

Identifying the Place of Banda's Arrival in Sonipat in the Sarkar and Suba of Delhi : A Reappraisal

Vighnesh Kumar**, *Kuldeep Kumar Tyagi,
*Manpreet Cour**** and *Kanishka*******

The entry of the 'Bahadur-Shah-nama' of the Jamadi I, 1119 Hijri corresponding to August 2, 1707 gives a clear cut evidence that Guru Govind Singh was in the Emperor's army at Agra immediately after the Battle of Jajau fought on 18th day of Rabi I, 1119 corresponding to June 18, 1707. The same primary source records Guru's 'balidan' on November 17, 1708 at Nanded on the bank of the Godavari. Before his 'balidan', the Guru had sent Madho Das Bairagi alias Banda to the north who appeared at a place near Kharkhoda in Sonipat from where the latter had started military expeditions

*** Professor and Head, Department of History, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail: <vighneshkmr@gmail.com>**

**** Assistant Professor, Department of History, SSM, Fatehpur Puthi, Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail: <tyagikuldeep02@gmail.com>**

***** Research Scholar, Department of History, CCS University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail: <choudharymanu449@gmail.com>**

****** Student, Department of History, CCS University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India)**

**JOURNAL OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Winter), 2023
Peer Reviewed, Indexed & Refereed International Research Journal**

against the Mughals. The site of the village Khanda (popularly known as Sehri-Khanda) has been identified as the very place of Banda's arrival in Haryana.

[**Keywords :** Guru Govind Singh, Nanded, Godavari, Achalnagar, *Bahadur-Shah-nama*, Govind Nanak, Rai Chatarman's *Chahar Gulshan*, Madhu Das alias Narayan Das, Ram Dev, Banda Veer Bairagi, Sarhind, *Mirat-i-Waridat*, Muhammad Shafi, *Ibratnama*, Kharkhoda, Sonipat, Rattan Singh's *Prachim Panth Prakash*, Karam Singh's *Banda Bahadur*, *Asthal Mahant Kishor Das*]

With the death of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb at Ahmadnagar on the 28th Zul Qada 1118 A.H.¹, coresponding to the 2nd March, 1707², the medieval period of Indian history is supposed to come to an end and the historians agree to accept the same as the starting point of modern Indian history. His eldest son amongst 3 alive ones named Prince Muazzam, assuming the name of Bahadur Shah, sat on throne after defeating and killing his younger brother Azam. His another brother Kam Bakhsh was also to be undergone same fate at Deccan a little later.

Quoting Danishmand Khan, William Irvine throws light on the presence of Guru Govind Singh at Agra just after Bahadur Shah's victory on Prince Azam Shah in the Battle of Jajau fought on 18th June, 1707³:

“It seems certain that Govind Singh joined Bahadur Shah at some point when that Prince was on his march down country from Lahor to Agra, to contest the throne with his brother, Azam Shah.”

He further remarks:

“In the same way Sikhs make the battle, fought at Jajau, between Agra and Dholpur, on the 18th Rabi I. 1119 (18th June 1707).”

Furthermore, he mentions⁴:

“But there is, I think, evidence that Govind Singh was in the Emperor's army at Agra immediately after the battle. I think that he is to be identified in the entry of the Bahadur-Shah-nama of the Jamadi I. 1119 (2nd August, 1707), when a jewelled scarf was presented to Govind Singh.”

About the death of Guru Govind Singh, the Sikh tradition assigns it to Nanded, on the Godavari, in a shrine called Achalnagar⁵. The Sikh tradition also tells it to be happened on the fifth day of some

lunar month⁶. The *Bahadur-Shah-nama* records it on 5th *Ramzan*, 1120 (17th November, 1708). It also records that a report was made to the Emperor, “as to the disposal of the movable property left by Guru Govind Nanak⁷.”

Quoting the evidence from Rai Chatarman’s *Chahar Gulshan*,* Irvine tells about one Ajit Singh apparently an adopted son. He also writes⁸:

”It was of considerable value, and according to rule ought to be confiscated. The Emperor, with the remark that he was not in want of the goods of a *darvesh*, ordered the whole to be relinquished to the heirs.”

Throwing light, further, he remarks⁹:

“The death might have just occurred; at any rate, it must have happened quite recently. Unfortunately, Danishmand Khan, in his contempt for all narrative, tells us nothing of the mode of death. One Ajit (or Ajib) Singh, who passed as Guru’s son, was brought to the Emperor, was invested with a robe of honour, and taken into the imperial service.”

Quoting Warid, Kamwar Khan and Yahya Khan, and Browne; the historian provides some more details about the death of Guru Govind Singh and Banda’s entry to the new movement’s stir. He writes¹⁰:

“On the death of Govind, his family and followers brought forward a man; who exactly resembled the deceased.* It is not very clear who this man was; he is generally spoken of either as Banda (the slave), or as the False Guru. Two contemporaries call him Fath Singh... Some say he was a Bairagi *faqir*... who for many years had been the intimate friend of Guru Govind. A more recent account calls him Madhu Das, alias Narayan Das, and tells us he was born on *Katik Sudi* 13th, 1727 S. (October 1670) being the son of Ram Dev, Rajput, of Rajauri-garh in Punchh.”

When the imperial train from Agra to Deccan was in progress and had reached Nanded, it seems some historical that Guru Govind Singh was perhaps made convinced by Madho Das Bairagi not to accompany the Emperor. Finding his effort not fruitful, Guru Govind Singh decided to stay and not to move further from Nanded. He stayed and came to Madho Das Bairagi’s math where its founder became his disciple i.e., Banda.

Banda *alias* Banda Bairagi *alias* Banda Bahadur or Banda Veer Bairagi was sent to north to settle the accounts with Nawab Wazir Khan of Sarhind. He left Nanded for north about September 1708. Throwing light on Banda, William Irvine writes¹¹:

“Whatever may be the truth as to his origin and antecedents, this man was now sent off secretly from Dakhin to Hindustan.”

Returning to his monastery to meet his guest Guru Govind Singh, Madho Das Bairagi made a hurry! Quoting Ahmad Shah Batala, Ganda Singh reproduces the dialogue held between the two as follows¹²:

<i>Sanyasi</i> Madho Das Bairagi	:	Who are you?
<i>Dasham</i> Guru Govind Singh	:	He whom you know.
<i>Sanyasi</i> Madho Das Bairagi	:	What do I Know?
Guru Govind Singh	:	Think it over in your mind.
Madho Das (after a pause)	:	So you are Guru Govind Singh!
Guru Govind Singh	:	Yes!
Madho Das Bairagi	:	What have you come here for?
Guru Govind Singh	:	I have come so that I may convert you into a disciple of mine.
Madho Das Bairagi	:	I submit, my Lord. I am a Banda (a slave) of yours.”

Quoting the *Mirat-i-Waridat* of Muhammad Shafi and the *Ibratnama* of Muhammad Qasim Lahori, about Banda’s suddenly appearance at Kharkhoda, a place in present day Haryana, William Irvine writes¹³:

“Suddenly there appeared in the town of Kharkhoda, thirty-five miles west of Delhi, a man who gave himself out to be Guru Govind Singh.”

The people took him as Guru Govind Singh himself who had recovered from his wounds¹⁴:

“According to some accounts, he asserted that he had recovered from his wounds and returned to Punjab; other believed that he had been restored to life by God’s power.”

It is a fact that he was taken and thought of to be their Guru¹⁵:

“The *zemindars* of the village where he appeared had become several years before this time, followers of Guru Govind Singh, and knew his appearance. As the pretender had copied Govind Singh’s exterior, and resembled him in features, these *zemindars* believed in him, adopted his cause, and wrote in all directions to the Sikhs, telling them that their lost leader had returned to earth.”

He further describes¹⁶:

“In response to this call many armed men assembled, and as soon as there were five hundred of them, they marched for Sonpat, about twenty-five miles north of Dihli. The *faujdar* of Sonpat came out utterly unprepared, was routed, and fled to Dihli.”

The dates of arrival of Banda to ‘the town of Kharkhoda’ and ‘to the village where he appeared’ are not mentioned in any of the contemporary sources. The term used ‘the town of Kharkhoda’ seems fit to get the location of the main site of the village where he had to be operate from. The village’s name as well as the date remain still a question of further investigation.

On the basis of the evidences in the *Prachin Panth Prakash* of Rattan Singh and the *Banda Bahadur* of Karam Singh, Ganda Singh has given a glimpse of Banda’s deeds full of bravery. He describes¹⁷:

“Robberies and thefts were not uncommon in those days, and, Banda Singh was advertised as a man of wealth, gangs of dacoits hovered round his camp. But they were soon driven away by his companions and he passed on to Bagar¹⁸ territory unmolested. He had so far been quiet and had followed the policy of non-interference in the affairs of others. This, however, could not continue for long. Bagar in those days was notorious for occasional visitations of professional dacoits. One day he was informed that a gang of dacoits was marching upon the village where he was stationed, and that the residents were deserting their hearths and homes to take refuge in the neighbouring jungle. He encouraged them to stand against the marauders.¹⁹ But the village *Panches*²⁰ were too timid to entertain any such idea. Fearing lest the whole population should catch the contagion of their city-fathers, Banda Singh locked them up in a house and marched out the head of a small

band of Sikhs to oppose the robbers. His attack was so sudden, bold and severe, that they were thrown into confusion and, without a second thought, they took to their heels, leaving for the victors all the booty of their previous plunders. Their leader was captured. All who came to his rescue were either killed or driven back. Now the villagers too were emboldened to strike a blow in their defence. Banda Singh released the *Panches* and ordered the pursuit of the robbers who were chased to their very homes in a neighbouring village²¹.

After this episode full of bravery, he proclaimed himself the protector of poor and helpless against all professional robbers and official tyrants. In return 'milk' and 'curd', ration were the commodities the people could offer. The custom of 'pallu pherna' was observed that meant the Baba was the protector of the ilaqa or the geographical area under his control.

Under the heading- "Secular leadership of Banda (1709-1715)", Hari Ram Gupta in his famous work thus writes²²:

"Banda had witnessed the ruthless despotism of the Mughals in general and their oppression against his own community in particular. He had also seen the unsuccessful revolts against Mughal absolutism, one in the Panjab (Banda's original home) and the other in Maharashtra (Banda's residence). The narration of his sufferings and the work done in the Panjab by Guru Gobind Singh himself roused the sense of patriotism of this young man of 38, and he undertook to execute the mission of the Guru. Having received his blessings, Banda started for the Panjab early in 1709."

Throwing light on newly energized life of the Hindus motivated by the new ideas of Guru Govind Singh and reenergized again by Banda Veer Banagi, the historian further remarks²³:

"Never perhaps in the history of the Panjab did the circumstances or the time offer so fair a field to the ambition of a leader, conscious of great talents, and called to the command of warlike people, only too eager to second him in any enterprise he might undertake. Near Kaithal he plundered a royal treasure on its way to Delhi, and distributed the whole of it among his followers. This was a good omen for a series of rapid victories which he subsequently achieved, and attracted crowds of Sikhs and Hindus to join his folds."

In this context what Khafi Khan records is worth mentioning²⁴:

“In two or three months’ time nearly five thousand horse and eight thousand foot joined him. The number of his troops was increasing daily, and great booty was falling into his hands. Soon after about nineteen thousand men armed and equipped took to plunder and persecution.”

The matters came to such a pass that from thirty to forty thousand infidels served under his banner. Then he issued orders to the imperial officials to submit and retire from their posts.”

No original or contemporary source tells which village was the one discussed above where Banda was stationed for his preparations on such a large scale. No names are available.

In fact, the names of 2 townships of Kharkhoda and Sonipat are clearly mentioned. It shows that clue of ‘the village under investigation’ should be located in the administrative units of these towns. Also, it should be somewhere situated to the proximity of both of these towns.

No village other than ‘Khanda’ ever claimed to be the very village where Banda Bahadur had suddenly appeared and where he had made warlike preparations. For the purpose of identifying this historical village at least the following points should be kept in mind it :

1. It should be a site having appropriate space to hold the meeting point on daily basis but capable for general acceptance in public for mass gathering as usual.
2. It should be a site holding ample amount of water to cater the needs for public bath on mass scale as well as pure water for drinking.
3. It should be a site being in practice of public meetings and mass-gatherings to be addressed from.
4. To fulfil the aforesaid 3 conditions, it is an essential thing that the site should contain a religious sanctity in the masses simultaneously it should also be traditionally famous for religious gathering practices so that no Mughal intelligence could even suspect.

And there is one, a village named Khanda²⁵ which has a ‘*dwara*’,²⁶ the religiously sacred place named ‘*Asthal*’ of Mahant Kishor Das²⁷ with a larger sized pond adjoined to it.²⁸

It lies in the present day tehsil of Kharkhoda in the district of Sonapat in Haryana state of India. The oral tradition of history still preserves the evidences enfocussing the fact relating to Banda Bairagi's shelter and site for his further campaigns which include the suppression of the Ranghar dacoits²⁹ and military expedition on the *faujdar* of Sonapat. This is the village from where Baba Banda Bairagi launched his military expeditions those resulted not only in successful execution of Wazir Khan, the *faujdar* of Sarhind but also in making a kingdom founded yielding a revenue worth of 32 lacs of rupees per annum within the *Suba* and *Sarkar* of Delhi.³⁰

Notes and References

1. William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I 1707-1720, edited by Jadunath Sarkar, [Luzac & Co. London], Calcutta : M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 89-90.
4. Danishmand Khan, fol. 18.
5. E. Trumpp, *Adi Granth*, xcvi.
6. Sakhi Book, 200.
7. William Irvine, *op. cit.*, 90, foot note.
* Rai Chatarman, *Chahar Gulshan*, Jadunath Sarkar's copy, fol. 143.
8. William Irvine, *op. cit.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 93.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Ganda Singh, *Life of Banda Singh Bahadur*, Patiala : Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, 1999, 10.
13. William Irvine, *op. cit.*, 94.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, 20-21; Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Prakash*, 95-96; Karam Singh, *Banda Bahadur*, 32-33.
18. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Edition 1908, XIII, 149-50.
19. Ratan Singh, *op. cit.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*

22. Hari Ram Gupta, *Studies in the Later Mughal History of the Panjab 1707-1793*, Lahore : Minerva Book Shop, 1944, 45-46.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Khafi Khan, ii, 652-53; Hari Ram Gupta, *op. cit.*; Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Panjab 1707-1748*, New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1986; *Oxford India Perenials* (Second Edition), 2013, 83,169; *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Vol. 1, 10; M. S. Chandla, *Banda Bahadur*.
25. Interview, 31-08-2018, Dr. Raj Singh, a direct descendant of the followers of Bairagi Asthal of Mahant Kishor Das, Sehri Khanda, Kharkhoda, Sonipat, Haryana; Dr. Angiras (Senior), Dr. Ashutosh Angiras and others, during National Seminar-cum-Penal Discussion on Contribution of Bairagi Sect to Indian History, Culture and Literature (Part-2), Organized by the Sanatan Dharma (LAHORE) College, Ambala Cantt. Haryana on 31-08-2018; [Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, 22].
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. Interview, 22.09.2023, Col. Yogendra Singh, Rohtak, Haryana; Dr. Kuldeep Dutta, Cardiologist, Dehradun, Uttarakhand; Dr. Raj Singh, and more than 50 other persons residents of village of Sehri Khanda, Kharkhoda, Sonipat, Haryana; *Bhaskar* (Hindi), 01.11.2018 Sukhbir Saini, "Khanda mein Baba Banda Bahadur ke Yodhaon ne hilai thi pahli bar Mughalon ki neev"; *Dainik Bhaskar* (Hindi), 03.11.2018 C. M. Aaj Khanda mein : 50 acre mein 'Armed Preparatory Institute' ki ghoshana ho sakti hei; Kai pariyojnaon ka shilanyas bhi karenge; "410 Varsha purana hei Nirmohi Akhada"; Sonipat Bharat, 04.11.2018, Panipat Ravivar Mukhprashtha "C. M. Aaj Khanda gaon par maharban hue, 50 Crore ka Armed Preparatory Institute sahit di 8 saugaten."; Interview, 03-11-2018, Some more than 200 persons, while the first author was conferred on the BANDA VEER BAIRAGI AWARD by Shri Manohar Lal Khattar, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana, at Sehri-Khanda, Kharkhoda, Sonipat, Haryana.
29. Interview, 22.09.2023, Col. Yogendra Singh, Rohtak, Haryana.
30. Vighnesh Kumar, *Banda Veer Bairagi* (in Hindi), Meerut : Hastinapur Research Institute, 2015, 38. ★