

JHABBAR KARTAR SINGH'S EMERGENCE IN AKALI PUNJAB POLITICS

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, I have explained the early life with birth and parentage of Kartar Singh Jhabbar. Sardar Kartar Singh Jhabbar joined Gurmata Vidhyala, his experience at Madhuki and other villages, work at Lahore, historical background of his political activities of Sardar Kartar Singh Jhabbar. The Sikh Sangat was united to abolish the atrocities in the Gurudwaras, whose leadership was in the hands of Kartar Singh Jhabbar. Kartar Singh led every front. Gurudwara Babe Di Ber, Akal Takhat, Panja Sahib, Khara Sauda, Tarn Taran Sahib, Nankana Sahib, Guru Ka Bagh, their jathas repatriated the Gurudwaras from the holding of the Mahants. He played a vital role in the foundation of Sikhism. His attire of classic Punjabi Jatt made him a great personality.

The renaissance period was more suitable in ending of nineteenth century & the beginning of the twentieth century. The *Singh Sabha* movement also contributed in that activity and *Akali* movement took it to the top.¹ Struggle of the *Akali* movement for the reorganization of the religious places, however, seemed to be against the characterless *Mahants* who were unscrupulous and manipulative, but it was a tremendous struggle against the British imperialism. The sacrifices of freedom fighters to liberate the country from the slavery of the British filled new way of life and encouragement in the community. Their biographies are an invaluable treasure in history of the nation. Jhabbar was among the great leaders who have made significant contributions in the freedom of the *Gurudwaras* from the control of the evil *Mahants*. He had to collide with the government. In that way his religious turmoil became the cause of political awareness. The *Gurudwara* Reform movement was a part of the National Independence Movement. Kartar Singh Jhabbar had a great contribution in that movement.²

Kartar Singh Jhabbar was born in September 1874 in the Virk family of village Jhabbar, district Sheikhpura. His father Sardar Teja Singh was a prosperous farmer. Kartar Singh Jhabbar was the grandson of Mangal Singh, whom Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed as a *Kummedan* in his army after compromising with the Jhabbars. He got the post of *Sardar* in the army. Due to lack of facilities of education in those times, Kartar Singh Jhabbar was sent to the *Gurudwara* to read. He had read *Gurmukhi* from the *Gurudwara* and got his education at the village's primary school.³ Jhabbar had received matriculation education from Nankana Sahib's High School. Jhabbar had educated himself by passing a course of religious education from the Khalsa Preacherist Mahavidyala. He passed that course in 1906-09.⁴

From the beginning, his way of living was masculine. He was handsome and his personality was impressive. He was fearless. In the stage of youth, he used to wear ordinary clothes, sheets, doublet and turban. He used to put a *Summa's* bludgeon in his hands. He never used vulgar talks and did not allow anyone to do it. He never accepted submission to anyone.

In his young age, he was married to a girl from village Butter, District Sheikhpura. Jhabbar was blessed with three sons and a daughter. His one son and daughter died in childhood. His two sons, Baldev Singh and Inder Singh were left.⁵

Kartar Singh Jhabbar was impressed with the personality of Bhai Mool Singh Gurmoola. His first meeting with Bhai Mool Singh Gurmoola was in 1904, when he heard the speech of Bhai Sahib's at Village Varan. At his speech, the *Kukas* incited some unknown people that Bhai Mool Singh was degrading Sikhism to join other religions into Sikh religion. They thought to insult Bhai Mool Singh. Bahadar Singh grabbed the shoe in his hand and went to Bhai Sahib when Mool Singh was preaching. When he was in front of him, something happened that he started scuffing shoe in his own mouth, fell down in front of *Guru Granth Sahib* and fainted.

When he came to conscious, he apologized. Seeing all that and after listening to speech of Bhai Mool Singh, Kartar Singh Jhabbar was so much influenced that wherever he came to know about Bhai Sahib's speech, Kartar Singh Jhabbar would reach there with his colleagues to listen to his lectures. Only at that time, pure preaching was started. There was generally a disturbance in that kind of publicity. Sometimes on preaching with purity, the opponents were ready to fight. To compete with them, there was a need for a stronger young man like Kartar Singh Jhabbar.⁶ In the age of thirty, Kartar Singh Jhabbar baptised *amrit* from Bhai Mool Singh Gurmoola in 1904 at *Nimani Mela* in Nankana Sahib. Kartar Singh's wisdom influenced Bhai Mool Singh. Thus, he became the companion of Bhai Mool Singh.

Kartar Singh Jhabbar opposed caste system and considered all to be equal. Jhabbar had great respect for women. As earlier, the women who had been strayed away from Sikhism, he would include them and their descendant in Sikhism by taking *amrit*.⁷

Sant Suraj Singh held a impressive *diwan* which was related to purity, in Kotli Dasu, District Sialkot in 1904. The leaders of the *Gurmata* preachers Bhai Lal Singh Gujranwala, Tirath Singh, Bhai Takht Singh Ferozpur and Bhai Manga Singh were also included in it at that time. The *Diwan* was organized for the purity of children and *amrit* was given by S. Ganda Singh. When Bhai Mool Singh was delivering lectures on stage, then 50-60 Muslims attacked the Sikh's *Diwan*. Kartar Singh Jhabbar threw some men down with his stick. All the other Muslims also fled due to the fear of stick. Seeing all that, the love and respect for Jhabbar had enhanced in the heart of Tirath Singh. On the second day, Jhabbar gave a speech in *diwan*.⁸

1. Singh Narain, *Akali Morche Ate Jhabbar*, Shiromani *Gurudwara* Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, November 1999, P-25.
2. Singh Harbans, *Heritage of the Sikhs*, Asia Publishing House, California, 1964, P-40.
3. Jhabbar Kartar Singh, *Journal of Sikh Studies*, Guru Nanak Dev University, 2003, P-104.
4. Singh Narain, *Jathedar Bhai Kartar Singh Jhabbar*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1988, P-20
5. Peace M.L. and Rattan Kaur, *Kartar Singh Jhabbar Spearhead of the Akali Movement*, P.O. Basti Guzan, Distt. Jalandhar, 1968, P-4.
6. Walia Jagjiwan Kaur, *Kartar Singh Jhabbar*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1991, P-2.
7. Giani Guriqbal Singh, *Virkan Da Itihas*, Punjabi Book Company, Jalandhar, 1960, P-518.
8. Singh Narain, *Akali Morche Ate Jhabbar*, P-27.

A young muslim woman was attending the *Diwan*. Her father had become a Muslim by marrying a Muslim woman. That young woman was their offspring and her *nikaah* was also solemnised with a Muslim of Gujran Wala, who was a very bad man. The young woman was ready to take *Amrit* after listening the speech of Jhabbar. She came to Jhabbar and requested for *amrit*. She said that Harnam Singh was ready for marriage with her. Jhabbar gave her *amrit* and Harnam Singh went to her village.

The mother of the girl, agreed for baptising her *amrit*, in the presence Harnam Singh. The girl was brought for *Anand Karj*. When her Muslim husband got to listen that news in Gujrawala, he filed a lawsuit against Jhabbar. Jhabbar got his statement recorded and the lawsuit was dismissed.⁹

Bhai Kartar Singh Jhabbar joined Khalsa Teaching Vidyala, Gharjakh and received education in Sikh literature. Kartar Singh Jhabbar became a good writer. After that he settled in Lahore and started preaching Sikhism in city and villages. At that time, there were only 19 members of the *Singh Sabha*, Lahore. The meeting did not have any special schedule and weekly *diwan* was also not held there. In Lahore, only one education center of *Kanya Pathshala* was available for receiving education in Sikhism. Apart from that, there was no other center of education in whole city.

Jhabbar started recruiting members of the *Singh Sabha* and within two months, he got enrolled 500 members. Jhabbar started conducting *diwans* at *Gurudwara Baoli Sahib*. People were notified by advertising in newspaper about the *diwan* and around a number of Six or Seven thousands *Sikh sangats* came to listen Jhabbar's speech. Jhabbar went out on a tour of *Gurmat* preaching.¹⁰

At that time, Baldev Singh son of Giani Ditt Singh was sent to study in England on a scholarship by Tikka Sahib of Nabha Ripudaman Singh. He was honored when he returned after getting a degree from there and *Singh Sabha* appointed him as a president of Lahore *Singh Sabha*.

He passed the resolution at the meeting of *Singh Sabha* that there was no need to sit in the rows and on the ground of *Singh Sabha diwan*. He ordered to sit on benches in *diwan*. The resolution was passed but there were some debates and dialogue between Jhabbar and Baldev Singh in which Kartar Singh Jhabbar said that the followers of Cultural Faith have their own fabricated principles. Thus, the respect of God (*Waheguru*) decreased. That was not a *Gurmat* principle, nor had it come anywhere in *Gurbani*. Even if the subject of the debate was accepted in his favor, then any unidentified man would pass the resolution to be a member of *Singh Sabha* that there would be no need to have *kase* (hair) and wearing *Kachchhara*, then where would be Sikhism left? There was no right to anyone change the principles those were set out by Gurus (*Waheguru*). After an hour's discussion, the bench was taken forever from the *Gurudwara*.

Jhabbar stayed in Lahore for seven years and preached *gurmat* without any salary or compensation. He had never worked in a position of salary in his life. He used to preach *Gurmat* to reach to all the people of Punjab.¹¹

He set up the first organization of *Khalsa Diwan, Khara Sauda* in 1912. That organization was named under the name of *Gurudwara Khara Sauda*. Its members were generally the *Virks* (caste group) near the Chuharkhana.

Under the leadership of the Education Committee of the Chief *Khalsa Diwan*, new schools were being opened everywhere. Jhabbar's interest was in the field of education. He opened the schools, so that the children could be educated. Bhai Mool Singh Garmoola built a building for the school near *Gurudwara Sacha Sauda* in 1913 by buying 13 canal land from *Arora Jat*.¹²

Jhabbar opened a middle school in that building in 1917. For some time, the school continued to run there and in those days Mandi Chuharakana was a newly established town which was near the *Gurudwara Sacha Sauda*.¹³ The people there asked Jhabbar to bring the school in mandi and took responsibility for paying him some funds. Jhabbar shifted the school to Mandi Chuharkana under that committee in 1918.

When the new classes started at school on 1 April, 1919, then Jhabbar accompanied his school teacher Bhai Arjan Singh to Lahore to buy books for the children. His interest was also of *Gurmat* preaching. He wanted to impart *Gurmat* education to their children through the *Khalsa School*.¹⁴

When Jhabbar went to buy books, on April 11, 1919, Congress had a big gathering at the *Badshahi Mosque* at Lahore. There Congress leader Lala Har Krishan Lal, Dr. Gokal Chand Narang, Dr. Kichloo and Mota Singh, etc. addressed the Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs gathered. That day, there was a strike in the city as in a gathering, the boys have beaten the Muslim inspector who wrote an Intelligence Diary. After some time, Aeroplanes were flying above the mosque, dropped advertisements and people were asked to scatter. At that time, the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore and other officers came to the royal mosque in Hira Mandi. A college student Khushi Ram hit the Deputy Commissioner, who was hitting them. A Muslim honorary Magistrate, who was with the Deputy Commissioner, fired a shot, and Khushi Ram was injured.¹⁵

When the news came, *Jalsa* was over. The student was brought dead to the doctor. There were about one lakh people with his bier. Arriving at the cremation ground, Jhabbar gave a zealous speech. Similarly, on April 13, the incident happened in *Jallianwala Bagh*. News of *Jalianwala Bagh* massacre spread far and wide. The *Khalsa Diwan* was also held in the Chuharkana district of Sheikhpura on the occasion of *Baisakhi*. In that *Diwan*, Jhabbar gave a lecture about the Rowlet Act.¹⁶

Rai Sahib Mr. Ram Suad, Extra Assistant Commissioner, Sub-Divisional Officer, Sheikhpura, Disorder Inquiry Committee, gave a statement that on 13th April, the leaders Kartar Singh Jhabbar and Teja Singh preached the state rebellion. The British government arrested them. For several months they tolerated the torture of the British government and in the same way all those incidents had great effect on Kartar Singh Jhabbar. That period was a time of political and religious awakening among the Sikhs. The issue of the wall of *Gurudwara Rikabganj*, incident of *Bajj-Bajj Ghat* and the death of many *Singhs* in the *Jallianwala Bagh* massacre, the Sikhs were made to revolt against

9. Walia Jagjiwan Mohan, *Kartar Singh Jhabbar*, P-18.

10. Singh Partap, *Akali Lehar De Mahan Neeta*, Bhai Jawahar Singh Kirpal Singh & Co., Amritsar, 1976, P-98.

11. *Ibid*, P-98.

12. Singh Ganda, *The Singh Sabha and other Socio-Religious Movements in Punjab*, 1850-1925, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1984, P-45.

13. Singh Narain, *Akali Morche Te Jhabbar*, P-73.

14. Singh Fauja, *Eminent Freedom Fighters of the Punjab*, Punjabi University Patiala, 1972, P-150.

15. Mahajan V.D., *The Nationalist Movement in India*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1981, P-293.

16. Singh Partap, *Akali Lehar De Mahan Neta*, P-90

the government. Those incidents caused considerable harm to the loyalty of the Sikhs.¹⁷ After that, there were some incidents that broke the ongoing interlinking ties between the government and the Sikhs. Kartar Singh Jhabbar and Master Mota Singh involved in political campaign. Jhabbar's view was purely religious, but due to the political events that happened, people came to normal with the leader's status.¹⁸

Kartar Singh Jhabbar spent his life preaching about the Sikh religion and in organizing religious activities for the Sikhs. *Gurudwaras* have a special place in the lives of the Sikhs. In Sikhism, *gurudwaras* are not only a part of the religious education center or religious life as well as also are a part of daily social life. The *Guru Granth Sahib* of the Sikhs is the life of the Sikhs and teachings of the gurus. Whereas, *gurudwara* is a living form of spiritual and political struggle. In *Gurudwaras* there was also arrangements for education. On the occasions of happiness and sorrow, the Sikhs congregated in *gurudwaras*. The Sikhs used to name in *Ardas* about the *gurudwaras* such as Five *Takhat Sahiban*, All *Gurudwaras*, *Chonkian Jhande*, *Bunge*, *Juggo Jugg Atal*, this means where Sikhs recite *Akal Purakh*, *Ten Guru Sahiban*, *Panj Pyare*, *40 Muktaas* and *Shaheed* in their *Ardas* every day. Therefore, Sikhs see the disrespect of *gurudwaras* and can never tolerate it.¹⁹

At that time, so many vicious *Mahants* lived in *gurudwaras*. They disturbed the on-going *sangat* in *gurudwaras* and mistreated women. Due to such behavior for the Sikhs, the distinction was to dissolve the tradition of the *Gurudwara*. Because of such circumstances, only the beginning of the *Akali* movement was compulsory. *Mahant* used to grab the money of the *gurudwaras* and they started themselves to be called as the landowners of the *gurudwaras*. The respect for the *Mahants* was declining day by day. They used to drink alcohol and gamble in the *gurudwaras*. Improvement in the management of *gurudwaras* was very much needed. The *Mahants* were fully sympathetic to the British government. *Mahants* to save their cushion, they used to hide their sins and made the government officials happy. The British government controlled the *gurudwaras* through *Mahants*. *Mahants* used to dislike the Sikhs who raised their voice of reform in the *gurudwaras*. They issued the declaration of untouchable from Sikhism against the countrymen. *Mahants* did not pray (*ardas*) at the time of the untouchables to become the Sikhs.

How shameful it was that the brute like General Dyer was honoured by *Sarbrah* at *Darbar Sahib*, whereas the Sikhs of Kamagatu Maru was called the untouchable Sikhs, who were caught in the *Bajj-Bajj* Ghat massacre. Due to that, the Sikh *Sangat* was united to abolish the atrocities in the *gurudwaras*, whose leadership was in the hands of Kartar Singh Jhabbar. Kartar Singh Jhabbar led every front.²⁰

Gurudwara Babe De Ber, Sialkot, *Sri Darbar* and *Akal Takht*, *Panja Sahib*, *Khara Sauda*, *Darbar Sahib*, *Tarn Taran Sahib*, *Nankana Sahib* and *Guru Ka Bagh*, their *jathas* repatriated the *gurudwaras* from the holdings of the *Mahants*. In order to maintain the sanctity of the *gurudwaras*, Kartar Singh Jhabbar supported the Sikh *Sangat* and never turned his back behind. The Sikhs retrieved the control of *gurudwaras* from the hands of the *Mahants*, and only the Sikhs were entitled to the *Gurudwaras*. Jhabbar had taught Sikhs to follow *Rehat Maryada*, *Rahini Behni*, demolished Caste System, Color, tribe, country etc., special emphasis was given to highlight the free life according to *Gurmat*.

In that way, Kartar Singh Jhabbar started his life as a religious preacher. He started the preaching work after receiving *Gurmat Vidya* from the *Khalsa Updeshak Vidyala Gharjakh*. He tolerated the government's oppression. He did not even tolerate torture. Kartar Singh Jhabbar was wrecked but he did not bend.

Platonic service was the ideal of his life. During the partition of Punjab, he did not care about his security. When Hindus and Sikhs were being massacred in Pakistan's Punjab, he established a camp in *Gurudwara Sacha Sauda*. That area was Virk Tapa's stronghold. Until he reached the local areas of the Hindu & the Sikhs and arranged to stay there will further arrangements. Lakhs of men, women, children and old people gathered there. With the help of Jhabbar, they were sent to India by motors. As long as all the people were evacuated, he stayed at the *gurudwara Sacha Sauda* and came to India after all. After coming to India, he settled in the village Habri, district Karnal. Yet he continued the service of the people and the *Panth*.

17. Singh Mohinder, *The Akali Struggle : A retrospect*, Vol. 1, Atlantic, New Delhi, 1988, P-20.

18. Narang Gokal Chand, *Sikh Matt Da Pariwartan*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1973, P-288.

19. Sahni Ruchi Ram, *Struggle for Reform*, Sikh Shrines Sikh Research Board S.G.P.C., Amritsar, 1945, P-1.

20. Giani Partap Singh, *Gurudwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1951, PP-20-21.