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Brief History of Sikh Misls

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SIKH MISLS

Origin of Misls. During the second *Udâsî* of Guru Nanak, when he visited the Sidhs on *Sumer Parbat*, he was asked on what foundation would he raise the edifice of Sikhism. Guru Nânak Dev Ji replied—On two pillars; one is *Gurû Sangat* and *Bânî*.^{*} The respect for *bânî* and sitting together in the form of *Sangat* helped raise the Sikh organisations and institutions. Both Guru Angad Dev Ji and Guru Amar Das Ji taught the Sikhs to respect the institution of *Sangat* and declared *Gur-Shabad* as the heart of Guru. Words of wisdom propagated by other so called spiritual leaders than the Guru were branded as *Kachî Bânî*. The Sikhs were advised to leave such unauthentic sermons which had not come out of the mouth of true Guru. Guru Ram Das Ji raised Amritsar as the centre of Sikhism that became the pivot of Sikh *Sangat*. In order to safeguard the *Guru Shabad* and the institutions, Guru Arjan Dev Ji sacrificed his life.

When two Sikhs sit together, it becomes *Sadh Sangat* where as a lone Sikh is just a Sikh. Five Sikhs together is deemed to have the presence of the Lord.^{**} These views lent much greater strength to the *Sangat*. During the period from Guru Hargobind Sahib to Guru Teg Bahadur, the respect for *bânî* and *Sangat* increased by manyfolds. The enemies and opponents of Sikhism did much to reduce the respect of *bânî* from the hearts of Sikhs, but they could not succeed in their aim. During the Guru period, beside *Sangat* and *Gur Shabad*, the Guru person was also respected and revered. A stage came when Guru Gobind Singh Ji

contemplated that instead of the personality of Guru, the ideology, *Sangat* and *bânî* be made supreme. He had also realised that the Sikhs have become well aware not to fall into the trap of the doubts and suspicions created by ordinary mortals. Thus he merged his personality in the *Sangat*, gave it the form of *Khâlsâ* and adopted its form himself. It means the personality of Guru has now merged with *Khâlsâ* and the *Khâlsâ* will now be of Guru form. During the last hour of his life, Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the honour of Guruship upon Sri Guru Granth Sahib thus raising its status to supreme level. *Bânî* was revered as it is; but now by issuing an edict “*Sabh Sikhian ko hukam hai Guru manîo(n) Granth,*” he made it supreme removing all doubts and suspicions. The body was *Guru Khâlsâ* where as the soul resided in *Guru Granth*. Both together became ‘*Guru Panth*’. Thus Guru Gobind Singh Ji blessed the Sikhs with an eternal leader to lead them during its difficult period. Such a leader was omnipresent and beyond the cycle of birth and death. Thus the Sikhs never waived.

After the demise of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, Sikhs made Amritsar as the centre of their struggle. Sikhs would assemble at Amritsar twice a year—once on *Diwali* and again on *Baisakhi*. This assembly used to be called *Sarbat Khâlsâ*. They would pass resolutions and arrive at decisions in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. All resolutions were passed unanimously and once passed, these were called *Gurmatâs*. The passed *Gurmatâ* was respected by Sikhs as the will of the Guru. Everyone would rever it as such.

Selection of Five Beloved Ones. Whenever the *Sarbat Khâlsâ* would assemble, its proceedings would commence after an *Ardâs* (Supplication) to the Lord. Thereafter invocatory command of the Guru (Sri Guru Granth Sahib)

^{*} *Gur Sangat bânî binâ dûjî ot nahî hai râ-ee.*

^{**} *Ik Sikh, doey sâdh sang, panjî Parmeshar.*

would be read out. Then the name of a Sikh would be proposed and accepted by *Jaikârâs*. Such a selected Sikh was called by the name of *Piârâ*. Then this selected *piârâ* would propose another name. On approval from all present, he too would be given the status of a *Piârâ*. If anyone ever objected, he would be appropriately answered after listening to his side of the story. If the answer was not to the satisfaction of the *Sangat*, his selection was cancelled. In similar fashion third, fourth and fifth *Piârâ* would be selected. This five selected used to be the recipient of all the honour of the *Khâlsâ Panth*. These five would then move to Akal Takht Sahib and sit in the attendance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Then a Sikh from the *Sangat* would put up a proposal for consideration. It would be discussed and passed as *Gurmatâ* if found suitable for the good of the *Panth* and public at large. If ever some impediment would come up, the *Panj Piârâs* would intervene and give suitable decision. The passed resolutions would virtually become the policy of the whole *Panth* which becomes binding on all. For example, matters like how to deal with Nawab of Patti, the Nawab of Jalandhar who had accepted defeat; so how should he be treated; what arrangements of defence or re-organisation are to be made in the case of invasion by Abdali; would it be in order to take possession of Lahore; when is the right time to punish Nawab of Kasur for the atrocities perpetrated by him etc etc. All such decisions were taken unanimously.

This method remained in vogue till 1733. Thereafter many *Jathâs* came up. But whenever *Sarbat Khâlsâ* assembled, the individuality of the *Jathâs* never existed. Then there became two *Jathâs*. One known as 'Tarunâ' Dal while the other was called 'Budhâ' Dal'. 'Budhâ Dal'

remained at Amritsar to protect it while 'Tarunâ Dal' went on campaigns. All *Jathedârs* used to render their account before Sri Akal Takhat to an appointed person by Nawab Kapur Singh. S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia performed this duty for sometimes. They could draw from there according to their mind. Thus 'Taruna' Dal further divided itself in five *Jathâs*. S. Shâm Singh, Baba Deep Singh, S. Karam Singh, S. Dâh Singh, S. Dasaundhâ Singh and S. Bir Singh were appointed the *Jathedars*. Gradually, the area of influence of the Sikhs increased and therefore the number of *Jathâs* also increased. By 1748, The strength of *Dal Khalsa* had gone up to 63. Had it not been arrested, it would have crossed all boundaries. Nawab Kapur Singh felt that in view of the threatened attack of Abdâlî, there is a need to unite into one. So he told everyone to break their *Jathas*. It was accepted by all. 'Tarunâ Dal' and 'Budhâ Dal' too were broken. For the protection of Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, Akalis were appointed. The entire organisation was named as *Dal Khâlsâ*. Its command was handed over to S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Nawab Kapur Singh retired from active service of the *Panth*. *Dal Khalsa* was split into eleven *Jathâs*. Each *Jathâ* was placed under a *Jathedâr*. The area of jurisdiction of each *Jathâ* was also defined so that there was no inter *Jathâ* discord. The eleven *Jathâs* and their *Jathedârs* were as under—

1. **Bhangî** – (Bhât Bhûmâ Singh and his son Bhât Harî Singh)
2. **Nishân wâlîâ** – The flag bearer. Bhât Dasaundhâ Singh)
3. **Shahîd** – (Bâbâ Bîr Singh and Bâbâ Deep Singh)
4. **Râmgarhiâ** – (Bhât Hardâs Singh and then S. Jassâ

Singh who converted *Ram Raoni* into Ramgarh.)

5. **Nakaî** – (Bhâi Hîrâ Singh, Nathâ Singh)
6. **Ahlûwâlîâ** – (S. Jassâ Singh of village Ahlû)
7. **Kanahiyâ** – (S. Khushâl Singh and S. Jai Singh)
8. **Faizalpurîâ or Singhpurîâ** – (Nawab Kapur Singh)
9. **Dalewâlîâ** – (S. Gurdial Singh, village Dalewâl)
10. **Shukarchakîâ** – (S. Charhat Singh, village Shukarchak)
11. **Krorh Singhîâ** – (S. Krorha Singh, S. Baghel Singh)

These *Jathâs* became famous by the names of the *Misls*

Naming *Jathâs* on the Names of *Misls*. Initially, these eleven groups were called as *Jathâs* but very gradually, the word *Jathâ* got replaced with *Misl*. A file of every *Jathâ* was kept at Amritsar. It used to contain the exploits of its *Jathedâr* and soldiers. Whatever loot was brought by a *Jathedâr*, he used to have it recorded in his file and then deposit it with the treasury. Everyone would say, “Please write my details in the *Misl* (file.)” Thus the word *Jathâ* dropped from their names and the word *Misl* got added. So much so that the Sikh soldiers started referring each other by *Misls*. Even if some one brought anything in his individual capacity, he would ask the incharge to record it in so and so *Misl*.

The Tasks of the *Misls*. Although from the looks, *misls* became separate, they were still attached with each other. During emergent situations, they used to come together and offer a combined front to the enemy. They could never imagine separating themselves from *Dal Khâlsâ*. They put their loot in a common coffer and shared their exploits.

There was no selfishness and no ‘mine’ and ‘ours’. Whenever they assembled at Amritsar during *Diwâlî* and *Baisâkhî*, they never sat under their flag but that of ‘*Dal Khâlsâ*’. They felt proud calling themselves ‘*Sarbat Khâlsâ*’. They took many joint decisions. They often held joint functions. Dealing with invaders and those who were against them were common matters for them. Physically they were separate, yet their hearts beat in unison. Soldiers were at liberty to express their views, yet they honoured the decision of their *Jathedârs*.

Secondly; there was no high or low in the *misl*. There were no gradations, nor sequences. All were equal. A *Jathedâr* was a soldier first and a soldier was as important as a *Jathedâr*. He who enjoyed the confidence and trust of all was normally appointed as *Jathedâr*. Yet his wish was never final. Every soldier could reach his views upto the *Jathedâr*. Maulwî Walî Illâh Siddiquî has written—“**Every person of the Sikh *misl* was a free person. Every leader was the master as well as servant. He was a ruler as well as a follower. When alone, he is a saint, a *faqir* or a *Bhagat* and when part of the *Panth*, he is the angel of death for his enemies.**”

Thirdly; every soldier had a right to leave a *misl* and join any other *misl* of his choice. This attitude was never looked down upon. It clearly establishes that the ultimate objective of all the *misls* was the same. One who was leaving was sent by his *Jathedâr* happily while the receiving *Jathedâr* always felt happy to receive him. Thus the advantage of the system was that the personality of the individual was maintained and respected. It was the moral duty of all the *Jathedârs* to keep his soldiers happy. A happy and contented soldiers would never leave the *misl*.

Development of the Misls. Till 1767, all the *misls* were focussed to deal with one objective of thwarting the invasions of Abdali. Thus they remained united under the common flag of *Dal Khâlsâ*. They obeyed the command of one *Jathedâr*. They honoured all the decisions of *Sarbat Khâlsâ* without any reservations. After 1767, the threat of Abdali disappeared. Mughal influence too had waned in Punjab. Marahattas would not think coming towards Punjab. There was no power in Punjab that was compatible with Sikhs. Thus selfish motives surfaced, political aspirations also woke up. So all *misls* started expanding their territory of jurisdiction. This became their prime objective. Although the territories of each *misl* was earmarked yet their limits/boundaries had not been defined. Taking advantage of the situations, each *misl* started working towards defining their boundaries and jurisdiction. Raising of forts in their territory was the first action that they took. Then the soldiers position was made permanent. They were paid wages periodically. Their desire to extend their rules changed their attitude of love and respect into jealousy and hatred. Thus the entire Punjab got divided into twelve parts. The existence of twelve *misls* was confirmed. The attendance on *Sarbat Khâlsâ* at Amritsar started thinning. Those who attended would show total respect and regard to the *Gurmatâs*. Those who were absent started flouting such respected decisions. Many started raising objections. As a result, the holding of *Sarbat Khâlsâ* became infrequent. The last meeting of *Sarbat Khâlsâ* took place in 1805 during the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Cunningham calls the *misls* by the name of Theocratic Confederate Feudalism. He is of the opinion that this organisation of the *misls* was *Jâgirdârî* based on religion. From the religious point of view, they all supported one

ideology. Therefore they all were one. Their political aim was also the same. They would often share each others company yet like feudal lords, were separate from each other. Thus the system can be called *Jâgirdârî*. But when deliberated, it will be clear that to call it religious confederate feudalism is not correct. Religion was one, sentiment was also one, to an extent. After 1767, when the development of *misls* took place, there was nothing common. Dr. Sinha describes the situation with the following example. "If we wind a wire on an iron rod and pass current in the wire, the iron core will become a magnet. But when the flow of current is stopped, the magnetic property also disappears." Something similar happened with the *misls*. The external aggression threat united them and when the threat ended, each became independent. The common objectives also disappeared. Political oneness also ended. Thus these *misls* cannot be called organisations based on religion. Religion was just a support for them. A student of Political Science would know that such a system cannot be called Theocratic. Also, the *misls* were not the runner of some feudal system. Feudalism has an unbreakable relationship with Monarchy. But Sikhs do not hold any one as *Mahârâjâ* or Emperor. The Sikhs of the *misls* never acknowledged the obedience and loyalty of any king. Cunningham himself has written that they considered God as their helper and support and regarded Him as their Master.* Every Sikh was free. He would never acknowledge anyones subservience. *Wahegurû Jî kâ Khâlsâ* was their primary and everyday slogan. They call themselves Emperor** is what had been acknowledged by Zakaria Khan and then by Abdâlî. Then when Capt Murrey asked Rattan Singh Bhangu as to by

* God was their helper and only judge.

** Shahansha Khudî ko bhâkhat.

what treaty were the Sikhs ruling? Rattan Singh replied, "Sikhs obey no one nor are they subservient to anyone." Dr. Sinha says that the *Jagirdârî* of Sikhs was neither on the lines of Europe nor of Rajputânâ. Each head of the *misl* used to obey the leader but only to an extent. The opinion of every Sikh soldier was respected. All this proves that it was not a Theocratic feudalism. It was a system that was spelt out by the need of the hour. No parallel of it can be found in India or even western countries.

Merits of Misl Organisations. *Misls* were historic necessities without which the survival of the *Panthic* organisation was not tenable. *Misls* not only helped keep the *Panthic* organisations united but also helped in the development and spread of Sikhism.

The first merit of *misls* was that the *Panths* got saved from division into small independent self-governing states at logger-head with each other. Nawab Kapur Singh realised that if 63 *Jathâs* can come up in 15 years, their strength can climb to hundred or more. They then will not only become independent but also break away from their pivot. So Nawab Kapur Singh organised them into eleven *Jathâs* after consolidating them into '*Dal Khalsa*'. Formation of eleven *misls* also satisfied the ego of the *Jathedârs* beside saving them from getting scattered. Innately, it also provided them with time for development.

Secondly; the organisation of *misls* increased the area of influence of the Sikhs. With the help of their associates, the *misls sardars* ran over the whole of Punjab. It may be a matter of surprise for the historians, but if they knew the history and development of the *misls* it was a natural thing to get inspired by each other. It is in the nature of everyone to lead the others in a competition. When the complete

account of achievements was read out every *misl* wanted to surpass the other. This inspiration helped them with their resolve to take over the entire Punjab.

Thirdly; this *misl* system proved very useful in protecting the country against the external invaders. This system made the Sikhs invincible. Defeating a *misl* was not the total defeat of the Sikhs. The other *misls* used to face the enemy unitedly and with courage. This is why the Mughals, Marahttas and then Afghans could not succeed in their missions. One could be confronted, but sometimes they would become eleven or even twelve. The *misl* system was such that no one could say that a strike at such and such place would prove decisive. Every *misl* revolved around a pivot, and any break away group would attach itself with other *misl*. The services rendered by *Phoolkian Misl* during the Major Holocaust and 'Ramgarhia Misl' during the reign of cruelty of Mir Mannu are two examples.

Once the field of operation had reduced, the *Jathedârs* of the *misls* and the soldiers were familiar with every inch of the ground. The outsiders often became helpless in tracing them. Every river and brook became their friend.

Fourthly—Once the wishes of every *misl* was respected, the feeling of enmity and opposition reduced. Since the area of operation of every *misl* was defined, there was complete freedom. If at all any dispute or discord would arise, the '*Jathedâr*' of *Dal Khâlsâ* would give a decision without taking sides.

Fifthly—the unwritten charter of the '*misls*' was such that every soldier was the master of his own will. A soldier could leave a *misl* to join any other. Similarly, every soldier would get adequate opportunity to progress. By his own traits, a

soldier could rise to the level of deputy *Jathedâr* or even *Jathedâr*. This possibility maintained a feeling of perpetual prosperity amongst the Sikhs. It did not permit the birth of feudalism. It was the result of the organisation of *misls* that the Afghans who did not spare the Marahatta Chief Madhav Rao Ji Scindia in his dream were pushed across the river Attock and ideal rule was established in the Punjab including the areas of North West frontier.

Demerits of the Misl System. Although the *misls* rendered many historic and timely merits, yet after 1767, they proved very harmful. This time was a period of vacuum in the history of India. Any stable, progressive, strong willed and opportunist nation could exploit the conditions to establish a lasting rule by filling up the void. The Sikhs had all the characteristics to do so. It was not some thing impossible for the Sikhs to establish an empire in Northern India. Forester¹, who came to India as a traveller in 1783 writes his impressions in his travelogues. He wrote that he had no hesitation in recording that the Sikhs would become the primary force among the Indian states and shortly after that they would prove destructive for their neighbours.

What Maharaja Ranjit Singh desired could have been fulfilled a century earlier. On the death of Najaf Khan in 1782, there was no strong minister in Delhi. Sikhs wasted away that golden opportunity². Shah Alam Second had

1. I have little hesitation in saying that the Sikhs would soon advance to the first rank amongst the native princes of Hindustan and would become a terror to the surrounding states.
2. In December 1768, Najib-ud-Daulla entered into a treaty with Sikhs. Rai Mal Gujar and Walter Leuhardt (Samroo) too wanted to join in. Shah Alam II had written to Sikhs from Allahabad, that he would be grateful if the Sikhs would help him. When no reply was received, Shah Alam entered into a Treaty with Marhattas.

reached an accord with Marahattas¹ and the British Government started direct indulgence in his affairs. With the stepping in of the Britishers the entire area under the Sikh protection was lost. The Sikhs remained confined to the land of five rivers. Let us have a look at the harms done by the *misls*.

1. Mutual Discords and Opposition. C. H. Payne writes that the *misls* gave birth to jealousy—a trait that was alien to the Sikhs. It now became a part of their character. Once the external threat was over, the inner strife took birth. Scramble for land commenced. They started fighting with each other with the same gusto as they fought with the Durranis. After the invasion of Durranis, the external threat would end and its place was taken over by doubts and suspicions. This commenced fight within the house. When they should have been interfering in the larger areas of India, they were wasting their time in fighting with each other.

2. End of *Gurmatâ* and Break up of Organisational Structure. The *misl* system virtually ended the principle of *Gurmatâ*. The *Gurmatâ* system that had guided the community at most arduous times, its end broke the pivot of unity. The common congregation at *Baisakhi* and *Diwâlî* ended. The respect of one leader ended. The greatness of an organisation broke. If these had remained, it can be said with certainty that Sikhs would have succeeded in laying the foundation of a mighty empire and would have presented unparallel front in India. But everything that happened was against the expectations. As a results, the organisational

1. On 31st March 1785, an accord was signed by Sikhs with Marhattas that their friends and enemies would be common. This accord could not be maintained.

structure broke and the authority of Sikhs remained confined to Punjab.

3. A Blow to the Democratic Set up. The birth of Sikh nation and its organisational structure was in favour of democracy and democratic values. Guru Gobind Singh Ji had adopted this concept. The selection of five beloveds and passing of *Gurmatâ* was aimed at the fulfillment of this ideology. The truth is that this was the main concept behind raising eleven organisations so that the existence of all could be maintained. But the *misl* system ended the sentiment of democracy. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh adopted the age old regal system of governance, he had also sown the seeds of the decline of the empire. It is said that he had thought of all making his kingdom into a democratic set at the fag end of his kindship, but his age went against it. the feudalism against which the Sikhs were fighting became strong amongst them.

4. Breaking of Associations Led to Debacles. The commencement of rat race for achieving selfish ends destroyed the earlier associations and closeness of purpose. Earlier the *misls* used to become one in the event of any external aggression but their mutual enmity increased to such an extent in 15 years that they never came together even in the face of common threat to them. When united, they were capable of facing the might of Abdali, but the greatest joke of the history took place when the *misls* of trans Satluj were defeated by Amba Ji Pingley Rane Khan and then Peron in 1787, 1790 and 1796 respectively. Some *Sardars* of *misls* accepted defeat and took up payment of yearly tribute to their vanquishers.

5. Sikhs Could not Become Mighty Power. The period

from 1767 to 1799 was a period of turmoil in India. The big powers had ended while the smaller had not found their feet on the ground. The Mughal empire had been reduced to just a name. The Marahttas were also a spent force. Ahmad Shah Durrani of Afghanistan had expired in 1772 and the Britishers were still in the far East of India. Rohillas, Jats, Rajputs and Nawabs of Avadh enjoyed some authority in Northern India but they were not strong enough. There was infighting amongst them. There was not even one power that could be called strong due to its organisational structure. According to a contemporary writer, **“There was internal fights and the country was crying in pain. That was a blessed time for the Sikhs because the threat of the Durrani’s had also ended. Ahmad Shah died in 1772 and his successor remained engrossed in his domestic affairs. He had neither the time nor the power to invade the Punjab.”** The Sikhs took no advantage of the situation and remained involved in their petty disputes. The *misl*s dealt an unforgettable loss. They could not fulfil their dreams of becoming a mighty power in India.

So we can say it with conviction that the *misls* who had caused the Afghans, Mughals and Marahttas to eat a humble pie, got themselves involved in such small inner strifes that they proved themselves no better than local power.

BRIEF HISTORY OF MISLS

Eleven *Jathâs* were constituted under the command of *Dal Khâlsâ*. These became famous as eleven *misls*. The twelveth was though not part of *Dal Khâlsâ*, yet was a *misl* historically and constitutionally. It had its own area of jurisdiction. We must have a birds eye view on the history of each *misl* in order to understand how Ranjit Singh managed to establish his rule in territory west of river Satluj. Shukarchakia *misl* was one among the twelve that became the only one historically.

After 1767, the entire Punjab came under the Sikh rule in about six years time. The territory got divided in twelve *misls*. The Sikhs commenced their own coin as well. The voice of “*Deg Teg Fateh, Nusrat Bedrang. Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.*” Started resounding in the Punjab. The *Khâlsâ* flag started fluttering from Saharanpur in the East to Attock in the West and from Multan to Kangra in the North-West. Taimur Shah, son of Ahmad Shah Abdali gave up his intentions of invading India and Sikhs in particular. He made a few invasions but these were not against the Sikhs but to sort out his own appointed rulers who had become defiant. Lahore and Punjab was not his targets. When a few selfish people of Punjab motivated him to come to Punjab, his reply was, “what has my father earned fighting the Sikhs?” Punjab came under the authority of the *misls*. Every *misl* had its own appearance and territory of protection. Many *misls* remained in the Punjab but their authority became less imposing due to the sharp and fast stance of other *misls*. Many thought it wise to merge themselves with others.

1. Faizalpuria Misl. This was the most respected *misl* among the Sikhs. Nawab Kapur Singh was the founder. It

was an honour to be part of this *misl*. Nawab Kapur Singh left the leadership of *Dal Khâlsâ* in 1749 but kept leading the *misl*. He belonged to village Faizalpur. Therefore this name was adopted for the *misl* as well. Later this very *misl* was renamed as Singhpuria. Nawab Kapur Singh led this *misl* till 1753. This *misl* faced many an enemy. Nawab Kapur Singh himself had killed over 500 enemy soldiers. The *misl* had a strength of 2500 soldiers. It operated across river Satluj right upto Delhi. After 1753, this *misl* came under the leadership of S. Khushal Singh*. He too was a brave and a gallant leader, who won territories on either side of river Saltuj. He took possession of Jalandhar, Noorpur, Behrampur, Bharatgarh and Patti. He took active part in preaching of Sikhism. After him, his son Budh Singh succeeded as the leader of the *Misl*. Budh Singh was not famous like his predecessors. Therefore the popularity and importance of the *misl* waned. Gradually its area of influence shrank to Jandiala, Taran Taaran and Patti from the principal *Mâjhâ* territory of the Punjab. Even this small area of their jurisdiction was frequently interfered by *Bhangi Misl*. Since this *misl* was located at Jandiala which is close to Amritsar, therefore it was often the target of enemy. The Chaudharies of Patti, Faujdars of Taran Taaran and Niranjaniyas of Jandiala had made this *misl* the target of their wrath. Thus its soldiers used to face the onslaught of the enemy perpetually. The enemy always believed this *misl* to be the pivot of the *Dal Khâlsâ*. Thus dealing a death blow to it would break the back of Sikh community. Yet the opponents could not succeed in their mission. This *misl* always enjoyed the help of other *misls*. Because of frequent blows over a long period of time, when the time of taking possession of the

*S. Khushal Singh was nephew of Nawab Kapur Singh.

Punjab came, this *misl* could not come to the forefront. Although it was much honoured, yet when it came to extension of territories, the much hyped respect also waned. This respect was primarily on two accounts—firstly, it was founded by Nawab Kapur Singh and secondly, it bore maximum brunt on itself in the event of aggressions from Afghans. This *misl* was under S. Khushal Singh till 1783. He had become old and therefore was not progressive. *Bhangi Misl* which was at its zenith wanted to usurp its territory but could not succeed. At last Maharaja Ranjit Singh annexed it into his kingdom.

2. Ahluwalia Misl. In terms of respect, this *misl* enjoyed love of Sikhs next to *Faizalpuria Misl*. It has great place in the Sikh history and therefore was held in much devotion and reverence. S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was the founder of this *misl*. As Nawab Kapur Singh very ably led the Sikhs during the ‘Small Holocaust’ and did not let them slip into a state of dejection, similarly S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia led the Sikhs admirably during the invasions of Abdali, the Great Holocaust oppressions of Adina Beg, Mir Mannu and obstinacy of Marahttas and made them capable of ruling Punjab. The nation felt immense gratitude for his able leadership and service and bestowed on him the title of *Sultan-ul-Quom* and made him Emperor of Lahore. When the matter of re-laying the foundation of Sri Harmandir Sahib camp up, the entire community asked S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia to do the honourable needful.* These two events

* This episode dates back to 1775. S. Jassa Singh had spread a sheet. What ever anyone had, he placed it on the sheet. According to an estimate, seven lakh rupees were collected. The task of re-construction of Sri Harmandir Sahib was entrusted to Shri Des Raj of Sursinghwal. In 1778, Baba Pritam Das and Baba Santokh Das had the *Hansali* (Water Channel) prepared.

are enough to show the respect that he enjoyed among the Sikhs. When Nawab Kapur Singh Ji entrusted the leadership into the able hands of S. Jassa Singh, it was not only a wise decision but also showed foresightedness of S. Kapur Singh. The *Panth* had to go through a period of turmoil from 1748 to 1767. It was the leadership of S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia that kept the nation progressing and emerge victorious.

The elders of S. Jassa Singh¹ belonged to village ‘Ahlu’. There lived a man by the name of Bhagu. Seeing the rise/ascendancy of Sikhs, he sold all his belongings and purchased a horse. He joined the *misl* of Nawab Kapur Singh. He was baptised with *Khande-ki-Pauhal* and was renamed Bhag Singh. Soon he organised his own *Jathâ* but always held Nawab Kapur Singh’s counsel as supreme.

One day Nawab Kapur Singh Ji visited his house. He met his widowed sister who had taken *Khande-ki-Pauhal*. She was singing *Gurbânî* very melodiously to the accompaniment of Rebbec. When Nawab Ji heard her singing, he was full of praise for her devotion. Nawab Kapur Singh Ji asked if the widowed lady had any issue, S. Bhag Singh Ji informed him that she had a son who was then staying with Mata Sundari Ji and had just arrived. This boy was S. Jassa Singh. When Nawab Kapur Singh had one look of the child, he said that he would become a famous warrior and a leading *Sardar*. Hearing this, the wise mother placed the hand of the child into the hands of Nawab Kapur Singh Ji. In a short period of time, the name of S. Jassa Singh became more known than his uncle S. Bhag Singh.

1. He was born at Delhi in 1718. He spent his childhood under the care of Mata Sundari Ji. Mata Sundari Ji had sent him to Amritsar. Since he was well educated, he was entrusted the task of maintaining *misls* (files). He partook *Amrit* at the hands Bhai Mani Singh Ji.

When S. Bhag Singh died, the responsibility of the *misl* fell upon S. Jassa Singh since S. Bhag Singh had no issue of his own. Thus this *misl* was named Ahluwalia. The jurisdiction and the territory of the *misl* was well defined. Its headquarter was in *Doaba* Jalandhar. It consisted of area east of river Beas, Ahlu, Sariala, Silevar, Bhupal, Gagarwal, Par Talwandi and Sultanpur. They were receiving revenue from Rai Ibrahim of Kapurthala¹. They also exercised their influence across river Satluj upto Kot Issa Khan and Jagraon. Although, S. Jassa Singh was the leader of the *misl* yet his view point was never selfish and limited/confined to the *misl*. The welfare and good of the *Panth* was at the core of his heart till his end. This *misl* too enjoys a very honourable place in Sikh history. If *Faizalpuria Misl* bore the brunt of all attacks, this *misl* did not lag behind in confronting the foreign aggression. Adina Beg was a clever Nawab of his time. He did not leave his authority on Jalandhar till his death. But this *misl* kept the intentions of Adina Beg in check. To keep their area of jurisdiction right under the nose of Adina Beg and not accept his supremacy the onus fell into the lot of this *misl*. Adina Beg made many attempts but had to keep quiet due to strong reply of S. Jassa Singh. This *misl* remained in power for long. Adina Beg tried to pitch S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia against *Ahluwalia misl* but *Ramgarhia Sardar* did not fall a prey to his guiles. No *Jathedâr* dare violate code of conduct with S. Jassa Singh around. Even during the occupation of Lahore, Ahluwalia Sardar was appointed the *Patishah*. After 1767, this *misl* took possession of Kapurthala and Jalandhar. S. Jassa Singh had grown old. He also did not think it appropriate to take part in the rat race. In 1783, he breathed his last

1. In 1781, this *misl* took over the reigns of Kapurthala. Then Kapurthala became its headquarter and remained so till 1847.

at Amritsar. His royal attitude can be gauged from the fact that he would never wear a dress second time. It was always given to a needy person. Every one was much impressed by his nobility, magnificence and gallantry¹. After him the leadership of the *misl* fell into the hands of his nephew Bhag Singh, a son of his brother. He was a weak ruler and could not succeed in the expansion of his jurisdiction. Instead, he earned a dispute with *Ramgarhia misl*. In 1801, Hamir Singh was defeated by *Ramgarhia misl*. After Bhag Singh, his successor Fateh Singh became a foster brother of Ranjit Singh who merged this *misl* in his own *misl*².

The area of operation of this *misl* remained confined to Kapurthala. Maharaja Ranjit Singh used this *misl* for his own gains. The strength of soldiers of this *misl* was 3000. It had touched a high mark of 7000 also.

3. Ramgarhia Misl. S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was the founder and *Jathedâr* of this *misl*. He belonged to village Ichhogil. His ancestors were carpenter by profession³. So he was addressed as 'Thoka' that almost became his surname. Where as he was well aware of construction and raising of buildings, he was also an intelligent soldier and military General. *Sarbat Khâlsâ* decided to construct a garrison enclosure near Gurudwara Bibeksar for the

1. Tarikh-e-Punjab, Kanaihya Lal.
2. It is behaved that had Fateh Singh picked up courage, he could have become king of Punjab. But he did not have the strength to take risk. There was no one as intelligent a *misl sardar* as him. S. Ranjit Singh also used his wisdom a great deal. Fateh Singh represented Ranjit Singh in the Treaty of 1806 with Lord Lake. He fought for Ranjit Singh in all his campaigns. He died in 1831.
3. Bhai Bhagwan Singh was also addressed as Giani since he used to do exposition of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He had five sons. S. Tara Singh, S. Mali Singh, S. Khushal Singh, S. Jai Singh and S. Jassa Singh.

protection and defence of Sri Darbar Sahib. This was named as Ram Raoni. Sikhs were of the opinion that without a fort/fortress, protection of the *sanctum sanctorum* was not viable. Therefore S. Jassa Singh (Thoka) was entrusted the task of raising *Ram Raoni*¹. When in 1748, this Ram Raoni was made into a permanent structure², Ram Raoni became Ramgarh. Although S. Jassa Singh was unhappy with Sikhs during the period of turmoil and adversities, yet he fought on the side of his brothers and saved Ramgarh. Since that day, the suffix Ramgarhia got added with his name. His *misl* too became known as *Ramgarhîâ Misl*. Kanaihya Lal the historian writes that seeing the intelligence, cleverness, sweetness of conversation and very respectable appearance, Adina Beg was highly impressed.

S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia made adequate contributions in the struggle for freedom. At no time had he backtracked himself. He fell cross with *Dal Khâlsâ* in 1750 on some account. He was accused of killing a new born girl—an act which was against the tenants of Sikhism. The 'Dal Khâlsâ' expressed its anger. He too felt peeved as to why has he been punished without making investigation of the matter. Adina Beg was looking for an appropriate time. He entered into a treaty with S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. This arrangement between them was frowned upon for some times. So both Adina Beg and Mir Mannu attacked Ram Raoni alongwith S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia in 1751. The Sikhs were trapped in *Ram Roani*. The condition of the entrapped Sikhs could not be borne by S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who was no less a Sikh at heart. So he detached himself from the army of Adina Beg and took side of the

1. S. Nand Singh Sanghani was also with him.
2. Adina Beg and General Mir Aziz Baksh had also blown up the mud fortress.

Sikhs to attack Adina Beg. As soon as he attacked, the enemy forces scrambled for cover and ran away.

S. Jassa Singh kept confronting the Durrans alongwith other *misls* of *Dal Khâlsâ*. He achieved many victories at far and near places in collaboration with S. Jai Singh *Kanaihya*. When Khawaja Abad Khan tried to break the organisational structure of *Dal Khâlsâ*, S. Jassa Singh alongwith the Sardar of *Kanaihya Misl* handed him a crushing defeat.

Even during the great holocaust (Vada Ghalughara), he bore the brunt equally. After Abdali had withdrawn, he too commenced his campaign for the expansion of his area of jurisdiction. He took Batala, Kalanaur, Dina Nagar, Quadian, Sri Hargobindpur, Ghuman and some other villages of Amritsar under his rule. His annual revenue also mounted to six lakhs. He was in complete control of Doaba area of Jalandhar. The *Kanaihya Misl* did not appreciate his occupation of Kalanaur and Batala. Therefore they fell apart with *Ramgarhia Misl*.^{*} In this state of pulls and pushes, S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia suffered much. So he had to go across river Satluj leaving their own territory. His organisational structure was strong and there was no one as strong and effective between river Satluj and Jamuna. Baba Ala Singh had expired and the Sardars of Karor Singhia Misl were not fit enough to confront him. He established himself as powerful leader in a short time. He

* It is also said that the brothers of S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia stopped and insulted/disrespected S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia when he was going on a visit to various Gurdawaras. When S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia came to know about it, he bade him farewell with much respect and honour. Although Ramgarhia Sardar was not at fault, yet the whole *Panth* felt aggrieved. Bhangi, Kanaihya and Shukarchakia *misl* then pushed S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia across river Satluj.

established Sirsa as his central place. He attacked the Mughal palaces of Delhi and took away four guns. He collected a sum of rupees ten thousand as protection money from Nawab of Meerut. He raised Hissar to ground because its ruler had molested two Brahman girls. He collected about 5 lakh gold coins from there. He won many campaigns and battles in the *Doab* of Ganga-Jamuna rivers. Had he stayed there for some more time, he would have emerged a strong power for ruling the entire Northern India. But he could never forget the territory that he had lost or was snatched away from him. In 1783, he collaborated with *Shukarchakia Misl* and attacked the territory of *Kanaihya Misl*.¹ He took over the territory of Batala. *Kanaihya Misl* was much aggrieved but was not in a state to fight alone. When Ranjit Singh married the daughter of S. Gurbakhsh Singh, then Sada Kaur also got an opportunity to punish *Ramgarhia Misl*. So she attacked Miani with the help of S. Ranjit Singh in 1796. S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was stationed at Miani. He approached Baba Sahib Singh Bedi to squash the matter but Sada Kaur did not listen to it. Baba Sahib Singh Bedi felt displeased. It is said that Sada Kaur had a very narrow escape at Beas. By now he had grown old. Therefore, he felt it wise to lead a retired life at one place. He breathed his last in 1803. With his demise, the fame of the *misl* also waned. Maharaja Ranjit Singh took possession of the territory of this *misl* when Budh Singh son of S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia accepted submission. This *misl* was about 3000 soldiers strong. During his invasions across river Satluj, this strength touched 8000 mark.

4. Bhangji Misl. This was counted as a formidable *misl* amongst the Sikh *misls*. In the early period, Faizalpuria and

1. Both S. Maha Singh and S. Jai Singh had fallen apart with each other.

Ahluwalia *misls* reigned supreme. These two were much respected in the *Panth*, but after the departure of Abdali, both these *misls* did not take part in the rat race of supremacy. Thus they lagged behind. Ramgarhias were also pushed across river Satluj when it became effective to interfere in the power equation of Punjab, *Bhangji Misl* was at its peak. It was also counted among the powerful *misl* of the time. Dr Sinha is of the opinion that had *Bhangji Misl* acted wisely, it would have ruled Punjab instead of *Shukarchakia Misl*. Perhaps the providence did not favour them.

S. Chhajja Singh was the founder of this *Misl**. S. Chhajja Singh brought the Jats of his area into fold of Sikhism and formed an independent *Jathâ*. Then they started attacking small hemlets of Mughal kingdom. Bhai Bhim Singh took over the *misl* after S. Chhajja Singh. Bhai Bhim Singh had been baptised by S. Chhajja Singh. He was also related to him. He belonged to village Kasur. During the invasion of Nadir Shah, S. Bhim Singh earned for himself a good name. They collected much of the plundered goods. After Bhim Singh, S. Hari Singh succeeded as the leader of the *misl*. S. Hari Singh was the nephew of S. Bhim Singh and he had been adopted as his son. This *misl* earned much fame in his leadership. S. Hari Singh was an intelligent leader, a progressive soldier and a wise statesman. The writer of *Tarikh-e-Punjab* writes that S. Hari Singh was a clever, powerful and a man of shining abilities. He was very active during all the Sikh struggles and at no time had it been found wanting in effort. They kept winning and attacking territories upto hundred miles or so. This is the only *misl* that had arranged for good horses for all its soldiers. It had made Gilwali (Amritsar) as its headquarter. The centre of all Sikh

* According to Kanaihya Lal, S. Chhajja Singh partook *Amrit* at the hands of Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

struggle was Amritsar alone. Even the ruling power was keen to destroy the importance of Amritsar for the Sikhs. Thus this *misl* earned a pivotal place by virtue of its position. So the strength of soldiers of this *misl* increased to 20,000. By an estimate, *Bhangi Misl* always had 12,000 soldiers with it. For their love for Amritsar and in order to save its honour, every soldiers and progressive leaders yearned to join this *misl*. It was considered a matter of pride to be part of the *misl*. S. Hari Singh himself was a proud and progressive young soldiers. Whenever he fought, he would appear to be intoxicated. People thought that he had consumed hemp/cannabis. Thus the suffix *Bhangi* got added to his name and the *misl* also became famous by this name.*

This *misl* expanded its area of Jurisdiction much after the departure of Abdali. What was confined to area around Amritsar now extended to Chiniot and Jhang. They also took possession of Sialkot, Narowal and Karial. They also took over Rawalpindi**. Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu was brought to submission and took tribute from him. The *misl* had the *Khâlsâ* flag raised even across river Sind. S. Rai Singh Boorhia had the Sikh flag fluttering across river Jamuna. Even Ranjit Singh acknowledged defeat. Bhangi Sardars even planned to win Kashmir but their plans did not fructify.

It was in the leadership of S. Hari Singh that S. Lehna Singh, S. Gujjar Singh and S. Sobha Singh took their first *Jathâ* to Lahore in 1765 and took over the city. S. Gujjar Singh even went to confront Mukbar Khan and had their

* Bhai Bhim Singh was an idle wanderer who was brought into the fold of Sikhism by S. Chhajja Singh. He was known to be preparing intoxicating drink of hemp all the time near the premises of Sri Darbar Sahib. After partaking *Amrit*, his nick name Bhangi stuck with him. Later on, even the *misl* became known as Bhangi.

** It was S. Milkha Singh who had attacked Rawalpindi.

own authority established from river Chenab of river Sindh. Mukbar Khan had established his authority in this area and took it as his right to rule the area after Abdali. By dealing a decisive defeat to him, *Bhangi* Sardars ended his authority from the territory. Thus S. Gujjar Singh made Gujrat as his centre of activities. S. Charhat Singh Shukarchakia demanded his share seeing the progress and prosperity of the *Bhangi Misl*. S. Gujjar Singh proposed him to launch a joint attack across river Jhelum so that Mukbar Khan could be pushed across river Sindh. So once new territories were won, only then could *Shukarchakia Misl* be given a share. Both pitched their forces against Rohtas and conquered it. S. Gujjar Singh thought it wise politically that the jurisdiction of Shukarchakia Sardar be acknowledged across river Jehlum.

In 1764*, S. Hari Singh expired. His son S. Jhanda Singh took over the mentle of the *Misl*. S. Ganda Singh was appointed Deputy *Jathedâr*.

S. Jhanda Singh detached his mind from Jammu, Kashmir and Northern territory and concentrated on Multan. Multan was under the rule of Afghans. Bhangi Sardar felt that the last sign of influence of the Afghans should also be removed from the soil of Punjab. But he was not aware of the strength of his opponents. Dawood's grand children of Bahawalpur were at the fore front of extending assistance to Multan. S. Jhanda Singh launched the campaign without adequate preparations. It could achieve no results. Therefore an accord was reached. Pak Pattan was fixed as the boundary.** Shortly thereafter,

* S. Hari Singh and S. Amar Singh of Patiala came face to face in a battle S. Hari Singh was killed in this shirmish.

** It happened in 1766, In 1767, S. Jhanda Singh had constructed a fort called 'Quilla Bhangian' near Loon Mandi of Amritsar.

Bhangis started crossing the boundary of Pak Pattan. They prepared and attacked Multan. Yet again they did not succeed. Then in 1771, S. Jhanda Singh thought of launching a severe attack on Multan. The victory was not expected easily. Unfortunately, the power at Multan got split into two parties. Sharief Beg Takkal, a leader of the break away group invited S. Jhanda Singh. Taking advantage of the situation, S. Jhanda Singh occupied Multan. Shujah Khan and the grandsons of Dawood of Bahawalpur ran away from the field. Sharief Beg also ran away to Sindh. S. Diwan Singh was appointed Governor of Multan. In the same year, *Bhangis* attacked Ram Nagar and captured 'Zam Zama' gun, that became famous by the name of '*Bhangîân di Top*'. This victory took the honour of *Bhangi Misl* to the top.

After Multan, they threatened Kasur. Aslam Khan the Garrison Commander of Kasur was famous for his ill treatment of his subjects beside being of immoral character. Kasur was captured many a times by the Sikhs and they had punished the *Faujdar*. Since the Sikhs were concentrating their mind and efforts towards Multan, the *Faujdar* re-imposed his power over the people. Thus after Multan, S. Jhanda Singh attacked Kasur. He took possession of the fort. *Bhangi Misl* exploits were known all around by now. General Barker was taking a keen interest in the state of Punjab in those days. S. Jhanda Singh wrote to General Barker telling him that the power of *Dal Khâlsâ* was indescribable. It was *Dal Khâlsâ* which had checked frequent attacks of Abdali. He also stated about the might of *Bhangi Misl*. This even dates back to 1773.

By then the area of jurisdiction of *Bhangi Misl* had

extended from Amritsar to Multan and Jammu to Rohtas. It was believed that this *misl* will over power all others and succeed in establishing its rule in the Punjab. But S. Charht Singh and S. Maha Singh kept the progress of *Bhangi Misl* in check.

Next year, a dispute developed between Ranjit Dev of Jammu and his son. *Bhangis* reached to help Ranjit Dev. Both *Kanaihya* and *Shukarchakia* declared their intentions to help Brij Raj Dev, the rebellious son of Ranjit Dev. S. Jai Singh Kanaihya paid handsome amount to a *Mazhabi* and had S. Jhanda Singh murdered. In 1774. This was a telling blow on *Bhangi Misl*. S. Ganda Singh, the younger brother of S. Jhanda Singh took over the reins of the *Misl*. He strengthened the fort of Amritsar and paid attention towards Amritsar. But he had not forgotten the murder of his brother. He was looking for an opportunity that came his way soon, when the widow of Nand Singh, a member of *Bhangi Misl* had her daughter married with Tara Singh of *Kanaihya Misl* and gave the area of Pathankot in dowry to *Kanaihya Sardar*. S. Ganda Singh did not like it and therefore attacked *Kanaihya Misl*. They fought at Dina Nagar. S. Ganda Singh fell during the campaign and died. His nephew Charhat Singh died fighting at Pathankot. These two deaths broke the hearts of *Bhangi* soldiers. They handed over Pathankot to *Kanaihyas* and returned back.

Bhangi Misl now accepted S. Desa Singh, a minor son of S. Ganda Singh as their leader. They could not control such a big and powerful *misl*. As a result both Jhang and Multan slipped out of their hands. In 1777, Muzaffar Khan, the Nawab of Bahawalpur attacked Multan but Diwan Singh

defeated him. Next year Taimur Shah launched an attack but Diwan Singh thwarted his efforts. Taimur now attacked with a force of 18000. *Bhangi Sardar* gave in nearly 3000 Sikh soldiers lost their lives. Multan fell into the hands of Taimur Shah. S. Desa Singh tried to recapture the area of Jhang but he lost his life in 1782 at the hands of Maha Singh.

S. Gulab Singh became the leader in his place. He got involved in worldly pleasures. The only achievement on the name of S. Gulab Singh is victory over Kasur. But it was taken back from him by Nizam Din Khan and Kutab Din Khan in 1794. When Ranjit Singh took possession of Lahore in 1799, S. Gulab Singh hit upon a conspiracy to call Ranjit Singh to the fort of Bhasin where he should be murdered. But (Maharaja) Ranjit Singh came to the fort accompanied by a strong force. So, S. Gulab Singh could not execute his conspiracy. S. Gulab Singh used to consume large quantity of liquor and could not save himself from its ill effects. Meanwhile on the pretext of borrowing *Bhangi's Top*, he occupied *Bhangi's* fort and Amritsar. Mai Sukhan and her son Gurdit Singh took shelter with S. Jodh Singh. S. Lehna Singh and S. Gujjar Singh of this *misl* had subjugated a large area of Punjab. S. Gurbaksh Singh who was a significant member of *Bhangi Misl* adopted S. Lehna Singh as his son. S. Gujjar Singh was grandson of S. Gurbaksh Singh (son of his daughter). After the sad demise of S. Gurbaksh Singh, both fell apart on some matters but reconciled soon. They divided the territory held by them. In 1795, S. Gujjar Singh, S. Lehna Singh and S. Sobha Singh took possession of Lahore. S. Lehna Singh ruled the city till 1797. In 1799, Ranjit Singh evicted sons of S. Lehna Singh (Chet Singh) and S. Sobha Singh out of Lahore and

took over the city. Ranjit Singh was ably supported by Bhâi Gurbaksh Singh, Hakîm Hâkam Rai and Mîân Ishaque Mohammad in investing Lahore.

Once Lahore was lost, S. Gujjar Singh now started paying attention towards North. He took possession of Gujrat and then in collobaration with some other *Bhangi Sardars* won Jammu as well. He also took over the cities of Poonchh, Islam Garh, Deva Botala in 1786. He had a fort by the name of Gujjar Singh constructed at Amritsar. The fort of Gobindgarh is now located there. S. Gujjar Singh had three sons named Sukha Singh, Sahib Singh and Fateh Singh. S. Sukha Singh was killed at the hands of S. Sahib Singh. Sahib Singh was married to an aunt (Fathers sister–Bûâ) of Ranjit Singh. Gujjar Singh and Sahib Singh were annoyed with each other because Sahib Singh had handed over the muslim Garrison Commander of Ram Nagar to S. Mahan Singh. This Garrison Commander had asked S. Gujjar Singh for refuge. This slip on the part of Sahib Singh annoyed Gujjar Singh so much that he left the fort. He handed over all his territory to Fateh Singh and came over to Lahore. He died in 1788. Fateh Singh was not accepted as leader by the members of *Bhangi Misl*. They selected S. Sahib Singh. In order to protect his interests, Maha Singh attacked his brother in law S. Sahib Singh. A pitched battle was fought at Sadhaora in 1792. Due to his ill health, S. Maha Singh left the field in the care of S. Sahib Singh. Then he conspired to murder Ranjit Singh in the fort of Bhasin but due to failure, he joined Ranjit Singh. In 1806, he accepted subjugation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and lived his life on a *Jâgîr* of one lakh granted by S. Ranjit Singh. He died in 1811.

Causes of Decline of Bhangi Misl

The *misl* that was expected to rule whole of Punjab got reduced to a symbol by the end of eighteenth century. There are many causes of its decline. Where as it enjoyed a pivotal place amongst the *misls*, it also had to face the onslaught of Abdali's invasion. All its leaders faced Abdali's challenge with their devotion and dedication and expanded their area of jurisdiction. When the time came for consolidation, they did not pay adequate attention towards expansion. They ignored their past and weaknesses. The unseen powers weakened them further. The primary cause of their victories were that they had established Amritsar as their centre. Later on, they changed their centres. S. Gujjar Singh, S. Hari Singh, S. Jhanda Singh and S. Ganda Singh made Gujarat, Jammu, Multan and Kasur as their centres respectively. Having gone away from the centre and position of advantage, they were unable to protect all their territory. Once Multan slipped out of their hands, other territories also started slipping away.

Secondly, occupation of Multan was not a wise idea. Statesmanship demanded that they remain concentrated in the centre. Multan was a concentration of Afghans. Taimur Shah considered it a challenge to his pride. When *Bhangi Misl* enjoyed complete control over Multan; thought he was ever ready to invade Punjab. So he attacked Multan in 1781. Much against the Sikh *maryada* *Bhangi Sardar* accepted defeat and showed cowardice. Multan was handed over to Taimur Shah. *Panth* respected *Bhangi Sardars* for their courage and bravery but with the fall of Multan that respect too was dashed into the dust. They could not recover from this insult. The leaders of other *misls* were ever on the look out for opportunities. They started unfurling their flags on the territory of *Bhangi Misl*. When *Bhangi misl* returned from

Multan to Amritsar, their glory had ebbed very low.

Thirdly, the luck also did not favour them. *Bhangi Misl* had progressed due to good leadership of its *Jathedârs*. Then all senior leaders started dying one after the other. Hardly had the grief of death of S. Hari Singh in 1764 overcome that S. Jhanda Singh was murdered in 1774. S. Ganda Singh expired in 1775. S. Charhat Singh who was his nephew and successor died in battle the same year. It became difficult to bear one tragedy after the other. The leadership of *Bhangi Misl* slipped into the hands of weak and incompetent *Jathedâr** who were not capable of giving a fight.

Fourthly—*Bhangi Misl* had done incorrect assessment of the power *Shukarchakia* and *Kanahiya Misl*. Their leaders were equally adept and wise. Moreover the organisational structure of these *misls* were well concentrated and united. On the contrary *Bhangi Misl* was divided into many parts. Bhai Lehna Singh, Bhai Sobha Singh, S. Gujjar Singh and S. Ganda Singh had their independently operating *Jathâs* while remaining part of *Bhangi Misl*. They could not arrest the expansion of *Bhangi Misl* nor could they do anything to stop its decline. Whatever was remaining in this decline, it was completed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. By the end of eighteenth century, this *misl* went into the annals of history.

5. Kanahîyâ Misl. This *misl* also took a very active part in the struggle of Sikh existence in Punjab. After the exit of Abdali from the scene, this *misl* earned much name for itself. It was counted among the leading three *misls*. Only *Bhangi* and *Shukarchakia Misl* could offer them a fight for supremacy. It made its jurisdiction in a large area of Punjab.

S. Jai Singh was the founder and *Jathedâr* of this *misl*. He was son of Bhâi Khushal Jat. They were residents of village Kahna which was about 15 miles South of Lahore.

* Desa Singh, Gulab Singh and Sahib Singh.

So initially the name of the *Jathâ* and then that of *Misl* became known as *Kanahiya*. It is said that when Bhâi Khushal Jat heard the episodes of martyrdom of the Sikhs, he decided to become a Sikh. So he presented himself before Nawab Kapur Singh and partook *Amrit*. He also inspired many other people of his area to adopt Sikhism. Gradually he formed a separate *Jathâ*. This *Jathâ* was often sent to participate in important campaigns. Jai Singh had two more brothers. One was Bhai Jhanda Singh and the other was Bhâi Singha. Nothing much is known about Bhai Singha in the history books but it is found that Bhai Jhanda Singh and one Bhai Bhag Singh had joined the *Jathâ* of Nawab Kapur Singh. They had farmed their own *Jathâ* during the period of Nawab Kapur Singh. By the time Nawab Sahib expired, these *Jathâ* had become fairly strong.

In 1763, at the time of attack on Kasur, these *Jathâs* were in the lead. Seeing the prosperity of *Bhangi Misl*, S. Jai Singh felt restless. So he started to plan to emerge as the leading *Jathâ*. At first, he decided to take up cudgels with them directly but seeing the power and strength of *Bhangi Misl*, he entered into a treaty with *Shukarchakia Misl*. S. Charhat Singh was also looking for an associate. *Bhangi Misl* fought a battle against the combined might of *Kanahiya* and *Shukarchakia Misl* on the bank of river Basantar near Jammu. S. Jai Singh and S. Charhat Singh came against S. Jhanda Singh. S. Charhat Singh was supervising firing with explosives when a charge of explosive caught fire and burst on him. S. Charhat Singh fell down and could not regain consciousness. S. Jai Singh Kanahiya attacked in a rage. S. Jhanda Singh was defeated and murdered on the spot. This event took place in 1774. Now after taking over the territory of *Bhangis* in Jammu area they now advanced towards the territory of *Ramgarhia Misl*. *Ahluwalia Misl* also

helped in this venture because S. Mali Singh and another brother of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had dishonoured and disrespected S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. They annexed the territory of Batala and Kalanaur into their jurisdiction. They forced S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia to leave Punjab.* After this success, S. Jai Singh attacked Sirhind. Zain Khan was killed. S. Jai Singh managed to collect much valuables and military hardware from there. He also collected protection money from the kings of Garota, Hajipur, Nurpur, Datarpur. In order to establish their supremacy these kings readily accepted giving of tribute. The most prominent victory was occupation of Kangra fort and extracting protection money from Raja Sansar Chand Katoch of Kangra. Raja Sansar Chand asked for help from S. Jai Singh against Saif Ali Khan the *Faujdar* of Kangra fort**. S. Jai Singh himself went to Kangra. As soon as he reached Kangra, Saif Ali Khan died suddenly. The fort was invaded. S. Jai Singh brought around Jiwan Khan son of Saif Ali Khan to vacate Kangra fort and he himself took over the fort. Sansar Chand felt much peeved but had to keep quiet. He then felt it wise to accept subjugation. This incident took place in 1775.

As *Kanahiya Misl* was unhappy with the prosperity of *Bhangi Misl*, similarly S. Mahan Singh also felt concerned. The receipt of protection money from the hill kings by S. Jai Singh Kanahiya caused much worry to S. Mahan Singh***.

* S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia established his area of jurisdiction in Hansi, Hissar and Sirsa.

** Kangra was the key to the valley. Its occupation made the *Kanahiya Sardars* most powerful above all others. The fort of Kangra was almost 1000 years old.

*** According to one source of information, this dispute took place during the distribution of looted treasure. Mahan Singh wanted to settle the issue even after reaching Amritsar, but S. Jai Singh did not respond favourably. For fear of being arrested Mahan Singh left Amritsar quickly.

S. Mahan Singh had a dialogue with Sansar Chand and entered into a treaty with him. They both combined together and attacked the territory of S. Jai Singh. It was a fearsome attack that uprooted the *Kanahiya Sardars*. His son S. Gurbaksh Singh died in the battle in 1784. S. Jai Singh agreed to confine himself in the general area of Gurdaspur. And yet another mishap had to be borne by *Kanahiya Misl*. S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had consolidated his forces out of Punjab. He entered into a treaty with S. Mahan Singh *Shukarchakia* and launched a direct attack. *Ramgarhia Sardar* even prepared Sansar Chand to take revenge of the injury caused by *Kanahiya Sardar*. The combined forces of three were too much for *Kanahiya Misl*. *Ramgarhia Misl* took back the territory of Batala and Kalanaur. This campaign broke the back of *Kanahiya Misl* and rendered it unfit for its sustenance. In order to end their feud among themselves, S. Jai Singh proposed the marriage of his grand daughter Mehtab Kaur with child Ranjit Singh son of Mahan Singh. S. Jai Singh died in 1789. The leadership of the *Misl* was taken over by Bibi Sada Kaur. S. Gurbaksh Singh was the only son of S. Jai Singh. Rani Sada Kaur was a capable and an adept politician woman/statesman. She maintained discipline in the *Misl* and kept it consolidated till 1820. She was always on the look out for recapturing her lost territory but Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not let her dreams be realised.

This *Misl* had a strength of 5000 soldiers. Many a time this strength had crossed 10,000 bodies. Had its treaty with *Shukarchakia* remained operative, it would not have faced such a quick decline. It did not have enough strength to thwart any combined aggression. It suffered a set back against the combined onslaught of *Bhangi*, *Shukarchakia*, *Kanahiya* and *Ramgarhia misls*.

6. Shukarchakia Misl. If any one *misl* succeeded most in the internal and mutual rift of the *misls*, it was *Shukarchakia*. It fulfilled its dream of occupying all territory west of river Satluj and then establish a regime free and independent from all interference. Undoubtedly some other *misls* kept earning fame from time to time, but the only *misl* whose fame and honour remained stable was *Shukarchakia Misl*. The *misl* that enjoyed supreme respect from 1780 till the beginning of the nineteenth century was *Shukarchakia Misl* only. Other *misls* were led by veteran leaders for a generation or two but this *misl* was fortunate to have intelligent and farsighted leaders through out till the establishment of their independent empire. It was S. Charhat Singh in the beginning followed by S. Mahan Singh and then (Maharaja) Ranjit Singh. The founder of this *misl* was Jathedâr S. Naudh Singh. His ancestors belonged to village Shukarchak.* Thus the name of the *misl* that became known all over was *Shukarchakia*.

S. Charhat Singh. S. Charhat Singh earned a name for himself during the Sikh struggle in the early part of the eighteenth century. There was no battle nor an opportunity where he had not participated and that too in the fore front. He would spend many months in the jungles. He was the leader of one of the five *Jathâs* of *Tarunâ Dal*. During the withdrawal of Abdali after his fourth invasion, it was S. Charhat Singh who chased him and caused him much

* This village was in Amritsar District. S. Budh Singh was a brave and progressive leader. He suffered 40 wounds on his body in various battles. When he died in 1712, his sons Chanda Singh and Naudh Singh resided in village Shukarchak and raised their *Jathâ*. This was a branch of Taruna Dal. This *Jathâ* operated effectively upto Gujranwala. S. Naudh Singh died fighting with Afghans near Majithâ. He had only one son named Charhat Singh. He was only 5 years old then.

damage. He also played a leading role in the confrontation with Adina Beg.

The courage and feats of bravery that this *Sardar* showed during the Great Holocaust, was praised by all and sundry. He suffered 23 wounds on his body and yet kept fighting. This *misl* became very famous after the influence of Abdali had ended in the Punjab. Many young people approached S. Charhat Singh with a request to take them into his *misl*. But he always maintained that other than a Sikh, he would not enroll anyone else. And if some one would become a Sikh, only then would he be accepted. Thus those with determination of service and achieving something enrolled themselves in the *misl*. They plundered villages and cities which ever side they went. In association with S. Gujjar Singh of *Bhangi Misl*, they occupied territory across river Jehlum. S. Charhat Singh led the *misl* as the time and event demanded. When *Shukarchakia Sardar* realised that the influence of *Bhangi Misl* had increased all over Punjab, he joined hands with *Kanahiya Misl* and arrested their progress. They kept a friendly attitude towards *Ramgarhia Misl* as well. One can say without doubt that S. Charhat Singh was an unrivalled, shrewd and self respecting general. There was none like him who would arrive at decisions. Under the able leadership of Nawab Kapur Singh and then S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, he acquired sharpness in his leadership traits. He was a calm person who had courage to go through many adversities with finesse. His enthusiasm and sentiments for Sikhism were indescribable.

He established Gujranwala as the hub of all his activities. He was always in the forefront during confrontation with Afghans. When the rat race of possessing territories and

establishing jurisdiction commenced among the *misl*, it helped him to be at Gujranwala. Even *Bhangi Sardars* avoided confronting him. S. Gujjar Singh felt that entering into an accord with them was a better option. Their combined forces invaded Rohtas and captured it. This fort had its own importance in Punjab and India. The campaign on Rohtas had made him so much capable that he could take up cudgels with more powerful opponents and come out successfully. Even if defeated, it would not have much adverse effect on the *misl* and above all, every *misl* was keen to help *Shukarchakia misl*. When he died in an accident due to bursting of explosives near Jammu* it was generally believed that this *misl* will also become ineffective like other *misls*. His demise was an unforgettable experience for the *misl*. The way S. Mahan Singh handled the affairs of the *misl* after the death of his father, and expanded its jurisdiction and territorial authority speaks volume of his leadership abilities. He like his father used all opportunities to his advantage. With the demise of S. Charhat Singh, *Kanahiya Misl* became more powerful. *Bhangi Misl* had lost its awe where as *Kanahiya Misl* was increasing its influence and jurisdiction very fast. It succeeded in pushing *Ramgarhia Sardar* away from the territories of their interest. It was indeed a great achievement to obtain protection money from the hill kings. S. Mahan Singh thought it wise to come to the aid of S. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia to restore him his lost territories. S. Jai Singh solemnised the marriage of his grand daughter with the son of S. Mahan Singh. This relationship proved highly beneficial to S. Mahan Singh. In collaboration with hill kings, he handed a crushing defeat to S. Jai Singh Kanahiya. *Shukarchakia Sardar* did not commit the mistake that other leaders of the *misls* were doing. He did not extend his territorial jurisdiction in trans Ravi

* This event took place in 1774.

area, but stayed put at Ram Nagar and Gujranwala. S. Mahan Singh took over the entire territory of Pir Mohammad Khan in three months time. S. Mahan Singh captured many sacred items of Muslim faith that he sent to Gujranwala very respectfully. This act earned him a name all around. He eyed Jammu longingly. When Balraj Dev king of Jammu, ran away from the city, the residents were much disturbed. He sent a message immediately that they had not come to plunder the city and that they should remain free of worry since he was only concerned with his ruling the city. Everyone had a word of praise for the wisdom and discernment. One must wait for an opportune moment to strike rather than rushing in direct confrontation and this was the right statesmanship. By 1791, the influence of the *misl* had extended up to Rohtas. In 1792, S. Mahan Singh died in the prime of his age. Although it was a big loss to *Shukarchakia Misl* yet Ranjit Singh took control of the situation very deftly. The way Ranjit Singh established his rule over the Punjab is a subject of separate chapter.* It is said that had S. Mahan Singh lived for some more years, the kingdom that could only survive and show its impression for forty years would have established a lasting empire in Punjab.

This *misl* had about 7000 soldiers and its strength did not fluctuate much. The consolidation of Punjab and then establishing a rule goes to the credit of this *Misl*.

7. Naka-ee Misl. The barricades of Lahore and Multan had special significance in the history of Punjab. These barricades had special place during the invasions of Abdali and Taimur. Sikhs were well aware of the importance of these barricades and in view of the position of Punjab, felt it mandatory to occupy them. The task of occupation of

* Read 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh' a booklet published by this college.

these barricades was undertaken by S. Hira Singh and thus was laid the foundation of this *misl*. Then it advanced further and won much territory along river Satluj. S. Hira Singh was son of Chaudhari Hem Raj of village Bharwal. This village was part of Chunia sub-division (Tehsil). It was also known by the name of Naka. S. Hira Singh partook *Amrit* and along with other youngmen of the village constituted a *Jathâ*. Very soon they became master of Naka area. They captured all barricades and contributed to the over all plan and power of the Sikhs. They used to impede the progress of ingressing and invading forces, and would also cause damage upon them when they were withdrawing. Thus they were able to forewarn other *misls* who would take timely action to react. During the Great Holocaust, it was this *misl* who informed other *misls* that Abdali was rushing at a great speed covering distances in days that would have taken months. In 1767, S. Hira Singh received complaint that Sheikh Shujah, the heir of Baba Farid *Gaddî* was violating the teachings of his ancestors and playing with the sentiments of Hindus. S. Hira Singh attacked Pak Pattan. *Jathedâr Sahib* was killed during this attack and the army returned to Bauharwal. S. Hira Singh's son named Dal Singh was a minor. Thus the leadership was passed on the son of S. Dhanna Singh (brother of S. Hira Singh). His name was S. Nahar Singh, S. Nahar Singh did not live long. He died in 1768 fighting battle of Kot Kamalia.

After S. Nahar Singh, the leadership of this *misl* came to S. Ram Singh. When other *misls* started expanding their territories, this *misl* also concentrated its efforts towards Multan and Kasur. *Bhangi Misl* knew the power and importance of his *misl*. S. Ganda Singh sought help from this *misl* so that they could subdue Multan. With the occupation of Multan and Kasur, the respect and honour of this *misl*. *Jathedâr* Ram Singh was an adept statesman.

He had retained and maintained balance with all the *misls*. This was the cause of his respect among them. The jurisdiction of this *misl* extended to Chunian, Kasur, Sharkpur, Gugar and Kot Kamalia. But when S. Ram Singh died in 1790, the leadership passed on to S. Gian Singh. This *misl* was of 3000 strong troops. Since they were manning the barricades, they were expert fighters.

Jathedâr Ram Singh had kept them in a definite discipline but after his death, its soldiers started fighting among themselves. After the death of S. Gian Singh* in 1804, Maharaja Ranjit Singh annexed the territory with his own kingdom in 1807. He granted a *Jâgîr* of one and a half lakh to Kahn Singh, son of S. Gian Singh.

Secondly—*Bhangi* and *Shukarchakia misls* picked up a row with each other. *Nakæe Misl* had some areas adjacent to the other two. Thus *Nakæe* were unable to maintain a balance between the two. Thus the *misl* remained confined to a few villages and ended its life span.

Thirdly, none of its successor was strong who could keep their territory intact. At the same time, the *misl* had no high aspirations.

8. Dalewalia Misl.** In 1745, *Sarbat-Khâlsâ* passed a

* S. Gian Singh solemnised the marriage of his sister Raj Kaur with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Prince Kharak Singh was born off Queen Raj Kaur.

** Dalewal was an important village near Derâ Bâbâ Nânak on the bank of river Ravi. Gulâbâ Khatri belonged to this village who was a retail dealer in the village. He partook *Amrit* and formed a strong *Jathâ* of his own. His name now was Gulâb Singh. He had exerted so much influence in the area that people were very scared of him. The people made a petition before the Mahant of Derâ Bâbâ Nânak. The Mahant told S. Gulâb Singh not to plunder the neighbour hood. He had a right on to the distant places and therefore could do whatever he wanted. He had no son of his own. So the leadership came into the hands of S. Tara Singh Gheba.

Gurmatâ (Resolution) that a fort should be constructed on the bank of river Ravi. It should be strong enough to stop the enemy as well as equipped to take refuge in for sufficiently long time. This fort was constructed in village Dalewal. After the fort came up, S. Gurdial Singh was appointed its incharge. He was *Jathedâr* of a *Jathâ* of *Tarunâ Dal*. He looked after the fort with utmost care and fought when need arose. And for the services rendered in connection with the defence of the fort, he was named *Dalewalia*, as the word *Ramgarhia* had become suffice of S. Jassa Singh.

The martyrdom of S. Gurdial Singh was seen with respect by the nation. During the Minor Holocaust, the Sikhs were surrounded from three sides. River Ravi was on one side, the other side was a desert and Lakhpat Rai was following immediately behind with Yahya Khan and his army. Sikhs decided to cross river Ravi. It was peak summer month and the river was full to the brim. The current of the water was very fast. S. Gurdial Singh suggested that he would enter the river on his horse to see the swiftness of the current and depth of the water. He could not sustain the swift wave of the river and he along with his brother was washed away in the river. He died but he managed to save many thousand lives. Had the caravan entered river, all would have drowned. Thus all the soldiers treaded on the footmarks of this leader. After S. Gurdial Singh, this *misl* was led by S. Tara Singh Gheba*. He too

* Gheba means wonderful. Tara Singh was blessed with courage and cleverness beyond description. His village was located on the bank of a river. His fields and house was on the other side of the river. It was difficult for him to rear sheep. So he made a rope bridge on the river. He would take his sheep across the river every day for them to graze in his fields. It was for this wisdom and cleverness that he was called Gheba.

was a soldiers of the highest order who would fight in the vanguard of his troops. Like S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, S. Hari Singh Bhangi and S. Charhat Singh, he was a great General who was ever ready to sacrifice his life for a noble cause. He fought shoulder to shoulder with his associates Generals. He and his *misl* was treated with much respect. They confronted the invasions of Shah Abdali with determination. They were the first to take up cudgels with Jahan Khan. They were the first to confront the invaders on Amritsar. This *misl* had contributed substantially in fighting Abdali. They joined hands with *Bhangi Misl* at the time of attacking Kasur. S. Tara Singh Gheba plundered nearly 4 lakh rupees. When a rich man of Gauhar Das Ganj was baptised with *Amrit*, the importance of this *misl* increased by many folds. When Sirhind was ransacked, Tara Singh Gheba was in the fore front. This *misl* had about 9000 soldiers. After Abdali, this *misl* did not participate actively in their mutual discords. Firstly S. Tara Singh Gheba was old and was not fit to take part in the battle regularly. Secondly he condemned their in fighting declaring it meaningless indulgence. He had even advised the *misls* not to indulge in rat race and mutual show downs. Taking advantage of his old age, (Maharaja) Ranjit Singh had sent S. Fateh Singh to capture the area under the jurisdiction of Tara Singh Gheba. S. Tara Singh was incapable of confrontation. Therefore the authority of the *misl* got restricted to a few villages. After S. Tara Singh, the command of the *misl* was taken over by S. Daswandh Singh and S. Chanda Singh but Maharaja Ranjit Singh also annexed the remaining villages of *Dalanwalias* in his kingdom. Thus the area of influence of this *misl* remained confined to area around river Ravi.

9. Karorh Singhia. A rich man named Krorha Mal* partook *Amrit* at the hands of Nawab Kapur Singh and became a Sikh. He was named Karorha Singh. He became a *Jathedâr* of Tarunâ Dal. In 1748, he made a separate *Jathâ* of his own. It picked up name of Karorha Singh. This *misl* too participated actively in the campaigns of the Sikhs. Their help came by way of provisions and money. The area of influence of this *misl* was east of river Satluj. No one could do anything without the approval of *Karorh Singhia Misl*. Sirhind was its target and they were the first to plunder it. During the forth invasion of Abdali, it was Karorh Singhia that had attacked him in a surprise and astounding move.

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- *1. Karorhi Mal belonged to Panj Garh. So it is also called Panjgarhia.
 2. S. Karorha Singh had no child of his own. Thus considering him capable, the leadership was bestowed upon Baghel Singh.
 3. The mughal influence was only upto Allahabad. Nawab of Avadh ruled in the East. In the Southern side, Jats of Bharatpur prevailed. Rajput had their say in the West. Shah Alam II was at Allahabad and Delhi was under the control of Najib-ud-Daula. The old pomp and show of the city had vanished and hunger prevailed everywhere. Jadu Nath Sarkar has written correctly that Delhi was so unfortunate that it was plundered at the hands of Afghan, Marahattas, Sikhs, Jats, Gujjars and Pindarias. The state of farmer was pathetic. Thus broke the domination of Marahattas. The Scindias of Gawalior, Holkars of Indore and Gaikwads of Baroda were under the Peshwas only for name sake. Bhosle of Nagpur had sounded the bugle of his freedom. Peshwa was trying to spread his tantacle in North India. Although Marahattas looked powerful yet their strength had dwindled. The Jats had established their kingdom between Jaipur and Agra. These Jats were strong because of money power. Rajputs were led by Madho Singh who had his authority in Jain Nagar. Bijai Singh was the king of Marwarh. Rohillas had established their authority between Delhi and Himalaya. Bareilly was their centre. Najib-ud-Daula, Hafiz Rehmat Khan and Ahmed Khan Bangash were the famous leaders. Shuja-ud-Daula ruled in North-East who was a clear headed and intelligent General. The Britishers had taken over Bengal, Bihar and Orrisa under the leadership of clive. The Nawab of Karnataka was subservient to the Britishers.

It exercised much control in Jalandhar *Doaba*. After Abdali had ceased his invasions, this *misl* kept up its influence in cis Satluj area. It won many prominent victories. Jathedâr Mastan Singh and Karam Singh were the leading operators of this *misl*. They took very active part in various-campaigns. After their demise, S. Baghel Singh took over the responsibility of the *misl*. S. Baghel Singh was a leading General and a leader of his times. There was no place in Gang-Jamun Doab that he had not overcome. He reigned supreme from Jalandhar to Pilibhit and Ambala to Aligarh. His exploits, personality and character are the examples for the community.

S. Baghel Singh raised a *Dal* of 30,000 soldiers and he kept winning many battles. When he heard that Mohammad Khan the ruler of Jalalabad had forcibly kept a Brahmin girl in his harem, S. Baghel Singh reached there and punished the miscreant ruler. He brought the girl back and reached her home. This *Jathâ* over ran Aligarh, Khurja, Chandausi, Hathras and Etawah. Nawab Isa Khan the ruler of these places was defeated.

In Punjab, S. Baghel Singh defeated Mohammad Khan and captured Nur Mahal. Raja Amar Singh tried to interfere in this area. Both armies faced each other at Ghurham but very soon they reached an accord. S. Sahib Singh son of S. Amar Singh partook *Amrit* at the hands of S. Baghel Singh. No one could now come to Punjab from Delhi without permission of S. Baghel Singh. He was such a statesman that every one had to obey him or agree to his views. One can support this statement with some examples.

In 1780, when Abdula Khan had sent Prince Farzanda

against Amar Singh, S. Baghel Singh let him pass through his territory. When his army reached Patiala, S. Baghel Singh joined Amar Singh to settle the score with Prince Farzanda. Very soon Prince Farzanda had to accept defeat.

When in 1787, Mana Rao Marahatta decided to invade Punjab, S. Baghel Singh encircled them at a vulnerable place and made him accept defeat. S. Baghel Singh had realised that the Mughal regime of Delhi was there only for namesake. So in 1789, he wrote to all the *Jathedâr* to send some selected Singhs so that Delhi could be captured. Thus an army of 40 thousand strong soldiers assembled under him.

In early months of 1790, Singh reached Majnu Tilla. They entered the city via Ajmeri Gate and established their control over that part of the city. From there, he attacked Katra Neela, and Mughal Mohalla. The residents ran away. The Red Fort had fallen in the lap of Sikhs. King Shah Alam sent Wazir Gohar, his Minister to hold a dialogue with Sikhs. The following decisions were arrived at between them.

- (a) Khâlsâ be given a sum of Rs 3 lakhs.
- (b) The *kotwâlî* of the city and rights to collect Octroi be handed over to S. Baghel Singh.
- (c) Till the service of the historic is completed, S. Baghel Singh will keep 4000 soldiers with him.

The first Gurdawaras that S. Baghel Singh raised was where Mata Sunder Kaur Ji and Mata Sahib Kaur were residing. Then he raised Gurdawaras Bangla Sahib in Mohalla Jaipur, where Guru Har Krishan Ji had also stayed

and died. A Gurudwara was also raised where both Mata Sunder Kaur Ji and Mata Sahib Kaur Ji were cremated. Then he constructed Gurudwara Rakab Ganj where Lakhi Shah Vanjara had cremated the headless body of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji by setting fire to his house.

The most difficult task was to find the spot where Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was beheaded. During the search, they met an old water carrier woman who had washed the blood of Guru Sahib after his martyrdom. She told him that the event took place under the Banyan tree near the mosque. S. Baghel Singh had a platform constructed. Some Muslims came to confront him. After a short skirmish, the Prime Minister came. S. Baghel Singh told him that without acquiring that spot, the Sikhs will not sit silently. The Prime Minister used his intelligence and got some land surrendered from either side. The platform was retained. Some more place was given for the Sikhs to have Sri Guru Granth Sahib established. The place was named Sis Ganj. A Sikh was appointed to take care of the place.

In 1857, some more place was acquired by Raja Sarup Singh of Jind and extended the Gurudwara. Muslims tried their utmost to thwart the Sikhs efforts of acquire the land but Raja Raghbir Singh of Jind obtained permission from England. Thus Sis Ganj Gurudwara was raised where it exists today.

After identifying the historic places related to Guru Sahibs and other personalities of Sikh religion, S. Baghel Singh returned to Chhadaoli. The king gifted him with an elephant, a gold chain, five horses and many other items. The king asked him that the Sikhs have so many *Jathâs*

who fight amongst themselves and yet unite again. It was a mystery for him. S. Baghel Singh said that it was natural to have differences in view points. Sikhs might have made many *Jathâs* but they remain *Khâlsâ* and one to face the enemy. They might be separate at home but when it comes to the whole community, they forget their separate identity and become ready to die for each other. So long S. Baghel Singh lived (till 1802), one fourth of the revenue of Delhi Octori post reached him home.

Ghulam Kadar Rohilla who was known as half Sikh and half Rohilla of the Guru, his father Zabata Khan* was brought into the Sikh fold by S. Baghel Singh. Ghulam Kadar Rohilla was only eleven years old. He was named Piârâ Singh. It can be said with conviction that Sikhs could have established a sovereign state in North India had *Dal Khâlsâ* and other *Misls* helped S. Baghel Singh. Rohillas became companion of the Sikhs. The Britishers were sitting far away. The Nawabs of Awadh were very weak. Marahattas were not fit to rise again. Another unfortunate development for this *misl* was that Amar Singh of Patiala started direct confrontation. This was highly damaging. This discord remained during the times of S. Baghel Singh. It was spread amongst the Sikhs that S. Baghel Singh was creating obstacles in the establishment of the rule. S. Baghel Singh was viewing everything with his sight fixed on the future. He was of the opinion that both Delhi and Marahattas should be associated into this venture. Since the power of Delhi and Marahattas was waning, it would then not be difficult to establish Sikh empire. But discords with Patiala caused much damage to the *misl*. After

* Zabata Khan was named Dharam Singh.

S. Baghel Singh, the leadership of this *misl* fell into the hands of S. Jodh Singh Kalsiân. He was son of S. Gurbaksh Singh Kalsiân. Even *Phoolkian Misl* could not survive before them S. Jodh Singh took over a large territory. The king of Phoolkian Amar Singh gave away his daughter in marriage to the son of S. Jodh Singh. Sensing the prosperity of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, S. Jodh Singh accepted his patronisation. Thus the importance of the *misl* remained intact. The strength of the army of this *misl* was never stable. Normally it was 5,000 but it increased to 15,000 sometimes.

10. Shaheed Singhi Misl. During the times of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, a *Jathâ* emerged who were ever willing to sacrifice themselves. Baba Deep Singh Ji who partook *Amrit* at the hands of Guru Gobind Singh Ji was associated with this *Jathâ*. Guru Ji had given the name of '*Nihang Singh*' to this *Jathâ*. *Nihang Singh's* were more concerned about the welfare of others than their own. The phrases depicting prosperous and progressive attitude that became popular amongst the Sikhs even today are the creations of this *Jathâ*. Other *Jathâ* respected the courage and patience of the *Shaheed Singhian*. After Bâbâ Binod Singh, the leadership to the *misl* was taken over by Baba Deep Singh. Where as he was a great warrior, leading General and a soldier, he was also an intellectual. He prepared many copies of Sri Guru Granth Sahib while staying at Sri Damdama Sahib. This place was far away from the scene of struggle that Sikhs were perpetually involved in. But in the event of necessity, he would rush for help from this place and offer the needed sacrifices. S. Gurbaksh Singh who defended Sri Akal Takht Sahib along with his

21 companions* also belonged to this *Jathâ*. Baba Naudh Singh and Baba Hakam Singh were the other leading personalities of this *Jathâ*. When by the order of Ahmad Shah Abdali, Sri Harmandir Sahib was blown up and the sacred *Sarovar* was filled with filth, Baba Deep Singh set out from Damdama Sahib in 1761 with a vow to 'die at the door of the 'Lord'', obtained martyrdom in the precincts of Sri Harmandir Sahib. The leaders of this *misl* generally kept their area of influence around Damdama Sahib and cis Satluj. Damdama Sahib is still famous as the '*Chhâonî*' of Nihang Singh. After Bâbâ Deep Singh Ji, Jathedar Karam Singh became its leader. Thereafter, the glory of the *misl* was enhanced by Akali Phula Singh and S. Sadhu Singh. This *misl* had very small strength of soldiers. It was just about 2,000. Its name remained famous on account of courage and bravery. During the period of Ranjit Singh, the *misl* made Akal Takht Sahib as their centre of activities. Maharaja Sahib did not think wise to indulge in the affairs of this *misl*. He respected the *misl* very much.

11. Nishanwalia Misl. Flag has great significance for every army. Falling of flag not only discourages the troops but is also a symbol of acknowledgement of defeat. 'Don't let the Flag drop' used to be the proclamation of the soldiers. So, selected Sikhs were pulled out of various *misls* and placed in this *misl*. If the flag bearer would drop in the battlefield, another would pick up the flag before it drops or comes lower. Many tales of bravery of this *misl* are known in Sikh history. One such example is as under. Bhai Alam Singh was captured by the Mughals. They asked Bhai Alam Singh to drop the flag but he did not budge. The

* Quazi Noor Mohammad has described this martyrdom.

commander shouted at him and said, "Throw the flag or your hands will be cut." With great enthusiasm, Alam Singh said, "I shall hold it with my mouth." "Your head will be cut." Bhai Alam Singh said loudly, "He will protect it whose flag it is." This *misl* had no separate area of jurisdiction. Their soldiers were found in every *misl*. They would obtain their share after every campaign. *Jathedâr* Sangat Singh was the *Jathedar* of this *misl*. He used to be ahead in every campaign of the Sikhs. After the exit of Abdali, S. Sangat Singh made Ambala as his centre and exercised jurisdiction upto Karnal in the South and Ropar–Kharar in the North. *Jathedar* Mohar Singh succeeded him. He felt contented with what ever territory he had. Since he had no offspring. The *misl* became leaderless. Maharaja Ranjit Singh took over this *misl* and ended its existence.*

Phoolkian Misl. To the eastern side of river Satluj, this was the only other *misl* beside *Karorh Singha* which was famous. *Karorha Singh misl* ended with the death of S. Baghel Singh, but *Phoolkian Misl* remained for long. Even during the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, this *misl* managed to retain its identity. This *misl* never came under direct control of '*Dal Khâlsâ*', although its founder Baba Ala Singh acknowledged the patronage of *Dal Khâlsâ*. Baba Ala Singh was born in 1690.** Baba Ala Singh Ji wielded his sword like his father after 1714. He attacked Asad Ali, the Governor of Jalandhar Doaba, defeated and killed him. This

* Diwan Mohkam Chand had launched the attack. Capt Murrey writes that the strength of this *misl* was about 12000. Which does not seem to be correct. This *misl* never had more than 2000 soldiers.

** Baba Ala Singh was descendent of Bhai Phul. Bhai Phul was blessed by Guru Har Rai Sahib that they will rule. After Phul, his son Ram Chand captured Kot and Bhatîân. Baba Ala Singh was son of this Ram Chand. Ram Chand was murdered by some Chain Singh.

victory enhanced the honour of Baba Ala Singh. The king of Delhi thought of taking Baba Ala Singh on his side and assured him that he would be made a king. Baba Ala Singh was more keen to keep the Delhi ruler guessing. So he always conveyed his willingness to accept the conditions. At the same time he kept rendering Bhatîân and Sirhind by launching repeated attacks against them. He was arrested but managed to escape. During the Minor Holocaust, when the influence of Zakaria Khan was weighing heavy on the Sikhs, he reached help to the Sikhs. He partook *Amrit* at the hands of Nawab Kapur Singh Ji. He had Bhawanigarh fort constructed in 1749. By 1752, he had captured a large territory and made Patiala as its centre. During the fourth invasion of Ahmad Shah Durrani, he had plundered the caravan of Taimur. He had also helped the Marahattas during the third battle of Panipat by reaching them the necessary supplies. However, in order to punish him, Ahmad Shah Durrani attacked Barnala. But Mai Fatto exercised her statesmanship by sending him a tribute of four lakh rupees. Abdali forgave him and acknowledged him to be a ruler of a separate kingdom. Baba Ala Singh agreed to pay him yearly tribute. '*Dal Khâlsâ*' took it ill and declared him a *Tankhâyâ* (a religious punishment). Then once again during the Major Holocaust, he accepted subjugation of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Sikhs felt much peeved. They were about to attack Patiala when S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia stopped them. Baba Ala Singh accepted *Tankhah* and sought forgiveness. He died in 1765. By then he had captured 84 villages of Sirhind, Kotkapura, Barnala and Sanâwar.

Thereafter, his grandson Amar Singh became the leader

of the *misl*. In 1767, Durrani bestowed the title of *Râjâ-e-Râjgan* to Amar Singh. He also gave him a drum and a flag and permitted him to issue/mint his own coins. Amar Singh thought it to be the wisest course and even Durrani did not think it appropriate to interfere. He was of the opinion that the divide in *Malwa* and *Majha* that he could not create during the period of Baba Ala Singh, he may be able to achieve during the period of Amar Singh. Amar Singh shortly occupied the territories of Malerkotla, Saidabad, Sirsa, Manimajra, Kotkapura, Faridkot and Bhatinda. Amar Singh did not interfere in the affairs West of river Satluj. He also ignored territory beyond river Jamuna. His *misl* had about 1040 soldiers. The way he expanded his territory, it was enough to prove him to be a brave and courageous ruler. In March 1782, he too expired. Then his son Sahib Singh became the head of the *misl*. He was a minor. Therefore the tasks of the *misl* were attended to by Bibi Rajinder Kaur and Sahib Kaur. Marahattas and even George Thomas wanted to capture the territory of this *misl* but could not succeed. With the occupation of Punjab by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the whole situation changed. The states of Nabha, Jind and Kaithal were the off shoots of this *misl* although their *misaldârs* (incharge of the *misl*) were different. This *misl* could not pull on well with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Therefore they sought help from the Britishers. The Britishers made Maharaja Ranjit Singh sign the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809. Thus these states retained their independent identity.

THE OBJECTIVES OF SIKH MISSIONARY COLLEGE

WE ARE SIKHS. Therefore it is essential that we know of Sikh tenets and philosophy. Every Sikh must know the meanings of *Gurbânî* be conversant with Sikh history, know Sikh culture and *Sikh Rehat Maryada*. How can we call ourselves Sikhs if we do not know anything about these aspects? We keep reciting *Gurbânî*. But if some one asks us the meanings of a line and we express our inability to answer, it is surely a matter of shame. Our knowledge of history, life sketch of Guru Sahib and noble Sikhs of that period must be sound. If we are not aware of our unique history, then how would we be able to tell the world what unparalleled and envious heritage we possess. What are the tenets of *Sikh Rehat Maryadâ*. We are generally ignorant on this account as well. Every time we are required to hold a religious function in the house, we being unaware of the *Rehat*, rush to the *Granthi* or any other knowledgeable Sikh. But being a Sikh should we not be aware of our procedures and rules?

If we carryout analytical study of our weaknesses, we will find that these are mostly due to our lack of knowledge or total ignorance. We also realise that we do not consider it our duty to acquire knowledge about our religion. Had we been aware of our religious ideology, we would advise our young Sikhs to abstain from cutting and trimming their hair and beards. They are indulging in drug abuse, holding faith in Gurudoms. Had we known our unique blood drenched history, the sacrifices made by our elders, we can atleast motivate than towards religion. If young Sikhs are revolting against Sikhism, it is not their fault. We are to blame, our preachers are at fault, our leaders have been unconcerned with this unignorable aspect of our life. They all have failed to give them the boon of Sikhism.

We are neither getting Sikh traits from our parents nor from anyone else in the house. The parents have also moved miles away from Gurmat. The Sikh institutes, Khalsa Schools and Colleges have also not contributed to this aspect. Infact baring a few, we have made no arrangement to import this essential knowledge to our future generation.

Sikh Missionary College is trying to fill this void by publishing authentic literature and selling at cheap prices. The college is also running a correspondence course of two years to raise elemantry preachers.