

HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

The Sikhs had not been able to found a state during the reign of Aurangzeb, though they had been organised into a fighting group by the tenth and the last guru-*Guru Gobind Singh*. After his death the Sikhs found a capable leader in *Banda Bahadur* (A.D.1708-1716). He organised a large number of Sikhs and captured *Sirhind*. He tried to establish an independent kingdom and struck coins in the name of *Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh* and also issued orders under his own seal. Under his leadership, the Sikhs offered valiant resistance to the Mughal and overran the entire territory between Lahore and Delhi. In his struggle against the Mughals, he was captured in the fortress of Gurudaspur. *Banda Bahadur* and his followers were sent to Delhi where they were treated in most barbaric manner. Banda's young son was killed and he himself was tortured and crushed to death. His followers called him *Sachha pad shah-the true emperor*.

The tenets of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh had taken deep roots in the hearts of the people. The Sikhs began to organise themselves gradually into a Sikh state. The disorder and confusion in the Punjab after the invasions of *Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali* helped the rise of the Sikh power to a great extent. In A.D. 1764, the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar and struck the first coins of pure silver with legends of *Degh, Tegh and Fateh*. This was the first proclamation of the Sikh sovereignty in the Punjab. They organised themselves into *12 misls* (military brotherhood with democratic setup) and controlled the regions of Punjab. The leaders of these misls parceled out the territories among themselves. Even Ahmad shah Abdali was unable to destroy the misls and within two years of his departure, the governors appointed by him at Sirhind and Lahore driven out. Small principalities like *Nabha, Patiala and kapurthala* emerged. It was towards the end of the 18th century that *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* united the misls and established a powerful state.

Name of the Misl	Founder or Leader of Misl
Singpuria Misl	Nawab Kapur Singh
Ahluwalia	Jassa Singh Ahluwalia
The Ramguria Misl	Jassa Singh Ramgarhia
The Phulkian Misl	Phul Singh
Kanhiva Misl	Jai Singh
Bhagi Misl	Hari Singh
Sukarchakya Misl	Charat Singh
Nishanwalia Misl	Sardar Sangat Singh

Karor Singhia Misl	Bhagel Singh
Dallewalia Misl	Gulab Singh
Nakai Misl	Hira Singh
Shahidi Misl	Baba Deep Singh

Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1801 – 1839)

- Born in 1780 to the leader of the Sukerchakia misl of the Sikh confederacies in Pakistani Punjab.
- United 12 Sikh misls and subjugated other local kingdoms to become the ‘Maharaja of Punjab’ in 1801.
- Successfully resisted many Afghan invasions and also captured areas under them like Lahore, Peshawar and Multan.
- Earned the title ‘Sher-i-Punjab’ (Lion of Punjab).
- After occupying Lahore in 1799, it became his capital.
- His Sikh Empire included lands to the north of the Sutlej River and South of the north-western Himalayas. His Empire included major towns like Lahore, Multan, Srinagar (Kashmir), Attock, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Jammu, Sialkot, Amritsar and Kangra.
- He maintained friendly relations with the British.
- He had men from different races and religions in his army.
- His maintained an army very efficient in warfare, logistics and infrastructure.
- After his death in 1839, there was a struggle for succession among his many relatives. This marked the process of disintegration of the Empire.
- He was succeeded by his eldest legitimate son Kharak Singh.

First Anglo-Sikh War (1845 – 1846)

- Major Broad was placed in Amritsar as the East India Company’s agent in 1843.
- The British were closely watching the developments in the Punjab political front and had territorial ambitions there as in other parts of the subcontinent.
- The Sikh forces crossed the Sutlej in December 1845 and took offensive positions against the English forces.
- Subsequently, battles were fought in different places and the English victory at Sobraon led to the signing of the Lahore Treaty in 1846 which ended the war.

Treaty of Lahore, 1846

- Maharaja Duleep Singh, who was the ruler of Punjab was to remain its ruler with his mother Jindan Kaur as regent.
- The Sikhs had to cede the Jalandhar Doab to the British.
- The Sikhs were also asked to pay a very huge war indemnity to the English. But since they could not pay all of it, part of it was paid and to make up for the remaining, Kashmir, Hazarah and all territories between the Beas and the Indus Rivers were given to the English.
- The Sikhs were to limit their army to a certain number.
- Also, a British Resident, Sir Henry Lawrence was appointed to the Sikh court.

Second Anglo Sikh War

- The terms of negotiation and treaty did not improve the situation in Punjab which led the foundation of Second Anglo-Sikh war.
- After war, Punjab was annexed to the company by Lord Dalhousie. *Lawrence* was the *first Commissioner of Punjab*.

Conclusion

The disintegration of Mughal Empire in the 18th century, its collapse was hailed by the ambitious nobles as well as a pre-occupied raja and regional leader who wanted to form their own kingdom. The Punjab was one of those regional which was rise after the decline of Mughal Empire.
