

LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENT OF FIRST SIKH RULER: BABA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

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Abstract: Banda Singh Bahadur, also called Lachman Das, Lachman Dev or Madho Das, was the first Sikh military leader to wage an offensive war against the Mughal rulers of India, temporarily expanding Sikh territory. Guru Gobind Singh told him to fight the Mughals and seize what was theirs. He then took on the Mughals with a supporting Sikh army and proceeded to the Battle of Samana where he killed thousands of Mughals. Banda Singh set out in 1709 to attack the Mughals and conquered large territories. His depredations and massacres in the Deccan eventually led the Mughal rulers to take forceful action against him. After an eight-month siege, the fortress town of Gurdas Nangal fell to the Mughals in 1715. Banda Singh and his men were taken as prisoners to Delhi and executed. He propagated the Sikh faith wherever he went. Apart from Hindus, many Muslims were inspired by him to change their religion and follow Sikhism. For example, he inspired prominent Muslims like Mir Nazir-ud-Din and Dindar Khan to change their names to Mir Nasir Singh and Dindar Singh. He abolished the unjust zamindari system. Banda was asked to accept Islam or be killed. The true Sikh that he was, he chose death. He was killed in a very brutal way where his eyes were gouged out and his limbs and skin were severed.

Keywords: Mughals, Sikh faith, zamindari system, Territories

1. The Early Life

Banda Singh Bahadur was the first Sikh ruler, warrior and commander of the Khalsa army. He was born in October 1670 in an agricultural Rajput family in Rajouri village, Punch district, Kashmir state. Lachman Dev was appointed. As a child, he was very fond of horse riding, martial arts and hunting and was an expert in the use of bow and arrows and other weapons used in the wars of the time.

However, as a youth he shot a doe and was shocked to watch a mother and her aborted fawn writhe in pain and die. After this grim scene, he changed his mind. This experience moved him so much that he completely changed his outlook on life. He left his home and became a recluse. He soon met Bairagi Sadhu, Janaki Das and became his disciple. The Sadhu named him Madho Das. In the company of sadhus, he traveled through northern India and then finally arrived at Nanded (in present-day Maharashtra) in central India on the banks of the Godavari River, where he built a hut to meditate on God.

He became a follower of Sadhu Ram Daas of Ram Thamman near Lahore (now in Pakistan). Janaki Daas followed after some time. His name was changed to Madho Daas. While moving from place to place, he reached Punchvati near Nasik in Maharashtra and became a follower of Sadhu Aughhar Nath. Madho Daas served Aughhar Nath with full devotion for 5 years. Satisfied with his services, Aughhar Nath endowed him with all his virtues, occult powers and even his own created holy book. Aughhar Nath expired in 1691. Madho Daas, a young Rajput, that is, at the age of 21, attained miraculous powers and reached Nander to establish his own ashram. Madho Daas who lived in Nander since the last 16 years, in 1708, at the age of 38, with many miraculous powers and fame, was the master of a great ashram and was very proud of his wisdom, meditation and occult skills. and fame. He started insulting, condemning all the saints, sadhus, intellectuals, fakirs etc. who ever came to his Dera.

Banda Singh's March towards Punjab.

In October 1708 at Nander, Guru Gobind Singh sent Banda Singh to the Punjab and advised him to: (a) stop the cruelty of the Punjab rulers, (b) punish the guilty and cruel rulers and (c) fight for human rights, uplift and empower the poor, lowly and slaves as people who could not even imagine freedom. The Guru blessed him with: (a) Guru's command of Sikh Sangats, (b) Five arrows, (c) Double-edged sword (Khanda) and (d) Big leather drum (Nagaara). He also sent with him five Sikhs namely Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Binod Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh, Bhai Bijay Singh and Bhai Ran Singh for advice; and another 25 Singhs as companions and warriors.

In the days of the Sikh Gurus, wars were defensive. They usually fought when war was upon them. Although on two occasions Baba Ajit Singh, the eldest son of Guru Gobind Singh, was advised by the Guru to go and help poor Brahmins whose newly married daughter-in-law had been taken away by the local Mughal chieftains, Baba Ajit Singh along with a few Sikhs were on the offensive.

Guru Har Gobind Singh fought 4 wars with the Mughal chieftains and won all of them. His strategy was to challenge the generals and fight them and avoid mass bloodshed even though a number of brave Sikh and Mughal soldiers were killed as no general wanted to face the Guru alone.

Guru Gobind Singh faced about 16 wars in a period of about 25 years. Guru Gobind Singh's entire family, thousands of Sikhs, devout Muslims - the name of Peer Budhu Shah of Sadhoura (a town in Punjab) is worth mentioning, his 2 sons, nephews and many of his followers - sacrificed their lives fighting the Mughal soldiers. In a later period, the Nawab of Sadhour, Usmaan Khan, a Mughal ruler, killed Peer Budha Shah and cut his body into pieces and threw them in different parts of Sadhour, thus punishing him for serving Guru Gobind Singh.

For these reasons it was necessary for Banda Singh Bahadur to insult and punish the culprits. The Nawab of Sarhind, Wazir Khan, the murderer of Guru Gobind Singh's 2 younger sons, was relieved to know that Guru Gobind Singh had gone south, but was in constant fear that the Sikhs would not let him live. He prepared and sent two Pathan spies to pursue and assassinate the Guru. At Nander one day they succeeded in stabbing Guru Gobind Singh while he was resting, though both lost their lives. The Guru's wounds were operated on and stitched. After about one and a half months, the injuries became the cause of Guru's death. But before that the Guru had already created the Khalsa, prepared Banda Singh Bahadur and sent him to the Punjab.

It was the first time in Sikh history that the Sikhs were the aggressors and the aggressors, but their objective was the same as before. Nanda Singh was on his way to Punjab when Guru Gobind Singh left this world after giving Guruship to the eternal Shabad Guru - Guru Granth Sahib. After reaching Punjab, Banda Singh sent the Guru's message to the Sikhs all over Punjab, Kashmir and Afghanistan. Memories of the unlimited sacrifices of the Gurus, their families, the Sikhs and their sufferings at the hands of the oppressors were fresh in the Sikh masses. The news of the death of their dear Guru, Guru Gobind Singh added fuel to the fire of fighting the Mughal rulers and making sacrifices. The Sikhs heeded the call of Banda Singh on the order of the Guru and started joining Banda Singh. In no time, Banda Singh had with him 4,000 horsemen and 7,800 Sikh artillerymen. A force of 40,000 warriors was under his command.

His army consisted of four types of people (a) True followers from all over Punjab, Kabul, Kandhar, Multan and Kashmir, (b) God fearing Muslims who were always with the Guru in most of the fights, (c) Poor, downtrodden and low caste, which has always been subject to torture and (d) Some unknown selfish bad elements with looting intentions.

Military Campaigns

Early Conquest

After meeting with Guru Gobind Singh, he marched towards Khanda and fought the Mughals with the help of the Sikh army in Battle of Sonipat (Sagoo, 2001). In 1709, he defeated Mughals in the Battle of Samana and captured the Mughal city of Samana (30 km southwest of Patiala) (Singh, 1999:79). Samana minted coins. With this treasury, the Sikhs became financially stable. The Sikhs soon seized Mustafabad (now Saraswati Nagar) (Singh, 1999) and Sadaura (both places in present Yamunanagar district, Northern eastern Haryana) (Sagoo, 2001:128). The Sikhs then captured the Cis-Sutlej areas of Punjab, including Malerkotla and Nahan.

On 12 May 1710, in the Battle of Chappar Chiri, the Sikhs killed Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind and Dewan Suchanand, who were responsible for the martyrdom of the two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Two days later the Sikhs captured Sirhind. Banda Singh now controlled the territory from the Sutlej to the Jamuna. He ordered that the ownership of the land should be given to the farmers and to let them live in dignity and self-respect (Singh, 1927).

Military Invasions

Banda Singh Bahadur developed the village of Mukhlisgarh and made it his capital. He then renamed it to Lohgarh (fortress of steel) where he issued his own mint (Grewal, 1998: 83). He established a state in Punjab for a short period of half a year. Banda Singh sent the Sikhs to Uttar Pradesh and the Sikhs took over Saharanpur, Jalalabad, Muzaffarnagar and other nearby areas.

Revolutionary

Banda Singh Bahadur is known to have halted the Zamindari and Taluqdari system in the time he was active and gave the farmers proprietorship of their own land (Jawandha, 2010:81). It seems that all classes of government officers were addicted to extortion and corruption and the whole system of regulatory and order was subverted (Sagoo, 2001:158).

Local tradition relates that people from the neighborhood of Sadaura came to Banda Singh and complained of wrongdoing on the part of their landlords. Banda Singh ordered Baj Singh to open fire on them. People were amazed at the strange response to their representation and asked him what he meant. He told them that they did not deserve better treatment when they still allowed themselves to be intimidated in their thousands by a handful of Zamindars. He defeated the Sayyids and Shaikhs in the Battle of Sadhaura (Singh, 1999:85).

Battles fought by Banda Singh

Though Banda Singh Bahadur fought a number of battles it is pertinent to mention a few of them as under:

- (a) *Conquest of Sadhaura*: Sadhaura ruler Usman Khan also committed atrocities on Hindus. He had Pir Budha Shah killed for helping Guruji in the battle of Bhangani, Banda Bahadur attacked Sadhaura. Soon the Sikhs defeated Usman Khan. They looted the city. Many Hindu and Sikh farmers who were mistreated by Usman Khan also joined Banda Bahadur's army. The Muslims who fled to take refuge in the haveli of Peer Budhu Shah were not spared even by the Sikhs.
- (b) *Battle of Chappar Chiri*: Banda Bahadur's real aim was to conquer Sirhind. Subedar Wazir Khan was very worried about Guru Gobind Singh Ji. He sent forces against Guruji during the battles of Anandpur Sahib and Chamkaur Sahib. The two younger Sahibzads of Guruji were walled up alive. Wazir Khan killed thousands of innocent Sikhs and Hindus. These incidents angered Banda Bahadur and the Sikhs against Wazir Khan. When the news of Banda Bahadur's advance towards Sirhind reached the Punjab, thousands of people assembled to fight under Banda Bahadur's command. The nephews of Sucha Nand, a Sirhind official, also joined Banda Bahadur's army. On the other hand, there were 20,000 soldiers in Wazir Khan's army. The regiment consisted of gunners and soldiers from infantry, artillery and cavalry. A fierce battle took place between the two armies on 22 May 1710 AD at Chappar Chiri. To demoralize the Sikh soldiers, Sucha Nanda's nephew also fled from the battlefield with his soldier. Banda Bahadur himself came to encourage his soldiers. The Sikhs attacked the enemy with great courage. Fateh Singh killed Wazir Khan. Confusion reigned among the enemy soldiers. Sikh soldiers killed a large number of enemy soldiers.
- (c) *Battle of Sirhind*: After the victory of Chappar Chiri, on 24 May 1710 AD, Banda Bahadur attacked the fort of Sirhind. As a result, 500 Sikhs were killed in the war. But the Sikhs were successful in capturing the Sirhinds. The Sikhs received

about 2 million rupees from Wazir Khan's treasury. Wazir Khan's dead body was hung on a tree. Sucha Nand, who had committed atrocities on the Sikhs, was arrested and taken in a procession. The Sikh soldiers looted and looted the city.

Arrest, Sacrifices and Execution of Banda Singh and his men

On 7 December 1715, Banda Singh and 800 Sikh men in his army were captured at Garhi, where they had been surviving for the last eight months after being ambushed by an army under Abdal-Samad Khan, the Mughal governor of Lahore. Zakria Khan, the son of Abdu Samad, who had ordered Banda's capture, was tasked with delivering this "gift" to the ruler of Delhi, Farakh-Seyer. As he failed to get any such information, the Mughals made a special procession on 9 June 1716. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur dressed in the emperor's pretended garb and was made to sit on an elephant while his 20-odd soldiers were produced. to march after him through the streets of Delhi. The procession proceeded to the mausoleum of Kutub-ud-din Bahadur Shah, near the present Kutab Minar.

Seeing that Baba Banda Singh simply did not break, the Mughals decided to stage the planned execution of his son. They placed his 4-year-old son named Ajai Singh on his lap and ordered Baba Banda Singh Bahadur to kill him with a short sword. When Baba Banda Singh Bahadur remained motionless, one of them moved towards Ajai Singh and cut him in two. They removed the flesh from Ajai Singh's body and threw it on Banda Singh's face. They also tore off pieces of the dead man's flesh and stuffed the unfortunate father's mouth with his son's liver and heart.

Banda Singh Bahadur was eventually killed after the Mughals gouged out his eyes with daggers, cut off his hands and feet with hot rods and cut off his head as he fell unconscious. Farakh Seyer, who ordered this torture of Banda Singh, met the same fate at the hands of his own men after a mutiny against him. But this gruesome execution of Banda Singh and his men still remains the most inhuman act of the Mughals during their 300 year rule.

Conclusion

Banda Singh Bahadur was an example of self-sacrifice unmatched by anyone else in history. The patience with which Banda and his companions bore all the tortures they were subjected to, and their bold refusal to renounce their religion in spite of all the cruel persecutions, proves how dear the Sikhs were to their principle. Sikh martyrology contains examples of bravery and self-sacrifice.

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