

TAKHAT SRI DAM DAMA SAHIB: ESTABLISHMENT AND ROLE IN SIKH HISTORY

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The Sikh tradition holds that Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo was established by Guru Gobind Singh. Association of the Sikh Gurus with this place commenced with the visit of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith. However, after the battle of *Khidrane-di-dhab* (Mukatsar), Guru Gobind Singh, on the request of Chaudari Dalla, arrived at Talwandi Sabo in January 1706 C.E. Available historical records testify his sojourn at this place which was of little more than nine months. This period of respite was put to the best possible use by the Tenth Master in laying an enduring foundation of Sikhism not only in the region of Malwa but also for the whole of Sikh world. Nevertheless, present attempt is to re-count and deliberate on some of the most significant events that took place during this phase of his life and were of far reaching consequences for the future Sikh history.

There were many places in the undivided Punjab bearing the name Talwandi. But in Sikh history only two Talwandis are significant. One is Talwandi Rai Bhoi (Nankana Sahib, Pakistan) the birth place of Guru Nanak. Second is Talwandi Sabo, popularly known in the Sikh history as Damdama Sahib or Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib about which we are presently concerned.¹

It is said that the name Talwandi is generally given to a portion of land which happens to be fertile. According to the author of *Gur-Pad Prem Parkash*, the literal meanings of the word Talwandi are vanisher of sorrows (*Bhum Dukh Khandi*).² However, two traditions are current about the etymology of the word Sabo-ki-Talwandi or Talwandi sabo. According to one tradition, around

¹ Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, Languages Department Punjab, Patiala, 1990, p. 581; Giani Balwant Singh, Kotha Guru, *Sri Damdama Guru ki Kanshi*, Giani Kaur Singh Sahitya Shashtri Sadan, Kotha Guru (hereafter Balwant Singh) Bathinda, 1995, p. 12.

² ਜਸ ਨਾਮ ਪ੍ਰਥਮਹਿ ਤਲਵੰਡੀ: ਸਾਬੋ ਕੀ ਸੁ ਭੂਮਿ ਦੁਖ ਖੰਡੀ: Baba Sumer Singh, *Sri Gur-pad Prem Parkash* (ed.) Dr. Achar Singh Kahlon, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2000, p. 440; Visakha Singh, *Malwas Itihas*, Gurmat Parcharak Sabha Tihara (Kishanpur Kalan), 1954, 3 vols, Vol. I, Introduction pp. 13 and 114; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, p. 12.

the middle of twelfth century, Hindu Gujars were in possession of this region. During the reign of Shamasuddin Iltumish (1210-36 AD), they adopted Islam as their creed and in lieu of this secured the grant of 48 villages. Their *Chudhri's* (headman) only scion named Sabo or Sahabo secured the *chaudhrat* (headmanship) of these villages, after the death of her father. She put herself at Talwandi and made it a centre of her activities. Thus in due course this village Talwandi came to be known as Sabo-ki-Talwandi.³ According to the second tradition, Sabo, the son of Hular, was a famed warrior of Talwandi. Hular was sixth descendant of 'Brar'. During the battle of Panipat (20th April, 1526 C.E.) Babur was immensely helped by Sabo with men and material. After becoming the emperor of Hindustan, Babur conferred the grant of Lakhi Jangal-Bathinda region on the Sidhu-Brars.⁴ Talwandi fell into the share of Sabo who made it his headquarter. Since then, it came to be known as Sabo-ki-Talwandi.⁵ Keeping in view the historical process, the first tradition appears to be untenable, for we do not find any evidence about its continuity till the times of the Mughal rule when Sabo, an ancestor of *Rai Dalla* became the *chaudri* of this region. Also, it does not corroborate either with the Sikh history and tradition or with the history of the Sidhu-Brars.⁶

However, after the cremation of the forty *muktas* (martyrs) who laid down their lives while fighting with the Mughal forces led by Wazir Khan, the *faujdar* of Sirhind, at Khidrane-di-dabh, on 30th Poh, Magh vadi 10, 1762 BK (29th December, 1705 C.E.), the Guru set forth towards Talwandi Sabo.⁷ A messenger of Rai Dalla

³ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals (1206-1526)*, Har Anand, New Delhi 2011, p. 39; Visakha Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 1 & 105; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, p. 4; Gurdwara Gazette, Nov. 1965, p. 85.

⁴ The Tract broadly covered by the present districts of Faridkot and Bathinda was arid and sparsely populated during the medieval period. In the Mughal records it was mentioned as *Lakhi Jangal*: Saki Mustad Khan, *Mausir-E-Alamgiri*, (Pb. tr. by Darshan Singh Awara, (ed.) Fauja Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala 1998, p. 405; Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi university, Patiala, 1975, p. 32; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, p. 5; *Malwa Desh Rattan di Sakhi Polhi*, Bhai Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar 2009, Sakhi No. I, (hereafter *Sakhi Pothi*).

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

⁶ At the death of Sabo, his son Mango secured the title of *Malik* from Sher Shah Suri. Mango's son Sato, his grand son Bhol and his great grand son Sadhu continued to enjoy this rank. However, Akbar the Great conferred the title of '*Rai*' on Razada, son and successor of Sadhu. And, his successors: Akal, Salem Shah and Dalla continued to enjoy this rank: Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 5-7.

⁷ Gurmukh Singh, *Giani Garja Singh di Itihasik Khoj*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2010, p. 116; Bhai Sarup Singh Kaushish, *Guru Kian Sakian* (ed.), Piara Singh Padam, Singh Brothers, Amritsar 2008, pp. 173-74. *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi Nos. 53 and 55, pp.

handed over his letter to the Guru at village Pakka Kalan. Rai Dalla has requested the Guru to proceed immediately towards Talwandi Sabo. After two days, the Guru left the place. Retinue of the Guru consisted of fourteen hundred persons. Five hundred of them were on horseback while nine hundred were foot soldiers. Many of them were on the pay roll.⁸ At village Chhateana, the contingents belonging to a faction of the Brars refused to move ahead and demanded their wages. They were paid at the rate of eight *anas* per *sawar* (horseman), and four *anas* per *piada* (foot soldier).⁹ But, Dan Singh did not accept the wages and requested the Guru to grant him the boon of *Sikhi*. He was blessed and initiated into the Khalsa Brotherhood. However, at Bangi Nihal Singh Wala, Rai Dalla alongwith his four hundred men received the Guru and escorted him to Talwandi Sabo.¹⁰

On arriving at a place now called Manji Sahib, the Guru saluted it. And on his behest Purohit Daya Singh cleared the *Varmi* (mount raised by white ants). Upon its clearance, a tent was pitched and a cot was placed beneath it. Thereupon, the Guru untied his waistband, took off his weapons and while resting on it uttered, "It is akin to Anandpuri Damdama".¹¹ It must be noted here that, association of the Sikh Gurus with this region particularly Talwandi Sabo was not altogether new. For instance, Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith had visited this place in 1515 C.E. During his short stay he put up himself where now

52,54; Giani Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash*, Language Department Punjab, Patiala, 1987, p. 312. *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, III, p. 136; G.S. Nayer and Sukhdial Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh: Yatra Asthan, Parampravan Ate Yaad Chin*, Punjabi University, Patiala 1989, p. 136.

⁸ Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, p. 435; *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi No. 67, pp. 61-62; Giani Gian Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, Language Department Punjab, Patiala 1979, Pt. I, p. 1058; *Guru Kian Sakhian*, p. 180.

⁹ Almost all the leaders of the various factions of the Sidhu-Brars: *Dul-ke-Brars*; *Paur-ke-Brar*, *Bhaike*, *Jaidke* etc. were the followers of the Guru, but due to their mutual rivalries, they were not united. Therefore, the contingents of Kapur Singh and Dan Singh were not inclined to enter into the domain of Rai Dalla which commenced from the boundaries of village Chhattiana. Gurdwara *Gupatsar* stands to commemorate this event: Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 434-35; Bhai Rattan Singh Bangu, *Sri Gur Panth Parkash* (ed.) Jit Singh Sital, S.G.P.C. Amritsar 1994, p. 113; Giani Gian Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, pp. 1058-59, *Sakhi Pothi*; Sakhi Nos 67-69; pp. 61-67.

¹⁰ Giani Gian Singh, *Ibid*, p. 1063; Bawa, Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, p. 440; G.S. Nayer & Sukhdial Singh, *Ibid*, p. 115; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, p. 22.

¹¹ Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, p. 441; *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi No. 78, p. 67; Giani Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, p. 1063; *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi Nov. 98, pp. 180-81; *Gardwava Gazette*, Nov 1965, p. 86.

stands Gurdwara Nanaksar.¹² Salem Shah, the father of Rai Dalla, was initiated into Sikhism by Guru Hargobind. In the battle of Mehraj (1630-31 C.E.), Guru Hargobind was helped with men and material by Salem Shah and Rai Jodh.¹³ In *Guru Kian Sakhian* we find mention about Guru Har Rai's visit to this place too.¹⁴ Guru Tegh Bahadur visited this region twice. And, during his second Malwa tour, he spent nearly half a month at Talwandi Sabo and initiated several projects, besides prophesying the future role of the place in the Sikh history. However, during this visit, the young Gobind Rai too was in his entourage.¹⁵ In 1693 C.E. Guru Gobind Rai visited almost all the places of Malwa which has earlier been visited by Guru Tegh Bahadur, including Talwandi Sabo during his second Malwa tour.¹⁶ Thus, this was Guru Gobind Singh's third visit to this place.¹⁷

In this way before choosing this place for settlement, he was quite familiar with its geographical as well as strategical position. Furthermore, it speaks of his political sagacity too. For example, besides being arid and forest land, the region was under the *subedari* of Multan, therefore, it was not easily accessible to the Mughal forces. It must be remembered, that, when Wazir Khan, decided not to pursue the Guru farther than Khidrane-di-Dhabh and returned to Sirhind, neither he was unaware about the question of jurisdiction nor the Guru who was expeditiously heading towards this fastness.¹⁸

However, at Damdama Sahib, the Guru planned to complete Panthic agenda to consolidate the foundation of Sikhism not only in the region of Malwa but also for the whole Sikh world. Among

¹² Vasakha Singh, *Ibid*, p. 106; *Gurdwara Gazette*, Nov 1965, p. 85; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 1,19.

¹³ Macauliffe, *Ibid*, IV, pp. 179-188; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, p. 6; Giani Gian Singh, *Tawarika Guru Khalsa*, pp. 547-558, 1028; *Panth Parkash*, pp. 143-44.

¹⁴ *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi No. 99, p. 182.

¹⁵ *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi Nos, 1,4, 18-20, pp. 22-26, 32-33; Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Ibid*, pp. 82, 85, 88, F.N. 17, 89, F.N. 26; Macauliff, *Ibid*, IV, p. 340; Tirlachan Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Prophet and Martyr* (A Biography). Delhi Gurdwara Parbandak Committee, Delhi 1967, p. 282; *Guru Kian Sakhia*, Sakhi Nos. 22, 98-99; pp. 69-70, 181-82.

¹⁶ *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi No 50, pp. 107-8.

¹⁷ First in 1673-74, Second in 1693 and Third in 1705-6.

¹⁸ According *Muasir-E-Alamgiri*, Zabardast Khan was the faujdar of *Lakhi Jangal*. But he was transferred and in his place the charge of faujdari was given to Muhammad Muijuddin who was the subedar of Multan and Thata; p. 405; Gurmukh Singh, *Ibid*, p. 117; *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi No. 99, p. 182; Giani Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash*, p. 310; *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa I*, p. 1075; Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Ibid*, p. 32; *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi No. 53, pp. 52-53.

the measures adopted to strengthen Sikhism in this part of Punjab was the administration of *Kande-di-Pahul* not only to important families of this region which had long been associated with the Sikh Gurus, but to the devotees and their accompanist who hailed from far off places to have his *darshan* and seek blessings. In fact in his daily sermon at Damdama Sahib and elsewhere, the Guru used to emphasize on the importance of taking *Khande-di-Pahul*. Also, there are many references in the Sikh literature to the exhortation of the Guru to the Sangat as to the individuals to be initiated into the Khalsa Brotherhood even during his journey to Talwandi Sabo. And, a considerable number people were initiated before the celebration of Baisakhi at Damdama Sahib in 1706 C.E.¹⁹

On the Baisakhi of 1706 C.E. at Damdama Sahib, the gathering like the Baisakhi of 1699 C.E. at Anandpur, was singular and the number of people who were initiated into Sikhism on this memorable event was quite large. Important families of the region who took *pahul* included: Bahi Takhtu Singh, Bahi Bakhtu Singh, Bhai Ram Singh, Bhai Fateh Singh (Chakanwale), Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Param Singh (Bhai Rupe ke), Bhai Ram Singh, Bhai Tilok Singh (Phul ke), Bhai Dayal Singh (Bhucho) Sodhis of Kotha Guru including Abhai Singh, son of Sodhi Klanwal Nain etc.²⁰ After Anandpur Sahib it was the first occasion, when the Sikhs were baptised in such a large number in the open *diwan* in a single day²¹ and the number of converts, according to Trumpp swelled to one lakh twenty thousands.²²

On this historic day (Baisakhi of 1706 C.E.), the Guru undertook a project for the preparation of an authentic recension of the Adi Granth. Here, one may ask, if there was no *Pothi* of Gurbani with the Sikh Gurus from 1634 C.E., when Guru Hargobind left Kartarpur for Kirtapur till 1706 A.D., when Guru Gobind Singh

¹⁹ For instance, Ghoghniyan Singh (Bhagta Bhai), Dan Singh Brar and his sons, Behmi Fakir (Ajmer Singh), Rangi Singh, Ghumi Singh, Zorard Gurbaksh Singh (Kot Bhai), Dal Singh Brar along with one hundred persons. These examples are multiple: *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi Nos. 41, 67, 69, 71, 102, pp. 45, 62-62, 64, 88; Giani Gian Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, I, pp. 1027-84; Maculiffe, *Ibid*, V, p. 223; Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Ibid*, p. 114; Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, p. 4557 and 58.

²⁰ Rattan Singh Bangu, *Ibid*, p. 115; Karam Singh Historian, *Baba Ala Singh*, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana 2006, pp. 28-29; Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, p. 444; Gurmukh Singh; *Ibid*, p. 117; Sakhi Pothi, Sakhi No. 102, pp. 85-86.

²¹ Viasakhi Singh, *Ibid*, p. 106.

²² Ernest Trumpp, *The Adi Granth or The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi 2010, p. xcii, FN. 3; CF. Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People (1469-19778)*, World Sikh University Press, 1979, p. 314.

prepared final standard recession. If the answer is in affirmative, then, the question arises, how the religious ceremonies, i.e. recitation and exposition of Gurbani were being performed during this long period. This is not the case; the Gurus and the Sikh Sangats do possess copies of Adi Granth prepared by Guru Arjan Dev in 1604 C.E. For instance, Guru Har Rai gave a copy of (Guru) Granth Sahib to Ram Rai before his demise. This copy did not contain extra verses other than the Adi Granth of 1604 C.E.²³ We also know for certain that Bhai Mani Singh used to write *Pothis/Gutkas* of Gurbani at Anandpur Sahib, besides performing *Katha*.²⁴ Not only this, we find mention in the historical literature about the existence of Adi Granth which contained the Bani of Guru Tegh Bahadur though not strictly according to the standard version.²⁵ Thus, the existence of the Granth with the Gurus and the Sikh Sangats can't be denied. But the problem which the Sikh world was facing at that time was of the authenticity of the text. For example *Birs/Pothis* in circulation, particularly written between 1675 C.E.-1705 C.E. were not in conformity with the text of Adi Granth of Guru Arjan Dev. To name a few; these texts

²³ This *Bir* is said to have been prepared by Guru Har Rai to be sent to Delhi with Baba Ram Rai. This copy was compared with the Granth of the Fifth Guru and does not contain the Bani of Guru Tegh Bahadur. However, later on some one inserted a Shabad attributed to Miran Bai but informed the reader that "*Miran Bai Ka Shabd Panjven Mahale Ke Granth Nahi*": Prof. Sahib Singh, *Ad Bir Bare*, Language Department Punjab, Patiala, 1999, p. 116; Sewa Singh, *Shahid Bilas Bhai Mani Singh*, Punjabi Sahit Akademi Ludhiana, 2007, (hereafter *Shahid Bilas*), p. 57.

²⁴ ਆਯੋ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਕੇ, ਮਨੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੁਧਿਮਾਨ
ਸਤ੍ਰੁਹ ਸੈ ਨੌਂ ਬੀਸ ਮੈਂ, ਚੇਤ੍ਰ ਨਾਮ ਪਛਾਨ।੩੦੧
ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਗੁਰੂ ਢਿਗ, ਚੱਕ ਨਾਨਕੀ ਆਹਿ
ਬਾਣੀ ਪੜ੍ਹੈ, ਬਾਣੀ ਸੁਣੈ, ਬਾਣੀ ਲਿਖੇ ਲਿਖਾਇ।੩੧।੫੬
ਜੇਠਾ ਮਨੀਆ ਆਇ ਸਿਖ, ਰਹੇ ਦਸਮ ਗੁਰ ਪਾਸ।
.....।੩੯੧
ਆਯੂ ਪੈਤੀ ਬਰਖ ਕੀ, ਮਨੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਕੀ ਆਹਿ।
ਲਿਖੇ ਲਿਖਾਇ ਪੋਥੀਆਂ, ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਬਹੁ ਓਤਸਾਹਿ।੪੦੧
.....
ਲਿਖ ਲਿਖ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਰੇ ਪੋਥੀਆਂ ਤਿਆਰ ਇਹ।
ਮਨੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਗੁਰ ਦਸਮ ਢਿਗ, ਥੇ ਪੁਰੀ ਬੀਚ ਅਨੰਦ
.....।੭੮।
ਕਥਾ ਰੋਜ ਗੁਰ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਕੀ, ਸੰਗਤ ਤਾਈ ਸੁਨਾਇ

..... [79] *Shahid Bilas* pp. 56,57,64.

²⁵ A copy of Granth Sahib bearing the date 1732 B.K. (1675 C.E.) lying at Dacca has been reported by G.B. Singh and another copy at Patna Sahib bearing the date 1748B.K. (1691 C.E.), containing the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur in their proper places has been reported by Teja Singh and Ganda Singh in, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Punjabi University Patiala, 1989, P. 71; G.B.Singh, "Sikh Relics in Eastern Bengal", *The Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. I, pt I, April 1967, p. 78.

contained *Kachi-bani*, differed in their contents about liturgical hymns and there was no fixed order for the writings of Guru Tegh Bahadur.²⁶ Therefore, the Guru felt a dire need to prepare an authentic text for posterity.

However, for this great enterprise, a special tent was pitched at Damdama Sahib and writing material (paper, ink, reed-pens) were collected. In fact before the commencement of this project, Guru Sahib himself used to make reed-pens daily. Task of writing was entrusted to Bhai Mani Singh while Baba Dip Singh was asked to assist him. The *Bir* was completed in four months and the recession came to be known as: *Dasven Patshah Ka Granth or Damdami Bir*. According to Bhai Khan Singh Nabha, the number of *Shabd*, *Saloks* and *Pauris* in this recession were 5867, and the same was later on invested with the status of eternal Guru at Nanded in Oct. 1708 C.E.²⁷ Thus the *Damdami Bir* of Granth Sahib was elevated to a status for above all the other recensions of the Granth Sahib including Dasam Granth. It has since then been known as Guru Granth Sahib.

During the process of re-editing of Granth Sahib, the Guru expunged certain unauthorized (*faltu Banis*) which had crept into some of the manuscripts written prior to 1706 C.E. These included following compositions: *Salok Jit Dar Mohmada* (3 Soloks); *Gosti Malar Nall, Bai Atish* (16 Saloks); *Ratan Mala* (25 Saloks); Miran Bai's Song in raga Maru; an extra Saloka of Tarlochan in raga Gujri (*Naunidhi Parsee*); an extra song of Namdev (*Sat Samund ja ka*) in raga Dhanasari; a couplet of Kabir (*Dhari Ambari...* at the beginning of *Var Satt*) in raga Gauri; *Hakikat Rah Raje Shiv Nabh Ki; Siahi Ki Bidi; Sakhi Mohala 5* (five dos and don'ts for the Sikhs) as found in *Pothi Bahowal* and some other Granths; death dates of Sikh Gurus and *Nasiatnama, Hajirnama* and *Painti Akhri* as found in some *Gutkas*. In addition to it, some hymns were re-adjusted while some standardized. For example, Saloka 54, *Bal hua Bandan Chhutta* as found attributed to Mahalla 10th in some *Birs*, was standardized as part of Salokas of 9th Mahalla; 3 Saloks in *Basant Ki Var* by Mahalla 5th (G.G.S page 1193) settled in proper place as found written under Mahalla 1st at the end in some manuscripts; 9th Guru's hymns in raga

²⁶ Prof. Sahib Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 106-117, 127-136; Vasakha Singh, *Ibid*, p. 106; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, p. 28.

²⁷ Bhai Khan Singh Nabha, *Ibid*, pp. 437 & 620 C.H. Loetilin, *The Sikhs and their scriptures*, Lukhnow (U.P.), 1964, p. 36; Teja Singh and Ganda Singh *Ibid*, pp. 71-72, Kapur Singh, *Parasarprasna: The Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh* (eds.) Piar Singh and Madanjit Kaur, G.N.D.U. Amritsar 2001, p. 163.

Jaijavanti were settled under raga 31st as they were found to be mixed with and written under raga Jaitsari or separate raga (12-13) after Jaitsari raga in many *Birs*; settled the *Dhunis* at the start of vars missing in some manuscripts; *Raag Mala* was settled at the end of standardized *Bir* as it was noted in *Kartarpuri Bir*, for many manuscripts were seen ending only with *Mundavani*; settled only two lines of Guru Arjan Dev's *Sabad* in raga Ram Kali as some *Birs* had complete *Sabad*. Besides, completed the daily prayer (*Nitnem*) by addition of four hymns under *so purakh* and so on.²⁸

However, it is recorded in an unpublished *Sakhi Daura* that four more copies of this recession were got prepared by the Guru himself and, were sent to Patna Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, Harmandir Sahib (Amritsar) and one was installed at Damdama Sahib. The original copy was with the Guru when he moved to Nanded and this copy was elevated to the status of eternal Guru.²⁹ It is also on record that two *Akand-paths* (non-stop recitation of Guru Granth Sahib) were performed at a place where now stands Takhat Damdama Sahib. First, soon after the completion of the *Bir* and second on 28th Oct. and on 30th Oct. 1706 C.E. before leaving for Deccan. For example three days before leaving for Daccan, Guru Sahib asked Bhai Dalla to bring *Samagri* (items related to rites and religious ceremonies for the *Akandpath*). Thereupon a canopy was spread on the same high place which the Guru had designated as Damdama Sahib, where he had arrived at Talwani Sabo and Guru Granth Sahib was placed under it. *Tirhaval Parsad* (ghee-clarified butter, wheat flour and sugar in equal quantity) was prepared and placed on a stool near Guru Granth Sahib. *Granthi* (scripture reader) recited first five *pauris* of Anand Sahib and the fortieth *pauri* and *ardas* was performed. Then, with the permission of the Guru, Bhai Mani Singh recited *Mukhvak* (reading the Sikh scripture at random) and started *path*. On the third day, about quarter past a day, the *granthi* completed

²⁸ Teja Singh and Ganda Singh; *Ibid*, p. 72; *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, Vol. I, p. 500; Macauliffe, *Ibid*, V, p. 223 F.N.I; Vaisakha Singh, *Ibid*, 106; Gian Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa* I, p. 1084; *Panth Parkash*, pp. 3187-19; G.B. Singh, *Guru Granth Sahib dian Frachin Biran*, pp. 397-403; Jasbir Singh Mann, "Final standardization of Guru Granth Sahib (Damdani Bir) at Damdana Sahib Sabo Talwandi" 1706 C.E.; *one Granth, one Panth and One Rehat Maryada*; *Gurdwara Gazette*, Nov. 1965, pp. 87,89.

²⁹ Quted by Balwant Singh, pp. 105, 133; *Gurdwara Gazette*, Nov. 1965; p. 87; Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Bhai Mani Singh: Jiwan te Rachna*, Punjab University Patiala 1995, p. 39; Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon, "Guru Granth: The Universal Scripture" *Guru Granth: A Perspective* (ed.) S.P. Singh, G.N.D.U. Amritsar 2004, p. 121.

the recitation of the scripture. In this way, mode and ceremonies relating to this rite were laid down by the Guru himself which survive to date.³⁰

On the same day (*Bhadon vadi teej*) on which the *Damdama Bir* was completed along with the *Katha* of the whole of Guru Granth Sahib, the Guru in the open *diwan* declared the establishment of *Guru Ki Kashi* for the study of Sikhism³¹ and after the conclusion of the *diwan*, got prepared *Karah Parsard* in large quantity, collected reed-pens used and unused and the remaining ink and accompanied by the *sangat* went to the *sarovar* of Likhansar. Here, after the performance of *ardas*, the writing material was poured with reverence into the *sarovar*, distributed *Karah Parsad* and blessed the place to be a centre of repute in learning and writing.³²

Nevertheless for the correct interpretation of *Gurbani* the Guru himself started performing *Katha* (exposition) in the evening without fail. This comprised the whole of Guru Granth Sahib. In fact, the process of writing and exposition of the Bani went on side by side. Every day two watches in the early morning were given to writing. And, the *Katha* of entire *Bani* written during that time was performed in the evening. It is recorded that 48 persons listened the entire religious discourse and gained mastery over the contents and meaning of Guru Granth Sahib. These were (1) Bhai Mani Singh; (2) Baba Dip Singh; (3) Baba Ram Koer (Gurbakhash Singh) (4) Baba Kahan Singh; (5) Baba Binod Singh; (6) Baba Gurbakhash Singh Shahid; (6) Bhai Dan Singh; (8) Bhai Param Singh; (9) Bhai Dharam Singh; (10) Bhai Shamir Singh (Dina); (11) Bhai Nand Lal; (12) Bhai Dhana Singh Kaviraj; (13) Bhai Daya Singh (Jind); (14) Bhai Bhiva Singh (Bathinda); (15) Bhai Piara Singh (Amritsar); (16) Bhai Bir Singh; (17) Bhai Dhir Singh; (18) Bhai Sunder Singh (Dharam Kot); (19) Bhai Amar Singh (Miran Kot); (20) Bhai Tara Singh (Delhi); (21) Bhai Jagjivan Singh (Ambala); (22) Bhai Gopal Singh (Mani Majra); (23) Bhai Dhiyan Singh (Majra); (24) Bhai Bishamber Singh (Ujjain); (25) Bhai

³⁰ Vaisakha Singh, *Ibid*, I, p. 229; *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi Nos. 103-4; pp. 186-87; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 36, 62-63.

³¹ Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, p. 38.

³² *Sakhi Poti*, Sakhi No. 96&101; pp. 82 & 85. Bhai Vir Singh Bal, Singh Sagar (ed.) Karishna Kumari Bansal, Punjabi University, Patiala 1998, p. 148; Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10(ed.). Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, Language Department Punjab, Patiala 1989, pp. 361-62; Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10(ed.) S.S. Ashok, Punjabi University Patiala 1999, p. 213; Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 455-56; Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Ibid*, p. 115.

Hargopal Singh (Ujjain); (26) Bhai Man Singh (Chaurbardar); (27) Bhai Rai Singh (Rampur); (28) Bhai Makhan Singh (Nabha); (29) Bhai Madan Singh (Aetiana); (30) Bhai Dharam Singh (Bhinder Kalan); (31) Bhai Sujan Singh (Ropar); (32) Bhai Jiwan Singh (Boparai); (33) Bhai Akal Singh (Akhara); (34) Bhai Pirtpal Singh (Rawalpindi); (35) Bhai Dayal Singh (Goindwal); (36) Bhai Bhakhtavar Singh Sodhi (Anandpur); (37) Bhai Deva Singh (Tarn Taran); (38) Bhai Meva Singh (Khadur Sahib); (39) Bhai Dhiyan Singh (Nankana Sahib); (40) Bhai Achal Singh (Talwanid Sabo); (41) Bhai Jai Singh (Raja Jaipur); (42) Bhai Bishan Singh (Raja Jodhpur); (43) Bhai Bhag Singh (Anandpur); (44) Bhai Vasava Singh (Chola Sahib); (45) Bhai Khaniya Singh (Takhtupura); (46) Bhai Ram Singh (Phulke); (47) Bhai Tirlok Singh (Phulke); (48) Bhai Maliaghar Singh (Nirmala). Nevertheless, amongst these, Bhai Mani Singh and Baba Dip Singh were appointed heads of the two orders created by the Guru himself; the former of the order of the Gianis at Amritsar and the later of the order of *Damdami Taksal* better known as Damdama school of Sikh exegesis. Thus, a cadre of Sikh scholarship for the correct interpretation of the sacred writings included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib was established at Damdama Sahib in 1706 C.E.³³

The Guru was not unmindful to disseminate the teachings of Sikhism as well as to cater to the spiritual needs of the masses living in far flung areas. For this very purpose, preachers were sent to different regions. For instance, Bhai Pheru, Sant Punjab Singh and Rocha Singh were appointed to preach Sikhism in the areas such as Pothohar, Kashmir and Muzaffarabad.³⁴ They and their successors continued to preach the Khalsa way of life. All available records vouchsafe the veracity of this fact.³⁵ Alongside, during his stay at this place the Guru occasionally visited other places around it for the same purpose. These places were visited either on the request of the inhabitants or the headman of the village or at his own desire. For example, Chak Fateh Singh Wala

³³ Vaisakha Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 103, 106; 232 Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh (eds.), *History of the Sikhs and Their Religion*, Dharam Parchar Committee (S.G.P.C.) Amritsar 2004; pp. 318-19; Balwant Singh *Ibid*, pp. 30-34.

³⁴ Baba Pehru Singh had received Pahul on the Vaisakhi of 1699 C.E. He preached Sikhism in Kashmir and other hill areas around. Punjab Singh was a great scholar of Persian and Sanskrit and member of the band of preachers of Pheru Singh. He received Pahul from Guru Gobind at Damdama Sahib and preached in the areas of Muzaffarabad, Poonch and Sri Nagar. Rocha Singh too had received Pahul from Guru Gobind Singh and preached in Hazara district (Kashmir): Kirpal and Kharak Singh, *Ibid*, p. 337 F.N. 22, 23,24.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 318.

(Chak Bhai Ka) was visited at the request of Bhai Ram Singh, grandson of Bhai Bhagtu. Ablu Mehma (Mehma Sarja) was visited on the request of Bhai Dan Singh. Apart from this, Kot Shamir, Bhagi Bandar, Talle, Bhucho, Bathinda, Bhagu, Bhokhri, Kewal etc were visited as well.³⁶

Establishment of Guru's court and patronization of a large number of scholars from different disciplines was another feature of the life at Damdama Sahib. Considering the grandeur and high spirits of the Khalsa the place was not less than the status of Anandpur Sahib. And, according to Bawa Sumer Singh, the Guru considered it even dearer than his life: *Kahyo Su Anand Nagar Samana Yeh Damdama aadik Pnya Parana*.³⁷

The number of Sikh Sangats thronging this place sometimes exceeded to four fold than Anandpur Sahib³⁸ Celebration of festivals like Holla Mahalla and Baisakhi were revived. Gurdwara Mahalsar (Tibi Sahib), Holgarh and Sarovar Mahalsar stands witness to the fact.³⁹ To stimulate and awaken the masses to the new realities, literature began to be produced; literary meets were arranged. Traditional bards were called for (*Dhadi aae Mukami*). Vars of the martial deeds of the heroes of the battles of Bhangani, Nadaun, Anandpur, Chamkaur etc were sung.⁴⁰ Apart from this, the Guru himself used to explain to the Sikh Sangat, the merit of *Khande-di-Pahul*, futility of totems, esoteric practices, futile caste-distinctions as well as caste considerations, superstitions, grave-worship and other such practices which were not in consonance with the Sikh ethos. All this was being done keeping in view the cultural transformation of people, but this could only be made possible, if the people were educated. Therefore, in addition to the extension of patronage to scholars of different disciplines, people were encouraged to stay and study at the *Ashram*.⁴¹ Tradition revolving around Likhansar attests to the intense desire of the Guru to educate the masses. Looking at environment created by Guru Gobind Singh at Talwandi Sabo one can understand the

³⁶ *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi Nos, 84-87, 93, pp. 71-75, 79-80, Gian Giara Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa I*, pp. 1071-76; Giani Thakar Singh, *Sri Gurdwara Darshan*, Chattar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar 2005, pp. 250-52; *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi No.100; pp. 183-84.

³⁷ Bawa Sumer Singh *Ibid*, p. 441, 445.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 457, Sukha Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 358, 365.

³⁹ *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi No.s 79-80, pp. 67-70; Gian Thakar Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 249-50; *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi No. 100; pp. 182-83; Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 442-43; Sukha Singh, *Ibid*, p. 362.

⁴⁰ Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, p. 456.

⁴¹ Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh, *Ibid*, p. 319.

vision that he desired to develop it into a great centre of Sikh learning i.e. *Guru Ki Kashi* to vie with Banaras, a traditional Hindu centre of great learning.⁴²

In addition to the literary and scholarly activities, the Guru continued to impart military training to his disciples. A considerable number of armed followers who were ever ready to lay their lives for the ideals of the Panth, were rallying around the Guru. To make them proficient in the art of warfare, drill was performed regularly in the evening at Jandianasar. And, to make them courageous, hunting and mock fights were arranged.⁴³ Besides, some regular soldiers belonging to the tribes of Brars and Dogras were recruited. It appears that the Khalsa forces at this time were consisted of three categories: (i) those who were always in the presence of the Guru; (ii) devotees who offered their services to the Guru without any desire for any pecuniary advantage; and (iii) the paid soldiers. However, distribution of gold and silver coins, apart from regular salaries at Gurdwara Jandiansar testifies that a number of fighters were attending the ranks of the Guru.⁴⁴ Thus, from the military point of view, the position of the Guru became much stronger than ever before. Nevertheless, on *Katak sudi* 5, 1763 B.K. (October 30, 1706 C.E.), he left for Daccan to meet emperor Aurangzeb. Before, leaving the place, Bhai Dalla Singh was asked to look after Bhai Desa Singh who was appointed in charge of Manji Sahib (a place associated with Guru Tegh Bhadur). Baba Dip Singh was made in charge of the Takkat Damdama Sahib and twenty five Singhs were asked to stay with him. Prominent among them were: Bhai Fateh Singh Malvai, Bhai Budha Singh, Bhai Desa Singh and Bhai Manohar Das (Udasi).⁴⁵

Literary and martial activities initiated by Guru Gobind Singh continued under Baba Dip Singh. According to Giani Gian Singh, Baba ji got prepared four copies of Guru Granth Sahib from the Damdama recension. These were sent to Patna Sahib,

⁴² *Sakhi Pothi* Sakhi No. 101, p. 85; Giani Thakar Singh, *Ibid*, p. 249; Bhai Vir Singh Bal, *Ibid*, p. 148, Sukha Singh, *Ibid*, p. 361.

⁴³ *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi NOS; 60, 66-67, 71, 81, 82, 89-90, 94, 97, pp. 57, 61-62, 64, 70-71, 76-77, 80, 87, Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 442-50.

⁴⁴ Sukha Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 358-59; Koer Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 211, 213; Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 441, 56, 57; Macauliffe, *Ibid*, VI, p. 223; Indu Bhushan Banejee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, A Mukherjee and Co. Pvt. Ltd. Calcutta 1992, 2001s, Vol. II, p. 138.

⁴⁵ *Sakhi Pothi*, Sakhi No. 104, pp. 89-90, *Gurdwara Gazette*, Nov. 1965, p. 87; Bhai Khan Singh Nabha, *Ibid*, p. 620; *Guru Kian Sahian*, Sakhi No. 103, pp. 187-88. Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 75-76.

Hazur Sahib and Akal Bunga (Amritsar), respectively and one was kept at Damdama Sahib which remained with the Budha Dal.⁴⁶ Besides, he got prepared many *pothis* of gurbani for the use of the devotees. It is said that Baba ji translated Sri Guru Granth Sahib into Hindi, Marathi, Persian, Arabic and Urdu.⁴⁷ However, for the benefit of the students and the Sangat, *Katha* of the scripture was daily performed. In due course, number of students who sought to study the scripture began to increase. Resultantly, many Sikh scholars specializing in correct recitation, copying and exposition of the Sikh scripture were produced. Alongside the study and teaching of the religious texts, training in martial skill remained a part of the curriculum at Damdama Sahib. Alongwith these activities, Baba ji got constructed several buildings at Damdama Sahib. These included: Takht Sahib, Manji Sahib, a *bhora* (basement),⁴⁸ a big community kitchen (*Langar Hall*), a Dharamsala for the scholars, students and sangat and a well to supply water to the complex. For the defense of the Takht Sahib and its inmates, four *buraj* (towers) were erected.⁴⁹ Thus, besides being a centre of learning and martial activities, Takhat Damdama Sahib became a place of refuge for the Khalsa forces in times of necessity.⁵⁰

Since Damdama Sahib served as the only rallying point for the Khalsa forces during their life and death struggle against the Mughals and the Afghans, therefore, several religious and political decision of crucial importance were taken here. Resultantly, several expeditions of crucial significance were launched. In fact first political decision of great importance was taken by Guru Gobind Singh himself when he decided to meet emperor Aurangzeb. Baba Dip Singh at the head of a group of warriors

⁴⁶ Giani Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash*, p, 319.

⁴⁷ Vaisakha Singh, *Ibid*, I, p. 416.

⁴⁸ This *bhora* was used by Baba ji for meditation, for writing the *pothis* of Gurbani and teaching to the students

⁴⁹ From the days of the Guru till 1740s, not only the inhabitants of the Takht Sahib were living in the tents but all the holy places too were covered with tents. However, Dal Khalsa contributed and sent 50,000 rupees to Baba ji who was now a head of the Sahid Misal too. With this money Bapa ji undertook the construction work of the complex.

⁵⁰ The region extending from the banks of river Satlej near Ferozepur to the wastes of Bathinda stretching over an area of about 80km, was covered with dense forests known as *Lakhi Jangal*. It was a secure retreat, as Forster holds, owing to the scarcity of water, and was famous for the valour of its people and for a breed of excellent horses called the Jungle Tarazees. Besides, as referred earlier the place was out of the jurisdiction the *faujdar* of Sirhind and subedar of Lahore. It was under the Subedari of Multan.

joined Banda Singh Bahadur in his campaign against the Mughals.⁵¹ In 1731 C.E., Baba ji went to the rescue of Ala Singh of Patiala who had been attacked by the combined Muslim forces of Rai Kallha, all the Manj chiefs of cis-Satluj and Jalandhar Doab, Asad Ali Khan, the *faujdar* of Jalandhar Doab and Jamal Khan of Maler Kotla.⁵² When in 1740, C.E., Sukha Singh and Mehtab Singh decided to punish Massa Rangar, the desecrator of Harmandir Sahib, *Ardas* for the success of the mission was performed here.⁵³ Similarly, when the news of the desecration of Harmandir Sahib by Jahan Khan reached at the Takhat Damdama Sahib, Baba Dip Singh set out with his Shahidi Jatha of 500 in number, to liberate Hamandir Sahib. While fighting with the Afghan forces, he fell a martyr in the holy precincts of Darbar Sahib Amritsar. However, when the news of his martyrdom reached at Damdama Sahib, his successor Bhai Sudh Singh appointed Bhai Karam Singh incharge of the Takhat and set out alongwith his Jatha towards the Holy City. He too fell a martyr while defending Harmandir Sahib.⁵⁴

With the subversion of political power of the Sikhs by the British imperialists on 29th, March 1849 C.E., many disgruntled persons who were adverse to the British administration, crossed over to Malwa. And, to please the British authorities, many Nihang Singhs were blown before the guns by the ruler of Patiala. In reaction to this the *Sants* and *Mahants* of Damdama Sahib passed the following resolution: “*Zo Patiala de raje da ann Khaega oh Papi Hovega*”, i.e. whosoever would eat the grain of the chief of Patiala would be regarded as a sinner’.⁵⁵ Obviously, this was an open challenge to the authority of the Rajah. It is said that to curb the power of the institution, Maharaja Rajinder Singh whose sister was married to Mahant Jiwan Singh gave the *jagirs* and other properties of the Takhat Sahib in dowry to him. At the same time, the British administrators decided not to allow the Sikhs to control such a powerful institution which through its teaching faculties was producing martial and intellectual Khalsa who might pose a serious threat to the Raj in future. Under this scheme, the Collector of Sirsa searched the Damdama Sahib complex in 1868

⁵¹ Giani Gian Singh, *Tewankh Guru Khalsa*, II, pp. 261-62.

⁵² Karam Singh Historian, *Ibid*, pp. 41-44; Kirpal Singh, *Life of Maharaja Ala Singh of Patiala and his times*, Sikh History Research Department, KCA, 1954, pp. 48-50.

⁵³ Giani Gian Singh, *Tewankh*, II, pp. 131-33. *Panth Parkash*, pp. 711-714.

⁵⁴ Giani Gian Singh, *Tewankh Guru Khalsa*, II, pp. 198-99, 262, 63, 64, *Panth Parkash*, 910-20..

⁵⁵ *Gurdwara Gazette*, Nov. 1965, p. 136, Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 105-106.

C.E. During the search, historical weapons found at Buraj Baba Dip Singh and Takhat Sahib were taken into possession. Soon after he left the complex, Sardar of Shahzadpur came there. The Mahants and the Sewadars related the incident to him. He put a plain paper before them and asked to sign with the assurance that he would secure certain concessions from the Collector for them. They signed the paper in good faith. After some time the agent of the said Sardar came and told the priest that all the Gurdwaras and the property attached to them was the property of the Sardar and they had no right to be there without his approval. As a proof, the agent showed them the paper on which terms and conditions were written and to their astonishment, it was the same paper on which they had put their signatures. The forgery has been made with the connivance of the Collector of Sirsa. In this way, all the Gurdwaras at Talwandi Sabo, the property attached to these including the *Jagirs* became the property of the Sardars of Shahzadpur.⁵⁶

Under the administration of the Sardars of Shahzadpur, the old *maryada* of the Takhat came to an end. For instance, recitation of Gurbani, *Katha* and *Kirtan* were stopped. Langar was closed. Consecration and distribution of *Karahparsad* was stopped, instead *parsad* of *Patasa* (sugar bubbles) was given to the devotees. The *Granthi* and other persons involved in the religious services became employee on a fixed salary. For overall supervision of the income from the offerings, shops and offices, a *munshi* was appointed whose designation was later on changed as manager. However, activities of the managers at Takhat Sahib and their attitude towards this place was not different from the activities and attitude of Mahant Narayan Das of Nankanan Sahib, birth place of Guru Nanak. For instance, Mukhtiyar Bhikham Singh and the manager were found smoking and drinking in the Barandari, a place adjoining to the Takhat Sahib. A debauchee, Jai Kaur from Ludhiana was living there. She was known for drinking and meat eating and whenever a devotee, particularly the Sants/Mahants of other Bungas visited Takhat Sahib to pay their respect, she used to shower abuses on them. There are so many instances like this. Thus, the period is marked by deterioration of the honour and prestige of the Takhat Sahib. This kind of mal-administration continued till 1963 C.E. when

⁵⁶ *Gurdwara Gazette*, Nov. 1965, pp. 95-6; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, p. 107.

Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee took over its management.⁵⁷

However, on 18th November 1966 C.E., the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee approved vide resolution No. 32, Damdama Sahib as a Takhat, adjured the Khalsa to keep in mind as they did in the past while performing their *ardas*, and recommended to the Punjab Government to amend the Gurdwara Act so that the Jathedar of the Takhat like those of other four Takhats could be counted as an ex officio member of the Shromani Committee. Now, one may ask, was this decision of the S.G.P.C. an arbitrary? Was its adoption tempted to complete the sanctified number of Five which is essential to take decisions relating to the Sikhs? Or, was the decision of the committee had have any historical and logical backing? Answer to these questions is not far to seek as the above decision is deeply rooted in the Sikh tradition and it finds full support in the historical literature pertaining to the Takhat Sahib. For instance, as referred earlier, before leaving for Daccan, the Guru performed *Akandpath* on the same high place which he himself designated as Damdama Sahib, when he had arrived at Talwandi Sabo.⁵⁸ By sending copies of Guru Granth Sahib to other Sikh religious centres, he further sanctified and recognized the high status of this place.⁵⁹ Not only this, this is the only Takhat which had have a seal of its own from the days of the Guru with the inscription: *Guru Gobind Singh Ji: Ki Jaga Takhat Damdama Ji*, and this seal was put on all the documents relating to the affairs of Takhat Sahib. For example, all the *Hukamnamas* issued from here from time to time, petition and memorendums to the government of the day, correspondence with the other Takhats, bears this seal as a mark of its authority.⁶⁰ Even the succession, not only of the Mahants of the Takhat Sahib but also of other Bunghas at Talwandi Sabo was not considered valid until or unless the seal of the Takhat was put on the papers of succession as a mark of recognition.⁶¹ When, during the 18th century, Akal Takhat Sahib was under the surveillance of the Mughal/Afghan Government and Takhat Kesgarh had been ransacked by the hill chiefs, Takhat Damdama Sahib was the only

⁵⁷ *Gurdwara Gaazette*, Nov. 1965, pp. 137, 140-41; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 105-118.

⁵⁸ Bawa Sumer Singh, *Ibid*, p. 441; *Sakhi Pothe*, Sakhi No. 78, p. 67; Giani Singh, *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, p. 1063; *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi Nov. 98, pp. 180-81; *Gardwava Gazette*, Nov 1965, p. 86.

⁵⁹ *Gurdwara Gazettee*, November, 1965, p. 87, Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 90-91.

⁶¹ *Opcit*; Balwant Singh, *Ibid*, pp. 84-93

place where *Dal Khalsa* used to reside or meet, held *Gurmata*s and took political and religious decisions of utmost significance. These hard facts, of course, are clear pointer to its being a Takhat even before it was adopted as the fifth Takhat by the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. Therefore, its decision was logical and based on historical facts and thus it was not an arbitrary decision.

Retrospectively, Thakat Damdama Sahib was established and designated by Guru Gobind Singh himself in 1706 C.E. Besides, it became a centre of martial and political activities too and several political decisions of crucial significance were taken here by the Khalsa. In due course, it resumed the character of a cantonment, a seat of learning and a place of refuge for the Khalsa in the need of the hour. It became a resort for the Sikh scholars, philosophers, theologians and copyist with elegant hands too. Significantly, tradition abounds that final canonization of the Sikh scripture was done by Guru Gobind Singh here and there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the compilation of Dasam Granth took place during this period. Apart from this, school for the correct interpretation of Gurbani was instituted and rules for the performance of *Akhandpath* were laid down. Nevertheless, taking into account the history and role of Damdama Sahib, the S.G.P.C. accorded it the status of Fifth Takhat of the Sikhs which hitherto had remained ignored due to the unexplainable reasons. However, some of the scholars in their bid to oppose the above move as well as to weaken the claim of it as a Takhat of the Sikhs started a campaign that finalization of the Sikh Scripture had already taken place at Damdama in Anandpur Sahib. It is a travesty of facts and holds no ground in the face of hard facts about the history and role of Takhat Damdama Sahib.