

FAMILY HISTORY OF THE SODHIS OF GURUHARSAHAI

Here, I will attempt to give the correct version of the history of my family as it has been passed on to me by my forefathers as it has been passed down from generation to generation. I will refer to quotes taken from different books where possible. Most of our history is already a known fact & I will try to fill in the gaps which are not known to all people.

Our Ancestors, Kalrai ruled at Lahore and his brother, Kalpat, at Kasur. The latter drove out Kalrai, who took refuge with some king in the Deccan, whose daughter he married. Their son Sodhi Rai re-conquered Lahore, and Kalpat in his turn became an exile. He went to Banaras and studied the Vedas, on which account he obtained the name of Bedi. All the Sikh Gurus were either Bedis or Sodhis; Guru Nanak belonged to the former, Guru Gobind Singh to the latter Family.

When the Sodhis descendants of Sodhi Rai were rulers, the descendants of Kalpat who had studied the Vedas and bore the name of Bedis, at one stage came to the Sodhis and recited the Vedas. The Sodhis were so highly impressed with the knowledge of the Bedis that they gave up their Raj Path in favor of the Bedis and asked them to rule in their place and themselves took sanyas in search of enlightenment. Before the Sodhis left their Palace, the Bedis blessed the Sodhis and said that when KALYUG would come the descendants/Representatives of the Bedis would return to the Sodhis all that they had given to the Bedis, and that they would give their daughter in marriage along with a temple made of gold.

Now to continue further as you all know that Guru Nanak Dev Ji was born in KALYUG and did not give the Gur Gaddi to his Son Baba Siri Chand Ji, but instead appointed Guru Angad Dev Ji who was Threhan by caste and the 3rd Guru was Guru Amar Das ji who was a Bhalla by caste. Up to this time the Sodhis were nowhere in the picture. One day Guru Amar Das ji was having a head bath and his daughter Bibi Bhani was pouring water for his Ishnan. One leg of the Chownki on which Guru Amar Das Ji was sitting broke and immediately Bibi Bhani his daughter put her foot under it so that her father Guru Amardas ji may not fall. A nail of the broken Chownki pierced the foot of Bibi Bhani and blood started flowing. When Guru Amar Das ji completed his bath he noticed a trail of blood flowing and was so pleased with his daughter that he told her Bibi I am very happy with you Please ask any wish and I will grant it. Bibi Bhani immediately said Guru Sahib my wish is that" ghar di cheez ghar vich he rawa" further she said that guruai mera pati noon mila aur mur is ghar vichon bahar noon jawa (she said that the relics of Guru Nanak and the Gur Gaddi should not go out of the family). In other words she had asked that the Gur Gaddi should remain within the family she also specified that the Gur Gaddi should be given to her husband and should remain in the family forever. Reference to this can be found in the book Sodhi Chamatkar compiled by Giani Tarlok Singh Ji (famous Historian and published by Bhai Jwahar Singh Kirpal Singh and co Amritsar Pages 26 to 28).Guru Amar Das ji was reluctant at first but then realized that he had given his word to his daughter said Bibi I am bound by commitment to you, but if I deviate from the tradition of passing on Gur Gaddi to a learned disciple, great misery and hardship will befall our

descendants and they will have to make several sacrifices and suffer much pain and agony and ultimately the family will cease to exist. Upon this Bibi Bhani said Father If this is going to be the ultimate fate of our family then what is the use of my asking this wish. Upon this Guru Amar Das ji after careful thought said yes I am bound by my commitment, but I assure you that the family lineage will continue but what I have said about the hardships and sacrifices etc will also have to be faced.

It was a custom to Give the PothiMala ,the Seli TOPI & the Padam of Guru Nanak to the next Guru and were the insignias of office of Guru .Up to the 4th Guru Ram Das Ji the PothiMala was the insignia of office. When Prithi Chand took the PothiMala and started a separate following in the Frontier Province the need for writing the Aad Guru Granth arose.

It is probably because of this that the Prithi Chand episode took place. I think that history had to take its course s the PothiMala was taken by Prithi Chand and whose lineage is also carrying on today, as Bibi Bhani had asked for the PothiMala. Secondly Guru Arjan Dev ji started writing the Holy Aad guru Granth Sahib, and his lineage gave all the sacrifices. In other words the prophecy of Guru Amar das ji came true. It would be pertinent to mention here that when Guru Nanak Dev Ji gave the PothiMala to Guru Angad Dev ji, Guru Nanaks son Baba Sri Chand ji was furious and cursed the Guru Angad Dev ji with the following words Quote “Karar kohri who pothi la gaya jis paas pothi rahaya gi usi ko dukh hova ga. (Baba Sri Chand Said that Guru Angad has taken the Pothi and who so ever is in possession of the Pothi will suffer). Reference to this can be found in the book Ithas Guru Granth Sahib by Giani Gurdit Singh 1990 edition on page pages 558 to 559.

Now let us come to the story of how Bibi Bhani got married to Guru Ram Das ji, It would be pertinent to note here that as I have mentioned earlier that the Bedis had promised to return everything that the Sodhis had given them earlier when Kalug came and also they would give a daughter in marriage along with a temple made of gold. One day Guru Amar Das ji was standing on the roof of his Haveli along with his wife, they saw a very handsome young man passing on the road below with a basket on his head. Guru Amar Das jis wife suggested to Guruji that it was now time to marry off Bibi Bhani and that he should ;look for a suitable match for her who should be good-looking and young line the young man with a basket on his head passing below. Upon this Guru Amar Das Ji said, that there can only be one person like the young man passing below and asked his servants to call this young man in. When the young man came in, Guru Amar Das Ji asked him his name, he replied I am Ram Das Sodhi. Then Guru Amar das ji gave the hand of his daughter Bibi Bhani to Guru Ram Das ji and their marriage was solemnized. With this the Prophecy of the Bedis came true and the Guruship was given to Guru Ram Das Ji. A daughters hand was also given and the foundations for making a temple of Gold were also laid. Guru Amar Das ji also fulfilled his promise to his daughter Bibi Bhani that he would give the Gur Gaddi to her husband and that in future it would remain in the family. Guru Nanak Dev ji did not give the Gur Gaddi to his son Baba Sri Chand Ji because of the commitment made by his ancestor Bedis earlier to the Sodhis to return everything to the Sodhis in Kalyug.

Guru Ram Das ji inherited the Gur Gaddi but along with it went the Curse of Baba Sri Chand ji to Guru Angad Dev Ji that whosoever remained in possession of the PothiMala would never remain happy and also the prophecy of Guru Amar Das ji that no doubt the Gur Gaddi would remain in the family but great suffering and sacrifice would follow and that the family lineage would come to an end and that the family lineage would also continue. Here History took its course because we all know that Guru Gobind Singh ji was the last Guru and all the 4 Sahibzadas were sacrificed. The earlier Gurus had to make several Sacrifices. Prithi Chand took the PothiMala and formed his own following from whom we are descended, and even we are suffering from this curse of Baba Sri Chand Ji that whosoever remains in possession of the Pothi would suffer. It is probably because of this curse that there has never been peace in our family and infighting is continuing even till today. I think that the Prithi Chand episode had to take place as it was the result of all the earlier curses and prophecies.

Sikh history is a witness that Guru Arjan Dev ji was very fond of Meharban son of Prithi Chand as Meharban was very learned and wanted to give the Gaddi to his nephew Meharban but it was not to be. In his book Sodhi Bans by Gurdarshan Singh Sodhi has referred to Pyra Singh padam who has stated referring to Kalam de Chamatkar, that Meharban son of Prithi Chand was very good in reciting the Kirtan and Guru Arjan Dev ji was very fond of him. Meharban was succeeded by his eldest son Harji and he came to stay at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. As Guru Har Rai ji, Guru Harkrishan Ji and Guru Teg Bahadur Ji did not stay in the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Harji grandson of Prithi Chand stayed in the Golden Temple in Amritsar and did sewa and was in charge of affairs there. Later he returned to his native place Mamdipur in Chunian. During Ahmed Shah Abdalis invasion har jis descendant Jiwan mal left Mamdipur for Guru Har Sahai.

The Guru Harsahai Family trace their succession in a direct line from the Guru Ramdas, after whom the great Sikh temple of Amritsar is called. The founder of the family was Guru Jiwan Mal who in sambat 1909 came from Mohammadpur in the Chunian tehsil of the Lahore district and settled at the place now known as Guru Har Sahai, so named by the founder in honor of his son. He was succeeded in order by Guru Ajit Singh, Guru Amir Singh, Guru Gulab Singh, Guru Fateh Singh and Guru Bishan Singh. The Religious influence of the family was decidedly great up to the time of Guru Gulab Singh, not only among the Sikhs of the neighboring districts and foreign states, but in Sialkot, Rawalpindi, The Dejratt, Kohat and even as far as Kabul; but this influence has been decreasing from Guru Fateh Singh's time whose family quarrels with his sons continued until his death. Now the family has but limited influence and that too, within a very limited circle. The late family quarrel between Guru Bishan Singh and his brothers did much harm.

Guru Bishan Singh died in 1910 and the estate of his minor sons Jaswant Singh and Karam Singh is under the management of the Court of Wards, the income being about three quarters of a lakh. The former is married to the daughter of the late Sir Baba Khem Singh Bedi, K.C.I.E.

GURU HAR SAHAI

This place was a waste tract between the territories occupied by the Brars and Dogars, who were constantly quarrelling over its possession. About two centuries ago, one Jiwan Mal came and pitched his tent upon this waste. He was a Sodhi, seventh in descent from the celebrated Guru Ram Das. He had been driven from his home in Mohammadpur near Chunian in the Lahore district (now in Pakistan), by the Kardar who represented Ahmed Shahs Government. No doubt he had made himself obnoxious by showing fanaticism towards the religion. The Dogar Chief Sultan gave him protection and encouragement to remain in the place, believing that his presence would be a measure to stop the incursions of the Brars, and put an end to the disputes between the tribes. the Brars also favored him, knowing him to be a priest of their own religion. He was therefore permitted to establish a number of villages in the plain, and he fixed his boundaries by marking down the tracks of his horses hooves as he made a long circuit one morning around the boundary of the land he fancied. He named the ilaqa Guru Har Sahai after his eldest son, who eventually took his fathers place as head of the family. Jiwan Mal appears to have made friends later on with Ahmed Shah, because he was allowed to hold his land free of revenue, and the grant was renewed by Ranjit Singh when the Mohammedans authority disappeared from this part of the Punjab.

The religious influence of the family was very great throughout the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and many of the Sodhis of Guru Har Sahai were employed at the court of Lahore, and they accompanied the army on expeditions along the frontier, when it was necessary to keep up the enthusiasm of the men at a high pitch. In making these journeys, they seized the opportunity of bringing the followers under their own religious banner from among the scattered Hindu families of western Punjab, and up to the historic partition of the country in 1947, continued to be revered by a large number of Sikhs, not only in their immediate neighborhood but also in Rawalpindi, Pashawar, Kohat and the Derajat. On the death of Guru Gulab Singh in 1867, only two-thirds of the Jagir was continued to his successor Fateh Singh on a life tenure. It was unfortunate that he became involved in quarrels with his own son, and in his time much of the old influence of the family melted away. He was moreover on bad terms with Bishan Singh his eldest son and to despise him, made a gift of the property and Guruship to his younger son Kabul Singh. A law suit followed, and that Guru Bishan Singh was successful, but the expenses of litigation seriously crippled the property. On the death of Fateh Singh in 1879, the Jagir was temporarily resumed, and it was regretted to Guru Bishan Singh in 1885 under a sanad from the supreme Government.

Both Guru Gulab Singh and guru Fateh Singh exercised magisterial powers within the limits of their jagirs but these privileges were not continued to Guru Bishan Singh, who in 1896 was declared, at his own request, unfit to manage his estates, which were placed under the Court of Wards. The expenses occurred by the Guru in his case against his brother Kabul Singh, amounted to about one lakh of rupees, and these and other debts were later cleared off and many improvements were affected, so that in 1909, the income from the estate was over Rs 50,000 a year. The family

then owned nearly 25,000 acres in nine villages in the Muktsar tehsil. The Guru was a provincial Darbari. He died in 1910 and was succeeded by his eldest son Jaswant Singh. He had given away to his brother Auttar Singh half of the property, except the Abadi lands, for his lifetime and the two brothers jointly gifted a village to Hira Singh, the son of their sister in perpetuity.

As head of the family, Guru Jaswant Singh continued to be the Guardian of the sacred book and the rosary which originally belonged to Guru Nanak Dev. These objects are held in high reverence by the people who travel long distances for the privilege of seeing them. One Pothi was lost in 1970 when Guru Jaswant Singh was traveling from Delhi to Ferozpur by train. Guru Jaswant Singh died on 18th March 1971 and was succeeded by his eldest son Guru Atamjit Singh who died in 1979. He was succeeded by his eldest son Guru Hareh Singh. Guru Hareh Singh abdicated the Gaddi in favor of his eldest and only son Guru Yuvraj Singh Sodhi, who was born on 25 May 1994. Guru Yuvraj Singh is 17th in direct descent from Guru Ram Das the 4th Sikh Guru and is the present Gaddi Nashin of Pothimala and head of the Guruharsahai Sodhi family.

The original village of Guru Har Sahai is contiguous to the town where in the Pothi Mala Temple a Pothi (book) and a Mala (Rosary) of Guru Nanak Dev, and a stone in which the image of Guru Nanak Dev is stated to be visible, is shown to the public by the family of the local descendants of the Gurus. Out of these objects, the Pothi is said to have been lost in 1970.

When my ancestor Jiwan Mal was driven from his home in Mamdipur Chunian in the Lahore District, he arrived in Guru Har Sahai in the year 1705 and laid the foundation of the PothiMala Building., and took a long time to complete all the succeeding Gurus kept adding something or the other. Since the time of Jiwan Mal who was 7th in descent from Guru Ram Das Ji all our Ancestors have been living in Guru Har Sahai. For your reference I am mentioning my Family tree.

THE SODHIS FAMILY TREE

1. Guru Ram Das Ji [The Fourth Guru of the Ten Gurus of Sikhism]
2. Baba Prithi Chand Ji
3. Baba Meharban ji
4. Baba Har Ji
5. Baba Har Gopal Ji
6. Baba Gurditta Ji
7. Baba Jiwan Mal Ji [Founder of Guru Har Sahai]
8. Guru Har Sahai
9. Guru Ajit Singh
10. Guru Hamir Singh
11. Guru Gulab Singh
12. Guru Fateh Singh
13. Guru Bishan Singh
14. Guru Jaswant Singh

15. Guru Atamjit Singh
16. Guru Hareh Singh
17. Guru Yuvraj Singh [The present Gaddi Nashin]