



The Babbar Akalis of Hoshiarpur

Ms. Gurinder Kaur

(Research Scholar) S.B.B.S. University, Khiala (Jalandhar) Ph. 9915072042

E.Mail: gurinderkaur754@gmail.com

Abstract: In India's struggle for independence, the freedom fighters of Hoshiarpur played a very significant role. The Hoshiarpur district was a hub of Ghadarities and Babbar Akalis. The Babbar Akalis in Punjab emerge basically as a reaction to the Nankana Sahib Tragedy. The present study details the origin of Babbar Akalis and the extent of their activities in the Hoshiarpur district. The idea of Babbar Akali Movement emerged from the deliberation of Sikh Education Conference held on 19th to 21st of March 1921 A.D. at Hoshiarpur. The Chakarvarti Jatha was organised at Rurka Kalan by Kishan Singh Gargajj. Later on Babbar Akali evolved from the Chakarvarti Jatha in 1922 A.D. The Babbar Akali mainly eliminated the sycophants (jholi-chuks) of the British Government. It is interesting to note the participation of women in this movement. This study also gives information on the Babbar Akali conspiracy trial cases. The convictions and sentences of the Babbar Akalis are given in the table no. 1 and 2.

Keywords: Babbar Akali, Women, Independence, Significant role, Chakarvarti Jatha, Sycophants (Jholi-Chuks).

In the middle of 19th century and in the opening decades of the 20th century many revolutionary Movements in Punjab were engaged in India's struggle for freedom. The first important movement in Punjab was the Namdhari movement, which was founded by Baba Balak Singh in 1857. At very outset the aim of Namdhari movement was socio-religious reforms, but subsequently it turned rebellious and came into direct confrontation with British during the time period of Bhai Maharaj Singh (Nihal Singh).¹ The next freedom movement was the Ghadar Movement. It was organised in U.S.A. by LaLa Hardyal at San Francisco in 1913. In the first week of October 1914, Ghadrities began to reach India. Thus, the centre of Ghadrities activities shifted to India from San Francisco.² But the Ghadrities newspapers continued to be published from the U.S.A. The Ghadrities divided their areas and elected District workers. Bhai Jawand Singh Nangal was elected as a District worker of Hoshiarpur.³ The Ghadarities also supported the Babbar Akali Movement. The Ghadrities published the "Babbar Gunj" in June 1925 from the Yugantar Ashram (U.S.A.).⁴

The Babbar Akali Movement originated from Bist Jalandhar Doab. A Sikh Educational Conference was held on March 19, 20, 21, 1921 at Hoshiarpur. From the

¹ Ahluwalia, M.A., Bhai Maharaj Singh, Patiala, Punjabi University, 1972, p.54

² Kumar Rakesh, Ghadar Party da Sahit (in punjabi), Samana, Sangam Publication, (2016), p.31

³ Kumar Rakesh, op.cit, p. 88.

⁴ Kumar Rakesh, op.cit, p.93.

deliberations of this conference the idea for launching the Babbar Akali Movement emerged.⁵ On 25 March 1921 the main leaders held a separate meeting to take revenge of Nankana Sahib Tragedy. The main Akali leaders Master Mota Singh, Bhai Kishan Singh, Amar Singh, Bijla Singh, Gurbachan Singh, Watan Singh, Chanchal Singh, Narian Singh, Tota Singh, Ganda Singh, and Bela Singh attended this meeting. Out of these Shankar Singh, Gurbachan Singh, and Watan Singh belonged to Hoshiarur District.⁶ Kishan Singh Gargaj knew that the people's support was essential. As a result, he established the Chakarvati Jatha in November 1921 at a Diwan of Rurka Kalan in Jalandhar. This Jatha further divided into two Jathas, one jatha was under Kishan Singh, Sunder Singh Babbar Makhsuspuri, and Karam Singh Jhingan and second jatha was under Karam Singh Daulatpur and Asa Singh.⁷ In August 1922, a meeting held in the hut of Sant Thakur Singh Gajowal, in which Chakarvati Jatha was renamed as Babbar Akali Jatha.⁸

The Babbar Akalis had already decided to take revenge of the Nankana Sahib Tragedy. The two British officers Deputy Commissioner King and Police Captain Baring, Bedi Kartar Singh, Mahant Basant Das Manak, Mahant Deva Das, Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia had a hand in crushing the Nankana Sahib Morcha. Later, both of British officers were transferred from Nankana Sahib to Lahore.⁹ Ganda Singh and Bela Singh went to Lahore to kill the British officers, but Sadhu (worker of Akali Newspaper) passed on the information of this plan to the Government.¹⁰ Due to the treachery of Sadhu Singh, Ganda Singh and Bela Singh were arrested. This resulted in the First Akali Conspiracy Case Trial No.1 which began in 1922.¹¹ During the Trial Ganda Singh confessed about his plan. After the investigation, the police submitted the challan in the court of Tota Singh Pisohri, Tara Singh, Bhai Chanchal Singh, Amar Singh, Narian Singh, Bela Singh, Granthi Prem Singh from Gurdwara Chumhla Sahib Lahore. Master Mota Singh, Bhai Kishan Singh, Bijla Singh, Amar Singh, Gurbachan Singh of village Ambala, District Hoshiarpur and Watan Singh of village Kahri sagri, District Hoshiarpur were declared fugitives in this case.¹²

The Britishers were scared to see the rising strength of Babbar Akali. The three Districts, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, and Kuprthala, became strong hold of Babbar Akalis. The Police had to seek the help of the army in dealing with the Babbar Akalis. It was because of the Babbar Akalis that the Government did not earn even a single penny between 1921 and 1923 from the bid of Fruit trees of Jamun and Mango.¹³

⁵ Babbar, Sunder Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar (in Punjabi), Amritsar, Singh Brothers, (2003), p.39.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mohan, Kamlesh, The Babbar Akali Movement And Its Ideology, in Punjab And The Freedom Struggle by Singh, Parm Bakshish, Verma, Devinder Kumar edi., Patiala, Punjabi University, (1998), pp.271-272

⁸ Ibid., p.271.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Milkha, Nijjar Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar da Ithass (in punjabi), New Delhi, Navyug Publishers, (2010), pp.34,35.

¹¹ Majitha, Ram Singh, Hindustan di Ajadi di Ladai vich Punjab (in punjabi), Moga, Punjab State Freedom Fighters Organisation, 1988, p.293

¹² Milkha, Nijjar Singh, op.cit, pp.36-37.

¹³ Milkha, Nijjar Singh, op.cit, pp.132,133.

The British announced reward for the arrest of Babbar Akalis and raids were conducted in the villages and arrest begun to occur. As a result, on June 4, 1924, the Babbar Akali Conspiracy case Trial No-2 was started. From 5th June, 1924, the court started taking statements of Government witnesses. Out of this one witness Kartar Singh S/O Jawala Singh, village Budobadiya, District Hoshiarpur belonged to Hoshiarpur District.¹⁴ In this case 91 people were convicted. Out of which 5 were awarded death sentence, 11 were sentenced to life imprisonment, 15 were seven year prison term, 2 were six year prison term, 16 were five years prison term, 5 were four years prison term, 3 were predeceased during trial, and 34 were acquitted. Out of 91, 37 Babbar Akalis belonged to Hoshiarpur.¹⁵ The detail of Babbar Akalis of Hoshiarpur, who were convicted in this case, is given in the table no.1. The Babbar Akalis of Hoshiarpur District, Sundar Singh of village Makhsuspur, Baba Dalip Singh of village Sahndra, and Dalipa of village Dhamian, did not give their statements in the court.¹⁶

In 1925 the convicts of Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case Trial No-2 appealed in the Lahore High court. The hearing of this case began in December 1925 and verdict was announced on January 19, 1926.¹⁷ In this case some punishments were extended while some convict were punished again. The detail of Babbar Akalis of Hoshiarpur who were convicted in this case, is given in table no.2

The Babbar Akali women

In the Babbar Akali Movement of village Rurki Khas, District Hoshiarpur, patriotic women like Mata Dharam Kaur, Bibi Sant Kaur, Bibi Aas kaur, Bibi Pritam Kaur W/O Misteri Gonda Singh (to secure Babbar Akali S. Ratan Singh in her house, she was convicted for 2 years imprisonment, after appeal in high court she was release after 6 months), Mata Sant Kaur W/O Ishar Singh, Bibi Karam Kaur W/O Nambardar Ishar Singh took part and made great sacrifices for the freedom.¹⁸

Conclusion: The district of Hoshiarpur contributed substantially in this movement. Out of 91 Babbar Akali, 37 belonged to this District. In order to suppress this movement the government came upon Babbar Akalis harshly. They announced rewards on them, arrested them, put them on trials and sentenced them. Dalipa of village Dhamian, District Hoshiarpur was hanged. The women of the Babbar Akalis of Hoshiarpur also participated in this movement. Mata Dharam Kaur, Bibi Sant Kaur, Bibi Aas kaur, Bibi Pritam Kaur, Mata Sant Kaur W/O Ishar Singh, and Bibi Karam Kaur assisted the Babbar Akalis in many ways. As long as the Babbar Akalis remained active, the government ceased to have its free and smooth run in the region.

¹⁴ Milkha,Nijjar Singh, op.cit, p.395.

¹⁵ Majitha,Ram Singh, op.cit, pp.300-304.

¹⁶Milkha,Nijjar Singh, op.cit, p.416.

¹⁷ Milkha,Nijjar Singh, op.cit, p.417.

¹⁸ Bombeli Vijay and Kangniwal Chranji Lal, Gumnam Desh Bhagta Da Pind Rurki Khas (in Punjabi), Jalandhar, Punj aab Parkashan, (2014), pp.101-104.

Table No.1

Sr. No	Convict No.	Name	Father Name	Age	Village	sentence
1	76	Dalipa	Labh Singh	18	Dhamian	Death
2	30	Sunder Singh	Natha Singh	35	Makhsuspura	Life imprisonment
3	36	Ratan Singh	Hajara Singh	24	Singriwala	Life imprisonment
4	39	Sant Thakur Singh	Gurmukh Singh	45	Mandiala	Life imprisonment
5	47	Surjan Singh	Hamir Singh	50	Haiatpur Rurki	Life imprisonment
6	48	Dharam Singh	Soba Singh	50	Haiatpur Rurki	Life imprisonment
7	49	Babu Dalip Singh	Ishar Singh	22	Dhamian Kalan	Life imprisonment
8	50	Piyara Singh	Puran Singh	26	Dhamian Kalan	Life imprisonment
9	37	Duman Singh	Munshi Ram	35	Pandori Mehtma	Seven year prison term
10	40	Gurbachan Singh	Dalip Singh	23	Sahndra	Seven year prison term
11	43	Hari Singh	Surjan Singh	28	Jassowal	Seven year prison term
12	45	Hardit Singh	Munsha Singh	30	Jassowal	Seven year prison term
13	58	Giani Kartar Singh	Surjan Singh	40	Gondpur	Seven year prison term
14	56	Amar Singh	Basant Singh	31	Rajowal	Six year prison term
15	33	Sardool Singh	Banta Singh	26	Budobadiya	Five year prison term
16	91	Chaja Singh	Ishar Singh	35	Chanasu	Five year prison term
17	35	Bhagwan Singh	Dula Singh	50	Fatehpur Kothi	Four year prison term
18	38	Sham Singh	Mehar Singh	50	Rehsiwal	Four year prison term
19	41	Labh Singh	Suba Singh	38	Jassowal	Four year prison term
20	44	Charan Singh	Khushal Singh	40	Jassowal	Four year prison term
21	79	Banta Singh	Jaimal Singh	35	Bhebalpur	Four year prison term
22	31	Wariam Singh	Jaimal Singh	70	Kot Fatuhi	Predeceased during trial
23	32	Sundar	Nand Ram		Kot Fatuhi	Acquitted
24	34	Dalel Singh	Deviya	32	Mananhana	Acquitted
25	42	Karam Singh	BhalaSingh	25	Jassowal	Acquitted
26	46	Hari Singh khanda	Basant Singh	24	Chela	Acquitted

27	60	Batan Singh	Deva Singh	25	Ganeshpur Bharta	Acquitted
28	61	Thakur Singh	Maiya Singh	29	Ganeshpur Bharta	Acquitted
29	65	Bawa Singh	Bhula Singh	30	Kolgarh	Acquitted
30	66	Udam Singh	Basakha Singh	30	Kolgarh	Acquitted
31	67	Harnam Singh	Rla Singh	30	Garh Kanugoa	Acquitted
32	68	Dalip Singh	Dit Singh	70	Shadra	Acquitted
33	82	Dhana Singh	Nihal Singh	40	Sahdra	Acquitted
34	83	Sundar Singh	Deva Singh	70	Kulewal	Acquitted
35	84	Harbans Singh	Khem Singh	22	Sarhala Khurd	Acquitted
36	85	Milkha Singh	Utam Singh	25	Moran Wali	Acquitted
37	88	Beant Singh	Chanda Singh	25	Nangal Kalan	Acquitted

Source:-Nijjar Milkha Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar Da Ithass(in punjabi), New Delhi, Navyug Publishers, (2010), p.418.

Table No.2

Name	Village	Sentence
Labh Singh	Jassowal	From five year imprisonment to life imprisonment
Giani Kartar Singh	Gondpur	From seven year imprisonment to life imprisonment
Chaja Singh	Chansu	From five year imprisonment to life imprisonment
Bhagwan Singh	Fatehpur Kothi	From four year imprisonment to seven year imprisonment
Sardool Singh	Badobadiya	From five year imprisonment to acquitted
Rattan Singh	Singhriwala	From life imprisonment to acquitted
Sham Singh	Rehsiwal	From four year imprisonment to acquitted
Sant Faqir Singh	Jassowal	From four year imprisonment to acquitted
Karam Singh	Jassowal	Sentenced to interned acquittal to acquitted

Source:-Nijjar Milkha Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar Da Ithass(in punjabi), New Delhi, Navyug Publishers, (2010), p.418.

References

1. Ahluwalia, M.A., Bhai Maharaj Singh, Patiala, Punjabi University, 1972.
2. Babbar, Sunder Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar (in Punjabi), Amritsar, Singh Brothers, 2003.
3. Bombeli Vijay and Kangniwal Chranji Lal, Gumnam Desh Bhagta Da Pind Rurki Khas, Jalandhar, Punj aab Parkashan, 2014.
4. Kumar Rakesh, Ghadar Party da Sahit, Samana, Sangam Publication, 2016.
5. Majitha, Ram Singh, Hindustan di Ajadi di Ladai vich Punjab, Moga, Punjab State Freedom Fighters Organisation, 1988.
6. Milkha, Nijjar Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar da Ithass, New Delhi, Navyug Publishers, 2010.
7. Mohan, Kamlesh, The Babbar Akali Movement And Its Ideology, in Punjab And The Freedom Struggle by Singh, Parm Bakshish, Verma, Devinder Kumar edi., Patiala, Punjabi University, 1998.