

# Banda Singh Bahadur's Contribution for establishment of a great Sikh Kingdom

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**Abstract :** Banda Singh Bahadur was one of the most remarkable men and warrior in India of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He was the first Sikh who established of the great Sikh Kingdom in Punjab. He was a baptise Sikh of tenth Guru Gobind Singh. He challenged the Mughals and made cause the decline of Mughal empire. He fight against in justice. He was a great leader of progressism, savior of Khalsa, bravest, selfsacrificable. This paper discuss the briefly battles, martyr of Banda Singh Bahadur. In the eighteenth century history of Sikh struggle and sacrifices is so significant in Punjab & Indian history. This paper shows the various attempts and difficulties to establishment of first Sikh Raj and Khalsa Republic. This paper is based on authentic contemporary primary and secondary sources.

**IndexTerms - Banda Bahadur Leadership, Great Sikh, Mughal Sarkar.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the eighteenth century in the Punjab was a period of great political upheaval and turmoil. Mughals Marathas and Afghans, strove with each other for supermacy. Their mutual fighting produced conditions of utter confusion and anarchy. The Sikhs become prominent in the Punjab region under Guru Gobind Singh Ji's leadership and they are also credited to have challenged the mighty Mughal empire, ultimately paving the way for its collapse. Among the successor states of the 18<sup>th</sup> century India the Sikhs were one of most successful powers of the period. There is an extremely rich historiography on the processes of state formation under the Sikhs. The disintegration of the Mughal empire and rise of the Sikh power are the dominant themes in major historical writings on 18<sup>th</sup> century India. Yet the question arises as to how to visualise the entire phenomenon, particularly in view of the varying perceptions that we witness in the historical writings representing Mughal, Sikh and European perspectives. This issue becomes more complicated given the fact that contemporary historical accounts are written by the Mughal court historians and officials (news writers) and the biasness in their narratives in the context of the Mughal-Sikh relations is obvious. The Mughals had their own agenda to portray a history of the time in a particular hue. Their own concerns indisputably influenced their perception of the role of different sects of people who challenged the Mughal authority or questioned the legitimacy of their rule. The result is that often the image that we get in the Mughal accounts of all forms of resistance to the Mughal authority is negative. Protest is taken as rebellion, rebelliousness and their synonyms are the most damning language of abuse in Mughal court literature. Therefore, the language of these writings needs to be understood and interpreted keeping in mind this specific context. So I have an impartial investigation of the subject of Banda Singh Bahadur. This is based on fact and authentic resources. There is no mixture of sentiments.

The Sikhs during the eighteenth century made maximum sacrifices and endured unprecedented suffering. During Banda Singh's period, Bahadur Shah issued an edict that no Sikh should be allowed to move about in any town or village. Despite all this, Banda Singh Bahadur was able to establish a Sikh state.

The period of Banda Singh Bahadur represents one of the most for motive stages of the Sikhs as a political power and is, therefore of absorbing interest and historically very important. A part from the most noble task of the creation of the Khalsa, another everlasting heritage of Guru Gobind Singh is the continuation of the Sikh tradition through the choice of his lieutenant Banda, popularly known to the Sikhs as Banda Singh Bahadur. He was the first veteran Sikh fighter who spear-headed the liberation movement and laid down the foundation of the Sikh sovereignty.

Banda Singh Bahadur whose original name was Lachhman Dev, was born on 16 October, 1670 (Kartiksudi, 13, 1727 BK). He was a Pahari Rajput of Bhardwaj clan and belonged to Rajouri in Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> He was a strong and sturdy youngman. Banda Singh Bahadur resembled Guru Gobind Singh in personal appearance.<sup>2</sup> He was light brown complexion, good features and charming eyes. Itmad-ud-Daula Muhammad Amin Found an opportunity to come close to him, at the time of his cruel death and praise him for so much of acuteness in his features and nobility in his conduct.<sup>3</sup> He was very fond of hunting horse riding sword and bow. But he is allowed on all hands to have been a man of undoubted valour and bravery and the coolness, with which he met his death.<sup>4</sup> has this praise even from men like Khafi Khan.

It was after spending sixteen summers at Nanded that Banda Singh Bahadur met Guru Gobind ji at the bank of Godavari in 1708 on solar eclipse.<sup>5</sup> At a time when Banda Singh Bahadur was leading an ascetic life at Nanded. Guru Gobind Singh was busy in his mission of fighting against political iniquities and religious intolerance in the Punjab. During the closing years of his reign, emperor Aurangzeb sent a conciliatory message to the Guru, inviting him to the Deccan for negotiations. The Guru, sent in reply

his famous "The Zafarnamah; where in he reprimanded him about his un kingly behaviour and telling him that he had taken to sword as the last resort.

However, as the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was too old and weak. While passing through Rajasthan, he received the news of Aurangzeb's death (20<sup>th</sup>Feb.1707) and therefore returned to Punjab. While the Guru Gobind Singh Ji was near Shahjahanabad (Dehli) he was approached by the prince Muhammed Muazzam (Bahadur Shah) for assistance against the usurping brother, Muhammad Azam like a true saint, the Guru helped Muazzam in the battle of Jajau. New emperor Guru Gobind Singh gave him a khillat and a dhukhdhukhi (a kind of necklece as a mark of his gratitude.

As the negotiations had not concluded, The Guru accompanied Bahadur Shah to the Deccan. But when the royal camp reached near Nanded. The Guru seperated himself from the royal camp. Where he met Madho Das (Lachhman Das)

Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave Khande da Pahul (Necter) to Lachhman Das (Banda Singh Bahadur) and a gave new name Banda Singh Bahadur.

Now Banda Singh Bahadur become a baptize Singh a leading disciple of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and a member of Khalsa brotherhood. Banda Singh Bahadur was now ready for a new assignment in accordance with the orders of his master, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. But Wazir Khan of Sirhind who deputed the Guru's assassins for his personssafety. A pathan stabbed the Guru Ji he had written to his people on this point in his letter of the IST. Kartik 1764 BK (2oct, 1707) Guru gave the military command of his people to his charge Banda Singh Bahadur at their head of course not as Guru, but as commander of the forces of the of the Khalsa. The Guru appointed a council of five Piaras consisting of Bhai Binod Singh, Kahan Singh, Baj Singh, Daya Singh and Ram Singh to assist him. A Nishan Sahib (flag) and a Nagara (Drum) were also give him. Thus raised to the position of Jathedar (Leader) and strengthened by the Guru's Hukamnamahs (letters) to the Sikhs all ours country to join in his expeditions, Banda left for Punjab. Before leaving, Banda Singh promised to obey the commands of the Guru. He was also given a letter addressed of the Sikhs of the Punjab to acknowledge Banda as their new leader and fight under his flag.

Thousands of Sikhs joined him from Doaba (District of Jullunder and Hoshiarpur Majha (District of Amritsar and Gurdaspur) and Malwa (District of Ludhiana).<sup>6</sup> Soon he had forty thousand armed men gathred round him recruited chiefly from the lower caste Hindus.<sup>7</sup> Ali Singh and Mali Singh who were come from the court of Wazir Khan with some more Sikhs after their escape from the prison of Sirhind and joined the Sikhs. They requested to Banda Singh Bahadur all those Sikhs who could be expected to join him that he should begin his operation. Banda Singh Bahadur replied that be was waiting for some who had been specially summoned and who were coming from great distances.

In the next few months, he arrived the frontier of the Delhi province, he slackened his speed and moved very leisurely and cautiously probably to avoid detection by or collision with the imperial troops He had decided wisely to first attack small citadels of power nearby, firstly to create a general disorder and contempt for imperial authority and secondly to put to test his own forces regarding their Capacity for warfare, sacrifice and hardship. As Banda Singh proceeded further he become very popular for his saintly blessings and princely generosity common people knew him only as a deputy of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and they flocked to him for benediction begging for dudh, put,(milk,offspring). He would not send away any one disappointed. Such reports about him spread for and wide, so that people brought to him complaints and received justice. This Banda Singh Bahadur, who had so for refrained from interfering with the government, found himself ready to do so,These made acts of bravery were only the beginning of a glorious though short, career of this hero. He invited the people to join in the fold of the Khalsa brotherhood and promised them a share in to the conquer territories. Banda Singh Moved into the pargana of Kharkhauda and established himself near the village of Sehri and Khanda.

The preparations of the Sikhs, all over the country, to join their new leader alarmed the Mughal officials, particularly Wazir Khan. He was concerting every passible precautionary measure to avoid this catastrophe and was collecting every bit of information about the Military strength and resources of the Sikhs.<sup>8</sup> He issued instructions to obstruct the passage of the northern Sikhs into Malwa districts. After having collected a considerable number of crusaders, all eager to do or die, Banda Singh Bahadur decided to commence the operation. He marched upon the town of Sonipat. Its faujdar was made to flee towards Dehli. On the morning of 26nov 1709 AD Banda Singh and his men rushed upon the town Samana and entered it from all sides before the gate could be closed against them.<sup>9</sup> while he was in the neighbourhood of Kaithal he attacked village of Bhuna and took the entire treasure without much opposition. The amil(Local Ruler) of Kaithal also defeated and captured.

In Samana which was a administrative unit between the parganah and the province of sub- province of Sirhind, the town was the residence of syiid Jalal-ud-din, the executioner of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji and of Shashal and basgal beg the executioners of the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. It was first conquest of Banda Singh Bahadur, Fateh Singh was made the governor of Samana.<sup>11</sup>

After this Banda Singh Bahadur conquered Ghuran, Thaska and Shahbad without any resistance Banda Singh Bahadur heard about the Zullum of Qadamuddin the ruler of Kapuri. The Sikhs fell upon Kapuri Qadam-Ud-Din perished in the general conflagration and with him ended his dark deeds. Banda Singh Bahadur next expedition was against Sadhaura whose ruler Usman Khan was notorious for the oppression of his subjects. He had tortured to death the great Muslim Saint sayyed Budhu Shah because the had helped Guru Gobind Singh Ji in the battle of Bhangani, after occupied Sadhaura Banda Singh Bahadur was marching in the north westerly direction to relieve the northern Sikhs who had assembled near Kiratpur on the otherside of the satluj, he was approached by the Hindus of chat and appealed to him for protection against the aggressions of the local Muhammadans. Banda Singh Bahadur promptly occupied the town and placed it under a Sikhs Amil.

Buy this time the Sikhs from other side of the Satluj crossed over from Kiratpur. Wazir Khan tried to prevent the combination of the forces. He deputed Sher Muhammad Khan of Malerkotla to deal with the Sikhs coming down from the north before they could join the main forces under Banda Singh<sup>12</sup>. The Majha Sikhs who by now had come down as far as Ropar, where attacked by Sher Muhammad Khan. This while on the one side there were all the worldly resources and on the other only the true spirit of Guru.<sup>13</sup> The Afgans fought a delaying action and then retreated before they could be crushed between the jaws of the Majha-Malwa nut cracker.<sup>14</sup> Khizar Khan, Nachtar Khan and wali Muhammad Khan were killed in the scuffle, Sher Muhammad Khan severely wounded in the battle of Ropar.<sup>15</sup> The Sikhs were victors of the day. While at Banur, Banda Singh heard about the glorious victory of his allies at Ropar. He marched out a few miles to receive them. The memorable junction took place between Kharar and Banur on the Ambala-Ropar road.<sup>16</sup>

The combined forces now started making preparations for a crusade against the condemned city of Sirhind and its governor Wazir Khan who was the cold blooded murderer of young sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Wazir Khan took every possible measure to protect himself and Sirhind. He even took recourse to treachery and sent the nephew of Sucha Nand to Sikh camp with one thousand men, to play the part of a traitor, to dupe Banda Singh with the false story of his desertions. Banda Singh Bahadar believed this story and allowed them to join his camp.<sup>17</sup> Wazir Khan on his part collected large stores of lead and gun powder and mobilized a long train of artillery and elephants. He declares a Jihad (Muslim Holy war) against the Kafirs (non-Muslim). The strength of his army was 15000 men of all ranks.<sup>18</sup> The forces of Banda Singh consisted three classes of men. The first category consisted true and loyal Sikhs who has sat at the feet of Guru Gobind Singh with the spirit or die. The second category of men consisted of mercenaries who had been recruited and sent to Banda Singh by Ram Singh and Tilok Singh of the Phulkian house. The last category was composed of the irregulars who had joined Banda Singh for the love of booty and Plunder. Wazir Khan heard news of the projected attack on Sirhind marched out with a large army.

The two armies came face to face with each other on the plains of Chappar-Chiri "on 22nd May 1710. As soon as the battle started, the treacherous nephew of Sucha Nand took to flight Banda Singh Bahadur personally rushed forward to the fore front of his army and boldly led them to attack. The Sikhs were very much encouraged by this bold movement of their leader. All his followers kept shouting "Sacha Padshah" and 'Fath Daras'. A musket ball made a martyr of Wazir Khan and they were put to fight.<sup>20</sup> The chief of the army were sent to their death. In the time of the Government Wazir Khan had with held cruelties from being inflicted the poor. So he reaped the fruit of it all. They (Khalsa army) special plundered the goods and houses of Sucha Nand, Chief clerk of the late Wazir Khan.<sup>21</sup> After small expeditions Banda Singh Bahadur occupied Lohgarh between the towns of Sadhaura and Nahan. In the Ganga, Yamuna, Doab territories Sikhs and Mughal rulers rushed upon each other time to time. In the Parganas of Batala-Kalanaur Sikhs established their own Thanas.

Banda Singh Bahadur used the tactics of Gurella action and occupied the fort of Rahon on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct 1710. Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah received the news of Sikh uprising under Banda Singh on 12 May 1710. The emperor reached Punjab at village of Pragpur, an advanced force was dispatched against the Sikhs on 28 July 1710, under the command of Firoze Khan Mewati. Muhammad Amin Khan Chin Bahadur and Qamar-ud-Din Khan also arrived from Maradabad. Sayyid Saif-Ud-Din Ali Khan Najam-Ud-Din Ali Khan Siraj-Ud-Din Ali Khan, Churaman Jat.<sup>22</sup> Emperor Bahadur Shah arrived at Sandhura on 24 Nov, 1710 and Banda Singh Bahadur by now had come to Lohgarh and had strengthened his fortifications. The emperor ordered the Royal forces to go forward but the Sikhs rushed upon him with showers of arrows rockets and Musket balls. Khafi Khan Observes "It is impossible to describe the flight that follows. The Sikhs in their Fakir Dress struck terror into the royal troops.<sup>23</sup> The emperor arrived at his camp on the banks of Som<sup>24</sup> on 29 November 1710. Next day the imperial troops marched under the command of Prince Rafi-Us-Shan. The Royal forces consisted of hill chiefs Raja Udet Singh Bundela Jumlat-Ul-Malk Khan, Mahabat Khan, Khan Jaman, Raja Chatarsal Bundela, Islam Khan Mir Atish and Khan I Khan, Munim Khan, Hamid-Ud-Din Khan and the retainers of Prince Amin Us Shan and Jahan Shah. The fort of Lohgarh was very closely invested by over sixty thousands imperial troops horse and foot reinforced by a large number of plunderers from among the Rohila Afgans, Bilochs and others. The emperor ordered the royal forces should not attack on Sikhs. But Munim Khan disobeys the royal orders and attacked the fort. The whole army continued its attack upon the Sikhs, Sikhs were decidedly outnumbered and had to fall back upon the last portion in the fort of Lohgarh. There was a heavy loss of life, on both sides. The Sikhs accepted the instruction of their leader and with deepest love and devotion came out of the fort with the shouts of their war cry and rushed upon the fire of the imperial artillery like, 'moths upon a flame'<sup>25</sup> The Sikh chieftain effected his escape during the night by a narrow path leading from the fort to the hills which had escaped the general's notice and retreated into the wildest parts of the snowy range the Himalayas.

Munim Khan and royal forces and emperor assured that Banda Singh has been surrounded and would be prisoner the next morning. Because of siege of three months no more food and fodder in the fort of Lohgarh. But the will of God between midnight a loud sound was heard from the Sikhs of Banda Singh Bahadur. It was a Taramind stem loaded with gun powder and run away. Banda Singh and his Sikhs cut their way through the besiegers and escaped towards the mountains of Nahan of Barfi Raja. Next morning Mughal troops were disappointed on finding 'the hawk had flown'. Bahadur Shah said in anger "where the dog had fled to the hawk had flown away' Banda Singh Bahadur conquered some six districts of Punjab from Panipat to Lahore through his military expeditions beginning from the occupation of Samana to the evacuation of Lohgarh in a short span of less than a year. He was not bothered about the loss of his stronghold or his treasure. His strength lay mainly in the indomitable spirit of the Khalsa. Within a fortnight from the date of his departure from Lohgar, Banda Singh Bahadur issuing Hukamnamas to Khalsa through the

country, calling Upon them to join him at once. Very soon Banda Singh's forces were again ready to launch military expeditions against the hill Rajas of the Shiwalks.

Banda Singh Bahadur was fully aware the preparations being made at Lahore against him. To meet the forth coming challenge he built a mud fortification at Kot Mirza Jan, a small village between Kalanaur and Batala. Before his defenses could be complete the combined forces under the command of Abdus Samad Khan and his deputy Asif Beg fell upon the Sikhs. The siege and struggle continued for several months with great loss on both sides the lack of food and fodder caused the fall of Banda Singh Bahadur. The besieged including Banda Singh Bahadur were made prisoners. The Mughal forces fell upon the half dead Sikhs like hungry wolves. From Gurdas Nangal Banda Singh and other Sikh prisoners were taken to Lahore. The Sikhs with greatest patience, singing the sacred hymns of the Gurus.<sup>27</sup> The ceremony on this occasion was copied from that observed after the capture of the Maratha Chief, Sambhaji son of Shivaji Sikhs were quite happy. Any one among the spectators said. Now you will be killed they shouted. "Kill us" when were we afraid of death? Had we been afraid of it how could we have fought so many battles With you? All observes, Indian and European unite in remarking on the wonderful patience. Banda Singh's young son aged about four years, the executioner cut his son and dragged out his quivering heart and thrust in into the month of his father, who stood unmoved like a statue. Completely resigned to Guru's will.<sup>(28)</sup> Finally he was decapitated and hacked to pieces limb by limb. Banda Singh Bahadur however did not die in vain. His short stormy career changed the scene of not only the Sikh history but also of the history of the Punjab. Banda Singh Bahadur had shown to the Sikhs the differences between those in power and those who were out of it. This lesson of power once practically taught could not be forgotten by a militant community, which continuously worked to regain what had been lost. Their grim struggle bore fruits and in less than half a century, the Sikhs became the undisputed masters of the Punjab. After his victories Banda Singh turned his attention towards the administration of the conquered territories. A fort was built by Banda Singh Bahadur and given the name Lohgarh. It became the first Sikh capital.

Banda Singh Bahadur commanded a large army and carried on the administration of the conquered territories through his deputies from Lohgarh, he issued a coin in the name of his saviours Guru Nanak, Gobind Singh in Persian script which read as under. "Sikanzad bar do Alam Tegh-i-Nanak wahab ast Fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i-Shahan Fazal-i-Sacha Sahib ast. (Coin Struck in two worlds by the grace of the True Lord, victory to Gobind Singh the king of kings the award of Nanak is the granter of desires.) The reverse of the coin contained the inscription "Zarb ba aman-ud-dahar massawarat Shahr zinat-ut-takhat-i-Mubarak bakht" (Coined at the model city the refuge of the world the ornament of the fortunate throne.) An official seal was also introduced for the purpose of issuing farmans (formal written edict issued by the Mughal emperor) etc. It read Degh Tegh Fateh-o-nusrut bedirang yaft as Nanak Guru Gobind Singh. That is kettle symbol of the means to feed the poor and sword symbol of power to protect the weak and helpless and victory and unhesitating patronage have been obtained from Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

His seal had thus inscribed an it not only the names of the Gurus, But also the two things which have since then contributed most to the popularity and power of the Sikhs and their Church the deg'h"cauldron) in the Guru's Langer (free meal) and the tegh (sword) of the khalsa. Banda Singh Bahadur also like other emperors introduced this own Samvat (year of accession) from the date of his victory at Sirhind. If the Mughal emperors had their capital coins, real and the San-i-Jules (year of accession) Banda Singh the first Sikh ruler too had all these. The only difference was that he struck coins and engraved his seal not in his own name, but in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. It is no doubt Banda Singh always declared himself to be banda (slave) of the Guru.<sup>29</sup>Notable achievement of Banda Singh Bahadur was the abolition of the zamindari, under the system established by the Mughals, the Ryot (Mughol term for pesants or rural subjects) suffered heavily. The solution lay only in its abolition as the zamidars (landlords) were mostly the government officials and acted as mini kings responsible to no authority and the peasant were practically reduced to the position of mere slaves. Banda Singh Bahadur deserves the full credit for the destruction of the zamindari System and making the cultivators of the soil the actual proprietors of their holdings in the areas under his occupation. William Irvin says "A low scavenger or leather dresser the lowest of the law in the Indian estimation had only to leave home and join the Guru (Banda Singh) when in a short time he would return to his birthplace as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders."<sup>30</sup> It is no doubt that from the river Yamuna to river Ravi Banda Singh was the only person who commanded respect of the peasants. Banda Singh Bahadur through his tact fullness and statesmanship and even use of force, made almost all the hill chiefs as his allies or supporters of the Sikh movement even the imperial Farmans and Khillats could not dissuade the hill chiefs to support the Sikh cause. Had Banda Singh succeed in getting the support of the Rajput's who were already in open revolt he could have captured Lahore and Delhi and a Sikh empire might have succeeded the Mughals which could have changed the entire course of the Indian history.

By his record of selfless devotion to the cause of his Guru and the Sikhs, Banda Singh has left indelible 'footprints on the sands of time' and will be remembered by posterity as one of the greatest freedom-fighters and founder of the first Sikh republic. As the course of subsequent Sikh history shows, Banda Singh Bahadur did not die in vain. His martyrdom changed not only course of Sikh history but also that of the Punjab and India.

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