narain Singh he was made chief of the Shahidan Misl.

In 1800 he moved with his squad to Amritsar. He served the Harmandir Sahib and the Akal Takht. There were some practices that had come into the Gurdwaras that were not in line with the Guru's teachings and he worked on reforming these.

In 1804, a conflict arose between the Bhangi Misl, which controlled Amritsar and the surrounding areas, and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Mai Sukhan was head of the Bhangi Misl. She refused to surrender to the Maharaja. The Bhangis had a famous cannon called the Zamzama gun. It had been built in Lahore, under the rule of Ahmad Shah Durrani. It was huge, and effective and one of a kind.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh wanted Mai Sukhan to give up the gun and she refused. The Maharaja marched on Amritsar, and there was fighting between the forces. Akali Phoola Singh did not want to see Amritsar destroyed, and he was upset that Sikh forces were fighting amongst themselves. so, he and Jodh Singh Ramgarhia mediated a peace between the Maharaja and Mai Sukhan. Maharaja Ranjit Singh annexed Amritsar and Mai Sukhan received an estate of five villages.

The Maharaja asked Akali Phoola Singh and his squad of 3000 Nihangs to join the Royal Army. Akali Phoola Singh's squad was extremely brave and accomplished in battle. They did an outstanding job in a battle at Kasoor.

One day, Akali Phoola Singh went to meet with the Maharaja. He was not allowed to see him for a few days. He complained to the Maharaja but was not satisfied with his response. He felt insulted and left Amritsar and moved his squad to Anandpur.

In 1814, Prince Partap Singh, from Jind came to meet Akali Phoola Singh in Anandpur Sahib. He was having some disagreements with the British Government and they asked Akali Phoola Singh to send the Prince back. He refused. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, helping the British, sent Diwan Moti Ram with an army. When his

forces were asked to surround Akali Phoola Singh, they threw their weapons down, saying there was no way they were going to attack a great man like the Akali. When the Maharaja heard about the people's devotion to Akali Phoola Singh, he decided to make peace with him. He called back his army, and sent a man named Baba Sahib Singh Bedi to convince Akali Phoola Singh to come back to Amritsar.

In April 1816, Mir Hafiz Khan ousted Nawab Mohammad Khan of Bhakhar and Liha and took over his territory. The Maharaja sent Akali Phoola, Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia to punish him. He accepted the sovereignty of the Khalsa after four days of fighting. The Maharaja also arrived by that time. At that place, the people of Jhang complained to the Maharaja about the cruelty of their ruler, Ahmed Khan. The Maharaja sent Akali Phoola Singh to Jhang to punish him. Phoola Singh annexed Jhang area to the Khalsa rule after a minor skirmish.

In January 1818 the Maharaja sent an army to annex Multan to the Khalsa rule. Nawab Muzaffar Khan had made all preparations for the battle before the arrival of the Khalsa army. The Khalsa army captured the city after a week-long shelling but the Nawab took shelter inside the fort. Continuous shelling for three months did not make a dent in the fort. With the arrival of summer, the stench of decaying corpses resulted in outbreak of cholera due to which the soldiers started dying. When the Maharaja got the news, he went to Amritsar and narrated to Akali Phoola Singh the plight of the Khalsa army. Akali Phoola Singh reached Multan with his squad and the ZamZama gun for the help of the Khalsa army. Three or four shells caused two breaches in the wall of the fort. The Nawab got the breaches filled with sand bags. The bags fell with the cannon fire. Akali Phoola Singh entered the fort through those gaps with his squad and started putting the enemy to the sword. The Nawab and Akali Phoola Singh confronted each other. They gave many blows to each other but in the end Nawab Muzaffar Khan fell dead on the ground. With the death of the Nawab, the Khalsa captured the fort.

In the beginning of 1819 the Maharaja attacked Kashmir taking Akali Phoola Singh and other chiefs with him. After annexing Kashmir to the Khalsa rule and appointing Diwan Mali Ram its governor, all others returned to Lahore.

On 12th February. 1823 AD, Mohammad Azim Khan, marching from Kabul captured Peshawar. The Maharaja sent Hari Singh and Kanwar Sher Singh with an army in advance and reached the battlefield himself along with Akali Phoola Singh afterwards. It was resolved in the prayer before Guru Granth Sahib to attack the enemy on 14th March 1823. News was received afterwards, "Guns of the enemy are expected to arrive." At this news, the Maharaja said, "We should also

wait for our guns before we attack." Akali Phoola Singh said, "We have resolved to attack. We should not wait come what may," Saying this, he attacked the enemy with his squad. Following his lead, the rest of the Khalsa army also pounced on the crusaders. The Khalsa forced the crusaders to retreat. In that confusion, an Afghan hiding behind a hillock fired four shots. Of this three hit the driver of the elephant ridden by Akali Phoola Singh and the fourth pierced the chest of the Akali Phoola Singh due to which he slumped in the seat. His death infuriated his Nihangs and they fought with such ferocity that they drove the enemy back. They won the battle but lost the great warrior, Akali Phoola Singh.

The Sikhs (1716-1801) Vs Mughal/Afghan Rulers

The period after Banda Bahadur's martyrdom (1716) was a chaotic one for the Sikhs, as well as for that part of India in general. The two centers of power were Delhi and Lahore, and there was often severe fighting for the throne at both of those places. The governors at Lahore (Zakariya Khan, et al) were often answerable to Delhi, but not always.

There were also external invaders (Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali) from Persia.

Because the governmental powers were generally very hostile to the Sikhs, this became a transitional period for them. After the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur, they had to retreat and slowly rebuild their own societal and military structure. They formed Dals, misls and built their fighting forces and de facto governments.

They usually worked together, but sometimes were at odds with each other because everyone was competing for resources, land, money and power. They were generally rebellious and fighting with the powers at Delhi and Lahore, but occasionally worked for and with them as well.

These narrative highlights some of the most important Sikh and Khalsa figures of that time and some of the contributions they made so the Panth could survive and flourish.

This chart is a thumbnail of some of the major Sikh warriors we cover as well as some of the people in power including the Mughals and Afghans that often clashed with and persecuted the Sikhs.

Sikh Leader	Ruler in Lahore	Ruler in Delhi
Banda Singh Bahadur 1670-1716	Wazir Khan 1635-1710 Governor of Sirhind, ordered execution of younger Sahibzade.	Bahadur Shah 1707-1712 Jahandar Shah 1712-1713
Diwan Darbara Singh Leadership 1716-1733	Zakariya Khan Viceroy of Punjab 1726-1745	Farukhsaiyeer 1713-1719 Muhammad Shah 1719-1748
Nawab Kapur Singh Leadership 1733-1748	Zakariya Khan. Nadir Shah invaded from Iran in 1739. He was Shah of Iran	
Jassa Singh Aluwahlia Leadership 1748-1783	Zakariya Khan Ahmad Shah Abdali (Durrani) invaded India eight times between 1748 and 1767. He succeeded Nadir Shah to the throne of Afghanistan	Bahadur Shah 1748-1754 Alamgir 1754-1759 Shah Jahan III 1759-1760
Jassa Singh Ramgarhia 1723-1803 His life and contributions overlapped partially with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia	Ahmad Shah Abdali	Shah Alam II 1760-1806
Akali Phoola Singh 1761-1823 Sikh Misl leader and -general in Maharajah Ranjit Singh's army.	Ahmad Shah Abdali	Akbar II 1806-1837
Sardar Baghel Singh 1730-1802 Contemporary with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Conquered Delhi for a time	Ahmad Shah Abdali	
Hari Singh Nalwa -commander in chief in Maharajah Ranjit Singh's army		Maharajah Ranjit Singh rules Punjab 1801-1839

