

# CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCES

PEER REVIEWED, INDEXED & REFEREED QUARTERLY INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

ISSN 0302-9298

<https://www.jndmeerut.org>

[Vol. 34, No. 3 (July-September), 2025]

<https://doi.org/10.62047/CSS.2025.09.30.177>

## Identifying Nagawali: The Launching Pad of Banda Veer Bairagi's Military Campaigns from Khanda against the Mughals

*Vighnesh Kumar*

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

### Abstract

*Banda Bairagi was born on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1670 A.D in present day Jammu-Kashmir. He left home and became an ascetic at an early age of 15 and founded a monastery at Nanded. In 1708, Guru Govind Singh visited his muth and he took up his cause to save the Hindus and to settle the account with Nawab Wazir Khan, the faujdar of Sarhind. He left Nanded for the north. It has been an interesting point to know about his base camp for his future activities. In 2018, the author has discovered and identified it at the village of Khanda, popularly known as Sehri-Khanda in present day tehsil of Kharkhoda in the district of Sonapat in Haryana. The exact place in the Khanda was a particular site known as 'Nagawali' which is actually nothing but a sacred large sized pond. Adjoined to it, there stands the muth called Dada Kishor Das Asthal. The contemporary head of this monastery helped Banda Bairagi to raise an army initially of around 500 strong for his military campaigns against the Mughals (more accurately the Later Mughals).*

### Keywords

Banda Bairagi, Avichalnagar muth at Nanded, Guru Govind Singh, Mahant Kishor Das Asthal, Khanda, Kharkhoda, Baman Bankya, Nagawali.

**Research Foundation International, New Delhi**  
(Affiliated to UNO)

Editorial Office : D-59, Shastri Nagar, Meerut - 250 004 (INDIA)

Ph. : 0121-2763765, +91-9997771669, +91-9219658788

## **Identifying Nagawali: The Launching Pad of Banda Veer Bairagi's Military Campaigns from Khanda against the Mughals**

'Banda Bairagi'<sup>1</sup> or more popularly known as 'Banda Bahadur'<sup>2</sup> or 'Banda Veer Bairagi'<sup>3</sup> or so lately as 'Banda Singh Bahadur'<sup>4</sup> is a historical figure from the last quadruple of the seventeenth century to the first one and half decade of the eighteenth century India.<sup>5</sup> Born on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1670<sup>6</sup> C.E. at in Rajauri-Punch<sup>7</sup> of Jammu and Kashmir<sup>8</sup>, he left home at an early age of 15 to become an ascetic.<sup>9</sup> Reaching the dera of Baba Ram Thamman at Kasur<sup>10</sup>, some miles away from Lahore in Punjab, he dedicated himself to the Mahant, the grand disciple of Baba Ram Thamman. Starting thus the journey of his new ascetic life, he finally settled on the bank of River Godavari at Nanded.<sup>11</sup> The site of Avichalnagar muth at Nanded is the very place of his monastery.<sup>12</sup>

Quoting Warid, William Irvine, the historian of modern India during the first half of the last century, writes<sup>13</sup>:

"On the death of Govind [Guru Govind Singh], his family and follower brought forward a man, who exactly resembled the deceased. It is not 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, and if this be correct, it points perhaps to his passing as Fath Singh, the son of Govind [Guru Govind Singh]."

He further remarks<sup>14</sup>:

"Some say he was a *Bairagi faqir*, a native of a village, Pandor, in the Baith Jalandhar *Duaba*, who for many years had been the intimate friend of Guru Govind. A more recent account calls him Madhu Das, alias Naraya Das, and tells us he was born on *Katik, Sudi* 13<sup>th</sup>, 1727 S, (October 1670) being the son of Ram Deo, Rajput, of Rajauri-Garh in PUNCHH. The name given to him at birth was Lachmi Deo. He formed a friendship with Janki Prasad, Bairagi, with whom he went to the monastery (*math*) of Baba Ram Thamman."

Commenting on becoming an ascetic and receiving the name of Lachman Bala, he further adds<sup>15</sup>:

“Authority was at that time exercised there by the Baba’s grandson of whom Lachmi Deo became a *Chela*, or disciple, receiving the name of Lachman Bala, *alias* Narayan Das. In the end, he found his way to the Dakhin, there met Govind Singh and became his disciple.”

There is an interesting story of Banda’s arrival in Haryana. In the research paper entitled, “Identifying the Place of Banda’s Arrival in Sonipat in the Sarkar and *Suba* of Delhi : A Reappraisal”, the authors write<sup>16</sup>:

“And there is one, a village named Khanda which has a ‘*dwara*’ the religiously sacred place named ‘*Asthal*’ of Mahant Kishor Das with a larger sized pond adjoined to it.”

Writing about the where about of Khanda, they further remark<sup>17</sup>:

“It [Khanda] lies in the present day *tehsil* of Kharkhoda in the district of Sonipat 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 dacoits and the military expedition on the *faujdar* of Sonipat. This is the village form 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 in the *Suba* and *Sankar* of Delhi.”

To examine the oral traditions of history still prevailing there in the village of Khanda, an academic tour for conducting the field work could help in certain manner. During the field work, a new evidence still unknown has been now recovered. It is regarding the ‘*Bamman Bankya*’ that means the ‘lot of 52 men of the same family of Khanda who were killed by the Mughal forces in an encounter during the suppression of Banda Bairagi’s followers at his base camp of Khanda’. It is not clear whether the time-period was just after the Emperor Bahadur Shah’s death in 1712 or it was somewhere in 1715 A.D. or else?

In oral traditions the story about the “*Baman Bankya*, the 52 brave men” runs as follows<sup>18</sup>:

At one time when either Banda Bairagi was suppressed by the Mughals or he was much far from our village, a contingent of the

Mughal forces entered our village. Their sole target was to punish the village, they were resisted by the villagers under the leadership of one family that used to reside in the *chowk* near of Thakurdwara at Khanda. 52 male members of one and the same leading family gave their lives resisting the Mughals. None of this family lives at Khanda now. I have been brought up having my daily morning and evening visits at the Dada Kishor Das Asthan since my childhood when I was only 6 years old. I have heard that none of that family live in the village since then, but saved their dynasty by migrating to other hidden place. My grandfather used to tell us that a branch of the '*Baman Bankyas*' family live somewhere at Samalkha.

*Interview, 08-06-2024, Shri Parvesh Dahiya,<sup>19</sup> s/o Shri Satpal Singh, 37 years, Khanda (Sehri-Khanda), tehsil Kharkhoda, District Sonapat, Haryana.*

Question: What have you heard from your elders about the relation of your village and Baba Banda Bairagi?

Answer: I have been a regular daily visitor to this place of 'Dada Kishor Das Asthan' since I was 6 years old. I am in practice to visit it twice a day i.e. in morning and in evening till night. I have learnt from my grandfather and other elder members that it is the place where Banda Bairagi came and this village had supported him in raising an army of 10,000 strong.

Question: Are you sure for the figure of 10,000 (ten thousand) strong?

Answer: Yes, I am damn sure. Each boy and girl, man and women, young and old-all-know this fact as generation-to-generation we are told to this as our village's greatness.

Question: How Banda remained successful in raising an army here in those tough days?

Answer: For our village, it is a thing to be proud of. Actually we are of the Jats of Dahiya *gotra*. From our this village of Khanda, 12 villages have been evolved in due course of time. The pond of 'Nagawali' proved an asset for raising the army. The 'Naganali Kua' of those days also still stands here.

Question: Are you sure for the 'Baman Bankya' martyrdom?

Answer: Yes, we are told so.

Question: Then what do you find the main reason of the killing of 52 members of the same and one family while rest of the villagers remained untouched or untortured by the Mughals?

Answer: Really, we never through of it. May be this family an exposed one and so that only was executed. But it might be a diplomatic way adopted by the villagers as a 'niti' according to which if sacrificing one family, the rest of the whole village could be saved; it is acceptable and better to save the latter and let the former be sacrificed.

Question: How the Banda's movement could come to an end and what was the role of your village at that point?

Answer: We never heard of it from our elders. What we are used to hear is that our village was the first to support Veer Banda Bairagi's military expeditions against the Ranghars of Kharkhoda, the *faujdar* of Sonipat and the Mughal officers upto Sarhind and more. We never heard about the details thereafter.

*Interview, 08-06-2024 and 09-06-2024, Shri Raj Singh,<sup>20</sup> 74 years, former Pradhan s/o Shri Mange Ram grandson of Late Shri Kundan Singh, Nagawali, Khanda.*

Question: Please tell us the story of this village related to Banda.

Answer: At this 'Ghar', (pointing out towards the Asthal Dada Kishor Das now turned to Ram Mandir recently by Shri Raj Singh Bairagi, an officer at Chandigarh and owner of the 'ghar') 500-600 *Maharajs (Sadhus)* were collected. Baba Banda Bairagi raised this army with the assistance of muth for the military campaigns first against the Ranghars and then against the *faujdar* of Sonipat. He successfully punished Nawab of Sarhind who was the main culprit for the murder of Guru Govind Singh's 2 infant sons.

In the Interviews<sup>21</sup> conducted with the 60-70 men including Shri Jeet Singh (Dahia), Shri Rajbir Singh (Dalal), Ajmer Singh (Dahia), Naveen Kumar (Dahia), Shri Azad Singh Dahia 70 yrs s/o Late Shri

Inder Singh Dahia, Shri Satbir Singh (Dahia) s/o Late Shri Kaliram 74 yrs. and 60-70 other village men; the facts of same type in nature have been collected. By applying the negative research methodology too, the evidences thus collected give the same and one result and that is the fact that unearths that Baba Banda Bahadur had started his military campaigns openly against the Mughals after raising an army here. The only suspicion stands existed on the issue of the number of the strong following whether at beginning it was 500 or more upto 10,000 strong. What might be the number but it is dead sure that 10,000 strong is surely an exaggerated figure. A researcher should be aware of the fact that oral traditions have mostly always a nature of exaggerating the data.

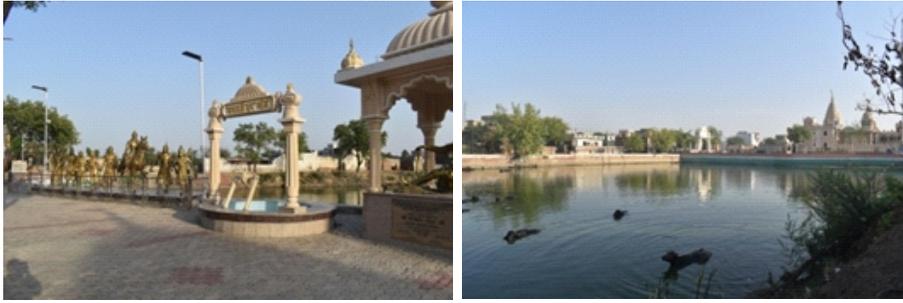
Thus, in the light of the evidences thus collected, the fact about the launching pad of Veer Banda Bairagi's military campaigns against the Mughals [more correctly against the Later Mughals, equates the site of the 'Nagawali' that exists at the village of Khanda in the tehsil of Kharkhoda of the Sonipat District of Haryana.

It seems a common tradition to identify the particular area of a village of Khanda in the particular area of a village keeping the name of a pond in centre. The particular the name of the particular pond a *Taal* (*talab*) or '*dahar*' or '*johad*'. For example, in a village of Uttar Pradesh, the village field's portions have been named as 'Berwali', 'Chajjuwali', 'Matawali', in which all the names are after the ponds (*Talaiya*) name 'Berwali', Chajjuwali and Matawali respectively. Similary the nouns 'Rajawala', 'Raniwala' and 'Bandiwali' stand in the then newly founded capital city of Raja Deshraj during Mughal Emperor Jahangir's reign.<sup>22</sup> It is also interesting that all these names like that of 'Nagawali' are of feminine gender which suggests that not the '*talab*' or '*dahar*' but a '*talaiya*' i.e., the feminine gender to '*taal*' was in consideration when the name was giving to it. It is further a point to be noted that the size of the pond at Khanda named. 'Nagawali' is much larger in size seems fit to name it as a '*taal*' instead of '*talaiya*'. This facts again importantly suggests that initially it was a smaller sized pond enfocusing suitability to be identified as a '*talaiya*' but in due course of time the size would have been increased and the root cause might be certainly the need of the hour being associated with the myth. The larger sized pond fulfilling the size-wise condition of a '*taal*' (*talab*) existed later on but the name 'Nagawali' remained as such. It is still the Nagawali not the Nagawala.

At present there are 3 wells made of smaller brick: one the Nagawali of the same name adjoined to the muth and 2 situated in the diagonally opposite side in which one is clearly visible but the other has been filled. The reason of filling it is told in a story in which it is said that once in the last decades, a cow was fallen into it so it was filled. It is not beyond doubt-as during the field work, both the days some people connected to that side of the 'Nagawali talab' were asking many-a-questions and were not doubtless towards the researcher. Over all the people have great faith towards the 'Nagawali' site and the Dada Kishor Das Asthal and so were not unwelcoming towards the author. All the time they showed their welcoming attitude in conversation and also by their gestures and postures, but all the time too curious to know why the researcher was taking photographs of that side of the Nagawali.



There is a great change in the structure of the 'muth' or 'asthal' to what it was on author's previous visit held on November 3, 2018. Then, the path between the boundary of the muth and the pond of 'Nagawali' was of around 10-12 feet excluding the location of the 'Nagawali Kua' which was around 30 ft inside the pond making a sharp cut entrance. At present the approach road has been widely widened upto around 50 feet that has been resulted in compromising the size of the 'Nagawali'. Certainly from all the sides, clearly visible encroachment is noticed too.



## Notes And References

1. It is his most popular name throughout India.
2. Lala Daulat Rai in his book '*Banda Bahadur*' calls him as Banda Bahadur. His knowledge is based upon the '*Panth Prakash*' and the '*Shamsher Khalsa*' of Gyan Singh, and '*Banda Bahadur*' of Karam Singh.
3. '*Banda Veer Bairagi*' or '*Banda Bir Bairagi*' is equally popular throughout India. This also echoes in Bhai Parmanand's '*Bir Bairagi*'.
4. It is the latest name suggested recently by Prof. Ganda Singh of Khalsa College, Amritsar. In his book entitled '*Banda Singh Bahadur*' published in 1935, he suggested this name for the first time in history. In its 'Preface' what is mentioned there worths to be noticed- "*Ganda Singh; Khalsa College, Amritsar; 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1935.*"
5. Upto June, 1716 A.D.
6. William Irvine, *The Later Mughals*, Vol. I, 1707-1720, [London: Luzac & Co.], Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar & Sons, year not mentioned, 93.  
The historian mentions the date in *Vikrami Samwat* as '*Katik, Sudi, 13th, 1727 S. [Samwat]*' that corresponds to 16th October, 1670 A.D.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Vighnesh Kumar, *Banda Veer Bairagi*, Meerut: Hastinapur Research Institute, 2015, 15-18.
10. Ganda Singh, *Life of Banda Singh Bahadur*, [First published in 1935] Patiala: Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, reprint 1999, 3.
11. *Interview*, 24-25-26 November, 2023, Shri Jay Prakash Nagla, age 70 years, Nanded, Maharashtra, India;  
*Interview*, Shri K. Datta, age 50 years, Nanded;  
*Interview*, Prof. Upendra Kulkarni, Nanded, Sardar Amrik Singh and some more than 13 other persons associated to the Avichalnagar site at Nanded.
12. *Ibid.*
13. William Irvine, *op.cit.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*

16. Vighnesh Kumar, Kuldeep Kumar Tyagi, Manpreet Cour and Kanishka, "Identifying the Place of Banda's Arrival in Sonipat in the Sarkar and Suba of Delhi: A Reappraisal", *The Journal of National Development*, 36(2), (Winter), 2023, 131.
17. *Ibid*, p. 132.
18. *Interview*, 08-06-2024, Shri Parvesh Dahiya son of Shri Satpal Singh, Age 37 years, resident of the Chowk near Thakurdwara, Village Khanda, *Tehsil* Kharkhoda, District Sonipat, Haryana, India (doing job in New Delhi).
19. *Ibid*.
20. *Interview*, 08-06-2024, Shri Raj Singh (74 years), former Pradhan, son of Late Shri Mange Ram and grandson of Late Shri Kundan Singh resident of the Nagawali, Village Khanda, *Tehsil* Kharkhoda, District Sonipat, Haryana, India (farmer).
21. *Interview*, 08-06-2024, Shri Jeet Singh (Dahia), Shri Rajbir Singh (Dalal), Ajmer Singh (Dahia), Naveen Kumar (Dahia), Shri Azad Singh Dahia 70 yrs s/o Late Shri Inder Singh Dahia, Shri Satbir Singh (Dahia) s/o Late Shri Kaliram 74 yrs. and 60-70 other village men.
22. Vighnesh Kumar, "Identification of Raja Deshraj Tyagi's then Newly Founded Capital City of 'Brahmabad' through its Royal Pond 'Raja Wala Talab'", *The Contemporary Social Sciences*, 32(3), (July-September) 2023, pp. 142, 143 (declared as Amrit Sarowar by U.P. Government Scheme), 146, 150 (end note no. 22). ★