

Emergence of Punjab as a Regional Power

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ABSTRACT

The present paper tells about the History and Geography of Punjab between ancient time to Ranjit Singh. This study also tells about invader and struggle of Guru's. How the boundaries of Punjab shrinking and swelling from time to time and Ranjit Singh gathered to the Misls and made Punjab a regional power in the west.

1. Emergence of Punjab as a Regional Power

Geography of Punjab: - the region of Punjab situated in the Alluvial Plains referred by Gargetic, along with various rivers sleek through the land. The word Punjab is a combination of two words "Panj" meaning five and "Aab" meaning water. The five rivers flowing in Punjab land namely Beas, Ravi, Chenab, Satluj and Jhelum. Punjab is located between Central Asia from west and Himalayan part from north, Ganga-Yamuna Doab situated on the East side while on south side located desert. Many rivers were flowing in Punjab so the land was very fertile.

History of Punjab: - Punjab had historical link with Indo-Aryan like other assorted indigenous communities. As a result, many ethnic groups and religion composed in the cultural heritage of Punjab. First Indus valley developed in Punjab and gave the name of this area sept-Sindhu. But, Islamic invaders gave name of this area, Punjab. First time name was mentioned in the book 'Tarikh-e-sher-shah', and again in 'Ain-e-Akbari'. He also said that this area divided into Lahore and Muttan. According to oldest book Rig-veda the "Battle of Ten Kings" was fought on the bank of the river Purusni. Present day this river is called Ravi, and it's situated in Punjab. Vedic and later Vedic period heroic society of Punjab got emerged due to reason struggles, conflicts and conquests. In ancient time, Gomati pass in district Deralsmail Khan was the oldest router of trade, when Alexander invaded Punjab (326 BCE), he connected it to the outer world. Alexander and Babur attacked on India and they used Khyber Pass.ⁱ Mughal gave new name to this province suba-i-Lahore. AbulFazal who was a historian in Akbar court also defined the boundaries of Punjab and told that it was located in third climate.

Mannuci, who came to India during Aurangzeb period, also described the Punjab of its river system as most important the five Doabs were made by river in the North side of Punjab and during Mughal times, each of them constituted Sarkar of the Suba of Lahore.ⁱⁱ i.e. Bet Jalandhar Doab, Bari Doab, Rechna Doab, Chenhat Doab and Sind Sagar Doab.

Main event in the History of Punjab: - Punjab region was most important place for trade and many religious and tribes came in the Punjab. As own a personality, Punjab developed during the medieval period. In this period, agriculture was

further extended and the state provided considerable encouragement including the extension of irrigation work.

Afghans extended their influence to the river Jhelum. Meanwhile, Babar, Successor of Timur had occupied Afghanistan and later occupied the Punjab in the early 1520's. He defeated Ibrahim Lodi in 1526 in the battle of Panipat and for over two centuries then, Punjab was an integration of Mughal Empire.ⁱⁱⁱ

During the Mughal period, Punjab was the home of militant revivalist, Muslim movements and the tolerant liberal trend. The most significant religious movement that had emerged from Punjab was the movement under the Mughals. Mughals were in the process of getting political hold over Punjab and beyond, during the period from 15th to 18th century, and on the other hand, a religious ideology grew. Sikhism was capturing the imagination of a large part of the population of Punjab.^{iv} Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikh faith in Punjab. Sikhism was started by Guru Nanak as ninepanth which emphasis on the pure teaching, but later on it was made a religion. The word 'Sikh' comes from Sanskrit word Sishya meaning a devoted follower or a discipline.^v Born of Guru Nanak on 15th April 1469 in Talwandi, near Lahore in a Hindu family. But Guru Nanak was the creator belonged to Muslims and non-muslims alike (The 'Shaikhs' were Sufi or other Muslim teacher).^{vi} Guru Nanak thinks that there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim.

A community grew up around Guru Nanak and the appointment of the successor, along with Guru Nanak ideals and institutions significantly supported the Sikh ideology.^{vii} In 16th century. After the death of Guru Nanak, he was succeeded by his followers Guru Angad, who at his death in 1552, was succeeded by Amardas, a Kshatriya of respectable family. Amardas was succeeded by Ramdas, his son-in-law; in 1574 A.D. Akbar gave 500 bighas to Guru Ramdas, who built the famous tank which he called Amritsar.^{viii} Ramdas died in 1581 and was succeeded by his son Arjun who compiled the Adi Granth, the first sacred book of the Sikhs.

He raised the worldly prestige of the guru, began to call himself Sacha Badshah and collected taxes through his agents who were appointed by him for this purpose only. Arjun was

succeeded by his son HarGovind, who was a man of warlike spirit and kept a large number of armed followers. He openly became a "military leader as well as a spiritual teacher"^{xix}, and during his pontificate the aim and policies of Sikhs became clear. HarGovind's successor was his grandson HarRai whose pontificate was marked by his active support of Dara during his fight after Samugarh. After HarRai's death in 1661, a violent contest arose among the Sikhs for succession. The dispute was referred to Aurangzeb who allowed the Sikhs to elect their own chief. They chose HariKishan, another son of HarRai. Guru HarRai left his two sons, Ram Rai and HariKishan.

According to the district gazetteer of Dehradun rightly suggested that the claims of Ram Rai did not receive acceptance as he was the son of hand maiden. HariKishan died at Delhi in 1664 and was succeeded by the TegBahadur, second son of Guru HarGovind. When TegBahadur was put to death his only son was in his 9th year. The government was suspicious of his followers and among the Sikhs themselves, and there were parties inimical to the son of TegBahadur. Guru Gobind Singh became a champion of the lowly people of North India and an irreconcilable foe of Muslim rule, affording Sikhism opportunity for further integration and eventual expansion up to and including his time, the Sikhs dwelt mostly rivers and the Himalayan mountains.^x

Guru Gobind Singh took an important step in 1699; transformed the Sikhs into a Military organization by establishing the brotherhood of Khalsa. It was a ceremony in which the Guru himself initiated the disciplines, who were obliged to maintain five distinctive insignia including uncombed hair and carrying of weapons that would publicly proclaim their identity.^{xi} The Guru gave instructions to the Sikhs that who so ever came to see him must bring either an arm or a horse and join the ranks of the Khalsa. He gave orders for the construction of a huge war drum called "RanjitNagada", or the drum of victory. The Guru set new code for the Sikhs, the piasres, after washing their hair, wearing shorts, Kirpan in girdles, iron bangles on their wrists, comb and turban. Therefore, the Masands were the only available agency to take the offering of faithful to Guru for communication which established by fourth Guru and wound up finally by the tenth Guru. Guru Govind Singh wanted to replace the personal rule by democracy, in which every citizen without discrimination of creed, cast or class should be able to live in peace. He fixed his headquarter at Anandpur which is situated in Kahlur state.

While Guru staying in Deena wrote his popular letter named "Zafarnama" to change his policy to torture and to avoid the shedding of the blood of thousands of innocent lives in the most senseless manner.^{xii} After reading this, Aurangzeb gave an invitation to the Guru to meet him in Deccan. Gobind reached the bank of river Godavari at Nander in the last week of September 1708. There Guru visited the place of Madha Das (Banda Bhadur), along with some of his Sikhs and gave

him the command of the Sikh community to fight against tyrant rule.^{xiii} Guru Gobind Singh died on October 7, 1708. He was actual originator of the ideal of democracy. As per the guidelines provided by Guru Gobind Singh, Banda, with the belongings and followers, started to make plans against the tyrant rule of Mughals and continued the Sikh revolt, Jat peasants were the most spotters of Banda Bahadur. This time of Sikh policy is more inspired by policy than religion.

Banda attacked on Sonapat and samana with five hundred Sikhs. The next towns to be reigned were Thanesar and Shahabad inhibited by Sayyids and Shaikhs. He issued a new coin and introduced his official seal and year, commencing from the date of his victory at Sirhind, from Lohgarh of the iron fort. But when in GurdasNangal many in Banda's forces were killed he surrendered. In June 1716, many Sikh prisoners were executed and many were tortured before got executed. Banda and his four monks were killed in south Delhi.^{xiv} Banda Singh Bahadur was a great warrior.

The darkest period in the history of Punjab came during governorship of Moin-ul-Mulk (1748-53) popularly known as Muirmanu. At this time Ahmed Shah Abdali Attack on India. It was main opportunity for Sikhs. Infact Ahmed Shah Abdali's invasion in India was very intimately part of Sikh struggle for independence.^{xv} After Banda Singh Bahadur the Sikh power established in Punjab during the Sixth and seventh decade of 18th century. The Sikhs continued their struggle under Dal Khalsa and Gurmata. Source of income for Sikhs became Rakhi system. In this system, Sikh gave internal and external protection of the person who gave Rakhi. Many villages were coming under Sikhs for their protection so the territory of Dal Khalsa increased rapidly. The Dal Khalsa divided into units which called Misls. These Misls work independently under Gurumata. Between 1767 till 1799, whole of the Punjab was held by Misls. In the seventies of the 18th century, considerable there were twelve Misls. Every Misl was a component part of SarbatKhalsa. The Misls extended their territories on the southeast of Delhi to keep the labour safe and unmolested. In Misls some Misls were very important in Punjab emergence like Kanhayas, Nakkais, Fazulpurias, Bhangis, Ramgarhias, Ahluwalias and Sukarchkias.

But the Misdar jealous of other Sardar of Misls and quarreled with them. These were the causes of their fall. At this time Ranjit Singh's power was rising who belong to Sukarchkia Misls. He became the leader of Sikhs and the political superemacy. He gathered as a resource of Kanhayas as and Ahluwalias which helped Ranjit Singh in building of Punjab.

Thus, Ranjit Singh gathered to all Misls and recognized to Punjab as a state.

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