

A critical analysis of Rattan Singh Bhangu's version of Banda Singh Bahadur's downfall

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Abstract : *Banda Singh Bahadur was one of most remarkable person in the 18th century. He was a great warrior who established the first Sikh raj in Punjab. He was a baptized Sikh and follower of tenth Guru of Gobind Singh. Within a short span of time he established the Khalsa republic with his own seal, struck own coin with the grace of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Historians have not done justice to Banda Singh Bahadur. Muslims historian like, Khafi khan, Muhammad Safi Warid etc. has been written about Banda Singh Bahadur with pro-Islamic prejudices. But the some Punjabi writers also has been written about him with jealous feel of his ancestors Bhangu Rattan Singh author of prachin panth parkash is an example of this his work is considered one of the main source of information on 18th century history of Sikhs. It is, therefore, necessary to find out the cause of apathy and indifference of the Sikhs towards this great hero in prachin panth prakash*

IndexTerms - *Banda Singh Bahadur, Bhangu Rattan Singh, Version, Downfall, Great Hero.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Banda Singh Bahadur is one of the greatest characters of the Punjab historian. But he was a character who was the most misunderstood and misinterpreted by our own historians, No biography of Banda Singh Bahadur written during his life time. The struggle of Banda Singh Bahadur against the in justice of Mughals. Many battles fought between the Mughals and Banda Singh Bahadur. So the contemporary sources about Banda Singh Bahadur is in Farsi Script which were written by authors of Mughal court or courtiers. They write about this great hero under their pro-Islamic prejudices. They write about struggle for in justice of Banda Singh Bahadur into a rebellion of Kaffar against the rule of the Momins. They have readily accepted the false as historical truths and have charged Banda Singh Bahadur with the blackest cruelty and barbarism. But the Gurmukhi scripts of Sikh, writers particularly of Rattan Singh Bhangu, Giani Gian Singh tamished the historical personality of Banda Singh Bahadur. They have laid undue emphasis on the differences between Banda Singh and so called Tat Khalsa. They adopt a partisan attitude.

Rattan Singh Bhangu's account of Banda Singh Bahadur's downfall written more than a hundred years after the event. His faulty account is responsible for the downgrading of this valiant fighter. Prachin panth prakash as the work of Rattan Singh Bhangu is called was completed in 1841 C E in the Bunga of Sham Singh near the golden temple Amritsar. He was the grandson of Bhai Mehtab Singh of Mirankot, who had either been personally through the unpleasant conflict between the Bandei and the other Khalsa after the death of Banda Singh in 1721 or had heard accounts of it from his father and others. ⁽¹⁾His work is considered one of the main sources of information on the 18th century history of the Sikhs after Banda Singh Bahadur.

No occult powers of Banda Singh Bahadur: - This is not a fact. It is story of mind of Bhangu Rattan Singh. He says Banda Singh Bahadur had many occult powers. His victories depend upon it. Banda Singh's own victories were ascribed to his occult powers which had been bestowed upon him by Guru Gobind Singh. ⁽²⁾Really Banda Singh Bahadur had the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh who gave him five arrows and Hukamnamahs in the name of Sikhs of different localities, but it will be wrong to state that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed upon him any occult power as has been stated by Rattan Singh Bhangu in his prachin panth parkash. Use of occult powers is a taboo in Sikhism. No Guru, not even Gobind Singh, displayed any occult powers. ⁽³⁾It has been clearly stated in the Adi Guru Granth. "Without devotion to the name is all wear and sustenance worthless, of such is pratice of super natural and miraculous powers cursed". ⁽⁴⁾

In the words of Bhai Gurdas , Guru Nanak told Sidhas, "without God's name we have no miracle". ⁽⁵⁾ Rattan Singh himself has recorded the reply of Guru Tegh Bagadur to Mughal officials in the following words, "miracle is synonymous with the curse of God. Hence we do not perform miracles". ⁽⁶⁾ It is a true historical fact at the time of execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur ninth Guru of Sikhs. Aurangjeb said to Guru. "Show you occult powers or miracle then Guru Tegh Bahadur writes two short writings in his hand. After the excution of Guru these short note opened and see and all amazed because Guru wrote this "sir dia par sar na dia" means he excute his head but did not give secrecy. With Guru Gobind Singh's blessings, Banda Singh Bahadur proved to be one of greatest Military generals of his times. It was no mean achievement to face the army of mighty Mughal power was at its zenith, Banda Singh Bahadur knew that he could not win against the well-trained and well-equipped mughal army. Therefore he after the issuing of the Hukamnamahs of Guru Gobind singh to Majha , Doaba and Malwa sikhs, took a circuitous route". ⁽⁷⁾ His companions from Nanded as well as wrote a large number of letters to leading Sikhs all over the country, telling them that Banda Singh had been appointed by the Guru himself as Jathedar of the Khalsa and that it beloved every true Sikh to fall in under his banner. To appeal to the sentiments of the people reminded them of the cruel death of the two sons of Guru at Sirhind and exhorted them to join in punishing Faujdar Wazir khan of Sirhind and his Peshkar Sucha Nand. Who had so cruelly butchered the young children. This produced a miraculous effect upon the minds of the Sikhs. Who were already burning with rage against them for these atrocities. There was a stir among the Sikhs and they readily responded to the call. They began to pour in from all quarters. ⁽⁸⁾ Even the ali Singh and Mali Singh who are in the service of Wazir Khan should join to Banda Singh Bahadur. Singhs of Majha, Malwa, Doaba join him. Although Chaudhari Ram Singh and Thirlok Singh, the ancestors of the phulkian chiefs, could not join in personally, they liberally contributed in men and money. A large number of professional robbers and soldiers of fortune, who anticipated a large booty from the condemned city of Sirhind, also join the holy warriors. In a few months Banda Singh consisted a considerable number of crusaders, eager to win the crown of victory or to drink the cup of martyrdom. He conquered the Samana and Sadhaura, Shahabad, Kapuri etc. Sirhind is hardly fifty miles from Samana (in modern Patiala state) which he had conquered. Banda Singh Bhadaur wanted to meet hurry up to the

Northern Singh who had collected on the other side of Sutlej near kiratpur and waiting for his orders. On his way the Hindus of Chhat appealed to him for protection against the in justice of local Mughal rulers. So Banda Singh occupied the town of Chhat Wazir Khan threatened from the combination of two Sikh forces. He deputed Sher Muhammad khan of Maler-kotla to deal with Sikhs coming from the north before they could join the main force of Banda Singh. So the battle of Ropar was fought Conquest of Ropar gone to favour of Singhs. Without loss any time they now hurried to join their leader as early as possible. Banda Singh Bahadur was pleased to hear about this victory of his Singhs. The memorable junction took place between Kharar and Banur on the Ambala-Ropar road.⁽⁹⁾ Banda Singh was successful to effect the union. The battle of Chapper-Chirhi was fought. Chapper-Chirhi is between Banur and Kharar near Chandigarh. It was an unequal battle, as Sikhs had neither training nor well equipment. But the holy Sikhs was determined to do or die. So the Wazir Khan was killed and the Sikhs had the upper hand inspite of treachery of nephew of Sucha Nand. Banda Singh Bahadur and his Sikhs conquered the fort of Sirhind, where the young sons of the guru had been bricked alive.⁽¹⁰⁾ Rattan Singh Bhangu says in prachin panth parkash about the desecration of the graves of Pirs, exhumation of the dead and their consignment to the flames. But the fact is that in the present day the Mausoleums of Ganj-i-Llam and Qutab-ul-Aqtab stand to the present day in the same condition in which they stood before the invasion of Banda Singh. The latter was only slightly smoked as a result of the fire set to it by revengeful and infuriated mob. In prachin panth parkash, Bhangu Rattan Singh narrated different view from the other books. 'He writes Ratan Singh ne Jim Suni so Ton Dhari Likhai',⁽¹⁰⁾ means "whatever heard he writes". In prachin panth parkash Rattan Singh has stated that he was given the narration as was told by his ancestors. This has been repeated at several place. But in case of account no reliable source of information.

Rattan Singh Bhangu narrates the Sakhi (story) of Kulu. He says "Bande Akyo Bir Un, Pinjre Liho Udaye, Le Su Utare had Mandi Sidh Sen Ke Jai." To Biran Ne Soi Kri, Uduyo Pinjro Tis he ghari¹² means Banda Singh Bahadur has been lock up in the prison of Raja of Kulu and he was in cage. With cage he flew from Kulu to Mandi of Raja Sidh Sen. In the Chamba state Banda is said to have performed another miracle. He crossed a fast runner stream while sitting on the horse back and his horse was strutting on the surface of the fast flowing water.⁽¹²⁾ Manuscript as, "Nadi Jo Bahuti Tej, Dyo Bande Ne Ghora Dhawaie".⁽¹³⁾ Such narration gives the impression that these have been written on the basis of hearsay or rumours.

No confirmation: - In Prachin Panth Parkash's account not based on any authentic record. This is based on only hear say Rattan Singh Bhangu tells us. Forkhusiyar debated has officials and they remarked Banda Singh Bahadur was a creation of Guru Gobind Singh. Guru's family was living in the Mughal Jurisdiction. If the Guru's wife did not stop Banda Singh she should be put under arrest by the Mughal authorities. Then calling Bai Nand Lal to the royal court, the emperar pleaded with him to seek the Guru mother's help. He ask Bhai Nand Lal to go back to the Guru Mother. He should tell her that Banda Singh had accomplished Guru's mission by avenging the murder of Guru's two Sahaibzadas. Who had received retribution for their own misdeeds. The Guru Mother should now summon Banda Singh back. The Guru Mother said to Nand Lal that Banda Singh would never pay any heed to her advice. Since he had managed to command over a large army. Chaupai; After listening to Guru mother's response Nand Lal advised her. That he chose to disobey Guru mother's instruction. He would get himself deprived of his power of miracles the emperor would take offence if she did not communicate his message, because he felt that Banda Singh would come at her bidding, she should complete her formality by writing to Banda Singh formally. There upon the Guru mother instructed Bai Nand Lal that he should communicate the proposal under her name. She asked Nand Lal to send in writing to Banda Singh (from her side) under the Guru's seal. Following the instruction of the Guru mother Bhai Nand Lal sent the emperor's proposal to Banda Singh after the reading Guru mother's letter Banda Singh expressed shock at the poor sense of judgment of woman. Banda Singh reply sent back to guru mother emperor read out the content to all his courtiers.

Chaupai:- Banda Singh had written that he was ,no longer, a guru's follower, as he had been a follower of bariragi vaishno, his collaboration with the guru was over. He would became a sovereign with his power. He would introduce his own slogan of darshan fateh in place of the guru's slogan of waheguru ji ki fateh. He would haras and torture the Singhs as brutally as the Singhs had slaughtered his goats. After all the mughals admitted defeat the hands of Banda Singh. He started harassing and torturing all the people of Punjab since the Guru himself had planted this sinful tree as Banda Singh. Guru mother said Banda Singh it should rest vested in khalsa panth and orders were sent to Khalsa panth should separated from Banda Singh.

Chaupai:- Rattan Singh Bhangu also stated that Banda Singh remarked that khalsa Singh deserved to be finished.⁽¹⁴⁾

The charges against Banda Singh Bahadur were not correct. This was a political diplomacy because Mata Sundri is wife of Guru who sacrificed total family for the Sikh religion and humanity and in justice. She did never do this Mata Sundri her first Hukanmamah was sent on date 1717 C E to Sangat vasi Patne ke jog. Means 'name of followers of resident Patna' about a year after the death of Banda Singh Bahadur Manuscript of Hukanmamahs of Mata Sundri are available in Punjabi university Patiala, published by publication bureau Punjabi university Patiala edited by Ganda Singh.⁽¹⁵⁾ Mata Sundri during the rising year of Banda Singh bahadur had migrated to Mathura after leaving her residence inside Ajmerigate, Delhi where she used to live.⁽¹⁶⁾ A Gurdwara were situated there in the name of Mata Sundri. So the statement about a letter by Mata Sundri does not appear to be correct hence the Question of Banda's disobedience to Mata ji does not arise.

Banda Singh Bahadur could never say he was separate from the principles of Guru Gobind Singh ji. He was the savior of Khalsa Panth. This fact is proved by his Hukanmamah, the manuscript as "ੴ Fateh Darshan" "shri sache sahib ji da hukam hai, asa satyug apnaya hai, app vich piyar karna, hukam hai, jo khalsa di rahit rahega, hukam hai tiski Guru bahuri karega"⁽¹⁷⁾ Means evert oerson who helped the Khalsa Panth. Guru (Gobind Singh) helped them Banda Singh Bahadur never against Mughals Muslim Jamindars to join the Banda Singh Bahadur by his own will. He never abused him. In this territory Muslim worshipped their God (Allah) in high vocals. They read their holy prayer (Namaz). I april 28, 1711 Saturday (21 rabi-ue-aiwal, Sth Bahadurshahi a. H.1123) Bhagwati das harkara presented the report to the emperor that Banda Singh proclaimed, "I do not oppress the Muslims. He permitted them to recite Khutba and Namaz. He did not reperate from Khalsa Panth. He stables the principle of sacrifice of tenth Guru Gobind Singh. In his last battle he arrested by Mughal ruler Abdus Samad khan.⁽¹⁸⁾ Guru's (Banda Bahadur) companions had been killed and his son should be killed by his own hands. After wards he himself was killed at the time of his cruel death he replied Farkhusiyar, in all religions and sects, whenever disobedience and rebellion among mortal men passes all bounds, the great avenger raises up a severe man like me for the punishment of their sins and the due reward of their works.⁽¹⁹⁾ This is prove that he sacrificed his son, his wife, followers and himself for injustice, Zullum(cruelty) and Sikh religion.⁽²⁰⁾

Bhai Nand Lal never met Farrukhsiyar. Bhai Nand Lal who is said to have persuaded Mata Sundri to write a letter to Banda Singh, had died earlier according to Dastur-i- Insha, Bhai Nand Lal died in 1713 C E at Multan.⁽²¹⁾ Encyclopedia of Sikhism and Kulyat-i-Bhai Nand Lal also give the same date of his death.⁽²²⁾ All accounts prove that Bhai Nand Lal died in 1713 CE in Multan. The emperor Farrukhsiyar entered Delhi as a Mughal emperor on 12th February, 1713 CE.⁽²³⁾ Bhai Nand Lal could not be at Delhi at that time, because according to all available accounts Bhai Nand Lal spent the last years of his life in 1713 C E, three years before the death of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716 C

E. the charge against Banda Singh Bahadur. He introduced his own brand of a greetings 'Fateh Darshan' and doing away with the guru ordained greetings "Waheguru ji ki Fateh" but he introduced it only for during the wars to encourage the spirit in Singhs. 'Fateh daras' only a war cry. It means he wants only victory or success. ⁽²⁴⁾

Rattan Singh Bhangu stated that Banda Singh Bahadur invoked the Goddess Kali by filling her bowl with blood. He would propitiate Kali by offering the sacrifice of Singh's heads approximately one lac and a quarter. In order to initiate his own brand of a religious order without the propitiation of kali by filling possible to initiate and propagate a new religious order. ⁽²⁵⁾ This allegation is wrong because worship of Goddess in Sikh religion is banned. Banda Singh Bahadur a baptize Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh ⁽²⁶⁾.

Another charge against Banda Singh Bahadur by Rattan Singh Bhangu is that he married the princess of Chamba against the wishes of Guru Gobind Singh. He had fallen from his character and lost sanctity. ⁽²⁷⁾ Guru Gobind Singh could not for bid him to marry because marriage is not a taboo in Sikhism (sarv dharm mein garihast pardhan hai) now where we find Guru Gobind Singh advising any one not to lead a house holder's life. Guru Gobind Singh could not give such instruction to Banda Singh Bahadur as this was against the tenets of Sikhism. It has also been alleged in the same connection that Banda had disobeyed the instruction of Guru Gobind Singh's widow, Mata Sundri, who in collusion with the Mughal authorities is said to have called the Khalsa o dissociate themselves from him and his activities, but there is nothing in any contemporary record to support these allegation, Which may be dismissed as mere fiction. ⁽²⁸⁾

Conclusion:- This grand epic (Prachin panth parkas by Rattan Singh Bhandu) of Sikh history is a unique and rare document but it's historical ligimacy is very weak. It is based on hearsay from his ancestors. In the time period of his ancestors Baba Banda Singh and Baba Kahan jealous with Banda Singh Bahadur. They telling false stories or romours about Banda Singh Bahadur.

In this way, it is clear that Banda Singh Bahadur was wrongly blamed instead of appreciating the great sacrifices. He has made and he has been Mialigned and disgraced by those people who did not agree with him on one account or the other.

The interested writers of these days who had followed them blindly have show the Banda Singh in false rumors, accusing them of Anti-Muslim prejudices. The day to day news of the imperial court preserved in the akbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla, revealed quite a different picture.

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