

CHAPTER VII

SIKHS DURING THE MUGHAL RULE (1708-1799)

Sikh Struggle for Freedom and Sovereignty

The basic principles of Sikhism were : to secure justice (Religious, political, social and economic) for the entire mankind and not for one's self only; to ensure and safeguard the Human Fundamental Rights of the entire humanity; to protect the saints and uproot the wicked; to guarantee equality and dignity of every individual and to maintain harmony and co-existence of all the religions. The upholding of these principles, continually kept the Sikhs in armed conflict with the Mughal Regime which was determined to violate all human rights and values and commit the adverse type of excesses and brutalities at the point of sword on innocent masses till the Sikhs totally uprooted the tyrannical Mughal rule and established their own independent sovereign Sikh State. The Mughals and Afghan invaders had to come in armed conflict with the Sikhs as they passed through their homeland, Punjab, while on their aggressive mission to invade India and its capital Delhi. The Mughal and Afghan invaders were proud of their vast armed resources, while the Sikhs had little apart from the spirit infused in them by the *Amrit* of the double-edged sword of Guru Gobind Singh and blessings of the Almighty for the noble cause based upon moral and social responsibility towards mankind. They were devoted to the cause and made supreme sacrifices which ultimately made them victorious while passing through extreme highs and lows in the prolonged struggle, which has few parallels in world history.

Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor, in whose regime such cruel excesses and brutalities had been committed, on his death, had visualized the horrors of Divine punishment after reading the letter of victory, *Zafarnama* sent by Guru Gobind Singh, in which a horrible depiction had been made of his unpardonable misdeeds. Aurangzeb sought pardon from Guru Gobind Singh and expressed his desire to meet the great Guru to apologise personally to him, but this could not be fulfilled as his end came sooner. His son and successor, Bahadur Shah, personally requested Guru Gobind Singh to grant pardon for the cruel excesses committed on Sikhs, at the hands of his father and predecessors and sought his blessings in the succession conflict. After becoming emperor, he had shown the highest respect to Guru Gobind Singh and expressed his

desire to take action against the guilty officials responsible for the heinous crimes against Sikhs, particularly against the Mughal Governor of Sirhind and other officials for committing the unpardonable crimes of bricking alive two minor sons of Guru Gobind Singh at Sirhind. He could not initiate any action in this regard due to the rebellion against Mughal rule in South India.

The Sikhs could not wait any longer and decided to deal with this matter themselves : to punish the guilty Mughal officials and uproot the tyrannical Mughal Rule. Sikhs sought the permission of Guru Gobind Singh for this mission. Banda Singh Bahadur, a newly baptized Singh from Bairagi (taking the name Gurbakhsh Singh after taking *Amrit* of double-edged sword from Guru Gobind Singh) requested the Guru to grant him the favour of fulfilling this mission and to send him to Punjab to seek justice and to establish Sikh Rule by uprooting the Mughals. Banda Singh Bahadur's personal distress at the bricking alive of two minor sons of the Guru as well as the guilty Governor of Sirhind and other Mughal officials not having been punished led him to seek this permission, which was granted by Guru Gobind Singh who sent with him five other devoted Sikhs; Bhai Binod Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh, Bhai Baj Singh, Bhai Dayal Singh and Bhai Ran Singh, with the orders that Banda Singh Bahadur would be the Jathedar and they would work under his leadership to punish the evildoers and protect the innocent. Five arrows, the Sikh flag and *Nagara* were also given to Banda Singh Bahadur by the Guru. He was also advised by the Guru to act upon the advice of the five Singhs as a humble Sikh and not to proclaim himself as Guru or sole Commander and to always have full faith in God, the Almighty while protecting the poor and punishing the guilty. *Hukamnamas* were given to Banda Singh Bahadur for the Sikhs to work under him with full devotion. Banda Singh Bahadur along with the other five Sikhs deputed by the Guru left with their Divine Master's blessings from Nanded (situated in Maharashtra state where Guru Gobind Singh was staying at that time with his followers and which is now called Sachkhand Hazur Sahib, an Historical Sikh shrine and one of the five Sikh Takhats-Prime Sikh historical places) in September 1708 for Punjab.

Guru Gobind Singh left for his heavenly abode in October, 1708 at Nanded. He ordained the Sikhs to accept the *Guru Granth Sahib* as the perpetual eternal Guru which is the spirit and embodiment of the ten Sikh Gurus and that guidance should henceforth be taken by the Sikhs from the Divine Hymns contained therein. These hymns being the word of God, containing the Truth, contentment and divine knowledge besides the 'Name of God'—the sustainer of mankind—the Khalsa Panth was to be the Sikh Commonwealth. The Sikhs were directed to worship one and only one God (formless, un-born and self-illuminated) the concept of God having been given by the founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak at the very beginning of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. They were also directed to contemplate from *Gurbanis* the word of God and to keep the appearance of the Khalsa (attained with *Amrit* of the double-edged sword and possessing all the five emblems prescribed by him to be obligatory). The

Sikhs were deprived of the direct guidance of the great Guru. The struggle for freedom and sovereignty and for implementation of Sikh Principles was to be carried on by the Sikhs, keeping intact the high standard of their morality and ethics.

Sikh Rule (1710-1715)

Sikh warriors and army organized by Banda Singh Bahadur (1708-09)

After getting the blessings of the Guru Gobind Singh to end tyranny and punish cruelty, Banda Singh Bahadur along with his associates reached village Sehri Khandra near Delhi on the outskirts of Punjab and camped there for several months in order to organize the Sikh warriors. Messages and *Hukamnamas* of the tenth Guru were sent to the Sikhs of Punjab and the nearby areas asking them to join them with weapons to fight the Mughal tyranny. Whosoever received such a message became ready for this holy war as everyone had faced Mughal terror and brutalities. *Hukamnamas* of the Guru were divine orders for every Sikh. A dedicated army of over four thousand Sikhs was ready within months to end the Mughal onslaught. It marched towards Sirhind under the command of Banda Singh Bahadur.

Sikhs in large numbers joined the Sikh warriors on their way to Sirhind. They occupied the principalities of the Mughals by defeating the Mughal officials and eliminating them and their armed forces, punishing the persons according to their crimes and atrocities committed by them on Sikhs and the general public.

At Samana, the Mughal army commander Jalal-ul-din had taken active part in the martyrdom of the ninth Sikh Guru. Shakil Beg and Beshil Beg, responsible for the killing of the minor sons of the tenth Guru at Sirhind, were also residents of that place. Samana was attacked by the Sikh army led by Banda Singh Bahadur on October 26, 1709. A very fierce battle took place between the Sikhs and the Mughals. About ten thousand Mughals and their supporters were killed, including Jalal-ul-din, Shakil Beg and Bashil Beg. Fateh Singh was appointed the Governor of Samana.

The Sikhs, similarly occupied Kaithal, Ghurum, Thanesar, Mustafabad and other towns by ousting the Mughal officials from these places. The Sikhs attacked Sadhaura to take revenge on its administrator Usman Khan, who was responsible for torturing Sayyed Budhan Shah to death. The Sayyed had helped the Tenth Guru with seven hundred of his followers in the battle of Bhangani, wherein two of his sons and thousands of Mughals were killed. After the fierce battle at Sadhaura, it was occupied by the Sikhs.

Sikhs then attacked Kapuri, the administrator of which was Sayyed Aman Ulla, and by defeating his armed forces occupied it. After occupying Sirhind, Banda Singh Bahadur attacked Saharanpur and Jalalabad in July 1710. In the fierce battle, Karnal and Panipat were also occupied by the Sikh warriors. Sikhs then occupied Jalandhar and Amritsar areas including Hoshiarpur and Phagwara. All these territories were divided in separate units to be administrated by Sikh commanders of repute like Baj Singh, Binod Singh, Ran Singh, Fateh Singh, Koyar Singh and others.

Battle of Sirhind won by Sikhs (May 1710)

The fierce battle between the Sikhs and the Mughal army took place at Sirhind on May 12, 1710. The Mughal army had come to village Chapar Chiri outside Sirhind town at a distance of 15 miles to face the Sikh warriors so as to avoid their entry into the town and prevent them from reaching the precincts of Sirhind. The Mughals were overconfident that the Sikhs were no match for their army on the battlefield. The Mughal army was much more in strength with superior war weapons than the Sikh army had, but it could not compete with the Sikh warriors' determination to seek justice for the supreme sacrifices made by the sons of the tenth Guru who refused to submit to the Mughals at that tender age and their enthusiasm to punish those guilty. All the eminent Generals of the Mughal army took part in that battle against the Sikhs to prevent them from entering Sirhind which was the headquarters of the Governor of Sirhind, and his administration. A very fierce battle took place between the two armies. Ultimately, the Mughal army was defeated by the Sikhs, inflicting severe casualties on the Mughals. The Sikh army reached Sirhind and occupied the entire area and ruled over it. Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind was dragged in the streets of Sirhind mercilessly and killed as a punishment for bricking alive the minor sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Sucha Nand was also given such punishment and killed. It was he who had instigated Wazir Khan to kill the minor sons of Guru Gobind Singh with the argument that the sons of a Cobra prove very dangerous if left alive. All the other officials of the Mughal administrator who had a hand in this heinous crime, were meted out similar punishments. The Sikh flag was flown over the fort of Sirhind and Sikh rule was established there. The main official buildings of Sirhind were razed to ground. Bhai Baj Singh was appointed Governor of Sirhind.

Sikhs occupied Punjab areas upto Lahore

The Sikhs had occupied the territories between Delhi and Lahore ousting the Mughals and awarding punishment to the guilty for committing atrocities on Sikhs and other innocent people. However, Malerkotla was not touched, as the Nawab of Malerkotla had objected to the bricking alive of the minor sons of Guru Gobind Singh. No innocent was humiliated as the Sikhs remained very cautious throughout their struggle and were careful that only the guilty should be punished. At some places fierce battles took place between the Mughal Army and Sikh warriors while capturing the Punjab territories from the Mughals, but at every place Mughal armies were defeated by the Sikh army at place like Ladwa, Amin Garh, Sidhaura. The Sikh army attacked Lohgarh fort and conquered it by defeating and ousting the Mughals. The battle at Samana took place in 1709, while the battles at Sirhind, Ladhova Saharanpur, Karnal, Amingarh and Lohgarh took place in 1710. At Lohgarh more than fifty thousand armed Mughal forces, seized the fort, but Banda Singh Bahadur with his warriors came out of the fort and succeeded in going towards Ibban, fighting the Mughal army and killing

several officers of the army. On the other side, Sikh warriors occupied Nahan and took Bilaspur state under their rule. The chief of that state Bhim Chand had entered into a conspiracy with the Mughals against Guru Gobind Singh when he was at Anandpur Sahib. Some other hilly states chiefs themselves surrendered to the Sikhs. Jammu state was conquered by the Sikhs in 1711. Banda Singh Bahadur then occupied Chamba state. Thus within two years the Sikhs established their rule in all these territories upto Lahore of Punjab province. In 1713, the Sikhs again ousted the Mughals from Lohgarh fort and occupied it. Currency in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh replaced the Mughal currency for a short period in this area under Sikh Rule. The Zimindari system was reversed and ownership rights were vested in the names of tillers of the soil.

The Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah came back from the South after hearing of the taking over of the Punjab territory by the Sikhs. He ordered his forces to march towards Punjab and directed the Governors in India to go to Punjab with their forces even from far off places like Awadh and Allahabad etc. He himself marched to Punjab. Thus the Mughal force of the rest of India stormed Punjab to deal with the Sikh warriors. Such was the fear created by the Sikhs under the command of Banda Singh Bahadur but, however, the Mughal Army did succeed in getting back Sirhind from the Sikhs, who could not match upto the consolidated strength of the Mughal Army of India. The small contingent of Sikh warriors at Sirhind left for Lohgarh where Banda Singh Bahadur had set up a centre for the Sikh army in the fort. The Mughal army under the command of Emperor Bahadur Shah himself, counting of over sixty thousand troops, surrounded the fort from all sides. The seize continued for two months and there were many casualties daily on both sides. Banda Singh Bahadur along with several of his trooped soldiers slipped out of the fort in disguise through a secret passage to the Hills. The fort was occupied by the Mughal army.

Emperor Bahadur Shah died on February 18, 1712 without crushing the Sikh armed forces and without arresting their commander Banda Singh Bahadur. There was a struggle for the throne of Delhi. In December 1712, Jallandhar Khan, son of Bahadur Shah murdered his brother Azim Khan and became the Emperor. On February 13, 1713; Farukhseer son of Azim Khan murdered Jallandhar Khan and became the Emperor. He appointed Abdul Samand Khan as Governor of Lahore. During this period Banda Singh Bahadur came down from the Hills to Punjab and occupied the Punjab territories, reorganizing the Sikh army. He declared himself to be the ruler of Punjab. Farukhseer directed the Mughal army to face the challenge of the Sikhs. In October 1713, Sikhs who had occupied Lohgarh fort had to vacate it under the possession of the Mughal army. They again went to their hideouts in the hills. After a few months Sikh warriors again came to Sirhind and attacked the Mughal forces but they had to retreat. In the beginning of 1715, Banda Singh Bahadur also came down from the Hills and attacked Kalanaur and Batala to avenge the atrocities being committed on Sikhs by the Mughals. Banda Singh Bahadur occupied the fort

of Gurdas Nangal. The Mughal army which had been reinforced in tens of thousands seized the fort. The Mughal army dared not enter the fort of Garhi at Gurdas Nangal to fight the Sikhs because Banda Singh Bahadur and his warriors had been occupying it since about eight months. From April to December 1715, the siege of the fort continued as vast resources were available at the hands of the Mughals while the resources at the command of the Sikhs were limited. The Mughal army became successful in entering the fort on December 7, 1715 and arrested Banda Singh Bahadur and 700 other Sikh warriors. They were taken to Delhi in custody and reached there on February 2, 1716.

All the Sikh prisoners were offered the release and posts of their choice in defence or civil administration if they would convert to Islam, otherwise they would be tortured and killed. None of them accepted the offer and rather expressed their anxiety to be killed sooner than the others, thus exhibiting their high spirits. On June 9, 1716 came the turn of their commander, Banda Singh Bahadur, last of all. He also totally rejected the offers and embraced martyrdom laughingly. The Mughals had the moral defeat as none of the Sikhs could be persuaded to convert his religion. All these Sikh warriors exhibited exemplary high spirits and unflinching confidence in their religion and were free from the fear of tortures and death.

This Sikh rule for a short period under the command of Banda Singh Bahadur laid the foundation for permanent Sikh rule and sovereignty of the Sikhs in their homeland by uprooting the tyrannical Mughal rule. It practically exhibited to the Sikhs that they could wipe out the Mughals in time to come and establish their own independent sovereign Sikh empire. It established bravery and courage of a very high standard exhibited by the Sikhs in defeating the Mughal army who were ruling over entire India in so short a period, particularly when they had no place and no resource to organize their army. It also proved that no power howsoever mighty it may be, could escape punishment at the hands of the Sikhs for committing excesses upon them. It was an example for the Sikhs that Sikh rule could be established and provided them with the determination to continue their struggle till the tyranny of Mughal rule was uprooted.

No Sikh warrior submitted to the Mughals

Such were the high spirits and the dedication of the Sikh warriors that their enemies had to praise it a fact which was possibly unparalleled in world history. Mirza Muhammad Hairsi in *Ibaratnama* had given the account of an eye witness, when Banda Singh Bahadur and other Sikh warriors were being taken to Delhi after their arrest :

"Those unfortunate Sikhs who had been reduced to this last extremity were quite happy and contented with their fate; not the slightest sign of dejection or humility was to be seen on their faces. In fact most of them as they passed along with their camels, seemed happy and cheerful joyfully singing the sacred hymns of their scripture and if any one from among those in the lanes

and bazaars called out of them that their own excesses had reduced them to that condition they quickly retorted saying that it had been so willed by the Almighty and that their capture and misfortune was in accordance with His will. And if any one said, 'Now you will be killed, they shouted, 'kill us when were we afraid of death?'

The executions of the arrested Sikh warriors began on March 15, 1716 and continued for a week. They were watched by thousands of citizens including two English men, who were then in attendance at the Mughal Court. In a dispatch dated March 10, 1716 those English men John Surman and Edward Stephenson reported :

"The great Rebel goor-oo (Banda Singh Bahadur) who had been for years so troublesome in the Subaship of Lahore is at length taken with all his family and attendants by Abdus Samad owns the suba of that province. Some days ago they entered the city laden with fetters, his whole attendants, which were left alive being about seven hundred eighty all severally mounted on camels which were sent out of the city for that purpose, besides about two thousand heads stuck upon poles, being those who died by the sword in battle. He was carried into the presence of the King and from there to a close prison. He at present had his life prolonged with most of his mustadis in hope to get an account of his treasure in the several parts of his kingdom and of those that assisted him. When afterwards he will be executed, for the rest there are a hundred each day beheaded. It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo that fate and to the last it has not been found that one apostatized from the new formed religion."

(Report by John Surman and Edwards Stephens in J.T. Wheeler, *Early Records of British India*, p. 180)

Even the author of *Siyar-ul-Mutaakherin* admitted reluctantly that

"Those people not only behaved firmly during the execution, but they would dispute and wrangle with each other for priority in execution" (p. 79).

A particulary harrowing tale has been recorded in *Muntakhib-ul-Subali* by Khafi Khan, reproduced in *Later Mughals* II, 761 that :

"One of the prisoners was a newly married young boy, the only son of a widow. The mother succeeded in obtaining a pardon from the Emperor. She brought the order of release just in time to save her son." The boy refused to be saved. "My mother is a liar. I devote my heart and soul to my Guru. Let me join my companions." The boy went back to the executioner and "was enrolled among the list of the martyrs produced by the Sikh religion."

The last words of Banda Singh Bahadur have been recorded in *Siyar-ul-Mutaakherin* pp. 79-80.

"Before execution, Banda Singh Bahadur was offered pardon if he renounced his faith and accepted Islam. On his refusal to do so, his son Ajai Singh was hacked to death before his eyes. A Mughal noble man said to Banda, "It is surprising that one, who shows so much acuteness in his features and so much of nobility in his conduct should have been guilty of such horrors". Banda replied : "I will tell you. When ever men became so corrupt and wicked as to relinquish the path of equity and abandon themselves to all kinds of excesses then providence never fails to raise up a scourge

like me to chastise a race so depraved but when the measure of punishment is full, then He raises men like you to bring him to punishment."

(Reference in *A History of Sikhs*, by Khushwant Singh Vol I, pp. 115-117)

Sikh rule was established in Punjab, punishing thousands of guilty Mughals and their supporters for committing atrocities on Sikhs and the innocent public who defeated the mighty armed forces of the Mughal just when the Mughals, thought finished them even if it were for a short period. There are several ups and downs in Sikh History which are possible unparallel in World history.

The Persian inscription on the Sikh coin, released by Banda Singh Bahadur, goes like this :

"Sikh Zadhara do Alam, Tegh-i-Nanak Sahib, Fateh Gobind Singh Sah-i-Sahan Faze-i-Saca Sahib Ast"

English translation :

Coins struck for the two with, which the sword of Nanak and the victory granted by the grace of Gobind Singh, King of Kings and The True Emperor.

The inscription of the seal of Banda Singh Bahadur in Persian was :

"Degh o Tegh o Fateh o nusrat-i-Bedrang-yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

English translation

Hospitality sword victory and prompt assistance came from Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh.

(*History of Sikhs*, Khushwant Singh, p. 107)

It became a model for future Sikh coins and seals. This courageous confrontation by the Sikhs and establishment of Sikh rule laid the foundation for Sikh Empire which was setup in that very century, wiping out the Mughals and the Afghans.

The Mughal rulers were shaken by the defiance shown by Sikhs towards them especially since other Indians had submitted to them and their tyranny and terror. They never expected such an organized onslaught against their rule so as to take over the vast Punjab territories in so short a period by forcibly wiping out their officialdom. During this onslaught by the Sikhs, hundreds of thousands of their men got killed in the attacks by Sikh warriors. This was particularly perplexing, since the presence of the Sikh soldiery was not apparent. As a result of the unseen nature of the Sikh soldiery, the Mughals had been deluded into thinking that perhaps they had eliminated the Sikhs after getting them to retreat from Anandpur Sahib, their more serious concern was the devotion of the Sikh warriors to their tenth Guru as they could not get them to surrender and convert to Islam, despite threats of tortures to death or the temptation of employment of their choice in defence or in civil administration. The Sikhs instead opted for martyrdom cheerfully and rejected all such offers and threats.

No doubt, Sikh rule in Punjab was for a short period but it sent out a clear message to the Mughal rulers, that Sikhs will not submit to their rule and would struggle for the freedom of their religion and their sovereignty at any cost. The Sikhs became more determined to wipe out the Mughals by meeting force with force and establish their own empire in their homeland. In spite of their limited resources in men and money as compared that of to the Mughals who ruled over the entire country, Sikhs carried on their struggle with exemplary courage and bravery for over half a century to wipe out the Mughals and the Afghan invaders. The Sikhs had to adopt guerilla war strategies to begin with apart from conventional war force against the Mughals and Afghan invaders, as well as face tremendous adversities, but despite all of which they ultimately overcame to become rulers.

Next Phase of Sikh Struggle-Guerilla Warfare (1716-1768)

The Mughals were much worried about the capability of the Sikhs to reorganise themselves in so short a period to defeat them in conflicts one after the other, Sikhs were always victorious and established their own rule. Particularly so since only six Sikhs, Banda Singh Bahadur and his five companions, managed to organise so powerful a Sikh army as to defeat their mighty army – an army to which almost all local Indian armies submitted. Moreover they were fearful of the high spirit, dedication and sense of supreme sacrifice which the Sikhs had demonstrated as most of the Sikhs warriors were not converted to Islam and rather laughingly faced the tortures and killings to become martyrs. Hence, the Mughals realized the threat the Sikhs posed to them and their rule in the near future. Therefore the Mughal administration decided to finish the Sikhs once and for all and for this purpose adopted a state policy of persecution and genocide of Sikhs. It was considered to be the right time for this purpose since large numbers of Sikh warriors had been executed at public places in Delhi to demoralize and terrorise the Sikhs and make them leaderless. Prices were put on Sikh heads and it was publicly declared that any body providing shelter and any sort of help to Sikhs would also suffer similar fate. Sikhs had to go underground in forests and made the saddles of their horses their homes, and thus entering into a new phase of their struggle using guerilla warfare, they vowed never to yield to the tyranny. The rejection by the Sikhs of the many tempting offers if they converted to Islam displayed their devotion to their religion and was thus personally considered by the Mughals as their moral defeat.

Several ups and downs came during their struggle as sometimes the Mughal forces would inflict heavy losses on the Sikhs and at times it was the other way around. The Sikhs also took action against state informers whenever they were able to do so and did not leave any one guilty of crime against them unfinished. The masses living in the villages were sympathetic to their cause and had high esteem for Sikhs warriors.

Abdus Samad Khan who remained the Governor of Lahore till 1726 A.D. had

become more arrogant and tyrannical after the arrest of Banda Singh Bahadur and other Sikh warriors. He had taken them to Lahore to parade in the streets of the Capital of Punjab in order to exhibit his bravery and to demoralize the Sikhs and other non-muslim population. From there he took them to Delhi in a jubilant procession. He thought that the Sikh movement was totally suppressed with no possibility of its revival. Therefore he issued orders for the indiscriminate killing of Sikhs in his province so that not a single Sikh should survive. He was not aware that demoralisation was not a part of Sikh psyche and that Sikhs had been taught to always remain in high spirits amidst all adversity. They had in front of them the actual examples of their ancestors and of the Divine Sikh Gurus and of how they challenged the Mughals and defeated their mighty armed forces with excellent heroism.

The Sikhs had become leaderless and had lost many of their warriors, besides which there was an eruption of disputes amongst them. One group, the followers of Banda Singh Bahadur, started calling themselves 'Banda's', while some others called themselves 'Tat Khalsa'. The hidden hand of the Mughals was believed to be behind the dispute, with the 'Banda's' being used by them to create disunity amongst the Sikhs so that they ended up fighting amongst themselves. Fortunately, the dispute was amicably settled amongst the Sikhs with the intervention of Bhai Mani Singh.

Bhai Mani Singh who was in charge of the Harimandar Sahib administration had been in close contact with the tenth Guru and was thus, respected by all. He ably handled the dispute and Tat Khalsa was made the real representative of the Sikhs. Vanquishing the rebel group of 'Banda's', the Sikhs became united to challenge the Mughal policy of Sikh persecution and genocide. Many had to adopt guerilla warfare against the Mughals and made their homes on the saddle of their horses in forests and adjoining hilly areas. They would punish the guilty for atrocities against Sikhs by surprise attacks and run away to their hide outs before coming to the notice of the Mughal administration, and thus making it impossible to apprehend them. There was enthusiasm among the Sikhs to join the Sikh warriors to fight for their sovereignty after taking Sikh initiation and observing Sikh code of conduct.

In 1726, on Baisakhi day when Sikhs visited Harimandar Sahib at Amritsar, the Governor Abdus Samad Khan sent his armed forces under the command of Mughal General Aslam Khan to attack the Sikhs there. The Mughals also included their supporters from Dera and Har Sahai of Patti, with their armed forces in that battle against Sikhs. Har Sahai was killed at the spot while Aslam Khan and Dera ran away with their forces having been defeated by the Sikhs and suffering heavy casualties despite it being a surprise attack. The Sikhs had unflinching faith in their Guru, who had declared that he would give the Sikhs their own empire and sovereignty (*Patshahi*) and that they must always remain in high spirits amidst all adversity and remember their God's Name while maintaining a high ethical and moral code. The ordinary people had high regards for Sikh warriors as they thought that those Sikhs were sacrificing for their sake as well as facing the onslaught of the Mughals. Sikhs were

careful not to punish any innocents, even if they were in contact with the Mughals. Such sympathizers of Mughals had also an inner sympathy for the Sikhs due to a sense of justice.

Zakaria Khan son of Abdus Samad Khan became the Governor of Lahore in 1726 and remained so from 1726-1745 as the representative of Mughal rule and lead the cruel policy of the Mughals against Sikhs. He took a prominent part in their persecution. Sikh warriors were provoked when innocent Sikhs like Bhai Tara Singh of Vahini village, a saintly person, were meaninglessly tortured and martyred. Sikh warriors went on the offensive and started weakening the financial resources of the Mughals by looting the Government treasury. In 1726, a sum of four hundred thousand Rupees was being taken from Multan to Delhi under tight security and, after attacking and killing the Mughal security forces, the Sikhs made off with the loot. They again looted another Mughal treasury when it was being taken to Lahore from Kasur. They also snatched the horses of the Mughals which were being taken to Delhi by Murtaza Khan. Quite often, even Sikh women warriors also attacked and killed several Mughal soldiers, who were found roaming about in search of Sikhs. Zakaria Khan was shaken by these offensive action of the Sikhs, because he thought that they had been eliminated.

Zakaria Khan now wanted to compromise with the Sikhs because he realized that their wrath against his harsh policy of persecution and genocide had not been successful. On the contrary it had made the Sikhs more determined to wipe out the Mughals by taking offensive action against them despite their state of repression for more than a decade. It was difficult for him to locate an intermediary approach in order to attack the Sikhs as the state was not successful in infiltrating the Sikh ranks. Ultimately he found Subheg Singh, who had contacts with both sides. He sent through Subheg Singh an offer of peace with the Sikhs and promised to treat them with dignity and honour. He apologized for past offences and excesses against Sikhs and gave his word that he would not interfere in their religious affairs in future. As a mark of respect for the Sikhs, a *Jagir* of one hundred thousands rupees, status of Nawab and five thousand rupees were offered to the Sikhs to honour them in March 1733. The Sikhs assembled at Akal Takhat to consider this matter. None of the Sikh leaders were interested in the status of Nawab and even refused to accept the other offers. However, after detailed deliberations, the peace offer was thought fit to be accepted as the Sikhs did not prefer violence and only resorted to the sword if all peaceful means had failed. It was decided that the status of Nawab be conferred on Kapur Singh, a dedicated Sikh and respected by all. He accepted it on the condition that he would continue to look after the horses and serve in the *Langar* (community kitchen) and that it be sanctified by five Sikhs (Panj Pyaras): Such was the spirit of selfless service and dedication demonstrated by Sikh leaders. A sum of five thousand rupees sent in cash and a *Jagir* of one hundred thousand rupees (one lakh) was given to the *Langar*. The *Jagir* was of the villages of Jhabal area.

Buddha Dal and Tarna Dal formed by Sikhs

The Sikhs now had no confrontation with the Mughals for some time. They organized themselves in two groups in 1734 – one contained elder Sikhs, called Buddha Dal and the other younger ones, called Tarna Dal. Nawab Kapur Singh and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia became the leaders of Buddha Dal. Tarna Dal was divided in five sections.

- i) Jatha Shahindan : headed by Jathedar Jit Singh Shahid.
- ii) Jatha Amritsarian : headed by Jathedar Karam Singh and Dharam Singh.
- iii) Jatha Kahan Singh : headed by Jathedar Kahan Singh, Miri Singh and Bhag Singh.
- iv) Jatha Dallewalia : headed by Jathedar Dasaundha Singh.
- v) Jatha Rangreta : headed by Jathedar Bir Singh and Jeev Singh

One Sikh flag and one *Nagara* were given to each of these Jathas. They were directed to punish the guilty and the informers for causing atrocities on Sikhs. The Jathedar of Tarna Dal left Amritsar to do the work given to them while Buddha Dal remained at Amritsar.

Zakaria Khan again in conflict with Sikhs

In 1735, Zakaria Khan confiscated the *Jagir* given to the Sikhs and again came in to conflict with them perhaps thinking that they had now become disorganized. He sent the Mughal patrolling Army headed by Mukhlas Khan and Lakhpat Rai to go from one village to the other to curb the Sikhs by committing atrocities in order to demoralize them, before they could organize themselves and thus crush them. However the Sikhs had already re-organized themselves and they defeated the armed squads of the Mughals, at all the places wherever armed conflicts took place between them. This deceitful planning of the Mughals failed hopelessly.

Zakaria Khan took advice from Mullas and Qazis (Muslim preacher) as to the reasons for the defeats of the Mughals at the hands of the Sikhs. One of them advised him to fill the sarovar of the Harimandar Sahib as it was believed that the Gurus of the Sikhs had left 'Abey Hayat' in it which provided Divine strength to Sikhs and healed their wounds immediately when they bathed in it. Zakaria Khan deputed security forces headed by Muhammad Bakhsh and Lakhpat Rai to go to Amritsar to fill-up the tank. However the Sikhs attacked them killing several of them, while the remaining forces ran away to Lahore.

Sikhs prevented from visiting Harimandar Sahib

The Mughal army kept a watch over the Sikhs in order to prevent them from visiting their holiest of shrines, Harimandar Sahib, so that they may not get the Godly strength to fight with them. The Sikhs would still visit their sacred shrine to pay their

obedience, as the Mughal army were never really successful in debarring them. Harimandar Sahib had been constructed in the middle of the sacred sarovar by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, and the Guru Granth Sahib had been installed in it in 1604, just after its compilation. The sarovar was constructed by Guru Ram Dass the fourth Sikh Guru, under instructions from Guru Amar Dass, the third Sikh Guru. Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, constructed the Akal Takhat in that complex for the socio-political affair of the Sikhs and also to give message to the Mughal Rulers that Sikhs are a sovereign people determined to struggle for the freedom of their Religion.

Baba Buddha who had the direct blessings of Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh Religion, was appointed the first Granthi in Harimandar Sahib and he died in 1631. He was succeeded by Bhai Gurdas who was the scribe of the *Guru Granth Sahib* under the direct supervision of Guru Arjan Dev. Thereafter, the Sixth Guru shifted to Kiratpur Sahib, the sub-mountainous area of the Shivalik hills and this sacred shrine remained under the control of Meharban, cousin of the sixth Guru who died in 1639. He was succeeded by his son Har Ji who died in 1696. These relatives of the Sixth Guru had become the rivals of the Sikh Gurus and the Sikhs never accepted them. In 1699, the Tenth Sikh Guru, sent Bhai Mani Singh from Anandpur Sahib to take charge of this holy shrine, which he did. Bhai Mani Singh remained in control of Harimandar Sahib complex, including Akal Takhat till 1738 when he was tortured to death by cutting him limb by limb as he had refused to convert to Islam.

Martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh (1738)

Bhai Mani Singh was the head priest of Harimandar Sahib Amritsar and was a very religious and peace loving person, highly respected by the Sikhs. He was arrested and martyred in 1738 at Lahore in a bid to terrorise the Sikhs as he was their religious leader. He had the direct blessings of Guru Gobind Singh to remain in his service for a long period. His death was caused in such a cruel manner that every limb of his body was cut into pieces, still he remained meditating the name of God. He belonged to a family of martyrs of village Kambowal in Sangrur Distt. Eleven out of his twelve brothers and all of his ten sons sacrificed their lives for the Sikh cause. So provoked were the Sikhs by this cruel and barbaric act of the Mughal rulers that they killed most of the guilty persons including the informers responsible for this crime. Qazi Abdul Razak who was instrumental in their crime was assassinated by the Sikhs and his village was burnt to ashes and in its place the new village of Akal Garh was setup instead of the old Aligarh. The other Qazi, who announced the punishment, was also killed at his village Mujang Lahore by the Sikhs. The Mughal officer Samad Khan responsible for this merciless killing of Bhai Mani Singh, was caught from his house and dragged by tying him with the horses of the Sikh warriors till he was dead.

The Sikhs did not leave unpunished any guilty person for the crimes committed against them. The Qazi who gave the advice to fill up the sarovar at Harimandar Sahib was caught hold and killed and his house was burnt.

Massa Ranghar, chief of Mandiala who dared to defile Harimandar Sahib in 1740 was punished without much delay. Bhai Mehtab Singh and Bhai Sukha Singh came from Bikaner, in Rajsthan, to award the punishment to him to avenge the insult to their holy shrines. Both of them reached Harimandar Sahib and posed on the pretext of giving revenue to him. They came near him and immediately killed him. They took away his severed head and produced it to their jathedar. All the Sikhs kicked the head of Massa Ranghar with their shoes and then burnt it. Such was the wrath of the Sikhs that within a few days of the misconduct of Massa Ranghar of defiling their religious shrine he was mercilessly done away with.

In 1745 Zakaria Khan died with his desire to eliminate the Sikhs remaining unfulfilled.

The determination of the Sikhs to never submit to Mughal Rule was manifest from the swift action of Bhai Bota Singh and Garja Singh. As the Sikhs sought refuge in the nearby forests for their guerilla warfare, the boast of Zakaria Khan, Governor of Lahore of having eliminated the Sikhs, came to the notice of these two Sikh warriors. They immediately decided to rebut the allegations of the Mughal Governor. Bhai Bota Singh and Garja Singh went to the G.T. Road and fixed the Sikh flag on a pole. They levied a tax on every passing donkey and cart asserting that there was Sikh rule there and not Mughal rule, with directions that it be told to Zakaria Khan. No Mughal armed forces came to confront them for three days. Then they sent a letter to Zakaria Khan that :

"Chithi likhey Singh Bota, hath hai sota,
Anna laya gaddey nu, Te paisa laya khota,
Akhin bhabi khan nu yun akhe Singh bota."

(This letter is from Bota Singh, who has a staff in his hand. A cart is levied one Anna and a donkey one paisa. Let sister Khano know that this is what Bota says and does.)

Khano was the name of the wife of Zakaria Khan. He sent the Mughal army after coming to know of the levy of tax by the Sikhs. These two Sikh warriors fought with the Mughal army till their ammunition was exhausted, killing several of them and died while fighting. This action was taken in order to assert that the Mughals could not eliminate the Sikhs.

Even Subheg Singh, who had mediated between Zakaria Khan and the Sikhs in 1733 at the request of the Mughal Governor, and his son Shahbaj Singh were not spared and were mercilessly killed when they refused to convert to Islam. Zakaria Khan had ordered that those who help the Sikh warriors in one way or the other will be punished like them i.e. will be killed. Even the Sikhs who had no connection with the Sikh warriors were not spared from the indiscriminate killings as the Mughal policy was to totally eliminate all Sikhs. It seems they had the fear that they would sooner or later oust them from power. One Hakikat Rai was married to the daughter of Kishan Singh of Batala and that was sufficient ground for the Mughals to kill him. The Sikh

warriors took immediate revenge by killing the Qazi and Faujdar Amin Khan who were responsible for this killing.

In June 1745, Bhai Taru Singh of village Puhla, a devoted Sikh, who used to provide assistance to Sikh warriors who were taking shelter in their hide outs in forests was arrested and martyred after being tortured. It was torture of the worst type; done by separating his skull from his head as he did not allow the executioners to cut his nails. He underwent this horrible brutality with an undisturbed mind, as he continued reciting the *gurbani*; Name of God, as if nothing was happening to him. It is recorded in history that Zakaria Khan himself witnessed this martyrdom, threatening Taru Singh that his Keshas would be destroyed by the shoe beating on his head. To which Taru Singh replied that Zakaria would get a shoe beating on his own head. When the skull of Taru Singh was being removed, Zakaria Khan suddenly fell ill. He was given a shoe beating on his head with the shoes of Bhai Taru Singh so as to revive him. He died before the death of Bhai Taru Singh. This type of brutalities was commonly suffered by the Sikhs, but none of them despite that agreed to convert his religion but continued to remain in high spirits in all such situations.

Dal Khalsa Formed

On Diwali day of 1745 the Sikhs collected at Akal Takhat in order to further intensify their struggle. They organized themselves as a consolidated force, called the Dal Khalsa under the leadership of Nawab Kapur Singh. Several Jathas were created headed by Jathedars : Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Naudh Singh Shukarchakia, Jeon Singh Majhabi and several others who had proved themselves as leader in this Sikh struggle and were devoted to the cause of wiping out the Mughals and establishing a Sikh empire.

In 1745, after the death of Zakaria Khan, his son Yahya Khan succeeded him as Governor of Lahore. He followed in the foot steps of his father and remained in conflict with the Sikhs. During a short period of two years, he was in no position to contain the Sikh struggle.

In 1747 Mir Mannu, became the Lahore Governor. He compromised with the Sikhs and gave several villages of Amritsar area as *Jagir* to the Sikhs and took no offensive step against them. Mir Mannu knew about the bravery and courage of the Sikhs. His plan was to use the Sikh warriors against the Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, who was planning to invade India from Afghanistan where he ruled and had a strong army. The Sikhs were obviously against his invasions. In 1751, at the time of the third invasion of Abdali, Mir Mannu's Mughal army fought against Abdali with the support of Sikh warriors. He betrayed the Sikhs and compromised with Abdali, getting the Governorship of Lahore and Multan confirmed. The conflict then started between Mir Mannu and the Sikhs. He used both the forces of Mughals and Afghans against the Sikhs but he was not able to contain the Sikh struggle. He committed uncalled for

atrocities against Sikhs. The Sikhs started raising the slogan that "The more Mannu cuts them the more they grow." Mannu was killed in a tortuous manner when his horse dragged him in the fields till he was killed. The Sikhs caught hold of all the guilty persons who helped Mir Mannu against them. The Sikhs killed the Faujdar of Patti, who committed excesses against Sikhs. Sikhs also dealt with the relation of Lakhpat Rai at his village Kalanaur who used to participate in the battles against Sikhs. Now the Sikhs had no fears from the Mughals, rather the Mughals became fearful of the Sikhs.

Lakhpat Rai Punished

Sikhs had also punished Lakhpat Rai Diwan, who was the main culprit of *chhota ghalughara* in which ten thousand Sikh were killed including children and women. Sikhs caught hold of Lakhpat Rai and tied him with a rope. His face was blackened and he was paraded in the streets. Then he was shut in a latrine. People used to do their latrine and urine upon him. He was tortured in this manner for six months. Then his death was caused in 1748. Mughal Governor dared not to save his Diwan (minister) from such a punishment by Sikhs. Jaspal Rai, brother of Lakhpat Rai who was also with the Mughals against the Sikhs, had already been killed by the Sikhs when he accompanied the Mughals to fight with the Sikhs.

Ultimately in the conflicts with the Mughals the Sikhs were victorious. The Sikhs faced the tyranny of the Mughal Governor of Lahore and the Mughal armies so courageously and with such determination that they wiped them out from the Sikh homeland of Punjab. In the process the Sikhs themselves suffered a lot, which caused two holocausts and numerous battles. Not caring for such losses, the Sikhs took revenge for each of their casualties. The utmost brutalities of the Mughal Governors like Zakaria Khan and Mir Mannu could not demoralize the Sikhs, even when there were prices on their heads and arbitrary executions. The Sikhs even compromised not with the Mughals when efforts were made from the other side. It was always in their minds with conviction that their Guru would grant them success, freedom and sovereignty. So they were true to the Sikh way of life and its code of conduct which infused high spirits in them and motivated them to give supreme sacrifices with excellent heroism.

Sikh Victorious in Conflicts between Sikhs and Afghan Invaders

Sikhs had to deal with Afghan invaders in addition to the Mughals. The Afghan invaders used to invade India from Afghanistan, where they had a mighty Army. They would go to Delhi, capital of India with their armed forces and after looting Delhi and other state treasury they would go back to Afghanistan. On most of the occasion, they would take women folk as captives in thousands and take them along. No

resistance was put by the government and the people of India. On these invasions once the Marathas, the so called militant force of the Hindus known for their bravery in India, came into conflict with the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah Abdali, who defeated them at the battle-field of Panipat. Thereafter they took no courage to resist the Afghan invaders. To the Afghan's bad luck, they had to pass through Punjab, the Sikh homeland. Sikhs would loot and snatch their looted wealth, in guerilla warfare through out the Punjab territory and liberate the captive women folk from their caravans and restore them with full honour to their homes at the risk of their own lives. These invaders had to bear humiliation from Sikh warriors as dumb spectators, although each time they would come with more armed strength. The Sikh warriors hiding in the forests, would abruptly come into sight and attack the caravan of Afghan invaders consisting of tens of thousands of armed forces. Despite their strength in numbers, they were unable to chase the Sikh warriors or they did not know the paths in these forests and could not leave the caravan unattended without their full strength. Thus they had to leave their adventurism and the idea to invade and conquer India due to the continuous Sikhs therein. It is due to Sikhs only that these invaders could not enter India when the Sikhs established their sovereign empire in North India up to the boundary of Afghanistan. These Afghans remained in fear of the Sikh threat.

Sikhs attack Nadar Shah

In 1739, Nadar Shah, after conquering Iran and Kabul, came to India with his armed forces and reached Delhi. He looted wealth from Delhi and the State treasury. The Mughal Rulers could not resist him. Nadar Shah came back with the looted wealth along with his caravan of tens of thousands of forces. On the way back, the Sikhs started guerilla attacks on his caravan from Panipat upto Lahore and snatched back most of his looted wealth. Nadar Shah enquired of Zakaria Khan, the Lahore Govenor, as to the identity of the Sikhs. Zakaria Khan told him that these Sikhs roamed about in the forests raising slogans that they would rule over the country one day and faced death lovingly. Also the Mughals could not contain them despite their best efforts. Nadar Shah then remarked that these Sikhs would be the rulers one day.

Attacks of Sikhs on Ahmad Shah Abdali

In June 1747, Nadar Shah was murdered by the forces of Ahmad Shah Abdali who became the ruler of Afghanistan. Abdali invaded India in that very year. He went back with the looted wealth in March 1748. Sikhs attacked his caravan when it was crossing Satluj river and snatched most of the looted wealth. Abdali invaded India in 1756 again and looted wealth from Delhi, the state treasury without any resistant. He took thousands of women folk as captives to take along with them to Afghanistan. His caravan was escorted by eighty thousand armed forces, spread over miles and miles. The Sikh warriors started the guerilla attacks on his caravan from Karnal itself

snatching the looted wealth and liberating the women folk. The Sikhs chased Abdali's caravan up to River Jhannaa, a distance of several hundred miles with such like attacks. The liberated women were taken back with full honour to their homes.

Abdali invaded India twelve times, though in the last few invasions, he had to go back midway. Every time he looted Delhi and brought wealth and women folk to take along, he had to face the guerilla attacks on his caravan from Sikhs, who would each time snatch the looted wealth from him and liberate the women folk. Abdali was also a man of tough stuff and he continued his invasions between 1747-1768 when he was finally stopped by the Sikhs from entering the Punjab province and then he had to finally give up his idea of looting or conquering India.

Abdali even defiled Harimandar Sahib through the Governor of Lahore, Jahan Khan, in 1757 and again in 1762 himself. With the combined forces of Afghans and Mughals, he committed the Sikh holocaust in which thousands of Sikhs were killed but he was unable to dim the high spirit of the Sikhs. At several places where the Sikhs came in direct armed conflict with the forces of Abdali, invariably the Sikhs won. In 1763 the Sikhs had taken several armed forces of Abdali captive and they were made to take out the filth they had previously put in the sarovar at Amritsar. The combined forces of Mughals and Afghans could not contain the Sikh struggle and they were wiped out at the hands of the Sikhs. Credit goes to the Sikhs for uprooting both of these tyrant forces who had no regard for basic human rights and values. Several Hindus like Dewan Lakhpat Rai were holding high posts in Mughal government. Despite the forced conversion of Hindus to Islam, they were instrumental in the Mughals' design to cause atrocities on Sikhs.

In fact the Mughals had surrendered to the Afghan invaders and in 1757 at the time of the fourth invasion when Abdali looted Delhi and the Mughal treasury. The Mughals gave in writing to him that Sirhind, Lahore, Sind and Kashmir would henceforth be under his domain. He left behind his son Taimur as the Governor of these provinces and his General Jahan Khan to be his assistant. It was the Sikhs who challenged them and defeated their forces. The Sikhs entered Lahore in 1758 and caused casualties to Afghan forces. Taimur ran away to Kabul and the Sikhs chased him and his forces upto the River Chenab. Jahan Khan also left Lahore to run to Afghanistan. The Afghan forces which were caught by the Sikhs were brought to Amritsar and were made to clean the sarovar at Harimandar Sahib which had been defiled by Abdali. No Governor of Abdali could contain Sikh power.

Initially there were four contestant powers with known armed forces in India and Punjab as well—Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs and Marahattas—within whom armed conflicts were taking place. Mughals virtually surrendered to Afghans by 1757 while the Marahattas were decisively defeated at the battle of Panipat in 1762 at the hands of the Afghans and did not put forth any substantial resistance thereafter to the Mughals or the Afghans. Thus only the Sikhs and the Afghans remained in the field. The Sikhs ousted the Afghans from Punjab in a prolonged struggle with various ups

and downs and great casualties but did not give up their high spirits at the worst of times. India was saved from the occupation of the Afghans by the Sikhs as they stopped them from entering Punjab which was the only way to enter India. If the Sikhs had surrendered or compromised with the Afghans, then the history and map of India would have been a different one.

Two Sikh Holocausts (*Ghallugharas*)

During the Sikh struggle besides cruel excesses against the Sikhs, the Mughals and the Afghans made sudden ambushes on Sikhs twice at places where Sikhs had collected in large numbers including armed forces and killed thousands of Sikhs, including women and children. During these attacks they too suffered huge casualties at the hands of the Sikhs. The first such holocaust is named as the 'small holocaust' *chhota ghalughara* in which about ten thousand Sikhs including women and children were killed. The other holocaust is named 'big holocaust' *Wadda Ghalughara* in which thirty thousand Sikhs including women and children were killed.

Small Holocaust (*Chhota Ghalughara*)

In June 1746 a large number of Sikhs had gathered near 'Kahnuwan' in Distt. Gurdaspur including women and children. The Mughals got to know of this and they sent very large contingent of Mughal army, numbering in tens of thousands and encircled the unwary Sikhs. Lakhpat Rai, though a Hindu, was one of the commanders of the Mughal Army. The Mughal Army attacked the Sikh gathering, killing ten thousand Sikhs including women and children. The Sikhs also managed to kill thousands of the Mughal Armed forces. Thereafter the Sikhs took revenge, killed most of the guilty who participated, supported and were informers of that holocaust. This incident could not shake the confidence of the Sikhs and rather they became more determined and organized in order to wipe out the Mughals.

Big Holocaust (*Wadda ghalughara*)

This holocaust took place in 1762 with the combined forces of Mughals and Afghan invaders and Abdali himself took part in it besides the government of Lahore and Sirhind. Abdali came to India in early 1762 and abruptly reached Lahore. He was feeling frustrated because of the Sikhs, who on his every visit attacked his caravan marching away with the looted wealth. His army was demoralized while in Punjab. He had come with hundreds of thousands of his army determined to deal with the Sikhs. He joined the Mughal army along with the Mughal Governors of Lahore and Sirhind. Thus both the Mughals and Afghan forces decided to liquidate the Sikhs once and for all. They chased the Sikhs from one place to another in Punjab. On February 5, 1762 near the village Khutba they encircled the Sikhs who had gathered there in large numbers including women and children. A fierce fight took place between the

Sikhs and the combined forces of Mughals and Afghans. This resulted in thousands and thousand of casualties on both sides. Thirty thousands Sikhs including women and children were killed at that place which is named as *wadda ghalughara*—Big holocaust.

Harimandar Sahib blasted

Abdali thereafter went to Amritsar with the armed forces with the intention of blasting Harimandar Sahib and filling the sarovar, as they thought that the Sikhs got their spiritual strength from there. Under Abdali's supervision Harimandar Sahib was blasted and the sarovar was filled up. Cows were killed and thrown into the sarovar which were considered sacred by Hindus. Hindu temples were also demolished so as to demoralize both Sikhs and Hindus. Still Hindus like Lakhpat Rai remained in service to the Mughals displaying a lack of conscience and self esteem.

Sikhs attack Abdali on his way back

Abdali with his large caravan of armed forces returned to Kabul from Lahore, having full satisfaction that the Sikhs had been eliminated. But they were astonished, when the Sikhs attacked their caravan near River *Jhannaa* causing severe casualties to the Afghan armed forces and snatching wealth and weapons from them. Then Abdali realized that it was impossible to tackle the Sikhs and he always carried a fear of the Sikhs in his mind.

Abdali had left Punjab, so the Sikhs could not take revenge on him; instead, the Sikhs punished all those who had been instrumental in the carnage by Abdali in the campaign against the Sikhs. The Sikhs went to Sirhind and attacked the Governor of Sirhind near Patiala, who had joined Abdali in that campaign. In that battle Sikhs defeated the Mughal forces, who ran away leaving behind their weapons.

Abdali Defeated by Sikhs

On the occasion of Diwali in 1762, the Sikhs gathered at Amritsar Akal Takhat and Harimandar Sahib and started *Kar Sewa* to remove the filth from the sarovar. Abdali came back from Kabul with a huge caravan of Armed forces and reached Amritsar with the zeal to finish the Sikhs. The Sikhs fought the battle with Afghans outside Amritsar at Pipli and defeated the Afghan forces. Abdali ran back to Lahore surprised at the heroism of the Sikhs. He returned to Kabul with his army from Lahore. He had hardly crossed river Ravi outside Lahore, when the Sikh warriors attacked his caravan and snatched the wealth which he was taking to Kabul.

Akal Takhat and Harimandar Sahib reconstructed

On the next Diwali of 1763, Sikhs in large numbers collected at Akal Takhat

Amritsar as now they feared no danger from Mughals and Afghans. They decided to reconstruct the Akal Takhat and Harimandar Sahib, their holiest of shrines as now there was no force to come in conflict with them as they had silenced both the Mughals and Afghans. On November 17, 1763 the foundation stone of Akal Takhat was laid and the reconstruction of Harimandar Sahib was also started. These constructions were duly completed by Sikhs.

Abdali again in 1764 sent his Army General Jahan Khan with armed forces to watch the situation in Punjab but the Sikhs attacked them at Sialkot. Most of the Afghans were killed in that battle and the remaining ran back, leaving behind their weapons.

To take revenge for this defeat, the killing of his armed forces by the Sikhs, Abdali came to Lahore with a bigger force at the end of 1764. He sent messages to Mughals and other Muslim chiefs to support him whole heartedly. He stayed for two days at Lahore and then along with armed forces went into the interior of Punjab. The Sikh warriors attacked his Lahore camp and took away his entire belongings and weapons. On hearing of this he came back to Lahore. He could not cause any harm to Sikhs this time. Now he tried to approach the Sikhs for peace and offered them the Governorship of Lahore. The Sikhs outrightly rejected his offer, asserting that they would rule over the entire area with their force and the blessings of their Guru and that they could never compromise with him as he had tried to blot their central religious place, filled the sarovar, besides causing killings of thousands of Sikhs. They challenged him that they would teach him such a lesson that he would never dare to enter their homeland again. Abdali then returned to his country. The Sikh warriors attacked his caravan as usual near river Jhelum causing severe casualties and snatching his looted wealth.

Abdali kept silence for about four years but again in 1768 he tried his luck by entering Punjab with a larger army. When he crossed the Jehlum River, he got information that Sikh warriors were waiting for him on the other side of the river Jhannaa. He went back to his country from there. Such was the terror created by Sikh warriors and their excellent heroism that the ruler of Afghanistan who was determined to conquer India and liquidate the Sikhs could not find courage to proceed further to face the Sikhs.

Abdali, who had faced such humiliation in front of his army by being ordered to return to their country, again came with a bigger force in that very year to show that he was not demoralized. The Sikh warriors came to know of it and they collected at Rohtang Pass near Afghanistan to receive him. After coming to know of it he returned to his country without proceeding further as he was fearful of facing the Sikhs. It was his last attempt and he never dared to enter Punjab thereafter. In fact he lost his moral strength to order his armed forces again to invade India.

There was now no informer to confront the Sikhs. The Mughals had already been demoralized. Thus the Sikhs successfully wiped out both the tyrants—Mughals and Afghans.

The Sikhs were so determined to establish their rule by wiping out the Afghan invaders and Mughals that they never accepted any offer for Governorship or Kingdom, as it was their conviction that they would get their empire with the blessings of their Guru, and not from any other person or power whatever it might be.

In 1765, Sikh *Misals* of Bhangis and Ghanayas under the leadership of Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh occupied Lahore. Abdali feeling helpless attempted to contact them with a show of respect to them by sending baskets of 'choice fruits' to Lehna Singh Bhangi to honour them. The Sikh Sardar refused to accept the gifts and returned it with the reply that these fruits are meant for emperors, as for a humble peasant like him, he said, the best food was the food grains. In spite of this rebuff, the ruler of Afghanistan, had no choice but to accept the Sikhs as the defacto rulers of Lahore, which they had taken in their dominion. Such was the high sense of self respect and dignity in the Sikhs. Abdali dared not to come into serious conflict with Sikhs thereafter. By the time of his death in 1772, the Sikhs had in their occupation the territories from Saharanpur in the east to Attock in the west and from Multan and Sind in the South to Kangra, Jammu and Kashmir to North, and the Afghans felt a terror from Sikhs in Afghanistan itself, forget about thinking of entering the Sikh homeland.

Sikhs Stop Abdali's Grandson to enter Punjab

The successor of Ahmad Shah Abdali, his son Taimur, also kept planning to invade India, but he was afraid of the Sikhs and could not take courage to enter Punjab, as the humiliation and defeats suffered by Abdali were still fresh in his mind. Nevertheless, Shah Zaman, grandson of Abdali, after becoming ruler of Afghanistan, engaged himself in this futile exercise. Ranjit Singh, as leader of the Sikh warriors, successfully tackled him. Shah Zaman came with very huge caravan of armed forces several times but faced defeats and enormous casualties in a much worse manner than his grandfather. In 1781, for the first time, and in 1788 for the second time, he retreated just after crossing the boundaries of Afghanistan or with information that Sikhs were anxious to engage him in battle. In 1796 with a large force he reached Lahore and proceeded towards Amritsar after sending a message to Ranjit Singh that "Sikhs should submit to him to avoid their bloodshed" to which a reply was immediately sent to him by Ranjit Singh, that they would meet him at the battlefield and teach him a lesson as not to enter Punjab again." A fierce battle took place between the Afghan Army and Sikh warriors in the area between Lahore and Amritsar in which the Afghans were defeated with severe casualties and they fled the battle field. Shah Zaman was made of tough staff like his grandfather and he came again in 1798 with a bigger force to Lahore. He locked himself in the Lahore fort when Sikh warriors reached there to receive him. He dared not fight with the Sikhs even from the fort which was a comparatively safe place. Ranjit Singh himself went near the Burj of the fort where Shah Zaman was camping and challenged him that the grandson of Charat

Singh had come to meet grandson of Abdali and he should now take courage to come out with his army to face him." The Afghan king bore the insult and humiliation, but dared not to fight with the Sikhs. The Sikhs were never offensive and so did not attack the Afghans unilaterally. He ran away with his army to Afghanistan conceding defeat and never came back, again. Thus came the end of the Afghan invasions.

The news of Sikh victories over the Afghan was received with great relief by the British who had reason to believe that Abdali's real objective in coming to India was to help Nur Qasim against them. A dispatch sent to Nawab Wazir of Avdh said that, "Lord Clive is extremely glad to know that Shah's progress has been impeded by the Sikhs. If they continue to cut off his supplies and plunder his baggage, he will be ruined without fighting and then he will either return to his country or meet with shame and disgrace. As long as he does not defeat the Sikhs or come to terms with them he cannot penetrate into India, And neither of these events seems probable since the Sikhs have adopted such effective tactics and since they hate Shah on account of his destruction of Chak (Amritsar)."

(*History of the Sikhs*, H.R. Gupta Vol. 1, p. 255)

The British acknowledged that the Sikhs alone frustrated the moves of Abdali to invade India, otherwise the map of India would have been different, and would have been part of the Islamic dominion.

Hard way of living of Sikh warriors; maintaining moral and ethical values

During the prolonged struggle of the Sikhs with more powerful forces than them, they had to adopt a very hard way of life in forests in order to continue guerilla warfare as their numbers and resources were of not comparable to their enemies. The Mughals were the rulers of India while the Afghan invaders were the rulers of Afghanistan and therefore had regular armies in large numbers and with vast resources at their command. Whenever the Sikh warriors came in direct conflicts with Mughal and Afghan armed forces, they invariably defeated those forces. The Sikhs were totally devoted and committed to their cause, as well to its justness. The spirit infused in them by the Amrit of the double-edged sword was always maintained by them. It was always in their minds that they had the blessing of their Guru and protection of God, the Almighty, in their noble cause. They had no fear of death and neither had they any lust for worldly desires. They were very strict in their adherence to the Sikh code of conduct and were regular in their religious duties (*Bana* and *Bani*). So the hardships of living did not bother them. A British writer George Thomas, who had witnessed the life style of the Sikh warriors in the Sikh struggle period, has given an account of it in his book *Military Memoirs* (1803) on page 71 briefly :

"Accustomed from their (Sikhs) earliest infancy to a life of hardships and difficulty, the Sikhs despise

the comforts of a tent; in lieu of this each horseman is furnished with two blankets, one for himself and the other for his horse. These blankets which are placed beneath the saddle with a gram bag and heal ropes comprise in the time of war, the luggage of Sikhs. Their cooking utensils are carried on ponies. Considering this mode of life and the extra ordinary rapidity of their movements, it can not be a matter of wonders if they perform marches which to those who are only accustomed to European warfare must appear almost incredible."

These Sikhs would successfully confront the big caravans of Ahmad Shah Abdali, as described by Khushwant Singh in his book, *A History of the Sikhs* at page 138 :

"Abdali's own goods were loaded on twenty-eight thousand elephants, camels, mules bullock carts, while two hundred camel-loads of property were taken by Mohammed Shah's widows, who accompanied him and these too belonged to him. Eighty thousand horses and foot followed him, each man carrying away spoils. His cavalry returned on foot, loading their booty on their chargers. For securing transport, the Afghan king left no horse or camel in any one's house, even a donkey."

The Sikhs would attack such big caravans guarded by thousands of armed forces at night and snatch the looted wealth and liberate the captive women folk and disappear into the forests leaving Abdali and his forces as mere spectators. The Sikhs would take the liberated woman folk honourably to their homes at the risk of their own lives. The Sikhs made Abdali abandon his desire to loot or conquer India. It was the Sikhs alone who saved India from the clutches of the Mughals and Afghans and secured the basic human rights of Indians, particularly the right to freedom of religion which had been totally crushed. To achieve this aim the Sikhs had to follow a life of hardships and make supreme sacrifices. These brave dedicated Sikhs wiped out both the evil forces of the Mughals and Afghans and established an independent Sovereign Sikh state. Without their bold stand and sacrifices, the Sikhs, Hindus and even Muslim in India would not have been where they are today.

Sikhs maintained Moral Ethical Values

Guru Hargobind, the Sixth Sikh Guru, had taken two kirpans of Miri and Piri at the time of his installation ceremony and created the Sikh Army to ensure freedom of religion. This he did after the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, had been martyred by Mughal ruler Jahangir to suppress religious freedom. Guru Hargobind had set up moral ethics for Sikhs for the battlefield, and in case all peaceful means failed then it was justified to resort to the sword :

"Let no one kill a fleeing soldier, nor the one who had surrendered. And no woman's honour should be molested, nor woman or civilian (arrested) captured in reprisal or booty. We are fighting for a religious cause, our right to live with honour and in peace and not for the sake of self glory or rule over others."

(J.S. Grewal and S.S. Bal, *Guru Gobind Singh—A Biographical Study*, p. 226)

Sikhs followed these warfare morals and ethics in all the wars in which they had to take part. Guru Gobind Singh the tenth Sikh Guru, had also to resort to the battlefields against the Mughals. Although the Sikhs were trained to maintain their moral and ethical values, the Mughals often used to violate all the ethics. The Sikhs did not lose their high values, ethics and morality despite the unfair and deceitful conduct of the other side. The Sikhs were praised highly by their adversaries. Qazi Noor Muhammad the historical scribe of Abdali could not resist paying high tributes to Sikhs. He remarked :

"In no case would they (Sikhs) slay a coward nor would they put an obstacle in the way of a fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth and ornaments of woman, be she a well to do lady or a maid servant. There is no adultery among these dogs nor are they mischievous people given to thieving. There is nothing at all among these dogs, nor is there any house breaker born amongst these miscreants. They do not make friends with adulterers and house breakers. In reality they are lions not dogs."

(Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. 1, p. 160)

None of the Sikh warriors, even after being victorious, misbehaved with any of the defeated enemy or their women. On the contrary, they treated all the women as their sisters. It is certainly a great tribute to those Sikhs that they exhibited such high character and moral and ethical values despite highly unfair and deceitful treatment from the other side.

The Sikh leaders who led the Sikh struggle had contacts and the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh. Banda Singh Bahadur had the privilege of meeting Guru Gobind Singh at Nanded where at that time he was living as a Bairagi hermit, and was so impressed by the Godly personality of the Guru that he fell at his feet and requested him to accept him as his servant (Banda) in the fold of the Khalsa Panth. Guru Gobind Singh himself administered the Amrit of the double-edged sword to him and named him Gurbakhsh Singh, turning the Bairagi into a Singh and bringing him into the Khalsa Panth to become a saint soldier. The great Guru sent him to Punjab with his blessings to lead the Sikh struggle for freedom and sovereignty and to protect the saints and wipe out the wicked—a duty which he performed very well.

Nawab Kapur Singh was also administered the Amrit by Guru Gobind Singh bringing him into the order of the Khalsa. He had served the great Guru and got his blessings and the qualities of a saint soldier.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's father Badar Singh took active part in the Sikh struggle with Banda Singh Bahadur. He died in 1722 when Jassa Singh was only four years old. He with his mother remained with Mata Sundri Kaur Ji at Delhi to serve her. Thus he had the direct guidance from the widow of Guru Gobind Singh and earlier education as well in Sikhism. She asked Nawab Kapur Singh for his upbringing for Sikh struggle and blessed him with a sword of Guru Gobind Singh.

Baba Deep Singh Shahid also received Amrit from Guru Gobind Singh to enter the order of the Khalsa to become a saint soldier. He stayed with Guru Gobind Singh

at Damdama Sahib and provided his services to the great Guru particularly in scribing *Guru Granth Sahib*. Copies of *Guru Granth Sahib* were written by him under the direction of Guru Gobind Singh which were sent to four Takhts. Upon hearing of the defilement of Harimandar Sahib, he went to Amritsar and had a fierce fight with the Mughal Army. Though his head was severed outside Amritsar, still he reached Harimandar Sahib fighting, putting his severed head in the Parikarma of Harimandar Sahib to fulfil his vow.

These Sikh commanders proved the worth of the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh enabling the Sikhs to wipe out Mughals and Afghans and to establish their own sovereign Sikh state. All the Sikh leaders of this period and struggle were true Sikhs, honest and devoted.

Such was the exemplary bravery of the Sikhs that Qazi Nur Muhammad, the Historian of Abdali, who used to accompany him to record historical events, praised the Sikhs in his *Jang Nama* statement No. 50 :

"Do not call Sikhs dogs, because they are lions and brave like lions in battlefield. You may know that their title is Singh (lion) and it is injustice to call them dogs. O, youth if you are ignorant of the Hindi language. I can tell you that the meaning of Singh is lion. In fact they are lions at the time of battle and when in festivities they surpass 'Haitm' (in generosity). When they take up Indian sword in hand they gallop from Hind up to the country of Sind. No body, however strong and healthy, dares to oppose them. When they hold the head upward, they break to pieces even to cankorous mountain. When they bend a bow and set in it the foe killing arrow, then they pull it up to the ear, the body of the enemy trembles like a cane. If their hatchet strikes a coat of mare then this coat of the mare itself on the body of the enemy becomes a shroud. The body of each of them looks like a hillock and in grandeur excels fifty men. Braham Gor (a Persian hero) killed wild asses and could frighten tigers. If he comes before them, he also would admit their superiority."

'Sikh Misals Confederacies' Rule

Sikh struggle (1748-68) and Rule (1768-1799)

Sikhs held a large congregation at Akal Takhat Amritsar in 1748 on the occasion of Diwali. They took two decisions unanimously which were of far reaching consequence and helped further their struggle in a meticulous manner to uproot Mughal rule and establish their own Sikh rule instead. The first was to appoint Jassa Singh Ahluwalia as the supreme leader of Sikhs so as to unite all Sikh leaders under one command and discipline, though all decisions were to be taken unanimously after due deliberations amongst all Sikh leaders at Akal Takhat and were to be acted upon by all Sikhs. The second was to form the Sikh confederacies (*misals*) (*jathas*) headed by one leader-jathedar. All Sikh warriors of each jatha were to work under their jathedar. The reports of the progress of each jatha-misal of the struggle was to be regularly sent to Akal Takhat so as the position and progress of the struggle could be assted and unified. Each confederacy was to occupy the territories of the area under its

command and not to surrender it. They were to keep the conquered territories under their administration in future and were to punish those guilty of atrocities. All the leader-jathedars of the confederacies *misals* were to meet regularly to review the progress of the struggle. The confederacies' main aim was to conquer the Punjab territories from the Mughal occupation to establish the Sikh rule and to preach Sikhism. The eleven confederacies were formed as under :

1. Misal Ahluwalia, headed by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.
2. Misal Singh Puria headed by Nawab Kapur Singh
3. Misal Sukarchakian, headed by Jathedar Naudh Singh
4. Misal Bhangian, headed by Jathedar Hari Singh Bhangi
5. Misal Ghanaya, headed by Jathedar Jai Singh
6. Misal Nikaian, headed by Jathedar Hira Singh of village Bahriwal
7. Misal Nishana Walian, headed by Jathedar Dasaunda Singh
8. Misal Dalewali, headed by Jathedar Hira Singh
9. Misal Shahidan, headed by Baba Deep Singh Shahid
10. Misal Karor Singhian, headed by Jathedar Karora Singh Panjgarh
11. Misal Sanghrian, headed by Jathedar Nand Singh Sanghrian

The rulers of Phulkian states, Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Faridkot made up the twelfth misal.

Jind or
Zind ?

All these heads of the *misals* – confederacies were well-known Sikh leaders already taking part in the Sikh struggle with full devotion. They recruited Sikhs particularly young ones in their Jathas who were strictly adhering to the Sikh code of conduct, having taken Amrit. The number of members of their Jathas increased day by day, coming to twenty to forty thousand in each Jatha. They were all working in full harmony and communication with each other. Sikh warriors of the Jathas had horses and weapons. They would punish only the guilty for excesses against the Sikhs. They would occupy the territories under their jurisdiction ousting the Mughals. All these Jathedars of the confederacies would work unitedly against the Mughals and Afghan invaders. Originally they had to hide in the forests and conduct guerilla warfare in co-operation with each other and to face the hardships of living as vagabonds. They had left behind all homely comforts and conveniences of daily living, despite which they felt contended amidst all odds and hardships. There was complete discipline among these warriors. They had silenced the Mughals much before Abdali was silenced in 1764. There was complete control in Punjab of these Sikh confederacies from 1768, as no Mughal and Afghan forces dared come into conflict with them. These confederacies set up Sikh rule throughout Punjab for 30 years. Their rule was popular amongst the masses as they committed no excesses. On the contrary, basic human rights were restored and there was no injustice.

Sikhs enter Red fort Delhi

In March 1783 the Jathedars of two confederacies, Jassa Singh Ahluwaia and Baghel Singh, with their Sikh warriors of about forty thousand, raided Delhi. They defeated the Mughal armed forces at Delhi and entered the Red Fort on March 11, 1783. The Mughal emperor agreed to give three hundred thousand rupees to Sikhs and to accept all the other conditions of the Sikhs. The Sikh Jathedars asked the Mughal emperor to give the lands of Sikh historical places for the construction of Gurdwaras. Those places were put at the disposal of the Sikhs with every kind of help. Jathedar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia came back and Jathedar Baghel Singh remained at Delhi with ten thousand Sikh warriors to complete the construction of the Gurdwaras; Sis Ganj Gurdwara — Bangla Sahib Gurdwara, Rakab Ganj Gurdwara and others. The Mughal emperor was now helping with the construction of Gurdwaras from fear of Sikhs, though earlier he was thinking of eliminating the Sikhs.

Whosoever witnessed the rule of the Sikh confederacies, had a word of praise for them. Colonel Podier, a Swiss, described the Sikh confederacies *misals* as :

"That formidable aristocratic republic of Sikh soldiers who are indefatigable mounted on the best horses that India could afford. Fifty of them are enough to keep at bay a whole battalion of the King's forces."

(Asiatic Annual Register, 1800, pp. 34-35)

Forester gives an account of the awe and respect with which the people treated the Sikhs at that time :

"I saw two Sikh horsemen who had been sent from the country to receive the SiriNagar tribute which was collected from the resources of certain custom houses. From the manner in which these men were treated or rather treated themselves, I frequently wished for the power of migrating in to the body of Sikhs for a few weeks – so well did these cavaliers fare. No sooner had they alighted, then beds were prepared for their repose, and their horses were supplied with green barley pulled out of the field. The Kafilah travellers were contented to lodge on the ground and expressed their thanks for permission to purchase what they required. Such is the difference between those who were in and those who were out of Power."

(Forester, 1, 326)

Forester has also given an account of the capture of the fort of Kangra by the Sikhs :

"The region lay wholly at the mercy of Sikhs who are I think the plainest dealers in the World. The fort of Sebah standing pleasantly on the brink of a rivulet, lay on our road and in passing it I saw two Sikh cavaliers strike terror in to the chief and all his people though shut up with in the fort. They had been sent to collect the tribute which the Sikhs had imposed on all the mountain chiefs from the Ganges to Jamuna."

(Forester 1, 261)

The rule of the Sikh *misals* was just and impartial with full freedom to worship and of religion. There it not a single instance of any forcible conversion to Sikh religion. Everyone had full protection in all respects. Records H.R. Gupta :

"The Sikh chiefs regarded their subjects as members of their family and the people paid them by their sincere devotion and respect. It was not a marvel to see the Sikh chief squatting on the ground in the midst of their subjects plainly dressed, unattended by an escort, without any paraphernalia of government, talking, laughing and joking as if with comrades, using the diplomacy with them but having straight forward dealings, simple manners, upright nuance and sincere language. If their rule was sometimes harsh, it was paternal; if it was occasionally strict, it was sympathetic; if at times it appeared crude and rough, it was wild and tender."

(H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Part III, p. 130)

An English man who travelled through the Sikh confederacies recorded :

"Their rule was as an administration without law and aristocracy without conscience, roads without traffic and the fields overgrown by forests"

(*The Asiatic annual register*, 1809)

And

"I was much gratified with the general appearance of the country then in a state of high cultivation. The people were well dressed and loved every appearance of health, ease and contentment—the effect of a just and good government. I heard not one cause of complaint. This system seems to have a happy effect in so much that crimes are rarely perpetrated. Persons of all nations enter the towns with confidence and meet with no molestation while they remain. The same attention is paid to an English man in our own territory by the Kotwal who readily sends the usual supplies for provisions and for which no payment is received. He also furnishes a guard or chaukidar at night. Their benevolence is not narrowed by bigotry and disclaims the distraction of religion or complexion. The Chief of every town makes a point of subsisting all poor and needy persons from his own funds. The inhabitants receive the stranger with an air of welcome that pre-possesses him in their favour, contrary to what the traveller experiences in Muslim towns where he is looked upon with contempt and regarded as the unwelcome intruder. One quality particularly raises the character of the Sikhs above all other Asiatics and that is their high veneration for truth. Both as people and as individuals, they may be considered as much less addicted to the low artifice of evasion, lying on dissimulation than any other race of Asiatics. Implicit dependence may be placed in their promise in all matters either of public or private concern."

Eye-witness accounts of George Thomos, Malcolm Cooplier, James Renell and others corroborate these statements :

"They (the Sikhs) differ from most religionists in that like the Hindus, they are perfectly tolerant in matters of faith. They preserve good order and regular government. The Zamindars of that country may have found it convenient to place themselves under the protection of Sikhs in order to avoid the more oppressive rule of their former masters."

It is also stated that during the famine of 1783, the Sikh Chiefs continued their *langar* (free kitchen). In what later was called the Mintgomerry District and where Sardar Budh Singh ruled, occurred the famine of 1783.' According to District gazetteer "He is said to have sold all his property and to have fed the people with the grain from the proceeds." In fact *langars* for the poor, being a part of the ethos of the Sikh religion were open to all at all times by the Sikh Chiefs.

(Quoted in *A History of the Sikh People* Dr. Gopal Singh, pp. 419-421)

Sikh Confederacies Territories

Every Sikh confederacy (*misal*) acquired its own territory separated from the other, throughout Punjab. The territorial jurisdiction of the Bhangi *misal* extended from the cities of Amritsar and Lahore towards river Jhelum; of the Ghanaya *misal* between Amritsar and the hills; of the Saukerchakya *misal* between rivers Ravi and Chenab with its centre at Gujranwala which ultimately consolidated Punjab under its leader Ranjit Singh. Of the Nikais *misal* to the south west of Lahore, along River Ravi; of the Faisalpuria *misal* along the right banks of Beas and Satluj; of the Ahluwalia on the left bank of River Ravi; of the Dallewalias to the right bank of upper Satluj; of the Ramgarhias in between the territories of Ahluwalia and Dallewalia *misals*; of the Karora Singhias in Jalandhar; of the Shahid *misal* to the south of Satluj; of the Nishania *misal* towards Karnal; the Phulkian *misal* to the South of Satluj around Patiala, Bhatinda, Faridkot and Jind, and Sirhind. Some *misals* had occupied the territories from Ferozepur to Karnal areas in between Sirhind and outskirts of Delhi to the West of Jamuna river.

All the *misals* had their Jathedars, whose command was obeyed by others living in those territories. Every Jathedar had Sikh warriors under him ranging from fifteen thousand to thirty thousand. There might have been about three hundred thousand (three lacs) of total Sikh warriors throughout Punjab, who occupied the entire Punjab area including their confederacies. They provided full protection to all inhabitants from external aggressions throughout Punjab and freedom of religion to every one. All the confederacies would join in case of the apprehension of external aggression. The Afghan invaders left the idea to conquer entire Punjab and the Mughals dared not confront the Sikhs. From 1764, the entire Punjab was under Sikh confederacies without any external interference.

Intense fighting between Sikh confederacies

The history of martial races is that when there is no outside forces to fight with them, intense fights on minor issues stand amongst them, which sometimes lead to battlefields. Minor intense fighting took place between some Sikh confederacies, mostly over territorial issues.

A minor fight took place between the confederacies of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, though they had been fighting the Mughals and Afghans together. Jathedar Baghel Singh sided with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, silencing Ramgarhia.

Jai Singh of Ghanaya Misal took some villages under his rule from Jassa Singh Ramgarhia in Doaba area.

In 1776, Ghanaya and Sukarchakia *misals* also had some fight with Ramgarhia *misal* at Hargobind.

In 1782, a dispute took place between Ghanaya and Sukerchakia *misals*, but soon after they compromised and Sada Kaur of Ghanaya *misals* married her daughter Mehtab Kaur with Ranjit Singh of Shukarchakia *misal*. Both these *misals* fought together with Ramgarhia *misal* in 1796.

There was some dispute between Nikaian and Shukerchakya *misals*, but it also ended in a relationship, as in 1793, Raj Kaur daughter of Gian Singh of Nikaian *misal* was married to Ranjit Singh of Sukerchakia *misal*.

Misal Shahidan of Baba Deep Singh (who sacrificed himself in order to liberate Golden Temple creating a unique instance of fighting upto Darbar Sahib while his head had been cut off. This instance stands written on the golden pages of Sikh history) was later on headed by Gulab Singh in 1804, who acted as a stooge of the British bringing a bad name to the *misal*.

Ranjit Singh, head of Sukarchakia *misal*, became very strong as the two *misals*, Ghanaya *misal* and Nankaina *misal* became his supporters owing to his having married the daughters of the heads of these *misals*. He established a sovereign Sikh state by amalgamating all the Sikh *misals*, comprising the entire area of Punjab in 1799. Thus a consolidated Sikh Empire came into existence headed by Ranjit Singh.

Imamudin in Hussain Shah p. 242-43 referred to the intense dispute between the Sikh chiefs.

"In the country of Punjab, from the Indus to the banks of the Jamuna, there are thousands of chiefs in the Sikh community one after the other. If a person owns two or three horses he boasts of being a chief and gets ready to fight against thousands when a village is besieged by the Sikhs to realize tribute, which the Zimidar cannot afford. They intrigue with other Sikhs and the Sikhs begin to fight between themselves. Whoever wins receives money according to the capacity of the villagers."

(*History of the Sikhs*, H.R. Gupta II, pp. 19-20)

As to the intense disputes which started between some confederacies over their territories, Forester, the English traveller remarked in 1783:

"We may see some ambitious chiefs, led only by his genius and success absorbing the power of his associates display from the ruins of their commonwealth, the standard of monarchy."

(*A History of the Sikhs*, Khushwant Singh, Vol. 1, p. 184)

This prophecy became true when Ranjit Singh consolidated the Sikh confederacies in 1799 to set up the Sikh empire. This sovereign Sikh state comprised the entire North

India, occupying all the principalities which were loyal to the Afghan king adjoining the borders of Afghanistan on one side, while of China on the other. Such was the might of power of the Sikh empire, that the British had to enter into an agreement with it so as to not interfere in the territories of each other. In fact the consolidated Sikh empire was the result of the Sikh confederacies rule. The Sikhs brought Punjab under their rule by means of their confederacies. Each confederacy had occupied the territories under its jurisdiction with the co-operation and coordination of all the Sikh leaders; thus wiping out the Mughal and Afghans.

Sikhs alone wiped out Mughals and Afghans

There was now no power strong enough to confront the Sikhs. The whole of Punjab was now under Sikh rule. In the prolonged period of Sikh struggle against the Mughal and Afghans who were the rulers of the big countries of India and Afghanistan respectively, the Sikhs alone uprooted both of them. It was only the Sikhs who took a stand against them and against their tyrannical regimes. The Sikh state was so powerful that the British dared not to enter their territories despite their having annexed the rest of India. No Sikh yielded to the cruel powers who utterly failed to convert a single Sikh to Islam as the Sikhs opted for martyrdoms rather than change their religion. No Sikh leader could be won over by these powers and neither could they infiltrate into their ranks. No doubt, two hundred thousands (2 lacks) Sikhs sacrificed themselves, but they restored the freedom of Religion and human values in the entire country.

High spirits, sense of hardship, living without worldly comforts, higher ethical and moral rules, dedication to the cause, no fear of death, and selfless service to humanity – all these had been infused in the Sikhs by their strict adherence to their code of conduct and *Amrit* of the double-edged sword, unshakable confidence in their religion and Sikh way of life. It was always in their minds that they were fighting for a noble cause, discharging their social responsibility with the blessings of their Guru and protection of God, the Almighty in whose name they were determined to meditate day and night. So rich was their source in both worldly and spiritual values and the practical precedents set by their Divine Gurus, which they never lost sight of, that they accomplished feats which otherwise would be impossible for average man to even think of. No average man in those times thought of wiping out the might of the Mughals and Afghans. Mrs. Jeans Cullar, an eminent British scholar, rightly remarked :

"The five symbols (obligatory after taking Amrit of double-edged sword as ordained by Guru Gobind Singh for Sikhs) had held the Sikhs in united brotherhood. They serve to make a Sikh and act as a Sikh, they endow him with a courage to accomplish feat which otherwise would be impossible for an average man. To make a long story short, the five symbols have a psychological bearing on the man who wears them. They are manifestation of the Guru, the eternal."

Obviously, to such dedicated and disciplined religious souls, no power,

whatsoever, could stop the formation of their sovereign Sikh state for which they had aspired. Moreover the top Sikh leadership had the privilege of having direct contact and blessings of Guru Gobind Singh.

The Historian of Punjab, Hari Ram Gupta, author of *History of the Sikhs*, remarked admiration of Sikhs, thus :

"The Sikhs emerged triumphant from their deadly struggle of the past thirty years and the long drawn agony of their subjection came to an end. The dream of their independence was realized. They had admirably succeeded in holding their own and in steadily pursuing their course not withstanding the hosts of terrors and disasters that gathered themselves together not only to check their ardour and to intercept their progress but also to bring them to the verge of annihilation. Surging floods of opposition rose and increased the impetuous rains of construction descend and fell; the rending storms of desperation blew and raged and all these opposition elements struck and beat upon them, but they could not shake the sturdy Sikhs standing on the steel-like rock of faith and freedom. The internal vigour consisting of their dogged faith in themselves and in the prophecy of Guru Gobind Singh that they would one day become a nation, their determined courage and unconquerable spirit of resistance not only sustained them against the bloody persecution of a great government determined to suppress them, but also raised them up again with great strength after every attempt to annihilate them."

And

"Readers, have we not witnessed a miracle ? The strength waged by the Khalsa was so glorious that any people in any culture would be proud of it."

And

"The story of the Sikhs' deeds opens up the great difference between head and heart between knowledge and action, between saying and doing, between words and works and between a dead and a living faith."

(Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 281-283)

This in brief is the history of the Sikh struggle for freedom and sovereignty in which they became victorious in wiping out the mighty Mughals and Afghan invaders to whom the rest of India had submitted. Over two hundred thousands of Sikh were martyred in this struggle. The manner of the arbitrary killing of innocent Sikhs by these tyrants was so barbarous and cruel as to be too horrible to describe. The scalps of some were removed, some were cut to pieces, some were tied and rotated on wheels, some were cut by saws and some were flayed alive. This was all done to create terror in the minds of the Sikhs but it proved counter productive. The Sikhs became more determined to wipe out these brutal Mughals and Afghan invaders. The high spirit infused in them by the Sikh religion could not be shattered by such barbarious tortures. They neither surrendered their religion, nor yielded politically to the tyrants.