



BABA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR: A GREAT SIKH WARRIOR ACTIVITIES IN HARYANA

**VINOD KUMAR, RESEARCH SCHOLAR, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY,
KURUKSHETRA UNIVERSITY, KURUKSHETRA, HARYANA**

Abstract- The present study deals with the historical analysis of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur's activities in Haryana region for struggle of the establishment of first sovereign sikh state in Punjab in the beginning of eighteenth century. There are lots of new facts available which created a need to reevaluate the role and contribution of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur to Sikh community. Banda Bahadur occupies an important and vital place in the History of Medieval India. He was not only a great devout of Khalsa or great disciple of Guru Gobind Singh but also a great freedom fighter who fought for the downtrodden and peasantry against the despotic and autocratic cruel rule of Mughal officials. Commander of the Sikh forces in his struggle with the Mughal rule in Punjab created a first sovereign sikh state immediately after the death of Aurangzeb during the rule of Bahadur Shah-I. This article deals with his activities against the Mughal nobility in Haryana region.

Key Words- Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, Haryana, Punjab, Sikh, Historical, sovereign, Mughal

Introduction:

Baba Banda Singh Sahadur (1670 – 1716). Shri Guru Gobind Singh established the Republic Order of the Khalsa on 30th March 1699. The Khalsa was created primarily as an instrument of Akal-Purkh to affect a just, moral, ethical and virtuous sovereign rule. The Sikhs recognise no human successor to Guru Gobind Singh, and speak of Guru Granth and Guru Panth as a condominium, it is the sovereignty that emancipates from the Guru Granth Sahib that empowers the Khalsa. In September 1708 Guru Gobind Singh, having completed the above condominium and mission of Guru Nanak - selected a Commander-in-Chief of the Khalsa to guide them to this Raj. At Nanded, resided an ascetic practising powerful occult incantations - Madho Das Bairagi. All saints were petrified of him and his miraculous powers. Guru Gobind Singh deliberately went to his monastery; the Bariagi's powers were tested and for the first time failed against the Guru. After a brief discourse, the Bairagi fell to the Guru's feet, and pronounced himself to be the Guru's banda. Guru Gobind Singh administered him into the Order of the Khalsa, re-named him Banda Singh, gave him 5

of his own arrows, and instructions to establish the Khalsa Raj. Banda Singh was also afforded the elite Binod Singh, Kahan Singh, Baj Singh, Daya Singh and Ram Singh. Banda Singh and his contingent left immediately for the Punjab - to eliminate the tyrannical Mughal Government. After this gloomy scene, he had a change of heart. Baba ji left his home and became a disciple of a bairagi Sadhu, Janaki Das, who gave him the name, Madho Das. In the company of the Sadhu he traveled through northern India and finally arrived at Nanded (in present-day Maharashtra), situated on the bank of the river Godavari, where he built a hut to meditate upon. When Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji came to the Deccan along with the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, he came here to Madho Das's hut. Madho Das was away. He had learnt tantra and was locally famous for his occult powers. He attempted to conjure his magic to humiliate Guru Sahib, but his magic would not prevail on Guru Sahib. Defeated he fell at the Guru Sahib's feet. Guru Sahib asked him "who are you?". Madho Das replied "I am Banda". Guru Sahib asked "whose Banda?". Madho Das replied "your's". Guru Sahib soon gave Banda the title of Bahadur. Banda was baptized and converted into the Sikh fold. Guru Sahib gave him five arrows and sent him to Punjab to fight against the Mughals. He is popularly known as "Banda Bahadur". Baba Banda Singh Ji Bahadur reached Punjab conquering Samana, Sadhaura, and Chapar Chidi. Finally Baba Banda Singh Ji conquered Sirhind. There was Sikh Raj established after that. After six years Baba Ji and his army was surrounded by Mughal army at Gurdas-nangal Garhi. Baba Ji and soldiers were surrounded for about 8 months, all the eatables and other necessary amenities were finished. Baba Ji and all his men were arrested here and taken to Delhi. He is revered as one of the greatest Sikh warriors as well as one of the most hallowed martyrs of the Khalsa Army.

The Khalsa were engaged in a prolonged fight against the cruel Mughals, who were practising their tyranny and terrorism. His confrontation with the Mughal administration in Northern India, though brief, was strong and vigorous enough to shake the foundations of this evil empire. Baba Banda Singh Jee Bahadur was one of the greatest Sikh leaders of all times. He avenged the Shaheedis of Sahibzaadas by punishing the aggressors. He won pretty much the whole of present-day Punjab and Haryana yet he did not have even an iota of lust for ruling. He used to win a territory and hand it over to Khalsa and never assumed the role of a king. He was the first Sikh to issue Khalsa coins and nowhere on the coin he let his own name be carved but only allowed Siri Guru Nanak Dev Jee's and Siri Guru Gobind Singh Jee's names on there. Some naive historians accuse him of disobeying Guru Sahib's Hukam of not getting married. This is such a lame allegation. How could Guru Sahib give him Hukam to not get married, when all Guru Sahibaan were themselves married? This is totally a baseless allegation. Some accuse Baba Banda Singh of trying to assume the role of Guru Sahib but this too is a false statement. There is no historical evidence to prove this. Most of these allegations were made by Rattan Singh Bhangu, who had a severe bias for Baba Jee. Even modern day

historians like Sardar Karam Singh Historian made baseless statements for Baba jee e.g. that he did not take Amrit etc. Baba Binod Singh and Kahn Singh, in my opinion were wimps and cowards, for deserting the battlefield of Gurdas-Nangal. They sought refuge from the Lahore Darbar which was a shameful thing to do. One of their descendants I believe was Bhalla who wrote some negative statements for Baba jee. The traitors Binod Singh and Kahn Singh had to justify their actions and they did so by making a villain out of Baba Banda Singh jee.

I have full Sharda that Baba jee was a Brahmgyani Gurmukh. Even his most bitter opponents and Nindaks like Sardar Bhangu have written that Baba jee had great Bhagti and all his Vaaks (statements) came out true. The Sikhs in Sirhind were losing the battle against Vazir Khan but as soon as Baba jee himself stepped into the battlefield by shooting arrows, the tide tilted in the favour of Khalsa. Can a normal person stay unmoved if his 4 year old son is cut to pieces in his own lap and then the still-pumping heart is put in his mouth? Well this is exactly what happened with Baba jee but Baba jee stayed absorbed in Naam Abhyaas. Farukhsiyar the Mughal emperor asked Baba jee what kind of death he wanted. Baba jee being a great Gurmukh said that the emperor should give him such death that he wants for himself. Farukhsiyar did not know whom he was talking to. He ordered that Baba jee's eyes be pulled out and every limb be cut to pieces. This is how Baba jee got Shaheedi and this is how Farukhsiyaar too got killed in the hands of the Sayyad Brothers. He was first starved for 2 months and then his eyes were pulled out. In the end he was hacked to death, after two months. Save the valiant Sahibzada Baba Ajit Singh jee, Baba Deep Singh jee and Sardar Hari Singh jee Nalwa, no other Sikh had a presence in the battlefield as strong as Baba Banda Singh jee Bahadur. Today we need someone like Baba Banda Singh jee to lead us out of the quagmire we are stuck in. The agrarian uprising that he led in the Punjab was the underpinning on which the Dal Khalsa, the Sikh Misls and Maharaja Ranjit Singh built the edifice which finally culminated with Ranjit Singh capturing Lahore in 1799 and establishing the Sikh Kingdom of the Punjab. This resulted in the end of a dark period in the history of India. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was born in a Minhas Rajput family on October 16, 1670 at Rajouri in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, Northern India; he was named Lachman Dev. Wrestling, horseback riding, and hunting were his major hobbies. He was a very active and energetic child. However, as a young man, he shot a doe and was shocked to watch the mother and her aborted fawn writhing in pain and dying. After this gloomy scene, he had a change of heart. This experience moved him so much that he completely changed his outlook to life. He left his home and became a recluse. Soon, he met a Bairagi Sadhu, Janaki Das and became his disciple. The Sadhu gave him the name, Madho Das. In the company of the Sadhus he travelled through Northern India and then finally arrived at Nanded (in present day

Maharashtra) in central India, situated on the bank of the river Godavari, where he built a hut to meditate upon God. Madho Das meets Guru Gobind Singh In September 1708, Guru Gobind Singh, who had come to the Deccan along with the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, happened to go to Madho Das' hut while hunting. Madho Das was away. The Guru ordered his disciples to cook food immediately as the Sikhs were hungry as they had not eaten for days. News of this reached Madho Das, who was enraged. He had mastered Tantra and tried some of his tricks to humiliate the Guru. But none had any effect on Guru Gobind. The Guru then asked him, "Who are you?" Madho Das, who having tried all his occult powers had my now accepted defeat, said with great humility, "I am your banda (slave)". The Guru inquired, if he knew who he was talking to. Banda said he was none other than Guru Gobind Singh.

The Guru then had a long conversation with Banda. He encouraged him to give up his present recluse lifestyle and the lonely way of living. The Guru asked him to resume the duties of a true warrior to fight for righteousness and justice before God. Banda Singh Bahadur's mission Guru Gobind Singh had hoped that Emperor Bahadur Shah would fulfil his promise and do justice in the Punjab by punishing the Governor of Sirhind, Nawab Wazir Khan and his accomplices for their crimes against the common people including the deaths of the Guru's mother, Mata Gujri and his two younger sons, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh. Finding him reluctant, the Guru deputed Madho Das Bairagi, under the leadership of five Sikhs, to end Mughal persecution of innocents in Punjab. In a few days, the Guru held a darbar and on 3 September 1708, baptised Madho Das with Khanda di pahal and conferred the title of Banda Singh Bahadur on him. He appointed him as his military lieutenant and invested him with full political and military authority as his deputy to lead the campaign in the Punjab against the evil Mughal administration and to punish Nawab Wazir Khan and his supporters. taken Banda more than a hundred days to complete his journey, but he actually took about a year. Probably, he might have been frequently in hiding. While Banda was on his journey to Punjab, the guru was severely wounded by a Pathan sent after the Guru by Wazir Khan with the connivance of the court nobles. The dispatch of Banda to Punjab had infuriated Emperor Bahadur Shah. As an indirect result of the wound of this attack, the Guru passed away on October 7, 1708. Banda had not gone far when he heard the sad news. This did not discourage him. On the contrary it doubled his zeal and set the fire of vengeance ablaze in his heart. Distance between Nanded and Hissar in current day Haryana is 1600 Kms. At the rate of 10-16 kms per day Banda should not have taken more than 100 to 150 days during his journey, but he actually took about a year. It means that he might have been frequently in hiding. The emperor would have instructed his officers to make short work of Banda and his party.

Narnaul: Banda arrived at Narnaul. There he saw the complete destruction of Satnamis with his own eyes. His blood boiled on learning that entire sect of Satnamis, men, women and children, one and all had been wiped out of existence. It was here that Banda suppressed some dacoits and robbers. (this is mentioned in Shri Guru Panth Parkash of Giani Gian Singh, 345-46, 4th edition).

Hissar: He was well received by Hindus and Sikhs as a leader of the nationalist movement and deputy of Guru Gobind Singh. Liberal offerings were made to him in the cause of the country and dharam (religion and virtue) which he distributed among poor and needy.

Tohana: Here Banda issued letters to Malwa Sikhs to join him in his crusade against Wazir Khan of Sirhind. Never perhaps in the history of Punjab did the circumstances of the time offered so fair a field to the ambition of a leader, conscious of great talents, and called to the command of a warlike people, only too eager to support him in any enterprise he might undertake. Banda directed his attention to the east towards Delhi. He wanted to leave Mata Sahib Kaur in Delhi and plunder the Government officials of the fertile area of Haryana. From Kharkhauda about 50 kms north-west of Delhi, Mata Sahib was sent to Delhi under proper escort, to join Mata Sundari, who was now acting as the head of the Khalsa. She might have resented Banda's ignoring her for not having visited her at the capital before starting on his crusade.

Sonepat: At Sonepat, 50 Kms north of Delhi, early in November 1709 Banda commanded about 500 followers. He attacked government treasury plundered it and distributed it among his retinue. This was his second success against the government and it considerably raised his prestige. By slow marches he advanced towards Sirhind.

Kaithal: Near Kaithal, about 100 kms further North, Banda seized a Government treasury which was on its way from the northern districts to Delhi. He kept nothing out of it for himself and gave it away to his rank and file.

Samana: Samana, 50 kms farther north was the native place of Jalal-ud-din Jallad, the professional executioner, who had beheaded Guru Tegh Bahadur, while his son had beheaded two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Ali Hussain who by false promises had lured Guru Gobind Singh to evacuate Anandpur also belonged to Samana. It was a cursed place in the eyes of Sikhs. The entire peasantry of the neighborhood was now up in arms due to their ill treatment by the Mughal administration. Banda's following had risen to several thousands. Banda fell upon the town on November 26, 1709. The inhabitants were no match to the Khalsa army and they were massacred and town thoroughly squeezed. Samana was the district town and had nine Parganahs attached to it. It was placed under the charge of Fateh Singh. Samana was the first territorial conquest and the first administrative unit of Banda. Then Kunjpura, Ghuram, and Thaska inhabited by Mughal Ranghars notorious for rape

and rapine were destroyed. People who were born out of Muslim father and Hindu mother were called Ranghars. Damla was the village of Pathans who had deserted Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani. It was ravaged. Shahbad Markanda also fell to Banda.

Sadhaura: Usman Khan, the chief of Sadhaura 25 kms distant, had persecuted Sayyid Budhu Shah for helping Guru Gobind Singh ji in the battle of Bhangani. The muslim population maltreated the local Hindus. On the approach of Banda the leading Muslims gathered in a big and strongly built mansion. They were all massacred. This building came to be known as Katal Garhi. Banda attacked the town and destroyed it. The contemporary historian Khafi Khan wrote: "In two or three months time four to five thousands pony-riders, and seven to eight thousand warlike footmen joined him. Day by day their number increased, and abundant money and material by pillage fell into their hands. Numerous villages were laid waste and he appointed his own police officers (thanedars) and collectors of revenue (Tahsil-dar-e-mal)".

Lohgarh: The ultimate aim of Banda was to punish Wazir Khan and conquer Sarhind. It required time to consolidate his material and territorial gains. He also wanted to study military resources of Sarhind. He was anxious to see what steps government will take against him. He therefore established his headquarters, in the beginning of February 1710 at Mukhlispur situated in lower Shiwalik hills south of Nahan, about 20 KM from Sadhaura. His fort stood on a hill top. Two kuhls or water channels flowed at its base and supplied water to it. This fort was repaired and put in a state of defense. All the money, gold and costly material acquired in these expeditions were deposited here. He struck coins and issued orders under his seal. The name of Mukhlispur was changed to Lohgarh, and it became the capital of first Sikh state. Banda ruled over the region bounded on the north by Shiwalik hills, on the west by river Tangri, on the east by river Jamuna, and in the south by a line passing through Samana, Thanesar, Kaithal and Karnal. He abolished the Zamindari System of land prevailing under the Mughals and declared the actual cultivators as the owners of land. Thus he established the peasant proprietorship, and won approbation and support of the overwhelming majority of the population. Khafi Khan says that Banda "issued orders to imperial officers and agents and big jagirdars to submit and give up their business." So Guru Gobind Singh's dream of political sovereignty was realized within a year of his death. Banda's name struck terror into the hearts of lawless people, and thefts and dacoity became a thing of the past. "In all the paraganahs occupied by the Sikhs," writes Irvine, "The reversal of previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru, when in a short time he would return to his birthplace as its ruler with his order and his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries the wealthy and well-born went out to greet him and with joined palms awaited his orders. Not a soul

could disobey an order, and men who had often risked themselves in battlefields, became so cowed down that they were afraid even to remonstrate.

CONCLUSION:

Banda Bahadur occupies an important and vital place in the History of Medieval India. He was not only a great devout of Khalsa or great disciple of Guru Gobind Singh but also a great freedom fighter who fought for the downtrodden and peasantry against the despotic and autocratic cruel rule of Mughal officials. In this biographical account Banda has not been assessed as a Bairagi or Baptized Sikh, but as a great warrior of Punjab, saviour of the poor and downtrodden, who ultimately grabbed political power and founded a benevolent rule. He was one of the bravest general and most enthusiast ruler of the time who took up the arms against the tyrannical rule of the Mughals. Like other warriors of his time Dhanaji and Shantaji Ghorpade, he gave the severe blow to the prestige and stability of the Mughal rule. Khuswant Singh wrote that "he Shook one of the most powerful empire in the world to its very foundations with such violence that it was never again able to re-establish its authority." Banda inspired the common masses of Punjab to resist the tyranny and live and die like a freedom fighter. Although his rule was short-lived and he met with a tragic end yet he occupies a high place in the history of Punjab. He lit the flame of inspiration for Independence and self rule in them. Making an estimate of his achievements G. C. Narang remarks that "Guru Gobind Singh had diverted the attention of his followers from plough to the sword. He had sown the seeds, Banda reaped the harvest. The Guru had destroyed the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism. Banda completely broke the charm of its invincibility.

REFERENCES:

- Muzaffar Alam, The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1986.
- Sohan Singh, Banda the Brave, Bhai Mehar Singh and Sons, Amritsar, 1915
- Karam Singh Historian, Banda kaun tha?(Punjabi), Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee, Amritsar, 1998.
- Anshu Malhotra, Gender, Caste, and Religious Identities–Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002.
- Sital, Sohan Singh, Rise of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, Ludhiana, 1970.
- Gupta, Hari Ram, History of Sikhs, Vol-2, New Delhi, 1978.
- Singh, Sohan, life and Exploits of Banda Singh Bahadur, Patiala, 1915.
- Singh, Gopal, A History of the Sikh People, (1469-1988), New Delhi, 1979.
- Narang, K.S, History of the Punjab, New Delhi, 1973.
- Suri, Vidhyasagar, Punjab ka Itihas (1469-1857), Chandigarh, 1975.
- Singh, Jagjit, The Sikh Revolution, New Delhi, 1981.
- Grewal, J.S, The Sikhs of the Punjab, New Delhi, 1994.
- Bhatia, H.S, Rare Document on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, New Delhi, 1981.
- Ahluwalia, M.L, Land Marks in Sikh History, New Delhi, 1996.
- Chhabra, G.S, History of the Punjab, Vol-1, Jullunder, 1960.
- Singh, Khuswant, A History of the Sikhs, Vol-1, 1469-1839, New Delhi, 1977.
- Singh, Ganda, Life of Banda Singh Bahadur, Patiala, 1999.
- Singh, Fauja, Sarhind through the Ages, Patiala, 1984.
- Sarkar, J.N, Fall of Mughal Empire, Calcutta, 1949-50.
- Data, Piara Singh, Banda Singh Bahadur, Delhi, 1986.
- Singh, Bhagat, Sikh Polity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, New Delhi, 1978.
- Singh, Kartar, and Dhillon, Gurdyal Singh, Banda Singh Bahadur and Rise of the Sikhs, New Delhi, 1971.