

# AKAL TAKHT AND PUNJAB POLITICS (1606-1920)

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**Abstract :** This paper consists information and detailed discussion about foundation of Akal Takht upto the formation of Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee in 1920. Akal Takht, center of the politics and religious decisions of Sikhs, has its own importance in shaping the history and politics of Punjab and Sikhs. Founded by Guru Hargobind, Akal Takht was administered by many persons over time, who influenced sikhs with Hukamnamas, and Sarbat Khalsa. The British rule over Punjab led to bad administration of Akal Takht and revolt against them for better administration led to the formation of Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee to purify Sikhism from casteism among other things.

## Chapter 3

### AKAL TAKHT AND PUNJAB POLITICS (1606-1920)

Sixth Guru Hargobind Ji founded the *Akal Takht*, and it was constructed by Bhai Gurdas and Baba Buddha. Guru Hargobind Ji supervised the religious and political activities from *Akal Takht*. Mughal emperor Jahangir invited him to Delhi. While he was at Amritsar, he managed everything at his own but when he went to Delhi, he handed over all the responsibilities to Bhai Gurdas and Baba Buddha. Bhai Gurdas was elected as *Jathedar* of *Akal Takht* and he administrated *Akal Takht* in his absence.<sup>1</sup>

Bhai Gurdas was a devout Sikh so he was handed over the responsibility of *Akal Takht*. About his birth a little is known, he was born between 1540 AD and 1560 AD. He was son of Datar Singh. His father was the younger brother of Guru Amar Das. Guru Amar Das taught him. He was intelligent and learned to interpret *Gurbani*. Guru Amar Das made him his Sikh who preached about Sikh religion. Afterwards, he became a devout Sikh of Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Guru Arjan Dev Ji gave him the task to compile the *Adi Granth*. The work completed in 1604 AD. After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, he consoled and supported the sikhs. When Guru Hargobind Ji was kept prisoner in the fort of Gwalior because of his military activity then Bhai Gurdas and Baba Buddha looked after the law and order of Amritsar.<sup>2</sup>

When Guru Hargobind Ji was arrested by Jahangir, Sikh community fell into despair as before that he had killed Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Bhai Gurdas kept morale of the khalsa army. When Guru Hargobind Ji returned he took every responsibility under his control. Whenever he would go out of Amritsar, he would hand over the control of *Akal Takht* to Bhai Guards.<sup>3</sup>

Guru Hargobind Ji and Jahangir became friends when he released Guru Hargobind Ji. He renovated the fort of *Lohgarh*. He secured the city with wall of bricks. He also strengthened the Sikh army. He did all that because he knew in politics no one remain friends forever, the rulers could kill their own sons for the power.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Singh, Ganda. *Makhij Tawarikh-e-Sikhan*. Khalsa College, Amritsar, 1949. p-38.

<sup>2</sup>Singh, Khuswant. *Sikh Ithihas Part 1*. Lahore Book Shop-2, Lajpat Rai Market, , Ludhiana, 2006. p- 295.

<sup>3</sup>Singh, Sukhdyal. *Khalsa de Panj Takht*. Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2002. p-11.

<sup>4</sup>Aulokh, Ajit Singh. *Sachittr Jivan Sakhiyan*. Bhai Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar, 2000. p-45.

After the death of Jahangir in 1627 AD, Shah Jahan became the emperor. He was not happy with the rising power of sikhs. Therefore, the fight of sikhs and Shah Jahan was compulsory. The reason was unhappiness of Jahangir over rising power of sikhs and sikhs never wanted to be dependent of any worldly rule. They just liked to bow down before *Akal Takht* only. Once soldiers of both the armies were on hunt, at that time Sikh captured emperor's white hawk and refused to return it to *Mughals* when they asked for it, as they were not afraid of Shah Jahan. He sent his army under the leadership of Mukhlis Khan. Guru Hargobind Ji and Mukhlis Khan fell in duel. He attacked Guru Hargobind Ji with his sword, which Hargobind defended, and then he sliced his head with just one attack of sword. It proved that sikhs serve only the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Hargobind Ji was always busy in fights so he seldom remained at Amritsar. Therefore, the administration of *Akal Takht* never remained the same. He also had to remain at Kiratpur. After 1635 AD when he seldom remained there, the responsibility came to the sons of Prithi Chand. They were supporters of *Mughals*. Guru Hargobind Ji began holding his court at Kiratpur Sahib. That place was known as *Takht Kotgarh*, he controlled *Akal Takht* from there.<sup>6</sup>

Guru Har Rai, the grandson of Guru Hargobind Ji and son of Baba Gurditta was chosen as the seventh Guru in 1644 AD. He served *Akal Takht* from 1644 AD. He reached at Amritsar in 1651 AD. At that time, Sodhi Har Rai, from the sons of Prithi Chand, was the moderator of *Akal Takht*. He was a devout to Sikh religion. He was respected in sikhs and stayed in Amritsar only.<sup>7</sup>

Guru Har Krishan became the eighth Guru in 1661 AD when Guru Har Rai passed away. He remained at the place only for three years as he died in 1664 AD. He refused to interfere in the administration of *Akal Takht* just before his demise. Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru remained at Bakala for a long time of his life and controlled the activities from there only. *Akal Takht* was sovereign but the heir of it controlled the activities from the place of his stay. Guru Hargobind Ji and the seventh Guru did that from Kiratpur Sahib and Guru Tegh Bahadur did that from Bakala. After some time when he went to Patna Sahib, the centre of decision became Patna. After his sacrifice, his son Guru Gobind Singh remained at Paonta Sahib for several years, which remained the centre for sikhs. He founded the city of Anandpur Sahib in 1689 AD and he would hold his court at the place of Keshgar Sahib. He would take care of the issues of *Akal Takht* there only.<sup>8</sup>

Sodhi Har Rai died in 1696 AD. After his death, Sikhs got divided. Sodhi Niranjan Rai signed a pact with *Mughals* and his brothers Sodhi Gopal and Sodhi Kanwal Nain fled away. Sikhs were not happy with Sodhi Niranjan Rai, who was living at Amritsar because of *Mughal* pressure. Sikhs wanted to take away the control of *Akal Takht* from Niranjan Rai. Therefore, a group of sikhs reached at Anandpur Sahib in 1699 AD at the occasion of the institutionalizing of Khalsa. They asked Guru Sahib to send a person to look after *Akal Takht*.<sup>9</sup> Guru Gobind Singh baptized Bhai Mani Singh and sent him to Amritsar to look after the order of Harimandir Sahib and *Akal Takht*. Bhai Mani Singh was also accompanied by five sikhs, a copy of Guru Granth Sahib and Nishan Sahib. He went to Amritsar and took over the full control of the administration. Then he threw out the sons of Prithi Chand out of the system. He began holding divans of sikhs in the evening and sikhs started coming. Niranjan Rai fled from Amritsar and lived somewhere else.

Bhai Mani Singh would visit to Guru Gobind Singh in Anandpur Sahib quite often. He also participated in many of the early battles fought by Guru Gobind Singh. Bhai Mani Singh as the *Jathedar* and head Granthi of sikhs fought many battles. Even

<sup>5</sup>Duggal, Kartar Singh. *Gur Itihas Dus Patshian*. Bhai Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar, 2011. p-115.

<sup>6</sup>Dilgir, Harjinder Singh., *Sikh Tawarikh Ch Akal Takht Sahib Da Role*. Sikh University Press, Belgium, 2005, p-98.

<sup>7</sup>Ahluwalia, Gurmohan Singh. *Sodhi Har Rai Ji Jiwan te Rachna*. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1985. p-8.

<sup>8</sup> OP. cit. pp-89,91.

<sup>9</sup>Singh, S. Garja. *Saheed Bilas Mani Singh*. Punjabi Sahitya Academy, Ludhiana, 1961. p-70.

his son Bachitar Singh fought for sikhs. He fought with the drunken elephant, which was sent by the *Mughals* to break the door of *Anandgarh*.<sup>10</sup>

Guru Sahib left Anandpur Sahib in 1705 AD and reached at Damdma Sahib via *Chamkor Sahib*, *Macchivara* and *Khidarne di Dhab*. Bhai Mani Singh was also with him. He lived for there for almost nine months. He controlled the activities of *Akal Takht* from there only. Bhai Mani Singh was the chief interpreter of *Gurbani*. He was the second amanuensis after Bhai Gurdas whom Guru Gobind Singh assigned the task of writing the second heap of Guru Granth Sahib at the land of Damdma Sahib. Baba Deep Singh made three copies. It is known as '*Damdmi beed*'.<sup>11</sup>

After leaving Anandpur Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh went towards South. When Guru Gobind Singh went towards Nander Sahib Sikhs fell into despair. Therefore, he sent Bhai Mani Singh and he took the administrative under his control. He held *divans* to encourage them. Guru Gobind Singh reached in the South and met Banda Singh Bahadur in 1708 AD. He baptized him and sent him to Punjab as the governor general of Sikh army. Guru Gobind Singh passed away on October 7, 1708 AD. Bhai Mani Singh and Banda Singh Bahadur were the two chief leaders. Bhai Mani Singh was the *Jathedar* of *Akal Takht* and Banda Singh Bahadur was commander of Sikh army. As a religious leader, he also helped Banda Singh Bahadur to organize an army. He would provide him with soldiers and ration. Banda Singh began his mission from East Punjab and won many areas. His victories influenced the sikhs. At Amritsar, many sikhs joined Banda Singh Bahadur. Chuharmal Khatri, disciple of Niranjan Singh, was against the Sikhs because his one son had left Amritsar while the other one Mohkam Singh joined Sikh army. Therefore, he was against sikhs. Once sikhs ate berries from his field and left the amount there. He made a plan to attack sikhs with the help of *Mughal* army. When Bhai Mani Singh became aware of that, he tried to resolve it but Chuharmal did not give his consent. He sent army to Amritsar, so Bhai Mani Singh also joined up his army. They fought and it rained. Har Sahai, ruler of Patti, died with sky stroke and Aslam Khan's army went into Chaos.<sup>12</sup>

There was a time of peace after that battle. However, Banda Singh Bahadur was an ambitious soldier. He wanted to free Punjab from *Mughals*. He captured many areas with that aim. In 1710 AD, he attacked and captured Sirhind. Afterwards he also captured *Saharanpur* and *Rahon*. He tried to establish a new rule of *Akal Takht*. He issued a new calendar and a new coin alongside a stamp. However, the rulers were doing their own activities under the leadership of Bahadur Shah. *Mughal* emperor wanted their man at the position of *Akal Takht* to end the influence of Bhai Mani Singh and Banda Singh Bahadur. They chose Ajit Singh, the adopted son of Mata Sundri, for this; Ajit Singh was sent to Amritsar.<sup>13</sup> He began collecting the offerings at Amritsar. Sikhs did not like him and the leaders stopped talking to him. On the other hand, Bahadur Shah died in 1712 AD. Therefore, Ajit Singh could not handle the administration for a long time. Banda Singh had already established himself and Ajit Singh flew to Delhi. Banda Singh Bahadur was arrested in 1715 AD in the battle of Gurdas Nangal. He was kept in chains and was put in a cage and heads of the sikhs were hanged on spears, and they were taken through the streets of the city. He was killed in 1716 AD.<sup>14</sup>

The speech of Farrukhsiyar Khan of 1716 AD made it sure that Ajit Singh was given the administration of *Akal Takht* and was honored. When Banda Singh was in power, Ajit Singh could not establish his control over Harimandir Sahib and Amritsar. When Banda Singh was captured, Ajit Singh was able to control the administration. Banda Singh was killed after two months. Guru Gobind Singh elected Bhai Mani Singh as the *Jathedar* of *Akal Takht*, the one whose whole family sacrificed their lives for Sikh religion. On the other hand were the people like Ajit Singh who betrayed Sikh religion by snatching away the administration of

<sup>10</sup>Bal, Vir Singh. *Singh Sagar*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1986. p-137.

<sup>11</sup>Brar, Gurnam S. *East of Indus: My Memories of Old Punjab*. Hemkunt Press, New Delhi, 2007. p-184.

<sup>12</sup>Chibbr, Keshar Singh. *Bansawalinama Dus Patshahian Da*. Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1972. p-190.

<sup>13</sup>*Akbar-e-Darbar Muala*, (Trans.) Bhagat Singh. *Punjabi Past and Present*. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1984. p-97.

<sup>14</sup>Rana, Ranjit Singh. *Hazuri Saheed*. Bhai Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh Amritsar. 2015. p-191.

*Akal Takht*. Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar died after being blind in 1719 AD. After him, Rafi-ud-Ajat became the emperor and died after some days. Then grandson of Bahadur Shah, Roshan Akhtar became the king and he was peace-loving person and did not bother himself with many issues. Sikhs took advantages of that and empowered themselves. From 1720 AD, sikhs began their meetings at *Akal Takht*. In 1721 AD, sikhs were divided in two *Jathas* of 'Tat khalsa' and 'Bandai Khalsa' due to the control about the Harimandir Sahib. Amar Singh was a soldier of Banda Bahadur's army and belonged to Bandai Khalsa. Baba Kahan Singh was a member of *Tat Khalsa*. These signed a pact with *Mughals* and did not help Banda Singh Bahadur. Bhai Mani Singh was the chief attendant of sikhs and *Akal Takht*.<sup>15</sup> He tried to reconcile with the help of slips and afterwards through wrestling. However, a fight ensues causing damage and earning reconciliation. Tara Singh Van became the victim to the envy and jealousy of Sahib Rai, who traduced about him to satrap of Lahore. All this resulted in the murder of Tara Singh Van along with 22 sikhs by the *Mughal* army. He indulged himself with mass slaughter of sikhs so they went underground. They would pay a visit to Harimandir Sahib and *Akal Takht* whenever got a chance. Sikhs looted and injured *Mughal* army with their Guerilla warfare. To end that, Zakriya Khan sent Subhegh Singh and Sehbaj Singh for reconciliation. Bhai Mani Singh, *Jathedar* of *Akal Takht* called a get together of *Sarbat Khalsa* to discuss over the matter. They decided for the settlement, as that would give them time to strengthen themselves. Kapoor Singh was honored with the title of *Nawab*. Sikhs would get revenue of the Jagir.

Zakriya Khan arrested the main Sikh leader, Bhai Mani Singh in 1734 AD. He asked Bhai Sahib about the shelters of sikhs but he did not betray them. Therefore, Zakriya Khan ordered to chop off the body of Bhai Mani Singh inch by inch, so he was killed.<sup>16</sup>

Zakriya Khan captured the sikhs living with Bhai Mani Singh and killed them. He banned the entry of sikhs to religious places of Amritsar. Sikhs were slaughtered for many years. Sikhs remained away from Amritsar in all that time. Nadir Shah invaded India in 1739 AD and he crumbled the power of Zakriya Khan. He came under the rule of Nadir Shah. Sikhs organized themselves during that time and looted Nadir Shah when he was returning.<sup>17</sup>

Sikhs were active once again. Then Zakriya Khan abolished the sikhs from Amritsar and handed over the responsibility to *Massa Rangar*. *Massa Rangar* was an evil person. He insulted Harimandir Sahib as he would drink and would see the dance of harlots in the *Darbar Sahib*. Sikhs thought to punish him, Mehtab Singh, and Sucha Singh Volunteered. They came in a façade of *Mughals* to pay the revenue. They tied their horses outside and beheaded *Massa Rangar*. In this way, Sikhs took revenge from him for insulting the Harimandir Sahib.<sup>18</sup>

Zakriya Khan died in 1745 AD. After his death sikhs returned to plains, began to discipline, and organize themselves. This was the period of *Dal Khalsa*. It was the army of Sikh community. It was divided into several parts. It was organized with the blessings of *Akal Takht*. They fought with Mir Manu to Abadali. They also faced many problems but it was their success in 1765 AD that the Punjab was under the Sikh rule. They always worked on the directions of *Akal Takht*. It would work with *Sarbat Khalsa* and the gathering was called twice a year on Diwali and Vaishaki. *Mughals* were helpless to act against sikhs because of invasion of Abadali.

Sikhs gathered for the meeting of *Sarbat Khalsa* in 1746 on Diwali. Nawab Kapoor Singh was the leader for that meeting. Sikhs were divided into 25 *Jathas* and every *Jatha* had its own leader. Those strengthen the political power of sikhs. They would

<sup>15</sup> Bhangu, Ratan Singh. *Prachin Panth Prakash*. Sikhkha Itihaṅsa Riṅsaraca Boradṅa, Ammritasara, 2000. p-223.

<sup>16</sup> Singh, Koir. *Guru Bilas Patshahi 10*. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1968. p-294.

<sup>17</sup> Cunnigham, J.D. *A History of Sikhs*. John Marg, London,, 1849. p-83.

<sup>18</sup> OP. cit. p-107.

attack on the soldiers carrying Tax from the farmers and other villagers and would rob them off money and food. Many young Sikhs joined the army; which increased the number of Khalsa army.<sup>19</sup>

The number of the Jathas increased to a real big number. In 1748 AD, sikhs gathered at *Akal Takht* in an atmosphere of mishaps. Nawab Kapoor Singh wanted to organize sikhs with the consultation of other rulers. At *Akal Takht*, they gathered to nullify the earlier Jathas. Sikhs were divided into 11 misls. This was the beginning of *Dal Khalsa*. The army of those Jathas was called *Dal Khalsa*. Nawab Kapoor Singh elected Jassa Singh Ahluwalia as the chief leader. Nawab Kapoor Singh became the leader of Singhpuria Jatha. Those Jathas would gather to fight with stronger enemies. The *Dal Khalsa* was always a part of *Akal Takht*. It was so powerful that it even faced the enemies like Meer Manu and Abadali.

When Abadali invaded India in 1764 AD, he captured Lahore instantly. *Dal Khalsa* was not present in Amritsar at that time. He came towards Amritsar. At that time, Gurbaksh Singh was the *Jathedar* of *Akal Takht*. He did not accept to leave *Akal Takht* at any cost. He decided to face Abadali's army with his 29 sikhs present at that time. When Abadali reached near Circumambulation, they attacked on the army of Abadali with guns. His army encountered them with the same. When their firearms were all used up, they used the arrows to attack them. They all died facing the army of Abadali.<sup>20</sup>

Abadali attacked only to teach a lesson to sikhs. However, after a while, he returned to his home. *Dal Khalsa* called a meeting of *Sarbat Khalsa* and planned to capture Lahore. They wanted to have a battle with Abadali, so they became more active in their actions. They did not allow Abadali to be comfortable even for a minute in that battle. They were victorious and then called a meeting of *Sarbat Khalsa*. They decided to establish a new calendar and a new khalsa rule. They also took care of Amritsar and *Akal Takht*. They renovated the *Akal Takht* and cleaned the *Sarowar*. Desh Raj, a Sehajdhari Sikh, controlled that. He was given a stamp of Khalsa. He also collected money. The work was completed in 1765 AD and 1766 AD. *Dal Khalsa* had almost every important area under their control and they thought Abadali would never attack them again.<sup>21</sup> In 1765 AD, Abadali's representative was sitting in Delhi. Sikhs besieged him and made him under their control. Abadali did invade Punjab but he could not do any harm to *Dal Khalsa*. As Akali Singh was the chief attendant of *Akal Takht* at that time. He never left *Akal Bunga* lest it was the most necessary. Cunningham said that sikhs were always ready to sacrifice their life and in battles, they would keep the interest of their humanity ahead of their personal motives.<sup>22</sup>

They established the Khalsa rule in 1765 AD. *Sarbat Khalsa* and *Gurmata* united sikhs since 1716 AD in which once they divided themselves in different Jathas and always worked for their community and for Amritsar and *Akal Takht*. Afterwards they divided themselves into misls and fought against their enemies. All that resulted in the establishment of Khalsa rule in Punjab in 1765 AD. After Abadali, his son Taimur Shah prepared twice to invade Punjab in 1792 AD and 1798 AD. During that time, the leaders of sikhs would meet at *Akal Takht*. They chose Ranjit Singh leader of the all armies of misls to face Taimur Shah.<sup>23</sup>

Taimur Shah was unable to damage the combined Sikh force under the command of Ranjit Singh. He was elected as the chief leader in those two battles. Thereafter, he was accepted as a leader of Sikh society. After the attacks of Taimur Shah, sikhs were assured against invaders, so the *misls* busied themselves to expand their own territories. Ranjit Singh was the chief leader at that time; he focused to establish his power. When he became Maharaja, then he kept his ministers and he elected able generals to strengthen his army. Therefore, there seemed no need for *Sarbat Khalsa* as he began taking decisions for Khalsa rule. However,

<sup>19</sup>Prinsep, Henry T. *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*. Language Department, Patiala, 1970. p-3.

<sup>20</sup>Singh, Ganda (Ed.) *Noor Muhamed Da Jangnama*. Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1939. p-35.

<sup>21</sup>Jas, Divan Ram. *Tarikh-e-Riyasat Kapurthala*. Guru Gobind Singh Press, Lahore Book Shop, 1897. p-197.

<sup>22</sup>Cunningham, J.D. *Ibid*. p-100.

<sup>23</sup>Waheedudin, Fakir Syed. *The Real Ranjit Singh*. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1981. pp-51,130.

one thing worth notice was that Ranjit Singh never thought himself superior to *Akal Takht*. One example of this was when he disobeyed the Sikh religion, he volunteered for the punishment. At that time, the centre of Sikh religion was *Akal Takht* and Harimandir Sahib, which was administered by Akali sikhs. Their leader Akali Phula Singh stayed in Amritsar.

Bhangi Sardars, infamous in public, were rulers of Amritsar. Ranjit Singh attacked them in 1802 to attain Amritsar and besieged it. Akali Phula Singh, *Jathedar* of *Akal Takht*, intervened for a reconciliation to stop the damage the battle would bring. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was given Amritsar and Bhangi Sardars were given the Jagirs. His rule over Amritsar also made his contact with *Akal Takht*. He would discuss his matters with his ministers only but when in 1805 Maratha Sardar Jaswant Rao Holkar came with the hope for his help against British, he did not want to refuse to Holkar and did not want to battle against the British. Therefore, he asked *Sarbat Khalsa* to decide over the matter and they decided not to help Holkar.<sup>24</sup>

Maharaja Ranjit Singh disobeyed the Sikh religion and Akali Phula Singh as punishment ordered him to whip him tied to tamale tree. However, he was not whipped but he presented himself for the punishment. That proved that he respected *Akal Takht* and considered him superior to himself. Akali Phula Singh also put many obstacles in his way. Maharaja Ranjit Singh could have elected any of his Sikh on the place of Akali Phula Singh but he did not do that as he respected *Akal Takht*. He did not want to use it for his personal motives. There were many incidents of that kind. First, when Matcaff brought his soldiers to Amritsar, Sikhs made fun of Shia Muslims they fought. When that news went to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he took care of the matter and remained friends with British. Around 1810 AD something similar happened. Maharaja Ranjit Singh decided to measure the land from the British officials. When they were measuring the land, someone spread rumor that Ranjit Singh was selling the Khalsa rule to British. Therefore, Akalis attacked them and the officials hide themselves in a village. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to know that, he sent some of his leaders to make them understand the situation. He brought back the Akalis. British officials asked Ranjit Singh to hand over Akali Phula Singh to them. However, Ranjit Singh handled the matter.<sup>25</sup>

It is said that Ranjit Singh ended the ritual of *Gurmata* after establishing the khalsa rule, which increased the influence of *brahmanvaad*. However, this needs deep analysis. Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not do any *Gurmatas* after establishing khalsa rule, as the number of sikhs was less than Hindus and Muslims. In addition, the enemies were all around. If he would have begun his rule with khalsa rule then it was possible that Hindus and Muslims would have been their enemies. Once Akali Phula Singh got angry with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and left for Anandpur Sahib as he recruited non-sikhs and Dogras in khalsa rule. He asked him to return but he did not. Therefore, he sent his soldiers to bring back Phula Singh to Amritsar with respect. He was brought back and told all the things. It was commendable the way Maharaja Ranjit Singh established the Khalsa rule.<sup>26</sup>

In the beginning, Akali Phula Singh was against Ranjit Singh. Afterwards he became a supporter of Ranjit Singh. One example of this is that he was part of Ranjit Singh's missions. Ranjit Singh considered Akali Phula Singh superior to himself, as he was the *Jathedar*. Akali Phula Singh was part of his Multan mission. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had attacked Multan before that also. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh planned then, Multan's lawyer visited him. Maharaja Ranjit Singh comes to know that the Sultan wanted to give him just forty thousands; he sent his troop under the leadership of Phula Singh. He did that because he had asked him one lakh and twenty thousand rupees from Mujafar Khan. Akali Phula Singh attacked and captured the city, Mujafar Khan ended it with reconciliation and gave him some many and promised to give the remaining amount later.

However, the king of Multan refused the revenue in 1817 AD and Maharaja sent his army. However, they were defeated so he sent his troops under the leadership of Khark Singh. That besieged the city and dug tunnels to get entry into the city but they

<sup>24</sup>Singh, Bhagat. *Sikh Policy*. New Delhi Press, New Delhi, 1978. pp-118-119.

<sup>25</sup>Singh, Sukhdyal. *Shri Akal Takht Sahib*, Gurmeet Prakashan, Naveen Saharda, Delhi, 2002. p-58.

<sup>26</sup>Singh, Sukhdyal. *Sikh Raj Samay Akal Takht Di Position*. 1799-1849, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2002. p-2-3.

got flooded due to rain and they could not accomplish the mission. Therefore, Maharaja Ranjit Singh went to Akali Phula Singh for help and he went there with 500 akali sikhs. They used the famous Jamjama canon to break the walls. They broke in and attacked. Akali Phula Singh killed Mujafar Khan and his army went into chaos. Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave him title of the 'Protector of Khalsa' as he was the reason of that victory.<sup>27</sup>

Even when Maharaja Ranjit Singh attacked on Kashmir, Akali Phula Singh was with him. When he attacked Nashaura then *pathans* gave an equal fight to sikhs and could have faced defeat. Although, Akali Phula Singh and other Akali Sikhs died in the battle but Akali Phula Singh and Akali sikhs showed rare courage that *pathans* flee away. The friendship between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Akalis showed that Ranjit Singh considered him the supreme leader of Sikh religion. He built the four stories of *Akal Takht*. After him, Hari Singh Nalwa built the golden dome and gave *Jathedar* Giani Gurmukh Singh 25 thousand rupees to cover the dome with golden plates.<sup>28</sup>

In the time of Ranjit Singh, the leader of Akali Sikhs was made the *Jathedar* of *Akal Takht*. He would supervise the order of Darbar Sahib and *Akal Takht*. However, when British government captured Punjab, most of the Akalis were killed, so the responsibility was given to *Granthi Sikhs*. As sikhs were not aware of their situation and were busy in saving their lands. Then in such circumstances who would have saved the law and order of *Akal Takht*. Therefore, when sikhs were not worried about it, the attendants became the administrators. During the rule of British, those *Granthis* were the supervisor of *Akal Takht*. British people hated sikhs and the administration of *Akal Takht* was handed over from father to sikhs. That resulted in the administration to remain in the hands of *Granthi sikhs*.

After the revolt of 1857 AD was repressed, the behavior of British government towards sikhs changed. They were dismissed from the British army and were replaced by the people from the east. They would fight against sikhs with religious staunchness. British demolished important Sikh forts. Akali Singhs, ones who never listened to even the kings about Amritsar, were silent after all this. British and their soldiers demolished Sikh historical places and of Sikh *misls*. The soldiers from the east had no respect or connection with those places so they insulted sikhs and their religious feelings. Sikhs developed hatred for those soldiers. On the other hand, even British were alike to those soldiers, but they had their political aims too so they began understanding sikhs and their emotions. Sikhs began to believe them and supported them in the revolt of 1857 AD, those who have stolen away their freedom some eight years ago. Sikhs thought that they could not win Punjab with power so they began flattering the British. They made them their soldiers British people tried to understand the emotional relation of sikhs with those places and tried to maintain the sacredness of those. They gave back the responsibility of *Akal Takht* to Sikhs and formed a committee. All major Sikh leaders were member of that committee. The committee had power to dismiss any corrupt member. However, those members except the *Jathedar* were selfish and thought only about their improvement. They were not serious to improve the condition of *Akal Takht* and Harimandir Sahib. Only *Jathedar* was not able to do much for it. Slowly and gradually, some of the members died and the committee began to dismantle.<sup>29</sup>

Another committee was formed in 1871 AD and that committee also elected their *Jathedar* but it did not survived for long, as they did not take any decision for sikhs on their own. Even to decide a very small matter they would go to British officials. From those two, one was about the increase in salaries of *Granthi sikhs* and another about the *Majhabi* sikhs whom priests had stopped from entering into the *Darbar Sahib*. British officials were against priests because of that. However, as the committee, members took any action on that then no one bothered about them. The members were always limited to their own personal motives.

<sup>27</sup>Jivani: Akali Phula Singh, Missionary College Ludhiana, February, 2017. p-12.

<sup>28</sup>Giani Gyan Singh, *Twarikh Shri Amritsar*. Singh Sabha Commmitte, Amritsar, 1917. p-16.

<sup>29</sup>OP. cit. pp-68,69.

British officials did not want to interfere in the religious matters of sikhs but as the members of the committee were ineffective, they had to.

In 1896-97 AD, there was a discussion to provide electricity to Darbar Sahib. Sikhs were divided on that issue. The famous leaders of the time called a meeting at *Akal Takht* to bring electricity. The relations between Sikhs and British people were improving. Nevertheless, the Communist party and Congress party instigated the Sikh farmers against them so the relations changed. It became known in 1914-15 AD. Sikhs supported British people courageously in the First World War. British also facilitated the sikhs. Nevertheless, the Congress party was working out to create a blockade between the two. Congressional representatives killed many British officers, it resulted in the implementation of article 44 in the city, and it prohibited any gathering whatsoever. After paying their respect to Harimandir Sahib, sikhs were resting in Jallianwala Baagh. At that time, congressional representatives began their conference there on the day of Vaishaki in 1919 AD. It was blamed on sikhs and British general Dyer got enraged. He gave the order to open fire against the people present there. Nevertheless, when they came to know about the Congress Party, they tried to win the favor of sikhs. Then general was honored by the Sikhs under their influence.

To honor the killer of Sikhs with '*siropa*' at *Akal Takht* was a wrong gesture; sikhs began to discuss those matters. They began publishing the newspapers, which talked about the activities of sikhs. Newspapers began publishing news about major Sikh issues. The newspaper, which published from Lahore in 1920 AD, became famous. That also made people aware of bad administration of Gurudwara *Mahants*. In August 1920 AD, Sikhs took Gurudwaras under their control.<sup>30</sup>

Many untouchable Sikhs were baptized in a gathering in Amritsar during the Gurudwara Sudhar Lehar and they were sent to give the offerings at Harimandir Sahib. Nevertheless, the priests refused to accept that. When Akalis came to know about this, they headed for the *Akal Takht*. The priests' ran away and *Akal Takht* came under the control of sikhs.<sup>31</sup> Some famous Sikh leaders gathered at *Akal Takht* and issued a *Hukamnama*. It invited the sikhs to *Akal Takht* on 15 November 1920 to elect a committee to look after the order and administration of *Akal Takht*. On 15 November 1920, they elected a Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandak Committee of 175 members amid a large crowd. The aim of that committee was to look after the management and order of *Akal Takht* and other Gurudwaras. Shiromani committee played an important role in the order, management, and administration of *Akal Takht*.<sup>32</sup>

For conclusion we can say, Guru Hargobind Ji held control of *Akal Takht* throughout his life. After his demise, the administration of the *Akal Takht* changed many hands. Sikh Gurus were the highest authority, but other people ran the administration. Like Bhai Mani Singh was the head of Harimandir Sahib and *Akal Takht*, during the time of Guru Gobind Singh. After that, there had been a constant struggle to control *Akal Takht*. Sikhs formed organizations like *Dal Khalsa*, which protected religious places and people from the invasions like that of Abdali. *Akal Takht* was destroyed by Abdali, which was then renovated and was avenged by *Dal Khalsa*. While Punjab was under the British Rule, *Akal Takht* and Harimandir Sahib was still looked after by Sikhs, though they become corrupted and then they were replaced by Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee in 1920. This committee has maintained the administration of Harimandir Sahib and *Akal Takht*.

<sup>30</sup>OP. cit. pp-156-157.

<sup>31</sup>OP. cit. p-74.

<sup>32</sup>Padam, Pyara Singh. *Sankhep Sikh Ithihas*(1469-1979). Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1979. p-244.