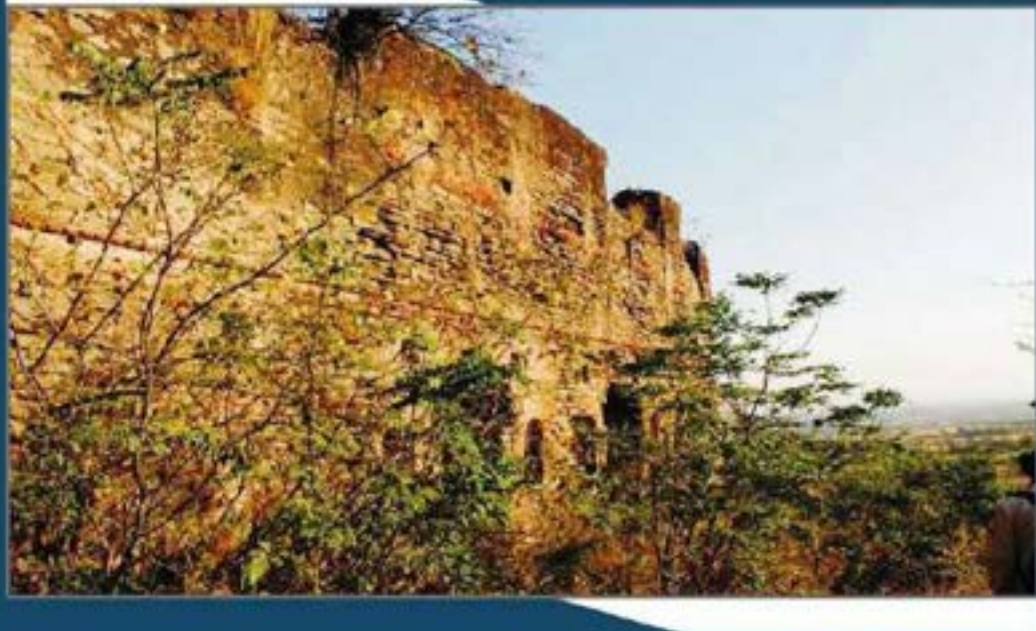


# LOHGARH

THE WORLD'S LARGEST FORT

(The Capital of the Sikh Kingdom)



Harjinder Singh Dilgeer

Gagandeep Singh

Gurvinder Singh

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Haryana Academy of History & Culture  
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**Harjinder Singh Dilgeer**  
**Gagandeep Singh**  
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Indeed they are of the authors.

*For*  
***Lakhi Rai Vanjara***  
*The unsung great hero of the South Asia*

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## **Message**

### **Chief Minister, Haryana**

---

Maharana Partap, Shivaji and Banda Singh Bahadur are among the great heroes who resisted and opposed the subjugation of India by foreign invaders. Their contribution cannot be forgotten. For Haryana, Banda Singh Bahadur has special importance, because, he had his capital in this region and many of his victories were in what forms Haryana today. My ancestors were also a part of the Banda Bahadur's army. I am proud of this heritage.

The Fort of Lohgarh is perhaps among the greatest Forts of the world. The campaign to capture it kept the mighty Mughal Empire engaged for six long years, a campaign that eventually destroyed the Mughal army, drained their treasury and shattered their economy.

The region that forms Haryana has been the epicentre of important events in India's history. It is the cradle of India's rich civilizational heritage. The unfolding of the historical facts related to the great hero, Banda Singh and the Lohagarh Fort are bound to make all Haryanvis proud.

In our effort to pay our humble tribute to Banda Bahadur the government has planned to set up at Lohgarh, a memorial and a befitting museum and also a school of martial arts. Several other projects are also planned for Lohgarh and the region around it.

When I learnt that this great chapter of our history did not have any good study in a published form, the government assigned the task to Gagandeep Singh, District Development & Panchayat Officer, Yamuna Nagar. This was done because Gagandeep had conducted extensive surveys and research in the area and come out with several important

new facts. To complete the task in an academically sound manner, Gagandeep associated Dr. Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, a reputed historian and scholar to complete the task of bringing out a history of the Lohgarh Fort. Dr. Dilgeer has been ably supported by Gagandeep Singh, Gurvinder Singh, Gurmit Singh and Jarnail Singh in the completion of this important study.

The Haryana Academy of History and Culture has done well to take up the task of publishing the volume.

I am confident this volume will fill a critical gap in the history of Haryana's rich legacy. I also hope this volume will be useful not just for the students of history, but also for those who are interested in reading about our brave legacy and great heritage.

**Manohar Lal**  
Chief Minister, Haryana

## Foreword & Acknowledgements

---

Banda Singh Bahadur changed the history of the sub-continent and in doing so embraced martyrdom. The credit to establish the first Sikh rule goes to this hero. He also deserves the honour of bringing an end to the yoke of the Mughals.

Not only Banda Singh, but even the biggest Fort of Lohgarh has met injustice at the hands of historians. Historians have narrated that this was a small Fort, which existed before Banda Singh 'occupied' it. The fact is it belonged to the Sikhs. Banda Singh did not capture it; in fact, he chose to have this Sikh Fort as his capital.

Again, some historians have also tried to misrepresent the events of November-December 1710 by saying that the Mughal army captured Lohgarh in just one day. This book proves that no one could have captured this Fort even in 5-6 years. Interestingly Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi had accepted that this Fort was almost invincible.

Lohgarh Fort, which should have been a matter of pride for history, remained concealed due to the injustice done to it. Perhaps some historians did not want to present its glory because by doing so, they would have had to show the mighty Mughal army in poor light.

Lohgarh came into limelight when the Haryana government held a state-level function to celebrate the 300th martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur last year. Gagandeep Singh DDPO Yamuna Nagar, explored relevant literature pertaining to Lohgarh Fort which gave an indication that it existed at the boundary of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh on a small hill, where the Mughal army attacked in early 18<sup>th</sup> century to

suppress the Sikh rebellion. War continued here for more than three years. A general feeling arose in our mind, as to how a Sikh army from a small Fort could withstand the powerful Mughal forces. To unveil the facts, intensive survey of the forest area at this location were conducted with a view that the Fort area may be far larger than was given in the available literature. On the request of the Deputy Commissioner, Yamuna Nagar, higher administration of Himachal Pradesh extended its support and appointed forest Officer (T) for assistance to explore forest area around the Lohgarh Fort. Initially it was expected that Fort may be spread over 500 to 600 acres of land, but to our great surprise, remnants of the Fort were found in more than 7000 acres of forest land on a number of hills. This fact was brought to the notice of the local Sikh Sangat and a trust was formed under the chairmanship of S. Gurvinder Singh Karnal, who is also the co-author of this book. A dynamic Sikh activist named S. Jarnail Singh extensively worked with S. Gagandeep Singh in all activities of explorations of the Fort area and collected number of evidences of the Fort. MOUs were signed with professional agency, which endorsed the facts that the remnants of the Fort are spread in a vast area. The trust has also associated a Delhi-based heritage revival company, the Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD).

The ITRHD research about Lohgarh has revealed that the Lohgarh Fort included Fort walls, bastions, rooms, soldier barracks, watch towers, grindstone, hand mills to mill and big clay drums for the storage of food grains. Many carved stones were also found. "The Fort walls are made of dressed stones and lime. Mortar mixed with brick powder has been used as the binding materials. The bricks used in the Fort walls are of five different sizes," says SK Mishra, IAS (Retd.) and ITRHD Chairman. Archeological studies have thrown up astonishing facts. Lohgarh was declared Khalsa Rajdhani by Baba Banda Singh Bahadur in 1710 and the epicenter of its Fort was spread across 7,000 acres, making it one of the largest Fort in the world.

When we (myself Gurwinder Singh and Gagandeep Singh) expressed our wish for unveiling the truth in the context of Lohgarh, Dr Harjinder Singh Dilgeer immediately came forward to support us and gave all his



materials to us and asked us to take up this project. We are very happy that we could fulfil our duty to bring the truth to light.

S. Jarnail Singh, a retired army official, spent several months exploring the Lohgarh Fort zone by actually visiting hundreds of hills. All materials about the structure and geographical location of Lohgarh Fort was done by Gagandeep Singh. Similarly, most of the materials about the battles of Lohgarh, the Vanjaras and the Sikligars, background of Sadhura, life of Pir Budhu Shah too was written by Gagandeep Singh. All the pictures, which have been published in this book, were taken by Gagandeep Singh, Gurvinder Singh and Jarnail Singh.

We are thankful to Baba Sukha Singh, Diljeet Singh, Prithi Pal Singh, Harjinder Singh, Parmjeet Singh, Manmohan Singh, Gurvinder Singh, Gurbhax Singh, Gurpreet Singh, Harjeet Singh, Narinder Singh, Shiv Shankar Pahwa, Hardev Singh, Charan Singh Arvinder Pal Singh, JS Mirpur, Rishi Pal Singh, Sukvinder Singh, Gobind Singh, Joginder Singh, Satinder Singh all associated with Lohgarh Trust, Yamuna Nagar, who made noteworthy contribution in unveiling facts pertaining to the Lohgarh-Khalsa Rajdhani. A special thanks to Adarshdeep Singh, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Govt. of Haryana, for providing the necessary support during the survey of the Fort Lohgarh. We are also thankful to the concerned Sarpanches, Gram Sachivs, Patwaris and the staff of DDPO office, Yamuna Nagar, who helped in compiling the important information in the context of Lohgarh. We also wish to record our thanks to the Haryana Academy of History & Culture, Kurukshetra for publishing this study.

Our sincere thanks to Shri Manohar Lal Ji, the Honourable Chief Minister of Haryana, for writing some kind words for our research work.

**Harjinder Singh Dilgeer**  
**Gurvinder Singh, (Chairman, Lohgarh Trust)**



## Introduction

---

Lohgarh –Khalsa Rajdhani (in the present Yamuana Nagar district of Haryana) is one of the most important places in Sikh history. From here the flag of Sikh sovereignty was raised in 1710, by the great Sikh General-Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. The cliometrics techniques used for new historical reflection discoveries, evidences, facts, and its interpretations, produces altogether a new history of Sikhism and Lohgarh Fort – the Khalsa Rajdhani. It will serve as a potential new reference, not only for Sikh history, but also the world history. After perusal of the Sikh history, we come across three Lohgarh-Forts, which were built by Sikh Gurus at different points of time. Under the leadership of the Sikh Gurus, it took almost 70-80 years for establishing such a huge Fortification at Lohgarh. The epicenter of Lohgarh Fort spread in more than 7000 acres; and dozens of small Fortresses and Chowkis (army posts) were established in the Shivalik hills in the present districts of Yamuna Nagar, Ambala and Panchkula. Fortresses were set up right from Indri, Ladwa, Babain, Shahbad, Barara, Ambala, Shahjadpur, Jagadhri, Sadhaura, Mustafabad, Raipur Rani and Pinjore to deal with the aggression of the mammoth army of the Mughals. Altogether this was made out to uproot the Mughal Empire from the Indian Sub-Continent, who made emergence atrocities to natives.

For making of such a huge Fortification a lot of fund was required and therefore a common wealth was created by the Vanjara and the Labana communities to raise funds for the construction of the Lohgarh Fort. The tandas (halting places of the trade caravans of the Vanjaras, which have now become villages) made special endeavours throughout

the Indian Sub-Continent to raise finances for the cause of freedom from foreign yoke. In the early eighteenth century the Mughal economy was 24.4% of the world's economic system and the Vanjaras Sikhs were the primary players of it. The Vanjaras were so rich traders that the Mughals had assigned them 'mansabs' in various regions of the Empire. The Vanjaras were the richest population of the nation and even had political power, but their feeling of nationalism was unmatched, they worked wisely and secretly, for many decades, to fulfill the mission of the Lohgarh Fort. Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara was the main leader behind the objective and a large number of *nayaks* (leaders) and the Vanjaras followed his path.

Banda came to Punjab with a large number of men around him and tandas of Vanjara Sikhs circulated the Hukamnama of Guru Sahib – stating war against the Mughals has opened and Sikhs were ordered to join Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. This rebellion was not against a small monarch, but it was against the world's most powerful empire. The battles of Lohgarh were fought mainly by the Vanjaras, the Labanas and the Sikhligars. After the battles of Lohgarh (1710-1716), the Mughal Empire began gradually declining. Later on after the capturing of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, the Vanjaras tried to carry on the battle against the Mughals, but could not sustain for want of a great leader. The Mughal regime inhabited 85 villages with Rangar people (the Rajputs turned Muslims) in the vicinity of Lohgarh; and, with this the Vanjaras had to yield a very big toll. This was the beginning of their genocide in the Northern India and the royal *farmans* (command) were issued that wherever Nanakprast (Sikhs) found, they should be killed right there and the person killing them shall be rewarded with 10 rupees per head; this was a big amount in those days. This continued for the next 30 to 40 years, i.e. up to 1750s, till the Sikh Misls captured this region and set up their administrative control over this region. The Sikh feudals never bothered to take charge of their Vanjara Sikh brethren who were passing their life in misery in the hills bordering the former district of Ambala.

After the battles of Lohgarh no population was left in the district. It is worthwhile to mention here that most of the population inhabiting

the present districts of Yamuna Nagar, Ambala and Panchkula, is not more than 250 years old. In 1852, the British Government appointed the first consolidation officer Kale Rai (Rangar) for reinhabitation of population in the said area.

Some historians have wrongly stated that the Lohgarh Fort was a new name given to the already existing Muklishgarh Fort (which was, in fact, not a Fortress, but was 'Rang Mahal' i.e. palace of joy of the Mughal Emperors and generals). The mighty Lohgarh Fort was falsely and fictitiously projected as Mukhlispur simply to dilute the glorified history of the Lohgarh Fort, which was constructed by the natives to uproot the alien and oppressive rule of the Mughals. Muklishgarh is situated near Hathni Kund Barrage and is approximately 35 km away from Lohgarh Fort. The contemporary Mughal historians like Khafi Khan, Mohammed Qasim Aurangabadi and others deliberately projected a wrong picture of Lohgarh as Muklishgarh. Later on, Alexander Cunningham, who was a British army engineer with the Bengal Engineer Group, held an interest in the history and archaeology of India. In 1861, he was appointed to the newly created position of the Archaeological Surveyor to the Government of India, and, he founded and recorded (what later became Archaeological Survey of India). He also surveyed this area, but he, too, deliberately, never submitted any report on Lohgarh. He even wrote a note on the Sikh history, but never made any true reference to Lohgarh Fort. All the later historians picked references in its context from the above cited authors, thus got a faulty interpretation of the history of Banda Singh Bahadur, the battles of Lohgarh, the Vanjaras and the Sikligars.

The British Gazetteer of the territorial dominion of old Ambala, published in 1893, makes no reference of the Fort of Lohgarh, though the British Gazetteer of district Saharanpur, makes a reference to Muklishgarh (the pleasure palace of the Mughals). After the Britishers occupied this area in the middle of the 19th century, the British surveyors like Cunningham, Irvine and W. Crooke were appointed to do research on the Vanjaras. It appears that these surveyors presented adverse reports against the Vanjaras (who uprooted the Mughals Empire). To

preserve this community under control they were even brought under the Criminal Tribal Act, 1871. The world's most socially, politically and economically advance community was put to house arrests for almost 75 years. They were de-notified in 1952, after the independence of the country. Now the Vanjara Sikhs are leading life in poverty and the community who fought for the country's independence and for the cause of the humanity has become one of the most neglected communities of the nation. Even the Khalsa Rajdhani Lohgarh has been left abandoned by the Sikh organizations. It is only now that Lohgarh Trust and the Government of Haryana are making endeavours for the development of the area.

**Gagandeep Singh**  
DDPO Yamuna Nagar  
Government of Haryana

## Chapter 1

# **LOHGARH FORT : The Largest Fort of the World**

---

Almost each and every historian has mentioned that a mammoth army of more than one hundred thousand soldiers led by the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah laid siege to the Lohgarh Fort on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1710 and captured it the very next day. This author (Harjinder Singh Dilgeer) too had said so in his earlier works, but when he visited the whole zone of and around the Lohgarh Fort, he wrote: “on the face of this propaganda of victory it seems that the Mughal army had made a great achievement, but, in fact this was just a funny claim. This gives the impression that as if Lohgarh Fort were just a small hill or a building which they had captured so easily. But, a survey of the geographical area and the structure of the Fort (from the remains of its ruins) proves that the Mughal claim was not only far from reality, but also exaggeration and fraud with history.”

Lohgarh Fort was not identified as such in 1710, in fact it had its birth in 1609 when Guru Hargobind had built a Fort in Guru-Da-Chakk (now Amritsar); nowadays a Gurdwara has been built at that site. This is the second Lohgarh Fort, which was built by Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara under the command of Guru Har Rai. The Guru monitored the construction of the Fort between 1645 and 1657, when he spent 12-13 years at Thapal (as mentioned by Maubad Zulfikar Ardastani in his work *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*). After this Guru Gobind Singh too supervised its construction during his stay at Paonta Sahib from 1685 to 1688. When Guru Gobind Singh returned to Chakk Nanaki (now a part of a greater Anandpur Sahib), he built another Fort of the same name there too, in 1689-90. At that Fort, the Guru had established a factory to manufacture

weapons. These arms were manufactured by the Sikligars and the Vanjara Rajputs, who had inherited this skill from their fathers and forefathers. It seems that the weapons manufactured here were sent to the Nahan state and the Lohgarh Fort of the hill zone also.

### **Geographical Map of Lohgarh Fort**

Lohgarh Fort was not a bastion built on one or two hills; it was a large Fort built on dozens of hills, thus, this becomes the largest\* Fort in the world.

Lohgarh Fort is about 29 kilometers from Nahan, Sadhaura and Paonta Sahib. Most of the area of this Fort lies in the erstwhile Nahan<sup>1</sup> State. The epicenter of the Fort is spread in 7000 acres land of (Yamuna Nagar district) Haryana and (Sirmaur district) Himanchal states of India. Villages Lohgarh, Haripur, Jheel Bankebara, Mehtavali, Devavala, Palori, Sukron, Mehronvala, Charanvala, Jamni (Himanchal) and Bhagwanpur, Nathauri, Dhananura, Nagli, Mohindinpur (Haryana) etc were a part of Lohgarh Fort. In fact the Fort was spread from Udhamgarh (near Kala Amb) to Kalesar forest. Raipur Rani, Toka , Kala Amb and Pinjor have been part of this Fort. The area between Thaska and Tevar, and, Milkara, Taharpur, Darapur, Cheeka, up to Kalesar forest is about 40 to 50 kilometers in length and 10 to 15 kilometers in width. These hills are at a height of 1200 to 1900 feet from sea level.

According to Mohammed Qasim Aurangabadi, in November 1710, the Lohgarh Fort is spread on 16-17 hills and it is really difficult to climb these hills, and the Sikhs had established bastions in an area of 5 to 7 kms. Around the Lohgarh Fort, there are deep forests spread from Lohgarh village to Kalesar and Sukron, and, even today (in 2018), some ferocious animals still dwell there. This region is known as Dabar hills. If this was the state of affairs, how could the Mughal army capture the Fort in just one and a half day?

Most of the walls of Lohgarh Fort were two to four fold. There were walls after walls. Some of the walls were 2.5 to 3.5 meters in width. These walls had the filling of lime, material which gave still greater strength to the walls of this Fort. All this work could not have been



performed in few months or a span of years; it must have taken 70 to 80 years to achieve all this.

The rivers and rivulets divided the Fort into two parts. There was a deep water channel on all the sides of the Fort and these walls were protected by walls, which provided a great defense to the Fort. If the enemy crossed one wall, he had to face a great resistance before crossing the adjacent wall; and, there were walls after walls around each mound. In this land the enemy could not hope of getting any aid from those coming behind to supplement him.

The hills of the Fort were covered with thorny and thick bushes, cacti, other plants and even poisonous bushes; besides there were countless slippery slopes and tight passages from where neither horses nor men could pass with speed. This made capture of this Fort a very difficult task.

On the other hand, the Sikh soldiers had made secret passages to reach to the higher hills or to escape from the hills towards the rivulets or to flee towards the forest area. Such a place was good for guerrilla war (of which the Sikhs were expert). Therefore, this could get a graveyard for the enemy powers. Only, in case hundreds of thousands of military units attacked the Fort, they could capture it only after many years of warfare and that even after sustaining great casualties.

### **Amar Vails (Hanging Vines)**

In the forests there are some hanging vines holding which one can fly from one tree to another or from one hill to a tree or another hill. Unlike branches of a tree, these vines are very strong and do not get decayed, damaged or broken with the passage of time. Guerrillas, monkeys and apes use these vines for jumping from one tree to another. At times these are very long. These vines have a very long life as well; sometimes hundreds of years. There were several such vines in the Lohgarh Fort (even now some such vines can be seen there). These vines generally are not found in this zone; hence it seems that Lakhi Rai Vanjara used to trade goods between Yaarkand and Samarkand (Central Asia) to Sri Lanka. He might have imported them from some other forests.

The Sikh soldiers used these vines for approaching various parts of the Fort. During the attack of an enemy, these vines proved very helpful.

### **Secret Passages**

At the Lohgarh Fort, there were secret passages in the hills of the Fort. These passages were not carved in a couple of hills but in almost all the hills and at all the levels, throughout the Lohgarh Fort. Some of these were like proper rocks and/or brick roads. Though bushes, shrubs and trees have covered many of them, some of these are still in existence. These were well known to the Sikhs. These passages were set up in such a style that if a stranger tried to enter those paths, he would slip and fall down the hill and might even lose limbs or even life. Besides, the Sikh soldiers could hide in these passages and make a sudden attack when the enemy reached there or tried to pass through these passages. They could even trap the enemy and kill them.

### **Water system**

The Lohgarh Fort had a great system of the supply of drinking water. There was a major river, Markanda on one side of the Fort. Besides, there were two small rivulets and more than 94 springs, falls and flows of water (like Lohgarh Khol, Haripur Khol, Nagli Ki Khol, Boli Khol, Asrodi Khol, Kaludeo Ka Khol, Guru Ki Khol etc.), in and around the Fort. Other than this, there were several dams and reservoirs where water was stored for drinking, bathing and irrigation purposes etc. More than 100 such dams are still in existence there.

### **Hand Mills, Oil-Pressers and Utensils**

A very large number of clay utensils, hand mills, flour mill, oil presses have been found not only in some of the hills but in a large number of hills in various parts of the Fort also and, not only in lower hills but also in the higher hills. It proves that several villages existed on these hills and, a very large number of people used to live there. Families of the soldiers might have been living there. This also shows that the Lohgarh Fort was a very big Fort.

### **Food Grains**

We have found evidence that there were great stores of food grains and lentils in and around the Lohgarh Fort. These were preserved in big clay drums. A few years back a big drum was found from a field in which a lot of lentils were still there; and, this seemed to be a couple of hundred years old.

### **Signs of Weapons Factory**

A lot of scraps and fragments of iron and brass have been found in various parts of the Fort. These scraps and fragments have been found in an area of about two to two and a half kilometer. This can be seen there even in the form of lumps and clogs. From this we make presume that ores of iron and other metals etc. were brought here from the mines and after melting them at a very high temperature and moulding them in moulds and dies, weapons like swords, arrows, spears and even barrels of guns were manufactured. It seems they had a system of heating the metal ores and then cooling them in water or oil. The weapons manufactured in this manner were very strong and could not be broken easily. A lot of ores, scrap and fragments of brass too have been found in this area which shows that the caps of brass too were manufactured here, which were used for making bullets; and, probably even barrels of guns might also have been manufactured here.

The Sikligars, who had been associated with the Sikhs since the times of Guru Hargobind were experts on manufacturing weapons. It is possible that there weapons might have been manufactured since the time of Guru Hargobind. Even today, there are several Sikligar families living in many villages around the Lohgarh Fort Zone.

Weapon industries & Sikh Armouries were also set up in the villages of Bhawanpur, Vansantoor & Shahjadwala (In the present Yamuana Nagar District). The Sikh Tandas brought iron and copper ores here from Orissa mines. Damascened steel swords were fabricated here by Sikligars.

### **Production of toys**

Fragments of broken toys of various types (e.g. Camels, elephants,

sparrows, parrots and dolls, etc.) have been found in a large part of the Lohgarh Fort. These can be seen lying in an area of about 8 acres, which means that there used to live several families of the soldiers; and they must be having children for whom these toys were being manufactured.

**Who was the owner of the Lohgarh Fort, Dabar Zone and the land around it?**

Lakhi Rai Vanjara was the owner of perhaps 80 villages i.e. the land on the foothills of the Lohgarh Fort (he had given this land to his employees; later, they too came to be known as Vanjaras). This fact of his ownership is proven by the evidence that he had constructed deep wells in all these villages. Though a large number of wells have been filled or covered or have disappeared due to one or another reason, but still some of them have survived; so far 52 such villages have been identified, e.g. Banda Bahadurpur, Garhi Varan, Garhi Vanjara, Sandhaya, Machchrouli<sup>2</sup>, Chhchhrauli, Balachour, Marwa Kurd, Sarwan, Lakhi Bas, Bani Bahadurpur, Niwarshi, Lohara, Garhi Sikkandra, Kaserla, Ranipur, Mughalawali, Sunder Bahadur, Mehilawali, Dayalgarh, Laharpur, Jihwerhari, Sudhal, Budhi, Vansantoor, Shahjadwala etc still have Lakhi Rai's wells. These wells are about 50 feet deep and are made of Nanakshahi bricks and finely cut rocks (there were no drilling machines in those days). These bricks and rocks were finely stacked and were filled with lime etc. To dig so many wells and construct them on the pattern of Egyptian pyramids was a terrific job. History has no answer to such splendid work. In fact, Lakhi Rai Vanjara, who was the greatest trader of those times, had his business spread between Central Asia and Sri Lanka; hence he had knowledge of every type of architectural work and building construction. He must have imported not only materials but also masons, workers and other experts from various parts of the world. In some of these villages, Lakhi Rai had built some small Fortresses as well, e.g. at Burhia, Garhi Vanjara, Dialgarh, Sooh, Deen, Mullana, Mansoorpur etc.

As far as Lohgarh Fort is concerned, only a wealthy person like Lakhi Rai could have built it. He had a force of hundreds of thousands of

young workers (who had military training as well). A huge quantity of stones, lime and bricks were used to build this Fort. Such a massive stock of construction materials could not have been brought by a couple of hundred persons. A '*tanda*' (trade caravan) of hundreds and thousands of persons might have brought all this. Lakhi Rai Vanjara already had an experience of building Forts and palaces. He had been a supplier of building materials (stone, lime and timber) for the construction of Red Fort Delhi and some Maratha Forts. He had built his own palace, known as Matia Mahal, in Delhi and some other buildings as well. So, it seems that Guru Har Rai Sahib had given this duty to Lakhi Rai Vanjara who supplied material and provided force to build this big Fort.

Not only building the Fort but even clothes, blankets, quilts, grains, hand mills, oil pressers etc. must have been supplied by Lakhi Rai and his sons and grandsons. Some Persian writers mention that when the Sikhs abandoned the Lohgarh Fort, the Mughal soldiers entered the Fort and plundered silk clothes. The silk clothes must have been brought by Lakhi Rai from China and other parts of Central Asia, otherwise there could not have been such precious clothes in that zone, where people did not have even enough food.

As has been mentioned above, Lakhi Rai's sons and grandsons were a part of Banda Singh's army, and, all of them died in battles against the Mughals. When all of them had died, only then, the Mughals might have captured this Fort. The Mughal soldiers demolished the Fort and carried the stones and bricks on the carts far away from that zone, so that the Sikhs might not build this Fort again.

### **Who Built Lohgarh Fort & On How Much Time Did It Take to Build ?**

Most of the historians say that a Fort existed there at the time of Banda Singh Bahadur. After having captured some Forts (Samana, Ghurham, Kapuri, Shahbad etc.) he must have captured this Fort as well. He got it repaired and renovated, and, established his capital here. But, this is just like a joke. The Fort is spread in at least 7000 acres of area on dozens of hills; hence it could not have been built in some months or

years. It must have taken 70 to 80 years to complete it. Even if all the stones, bricks, lime and timber, etc. was supplied by Lakhi Rai Vanjara it must have taken a very long time to carry all these things from far of places to so many levels of the hills.

It seems that the building of the Fort had begun at the time of Guru Hargobind Sahib when he had moved to Keeratpur in 1635. But, most of the work for this Fort must have been done during the time of Guru Har Rai Sahib. According to *Dabistan-I-Mazahib* (by Maubad Zulfiqar Ardastani), Guru Har Rai spent about 13 years (1645 to 1657) in the Thapal village (in the old state of Nahan<sup>3</sup>/Sirmaur, in Lohgarh zone). The Guru had 2200 horses (that means an equal number of soldiers). This area was a good grazing ground where the horses could get grass and water in plenty.

During his stay here, Lakhi Rai Vanjara used to visit him. Here, the Guru must have monitored the activities of the construction of the Fort. The central part of the Lohgarh Fort is about 15 km from here (and by modern roads, it is about 25 kilometers) from here. In between Thapal and Paonta Sahib, there is only Kalesar forest (now known as Kalesar Wild Life Sanctuary). Another passage to Lohgarh is via Sukhchainpura (this village is known after some Sukhchain Singh; he might be a descendant of Lakhi Rai Vanjara).

As mentioned earlier it seems that all the stones, bricks, lime etc were brought here by the trade caravan of Lakhi Rai Vanjara, it is very likely that he set up brick kilns here. Nanakshahi bricks have been used in dozens of hills. Though the Mughals had removed all the stones, rocks and bricks from most of the area of the Fort still signs of Nanakshahi bricks can be found everywhere, not only in one or two hills but in almost all the hills and at all the levels of the hills.

#### **Who was Lakhi Rai Vanjara<sup>4</sup>?**

Most of the students of the Sikh history remember Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara for his act of carrying the headless body of Guru Tegh Bahadur from Chandni Chowk and cremating it by torching his house. He is popularly known as Bhai Lakhi Shah Vanjara. But, they do not know that Bhai

Lakhi Rai's family (his father and grandfather and others) has been a part of the Sikh faith since the time of Guru Nanak.

In 1508, when Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana, during their first udasi (missionary journey) were moving from place to place, they reached a place (now known as Tanda)<sup>5</sup> where the traders were busy in celebrating the birth of a baby boy in the family of one of its chiefs; the Guru made a stopover there and began singing hymns; the Vanjaras (traders) were so busy in celebrations that nobody even bothered to listen to the hymns of the Guru; they did not even offer them food; after some time, the Guru left the place and began his journey onwards.

As luck would have it, the new born child died amidst celebration; everyone plunged into sorrow; the celebrations turned into wailings. Then, suddenly, one of them said, 'We did not bother for the two faqirs who had been singing hymns near our place of celebrations; they might have cursed us, or, it might be god's curse that we did not attend to the saintly person;' this was seconded by some more persons. Now they sent some horsemen to find them (the Guru and Bhai Mardana); they had not gone very far when one of the horsemen found them and begged pardon of the Guru and requested them to return to their place; when they insisted, the Guru and Bhai Mardana joined them.

When the Guru reached there, the chief of the Vanjaras begged pardon for not attending to them earlier and requested the Guru to make prayers so that the dead child may come to life again. The Guru told them that life and death are both in the hands of God; none has power to change it; if God had given a few hours life to the baby why should one pray to God to change his will; there is no occult power and there are no miracles; if there are miracles or occult power then it would mean that God's command is not final. With this he sang a hymn: "We are mortal beings with one breath (i.e. we don't know about the next breath; we do not know the date and time (of our death)). Nanak prays, "let us serve the One who owns our life and breath"

Now, the Vanjaras realized the truth and after this Guru made prayers to God seeking peace of mind for the parents, relatives and well-wishers of the baby. The Vanjaras requested him to spend some

days with them; the Guru agreed and held morning and evening congregations every day and preached his mission. Then, Bhai Thakar (father of Godhu and grandfather of Lakhi Ra Vanjara) joined Guru Nanak's faith; and, since then, this family remained a part of the Sikh world, serving the Panth during the time of all the Gurus and even Banda Singh Bahadur and the Misls' leaders.

### **History of the Sikh Vanjaras**

Up to the eighteenth century, most of the trade was carried out by the Vanjaras (literally: traders), who used to carry goods of different types from one place to another. These goods included foodstuff, clothes, construction materials and every possible movable thing. These goods were transported with the help of camels, elephants, horses, oxen and mules, etc. During the seventeenth century there were three major trade groups in South Asia and Central Asia: 1. Bangeshri (Parmar Rajput) family headed by two sons of Bhai Ballu: Bhai Mai Das (father of Bhai Mani Singh) and Bhai Nathia 2. Bhai Makhan Shah Lubana (Tomar Rajput) family 3. Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara (Yadav Rajput) family. All the three had hundreds of thousands of camels, elephants, horses, oxen and mules. To manage and defend their goods, money and animals, each of them had employed a force of hundreds of thousands of youth. Among these three trader families, Lakhi Rai Vanjara (4.7.1580 – 28.5.1680), son of Godhu and grandson of Thakur (Chandarbansi, Atrish Yadav, Barhtia Kannaut clan) was the richest.

As per Bhat Vahi Karsindu, Lakhi Rai was born at village Khairpur Sadat, tehsil Muzzafarpur, district Alipur, presently in Pakistan, on Saravanbadi Ashtami Sammat 1637 (04-07-1580), in the house of Naik Goddu. Some Vanjaras of Narnaul (Haryana) claim that he was born in South Haryana and later shifted to Delhi for business.

He was an owner of lands in various parts of South Asia. Villages Raisina, Malcha, Narela, Bara Khamba and the forest area around these villages (now a part of New Delhi) were part of his property. Similarly, all the land of the Lohgarh Fort belt between Kala Amb and Yamuna river was also his property. It was, in fact, his kingdom (and for this



kingdom he had built Lohgarh Fort and many Fortresses in this area). Lakhi Rai Vanjara had more than fifty thousand bull-carts, three to four hundred thousand camels, elephants, horses, oxen and mules and other livestock and he had a number of youth as his workers. Lakhi Rai Vanjara used to deal in livestock like camels, elephants, horses, oxen, buffaloes, goats and mules as well as grains, lentils, salt, spices, clothes (especially silk), wool, fleece, building construction material (stones, marble, lime, etc.), defense goods (weapons, armors, saddles, stirrups) and bills of exchange (for State, rich people, traders). It is believed that these tandas (trade caravans) used to transport 1.5 million tons of goods in one round. The Mughal currency and system, both were used for business purposes by him.<sup>6</sup> His trade caravan used to travel between Sri Lanka and Samarkand and Yaarkand (Central Asia). This trade caravan used to be in movement through out the year around (except hot summer and rainy days). He constructed hundreds of drinking water ponds & wells in Uttar Pradesh & Central India.

In the seventeenth century, the Mughal Empire became the richest economy of the world and the GDP of the Indian sub-continent reached the highest level and it controlled 24.4% of the world's economy.<sup>7</sup> The Vanjaras being trading community played a significant role in raising the economic status of Mughals and being a trading community also helped in developing new market of products. Moreover the Vanjaras were nomadic and travelled through the country for the supply of goods. Their knowledge and trading skills helped in increasing their trade and gradually the Vanjaras became the richest community in the nation. The Vanjara had disowned *Varna* system long ago and class category was established in tanda's management system.<sup>8</sup> A man was classified on the basis of duties performed and the prescribed status was not given any importance in the Vanjara culture.

Lakhi Rai Vanjara had eight sons: Nigahia, Hem Chand, Haarhi, Heera, Pundia, Bakhshi, Bala and Jawahar. All of them were a part of the army of Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Singh Bahadur. From among these Jawahar (later Jawahar Singh) embraced martyrdom in the battle of Fategarh Fort, Anandpur (on 30 August 1700), Hema (later Hem Singh)

In the battle of Tirgarh, Anandpur (on 16 January 1704) and Nigahia (later Nigahia Singh) embraced martyrdom in the battle of Amritsar (on 6 April 1709). The rest five were a part of the Banda Singh's army; they too embraced martyrdom in different battles. Lakhi Rai Vanjara had 17 grandsons and 24 great of grandsons. All of them too embraced martyrdom in different battles.

In 1630s, the ancient city of Delhi was a small town. It had remained the capital of several kingdoms from time to time. It was constructed, populated, and, then destroyed again several times. During the reign of Shah Jahan, Delhi was a semi-deserted town. Though Sher Shah Suri's descendants (known more as Suris) ruled over it till 1556 but they could not achieve a glorious state. Delhi had several old Forts; some of them were severely destroyed hence were deserted. Islam Shah Sur (ruled 1545-1554) too had built a Fort (Salimgarh Fort just behind the Red Fort). After the defeat of the Suris, the Mughals occupied Delhi. When Shah Jahan became Emperor in 1628, he decided to build a new Fort. He asked Ahmed Lahori to plan a map of the new Fort. On 12 May 1639, final orders were issued for beginning the construction. The very next day foundation stone was laid and after 9 years it was completed and was ready to be occupied on 6 April 1648. Shah Jahan named this Fort as Qila Mubarik but because it was made of red stones, it was known more as Lal Qila (Red Fort).<sup>9</sup>

Delhi's Red Fort covers an area of 254.67 acres. Around it a 2.41 kilometer long wall has been built. The height of this wall is 18 to 31 meters. Its main gate is towards the southern side and is known as Lahori Gate. Its second gate is known as Delhi Gate. The gate that opens on the side of Yamuna river is known as Paani Darwaza (Water gate). It has 14 gates including Kashmere Gate, Calcutta Gate, Mori Gate, Kabul Gate, Faresh Khana Gate, Ajmeri Gate and the Turkman Gate etc. In the Fort there is a *baoli* (well with steps). According to a local tradition, this *baoli* existed much before the construction of the Fort.

After the Fort was occupied, people began building houses around it. Jama Masjid, Chandni Chowk and Fatehpuri, were first to be built. They were followed by the construction of Sadar Bazar, Chawri Bazar,

Darya Ganj and other areas. At that time this area was known as Shahjahanabad (now old Delhi). The sandstone for the Red Fort and the new town was supplied by Lakhi Rai Vanjara.

It is believed that Lakhi Rai Vanjara was the owner of a large estate around Delhi. The whole of Raisina village and the present Malcha Mahal and the land around it belonged to him. The present Dhaula Kuan,<sup>10</sup> Bara Khambha, Pusa Hill, Connaught Place, Rashtarpati Bhawan (earlier Viceregal House), Parliament House, Gurdwara Rakab Ganj... the land once belonged to Lakhi Rai Vanjara. District Lakhi sarai, in Bihar and Lakhi Vanjara Lake at Sagar district, M.P. are also associated with Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara. He is still remembered in the folksongs sung throughout the Indian Sub continent.

Lakhi Rai was also the owner of all the land of Dabar, i.e. between Sadhuara and Kala Amb. Lakhi Rai Vanjara had another Fort on the eastern side of Yamuna river, a few kilometres away from Mukhlisgarh; it is near Khawaspur and Haidarpur Ali Hinduwala villages (between Tanda and Rampur towns). Its ruins speak of its grandeur. This Fort too has stones like those of Lohgarh Fort. Around this Fort too, several wells built by Lakhi Rai Vanjara. It proves that he was the owner of this land as well (i.e. Thaska or may be from Raipur Rani, in Haryana to Dehradun in Uttarakhand). In the Punjab too, Lakhi Rai Vanjara had a sarai near Rajpura; it is still known as Sarai Vanjara.

### **Role of Pir Budhu Shah**

In the history of Sadhaura and Lohgarh, the role of Pir Budhu Shah has great importance. His real name was Sayyad Badar-ud-Din. Being Sayyad (a descendant of the daughter of Hazrat Mohammed, the founder of Islam), he was also known as 'Shah' Ji and 'Pir' Ji. He was born on 13 June, 1647 and had his abode at Sadhaura. The Mughal Emperor (perhaps Akbar) had granted an estate to this family. He was a very polite person. When people bowed before him and touched his feet in reverence, he would stop them from doing so; rather he would ask them to call him Budhu Shah instead of Sayyad Badar-ud-Din Shah. He was such a down to earth personality.

Pir Budhu Shah and Bhikhan Shah of Thaska too were very friendly. It was due to his relations with Bhikhan Shah that he first met Guru Gobind Singh. Soon, Budhu Shah too became an admirer of the Guru. He would make frequent visits to the Guru. His wife and sons (Ashraf, Mohammed, Mehmood Bakhsh and Hussain) would also visit the Guru at Chakk Nanaki, Paonta Sahib and Anandpur. Budhu Shah was married to Nasiran (sister of Sayyad Begh, a general of the army of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb).

Pir Budhu Shah played a noteworthy role in the edifying the Fort of Lohgarh. As per the known history, he and his father Sayyed Mohammad Ashraf remained a syndicate of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. The sons of Pir Budhu Shah embraced martyrdom fighting along with Baba Banda Singh Bahadur against the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah, in 1710, at Sadhaura. The family of the Peer Budhu Shah was one of the main landlords of Sadhaura. But being a God-loving family and a staunch supporter of humanity, the Sayyed families of Sadhaura were not happy with the orthodox policies of Aurangzeb and his predecessors. The mission of Guru Nanak appealed to the ancestors of the Peer Budhu Shah and they started following the ideology of Guru Nanak. When Guru Hargobind Sahib started the construction of Lohgarh Fort, Raja Shah Ibrahim Bala the grandfather of Peer Budhu Shah, accompanied Guru Sahib in the main survey of Lohgarh Fort. The location of Fort Lohgarh is near the pargana of Sadhaura and the Sayyeds of Sadhaura participated in the divine mission of Lohgarh Fort. Later, when Guru Har Rai Sahib stayed in this zone for 13 years, Sayyed Mohammad Ashraf, the father of Peer Budhu Shah played a significant role in the construction of Lohgarh Fort. The Sayyeds were a superior martial race army-men of the Mughals and their knowledge of the warfare certainly helped the Gurus for building better defences to fight against the mammoth army of Mughals. Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara and Bhai Makhan Shah Lubana were working in coordination with the Peer Budhu Shah and his ancestors for the construction of Lohgar Fort.

According to Nirmala Tradition, when Fateh Shah, the ruler of Garhwal attacked the Guru at Bhangani, on 18 September 1688, five

hundred Pathan soldiers, whom the Guru had employed at the recommendation of Budhu Shah, betrayed the Guru and joined hands with Fateh Shah. When the Pir came to know about their treason, he, along with his sons and 700 of his followers reached there and participated in the battle. In this battle two of his four sons (Ashraf and Mohammed) and his brother Bhure Shah embraced martyrdom.

No source of history confirms this story. First of all there were no salaried soldiers in the army of the Guru, so employing 500 Pathans in his army is not true. Secondly, this battle was held at Bhangani (about 20 km from Paonta Sahib). According to Sawroop Singh (in *Guru Kian Sakhian*, episode no 44), this battle was fought just on one day and continued only for 4-5 hours. Now, if the Pathan soldiers had deceived the Guru, how did Budhu Shah receive the news at Sadhaura (85 km from Bhangani) and when did he reach there to join the battle. There were no telephones, nor helicopters to enable him to get the news of treason to join the battle. So, this story seems to be a concocted one. Further *Guru Kian Sakhian* book mentions the names of all the prominent persons who participated in the battle; and Pir Budhu Shah's name figures nowhere. But, one thing is evident that Budhu Shah had a very loving relationship with the Guru and he used to make frequent visits to the Guru at Paonta Sahib and, later, at Anandpur.

Usman Khan the chief of Sadhaura town did not like Pir Budhu Shah's affinity with the Guru. One day he invited the Pir to join him for hunting and took him to the forest where he got him burnt to death. It happened on 21 March 1704. This news reached the Guru much later. By that time Anandpur was under siege and the Guru could not punish Usman Khan. When Banda Singh attacked Sadhaura on 5 December 1709, the family of Pir Budhu Shah helped him a lot. After having occupied Sadhaura Banda Singh arrested Usman Khan. Usman Khan was the killer of the Pir Budhu Shah, he was also known for his hatred for the non-Muslims. He would forcibly take away young Hindu girls and rape them. Banda Singh publicly executed Usman Khan for his crimes.

### **Mukhlisgarh and Lohgarh**

Some historians have said that Banda Singh Bahadur captured Mukhlisgarh Fort and renamed it Lohgarh. One historian says that Banda Singh built a Fort near Mukhlisgarh village and named it Lohgarh<sup>11</sup>. In fact, there is no village known as Mukhlisgarh. We have maps drawn by Major James Rennel (1742-1830). He is known as the father of geography. In 1792, he published *Memoirs: Maps of Countries between Delhi and Candahar*. This book refers to Moklespore (Mukhlispur) “*a place seven or eight kos from Sadhaura, near the northern hills and on the edge of a small hill, difficult of access, on which Islam Khan, son of Sher Khan Sur, in his day of brief authority, began to build a strong Fortress, under the name of Pawagarh. It was left unfinished at his death, and, fell into ruins, part of which still remains. Banda Singh restored and extended these ruins.*”<sup>12</sup>

(See the location in the map and the pictures):

In fact there is not (nor ever was) any Fort named Mukhlisgarh. This name was given to a palace which had been built as a holiday and pleasure resort for the kings and senior generals and governors, etc.<sup>13</sup> It is about 40 kilometers away from Lohgarh and is situated on the eastern side of Yamuna river. It is not far from the Hathni Kund barrage. It has an area of 45 acres of land and the building of the palace covers an area of one acre and a half. Being in the foothills and on the bank of a river, it is a beautiful resort. The Mughal Emperors used this palace for pleasure and hunting.

This palace has not a single feature of a Fort; hence it is wrong to consider it as such. This area is known a Badshahi Bagh (royal garden) and the building is also known as Rang Mahal (place for pleasure). Irvine refers to this palace as “*hunt-lodge, now called Badshahi Mahal, built by Shah Jahan, close to Jamuna Canals*”. In 2017, the Archaeological Survey of India spent 20 million rupees to repair and renovate this building.

### **Birth of Ram Rai, Rup Kaur and Guru Harkrishan Sahab ji**

Guru Har Rai had spent about 13 years in the Thapal village (in the old state of Nahan/Sirmaur, in Lohgarh zone), his children Ram Rai

(24-2-1646), Rup Kaur 9-4-1649) and Guru Harkishan (20-7-1652) must have been born here.<sup>14</sup>

In 1657 Guru Har Rai visited Keeratpur, Goindval, Sialkot and Kashmir, etc. he spent the next two years at Keeratpur where he breathed his last in 1661. Guru Harkishan could not visit Thapal or Lohgarh because he remained Guru only for three years. Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib founded the town of Chakk Nanaki (now a part of a Greater Anandpur Sahib) in 1665. He spent about four years (1666 to 1670) in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Assam and preached his mission in these areas. During this time Lakhi Rai Vanjara and his sons monitored the construction of Lohgarh Fort.

Guru Tegh Bahadur embraced martyrdom in 1675. Guru Gobind Singh spent 10 years (up to 1685) at Chakk Nanaki. He visited Nahan in April 1685 and founded the town of Paonta Sahib. He spent the next three years and a half at Paonta. During this period he gave the last touches to the Lohgarh Fort. Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara had died in 1680 but his sons remained with the Guru. They were a part of the Guru's army and they participated in all the battles of the Guru.

In November 1688, Guru Gobind Singh returned to Chakk Nanaki and began the work of construction of five Forts at Chakk Nanaki (Fatehgarh), Anandpur Sahib (Anandgarh), Sahota (Lohgarh), Tirgarh (Tirgarh) and Agamgarh (Holgarh/ Agamgarh).

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### **Endnotes**

1. The rulers of the Nahan or Sirmaur State had good relations with the Sikhs right from the time of Guru Hargobind (1590-1644). According to a tradition this State was established by Sobha Rawal (Subans Parkash) in 1095. The city of Nahan (which eventually became capital) was founded by Karam Parkash (ruler 1616-1630). Karam Parkash was an admirer of Guru Hargobind. He friended the Guru sometimes after 1619, when he came to know that the Guru had got 52 Hindu rulers, princes and ministers States released from Gwalior Fort prison. There royal prisoners were mostly from hill and Rajputana. In October 1621, the Guru had defeated

forces led by a Hindu feudal and a Mughal general of Doaba zone. Karam Chand was succeeded by Mandhata Parkash (ruled 1630-1654). He had friendly relations with Guru Hargobind and his successor Guru Har Rai (1631- 1661). In 1645, when Tara Chand, the ruler of Kehloor State stopped paying tax to the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, the latter ordered his arrest. The Guru tried to convince Tara Chand to negotiate but he remained adamant; hence the Guru left Keeratpur and moved to Thapal (in the old state of Nahan/Sirmaur, in Lohgarh zone). According to Maubad Zulfiqar Ardastani, Guru Har Rai stayed in this village from 1645 to 1656-57 (about 13 years). Mandhata Parkash was succeeded by Saubhag Parkash (ruled 1654-1664) and Budh Parkash (ruled 1664-1684). Budh Parkash was very friendly with Guru Tegh Bahadur. In 1684, he died and Mat Parkash (ruled 1684-1704) became the ruler of Sirmaur State. In Sikh sources, he is mentioned as Medni Parkash. It was Medni Parkash, who, in 1685, invited Guru Gobind Singh and requested him to establish his headquarters in his state. Eventually Guru Gobind Singh founded the city of Paonta Sahib and stayed there from April 1685 to 27 October 1688.

Mat Parkash (Medni Parkash) was succeeded by his minor son Bijay Parkash (Mughal records mention his name as Bhup Parkash). He joined Banda Singh in his fight against the Mughals, as a result, he was arrested and imprisoned in Salimgarh Fort at Delhi from 1710 to 1711. After this he secured his release by joining the Mughal authorities in their struggle against the Sikhs.

2. There are three village by the name of Machchrouli in Haryana , one in Tahsil Samalkha, Tahsil Bilaspur and Tahsil Jajjar, all making referencess and relationship with Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara.
3. A Manji was also established by 3rd Guru Amar Das Ji, at Nahan, the name of the Manji was Gangushahi Manji. This area is just 50 kms from Yamuna Nagar. It is very clear that the present district of Sirmaur (old Nahan estate) and the district Yamuna Nagar ( pargana of Khizrabad and Mustafabad) was a great Sikhism influenced area.
4. Lakhi Rai Vanjara is also known as Lakhi Shah (Rai in Hindustani and Shah in Persian, both mean 'king').
5. The place is now situated in the district of Rampur, division Muradabad (Uttar Pradesh). Some part of this place is in the state of Uttrakhand.
6. Moti Lal Rathore, *Vanjara Community* (Hindi), p. 121.
7. *Johnson Gordon, Bayly, C. A. (editors). The Mughal Empire. The New Cambridge History of India: 1.5. I. The Mughals and their Contemporaries.*



*Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press. Vol 1, p. 190.

8. S.G. Deogaonkar : *Caste and Tribes of India-3*, The Vanjara, Chapter 2.
9. The Fort at Agra too is known as Red Fort. It covers an area of 94 acres. A brick Fort already existed here and was known as Badalgarh. It was renovated and new additions too were made, between 1568 and 1573, during Akbar's time. Akbar commissioned sand stone (red stone) from Barauli Rajasthan and built an outer wall with these stones; hence this came to be known as Lal Qila.
10. Dhaula Kuan, about 20 km from Nahan on Nahan-Paonta Road, too was built by Lakhi Rai.
11. Balwant Singh, *Persian Sources on Banda Singh Bahadur*, p 36.
12. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, vol. 1, p 109.
13. In February 1711, even the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah stayed there and spent some time hunting in the hills. This has been referred to by Pancholi Jagjivan Das in his letter to the ruler of Jaipur.
14. In his 'History of the Sikh Gurus', Har Ram Gupta says that, "in *Shikasta* Persian with a slight change of dots and curves Nahan was written by the scribe as Thapal. Thapal is no place in the territory of Raja Karam Parkash. It is undoubtedly Nahan, capital of Sirmaur state. In fact Hari Ram Gupta could not find Thapal; hence he made this statement. Several writers including Indu Bhushan Bannerjee (*Evolution of the Khalsa*, II, 48) Ganda Singh (*Makhiz-e-Twarikh-e-Sikhism*, I, 45); Chunnigham (*A History of the Sikhs*, 55) have accepted it as Thapal. Khushwant Singh (*A History of the Sikhs*, I, 6) read it as Taksal or Tangral near Kasauli. Tarlochan Singh refutes Har Ram Gupta's contention that Nahan is the birthplace of Ram Rai and Har Karishan. In support of his statement, Singh argues that, "There is no historical place commemorating the visit of Guru Har Rai in Nahan, but there are historical shrines commemorating the visit of Guru Gobind Singh in Nahan and other places in Sirmaur."

## Structure and Location of the Lohgarh Fort

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Fortification of the Lohgarh Fort was made in a huge area to deal with the mammoth army of the Mughals and a strategic planning of the defense was made keeping in view the Mughal warfare. The epicenter of the Fort is spread in almost 7000 acres which is situated in the old State of Nahan, in the present Yamuna Nagar District of Haryana and Sirmaur District of Himachal Pradesh. The archaeological evidence, along with time and motion study of Lohgarh Fort shows that it must have taken about 70 to 80 years for completion of the Fortification work of such a large area. The Lohgarh Trust Yamuna Nagar has collected the evidences from Archaeologists and Engineers of Time and Motion study experts.<sup>1</sup> The area of the Fort is spread in revenue estates of Lohgarh, Haripur, Chile, Mehtawali, Palori, Sukron, Maharonwala in Himachal Pradesh, and, Bhagwanpur Nathori, Dhanaura, Nagli and Mohindinpur revenue estates of Haryana State; and, the circumference of this Fort is about 50 km. The Fortification of the bastions of the Fort Lohgarh existed right on the hills known as Dabar Hills and it is holistically an arc shaped ridge starting from the river Yamuna to river Markanda. The overall Fortification of the hills in the said area is extended about 60000 acres. For research work the Fort is divided into 32 sectors. The defense established before the Lohgarh Fort in plains, to check the advance of Mughal Army, was extended up to Ladwa & Indri (districts of Kurukshetra and Karnal). After the Archaeological survey and after the intervention of Persian records, it has clearly come out that the Fortification/chowkies were established in the Shivalik Hills, in the present districts of Yamuna Nagar, Ambala (Toka Sahib area) and

Panchkula (chowki village near Nada Sahib); (Forts still exist in Mansoorpur & Bavana). The last Fortification made by the Sikhs and Banda Singh Bahadur, are found near Pinjore. Banda Singh Bahadur struck at the Mughals over a very wide area ,extending from Jalandhar Doab in Punjab to Bareilly in Suba Delhi.<sup>2</sup> So it is quite obvious that the Fortification were made on the shivalik hills from Punjab to Uttar Pradesh. At various points, nature was very skillfully used for defense purposes and the hills were cut for the generation of narrow passages, so that, in case the enemy army reaches a particular bastion of Lohgarh, the large Mughals army cannot enter all together in the bastions. As a part of strategy of defense through this narrow passage only a single soldier could enter inside the bastions one at a time. It was always easy to handle single moving soldier and the Sikh army even in less number always remained heavy on the Mughal forces due to their strategic defense positions and caused heavy casualties to the Mughal troops advancing towards Fort Lohgarh. Lohgarh Fort was constructed by common men, i.e. by Vanjara Sikhs and the Sikligars, who lived near the vicinity of Lohgarh Fort. This is the largest Fort of the world having defense comprising 200 hills on which strong ramparts of Fortification were made. This makes Lohgarh Fort the largest Fortification of the world, constructed so far. This is also the first time in the world history that the Fort was constructed by the people and not by any monarch.

The contour of first Fortification of the Fort commences at the height of 1200 feet above sea level and the last rampart of the Fort is found on the hilltop 1900 feet height. Each hill has an independent and separate defense system which also acts as a supporting protective system of other defensive posts. Such a unique Fort was built to deal with the world's strongest army of Mughals. The Mughals had a mammoth army, equipped with the most sophisticated weapons of that time. As the strategy of war the Mughal army used to lay siege of the enemy Fort thus cutting the supplies of essential materials required for the sustenance of lives. The soldier in the Fort were compelled to surrender. The major part of a military campaign of Mughals frequently consisted of an extended siege of a town or a Fort with only a few minor

skirmishes.<sup>3</sup> Mughal warfare was inflexible when confronted with guerrilla tactics.<sup>4</sup> In various incidents of this kind the Gurus had mustered troops from amongst their followers, the military exercises had been systematically encouraged, for building and towns in which a careful consideration was given to proper defenses.

In ancient times nature was used as a defense. Frequently the dense forest called as *Vanh Durg* and hills/mountains were called *Parvh Durg*. In the case of Lohgarh Fort and its battle field both the concept of *Vanh Durg* and *Parvh Durg* exist which was a great advantage to the Sikh forces. The geographical location of the Lohgarh Fort is such that, this place has dense forest on its North and South, the cumulative width of which is 14 km. the Lohgarh Fort was established as the Sikh State Capital, by Baba Banda Singh Bahadur in December 1709. The Sikh army not only had sufficient water but also had control over the water which flowed down to the enemy's army. The Fort is designed in such a manner that it has a double Fortification system, i.e. one Fortification wall moves around the rivulet area and the other moves around the hill. The rivulets, passing through the Fort area, strategically bifurcated the Fort in such a fashion that each bifurcation system in exigency was in the protective support of the other area. Even if the enemy army succeeded in capturing any side, the whole Fort could not be captured at the same time as the Fort is divided along the rivulets and different protective defence belts. The Sikh army present in other parts of the Fort being at an advantage point could have easily reinforced and recaptured the lost portion. The bastions were established in such a fashion and position that each used to defend other. Watch towers/ chowkies were established strategically in such a manner that the view of the Som river is visible from every part of the Fort. Therefore, even when the Sikh army was outnumbered the enemy army failed to capture it because of its vantage point of defensibility. No cannons were effective on the strong impregnable walls of Lohgarh Fort. The flanks and rear of the Fort, were protected by narrow gorges and its face rested on nearly vertical slopes. The hill sides were overgrown with dense subtropical undergrowth, thick bramble, impenetrable mass of thorny shrub acacia,

cacti, lantana bushes, therefore a large scale assault was not possible, from this side. Therefore, Lohgarh Fort was chosen with excellent defensibility. In case of sieze there were many secret routes to escape out of the Fort. It is not possible to construct such a huge Fort in a short span of one or two years, and that too on a terrain which is about 1200 feet to 1900 feet above the sea level in the Shivalik hills. This land is still densely forested area and for a normal man it is not possible to even to make surveys of the area for making its design. The area is rich in minerals of limestone and metamorphic rocks are available in ample quality. Hence the raw materials must have been available on the spot for construction of the Fort. Lohgarh Fort was the capital having a model city with ample amount of water, food and ammunition.

#### **The Western Side of the Fort**

The elevated ridges (1200 to 1900 feet) of Dabar (lowest hills of Shivalik) were chosen as the battle field which extended from Udhamgarh (near Kala Amb) to Kalesar and exactly the central point of the ridges was chosen for the Fort Lohgarh. On the North side, i.e. near Udhamgarh, Markanda river flows which emerged from the Shivalik hills and flows to the plain area after passing about 20 km along the hilly boundaries of Dabar Hills, touching its feet. The width of the river while emerging into plain area is more than 100 meter, but as it goes into and towards Dabar hills, its width goes on decreasing and becomes deeper with more and more high brims on both sides of the hilly areas. As the part of the strategy the Mughal army laid a siege from 1710 to 1716, but it failed to achieve the stereotype objective. Now a days, along the side of Markanda river, a metalled road has been constructed from Nahan to Paonta Sahib, through these hills. A dense forest having thorny bushes, cacti, sub-tropical grasses, marshy meadows extends from the boundary of the river up to the Lohgarh Fort wall.

The area between the wall of the Fort and Markanda river was thus thickly covered with impassable forest and Sikh army made ramparts and trenches at weak points to plug the entry of the enemy. These thick thorny forests were also used as hide points of Sikh army so that

the enemy may be attacked, suddenly in case of their entry from this side. It was impossible for the Mughals to make the estimate of arrangements made by the Sikhs in anticipation of a big war. There are many Khols (small rivulets) such as Haripur Khol, Lohgarh Khol which fall into Som River and make it a medium size river.

There is another river Boli Nadi, in the South side of the Fort, which touches the Dabar Hills foot beyond 10 km before it emerges in the plain area. This river is a seasonal one which flows heavily in rainy season, and brings sand down the hill in the river bed. This sand has gold particles and even today the district administration Yamuna Nagar, leases out the river beds for extracting gold. The Hill side of the river, having steep rise and some weak points was plugged with a heavy entrenchment up to the approach of Lohgarh Fort. There are other Khols such as Nagli Khol, which forms a big river called Pathrala, which makes a heavy discharge (30000 c.c. per second) of water during the rainy season.

#### **The Southern Side of the Fort**

The Southern side of Lohgarh Fort faces towards a plain; and, this area was used to produce food grains by the Sikhs. In between the plain area and the hilly area of Lohgarh Fort, Som river flows which finally makes its discharge in Yamuna river. It touches about 10 km from west with the feet of hills.

Khols and rivulets are passages which make approaches towards the Lohgarh Fort, which made the Fortification of the Lohgarh stronger because from the edge of Som river, hill slope were steep and had abrupt rise. This made the approach to Lohgarh Fort still tougher. Heavily ramparts entrenchments were constructed by the Sikh army to inflict heavy damage to enemy in case of attack from this side. A number of high pickets/Fortresses were raised, so that the enemy movement can be viewed from a distance.

The view of the Som river and its adjacent plain area are visible from high pickets/garhis. Many rivulets, ravines and many khols, emerging out from Dabar Hills, the flow of which falls in Som Nadi, ultimately emerge into Yamuna river. Light towers on the hillocks were

constructed, with objective to guide guerrilla Sikh fighters in the night time, so that after making raids on Mughals camp, they could safely retreat back to Fort. The cotton seeds were burnt in a small pond on the tower, this process generated light, which was highly luminous and could be seen from far distance. 52 bastions existed on the southern side of the Fort, starting from Indri, Ladwa, bank of Yamuna and spreads in district Yamuna Nagar. Most of the war between the Sikh and the Mughal armies was fought in plain area where 52 bastions of Fort Lohgarh existed.

### **The Eastern Side of the Fort**

The Eastern side, which is the rear side of the Fort, is completely under a forest cover, which is now declared as the National Forest Park and now falls in the State of Himachal Pradesh. From Lohgarh Fort up to the towns of Paonta Sahib and Nahan, there is a thick wooded forest having bushes and sub-tropical grasses, where wild animals like bears, panthers, leopards, and tigers were often spotted in those days, and, hunters used to hunt them. At present all these wilds are kept protected in hedge made of thorny steel wires and tourists usually visit them through particular passages.

In those days, the approximate width of this forest was 8 km from the wall of the Fort. There were many secret passages to reach Lohgarh and were used for supplying essentials to the Sikh Army and in case of siege they acted as safe exit routes. From these passages Banda Singh, along with his troops, used to move towards Anandpur Sahib, Jammu and Chamba hills and also to the plain areas of Punjab for assault on Punjab cities. The Mughals were never aware of these routes. Moreover, these routes were properly entrenched with dressed stones so that the enemy could not take control of these passages. All the entry points from the front side to the rear side of the Fort were highly protected and Mughal siege was not possible from these directions of the Fort because of the Markanda and Som Nadi rivers and highly steep abrupt rise of hills from both sides. Only part of the front side, i.e. the southern side was exposed to the enemy attack. On this side of the Sikh army

made *pucca* trenches and obstacles in most of plain area. Sikh army kept Mughals engaged in war most of the time in plain area where 52 bastions existed before their attack on Lohgarh area. The seizure by the enemy on the front side, i.e. the southern side was not so effective, therefore, this led to heavy damage to the Mughals during the war. The Lohgarh trustee explored deeply the area of the Lohgarh Fort with a good number of people because one could only enter it after cutting wild plants on the way. Lohgarh Fort, which is spread in 7000 acres, is divided further into sectors. So far 32 sectors of its area, which comprises about thousands of acres of land, have been surveyed. Each sector is situated on different hillocks. There are dual-protection walls enclosing each sector. The foundation of the ramparts could be seen especially at vulnerable points, which were properly plugged with stone walls. Each sector supported as a defense for the adjacent sector.

In case one sector was captured by the enemy, the other men sitting in the adjacent sectors could inflict heavy damage on them with their gunshots, as the area came directly under their range due to higher contours. Many areas of Lohgarh are still under exploration because it can be inspected only after cutting wild plants. The outer wall of the Lohgarh Fort is not found continuous. The foundations are clearly visible at vulnerable points. The foundation about 2.5 to 3 meters wide and it is not visible where the wall joins steep rise of the hills. Fort's outer circumference of the wall, including hill width is about 50 km. How could this huge Fort, which is further defended by the Fort wall around each sector, be conquered by the Mughal army in one throw and one day as narrated by some historians. As the strategy of war, the Mughal army used to lay seizure of the enemy posts, thus cutting their supplies of essential materials required for the sustenance of life, compelling the defending forces to surrender; but, in case the Lohgarh seizure was not possible, the question of a shortage of supplies and further surrounding of Lohgarh never actually happened.

The geographical location and topography of the Lohgarh area is such that here the seizure of Mughals also was not possible. This area, having high contours hills with undulated land with thorny forest covers



on one side, and steep rise of hills on other side, surrounded by seasonal rivulets flowing along with their foot, made it highly defensive. Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor himself reached Lohgarh in 1710, to free this Fort from the Sikh army. After reaching this place, he realized the gravity of the situation, i.e. the defensibility and invincibility of the Fort, and, he was compelled to move back without capturing it. Now the fear of collapse of the vast Mughal Empire hovered over his mind as a result of which depression overwhelmed him due to which he became insane and died after some time.

For the construction of such a large Fort, a large number of men forces both skilled and unskilled i.e. in the shape of laborers, masons & architect were required. The Construction materials i.e. bricks, stone of different size, sand and crushed stone were the requirement a heavy demand; hence, the mission was supposed to be completed secretly without disclosing its objectives to the common man.

#### **Remnants of Fortification Walls found at Lohgarh Fort**

A systematic archaeological investigation of the site of the Lohgarh was conducted for months together and a large number of remnants pertaining to Fortification walls were found at Lohgarh. These Fortification walls bear the thickness from 3 to 4 meters. Such large and heavy Fortifications were done with anticipation of huge battle with the Mughals and the Sikhs had the information that the Mughals' arsenal had the world's best cannons including the small cannons which could be installed on the camels.

The Fortification wall was found around the Lohgarh Fort and this wall is made of *Ashlar* stone masonry using dressed blocks of given dimensions with faces perpendicular to each other and laid in the course by using lime mortar as the binding materials. The masonry and the workmanship of the walls is wonderful.

The remains of the defense walls have been found in the Pahlori Reserve Forest. These archaeological evidences are located in the North east side of Fort Lohgarh. The back side of this area is a dense jungle, which has now been declared as the Sher Jung National Park. We can

make a walk of 10 km through the jungle from these archaeological evidences towards the northeast direction to reach Poanta Sahib. In the center, we find a place called Sukhchain Singh Tanda; there too archaeological evidences can be seen.

**The foundation of a bastion** is found at in sector 30 of Lohgarh Fort. Presently there are only two layers of stone left on the archaeological site. The rest of the structure was demolished by the Mughals. It can be safely presumed that there has been a continuous erosion of soil due to rains in the area and that erosion has uncovered the foundation of the Bastions in the course of 300 years. Each bastion is having the area of 50X50 ft.

**Dregs of Parapets** are found in sector 12 of Lohgarh Fort: This area is of strategic importance as it is situated near the forefront of the Fort. The thickness of the wall is about 3 to 4 meters. It is a masonry built of stones in regular shape and hammer dressed with comparatively thick joints and lime mortar brick *surkhi* used as a binding material.

The blockage of stronghold found in the village of Nagli shows the archaeological evidences of the Fort Lohgarh. The stone masonry work was done here lime mortar. The contour of the said area is at hillock and for the enemy this rampart was a major hurdle for the army to reach the camping area of the Sikh soldiers. From this point only a few Sikh soldiers were able to confront the large Mughal army.

Heavy Fortification walls bearing thickness from 2.5 to 3 meters are found in sector 12 of Lohgarh Fort. This area is on the bank of Lohgarh khol and it was quite vulnerable to the Mughal attack in 1710. This area is flat from the front side having a big camping ground and the backside of this area is elevated and narrow, having a steep side and two *kholes* touching both the sides flow and fall in the Lohgarh Khol. This area was a vintage point for the Sikh soldiers, it acted as a supply depot for the Sikh soldiers fighting in the front against the Mughal army. The tail of this Fortification touches the sector C-4 of Haripur reserve forest which was a very safe and invincible.

The remnants of ramp and strong hold lead to the hillock of reserve forest of Jhanda village of Haryana are found. After making the

archaeological survey of the area a dual Fortification of the hills can be seen and from here a vast view of the plains, i.e. the battlefield of the Lohgarh; and, some of the 52 bastions of Fort Lohgarh were easily visible. The siezure of this area was not possible as there are steep hills and adjoining these hills the river Markanda flows. The supplies for the Sikh army were made from the back side of the Fort, which is adjacent to Nahan.

**Remnants of Stone Barricades** are found in the Nanhari reserve forest. This area is in the South east part of the Fort Lohgarh and is situated on the attacking site of the Fort. Geographically, this area is situated between the khols and a pass leading to Jafarpur Jafri village of Haryana.

Archaeological evidences are found in the reserve forest of Kotla. At the hillock of Kotla and the adjacent area of Himachal Pradesh there is a heavy Fortification on the hills and parts of Chakki are found here. It shows that the kitchen of the Sikh soldiers was on the high contours, so that the food supplies and other basic amenities remained away from the attack of the Mughals.

In the revenue state of Sangholi, on the higher contours, a random rubble masonry Fortification is found with stones of different sizes and shapes brought from the quarry of a bed of a rivulet flowing adjacent to the area. Lime motor and *surkhi* was used as the binding material. This area had a multi Fortification system as it was on the fore front of the Fort and these are vulnerable to the aggression by Mughal canons.

The historian Dr. Harjinder Singh Dilgeer along with S. Jarnail Singh, during his visit to Lohgarh, inspected the bastion and a watch tower in sector 16 of Lohgarh Fort. On the foundation of the bastion, as found in sector 16 Lohgarh Fort, presently there are only two layers of stones left on the archaeological site. The rest of the structure was demolished by the Mughals.

During their visit to sector C-2 of Lohgarh Fort, they found that this sector is about 10 km deep inside the Fort and this is quite far away from the forefront of the Fort. The supply depot of the Sikh army has been found here.

**Dregs of the parapets** have been found in sector 17 of Fort. This area is of strategic importance as it is situated near the forefront of the Fort. Here the thickness of the wall is about 2 to 2.5 meters. It is masonry built of stones in regularly shape as quarried or squared and hammer dressed and having comparatively thick joints of lime mortar having brick *surkhi*.

As far as Lohgarh Fort is concerned, only a rich person like Lakhi Rai Vanjara could have built it. He had a force of hundreds of thousands of young workers (who had military training as well). A huge quantity of stones, lime and bricks were used to build this Fort. Such massive stock of construction materials could not have been brought by a couple of hundred persons. A '*tanda*' (trade caravan) of hundreds of thousands or person would have brought all this. Lakhi Rai Vanjara already had experience of building about two dozen Forts and Palaces. He had been a supplier of building materials (stone, lime and timber) for the Red Fort Delhi and some Maratha Forts.

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### ***Endnotes***

1. Research Report, prepared by Indian Trust, for Rural Heritage and Development, New Delhi, (2016), page 8.
2. Page 169; *The Crisis of empire in Mughal North India*, by Muzaffar Alam, ISBN13:978-0-19-807741-6 & ISBN10:0-19-80741-6.
3. *Ibid* page 160-74
4. Andrea Hintze, *Mughal Empire and its Decline: An Interpretation of the Sources of Social Power*, p. 62.

## Founding of Lohgarh Fort

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The idea of Lohgarh Fort was conceived by Guru Hargobind Sahib during his imprisonment in the Gwalior Fort. Guru Hargobind spent about six and a half years (1613 to 1618) in Gwalior Fort prison. This prison was reserved for exceptional persons (especially defaulter taxpaying rulers, state officials, opponents of the state or rebels) and non-Muslim religious personalities. At the time of the imprisonment of the Guru, 101 rulers, princes, chiefs, chieftains, feudals, landlords, state officials and other prominent persons had been interned in Gwalior Fort. They had been interned for non-payment of taxes or for disobeying one or another command of the Emperor. They included Kalyan Chand and his son Tara Chand (the ruler of Kehlur/ Bilaspur state), Hari Chand (the rulers of Handur/ Nalagarh state) and others from hilly or Rajputana states. Before the arrival of the Guru, these prisoners had been living in a state of anxiety, despondency and helplessness. When the Guru reached there, he began daily *keertan* (singing of hymns) and religious and philosophical discourses. The Guru gave them confidence and made them cheerful. Those who were feeling despondent and helpless and suffering from the problem of psychosis began living in hope and high spirits. They became devotees of the Guru. It seems that here the Guru might have planned to build a very powerful Fort to ensure a defense system to face the Mughal Empire. Lohgarh Fort seems to be a part of this strategy.

### **Release of Guru Hargobind Sahab and the Heads of the States**

In 1618, Murtaza Khan the Governor of Lahore died. In the meanwhile,

Wazir Khan of Chiniot (later Governor of Lahore) had become a favorite courtier of Jahangir; almost during the same time Jahangir had a meeting with Mian Mir. Both of them (Wazir Khan and Mian Mir) requested Jahangir to release Guru Hargobind; Jahangir's beloved wife Nur Jahan too impressed upon him to accept their advice and release the Guru. By this time, Jahangir too had become free from the influence of the fanatical Muslim clergy (including Sheikh Ahmad Sarhandi); all this made Jahangir to issue orders for the release of Guru Sahib.

The orders of the release of Guru Sahib were delivered by Wazir Khan himself. When the other royal prisoners came to know of the release of Guru Sahib, they became very sad and some of them began weeping also. Daily discourses of the Guru had changed their lives and they had begun living in high spirits. Guru Sahib decided to help them. He told Wazir Khan: 'I will leave the prison only if other prisoners too are released.' Wazir Khan promised to approach the Emperor; and when Wazir Khan met Jahangir and informed him about the Guru's wish, the Emperor was very much impressed. He ordered that those prisoners who had been given short sentences (one to two years) be released and from amongst the rest all those would be released who clung to the Guru's cloak. Jahangir, perhaps, wanted to test as to whom the Guru preferred as there were 49 prisoners who had been given short sentences and 52 were those who were undergone long sentences.

When Guru Hargobind came to know about the orders of the Emperor, he requested the jailor Hari Das Yadav to get him a cloak which had 52 hanging stripes. The cloak was ready by the next morning. The Guru wore the cloak and got all the prisoners released as each was holding one stripe of the cloak. Those who got released included several kings and princes from hill states of the Punjab (Bilaspur, Handur etc.), Rajputana and other zones. The Guru was released on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1619. When Jahangir got this news he was convinced that the Guru was really a genuine *pir* for whom everyone was equal. *After this, Jahangir ordered the arrest of Sheikh Ahmad Sarhandi, who was interned in this Gwalior Fort prison.*

### **Battle of Ruhila:**

Guru Arjan had founded Gobindpur (now Sri Hargobindpur) at the site of the ruins of the erstwhile Ruhila village on the right bank of river Beas. After the arrest of Guru Hargobind, this village had been occupied by Chandu and Bhagwan Das Gherar (father of his daughter-in-law). When Guru Sahib chose to stay at Guru-Da-Chakk, he decided to take possession of Gobindpur. Although Chandu had been killed in the summer of 1620, his son Karam Chand had still not learnt a lesson. When he came to know that the Guru had taken possession of Gobindpur, he collected a large number of men and attacked the Sikhs. A battle was fought on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1621<sup>1</sup>. The Sikhs battled the invaders and gave them a crushing defeat. After their defeat, they approached the police chief of the Jalandhar - Doab and offered him money and requested him to help them. He agreed and sent several Mughal soldiers to help them.

This army reached Ruhila on the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1621; that day, another battle was fought; this was a decisive battle in which Chandu's son Karam Chand, his father-in-law Bhagwan Das Gherar and (Bhagwan Das's son) Ratan Chand were killed. After their deaths, their mercenaries fled the field. After this, none dared to attack the Sikhs. When the news of Guru's victory at Ruhila reached Kalyan Chand (ruler of Bilaspur), he contacted other hill chiefs and decided to visit the Guru to congratulate him. In fact, they wanted to seek the favour of the Guru in case they had to face an enemy attack or clashes with the Mughal Emperor.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1624, a big gathering of the Sikhs was held at Guru-Da-Chakk; those who attended included the rulers of Bilaspur and Handur etc. (whom Guru Sahib had got released from Gwalior Fort prison in 1619). The ruler of Nahan (Sirmaur state) too joined Kalyan Chand. Kalyan Chand, the ruler of Bilaspur, requested the Guru to establish his headquarters in his country; he made an offer of land too. The Guru was already interested in a strategic defense bastion so he agreed to establish a new village, but refused to accept the gift of the land. The

Guru toured the area around river Satluj and selected some territory of the villages of Kalyanpur, Bhatoli and Jiowal and paid the price of the land. At first Raja Kalyan Chand refused to accept money, but when the Guru refused to accept donations of land, he (the king) had to accept the money.

### **Purchase of Land For Establishment of Keeratpur**

Though the Guru had purchased the land but he could not move to the new place; finally, he asked his eldest son Gurditta to take charge of the land. Gurditta founded the city of Keeratpur on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1624 and began living there.

From 1624 to 1634, Guru Hargobind stayed at Guru-Da-Chakk (now Amritsar). During this period, Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor had died on 28 October 1627; he was succeeded by Shah Jahan. With the passage of time, Shah Jahan too came under the influence of fanatic Muslim clergy. During this the Guru had to face attacks by some minor Muslim generals and chieftains. The Guru had to face three attacks: on 13 April 1634 at Guru-Da-Chakk, on 16-17 December 1634 Mehraj and on 26-28 April 1635 Kartarpur.

Though the Guru had won all the three battles, he realized that this won't end anywhere, and there would be further attacks and clashes; so, he decided to leave the plains and move to Keeratpur, a city founded by him in Bilaspur state. Having discussed it with his courtiers, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1635, he left Kartarpur for Keeratpur.

Guru Hargobind reached Keeratpur on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1635. Now Keeratpur became the major centre of the Sikhs. Besides the Sikhs, most of the rulers of the hill states too began visiting the Guru. They were pleased to see the Guru near them because they knew that the Guru had defeated the invading armies several times; and they expected the Guru to defend them in case of a Mughal attack.

During the Guru's stay at Keeratpur, the rulers of Kehlur (Bilaspur), Handur (Nalagarh), Sirmaur (Nahan) and other states used to send regular messages and even paid visits to the Gurus. During this time, several Rajput rulers and princes as well as other political refugees had



taken refuge with the Guru and had been living at Keeratpur. Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara and other major traders like Bhai Mai Das Parmar (father of Bhai Mani Singh) and Bhai Dasa (father of Makhan Shah Lubana) too used to make frequent visits to the Guru. It seems that during this time the Guru planned the construction of a Fort. Lakhi Rai Vanjara was the owner of a great track of land in the Shivalik foothills (between Kala Amb and Yamna river), he might have offered to build a Fort. The construction of the Lohgarh Fort seems to have been begun by Lakhi Rai Vanjara under the instructions of the Guru.

Guru Hargobind breathed his last on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1644. When his body was cremated, a former Rajput ruler jumped into the pyre and immolated himself (it was a Rajput way of expression of love and devotion); this Rajput ruler had sought asylum at Keeratpur after having killed several Mughals to save the honour of his daughter. At the time of the Guru's funeral, he became so emotional that he could not bear separation from the Guru; when another Rajput tried to jump into the pyre, Guru Har Rai stopped him; he, however, killed himself with his own dagger; he too was cremated along with the Guru.

Guru Har Rai spent early days of Guruship at Keeratpur. In 1645, Tara Chand, the ruler of Kehlur (Bilaspur) State, stopped paying tribute to the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, and the latter ordered his arrest. The Guru advised him to either declare sovereignty or get ready to fight against the Mughal Emperor or pay him the amount of tribute. But he did not bother for the Guru's advice (eventually he was arrested and imprisoned). When Tara Chand did not bother for the Guru, the latter left Keeratpur and moved to Thapal (in the old state of Nahan/Sirmaur, in Lohgarh zone). It seems that major work of construction of Lohgarh Fort was done during stay of Guru at Thapal. On the other hand, when Tara Chand was released, he visited Guru Har Rai at Thapal and requested him to return to Keeratpur.

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### ***Endnotes***

1. Bhai Nanhu Shah Vanjara was martyred in the battle of Ruhila and he became the first sikh martyrdom. Bhai Nanhu Shah is the ancestor of Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Bhagwant Singh Bangeshwari.

## Banda Singh Bahadur's Journey from Nanded to Lohgarh Fort

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When Aurangzeb died, there was a war of succession between his sons, in which Muazzam (later Bahadur Shah) became victorious. The decisive battle took place at Jajau, on 8 June 1707, in which prince Tara Azam was killed and Muazzam was victorious; a unit of the Sikh soldiers too had fought as allies of Muazzam. Now, Muazzam sat on the Mughal throne as Bahadur Shah; and held a *darbar* (court) to thank and award his supporters. On 23 July 1707, he welcomed the Guru in his *darbar*, thanked him for his blessings and help and presented him a diamond-studded *khillat* (robe of honour). Besides, he (Bahadur Shah) promised to punish those who had perpetrated atrocities on the Guru's mother, Sahibzadas and the Sikhs. The Guru presented him a list of ten persons, including Wazir Khan<sup>1</sup> (the Governor of *Sahrind*, now *Sirhind*), who were responsible for the killings of Sahibzadas and Mata Gujri as well as others. But, before he could take any action on his promise made to the Guru, he had to leave Agra to quell the rebellion of the Rajput Rajas of Amber (Jaipur), Jodhpur and Ajmer. He requested the Guru to accompany him during the expedition so that they may finalize the line of action regarding Wazir Khan and others.

According to another tradition, the Guru did not accompany him, but when he remained engaged in Rajput-expedition for about five months, he sent an emissary to the Guru to visit him in Ajmer. The Guru reached Ajmer in the beginning of March 1708; but, before he could discuss further on Wazir Khan's issue, Bahadur Shah received reports that his second brother Kam Bakhsh too has rebelled; so he decided to go to South to quell his rebellion; he requested the Guru

too to accompany him so that during the journey they may discuss something.

During their journey towards the South, the Guru had a couple of sittings with Bahadur Shah and discussed the line of action; both the camps reached Burhanpur in May 1708; during those days there was a great flood in the Narmada river so they had to stay back in Burhanpur.<sup>2</sup>

By this time, Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sarhind, had come to know about Guru's meeting with the Emperor; and he knew that Bahadur Shah was already friendly to the Guru and some action on him (Wazir Khan) was a must. So, it seems that he planned to create differences between the Guru and Bahadur Shah; and, as a part of this strategy, he sent a big amount (rupees 8 lakh) to Bahadur Shah as his contribution to war expenses. He also sent some *Pathans* to infiltrate the Guru's camp and to eliminate him (Guru) at the first opportunity.

Bahadur Shah and the Guru crossed Narmada in the second half of May 1708 (Bahadur Shah crossed it on 17 May); by this time, Bahadur Shah had received rupees 8 lakh from Wazir Khan; hence there was no question of taking any action against him; as a result Bahadur Shah began avoiding meeting with the Guru; however, after crossing Tapti river, on 25 June 1708, a meeting between the Guru and Bahadur Shah took place at or near Balapur (sometimes in July 1708); and it seems that in this meeting Bahadur Shah gave an indication of his soft stand regarding Wazir Khan. Having smelt Bahadur Shah's intentions, the Guru, now, decided to forget about him (Bahadur Shah) and to himself take action against Wazir Khan; so, the Guru left the caravan of Bahadur Shah and decided to return to the Punjab; but, before leaving for the Punjab, he decided to visit Madho Das Bairagi, who had established his *dera* at Nander (Madho Das had met the Guru in 1694 at Rishikesh).

On the other hand, Bahadur Shah crossed the river Ban Ganga, on 24 August, 1708, and went towards his brother's capital.

### **Banda Singh Joins Sikh Faith**

Guru Gobind Singh visited the *dera* (camp) of Madho Das on 3 September 1708.<sup>3</sup> Before Madho Das could speak any word, the Guru

said: 'Madho Das we have come to see you.' I knew that yours is a *Vaishnu dera*. I guess, you don't know about another bigger *dera*, this country, where every day hundreds and thousands of innocent people, not animals, are being butchered. I have come to your *dera* to draw your attention to this human misery.' These words had magical impact on Madho Das and he, in a trembling voice, said, 'From today, Gurudev, I am your *banda* (slave) in mind and body. Tell me as to what I should do for you now.' The Guru smiled and looked sternly at Madho Das and said: Madho Das! It is very difficult to become a *banda* of someone and to obey his orders. A *banda* is one who sacrifices his body, mind and wealth for his master.'

Now, Madho Das was not the earlier Madho Das (a vain yogi). He had renounced his *honour* and ego and had really become a humble *banda* of the Guru. On this, Guru again said, 'Madho Das, our faith (Sikhism) is the house of Guru Nanak. Whosoever joins this house; he needs forget his previous family of birth, faith, actions, hesitations and doubts.' Madho Das consented, 'Master, now I have no other resort even to think of... I have become just your *banda* in and out.'<sup>4</sup>

### **Banda Singh Initiated into Sikhism**

The next day, on 4 September 1708, the Guru himself bestowed five *kakaars* (Kangha, Kirpan, Karha, Kachhehra, and Keski) upon Madho Das. The former *bairagi sadhu* now became a Sikh with *keski* (turban). Madho Das was given *Khanday-Di-Pahul* by the Guru, along with Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh and two others. He was also given a new name, *Banda Singh*. The Sikhs present there raised aloud *jaikaaraas* (Sikh slogans of victory) and thus celebrated Banda Singh's entry into the Panth. (*Max Arthur Macauliffe has wrongly mentioned his name as Gurbakhsh Singh*).

The scene of his initiation has been recorded by the writers of the *Bhatt Vahis*. This event has been presented by Swarup Singh Kaushish, the writer of *Guru Kian Sakhian* in detail.

Besides Swarup Singh Kaushish, several other writers, of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries (mostly non-Sikh), e.g. Mirza

Mubarkullah Iradat Khan (*Tarikh-i-Iradat Khani*, 1714), Mohammed Ali Khan Ansari (*Tarikh-i-Muzaffari*, 1788), Ghulam Hussain (*Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, 1836), Ali-ud-Din Mufti (*Ibratnama*, 1854), Ganesh Das Vadera (*Char-i-Bagh-i-Punjab*, 1855), Kanhaya Lal (*Tarikh-i-Punjab*, 1881), Ahmed Shah Batalia (*Kitab-i-Hind*, 1885), Mohammed Latif (*Tarikh-i-Punjab*), Elliot and Dowson (*History of India as told by its Historians*), James Brown (*Indian Tracts*), McGregor (*History of the Sikhs*), C. H. Payne (*The Sikhs*) etc. too have mentioned that Banda Singh was initiated by the tenth Guru at Nander before he was given the supreme command of the Sikh army.

After initiating Banda Singh, Guru Gobind Singh explained to him the situation of the Sikh homeland. The Guru also narrated the details of his exit from Anandpur Sahib. This made Banda Singh despondent, but the Guru exhorted him: 'It is not a time to be sad and lose heart; it is a time to act and bring an end to the cruel regime.' At this Banda Singh spoke: 'Guruji, I am your *banda*... just order me as you please and I will carry it out immediately.' On this, the Guru asked him to take up the command of the Sikh army and bring an end to the tyranny being perpetrated by the cruel Mughal regime. The Guru further told him that thousands of Sikhs will join him once he reaches the Sikh homeland.

For the next one month, Guru Gobind Singh trained Banda Singh in various spheres like Sikh philosophy, history, the art of warfare. The Guru periodically tested his knowledge and when he became sure that Banda Singh was fully trained, he decided to send him to the Punjab on planned expedition.

### **Banda Singh Leaves Nanded**

During this period, a trade caravan of Bhai Bhagwant Singh Bangeshari happened to pass through Nanded region. When he came to know of the Guru's presence in that area, he went to him to pay obeisance. The Guru used this opportunity to send Banda Singh with his caravan. Thus, on the fifth of October of 1708, Banda Singh left Nanded with Bhagwant Singh Bangeshari's caravan. Guru Gobind Singh offered Banda Singh a blue flag (symbol of Sikh sovereignty), a *nagara* (battle drum), and five

of his personal arrows. The Guru also handed him some *hukamnamas* (royal letters), addressed to some prominent Sikhs, asking them to give Banda Singh complete support. Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara was the owner of Bangeshwari Tanda and it was one of the richest Tanda of that time. Bhagwant Singh Bangeshwari (earlier Bhagu Vanjara) was one the major mansabdar of Aurangzeb and he was a noble of Attock and was having the Mansab of 5000.<sup>5</sup>

The Guru also sent some Sikhs to accompany Banda Singh. Rattan Singh Bhangu has given the names of these Sikhs as Binod Singh, Kahan Singh, Baj Singh, Ran Singh and Ram Singh. But the *Bhatt Vahis* mention the names of Bhagwant Singh, Baj Singh, Kuir Singh, Kahan Singh and Binod Singh.<sup>6</sup>

Banda Singh was still on his way when he got the news of the martyrdom of the Guru. But, he was so dedicated to his mission that it did not dishearten him and he continued his march towards the Punjab. He covered a distance of more than 1500 kilometres in more than one year. He travelled through Khan Desh (Burhanpur etc.), Mandsaur, Ajmer, Phulera, Churu, Bharatpur and reached Bangar Desh. He next encamped in the forest area between the villages of Khaanda and Sehri in Kharkhauda *pargana*, situated between Sampla and Sonepat.<sup>7</sup>

This was a desert and scanty forest region, almost without habitation. From here, Bhagwant Singh Bangeshri proceeded towards his home near Multan, with a promise to deliver the Guru's letters to the prominent Sikh families and also to enlist Sikh soldiers in the Banda Singh's army. Thus, within a few weeks, the armed Sikhs began joining him. In a month's time the number of his companions had crossed five hundred and in two months it was above a thousand and every day new recruits were joining the Sikh army.

### **Banda Singh Captures Royal Treasury**

One day Banda Singh got the information that the royal treasure was being taken to Delhi. When this party reached near Bahun village, near Kaithal, it stopped for some rest; the Sikhs, under the command of Banda Singh attacked the party carrying the treasure. On seeing the Sikhs, the

mercenary soldiers ran away, leaving the treasure behind. After fleeing from Bahun, those Mughal soldiers went to the chief of Kaithal and reported him about the incident. The chief of Kaithal was a Hindu but was very much loyal to the Mughals. Having got the information about the Sikhs, he led his forces to attack them. The Sikhs got intelligence about his march; and they prepared themselves to give him a good fight. The Sikhs hid themselves among the trees and when the Mughal soldiers came near them, they made a surprise attack on them. Several of the royal soldiers were killed in this sudden but swift attack. The chief of Kaithal himself was captured by the Sikhs. When he was presented before Banda Singh, he begged for his life. Banda Singh forgave him, but relieved him of all his horses, arms and ammunition. Banda Singh also appointed him as the Sikh chief of Kaithal. After this, Banda Singh distributed the horses and the arms among his fighting force and did not keep anything for himself. This increased his respect among his companions.

A few days after this incident, several young Sikh men belonging to the families of Bhai Rupa, Bhai Bahilo and other families of the present Malwa zone, reached Banda Singh's camp. Within a few weeks the number of the Sikh soldiers grew more than four thousand. They wanted to punish Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sarhind immediately. Banda Singh advised the spirited youth to restrain them for the moment as Sirhind had a big army. Moreover, the chiefs of the surrounding towns Samana, Malerkotla, Sanaur, Ghuram, Shahbad, Mustafabad and Kunjpura etc. too could come to his help. So, in order to attack Sirhind, the Sikhs needed a big force fully equipped with arms, ammunition and horses.

To get the necessary arms, the Sikhs did not have money; so, Banda Singh attacked Narnaul, Bhiwani and Hissar Firoza etc. and captured enough arms and horses. During these attacks the Sikh army plundered state treasuries too.

### **The First Sikh Victory: Samana Captured**

Banda Singh was a wise general. In order to make Sarhind weak, he decided to capture the Forts around it. The first to be attacked was

Samana. This town had been the capital of the Punjab up to 1360, before Firoz Shah Tughlak moved it from Samana to Sarhind. But, in spite of this, Samana city was still the abode of very rich persons. It had several big mansions of the Sayyads<sup>8</sup> and the Mughals. There were 22 such *umraa* (plurals of *amir*, literally: very rich and affluent persons and chiefs, i.e. the aristocracy) in this city, who had a right to move about in the city in their own palanquins. These *umraa*'s houses were not less than mini Forts; and there were heaps of gold and diamonds in these mansions. The city had a big Fort too (*a part of the wall of that Fort is still in existence*). Though there was no force, the *umraa* had no apprehension that anybody would even think of attacking Samana.

Samana had a notorious image in the Sikh history and Sikh psyche. This place was known as a 'city of the *jallads* (executioners)'. Sayyad Jalal-ud-Din, the executioner of Guru Tegh Bahadur belonged to this town. Shashal Begh and Bashal Begh executioners, who had executed the younger Sahibzadas at Sarhind, too belonged to Samana. The Qazi who delivered the Aurangzeb's letter (in fact not written by Aurangzeb) to the Guru at Anandpur on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1705 (asking the Guru to quit Anandpur and reach Kangar village) too belonged to this town. Many Sikhs had disdain for this town.

Banda Singh assessed the situation of attack on Samana and in the early hours of the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 1709 he attacked this town. The Sikh soldiers entered the town just before dawn when most of the city was asleep and began killing all those who dared to stop or attack them. When the *umraa* saw the Sikh army, some of them tried to confront the Sikhs but could not fight for long and finally shut themselves in their mansions.

After capturing the main Fort, Banda Singh announced that the Sikhs would not be revengeful towards any one; only the cruel officials and the *jallads* (executioners) would be punished. After this declaration, the local common Muslim workers sided with the Sikhs. As they had also been the victims of the atrocities of their Sayyad and Mughal landlords, they had no sympathy for the *umraa*. They helped the Sikhs with secret information about the treasures of the *umraas*. After this,



the Sikhs attacked the mansions of the ruling families as well as the cruel officials. The *umraa* began firing, arrow-shooting and throwing burning wood on the Sikh soldiers from the roof-tops of their houses. When this continued for long, the Sikhs had no option but to set fire to their mansions; hence a good number of Sayyads and Mughals were burnt alive in their own houses, and, those who tried to come out and fight their way were slain. The fighting continued till evening. Some Mughals and Sayyads fought bravely, but before dusk almost all of them were dead or had fled the city to save their lives. The number of dead had been assessed between five and ten thousand. Besides, all the big mansions had been reduced to ashes.

By the evening, the Sikhs were in possession of the town and the main Fort. Now, no young member of the Mughal or Sayyad families was found in the town; there were only old men, women and children or some of the families of the workers whom the Sikhs did not disturb because the Sikhs did not touch any female, child, old man and those who surrendered. Besides, the Sikhs did not touch even a single Muslim grave or mosque (a dozen of these are still in existence even after 300 years).<sup>9</sup>

In Samana, the common people, in fact, had been angry with the *umraa* of the town, because they had been treating them as their bonded labour. So, the workers too, took their wrath upon the *umraa* by killing some of those who had perpetrated atrocities on them. Besides these Muslim common folk, the Hindus too took part in attacks on the *umraa*. The acts of burning mansions and looting, etc. were carried mostly by the aggrieved residents as a consolation; they were intent on taking revenge from the *umraa*.

At Samana, the Sikhs had captured a very large number of weapons, horses, gold, diamonds, silver and other valuables. Now, they were well equipped with arms and were capable of attacking any stronghold. In the battle of Samana, major role had been played by (Bhai) Fateh Singh, so, Banda Singh appointed him as the Governor of Samana. After leaving a unit of the Sikh soldiers there, Banda Singh decided to capture other Forts around Sarhind.

By this time, the number of the Sikh soldiers had crossed ten thousand. According to Khaki Khan:

*"In just two to three months, four to five thousand horsemen, and seven to eight thousand foot soldiers joined him. Day by day, their number went on increasing and they plundered a lot of valuables. Soon eighteen to nineteen thousand persons began a reign of plundering."*<sup>10</sup>

### **The Sikhs Capture Ghuram**

After handing over Samana to Fateh Singh, Banda Singh turned his attention towards Ghuram.<sup>11</sup> On his way to Ghuram, he captured Sanaur<sup>12</sup> too. Here too, Banda Singh got some arms and horses.

Banda Singh wanted to capture all the Forts around Sarhind with a view to isolate and deprive it (Sarhind) from any possible help from outside. Though Ghuram Fort did not have a very big force, but its caretaker decided to put up a fight against the Sikh army. So, a fierce battle was fought here, but before evening the Sikhs were able to capture this Fort too. During this battle, hundreds of soldiers of the Mughal army were killed or wounded.

### **Attack on Thaska**

After capturing Ghuram, Banda Singh moved to Thaska (about 20 km from Ghuram). This was also known as *Thaska Miran Ji*,<sup>13</sup> and, was the abode of hundreds of Sayyads, Sheikhs and rich Mughals and other *umraa*. Some of these boasted themselves to be *pirs* (known among Muslims as holy men). They used to befool common folk by propagating that they had miraculous powers. It was like the false propaganda of the priests of the city of Parbhas Pattan (the city of Somnath temple). In 1027, when Mohammed Ghauri attacked, the Hindu priests had claimed (in fact boasted) that due to their *mantras* (incantation, magical verses) Ghauri would not be able to enter their city; and, the same had been boasted by the *Pirs* of Sayyadpur (Eimanabad) when Babar attacked the city in 1520.<sup>14</sup> Neither at Somnath nor at Sayyadpur, had the drama of miracles worked as that was a mere fraud (*and there is no such miraculous power on this earth*). The attackers plundered and

perpetrated atrocities and the so-called miracles did not work. Here, at Thaska too, the *pirs'* drama, their so-called miraculous power, black magic, occult power was exposed.

When Banda Singh captured the Fort and the town the elite of the town, headed by Pir Zafar Ali, came to him with leaves of grass in their mouths (symbolizing that 'we are your cows', please don't kill us).<sup>15</sup> Banda Singh told them, 'cow may be a sacred animal for the Hindus; it has nothing to do with Sikhism; but, your apology and surrender is enough; we shall not harm any innocent person and would punish only those who have committed crimes against innocent folk'. After hearing this, the *umraa* of the town came to Banda Singh with precious gifts. Banda Singh held his court and tested the credentials of the influential persons of the city. He listened to the common folk and on the basis of these investigations; he punished the cruel and evil officials. Having observed this, the common folk praised the Sikhs for their justice.

#### **Thanesar and Shahbad-Markanda Occupied**

After capturing Thaska, Banda Singh marched towards Thanesar (now Kurukshetra) and occupied it without much effort. From here he proceeded towards Shahbad, a city on the banks of river Markanda. When the chief of Shahbad came to know that the Sikhs were coming, he fled from the city and went to Delhi for his safety. When the Sikh army reached there, the deputies of the town surrendered without resistance and handed over the Fort to the Sikhs.

#### **Mustafabad Occupied**

By now, most of the Forts in that area had been occupied by the Sikhs; but a big Fort at Mustafabad was still to be conquered. There were more than 2500 armed soldiers under the chief of this town. When he came to know about the march of the Sikh army towards Mustafabad, he sent two thousand soldiers and two cannons to stop their advance.

When the Hindus, who were accompanying Banda Singh's army (*who had joined the Sikhs with an intention of plunder and booty only*), learnt about the dispatch of the canons by the Chief of Mustafabad,

they fled away. Now only the Sikh soldiers remained behind in the rank and file of the Banda Singh's army.

When both armies confronted each other, the Sikhs made a powerful attack on the Mughal army compelling them to withdraw. While fleeing the battle-field, they left behind them even one cannon, which was captured by the Sikhs. Now, the Sikh army attacked and occupied Mustafabad city and compelled the rulers and the *umraa* to pay tribute to the Sikhs.

### **Attack on Kunjpura**

After the victory of Mustafabad, the Sikh army was in possession of the most of the Forts around Sarhind; they had, now, seven Forts in their possession and had mustered a several thousand fully armed soldiers too. Now, they could think of an attack on Sarhind, for which they had been planning for more than six months. But, Banda Singh wanted to wait still more. He was of the opinion that an attack on Sarhind should be so perfect that there should not be left even the slightest possibility of losing it.

Incidentally around this time, the Sikhs captured a man whom Wazir Khan had sent for getting reports about the Sikh army. The Sikhs, instead of killing or torturing him, let him off and asked him to inform Wazir Khan that the Sikh army was coming very soon to attack Sarhind. Banda Singh also asked him to inform Wazir Khan that before attacking Sarhind the Sikhs would attack his native town of Kunjpura.

When Wazir Khan received this information, he got quite scared. By this time he had known that the Sikhs had occupied not only Samana but also Sanaur, Ghuram, Thanesar, Thaska, Shahbad and Mustafapur. Now, he was sure that the Sikhs would definitely attack Sarhind and Kunjpura, so he dispatched four thousand soldiers as well as two big cannons to Kunjpura, to crush the Sikh army.

But, before Wazir Khan's soldiers could reach Kunjpura, the Sikhs had already occupied it; and, when Wazir Khan's army reached there, the Sikh army made a fierce attack on them and killed hundreds of them in no time. After such a loss, the Sarhind army fled the field leaving

its dead and the cannons behind to be taken over by the Sikhs. Besides the cannons, the Sikhs captured a large number of other weapons and horses too. After this, the Sikh army also captured Dahmala, another rich town in that region.

### **Victory of Kapuri**

During those days Kadam-ud-Din was the Chief of Kapuri. (*He was the son of Amanullah, who had been the Governor of Gujrat during the reign of Aurangzeb*). Kadam-ud-Din hated the non-Muslims and would never miss an opportunity to torture or harm them. He was so cruel that he had set up a gang of his soldiers whose sole purpose was to forcibly carry away pretty and young Hindu girls for his sexual pleasure. He had also appointed agents who would inform him about the whereabouts of pretty Hindu females, and, these agents were always busy in getting information about the marriages of the Hindu girls and on the wedding day or around it. He would send his soldiers to forcibly carry off the 'would be brides' or, the recently married Hindu girls, for his sexual gratification. He was so much obsessed with sex that he would send his agents to bring young Hindu girls from other *parganas* (blocks/districts) too. Kadam-ud-Din had inherited a lot of wealth from his father and he himself had collected a lot of wealth and he would lavish most of this for his sexual ventures.

One day, a group of Hindus from Kapuri presented themselves before Banda Singh and narrated their woes. Banda Singh asked the Sikh army to immediately march towards Kapuri. At first Kadam-ud-Din's men fought against the Sikhs but his rascals, rogues and hooligan mercenaries were no match to the heroic and committed Sikhs and they fled leaving Kadam-ud-Din alone. Though he fought for some time but he too realized that he would't be able to defeat the Sikhs, so he shut himself in his mansion. The Sikhs tried to break open the gates of the mansion, but could not succeed; hence, they set it on fire; Kadam-ud-Din burned in this fire.<sup>16</sup>

### **Sadhaura Falls to the Sikhs**

Sadhaura, in the feet of Shivalik hills, is one of the ancient towns of the Punjab. In those days it had a big Fort, and Banda Singh decided to take control of this city too. This city was being ruled by Usman Khan. He was on the Sikhs' hit list because he had tortured and killed Pir Budhu Shah due to latter's cordial and friendly relations with Guru Gobind Singh.

Like Kadam-ud-Din, Usman Khan too was notorious for his sex crimes, and, he too had forcibly carried away and raped several Hindu girls. The local Hindus had been living like slaves and even less than third-rate citizens. So, after capturing Kapuri, Banda Singh marched towards Sadhaura. Then, Sadhaura was a powerful stronghold and its Fort had very tall walls and strong gates, and, it was almost impossible to break into this Fort except after very heavy gun-shelling.

By this time, 35 to 40 thousand Sikhs had joined Banda Singh and it had become a big force.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand Usman Khan too had a powerful army and several cannons. It seemed that the Sikhs wouldn't be able to capture this city easily.

When the Sikh army reached the outskirts of Sadhaura, Usman Khan's cannons began showering shells on them, killing several Sikhs. But, in spite of this, the Sikh forces continued their march. Very soon they were able to break open one of the gates of the city. A fierce battle was fought in the streets of Sadhaura between the Sikhs and the Sadhaura army. During this expedition, the relatives of the martyr Pir Budhu Shah extended their full support to the Sikhs so the Sikhs did not face much difficulty in capturing the city. Now only the Fort remained in the possession of Usman Khan, who had shut himself therein.

When the Sikhs were in the control of the town, several *Nawabs*, ministers and *umraa*, with a flag of surrender in their hands and leaves of grass in their mouths (symbolizing that they were poor cows), came to the Sikh generals and begged for their (Sikhs') mercy. Banda Singh forgave them and told them, 'Should you remain loyal, nothing will happen to you.'

Although all others had surrendered, Usman Khan was defiant, still inside the Fort. A long struggle and large scale sacrifices might have enabled the Sikhs to capture this Fort. But, Banda Singh did not like to make so many sacrifices to capture this Fort. His final goal was Sarhind and not Sadhaura. But, here too, the relatives of Pir Budhu Shah played their role: some of them were inside the Fort too. They opened one of the doors of the Fort for the Sikh army, which stormed it with great zeal. Usman Khan tried to fight against the Sikhs but he could not do it for long, and finally, he was captured and given the death sentence.<sup>18</sup> Sadhaura was a rich fiefdom; here the Sikhs confiscated lakhs of rupees, a lot of gold and diamonds, thousands of arms and horses. This made the Sikhs armory and the army still richer.

After the capture of Sadhaura, the Sikhs did not leave the town and remained there for several days during which they planned attack Sarhind. One day, some Sikhs who were grazing their horses, saw a camel running about and around in a field. To save the crops from the camel the Sikhs tried to drive it away from the fields. In the meanwhile they saw a man walking by the side of that field. He had a bamboo stick in his hands. The Sikhs took hold of his stick and hit the camel with it to make him go away. The stick being hollow broke and a letter fell out of it. One of the Sikhs knew Persian and he could read it. This letter had been written by the *umra* of Sadhaura to Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sarhind. It said, *"You should attack Sadhaura. Banda Singh and his companions trust us. We shall keep the Sikhs' attention busy with trivial things so that they should not be prepared for a fight. If Banda Singh is not captured in this attempt, he will, at least, flee the town and we shall regain it from the Sikhs."*

The Sikhs arrested the person carrying the letter and produced him before Banda Singh. Banda Singh called a meeting of all the prominent Muslims of Sadhaura. Here, he asked them, 'What should be the punishment for a traitor, who backs out of his promises.' All the people said, in one voice: 'Such persons should be given a death sentence.' Now Banda Singh showed them the letter. Seeing this letter several of the *umraa* began trembling and beseeched their mercy. They swore by

*Quran* that such a sin would never be committed again. Banda Singh said, "Well, those who enter the mansion of Pir Budhu Shah will be spared." Hearing this, all those who were the real culprits ran towards the mansion. Their number was between 100 and 150. When they had gone into the mansion, Banda Singh asked them to lock it from inside. Now, Banda Singh also put a lock outside the mansion and ordered that the building be put to fire. Thus, all the conspirators were burnt to death. This exemplary punishment proved a deterrent for others. After this, no one could even dream of committing treason.

The Sikhs did not trouble any innocent resident of the town. They did not desecrate any Muslim shrine. Even today the tomb of Kutub-ul-Aqtab (Shah Abdul Wahab) and Ganj-i-illum still exist as they were in December 1709.<sup>19</sup>

After the victory, the Sikhs hoisted blue<sup>20</sup> flag on the Fort of Sadhaura. The Sikhs established a *Khalsa Panchayat* for the administration of the town. The events of Sadhaura were reported to Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor, when he was at Toda town; and he wrote letters to the Governors of Sarhind and Lahore to take action against the Sikhs.

Banda Singh renamed Sadhaura as Ajaibgarh.<sup>21</sup>

### **Banda Singh Declares Lohgarh as the Capital of the Sikh Kingdom**

Having captured Samana, Ghurham, Sanaur, Thaska Miranji, Kunjpura, Shahbad, Dahmala, Mustafabad, Kapuri and Sadhaura, In December 1709, Banda Singh declared Lohgarh as the capital of the Sikh kingdom. As mentioned in the first chapter, Lakhi Rai Vanjara, under instructions from the Gurus, had built the Fort Lohgarh. Sikhs had already built defensive walls, raised bastions and set up entrenchments. They constructed buildings for the stores of the wealths, weapons, food and other things as well as a residence for the families of the soldiers. Banda Singh transported all treasures and weapons to this Fort.

This Fort was surrounded by dozens of steep hills, gorges and forests; hence it was not easy to capture this Fort easily. This area was also known as Dabar.<sup>22</sup> Dabar word was first used by Iradat Khan in *Tarikh-i-Iradat Khani*.



### **Role of the Vanjaras of the Dabar Zone**

The land around Dabar was owned by a Sikh trader Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara, who was the greatest trader of South and Central Asia. He had employed thousands of young men; they would help him in transporting goods in his trade caravans as well as defending the caravans from thugs, highwaymen and plundering bands. All of them were Sikhs. When Banda Singh established Lohgarh as his Capital, many of these Vanjaras joined his army; some of them engaged themselves in arranging food for soldiers and fodder for their horses; some of them would make arrangements for weapons; and, still some of them engaged themselves in gathering news about the Mughal Army, the Mughal officials and their activities. Most of the Mughals used to buy goods from them; this too helped them in gathering information. Vanjaras acknowledge one God and look on Guru Nanak as the Supreme teacher.<sup>23</sup> The Vanjaras (a class of grain carriers) who moved about in all parts of the country in connection with their trading activities were very helpful to the Sikh movement in Punjab under Banda Singh. Most of them professed Sikhism and had devout faith in their religion. All this information was conveyed further to Banda Singh. Kamvar Khan too confirms this.<sup>24</sup>

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### **Endnotes**

1. Mirza Askari (title *Wazir Khan*) had a mansab of 2000. His native village was Kunjpura (near Karnal). He was of an Iranian descent. His father and grandfather too had been in the service of the Mughal rulers. (M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, p 249, reprint of first edition. Athar Ali quotes *Mirat-i-Aftab Numa*, p 594).
2. Dr. Harjinder Singh Dilgeer *Sikh History in 10 Volumes*, vol 2.

4. This incident has been reported by Swarup Singh Kaushish, in detail, in his book *Guru Kian Sakhian*, in Sakhi no. 110, pages 196-98, of 2003 edition.
5. Page -222, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, by M. Athar Ali, ISBN-13: 978-0-19-565599-5 & ISBN-10: 0-19-565599-0.
6. *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi no. 111.
7. It is about 40 km from Delhi, about 33 km from Rohtak and about 13 km from Kharkhauda.
8. Sayyads are the direct descendants of Fatima and Ali (the daughter and the son-in-law of Hazrat Mohammed, the founder of Islam), hence are given special respect by the Muslims.
9. See latest photos of some of these Muslim mausoleums, in the pictorial section of this book.
10. Khafi Khan, *Muntkhab-ul-Lubab*, (1722); vol 2, p. 652.
11. Ghuram, about 20 km from Sanaur, was an ancient town and had also, sometimes, been the capital of the Punjab. Kutub-ud-Din Aibak used this as capital before moving to Delhi. When Razia Sultana became emperess, she used this Fort as a jail for royal prisoners. She kept even her rebel brother in this prison. (The story of associating this town with mythical Ram is a much later concoction).
12. It is about 28 km from Samana and 3 km from Patiala. Now it is a part of Greater Patiala.
13. *Miran* means belonging to the *umraa*. *Miran* is an adjective of *Mir*, and, like *umraa*, it too has its root in *amir*.
14. A hymn of Gurbaani (composed by Guru Nanak Sahib), popularly known as *Babar Vani*, depicts this incident.
15. A cow in India, according to some Hindu Vaishnavites, is also considered humble and helpless deserving pity.
16. Burning of body is the greatest curse for a Muslim; it is like being condemned to hell.
17. As mentioned in an entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, the records of Jaipur state. But this figure of 70 thousands seems to be an exaggeration or a mistake.
18. He met the same (rather worse) fate that he had given to Pir Budhu Shah. *As you sow, so shall you reap*. People still remember Pir Budhu Shah but no one (not even the Muslims) knows who was Usman Khan.
19. But, that mansion of Pir Budhu Shah does not exist now. A school has been set up at that site.

20. At the time of Guru Sahib, the colour of the Sikh flag was blue. See: Dr Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, *Nanakshahi Calender*, 2010, pp. 147-150.
21. Muhammed Qasim Aurangabdi *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 68-69.
22. Dabar means : high hills surrounded by forest and rivers.
23. *Tribes and Caste of N.W.India* 1542, W.Crook.
24. Kamvar Khan *Tazkiratut Salatin Chagatta*, pp 93-94.

## Banda Singh Bahadur's Actions from Lohgarh

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### Preparations for Attack on Sarhind

By April 1710, Banda Singh had freed most of the territory around Sarhind from the Mughal rulers. The land between Yamuna and Satluj rivers, including eight Forts was in the possession of Banda Singh. Though Sarhind was not a province (it was under Delhi state), but it was a major centre of power of the Mughal Empire; hence it was treated just like a province. It had 28 *Parganas* and its income was 52 lakh rupees in 1710. That is why it was known as *Baawani Sarhind* (*Baawani* means fifty-two). The governorship of such a province could be given to a senior person only. Mirza Askari (known more as Wazir Khan) had an Irani background and was amongst the most loyal persons of Aurangzeb. He had a *mansab* for two thousand horsemen, and, the land between Satluj and Jamuna/Yamuna rivers was under his administration. The Chiefs of Malerkotla, Rugar (now Ropar), Machhiwara etc. were under Wazir Khan.

On May 1710, Banda Singh decided to attack this powerful enemy, the ruler of Sarhind. Wazir Khan too had got the information about the forthcoming attack by the Sikhs. He had in his mind that the Sikhs had already captured eight Forts and major towns. He was also angry for the Sikhs' attack on his former village Kunjpura. Thus, he wanted to crush them (the Sikhs). At that time, Banda Singh was in Chhat-Banur forest.

Wazir Khan sent messages to his neighbours to be ready for a battle against the Sikhs. He raised the flag of *Jehad* (holy war) and instigated

young Muslims to join his army. He sent messages to all the Pathans, Balochs, and Ranghars etc to join his forces. He also recruited thousands of soldiers for the forthcoming battle. Several Muslim *Chowdhrys* and feudal too promised to send their private forces for his help. His deputy in this campaign was Sher Mohammed Khan of Malerkotla. (*Some ignorant writers mentioned him as 'sympathizer' of the Sikhs*).

### **Malerkotla Army Attacks the Sikhs of Majha**

When the Sikhs of Majha (an area between rivers Beas and Ravi) came to know about Banda Singh's planning to attack Sarhind, hundreds of them decided to participate in it; they formed various groups and reached Keeratpur. Their number was around two thousand. They had planned to join Banda Singh in Chhat-Banur area. When Wazir Khan received the information about these Sikhs, he asked Sher Mohammed Khan to intercept and attack them. Sher Mohammed Khan, accompanied by his brother Khijar Khan and his nephews Wali Khan and Mohammed Bakhsh, led a big force to attack the Sikhs of Majha. From Malerkotla he went towards Rupar but when he was on his way he got the information that the Majha Sikhs would cross river Satluj at Machhiwara or Behlolpur.<sup>1</sup>

Having received information about the route of the Sikhs, he proceeded towards Behlolpur. Both the armies fought a pitched battle at Behlolpur. Although the Malerkotla Army was bigger in number and also had better arms, the Sikhs had, in their mind, dedication to their cause and were ever ready to make sacrifices. For the whole day, both fought bravely. On both sides there were heavy casualties; however, the Malerkotla Army seemed to have an upper hand. The battle was stopped after it grew dark. The next day, before the dawn, several more Sikhs reached there. Now, the Sikhs made an aggressive attack on the Malerkotla Army and put it into defending.

By noon the battle was at its highest pitch when a bullet hit Khijar Khan, the brother of Sher Mohammed Khan; and he died instantly. Seeing him fall, the Malerkotla soldiers began running helter-skelter. At this Sher Mohammed Khan raised a loud cry to re-group his loyal

soldiers. He, with the help of his two nephews (Wali Khan and Mohammed Bakhsh), went forward to pick up the body of his brother. The Sikhs attacked them too. In this attempt, Wali Khan and Mohammed Bakhsh also killed; even Sher Mohammed Khan was wounded. After this no soldier of the Malerkotla Army could hold ground, even for a moment. Of course, the Sikhs raised the sky with the slogans of victory and began their march towards Banur. On their way, the Sikhs had to face another attack at Ranvan village (near the ancient town of Sanghol, now a small village). The Sikhs emerged victorious in this battle too. When these Sikhs reached near Banur, Banda Singh himself came out to welcome them. The Sikhs met each other with embraces and *jaikaaraas* (slogans of victory).<sup>2</sup>

#### **Battle of Chappar Chiri and Occupation of Sarhind**

When Wazir Khan received the news of the death of Khijar Khan and his two sons and the defeat of the Malerkotla Army at the hands of the Sikhs, he became very despondent; but, in spite of this, he was not disheartened. He had already sent emissaries to Delhi and Lahore asking them to send more soldiers and arms. Thus, he had assembled a very powerful army and a big arsenal of weapons. Besides, he had a very large number of not only horses but also elephants. Having assessed all the arrangements he decided to attack the Sikhs before they could move towards Sarhind as he did not want to fight inside or near his city. So, he led his army towards the place where the Sikhs had encamped and were planning to attack Sarhind.

Besides this, Wazir Khan played another trick. He sent Ganda Mall, a nephew of Sucha Nand (minister of Wazir Khan), to Banda Singh to pose himself as a rebel against Wazir Khan. It was planned by them that when the battle began, he (Ganda Mall) would flee the field, which would demoralize the Sikh soldiers and they will lose the battle and possibly Banda Singh too might be captured. With this foxy notion, Ganda Mall went to Banda Singh. Banda Singh listened to Ganda Mall but he would not trust him. In spite of this, he did not reject him and asked the Sikh generals not to place him in the front line.

Chappar Chiri<sup>3</sup> site (now a village) is about 20 km from Sarhind. The Sikhs were resting there to plan an attack on Sarhind. When they got the news that Wazir Khan himself was marching towards them, they took their defensive positions. They had the benefit of defense of the trees and mounds. Banda Singh divided the whole army into four units, under the command of Fateh Singh, Karam Singh-Dharam Singh, Aali Singh-Mali Singh and Baj Singh. The Sikhs had, by then, six cannons too. These were put under the charge of Shahbaz Singh. Banda Singh stationed himself on a high mound to observe and give commands as necessary.

According to Khafi Khan, the number of the Sikh soldiers was 30 to 40 thousand, but they did not have good weapons. They had mostly swords, spears, arrows and only a few guns and just six cannons.<sup>4</sup>

On the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1710, both the armies had taken positions in the fields of Chappar Chiri. Though it is often said that the number of the Wazir Khan's soldiers was about one lakh but this seems to be an exaggeration. Another source mentions the number as 5-6 thousand horsemen, 7-8 thousand artillery and about 8 thousand *ghazis* (who had joined them in the name of 'holy war'); thus, their number could be around 20 thousand.<sup>5</sup>

Wazir Khan's army was led by elephants, which guarded them from the Sikhs' attacks. His soldiers were raising the war cry of 'Ya Ali', 'Ya Ali' and 'Allah Hu Akbar'. The Sikhs too began raising slogans of 'Akal Akal'. Having assessed that the sound of Wazir Khan's army's slogan 'Allah Hu Akbar' was forceful and quick, they coined another war cry 'Fateh Darshan' which had the same sound effect as that of 'Allah Hu Akbar'.<sup>6</sup> Some writers believe that Banda Singh never coined 'Fateh Darshan' and it was, like other concoctions, created by Ratan Singh Bhangu. But this is not true; Elliot and Dowson have referred to this in clear words.<sup>7</sup>

When the battle began, the Sikhs, in order to attack the Sarhindi soldiers, needed first to remove elephants from the scene; so, they began throwing cannon balls at the elephants. This achieved the desired effect and some of the elephants were badly wounded. These elephants

screamed, trumpeted and began retreating, thus wounding several of the soldiers of their own army.

This angered Wazir Khan and he ordered his men to shower the Sikhs with cannon balls. But, as the Sikhs had the protection of trees and bushes, these balls did not affect them much. On the other hand, the Sikh cannons began shelling the Sarhindi cannons. Soon, the Sarhindi cannons were silenced because their masters (operators) had been killed by the Sikh canons. Since the Sikh soldiers were not under direct attack, their horsemen pushed forward and entered the front line of the Sarhindi army. Soon there was full fighting in the midst of the Sarhindi army. The Sikh soldiers began cutting the enemies like carrots. In minutes, hundreds of them were slain. This frightened them and they began running away. The first to desert were the *ghazis* (recruited in the name of 'holy war') as a very large number of them had already been killed.

Now, Ganda Mal, whom Wazir Khan had sent to infiltrate into the Sikh army, too appeared in his true colours; he ordered his men to flee from the battle-field. This, of course, created confusion in the Sikh camp also. When Banda Singh saw this, he came down from the mound and went to the front lines to encourage the Sikhs. He inspired them saying '*Guru is waiting to embrace you in his arms. Let us annihilate the cruel enemies or embrace martyrdom.*' These words rejuvenated the Sikh soldiers and they made another fierce attack on the Sarhindi army. Finding his soldiers over-awed, Wazir Khan himself went to the soldiers and inspired them in the name of Islam and *Allah*. His minister Sucha Nand too joined him. Finding Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand near them, the Sikh soldiers attacked the enemy so forcefully that most of them began fleeing from the battle-field in order to save their lives. Some Sikh soldiers chased them. But, they did not kill the coward Sarhindi soldiers. They allowed them to retreat after leaving their horses and weapons. The Sikhs spared their lives.

After this, several Sarhindi soldiers fled from the front line. Soon a hand-to-hand fight began. During this fight Baj Singh and Sucha Nand came face to face. On seeing Baj Singh, Sucha Nand was frightened and



he began trembling as if he were facing his death. Coward Sucha Nand took no time to run away, and, he did not stop before he reached Sarhind.

Wazir Khan<sup>8</sup> was still there, encouraging his soldiers; sitting on his elephant, he was fully active in the frontlines; and when Baj Singh and Fateh Singh saw him, they rushed towards him and attacked him. Wazir Khan fought with great defence but was killed in the hand-to-hand fight with them.

Some Sikhs tracked down Sher Mohammed Khan of Malerkotla too. Just a couple of days earlier he had fought against the Majha Sikhs at Behlolpur (in which his brother and two nephews had been killed and he himself was wounded); now, here, he was the second in command at Chappar Chiri. After the death of Wazir Khan, Sher Mohammed Khan came in the front lines but was killed soon; and so was his other brother Khawaja Ali<sup>9</sup>. When all their commanders were killed, the remaining Sarhindi soldiers also surrendered and begged for their lives. The Sikhs told them: 'You need not worry; we do not attack those who surrender'; and they (Sikhs) let them leave safely but stripped them off their arms.<sup>10</sup> This battle lasted only for seven to eight hours. By noon, the Sarhind army had been totally routed.<sup>11</sup>

**How was Wazir Khan Killed:** There are several versions of the death of Wazir Khan. According to Khafi Khan, Wazir Khan was hit by a bullet. According to him Sher Mohammed Khan had attacked Binod Singh. But, at the same time a bullet hit Wazir Khan and Sher Mohammed Khan rushed to help him.<sup>12</sup>

According to Kanhaya Lal too, Wazir Khan was killed by a bullet.<sup>13</sup> But Latif says that Wazir Khan was killed by an arrow.<sup>14</sup> According to Mir Ahsan Ijad (in *Shah Nama*), Wazir Khan saw Banda Singh and moved towards him to attack him. When Baj Singh noticed this he kicked his horse and came in between Banda Singh and Wazir Khan. Wazir Khan shot his spear at Baj Singh which the latter caught with his hand and threw the same back towards Wazir Khan. This spear hit the horse of Wazir Khan and he fell down. Even in this position, Wazir Khan shot an arrow at Baj Singh which pierced the arm of the latter. At this moment

Wazir Khan attacked Baj Singh with his sword too. But, before Wazir Khan's sword could hit Baj Singh's body, Fateh Singh gave a strong blow with his sword which almost chopped off the right arm of Wazir Khan, and with another blow his head too was severed. Yar Mohammed, in *Dastur-ul-Insha*, writes: "Wazir Khan's head was hung on a spear and his trunk was dragged behind a cart up to Sarhind".

**Figures of Casualties:** According to common belief, 50 thousands Muslims and 30 thousand Sikhs were killed in this battle, which seems to be improbable and unrealistic. The figure of 5 thousand Muslims and 3 thousand Sikhs seems to be near reality. The number of the wounded is separate from it. Those who embraced martyrdom among the Sikh side included the highly revered of elderly Bhai Bajjar Singh (he had taught martial arts to Guru Gobind Singh). In this battle the Sikhs captured 45 big and small cannons, dozens of elephants, hundreds of horses and a large number of guns and sword etc.

After the battle was over, the Sikhs cremated their martyrs in large groups and bandaged those who were wounded. They did not have enough bandages, so they had to feel satisfied with whatever they had at hand. All this time the victorious Sikhs went on chanting hymns in praise of God. After cremation, the Sikh soldiers left for Sarhind, leaving some of them there to take care of the cremated bodies and to dispose of the ashes.

After covering a distance of about 20 kilometres the Sikh army reached Sarhind. It was not yet dawn. The gates of the walled city were closed from inside, hence they could not enter; they had to break open the gates and for this purpose they had to fight the garrison of the Sarhind regime. The Sikhs were carrying with them the body of Wazir Khan. They took a round of the main streets of the town to show the head and trunk of the body of Wazir Khan which, later, they hung from a tree so that the people might see with their own eyes the fate of the cruel ruler. It being an extremely hot weather; the body of Wazir Khan began stinking. The vultures began picking upon the body to get their share. This frightened the residents of Sarhind and they begged mercy of the Sikhs. Banda Singh sent them a message telling them that the

Sikhs would not trouble any innocent person; only the tyrant officials would be punished.

Now the Sikhs turned their attention to the Fort; but the cannons from inside began firing on the Sikhs. About 500 Sikhs were killed. The Sikhs then realized that they would be able not to enter the Fort for many days. They pitched one cannon at the top of a brick-kiln and fired cannon balls towards the direction of the cannons of the Fort, killing the cannon operators of the Sarhind army. Thereafter, the Sikhs began firing cannon balls at the gates of the Fort. After a lot of shelling one of the gates crashed and the Sikhs entered the Fort. Here, again, some loyal imperial soldiers resisted but were killed soon and the rest of them surrendered; they were arrested.

Now, the Sikhs had full control of Sarhind. Wazir Khan was dead; his son had fled to Delhi and all other officials had been either killed or arrested; the only person yet missing was Sucha Nand, who had fled from the battlefield at Chappar Chiri, the previous day. It was believed that he had hidden himself in some building in the city.

In the evening, Banda Singh called a meeting of the prominent local residents and assured them that no innocent person needed to be afraid, and, no one would be allowed to do injustice to anyone, but no criminal would be forgiven. This announcement gave the common man a sigh of relief. Most of them began co-operating with the Sikhs; one of them also gave the Sikhs information about the hideout of Sucha Nand. After fleeing from Chappar Chiri he had gone to Sarhind but had not fled further as he wanted to manage his wealth. Soon, he was arrested and paraded through the streets of Sarhind like an animal, with a string through his nostrils, and, around his neck with a rope. He was asked to beg alms from the folk. While he was being paraded through the streets of Sarhind the common Hindu and Muslim folk, who had been victims of his cruelty and injustice, threw stones at him. Due to stoning and torture he died in the evening.

Sucha Nand had hoarded immense wealth; all this was confiscated and deposited in the Sikh treasury. Mohammed Qasim writes: *'It seems that he had collected all this wealth for this day...People said that there*

*was no form of injustice that Wazir Khan had not perpetrated on the poor people; and, now, there was no seed of (cruelty) which did not sprout; as he sowed, so did he reap.'*<sup>15</sup>

Sucha Nand's family too got its share of punishment; they were stripped of their precious clothes and allowed just under clothes and were compelled to beg through the streets of the town. The residents were told that none should give them more than one *kaudi* (one twentieth of a paisa) i.e. trifling. The Sikh army sentenced all the criminals and guilty to death (*Tarikh-i-Mohammed Shahi*). Paradise-like mansions of Sucha Nand and Wazir Khan became playgrounds of the crows (Mohammed Qasim).<sup>16</sup>

#### **Bahadur Shah Receives the News of the Fall of Sarhind**

Bahadur Shah was on his way from South towards Delhi, when on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1710, he got the news of the fall of Sarhind to the Sikhs and the death of Wazir Khan; he issued orders to the chiefs of Lahore and Delhi to suppress the Sikh rebellion.<sup>17</sup>

**Correct Date of the Battle of Chappar Chiri:** Irvine<sup>18</sup> mentions the date of this battle as 24 Rabbi-ul-Awwal, but he calculates it as 22 May 1710 (whereas 24 Rabbi I corresponds to 12 May). It seems that he had relied on an undated entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*,<sup>19</sup> which was written as a commentary, and, is not a daily diary of the Mughal court, and, it seems that the translator had erred in converting the date from Hijri to Julian/Gregorian calendar. On the other hand, as per an entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*,<sup>20</sup> the report of this battle was given to Bahadur Shah on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1710 when he was at Bahasu. It took this news eight days to reach him (*he could not have the report two days in advance of the battle*). So, the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1710 is the correct date.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Banda Singh's Treatment of the Muslims**

After their victory, the Sikhs hoisted the Sikh blue flag<sup>22</sup> on the top of the Fort.<sup>23</sup> Banda Singh appointed Baj Singh Bangeshari as the Governor of Sarhind and Aali Singh of Salaudi as his deputy. Although Banda Singh

punished all the criminals and cruel officials, but he did not trouble any innocent person; he did not take revenge from anyone; he did not punish even the Sheikhs of Nakshbandi cult who had provoked the Mughal Emperors to execute Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur, and had celebrated their (Gurus') killings.

In fact, the Sikhs' war was not against any person, religion or cult; it was against injustice, cruelty and inhumanism; that is why Banda Singh did not destroy any Muslim shrine, mosques, mausoleum, tomb or grave. Even today, in 2017-18, dozens of Muslim shrines and memorials of that period are still intact in old Sarhind: including the tomb of Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi (known as *Roza Sharif*, which is considered as one of the most holy shrines by some Muslims), *Laal Masjid* (built by Aurangzeb), and the mosque of Sadna, as well as the *makbaras* (tombs) of Ustad and Shagird, tomb of Meir-I-Miran and several others. These monuments speak of the Sikhs' respect for the faith of even enemies. Had the Sikhs been anti-Islam, they would have demolished at least the memorials of the fanatic Muslims who were the cause of cruelties against the Gurus and the Sikhs. *On the other hand, whenever the Muslims had a chance, they attacked, demolished or at least damaged the shrines of the non-Muslims.*

### **Banda Singh Moved to His Capital Lohgarh**

Banda Singh appointed Baj Singh as the Governor of Sarhind. He handed over the control of Thanesar to Ram Singh and Binod Singh. After this he moved to Lohgarh, the Capital of the Sikh Kingdom. All the money that he had collected till then, was also taken to the State Capital at Lohgarh. According to more than one source, it was about three crore rupees. Kamvar believes it was two crore rupees from the treasury of Sarhind; the wealth captured from Sucha Nand's palace was separate from it.<sup>24</sup> According to an entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualaa*, Rustam Dil Khan had told the Emperor that Banda Singh deposited this money with the ruler of Nahan.<sup>25</sup> According to another entry, there was a great amount of gold coins in Sikh state's treasury at Lohgarh. When Banda Singh came to know about the Mughal army's attack (of 30 November

1710), he transported these gold coins on 40 camels and deposited them with the ruler of Nahan for safe custody.<sup>26</sup> According to still another entry “the Sikhs realized the State share of the produce (crops and taxes) and took it to Dabar... one day they loaded three hundred wagons and took away the same. None obstructed their way”. As there were several soldiers and their families staying at Lohgarh, which had now become a big township. The Sikh Capital was spread through dozens of hills, and on each hill there were several houses (hand mills, oil pressers, utensils and toys of children found on almost all the hills confirm that several families had been living on these hills).

### **The Sikh Rule & Promulgation of an Egalitarian System**

After taking control of the administration and infra-structure of Sarhind, Banda Singh Bahadur held a public *Darbar* (court) on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1710. In this open gathering he announced that the Sikh rule would be the ‘rule of the people’; the land would belong to those who till it; no one would be a slave or labourer of any landlord. All the peasants would contribute one third of their crop to the Sikh state’s treasury (*under Wazir Khan it was the half of the crop*). Banda Singh declared an end to feudal system; now, the *Jats* became the owners of lands i.e. fully independent landholders; a *Jat* (farmer) was no more a *dalit* (so-called low status person). It was Banda Singh, who promulgated an egalitarian system for the first time in the history of the world.

### **First Sikh Coin Issued**

After this, Banda Singh issued a new coin, a symbol of sovereignty, in the name of the Gurus. The Sikh coin had this wording on it:

***sikka zad bar har do aalam, tegh-i-naanak vahib ast  
fateh Gobind Singh shah-i-shahan, fazal-i-sacha sahib ast***

(Meaning: Issued with the blessing of the master of both the worlds. Guru Nanak’s sword is the dispenser of everything. With the blessing of the True Master, it was a victory of Guru Gobind Singh).

On the Reverse inscription of the Sikh coin Baba Banda Singh Bahadur wrote the Lohgarh as Khalsa –Takht.

**Zarb Khalsa Mubarak Bakht,**

**Ba- Aman Ud-Dahr Zinat At- Takht, Mashwarat Shahr.**

{Meaning: coined at model city, the refuge of the world, the ornament of the Fortunate Khalsa throne}. These were the titles and epithets used by Baba Banda Singh Bahadur for Lohgarh. Now these two words become more interested in research as Khalsa-Takht is the seat of power in Sikhism. Guru Hargobind Sahib revealed Akal Takht and after that Baba Banda Singh Bahadur (nominee of Guru Gobind Singh) declared Lohgarh as Khalsa Takht and encrypted it in on the first coin of Khalsa Raj. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur calls Lohgarh a beautiful city, now the question is 'where is Khalsa- Takht, the beautiful city (model City) and Khalsa Raj Capital.

A **seal** of the Sikh kingdom was also issued. It reads:

**azmat-i-naanak guru ham zahir-o ham batan ast.**

**padshah din-o-dunia aap sachha sahib ast**

(Meaning : Inside and outside, everywhere, it is Guru Nanak's greatness. True God himself is the master of both, this and the other, worlds).

Later, another 'seal' was issued. It said:

**deghe-o-tegh-o-fateh-o-nusrat bedirang**

**yafat az naanak guru gobind singh.**

(Meaning: Victory of sword and kettle, *i.e. political and economic domains*, was achieved, without delay, from Gurus Nanak - Guru Gobind Singh).

This confirms that Banda Singh did not rule in his own name, and, attributed everything to the Gurus and God. He issued the coin and the seal in Guru's name only. In the history of the world Banda Singh is, perhaps, the only ruler who did not issue a coin in his own name. It is remarkable to note that even the Muslim rulers, who claimed themselves as rulers in the name of Islam or Mohammed or Allah (God), too used their own names on their coins; and, most of them also asked the people to recite their name, along with Allah's (God's name), in *kalma* (prayers).

### **New Sikh Calendar Issued**

After the victory of Sarhind, Banda Singh issued a *new Sammat* (calendar) also. The year 1710 C.E., Hijri 1122 and 1767 Bikrami were now year 1 of the Khalsa Raj.

### **Banda Singh's March Towards Malerkotla**

Though Sher Mohammed Khan, two of his brothers and two of his nephews were dead by now, the Sikhs still wanted to punish the remaining rulers of Malerkotla too. Having settled at Sarhind, the Sikhs now turned towards Malerkotla. When the Malerkotla *Pathans* got the information that the Sikh army was marching towards Malerkotla, they approached Kishan Chand, a rich Hindu trader and money-lender of the area, and requested him to help them. Kishan Chand had already met Banda Singh more than once, so he agreed to mediate. He went towards the Sikh route and met Banda Singh on the outskirts of Malerkotla. Kishan Chand requested him not to attack Malerkotla. Banda Singh agreed and the state and the *umraa* of the city offered a huge amount as tribute to the Sikh army and saved the state from destruction.<sup>27</sup>

### **Anup Kaur and Bulaka Singh**

Sometimes earlier, a Sikh lady named Anup Kaur had laid down her life to save her honour from being molested by some Malerkotla official, and, after her death her dead body was not cremated but buried. Now, after subjugating Malerkotla, the Sikh soldiers found her grave, extracted her body and cremated it according to the Sikh rites. Similarly, at Ghurani, the Ramraiyas (who had been excommunicated from the Sikh Panth by Guru Gobind Singh) had been troubling a Sikh named Bulaka Singh. Banda Singh went to the village and punished the rascal Ramraiyas; besides, he appointed Bulaka Singh as the police chief of the area.

### **Hindus & Muslims Embrace Sikhism**

After the victory of Sarhind hundreds and thousands of Hindus joined



the Sikh faith (but, after the martyrdom of Banda Singh, most of them again returned to the Hindu fold).<sup>28</sup> Likewise, some Muslims too embraced Sikhism in order to taste the fruit of power. Among these was also Mir Nasir-ud-Din (named as Nasir Singh) and Dindar Khan, son of Jalal Khan Ruhia, (named as Dindar Singh). After the fall of Banda Singh's rule, this Dindar Singh again joined Islam. In 1713, he joined hands with the Sayyad brothers and played an effective role to install Farukhsiyar as the Emperor at Delhi, and again in 1719, it was he who dragged Farukhsiyar from his palace, blinded him and later killed him.

### **Sikh Expeditions in Deoband, Saharanpur and Jalalabad**

The Sikh victories inspired some people beyond the Yamuna River too, and they joined Sikh faith. When Jalal-ud-Din, the Muslim chief of this area, came to know that some Muslim residents of Unarasa (Deoband pargana) had embraced Sikhism, he arrested and tortured them in prison. One, Bhai Kapur Singh had been preaching Sikh mission in this area; when he got the news of the plight of these Sikhs, he sent a message to Banda Singh.

After making preparations, Banda Singh attacked Deoband and captured it. He wanted to attack Jalalabad too, but before marching to the stronghold of Jalal-ud-Din, he thought of taking over Saharanpur. In those days, Saharanpur too was a major state like Sarhind and Hissar-Firoza; it consisted of 28 Parganas; Sayyad Ali Mohammed Khan Kanauji was the Chief of Saharanpur. Banda Singh sent a message to him asking him to surrender and pay tribute. But, the coward Kanauji, instead of fighting or negotiating, chose to flee from the city along with his family and wealth. He appointed his son Dindar Ali Khan as his successor and he fled to Delhi.

When he was gone, some Muslim clergy tried to raise the bogey of *jehad* (holy war). They were joined by some *umraa* (aristocracy) and ministers. They closed the doors of the walled city and stationed security men on the towers of the wall. When the Sikh soldiers reached there, these guards welcomed them with a volley of arrows and gunshots. But, this could not last long and did not frighten or dishearten the Sikhs.

The Sikhs broke open a gate of the city and entered it, thus they captured the city.

The Sikh army was joined by several Hindus, mainly Gujjars, as well as some miscreants too. They had joined the Sikhs simply with an intention to plunder; but when Banda Singh came to know about their activities, he rebuked them and expelled them from his army. After leaving him, these wicked Gujjar Hindus entered some villages around the city and plundered people.

Saharanpur was mainly a Muslim city, and, the local Hindu residents had generally been the victims of atrocities of the rulers; they felt relieved when the Sikhs occupied the city. When the Sikhs became the masters of the city, several elite and rich Muslims, now, began moving out of Saharanpur. Banda Singh stayed here for several days. He changed the name of the city from Saharanpur to *Bhaagan Wala Nagar* (Bhaag Nagar).

#### **Punishing the *Pirzaadas* of Behat**

When Banda Singh was still in Saharanpur, some Hindus from Behat (about 25 km from Saharanpur, towards the hills), came to see him and narrated the story of their sufferings. They told him that the *Pirzaadas* (literally: the sons of the *Pirs*, i.e. the descendants of the Muslim priestly class) were very cruel to the Hindus; they would leave no chance to molest the honour of their women folk. Banda Singh sent a large unit of Sikh soldiers to teach a lesson to the *Pirzaadas*.

The Sikh army had not to suffer much loss before occupying the city. When they were in full control of the town, they summoned all the *Pirzaadas* in an open space and asked the people to narrate their crimes. They found that all the *Pirzaadas* were guilty of cruelty, rape and other crimes. All of them were executed there and then. It had happened in the month of June 1710.

#### **Unsuccessful Attack on Jalalgarhi**

A few days after the occupation of Behat, the Sikh army decided to attack Jalalgarhi (the Fortress of Jalal-ud-Din Khan). Here, Jalal-ud-Din

(also known as Jalal Khan) had stationed his army, and there was also stored most of his arsenal and treasury; the Sikhs wanted to capture it.

On the other hand, Jalal-ud-Din Khan too knew of the Sikhs' intentions, and, he himself was fully prepared for the battle. Besides, he had raised bogey of *jehad* (holy war) and recruited several more young Muslim boys into his army. He had also stocked a lot of food in the Fortress, which could last for months. The Sikhs put siege to this Fortress, which continued for more than 20 days, but they (Sikhs) could not achieve their goal because it was the rainy season; hence, they had to temporarily abandon the idea of capturing this Fort.

#### **Attack on Ambaheta**

After an unsuccessful expedition to Jalalabad, the Sikhs returned to Saharanpur. On their way they attacked Ambaheta (a town between Gangoh and Nakur). It was being guarded by Pir Khan, a close confidant of Jalal Khan. He was killed during the Sikhs' attack. The Sikhs captured a good number of arms in this battle too. But, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, the Sikhs had to fight a battle in the fields of village Kehra, near Rarh. Here, the Afghans of Dehrana and Mukad joined Ghulam Mohammed Baniara (grandson of Jalal Khan) and Pir Mohammed, and they gave a tough fight to the Sikhs. As the number of the opposing forces was too big, the Sikhs had to retreat; several Sikhs were killed in this battle. The Sikhs also lost two cannons, five guns, several rifles, one thousand arrows, four tents and several other things. Banda Singh himself was not with this unit and it was led by Amar Singh. In fact, the Sikhs lost this battle due to the treason by Lal Kanwar Gujjar.

#### **Buria Becomes Gulab Nagar**

By this time, some Sikh units had occupied Buria<sup>29, 30</sup> too. Valiant Gulab Singh Bakhshi had played a major role in capturing this state; hence Banda Singh named this town as Gulabnagar. He appointed Gurbakhsh Singh as the chief administrator of the town.

Shah Mohammed, the Qazi of Buria, was an impudent person who oppressed the common people and they were fed up with his excesses.

They complained about him to Gurbakhsh Singh, who arrested and imprisoned him in Lohgarh Fort, and, also confiscated his property. Gurbakhsh Singh, the Chief of Buria, in collaboration with Mihan Singh, the caretaker of Lohgarh, misappropriated some of the wealth of the Qazi, and, when Banda Singh came to know about this, he removed Gurbakhsh Singh from his post and appointed Kishor Singh in his place, enforcing quick and impartial justice.

### **Attack on Nanauta**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 1710, the Sikh army attacked Nanauta (about 30 km from Saharanpur towards Jalalabad and 15 km from Rampur and Jalalabad, both). The rulers of this town were known for their excesses on the common man. The Sikhs captured the city and took away weapons, money and other valuables from the mansions of the ruling and rich-elite class. Those, who opposed the Sikhs, their houses were set on fire. When the Sikhs left the town, it looked like a destroyed city, hence it came to be known as *foota shahr* (literally: broken city).

According to Khafi Khan, Jalal-ud-Din Khan (Jalal Khan) had sent his son Dindar Khan, his sister's son Ghulam Mohammed Khan and brother's son Hajbar Khan to fight against the Sikhs in the battle of Nanauta. Hajbar Khan was killed in this battle. Even after his death, Dindar Khan fought bravely but lost the battle. Pir Khan and Jamal Khan, the nephews of Mohammed Ali Khan, the chief of Saharanpur, too were killed in this battle.<sup>31</sup>

When the news of daring performance of Jalal Khan, in the battles of Jalalgarhi and Ambaheta, reached the Mughal Emperor, he appointed him (Jalal Khan) as the Chief of Saharanpur. The Emperor removed Mohammed Ali Khan from the Chief-ship of Saharanpur for showing cowardice at the time of the attack of the Sikhs in Saharanpur.

### **Awe in the Mind of the *Umraa* and the Minsters at Delhi**

After the occupation of Saharanpur by the Sikhs, the rich, the affluent, the *umraa* (aristocracy) and the ministers of the capital of the Mughal Empire in Delhi, began living under the awe and terror as they

apprehended a Sikh attack on Delhi itself. Iradat Khan writes:<sup>32</sup> *“From Delhi to Multan, there was a commotion (about the Sikhs’ supremacy), but from Thanesar to Lahore, it was so strong that nothing could be said (with certainty). So much so that Asif Ali, Nizam-Ul-Mulk, too, was afraid and he wrote a letter to the Emperor; and also reminded the officials in Delhi that everyone should send the report about this commotion to the Emperor... There, Diwan Bayotat, Diwan Hafiz Khan, Kotwal Raza Khan, Fakhar-Ud-Din Bakhshi reporter, Mohammed Tahir reporter and Qazi Darwesh Mohammed wrote separate letters to the Emperor. Asif-ud-Daula, the Governor of Delhi, too, was very much afraid. The umraa, along with their families and wealth, began fleeing Delhi from far-off provinces.”* (The non-Italic text is mine- Author).

In fact, the situation of the country around Delhi was very alarming; the Sikhs had captured all the three states around Delhi, i.e., Sarhind, Thanesar, Saharanpur. It meant almost blocking the Capital of the Mughal Empire from the outside world; besides, the rulers of Lahore too were afraid of the Sikh army.

### **Sikh Actions in Lahore and Riarki Area**

The Sikhs of *Majha* (then pronounced as *Manjha*), the area between the rivers Beas and Raavi, had already defeated the Mughal chieftains of one of the areas of, in April 1709, i.e. about 7 months prior to the first victory of Banda Singh in Samana in November 1709. It was in April 1709, when Chuhar Mall Ohri of Guru-Da-Chakk (Amritsar) had instigated Aslam Khan, deputy chief of Lahore province, to attack Guru-Da-Chakk, and, Aslam Khan had sent an army under the command of Har Sahai, the chieftain of Patti. On the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, 1709, two battles took place, in which the Sikhs, under the command of Bhai Mani Singh, Tara Singh of Dall-Vaan, Mohkam Singh Ohri and others, defeated the aggressor army. The second battle resulted in several casualties of the enemy, including their chief Har Sahai. After this crushing defeat, the Mughals did not attack Guru-Da-check.

When Banda Singh had planned an attack on Sarhind, the Sikhs of Majha too had joined Banda Singh. After the victory of Sarhind, some

of these Sikh soldiers returned to their village; they organised local Sikhs and began to expel the Mughal and Pathan rulers from the villages around their area, and, several villages of *Riarki* (a zone between Raavi and Beas rivers) were now under the rule of the Sikhs. This news reached Aslam Khan (deputy Governor of Lahore) too, but he dared not march against the Sikhs. When the Mughal rulers did not take action, the Sikhs decided to capture some smaller towns too (but they did not march towards Lahore or Kasur, the major cities and army centers).

Their first targets were Batala and Kalanaur which were only next to Lahore in importance. Batala was a major center of trade, where traders from Kashmir had established their markets. The town was also a residence of several rich and affluent Mughals and Pathans. Similarly, Kalanaur too was a major town. A folk saying is still popular in literature: '*If you cannot go to Lahore to see its grandeur then visit Kalanaur*' (meaning Kalanaur was as affluent and grand as Lahore was). It was here that the Mughal Emperor Akbar had been coronated. This was so big a town that there were more than 350 mosques in the city at that time.

The Sikhs put siege to both the towns and cut them from the rest of the world. All the surrounding areas were already under the control of the Sikh soldiers and the Mughal rule was confined to the walled cities of Batala and Kalanaur.<sup>33</sup>

Having established their supremacy in the zone, the Sikhs occupied Batala, Sathiala, Ghuman and Kala Afghana villages too, and, by this time some Sikhs had occupied Patti (then known as *Patti Haibat Khan*) town also.

### **Attack on Lahore (autumn 1710)**

Having established their rule in Riarki and Patti zone, the Sikhs decided to attack Lahore, the provincial capital, and, a military stronghold, too. This was supposed to be a major action as the Capital of the Punjab had a big army and a large arsenal. The province, then, was under the command of prince Jahandar Shah (son of Bahadur Shah) and Sayyad Aslam Khan of Kabul was his deputy. Prince Jahandar Shah was mostly

in Delhi; hence the affairs of the province were looked after by Aslam Khan.

Having planned an attack, the Sikhs reached the outskirts of the city. They occupied the area around Shalimar and plundered the mansions of the government officials, the feudal and other affluent people; the Sikhs did not trouble even a single person from amongst the common folk. Most of the officials and the Muslim elite fled the Shalimar area and entered the walled city. They got the gates of the city of Lahore closed so that the Sikhs might not enter it. The officials asked Aslam Khan, the Deputy Chief of Lahore, to expel the Sikhs from that area, but he was very much scared of them, he had not forgotten the battles of April 1709, in which the Sikhs had killed even the Chief of Patti. So, he just defended the walled city of Lahore by locking all the gates from inside. His soldiers fought the Sikhs from inside the walls of the city and showered bullets and arrows on the Sikhs. The Sikhs too used all the weapons they had. The battle continued for two days, but, the Sikhs could not succeed in entering the city. Hundreds of people from both sides died in this battle.

When the Sikhs realized that they wouldn't be able to break into the city, they decided to retreat and wait for another opportunity. They, still, were carrying with them a lot of wealth and just enough weapons which they had captured from the Mughals. When the Sikhs were returning from the zone, the so-called low caste people entered the Sikh files and plundered the houses of the Muslims.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Jihad (holy war) Against the Sikhs***

According to Mohammed Qasim, in September-October 1710, the Sikhs again marched towards Lahore. The *Maulavis* (the Muslim priests) of Lahore declared a *jihad* against the Sikhs. They called a gathering of the Muslims at Idgah, near Delhi Darwaza (the present site of Railway Station Lahore); and, about ten thousand Muslims responded to their call. Those who attended included Pir Mohammed Taqi (a relative of the erstwhile Prime Minister of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan), Musa Begh (son of Ali Wardi Khan Agarkhani), Mohammed Zaman Rangharh, Maulvi Mir

Mohammed and others.

Several Hindus too joined these fanatic Muslims. These Hindus were headed by the son (his name does not appear in any source) of Pahara Mal and the grandson of Todar Mal (who had been a minister under the Mughal Emperor Akbar). He gave liberal donations for the Muslim *jihad* and also offered his cannons, guns, arsenals and horses. He enrolled several young men to fight against the Sikhs and paid them good salary from his own treasury. Several other Hindus too donated big sums for this *jihad*.

Although Aslam Khan (Deputy Governor of Lahore) was scared of the Sikhs and he had confined himself into the Fort of Lahore, still he sent one thousand foot soldiers and five hundred horsemen under the command of Ataullah Khan and Muhib Khan Kharal to fight against the Sikhs.

These 'holy soldiers of Islam' fought three battles against the Sikhs: at Kotla Begum near the village of Chamiani, Qila Bhagwant Singh (*pargana* Sehansara) and Bhilowal (in the area known as *Bharli*, in Lahore zone). The first battle took place at Kotla Begum, near the villages of Bharat and Rani. Thousands of the Muslim 'holy soldiers of the Islam' surrounded the Sikhs present there. The number of the Sikhs was very small; hence, they fought a defensive battle and fled from the area after sunset. Their next halt was at Chamiani<sup>35</sup>. The Muslim army chased them. On their way, the 'holy soldiers of Islam' plundered some villages and even raped some women. When the leaders of the 'holy army' received information about these activities, they punished some of them, but this did not make much difference as most of the 'holy soldiers of Islam' were not true Muslims; they were just anti-Sikh youth.

The next day, a fierce battle was fought at Chamiani between the Sikhs and the 'holy soldiers of Islam'. Though in small numbers, the Sikhs fought bravely, but also continued retreating for a safe defensive resort. Before it was evening, they (Sikhs) reached near Garhi Bhagwant Singh and entered the Fortress, and they closed the doors of the Fortress. Soon the 'holy soldiers of Islam' also reached there and put a siege to the Fortress. In the middle of the night, the Sikhs secretly came



out of the Fortress and fled away.

The next morning, the 'holy soldiers of Islam' entered the Fortress and were pleased to declare it as their victory. Now, they raised victory slogans and began their return journey to Lahore. On their way they decided to spend a night in the Fortress of Bhilowal. This was a small Fortress and only a few persons could stay there in; hence, only the leaders, the senior officers and priests got a place inside the Fortress and the rest had to sleep outside. When the Sikhs came to know that the soldiers were sleeping in open ground, they surrounded the area and the next morning, when the sun was yet to rise, they (Sikhs) attacked the 'holy soldiers of Islam' while they were still asleep. Several hundred of them were killed and the rest fled to Lahore. The Sikhs, however, did not leave the place. They compelled the leaders of the 'holy soldiers of Islam' to come out of the Fortress and fight. During this battle, all the leaders of the 'holy soldiers of Islam', including Murtaza Khan as well as the son of the Pharaoh Mall (and grandson of Todar Mall), were killed. The battle of Bhilowal brought a drop scene to the Muslims' holy war against the Sikhs. In fact, the 'holy soldiers of Islam' were untrained soldiers and their first encounter with the Sikhs created awe in their minds and made them realize that they were no match for the brave Sikh soldiers.

The Sikhs won all these three battles and captured the Forts of Bhilowal and Garhi Bhagwant Singh, but they did not stay there. On the other hand, the Muslim priests too tried to provoke the Muslim youth for another war against the Sikhs but the Muslim youth were so scared of the Sikhs that they dared not fight against them (Sikhs). This was enough to establish the supremacy of the Sikhs in that zone. Now, even the Muslim authorities began fearing the Sikh soldiers. When this news reached Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor, he too got scared.<sup>36</sup> Mohammed Qasim writes that the Sikhs had established their control in the area of Riarki-Majha up to the walls of Lahore city.<sup>37</sup>

In just less than a year (November 1709 to September 1710), the Sikhs, had got freed the land between the rivers Raavi and Yamuna. They had captured Sarhind, Samana, Chhat-Banur, Rupar, Ghurham,

Kapuri, Thanesar, Shahbad, Buria, Thaska, Sadhaura, Saharanpur, Deoband, Nananuta, Ambaheta (Saharanpur province); Rahon, Batala, Kalanaur, Pathankot and Basohli (Jammu province) and had established their supremacy in these cities. Besides Chamba, Kullu, Mandi, Bilaspur, Nahan, Garhwal etc hill states had accepted the supremacy of the Sikhs. The Sikhs had appointed their own officials (police, judges, governors, etc.) in most of this area. It was the time when even the Delhi rulers were afraid of the Sikh might.<sup>38</sup>

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### **Endnotes**

1. In those days Satluj River used to flow by the towns of Machhiwara and Behlolpur which were very big towns in those days. Later, after 1750, the river changed its course, about 10 km away towards the northern side.
2. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, p 653.
3. This name is in fact a variation of the original name *Chhappar Jhirhi* (literally: pond and thick bower of trees and bushes).
4. Khafi Khan, *op.cit.*, pp 652-53.
5. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its Historians*. vol VII, p. 414.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. According to Irvine, Wazir Khan was then 80 years old: *Later Mughals*, vol. 1, p 96.
9. Irvine, *Ibid.* According to Irvine Sher Mohammed Khan was killed before Wazir Khan died. Malerkotla family believes that he did not die in this battle.
10. Khafi Khan, *op.cit.*, p 654.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab.*, p. 653; Irvine, *Later Mughals*, vol. 1, p. 96; Elliot and Dowson, *History of India As Told By Its Historians*, vol.7, p.414).
13. *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, p 59.
14. *History of the Punjab*, p 274.
15. *Ibratnama*, pp. 133-46 of the printed book; 26B to 35B of the manuscript at British Library, London.

16. *Ibid.*
17. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualaa*, 20 May 1710.
18. *Later Mughals*, p 95.
19. An undated entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualaa*, entered after the report dated 13 February 1712.
20. Entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, dated 20.5.1710.
21. It is interesting to note that Santokh Singh (in *Gur Partap Suraj Granth*) wrote that the battle of Sarhind was fought in 1707 when the Guru was still alive. According to him, on hearing the news, Guru became 'happy'. Another writer, Giani Gian Singh, who borrowed information from Santokh Singh (*Gur Parap Suraj*) and Ratan Singh (*Prachin Panth Parkash*), too mentions the date of this battle as Jeth 1764 Bikrami (May 1707 C.E.).
22. The Sikhs' flag was originally blue; saffron flag was adopted after 1830s in ignorance; and the Sikhs are still continuing this mistake. For details, read the book *Nanakshahi Calender* by Dr Harjinder Singh Dilgeer.
23. *Tarikh-i-Iradatkhani*, p 68.
24. Kamvar, *Tazkiratus Salatin Chugatta*, p 334.
25. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualaa*, 6 November 1710.
26. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualaa*, 1 December 1710.
27. It is an act of ungratefulness that the Malerkotla rulers have not raised any memorial for their saviour Kishan Chand.
28. Among these Hindus was Parma Nand Chhiber too; his elders had renounced Sikh faith and re-joined Hinduism simply to save themselves from Muslim backlash. Later, Parma Nand wrote a book distorting the history of Banda Singh and (Veer) Haqiqat Singh and presented them as Banda Bairagi and Haqiqat Rai respectively, in order to present them as Hindus. This Parma Nand boasted that he belonged to the family of Bhai Mati Das (martyr of 11 November 1675) whereas he was a descendant of Janti Das. Similar was the case of the Hindus of the Punjab, the Brahmins of the U.P. and the Dogras of Jammu who posed as Sikh in order to seek offices in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and, after the loss of his kingdom they again reverted back to Hinduism.
29. 3rd Sikh Guru Amar Das Ji established 22 Manjis (Sikh preaching centers) in various parts of Indian Sub-Continent in mid of 16th century. One of the Manji was established at Buria and old is about 4 km East of Jagadhri. The encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Harbans Singh, Published By Punjabi University Patiala, Page 417.

30. As per the Persian sources (Ahkam-I-Alamgir 1703-07, translated by Irfan Habib) reveals that "In this while, Muhammad Auliya, resident of the township of Buria, in parana Khizrabad, sarkar Sahrind [Sirhind], has reported through persons known to this just world-adorning Court that his Highness [the addressee] had, in accordance with imperial orders and in concert with the qazi, (Nanak-parastan) in the said township, and built a mosque, installing a dervish Saivid Muzaffar by name for the offering of Muslim prayers in that mosque. The said people [i.e. 'the Nanak investigation, they have admitted having killed him. But, owing to the representation made by some of them who have come to this benevolent Court, the qazi and muhtasib of that place have been dismissed without any fault of theirs ; and 'Alimullah has been appointed qazi and his father the muhtasib [lit. given (the charge of) ihtisab]. The world-binding order has been issued that his Highness may be written to, as to why such negligence's has occurred. Amends should be made in a commendable manner. "It belongs to Him, and is on God's account." It was also ordered that he should write the true facts about the previous qazi and muhtasib, and, till the receipt of his reply the orders of appointment of the proposed qazi and muhtasib be not issued."
31. Their graves still exist near mausoleum of Kale Shah on Saharanpur-Delhi road.
32. In *Tarikh-i-Mohammed Shahi*.
33. Khushwaqt Rai, *Twareekh-i-Sikhan*.
34. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its Historians*, Vol 7, p. 419, Mohammed Latif, *History of the Punjab*, page 275.
35. Chamindari was a major town in those days, and, had a Fort too.
36. Mohammed Qasim, *Ibratnama*, p. 22; Khushwaqt Rai, *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*.
37. Mohammed Qasim, *op.cit*.
38. *Sikh History* (10 Volumes) vol 2, p. 57-58.

## Mughal Action Against The Sikhs

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At that time, Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor, had been away to the south, to quell the rebellion of his brother Kam Bakhsh. Kam Bakhsh was finally defeated and killed on 2 January 1709, and, Bahadur Shah began his return journey to his capital on 19 January 1709. On 29 January, he reached 'Talab Zakir Hussain'. Here, he appointed Khwaja Abdullah *Dil Diler Khan* as the Governor of Lahore and Jammu provinces and sent him a message to take charge.<sup>1</sup>

On 6 March 1709, he was near the city of Kamlapur. He was marching towards Delhi at a slow speed because he was in a relaxed mood after defeating and eliminating all of his enemies. He, having finished all his enemies, now, began behaving in an arrogant, aggressive and a peevish manner too. On March 6, he issued an order commanding that '*except on the days of feasts, none other than Munaim Khan 'Khan Khanan', Zulfiqar Khan 'Amir-Ul-Umra', Chugatta Khan, Mahabat Khan, Shah Niwaz Khan and Hamid Khan, shall wear decorative turbans on his head.*' On March 13, he issued an order banning the use of palanquins for Hindus. It was declared that any Hindu found sitting in a palanquin<sup>2</sup> would be arrested and imprisoned.

On 29 March, Bahadur Shah reached Maadri Nagar. Here, he sent a message to Asad Khan (Nawab Asif-ud-Daula *Nizam-UL-Mulk*) and Mohammed Amin Khan (*Chain Bahadur*), the chief of army in Moradabad, asking him to punish Raja Ajit Singh, the ruler of Marwar (Jodhpur), for his rebellious acts. Besides, Bahadur Shah himself decided to march towards Rajputana (now Rajasthan) to punish the rebel Rajput rulers, i.e. *Raja Ajit Singh (Jodhpur), Jai Singh Swai (of Amber), Amar*

*Singh (of Udaipur). These Rajput rulers, had joined the Mughal Emperor in his campaign against his brother Kam Bakhsh, but had quietly left his company at Mandsor and returned to their capitals. After returning to their countries, they had killed the agents of the Mughal Emperor and declared complete independence.*

On 21 August 1709 Bahadur Shah reached Samarda. Here, he issued orders appointing Mir Abdulla Salam (son of Qazi Kurban) as *Kotwal* (police chief) of Lahore. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August he appointed Ali Mardan Khan (Zabardast Khan) as the Governor of Kashmir. The same day he ordered that the number of the Hindu horsemen in the Mughal army should be reduced. On 12 October he appointed Altaf Khan as Bakhshi and Chief Reporter of Lahore Darbar.

### **Bahadur Shah Receives Reports of Sikh Victories**

On 25 February 1710 Bahadur Shah reached Jamrauli town. Here, he received a letter from Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sarhind, reporting the victories of the Sikhs in some areas of Punjab. The letter said: *“How shall I narrate the destruction caused by the Khalsa Sikhs in the Sarhind and the Punjab areas? They have destroyed very affluent Parganas. Today, I have received news that the pagans of Buria and Sadhaura have been captured and plundered. The government officials have been killed. The glorious Afghan families of Dahmala to have been killed.”* After hearing the news, the Emperor wrote a letter to *Nizam-UL-Mulk* (Prime Minister) of Delhi to help Wazir Khan in suppressing the Sikhs’ rebellion.<sup>3</sup>

On 23 April, Bahadur Shah received a letter from Rustam Khan, from Lahore, mentioning: *“Someone has declared himself Guru and has begun enrolling men (army) and creating riots.”* At this Bahadur Shah sent orders to the army chiefs of Eimanabad and other areas around Lahore asking them to join the Governor of Lahore in punishing the Sikhs.<sup>4</sup>

On 5 May 1710, Bahadur Shah reached Ajmer. Here, the ambassadors of the rulers of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur presented them before him and offered apologies on behalf of their chiefs.<sup>5</sup> On May the 10<sup>th</sup>, on the mediation and the request of the prince Jahandar Shah,

Bahadur Shah forgave these three Rajput rulers, and, sent for them robes of honor. In fact, Bahadur Shah was so much worried about the situation of the Punjab that he did not want to take any action against the Rajputs; hence, he opted for a compromise with them.<sup>6</sup>

On 12 May 1710, Preet Rao, a messenger, reported to Bahadur Shah that *“a Sikh has declared himself as Guru and has gathered several people around him and attacked even Saharanpur.”* Hearing this, Bahadur Shah ordered the governors (of Sarhind, Lahore and Jammu) to take an immediate action against the Sikhs.<sup>7</sup>

On the same day, the agent of the ruler of Amber, in a letter to his master, wrote:

*“The agent of the Governor of Sarhind has told me that we should not under-estimate the riots of this cult (the Sikhs). About seventy thousand persons (the Sikhs) have gathered at Sadhaura. They recite the name of Guru and also say that ‘a holy man has joined us from heavens’. (They) have destroyed the parganas of Doaba and have established their supremacy up to Fatehbad (Beas River). On receiving a letter from Wazir Khan, Nawab Nizam-Ul-Mulk Asad Khan has written to the Governor of Hissar to join him in his expedition against the Sikhs. But they too are awe-stricken. Let us see what the will of God is. Some people of this organisation have created a commotion in Lahore (zone) too. They have killed several of them and it is said that they have put siege to Saharanpur too...To sum up, the power of this cult is increasing day by day. Nawab Asif-ud-Daula has sent letters to Mohammed Amin Khan and Khan Durran Bahadur to immediately march against the Sikhs. They have told him (Nawab) that if he marches (against the Sikhs), they too would join him....As the situation is not undergoing any change, Nawab has decided to send Abdullah Khan (Khwaja) to discuss it with Wazir Khan. He has also written letters to the army chiefs of the surrounding areas asking them to ‘deliberate among themselves to deal with this cult (Sikhs)’. The Emperor too has told the army chiefs of the surrounding areas (to take action against the Sikhs). (The Emperor) has also ordered to grant twenty-five thousand aalat-i-nukra (silver coins) to Abdullah Khan and (has commanded) to grant fifty thousand rupees to Abdullah Khan (for his expedition against the Sikhs). Khan Sahib himself is passing through bad days, but he has accepted the order (of the Emperor) under compulsion”.*<sup>8</sup>

(The non-Italic text is mine- Author).

On 20 May, 1710, when Bahadur Shah's caravan stopped near Bahasu, he got the news of the occupation of Sarhind by the Sikhs.<sup>9</sup> The Emperor was told that the Sikhs had killed Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sarhind, and his son or son-in-law also has either been killed or arrested. The informer told the Emperor that this news still needed confirmation.

On 24 May 1710, Bahadur Shah reached Toda. Here, he got confirmation of the fall of Sarhind to the Sikhs as well as the killing of Wazir Khan; Bahadur Shah immediately sent a letter to the officials at Shahjahanabad (Delhi) asking them to send eight lakh rupees to Khan Jahan, the Governor of Allahabad and Ubaid Khan (for the campaign against the Sikhs). He also sent Afzal Khan to Shahjahanabad to convey the orders of the Emperor to Khan Bahadur, Shamsheer Khan, Chet Singh Kumaon, Anup Singh and Issa Khan lead forces against the *Guru* (Banda Singh).<sup>10</sup>

Banda Singh's victories compelled Bahadur Shah to change his strategy. He realized that he could not fight on two fronts: the Rajputs and the Sikhs. So, he decided to make a deal with the Rajput rulers (as earlier said). He sent letters of 'forgiveness' to the three Rajput chiefs (Amber/Jaipur, Ajmer, and Jodhpur) and also granted them new rights and grants. He also sent them messages to join him in his crusade against the Sikhs. Besides, the Emperor announced that he himself would march to the Punjab to lead the expedition against the Sikhs.

On 27 May 1710, Shafshikan Khan sent a request to Bahadur Shah, saying: "*If Your Majesty grants me the Governorship of Sarhind, I shall crush that Guru who has created turbulence.*" Bakhshi-UI-Mulk Zulfikar Khan conveyed his request to the Emperor, but the latter did not accept his request.<sup>11</sup>

On 28 May, Bahadur Shah was told that the *Guru* (Banda Singh) had sent letters to the Rajput rulers Ajit Singh (of Jodhpur) and Jai Singh Swai (Amber/Jaipur) and they had sent their replies (to Banda Singh). Bahadur Shah also got the news that both of the Rajas had left Sambhar for Manoharpur.<sup>12</sup> On June 5, at the request of Munaim Khan *Khan Khanan*, the Emperor sent Mahabat Khan (son of Munaim Khan) to



approach these Rajput rulers and assure them of his (Emperor's) hand of friendship and bring them to his court.<sup>13</sup>

On 10 June, Bahadur Shah got the message that Mahabat Khan had succeeded in his mission and the Rajput rulers were on their way to see the Emperor. The terrified Bahadur Shah asked his minister to march towards the route of their journey, grant them warm welcome and escort them honorably to his presence. The same day Bahadur Shah dispatched orders to the Lahore officials asking them to grant three thousand rupees to Mohammed Taqi, the nephew of Wazir Khan, as travel expenses and ask him to present himself before him (Emperor). Bahadur Shah also got the news that the officials of the estate of Bakhshi Shah Niwaz were so scared of the Sikhs that they had fled from their territory. There was great awe in the Thanesar zone too. Several affluent residents of Panipat (*pargana* Faizabad), along with their wealth and families, have also reached Shahjahanabad (Delhi).

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, Bahadur Shah began his march again. He had not gone far when Mahabat Khan met him on his way. The two Rajput rulers too were also with him. Ajit Singh and Jai Singh Swai each presented 200 golden mohars and 2000 rupees to the Emperor. Bahadur Shah, in return, presented them, some fine robes of honour, swords studded with gems, elephant, horses and other precious gifts. The Emperor addressed them in a language of friendship and love. After the meeting, they sought farewell of the Emperor and assured him of their help in all his crusades (especially against the Sikhs).

Khafi Khan<sup>14</sup> says: *"When Emperor reached Ajmer, he received more news of the turmoil created by the Sikhs. This made him nervous and sad. By this time some unmraa of Sarhind and the Pirzaadas of Sadhaura too had reached there. Having learnt about their plight, the Emperor became very despondent. When they narrated the events, all the persons present were frightened."*

On 22 June, the Emperor got news that Banda Singh had stationed himself in Lohgarh Fort. A week earlier, he had ridden an elephant and left the Fort for Gulabnagar (the name given by Banda Singh to Buria), a town about 12 km away. He was escorted by two thousand and a half

horsemen, and more than ten thousand infantry (soldiers on foot). At Buria, he came to know that the Sikh soldiers had returned to Saharanpur after their defeat at the hands of Jalal Khan. Here, he (Banda Singh) met Amar Singh, the new Sikh police chief. Banda Singh twice stroked his (Amar Singh's) face with his spear and said: *'Why did you flee from the battle against the Afghans?'* Amar Singh told him that the Hindu *Chowdhry* Lal Kanwar Gujjar had deceived them. At this Banda Singh said: *"We have begun this crusade for righteousness. What to talk of Gujjars, all the Hindus shall approach us for the job."* After this Banda Singh addressed Jan Mohammed, the Zamindar of Buria and said, *"We have forgiven you for all your sins and have appointed you the chief of the pagan. Now, you should take Sardar Khan, the chief of Chandla with you and march to defeat Jalal Khan."* The Emperor was also told that Qazi Shah Mohammed, the chief of Buria, had been arrested. His property had been confiscated and he had been interned in Lohgarh Fort. In his place, now, Gurbakhsh Singh was the chief of the army and administration at Buria and Kishor Singh was his deputy. Banda Singh had re-named Buria as Gulab Nagar and Saharanpur as Bhaagnagar. Such news made Bahadur Shah further despondent and melancholy.<sup>15</sup>

On 1 July 1710, the caravan of the Emperor reached Roop Nagar (about 45 km from Ajmer). Here, he received a letter from Muaraf Khan narrating that the Sikhs had captured Rampur, Nanauta, Jhunjhana, Bakaur, Barsadu, Sadhaura, Karana, Budhana, Kandhala, Buria etc, and, had established their own police posts in all these places. The *Kanungo* (land revenue officer) of Saharanpur and rebel Gujjars had also declared their loyalties to him. The Emperor also got the news that Jalal Khan had defeated the Sikhs and had captured two of their cannons, five guns, several rifles, a thousand arrows, four tents and several other belongings including fourteen thousand rupees. This made him (Emperor) a bit comfortable. He sent a robe of honour, a royal letter of appreciation and a horse for Jalal Khan. Just a minor victory made the Emperor so much overjoyed that he decided to offer governorship of Sarhind and Saharanpur to Jalal Khan.<sup>16</sup>

On 2 July, someone reads out to Bahadur Shah, the declaration

made by Banda Singh after the victory of Sarhind. It said: "*Guru Nanak's glory has been established in this and the other world. True Guru is the master of the spiritual and mundane domains.*" The Emperor was also told that the Sikhs had coined strange terms for some words. They called a single Sikh as *Fauj* (army). They had also issued their own coin. They have started a new calendar too and wrote 'year one' on the letters being sent to the officials. They charged one third as revenue from the farmers, giving two third to the land-tiller. They had captured a very large amount of wealth from the treasures of Wazir Khan, along with several elephants, horses and other goods. There was a great uncertainty in the mind of the common folk.<sup>17</sup>

A few days later, Bahadur Shah got the information that Banda Singh himself had reached Saharanpur. Saadat Khan and other *umraa* were planning to give him a fight. Saadat Khan had seven thousand horsemen. Jalal Khan was sitting in his stronghold, the Fort of Jalalabad. On 7 July, Bahadur Shah received reports that six to seven thousand soldiers of Saadat Khan had given a tough fight to the Sikhs. In this battle, the Sikhs had been defeated and about eight hundred of them were killed. The news also mentioned that Banda Singh too had been among the killed. This news pleased the Emperor, but he wanted to confirm this. He asked Sayyad Wajih-ud-Din to get details. The latter rebutted the news of the death of Banda Singh and told that he had escaped unhurt. Jalal Khan had chased him, but could not reach near him.

On 8 July, Bahadur Shah appointed Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan (then the chief of Sikanderabad and Merrut) as the Governor of Sarhind. His *mansab* was increased from 1400 horsemen to 2200 hundred horsemen. But Zain-ud-Din was scared of marching to Sarhind.<sup>18</sup>

On 23 July Bahadur Shah reached Udaipur. Here he came to know that Banda Singh had sent a Sikh army to occupy Panipat. He was told that some royal officials too had joined the Banda Singh's rank and file. The Sikhs had took complete control of Sarhind and Saharanpur. Even some Muslims had joined the Sikh faith. Bakhshi Mohammed Nasir had joined the Sikh faith and was, now, known as Nasir Singh. Banda Singh had appointed him as the treasury officer. In both these towns, not a

single Afghan officer had survived. The Emperor was told that Banda Singh had some supernatural power. When he had reached river Yamuna to cross it, he had said: “*Give way to cross my army*”, the river-water stopped moving (became still) and the Sikh army had crossed it without any difficulty.<sup>19</sup>

On 25 July the Emperor was told that Saharanpur and Nanauta were fully under the control of the Sikhs. The Emperor received a request asking him to dispatch an army under the command of Firoz Khan Mewati to fight against the Sikhs. He (Emperor) immediately asked Rustam Dil Khan to send Firoz Khan Mewati for the expedition. On 28 July, the Emperor also allowed Sayyad Wajih-ud-Din, Usman Khan Kotwal and Sultan Kuli Khan (brother of Rustam Dil Khan) to join Firoz Khan Mewati. An amount of rupees fifty thousand was also granted to Firoz Khan Mewati.<sup>20</sup>

### **Bahadur Shah Himself Leads the Expedition Against the Sikhs**

When all these expeditions could not defeat the Sikhs, Bahadur Shah decided to lead the army himself. On 4 August 1710, he sent robes of honor, a decorated palanquin, a horse with golden saddle and an aigrette to Amar Singh, the Rajput ruler of Udaipur, so that he could also be asked to accompany the Emperor in the latter's expedition against the Sikhs.

On 14 August, Bahadur Shah reached Madgaon. Here, he issued orders that none of the caravan of the Emperor would go to Shahjahanabad (Delhi); nor anyone coming from the Capital would be allowed to enter the caravan.<sup>21</sup> The Emperor himself too did not go to Shahjahanabad and, instead, went straight towards Sonapat. Soon, the armies of Lucknow, Moradabad and Shahjahanabad, led by their Chiefs, joined the rank and file of the Emperor. Sayyad Abdullah of Bara Saadat, Muzaffarnagar (*Faujdar* of Allahabad), the Hindu rajas Chhatarsal and Udit Singh Bundela, along with big army units, too joined the royal troops.<sup>22</sup>

On 26 August, the Emperor sent orders to the Hindu ruler of Kumaon

asking him to chase Banda Singh, and, after punishing him (Banda Singh), he (ruler of Kumaon) should present himself before the Emperor. On 28 August, the Emperor issued the same orders to Fateh Shah (the ruler of Garhwal) too, asking him to launch a campaign against the *Nanakpanthis* (Sikhs).<sup>23</sup>

During this period Firoz Khan Mewati and Sayyad Wajih-Ud-Din had a dispute over the strategy against the Sikhs, Mewati not bothering, he (Sayyad) became angry and withdrew himself from the expedition. When Bahadur Shah came to know about this, he immediately ordered reduction in the *mansab* of Sayyad Wajih-ud-Din and also sent his *gurj bardar* (mace-bearers) to summon him to his court.

Having established his supremacy in most of the trans-Yamuna area, Banda Singh began his journey towards the Punjab. He sent Binod Singh and Ram Singh, as an advance party, to occupy Panipat and Travari. He (Banda Singh) handed over the *Malwa* area to Fateh Singh and Gurbakhsh Singh (Bhai Bhagtu family), Tirlok Singh and Ram Singh (Phul family) and Param Singh and Dharam Singh (Bhai Rupa family); and, he himself retired to Lohgarh Fort.

The scenario in the Punjab was very frightening for the Mughal and Afghan elite; five provinces of the Mughal Empire had been captured by the Sikhs; from Delhi to Lahore, it was all Sikh supremacy; the hills too had accepted the Sikhs' sovereignty. Mohammed Hashim Khafi Khan (in *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*) narrates the situation:

*“Here, between a couple of encampments before the capital Shahjahanabad (Delhi) and they’re up to Lahore territory, all the towns and prominent cities had been plundered and crushed under the feet of the unholy Sikhs. The world (zone) had been destroyed by the onslaught of the Kafirs (Sikhs) and innumerable number of people (Muslims) had embraced ‘martyrdom’ (died). Most destroyed were the towns of Sadhura and Karnal as well as villages around them, where their army chiefs along with innumerable number of Muslim companions had drunk nectar of martyrdom (had died).”* (The non-Italic text is mine- Author).

On 28 August 1710, in the court of Bahadur Shah, a news reader

read out a letter, saying: *“What to talk about the secret treasures of Sarhind, the bankers have reported that no money has come even from Doaba. It is only the Khalsa which collects the money and cartloads of this money are being carried to Dabar (Lohgarh) which they have established as their capital. On one day, they took (wealth in) three hundred carts. Up to Lahore, there is none who can stop them”*.<sup>24</sup> (The non-Italic text is mine- Author).

On 29 August, Bahadur Shah issued a new order asking the Hindu officials to shave their beards before appearing in his court; those Hindu officials, who shaved their beards immediately, were presented with robes and pearls.<sup>25</sup>

By this time, Bahadur Shah was so scared of the Sikhs that he had only one business in his mind, and, all his actions were centered against Banda Singh. He would discuss the issue of the Sikhs' several times a day with his courtiers and others. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, he called Mahabat Khan (son of Munaim Khan), presented him a robe of honor and asked him to lead an expedition against the Sikhs. The Emperor asked him to station himself in Karnal from where Sarhind was not far away. He also asked Nusrat Khan, Ghulam Nabi Kuli Khan and Sayyad Hussain Ali Khan as well as the Raja Chhatarsal to join Mahabat Khan, which they gladly accepted.<sup>26</sup>

On 2 October, Bahadur Shah received news that Firoz Khan Mewati had reached near Karnal on 28 September and he was expected to launch an attack on Sarhind very soon.<sup>27</sup> On 12 October, the Emperor got the news that Firoz Khan had set up his post at Taravari (about 6 km from Karnal) and the Sikh 'swines (pigs)' had fled away. On 14 October, Bahadur Shah got the news that a battle had been fought between Jalal Khan Ruhila and the Sikhs in which 300 royal soldiers and several Sikhs had been killed.<sup>28</sup>

### **Battle of Rahon**

In September-October, 1710, the Sikhs had attacked Rahon and occupied it. After this the affluent Muslims of the town left their homes, and, established themselves in a new town which came to be known as

Naushehra (now Nawanshahr).

Since the fall of Sarhind to the Sikhs, the Mughal and the Pathan chieftains and the officials in the Punjab and the surrounding areas had been planning to expel the Sikhs from that town. One of such persons was Shamas Khan, the former chief of Sultanpur Lodhi. On September 1710, Shamas Khan declared a 'holy war' against the Sikhs and enrolled a large number of Muslims from Sultanpur and surrounding areas. Before attacking the Sikhs at Sarhind, he wanted to get Rahon freed from the Sikhs. He left Sultanpur for Rahon in the first week of October 1710. Khafi Khan mentions the figure of Shamas Khan's forces as one hundred thousand. According to Khafi Khan there were 4-5 thousand horsemen, and thirty thousand infantry and the rest were ordinary Muslims, most of whom were *julaahas* (weavers). Khafi Khan gives the figure of the Sikh army as seventy thousands. Both figures seem to be exaggerated.<sup>29</sup>

When Shamas Khan's army reached Rahon, there were only a few hundred Sikhs in the Fort; but they came out of the Fort and fell upon Shamas Khan's army. A pitched battle was fought outside the walls of the town. The Sikhs gave such a fierce fight that at one time it seemed that Shamas Khan would flee or at least give up fighting; but, in the meanwhile Shamas Khan's uncle Bayzid Khan (Qutub-ud-Din Khaishgi), the Governor of Jammu, also reached there with a big force; and, almost at the same time, Umar Khan, the chief of Kasur, and his soldiers too arrived. This compelled the Sikhs to retreat and take refuge in the Fort. Now, a mammoth army put a siege to the Fort from all the sides. The Sikhs, though very small in number, continued fighting for three days, but when their ammunition as well as ration was exhausted, they decided to leave the Fort; so, at midnight they made an attempt to flee; while doing so several Sikhs were killed and only a few managed to save their lives. This victory added to the pride of Shamas Khan and Bayzid Khan and they, now, decided to repeat this action at Sarhind too. They crossed the river Satluj at Machhiwara and spent a night there in the *Pakki Saran*.<sup>30</sup>

The news of Shamas Khan's victory reached Bahadur Shah on

15 October, but, the report wrongly mentioned the venue of battle as Machhiwara and the figures of the Sikh casualties as two thousand.<sup>31</sup>

### **Battle of Travadi**

Although the occupation of Rahon was the first Mughal victory over the Sikhs, but, the first action by the army sent by Bahadur Shah himself, took place on 16-17 October 1710 at Amingarh (Khera Amin), about 24 km from Karnal. The Sikhs, under the command of Binod Singh, were not many in number, and, had a small quantity of ammunition, but, still, they gave a tough fight to the 60 thousand soldiers' strong royal army. At first Mahabat Khan began retreating, but then Firoz Khan Mewati came forward and inspired the soldiers, who made a massive attack on the Sikhs, putting them into the defensive. Now, the Sikhs began fleeing, as a couple of thousand of Sikhs were no match to such a huge and fully armed royal army; hence it was an unequal battle. Even while fleeing, several Sikhs lost their lives; Firoz Khan Mewati severed the heads of three hundred Sikhs killed in this battle and dispatched them to Bahadur Shah to earn his favour. The Sikhs had erected a huge Minar (Satun-I-Jung) near the city of Thanesar, marking undisputed right of ownership and the implication of their claim. The Sikhs erected Minar to demarcate their territories which was a practice among the warriors.<sup>32</sup>

After this victory, Firoz Khan Mewati attacked the Sikhs at Taravari and Thanesar on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October. The Sikhs had to abandon these two stations too. Shahbad was next to fall to the Mughal forces. From all these four places the Sikhs fled to Sadhaura and then moved to Lohgarh. When the Emperor got this news on 20<sup>th</sup> October, he bestowed precious gifts on Firoz Khan Mewati. It included one hundred thousand rupees and the Governorship of Sarhind (Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan was removed from governorship).<sup>33</sup>

### **Emperor Reaches Near First Fortress of Lohgarh (Ugala, Tehsil Barara)**

Passing through Karnal (20<sup>th</sup> Ramzan, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1710), Alamgirpur (2<sup>nd</sup> Ramzan, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1710), Thanesar (28 Ramzan 19 November)



and Shahabad the Emperor encamped at villages Okala (now Ugala, Tehsil Barara) on 27 November 1710.<sup>34</sup> The Mughal forces took a month time to capture these Forts and clearing the route for the Mughal Emperor to reach near Sadhaura. The reason why the Mughal Emperor did not adopt the shorter route is very clear that this route was on the bank of river Yamuna, covered with dense forest near the route. Moreover, the Sikhs had captured all the Parganas in the route, therefore coming by this route could have endangered their lives. On the other hand the route adopted by the Mughal Emperor was on the bank of dry rivulet Markanda having a plain area, so the advance forces sent by the Mughals preferred the longer route via Shahabad, ensuring proper security to the Mughal Emperor. Bahadur Shah never reached Sadhaura and made this camping ground a few miles from Sadhaura and when Vanjara Sikhs and Sikhligarh army attacked the camp of Bahadur Shah, the Emperor, and his accompanying nobles immediately shifted their camp back to Shahbad 12 *kos* (about 48 km) From the Sarai of Shahabad, the Emperor Bahadur Shah monitored the battle of Lohgarh. Banda Singh Bahadur assaulted the Mughals over a very wide area, extending from Jalandhar Doab in Punjab to Bareilly in Delhi.<sup>35</sup> The Sikhs had established themselves in the Fortress spread in present district of Karnal, Kurukshetra, Yamuana Nagar, Ambala and Pinjaur.

### **First Battle of Lohgarh 1710 to 1712**

Misreported in history, during their regime of 246 years, the battle of Lohgarh is one of the largest and longest expeditions undertaken by the Mughals against any opponent (and after the battles of Lohgarh, the Mughal Empire began declining).

Emperor Bahadur Shah reached Lohgarh with four princes (Prince Rafi-us-Shah, Prince Azimushan, Prince Jahandar Shah and Prince Khuzishta), more than fifty high-rank *mansabdars* (having mansabs of 1000 or above) and more than one hundred low-rank nobility and a mammoth army of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Besides, the army of allied Hindu Rajas like Chhatrasal Bundela and Churimani Jat (and later Raja Jai Singh Swai of Jaipur, Raja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur, Raja Amar

Singh of Ajmer) were also invited by the Emperor to fight against Banda Singh Bahadur. The Mughal army used extremely heavy artillery to control the Sikhs. Elephants were widely used for lifting and pushing the artillery to Lohgarh. The Mughal cavalymen mainly depended upon the short arms (*kotah-yaraq*) for close quarter combat at Lohgarh. They were classified into five categories: swords and shields, maces, battle-axes, spears and daggers. Weapons used for long range attacks were the bows and arrows (*kaman* and *tir*), the matchlock (*bandoq/tufang*) and the pistols. Rockets were also used by the artillerymen in the battle. Similarly, camel artillery men (*zumbouruckchee*), a piece of ordinance of small calibre, too were intensively used against Sikhs.

On 29 November 1710, the imperial troops, under the Prince Jahandar Shah, reached the foot of the hills and Fort of Lohgarh was closely investigated by large Mughal troops.<sup>36</sup> Prince Jahandar Shah got prepared the map of Lohgarh (also known as Dabar).<sup>37</sup> It took a lot of time to prepare the map of Lohgarh and its 52 Fortresses. In fact, the Mughals were unaware of this Fort. Such a resistance and Fortification had never been faced by the imperial forces; hence the Mughals failed to prepare the plan for capturing such a huge Fortification which was spread in hundreds of miles; hence it demoralized the Mughal generals and the Emperor.

In the month of January 1711, the Emperor planned to siege the area between Markanda to Yamuna, and he divided his army into six groups; but, the Mughal army had no clue how to break the web of 52 bastions built on the way to Lohgarh. Experienced generals of the Mughal army failed to perform in these difficult conditions as the preparation and principles of war adopted by Sikh army were very complicated and invincible. No siezure plan could be prepared; in fact, the map prepared by the Prince was inaccurate, as it was only confined to the situation of the first hill of Lohgarh Fort. The Sikhs had established *chowkies/thanas* (posts) and Fortification right from river Beas to Bareilly; and, they operated all this in a co-ordinated manner by providing reinforcement to one and another. High contours of the Shivalik hills were chosen for the construction of ramparts and the hill

chieftains of Nalagarh, Nahan, Garhwal, Jammu, Chamba, Nurpur etc.

The Mughal army remained stationed near Lohgarh while other contingents of the Sikhs continued to make parallel attacks on most of the parganas of the provinces of Lahore and Delhi. The Mughal army was only trying to capture Lohgarh, situated in the present district of Yamuna Nagar, but the Sikhs had established bastions/Fortresses everywhere in the present districts of Ambala and Panchkula (of these Fortresses and bastions, the Mansoorpur & Bavana Fortresses of the Sikhs still exist). The battle-field, which was on the south side of Fort of Lohgarh, had undulated contours; and, the cover of dense forest over; and, on the passage leading to Lohgarh Fort, 52 Fortresses, had been built on which muskets and rahkalas had been installed. Due to this, even, the siezure of Sadhaura was not possible for the Mughals; and what to talk about Lohgarh. The Mughals failed to execute their important strategy of siezure of Lohgarh. The strategy of checking supplies of the Sikhs could not be implemented in such a vast area. The Sikh army had regular supplies of the required goods; therefore the question of the Sikh army's surrender before the Mughal army at Lohgarh never arose. There was ample amount of amenities and food grains stuff in the Lohgarh Fort and in the depots, which had been established long back in anticipation of big war. Moreover, there was a continuous supply of required materials through the secret route to Lohgarh from the northern side of the Fort. It can be safety presumed that during the construction of Fort Lohgarh, the Sikh Gurus and Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara had kept in mind the siezure strategy of the Mughal warfare. Despite being large in number, the Mughal Army had no planning and strategy to attack the Sikh forces and their defences. In this dense forest area, it was very difficult to advance, and, moreover, the Sikhs were good guerrilla fighters and even nature gave advantage to the Sikh forces which rendered the world's strongest force of that time helpless. The Mughal Emperor failed to understand the situation and gradually started losing his confidence.

The royal army, under the command of Firoz Khan Mewati and Rustam Dil Khan moved towards Sadhaura and surrounded the Fort.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of November, a fierce battle was fought outside the Fort between the Sikhs and the royal forces.

According to Kamvar Khan, who claimed having seen the battle with his own eyes: *“This humble man was present in the army units of prince Rafiushan. I Saw with my own eyes: from among those wicked people, each one would jump in the field and fight with the royal forces; and after attempting show of great bravery, would become a good (would die) of the merciless sword of the holy warriors. At this time the royal army and the armies of the famous umraa attacked them from all sides and surpassed the acts (of bravery) of Rustam and Isfandyaar (the two warriors who fought so bravely that they are quoted as the greatest fighters in the history). About two and a half thousand persons of that unprincipled occult (Sikhs), along with their leaders became food of the swords of the brave men (Muslims). Among the victorious forces nephew of Firoz Shah Mewati was killed and his (Mewati’s) son was wounded”*

At that time, the Emperor had divided all his army into six divisions: Prince Rafiushan had the command of thirty-one thousand soldiers; he was assisted by *Bakhshi-ul-Mulk* Zulfiqar Khan. The other three princes had eleven thousand soldiers each; *Khan Khana* Munaim Khan too had eleven thousand soldiers; the sixth division, comprising of seven thousand soldiers, was under the command of Mahabat Khan (son of *Khan Khanan*).<sup>38</sup> The forces of Hindu Rajas, under the command of Chhatarsal Bundela and Udit Singh Bundela, too had joined the royal troops. So, it was an army of more than one hundred thousand strong which marched towards Lohgarh.<sup>39</sup>

Here he asked Rustam Dil Khan and Rafi-Us-Shan to get information about the details of the Fortification of Lohgarh. According to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi Banda Singh had about one and a half hundred thousand, and, almost same was the number of the soldiers of the Mughal army. Here, Bahadur Shah received information that a very large number of the soldiers of the Mughal army had been killed in the battles against the Sikhs. The Emperor was also told that Banda Singh was a “very powerful magician. He could turn a bullet from its course and could work such spell that spears and swords had little effect

upon his followers, “This disheartened and frightened the Emperor and he issued instructions that no Hindu should be allowed to enter the area around his camp. He was so scared of the Sikhs that he commanded that even Hindu generals, who were a part of his own army, who had always been loyal to him, should not be allowed to come near him. So much so that, now, he was afraid of his own loyal Mughal soldiers. He decided to keep himself away from the battle zone and moved his camp near Qaimpur village, i.e. 12 *kos* (about 38 kilometres) away from Lohgarh. Hadi Kamvar Khan, who was accompanying the royal caravan, writes:<sup>40</sup> “*I saw that the camel-riding Rajput soldiers were present in the whole area. Thousands of them were there, but the Emperor was accompanied by just four sons and a few courtiers only.*” It means that the Rajput rulers were fully ready to react to any untoward incident, and, had Bahadur Shah taken any wrong step, he too would have been eliminated. Certainly the Mughals were demoralized, because of heavy casualties inflicted from the hands of the Sikhs. Banda Singh Bahadur, accompanied by Sikh soldiers, was highly motivated to fight and resist the Mughals. Coming out of the 52 Fortresses with great, enthusiastic and inclination, they raised the cry of “*Fateh Darshan*” and “*Sachcha Padshah*” and threw themselves upon the fire of artillery of Mughals and frightened them. They launched rank-shaking assaults of the imperial entrenchment, and every day many were killed. A large number of soldiers from both sides were killed daily.

An Imperial officer, Mirza Rukn, came from the van and reported that fighting and killing of the Mughals was going on at the passages leading to the satellite Fortress of Lohgarh. Rustam Dil Khan Bahadur on reaching a Fortress called Sudhawala surrounded it, believing that Banda was inside that building. But the information was wrong as Banda Singh Bahadur was sitting under that tent on that hillock and from there he was watching the actions of his devoted followers. No General of the Mughals could reach near Banda Singh, as he was so swift and moved from one satellite Fortress to another like a light. He was himself monitoring some weak defenses of the Sikhs and accordingly providing them the reinforcement.

The Mughal Mansabdars, along with their army tried to move forward between the web of 52 Fortresses that had been established by the Sikhs on the passages leading to Khalsa Rajdhani. The Sikhs launched attacks from each Fortress and a fierce battle with cannon and musket took place at regular interval of time, The Sikh soldiers were not bothered by the mighty enemy; with their chivalrous spirit they brought down large Mughal army under the range of their attack. The Sikhs had great advantages of being at higher contours; and they used arrows and musket fire against the Mughals from high ramparts. From the flashing of swords and spears, many of the Mughals died from sword thrusts of the Sikh soldiers. Khan-i-Khanan tried to advance near the Fortress, but did not dare much to achieve the objective. The imperial soldiers were somehow trying to fight against Sikhs, but Mughal Generals were cowards and were trying to save their lives. Much endeavour and effort was put in from both sides in which the 'trade of giving and taking life' came briskly. By that time, the Imperial forces, crossing over the plain ground, reached to a distance of a quarter *Kous* from the wall of the advance Fortress of Lohgarh. Cannon balls, regularly fired from the top of the bastions, were falling on the Imperial army and it killed a large number of Mughal soldiers. Amini'l Umara Bahadur Nusrat Jang never went close to Lohgarh and kept on sending the message to the Emperor from his tent. The Emperor was stationed at Ugala village near Shahbad and was daily monitoring the warfare from quite a far and safe place. This process continued for a month and daily hundreds of Mughal soldiers were being killed at the hands of the Sikhs. There was not even a minor achievement on the side of the Mughal army.

Irvine writes, *"The Mughal and Pathan soldiers were very much scared due to the rumours about Banda Singh. They had heard that Banda Singh had magical power with which he could make the spears and swords of the enemy ineffective. They had learnt that Banda Singh had given a 'blessing' to the Sikhs that if anyone of them died in the battle, he would be reborn and would get a higher office in life. Due to such rumours the Emperor and the senior generals of the Mughal army had*

*become perplexed and disheartened.”*

After such a long expedition against the Sikhs at Lohgarh, the Emperor Bahadur Shah realized that capturing of the Fort of Lohgarh was impossible and the only possibility of capturing the Fort was to capture the leader of the Sikhs- Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. After this, the Emperor spent most of his energy, resources and power only to capture Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. According to the Mughal chronicles, in May-June 1711, the Mughal army engaged the Sikhs in pitch battles for a couple of times, but, in spite of inflicting heavy casualties on the Sikhs, it failed to apprehend the Sikh leader (Banda Singh). There was a huge difference between two leaders, i.e. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and Emperor Bahadur Shah; the Sikh leader was himself participating in the battle and kept the morale of the Sikhs soldiers high, but the Emperor had been watching the battle from a distance of more than 35 kilometers. Moreover Banda Singh's knowledge of warfare and strategy building was unmatched. The Sikh General (Banda) was in the late thirties and Emperor was 65 years old. After some time Banda Singh realized that the Emperor was a coward and does not want himself to lead the expedition from the front and remained stationed at a safe point near Shahbad. A very large number of soldiers remained with the Emperor Bahadur Shah, to protect him. The Emperor encamped at Ugala village of Shahbad Pargana. On seeing high casualties on his side the Emperor Bahadur Shah frustrated too much, therefore he stopped the entires of any Hindu and Hindu Rajas who were fighting on his side to enter in his imperial camp. The level of insecurity increased to the highest level and the Emperor stopped trusting his loyal soldiers.

The supplies of the Mughal army started getting affected, during this long war, as the Imperials had deployed large army troops for submerging the Sikhs. They needed a lot of food grains, medical facilities, arms/ammunition and horses to deal with the Sikh army. The supplier/traders of the Mughals army were mainly the Vanjaras, and the Vanjaras were helping the opponents of the Mughals army i.e. the Sikh army. They didn't only supply food grains and other essential goods, but also supplied arms and ammunitions, or whatsoever was the requirement

of the Sikh army.

In the guerrilla warfare, the Sikh army was very expert. They were always first to attack the enemy. Their attack was sudden and speedy. They attacked like a leopard and ran too, like a leopard. They never passed through the straight ways. They moved on the arduous wild routes by concealing themselves like leopards. When the enemy came under their blow they pounced upon them. The author of *Asrar-I-Samadi*, a contemporary writer, describes the movement of Banda Singh Bahadur and his Khalsa colleagues like that of lions and leopards. According to him, "*Lion-like they sprang upon the backs of the elephants, and flung on the ground those who were seated in the hawdas. Like leopards they would reach such places, where even the fastest horses would be reluctant to proceed.*" The Mughal army made attacks in the day light and the Sikh forces defended the attack. The attack of the Mughal forces was of poor quality, since the natural terrain advantage was on the side of Sikhs. The Sikhs were fully trained to fight in dense jungle and on undulated land. And on the other hand Mughals were new to the conditions and therefore, suffered heavy casualties. The Sikh soldiers used to attack the Mughal army in the dark, due to which there were heavy losses on the side of the Imperial troops. The Sikhs never allowed the enemy to settle down and secure their position even in the nights. At the hillocks, light towers were established at various points. On these light towers a pool was established in which cotton seeds could be filled and these emitted light gradually resulting in sufficient light to guide the Sikh soldiers, who were making guerrilla attacks on the Mughal camps. After plundering the Mughal camps in the night, these light towers guided the Sikhs Soldiers to retreat back to their respective defense post. According to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, "Khan Khanan and the Mughal prince were of the opinion that the occupation of the Fort will not be possible in less than one year."<sup>41</sup>

### **Supplies to Sikh Army**

Guru Har Rai Sahib, (1645-58 for 13 years), during his stay at Thapal, in



Lohgarh zone, might have constructed proper ration stores and stores for other goods required for the war. His imagination to originate plans and practical sense and energy to carry them through was remarkable. He was observant, untiringly shrewd, kindly, a watchman, generous and conservative, while constructing the Lohgarh Fort. Guru Har Rai Sahib, had a real knowledge of humanity, the raw materials required for the construction of Lohgarh and most vital of all, of building the fighting spirit among the Sikhs, the will to win. More than the physical and moral make up, he nurtured the mental qualities among the Sikhs i.e. common sense, knowledge of what is and what is not possible. The real sound knowledge of the mechanism of war, i.e. topography, movement and supplies were well known to the Sikh army and this helped the Sikhs to face Mughals at Lohgarh.

The *tanda* (trade caravan) of Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara used to supply food grains and other trading materials and general carriers for the conflicting armies also. He enjoyed a sort of immunity (comparable to the present red cross) during the wars as his *tanda* was never attacked or harmed by the conflicting armies: whether Mughals, Rajputs or Marathas. These armies used to purchase grains, tents, weapons, horses, goats, sheep etc. and his *tanda* also acted as transporter for shifting of camps. His *tanda* had a strong contingent of forty to fifty thousand bullock carts and dogs to safeguard them. His *tanda* encamped for safety every evening in a regular square formed with the bags of the grains. The Vanjaras remained in the centre and the oxen were fastened outside. But in the case of Lohgarh, the Vanjaras not only supplied the materials and weapons to the Sikh army, but they also fought against the Mughals in front to uproot oppressions of imperialist regime.

The Vanjaras, the moving traders lead the Sikhs through the difficult routes in jungles. They were reported to have carried weapons along with the grains to the Sikh hide out in the hills. The Sikh army had no shortage of supplies of essential food grains and commodities because, having anticipated a prolonged war, they had accumulated everything long back at Fort Lohgarh in a well planned manner; whereas, on the other hand, the supplies for Mughal army were badly affected as the

Vanjaras, who use to supply the food grains and other items to them, withdrew their supplies and became Sikh warriors. The rise in the prices of the food grains had affected the Vanjaras and the people in the hills, therefore the Vanjaras were inclined towards Baba Banda Singh Bahadur.<sup>42</sup> Diwan Bhikhari Das to Maharaja Jai Singh, informs about the incessant rain, shortage of ration in the royal camp, large scale casualties of horses and beasts of burden; epidemic type situation on the battlefield<sup>43</sup>. These *Vanjaras* who were true the Sikhs and the Sikh movement in the Punjab, always tried to maintain the supply of provisions to the Sikhs even when they were besieged in the Fort. The besieged threw of pieces of cloth from the top of the Fort wall and the *Vanjaras* packed the grain, tied them up and then through the ropes the same were drawn up and taken inside the Fort.<sup>44</sup> We may also presume that the inflated rates of *ijara* leading to the exorbitant rise in the prices of food grains hit both the *Vanjaras* and the people in the hills.

There are very significant entries in the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* regarding these facts. We have, in the fifth year (1710) of Bahadur Shah's reign, a report presented to him by Jagjiwan Dass, reads: "Some people purchased horses and ammunition to be delivered to the Sikh rebels, and they carried the same through the Kohistan (hills). If somebody obstructed them, they pretended that they were taking the same for the *Zamindars* of that district. The Emperor ordered the investigation and the necessary action."<sup>45</sup>

### **Water Management at Lohgarh and its Bastions**

Water was the most important requirement during warfare and only source of water were wells and the wells were situated inside the Fortress of Sikhs, therefore Mughals soldiers had no access to water. The wells outside the Fortress were made poisonous, so that the Mughal army has no access to the water. The residence of the village in the neighborhood of Sadhaura left the place after throwing poison into the wells. Bahadur Shah ordered that no one should use the water.<sup>46</sup> Since each bastion was working in coordination with other, therefore

any shortage of supply in any of the Fortress was immediately fulfilled for Sikhs. Dams were constructed at various points in hills and heavy precipitation in the area always kept these dams full with water. Well coordinated effort of Sikh army, shocked the Mughal generals.

**Attack on the Lohgarh Fort** (as reported by historians)

Most of the historians have written that the Mughal army puts siege to the Lohgarh Fort on 30 November 1710 and captured it on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1710, the very next day, and, Banda Singh Bahadur escaped from the Fort with a few of his companions through the hills of Nahan. Almost same or a like material is found in the works of almost all the historians. In fact, these historians have based their works on the writings of the Persian writers who had claimed that they had seen this battle with their own eyes; they (especially Khafi Khan and Kamvar Khan) claimed themselves to be eyewitnesses. Their narration of this battle as such:

On Wednesday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 1710, the Emperor reached village Kampo, on the bank of river Som, a few furlongs away from Lohgarh. Having observed the situation, he ordered Khan Khanan and Mahabat Khan to assess the state of the trenches (posts) of the Sikhs in the hills. The same order was given to prince Rafiushan too. After assessing the whole situation, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, the royal forces surrounded the Lohgarh Fort in this manner:

- (1). Rafiushan will take positions at about one km from the Fort, and, he will be assisted by Zulfiqar Khan.
- (2). Khan Khanan Munaim Khan and his two sons, Bakhshi Mahabat Khan and Khan Zaman, will move from the hip of the hills.
- (3). Chhatarsal Bundela<sup>47</sup> and Islam Khan Mir Aatish will be the advance party of Khan Khanan.
- (4). Hamid-Ud-Din Khan, Azimushan Shah and their associates as well as the soldiers of Jahan Shah were to assist the three parties of the action.<sup>48</sup>

At the time of beseige, there were not many Sikhs in the Lohgarh Fort; nor they had enough ammunition or food for survival. They had just three cannons and had also made one improvised cannon of an

*imli* (tamarind) tree. They did not have even enough gun powder for these cannons.

But, according to the account of Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi: the next day the big pearl of the crown of the empire (prince) Rafi-ush-Shan and Wazir-UL-Mumalik Khan Khanan (Munaim Khan) were given command to put siege to the Fort. So, following the command, they organized the army and put siege to the Fort. The cheat (Banda Singh) became busy in strengthening the towers, outer wall, mounds and gates of his Fortress. The noble-born prince and Khan Khanan strengthened their trenches and became ready for battle. They began firing from cannons, guns and rockets. By God's grace, one of the rockets fired by great honorable prince fell into the storage of explosives and that got fired. With this blunder of that unlucky person, countless persons reached the hell. All the trenches, which were made of timber, were burnt. When the fire was extinguished, the honorable prince strengthened their foot on the foothills of the Fort. But now no voice could be heard from the Fort side. There were not more than one thousand young men in the Fort. As the awe of battle affected both the sides, the brave soldiers (of the Mughals) did not move forward and waited for the command of the prince, Khan Khanan's wise advice. The opinion of the prince was that the knot would not be untied (occupation of the Fort would not be possible) in less than one year; i.e. this problem would not be solved in less than one year. Divine courage played its role and the long-term problem was solved in a moment. They thought that there was no necessity to make haste, the soldiers too were badly tired. So they decided to wait for some time. They thought if God willed, in the morning they would occupy the Fort in no time. They thought that if they attacked that day, he (Banda Singh) might escape through some other way and their efforts might go waste. They thought that the proper thing for them would be to make arrangements to block the path of his escape. If that unFortunate schemer (Banda Singh) ran away from there, he had two escape routes: one was through the territory of Burfi Raja (Nahan), and the other towards the Afghan border of the Afghan (Jammu). We should write to them that they should not allow

him to cross their borders and they should block their passage. When all the sides were strengthening, an attack should be made and not a single person should be left alive, so that after that battle no person should dare to do such a silly act (of rebellion against the empire). That, it was a good advice that quite good number of soldiers should be left on trenches and others should go to the Capital (royal camp).

But, that Fort could not be captured according to their (prince and Khan Khanan's) thinking. When the life of that ill-minded infidel was still to be spared (by God) for some more days, how could this advice become true? The great honourable prince returned to the capital (royal camp). In spite of his age (wisdom) Khan Khanan got deceived.

That clever person (Banda Singh) had left about two hundred men in the Fort and escaped through the territory of Barfi Raja (Nahan). Those unlucky persons whom he had left for the defense of the Fort were caught in the net of misery. The next morning the prince gave command to attack. Fearless soldiers used the stairs and climbed the walls of the Fort and entered the Fort, but they did not fight the defense of the Fort had heard strong but they did not find that there. Those of his soldiers who, confronted with swords were murdered immediately. Those who ran away, they were killed by people by throwing rocks at them. Thus the Fort came under the occupation of the glorious holy army. Everyone got a lot of commodities. For one week, the army men continued entering the hills in the form of groups and they killed whoever they come across. They plundered and brought a lot of goods to their homes (tents). They brought velvet, silk, clothes and other goods, besides slaves and women folk. Only lazy, the drunkard, the weak and powerless person did not go into the hills, hence they could not have anything from the Fort.<sup>49</sup>

Kamvar Khan, who claimed to have seen the battle with his own eyes says: *"This humble man was present in the army units of prince Rafi-ush-Shan. I saw with my own eyes: from among those wicked people, each one would jump in the field and fight with the royal forces; and after attempting a show of great bravery, would become a good (would die) of the merciless sword of the holy warriors. At this time the*

royal army and the armies of the famous umraa attacked them from all sides and surpassed the acts (of bravery) of Rustam and Isfandyaar.<sup>50</sup> About two and a half thousand persons of that unprincipled cult (Sikhs), along with their leaders became the good of the swords of the brave men (Muslims). Among the victorious forces nephew of Firoz Shah Mewati was killed and his (Mewati's) son was wounded..."<sup>51</sup> (The non-italic text is mine- Author).

Khafi Khan says, "It is difficult to narrate this battle. Faqir-like dressing Sikhs have created awe in the royal army. So many people of the royal army were killed that it seemed that we shall all die. In this Sikh attack, Firoz Khan Mewati's nephew and son were also killed."<sup>52</sup>

### **Lohgarh Fort falls (?) and Banda Singh escapes**

Kamvar says: "When the sun has just arisen, Khan Khanan, with a force of five thousand companions, attacked the Sikh positions at the top of the hill. A fierce battle of guns and arrows was fought on both the sides. Khan Khanan reached near the trench of the Fort. Both sides fought a full-fledged battle. Trade of life-taking was at its full extreme."<sup>53</sup>

Irvine writes, "The Mughal and Pathan soldiers were very much scared due to the rumours about Banda Singh. They had heard that Banda Singh had magical power with which he could make the spears and swords of the enemy ineffective. They had learnt that Banda Singh had given a 'blessing' to the Sikhs that if anyone of them died in the battle he would be reborn and would get a higher office in life. Due to such rumours the Emperor and the senior generals of the Mughal army had become perplexed and disheartened".<sup>54</sup>

When Khan Khanan reached near the trench, there were small skirmishes. A couple of Sikhs would come out of the Fort, fight against the royal soldiers and get killed after a good deal of fighting; a large number of royal soldiers too were getting killed.<sup>55</sup>

Finding Khan Khanan resolute, prince Rafi-ud-Shah and Rustam Dil Khan too made an assault at Lohgarh Fort. They acted so with an intention of stopping Khan Khanan getting the credit/laurels of victory. The action of Khan Khanan, and others following him, was in violation

of the orders of the Emperor because he (Emperor) had given instructions that the siege should be prolonged; and, when the ammunition and the ration of the Sikhs is exhausted, they will be captured. Now, when they had moved forward in violation of the orders of the Emperor, they had only one option, i.e., either capture the Fort or die; because a defeat would earn them the wrath of the Emperor along with punishment for disobeying his orders.

On the other hand, the Sikhs were firing from cannons after long intervals. This made the royal generals realise that the Sikhs did not have much gun powder; by the evening the Sikhs' cannons stopped firing; they came out of their trenches and attacked the royal forces with swords. Several Sikhs were killed in this fighting.

At that time Banda Singh was sitting in Sitargarh Fort, on the top of another hill adjacent to Lohgarh hill. By this time, the royal forces had closely surrounded Lohgarh Fort and could enter it any time. The Sikhs had realised that they had no option except to die fighting or make an attempt to escape. So, at night, they filled all the gun powder in the improvised tamarind-stem cannon and fired it towards the royal army. It resulted into a great explosion which shook the earth. This frightened the royal forces and they hid themselves in their trenches. The Sikhs availed of the opportunity and fled towards the Shivalik hills; Banda Singh too was a part of this group which escaped.

The next morning, Udit Singh Bundela and Rustam Dil Khan made a major assault on the Fort and entered it without any major fighting; there they found not more than thirty Sikhs including Gulab Singh Bakhshi who was wearing Banda Singh's clothes. Khafi Khan, commenting on the escape of Banda Singh and arrest of his look-like Gulab Singh, says: *'the falcon had escaped and an owl had been captured.'*<sup>56</sup>

When Bahadur Shah came to know that Banda Singh had escaped, he became very much angry and said: *'How could a jackal escape from the siege of so many dogs?* The Emperor was especially angry at Khan Khanan who had disobeyed the Emperor and attacked the Fort of his own."<sup>57</sup>

But, Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi gives another account. He says that after 'capturing' the Lohgarh Fort, the elder prince and Khan Khanan sent a messenger to deliver a letter to the Emperor about their victory; reading this the Emperor was elated and he made *sajda* (prostration to God in the direction of the Kaaba at Mecca) to thank God for that victory. But learning about the escape of Banda Singh, he began guessing as to from which side he had escaped. In the meanwhile the prince and Khan Khanan reached there and they narrated that Banda Singh had escaped through the territory of the Nahan ruler. At this, the Emperor ordered summoning of the ruler of Nahan in his court. Accordig to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, the Emperor did not become angry with Munaim Khan (Khan Khanan).<sup>58</sup> It is possible that Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi had soft corner for Khan Khanan.

Earlier, when the news of the entry of the royal forces into the Fort had reached the Emperor, he had ordered beating of drums, and, all his soldiers were dancing. But, when he came to know about the escape of Banda Singh, he stopped all jubilations and became sorrowful. He was not happy even at the capture of the Fort or the killings of the Sikh soldiers whose number was about 1500.<sup>59</sup>

When the Fort had been occupied by the royal forces, a very large number of soldiers rushed towards it. Kamvar, who was present there, reports:

*"We deliberated and entered the Fort. We observed the looting by the soldiers. Scoundrel and high-handed Afghan and Baloch soldiers were scuffling with each other to snatch women and children as well as valuables from each other. During their scuffle a spark fell on gun powder lying there which resulted into the death of several persons; these included the son of Sucha Nand of Sarhind and several Muslim men and women who had been held captive by the Sikhs; their bodies were buried under the debris (caused by the fire and explosion)." (The non-Italic text is mine-Author).*

### **Could Lohgarh Fort Be Capured ?**

The capture of Lohgarh Fort, as narrated above is based on the writings



of the Mughals or the *Akhbarat-I-Darbar-Mualla* (letters of the Jaipur rulers' agents in the Mughal court; and, this information were based on what they learnt from the Mughal court). It seems that all this was written or narrated to please the Emperor or to boast of the might of the Mughal army or to prove that the Sikh army was weak and powerless.

We have seen that the Lohgarh Fort is 40 to 50 kilometers in length and 10 to 15 kilometers in width. The periphery of this Fort is 50 km which surrounded by 52 Fortresses and dozens of hills. Could this Fort be captured in just one or two days? This is impossible. In one day, even one Fortress cannot be captured. There are dozens of hills, some of them very hazardous to enemy having towers, bastions, trenches and walls on each hill.

According to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, "Khan Khanan and the Mughal prince were of the opinion that the occupation of the Fort will not be possible in less than one year.<sup>60</sup>

### **Propaganda about Occupation of Lohgarh Fort ?**

To claim that the Mughal army attacked and captured the Fort in just a few hours or a couple of days is just a joke. The truth is that the Mughals captured only one or two hills of the Fort of Lohgarh. To please the Emperor, they spread the news that they had captured the Lohgarh Fort. Kamwar Khan, Khafi Khan and Muhammed Qasim Khan, who claimed to be eyewitnesses to the battle, had said all this to propagate that the soldiers of the Mughal army were 'great fighters', the Mughal generals were 'great planners' and the Sikhs were 'no force against these mighty Mughals'. In fact, this Fort was so vast (in length and width), and surrounded with so many hazardous hills, that it could not have been fully captured even in 6-7 years.

What to talk of capturing the Lohgarh Fort, even the path between Sadhaura and Lohgarh could not have been covered by the Mughal army in this short time. There were 52 Fortresses between Sadhaura and Lohgarh, and, these were very strong posts; there were soldiers and cannons and other ammunition in each bastion and trench; hence

the Mughals were supposed to fight 52 battles before reaching just the foothills of Lohgarh Fort.

### **Why Did Banda Singh leave Lohgarh?**

After months of struggle made by the Mughals, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur realized that Mughal forces are confused and now they were trying to achieve only one objective i.e capturing of Sikh leaders and that they were no more interested in capturing Lohgarh. Moreover, like a game of chess, as a part of the strategy the players try to make the opponent concentrate the power at a particular point and once the power is concentrated at one point, the better player shifts the attack on the opponent's king from the other side. The same thing happened at Lohgarh Fort. When the Mughal forces got accumulated at Lohgarh Fort, under the banner of Emperor Bahadur Shah, and the forces failed to control and capture the Lohgarh Fort, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur very tactfully shifted the theatre of war from Lohgarh to Lahore. Understanding as stated above, we may conclude that within one or two days the Mughals forces could not have reached even near the advance fortress of Lohgarh. After his escape through the territory of Nahan (as stated by Mohammed Qasim Aurangabadi) Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, along with his 20 Sikh generals and army of 40000 armed horsemen, planned to attack Lahore, report 22 March 1711.<sup>61</sup>

### **Situation following the (so-called) 'Capturing' of the One or Two Hills of Lohgarh**

In this false "victory", the royal army captured five elephants, three big cannons, seventeen small cannons, seven carriage vehicles (on which guns are carried), one tent and a few silver poles from Lohgarh Fort, and about eight lakh rupees and a few *ashrafis* were recovered from Kundan, the zamindar of Lohgarh.<sup>62</sup> On the first of December all these things were brought to the Kampo village to be presented before the Emperor.<sup>63</sup>

The Emperor appreciated the role of *Jamadat-ul-Mulk* and Zulfiqar Khan *Bakhshi-ul-Mulk* in this battle; similarly, Zorawar Khan, Ranbaz

Khan and Sher Khan were also presented robes of honour.

On Sunday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1710, the Emperor held his court and gave awards to those who had played a special role in the battle against the Sikhs.<sup>64</sup> These awards included: robe of honor and a turban to *Jamadat-ul-Mulk* and *Bakhshi-ul-Mumalak*; special robe of honor to Mahabat Khan, Islam Khan Bahadur and Raja Udit Singh; Raja Chhatarsal was presented an aigrette and an elephant was given to Churamani Jatt.<sup>65</sup>

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, the Emperor issued an order strictly banning the Hindu officials of the *Darbar* from buying slaves or women or looting property of the rebels (*this right was confined to the Muslims only*); the Emperor further ordered that if any Hindu was already holding any slave or a woman, he must release them. It is very interesting that those who played major role in the battle of Lohgarh included a very large number of Hindus, but the Emperor was still inimical to the non-Muslims in spite of their contribution.

On the same day, the Emperor was told that the soldiers had dug out five hundred thousand rupees and three thousand four hundred ashrafis from Lohgarh Fort.<sup>66</sup>

### **Bahadur Shah Orders Massacre Of the Sikhs**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1710<sup>67</sup>, Bahadur Shah issued a blanket order of the massacre of the Sikhs. In his order, issued to Mahabat Khan (Bakhshi-ul-Mumalik), he asked him to issue commands to the governors of Shahjahanabad and the other provinces that if they find any *Nanak-prast* (Sikh) anywhere, should kill him instantly. Later, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1711, he issued orders that a Sikh should not be mentioned as Sikh but as 'Sikh-*Chor* (thief)'.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Fate Of the Ruler Of Nahan**

On Sunday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1710, the Emperor sent orders to Gian Chand (the ruler of Kumaon), Fateh Shah (the ruler of Garhwal) and Bhup Parkash (the ruler of Nahan) informing them about the escape of Banda Singh and commanding them to arrest and present him before

the Emperor Bahadur Shah. Bahadur Shah also dispatched Hamid Khan to chase Banda Singh; he also commanded him to arrest the ruler of Nahan in case Banda Singh is not captured by him (because Banda Singh had entered the territory of Nahan State).

When Hamid Khan reached Nahan, the ruler did not meet him as he knew about the wrath of the Emperor. At this Hamid Khan assured them that Mahabat Khan has given word that nothing will happen to Bhup Parkash (the ruler of Nahan).

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1710, Hamid Khan presented Bhup Parkash, the minor king of Nahan, before Bahadur Shah. He was accompanied by Khwaja Kutub-Ud-Din, Dianat Rao and Uma Pandit. Bhup Parkash presented one hundred one *mohars* and several birds of prey, including four falcons, five *jurra*, nine *kitash* and five hundred *jadwar*<sup>69</sup> to the Emperor. In return, the Emperor presented him a robe, and ordered that he will remain in the custody of the royal court.<sup>70</sup>

The next day he was offered release in case he could get Banda Singh arrested.<sup>71</sup> The Emperor sent a message to his (minor ruler's) mother asking her to exchange her son by presenting Banda Singh. At this Bhup Parkash's mother arrested 35 Sikhs and dispatched them to the Emperor. The Emperor ordered the killing of these Sikhs but refused to release Bhup Parkash till Banda was arrested.

Khafi Khan reports that on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1711, the Emperor puts Bhup Parkash and Gulab Singh Bakhshi (a companion of Banda Singh arrested from Lohgarh) in a big iron cage and dispatched them to Delhi. On the 20<sup>th</sup> Of March 1711 the Emperor ordered that both of them should be interned in Qila Salimgarh (a Fort on the backside of the Lal Qila, especially reserved for prominent prisoners) and a receipt (of the arrival of the prisoners) given by the incharge of the Fort, be also presented before him the (Emperor). (*Later, the mother of the ruler of Nahan approached the Rajput rulers of Jaipur and Jodhpur and requested them to use their influence for the release of Bhup Parkash, but they told her that they could not do anything and he would be released only when Banda Singh was arrested*).

On 17 March 1711, the Emperor sent command to Mahabat Khan

to put Bhup Parkash in the thorny cage that had been made for Banda Singh. Mahabat Khan submitted before the Emperor that Bhup Parkash was innocent and Banda Singh had already sneaked out of the territory of Nahan. At this the Emperor said 'if you do not punish him, all the hill rulers will become Sikhs. You must punish him'. Mahabat Khan again pleaded that the nails inside are sharp and hard and Bhup Parkash would die as soon as he put into the cage. Even this could not change the callous mind of the Emperor and he said 'in case the Raja dies, he will surely go to hell'. After this Mahabat Khan did not plead any more, and, in compliance of the Emperor's command, he put Bhup Parkash into the cage, but before that he asked his servants to bend the nails, so that they might not inflict wounds to Bhup Parkash.<sup>72</sup>

Pancholi Jagjiwan Das gives a different story. According to him, when Bhup Parkash and his Diwan (minister) reached there (before the Emperor), Khan Khanan asked them, "where is Banda Singh"? At this the minister said Banda Singh had gone out of their State. Reacting to this Khan Khanan said that was telling lies and he insulted him. He (Diwan) was handcuffed, his feet were fettered and an iron belt was put around his neck and he was put into a cage. Raja Bhup Parkash too was unarmed and he was interned in a small tent; and, soldiers were posted to keep a watch on him. Pancholi Jagjiwan Das further says that Raja Chhatarsaal too had assured Raja Bhup Parkash that he will not be harmed. But, when Chhatarsaal saw that the Emperor has impressed Bhup Parkash, he left the camp of the Emperor and returned to his own country.<sup>73</sup>

According to Diwan Bhikhari Das when Raja Nahan reached there Khan Khanan asked him where is Banda Singh, the Raja said 'I don't know. My Diwan (minister) is a Sikh of the Guru, he might have knowledge of the Banda Singh's whereabouts'. At this the minister was arrested and badly beaten. His survival was in danger. The next day, the Emperor said, 'You will find nothing by beating the minister; instead arrest Raja of Nahan and tell him that if he does not present Banda Singh, his State will be destroyed.'<sup>74</sup>

On 22 January 1711, when the Emperor was near Sadhaura, a

messenger brought the news that Raja of Nahan's mother had captured Banda Singh and she was on her way to present him to the Emperor. She was about 12 kos (about 45 kilometers) from the royal camp. At this the Emperor commanded that Mahabat Khan should go and bring them to his presence. The Emperor sent a message to Mahbat Khan to put Banda Singh in the cage and his wife should be brought in a chariot. On 24 January, the Emperor ordered that Hindu style ornaments worth rupees one hundred thousand should be made for the mother of Raja Nahan (as an award for arresting Banda Singh).<sup>75</sup> Though, later, the news of the arrest of Banda Singh proved to be false.

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### **Endnotes**

1. Entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, also *Tazkira-i-Salatin Chugatta*.
2. Palanquin was a symbol of privilege and aristocracy.
3. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 25.2.1710.
4. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 23.4.1710.
5. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 5.5.1710.
6. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 10.5.1710.
7. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.5.1710.
8. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.5.1710.
9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 20.5.1710.
10. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 24.5.1710.
11. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 27.5.1710.
12. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 28.5.1710.
13. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 5.6.1710.
14. In *Muntkhab-ul-Lubab*.
15. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 22.6.1710.
16. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 1.7.1710.
17. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 2.7.1710.
18. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 8.7.1710.
19. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 23.7.1710.
20. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 25.7.1710.
21. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 14.8.1710.
22. *Ibid.*

23. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 26.8.1710
24. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 28.8.1710
25. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 29.8.1710
26. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 29.9.1710.
27. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 2.10.1710
28. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 14.10.1710
29. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, vol. II, p. 658.
30. Now, not even a single brick of this Fort-like inn can be found there.
31. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 15.10.1710.
32. *Ibid.*, Page 99.
33. Khafi Khan, *op.cit.*, pp 669-70, Kamvar Khan, *op.cit.*, p. 352. Also *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 20.10.1710.
34. Ganda Singh, *Banda Singh Bahadur*, p 188.
35. Muzaffar Alam; *The Crisis of empire in Mughal North India*, p. 169
36. Amarjit Singh (editor), *Revisiting Banda Singh Bahadur and his times*, Key Note by J.S. Grewal, p. XXXVI.
37. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 16.11.1710.
38. Kamwar Khan, *Tazkira Salatin Chgatta*, p. 103 of translation by Ali Nadeem Rizvi.
39. Pancholi Jagjiwan Das's letter to the ruler of Jaipur, dated 26 December 1710, Serial No 1, Arzdaashat No 195. 9 (quoted in *Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon).
40. In *Tazkira Salatin Chugatta*
41. Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, (edited by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon), pp 34-37.
42. Muzaffar Alam *The Crisis of empire in Mughal North India*, p 163.
43. Balwant Singh Dhillon, *Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur, Vakil Rep No. 2, dated Jan. 19, 1711.*
44. Khafi-Khan, quoted by Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. VII. p.454.
45. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 28-10-1711.
46. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 15-10-1710
47. Chhatarsal was in direct line of Raja Rudar Partap Dev. Rudar Partap's grandson had murdered Abu Fazal, a minister of Akbar. Chhatarsal was the son of Champat Rai, fifth in direct line of Rudar Partap. In 1671, Chhatarsal, as a boy, was the chief of a small unit of just 25 horsemen. He worked hard and became a prominent fighter. Later, on the 21st of January 1714, Farrukhsiyar granted him a *mansab* of six thousand *zaat* and four

thousand horsemen, a very high status for a non-Muslim. At the time of his death, he was the master of half of eastern Bundelkh and.

48. Khafi Khan, *op.cit.*, Vol II, pp 671-72.
49. Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 40-43.
50. The two warriors who fought so bravely that they are quoted as the greatest fighters of the history/mythology.
51. Elliot & Dowson, *op. cit.*, vol 7, p 423.
52. Khafi Khan, *op.cit.* Vol. II, pp. 669-670.
53. *Tazkira Salatin Chugatta*, p. 153.
54. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, vol II, p. 111, Khafi Khan. *Op. cit.*, Vol I, p 671.
55. Khafi Khan, *op. cit.*, Vol II, p 669-70, Elliot & Dowson, *History of India as told by its Historians*, Vol 7, p. 423-24, *Tazkira Salatin Chugatta*, p 153.
56. Elliot & Dowson, *op.cit.* Vol 7, p. 555-56.
57. *Khan Khanan* took Bahadur Shah's castigation to his heart and became despondent. This made him mentally sick and he was confined to bed. He, however, continued to move along with the Emperor's caravan. After about two month's illness, he died at village Badhauri (near Sadhaura). *Khan Khanan* had a *mansab* of seven thousand horsemen, out of which five thousand was double horses, the highest *mansab* at that time. He had, by then, obtained awards of about ten million rupees from the royal court.
58. Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 34-37 (edited by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon).
59. Elliot & Dowson, *op.cit.*, Vol VII, p 424.
60. Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 34-37 (edited by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon).
61. *Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur* (edited by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon), Vakil Report No. 351, dated 6 March 1711.
62. Khafi Khan, *op.cit.*, p 672-73.
63. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 1.12.1710.
64. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 3.12.1710
65. This Churamani Jatt, earlier, had been a companion of Tara Azam (the brother of Bahadur Shah). But, after his defeat and death at the hands of Bahadur Shah, he plundered Tara Azam's treasure and joined the camp of the latter.
66. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 6 December 1710.
67. In some papers the date has been mentioned as 30 November 1710 also.



The difference is due to usage of Julian and Gregorian calenders.

68. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 26 March 1711
69. *Jurra*, *kitash* and *jadwar* are all birds of prey.
70. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.12.1710
71. Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, p 37 (edited by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon).
72. Letter written by Bhikhari Das to the ruler of Jaipur, on 17 March 1711. Serial No 13, Vakil Report No 45. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
73. Letter written by Pancholi Jagjiwan Das to the ruler of Jaipur, dated 26 December 1711, Serial No 1, Arzdaasht No 195. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
74. Letter of Diwan Bhikhari Das to the ruler of Jaipur, dated 10 Janury 1711, Serial No 2, Vakil Report No 21. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
75. Letter of Diwan Bhikhari Das to the ruler of Jaipur, dated 27 January 1711, Serial No 3, Vakil Report No 25. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon), also *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, entry of 22 Janury 1711.

## The Emperor Leads Campaign Against the Sikhs

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On the 1st January 1711, Mohammed Amin Khan reached Sadhaura and told the Emperor that he had brought four cartloads of the heads of the (slain) Sikhs. He also made a complaint against Shamas Khan of Sultanpur Lodhi (he was angry with Shamas Khan because the latter had earned the credit of occupying Sarhind).<sup>1</sup>

One day, Bahadur Shah came to know about the Banda Singh's presence at Chamba. He decided to dispatch a unit of his army to confirm the news, and, attack Chamba if necessary. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1711, Bahadur Shah presented a robe of honor to Hamid Khan and appointed him general of a five thousand strong army to chase Banda Singh. On 6<sup>th</sup> of March, Mahabat Khan (*Bakhshi-ul-Mulk*) too was sent to chase the Sikh army; he was given command of fourteen thousand soldiers.<sup>2</sup>

Bahadur Shah had sent several thousand soldiers against the Sikhs but he, still, was not satisfied. Hence, on March 14, he proclaimed that he would stay in Lahore, from where he himself would monitor the actions against the Sikhs. He sent messages to all the government, reporters and officials to daily report to him about the movements of the Sikhs. Those who sent regular reports included: Oma Pandit, Askar Rao, Abdul Rehman, Abdul Rahim, Altaf Khan, Iradatmand Khan, Shankar Rao, Kesho Rao, Jagjiwan Das, Dianat Rao, Partit Rao and Bhagwati Das etc (all these names are found in the entries of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mulla*). All these were the official reporters who had, regularly, have been sending reports from Lahore, Sarhind, Gujrat, Delhi, Jammu, Ajmer and other places.<sup>3</sup> The Emperor used to give presents to those who would give him some valuable information or the news of the death or

losses of the Sikhs. These reports helped the Emperor to take action and/or make necessary changes in his strategy.

On 20 March 1711, the Emperor presented robes of honor to Hindu feudal Churhamani Jatt and Kishan Singh Naroka, and attached them to Mahabat Khan in an expedition against the Sikhs. On 22 March the Emperor left Sadhaura for Lahore. On 24 March the Emperor was told that Banda Singh has occupied territory between Guru-Da-Chakk (Amritsar) and Shahdara, the outskirts of Lahore (on the other side of river Ravi).<sup>4</sup>

On 18 April 1711, the Emperor was told that the Sikhs have taken away the animals (buffaloes and cows) of the Muslims. Some of those present there opined that this action was done by the Vanjaras, who were the companions of Banda Singh. Some of them believed that it was done by the people of Nahan (Sirmaur) State.<sup>5</sup>

#### **The Emperor Plans a Cantonment at Ropar**

On 22 April 1711, when the Emperor was near the Satluj river, he expressed his wish to celebrate the fifth anniversary of his crowning as Emperor. He announced the construction of a big platform for celebrations of the event at Ropar.

The Emperor had issued this order, but, in his heart of hearts he was under constant fear of Banda Singh. Though, the Mughals had wrested control of Kunjpura, Thanesar, Shahbad, Sarhind, Sadhura etc. from the Sikhs, but the Emperor was not at peace. The Emperor had been given the impression that the Mughal army had occupied the Lohgarh Fort (whereas they had occupied only the first hill and Sitarganh). The Sikhs were still present in the upper hills of Lohgarh as well as in the villages around Lohgarh and Sadhaura as well as in the forest. The Emperor received reports that the Sikhs were openly moving in Sadhura, Lohgarh an even around Sarhind. Some Hindus were co-operating with them, but the Muslims were living under fear.

The Emperor had been getting the reports that Banda Singh had subjugated the hill rulers. All this created awe in the heart of the Emperor.

On 22 April 1711, the Emperor held a meeting of the princes and the *umraa* (the Muslim aristocracy) accompanying him and told them that he had decided to establish a cantonment at Ropar. He asked them to build their mansions there. He gave a new name, Jahangirpur, to the city of Ropar. He told them that Lahore and Shahjahanpur (Delhi) were at an equal distance from Ropar. By establishing a cantonment there, the passage to the hills would be closed. Then neither the hill rulers will be able to help Banda Singh nor would Banda Singh be able to escape into the hills.<sup>6</sup>

This clearly indicates that the Emperor believed that Banda Singh was a great force and it was not easy to defeat him. He knew that Banda Singh's exit from Lohgarh was a temporary action and as soon as he learnt that the royal army had left Dabar area, he would come back. The state of the Emperor Bahadur Shah was like that of Aurangzeb, when he had to shift his headquarters from Delhi and Agra to Aurangabad.

### **Rumour of Banda Singh's Plan to Occupy Delhi**

On 20 May 1711, Bhagwan Das, a news reporter, sent the news to Bahadur Shah that Banda Singh had returned to Batala and was resting at Achal (now Achal Watala), about 6 km from Batala. Another informer reported that a Sikh named Ram Singh had arrived from the hills of Jammu, along with seven thousand soldiers, to join Banda Singh.

A news reporter informed Bahadur Shah that if any Hindu or even a Muslim approached Banda Singh, he was admitted into the Sikh army. He (Banda Singh) has told them (the Sikh soldiers) that if the Mughal army had marched towards them, they should fight; otherwise proceed towards Shahjahanabad (Delhi) via Lakkhi Jungle and Ajmer and then occupy the Capital. This news frightened Bahadur Shah.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, Bahadur Shah appointed Issa Khan as Deputy Chief for Bist- Doab. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, Bahadur Shah was present at village Hoshiarpur (the headquarters of Hoshiar Khan). Here, Raja Jagat Singh of Kumaon presented him the heads of 25 Sikhs slain by his army. The Emperor gave him an award and asked him to throw these heads at

the crossing.

### **Battle Between Sikhs and the Mughal Army Near Pasrur**

In the last week of May 1711, the Sikh army was present in the hills near Pursarur (now Pasrur). On the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, Mohammed Amin Khan (*Chain Bahadur*) and Ghazi Khan (*Rustam-i-Jang*), who had been specially deputed by Bahadur Shah to annihilate the Sikh army, received information about the presence of the Sikhs near Pasrur.<sup>7</sup> They immediately left for Pasrur and reached there in the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, covering 30 *kos* (about 100 km) in less than two days. The next day a fierce battle was fought between the Mughal army and the Sikhs. Isa Khan (son of Daulat Muin) too joined the Mughal side. His elephant was wounded in this battle. The battle continued for a few hours, but, the Sikhs, realizing that their (Sikhs') number was too small against the huge Mughal army. They fled towards the hills in the territory of Raja Dhruv Dev of Jammu.

When Dhruv Dev came to know about the Sikhs' entry into his territory, he sent all his army to attack the Sikhs; Azmatulla Khan, the chief of Rajauri, too dispatched all his army against the Sikhs. The Sikhs had no option but to proceed further towards high hills. Another group of the Sikhs had to fight battles at Kathua and Parol where they suffered heavy losses. In all these battles about 500 Sikhs lost their lives. A rumour reached the Mughal court that Banda Singh too had been killed in one of these battles. At this the Mughal officials began searching the dead bodies of the Sikhs but they could not find Banda's body; soon, they realized that they had got the wrong information.

The news of this battle reached Bahadur Shah on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June. He was so happy at the victory of the Mughal forces that he ordered the grant of a robe of honour, along with a sword studded with diamonds and an emblem (with lions and fish signs on it) for Mohammed Amin Khan. He also awarded a robe of honour to Ghazi Khan along with a precious sword and an emblem (with horse and fish signs on it). He also sent both of them a message to see him (Emperor) and receive the prizes. Bahadur Shah sent awards, including a sword, to Isa Khan too.<sup>8</sup>

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1711, Bahadur Shah received the report that Raja Dhruv Dev of Jammu and Sayyad Azmatulla Khan of Rajauri was chasing the Sikhs. Mohammed Amin Khan and Ghazi Khan too were with them. All these four armies had surrounded the Sikh soldiers from three sides. The Emperor was given the hope that Banda Singh would be captured very soon. But, Bahadur Shah's hopes and joy were shattered when he learnt that the Sikhs had once more escaped and moved towards Wazirabad. Here, Azhar Khan, the Chief of Wazirabad attacked the Sikhs with all his forces and compelled the Sikhs to flee from that area too; when Bahadur Shah received the news of the action of Azhar Khan, he sent him a robe of honour.<sup>9</sup>

At that time Bahadur Shah was proceeding towards Lahore. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of June he was in the Fort of Bajwara (at that time Hoshiarpur was a small village and Bajwara was a major town). He spent a couple of days at Bajwara and then again began his journey to Lahore. On the 13<sup>th</sup> 1711 of June, Bahadur Shah ordered enrollment of two thousand infantry at a salary of four rupees per month, and two thousand horsemen at a salary of twenty-five rupees per month, and, ordered that these four thousand soldiers would chase the Sikhs.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1711, Bahadur Shah received the reports that the Sikhs were moving towards Sadhaura and their goal was to recapture Lohgarh Fort. The Sikhs had taken the route via the hills, he had been told. Bahadur Shah sent an order to prince Jahandar Khan and Isa Khan (Deputy Army Chief of Bist Doab Jalandhar) to march towards Sadhaura and crush the Sikhs. Both the groups of the royal soldiers reached Sadhaura but found no Sikh there. At that time, the Sikhs were still camping in the hills; Banda Singh too was with them. The Sikhs had in fact themselves spread the rumour as Banda Singh wished to divide the strength of the Mughal army rumour.

When Bahadur Shah received the news of the failure of Sadhaura mission, he became desperate. He decided to stay in Lahore and personally monitor the anti-Sikh campaign. When the soldiers found that Bahadur Shah was scared of Banda Singh and the Sikh army, they too got disheartened. The rumours and whispers that '*Banda Singh has*

come, *Banda Singh is coming*' began lowering the morale of the Mughal soldiers. The situation was so frightening and scary that simply the mention of the name of Banda Singh would turn the faces of the Mughal officials pale.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 1711, Bahadur Shah received a message from Ghazi Khan that Banda Singh was now in the reach of his grip, hence more forces had to be despatched towards his camp so that he (Banda Singh) may be captured or killed. Ghazi Khan already had the command of two thousand soldiers, so Bahadur Shah did not answer his letter. When Bahadur Shah received Ghazi Khan's message, Mohammed Amin Khan was sitting near him and he conveyed to the Emperor that Ghazi Khan was only after getting more money, weapons and ammunition.<sup>10</sup>

Bahadur Shah continued his march towards Lahore. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 1711, he reached near Kahnuwan. Here, he decided to spend a few days for hunting in the nearby forest. His next stop was at Kalanaur.<sup>11</sup> On the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, he (The Emperor) was present in Kalanaur where he held his court and discussed the Sikh affairs with his generals and courtiers. The next day, he again began his journey towards Lahore.<sup>12</sup>

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### Endnotes

1. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 1.1. 1711.
2. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 6.3.1711.
3. These names are found in different entries of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*.
4. Letter written by Pancholi Jagjiwan Das to the ruler of Jaipur, dated 24 March 1711, Serial No 16, Vakil Report No 48. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
5. Letter written by Bhkhari Das to the ruler of Jaipur, dated 18 April 1711, Serial No 20, Vakil Report No 51. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
6. Letter written by Bhikhari Das to the ruler of Jaipur, dated 26 April 1711, Serial No 21, Vakil Report No 52. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
7. In ancient times, the name of this town was Porus-pur, in the name of king Porus (330 O.E.) which, later, became Pursrur and finally Pasrur.

8. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 4.6.1711.
9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 7.6.1711.
10. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 11.7.1711.
11. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 19.7.1711.
12. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 30.7.1711.



## **Banda Singh After Leaving Lohgarh**

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### **Banda Singh Subjugates Hill States**

After leaving Lohgarh Banda Singh did not take rest. Having discussed the situation with the senior leaders, Banda Singh decided that for the time being they should not launch any action in the Punjab; so, they decided to move towards the hills. Their first action was an attack on Bilaspur, the capital of the Kehlur State. Ajmer Chand, the ruler of that State had attacked Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur Sahib and Nirmohgarh several times between 1700 and 1705; he had also instigated and even paid to the Mughal army to attack the Guru. It was he who was responsible for Guru's exit from Anandpur Sahib in December 1705. In fact, most of the calamity of the Sikhs was as a result of Ajmer Chand's actions. So, like Wazir Khan, he too deserved severe punishment.

Before attacking Bilaspur, Banda Singh sent a message to Ajmer Chand to accept subordination of the Sikhs; but Ajmer Chand was too haughty to bother about this; instead, he contacted the Governors of Kangra and Jammu. They sent some soldiers and ammunition to help him. Further, Ajmer Chand Fortified his capital. When Banda Singh came to know about the Ajmer Chand's preparations he (Banda Singh) decided to teach him a lesson. The Bilaspur city, then<sup>1</sup>, was surrounded by a lake on one side and high hills on the other sides; but, still, it was not stronger than Sadhaura, Sarhind, and Samana etc., which had fallen to the Sikhs; secondly, the Sikhs were not mercenaries; they had been fighting for the sake of their Guru and righteousness.

When the Sikh army reached near Bilaspur, the hill soldiers attacked them with guns and arrows from the tops of the hills, but, the Sikhs braved all this, and, gave a befitting reply. Soon, the Bilaspur soldiers realized that they were no match to the brave Sikhs, hence they decided to surrender. Thirteen hundred hill soldiers had died in this battle. Instead of cremating them, they were buried in a big ditch. Some Sikhs too lost their lives in this battle.

Some scholars question the decision of Banda Singh in accepting the apology of Ajmer Chand and forgiving him; they assert that the crimes and sins of Ajmer Chand were no less than that of Wazir Khan, and, he deserved death as the minimum punishment. Some others believe that though Ajmer Chand had attacked Anandpur to get the city vacated, he was not responsible for the killing of any member of Guru Family; whereas Wazir Khan had killed two younger sons and the mother of Guru Gobind Singh.

#### **Robe of Honour For the Ruler of Mandi**

After defeating Kehlur State, Banda Singh sent messages to the other hill States asking them to declare their loyalty to the Sikhs and send their tributes; all the hill rulers, one by one, surrendered. Raja Sidh Sen of Mandi was the first to surrender; in fact, this State had been a part of the Sikh world since the time of Guru Nanak. When Banda Singh visited Mandi he was given a royal welcome; in return, he presented a robe of honour to the ruler of Mandi and assured him of complete assistance in the situation of a crisis in his state.

Similarly, the rulers of Haripur and Guler too immediately accept the subordination of Banda Singh. The Nahan ruler was already helping the Sikhs, and, it was due to his sympathy with the Sikhs that Bahadur Shah had arrested him. *(Later, Nahan ruler had changed sides and became an associate of the Mughals).*

#### **'Arrest' of Banda Singh at Kullu**

Kullu was the next target of Banda Singh. According to a popular story, he was hoodwinked and arrested by Raja Maan Singh of Kullu who put

him into an iron cage with an intention of presenting him before Bahadur Shah. There are two popular narrations as to how he achieved freedom. According to one view, when the ruler of Mandi came to know about Banda Singh's arrest, he sent his army to attack Kullu; but before it could reach there, the Sikh army had already got Banda Singh released. And, according to another story, Banda Singh had magical power and he, along with his cage, flew from Kullu.<sup>2</sup> There is no mention of any such arrest or any such event in the Persian sources or the Mughal records. It was such an important news that it must have been celebrated by the Mughals (even if it was not a success). The records '*Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla'* don't refer to it even slightly or indirectly).

#### **Marriage of Banda Singh at Chamba**

After vanquishing Kullu, Banda Singh compelled Jaswan Siba and Nurpur to pay him tribute. His next major action was an attack on Chamba. Raja Udey Singh of Chamba did not oppose him and accepted him as his 'master'. Udey Singh was so impressed by the charismatic personality of Banda Singh that he requested him to marry his daughter. (*When Banda Singh was arrested in December 1715 at Gurdas Nangal, this Rajput wife Sushil Kaur was with him. She had given birth to Ajay Singh, who was butchered before the eyes of Banda Singh on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1716, at Delhi*).

#### **Killing of the Chiefs of Jammu and Sultanpur Lodhi**

Banda Singh left Lohgarh on 1st December 1710. By March 1711, he had again re-organized the Sikh army; he spent some days at Riasi (Kashmir) and planned for further action. In the first week of March 1711, he reached near Raipur, a border town of Jammu province. The Sikh army rested on the hills between Raipur and Rasulpur. During those days, Shamas Khan, the former *Faujdar* of Sultanpur Lodhi too was on a visit to his uncle Bayzid Khan (*Faujdar* of Jammu). When they received the information that the Sikh army was moving into the territory of Jammu province, they decided to attack it. They were in high spirits and hoped to defeat the Sikhs because they were proud for having

defeated the Sikhs at Rahon and Sarhind in 1710; and because of their earlier victory over the Sikhs, they led their army and set out in search of the Sikhs. Soon they reached the place where the Sikhs were taking a rest and made a sudden attack. The Sikhs had not expected an attack and hence they were not prepared for this; so, they did not waste their power for a combat and fled the place. Soon, the Sikhs found a new shelter and a better strategic place. On the other hand, Shamas Khan and Bayzid Khan decided to chase the Sikhs in the hills because they were well familiar with that area. When they had gone deep into the hills, the Sikhs found that Shamas Khan and Bayzid Khan were not having much force with them; so, they made a sudden attack and put the chasers on defence. In this battle, Shamas Khan was killed and Bayzid Khan<sup>3</sup> was badly wounded (he too died after three days). Their dead bodies were taken to Kasur for burial. In this battle, the Sikhs captured a large number of weapons and horses. News of this incident reached the Emperor on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1711, when he was near Rupa.<sup>4</sup>

Bahadur Shah was so much serious about his campaign against the Sikhs that he began encouraging and alluring the generals, officials, *chowdhrys* (village aristocracy) and others to participate in war against the Sikhs. He began distributing awards, robes of honour, *mansabs* and *jagirs* to those who would make even minor contribution in war against the Sikhs. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, he granted robes of honour to the Hindu feudal Churamani Jatt and Kishan Singh Naroka and asked them to join Mahabat Khan in hunting down the Sikhs. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, he appointed Saif Khan as the chief of Sultanpur Lodhi and increased his *mansab* by six hundred horses. He gave the charge of Lakkhi Jungle area to Sultan Khan and also increased his *mansab* to fourteen hundred horsemen; he was also given a grant of rupees eight hundred thousand *daams* (i.e. two hundred thousand rupees) to fight against the Sikhs.<sup>5</sup>

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1711, Bahadur Shah received an intelligence that the Sikh army, led by Banda Singh, was moving towards Lahore; Bahadur Shah ordered Mahabat Khan to rush after the Sikhs. He (Mahabat Khan) led an army of fourteen thousand soldiers to chase the Sikhs. Almost at the same time, Bahadur Shah was informed that the number of the

Sikh soldiers swelled to twenty-five thousands.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1711, when Bahadur Shah reached near Banur, he was told that *'the Sikhs have taken shelter near Beas river, about 40-45 km from Lahore, and they have built a new Fort too. The Sikhs have established their police posts in a belt of about 25 km long and 10 km wide area around river Beas and the landowners are fully co-operating with them.'*<sup>6</sup>

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, Bahadur Shah was told that the Bilaspur ruler had become a friend of the Sikhs and he had assured the Sikhs that if the Mughal forces chased the Sikhs, he would grant them safe heaven and would stop the Mughals from entering his territory.<sup>7</sup>

### **Sikhs Army again Captures Batala and Kalanaur**

In March 1711, after the killings of the army chiefs of Jammu and Sultanpur, the Sikhs marched towards Kalanaur and Batala. Batala was a major trade centre and Kalanaur too was a town of the rich and the affluent. When the elite Muslims heard about the Banda Singh's march towards Batala, they took away their valuables and fled to Lahore along with their families.

During those days, two prominent Muslim personalities, Sayyad Mohammed Fazal Qadri and Sheikh Ahmed (also known as *Sheikh-Ul-Hind*), had their residence in Batala. Sayyad Mohammed Fazal Qadri, who had established a big Muslim religious institute in the town, was not in favour of fighting against the Sikh army because it would have harmed the activities of his institute; but, on the other hand Sheikh Ahmed wanted to give a fight to Banda Singh.

Banda Singh reached the village Achal, about 6 km, from Batala, on one evening and rested there for a few hours. The next morning, before it was dawn, the Sikh soldiers reached Hathi gate, the main entrance of the city of Batala. Sheikh Ahmed, along with a big force of soldiers as well as some ordinary young Muslims, in the name of holy war, was already present outside the walls of the city. A fierce battle was fought between both armies, but within a couple of hours Sheikh Ahmed was killed and all his followers fled from the field. After this, the Sikhs broke

open the gate of the city and entered it. The Sikh army plundered the treasury, the government offices, the houses of the government officials and other affluent pro-government men. The Sikh soldiers also plundered the house of the corrupt and unjust Qazi Abdul Haq and later burnt the whole street to ashes. Banda Singh established a Sikh post in the city and appointed new officials to the government positions.

After capturing Batala, the Sikh army marched to Kalanaur. When the Sikhs reached near the town, Kalanaur's chief Sohrab Khan and Kanungo Santokh Rai realized that they would not be able to face them and fled from the town without fighting. Ankh Rai, the brother of Santokh Rai, fought for a short while and he too fled from the battlefield. After the occupation of the town by the Sikhs, most of the Muslim elite too fled to Lahore.

After capturing the town, Banda Singh appointed Sikhs as officials. He did not disturb any ordinary resident of the town and declared: *'My war is against injustice and cruelty. No innocent or common person shall have any problem.'* This declaration gave a sigh of relief to the people and they began sympathizing and co-operating with the Sikhs. Banda Singh also offered the Muslims jobs in his army. He assured them that they would have full freedom to practise their religion (*Namaz* and *Azaan*) during their duties. Within a few days about five thousand Muslims joined the army of Banda Singh.

On the other hand, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1711, Bahadur Shah appointed Ashraf Khan as army-chief of Haryana (now a part of district Hoshiarpur) and ordered him to chase Banda Singh. The same day, he also appointed Aatish Khan as the in charge of cannons, and, sent him to cis-Satluj area, on an expedition against the Sikhs.<sup>8</sup>

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1711, Bahadur Shah reached Rupar and he stopped here for some time before crossing Satluj river. There, he received a report about the condition of Kalanaur from Bhagwati Das news reporter. It said:

*"On the 19th (of Islamic month, i.e. 26.4.1711), the Nanak-worshipper (Banda Singh) is encamping in Kalanaur town. He (Banda Singh) has given a word that he won't create any problem for the Muslims. As a result,*

*whosoever Muslim joins him, he fixes his daily wages and salary and also takes care of that person. He has given permission for Khutba (religious sermons) and Namaz (religious prayers). As a result five thousand Muslims have joined the army of that rebel (Banda Singh). Having got right to Azaan and Namaaz, Muslims are feeling comfortable in the army of these rebels.*<sup>9</sup> [The non-Italic words are mine – Author].

Although the Emperor was getting the news of the losses of the Sikhs, he was still very much scared. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1711, he got the information from Kesho Rao that the Sikhs had established permanent posts between the area of Raavi and Beas rivers, and they had killed a very large number of *Pathan* generals and feudal.

Bahadur Shah was very much distressed for the loss of his generals. In such a situation, he went on encouraging and rewarding army generals, feudals and all others who would render him any help against the Sikhs. During this month (May 1711) he presented robes of honour to Kirpal Dev of Jammu, Daya Dhamman of Nurpur, Udit Singh Zamindar, Saadat Khan of Malerkotla, Zamindars of Talwara and 11 others; most of them were the Hindu rulers and feudals. Bahadur Shah sent robes for them through Sayyad Azmatullah Khan and also asked them to do more efforts for the arrest of Banda Singh.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1711, Bahadur Shah received reports that the Sikhs were present near Fatehbad (6 km from river Beas). On the other hand, having received information about the Sikhs, the chief of Fatehbad and Isa Khan (who was, later, appointed deputy chief) attacked them resulting in heavy losses on both sides.<sup>10</sup>

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1711, Bahadur Shah applauded the services rendered by Mohammed Amin Khan and presented him a robe of honour. He was given command of nine thousand soldiers to chase the Sikhs.<sup>11</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, Bahadur Shah received reports that Banda Singh was on the eastern side of river Beas, but when Banda Singh got the news of the advance of the royal army, he crossed even river Satluj and moved towards Lakkhi Jungle area.<sup>12</sup>

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1711, Bahadur Shah dispatched Mughal Begh Khan, Durlab Khan, Abdul Samad Khan and Inayat Khan (all the four

Zamindars of Talwan) on an expedition against the Sikhs. He also ordered Inam Wali Shah to join Mohammed Amin Khan's crusade against the Sikhs.<sup>13</sup> On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1711, Bahadur Shah sent Abdus Samad Khan (father of Zakaria Khan) too for chasing the Sikhs.<sup>14</sup>

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1711, Bhagwan Das news-reporter sent news that Banda Singh was present in village Alaab, 7 *kos* (i.e. About 22 km) from Beas river. When the royal forces tried to construct an improvised bridge of boats, the Sikhs showered a volley of arrows on them, hence they could not succeed in crossing the river.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1711, Bahadur Shah issued orders to supply 10 guns, 300 arrows, 50 *mounds* (about 1800 kg) gun powder, seven rifles and two thousand soldiers to Mohammed Amin Khan. He (Bahadur Shah) also sent him an amount of one hundred thousand rupees too.<sup>15</sup> Bahadur Shah also allowed Daulat Begh Khan, Saleh Khan and Fatehulla Khan, to join Mohammed Amin Khan. The same day Sarbrah Khan, Islam Khan Bahadur, Kulich Mohammed Khan, Ajnabi Khan Bahadur, Bakhshi-Ul-Mulk and Mirza Shah Niwaz Khan too were sent to chase the Sikhs.

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### Endnotes

1. The old Bilaspur forms Gobind Sagar Lake and a new town was established near that site.
2. The Sikh history too is replete with such hagiographic, gossip, fiction. The major share was contributed by Bhai Santokh Singh and Giani Gian Singh.
3. Bayzid Khan, the son of Sultan Ahmed Khan, had a *mansab* of one thousand horses and his nephew Shamas Khan, son of Pir Khan, had a *mansab* of five hundred horses. Shamas Khan was the former chief of Sultanpur. Bahadur Shah had removed him from his office and had reduced his *mansab* to four hundred only because he had plundered some residents of Nakodar. Bahadur Shah had also divested him of his title *Khitab Khani*; but, when Shamas Khan defeated the Sikhs at Rahon and Sarhind, Bahadur Shah re-instated him to his earlier position. The writer of *M'asur-ul-Umra* mentions that Shamas Khan had fought against the Sikhs for 22 times. But, it was ill luck of Shamas Khan that within one month of his re-tatement, he, along with his uncle, was killed by the Sikhs.



4. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 23.4.1711.
5. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 2.4.1711.
6. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 7.4.1711.
7. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 15.4.1711
8. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 25.4.1711
9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 28.4.1711
10. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 28.4.1711
11. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 5.5.1711
12. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 9.5.1711.
13. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 14.5.1711.
14. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 15.5.1711.
15. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 19.5.1711.

## Death of Emperor Bahadur Shah

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### **Bahadur Shah Decides to Stay in Lahore**

Bahadur Shah reached Lahore in the evening of the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1711. As he was accompanied by a very large force he decided to put up his camps in the territory of Alawal village, instead of the Fort of Lahore. The eldest prince Azim-us-Shan put up his camps in village Awan. He created a defense of the carts of treasury and ammunition around his own tent. The second prince Muazz-ud-Din put up his camp near Parwezabad and prince Rafi-us-Shan near the Dharmu Bagh area. Mohammed Jahan Shah chose the plains of Shamir Khush. The eldest prince had 31 thousand soldiers and the rest three had 11 thousand soldiers each.<sup>1</sup>

By this time the Muslim residents of Lahore had been living under the fear of the Sikhs. Earlier, the Muslim priests had made an attempt to fight a *holy war* to quell the Sikh rebellion, but they were badly defeated. A very large number of their leaders lost their lives during their battle against the Sikhs. This created an atmosphere of awe and terror and an average Muslim dreaded even the simple mention of the possibility of a Sikh attack. But, now, as a huge royal army of about one hundred thousand soldiers, under the command of the Emperor himself, had reached Lahore, these Muslim clergy heaved a sigh of relief. One day, Sayyad Inayatullah, Sayyad Ataullah, Mohammed Taqi etc., the leaders of the Muslim holy war, went to have an audience with the Emperor and assured him of their complete help in his crusade against the Sikhs. Bahadur Shah had already got the information about their

woes; he consoled them and assured that he himself would be staying in Lahore and they should feel fully safe there. Having got assurance from the Emperor, these Muslim clergy re-assumed their mission against the Sikhs and their sympathizers. Several Sikhs, even though they had nothing to do with the Sikh army, were killed by these clergy. Several Sikh sympathizer Hindus too were hacked to death.

In Lahore, Bahadur Shah regularly received the latest information about Banda Singh and the Sikh army. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1711, he got the information that Banda Singh had reached near the bank of the river Beas and was likely to cross to *Majha* zone. At that time Mohammed Amin Khan was present in Kalanaur. Bahadur Shah sent a message to the Khan to cross the river and attack the Sikh column. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, Bahadur Shah was told that before the Khan could reach near the Sikh positions, Banda Singh and his six thousand companions had already escaped to the hills.

Now, Bahadur Shah began an action against the ordinary (non-soldier) Sikhs and their families and relatives too a very large number of Sikhs were arrested and killed; several Sikh houses were plundered. Those Muslims whose relatives had been killed during their 'holy war' against the Sikhs played a crucial role in getting the Sikhs traced, arrested and killed. Similarly, several Muslims joined this crusade with an intension to get awards and/or appreciation of the rulers. In order to prove their loyalty to the Muslims, even the Hindus of Lahore and other areas got several Sikhs arrested.

Bahadur Shah had issued a general order for the massacre of the Sikhs. This situation was misused by some fanatic Muslims against the Hindus too; some of them took revenge from them for their personal grudge against them and got them arrested by branding them the supporters/ sympathizers of the Sikhs. Some Muslim clergy began creating trouble for the Hindus by opposing even their religious ceremonies and rituals. One day, some Hindus were moving in a procession to a local Hindu temple in Lahore, to perform a ritual of worship of a mythical Hindu goddess, for the health of a Hindu boy (who had been attacked by small pox) who was the son of Shiv Singh,

an employee of Khan Khana.<sup>2</sup> The Hindus were also accompanied by a musical band. On seeing this, Viridi Begh, a fanatic Muslim, created a hue and cry that the Hindus, by exhibition of such un-Islamic show, were preaching *Kufar* (profanity).

Viridi Begh was successful in instigating the simple-minded Muslims and they joined him to oppose the Hindus; thousands of Muslims began attacking the Hindus; several of them (Hindus) were punched and plundered; a few Hindus lost their lives too; and cowardly Hindus suffered all this without any protest. The plight of the Hindus was reported to Bachan Singh Kachhwaha and Badan Singh Bundela (two Hindu generals) by a generous Muslim general who had come to Lahore, as a part of the army which had joined Bahadur Shah in his campaign against the Sikhs. These Hindu generals approached the Emperor and got issued an order for him to stop attacks on the Hindus.

Though the attacks on the Hindus were stopped, but the Sikhs still continued to be the targets of the Muslim fanatics; now, the fanatics Muslims began another propaganda that the Lahore riots had been caused by the Sikhs who had long beards. Bahadur Shah knew that the Sikhs did not cut/trim their beards so he issued an order asking the Hindus to shave their beards, so that they might not be mistaken as Sikhs. The Hindus obeyed this order and most of them shaved their beards the very next day. But, Yaar Mohammed Khan Kalandari, the *Faujdar* of the Delhi province gives another story; according to him, the Hindus had not shaved their beards willingly, in fact, the royal order for shaving their beards was forcibly implemented:

*"...royal order commanded that the beards of all the Hindus of the royal army should be shaved and an order be conveyed to all the provinces that no 'bedeen' (profane, i.e. non-Muslim) shall keep long beard and if such a person (non-Muslim) is found (with beard) his beard should be plucked. Hence, this order was proclaimed in all the royal provinces. In the royal camp, this order was implemented in such a manner that the monster-looking chiefs used to wander in the streets and the bazaars of the town, carrying basins of dirty water. They would insult anyone and shave his beard, snatch his turban and even take off his clothes. The Hindu employees*

*of the Emperor and the princes would appear before them only after shaving their beards...*" (The non-Italic text is mine- Author).

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1711, the Emperor sent two hundred thousand rupees to Mohammed Amin Khan as an advance grant for his expedition against the Sikhs.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1711, Bahadur Shah got information that Banda Singh had crossed Raavi and Beas rivers and was moving towards Rupar from where he intended to go to Lohgarh in order to establish himself in that Fort.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, Bahadur Shah got news that Banda Singh had already crossed Satluj river along with four thousand Sikh soldiers on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1711. The Emperor sent a message to Mohammed Amin Khan to march towards Keeratpur. The Emperor also dispatched two thousand additional soldiers to join Mohammed Amin; but due to flooding in the river Mohammed Amin had to wait on the bank of the river, which he finally crossed on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1713. When Banda Singh got this news, he rushed towards the hills and entered the territory of Kullu State.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1711, Bahadur Shah appointed Hoshiar Khan (son of Iradat Khan) as the army chief for Jalandhar-Doab and despatched him on an expedition against the Sikhs. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, the Emperor received a letter from Mohammed Amin Khan in which he had written: 'the Sikhs attack our camps at night, please send five thousand horsemen to chase the Sikhs'; the very next day, Bahadur Shah ordered five thousand soldiers and three hundred trained gunmen to march towards Rupar, under the command of Hoshiar Khan, the army-chief of Jalandhar.<sup>3</sup>

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1711 Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, the new Governor of Sarhind, along with one thousand of his best-trained soldiers, too joined Mohammed Amin Khan, in the expedition against the Sikhs. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, the Emperor received reports that royal soldiers had fought a four-hour long, fierce battle against the Sikhs near Hari Jungle; several royal soldiers had lost their lives in this battle.

### **Killing of Forty Sikhs (Vanjaras and others)**

As mentioned earlier, in December 1710, the Mughal Emperor had issued an order for the annihilation of the Sikhs. The Muslim officials, clergy and feudals, and even the Hindu elite too, acted to translate this order into action. In the execution of this order, the chief of Multan arrested Forty Sikhs (most of them Vanjaras and Bhattas) from different parts of the province and sent them to Lahore to be presented before the Emperor. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1711, the Emperor ordered that they should be converted to Islam, and, if they refuse they should be buried alive; but, none of them agreed to renounce his faith; hence they were buried alive near the camp of the Emperor, in the village of Alawal.<sup>4</sup> These Sikhs included: Sahij Singh Chauhan, Dogar Singh, Hira Singh, Dyal Singh, Keso Singh Bhatt, Desa Singh Bhatt, Narbud Singh Bhatt, Tara Singh Bhatt, Sewa Singh Bhatt, Deva Singh Bhatt, Jetha Singh Chauhan, Jetha Singh Parmar, Hari Singh, Rup Singh, Parsan Singh Rathore, Anup Singh, Kehar Singh, Channan Singh, Dharam Singh etc.<sup>5</sup>

### **Battle of Bilaspur**

In December 1711, the Sikh army entered the territory of Bilaspur State; Banda Singh was not among them. Mohammed Amin Khan got the information about the presence of the Sikhs and he led a big force towards Bilaspur. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, they reached near the river Barsana and put up their camps on the bank of the river.

The next day, the Sikhs made a sudden attack on them; a fierce battle of guns and arrows was fought between the Sikhs and the royal forces. Several Mughals and about 500 Sikhs were killed in this battle. These included Keso Singh (son of Chitar Singh) and Bagh Singh (son of Udey Singh), both the grandsons of Bhai Mani Singh. After the sunset, the Sikhs crossed the river and moved towards Bilaspur.

In this battle, both the parties suffered almost equal losses but the Mughal messengers and reporters informed the Emperor that they (the Mughals) had won the battle; Mohammed Amin Khan got heads of the 500 Sikhs severed from their dead-bodies so that the same may be presented before the Emperor in order to earn his appreciations. On

the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, Bahadur Shah inspected these severed heads and ordered that they should be exhibited in the open so that it might create a terror among the sympathisers of the Sikhs.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1712, the Emperor ordered the erection of minarets of these heads; the same day he ordered *mujra* (dance of the prostitutes) to celebrate the 'victory' over the Sikhs. Bahadur Shah, on the advice of the astrologers, donated a horse, a wild ox, a slave and a few embroidered and golden articles for charity. He also gave awards to the officials involved in the above mentioned battle. But, in spite of this, Bahadur Shah was still frightened and was living under the awe of the Sikh army. All this made him sick (and finally confined to bed).<sup>6</sup>

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1712, the Emperor was told that Banda Singh was on his way from Keeratpur to Bilaspur. The informers of the Mughal court told that they had seen him in the village of Bassi Afghana, about 25 km from Keeratpur. Bahadur Shah was further told that the ruler of Bilaspur had given safe haven to the Sikhs. He was also informed that the Mughal general Firoz Jang Khan had burnt the villages of Keeratpur and Kalyanpur to ashes, for their residents' 'crime' of helping the Sikh army. The Emperor was, in addition, told that Firoz Jang Khan had stationed himself at the top of a strategic hill near the village of Nirmoh (about 5 km from Keeratpur) and was monitoring expedition against the Sikhs.<sup>7</sup>

### **Killing of Hatim Khan**

During these days, the Hindu rulers of Jodhpur and Jaipur too had left for their States. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1711, Banda Singh received the information about their return journey. When they were gone, Bahadur Shah thought of honouring them for their assistance in his expedition against the Sikhs; so he ordered grant of robes of honour and issuance of letters mentioning increase in their *mansabs*, to four and three and half thousands, respectively, for both the rulers. Prince Azimushan sent a very senior officer Hatim Khan to go after the rulers and personally deliver the robes and the letters of authority to them. Hatim Khan met the Hindu rulers when they had almost reached near

the Rajput zone and delivered the royal letters and presents. When he (Hatim Khan) was on his return journey to Lahore to report it back to the Emperor, the Sikhs seized him near Jhajjar town and killed him; Bahadur Shah received the report of his death on the first of February 1712.<sup>8</sup>

In January 1712, Banda Singh was present in Bilaspur State. A band of Sikh soldiers attacked the army of Hoshiar Khan at Jindbari (which was one of the major *parganas* at that time), about 14 km from Anandpur Sahib. Several Mughal soldiers lost their lives in the Sikhs' action.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1712, Bahadur Shah despatched Firoz Khan, the *Faujdar* of Jammu province, against the Sikhs.<sup>9</sup> Already, Mohammed Amin Khan and Hoshiar Khan were chasing the Sikhs with a big force. Mohammed Amin Khan, with a force of twenty thousand soldiers, had established his camps at village Bhilowal and Hoshiar Khan's camps were at Jaijon (then a major town); besides, there were Mughal camps at Jhajjar and Jindbari too. All these generals, with forces at four camps, were keeping an eye on Banda Singh's activities, who was, then, staying at Bilaspur, but, the Mughal forces did not move towards Bilaspur; they were waiting for Banda Singh's descent into the plains. Thus, it was a period without any success for the Mughals; in spite of this, Bahadur Shah bestowed an award of *Ghazi-ud-Din Khan Bahadur* for Mohammed Amin Khan.

Not only Mohammed Amin Khan but other ten senior and dozens of junior generals of the Mughal army were engaged in operations against the Sikhs. They had fought several battles against the Sikhs, in which both sides had suffered heavy losses.

Bahadur Shah had spent hundreds of thousands of rupees and used a large quantity of ammunition and arms to quell the Sikh rebellion but had not been able to achieve any major success. Eliminating Banda Singh and crushing the Sikhs, was a matter of life and death for him. Whereas, earlier, he had succeeded in defeating and killing all his brothers; he had suppressed rebellion in Deccan; he had compelled the Hindu Rajput rulers to submit to his authority; and all these enemies of the king had



large armies, arsenals and a lot of sources of wealth, power and man-force; whereas, the Sikhs were small in number, they did not have money, horses, ammunition, Forts etc, but Banda Singh was still out of his reach. When Bahadur Shah had launched action against the Sikhs, he knew well about the number, their strength and position; hence, he had a feeling that he would annihilate the Sikhs in a very short time; but he was shocked at his miscalculation.

Bahadur Shah's euphoria and his hopes were soon belied; he could not even reach near Banda Singh, leave alone killing or capturing him. Thousands of Sikhs had been killed in dozens of battles and a large number of skirmishes, but, in spite of this, their number had not diminished as yet; almost all the major leaders of the Sikhs were still in action. All this made Bahadur Shah despondent and almost psychic. He began mumbling and murmuring about the Sikhs in half insanity. Occasionally, he would utter the name of Banda Singh and get frightened. Bahadur Shah's insanity went on deteriorating. Soon, he went fully out of his wits.

Now, he began making strange statements and issuing queer orders. One day someone complained that the *jogis* and ascetics, who roamed around the army camps, had probably been sending information to Banda Singh; Bahadur Shah immediately ordered that all the ascetics should be exiled from Lahore and if, still, any ascetic was found in or around the town, he should be immediately put to sword (Bahadur Shah had issued an a similar order, earlier, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1711 too).

### **Bahadur Shah's Death**

During those days, Bahadur Shah had issued an order: 'if a Sikh was found anywhere, he should immediately be put to death'; he had issued orders to the Hindus to shave their beards and heads in order to save their lives; he had killed several Sikhs in and around Lahore; but, all this could not finish off the Sikhs; their terror was ever present in his mind; this made Bahadur Shah totally mad.

Now, he began behaving in a strange manner; he would behave as

an angry man, make strange statements, utter queer words and issue foolish and mad orders. In fact, Banda Singh and Sikh factors had begun affecting him right from the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1710, when he (Banda Singh) had escaped from the siege of mammoth Mughal army at Lohgarh. Reacting to Banda Singh's escape, he misbehaved even towards his most loyal man Munaim Khan *Khan Khanan*, by indirectly calling him a *dog*. He had granted earlier this Munaim Khan the titles of *Khan Khana Bahadur, Jafar Jang, Wafadar* and *Wazir-i-Aalah*, and, had presented him several robes of honour; Khan Khana could not bear this insult and fell ill (and died).<sup>10</sup> Bahadur Shah's second strange command was that of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1711, when he ordered to chain and imprison Ghazi Khan (the former Governor of Sarhind), and, his further declaration that if any one tried to seek mercy for Ghazi Khan would also be imprisoned immediately. Bahadur Shah, lately, had made several such decisions and had issued queer orders.

Soon, Bahadur Shah was confined to bed; by January 1712, he had become totally insane; he issued his last order on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1712, asking the army to kill all the dogs of the city of Lahore; in fact, he used to call the Sikhs *sagg* (Persian word for dog) and by issuing such an order perhaps he meant 'kill all the Sikhs'; such was the fear of the Sikhs in his mind. However, his order was translated into action and within two days all the dogs had been killed and only those escaped which had fled the town.

For the next two weeks Bahadur Shah's illness went on increasing; on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1712 he held his court for the last time. But even in this ceremonial gathering he did not say anything. For the next three days, he did not leave his bed; he had spleen and swelling on his face and forehead; three *haqims* (physicians) attended on him all this time but there was no change in his condition; he died on the night between the 27<sup>th</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1712.

Bahadur Shah's dead-body was wrapped in a coffin and it was decided that it should be buried at Delhi. The body was given in the custody of Maulvi Muradullah, Abdul Qadir and Mehfooz Khan. But, it could not be taken to Delhi due to war of succession among the sons of

Bahadur Shah. Finally, after a period of 43 days, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1712, the dead- body of the Emperor was taken to Delhi under the escort of his widow Mehar Parvar and one Mohammed Khan.<sup>11</sup> It reached Delhi on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, and, after decay and 'insult' of 67 days, it was buried in the compound of a mosque built by Aurangzeb, near the mausoleum of Bakhtiar Kaki, close to Qutub Minar.

### **Battle For Succession**

After the death of Bahadur Shah, all the generals of the royal army, including Mohammed Amin Khan, who had been engaged in the expedition against the Sikhs, returned to Lahore. This gave some relief to the Sikhs.

At Lahore, all the four sons of Bahadur Shah fought a bloody battle for the throne of Delhi. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1712, a fierce battle was fought between the forces of Jahandar Shah and Azimushan on the banks of river Raavi.<sup>12</sup> The first royal casualty of this battle was prince Azimushan (father of Farukhsiyar) who was killed by Abdus Samad Khan (father of Zakaria Khan, later the Governor of Lahore). Abdus Samad Khan was fully loyal to prince Jahandar Shah. When Azimushan was dead, Abdus Samad Khan carried his dead-body and threw it in front of Jahandar Shah.

The second battle was fought between the armies of Jahandar Shah on one hand and the armies of Rafiushan (Rafi-ul-Qadir) and Jahan Shah (Khuzishta Akhtar) on the other hand. At first, Jahan Shah had an upper hand; his companions Rustam Dil Khan, Jani Khan and Mukhlis Khan defeated the forces of Jahandar Shah and they also arrested Azz-ud-Din (son of Jahandar Shah). The next day, when Jahan Shah, accompanied by his son Farkhanda Akhtar, was going to his camp, Abdus Samad Khan fired a ball from cannon and killed both of them. After this, the companions of Jahan Shah surrendered and also released Azz-Ud-Din (son of Jahandar Shah).

After the death of Azimushan and Jahan Shah, now, Jahandar Shah and Rafiushan fought against each other. In the wee hours of the next morning, Rafiushan made a forceful attack on the army of Jahandar

Shah. But, the newly recruited soldiers of Rafiushan could not face the well-trained soldiers of Jahandar Shah and began fleeing the battlefield. When Rafiushan saw this, he himself came forward to encourage his soldiers and manage the battle; soon, he too was killed. Thus, now three of the four sons of Bahadur Shah were dead. Even after this, the enmity between the princes did not come to an end; Jahandar Shah or his companions did not bother even for the dead bodies of his brothers. The dead bodies of the princes remained unattended on the *tavi* (hot sand burning like a *tava*, i.e. hot plate for baking loaves) of river Raavi for three days and on the fourth day Jahandar Shah ordered the burial of the dead-bodies.<sup>13</sup>

After finishing his brothers and nephews, Jahandar Shah's first action was to punish his enemies i.e. the officers, generals, helpers and collaborators of his dead brothers. Jahandar Shah also decided to honour his loyal companions. *Amir-ul-Umraa Bahadur* Kokaltash Khan, Khwaja Hassan Khan, Shakar-ulla-Khan and some other *umraa* had been the most faithful to Jahandar Shah; he bestowed liberal gifts upon them and offered them high offices in his government.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1712, he ordered the execution of Mohammed Rustam Khan (Ghaznafar Khan alias Ghazi Khan, the former Governor of Sarhind) and Mukhlis Khan (both of them were the associates of the prince Khuzishta Akhtar);<sup>14</sup> Besides, Hamid-Ud-Din Khan Bahadur Aalamgiri, Sarfraz Khan Bahadur (Behroz Khan) and his sons, Saif-ulla-Khan, Rehman Yaar Khan, Musharaff Khan *gurj-bardar* and Fakirullah Khan were also given death sentences. Seventeen persons, including Hamid-Ud-Din Khan, Mahabat Khan (son of Khan Khana), Ahtiman Khan and his son Lutfullah Khan (deputy of Khuzishta Akhtar), Rehman Yaar Khan, Attaullah Khan, Fatehullah Khan, Mohtam Khan, Rai Raiyan, Jani Khan, Fidvi Khan, Abdul Karir Khan, Aqidat Khan (son of Amir Khan), Mohammed Ali Khan etc were immediately arrested and imprisoned in Lahore Fort. Properties of all these seventeen persons were confiscated. But, the very next day, Jahandar Shah announced amnesty for Lutfullah Khan, Rai Raiyan and Jani Khan. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1712, Jahandar Shah ordered that Mukhlis Khan and Hakim Moitmad-Ul-Mulk be

executed by cutting limb-by-limb.<sup>15</sup> The punishment was to be carried out at Delhi. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1712, Jahandar Shah formally sat on the throne (in Lahore Fort) and held his court.

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**Endnotes**

1. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 1.8.1711
2. The Hindu priests have fooled (and are still folling) their folk that physical ailments can be cured by performing some rituals; *seetla* (small pox) is one of such diseases for which the Hindu priests perform special rituals to please the mythical goddess of *seetla*, which would 'cure' the disease. Sikhism rejects this as fraud, but, some Sikh-looking priests fool the Sikhs also, and, some simpleton Sikhs fall into their trap.
3. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 5.11.1711
4. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 11.11.1711.
5. An entry of *Bhatt Vahi Talaunda, pargana Jind* mentions some names; the names of all the Forty Sikhs are not available. For more details: *Guru De Sher* by Dr Harjinder Singh Dilgeer.
6. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 18.1712
7. It was the same hill where Guru Gobind Singh had spent a few days in October 1700.
8. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 1.2.1712
9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 23.1.1712
10. He died within 80 days of this incident, on the 18th of February 1711, when he was still accompanying the Emperor's caravan.
11. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.4.1712
12. At that time River Raavi used to flow near the Fort of Lahore.
13. This was the treatment of Jahandar Shah with the dead-bodies of brothers. He did not give even customary respect to a former opponent soldier.
14. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 20.3.1712
15. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 21.3.1712.

## **Banda Singh Bahadur's Return to Sadhaura and Lohgarh**

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When Banda Singh received the news of the death of Bahadur Shah, he was at Rajauri. Considering this as a useful opportunity, he decided to return to the Punjab. Islam Khan, the Governor of Lahore, tried to block his way but failed. Banda Singh reached Sadhaura and Lohgarh in the early days of March 1712. He had four to five thousand soldiers with him.<sup>1</sup> After a few days, a deputy of Sarhind attacked Lohgarh but was defeated badly. In spite of his defeat he did not return to Sarhind and established his camp in between Sadhaura and Sarhind. One night a group of Sikhs put siege to his camp, entered his tent and chopped off his head.

When the Sikhs received information about Banda Singh's return to Lohgarh, they began reaching there. Not only between Sadhaura and Lohgarh, there lived many Vanjaras and the other Sikhs in many villages in this zone. All the young men flocked to Sadhaura and Lohgarh to join Banda Singh's army. When this news reached Mohammed Amin Khan he ordered his soldiers to march towards Sadhaura.<sup>2</sup>

By that time the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah died, Mohammed Amin Khan had to return to Lahore. Due to war of succession to the Mughal Empire, the expedition against the Sikhs had come to a halt.

In the battle of succession, Mohammed Amin Khan did not side with any one of the princes and remained totally neutral. When the new Emperor Jahandar Shah became free from battle (as all his brothers had been killed and there was no one to challenge him), when Mohammed Amin Khan realized that Jahandar Shah was in full control of the Empire, on 21 March 1712, he presented himself in Jahandar

Shah's court and expressed his complete loyalty for the new head of the Empire.<sup>3</sup> Jahandar Shah increased his *mansab*<sup>4</sup> to seven thousand *zaat* and seventh thousand cavalry; out of which five thousand were do-aspa (double horse). At that time, this was the highest *mansab* of the Mughals. He was also given the title of "Chain Muhammed, Mohammed Amin Khan, and Firoz Jang". The same day, Jahandar Shah told Mohammed Amin Khan to go on expedition against the Sikhs, and, also granted him command of nine thousand soldiers and asked Muaraff Khan too to join him. On 29 March, the new Emperor sanctioned a force of 9000 soldiers, to be led by Mohammed Amin Khan, for the expedition against the Sikhs. On 5 April Mohammed Amin Khan met Jahandar Shah and requested him to sanction ten thousand soldiers. On 9 April Mohammed Amin Khan sent Muaraff Khan on the expedition against Banda Singh.<sup>5</sup> He gave him a good number of soldiers as well as a lot of ammunition.

On 23 April 1712 Mohammed Amin Khan again met the Emperor and told him that he had prepared two thousand soldiers for expedition against the Sikhs. He demanded another two thousand cavalry and three thousand foot soldiers. At this the Emperor allowed him to enrol fifteen hundred cavalry at a salary of Rs 25 per month and two thousand foot soldiers at a salary of Rs 4 per month.

In the early days of May 1712, Jahandar Shah (the new Mughal Emperor) left Lahore for Delhi. He reached Sultanpur Lodhi on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1712. Having rested for a day, he left for Delhi via Sarhind. He had made stop-overs at Dakhani Saran (near Nakodar), Nurmahal, Phillaur, Sunet (Ludhiana), Doraha and Khera; he reached Sarhind on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1712. Here, he received reports that Banda Singh was present in Lohgarh. People told him that the soldiers of Banda Singh's army had committed oppression and atrocities on them during the reign of Bahadur Shah (in 1710). When the Emperor would return to Akbarabad (Agra), the rebels would wander in the district of Sarhind; thus there was no security for the people there. If due care was paid to them, they would show firmness in staying on; otherwise they would like to move away from that place along with the Emperor. The Emperor

told them that they should rest assured that due attention would be paid to their security.<sup>6</sup> On 22 May, the Emperor ordered Zain-Ud-Din Ahmed Khan, the Faujdar of Sarhind, to lead an army of eight thousand soldiers to Lohgarh to crush the Sikhs.<sup>7</sup>

On 29 May, the Emperor was in Thanesar (Kurukshetra). Here the noble persons of the town told him that when Banda Singh attacked this town, most of the vagabonds, who had joined the Sikhs, supplied all sorts of provisions to them. They had pulled down most of the mosques, mausoleums and mansions. They were still present in the town. When the Emperor went to Akbarabad, they would settle score with the people. At this the Emperor became angry and ordered his attendant Rai Mann to accompany Sarbrah Khan Kotwal along with a contingent of soldiers. The Emperor asked them that who called themselves Nanak-worshippers (Sikhs) be captured and produced before him. If they embraced Islam well and good, otherwise they should be murdered, so that they were no more a source of trouble. Seventeen persons were made captives. Fourteen of them chose to be Muslims. Three persons who were servants of Chowdhry of Thanesar did not accept Islam. At this the Emperor presented robes of honour to those who accepted to be Muslims, and for the three 'rebels' he issued orders that they should be killed and their bodies be cut into pieces and hung in the vicinity of the minar (tower on the highway near the city. The imperial orders were complied with.<sup>8</sup>

The Emperor reached Delhi on 8 June 1712. He entered the Red Fort on 11 June and sat on the throne. On 12 June he was told that Banda Singh has established his police post at Sarhind.<sup>9</sup>

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1712, he (Jahandar Shah) was told that the hill chief Jagat Chand of Kumaon had played a remarkable role in the expedition against Banda Singh; but Fateh Shah of Gharhwal<sup>10</sup> had helped Banda Singh. At this the Emperor ordered that Jagat Chand of Kumaon be sent an order of appreciation, a valuable robe of honour and a sword studded with pearls. The Emperor also issued orders that Fateh Shah should be punished for his rebellious act.



On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, the *Faujdar* of Sarhind, was given the charge of the office of *Diwan* (chief administrator of revenues) of the army of Mohammed Amin Khan, and, his nephew Abu-ul-Qasim was appointed deputy *Faujdar* of Sarhind.<sup>11</sup> On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, the Emperor appointed new army chiefs: Jalal Khan of Jalalabad (who had given a tough fighting to the Sikhs), Mohammed Amin of Rajauri and Mohammed Baqa of Fatehabad.<sup>12</sup>

### **Second Attack on Sadhaura Fort by the Mughal Army**

In August 1712, Banda Singh Bahadur was present in Lohgarh. When Mohammed Amin Khan got this information, he began his march towards Lohgarh. Before reaching the foothills of the Lohgarh Fort, he had to fight at more than 50 Fortresses and trenches.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1712, Jahandar Shah received a letter from Mohammed Amin Khan informing him that "*the Sikhs have returned to Sadhaura and established themselves in the Fort there. The Mughal army has surrounded the Fort. The Sikhs come out of the Fortress and fight against the Mughal soldiers. Both the sides have been suffering heavy losses.*" On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August Banda Singh too came to Sadhaura. His army was attacked by the Mughal soldiers. During this battle, the Mughal army suffered heavy losses. Mohammed Amin Khan requested the Emperor to send two cannons so that they might break open the walls of the Fort at Sadhaura.<sup>13</sup> On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, the Emperor ordered the despatch of two cannons to Sadhaura. Even these cannons could not break the walls of the Fort of Sadhaura. The Mughal siege of the Fort continued for about six months. On the other hand, the Sikhs inside the Fort did not have enough food and ammunition; so, when their food stocks were fully exhausted, on one dark night of winter, the Sikhs came out of the Fort, broke through the siege of the Mughal army and fled to Lohgarh and Nahan.

In the last days of September 1712, some Sikhs went from Sadhaura to the territory of the Nahan State. The hill soldiers informed General Firoz Jang Khan about the hideouts of the Sikhs; besides, they made a sudden attack on the Sikhs and by that time the ruler of Nahan had

become loyal to the Mughal Emperor. As these Sikhs did not know that the Nahan ruler was a traitor, they suffered heavy losses. So, the Sikhs left Nahan territory. After some time Firoz Jang Khan's soldiers too reached there but by that time the Sikhs had already moved forward.<sup>14</sup>

In the early days of October 1712, the Sikhs attacked Chhat (near Banur) and killed a large number of government officials and *qazis*. The deputy of the Governor of Sarhind was also present there. Instead of fighting, he ran away and reached Sarhind and informed the Governor. The Governor too was scared of the Sikhs so he did not attack the Sikhs; hence, the Sikhs established their control in the area between Sarhind and Lohgarh.<sup>15</sup> Thus, within eight months of the death of Bahadur Shah, the Sikhs were now again *de facto* masters of the area between Lohgarh-Sadhaura and Sarhind.

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### Endnotes

1. Letter written by Bhandari Khivsi (the envoy of Raja Jaipur in the court of the Mughal Emperor) to the Raja of Jaipur, on 10 March 1712, Serial No 57, Vakil Report No 266. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
2. *Arzdashat* (letter) sent to the Raja on 10 March 1712, Serial No 57, Vakil Report No 267. (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
3. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 21.3.1712.
4. *Mansab* is rank of government official; army pay grade status; e.g. mansab of seven thousand means he was entitled to keep seven thousand soldiers, and the salary of the soldiers was to be given from State treasury.
5. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 29 March, 5 and 9 April 1712.
6. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 20.5.1712.
7. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 22.5.1712.
8. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 29.5.1712.
9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.6.1712.
10. Fateh Shah was the chief of Garhwal. He had attacked Guru Gobind Singh Sahib at Bhangani on 18th of September 1688. In that battle, after heavy

losses, he fled the battlefield and returned to Garhwal. He had grudge against the Mughals, hence he chose to help Banda Singh.

11. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.7.1712.
12. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 24.7.1712.
13. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 8.9.1712.
14. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 2.10.1712.
15. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 15.10.1712.

## Third Mughal Expedition Against the Sikhs

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### **Murder of Jahandar Shah : Farukhsiyar Becomes The Emperor**

Although Jahandar Shah had killed all his brothers and nephews before wearing the crown, one of his nephews, Farukhsiyar (son of Azimushan), was still alive; at that time he was at Patna. On 27 March 1712, he declared himself as new Emperor. Sayyad Hussain Ali Khan was the deputy Governor of Bihar at that time. When Farukhsiyar declared himself as the 'Emperor', Hussain Ali Khan was not present at Patna. Farukhsiyar's mother went to the mother of Hussain Ali Khan and requested her to impress upon her son to help Farukhsiyar in capturing Delhi. She (Farukhsiyar's mother) reminded Hussain Ali's mother that it was her husband (i.e. Farukhsiyar's father, Azimushan) who had played major role in getting high offices for Hussain Ali Khan and his brother Sayyad Abdullah Khan (Kutub-ul-Mulk). When Hussain Ali Khan's mother did not make any promise for helping Farukhsiyar, she (Farukhsiyar's mother) began wailing. This created sympathy in the mind of Hussain Ali Khan's mother and she agreed to help her.<sup>1</sup>

After some days Hussain Ali Khan too reached Patna. Farukhsiyar and his mother visited him and said, "Either arrest me and send me as a prisoner to Jahandar Shah, or help me in getting the reigns of the Mughal Empire. As and when I get control of Delhi, I shall give the two highest offices to you and your brother, i.e. the office of chief minister and the first noble (*Amir-ul-Umra*). This way, you will be the real rulers of the Mughal Empire."<sup>2</sup>

Although at first Hussain Ali Khan was a bit reluctant but when his mother told him that she had given a word to the mother of Farukhsiyar, he agreed to help Farukhsiyar. Later, Abdullah Khan, who was then the

deputy chief of Allahabad, too agreed to join hands with Farukhsiyar. He was angry with Jahandar Shah because the latter had expressed doubts about his loyalty. When Jahandar Shah came to know about this, he tried to win him back, and, increased Sayyad Abdullah Khan's *mansab* from four to six thousands. But, by that time, he had already joined Farukhsiyar's camp. Jahandar Shah tried to please other officials too; he promoted Mohammed Amin Khan (later, died on 27.1.1721) as Second Bakhshi and Afrasiyab Khan (later, died on 21.8.1718) as Third Bakhshi.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, at Delhi, when Jahandar Shah, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1712, had received information that his nephew Farukhsiyar had declared himself as the new Emperor, he (Jahandar) had despatched a big army, under the command of his son Azz-ud-Din, to quell his rebellion.<sup>4</sup>

Now, Sayyad brothers, Hussain Ali Khan and Abdullah Khan, openly declared their support for Farukhsiyar and they led an army to capture Delhi. They reached Shamugarh (near Agra) on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1712. When this news reached Delhi, some generals of the army of Jahandar Shah decided to shift their loyalties; they quietly left Delhi and went to Shamugarh to join Farukhsiyar's camp. Now, Jahandar Shah did not have enough forces to challenge an attack by the forces of Farukhsiyar; he recruited twenty-two thousand new soldiers and began marching towards Agra.

By this time, Farukhsiyar had forty to fifty thousand soldiers and heavy artillery. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, when the rain stopped, Farukhsiyar ordered his army to make a fierce attack. Jahandar Shah's general Kokaltash was killed within a very short time and Rustam-i-Hind was seriously wounded. By the evening, Jahandar Shah too had fled from the battlefield. Now, only Zulfiqar Khan was leading the battle. He too could not continue for long and fled to Delhi. Now, there was none to stop Farukhsiyar's army from reaching Delhi.

In Delhi, Jahandar Shah and his give gap took shelter in the bungalow (it was a fort-like mansion) of Asad Khan. Soon Zulfiqar Khan too reached there and he too took refuge with Asad Khan. When Farukhsiyar reached Delhi Asad Khan approached Farukhsiyar and told him about Jahandar

Shah's whereabouts. He sent Saif Khan to kill Jahandar Shah and Zulfiqar Khan and bring their severed heads into his presence. Thus, by the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1713, one more Mughal Emperor was dead and another had occupied the Delhi throne.

### **New Mughal Expedition Against Banda Singh Bahadur**

Having gained complete control of the State affairs, Farukhsiyar first began punishing his enemies. After this, he paid attention to the Sikhs. In the third week of January, Mohammed Amin Khan, who had been in the charge of an expedition against the Sikhs for about two years, appeared in the court of Farukhsiyar, expressed his faith in the new Emperor and declared his loyalty to the throne.

Mohammed Amin Khan had not sided with anyone during the two wars of succession (March 1712 at Lahore, and, October 1712 to January 1713, at Patna, Agra and Delhi), hence none had any grudge against him. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1713, Farukhsiyar appointed Mohammed Amin Khan as Second Bakhshi.

### **Farukhsiyar Forgives Abdus Samad Khan and Sends Him After Banda Singh Bahadur**

Abdus Samad Khan was a loyal companion of Jahandar Shah. It was he who had killed Azimushan (the father of Farukhsiyar), and, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1712. Jahandar Shah had awarded him for this act by granting him a *mansab* of six thousand, by then the highest *mansab*. Thus, Abdus Samad Khan was the 'enemy number one' of Farukhsiyar. On the other hand Abdus Samad Khan was also the father of Zakaria Khan (who was the son-in-law of Mohammed Amin Khan).

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1713, Mohammed Amin Khan visited Farukhsiyar and told him that Abdus Samad Khan wanted to apologize for his crimes and sins and promises to remain loyal to him forever. As Farukhsiyar had full faith in Mohammed Amin Khan, he agreed to forgive Abdus Samad Khan and told him (Mohammed Amin Khan) to ask him (Abdus Samad Khan) to present himself before him (the Emperor), the following day. The next day, Abdus Samad Khan visited the Emperor

and submitted an unqualified apology and prayed for forgiveness; Farukhsiyar treated him with mercy and also presented him a robe of honour.<sup>5</sup>

On 11 February 1713, Farukhsiyar appointed Abdus Samad Khan as the Governor of Jammu and gave him instructions to take action against the Sikhs. On 12 February, he was appointed Faujdar of Doaba also. On 14 February Farukhsiyar promised to appoint Abdus Samad Khan as the Governor of Lahore too; the Emperor told him that he would have to get the Forts of Sadhura and Lohgarh freed from the Sikhs. Abdus Samad Khan immediately set out for action against the Sikhs.

Now, Farukhsiyar began appointing new officials. He appointed Zabardast Khan (grandson of *Amir-ul-Umra* Ali Mardan Khan, *Shah Jahani*) as the Governor of Lahore (replacing Inayatullah Khan). On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, he appointed Iradatmand Khan as the Governor of Eimanabad, Ahmad Khan as the Governor of Gujrat and Saadat Khan as the Governor of Kashmir. Saadat Khan was also given *mansab* of six thousand soldiers. Farukhsiyar decided to befriend the rulers of Jaipur and Jodhpur as well. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1713, Farukhsiyar wrote letters to Rajput rajas Ajit Singh (of Jodhpur) and Jai Singh Sawai (Jaipur/Amber) granting each of them *mansab* of six thousand soldiers and five thousand horse.<sup>6</sup>

*In fact, Ajit Singh had offered to marry his daughter Raj Inder Kanwar to Farukhsiyar. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July Sayyad Hussain Ali brought this girl from Jodhpur to the Sarai of Ali Vardi Khan. She reached Delhi on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, she embraced Islam. After this, the ceremony of betrothal was performed. When this marriage ceremony was held, Farukhsiyar was suffering from piles, so the marriage could not be consummated for two months.<sup>7</sup> Farukhsiyar was treated by William Hamilton, an English doctor (to reward the services given by the doctor, Farukhsiyar granted the English right to exemption from custom duty in Bengal).<sup>8</sup>*

Farukhsiyar was so much angry with Jahandar Shah that he issued an order proclaiming that “references to Jahandar’s rule should be erased from history and the period of his (Farukhsiyar’s) reign should be considered from the date of his proclamation of Emperorship in Patna

on 29<sup>th</sup> of Safar, 1124 Hijri/Hegira (i.e. The 27<sup>th</sup> of March 1712 C.E.).”

### **Farukhsiyar Receives Reports About the Sikhs**

On 10 March 1713, Farukhsiyar was told that the rebels (Sikhs) “had raised their heads in rebellion in the villages and *Parganas* of *chakla* of Sarhind. They had laid waste the imperial territory. The *Faujdar* was not able to punish them. Instead the troopers of the *Faujdar* attacked the villages and took away their grains and their buffaloes. On this account the people of the said *chakla* are fleeing from there.”<sup>9</sup>

Farukhsiyar was told that Banda Singh had come out of the caves of the hills (which are out of the territory of government of Hindustan) and, he had strengthened the Fort of Lohgarh and had also occupied the land and the towns around it. His soldiers came out at night and attacked, plundered and killed the Muslim. They moved up from 20 to 30 *kos* (i.e. 60 to 90 kilometres). Hearing this, the Emperor got so much frightened and scared that it cannot be narrated in words. At that time *Qutbul Mulk* Sayyad Hassan Ali Abdulla Khan, *Amir-ul-Umra* Sayyad Hussain Ali Khan, Hamid Khan, Samsam-ud-Daula and some other senior courtiers were also present there. Now, Farukhsiyar decided to send Abdus Samad Khan (the Governor of Lahore) on the expedition against Banda Singh.<sup>10</sup> On 21 March 1713, Farukhsiyar asked *Amir-ul-Umra* Sayyad Hussain Ali Khan, to write a letter to Abdus Samad Khan asking him to contact Zain-ud-Din Khan (*Faujdar* of Sarhind) and make a joint attack on Banda Singh.<sup>11</sup>

In his letter to Abdus Samad Khan, the Emperor called Him “helper of the government, great personality of the great empire, leader of the leaders, national leader of the great nobles, perfectly wise person and beautiful faced” and asked him to immediately leave for expelling the Sikhs from Lohgarh. The Emperor also stated that he was dispatching seven thousand cavalry and ten leaders (generals)<sup>12</sup> under the command of Inam Khan for this expedition. In the same letter, Abdus Samad Khan was requested to work with counsel of and in co-operation with each other (i.e. Sarhind *Faujdar* and the 13 generals) and the salary for the soldiers was to be given by the *Faujdar* of Sarhind.



### **Banda Singh attacks Nahan**

In March 1713, Banda Singh was present in Lohgarh Fort. Here, he got the information that Bhup Parkash (the ruler of Nahan) had been released by the Mughal Emperor Farukhsiyar because the former had agreed to collaborate with the Mughals in their campaign against the Sikhs. Banda Singh also received the information that Bhup Parkash actually had begun taking action against the Sikhs. On this, Banda Singh decided to punish Bhup Parkash. He led an army of 5 to 6 thousand soldiers to Nahan. When Bhup Parkash got the news of Banda Singh's march, he fled Nahan and took refuge in high hills.<sup>13</sup> Banda Singh set up his camp at Nahan. After a couple of days, the rich and the affluent residents of Nahan approached Banda Singh and offered to pay a heavy ransom; Banda Singh accepted the money and left Nahan after about a week. From Nahan, Banda Singh went to Lohgarh. Here, Banda Singh got the intelligence of a possible Mughal attack on Sadhaura, so he sent one thousand soldiers to defend Sadhaura Fort.<sup>14</sup>

### **Third Mughal Attack on Sadhaura Fort**

Since, Banda Singh had received the reports of the plans of the Mughal army to attack Sadhaura; he strengthened both the Forts. With this the Sikh soldiers also took control of all the areas between Lohgarh and Sarhind. Zain-ud-Din, the *Faujdar* of Sarhind, tried to save his territory from the attacks of the Sikhs but he could not succeed. His power reigned supreme only in his Fort.

By April 1713, seven thousand of Mughal soldiers reached near Sadhaura, but, their generals believed that this force won't be enough to fight against the Sikhs. They wrote to the Emperor to send still more forces.<sup>15</sup>

Having made a full preparation, Abdus Samad Khan (the Governor of Jammu), Zain-Ud-Din Ahmed Khan (the Governor of Sarhind) and general Inam Khan led a very big force to Sadhaura, on 22 June 1713, and put siege to the Fort. They set up trenches around the city.<sup>16</sup> According to Irvine, the Fort of Sadhaura had high and thick walls,<sup>17</sup> hence the guns and the cannons of the Mughals were unable to damage

them.

Abdus Samad Khan encamped on one side, Zain –ud-Din Khan on the second side and the third side was guarded by another section of the Mughal army.<sup>18</sup> According to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi Sadhaura had countless number of buildings and these were made of baked bricks. Banda Singh Bahadur had destroyed this area. He had carried away the wooden planks and wood (which were taken from the demolished buildings) and fixed them into the Fort to strengthen it. He had thought that this would save it from the cannon and gun fire, and the walls of the Fort would remain safe.<sup>19</sup>

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1713, the very first night, a large number of Sikhs came out of the Fort and fell upon the Mughal soldiers. It was followed by a pitched battle. A good number of soldiers were killed on both sides; among the Sikh casualties included Albel Singh and Mohar Singh (sons of Bhai Udey Singh) and Saina Singh (son of Bhai Chitar Singh), *all the three were grandsons of Bhai Mani Singh*. The Mughal casualties included Baqa Begh Khan (brother of Inam Khan) and several others. According to Muhammad Qasim Aurangabadi 152 Sikhs were killed in this battle. Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi mentions the scene of another battle, which is almost like the battle of, 22 June 1713 (but he says this battle was fought at Lohgarh, which is not true; attack on Lohgarh was made on 13 November 1713).<sup>20</sup>

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, the Mughal army brought 700 wooden ladders to climb the walls of the Fort, but could not succeed due to vigil by the Sikh soldiers. In spite of this, neither the Sikhs nor the Mughals gave up the battle.

Muhammad Qasim Aurangabadi says that one day the brave soldiers of the Mughal army, ignoring the strong position of the Sadhaura Fort, attacked it. At that time the Sikhs came out of the Fort and made a fierce attack on the Mughal soldiers. The Sikhs fell upon the Mughal army; the battle continued for about three hours. The Mughal soldiers too fought bravely. In this battle 691 Sikhs were killed. He does not give the number of the casualty of the Mughal soldiers, but, mentions that Mir Bazurg, the brother of Janish Khan, Mirza Abdulla Bakhshi and Sayyad Hashim Khan (a close associate of Abdus Samad Khan) were

killed.<sup>21</sup>

However, after the shelling of several days, the Mughal army succeeded in putting the Sikhs on the defensive. By this time, the Mughal army occupied the area around the Fort and took positions at a distance of about 35-40 metres of the Fort. Now, they (the Mughals) have dug a wide trench around the Fort in order to stop the Sikhs from coming out of the Fort. By that time they had brought one big cannon too; this cannon was being used to throw shells on one wall of the Fort, which led to a serious damage to any portion of the wall. Now, the Sikhs realised that, sooner or later, the Mughals would succeed in breaking the wall of the Fort unless this cannon was silenced; hence, on the night of 31 July 1713, when it was raining heavily and the Mughal soldiers had taken shelter in their tents, some daring Sikh soldiers came out of the Fort and began pulling the cannon towards the Fort. The Sikh soldiers succeeded in pulling the cannon up to the trench, but here their ropes got broken and the cannon fell into the moat, creating a loud thud. Hearing the sound, several Mughal soldiers came out of their tents and found their cannon missing. Now they looked here and there and finally found it in the moat. The army officials paid fifty rupees each to one hundred soldiers and got it pulled out after a great labour.<sup>22</sup>

After the failure of the cannon-mission, the Sikhs realized that they wouldn't be able to hold long; moreover, they did not have a lot of food and ammunition and the number of the Mughal soldiers were very large; so, they decided to begin the guerrilla war.

According to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi not a day passed when the Sikhs did not come out of the Fort and attack the Mughal soldiers with swords. One day, at midnight, the Sikhs came out of the Fort and attacked on the trenches of Abdus Samad Khan. It caused disarray in the camp of Abdus Samad Khan. The firing of cannons and guns, and the sound of rockets and bullets was like thunder and lightning. Some Sikhs made a strong attack with their swords. At first the Mughal soldiers were losing the battle, but then Sayyad Kashim Khan and Mir Baba Khan and their sons, brothers and companions reached there and fought bravely. In this battle 200 Sikhs were killed (the author does not tell the number of the casualty of the Mughals,

but as per the description, the number must be very high).<sup>23</sup>

The Mughal army had surrounded the Fort from three sides, only one side was open, and the Sikhs used to come out from this side. There, they would graze their horses, buffaloes and oxen. They would even carry grass, etc. into the Fort. When the Mughal soldiers saw them, they would turn their eyes away; they did not have enough courage to challenge the Sikhs. On the other hand, the Sikhs would often challenge and attack the Mughal soldiers. Thus, every day 5-7 soldiers were being killed. In the beginning of August, new units of the army, under the command of Isa Khan, reached there and they blocked the fourth side of the Fort. They were posted so near the Fort that because of this the Sikhs got confined within the Fort. Now, the Mughal soldiers began marching around the Fort, on all the sides.<sup>24</sup>

The siege of Sadhaura continued for another two months; finally, the Sikhs decided to vacate the Fort. One night they came out of the Fort and fled towards Lohgarh. The Sikhs were given a hot chase by the Mughal army; during these skirmishes several Sikhs lost their lives.

According to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi the siege of Sadhaura Fort continued for seven months and a half, but this is not true. The Mughal army reached Sadhaura on 22 June and they occupied it in the third week of September; hence the siege continued for about three months.

**How Many Sikhs were Killed in This Battle:** In March 1713, there were only 1000 Sikhs in the Fort. According to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi, 691 Sikhs were killed in one day, 152 on another day and 200 in the third battle<sup>25</sup>. So, according to this account 1043 Sikhs were killed in these three days alone. On 31 July 1713, when it was raining very heavily, 500 Sikhs on horses and 500 on feet, entered the Fort. Fighting continued still another 2 months. During these battles too several Sikhs were killed. If these figures are correct, then, out of a force of 2000, only 2-3 hundred Sikhs could escape by breaking a portion of any wall of the Fort. But, according to a report, Abdus Samad Khan got severed the heads of the 600 dead Sikhs killed in the battle of Sadhura and dispatched them to the Emperor to win his appreciations.<sup>26</sup> On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September the Emperor inspected these heads and sent

a special robe of honour to the Abdus Samad Khan.

Having captured the Fort of Sadhaura Abdus Samad Khan decided to demolish it, so that the Sikhs might not be able to have this Fort as their defensive post. All the soldiers were given the duty to demolish and transport its rocks and bricks and other materials to far areas, so that the Sikhs might not be able to repair or re-build it.<sup>27</sup> The demolition of the Fort and transportation of its debris took several days. After this, Abdus Samad Khan decided to move towards Lohgarh.

### **Martyrdom of Bhai Fateh Singh**

When the battle of Sadhaura was going on, Bhai Fateh Singh was in Jammu-Kashmir area. In the second week of August 1713, Bhai Fateh Singh was present in Baloh (in Kashmir). Suddenly, the ruler of Kashmir on one side and the ruler of Baloh on the other side surrounded the Sikh army. The Sikhs tried to seek refuge in the nearby jungle, but the number of the Mughal soldiers was so high that they (Sikhs) could not save themselves. All the one thousand Sikhs and an equal number of the Mughals died in this battle. Bhai Fateh Singh was also one of those who lost their lives. His head was severed and dispatched to Mohammed Ali Khan (deputy Governor of Kashmir) who further sent the news of the Mughal victory to Farukhsiyar. Farukhsiyar praised the Mughal soldiers and increased the *mansab* of Mohammed Ali Khan by five hundred.<sup>28</sup>

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### **Endnotes**

1. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, vol 1, p. 206.
2. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, vol 1, p. 206.
3. *Ibid*, p. 258.
4. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 20.10.1712
5. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entries of 26 and 27.1.1713
6. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 2.3.1713
7. Later, after the murder of Farukhsiyar in 1719, Raj Inder Kunwar's father Raja Ajit Singh got her 'freed' from the palace of the widows, on the 16th of July 1719, and escorted her to Jodhpur; he also took away all her wealth and other precious belongings; the Muslim clergies and aristocracy

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- opposed this and tried that she should not be allowed to go, but Abdullah Khan helped the Raja's safe exit from Delhi. (Irvine, *Later Mughals*, p 401).
8. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, vol 1, p 305.
  9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 10.3.1713
  10. Mohammed Qaim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khwakeen*, pp 64-67.
  11. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 21.3.1713.
  12. Farukhsiyar sent these 13 senior generals to lead seven thousand soldiers: Khushkismat Janash Khan, Daulat Begh Khan Hazara, Iradat Khan, Arab Ali Khan, Mir Hussaini Khan, Sayyad Jawad Khan Bukhari, Mirza Muhammed Shafia Barlas, Nazar Khan Kheshgi, Walidad Khan Sherzaad, Sher Khan, Mirza Begh Turk, Mir Mustafa and Zahur UllaKhan. Mohammed Qaim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khwakeen*, pp 64-67.
  13. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 16.3.1713
  14. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 2.4.1713.
  15. *Arzdashat* (letter) written by Jeth Mall (agent of Raja of Jaipur) to the Raja of Jaipur, in April 1713, Serial no 62, *Arzdaasht* no 145 (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
  16. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entries of 27 and 28.6.1713.
  17. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, vol. I, p. 308.
  18. Irvine, *Later Mughals*. vol. I, p. 309.
  19. Muhmmmed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 64-67.
  20. Muhmmmed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 68.
  21. Muhmmmed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 64-67.
  22. Irvine, *Later Muggals*, volume I, pp 308-09.
  23. Muhmmmed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 64-67.
  24. *Arzdashat* (letter) written by Jeth Mall (agent of Raja of Jaipur) to the Raja of Jaipur, on 6 Augsut 1713, Serial no 63, *Arzdaasht* no 139 (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
  25. Muhmmmed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 64-67.
  26. It is possible that the total number of the Sikhs killed at Sadhura was around 600. As Muhammed Qasim Aurangbadi gives figure of 691 in one battle, it may be total number of the Sikhs killed at Sadhaura.
  27. Muhmmmed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 68-69.
  28. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 16.8.1713

## Third Mughal Attack on Lohgarh

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Banda Singh Bahadur knew that after capturing the Fort of Sadhaura, the Mughal army would surely attack Lohgarh Fort; so, he dispatched every good, except weapons, to Paonta Sahib (12 *Kos*, i.e. about 45 kilometers from Lohgarh).<sup>1</sup>

Having captured Sadhaura, Abdus Samad Khan wanted to attack Lohgarh Fort, but his companions told him that there was no hope of winning this battle; hence he postponed the decision. This delay gave opportunity to Banda Singh Bahadur and he further strengthened Lohgarh Fort. He strengthened the walls, and, built bastions and trenches.

On 21 August 1713, an advance unit of the Mughal army went towards Lohgarh. This party came under the attack of the Sikh soldiers. From among the soldiers of this unit at least 40 were killed, 20 were wounded and 35 were arrested by the Sikhs. The rest of them left everything there and ran empty-handed and saved their lives. Besides, the Sikhs captured about 100 horses, 30 camels, 40 buffalos and 200 other animals. Almost during the same days, the death of Mohkam Singh, a general of the Mughals, too disheartened the Mughal soldiers, and the companions of Banda Singh became more daring and bold.<sup>2</sup>

On 29 August 1713, about 200 Mughal soldiers were patrolling in between Sadhaura and Lohgarh. When they saw just a small number of Sikhs, most of them ran away, but their leader Jamandar Baloch Khan was killed by the Sikhs. Beside him, four more Mughal nobles were also killed. The Sikhs chopped off their heads and took them into the hills of Lohgarh. These losses disheartened the Mughal army and they decided

to postpone an immediate attack on Lohgarh.<sup>3</sup>

On 12 October 1713, the Emperor was told that Banda Singh was present in Lohgarh Fort and he was further strengthening it. The moat of the Fort was under preparation and Banda Singh intended to fight.<sup>4</sup> It was an indication to the Mughal generals that they should not make a hasty attack on Lohgarh Fort, otherwise they would have to suffer heavy losses.

According to Irvine, from the first ridge up to the wall of Lohgarh Fort, the Sikhs had built fifty-two defensive posts, arranged in such a manner that each protected the other, thus exposing an assailant to a deadly fire throughout his advance. The Fort was in more than a dozen hills, and, all around were bowers of trees, stones and ditches and gorges everywhere. It seemed that even angels with wings or birds could not reach there, then how a man or a horse could reach there. It was a really difficult venture.<sup>5</sup>

Having waited for some days more, Abdus Samad Khan began moving to Lohgarh. He covered this distance in 14 days. When he reached near the Fort, he pitched his tents there, but he did not launch an attack. After some days Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan (Faujdar of Sarhind) and Zakaria Khan (son of Abdus Samad Khan) too reached there.

On 13 November 1713, these three armies began a very heavy artillery attack on Lohgarh Fort. For the next four days guns and cannons bombarded all the hills of the Fort. It was such a heavy bombardment that (to quote an idiom used by Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi) 'even the wings of the gods might have been burnt'.<sup>6</sup> Banda Singh, who could watch the movement of the enemy from the tops of the hills, had seen that a mammoth army had surrounded the Fort from three sides.

Those soldiers who were in the front trenches and first layer of the hills fought bravely, but the firing made them helpless; hence many of them were killed and quite a number was captured as well. The Mughal attack continued for many days, but there was no fighting from the Sikhs' side. This made the Mughal army understand that the Sikhs in the upper trenches and the hills had disappeared; they had escaped through high hills. Banda Singh and senior Sikh general had escaped



without giving a fight. It seemed that only one thousand Sikhs were involved in the battle. Abdus Samad Khan, once again, failed to arrest or kill Banda Singh Bahadur. So, the Mughals lost this battle too. Their purpose was not to capture Lohgarh Fort; they were there to arrest or kill Banda Singh Bahadur; and they failed in this mission. Even by fleeing the scene Banda Singh had virtually defeated the Mughals.

### **Why Did Banda Singh Leave Lohgarh in 1713?**

One may ask that it was neither failure of food supplies, nor in ammunition, then why did Banda Singh leave Lohgarh without giving a big fight? The answer is Banda Singh had a long term strategy. His purpose was not to achieve a small gain of winning the battle of Lohgarh. He wanted to keep the Mughal army constantly engaged in the battlefield and thus exhaust it, drain its treasury in paying salary for the soldiers and spending on provisions and ammunition, create constant fear in the mind of the Emperor and the Mughal aristocracy, and create an atmosphere of chaos for the officials of the Mughal regime.

When he left Lohgarh on 30 November 1710, it was the same reason. He could have fought for several months. He left Lohgarh and the Mughal generals and the soldiers remained in trouble for so many days; the regime spent a lot of money for this expedition, the Emperor could not pay attention to other activities. The awe and chaos created by Banda Singh made the Emperor insane. This was the beginning of the destruction of the Mughal Empire. Even for the second time, in September 1712, he left Lohgarh without giving a fight. At that time too, along with Mohammed Amin Khan, hundreds of generals and thousands of Mughal soldiers, the Emperor had also engaged the Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur. This time too, the royal treasury spent a lot of money, and, it had to surrender revenue rights of the East and Gujrat to the rulers of Jaipur and Jodhpur, thus losing a considerable part of the royal income. The third time (in November 1713) too, the Governors of Lahore and Multan and the *Faujdar* of Sarhind and thousands of the soldiers of the Mughals spent many months to capture Sadhura and Lohgarh but they could not arrest or kill Banda Singh Bahadur. This time

too they lost the battle. Had Banda Singh Bahadur not made the mistake of confining himself to Gurdas Nangal, in March 1715, the results would have been much different; he could have ended the Mughal Empire (at least in the Punjab), by 1720. Had the Rajput rulers of Udaipur, Jaipur and Jodhpur declared rebellion against the Mughals, this would have resulted in the end of the Mughal Empire in the whole of South Asia. Banda Singh's battle was not over with his arrest and execution. The Sikh struggle of post-Banda Singh period, which ended the Mughal rule in the 'Greater Punjab', was continuation of the Banda Singh's expedition."

Having captured the lower part of Lohgarh Fort, the soldiers went up towards some stages of the Fort. There they found precious clothes, including silk and other precious clothes, gold and silver, utensils, spices like cardamom and cloves, animals (buffaloes and cows, etc.), slaves and womenfolk etc.; many soldiers plundered whatever they found there.<sup>7</sup>

This was the last battle of Lohgarh Fort. The battle of Lohgarh continued for three years (November 1710 to November 1713). During this period three major battles were fought. In the first battle, fought in November 1710, mammoth Mughal army of more than one hundred thousand soldiers led by the Mughal Emperor, his four princes and hundreds of Mughal generals and some Hindu rulers as well (some believe that the number of these soldiers was between two and three hundred thousand). The second battle was fought in September 1712. It was led by Mohammed Amin Khan, chief general of the Mughal army. The third battle was fought in October-November 1713. It was led by Abdus Samad Khan (Governor Lahore), Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan (Faujdar Sarhind), Inam Khan and Zakaria Khan (later Governor Lahore). After this third battle Banda Singh had gone to Jammu but still thousands of Sikh soldiers were present in Lohgarh Sadhura zone. They continued attacking the Mughal posts and plundering the Mughal aristocrats and ministers. The Emperor continued receiving news about such attacks<sup>8</sup> till Banda Singh was arrested and executed. The Lohgarh Fort was occupied by the Mughal army much after the execution of Banda Singh.

After this the task of its demolition was taken up by the Mughals.

According to a report on 29 November 1713, about 900 Sikhs were killed in this battle.<sup>9</sup> Abdus Samad Khan severed the heads of the dead Sikhs and sent his son Zakaria Khan to present these before Farukhsiyar.

Zakaria Khan reached Delhi on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1713. Farukhsiyar inspected these heads and ordered that those (heads) should be hanged on spears and exhibited in the *Chandni Chowk* in Delhi. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, Farukhsiyar presented a special robe of honour, an aigrette and an insignia to Zakaria Khan; Farukhsiyar also increased the *mansab* of Abdus Samad Khan from two and a half thousand to three thousand foot-soldiers and one thousand horses;<sup>10</sup> besides, a ceremonial *nagara* (drum) was also presented to him.

#### **Abdus Samad Khan Honored as 'Great Victorious'**

Like Bahadur Shah and Jahandar Shah, Farukhsiyar too considered the Sikh issue as the most important and always gave it special consideration; due to this he had a special regard for Mohammed Amin Khan and Abdus Samad Khan who had been leading campaigns against the Sikhs. In the last week of February 1714, the Emperor received the message that Abdus Samad Khan would visit him on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February; he asked his ministers and advisors 'how a great victorious general should be greeted in the Emperor's court?' He sought details as to which officers had welcomed and escorted Asad Khan to the court of the then Emperors after the victory of Jinji and Khan Jahan Bahadur after the victory of Bengal.<sup>11</sup>

Having received information, Farukhsiyar gave instructions to his courtiers to grant a befitting welcome to Abdus Samad Khan; he asked Mir Jumla to welcome Abdus Samad Khan at the gate of *Diwan-i-Khas* and escort him to his (Emperor's) presence. When Abdus Samad Khan presented himself before the Emperor, he (Emperor) patted his back and presented him an aigrette with his own hands.<sup>12</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1714, Isa Khan Manjh too presented himself before the Emperor. The Emperor rewarded him also for his campaign against the Sikhs by permanently granting him the *Faujdari* (chief of

law and order) and *jagir* (estate) of the Lakhi Jungle (most of the present *Malwa* of the Punjab) area. His *mansab* too was increased by nineteen hundred soldiers.<sup>13</sup> The Emperor rewarded other officials too.

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### Endnotes

1. *Arzdashat* (letters) written by Chaube Jeth Mall (agent of Raja of Jaipur) to the Raja of Jaipur, on 27 and 29 Augsut 1713, Serial no 64, *Arzdaasht* no 161 (*Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon).
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.10.1713
5. Muhmmed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 68-69.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Muhmmed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp 68-69.
8. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entries of 17.4.1714; 7 and 29 May 1714; 12 June 1714; 9,10,18 and 19 July 1714.
9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 29.11.1713.
10. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 3.12.1713
11. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 1.2.1714
12. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 24.2.1714
13. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 3.3 1714

## The Last Battle of Banda Singh Bahadur

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Having left Lohgarh, Banda Singh is said to have gone to Chamba. But, according to an entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mulla* dated 11 December 1713, Banda Singh had reached Jallapur (district Muradabad, Uttar Pradesh) and the Emperor had sent a message to the *Faujdar* of Muradabad to take action against him. But, it does not seem true; firstly, there is no village named Jallapur in Muradabad district; there is a village named Jalalpur Khalsa in Dilari tehsil of Muradabad district, but this is about 300 kilometres from Lohgarh. Secondly, according to another entry of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mulla*, on 14 December 1713, the Emperor issued order to send Hamid Khan to Muradabad and punish the rebels, and, on the same day the Emperor Khan Bahadur Muzzafar Jung to go to Lohgarh to chastise Banda Singh. It seems that it might be a band of the Sikh soldiers, which was active in Muradabad which officials wrongly guessed as Banda Singh himself.

On 1 March 1714, the Emperor was told that the Sikh soldiers had plundered the area of Sarhind. Zain-ud-Din Khan, the *Faujdar* of Sarhind had sent his soldiers to chase them; and, after a battle the Sikh soldiers left that area.<sup>1</sup>

On 11 March 1714, the Emperor received a letter from Ifsandiyar of Jammu which said that the accounts keeper of the ruler of Chamba and the vakils of the Raja of Nurpur had told the deputy *Faujdar* Abdul Azim that Banda Singh had been staying in village Vaan and was planning to go to Batala via Bahilwal. The Emperor was told that deputy *Faujdar* Abdul Azim did not have enough number of soldiers, so he could not fight against Banda Singh; and, moreover, no hill ruler had helped him

to take action against Banda Singh.<sup>2</sup>

During this period, the Mughal Emperor received information that Iradatmand Khan, the army-chief of Eimanabad had made a secret agreement with the Sikhs; the Sikhs would attack the affluent and elite in the areas between Kabul-Kashmir and Lahore-Gujrat zones and share the plundered money and goods with Iradatmand Khan. The Emperor was also told that the Khan was also embezzling revenues and preparing fake records; hearing this, the Emperor wrote a letter to the Governor of Lahore to suggest some person to be appointed as chief of Eimanabad.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sikh Soldiers in Lohgarh, Baddi, Pinjore And Morni Hills**

Although, the Mughals had demolished the Fort at Sadhura, they had failed to capture Lohgarh Fort; and thousands of the Sikh soldiers were still present in Lohgarh, Raipur Rani, Toka, Chowki village near Nada Sahib, Baddi, Pinjaur and Morni hills, and, they had been the attacking an area up to Sarhind. Vanjaras Sikhs had been moving out of the area upto Ropar and Pinjor.

In the second week of April 1714, five thousand Sikh soldiers set up their camps near the village of Mehlu; they forcibly harvested the crops of the Mughal and Pathan feudal. When Sharaf-ud-Din, *Bakhshi* of the *Faujdar* of Sarhind received this news, he led a large number of soldiers against the Sikhs. The Sikhs gave them a tough fight. Several of the Sarhind soldiers were killed. The next day, they came again along with seven hundred foot soldiers and one thousand horsemen. There followed a pitched battle with swords and arrows, which continued for three *pahirs* (about 9 hours), resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. When it became dark, the Sikh soldiers returned to hills.<sup>4</sup>

As per information sent to the Emperor, on 30 April 1714, there were about five thousand Sikh soldiers, staying in the hills near Ropar. Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, the *Faujdar* of Sarhind, sent two thousand soldiers under the command of his nephew Mir Abu Mukarram to attack the Sikhs. When the Sikhs found that the number of the Mughal soldiers was less than their own, they came down from the hills. When Mir Abu

Mukarram received the news of the Sikhs' arrival at Ropar, he too reached there. This was followed by a pitched battle. Both sides exchanged gunfire, arrows and swords. This battle continued for two *pahir* (about 6 hours) and ended when it was dark, and the Sikhs returned to the hills. Hundreds of the Mughal soldiers and 300 Sikhs were killed in this battle. Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan severed heads of the three hundred dead Sikhs and dispatched them to Delhi to show the same to the Emperor and get rewarded for that.<sup>5</sup>

In the third week of May 1714, another battle was fought between the Sikhs and the Mughal army. On 29 May, the Emperor was told that on one day five thousand Sikh cavalry and seven thousand infantry come down from Shivalik hills and were present in Bawasa<sup>6</sup> village. At that time Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, the *Faujdar* of Sarhind, was also present in that area. He had a big force with him. Having received this information, the Mughal army surrounded them. Soon, a very large number of more Mughal soldiers too joined them; besides the local chiefs also sent several soldiers. According to this report, then the Mughal army too was about five thousand of cavalry and seven thousand infantry. When the Sikhs came to know about the strength of the Mughal army, they decided not to fight against such a huge army; hence, they continued guerrilla battle till they fled towards the high hills; in these skirmishes at least thirty Mughal soldiers were killed and fifty was injured, and many Sikhs too, lost their lives.<sup>7</sup>

The news of these casualties was reported to the Emperor on 12 June also. According to this report, on 13 May 1714, a big force of the Sikhs soldiers had entered village Manakpur and other villages of Dahona<sup>8</sup> pargana. They planned to take away their animals. The *zamindar* (chief) of the said village and the men of *thana* (police post) fought against the Sikhs. The Sikhs fought with arrows and swords. In the meanwhile the army of Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, Faujdar of Sarhind, appeared. In this battle, 11 soldiers of Mughal cavalry and Forty soldiers of their infantry were killed. Many Sikhs too were killed.<sup>9</sup> On 3<sup>rd</sup> July it was reported that Vanjaras were staying at around Nurpur and supplying the Sikhs with food grains, arrows and rifles.<sup>10</sup> There was a ceaseless

fight between the Mughals and Sikh forces.<sup>11</sup> The obnoxious smell of dead human bodies and animals made it a very foul many place. The Mughal Emperor, he lost his mind when he came to know about this.<sup>12</sup>

We have important news regarding the role of *Vanjaras* in the fourth year of Farrukhsiyar's rule. The news from the *chakla* from the Kangra was submitted to the Emperor that most of the *Vanjaras* who were Nanak-worshippers were staying in the *taaluqas* of Heer Chand and Daya Dhamma and the *zamindars* of the *khalsamahals* (imperial lands). They acted as spies for the Sikhs rebels and provided them with food grains, arrows and rifles. If captured, they should be punished and in this way the movement of the rebels and the supply of food grains for them would be restricted. The Emperor issued the necessary orders<sup>13</sup>. In the wake of Banda Singh's flight to the hills the imperialist had to encounter stiff resistance from the *Vanjaras*. Later it was reported that the *Vanjaras* had ravaged a number of villages there.

### **Baj Singh Separates Himself From Banda Singh**

Some writers (Ratan Singh Bhangu and Giani Gian Singh) have mentioned that Banda Singh and Binod Singh had developed differences with each other in the Fortress of Gurdas Nangal sometime in April-December 1715, and, Binod Singh had left the Fortress; but this is not true; there is no authentic source to prove it.<sup>14</sup> However, there is a clear evidence that once Baj Singh did go away from Banda Singh. According to a report, sent to the Emperor by Anand Rao reporter, Baj Singh, along with 14 to 15 thousand soldiers, had parted from Banda Singh and established his camp at Makhawal (Anandpur). He had the support of the ruler of Bilaspur. Baj Singh attacked several villages and plundered the mansions of the rich and the affluent Mughal and Pathans of the area. In spite of the presence of the royal forces in the nearby camps<sup>15</sup>, he would take away money, weapons and cattle.<sup>16</sup> It seems that Baj Singh had parted from Banda Singh not due to any differences, but in order to confuse or at least divide the Mughal army into two expeditions.

In the third week of July 1714, the Sikh soldiers put up their camps in Ardun, Mehluk, and Malkiaat villages (in the lower Shivalik hills). When



the Mughal army got this news, they attacked the Sikh camp; seventy Sikhs and a large number of Mughal soldiers were killed in these skirmishes. In the third week of August 1714, Baj Singh's army was again attacked by the Governor of Sarhind. Instead of fighting, the Sikhs preferred to move towards the hills.

It is possible that these attacks were led by Baj Singh. There is no further mention of Baj Singh's army in any source except that he was killed along with Banda Singh, in Delhi, on 9 June 1716. To say that the record of the Mughal times (*Akhbarat-I-Darbar-I-Mualla*) might have misspelled or wrongly mentioned Binod Singh as Baj Singh is not true. Moreover, Baj Singh has been shown to fight all the time against the Mughal army. It proves that Baj Singh did not part from Banda Singh due to any differences; rather the Sikh generals themselves divided the Sikh army into two groups as a part of military strategy. So, it is wrong that Baj Singh left Banda Singh due to 'differences' and he joined hands with the Mughals. Besides Binod Singh's name also does not appear in any Mughal record, source or concern (as referred to, about Binod Singh, in Ratan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Parkash*).

### **Banda Singh in Uttrakhand / Kumaon Hills**

In the beginning of August 1714, Banda Singh was present in the hills of the present Uttrakhand zone. According to the report of 10 August, the ruler of Srinagar was collaborating with Banda Singh. According to this report, Banda Singh had gone to Bareilly and Moradabad in accordance with the agreement with the *Vanjaras*.<sup>17</sup> Hearing this, Baj Bahadur Chand, the ruler of Kumaon, sent his army to attack the Sikhs. This battle continued for three days, leading to a few losses on both sides. Baj Bahadur dispatched heads of 19 Sikhs killed in these skirmishes, to the Mughal Emperor; and the Raja wished that the Emperor would reward him with a royal letter, a robe of honour and a turban-decoration, and the Emperor fulfilled his wish.<sup>18</sup> A report on 12 August mentions the number of the Sikhs killed at twenty.<sup>19</sup>

### **Banda Singh Again Returns To The Punjab**

In the middle of August 1714, Banda Singh again returned from the Hindustan to the plains of the Punjab plains. According to Irvine, on 16 August 1714,<sup>20</sup> a seven thousand strong force of the Sikhs attacked Ropar. Khwaja Mukarram, the deputy of Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan gave a tough fight to the Sikhs; as a result the Sikhs had to flee towards the high hills; two hundred Sikhs were killed in this battle.<sup>21</sup>

In December 1714, he put up his camps near Pinjore and Lakhat villages. On 5 December 1714, Banda Singh Bahadur reached Amboh near Pinjore<sup>22</sup>. At that time his wife Sahib Kaur and his son Ranjit Singh were also with him. As he was planning to launch an attack on Batala and Kalanaur, he decided to send his family to some safer place. He went to the village of *Dhotay-Da-Tanda*, also known as Tanda Dhota, (near Riasi in Jammu zone) and left his family in the care of Bhai Mehar Singh Dhoota; he also handed over the Guru Granth Sahib<sup>23</sup> and Guru Gobind Singh's Kirpan<sup>24</sup> to his wife and asked her to take care of the relics. After this he began his march towards Gurdaspur.<sup>25</sup>

On 5 February 1715, the Emperor was told that the Sikh soldiers were encamped at village Lakhat (3 *koh*, i.e. about 10 kilometre from Sarhind). When Faujdar Khidmat Talab Khan<sup>26</sup> received the information, he sent his Bakhshi with five thousand gunmen and arrow-shooters to chase the Sikhs. He also wrote to the hill rulers asking them not to allow the rebels enter their territories.<sup>27</sup>

In the third week of March 1715, the Sikh had gone from Sarhind to the hills towards Suket and Mandi. Their number was seven thousand cavalry and eight thousand infantry. They had the support of the ruler of Kehlur (Bilaspur) State. During this period, when the Sikh army was in Dun area, they had to fight a battle against the Mughal army led by Ramzani Begh, *amil* (an employee) of Fatah-Ulla-Khan. In this battle the Mughals suffered heavy losses.<sup>28</sup>

### **Banda Singh in the Punjab**

At the end of February 1715, Banda Singh himself came down to the foothills and entered the Punjab; he attacked the Mughal posts and

cantonments and took away money, weapons and food. When the Emperor got the news, he sent mace-bearers (special messengers) to Abdus Samad Khan to take action.<sup>29</sup>

In the early days of March 1715, Banda Singh attacked Kalanaur, defeated Sohrab Khan and occupied the town. Batala and Raipur were the next to fall. The *Faujdar* of Lahore or the officials of the area around Batala-Kalanaur did not come to challenge Banda Singh.<sup>30</sup>

At that time, Abdus Samad Khan, the Governor of Lahore, was not present in the province and had gone to quell the rebellion of the Hussain Khan Kheshgi. (In the beginning of 1715, Hussain Khan Kheshgi had raised rebellion against the Mughal regime. Abdus Samad Khan himself led an army against Kheshgi. This battle continued for a couple of months. Finally, Kheshgi was killed. The Emperor granted the title of *Said-ud-Daula* (meaning: sword of the state) to Abdus Samad Khan).<sup>31</sup>

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### Endnotes

1. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 1.3.1714
2. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 11.3.1714
3. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, an entry dated 8.3.1714.
4. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 17.4..1714
5. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 7.5.1714
6. The report mentions this village/town as a pargana, but, now, in this area, there is no village with this name.
7. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 29.5.1714
8. In this area, there is no village named Dahona, however a village named Manakpur is there between Mohali and Tangori, about 35 kilometers from Sarhind).
9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.6.1714
10. Ghulam, Mohyy-ud-din, *Fatihat Namah-i-Samadi*, p.156.
11. Ghulam, Mohyy-ud-din, *Fatihat Namah-i-Samadi*, p 129.
12. Ghulam, Mohyy-ud-din, *Fatihat Namah-i-Samadi*, p 97
13. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 3 July 1715.
14. This story was concocted by Ratan Singh Bhangu in his work *Prachin Panth Parkash*.

15. There were two camps of the Mughal army in that zone: one at Jindbarhi and the other at Ropar.
16. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entries of 9 and 10.7.1714
17. It shows that the companions of Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara were present in Garhwal and Kumaon zones, and, in Bareilly and Moradabad areas as well.
18. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 10.8.1714
19. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.8.1714
20. Irvine gives the date 16 Shaban 1126 Hijri but he calculates it as 26 August. At that time it was Julian calendar which should be 16 August; it seems he has calculated according to Gregorian calendar.
21. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol I, pp. 311.
22. Veena Sachdev: *Revisiting Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and his time*,; an article in *Historical Geography of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur*, edited by Amarjeet Singh, page 34.
23. It was that volume which had been granted Guruship. After victory of Sirhind, the Sikhs had brought it from nanded to Sarhind. Since then it had been in the custody of Banda Singh.
24. This sword had been given by Guru Gobind Singh to Banda Singh on 5 October 1708, at the time of his departure for the Punjab.
25. Desa Singh Multani, *Ahwal Mutallaka Khandan Banda Singh Bahadur* (1800), p.22. *Guru Kian Sakhian* p. 27.
26. Some times in the last months of 1714, Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, the Faujdar of Sarhind had been replaced with Khidmat Talab Khan.
27. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 5.2.1715
28. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 23-24.2.1715.
29. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 2.3.1715
30. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 14.3.1715.
31. Khafi Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 861.

## Battle of Gurdas Nangal and Arrest of Banda Singh Bahadur

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On 14 March 1715, the Emperor received the news of the fall of Kalanaur and Batala. This frightened and angered the Emperor. The next day he sent a large army, under the command of Qamar-ud-Din (son of Mohammed Amin Khan, and father of Mir Mannu), to attack the Sikhs. Qamar-ud-Din left Delhi on 15 March. The Emperor also despatched Afrasiyab Khan Bahadur *Khan-i-Dauran*, Raja Udip Singh (Raja of Orchha), Raja Gopal Singh Bhadauria, Pirthi Chand and 300 *swar mansabdars* (those who had right to employ soldiers with horses, i.e. cavalry) to chase the Sikhs; besides, the Emperor ordered twelve thousand five hundred and fifty horsemen of his personal command to join crusade against the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup>

### Siege of Gurdas Nangal

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1715, the Emperor got news that the Banda Singh's army was present in *Majha* area, at a distance of about Forty *Koh* (about one hundred and twenty-five km) from Lahore; and, all the government officials as well as other prominent persons had fled the area for fear of Banda Singh, and, the Sikhs had appointed their own officials in that area. When this news reached Abdus Samad Khan, he ordered all his soldiers to march towards that area which the Sikhs had occupied, hoping that Banda Singh too might be present there.

At that time, Banda Singh was present at the Fortress of Kot Mirza Jaan and was fortifying it. Kot Mirza Jaan was a village between Batala and Kalanaur; Karam Singh Historian believes that "Banda Singh chose this place from military strategy point of view; he (Banda Singh) knew

that had he chosen to fight near Batala and Kalanaur, then, in case of losing the battle against the Mughal army, the residents of these two towns would have blocked his way from escaping; and if the Mughals were defeated, the fleeing Mughal army would have found refuge in these towns; so, he was looking for a safer defensive post like that of the Fortress of Kot Mirza Jaan. Karam Singh believes that Banda Singh expected more possibility of defeat than victory. That is why he began repairing this Fortress. Banda Singh had repaired a major part of the inside of the Fortress but the outer walls and the moat were still not ready.

It seems that Karam Singh historian had not rightly assessed the situation. Mirza Jaan village (in between Bijliwal and Akarpura) is eight and a half kilometres from Batala, and, the distance from Kalanaur to Mirza Jan is fifteen kilometres. All the villages around Mirza Jaan i.e. Akarpura, Muridke, Kala Afghana and Fatehgarh Churian on one side, and, Satkoha and Dhariwal on the other side were totally Muslim villages. They were not supposed to help Banda Singh. But, the reality is that all the Muslims of the Punjab were afraid of Banda Singh, hence, there was least possibility that any civilian would try to block the passage of Banda Singh.

Now, when he received the news of the march of a huge Mughal army, under the command of Arif Khan, he decided to leave that area for a safer place from where he could fight against the invading army. Banda Singh marched towards Gurdas Nangal and took refuge in the Fortress-type mansion of Duni Chand Darwesh (later known as *Gurdas Nangal Di Garhi*), at Gurdas Nangal village, about six km from present town of Gurdaspur. Soon, the Mughal army too reached there and surrounded the Fortress from all the sides.

At that time Banda Singh had not more than five thousand soldiers with him. This mansion was not big enough to give place to more than a thousand persons; the rest had no choice but to try to flee by cutting the Mughal siege. So, about four thousand Sikhs began running for safety; but, due to the siege by the thousands of Mughal soldiers, most of them were slain, and only a small number of them were able to save

their lives. According to Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi<sup>2</sup> two thousand Sikhs were killed and a few hundred were captured too; two thousands heads of the dead Sikhs were severed and dispatched for exhibition before the Emperor. About one thousand Sikhs, who had been arrested there or elsewhere, were handcuffed and chained. They too were taken to Delhi to be paraded before the Emperor.<sup>3</sup>

Now, as Banda Singh had shut himself in the Fortress of Gurdas Nangal; and thousands of troops, led by Abdus Samad Khan, had surrounded the Fortress from all sides. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1715, the Emperor sent his messenger to Azz Khan, the deputy Governor of Sarhind, asking him to march towards Gurdas Nangal to help Abdus Samad Khan. In the meanwhile, the Emperor got the news that Daulat Khan Muin (of Sultanpur) too had already reached Goindwal on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, along with his 500 soldiers and had taken control of the shores of the river Beas; the Emperor assigned his duty to stop and arrest/kill the Sikhs if they tried to escape through that side.<sup>4</sup>

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 1715, the Emperor got (wrong) news from Jammu that Banda Singh and his wife and son had been arrested; in fact, the truth was that they were among those who had been surrounded by the Mughal army at Gurdas Nangal.<sup>5</sup>

By this time, Abdus Samad Khan too had returned to Lahore. When he came to know that the Muslim armies had surrounded Banda Singh at Gurdas Nangal, he did not rest and reached Gurdaspur with twelve thousand cavalry, and the same number of foot-soldiers and a very large number of cannons. He covered this distance of 40 *kos* (about 125 kilometres) within three days. In between, he attacked Batala and Kalanaur and freed these towns from the Sikhs. On all these fronts, he had to face tough fighting by the Sikhs. The Sikhs fought with arrows and matchlocks.<sup>6</sup>

By this time, the number of the Mughal army surrounding Gurdas Nangal had grown to more than fifty thousand. Abdus Samad Khan himself was commanding this huge Mughal army. Saif-ud-Din Ahmed Khan (*Faujdar* of Gujrat), Iradatmand Khan (*Faujdar* of Eimanabad), Nur Mohammed Khan (*Faujdar* of Aurangabad and Pasrur), Sheikh

Mohammed Dayam (*Faujdar* of Batala), Sohrab Khan (*Faujdar* of Kalanaur), Hamir Chand Katoch (Raja of Kangra), Hari Dev (son of Raja Dharuv Dev Jasrotia) and Arif Begh (deputy chief of Lahore) too had joined Abdus Samad Khan. The Mughals had dug trenches all around the Fortress of Gurdas Nangal.<sup>7</sup>

On the north side of the Fortress Zakaria Khan (then Governor Jammu) and Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan (Governor Sarhind) were leading operations, and, on the south side the command was with the *Faujders* of Patti, Eimanabad, Batala, Kalanaur, Aurangabad-Pasrur, Gujrat as well as the Rajput rulers of Kangra and Jasrota.<sup>8</sup>

The number of the Mughal and Hindu hill soldiers was more than fifty times than that of the Sikhs in the Fortress; the Sikhs were fighting the battle for survival; they did not have any food inside the Fortress. For a few days, some of them would come out of the Fortress and fall upon the nearby villages in order to plunder food and cattle. In the second week of April 1715, some Mughal units proceeded forward to stop the Sikhs from coming out of the Fortress so that they (Sikhs) should not be able to get food; this resulted in losses on both the sides. Several Sikhs and Mughal soldiers were killed in these skirmishes. One day, when a Sikh group came out of the Fortress to fetch wood for fuel, the army of Dharuv Dev Jasrotia attacked them; as a result, most of the Sikhs were killed and the rest ran to the Fortress to save their lives. Now, this side too was blocked; the Mughal gun and arrow-shooting experts were stationed all around the Fortress and if any Sikh tried to come out of the Fortress to fetch food or anything else, he would become a victim of these arrows and the gun shots. Several attempts were made by the Sikhs and hundreds of them were killed.

But, in spite of being a mammoth force, the Mughal army did not try to enter the Fortress. In fact they were afraid that the Sikhs had several guns and cannons, and, in the early days of the siege of the Fortress, they had also collected a lot of iron from the nearby villages (for making guns). The Mughals got the news that the Sikhs had made three new cannons with this iron and also had a large amount of gun-powder. Abdus Samad Khan reported all this to the Emperor; the



Emperor got this news on 23 April 1715. On 28 April, the Emperor received a request from Abdus Samad Khan asking for a big cannon to blow up the walls of Gurdas Nangal; the Emperor immediately ordered despatch of a very powerful cannon.<sup>9</sup>

More than one month and a half had passed but the Sikhs did not surrender nor did they make any attempt to flee from the Fortress. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, the Emperor asked Issa Khan Manjh (chief of Lakkhi Jungle) also to lead his army to Gurdas Nangal. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May the Emperor asked Safvi Khan to issue orders to all the *mansabdars* and *jagirdars* of the Lahore province to join Abdus Samad Khan along with their soldiers; and that properties of those who do not abide would be confiscated.<sup>10</sup> There was not even a single person whom the Emperor did not issue orders to join the campaign against the Sikhs; by the end of May, 24 thousand soldiers of Abdus Samad Khan, 5 thousand soldiers from Sarhind, 10 thousand soldiers from Lahore, 5 thousand soldiers from Jammu and about 20 thousand soldiers of the *Faujdar*s of different areas of the Punjab as well several *mansabdars* and *jagirdars* had put a siege to Gurdas Nangal. On the other hand, thousands of soldiers, led by Qamar-ud-Din, were also ready to leave Delhi for Gurdas Nangal within a few days.

Now, the Mughal army engaged one thousand wood cutters and an equal number of carpenters to clear the jungle around the Fortress. A very large number of trees were cut down. Two thousand carts pulled by camels were brought to remove the wood. When all the area around the Fortress was cleared of all the vegetation etc, the Mughal army dug trenches all around the Fortress so that the Sikhs should not escape.<sup>11</sup>

It was now the middle of June and the Sikhs had been inside the Fortress for the past two months and a half. Mohammed Qasim, the writer of *Ibratnama*, who was present in the camp of Arif Begh Khan (the deputy Governor of Lahore), writes: *“The Sikhs in groups of 40s and 50s would come out of the Fortress with the purpose of getting food and water for themselves as well as for their horses. The Mughal soldiers would try to stop them, but the firing of guns as well as arrows shot from inside the Fortress would kill a large number of Mughal soldiers.*

*Those Mughal soldiers who succeeded in reaching near the Sikhs were cut by their swords.” Mohammed Qasim further writes that the Mughal soldiers used to make prayer saying: “O Allah! Let Banda Singh somehow escape from here, so that we may be able to save our lives.”*<sup>12</sup>

Khafi Khan refers to the awe and fear among the Mughal soldiers, writes: *“When some cat or dog would come out of the Fortress, the royal persons would kill it with an arrow or gun fearing that this might be some act of magic.”* (The Mughals feared that, as Banda Singh knew magic, he might have disguised himself as a cat or dog).

When the news of the prolonged siege reached Delhi, the Emperor wrote an angry letter to Abdus Samad Khan for not being able to capture Banda Singh even after a siege of more than two months; he ordered Qamar-ud-Din to immediately lead his forces to Gurdas Nangal. Within a few days he (Qamar-ud-Din) reached there and established his camp on the eastern side of the Fortress.

Now, the Sikhs were in a major crisis; due to such a big force surrounding them, they became helpless and hopeless too; they were not able to come out of the Fortress even to get food or water for themselves and fodder for their horses; and, whenever they tried to come out, they would come under the attack of the guns and arrows; most of them would die and the rest had to run into the Fortress for their safety. A couple of hundred Sikhs died during these attempts too. Now, their number inside the Fortress was not more than five hundred.

In the first week of June 1715, Abdus Samad Khan announced that whosoever brought the head of a Sikh would get ten rupees (it was two month's and a half salary of a soldier); this encouraged some Mughal soldiers to try their luck; they began taking risks and a few of them succeeded too while others lost their lives.

On 3 July, the Emperor was told that most of the *Vanjaras*,<sup>13</sup> who were Nanak-worshipper (i.e. Sikhs), were staying in the territory of Raja Daya Dhamma<sup>14</sup> and Raja Heer Chand<sup>15</sup> (i.e. Kangra and Nurpur areas). They acted as spies of Banda Singh. They provided the rebels with food-grain, arrows and rifles. The Emperor was requested to issue orders to the hill rulers asking them not to allow Vanjaras in their territories. If

captured, they should be punished. In this way the movement of the rebels and the food-grain for them would be restricted.<sup>16</sup>

During this expedition against Banda Singh, Hamir Chand Kamboj (Katoch), the Daya Dhamma (Nurpur), Ram Singh Jamwal, Deb Chand Dehnuval had come to Abdus Samad Khan along with their armies, and participated in expeditions against Banda Singh. Similarly, Udey Singh (Sibia) and Dalip Singh (Loka) had sent their armies, led by their army chiefs. But, Madha Sen (Mandi), Man Singh (Kullu) and Heeraj Pal<sup>17</sup> (Malabar) neither joined the expedition against Banda Singh, nor did they send their armies. These three were friendly to Banda Singh. The Emperor asked Itmad-UI-Daula (Bakhshi ul Mulk) to write to the Governor of Lahore to take action against them.<sup>18</sup>

**Banda Singh and the Sikhs Inside the Fortress:** In July 1715, the monsoon stopped major action by the Mughals, but they did not lift their siege. On the other hand, the Sikhs too did not try to avail of the rainy season for trying to make any attempt to escape by breaking the siege. Though the number of the Mughal soldiers was very high there was the possibility of escape by some Sikhs; the Sikhs did nothing but and remained inactive during the whole *Chumasa* (four months), i.e. first extreme heat and then the rains, whereas they knew that they wouldn't be able to get food and even water, and, there was no possibility of the lifting of the siege.

Inside the Fortress, as the Sikhs did not have food, they ate all the grass and even dry leaves of the trees. Several of them became victims of loose motions and other diseases. Some Sikhs crushed the stems of the trees into powder and cooked it for food; some had cut the flesh from their thighs and cooked it in order to save themselves from starvation.

The Sikhs did not try to break the siege even when winter began. They had two options: 1. Try to break the siege and embrace martyrdom and possibly escape of a few of them; or 2. Remain inside the Fortress, die of hunger or get captured and then face death. Thus, Banda Singh simply waited for eight full months and finally the day came when the calamity was to happen.

### Capture of Banda Singh and His Companions

In the first week of December, not a single Sikh tried to come out of the Fortress; nor was any face or weapon appearing from the tops of the walls; at this, the Mughals began thinking that either the remaining Sikhs had fled from the Fortress or all of them had died; they, however, did not yet dare move towards the gates of the Fortress. Finally, on the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1715, the Mughal general sent a few dare devil soldiers towards the gate of the Fortress. They reached near the gate without any opposition. This confirmed their apprehensions that the Sikhs had either disappeared or died. Now, the herds of the Mughal army ran towards the gate of the Fortress, broke the gate open and entered the Fortress.

There were none to resist them; inside, they found about three to four hundred Sikhs who were very weak from hunger and almost dead; the Mughal soldiers immediately tied them, and, if any one of them showed even a little movement, he was immediately cut with sword; about half of the Sikhs were put to the sword. There was a pool of blood around the dead bodies of the Sikh soldiers.

But, on the other hand, Mohammed Qasim (in *Ibratnama*) gives a different story: *“Due to stinking smell and starvation, the Sikhs offered themselves for arrest on this condition that they won’t be killed.”* The same has been claimed by Mirza Mohammed; he writes: *“the Sikhs offered a big sum of money (as bribe) to Mohammed Amin Khan if he would allow them passage to flee; but when the Khan did not agree, they offered themselves for arrest, on the condition that they won’t be killed but shall be presented before the Emperor and they would accept whatever punishment the Emperor grants them.”*<sup>19</sup>

Both these stories are concoctions. Any Sikh showing his head out of the gate of the Fortress or above the walls was sure to get an arrow or a bullet attack; hence no question of their surrender. Secondly, the Sikhs had no money which they could have offered to Abdus Samad Khan (the Sikhs had only 600 rupees and 23 *muhars*).<sup>20</sup> Thirdly, had the Sikhs offered to surrender, they would have either come out with their hand up or with a white flag or any other form of surrender. Fourthly,

had the Mughals accepted the Sikhs' offer, they would not have killed more than half of the Sikhs, even after their surrender? Fifthly, how could the Sikhs have offered to agree to the decision of the Emperor about their fate after their arrest, especially from that Emperor who wanted to annihilate them? Hence, this is just a propaganda of the Mughal. The truth is that the Sikhs in the Fortress had become so weak due to hunger that they were unable to make any movement, and, when there was no movement for several days, the Mughal army attacked and captured the feeble and half-dead Sikhs there.

Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi has given the true account of the arrest of Banda Singh and the Sikhs. He says that when there was no movement within the Fortress for so many days, the Mughal soldiers climbed the ladders, scaled the walls, and entered the Fortress. Inside the Fortress, due to hunger and other difficulties, the limbs of the Sikhs had become powerless to act or even to make any movement; hence they had lost strength to fight because they did not have power to even hold swords. So much so that they could not even speak any word. Thus, to say that Banda Singh and the Sikhs surrendered is baseless.

### **Banda Singh was Immediately Fettered**

As soon as the Mughals identified Banda Singh (who himself was almost unconscious), they immediately fettered him; others too were tied with ropes. All the Sikh prisoners were taken to Lahore under heavy army escort. At Lahore, they were paraded through the streets of the city; the local Muslim residents threw bricks, stones and other articles on them; this hurt several Sikh prisoners. When the prisoners' procession was passing by the residence of Bayzid Khan (former chief of Jammu), his mother threw a big stone at them, killing one of them.<sup>21</sup> So, after this, the Governor of Lahore ordered covering of the faces of the prisoners with sacks.

After the procession, these Sikh prisoners were kept in shackles, under strict surveillance of the Mughal army. Their feet too had been fettered, and, their wastes had been tied with ropes; they were further tied in batches of 2s and 3s, and then they were again tied down on the

carts. Finally, it was decided to despatch them to Delhi via Sarhind under heavy army guards. The news of these arrests had reached the Emperor on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1715.

The number of the Sikhs arrested from Gurdas Nangal was less than 300; several Sikhs arrested from other places were also added to this group. Similarly, the Mughal army had killed only a couple of hundred of Sikhs during capture of Gurdas Nangal, and, their heads had been severed. During this period hundreds of more Sikhs had been killed elsewhere; the severed heads of all these Sikhs were also added to the total of the heads being despatched to Delhi. By the time the arrested Sikhs and severed heads of the Sikhs killed reached Delhi, their number had risen from 300 arrested from Gurdas Nangal to more than 700; and the number of the severed heads, which was about 200 at Gurdas Nangal, 700 at Lahore, now had risen to more than 2000 when it reached Delhi; all this was done to show the Emperor and the people of Delhi that Abdus Samad Khan had made great achievements.<sup>22</sup>

From Gurdas Nangal, the Mughal forces had captured 1000 swords, 278 shields, 173 bows and a small number of arrows, 180 guns, 114 daggers, 217 swords with *gaatra* (the Sikh sword-belt), a few ornaments of gold, 23 mohars and about 600 rupees only, and, all this was, later, deposited in the royal treasury at Delhi. It is amazing that the Sikhs had fought against a heavily armoured mammoth Mughal army, with just such a small number of weapons, for about eight months.

### **Farukhsiyar Celebrated the Arrest of Banda Singh**

When Farukhsiyar received the news of the arrest of Banda Singh and his companions on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1715, he made prayers (*namaaz*) twice. He announced the news of the Banda Singh's arrest in Delhi at the beat of the drum; he sent four sacks filled with coins (money) to be showered from elephants, so that the public should pick up the money and celebrate the victory of the Mughal army over the Sikhs.<sup>23</sup>

Zakaria Khan (son of Abdus Samad Khan, the Governor of Lahore, and son-in-law of Mohammed Amin Khan) himself led the procession bringing Banda Singh, his wife Sushil Kaur and 4'1/2 years old son Ajay

Singh, along with more than 700 other Sikh prisoners and two thousand severed heads of the Sikhs; severed heads of the Sikhs had been heaped in carts; the prisoner Sikhs had been tied in 2s and 3s and were 'laden' on camels. Banda Singh, who was in fetters, had been put in a big cage; this cage had been placed on an elephant and a Mughal soldier, carrying an unsheathed sword, was standing behind this cage, due to fear that Banda Singh might not break the cage with his 'magical power' and fly away.<sup>24</sup>

The procession of the Sikh prisoners first reached the village of Agarabad, in the outskirts of Delhi, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1716. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of February, before imprisoning them in the *Salimgarh Fort* (a Fort built by Salim Shah Sur in 1540s, on the back side of the *Lal Qila*, built by Shah Jahan in the 1620s; *Salimgarh Fort* was used for keeping the prisoners); these prisoners were paraded through the streets of Delhi.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Scene of Procession of the Sikh Prisoners**

This procession of the Sikh prisoners began from Agarabad and after covering about ten km route it reached the *Lal Qila*. It was led by a musical band, followed by the carts laden with severed heads of some two thousand Sikhs. These heads had been filled with chaff and were hung on the tops of bamboo sticks. The hair of these heads had been left flowing so that people might know that they were the heads of the Sikhs; these included some heads of the Sikh females as well and due to their long hair they too looked like male Sikhs.

Next to these severed heads, one soldier was carrying a dead cat at the top of a long bamboo stick. It signified that in the houses of the Sikhs not only human folk, but even no animal was left alive.

It was followed by Banda Singh; who had been put in a big cage that had been placed on an elephant; to ridicule Banda Singh, he had been dressed as a bridegroom; he was made to wear a royal cloak embroidered with pomegranate flowers and a red colored golden brocade turban. A heavy wooden case, carrying 3-4 kg soil had been placed on his head, and, due to this heavy weight he was sitting in a

reclining posture leaning towards one side. Though he had been chained and was put in a cage, still, a soldier carrying an unsheathed sword was standing by in an ever-ready position to attack Banda Singh, in case the latter tried to flee by using his 'magical' power.

The last in the procession were 740 Sikh prisoners whose faces had been blackened; their hands had been tightly tied and clamped by their necks. To insult and make fun of them, cartoon-styled paper caps had been put on their heads and sheep skin had been wrapped about their bodies.

The procession was being escorted by Mohammed Amin Khan, his son Qamar-ud-Din and son-in-law Zakaria Khan, who was riding on horses with haughty pride, like winners of some great trophy.

This procession entered the walled city of Delhi through Lahori Gate.<sup>26</sup> Almost the whole of Delhi had come to see this. There was perhaps no male resident of Delhi who had not seen this procession; hence, due to this crowd of hundreds of thousands, there was suffocation and it was difficult to breathe properly. People were passing remarks making insulting signs and showering abuse on the Sikhs; some of them were creating shrieking/hooting sounds, clapping and even dancing as if they themselves had achieved the most precious victory in the history.

But, on the other hand, there was no sign of remorse or despondency on the faces of the Sikhs; they did not look like defeated and fallen soldiers. They were chanting hymns and repeating '*Waheguru*' (the name of God); they were behaving in a manner as if nothing had happened to them.<sup>27</sup>

When Banda Singh was presented before Farukhsiyar, the latter asked him 'What type of death would you choose for yourself?''<sup>28</sup> Banda Singh replied 'The same type as the Emperor would opt for himself.'<sup>29</sup>

Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi says that when Farukhsiyar looked at the faces of the Sikhs he got frightened. He said that their faces were filled with scary and thunderous look. Had they survived some more time, it would have become a very difficult task to uproot them.<sup>30</sup>

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, Mumtaz Khan Akhtar Beghi presented 16 horses



to Farukhsiyar. These had been sent by Abdus Samad Khan; out of these 16 horses and mares, 3 horses and 6 mares had belonged to Banda Singh himself.

### **Execution of the Sikh Prisoners**

On 5 March 1716, the Emperor ordered Sarbrah Khan, the police chief of Delhi, to execute all the Sikh prisoners<sup>31</sup> except the seventeen senior leaders of the Sikh army. For the next seven days, one hundred Sikhs were executed every day; they had, of course, been given the option to save their lives in case they embraced Islam; but, not a single Sikh chose to renounce his faith in order to save his life; all of them chanted 'Waheguru! Waheguru!!' while they were being beheaded; what to say about their saving their lives, they used to address the executioner as 'Mukta' (deliverer, i.e. one who liberates from this world).<sup>32</sup> These executions were carried out in front of the *kotwali* (police station) at the Chandni Chowk, the then downtown and a hub of Delhi.<sup>33</sup>

John Sermon and Edwards, Stephen, the Delhi representatives of the British Governor at Fort William (Calcutta), in a letter written on March 10, 1716, have given an eyewitness account of these executions:

*"The great Rebel Guru who has been for these past 20 years so troublesome to the Subaship of Lahore, is at length taken with all his family and attendance by Abd-Us-Samad Cawn, the Suba of that province. Some days ago, they entered the city laden with fetters, his whole attendance, which were left alive, being about seven hundred and eighty, all severally mounted on camels which were sent out of the city for that purpose, besides about two thousand head struck upon poles, being those who died by the sword in battle. He was carried into the presence of the King, and from thence to a close prison. He, at present, has his life prolonged with most of his mutsuddys, in hope to get an account of his treasure in the several parts of his kingdom and of those who assisted him, when afterwards he will be executed; for the rest there are 100 each day beheaded. It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one apostatized from his new formed religion".* Sarup Das Bhalla

(in *Mahima Parkash*) writes that Kahan Singh Trehan (a descendant of Guru Amar Das) too was one of the Sikh prisoners. According to Sarup Das, Kahan Singh was swapped with another Sikh so that he (Kahan Singh), being the descendant of a Guru, might be saved from execution.

*This is just another concoction. First, it was impossible for a Sikh to reach there and get another one released. Secondly, it is un-Sikh like act to get a Sikh killed in order to save another. This is unhistorical too. Even Guru Gobind Singh did not try to save his sons in the battle of Chamkaur. He sent his sons to fight and die (on the 7th of December 1705); instead of his sons, he saved some Sikhs who escaped from the Fortress of Chamkaur along with him on the night of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1705.*

More than seven hundred Sikh prisoners were executed by the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1716. Their dead bodies were cut into pieces and these pieces were hung upside down from trees in different parts of the city of Shahjahanabad (Delhi). The flesh from these body parts was eaten by the vultures, but the skeletons and bones remained hanging. Wanton Muslim children used to hit these bones with bricks and stones in order to express their anger against the Sikhs.<sup>34</sup>

After the execution of these more than seven hundred Sikhs, Farukhsiyar handed over Banda Singh and other 18 Sikhs<sup>35</sup> to Tikka Ram, to imprison them in Tripolia Fort. Banda Singh's wife Sushil Kaur (of Chamba) and his son Ajay Singh were sent into the custody of Darbar Khan Nazir.

Khafi Khan claims that some rich people offered a big amount of money to Mohammed Amin Khan to release Banda Singh but he refused to have even a dialogue on this issue. This too seems to be another concoction because at that time none could have dared to present oneself as an agent or even as a sympathizer of the Sikhs.

Banda Singh and his companions were tortured for the next three months; they too were offered life if they accepted to embrace Islam but none of them chose to do so. Finally, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, Farukhsiyar ordered the execution of Banda Singh and his companions. The Emperor ordered Ibrahim-Ud-Din (*Mir Aatish*) and Sarbrah Khan (*Kotwal*) that Banda Singh should be first tortured and then killed.<sup>36</sup> The order included

cutting of his tongue, pulling out his eyes, pulling skin from his flesh and tearing flesh from his bones; and also killing his son before his eye. According to Khafi Khan, the Emperor had ordered that Banda Singh should be forced to kill his own son with his own hands.

The execution was to be carried near the tomb of Khwaja Qutub-Ud-Din (near Qutub Minar) at Mehrauli. The order of the Emperor was translated into action immediately and Banda Singh was at once taken to the site of execution.

At Mehrauli, Banda Singh was taken around the tomb of Khwaja Kutub-Ud-Din and then brought to the site of execution. Along with Banda Singh, his son and 26 more Sikhs too were brought there.<sup>37</sup> These Sikhs were offered life if they chose to embrace Islam; but, not a single Sikh accepted this offer; rather they put their heads forward for getting beheaded: "*Aan grftaaraanay beghum khud gardan payish jalladaan mi nihadand. Va vahguru goyaan jaan mi daadand*" [Meaning: all of them put ahead their necks, for being beheaded, before the executioner and accepted martyrdom by uttering the name of Waheguru].<sup>38</sup>

**Scene of the Execution of Banda Singh:** To execute Banda Singh, he was brought out of the cage. His right hand was freed; he was given a dagger and asked to kill his son Ajay Singh, who was just four and a half years old. (Khafi Khan writes that he was seven-eight years old and Sohan Lal Suri makes him six years old)<sup>39</sup>. He became youngest martyr of the world. When Banda Singh did not move, the executioner himself killed the child, cut his stomach, pulled out his heart and tried to thrust it into Banda Singh's mouth. Banda Singh kept his teeth clenched. After this, the executioner pulled his (Banda Singh's) right eye out of the socket, followed by peeling of the left eyeball; next his left foot was chopped off, followed by the right foot; the next target was his hands. In spite of this Banda Singh did not even cry; now the executioner pulled his flesh with pincers and finally attacked his head with a hammer. By then, Banda Singh was dead, but even after this, the executioner chopped off his dead body into pieces.

Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi says that when a Banda Singh's son was hacked to pieces, he did not utter even a word with his tongue,

and what to talk of shedding a tear from his eyes, he continued having a smile on his face.<sup>40</sup>

All this was carried out in the presence of Ibrahim-Ud-Din (*Mir Aatish*) and Sarbrah Khan (*Kotwal*).<sup>41</sup> The Emperor had ordered that these parts of Banda Singh's body should be hung from the trees; but, as, by then, it had grown dark the government officials left the place. At midnight, Amar Singh Kamboj<sup>42</sup> (of Khemkaran), who was present in that area, reached there in disguise and collected all the parts of the dead body of Banda Singh in the red turban (that Banda Singh was wearing)<sup>43</sup> and took them to the village Dhotay-Da-Tanda (*pargana* Jammu) and presented them before Sahib Kaur, the wife of Banda Singh, who cremated it there.<sup>44</sup>

Giani Gian Singh writes that Banda Singh was dragged behind an elephant for one whole day and in the evening, considering him dead; his body was thrown on the banks of river Yamuna so that crows and dogs should eat his dead body; but, a *Faqir*, who was passing through that area, picked up his body and saved him. According to Giani Gian Singh, after his recovery, Banda Singh went to Kashmir and spent the rest of his life there. Giani Gian Singh writes that Banda Singh died a 'natural' death in 1741.<sup>45</sup>

The rest of the companions of Banda Singh were killed the next day (according to Sewa Singh<sup>46</sup> they too were killed on the same day). These included Gulab Singh Bakhshi, Bhagwant Singh, Baj Singh, Kuir Singh, Sham Singh (four Bangeshari brothers), Nahar Singh, Sher Singh, Albel Singh (all the three were the sons of Baj Singh), Ram Singh Parmar (son of Bachitar Singh and grandson of Bhai Mani Singh), Aali Singh, Mali Singh (both from Salaudi village), Rai Singh Hazuri (a nephew of Bhai Mati Das) etc. For details, see: *Guru De Sher* by Dr Harjinder Singh Dilgeer.

### **Banda Singh And The Sikh Prisoners' Statements**

When Banda Singh was brought to Delhi, he made some statements which have been recorded by the Muslim writers of the day. According to Khafi Khan, when Mohammed Amin Khan asked him: "What compelled you to undertake this war?", Banda Singh replied: "When

faithlessness (in God) and sins cross the limits (on this earth) then the True God appoints a person like me who become the cause of punishing the deeds of that community. When He wants to destroy the world, He gives the command of the land to the tyrants.”<sup>47</sup> Mohammed Harsi, in his book *Ibratnama*, writes: When someone would ask the Sikh prisoners ‘do you know that you shall be killed’; they would boldly answer:

*“bikushand maa azz kushtan kei mee tarsaym; chiraa baa shumaa een kadam janghaa mee kardaym! va maa mahaz b-sabab gursangi va fakkdani aazukaa ba-dasti shumaa uftadaym! Va illa haqiqat bahadari-maa zayaadaa az aanchih deed aayad, maaloom shumaa mee shud!”*

(Meaning: you will certainly kill; we are not afraid of dying. Had we been afraid of death, why would we have taken up such a big war against you? We have been captured by you because of hunger and shortage of food; otherwise you could have seen more of the truth of our braver than you have seen).

#### **Declaration of a Captured Sikh Youth: ‘She is not my mother!’**

During these executions, another miracle took place. The mother of a young Sikh boy approached the Prime Minister Sayyad Abdullah Khan, with the help of Diwan Ratan Chand and convinced the minister that her son was not a Sikh, and, she got a letter for the release of her son. After this, she, accompanied by her daughter-in-law (the Sikh youth’s wife), approached the executioner and told him to release her son. She told him: “My son is not a Sikh. He should be released. I have brought orders from the prime minister.” Hearing this, the Sikh boy cried: “*Man namay daanam ke een maadar keesat; va een aroos az kujaa aavahdaa! va een chigoona sukhanha-ay mee goya! rafikaani man guzzashtand; va aknoon waqti maa az dast ravad! va een muhlat baa-issee aazaari maasat!!*”

(Meaning: I do not know whose mother, she is, and where from she has brought this bride? And what type of words she is speaking! My companions have gone further, and now my time is passing out, and this time is painful for me).

According to the writer of *Muntakhabul-Lubab* this young man was a companion of Banda Singh, but the writer of *Tarikh-i-Mohammed Shahi* does not believe so; according to him this young man had been arrested from somewhere else; he had recently been married and being a Sikh he was arrested and added to the group of the companions of Banda Singh. His mother and wife had made a petition to the *faujdar*. But, both these authors agree to the details of the arrival of motherhood with a royal letter and the boy's refusal to recognize his mother.

### Royal Rewards For Those Who Captured Banda Singh

As a reward for the arrest of Banda Singh, Farukhsiyar bestowed several gifts, on Abdus Samad Khan; his *mansab* was increased to six thousand. He was awarded a decorated palanquin, several elephants and horses, a large number of ornaments, a pearl-studded stripe (for turban), a decorated robe, a diamond necklace and grant of several *Parganas*.<sup>48</sup>

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### Endnotes

1. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 15.3.1715
2. *Ahwaal-ul-Khwakeen*, pp. 121-24.
3. Elliot & Dowson, *op.cit.*, Vol II, p 457.
4. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 30.3.1715
5. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 10.4.1715
6. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 14.4.1715
7. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Part I, p 313.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 28.4.1715
10. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 21.5.1715
11. Irvine, *op.cit.* Vol II, page 314.
12. Mohammed Qasim, *Ibratnama*, pages 57B to 61A of the manuscript in British Library London, pages 180-84 of the printed edition.
13. They were the employees of Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara. As Lakhi Rai Vanjara was dead, and, his sons and grandsons were a part of Banda Singh's army, the trade activities had come to a halt.

14. In the Mughal records, his name appears as Daya Dharma and Daya Dhata as well.
15. It was Hamir Chand Katoch. His name appears as Hamir Chand Kamboj as well. He ruled Kangra from 1700-1747. Many Mughal records do not spell correct names of the Hindu rulers.
16. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 3.7.1715
17. Perhaps Dheeraj Pal. Many Mughal records do not spell names of the Hindu rulers.
18. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 26.9.1715
19. *Ibratnama*, pages 39A to 46B and 52B to 54A. The name of the books of both writers, Mirza Mohammed and Mohammed Qasim is *Ibratnama*.
20. This was the amount that was recovered from them at the time of their arrests.
21. This story has been given only by the author of *Siyarul Mutakhrin*.
22. Kesar Singh Chhibber, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patsahian Da*, p 294.
23. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 12.12.1715
24. Mohammed Qasim, *op.cit*, pp 86-87, Kamwar, *op.cit.*, p. 460.
25. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 29.2.1716
26. Irvine, *The Later Mughals*, vol. II, page 316.
27. C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals of English in Bengal*, pp. 96-98, Mirza Mohammed Harsi, *Ibratnama*, pp 52B to 53A.
28. *Ahwal-i-Adina Begh*, p. 20.
29. Later, Farukhsiyar too had met the same type of death.
30. *Ahwaal-ul-Khawakeen*, pp. 121-124.
31. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 5.3.1716
32. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, vol II, p 766, *Haqiqat-i-Bina-O-Aruz-i-Sikhan*, p 10.
33. C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals of English in Bengal*, pp. 96-98, Mirza Mohammed Harsi, *Ibratnama*, pp 52B to 53A.
34. *Tarikh-i-Mohammed Shahi*.
35. Earlier their number was seventeen; two more had been arrested in between and they too were included in this group.
36. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla*, entry of 9.6.1716
37. Kamwar mentions that there were 17 companions with Banda Singh but a few days later two more Sikhs were also arrested, and, at the time of execution their number was 26. It means that some more Sikhs had been arrested and added to this group.

38. Ganesh Das Vadhera, *Risala Sahib Numa*, p 197.
39. Ajay Singh was born to Sushil Kaur of Chamba. Banda Singh had married her in the last days of 1710 and even if he was conceived in the first day of marriage, he must have been born after September 1711; hence he was less than five years old at the time of his martyrdom.
40. Mohammed Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwaal-Ul-Khaakeen*, pp 121-124.
41. Khafi Khan, *op.cit.*, chapter 2, pp 766-67.
42. Amar Singh Kamboj was the son of Raghupati Sahai Kamboj (a dedicated Sikh of the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur), and was a landlord of Khemkaran. He and his brother were a part of the army of Guru Gobind Singh. He had participated almost in all the battles of Banda Singh Bahadur. When Banda Singh was arrested from Gurdas Nangal, he had gone to his village.
43. Sahib Kaur presented this turban to Amar Singh, who kept it as a *siropao* (robe of honour), and he preserved it as relics. Later, his companions began claiming that due to this turban Amar Singh was the chief of the Sikh Panth. Due to this, the companions of Amar Singh began tying turbans of red colour.
44. Lala Ganda Mall Wadhawan, *Twareekh-i-Sohdra*, as quoted by Giani Garja Singh in *Shaheed Bilas*.
45. Karam Singh Historian (in his book *Banda Singh Bahadur*), commenting upon Giani Gian Singh says, "It is bad luck of the Sikhs that their history writers were like those of Giani Gian Singh." In another article "*Ablawan tay Sikh*" Karam Singh Historian comments that "Giani Gian Singh was fond of gossip-mongering."
46. Sewa Singh, *Shaheed Bilas*, written in 1790.
47. Khafi Khan, *Muntkhab-ul-Lubab*, pp 765-67.
48. *Haqiqat Bina-va-Aruz-i-Singhan*, published in *India Historica Quarterly*, March 1942.



## Demolition of Lohgarh

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### Who demolished Lohgarh and How Much Time Did it Take?

The Mughal Emperor and the generals of the Mughal army were scared of Banda Singh Bahadur, Sadhaura and Lohgarh Forts. But, Lohgarh Fort was their bigger concern. **The Vanjara Sikhs continued their struggle even after the martyrdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, but were soon captured as they became leaderless.** They had started demolition of the Sadhura Fort in 1716. But, Lohgarh Fort was their bigger concern. They were always afraid that if they re-occupied this Fort then again thousands of Mughal soldiers would have to be engaged to combat the Sikh army for many years, and, it would mean loss of lives of thousands of Mughal soldiers, and a lot of money as well; and, still the Mughals would never be able to keep it under their control for a long time. The Sikhs would come again and occupy it. So, following the advice of the army generals, the Mughal Emperor ordered that this fort should be totally demolished.

Chowdhry Musa-Ul-Khan<sup>1</sup> (known more as Massa Ranghar) of Mandhiala village (13 kilometres from both Amritsar and Jhabal Kalan) was assigned this job. When Banda Singh Bahadur and all the senior generals of the Sikh army had been arrested (in December 1715) and executed (on 9 June 1716), the demolition of the Fort was begun. For this purpose, hundreds of Mughal soldiers and thousands of laborers were engaged. They took up each one hill as a unit, and began demolishing the walls, trenches, foundations and passages of each hill one by one. Ranghars, who had been brought to demolish the Fort and carry massacre of the Sikhs, where, later, got settled in 85 villages in old district of Ambala.

At that time, the families of those persons, who were employees of Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara's *tanda* (trade caravan), and the families of Sikligars (who used to manufacture weapons and ammunition for the Gurus and Banda Singh) had been living in these hills and in the villages in the foothills of the Fort. This Fort had been built by these Vanjaras and the Sikligars and their forefathers.

It seems that the Mughals would not have only demolished the Fort, but they would have even occupied these villages, one by one. They might have either killed or expelled the Vanjaras and the Sikligars and their families; and, some might have fled from their houses to save themselves from the atrocities of the Mughal soldiers. Those soldiers and the labor, which had been brought here, to demolish the Fort, might have been given possession of the land and the houses belonging to the Vanjaras and the Sikligars. Before 1716, not a single Muslim used to live here. All this land belonged to Lakhi Rai Vanjara and all his employees (Vanjaras) were Sikhs.

It is believed that the demolition of the Fort would have at least twenty years. A Fort, which was built in 70 to 80 years, at least half time was needed to totally demolish it. It seems that Massa Ranghar personally supervised the demolition of the Fort that is why he had built his palace here. The palace, in which Massa Ranghar lived, the ruins of which can still be seen in Machhrauli village till today. Similarly, there is a village Mughalvali, where workers, who were engaged in the task of demolition, might have been living there; hence, this place might have come to be known as Mughalvali. Even now, all those Muslim families which live in this area are the descendants of those who had come here between 1716 and 1740.

Between Sadhaura and Lohgarh and in the foothills of the Fort, there were more than 50 villages where Vanjaras used to live. The land of these villages was the property of Lakhi Rai Vanjara; and it was inhabited by his employees. The Mughals had killed most of them and their lands given to those workers engaged in demolition of the Fort. In spite of this, some Vanjaras still remained there in these villages. It is possible that these Vanjaras might have co-operated with the Mughals or surrendered to them. This too is possible that some Vanjaras returned

to this place after 1740, when the Fort had been almost demolished and Massa Ranghar had left this area for his native village in Amritsar district. Even nowadays, several Vanjaras and Sikligars are living in this area. They are Sikhs and they perform all their rituals as per Sikh traditions. Some of the villages in this area, and in nearby districts, are even known as Vanjaras villages. These include Ishargarh, Ismailabad, Lohara, Bir Saunti, Haripur Majri, Khaira, Simalvar, Nakhrojpur, Bhukri, Falshanda, Ladva, Raurhki, Mand Kheri, Dilli-Ka- Majra, Deviaspura, Navarsi (Kurukashetra); Bigarh (Fatehbad); Balsola, Nanakpura, Navan Nagar (Pinjaur-Nalagarh road), Sherpur, Bakkarvala, Kalesar, Sunder Bahadurpur, Naushehra, Bilaspur, Buria, Kunjal, Baruda (Yamuna Nagar); Mithapur, Sagrani, Khanpur, Ganauli (Ambala), Raipur Rani, Shahpur, Raurki, Chauki, Nada, Fatehpur, Raili, Kundi, Surajpur, Rajipur, Pinjaur, Premtura, Kiratpur, Maulavali, Karanpur, Karauli, Karaul Fateh Singh, Karul Maula (Panchkula) etc. Some villages in Karnal district too belong to Vanjaras, e.g. Sangoi, Bhara Gaon, Kavahi, Mehtamati, Neval, Tikri, Sugri, Chhapra, Daliyanpur etc. Besides these districts, several Vanjaras live in Charkhi Dadri, Bhiwani, Rohtak, Gurgaon, Kosali, Behri, Gohana, Mahendragarh, Narnaul, Sonapat, Panipat and Gharaunda too. In Himanchal Pradesh too there are several villages where Vanjaras are still living, e.g. Kearda, Patlion, Kishanpur, Thapal (in the old state of Nahan/Sirmaur, in Lohgarh zone), where Guru Har Rai Sahib spent about 13 years), Singpura, Bhatvali, Bannewali, Molokvali, Barotivala, Haripur, Fatehbad, Vikas Nagar, Salakhoi, Vikram Bagh etc. In Punjab too the Vanjaras inhabit in several villages, e.g. Tandi, Navan Gaon (Kharar tehsil); Masoli, Arauli, Dasovala, Lubangarh, Udiavala, Tanda (Machhiwara tehsil); Madwara (Ropar tehsil); Behat (Lidhiana). In Uttar Pradesh and Uttrakhand too Tanda villages are predominately inhabited by Vanjaras community. All of them are Sikhs and perform their family ceremonies (birth, marriage and death rituals) according to Sikh religion.

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### **Endnotes**

1. Later, on 11 August 1740, he was killed by Sukha Singh and Mah tab Singh.

## Situation After the Destruction of Lohgarh Fort

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It has been said that Lakhi Rai Vanjara had a *mansab* of four thousand granted by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (Athar Ali wrote a book 'Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb' which gives the names of more than one thousand *mansabdars* out of which dozens are Hindu Rajput, Maratha and other *mansabdars* as well but, it does not contain even a single name which belonged to the Sikh community). However, there is no doubt that Lakhi Rai Vanjara was a very rich person; perhaps he was the richest trader of his times. He used to trade from Balkh, Bukhara, Yarkand, Samarkand (in the Central Asia) to Sri Lanka. He had at least three hundred thousand camels, elephants, horses, oxen, buffeloes and mules. To maintain such an animal force, he must be having thousands, may be lakhs of employees, which were known as Vanjaras (employees of Vanjara).

After the execution of the Sikh soldiers, including all the sons, grandsons and great-grandsons of Lakhi Rai Vanjara, and the fall of Lohgarh Fort, thousands of persons associated with his trade caravans had become unemployed. Now, they began wandering from place to place in search of work.

Similarly, some of these, who used to manufacture weapons for Lakhi Rai Vanjara, Guru Sahibs, Banda Singh, too had become jobless. The Mughals too did not give them jobs.

Those workers, who had been associated with trade, some of them got engaged in trade activities, i.e. they got engaged in door-to-door, village to village trade activities. They had experience of trade activities. They knew what good was needed at which place. As they did not have

much capital, they could not begin large scale businesses. So, with petty capital, they began to sell some less expensive goods. They would travel from one village to another and fulfil the needs of the people of that area. They would enquire about the needs of the people and would try to arrange those things. Thus they became petty peddlers. Hundreds of Vanjaras engaged in such activities. As they would bring the goods needed by people, they became a necessity for the people, especially in the villages which were far away from the major road routes. As a result, people would wait for them. Though, now, they did not trade in the form of large caravans, and did not move to long routes, but people still used to call them Vanjaras. Most of them were Rajputs and Khattris. With the passage of time, even idioms and proverbs became associated with the Vanjaras.

Like Vanjaras, the number of Sikligars associated with weapon manufacturing for Lakhi Rai Vanjara, Guru Sahibs and Banda Singh too was very large hence they too had no chance to get job or assignment at one place. They too began wandering from place to place in the search for livelihood. Many of them travelled upto Kumaon, Rajputana and Martha lands with the hope of getting work of manufacturing of weapons. But, no Raja, Peshwa, Chowdhry or Zamindar made arrangements, of setting up industry of weapon manufacturing, for them. One of the reasons was that the Sikligars were turban-wearing Sikhs (having uncut hair and beards). They refused to cut hair. In such a state they had to live in small tents, camps and huts, and, they earned their livelihood (basic needs) by manufacturing petty household things like kniyes, swords, bowls, buckets etc. They would halt near a village or town and fulfil the needs of the local residents. When they did not get good number of customers, they would proceed to next areas. Thus, they lived the life of gypsies.

This is the reason that Vanjaras and Sikligar are found in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand and even in some areas of Karnatka.

## Contribution of Banda Singh Bahadur

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Banda Singh was not just a great general of army; he was a 'miracle' because he exercised wonders. He created a people-oriented revolution on the land of five rivers, known as the Punjab. He laid the foundation of freedom of not only of the Punjab but also of the whole sub-continent of South Asia from the seven hundred years' old slavery of the foreign rulers. It was he who shook Empire of the Mughals. He was such a great military general as shattered the false belief that the Mughal empire was ever-powerful, permanent and unchallengeable. So long as he was alive, three Emperors, more than a dozen governors and more than two hundred small rulers, generals, police-chiefs, feudals, plus countless *jehadis* could not have a peaceful sleep, even for a day. More than one hundred thousand royal soldiers (more than two-third of total imperial army) were engaged in operations to defeat him.

During this struggle, thirty to forty thousand Sikhs died, but in spite of such a big number of casualties, the Sikhs continued their struggle for freedom. Even after the martyrdom of Banda Singh, the Mughals could not have a peaceful reign in the Punjab. The fall of the authority of the Mughal power, which had started in the Punjab, now began spreading to other areas too. With the passage of time, the Sikhs had become the decisive force not only in the Punjab but also in areas of Rajputana, the hills and even parts of the Hindustan (*the present provinces of U.P., M.P. , Bihar etc, then, was known as Hindustan*). All this was an extension due to achievements of Banda Singh.

On the other hand, if we analyse the circumstances in which Banda Singh launched his struggle to uproot Mughals, he deserves to be given

still more credit. Ratan Singh Bhangu claims that Guru's wives opposed him, Ajit Singh Palit collaborated with the Mughal and the so-called *Tat Khalsa* joined the Mughal side. In such circumstances, what Banda Singh achieved was remarkable; his period can well be called the most pro-people revolutionary period of the Sikh history, and, may be the world history.

Banda Singh wrote with his own blood the lesson of freedom but mentally slave, impotent and coward people could not learn it properly. It was only the Sikh nation which, at one time, learnt this lesson by heart, and, after making thousands of sacrifices they achieved their freedom and established nationhood of the Sikhs and the Punjabis, under the Sikh Misl.

Banda Singh taught the Sikhs the value of freedom; having known about the difference between a ruler and the ruled, the Sikh nation refused to accept slavery or even supremacy of the others. Banda Singh gave the Sikhs their own currency, their seal of sovereignty, and, provided the Sikhs with a new calendar of their own too. Banda Singh was the first person in the world history who brought an end to the feudal system and introduced egalitarian system (though it was again finished by Maharaja Ranjit Singh).

Banda Singh also taught the Sikhs the lessons of power of organisation and leadership; he played as a hero and taught others to be so. He exhibited how one can brave the most savage torture and embrace martyrdom for one's faith; perhaps, in the whole of history, no other general had to face such a torturous death.

He taught the real way of living like a true Sikh; he adhered to the Sikh values throughout his life; in a life span of just 45 years, he was a Sikh only for less than eight years; and all this time he lived as a true and a model Sikh; and he embraced death/martyrdom like a true Sikh.

He was a miracle on this earth; and he created a unique phenomenon in history.

In the history of the Sikhs, Banda Singh's name will shine with glory only next to the Gurus. All the achievements of the succeeding generations of the Sikhs owe their existence to Banda Singh's

contribution. It was he who, through his martyrdom, gave his blood for the transfusion, resuscitation and survival of the Sikh nation!

### **Banda Singh and Islam**

Some Muslim writers have tried to portray Banda Singh as a cruel general or an anti-Islamic. It is a sheer misconception and a blatant lie. It is evident from the history that Banda Singh did not kill even a single innocent Muslim; he punished only the tyrants or those who fought against him. Remember, ordinary Muslims themselves were victims of the atrocities of the Muslim rulers (Sayyads, Pathans and Mughals) and other aristocracy. There are several references in history that ordinary Muslims rather supported Banda Singh; in Samana, Sadhaura, Buria, Kalanaur and several other areas the local Muslims helped Banda Singh and even joined his rank and file.

Secondly, whenever Banda Singh freed any territory, he did not demolish any Muslim religious place. This is evident from the scores of mosques, tombs and other such structures of those days which are still intact; one can see a large number of such old mosques and tombs at Samana, Fatehgarh Sahib (erstwhile old Sarhind city), Sadhaura and many other places. *On the other hand, the Muslim rulers (Mughals and Afghan, both) had attacked, plundered and destroyed Darbar Sahib and other Sikh shrines several times and filled the sarovars (tanks) with debris, animal bones, filth and garbage.*

An interesting entry in the *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* dated 28th April 1711 refers to the enrollment of five thousand Muslims in Banda Singh's army at Kalanaur. According to this entry Banda Singh always used *Ji* (a suffix, which is addressed of respect) for all the Sikhs and Muslims alike and he never uttered even a single word against Islam or its religious leaders; (on the other hand the Mughal rules always used words of disdain for the Sikhs and usually referred to them as *infidels, thieves, dogs* etc.).

Banda Singh's justice was alike for the Sikhs and the Muslims. Once, when a Sikh officer usurped the property of a Muslim, Banda Singh immediately punished that Sikh.<sup>1</sup> Banda Singh had issued strict



instructions against injustice. On the other hand, the Muslim rulers always committed atrocities on the Sikhs; they raised, many a times, *jehad* (holy war) against the Sikhs to wipe them out. Bahadur Shah had issued orders to kill all the Sikhs indiscriminately; one such order had been issued on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1710, and, repeated time and again. Thus, to call Banda Singh as anti-Islam is a grave injustice to Banda Singh and is rape of history.

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**Endnotes**

1. This justice-loving nature of Banda Singh finds mention in Kesar Singh Chhiber's book *Bansavalinama Dasan Patsahian Da*, stanzas 43-45.

## Appendix

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### **The Emperors, Princes, Muslim generals, Muslim *jehadis* who fought against the Sikhs**

**Emperors:** Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah, Farukhsiyar.

**Princes:** Rafi-us-Shan, Azimushan, Jahan Shah, Khuzishta Akhtar, Azz-ud-Din.

### **Muslim Governors and Generals who Fought Against the Sikhs**

Wazir Khan (Sarhind), Munaim Khan (*Khan Khana*) and his sons Mahabat Khan and Zaman Khan, Islam Bahadur (*Mir Aatish*), Hamid-Ud-Khan (*Gurj bardar*), Sarfraz Khan Bahadur (Behroz Khan) and his son Saif-Ulla-Khan, Ahitman Khan and his son Lutf-Ulla-Khan, Mohammed Amin Khan (Governor Moradabad, later *Second Bakhshi*, i.e. deputy army chief) and his son Qamar-Ud-Din Khan (later Prime minister), Zulfiqar Khan (*Bakhshi-Ul-Mulk*), Kokaltash Khan Bahadur, Khawaza Hassan Khan, Shakrulla Khan, Ibrahim Khan (Mir Aatish), Sarbrah Khan (*Kotwal Delhi*), Sayyad Abdullah Khan (*Governor Allahabad*), his brother Sayyad Hussain Ali Khan and Sayyad Wajih-Ud-Khan (of Bara), Rustam Dil Khan and his brother Sultan Kuli Khan, Abdus Samad Khan (*Governor Jammu and Lahore*) and his son Zakaria Khan (*Governor Lahore*), Chugatta Khan, Shah Niwaz Khan, Afrasiyab Khan, Shafshikan Khan, Firoz Khan Mewati (*Governor Sarhind*), Zain-Ud-Din Ahmad Khan (*Governor Sikanderabad, Merrut and later Sarhind*), Mohammed Rustam Ghazi Khan (Governor Sarhind), Hakim Moitmad-Ul-Mulk, Rehman Yar Khan, Ata Ulla Khan, Fateh Ulla Khan, Mohtam Khan, Rai Araian, Jani Khan, Fidvi Khan, Abdul Karir Khan, Aqidat Khan (son of Amir Khan), Mohammed Ali Khan (*Bakhshi Jahandar Khan*), Abu-Ul-Qasim (*deputy Governor Sarhind*), Mohammed Baqa (*Governor Fatehabad*), Mohammed Amin (*Faujdar Rajauri*), Jalal Khan (army chief Rohtak), Saif-Ud-Din Ahmed Khan

(*Faujdar* Gujrat), Azhar Khan (*Faujdar* Wazirabad), Iradatmand Khan (*Faujdar* Eimanabad), Nur Mohammed Khan (*Faujdar* Aurangabad and Pasrur), Sheikh Mohammed Dayam (*Faujdar* Batala), Sohrab Khan (*Faujdar* Kalanaur), Arif Begh Khan (deputy Governor Lahore), Sultan Khan (*Faujdar* Jammu), Sadat Khan (Governor Kashmir), Mohammed Ali Khan (deputy Governor Kashmir), Jalal Khan (army chief Jalalabad), his son Dindar Khan, grandsons Ghulam Mohammed Baniara and Pir Mohammed Khan, his nephew Ghulam Mohammed Khan and general Sadat Khan; Mohammed Ali Khan (*Faujdar* Saharanpur) and his nephews Pir Khan and Jamal Khan, Qadam-Ud-Din (*Faujdar* Kapuri), Usman Khan (chief Sadhaura), Sher Mohammed Khan (chief Malerkotla), his brother Khizar Khan and nephews Ali Khan and Mohammed Bakhsh; Nizamul Mulk Asad Khan (Delhi), Afzal Khan, Khan Bahadur Shamsheer Khan, Abdullah Khan (generals of Delhi), Shamas Khan, (*Faujdar* Sultanpur), Bayizid Khan alias Kutub-Ud-Din Kheshgi (*Faujdar* of Jammu), Isa Khan (son of Daulat Muin), Isa Khan Manjha, Uma Khan (*Faujdar* Kasur), Saif Khan (*Faujdar* Sultanpur), Usman Khan Karawal, Nusrat Khan, Sayyad Hassan Khan, Zorawar Khan, Ranbaz Khan, Sher Khan, Sheikh-Ul-Hind Sheikh Ahmad (Batala), Sohrab Khan (Kalanaur), Inam Khan general, Sadat Khan (Kotla), Ashraf Khan (chief Hariana), Khawaja Sultan (mace-bearer), Sayyad Azmatulla Khan (*Faujdar* Rajauri), Hoshdar Khan (*Faujdar* Jalandhar Doab), Mughal Begh Khan, Durlab Khan, Abdul Samad Khan and Inayat Khan (generals from Talwan, Jalandhar), Inam Khan Walashahi, Mirza Shah Niwaz, Daulat Begh Khan, Saleh Khan, Fateh-Ulla-Khan, Mohammed Aslam (*Vakil* Ghazi Khan), Firoz Jang Khan, Maulavi Muradulla, Abdul Qadar, Mehfooz Khan, Mohammed Khan, Abu-Ul-Mulk, (nephew Zain Khan Governor Sarhind), Khwaja Mukarram (*Faujdar* Rupar), Shah-Ud-Din (*Bakhshi* Sarhind), chief of Patti and several others whose complete names don't appear in records.

#### **Muslim *Jehadis* of Lahore etc**

Pir Mohammed Taqi, Musa Begh, Shah Inayatulla, Mohammed Jaman Ranghar and Mulla Mir Mohammed.

#### **Other Maulvais:**

Maulvi Viridi Begh Lahore, Shah Mohammed Qazi Buria etc.

## Epilogue

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### **Banda Singh's Impact on Mughal Empire**

There is no doubt the Mughals had captured Sadhura and Lohgarh, and, had demolished them. They had also killed Banda Singh Bahadur and thousands of the Sikhs. But, with this had also started the destruction of the mighty Mughal Empire. Just in a period of six years, Banda Singh had destroyed the Mughal Empire. The royal treasury had got drained. More than fifty thousand Mughal soldiers had been killed; many of them were prominent generals. Banda Singh had finished the awe of the Mughal ruler. The area of Jammu to Delhi and up to Saharanpur on the eastern side of Yamuna river had been devastated. Even after the execution of Banda Singh (1716) and up to 1760, though the Sikhs were not in power, most of the Mughal wealth, power and attention remained centered on the expedition against the Sikhs, which shook the foundations of the 'mighty' Mughal Empire.

## Places Associated with Banda Singh Bahadur & His Companions

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### **Rajauri:**

Most sources agree that Banda Singh Bahadur was born as Lachhman Dev, at Rajauri (Punchh) in Kashmir. This is the first place associated with Banda Singh. Here, a memorial should be established in his memory.

### **Bisrampur:**

James Brown, in his work 'Tracts' mentions that Banda Singh was born in Bisrampur village (Jalandhar district). No other source agrees with him and it might just be a hearsay. Anyhow, Master Mota Singh of Patara (a village nearby) had established a shrine to commemorate Banda Singh's memory.

### **Nanded:**

Here, Banda Singh had spent several years, and, he got initiation into the Sikh faith and blessings from Guru Gobind Singh. A shrine has come up at the site of his erstwhile *dera*.

### **Khanda/Sehri (Kharkhauda):**

Banda Singh had made his first headquarters here in the jungle in between these two villages. He spent several weeks here to form and organise an army and to make military preparations before launching his war for freedom of Sikh Homeland. A tower commemorating Banda Singh should be established at that site.

**Samana:**

It was the first town freed by the Sikhs on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 1709. But, so far no memorial has been established to commemorate this greatest event of history of the Sikh Homeland. This was the first victory against the foreign rule. A museum, depicting the history of the battle and the city, should be established here.

**Lohgarh:**

This was the first capital of independent Punjab. This village is on the border of Haryana and Himanchal Pradesh. Some Sikhs have established a small shrine here but this is not enough, rather this is a great injustice to Banda Singh as well as the history of the Punjab, Haryana and Himanchal Pradesh. It is pleasing to note that the Haryana government has decided to construct a grand memorial at Lohgarh. A grand museum depicting Banda Singh's achievements should be set up. Besides a 'light and sound' programme, depicting the battles of 1710, 1712 and 1713, should also be set up.

**Sadhaura:**

Here, hundreds of Sikhs sacrificed their lives. A park, a fine memorial, in the form of a tall tower, should be established near the ruins of the Fort.

**Chappar Chiri:**

This place is as important as Waterloo. Here, the Sikhs wrote the grand chapter of history with their blood. Thousands of Sikhs laid their lives here. A grand museum with at least a 50 feet high statue of Banda Singh, like the one of General Nelson in Trafalgar Square, London, should be set up here. A 'light and sound' programme can also be set up.

**Sarhind (now Fatehgarh Sahib):**

It was here that the the history of world's first egalitarian declaration was made on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1710. A grand museum and statues of

Banda Singh and Baj Singh (the first Governor of Sarhind), and a big-long replica of steel of the martyrs should be established here.

**Riasi:**

It was here that Banda Singh spent some time. His wife Sahib Kaur, his son and his grandchildren lived here for about a century. A shrine has been established here.

**Gurdas Nangal:**

Here, Banda Singh and the Sikhs remained under an eight months' long siege; and, about two thousand Sikhs embraced martyrdom here. A grand museum and a tall statue of Banda Singh, and a light-and-sound programme should be set up here.

**Lal Qila:**

Banda Singh and more than seven hundred Sikh prisoners were interned here for several days. A tower/pillar commemorating this event should be set up here.

**Salimgarh:**

Banda Singh and his companions were interned here for several days. A pillar commemorating this event should be set up here.

**Chandni Chowk:**

More than seven hundred Sikh prisoners were executed here in March 1716. A pillar should be set up to commemorate the sacrifices of these martyrs.

**Qutub Minar/Mehrauli:**

It was here that Banda Singh Bahadur and his son were butchered by the Mughal regime on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1716. The Sikhs have set up a Gurdwara but a fine tower and a 'light and sound' programme should be set up here.

**Dhota Tanda (Jammu):**

Banda Singh Bahadur's body was cremated here.

**Amingarh, Kunjpura, Kapuri, Thaska, Buria (in Haryana), Saharanpur (in UP), Bilaspur (in Himanchal), Ghuram, Rupar, Rahon, Kalanaur, Batala (in Punjab), Raipur-Rasulpur and Baloh (in Kashmir) are the places where a large number of Sikhs sacrificed their lives. Suitable pillars commorating their sacrifices should be set up in these places.**

**There is a trend to establish a Gurdwara in the memory of an event and there are thousands and thousands of Gurdwaras all over the world. Instead suitable minars/towers, museums, statues, platforms and domes etc. should be set up so that future generations may know their history.**



## **Banda Singh Bahadur :** A Poem by Rabinder Nath Tagore

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In the prominent royal Mogul court of Delhi  
King's sleep will break-up hundred times daily  
There was such a dreadful fright in his heart  
In his consciousness painful sighs were brought  
What fire scorched his heart no one knows  
All of a sudden he was jumping in fiery blows  
It appeared like red hot sky from the Delhi court  
King's heart shaking, seeking Godly support  
Rivers of blood were flowing on the five rivers' land  
Sikhs were facing persecutions for some ideal ground  
Smearred in blood, they were saying thanks in gratitude  
Patiently, regardless of comforts, they were in solitude  
They crossed their way with the Moguls might  
With faithful heart they remembered God in sight  
Maiden decorated with mark of blood, their foreheads  
What sort of people are Sikhs, with such eagerness  
They move like moth, looking at burning all around  
Without delay they line up ready to fight duty bound  
They play jokes with death, and like lions they roar  
Wherever they stare and rebuke, enemy is no more  
Brave warriors jumped in fray with hand to hand attack  
They quickly hawk assaulting caught the deadly foe  
Like flying hawk assaulting a deadly poisonous snake  
Squeezing them in their claws from tip to toe  
Innumerable was the enemy army, Sikhs were very few

They were surrounded in chains and were put in queue  
Clothes soaked in blood, bodies full of wounds and bruises  
Intestines fall in tummy but they had faith and confidence  
The enemy was battered by the dashing Banda Singh sage  
Moguls fought back and tied him like brave lion in cage  
Surrounded him from all the sides and imprisoned the hero's chum  
Then they moved towards Delhi, on the beat of kettle-drum  
The Mogul army departed towards the Capital of Delhi city  
They moved like hurricane, without stopping or any pity  
Seven hundred Sikhs were imprisoned and curled-up in chains  
It was a disgusting sight, an extraordinary incident, full of pains  
On every pointed spear, the head of Sikh was hanging  
Streams of blood dripping, the sight will give a panging  
Sikh prisoners shackled in chains, shouted this voice of cry  
O! Our true saviour preserve thy honour, don't let panth shy  
Spectators gathered in the heart of Delhi's Chandni Chowk  
This caravan of Sikhs was quite out of strength and in shock  
Outside they were dull and defeated, inside enjoying thrill  
Greeting loudly the victory of Guru and obedient to His will  
The onlookers revealed an extraordinary and peculiar tale  
The prisoners started argument as nobody wanted to fail  
Everybody wanted to be first in their turn to meet the fate  
All wanted to meet the Beloved, Gobind through life's gate  
The wheel of death started, the murderers were on assault  
An applause was echoed, whenever the sword was at fault  
The Sikhs were being butchered, going forward for sacrifice  
It was game of seven days for seven hundred heroes nice  
Chief Banda Singh was in the clutches of destiny or fate  
Next they brought forward to kill his little son ever so great  
The Kazi passed on to Banda Singh the killer sword grand  
He ordered him to cut his son's head as it was royal command  
Sons are symbols of worldliness for formality in social affairs  
If someone rebukes them one feels like to pull his hairs  
What sort of test in life, to kill one's own son, was shaping

The thing one can't even imagine, the same was happening  
Banda first picked his son and loved and caressed him  
Then he tried to explain the role and character of Sikhism;  
Prince Fateh and Jujhar Singh were also children like you  
Now in the test time and what they achieved you can also do  
Greeting the victory loudly, the little son was revitalized  
If life goes, the custom of Sikhism is, let it be sacrificed  
For holder of righteousness definite victory will be at last  
His love won't be wasted; he meets the Beloved very fast  
The Kazi became angry as he could not bear the splendour  
The executioner attacked the child and he started to flutter  
Even then this strange trick of destiny could not succeed  
Plump intestines jumping softly, the earth was red indeed  
It is written in the history that Banda remained unmoved  
In his mouth soft plump heart of slayed child was forced  
In this hard probation Banda remained unshaken, steady  
The history will cry when going through its own study  
It was such a dreadful scene that onlookers could not spy  
Snatching with pincers first they took out his both eyes  
Iron bars were made red hot to burn his body limbs ready  
The Sikh greeted the victory loudly and soul left the body  
The Sky echoed with kettle-drum beat, banner flying like kite  
Once a hero takes a battlefield, he is eager to show his might  
A true warrior is one, who fights for sake of humble and meek  
He might be cut into the pieces, but to leave battlefield will never seek

## List of 52 Bastions of Lohgarh

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S. No	Disttict	Tehsil	Village	Remarks Regarding availability of structure.
1	YamunaNagar	Sadhaura	Ladharpur	available
2	YamunaNagar	Sadhaura	Sarawan	available
3	YamunaNagar	Bilaspur	Azizpur	available
4	YamunaNagar	Chhchhrauli	Leda Khas	available
5	YamunaNagar	Jagadhri	Mehalawali	Non available
6	YamunaNagar	Sadhura	Fatehgarh Tumbi	Non available
7	YamunaNagar	Bilaspur	Sandhaya	available
8	YamunaNagar	Bilaspur	Machhrauli	Non available
9	YamunaNagar	Chhchhrauli	Chhchhrauli	Non available
10	YamunaNagar	Jagadhri	Garhi Banjara	Non available
11	YamunaNagar	Jagadhri	Karwan	Non available
12	YamunaNagar	Chhchhrauli	Dayalgarh	Non available
13	YamunaNagar	Radaur	Radaur	Non available
14	YamunaNagar	Radaur	Hartan	Non available
15	YamunaNagar	Radaur	Jatlana	Non available
16	YamunaNagar	Mustafabad	Kulchandu	Non available
17	YamunaNagar	Mustafabad	Saran	Non available
18	YamunaNagar	Chhchhrauli	Yakubpur	Non available
19	Ambala	Barara	Barara	Non available
20	Ambala	Barara	Ugla	Non available
21	Ambala	Barara	Adoya	Non available
22	Ambala	Barara	Thambar	Non available
23	Ambala	Barara	Nahara dera	Non available
24	Ambala	Barara	Tandwal	Non available
25	Ambala	Barara	Dhin	available

S. No	Disrtict	Tehsil	Village	Remarks Regarding availability of structure.
26	Ambala	Saha	Nagla	available
27	Ambala	Saha	Bhita	available
28	Ambala	Saha	Landa	Non available
29	Ambala	Saha	Khesri	Non available
30	Ambala	Saha	Durala	Non available
31	Ambala	Saha	Samlheri	Non available
32	Ambala	Saha	Nohni	Non available
33	Ambala	Shahjadpur	Korwa	available
34	Ambala	Shahjadpur	Karsan	available
35	Ambala	Shahjadpur	Kadhoul	available
36	Ambala	Nariangarh	Tandwal	Non available
37	Ambala	Nariangarh	Badragarh	Non available
38	Ambala	Nariangarh		available
39	Panchkula	RaipurRani	Ratur	available
40	Panchkula	RaipurRani	Hangoli	available
41	Panchkula	RaipurRani	kot Gangeshara	Non available
42	Kurukshetra	Babian	Babian	available
43	Kurukshetra	Babian	Lakhmari	Non available
44	Kurukshetra	Babian	Buhavi	Non available
45	Kurukshetra	Babian	Sangor	non available
46	Kurukshetra	Ladwa	Ladwa	available
47	Kurukshetra	Ladwa	Niwarsi	Non available
48	Kurukshetra	Shahbad	Karindwa	Non available
49	Karnal	Indri	Sangotha	Non available
50	Karnal	Indri	Bairsal	available
51	Karnal	Indri	Baina	available
52	Karnal	Indri	Garhpur Khalsa	Non available

## State of Garhwal and the Sikhs

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On June 1634, Guru Hargobind Sahib visited Garhwal on his way to Gorakhmatta (now Nanakmata). Here, he met Rani Karnavati, widow of Mahipat Shah, Raja of Garwal (1622-1633) and Samrath Ram Das (the mentor of Shivaji Maratha). Samrath Ram Das learnt lessons in polity from the Guru (which he, later, taught to his disciple Shivaji Maratha).<sup>1</sup>

Raja Mahipat Shah's son Prithivi Shah was only eight years old when Guru Hargobind visited Garwal, and, his mother, Rani Karnavati was looking after the Kingdom of Garhwal. After Guru Sahib's visit the morale of queen became up and she became bold to face any odds. Rani Karnavati for many years successfully defended the kingdom against the invaders and repelled the attack of the Mughal army, led by Najabat Khan sent by Emperor Shah Jahan, in 1640. In those times she was known by the nickname of 'Nakti Rani' as she used to chopps off the noses of any invader to her kingdom. In 1654 Shah Jahan despatched an expedition to coerce Raja Pirthi Shah, which ended in the separation of Dehra Dun from Garhwal.<sup>2</sup> In May 1657, a major battle between Dara Shikoh's army and Aurangzeb army took place at Shamugarh, which resulted into Aurangzeb victory. On 29 May 1658 Suleiman Shikoh son of Dara Shikoh took refuge in Garhwal, since Aurangzeb had prisoned his father Emperor Shah Jahan and had launched war against his brothers. Guru Har Rai had a large army of Sikh soldiers. He supported the moderate Sufi-influenced Dara Shikoh instead of conservative Sunni-influenced Aurangzeb as the two brothers entered into a war of succession to the Mughal Empire's throne.

When Suleiman Shiloh took refuge in Garhwal, Guru Har Rai was at Thapal, in the old state of Nahan/Sirmaur (1645-1657), and this place is quite near to Garhwal. In 1658, in order to help Dara Shikoh, the Guru left Thapal and reached Goindwal, along with 2200 cavalry. Raja Rajrup of Nurpur (1646-1661) also came to help the prince, but as Prince Dara was highly disheartened, they had to go back. In 1659, Dara Shikoh was captured and beheaded by his younger brother Aurangzeb.

Raja Pirthvi Shah of Garhwal continued to provide the asylum to Suleiman Shikoh, and Aurangzeb tried his level best for the get Suleman, but Raja of Garhwal stood firm and did not hand over him (Suleman) to the Emperor. Raja Jai Singh Mirza tried to intervene in the matter, but Garhwal Raja refused to oblige. After many efforts, and against the wish of the Raja of Garhwal, Suleiman Shikoh surrendered before Aurangzeb in 1661.

In 1661-1662 Raja of Garhwal died (40 years old), Suleiman Shikoh died (28 years old), Guru Har Rai died (32 years old) and Raja of Nurpur died (40 years). Mystery surrounds the deaths of these personalities in the same year and most of them at a young age. Some people doubt that it was the result of a conspiracy by Aurangzeb.

### **Uttrakhand and the Vanjaras**

Hiuen Tsiang did not mention any cities which can be identified as lying within the present district of Dehradun; and tradition asserts that they remained without inhabitant, until the eleventh century, when a passing caravan of Vanjaras struck with the beauty of the country, permanently settled on the spot.<sup>3</sup> If we look back at the Sikh history, Guru Nanak Sahib during his first Udasi, took a southerly route from Gorakh Matta, which brought him to the Tanda Vanjara, near Bareilly, division Moradabad, the home town of Vanjara traders. These Vanjaras embraced Sikhism and followed the path of truth. Guru Hari Rai Sahib increased the Sikh preaching centres from 22 to 360<sup>4</sup> and new centres were also established in the estate of Nahan, Garwal, Sarkar of Saharanpur and Moradabad. The Sikhs made Fortification (some of the Fortress still exist & archaeological evidences related to Bhai Lakhi Rai

Vanjara are found on the ridge and both on back and front plains of the ridge), on the ridge started from Yamuna river to Ganga River (via Dehradun–Haridwar). Sikh history is necessary to narrate here, as the militarization of Vanjaras made by different Sikh Gurus to uproot the Mughals oppressions. With the help of the Srinagar-Garhwal Chiefs and the Vanjaras, Banda Singh Bahadur marched and aspired to invade as far as the territory of sarkar Moradabad and Chakla Bareilly in Subha Delhi.<sup>5</sup> (This event is of 1712; and, at that time Garhwal Hill chief was Fateh Shah and he was the same Raja as had attacked Guru Gobind Singh at Bhangani on 18 September 1688 as a result of some misunderstanding, but later he sided with Banda Singh because he had realized that the Guru's war was against injustice, and, the Mughals were the oppressors of the people; hence he joined hands with Banda Singh to uproot the Mughals. There are reports of 40000 Sikhs moving about in Garwal hills.<sup>6</sup> Banda Singh had full knowledge about this area and moved very fast in hills and attacked *sarkars* and *praganas* in the west Uttar Pradesh.

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### **Endnotes**

1. Dr. Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, *Sikh History, vol 1, p. 265.*
2. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Dehradun, 1909 vol. 11, p. 165.*
3. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Dehradun, 1909 v. 11, p. 212.*
4. Dr. Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, *Sikh History-1, p. 280.*
5. Entries in *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla.*
6. Veena Sachdeva, *Article-Historical Geography of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur*, in *Revisiting Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and his time*, edited by Amarjeet Singh, p 29.



## Folk Song on Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara

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*Sab that pada rah javega,  
Jab lad chalega banjara,  
Tu hai Lakkhi banjara,  
Tanda tera bhari hai,  
Gophal dilme mat rahana tu,  
Bahot bada beopari hai (1)*

*Namakka, misri, kandgiri,  
phauhi saman rakhata hai,  
Ganim tuze ghabarata hai (2)*

*Beopar tera sachcha hai,  
Aor khudaka tu hai pyara,  
Lakha ashrafi, lakkhi tole,  
Kon karega bevvara (3)*

*Nur gajarka tane lagi,  
Vemne kaptase mara gaya,  
Vo nayak tha merahi dhani (4)*

*Jab aankajaki chot padi,  
Roneka macha hari gul sara,  
Samsher bhaloka mara (5)*

Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara marches with his goods leaving his belongings. The Tanda of Lakhi Vanjara was huge in size should always be alert, being a big trader. The song continues praising the bravery of Vanjara community.

## Glossary

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<i>Ahdi</i>	The ahadis were cavalrymen directly employed in the Imperial service (designated mansab-holders of one ahad). Their horses, equipment, etc., were checked and the pay fixed thereon by the bakhshi-i-ahadian, or bakhshi of ahadis, who in turn worked under the mir bakhshi.
<i>Akal Takht</i>	Immortal Throne. A building facing the Dabar Sahib in Amritsar, where Sikhs gather for political purposes.
<i>Amar Velan</i>	Hanging vines holding which one can fly from one tree to another or from one hill to a tree or another hill.
<i>Amin of a subha</i>	Amin was a term employed for land-surveyor, later (under shah jahan) for revenue-assessor. But the amin of the subha under Akbar and Jahangir was an official charged with ensuring that the land revenue was assessed and collected, particularly by jagirdars, in accordance with imperial regulations.
<i>Amin-un mulk</i>	Head of the amins of a province at the court, and thus charged with ensuring equity and obedience to imperial regulations in the assessment and collection of land-revenue.

<i>Amir</i>	Noble (Its plural is umra).
<i>Bahadur</i>	The Honourable, the sixth highest title conferred by the Mughal and other important Muslim courts. Often added to more important honour to enhance them by one degree. Also a title of honour conferred on recipients of the second class of the Order of British India (OBI).
<i>Bakhshi of ahadis</i>	See: ahadi.
<i>Bhai</i>	It means brother/ brethren. Guru Nanak addressed his followers as Bhai.
<i>Chakk Nanaki</i>	Old name of Anandpur Sahib.
<i>Chowkis</i>	Bastions.
<i>Durbar</i>	Royal court, an important ceremonial held in the audience hall of a ruler to hear petitions and accounts, make investitures or official appointments, receipt and giving of presents, official letters, etc.
<i>Farmans</i>	Imperial orders
<i>Faujdar</i>	Commandant of territory, in charge of law and order.
<i>Garh</i>	Fort or stockade.
<i>Garhi</i>	Fortress
<i>Gurdwara</i>	Literally "Door of the Guru." Any building or room dedicated to housing the devotional songs of the Guru for the purpose of spiritual practice.
<i>Guru-da-Chakk</i>	Old name of Amritsar.
<i>Jagirdar</i>	Fief holder/ Feudal Lords .
<i>Jang</i>	War or battle, a suffix used as part of the fifth

	highest title conferred by the Mughal and other important Muslim courts
<i>Khalsa Rajdhani</i>	In 1710, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur declared Lohgarh as the capital of the Sikh Kingdom.
<i>Khalsa Takhat</i>	Literally: Sikh seat of power. In 1710, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur issued coins of Sikh Raj and on the back side of the coin, mentioned Lohgarh as Khalsa Takht.
<i>Khalsa</i>	Literally: "land belonging to the / sovereign;" In Sikh meaning: the collective body of all initiated Sikhs, who agree to live by the highest ideals of Sikh principles. Committed to one's own purity of consciousness and actions.
<i>Khan-i-Khanan</i>	Chief of chiefs.
<i>Khillat</i>	Dress of honour of a specific valour, usually consisting of a turban, shawl and pieces of unstitched cloth, sometime also including arms, jewels and other valuables. Presented on great occasions, such as a ceremony of installations.
<i>Kotwal</i>	Head of the town or city police.
<i>Kshatriya</i>	Hereditary Hindu military and ruling caste.
<i>Mansabdar</i>	Holder of a military command over horse or foot, usually awarded together with estates or revenues for their upkeep.
<i>Mir bakhshi</i>	Incharge of awarding mansabs and checking mansabdars contingents through the dagh system; and controller of intelligence.
<i>Mir-i-atish</i>	Chief of the artillery.
<i>Nanakprast</i>	The term used by the Mughals for the Sikhs.

<i>Nayaks</i>	The leader of the <i>Tanda</i> (trading unit of Vanjaras). Bhagat Kabir in Guru Granth Sahib has discussed nomenclature of Nayak and Vanjaras.
<i>Padshah</i> (or <i>Badshah</i> )	Persian term for Emperor.
<i>Pargana</i>	Administrative unit within a provinces or state, dating from the Mughal period.
<i>Pir or Peer</i>	Sufi master or spiritual guide equally used in the nath tradition. They are also referred to as a Hazrat or Shaikh, which is Arabic for Old Man.
<i>Qanungo of Sarkar</i>	Hereditary keeper of revenue accounts, playing a very important role in helping jagirdars or their agents to draw up revenue assessments of parganas.
<i>Qazi</i>	One learned in Islamic law, Shariat
<i>Rangar</i>	Rajput converted into Muslims.
<i>Risala</i>	Troop of cavalry.
<i>Sarkar</i>	Administrative Unit of Mughals larger than pargana and smaller than Subha.
<i>Sayyid</i> (or <i>Syed/Said</i> )	A male descendant of Ali (Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law) also used as given or surname.
<i>Shahzada</i>	Son of a Shah (Emperor), prince.
<i>Shiqdar</i>	Revenue collector; later also used for revenue-official under a jagirdar.
<i>Sikh</i>	Literally "disciple." According to the Sikh Rehat Maryada, a Sikh is someone who believes in God, the ten Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib; and follows no other religion.
<i>Subedar</i>	The governor of a subha (province).

<i>Tanda Trade caravan</i>	During the Medieval Age, this was the main trading unit and means of transportation of goods, in the Central and South Asia. It comprised of thousands of bullcarts, horses, camels, buffaloes and other animals. Now some villages and towns are also known as Tanda (these were the halting stops of the <i>tandas</i> ).
<i>Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa</i>	Traditional Sikh greeting, which
<i>Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh!</i>	Means "My Purity belongs to God, My Victory belongs to God."
<i>Vakil (or Wakil)</i>	Agents of the princely states present in the court of Mughal Emperor.
<i>Vanjara</i>	Literaly: a trader. This was the richest community of the world up to the eighteenth century. In order to establish their own supremacy in trade, the British brought this community under Criminal Tribal Act in the nineteenth Century.
<i>Zamindar</i>	Literally: landholder. This was a term used for an independent or semi-independent ruler of a large estate, one level below a ruling prince. The zamindar usually held his rights to his lands directly from the paramount power, on a permanent basis and with a fixed assessment of the value of its revenue. He enjoyed the right to collect taxes, dispense justice at magisterial level, raise troops, police, etc. Most of the more important zamindars also held princely rank.

## Bibliography

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The present work is about the life and contribution of Banda Singh Bahadur. Banda Singh Bahadur became the greatest hero of the history of the Sikhs, the Punjab and South Asia through his unparalleled deeds and sacrifices for eight years (1708 to 1716). Luckily, several Persian sources have preserved valuable materials about this period. The Gurmukhi and Punjabi sources too have useful information.

Among the Gurmukhi and Punjabi sources, the best ones are the *Bhatt Vahis* (literally: registers of the Bhattas; the Bhattas used to record the births, marriages, battles, deaths of their 'clients'; hence, these are a genealogical account of prominent Sikh clans, mostly Rajput and Khatri, written by their family priests commonly called *prophets*; however, it is not proper to call them priests; they were a sort of record-keepers). As the *Bhatt Vahis* had been written by the priestly class, hence they had presented the materials with exaggeration and might have concocted some stories also. But, their preservation of the record of dates, names of people and places is the most precious treasure of history of their times. The next work is *Gur Sobha*. It was written by Sainapati in 1711. This work covers the period between 1701 and 1709 only, hence no reference to Banda Singh.

The second stage of sources is the Gurbilas literature (biographies of the Gurus) which was composed in the second half of the eighteenth century or in the first half of the nineteenth century. They are replete with fiction and hagiographies materials besides several concocted stories, thus distorting the history. Three such works are often quoted: *Gurbilas Patsahi 10* (1751) by Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patsahi Dasvin* (1797)

by Sukha Singh and *Gurbilas Patsahi Chhevin* (1835-40) by some unknown author (by Gurmukh Singh and Darbara Singh as per Kahan Singh Nabha). All these three works present distorted history of the Gurus period. These too do not have much materials about the Banda Singh's role.

Kesar Singh Chhiber (great-grandson of the Diwan Dargah Mall, minister of Gurus from 1644 to 1696) wrote *the Bansawlinama Dasan Patsahian DA* in 1769. The second part of this book is based on the author's memoirs, but still it gives some useful materials about Banda Singh's role.

In 1790, Sawrup Singh Kaushish wrote *Guru Kian Sakhian*, which was solely based on Bhatt Vahis. This book has very precious data of the Gurus - period and some information about Banda Singh too.

The next in this series are the works by Santokh Singh (*Gur Partap Suraj Granth*, 1839), Ratan Singh Bhangu (*Prachin Panth Parkash*, 1814/1840) and Giani Gian Singh (*Panth Patkash* 1890). Though, these books are a chronological account of the Sikh history, but all the three are replete with seriously distorted information. However, another work *Shashi Bans Binod* (1879) by Ganesha Singh Bedi has preserved some precious data of relations between the Gurus and the Bilaspur (Kehlur) state. Ram Sukh Rao's *Fateh Singh Parbhakar* and *Jasa Singh Binod* (written in the second half of the nineteenth century) to have some good information.

The Persian sources are most valuable source of information about the Banda Singh's period. Though a reference to the Gurus too can be found in *Akbar Nama* (Abu Fazal, 1601), and *Tuzk-i-Jahangiri* (1620s) but *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* (1645-46) by Zulfikar Ardastani (earlier mistaken as Muhsan Fani) has much detailed information about Sikhism (though it is an amalgam of right information and hearsay materials). Sujan Rai Bhandari's *Khulastut Twareekh* (1696) also has some references to Gurus-period, but it covers the period up to 1695-96 only.

Most precious Persian sources narrating the Sikh situation are *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla* (literally: the news of the court of the Emperor); this is in the form of the reports sent by the agents of Jaipur



state (who used to be in the Delhi *Darbar*, as well as in the company of the troops of the Mughal Emperors). From this source, one can read daily diary of the events of the period 1707 onwards (till 1750s). We have used this record extensively, particularly the orders/activities of the Mughal Emperors and other officials as source of materials.

Among some other treasures of information written mostly during this period or about this period, are as follows:

*Tazkiratu Salatin-i-Chagatta* (written by Mohammed Hadi Kamvar, in 1724) is an account of the period from 1707 to 1724. He was an official of Rafi-Ul-Shan, the son of Bahadur Shah, and always accompanied him. His duties included sending day-to-day information to the Emperors. This book is in two volumes, the first volume covers the period up to 1707 and the second volume narrates the events up to 1724. Though Kamvar did not conceal his hatred for Banda Singh and the Sikhs, yet he has given a lot of useful information about Banda Singh Bahadur's activities. He has given a detailed account of the Mughal attack on Lohgarh and escape of Banda Singh, battle of Sadhaura, arrest of Raja of Nahan, killing of the chiefs of Jammu and Sultanpur by the Sikhs, siege of Gurdas Nangal, arrest and martyrdom of Banda Singh etc. No other account equals his detailed description of attack on Lohgarh in November 1710, in which he himself was an eyewitness cum participant.

*Tareekh-i-Iradatkhani* (by Iradat Khan, written between 1710s or 1720s) is an account of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Iradat Khan, a former employee of Prince Mohammed Aazam, had joined the service with Khan Khana but after his death he retired from service and wrote this book. He too has given useful information about Banda Singh.

*Ibratnama* (written by Mohammed Qasimi, in 1723) is an eyewitness account of the first two decades of the eighteenth century. He has given a precious account of the battle of Chappar Chiri, killing of the chiefs of Jammu and Sultanpur, siege of Gurdas Nangal and the arrest of Banda Singh. It was he who gave a true picture of the state of the mind of the Mughal soldiers mentioning how they dreaded even the simple mention of Banda Singh.

*Dastur-UI-Nisha* (written by Yaar Mohammed, in 1720s) is the only Persian source which mentions that some Muslims embraced Sikh faith after the Sikhs' victory of Sarhind.

*Ibratnama* (written by Mirza Mohammed Harsi, in the 1720s) gives a detailed account of the battles of Chappar Chiri, Rahon and Gurdas Nangal as well as the martyrdom of Banda Singh and other Sikhs in Delhi in 1716. He has also given fine details of the procession of the Sikh prisoners in Delhi, taken out on the 29<sup>th</sup> of February 1716. His book has also recorded the statement of some of the Sikh prisoners. Mohammed Harsi was an employee under prince Rafi-UI-Shan (son of Bahadur Shah) and had a *mansab* of fifty horsemen. He was a favorite of Bahadur Shah's family; and he was chosen as escort to carry the dead body of the Emperor Bahadur Shah from Lahore to Delhi.

*Shahnama* (written by Mir Mohammed Ahsan Sajad, in 1718) is an account of the reign of Farukhsiyar. The author was the first to mention the name of Chappar Chiri village where the battle for occupation of Sarhind was fought on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1710. He has given a picturesque account of the killing of Wazir Khan in this battle. He is the first to give details of the first Sikh coin; hence this book is a valuable source of Sikh history.

**Munavar-UI-Kalam** (written by Shiv Das, in 1722) mentions that Banda Singh had got initiation (*Khanday Di Pahul*) from Guru Gobind Singh Sahib.

**Fathatnama Sammadi** (written by Ghulam Muhai-Ud-Din, in 1723) is another precious work about this period of Sikh history. The author has given an eyewitness account of the battle of Gurdas Nangal and the arrest of Banda Singh and other Sikhs in December 1715.

**Muntakhab-UI-Lubal** (written by Khafi Khan, in 1731) has recorded the history up to 1730. Though this work lacks accuracy about the dates and even the chronology of events too is faulty, but it has given the story of newly wedded young Sikh boy who refuses to be released on the plea that he is not a Sikh. When his mother presents Kotwal's letter to release him, he yells: 'she is not my mother; I am a Sikh; let me join my martyr brethren.' Khafi Khan has also presented details of the

procession on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1716 when Banda Singh and other Sikh prisoners were paraded in the streets of Delhi. It is he who had recorded the statement of Banda Singh about his reasons for the declaration of war against the Mughal regime. He is the first to refer to the Sikhs' coining of the slogan of *fateh darshan*.

**Mirat-i-Wardat** (written by Mohammed Sufi Warid, in 1734) has also given some detail of Banda Singh's march from Nanded to Kharkhauda, battle of Chappar Chiri, killing of Wazir Khan and some later events. This work is important because it gives details of the implementation of an egalitarian system by Banda Singh after victory of Sarhind.

**Tarikh-i-Mohamamedshahi** (written by Khushal Chand) has referred to Banda Singh's initiation into Sikh faith as well as the description of the execution of the newly wedded Sikh boy who refuses to save his life by declaring himself a Hindu and not a Sikh as his mother tries to present. His account almost resembles the account given by Khafi Khan.

**Muasar-UI-Umraa** (written by Shah Nawaz Khan *Shamas-Ud-Daula*, completed in 1757-58) gives information about the officers of the Mughal Darbar, from the time of Akbar (1556) up to 1757 (i.e. A period of about two hundred years). Shah Niwaz had access to the record of the Mughal *Darbar*; hence he has given precious details of the role of these officials. These officers include Governors, Faujdars, Diwans and other officers of Lahore and Sarhind too. From these details one gets a lot of information about their dealings with the Sikhs. This book was translated into English by Asiatic Society of Bengal, in 1888.

Three latest books about Banda Singh Bahadur have rich information about the period between 1710 and 1716. These are: 1. *Banda Singh Bahadur: Farsi Sarot* (in Punjabi), compiled by Balwant Singh Dhillon (published in 2011 by Singh Brothers Amritsar) 2. Muhammed Qasim Aurangabadi's *Ahwaal-UI-Khawakeen*, edited by Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon (published in 2012, by Singh Brothers Amritsar) 3. *Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur*, compiled by Balwant Singh Dhillon (published in 2016 by Singh Brothers Amritsar).

**The English Sources:**

The early English sources do not mention much about Banda Singh; the only information available from the English sources is a letter written by John Sermon and Edwards Stephen, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1716, to the then British Governor at Fort William (Calcutta), which mentions the execution of seven hundred Sikhs at Delhi. This has been published by Dr Ganda Singh in the book *Early European Account of the Sikhs*. The English have referred to Banda Singh in other works too, but all these books/reports were published either in the second half of the nineteenth century or in the first half of the twentieth century. Slight reference to this incident has also been given by C.R. Wilson in *Early Annals of English in Bengal*. However, Irvine, in his work *Later Mughals*, has given a lot of useful information about Banda Singh.

The first proper biography of Banda Singh was written by Karam Singh, in 1915. He wrote two books: *Banda Kaun Tha* (in Urdu) and *Banda Bahadur* (in Punjabi); within two years he revised his first book. Karam Singh had used several Persian sources besides Punjabi sources. In 1930, Sohan Singh published his book *Banda the Brave* in English. Sohan Singh did not use Persian sources like Karam Singh but his was the very first English account of the great Sikh general, hence he got a good response. In 1935, Dr Ganda Singh published his book on Banda Singh Bahadur, in Punjabi. Ganda Singh had based his book mostly on Karam Singh historian, but he had added some new information as well. It was followed by Dr Hari Ram Gupta's *History of the Sikhs* in which he gave a lot of materials about Banda Singh. After this, Mr Chandla's book on Banda Singh (in English), published in 2006, and some more secondary works too appeared but none of these gave any new information or thesis. Almost all of them depended mostly on either Karam Singh and Ganda Singh or the Punjabi sources like Santokh Singh, Giani Gian Singh and Ratan Singh Bhangu.

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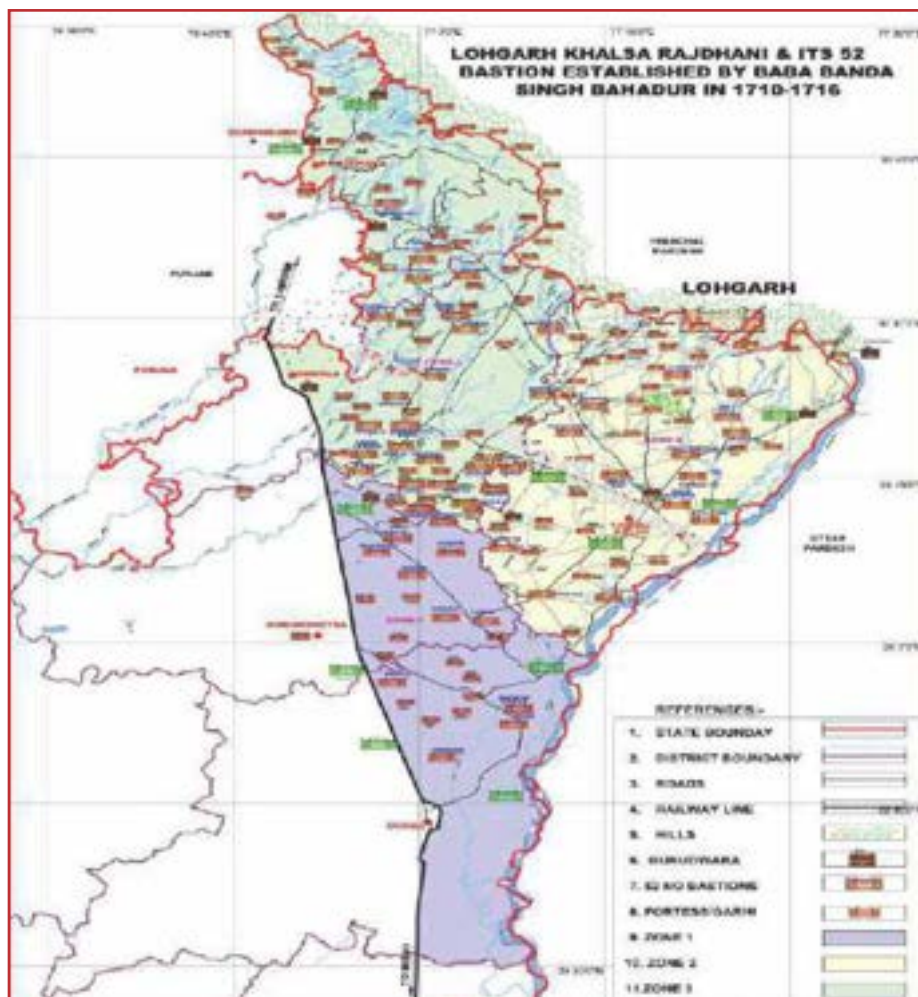
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## Illustrated Evidences of Lohgarh & Kingdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur

The Lohgarh fort and its bastions are spread in five Districts of Haryana i.e Yamuna Nagar, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Ambala and Panchkula. For proper understanding of the subject this area is divided into three Zones, Zone-1 is comprised of area in district Karnal and Kurukshetra, Zone-2 area of district Yamuna Nagar and Zone-3 area of District Ambala and Panchkula. The Map given below presents a description of the area under consideration.

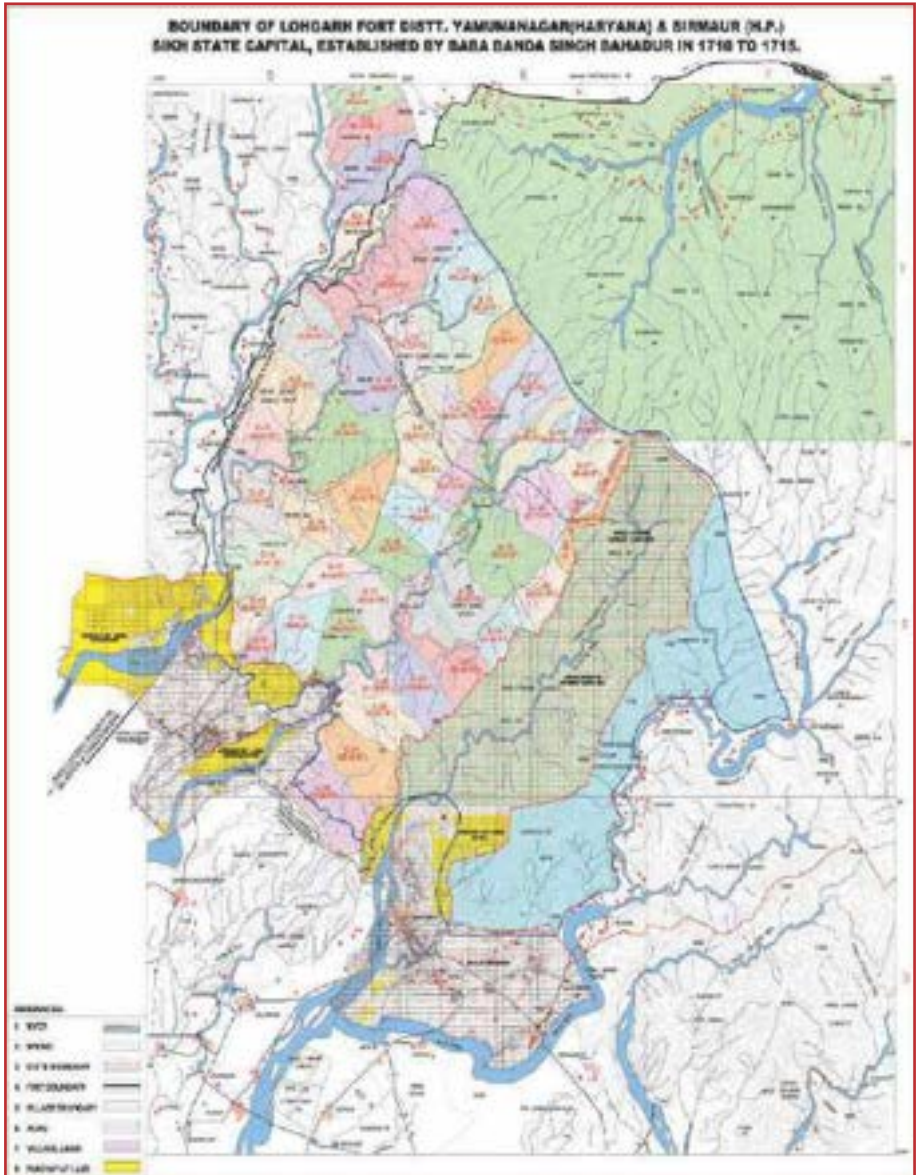


**LOHGARH**

(1)

## Maps of Lohgarh (Divided into 32 sectors (HP) & Nagli reserve forest area (Haryana))

Details of this map are discussed in **Chapter-2**



## Route Map of Sikh Tandas to Import Supplies to Lohgarh

(There are archeological evidences in context on Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara on all the trade route of Indian Sub-continent. Further research is required to explore them)

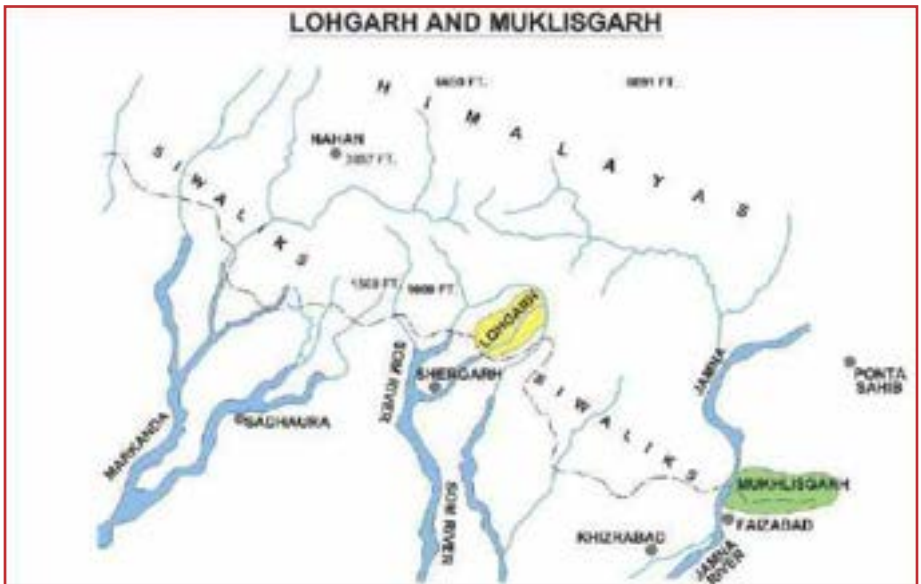


## Territory of Sikh Kingdom under Baba Banda Singh Bahadur

(Haryana, Punjab, West Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & East Pakistan)



## Muklishgarh and Lohgarh



Historians wrongly quoted that the earlier name of the Fort Lohgarh was Muklishgarh, the Rang Mahal of Mughals. Mukhlisgarh was simply projected to hide the history of Fort Lohgarh which was constructed by the natives to uproot the long oppressions rule of Mughals. Under Shahjahan (1627-1658) the celebrated Ali Mardan Khan laid down Rang Mahal named Muklisgarh and in it built a royal hunting lodge known as Badshahi Mahal - pleasure palaces on the left bank of Yamuna to the north -west of the Faizabad Pargana in the Sarkar of Saha-ranpur presently in the state of Uttar Pradesh near famous Hathani Kund Barrage. The palace is situated opposite to the head works of the Delhi Mughal canal and its many portions were standing till the beginning of the present century. To the name of same nobleman is drawn the construction of the canal. He is said to have designed the canal which was conducted with a considerable knowledge of hydraulics along the crest of the high ground between Yamuna and Hindan so as to admit of its water being thrown off on both irrigation purposes. Geographical location of Muklishgarh was in the pargana of Fahizabad, Sarkar Saharanpur, on the bank of Yamuna river. It also lies in the proximity of Shivalik Hills and the location of Muklishgarh made it very suitable from a climate point of view.



One of the important known facts of the Muklishgarh was that a number of passive cooling techniques to factor in the intense heat prevalent in North India during the summers. Some of the most notable features of this strategy include Jaalis walls with high thermal mass (thick walls) river side Yamuna & its waterways, cross ventilation, relatively smaller windows, blank walls, courtyards, gardens and so on and henceforth. The Mughals used ingeniously to their advantage the natural water resources present at the Muklishgarh. Total area of Muklishgarh is 45 acres and Rang Mahal building covers area between 1.5 to 2 acres only. Presently it is a protected site of Archeological Survey of India and ASI has spent about Rs. 2crores for renovation of the building (Badshahibag).



## Lohgarh Bastion at Village Masoompur, Near Raipur Rani

This citadel is located on hillock at a peak of 1200 feet above sea level in the revenue state of village Masoompur (30°34'27.98"N, 77° 5'5.83"E). It is a wonderful building for defense purposes and from the remnants it can be easily assessed that the intensive concrete was applied in the structure of the edifice. This bastion has double fortification of walls which are 2 to 3 meters in width. Stones have been dressed to the size and shape by chisel on all the beds so that joints are free from any waviness and give perfect vertical, horizontal, circular, joints with adjoining stones. The face of stones gauged, cut, chamfered, grooved, rebated sunk plain moulded and fine tooled as shown in the working design and pictures. The joints are finely tooled so that the straight edge laid along it is in touch with every level. The structure is made of concrete, lime, boulders and bricks. It is strong hold building as it was in the vanguard of the fort, facing the Mughal onslaught. It is a goodful example of joint use of stone and bricks along with lime mortar having a good ratio of lime, surkhi (powdered bricks) and sand.



Even after the 400 years the structure is still standing. The mughals tried to demolish it but due to high contours and heavy concrete structure, they failed in their objectives. The structure signifies that this building is a fine example of Sikh architecture. Bhai Lakhi Rai Banjara had a battery of good Sikh architects and the masons involved in the construction of fort Lohgarh who were also expert in their work. The school of knowledge started by 2nd Guru Anged Dev Ji at Khadur Sahib, not only provided good knowledge to the Sikhs but also motivated the coming generations to become scholars in every field of worldly education. The Banjara Sikhs became expert in the trading field and also in raising of defense buildings, secretly and work for the humanity. The remnants of the such fine buildings in fort Lohgarh, shows the farsighted planning of Sikh Guru Sahiban.

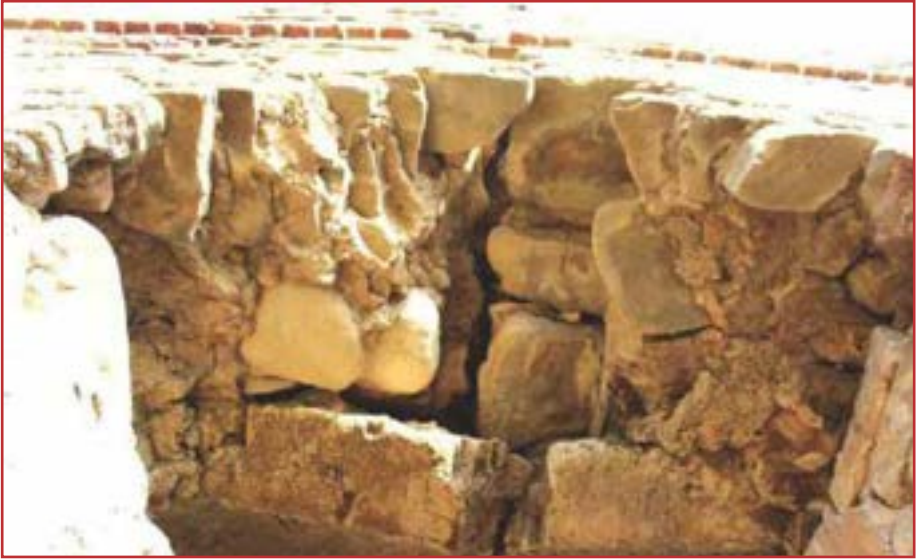
### **A Double Storey Building Found at Fort Lohgarh with Flat Arch & Having 25 Soldier Barrack.**

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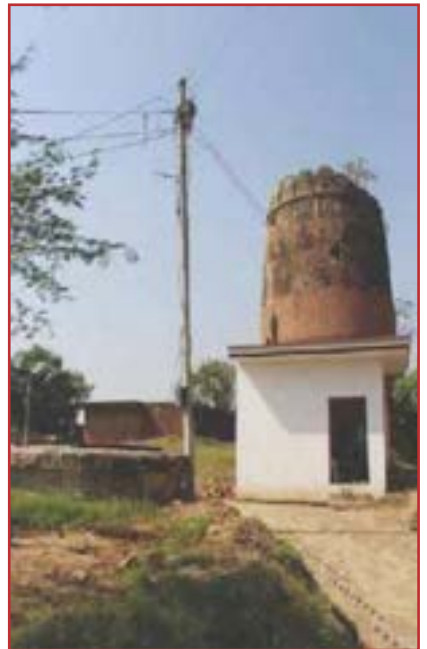
The flat arch found at Lohgarh, having straight horizontal arch consisting of reciprocally supportive wedge shaped blocks. Arches having a small rise to span ratio. These arches are also known as Jack arches and are very similar to French arches. A French arch is also a flat arch constructed of wedge shaped materials but also have a center keystones. For Ashlar facing having backing of the brick work is laid in alternate courses of headers and stretchers unless otherwise directed. Face stones and bond stones course are maintained throughout. All connected masonry in a structure is carried up nearly at one uniform level throughout with the joint made in good long steps so as to prevent cracks. This citadel is on a hillock and fortified by dual ramparts. These ramparts are present at the foot of the hillocks and the citadel is located exactly in the center and top of the hillocks. The height of the stronghold is about 30 feet and the walls of the building are having width of about 3 meters. The ceiling of the building is having a width of 2 meters. The lime mortar and the stone boulders of medium size has been used in the ceiling work. The roof has been so wonderfully constructed that even the cannons of the Mughals failed to demolish it. The building is divided into 25 compartments and each compartments was used as barracks.







From this bastion number of passages lead towards Ambala and on these passages more bastions were established. These bastions are found in the villages belonging to Vanjaras. These villages were not only located in a strategic place identified about 70 to 80 years back before the construction of fort Lohgarh, but these villages / tornados were also manufacturing units of various products. The Sikh Vanjaras were making major trade items in the area and the passages from these villages lead to the Grand Trunk road. Vanjaras sold the Lohgarh manufacture products throughout the Indian sub-continent. The pictures are of some of the 52 bastions of Lohgarh, which were constructed in village Ratour, Hangoli, Baroli, Garhi Kotaha, Kot Khangesra etc. The Sikh army took possession of the fortresses present at Raipur Rani, Barwala and Shehjadpur. These bastions are situated on the bank of rivulet Tangri.



Some bastions were constructed around the village of Vanjaras the fortification of which was between 10 to 15 acres of land. After perusal of archeology, these fortifications might have taken place after Baba Banda Singh Bahadur's arrival at Lohgarh, it is estimated that the brick used in the 52 fortifications are Nanak Shahi bricks and both mud and lime mortar had been used as binding material for construction.



Well of Lakhi Shah Vanjara at Kasampur



Bastion at Ratore (30°31' 33.14"N, 77° 2'36.82"E)



Bastion at Hangoli (30°31 '39.36"N, 77° 0'43.21"E)

### **Lohgarh's Bastion at Village Bavana, Pinjor (30°47'53.61"N, 76°57'44.26"E) (Zone 3)**

According to Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur remained at this place in 1714. This place is situated on a hillock having contours 2200 feet above sea level and the fortification is just on the bank of river Gaggar, in fact it is very strategic place from where viligance can be kept on the passages leading to the valley. More over it is just on the boundary of old state of Nahan and Hindur, therefore it was an important coordination point. The fortification is mainly done with dressed stones and lime mortar. There are ample amount of curved stone in the village. Vanjaras constructed this fort. Presence of a well on hill top clearly indicates that rich Vanjara use to live here and also they use to do trading activities. Intensive use of concrete had been done, no Mughal cannon was capable of breaching it. Strength of concrete is still found, even after 400 years.





## Pictures of Some of the 52 Bastions of Lohgarh

These bastions were constructed in the present district of Karnal, Kurukshetra, Ambala, YamunaNagar and Panchkula, to check the advance of the Mughal army (list of these bastion in Appendix). As already discussed, these villages were inhabited by the Vanjara Sikhs. Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara selected the locations for establishing them. This region is flood prone as number of rivulets flow down the Shivalik Hills. The Vanjaras raised the plinth of villages up to 20 to 30 feet high and then construction was carried out. These villages were having trading and manufacturing units leading to generation of heavy revenue. Guru Arjun Sahib established 52 trading centres (Kitas) at Amritsar and it is quite possible that these trading centres were shifted to Lohgarh during the time of Guru Har Gobind Sahib. After perusal of archeology and circumstances it is believed that these village were turned into forts in the early 18th century.



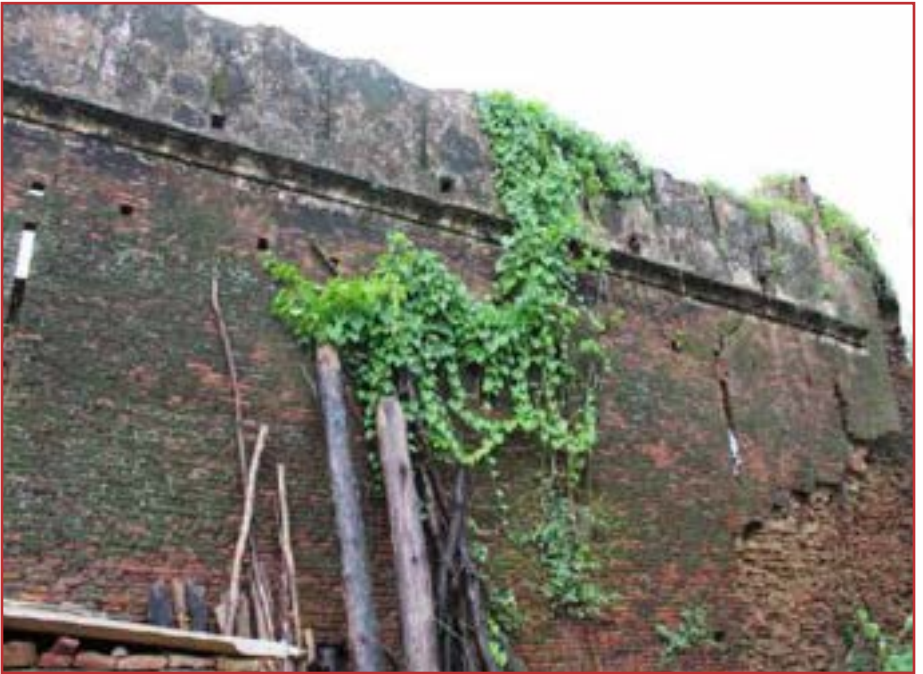
Village Leda Khas, Tahsil Chhchhrauli, Yamuna Nagar. (30°14'47.08"N, 77°19'47.51"E)



Sadhaura Village



Sarawa Village, Tahsil Sadhaura



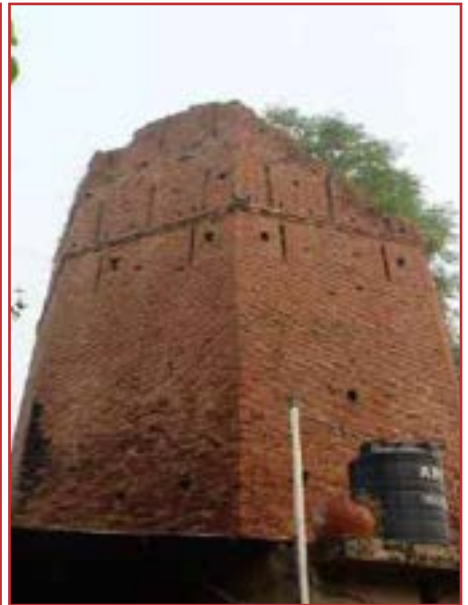
Village Azizpur Kalan, Tahsil Bilaspur, Yamuan Nagar



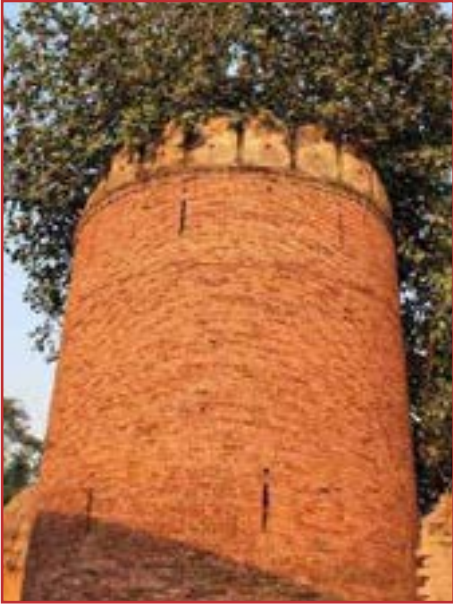
Village Bhita , Tahsil Saha, Ambala. Even there is pond of Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara. This village is a few Kilometers from GT Road, thus important centre for Vanjaras.



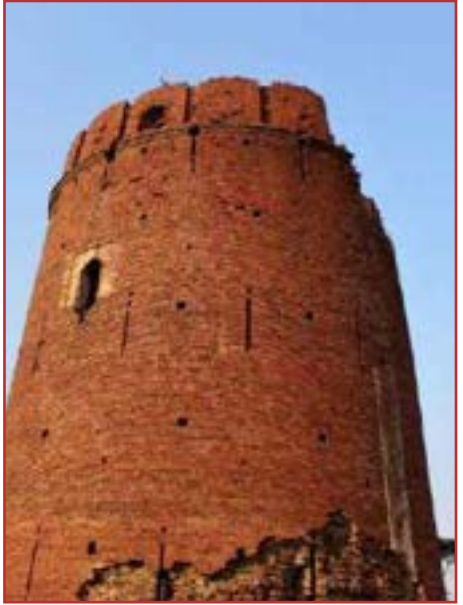
Village Deen, Tahsil Barara, Ambala



Village Nagla, Tahsil Saha, Ambala



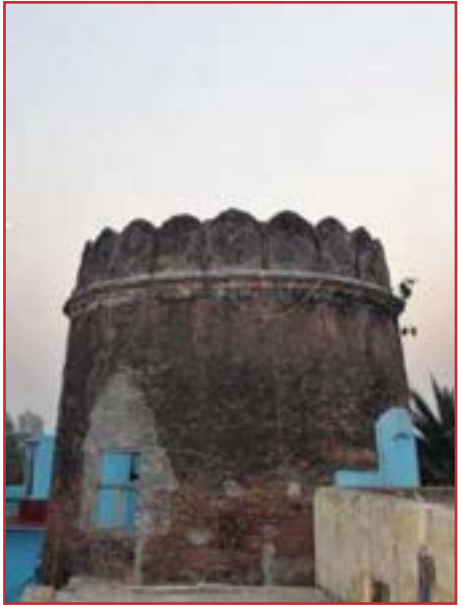
Village Karauli, Tahsil Sahzadpur,  
Ambala



Village Korwa, Tahsil Sahzadpur,  
Ambala.



Village Rataur, Tahsil Raipur Rani,  
Panchkula



Village Laharpur, Tahsil Sadhura,  
YamunaNagar.(Local Residents believes  
that Guru Gobind Singh stayed here in  
1688 ,for 13 days on his ways from Poanta  
Sahib to Ananpur Sahib.





Village Sangor, Tahsil Babian , Kurukshetra Britishers have made a police station on the bastion of Lohgarh. There are some points which are to be noticed. This village is quite in interior and no proper connectivity must be there during 19<sup>th</sup> century . The Britishers closed this police station few decade later as there was no crime. Now the question arise why the police station was established when there was no requirement, the only reason can be to keep a check on the rebels.



Village Babian, Kurukshetra . There were some bastions nearby like Karindwa, Bohwai, LakhiGarhi etc which are not available today.

## Walls and other remnants of Lohgarh fort



Fortification wall in sector C-12



Canon Keeper found in Kalesar reserve forest



Revenue officials of Yamuna Nagar making survey of Lohgarh Fort.



Ramp found in sector C-32



Ramp found in sector C-20



Store rooms found on hillock of Lohgarh.



Fort wall having width of 3 meters found at Lohgarh.



Fort wall having lamp keeper.



Canon keeper found at Lohgarh.



Lohgarh bastions on hillock



Tunnel of Lohgarh, used for moving from one hill to another



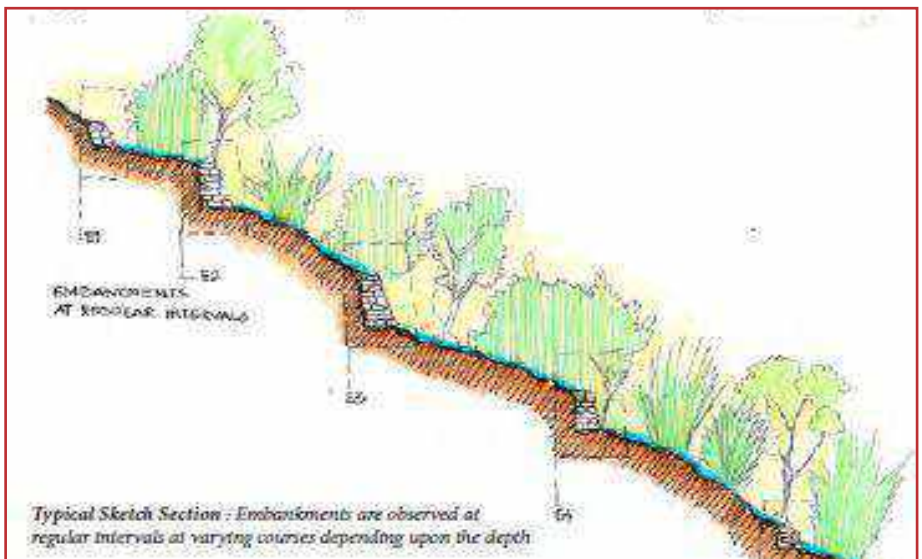
Fortification wall



Remnants of Living rooms found at Lohgarh.

## Dams and Water preservation System

Inspections were done along the rivulets coming out from the fort Lohgarh and it was found that the water even in the summer season existed inside these rivulets. Even after the reduction of precipitation in the area under study, the existence of water in the rivulets of the Lohgarh made the study more important. As per the geographical location these rivulets originated just 10 k.m. from the hillocks and flows down in the plains. As the inspection team moved towards the various hillocks, tangible evidences of a typical structured embankment along the sub rivulets (9 courses random rubble masonry) were found. Just after the structures a formation of water tanks was found which have a capacity to retain an ample amount of water on the hillock. These structures shows the planning of Sikh army, in anticipation of big war as the water the primary requirement for both men and horses. The availability of water on the hillock was also must as the defense morchas and the inhabitations of the Sikh army were on the higher contours. Moreover, if the water source was at the low height, the vulnerability to the enemy's attack increased. Therefore, these structures having curved in plan, constructed with dry rubble masonry was constructed by the Sikh soldiers under the guidance of Sikh Guru Sahiban. The pattern and the location of these structures are strategically placed before the water source at regular intervals of the rivulets.





Embankment Sketch-curved plan for storage of water, at different levels in fort Lohgarh, involving the different contours and topography. During the war the Persian sources had repeatedly reported that there is no seizure to Lohgarh fort and there was ample amount of supplies and amenities of Sikh soldiers. On the other hand the Mughals soldiers had a shortage of supplies and this lead to demoralization of Mughals army.



Embankments sketch plan with rubble masonry.



Checked dam found in sector 32 of Lohgarh Fort.



Checked dam found in sector 12 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 2 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 11 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 22 of Lohgarh Fort



The check dam found in sector 18 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 15 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 17 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 23 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 29 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 19 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in Sector 21 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in Sector 4 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 5 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 24 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 6 of Lohgarh Fort.



The check dam found in sector 23 of Lohgarh Fort.



## Pottery, Chakki etc. Found at Lohgarh (Zone 2 & Zone 3)



Pottery found at Lohgarh. These jars were mainly used for storage of food grains. There is a clear inference that the preparation of war was made much earlier and Sikh soldiers never had a shortage of supplies during the Battle.



Heavy lime mortar, concrete was used in the construction of Lohgarh in order to resist the Mughal cannon. Lime mortar had been blended with brick powder and even after 400 years its strength is unmatched.



Alloy left while making arms at Lohgarh by Sikhs. After melting, it could be used again. It is alloy of iron, zinc, chromium & copper. These are found in village Shahzadwala, Vansantoor and Bhagwanpur.



Various types of round shot made from dressed stone, found at Lohgarh. It is a solid projectile. Without explosive charge, it was fired from a cannon by the Sikh army against Mughals in Battle of Lohgarh



Multipurpose pulley used for extraction of oil from seeds, lifting water, lifting heavy material on a hilltop. The diameter of raising portion is 40 inches and depressed portion is 28 inches. The ropes and wood was used to operate it.



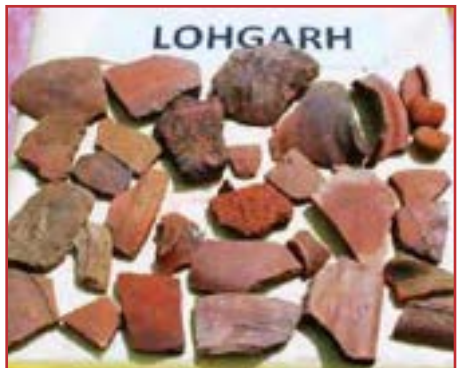
Okali-Musal found in Lohgarh – Main used for grinding spices, chilies and other food items. Famous Phrase of hindi 'Okhli mein sar diya to muslon se kya darna' . Diameter upper part 42 inches and lower 21 inches . Depth of Okali 12 inches.



Millstones or Chakki found in different sectors of Lohgarh and stones made chakkis were used for grinding wheat or other grains. Diameter of chakki found at Lohgarh, varies from 48 inches to 54 inches .



Toy Factory was installed near Lohgarh by Bhai Laxhi Rai Banjara. These toys are found at Lohgarh. Detail reference on this topic is made on page 24.



Broken pottery found in different sectors of Fort Lohgarh. These pieces are spouted pitchers, jugs, cooking pots, storage jars, bowls, lamps etc.



Dressed stone used for construction of fort Lohgarh. There is hole in every stone so that lime mortar can get its strength and each stone are bound with other one strongly.



Carved stones found at Lohgarh, clearly indicate that the fort was not constructed in a hurry and the Sikhs constructed it much earlier than Baba Banda Singh Bahadur.

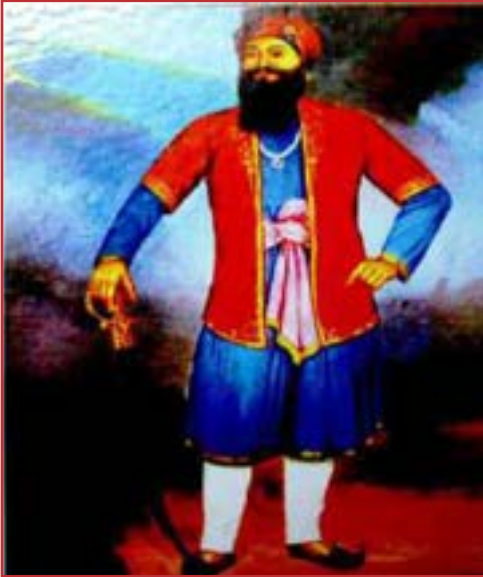


Five sizes of bricks were used for construction of fort Lohgarh. 1<sup>st</sup> length - 7 inches, breadth 3.5 inches & width 1.5 inches, 2<sup>nd</sup> length - 7 inches, breadth 5 inches & width 1.5 inches, 3<sup>rd</sup> length - 10 inches, breadth 7 inches & width 1.5 inches 4<sup>th</sup> length - 11 inches, breadth 6 inches & width 2 inches & 5<sup>th</sup> The size of the brick is length - 11 inches, breadth 6 inches & width 2 inches.



## Places linked to Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara

### Unsung Hero

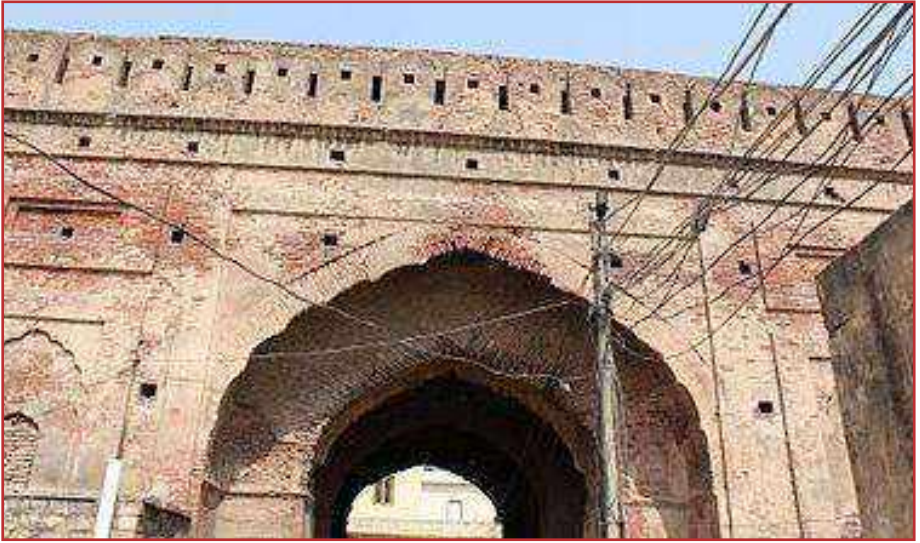


The family of Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara (1580- 1680) had been associated with Guru Nanak Sahib. Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara was the main person, who raised funds for the construction of Fort Lohgarh. He was not only a rich trader but also a clever strategist and a warrior. He was the owner of the biggest Tanda (transporting and trading unit) and employer of hundreds of thousands of Vanjaras. Vanjaras throughout the Indian Sub Continent contributed for the construction of Fort Lohgarh. After the decline of the Mughal Empire,

the Britishers brought the Vanjaras under the Criminal Tribal Act. The name of Laksi Shah Vanjara is mentioned in the Imperial Gazetteer of Ambala.



Mughals constructed a Mazar of Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara near Lohgarh.



Fort and Sarai of Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara near Fatehgarh Sahib.

## **Water Wells found in the Vicinity of Lohgarh constructed by Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara**

So far 85 wells constructed by Bhai Lakhi Rai Vanjara have been found in the vicinity of Lohgarh, this clearly indicates the presence of trading Tanda's and Vanjara's near Lohgarh. Every well has a plate and the name of Lakhi Rai Vanjara inscribed on the plate. There are other important information pertaining to Sikh history available on these plates.



**Budhi**



Battuwala



Alisherpur Majra



Mahilawali



Bansewala



Vansantoor



Baniyawala



Thaska



## Palaces of Massa Rangar & Other Rangars

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After martyrdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, Sikhs were left without a leader Rangars were deputed by the Mughals for the genocide of the Sikhs. Rangars not only killed the Sikhs, but also demolished the Fort of Lohgarh. Massa Rangar is believed to have lived in Yamuna Nagar from 1716 to 1740.



The remnants of Massa Rangar's haveli are available at village Machhrauli, Tehsil Bilaspur and remnants of other havelis of Rangars are present in Tehsil of Raipur Rani and Naraingarh.

## Gurudwara Gorakpur (Pinjor) and Sikh Bastions

A Sikh bastions is found in village Gorakpur, located in Shivalik Hills, adjoining Pinjore. A Gurudwara has already been established in the remembrance of the humanitarian deeds of the Sikh army under the leadership of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur.



# Fort Lohgarh to rise from ashes

The place lies sandwiched between Haryana and HP. It is believed Baba Banda Singh Bahadur fought 3 battles against the Mughals from the fort

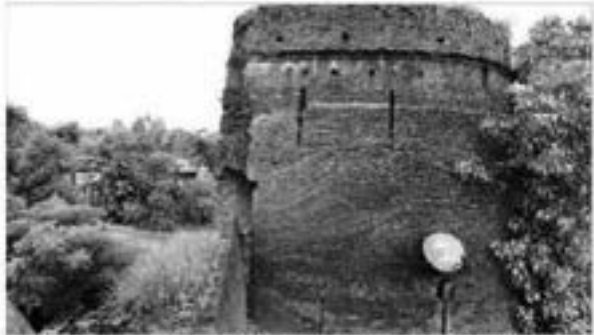
**SHIV KUMAR SHARMA**  
IN YAMUNA NAGAR

**H**ISTORY can be a queer mixture of unmeasured doubts and self-assured glorification; the two may tend to meet at even queerer juncture of folk tales and beliefs. Like Lohgarh fort, lying on the cusp of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, the fort, believed to be the largest in the world, has lived off the terrain, steel-like, unforgettable for generations, unsought for yet standing apart, rock solid. What was there, and is there, has remained unnoticed for 300 years — this in its claim to fame, with the belief that the decaying fort was once witness to three battles between Baba Banda Singh Bahadur's forces and Mughal armies.

Lohgarh rose into the night when the Haryana government held a state-level function to celebrate the 300th martyrdom of Banda Bahadur last year. The chief guest, chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, highlighted several "untouched historical facts" about the place and told the gathering that his ancestors were also a part of the Banda Bahadur's army. The state government is keen to develop Lohgarh, of which a part ends in Bhagwanpur gram panchayat of Yamunanagar district and the other part in Himachal Pradesh.

Lohgarh is located about 36 km from Yamunanagar. The state government appointed district development and panchayat officer (DDPO) Gagandeep Singh a nodal officer to develop the area. A Sikh activist, Jarnail Singh, says the community has formed 'The Lohgarh Trust' under the chairmanship of Gurneet Singh, a resident of Karnal, for carrying out research about the place and the fort. The trust has roped in a Delhi-based heritage revival company, the Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD).

The ITRHD research about Lohgarh has revealed that the Lohgarh fort included fort walls, bastions, rooms, soldier barracks, watch towers, pottery, grindstones, hand mills to mill flour and big clay drums for the storage of food grains. Many carved stones are also found. "The



Haryana has started a slew of projects to boost tourism in Lohgarh. ISTOCK PHOTO

fort walls are made of dressed stones and lime. Mortar mixed with brick powder has been used as the binding material. The bricks used in the fort walls are of five different sizes," says SK Mishra, ITRHD chairman. Archaeological studies have thrown up astonishing facts, he said.

**Lohgarh Trust plans to build a gurdwara, living rooms, a langar hall, multimedia interaction rooms and an exhibition hall at Lohgarh**

Gagandeep Singh, the nodal officer, says Lohgarh was Khalsa Rajdhani and the epicenter of its fort was spread across 7,000 acres, making it one of the largest forts in the world. The fort area covers numerous estates of Haripur, Jhal, Mehtawali, Pakri, Sukera, Mahamoraola (in HP), and Ekagwanpur, Nathari, Dhamsara, Nagi and Mohindrapur (in Haryana).

"The 52 defence posts (bastions) built by the Baniyas Sikhs in plain before the Lohgarh fort to check the advancement of the Mughal army extended up to Ludhiana (part of Kurukshetra) and Indt of Karnal," says Gagandeep. "It is interesting to note that the Lohgarh fort was constructed by the general public and not by a monarch."

Dr Harjinder Singh Dilger, former director Sikh History Research, SGPC, and former visiting professor Panjab

University, Patiala, says Bhai Lalcha Rai Baniyas, Bhai Makhan Shah, Lakana (tribe leader) and Peer Baniya Shah (a noble man in the Mughal court) played a key role in raising funds for the construction of the fort.

He said that in 1708 AD, after a series of battles fought between Guru Gobind Singh and Bahadur Shah at Mander (Maharashtra), Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, the first Sikh general was deputed by the 10th master to uproot the Mughal empire. "In 1709, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, after capturing all the major parts of Delhi and Lahore declared Lohgarh as Khalsa Rajdhani," said Dr Dilger. He says first Khalsa Raj coins were minted, the Sikh calendar was issued and a royal seal was prepared to issue 'farman' (orders) by Baba Banda Singh Bahadur.

Dr Dilger says historians have wrongly called Lohgarh as Mukhlagarh, the King Mahal of Mughals situated in UP, close to Bahini Band Barrage of Yamunanagar district.

Prof Verna Sachdev of Panjab University, Chandigarh, says three battles were fought at Lohgarh. The first was fought between emperor Bahadur Shah and Baba Banda Singh Bahadur in 1710; the second was fought in 1712 between emperor Jahangir Shah and Baba Banda Bahadur and the third battle in 1713 between Akbar Sarnat Khan, the Mughal subedar of Lahore appointed by emperor Farrukhsiyar and Baba Banda Bahadur.

### About the book

Research has established the Lohgarh Fort as the largest fort of the world. It lies sandwiched between Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, over a vast area of 7000 acres on undulated land of the Daber Hills. This is an extremely strategic site in military terms. Banda Singh Bahadur occupied this fort in 1710 and declared it as the first Khalsa *Rajdhanī*. From here Banda Singh fought three major wars against the Mughals under three Mughal Emperors from 1710 to 1713. He issued coins, official seals, a calendar and abolished the feudal and *Jagirdari* system from here. Historians so far have known Lohgarh Fort by its old name Mukhlagarh, which is incorrect. Mukhlagarh a 'Rang Mahal' of the Mughals built by the Emperor Shah Jahan exists in Uttar Pradesh near Hathni Kund Barrage on the Yamuna River, which is 40 Kms away from Lohgarh. Extensive survey of literature reveals that the idea to raise Lohgarh Fort in the hilly area was conceived by Guru Hargobind Sahib and executed by the later Sikh Gurus with the help of the Vanjara community under the leadership of Lakhi Rai Vanjara. The Haryana government are developing the site in a major way as a tribute to the great hero. To pay tributes and homage to Banda Singh Bahadur, the Lohgarh Trust is developing a health care centre, imparting religious education based upon principles of 'Guru Granth Sahib', displaying discovered articles for general public and a national academy to prepare students for the defence forces etc. This volume is an attempt to correct a major distortion in our history as well as a tribute to a great son of India.



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