



History of Village Kewal, Distt. Sirsa (Haryana)

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The *Guru* left Damdama (Talwandi Sabo) for the Deccan on Kartik Sudi 5, 1763 Vikrami (October 30, 1760 C.E.). For some time he waited for Daya Singh's return at Talwandi Sabo whom he had sent to Aurangzeb at Ahmednagar to deliver his letter 'Zafar Nama' but he did not receive any communication from him or Dharam Singh. He, however, got wind that Daya Singh had to face a lot of difficulties caused by the obstructionist tactics of Subedar Wazir Khan's hired persons who were specially deputed to scuttle the attempts of Daya Singh to meet the Emperor to deliver the letter personally. The Subedar did so because he thought that if the *Guru's* letter and Daya Singh dialogue with the Emperor succeeded in arousing the moral conscience of the Emperor, a lot of harm was likely to accrue to him.

The *Guru* also got inkling that the letter had been delivered and its contents had moved the Emperor.

The *Guru* sensing change in the mood of Aurangzeb decided to move towards the Deccan even before Daya Singh could reach Damdama. The most important factor that impelled the *Guru* to take this decision was the fast failing health of the Emperor who was about ninetyone in 1706 and had been overtaken by illness. The *Guru* deemed it appropriate to go to Deccan himself and settle the affairs with the Emperor for which purpose Daya Singh had been sent with the letter.¹

The exact number of those who accompanied the *Guru* is not known, yet, on the basis of accounts available to us, it is not difficult to surmise that the number was quite large. Among them, a few notables were Man Singh, Ram Singh and Fateh Singh of Bhagtu Family, Dharam Singh and Param Singh, the sons of Bhai Rupa. Rai Dalla also accompanied the *Guru*. As the *Guru* proceeded further, some of them went back to their homes, but even then the hard core was quite large and included Mani Singh, Bhupat Singh from Amritsar, Sodhi Kanwal nain from Dhilwan, Udey Karan, Gurdas Singh from Sadhora, Ram Singh and Tilok Singh from Phul, Godaria Singh from Bhucho, Dan Singh with his son from Ablu, Ram Kaur from Ramdas.

En route to Deccan, the first halt of *Guru* Gobind Singh was at village Kewal. Shri *Guru* Gobind Singh Katak Sudi Panchami (1763 Bk) on October 30, 1706 AD on the way from Talwandi Sabo (Damdama Sahib) to Nanded Sahib (Hazur Sahib) on the south side. When *Guru* Gobind Singh came to the

¹ Darshan Singh Maini, *A biographical sketch of Guru Gobind Singh for children*. Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Chandigarh, 1967.

village kewal,² Jatt Bhai Kawela Singh was grazing buffaloes at that time. When he met *Guru Ji*, Bhai Kawela came home and told his wife Mata Punjabo Kaur that *Guru Ji* had come. Mother brought milk to *Guru Ji* and accompanied by Bhai Dalla Rao, Bhai Ram Singh, Bhai Fateh Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Tilok Singh, Bhai Man Singh, Bhai Param Gill, Bhai Gurdas Singh, Mata Ram Kaur etc. Milked. Then *Guru Ji* rested at this place for the night. Some of the forest trees with which *Guru Ji* tied his horses still exist today. The next day *Guru Sahib* performed the kirtan of Asa di War. When *Guru Ji* prepared for the south. The *Guru* told the Singhs to join the Paintra. Then *Guru Ji* went to the next stage towards village Jhorar Rohi. Nowadays *Gurudwara* Pantra Sahib is built on this place. The name of this village is only named after Bhai Kawela. In the field of Punjabi language, this village is known as keol. The river Saraswati used to flow at this place in ancient times. According to some historians, the river Ghaggar is considered to be the oldest form of the river Saraswati, but in time the river disappeared. In the time of Baba Deep Singh, rations were sent by the *Sangat* of Kewal, Dharampura, Takhtmal, Dadu, Tilokewala, Singhpura and Pakka Shaheeda for *Guru ka Langar* at Talwandi Sabo (Damdama Sahib).

Today, the village is located in Tehsil Kalanwali, District Sirsa, Haryana. Then the *Guru* sojourned at village Jharori, wherefrom he proceeded to village Jhanda. When the night fell, Feteah Singh and his brother Ram Singh left the *Guru's* camp. Rai Dalla placed his offerings comprising two gold bangles and one double-edged sword and slipped out of the *Guru's* camp and betook himself to his native place. These people did so because they could not shed their attachment with their people. Some others left the *Guru* gearing the difficulties of the arduous journey.

The *Guru* expressed surprise at the doings of Dalla particularly because he wished him to prepare himself for certain other jobs. when at dawn, the *Guru* asked where Dalla was, someone from amongst this followers told "There is no Dalla-Malla, there is only Allah and the *Guru*; the theme being that at that point of time, the *Guru* was all alone, determined to carry out his mission in spite of high risks involved in the process. The *Guru* remained calm and continued to march towards his destination.

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The *Guru* reached Sirsa now in the state of Haryana which was a small town then. People expressed their regards for the *Guru* by serving him and his Sikhs. In the course of his stay, he was told that open goldsmith named Gulab Singh had been imprisoned in an underground cell by Nabi Bakhsh, the Chaudhri of the village, Khural. The reason was that he did not honour the order of the Chaudhri to offer his daughter to cater to his carnal fits. The *Guru* mounted his steed and taking five Sikhs with him marched to the place. He freed Gulab Singh and chided the Chaudhri who out of fear prostrated at the *Guru's* feet. The *Guru* forgave him and instructed him to stop tyrannizing the people. The *Guru* having visited neighboring places such as Gobindpur

² Surjeet Singh Gandhi, *History of sikh Gurus Retold, 1606--1708 C.E.*, Atlantic Publishers Distribution, New Delhi. 2007. p-860-

came back to Sirsa. After this the *Guru* set out in the direction of Rajasthan reroute to Ahmadnagar where the Emperor was encamped.³

Passing through Haripur (Bad Tirath) the *Guru* reached Nauhar. Here the people were the votaries of Jainism. Instead of practicing the high ethical principles of their religion, their whole emphasis lay upon rejection of non-vegetarianism, which they thought was the only way to Bliss and social reconstruction. The *Guru* exposed the hollowness of their thinking and tried to make them understand the theory and practice and the ultimaticity of 'Non-violence'. Vegetarianism or non-vegetarianism is irrelevant to the process of building a good society as well as good individuals.

From Nauhar, the *Guru* proceeded to village Bhadra, where he was affectionately received by a Rajput family. The next halt of the *Guru* was at village Sahewa. During the course of travels, Dharam Singh and Param Singh carried the weapons and clothes of the *Guru*. they had taken a resolve to prepare a fresh cot for the *Guru* at his every halt.

Thencefrom the *Guru* proceeded to Bahaduran. There he gave horses, one each to Dharam Singh and Param Singh. Thereafter the *Guru* reached Sahena. From there he proceeded onwards to Madhu Singhnai. Bhai Ram Singh, a scion of Bhai Bhaktu, lost heart and beat a hasty retreat.

After this the *Guru* reached Pushkar Raj, a place of pilgrimage sacred to Brahma. The place earlier had been made hallowed by *Guru* Nanak. Pandit chetan Misar who was the incharge of the place fell at the *Guru's* feet and received Pahul to join the Khalsa fellowship.

After this, he *Guru* reached Naraina also known as Dadudwara where the saint Dadu had lived. His shrine, by this time, had come under the charge of Mahant Jait Ram. One day the *Guru* saluted the sepulcher of Dadu by lifting an arrow to his head. The Khalsa took exception to it and demanded a tankhah (religious punishment). One of them, Man Singh quoted the *Guru's* own verse Gor Marhi Mat Bhul Na Mane (worship not even by mistake cemeteries). The *Guru* at once confessed guilt of religious misconduct and paid a sum of Rs.125/- part of which was spent on *Guru Ka Langar* and the rest on the purchase of a canopy to cover the place where food was served.

In the course of conversation, the Mahant raised certain pertinent question. Was the living-style the *Guru* had adopted appropriate especially when according to Dadu, attachment with material world was futile and in no way helpful in the process of spiritual ascent? Was it justifies to bear weapon? The *Guru* replied that materiality and spirituality are not exclusive to each other, rather they form the parts of the same whole. Both are to be developed if the individuals and world are to march ahead. God, man and the world are related to each other organically and certainly not antagonistically. God as the soul create or permeates everything, seen and unseen and hence material things are not to be discarded or looked down upon, rather utilised and harnessed properly. Resort to weapons is legitimate, if it is done to eliminate evil in emulation of God as a 'smasher of the wicked'. According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta 'While sojourning at Naraqina, the *Guru* asked the Mahant that he

³ Kubeer Singh Badal, *Travels of Guru Gobind Singh in Rajputana*, Rajasthan History Congress, Jaipur. 2017.
p-170

could secure help from the Rajput princes to eliminate the Mughal government. The Mahant replied that it was not possible'. There seems to be no plausibility in the statement of learned historian, for the Mahant bring a recluse and indifferent to world affairs, had no worthwhile contracts with the Rajput princes. However, the *Guru* while traveling through Rajasthan, must have been disappointed at the political predilections of the Rajput princes. Except the Raja of Marwar, all other important princes such as Jai Singh of Mewar, Mokam Singh of Nagaor, Jai Singh of Jaipur, were openly on the side of Aurangzeb.

From Naraina, the *Guru* reached Kalot via Lali and Maghroda. Bhai Daya Singh and Dharam Singh on way back from Deccan met the *Guru* and related to him their experiences in the Deccan. The Emperor's Gurj-Bardar and Mansabdar had gone ahead towards Delhi with the royal farman for Munim Khan while Daya Singh and Dharam Singh came to the *Guru*. After this, the *Guru* reached Bhagaur, the headquarter of a parganah in the erstwhile Udaipur State about 70 miles north-east of Udaipur city. Here he heard the news of the death of Aurangzeb at Ahmednagar on February 20, 1707. The *Guru* decided to stop moving further towards the south. Aurangzeb being no more, March towards the South did not serve any purpose as now the *Guru* would not be able to build bridges of understanding between the Sikhs and the Mughal government nor could he arrange that the guilty Subedar Wazir Khan, was appropriately punished. He, therefore, decided to wait and watch and turn to Delhi where Revered Sundri and Sahib Kaur were living.

The war of succession had begun among the late emperor's sons. Prince Mauzzam (Bahadur Shah) was in Jamraud, a few miles away from Peshawar when his father died. Azam Shah (Tara Azam) who was in Deccan with his father at the time of his death assumed command of the imperial army and proclaimed himself as the next Emperor.

Bahadur Shah too marched from Jamraud to lay his claim to the throne. He left Jamraud in the last week of March, 1707, and reached Peshawar on the last day of the month. His trusted governor at Lahore, Munim Khan, had kept the troops in readiness for the long awaited war of succession and welcomed Mauzzam who was formally declared Emperor Bahadur Shah before he entered Lahore. Collecting men and money from the officials of the Mughal government in that part of the empire, he reached Delhi in the end of May. Wazir Khan, the Faujdar of Sirhind, had contributed eight lakhs. Mohammad Mauzzam left Delhi in the first week of June, took possession of treasures at Agra and moved toward dholpur to oppose Azam Shah, his rival claim ant to the throne, who along with a huge army and his very intelligent and valorous son, Bidar Bakhat, was fast marching to this place.⁴

On the way to Delhi, Muazzam, who had first hand knowledge of the *Guru's* valour and his influence in the Punjab, especially among the Sikhs, thought it appropriate to seek *Guru's* help, partly to avoid any Sikh trouble while he was busy in a civil war and partly to use the Sikhs in his cause. The *Guru's* contemporary Sainapat in Sri *Guru* Asobha says that the *Guru* was approached for help by Mauzzam's emissaries. William Irvine writes in this connection "It seems certain that Gobind Singh met Bahadur Shah at some point when the

⁴ Anand Mehta, *Krishan Biography of Guru Gobind Singh with pictures*. Lahore, s.n. 1924.

prince was on his march down the country from Lahore to Agra to contest the throne with his brother Azam Shah."

Bhai Jodh Singh, in his work *Kalghi Dhar Hulas* says that the Prince Muazzam deputed Nand Lal to persuade the *Guru* to join with his Sikhs promising at the same time on behalf of Bahadur Shah that he would look into and redress any grievance, the *Guru* might have against his house. The *Guru* read the letter and also listened to the pleadings of Bhai Nand Lal. Though the *Guru* was not sure of Bahadur Shah keeping his word once victory was his, yet he decided to offer help to him.

While reaching this decision, the *Guru* deemed to have been actuated by certain considerations. First, Bahadur Shah was a generous, munificent and extremely good-natured prince. His tolerance and amiability were in great contrast to the bigotry and hypocrisy of his predecessor, Aurangzeb. The *Guru* had himself seen that in spite of his father's instructions, he had refused to molest the *Guru* in 1695. The *Guru*, therefore, thought that if he won the battle of succession, he would be more amenable to liberal influences, especially his own. Secondly, as per law of primogeniture, which was prevalent among the Mughal rulers, Bahadur Shah being the eldest of the three living brothers (Muazzam, Azam Shah and Kam Bux) had a legitimate right to the throne of his father. Thirdly, Nand Lal held out full assurance on behalf of the Prince. The *Guru* thought in terms of influencing Bahadur Shah in the same ways as he had envisaged a possible change of heart in the case of late Emperor, Aurangzeb.

According to the author of the book *Mulakat Da Parsang*, Bahadur Shah personally called upon the *Guru* at Delhi on May 20, 1707 to persuade him to assist him in his difficulty. The *Guru* agreed and deputed Kuldipak Singh as a liaison Officer who remained with the Emperor up to the end of the battle of Jajau on June 8, 1707. He also decided to send two to three hundred Sikhs soldiers under the command of Dharam Singh to side with Bahadur Shah, as a token of his moral support.⁵

The *Guru* at Delhi first stayed in a house lying at the back of Humayun's tomb. The site is now marked by the Gurdwara Damdama Sahib. As a token of love for the so-called low caste of Delhi on account of Bhai Jaita's valorous deeds, the *Guru* shifted to the colony of Shoemakers, called Mochi Bagh. The *Guru* was so much impressed by their conduct that he changed the colony's name to Moti Bagh, the Garden of Pearls. A gurdwara stands at this place. It lies on the Ring Road now called Mahatma Gandhi Marg. When the *Guru* was in Delhi, a goldsmith supplicated for the boon of a son. He waited on the *Guru* a couple of times. One day the *Guru* was going to hunt in the neighboring jungle, the goldsmith followed him along with the Sikhs. They had not gone far, when they saw a woman leaving a newly born male child in bushes. The *Guru* asked the goldsmith to adopt the child. Later, the child was adopted by Revered Sundri, the mother of the Khalsa who named him Ajit Singh.

The armies of Azam and Bahadur Shah clashed each other on June 8, 1707 at Jajau, situated between Agra and Dholpur. The fierce fire of joint armies of Bahadur Shah and of the *Guru* wrought terrible havoc in

⁵ G.A. Natesan, *Ramanand to Ram Tirath: lives of the saints of northern India including the Sikh Gurus*. The Author. Madras, n.d. P.K. Nijhawan, *Sri Guru Gobind Geeta*. Army Educational Stores, New Delhi, 1985.

the ranks of Azam Shah and Bidar Bakht. Bidar Bakht was killed in action and immediately after, Azam also fell victim to an arrow.

Bhai Jodh Singh in Kalghidhar Hulas and Gian Singh in Twarikh *Guru* Khalsa hold that the *Guru* also reached the battlefield to assure Bahadur Shah's victory. According to Jodh Singh, the *Guru* told the prince "Have faith, you will get victory." *Guru's* word never goes in vain, the same author adds that the *Guru* pushed his horse near Azam's elephant and killed him with his arrows.

Muazzam inquired whose arrow killed Azam Shah. The arrow was pulled out of Azam's dead body. It was found to be gold-tipped arrow of the *Guru*. After the defeat and death of Azam and his son, the *Guru* left for Delhi forthwith without even meeting the Emperor.

Bahadur Shah who now became the undisputed Emperor of India honoured the Sikhs who had taken part in the battle and gave each of them precious gifts. He sent Dharam Singh to Delhi with a letter expressing his gratitude to the *Guru* for the help which he had rendered in the battle. The emperor also invited him to Agra.

The residence of the *Guru* at Delhi became the focus of the Sikhs and non-Sikhs. The *Guru* held congregation of Sikhs twice daily. He often visited Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib in Chandni Chowk, where his father, *Guru* Tegh Bahadur, was martyred on November 11, 1675. The *Guru* also paid visits to the site of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj where *Guru* Tegh Bahadur's headless body had been cremated by Lakhi Shah Lubana by setting his house on fire. The *Guru* raised a gurdwara at that spot as a memorial to the supreme sacrifice of his father.

After about a month's stay at Delhi, the *Guru* made preparation to leave for Agra in response to the invitation of the Emperor. The *Guru* made appropriate arrangements for the stay of Mata Sundri at Delhi under the protection of the Sikhs. Sahib Kaur, however, importuned him to allow her to accompany him. The *Guru* yielded to her request, ultimately.

The *Guru* on the third day after his departure from Delhi arrived at Mathura and encamped at Suraj Kund on the bank of Yamuna. He made a tour through Brindaban and visited all its famous places. Then he proceeded further on the road to Agra. He established his camp 12 Kms from Agra and 6 Kms from Bahadur Shah's camp.

Shortly after, Khan-i-Khanan, Munim Khan the Prime Minister invited the *Guru* to his palace situated within a beautiful garden. The *Guru* along with his brave Sikh soldiers reached there. Munim Khan accorded the *Guru* a hearty welcome and received him with all the honour due to his position expressing, '*Guru* ji' you have done a great favour to me by coming out to my palace to allow me a n opportunity to have your sacred glimpse. The same day the *Guru* came back and laid his camp nearby. On the fall of night, heavy rains poured. The next day, the *Guru* made a rapid survey of the area close by and selected a garden, where he and his followers decided to stay.

The life-style at the camp was that of a true Khalsa. Assemblies met twice a day where information of the Sikh creed was given. People in hordes from far and near visited the camp to receive instructions.⁶

On July 23, 1707, Bahadur Shah invited the *Guru* to his court. The *Guru* and his Sikhs moved to the royal presence. He was accompanied by his soldiers, but at the gate of the palace of the Emperor, he instructed them to stay back except one Sikh whom he took along with him to the place where the Emperor met him. The *Guru* was having an aigrette fixed to his turban and other weapons along with him. His face looked resplendent and his personality radiant. The Emperor thanked the *Guru* for his help in the battle and offered valuable presents to the *Guru*. He distributed the presents to his Sikhs as well just as he did to his other generals. He honoured the *Guru* as a revered saint and requested him to continue to lend his company frequently. The *Guru* was accompanied by two to three hundred horsemen and some more Sikhs on foot. The Emperor, in token of his respect for the *Guru*, presented a robe of honour including a jeweled scarf, a Dhukh Dhukhi, and an aigrette worth sixty thousand rupees. The *Guru* did not, however, put it on his person there as it was the custom, but asked one of his Sikhs to carry it to his camp. The Emperor did not mind this demeanor of the *Guru*, for he treated him as a holy saint and not as his servant or dependent.

The Sikh records, more or less, are definite that this was the object for the consummation of which, the *Guru* joined Bahadur Shah. This thing is also quite clear from the *Guru's* Hukam Nama (fiat) of October 2, 1707, wherein it is written 'old negotiations that had brought him so far, were then in progress and he soon expected to return to the Punjab. But it appears that the negotiations had not yet culminated into any agreement. It appears that the Emperor started for Rajputana (12th November, 1707), the *Guru* had to accompany him. The Emperor, however, avoided the *Guru* under one pretext or the other. Soon after, the *Guru* discovered that his efforts had failed and the Emperor was not sincere in his overtures. He then commissioned Banda to achieve by force what he had failed to accomplish only on appeal to justice.

The *Guru* expired on 7th October, 1708 as a result of the wound caused by stabbing of the *Guru* by a certain Pathan. Various views have been expressed with regard to the circumstances of the assassination of *Guru* Bhai Sukha Singh in his *Gur Bilas* states two Pathan youths, who were the sons of Painsa Khan whom *Guru* Hargobind had killed in the battle of Kartarpur came to the *Guru*. One day the *Guru* gave one of them the sword which had been presented to him and said that a man who had sword in his hand and saw enemy of his father or grandfather before his eyes and yet failed to avenge the wrong had been born in vain. The youngman hesitated; but after a few days when he went to see the *Guru* he was again aroused. He struck the *Guru*, his third blow penetrated into the *Guru's* belly. Upon this there was a row and a Sikh came and cut off the Pathan's head. The wound was stitched up' but it could not be healed causing ultimately the death of the *Guru*.⁷

⁶ Pritam Singh *Five Stories from Guru Gobind Singh's life*. National Book Trust, New Delhi, 2008.

⁷ Parkash Singh, *The Sikh Gurus and the temple of bread*. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. Amritsar, 1965.