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*Chapter 3*

**RAO BIRENDER SINGH AND HIS ENTRY  
INTO THE POLITICS**

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**R**ao Tula Ram was born on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1825 to a well known Yadav family in the village Rampura (Rewari)<sup>1</sup>. His father was Puran Singh and his mother; Rani Gian Kanwar was the daughter of Rao Zahari Singh. Rao Tula Ram ascended the throne on the death of his father. In 1857, he led the rebellion in Haryana along with his brother Gopal Dev. The ancestors of Raos had helped the Marathas in 1803 against the British<sup>2</sup>. On 17<sup>th</sup> May, 1857, Rao Tula Ram went to the tehsil headquarters at Rewari with four to five hundred followers and deposed the tehsildar and thanedar.<sup>3</sup> They appropriated the cash from the tehsil treasury, took all the government buildings in their possession and proclaimed, under the sanction of the emperor Bahadur Shah, their rule over the pargana of Rewari, Bhora and Shahjahanpur<sup>4</sup>. Delhi fell to the Britishers on September 20, 1857<sup>5</sup>. Soon after Brigadier-General Showers led out a column (from Delhi) of 1,500 men with a light field battery, eighteen two-pounded guns and two small mortars, "to attack and destroy Rao Tula Ram and his followers and to raze his fort (at Rewari)<sup>6</sup>." The column had light skirmish with some Rewari-sowars on October, 5 at Pataudi, thirty seven miles from Delhi<sup>7</sup>. The British column reached Rewari on October 6<sup>th</sup>. The fort of Rewari (Rampura) was taken without any opposition. Immediately after the occupation of the fort of Rewari, Brigadier-General Showers sent a messenger to Rao Tula Ram telling him that if he submitted along with guns and arms, he would be treated on merits<sup>8</sup>. But Rao Tula Ram turned down the inducement. The British authorities at Delhi were alarmed by these developments. They sent a strong column comprising about 1,500 strong under Colonel Gerrard, an officer of conspicuous merit on November 10, 1857<sup>9</sup>. The column reached Rewari three days later. They occupied the abandoned fort of Rampura. Here two squadrons of the Carabineers joined them.

After a few days rest at Rewari (Rampura), Colonel Gerrard proceeded to Narnaul via Kanaud and reached there in the evening. In the night, the Haryana Field Force joined him. On November 16<sup>th</sup> Gerrard marched to Narnaul<sup>10</sup>. As the track was sandy, the column reached Nasibpur, a small village, two miles north west of Narnaul and halted there for a short rest. The rival force, having abandoned their strong force in the centre of the town pounced on them. Rao Tula Ram's first charge was irresistible and the British forces scattered before them. Rao Tula Ram's forces fought furiously and stood on their grounds. The British artillery fire, nevertheless, broke their backbone and split their forces into two parts – one engaged in the close quarter battle and the other fleeing to go out of the range of the British guns. Meanwhile Kishan Singh and Ram Lal, the two best commanders, received musket shorts and resumed advance until they came to a dry bed of a stream flowing between Nasibpur and Narnaul<sup>11</sup>.

After a little fighting, Rao Tula Ram lost the day and, when the Sun went down, there. Though Rao Tula Ram and Abdul Samad Khan escaped, Rao Kishan Singh, Ram Lal, Samad Khan's son and many other top-ranking officers were killed in action. The British army lost its commander, Col. Gerrard and Capt. Wallace, while Lieutenants Graije, Kennedy and Pearse were severely wounded<sup>12</sup>. The battle of Narnaul was undoubtedly one of the most decisive battles of the Uprising of 1857<sup>13</sup>. The English felt jubilant over their success in this confrontation, for it resulted in the marked the Close of the crucial period of the struggle in the Haryana region and the northern Rajasthan<sup>14</sup>.

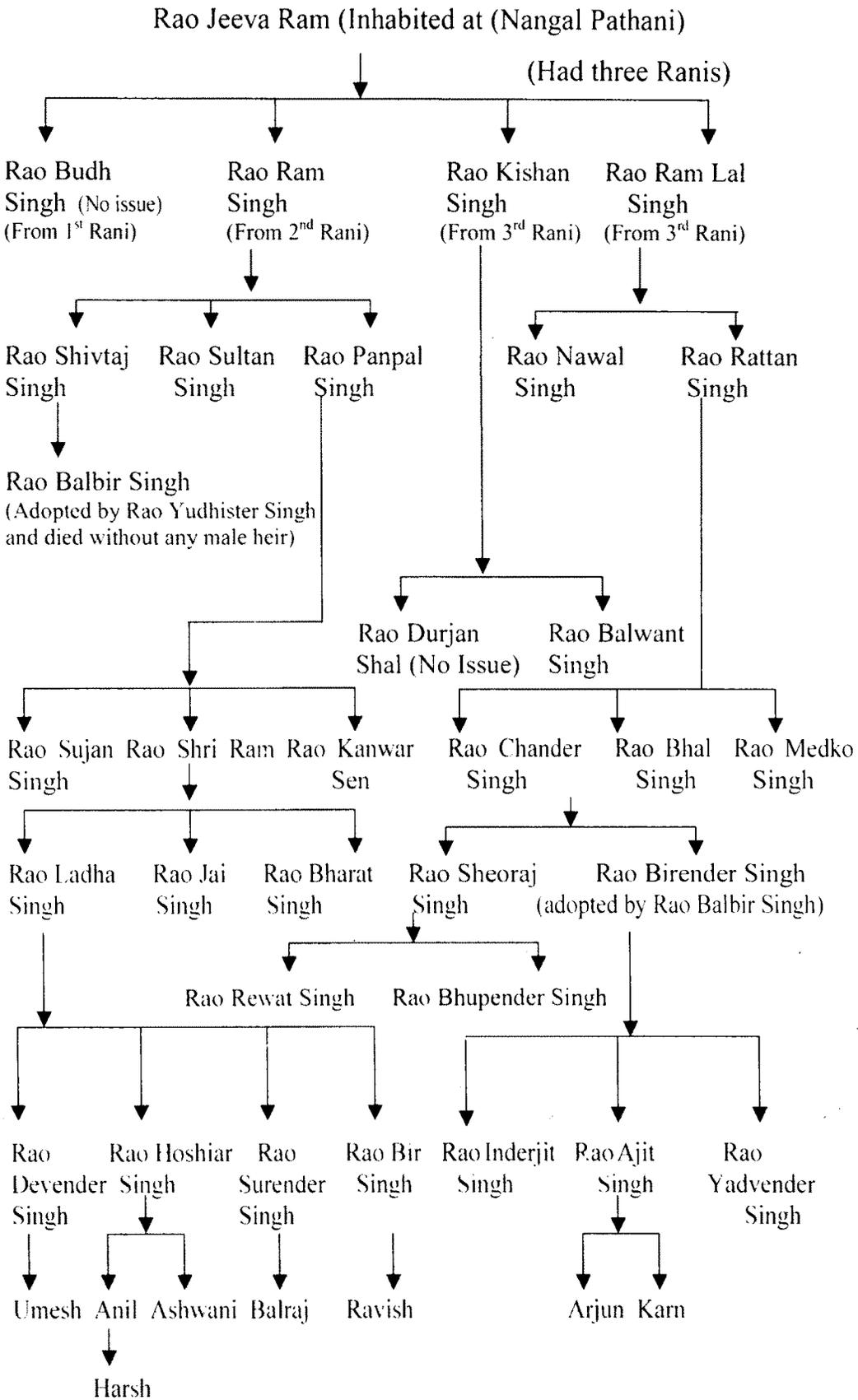
After the Battle, Rao Tula Ram moved to Rajasthan; then joined Tantya Tope's forces for one year<sup>15</sup>. After the British proclamation of

promising unconditional pardon, amnesty and oblivion to all offences against the British to all except those who directly or indirectly took part in the murder of the British subjects (issued on November 1, 1858)<sup>16</sup>. He sent a petition to the Governor-General, Lord Canning, on December 24, 1858. He stated that he considered himself “an offender, but as he looked up to the government as his protector, he begged to solicit that an inquiry might be directed to be instituted and that he as well as his followers pardoned<sup>17</sup>.” He was refused pardon for he was the chief instigator and the prime mover of revolt. He, therefore, left India in 1862<sup>18</sup>. He went to Iran; then to Afghanistan in the winter of 1862, where he died of dysentery at Kabul on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1863 at a young age of thirty eight<sup>19</sup>.

Rao Balbir Singh died on January 18, 1941 without heir-apparent<sup>20</sup>. According to his will, Rao Balbir Singh gave all the rights to his Rani Nihal Kaur for adopting the heir-apparent from the same lineage of Rao Tej Singh. In 1945, according to the will of Rao Balbir Singh, Rani Nihal Kaur adopted Rao Birender Singh<sup>21</sup>. Rao Tej Singh had settled his four brothers, by giving them jagirs at frontier villages. Rao Jeeva Ram, one of his four brothers, was settled at Nangal Pathani. Rao Birender Singh belongs to the lineage of Rao Jeeva Ram<sup>22</sup>.

In 1947, Rao Birender Singh resigned from the Army as a Captain<sup>24</sup>. He came to Rampura and took all the movable and immovable property of Rao Balbir Singh in his possession. Again in 1950 to 1951, he joined the Territorial Army as a Commissioned Officer<sup>25</sup>. In the batch of 1949-50, Rao Birender Singh was selected for Indian Police Service but he did not join that service<sup>26</sup>.

The family lineage of Rao Birender Singh was as given below<sup>23</sup>:



The entry in politics started when Rao Birender Singh contested the united Punjab assembly general election from Rewari Vidhan Sabha constituency in 1952 but could not be successful. For the welfare of the farmers and the labourers, Rao made a party – ‘Kisan Mazdoor Party’ in 1952<sup>27</sup>. He was elected to unite the *Ilaqa* for the growth and development of the area as the Member of Legislative Council in 1954 as an independent candidate from the Ambala division. In the same year, he came into contact with Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir, who was the President, Punjab Congress Committee and with his inspiration, he joined the Congress Party in 1954<sup>28</sup>.

On 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1956, Rao Birender Singh was made the Deputy Minister by Pratap Singh Kairon, who became the Chief Minister after the resignation of Bhim Sen Sachar. Devi Lal and Rao Birender Singh played an active role in overthrowing Sachar. He was associated with the Public Works Department, Revenue, Transport, Irrigation and Power departments. He was closely associated with the development and growth of the city beautiful Chandigarh. Being a Public Works Department Minister, he took keen interest in the layout specially in the architecture and designing of the city beautiful<sup>29</sup>.

The second Assembly elections were held in 1957. Kairon again became the Chief Minister of Punjab. Rao Birender Singh was made the Cabinet Minister in 1957 of revenue, transport and technical education, irrigation, power and public works department<sup>30</sup>. This was Rao Birender Singh, who appointed Chaudhary Bhim Singh as a Chairman, Subordinate Selection Board<sup>31</sup>. During the period of his ministership he did many development works for the upliftment of rural life, the areas of present Haryana. This *Ilaqa* was undeveloped and backward from

Ambala, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Amritsar districts of the united Punjab. He made a policy to stop temporarily the development of these districts till the backward areas of the Hindi Region were brought to the level of the developed areas of Punjab. The roads are the symbol of progress. Under Rao, the roads from Rewari to Narnaul, Mohindergarh, Pataudi and Maujabad were constructed<sup>32</sup>. These roads proved boom for south Haryana, which was under-developed till then. Rao Birender Singh took the interest in getting the roads constructed from Delhi-Jaipur Highway<sup>33</sup>. It enhanced and linked Haryana with other provinces and with this developed the trade, commerce and means of communications speedily. The Ilaqa people appreciated his contribution in this field. Rao Birender Singh got constructed the present bridge (Pataudi) on Sahibi river which has given impetus to the transportation and communication<sup>34</sup>. The water is the basic need of the people. Many tubewells and pump houses were installed to lift the water from Sahibi River for the Rewari *Ilaqa*. Water from 'Dahina Water Lift Scheme' was supplied to the villages. This way, he solved the problem of the drinking water of Rewari and surrounding areas. Sohna Water Lift Scheme in district Gurgaon was a big boom and it solved the problem of the drinking water. He got constructed the Gurgaon Canal, thus Mewat got water for the first time<sup>35</sup>.

As a Transport Minister, he also established Gurgaon depot, many bus stands and bus stops for halting. Being an ex-serviceman, he gave employment to the ex-servicemen in this depot<sup>36</sup>. The consolidation work under Rao Birender Singh was completed speedily so that the small farmer's land could be consolidated in one track. He took a historic step by eradicating the step motherly treatment to the farmers of Bawal. They were paying the six times land revenue as compared to the Punjab

farmers. They were equalized to pay the land revenue on the Punjab pattern and in this way justice was done to them<sup>37</sup>.

Being an ex-serviceman, who else could understand the problems of the soldiers and Rao Birender Singh, initiated many welfare schemes for the ex-servicemen. He believed that the farmers and the soldiers are the backbone of the country in the difficult times. His differences with Pratap Singh Kairon were political and Rao Birender Singh had never compromised though he had to pay a heavy price for it. Pt. Mohanlal has mentioned in his book 'Disintegration of Punjab' the circumstances of his dismissal. Rao Birender Singh was a close ally of Chaudhry Devi Lal. Both of them opposed Pratap Singh Kairon by tooth and nail. The alliance with Devi Lal was the main cause of the dismissal of Rao Birender Singh from Kairon ministry on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1961<sup>38</sup>. But Pratap Singh Kairon realized his mistake and he publicly felt sorry and Rao was made the Defence Advisor of the Punjab government.<sup>39</sup> During the Indo-China war of 1962, Rao Birender Singh also played a significant role with Pratap Singh Kairon. He was instrumental in granting the scholarship to the wards of the ex-servicemen. He established many Sainik Schools and Sainik Welfare Boards and liberally helped the ex-servicemen<sup>40</sup>.

Rao Birender Singh was again elected to the Punjab Vidhan Parishad in the biennial elections though Kairon did not support him fully. Now the preparations for the third general elections were started in the last quarter of 1961<sup>41</sup>. Rao Birender Singh, Chaudhary Devi Lal, Giani Kartar Singh and Pandit Mohan Lal were the members of the committee. The leader in the saddle, Partap Singh Kairon, did not like their recommendations for the selection of the candidates. Again the

trouble started on the selection of the candidates for the election and the finalisation of the selections was shifted from the committee to the President, Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee, Darbara Singh.<sup>42</sup> Rao Birender Singh being a rebel was always relentless in compromising with injustice. The committee reported to the government that the representation of the people of Haryana in the services was woefully inadequate.

Com. Ram Kishan was the first Chief minister who tried to apply balm and to remove the grievances of Haryanavis, when the injustice done with them was brought into his notice. The gruelling example of discrimination in the allotment of funds in third-five year plan was as acute. Even in the employment avenues, the Haryana Region was discriminated and was treated in a step motherly way. Out of three hundred Punjab Civil Services officers, two hundred twenty five were from Jalandhar division and seventy-five from Haryana region<sup>43</sup>. In March, 1965, Ram Kishan constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Shri Ram Sharma, a freedom fighter. All the then prominent Haryana leaders including Prof. Sher Singh, Chand Ram, Hardwari Lal, Suraj Mal and Gajaraj Singh were its members.<sup>44</sup> The Hindi region was the area to be covered. On 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966 the committee reported back the grave injustice meted out to Haryana during the last eighteen years and recommended the setting up of a special administrative machinery for removing the imbalance but Ram Kishan also could not help due to ongoing the Punjabi Suba agitation. At that time, there was a strong movement of Punjabi Suba, which was being run by the two Sikh leaders, Master Tara Singh and Saint Fateh Singh. They demanded the Punjabi Suba on the basis of the Punjabi-speaking people residing at there. Both the Sikh leaders and the veterans undertook fasts

from time to time. Saint Fateh Singh demanded the Punjabi Suba on 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1965 and declared to immolate himself on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1965<sup>45</sup>. In the meanwhile, Pakistan attacked Kashmir, Saint Fateh Singh on the appeal of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, and Home Minister, Guljari Lal Nanda, postponed his fast<sup>46</sup>. He took a promise from Lal Bahadur Shastri to concede to the demand of the Punjabi Suba. Pakistan was badly defeated in the war and as soon as the war finished, the consultative committee of the Parliament was constituted on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1965 consisting of twenty one members<sup>47</sup>. Fourteen were from the Lok Sabha and seven were from the Rajya Sabha. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Hukam Singh was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee.

Haryana was carved out on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1966 because of the linguistic re-organisation of Punjab. Fresh elections were impracticable. The Haryana Legislative Assembly was formed out of the erstwhile Punjab Assembly. The Congress Party had fifty-one M.L.A.s and just a feeble opposition consisting of three (one M.L.A each) from three opposition parties. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma was the president of the Punjab Congress Committee, who opposed the re-organisation of Punjab and carving out the new state of the Haryana. He was able to become the President of the Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee. Being elected as the leader of the party, he became the Chief Minister of Haryana on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1966. He managed to install unanimously his right hand man, Ram Krishan Gupta, as the President of Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee. Old Haryana leaders Devi Lal, Moolchand Jain and Sher Singh, who had left Congress party, joined it again.

Haryana was a peaceful state and did not inherit the problem of language. The only national party was Jan Sangh, which was very weak and had just one member in the Assembly. Having such a comfortable majority in Assembly, Bhagwat Dayal did not face any problem. The fourth general elections were due on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1967. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma being the Chief Minister and his right hand man Ram Krishan Gupta were able to distribute the Congress tickets to their supporters. The supporters of Rao Birender Singh and Devi Lal were ignored. Now the Haryana Assembly had eighty-one assembly seats as compared to fifty-four seats at the time of re-organisation. Congress party fought elections unitedly and won comfortable majority by winning forty-eight seats. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma became the Chief Minister once again. Every influential Congress leader sponsored and supported his/her own supporters. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma visited the constituencies of his supporters. Ram Krishan Gupta, the President of Haryana Pradesh Congress party did not provide financial help to the supporters of Bhagwat Dayal Sharma. Bhagwat Dayal Sharma was able to frustrate the efforts of Rao Birender Singh for the Chief Ministership in 1966 and now he desired to bring his own men in plenty to face any claimant of Chief Ministership after elections. Rao Birender Singh was trying hard to bring more and more from the Ahir belt of Rohtak, Rewari, Gurgaon and Mohindergarh districts so that he could face the challenge of Bhagwat Dayal Sharma. In this way, Congress Party was a divided house. In fact, factionalism is the old game of politics and newly carved out Haryana State was not an exception.

Rao Birender Singh was inducted in the ten members election committee. There was a rumour in the press that Rao would leave the Congress Party in the nick of time of general elections. Under the

circumstances, Rao and Bhagwat Dayal Sharma suspected each other. They were rivals in the power politics to be played after the elections. Congress Party was to face a united front comprising of Jan Sangh and Swatantara Party, which was a strong combine to give befitting reply to the opponents.

Rao Birender Singh's entry into the political field made a remarkable change in it as well as the progress of the Ahirwal region. His family tree shows his family tradition and he was a follower of this important tradition of the social service. He entered the political field as a learner and came out as a victorious one in all respects. The politics is a game of twists and turns and the Ahirwal region felt it a lot. There was a gradual politicization of the Ahirs and Rao Birender Singh is a pioneer leader in it. He tackled the twists and turns i.e. change and re-change of the political field in a remarkable manner.

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