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## **Traces of Banda's Disciples in the District of Meerut : A Case Study of Sadullapur Bangar**

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### **Abstract**

*Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb sat on throne in 1656; and in 1669, he had issued some Government Orders (Farmans) which were to suppress the Hindus for preparing a solid foundation based on terror and butchery for his 'conversion-mission' and to resist His Majesty's cruelty, Punjab rose against him. Guru Teg Bahadur, Guru Govind Singh and their disciples tried their best to save the Hindus. Guru Govind Singh motivated Banda who had come to the north in 1709 and had launched his successful military campaigns against the Mughals upto 1715. The district of Hoshiarpur was an area full of his staunch supporters. The small principalities including that of Patiala had evolved and increased their influences in coming decades. Raja Nain Singh of Parikshitgarh-Bahsuma, when in need, asked for help on which Patiala Maharaj is said to despatch contingent under two of his officers from which the branch of Sadullapur Bangar claims its flow. Sardar Phool Singh Gujar's family's claim is supported by the Bhat ki Pothi also.*

### **Keywords**

Banda Veer Bairagi, Jaita Daku, Raja Jait Singh, Raja Nain Singh, Raja Patiala, Parikshitgarh, Bahsuma, Sardar Phool Singh, Gujar Sardar of Chilkana Pind, Punjab, Sadullapur Banger.

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### **Traces of Banda's Disciples in the District of Meerut : A Case Study of Sadullapur Bangar**

There is situated a village named Sadullapur Bangar in the Development block of Machhara in the *tehsil* of Mawana of Meerut District in Uttar Pradesh. Here live the descendants of one Sardar Phool Singh who is said to be the grandson of one Gujar Sardar sent here from Patiala by Patiala Maharaj to assist Raja Nain Singh in his military expeditions.<sup>1</sup> According to a common legendary source, preserved in the oral traditions, it is believed that Raja Nain Singh once was in need of military assistance and he had received that from the ruler of Patiala Raj. Raja Patiala<sup>2</sup> sent two of his military leaders whom one belonged to Gujar and the other to Jat caste.<sup>3</sup> The leader of Gujar caste was the said Sardar Phool Singh's grandfather. whose name still remains a thing of further investigation.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in general and its 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> decades in particular are considered eventful time periods as far as the geographical area of the districts of Meerut and Hapur is concerned. During the reign of Emperor Ahmad Shah, one Jaita Gujar rose to prominence, he levied on the Ganga *ghats* at Garhmuketeshwar and Puth.<sup>5</sup> This alarmed the Royal Court at Delhi and a number of attempts were made to crush and imprison him but each time he was proved more powerful than earlier. Ultimately, Jaita was summoned at the court with assurance of safety for his life. On that assurance, he presented himself before the emperor and was conferred royal favours and thus ultimately he was assigned land grants. Later on, he was made a 'Raja'<sup>6</sup>.

This whole powerful episode played by Jaita Gujar was executed in the secret guidelines of the then Chaudharies of the *parganas* of Jalalabad and Saraa.<sup>7</sup> Both these *parganas* are well mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Few more Chaudharies particularly those of Asaura and Ajrara were the silent and strategical supporters in the episode.<sup>8</sup>

Gaining the political and administrative prominence, Raja Jaita Singh made his seat at Parikshitgarh.<sup>9</sup> It is not tough to

understand that the Raja never forgot the advice of his kind Tyagi Chaudhary supporters.<sup>10</sup> The Chaudharies had also the issues with the Syeds around Mawana and so they had to settle the old accounts with them. They were the designers of the Raja and were using him as a tool for the greater purpose for which all of them seem agreed upon.

Raja Jait Singh had no male issue<sup>11</sup> and therefore he was succeeded by his companion's son named Nain Singh<sup>12</sup>. Raja Nain Singh transferred his seat of administration from Parikshitgarh to Bahsuma, a site further northward towards the Barha country. In this context, what the District Gazetteer records, is worth mentioning<sup>13</sup>:

“Parichhatgarh, *Pargana* Kithor, *Tashil* Mawana

A small town, in *latitude* 28°59' north and *longitude* 77°57' east... On the highest point in the centre of the town is a brick fort, which is of great antiquity.”

According to the tradition it was built by Parikshit, the grandson of Arjun Pandava, who was also the founder of the town. The fort remained untenanted until the rise of the Gujars in the eighteenth century when Raja Nain Singh repaired and strengthened it and built a residence for his family close by. The fort, which is known as the *Qila*, a name which is locally applied to the town, was dismantled in 1857 and is now used as a police station. The *chaupal* on one side of the Raja's house has been utilized as a school. The houses of the people are chiefly of mud and congregate around the fort.

In the early days of British rule, Parichhatgarh was the head-quarters of the *Tahsil* which has since been removed to Mawana.

Again, about the town of Bahsuma and Raja Nain Singh, the same source mentions<sup>14</sup>:

“BAHSUMA, *Pargana* HASTINAPUR, *Tahsil* Mawana

A large village on the road from Meerut to Bijnor, situated in *latitude* 29°12' north and *longitude* 77°55' east, at a distance of 23 miles from the district headquarters...”

In more recent times it was of some importance as being one of the head-quarters of the Government of the Gujar Raja Nain Singh of Parichhatgarh. There is a house of the Raja here and a fort built by him. The place was formerly noted for the saddlery made here; but the trade has declined of late, and there is only one family of saddlers left. Very few saddles are now made as the people prefer cheaper ones made in Meerut, Cawnpore and elsewhere.

About the Raja and his new seat of administration at Bahsuma, Prof. Vighnesh Kumar and others' article published in one of the issues of the *Contemporary Social Sciences* mentions<sup>15</sup>:

“There stand few monumental heritage buildings at the town of Bahsuma in the *tehsil* of Mawana of the district of Meerut in U.P. The town is situated on both the sides of Meerut-Pauri National Highway no. 119, some 40 kilometers from the district head-quarters of Meerut.”

It further records<sup>16</sup>:

“During the Later Mughals one Jaita Daku, a man full of bravery arose to prominence because of local *zamindar*' support. Really he had become very influential. He started collection levies at the Ganga *ghats* of Garhmuketeshwar and Puth. He was treated as a rebel but remained undaunted.”

In this context, Edwin Thomas Atkinson in one of his famous work, thus records<sup>17</sup>:

“The Gújar family of Parichhatgarh, like their clansmen of Dádri and Landhaura and the Játs of Kuchchesar, owed their existence to the troubled state of the times during the latter half of the past century. The founder of the family, Rao Jit Singh, found the occupation of leader of banditti more profitable than his hereditary calling of grazier and cattle-lifter, and more to his taste than cultivating the soil for crops which the Sikh, Marhatta, or Imperialist raider had quite as good a chance of reaping as the person who sowed them. He commanded the *gháts* into Rohilkhand and reduced the levying of black mail to a science, establishing his *ámils* as he went. Although his depredations were known to the court of Dehli, no notice was taken of his conduct until he happened to slay, in an encounter, the *chela* (or disciple) of one Parta Singh, a Dákhini *subahdár* and favourite of the mother of Ahmad Shah, the reigning emperor. Parta Singh marched with what he considered a sufficient force to chastise this insolent ploughman and cowherd, but was himself defeated and slain. Kumar Ali, the *kotwál* of Dehli, next tried to capture the Gújar leader, but suffered the same fate, and so others, until the emperor invited the heads of the banditti to Dehli and invested them with plenary authority over the country that they had already been able to occupy, on condition that they should prevent others from

thieving. Dargáhi Singh held Dádri and its neighbourhood; the Ját leader of Kuchchesar, Magni Rám, held Sayána, Púth and Farida, and Jit Singh obtained possession of the eastern *parganahs* of this district. Jit Singh died of paralysis without leaving any male issue, and was succeeded by his nephew, Nain Singh, to whom Perron, the Marhatta governor of Aligarh, gave over 300 villages in *jágir*. Nain Singh first established himself at Parichhatgarh, and subsequently at Bahsúma or Baisambha. On the occupation of Meerut by the British, Nain Singh was permitted to hold his accumulation on the terms granted to him by the Marhattas, and subsequently this concession was made to him for his life. During his lifetime he gave much trouble to the authorities by harbouring offenders and engaging in an extensive smuggling trade in salt. Nain Singh died about the middle of the year 1818, and his family were allowed to retain the *rabi* produce of that year. He left one son, Nátha Singh, who made no claim to his father's *mukarari*, but sued for the proprietary right in 183 villages under a *zamindári farmán* by right of inheritance, and for similar rights in 35½ villages by virtue of a lease at a fixed revenue in his own name."

Thus, brave Jaita Gujar could not be routed out. And in the last, finally, was given land in grant followed by the title of 'Raja'. He became Raja Jait Singh.

About the successor of Raja Jait Singh, the following paragraph is important to be looked upon<sup>18</sup>:

"Raja Jaita Singh died without any issue and his companion's son named Nain Singh succeeded him... Raja Nain Singh was imposed a number of restrictions by the Government of the East India Company on account of the 'salt issues'".

Now come to the oral tradition prevalent in one Gujar Sardar family of Sadullapur Bangar.<sup>19</sup> If the story has some historical base, then, it is necessary to be listed in the time bracket from 1798 to 1803.

As per recorded history, it was Raja Nain Singh Gujar who built the temple at Hastinapur now known as 'Pachin Pandaveshwar Mandir'.<sup>20</sup> He is the one who after an issue, laid the foundation stone of Prachin Bada Jain Mandir at Hastinapur in 1801. The period from 1788 to 1803 was the ruling period of the Sindhias of Gwalior. But no traces of clash between the two exist there during this period. Now the point gain masses that Raja Nain Singh, to resist the East India

Company would have demanded for military assistance from Patiala Raj and accordingly Patiala Maharaj would have dispatched his two lieutenants - one Gujar and one Jat - to help him. Again, the point to be noted is that no clash happened at actual field and both these military men never went to fight. This fact is supported by the oral tradition that no fighting never ever could take place since the 2 lieutenants had come from Patiala to Raja Nain Singh.

Now, again it is interesting to discuss the point relating to the year of their arrival from Patiala to Meerut. The genealogical table can help to fix it. The Gujar lieutenant's grandson's name was Sardar Phool Singh who is said to found the village of Sadullapur Bangar.

The interviewees are the direct descendants of same Sardar Phool Singh whose grandfather is said to come here from the *Pind* of Chiklkana in the district of Hoshiarpur in Punjab. He belonged to the *Chhonkar* or *Chhokar gotra*.

The genealogical charts as drawn from the interviews information are shown in the next pages.

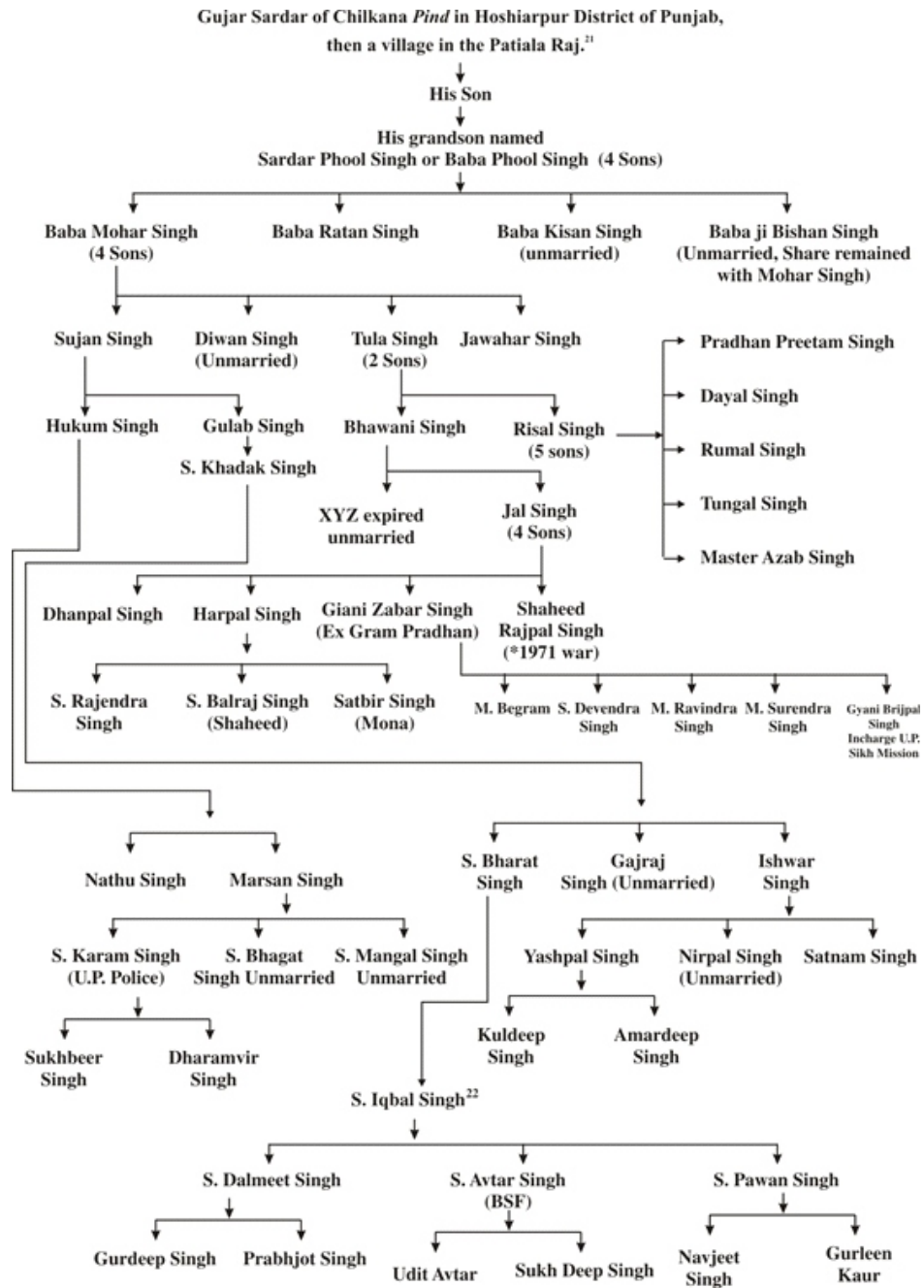
At present, the *Gram Pradhan* is Mr. Sachin Singh. He is in the 8th generation from Sardar Phool Singh. Two generations are the earlier ones to Phool Singh so Sachin Singh stands at 10<sup>th</sup>. His age and that of Sardar Iqbal Singh and Sardar Tirath Singh is now around 66 and 62 in the same line. If an average age for one generation is taken 22 years, then a time period of 10 generations is equal to  $22 \times 10 = 220$  years.

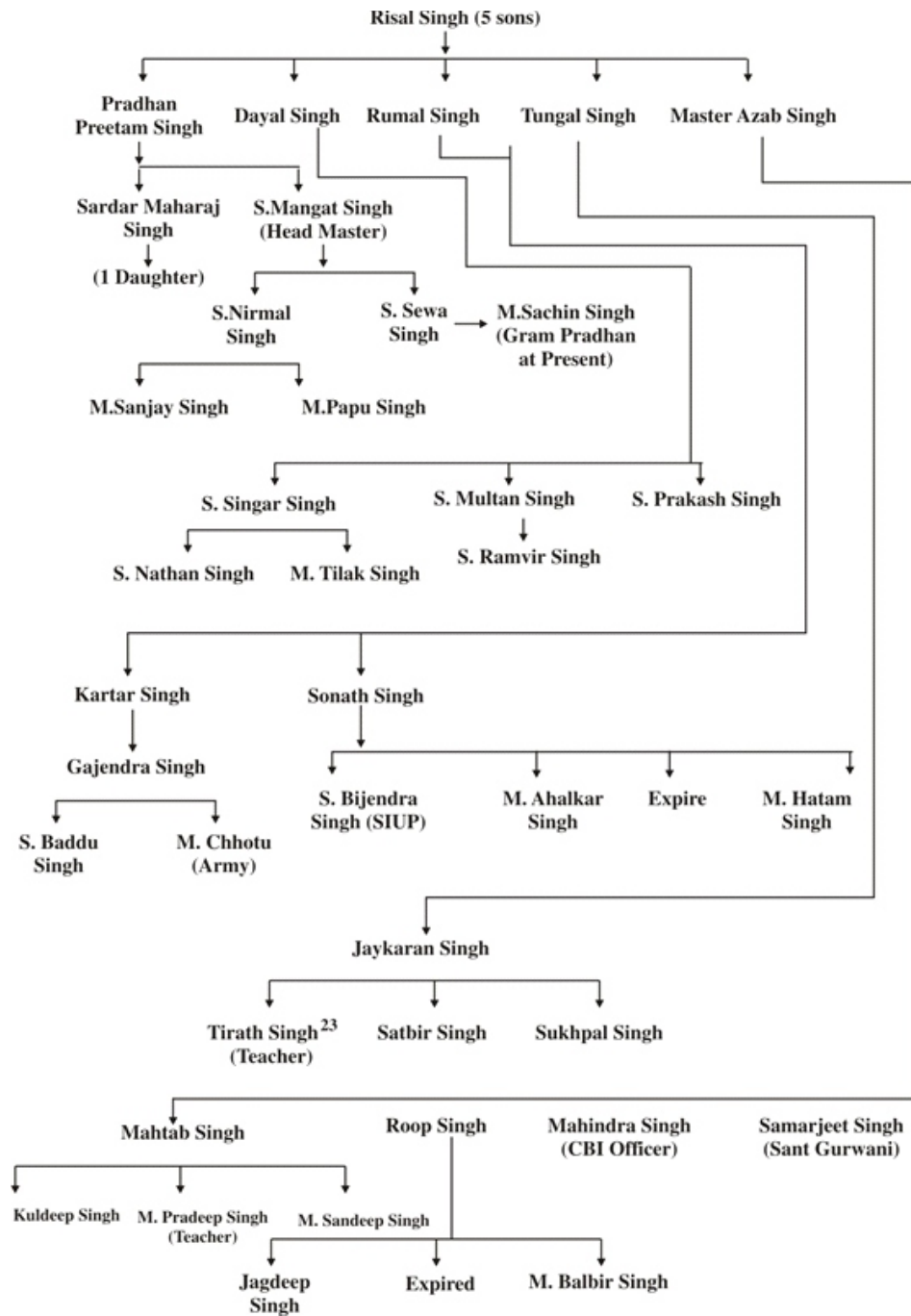
If the average age is taken 25 years then it is calculated as  $25 \times 10 = 250$  years. 2 more generation still exist after those 3 persons of same generation and so some  $22 \times 2 = 44$  or  $25 \times 2 = 50$  years might be added to the said 220 years or 250 years.

The sum then comes either  $220 + 44 = 264$  years or  $250 + 50 = 300$  years.

In case the total period is taken 264 year then Gujar Sardar ancestor's birth date should be find somewhere  $2024 - 264 = 1760$  AD. In case it is taken 300 years, then Gujar ancestor's birth date can be fixed somewhere  $2024 - 300 = 1724$  AD.

In both the cases, the area of Hoshiarpur at that time was much in influence of Baba Banda Bairagi alias Baba Banda Bahadur popularly known as Baba Banda Veer Bairagi. In the district of Hoshiarpur influence of Banda is greatly assessed. So the Gujar ancestor's family was survey one of the staunch supporters of Baba.







Thus, some clear traces of Banda's disciples are witnessed in the Sadullapur Bangar, a village in the Machhara block of the Mawana *tehsil* of Meerut District in Uttar Pradesh.

## Notes and References

1. The oral tradition to this effect prevails in the village.
2. *Interview*. 27-04-2024, 29-04-2024, 30-04-2024 Sardar Iqbal Singh (62 years) son of Bharat Singh, village Sadullapur Bangar, *tehsil* Mawana, Distt. Meerut (U.P.)
3. *Interviews*. 27-04-2024, 29-04-2024, 01-05-2024 Sardar Tirath Singh (65 years) Son of Sardar Jaykaran Singh, village Sadullapur Bangar, *tehsil* Mawana, Distt. Meerut (U.P.)
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. Pratap Singh Nagar, *Raja Nain Singh Smarikha* (in Hindi), Meerut, Raja Nain Singh Smarak Samiti, Bahsuma (year not mentioned), 77-85.
7. *Interview*, 22-10-2023 Shri Kuldeep Narayan Tyagi and Shri Pradeep Narayan Tyagi, s/o Chaudhary Narayan Singh Tyagi, nephews of Chaudhary Vikram Singh Tyagi, Chaudhary of Pargana Sarawa, Distt-Hapur, U.P.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Interview*, 17-11-2023, Shri Vasudev Sharma, (93 years) Rtd. Lecturer, Hindi, DN College, Meerut; 7/7, Shastri Nagar, Meerut.  
He has composed a '*Khand-Kavya*' on Jaita Daku alias Jeta Gujar alias Raja Jaita Singh alias Jit Singh (is mentioned in E.T. Atkinson's work). For details, please see : Vashudev Sharma, *Parikshitgarh (Virtta Kavya)* [in Hindi], R. Lal Publishers, Meerut, 65-77 (*Jait Singh*), 77-87 (*Nain Singh*), 89-91 (Natha Singh).
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 133.
12. Atkinson took Nain Singh as Raja Jaita's Nephew. It was by mistake.
13. H. R. Nevill, *Meerut : A Gazetteer being Volume II, of the district Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, U.P. Govt. Press, Allahabad, [1904] Reprint 1922, 289.
14. *Ibid.*, 198.
15. Vighnesh Kumar, Kuldeep Kumar Tyagi and others, "Rao Kadam Singh: A Less Known Hero of Indian Revolution of 1857", *The Contemporary Social Sciences*, 31(2), April - June, 2022, 132.
16. *Ibid.*, 133.

17. Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India*, Vol. III Part II, NWP Govt. Press, Allahabad, 1876, 290-291.
18. *The Contemporary Social Sciences*, *op.cit.*, 133.
19. *Interview*, Sardar Iqbal Singh, S. Tirath Singh and Some 20 more, residents of Sadullapur Bangar relating to the same ancestor Sardar Phool Singh.
20. E. B. Joshi, *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Meerut*, U.P. Govt. Press, Allahabad, 1964, 48-452; Pratap Singh Nagar, *op.cit.*
21. *The Bhat ki Pothi*.
22. *Interview*, Sardar Iqbal Singh, *op.cit.*
23. *Interview*, Sardar Tirath Singh, *op.cit.* ★