

*By the same Author on Sikhism*

**HARI SINGH NALWA**

1. Guru Gobind Singh—A Biography
2. Guru Gobind Singh—A Study
3. Guru Nanak—A Biography
4. Guru Tegh Bahadur—A Biography
5. Sikh Gurus and their Shrines
6. Handbook on Sikhism
7. The young Martyrs
8. The Heritage of Amritsar

SURINDER SINGH JOHAR

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PREFACE

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Hari Singh Nalwa was one of the greatest Sikh generals. It was he who helped Maharaja Ranjit Singh to annex large territory to his empire and consolidate it. Nalwa never tasted defeat in his life time. He was the conqueror throughout his life. Whatever territory he attacked became within his fold. He was a dare devil, a terror for his enemy but humble and polite for his soldiers from whom he got courage and strength. A man of determined will and action, Nalwa was the pillar of the Khalsa raj. If the boundaries of Sikh raj were extended to far off areas, it was only due to Nalwa's skill, valour and a burning desire to serve his Master, who always reposed confidence in him.

Nalwa had a versatile brain, he took prompt decisions and never wavered. Whatever he decided to do he carried out with determination and a strong will. He remembered God and Guru Gobind Singh's war-like qualities and worshipped the sword and the shield. He followed on the Guru's foot-steps and fought against injustice and tyranny. Before launching any campaign or jumping into a fray he took *vak* from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and performed *ardasa*. He firmly believed in the existence of one Supreme-being who was the Creator and Destroyer. Even during worst crisis, he never lost faith in Him and always achieved his motive.

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This is the story of a General who did so much for

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consolidating the Khalsa raj. History would have been different, if he would not have died in the battle of Jamraud.

An effort has been made in the book to narrate the events of this great General from his birth to death. His inspiring life can be an example for the posterity. In an simple, lucid and easily understandable language, the story has been told for the general reader. It is not a scholarly work but an attempt has been made to sort out facts from legends which generally shadow lives of such national heroes.

Life and deeds of Hari Singh Nalwa are landmark in the history of the Sikhs which will surely influence the younger generation.

My thanks are due to all those learned authors from whose works I have quoted extensively.

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Surinder Singh Johar

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*Dedicated to my loving daughter  
Simmi  
who always quarrels with me*

## ANCESTRY

Hari Singh Nalwa was a leader of infinite dash and gallantry. "He was originally a personal attendant,<sup>1</sup> who received recognition for his boldness, intrepidity and address and rose to the very high rank of a governor and became one of the greatest noblemen of the Punjab. He had earned the title of 'Nalwa' for having cloven the head of a tiger that had seized him. He could both read and write persian and was very well informed as regards the policy of the East India Company and the state of Europe. So the Maharaja (Ranjit Singh) at times requisitioned his services in connection with the missions that he sent to the British Government. He was both feared and respected and, according to Masson, his deportment and intrepid conversation resembled those of Ranjit Singh."<sup>2</sup>

The story of Hari Singh Nalwa's ancestors and those of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is inextricably intertwined. It would, therefore, be in order to recapitulate here the source history of some of their joint as well as separate identities.

Ranjit Singh's ancestor, Baba Budh Singh, had visited the *darbar* of Guru Hari Rai, the seventh Sikh Master. Later baptised by Guru Gobind Singh, he became a devout Sikh. It is understood that he had also served under the tenth Master. Budh Singh has also been described as a person having connections with a gang of predatory Sikhs and Sansis and "won for himself the reputation of the boldest and the most successful freebooter in the country." Says Khushwant Singh: "Budh Singh was a freebooter whose feats of endurance and those of his piebald mare, Desan, made them legendary. They travelled the plains of the Punjab and swarm its broad rivers in flood many times, and being inseparable, came to be known jointly as Desan Budh Singh. When Budh Singh died in 1718, his body was found to be riddled with scars of sabre and musket wounds. He left his sons a few villages they could call their own and many others in the neighbourhood which paid them protection tax—rakhi."<sup>2</sup>

Budh Singh's son, Nodh Singh, was born in 1709. After the death of Budh Singh, the family shifted from Sukerchak, first to Raja Sansi and then to Majitha, both in Amritsar district. Nodh Singh carried on his father's profession. He constructed a small fortress in Sukerchak village and raised a force to defend it against Afghan invaders. He further strengthened his position by marrying Lai Kaur, daughter of Bhai Gulab Singh Shergill of Majitha, in 1726. Gulab Singh was the leader of the people associated with Guru Gobind Singh's

*darbar* at Anandpur. Nodh Singh was an ambitious man, always ready to fight. He spent most of his time stealing cattle grazing in the fields in the surrounding villages. This was then considered a dignified profession. The more a person indulged in this type of depredations the more powerful he became, covering himself with glory. In due course of time, he became a highway robber— And as his notoriety spread, people became increasingly afraid of him. He joined the Fyzulpuria misal under Kapur Singh's leadership and made a fortune by plundering Ahmed Shah Durani. Hari Singh Nalwa's grandfather, Sardar Hardas Singh Uppal, had met Nodh Singh at Majitha where the former lived and struck friendship with him.

After the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, there followed a period of chaos and confusion. Repression was let loose on the Sikhs who had to make great sacrifices for their survival. The period of trials and tribulations continued till 1733. During this period, the Gill Chaudhries of Majitha were Mughal henchmen. They were staunch supporters of the Governors of Lahore, Abdul Samad and Nawab Zakria Khan who were bent upon crushing the Sikhs. In 1733, Bahadur Shah, the Emperor of Delhi, bestowed upon Kapur Singh Fyzulpuria a *jagir* of 12 villages beside the title of Nawab. Taking advantage of the prevailing conditions, the Sikhs organised themselves into five *dais*, which later laid the foundations of 12 Sikh *misals*.

Bhai Gulab Singh Shergill of Majitha always took the side of the *panth*. He left no stone unturned to keep

1. Smyth, C. History of Reigning Family of Lahore P. 4.

2. Khushwant Singh, Ranjit Singh, P. 21

aloft its banner. He persuaded his son-in-law, Nodh Singh to be baptised by Kapur Singh. Later, both of them joined the *Khalsa Dal*. The *Dal* had to be strengthened as the Mugal rulers at Delhi had again taken to a policy of suppression, Sikhs being the main target. Several leading Sikhs had to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the *panth*. In short, the Punjab was in turmoil.

Bhai Gulab Singh Shergill and Sardar Hardas Singh Uppal took leading part in the campaigns against the Mughals, Baba Nodh Singh assisting them. He defended their ancestral home against the onslaught of the Mughals. The Gill Chaudhries of Majitha played a dirty game and became informers of the Mughal government. Whenever Sardar Hardas Singh visited the town ; the government was informed. One day as both the Sardars were surreptitiously trying to enter Majitha, they were attacked by the Mughal soldiers and their place of shelter was set on fire. Bhai Gulab Singh Shergill, along with several others, was burnt alive. Sardar Hardas Singh luckily escaped.

In 1750, when Mir Mannu became the Governor of Lahore, the Sikhs were persecuted and a reign of terror unleashed on them. Many Sikhs started collecting in the house of Sardar Nodh Singh. Majitha Chaudhries, who were jealous of him, carried tales to the Governors of Lahore. As a result, the town was one day attacked by Mir Mannu's forces in full strength. Baba Nodh Singh took shelter in house but eventually had to lay down his life as his defences were rather weak.

Nodh Singh's eldest son, Charat Singh, was born in 1721. He was a gallant soldier, always willing to risk

his life. He strengthened his relationship with the Fyzulpuria *misal*, and fortified the Sukerchak fortress. He recruited a number of soldiers to fight the Afghans and organised regular campaigns of loot and plunder to raise funds and enhance his prestige. In a short span of time, Charat Singh captured many surrounding villages and became chief of the Sukerchakia *misal*. He had a large army under his command and struck terror all around, gaining considerable power and influence.

"In 1756, Charat Singh married a daughter of Amir Singh. Amir Singh's depredations extended from the banks of the Jhelum to the walls of Delhi having acquired large territorial possessions in Gujranwala, he was looked as the chief man of the district." He was an old man but was very powerful in the area. This marriage raised Charat Singh's status. He became ambitious and entertained thoughts of annexing the adjoining territories. Charat Singh started regular campaigns and created havoc in the neighbouring areas. He collected a large booty and acquired considerable financial standing. Eventually he became a force to reckon with.

He considerably augmented his original force of 100 horsemen and appointed Sardar Hardas Singh Uppal as Commander of his forces.

Time and again Sardar Charat Singh fell upon the Mughal forces. He attacked the Mughal fortress at Eminabad whose commandant was killed in action. The Sardar collected a large booty and retired to his newly-

built fortress at Gujranwala. Khawaja Obeid, the Governor of Lahore, became furious and ordered a strong force of 2,000 led by Bahadur Khan and Afzal Khan, to march on Gujranwala. A fierce battle ensued. "The sikhs united together and defended their property against the Mahomedans—the invading army was completely routed, and its chiefs narrowly escaped with their lives, leaving their military stores and ammunition in the hands of the enemy. From this time the audacity of the Sikhs increased, and they began to organise themselves into a still more compact and formidable body under Charat Singh, who, as his fame increased established his power as the head of the 'Sukerchakia *misal*'

The liquidation of the royal forces emboldened Charat Singh and he organised a series of campaigns against the Afghans. Many more people joined his army. On the appearance of Ahmed Shah, the Abdali, with his Afghan troops, in 1762, Charat Singh conscious of his own inability to oppose the disciplined army of the Shah in the open field, and afraid of a direct conflict with the main body of the invaders, sent his family to Jammu, where he concealed all his property, but he was never quiet himself. At the head of the band of chosen men, he harassed the march of the Afghans, cut off the stragglers of their army, and plundered their baggage. The Afghans on their side, levelled to the ground the mud fort which the Sikhs were building at Gujranwala."<sup>2</sup>

1. Latif Mohd , History of the Panjab P. 339

2. Latif Mohd., History of the Panjab P. 339

Now Charat Singh captured the fort of Rohtas and occupied Chakwal. Pind Dadan Khan and the area north of the river Jhelum. After that he kept quiet for about 10 years, at the same time strengthening his forces. Then he had to intervene in a family dispute of the Raja of Jammu, Ranjit Deo. The Raja wanted his younger son Dalel Singh to succeed him in place of the elder, Brij Raj Deo and invited the Bhangis to help him. At this Brij Raj Deo raised a banner of revolt and sought the help of Charat Singh, promising him an annual tribute in case of his success. Charat Singh in turn entered into an alliance with Jai Singh Kanahaya and attacked Jammu but the battle could not be decisive. Charat Singh was, however, killed with the bursting of his own matchlock.

Now a word about Sardar Hardas Singh Uppal, an ancestor of Hari Singh Nalwa. He fought all the battles shoulder to shoulder with Sardar Charat Singh. When in 1762, Ahmed Shah attacked Panjab and a great massacre took place at Kup Rihara in Sangrur district, Sardar Hardas Singh fought valiantly but was killed in action.

After the battle was over and things settled down somewhat. Sardar Charat Singh appointed Sardar Gurdial Singh Uppal, son of Sardar Hardas Singh, in his army and gave him a command.

Charat Singh died at the age of 45, leaving behind his eldest son, Mahan Singh, to succeed him. He was hardly ten years of age but he proved to be a great warrior. Later he became head of the Sukarchakia *misal*.

His principality included Gujranwala, Eminabad, Chakwal, Jalalpur, Pind Dadan Khan and Rohtas. He had an estimated annual revenue of Rs. 300,000.

When Mahan Singh was a minor, his mother, Mai Desan, played a remarkable part in his life. "She ruled with vigour and diplomacy as Sikh ladies played an important part in the history of these warlike families."<sup>1</sup> "She was a shrewd and courageous woman who ruled the *misal*, with tact and ability"<sup>2</sup> and rebuilt the Gujranwala fort which had been earlier destroyed by Ahmed Shah Abdali.

In 1779, Mahan Singh took charge of the government in his own hands. He later attacked the territory of Bhangis and succeeded in taking possession of Issa Khel and Mussa Khel. Then he marched towards kotli near Sialkot and accepted tribute from the ruler there. Returning from Kotli, he entered into alliance with the Kanahaya chief Jai Singh. The alliance proved very useful and they marched together on Rasulnagar, a territory ruled by Pir Mohammad Chatta whose principality extended to the eastern side of Chenab. Rasulnagar fort was besieged by the allied forces which were 6000 strong and the siege lasted four months. Pir Mohammed had no alternative but to surrender. However, he and his family were offered a safe conduct. But the promise was not kept and the Pir was first chained and put in an iron cage and then tied to a canon's mouth and blown up. The capture of

1. Gordon J. H., *The Sikhs* P. 82

2. Payne, C. H. *A Short History of the Sikhs* P. 68

Rasulnagar and surrender of the Bhangis enhanced the stature of Mahan Singh resulting in spread of his fame far and wide. He was now the acknowledged warrior.

Realising Mahan Singh's strength, the smaller Sardars accepted his suzerainty and offered him *nazrana*. At this, Sardars of other leading *misals* became jealous of him and tried to harm him in whatever way they could. But he had become so powerful that none could challenge his superiority.

Next Mahan Singh marched towards Jammu which was a rich and prosperous area. Jammu fell and its ruler Brij Raj Deo fled to the hills for safety, leaving the capital undefended. Mahan Singh had joined hands with Kanahayas for the capture of Jammu and agreed to share the booty equally. The Kanahaya's forces under Sardar Haqiqat Singh marched via Jaffarwal but could not join Mahan Singh's forces. "Maha Singh plundered the town, exacted a large indemnity from the people, stripped the palace and the treasury everything of value, and when Haqiqat Singh arrived at the scene, refused to share the spoils with him. The Kanahaya Sardar left the hills empty-handed in disgust, and shortly afterwards he died."<sup>1</sup>

When the Kanahaya chief heard that Jammu had fallen to Mahan Singh and Sardar Haqiqat Singh had died, he prevented Jaimal Singh, son of Haqiqat Singh, from proceeding to Gujranwala, though summoned by Mahan Singh. Mahan Singh was threatened with ven-

1. Hasrat, Bikramjit. *Life and Times of Ranjit Singh*, P. 84



geance. In 1783, they attacked Jandiala, which was followed by the sack of Rasulpur and Mandiala. Then the possessions of Nakai chiefs were attacked and the Sardars were forced to submit. A battle was fought at Majitha between Sukerchakias and Kanahaya and Jai Singh's troops were routed. He was forced to flee and he took shelter across the Beas.

Jai Singh made preparations for an attack on Sukerchakias. Mahan Singh invited Jassa Singh Ramgaria and Sansar Chand, Raja of Katoch to join him. A battle was fought at Batala between the forces of Mahan Singh and Jassa Singh on the one hand and Jai Singh on the other. In this battle; Gurbaksh Singh, son of Jai Singh died. Then Jai Singh fled to Pathankote. He regrouped his forces and attacked Mahan Singh at Naushera, but was repulsed. Jai Singh once again suffered heavy losses and fled to Nurpur.

The battle was now joined by Sansar Chand to wrest the Kangra fort. Sansar Chand captured Hajipur and Mukerian, invested Akalgarh and continued to pursue Jai Singh's forces in the hills. In the end, peace was restored ; as a result, Jai Singh surrendered Kangra fort and Sansar Chand agreed to vacate Hajipur and Mukerian.

Later, after reconciliation with Jai Singh, Mahan Singh and Sansar Chand marched towards Batala to put the Kanahayas in possession of it. Jassa Singh fought valiantly and did not allow the attackers to capture the town.

After the death of Gujjar Singh Bhangi of Gujrat, some dispute arose between his sons, Sahib Singh and Fateh Singh. Mahan Singh took the side of Fateh Singh. The brothers fought at Sodhra in 1792. Gujrat was invested by the combined forces of Mahan Singh and Fateh Singh and the fort of Sodhra, where Sahib Singh was hiding, was besieged for about 3 months. Mahan Singh then fell seriously ill and was taken to Gujranwala, where he died after a shortwhile. And thus ended the career of this great general.

In all the battles fought by Sardar Mahan Singh Gurdial Singh Uppal proved his mettle. When the possessions of Chatta Sardars' Rasul Nagar and Manchar were captured his services were recognised and he was given a *jagir* near Shahdara. Gurdial Singh Uppal died in 1798.

After Mahan Singh, his son Ranjit Singh fought many successful battles. He captured Lahore on July 7, 1799 and entered the town through Lahori Gate at the head of a 1000-strong force. Another 3000-strong entered through Shalmi Gate. A part of the town was occupied without any resistance from the Bhangis. Later, both the Bhangi Sardars, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh, left in panic. Only Chet Singh was left in the field. Ranjit Singh's forces camped in the *baradari* of Wazir Khan and Chet Singh hid himself in Hazuri Bagh with a force of only 500 men. Ranjit Singh's forces surrounded Hazuri Bagh and after some exchange of fire, the fort was surrounded. Chet Singh was however allowed to leave the city with his family.

The occupation of Lahore proved a landmark in the history of the Sikhs. Young Ranjit Singh changed the course of history, wiping out the powerful Bhangi *misal* and laying the foundation of a sovereign empire of Punjab.

## CHAPTER II

*EARLY YEARS*

Gujranwala had the rare privilege of being the birth place of two great sons of the Punjab—Maharaja Ranjit Singh and General Hari Singh Nalwa. Originally the son of a petty official, Nalwa received recognition for his courage and initiative, and rose to the rank of a Governor besides being counted among the foremost noblemen of the Punjab.

Hari Singh was born in 1791 to Dharam Kaur, wife of Sardar Gurdial Singh Uppal, a Kamedan in the army of Sardar Mahan Singh, father of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was the only son of his parents. They took special care of him and brought him up well in the hope of his becoming a great soldier like his forefathers. He was given education at home and two competent teachers were engaged to coach him, one for Punjabi and the other for Persian. Hari Singh showed keen interest in his studies and mastered these languages well. His knowledge of Persian proved very useful to him in later years when he had to deal with Muslims.

From the very beginning Hari Singh had robust health with an excellent physique. He wanted to learn many a skill from his father, but fate willed otherwise. He was hardly seven years old when his father died. The shock was too great for the family, more so for

young Hari Singh. There was practically nobody to look after him. In these circumstances, he would have gone astray but for Ranjit Singh, then nineteen, who took him under his protection. Ranjit Singh initiated him in the art of horse-riding and handling the bow shooting. At that time nobody could dream that one day Hari Singh was becoming Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh army and Governor of the provinces. Though he had all the qualities that went into making of a great man it was difficult to predict that one day his likeness would appear on the coins.

One reason why Hari Singh had so much affection for the poor and needy was that he had spent his childhood in distress and want. He felt a deep scar in his heart whenever he saw anyone in trouble, and always came to the rescue of whosoever, asked for his help irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

Even as Hari Singh reached the age of fifteen, he was already well versed in military feats. He was by this time a perfect swordsman and Ranjit Singh was greatly impressed by his courage and valour. Shooting was his specialization. His aim was so accurate that even best of the soldiers marvelled at his mastery. His body was now fully developed and his sharp features attracted the attention of one and all.

Hari Singh had learnt the Sikh scriptures well and could recite them from his memory hymns from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, *Japji*, *Jap*, *Rehiras* and *Sohila*. He had a beautiful hand. Baron Hugal testifies that Hari Singh could read, write and speak persian fluently.

During later years of his life, he learnt Pushto too and gained proficiency in this language as well. The knowledge of Pushto helped him a good deal in his dealings with the Afghans. In fact, the success of his campaigns against the Afghans was mainly due to his knowledge of Pushto and the culture and character of the Afghans.

This was a period of chaos and confusion in the Punjab. Gujranwala, where both Ranjit Singh and Hari Singh lived, was surrounded by hostile forces. The Punjab was frequently invaded by the Durrani King, Shah Zaman, who cherished the hope of founding an Indian Empire. He attacked India five times and twice occupied the capital of Punjab without any resistance but each time he was compelled to retrace his steps west of the Indus, without being able to make permanent arrangements for administrating the territory. Whenever an attack was launched the Sikhs retired and regrouped themselves.

"Among those who retired before the Durrani invader was Ranjit Singh. He formed a coalition with other *misal's*, circumstanced like his own, and while the Shah was busy with his Lahore affairs, he availed himself of the opportunity to cross the Sutlej, reducing to subjection the districts through which he passed, and exacting tribute from the people upon the Shah's retirement, the authority of Ranjit Singh had gradually become predominant among the Sikhs, and his rising fortune made him an object of envy to his contemporary Sardars. One Hashmat Khan, Chief of the *Chatta* tribe, whose possessions lay on the banks of Chenab under-

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HAEI SINGH NALWA

took the hazardous task of taking the young chief's life, and thus removing him from the scene. One day as Ranjit Singh was returning from a hunting excursion on horseback, his followers having been left behind, Hashmat who lay concealed in ambush on his way, suddenly sprang up and attacked the youthful sportsman. The blow missed him, and struck the bridle, which it severed in two. Ranjit Singh, coming upon his guard, fell violently on his intended assassin and with one blow of the sword severed his head from his body. On the death of their chief, the chattas submitted to Ranjit Singh, who annexed a great portion of the estates of the deceased to his own."

Hari Singh was deeply impressed by the extraordinary prowess of Ranjit Singh. The crisis from which Ranjit Singh was passing left a lasting imprint on young Hari Singh's mind. The hard struggle undertaken by Ranjit Singh thrilled his heart and he yearned to take part in the expeditions launched by Ranjit Singh.

Lahore was then ruled by three Bhangi Sardars—Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh. Besides, two influential Muslim Chaudhries, Mian Ashiq Muhammad and Mian Muhkam Din, wielded great power in the city. People were groaning with pain and agony under the Sardars' mis rule. They were subjected to heavy taxation and were forced to pay many other dues. Once a dispute arose between the son-in-law of one of the Chaudhries and the *Khatri*s of the town. The *Khatri*s' charged him with conspiracy and sedition and put

him behind bars on orders from Sardar Chet Singh Bhangi.

Unable to get their grievances redressed, out of sheer vengeance, the Chaudhries decided to invite Ranjit Singh and Rani Sada Kaur to attack Lahore. These Chaudhries were supported by both Hindus and Muslims of the town who presumed that in the event of an attack, the Bhangis would not be in a position to protect the town.

Ranjit Singh heard the tales of woe of the people of Lahore from the messenger who came to invite him and sent one of his men to Lahore to start negotiations with them. He himself proceeded towards Amritsar to offer prayers at the Golden Temple. He also sent a message to his mother-in-law Rani Sada Kaur asking her to join in full strength. The combined force of 5,000 men marched on Lahore on July 6, 1799 and met those who had invited him at Shalimar Garden. Here Ranjit Singh was assured that the next morning both the Shalmi and Lahori Gates would be thrown open to him.

On July 7, Ranjit Singh entered the city through Lahori Gate and another column of troops marched through Shalmi Gate and before the gravity of the situation was known to Bhangi Sardars, a part of the town had been captured without any resistance. On hearing the news, two of the Bhangi Sardars, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh, left Lahore and fled to a safer place. Now Chet Singh alone was left to offer defence. He shut himself up in Hazari Bagh with 500 men. Ranjit Singh's forces surrounded the Bagh and made the

Sardar surrender to them. Chet Singh was later permitted to leave the town alongwith his family and the soldiers were ordered not to plunder the town. Peace was restored in a couple of days.

"The occupation of the city of Lahore by the young Sukerchakia Chief is a landmark in the history of the Sikhs. It wiped out the remnants of the once powerful Bhangi *misal*, created awe and respect in the minds of the Manjha Sardars, and provided to Ranjit Singh a historic capital, the possession of which was necessary for prestige and power to any master of the Punjab. It thus laid the foundation of a sovereign Sikh monarchy in Punjab."

Soon after the Sikh chiefs joined hands to oust Ranjit Singh from Lahore, Nizam-ud-din of Kasur also became a party to their plans. Their combined forces which marched towards Lahore in 1800, halted at Bhasin, about 15 kms. from the city. Ranjit Singh regrouped his forces with the help of Kanahaya *Misal* and proceeded to Bhasin. But the Sikh chiefs could not offer him much resistance as they were not invited and lacked coordination. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia could not join the assault due to illness and Gulab Singh Bhangi, a man of loose character was all the time surrounded by women he had brought with him. The rival forces remained poised against each other for two months but no battle was actually fought. Gulab Singh Bhangi died of excessive drinking and sexual indulgence.

1. Hasrat, Bikramjit : Life and Times of Ranjit Singh. P. 41

#### EARLY YEARS

Ultimately, the Sikh chiefs' forces dispersed without any action. On the other hand, the Kanahaya force under the command of Rani Sada Kaur, routed the Ramgarhias at Batala. Now Ranjit Singh's supremacy was well established, there being nobody to challenge him.

Ranjit Singh then hastened back to Lahore drunk with wine of victory. The citizens of Lahore gave him a befitting welcome lining the entire route he passed through. Special prayers were offered for him in Sikh shrines and other places of worship.

Then came the day of destiny. On April 12, 1801, the auspicious Baisakhi day, Ranjit Singh was formally crowned the Maharaja of Punjab and was proclaimed *Sarkar Khalsa*. Sahib Singh Bedi put saffron paste, on his forehead and a royal salute was fired from the fort. In the evening, the Maharaja rode an elephant and went past a jubilant crowd. Gold and silver coins were showered on the grateful citizens. At night, the town was illuminated with earthen lamps accompanied by a fireworks display. A commemorative coin called *Nanak-shahi* was also issued with the following inscription :-

*Degh-o-Tegh-o-Fateh-o-Nusrat be-derang  
yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*

The chieftains and other notable Sardars offered *nazars*, they were in turn given *Khillats*. Government officials were appointed to manage the affairs of the State and normal life was restored in the city after a long time.

Thus, a secular rule in the true sense of the word was established in which people of all castes, creeds and religions were treated equally and had equal share in the management of the State affairs. "The assumption of royalty by Ranjit Singh, however, was a vital step towards the establishment of a sovereign political power in Punjab. The Maharaja styled himself the *Sarkar Khalsa*, a servant of the commonwealth of Gobind, disdained to wear a crown, or adopt oriental ostentation in personal apparel. The step was a wise one, it fostered a sense of unity among the Sikhs, calmed down the aspirations of other *misaldars* for a claim of sovereignty over the Sikhs, and gave Ranjit Singha legal right to that claim."

## CHAPTER III

IN MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S  
DARBAR

With his foothold fully established, Maharaja Ranjit Singh reorganised his entire military system. He changed the whole organisation of the khalsa army. The cavalry was no longer allowed to remain important. Utmost significance was attached to infantry which became the most formidable body of soldiers. European officers were employed. Some of them were generals of considerable ability and were highly competent who could march 45 kilometres a day for many days together. They were men of stamina and could fight on empty stomachs.

The Maharaja did not face any difficulty in recruiting men in his army. "The Cavalry was constituted much in the same manner as in the early days of the khalsa, when clouds of horsemen hung on the skirts of the Afghan armies, afraid to venture an attack upon regular troops, but cutting off conveys, and endangering the communications of the enemy. This is no doubt one of the principal duties of light horse; but the Sikh cavalry were, as a rule miserably mounted and armed and became more celebrated for taking to fight when attacked than for any display of valour. On foot the Sikh is the bravest and steadiest of soldiers; but on horseback although there are some crack cavarly regiments of Sikhs in the English Service that can hold their own with any

horsemen in the world, they are surpassed by Afghans and Hindustanis who are inferior to them as infantry. In the Maharaja's army the infantry were the pick of the youth of the country ; only the handsomest and strongest men were selected, while the cavarly were irregular troops. The contingents of his different Sirdars, and not appointed for any considerations of bravery or strength."<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja had great love for children. He would see that his Sardars' sons got special training in horsemanship and in the use of arms and ammunition. "The Maharaja is fond of children, and many of his Sirdar's sons are bred up under his eyes, and instructed in riding and the use of arms; by this means they became attached to him, and when able to assume commands, they never fail of succeeding to important ones."<sup>2</sup>

The Maharaja thus raised a boys' regiment and trained them in the use of arms. When Hari Singh was only eleven he came to Lahore with the idea of serving the Motherland and went straight to the Maharaja's *darbar*. He showed him the letters of appreciations his father and grand father had received from the Ranjit Singh's forefathers in lieu of services rendered to them. The Maharaja was duly impressed by Hari Singh's desire to serve in his army, following in the foot steps of his forefathers and took him in the boys' regiment.

Hari Singh was given special training in military matters. Exhibiting keen interest in martial techni-

ques, he became perfect in horsemanship and other my feats at a tender age of eleven. In due course of time he became the leader of infinite dash and gallantry.

Hari Singh grew like a true soldier. During the period 1801-1804, he participated in all the campaigns launched by the Maharaja and left a lasting impression on his mind. It was a period when Ranjit Singh was consolidating his empire. Besides capturing Kasur and Multan, he forced the Rajas of Jammu and Kangra to pay tribute to the Maharaja. Amritsar was annexed by defeating the Bhangi Sardars.

By now Hari Singh had shown signs of becoming a great general. He became so perfect in horsemanship that the Maharaja instructed his generals to take special care of the boy. One day in 1804, Hari Singh accompanied the Maharaja on a hunting expedition. Many other Sardars had also joined them. Hari Singh, then hardly 15 years of age killed a roaring tiger with his sword in a hand-to-hand fight. It was a feat of great courage, which impressed the Maharaja so much that he conferred on him the title of sardar and bestowed on him a big *Jagir*.

When the tiger was cut into pieces, Pandit Bihari Lai, the painter accompanying the hunting party, was ordered by the Maharaja to paint the portrait of Hari Singh depicting his encounter with the tiger. After the portrait had been painted, a copy of it was presented by the Maharaja to Hari Singh who kept it as a monument.

I surprisd him by my knowledge whence he had gained the application of Nalwa, and of his having cloven the head of a tiger who had already siezed him as its prey.

1. Griffin, Sir, Lepel : Ranjit Singh, PP 134, 35

2. Megregor, M. L., History of the Sikhs, Vol. I. P.227

He told the Diwan to bring some drawings, and gave me his portrait in the act of killing the beast."<sup>1</sup>

Hari Singh was honoured in the open *darbar*. High praise was showered on him and he was made Sardar of the *Sher-e-dil* regiment. He was given command of 800 horsemen and infantry. While other Sardars like Sardar Desa Singh Majitha, Sardar Hukma Singh Chimni and Sardar Nihal Singh Attariwala were given command of 400 horsemen, 200 horsemen, and infantry and 500 horsemen and infantry respectively. This largely encouraged the young Sardar, who was now determined to fight against heavy odds.

From now onwards, Hari Singh's military career saw an upward curve. By virtue of his extraordinary prowess, valour and devotion, he became not only the Commander-in-Chief of the Khalsa army, but also held the important position of the Governor of Kashmir, Hazara and Peshawar and coins were struck in his name. It was a rare achievement which any general in the Khalsa army could achieve."<sup>1</sup>

Hari Singh Nalwa thus brought infinite fame to his forefathers who had established themselves as the finest of soldiers.

## FIRST VICTORY AT KASUR

Ranjit Singh was attaining one victory after another and had by now consolidated his position in most of the areas occupied by him. He was ambitious and was always thinking of ways and means to annex as much territory as possible. When in 1800 Ranjit Singh came to Lahore, his authority was unchallenged. On April 12, 1801, on the birthday of Khalsa—an auspicious day for the Sikhs—Ranjit Singh was formally crowned the Maharaja of Punjab. Great festivities were organised in all parts of his kingdom. Public buildings were illuminated and crackers were burst. The sovereignty of *Sarkar Khalsa* was proclaimed and coins were struck in the Maharaja's name. The coins bore the following inscription :

*Degh-o-Tegh-o-Fateh-o Nusrat be-darang,  
yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.*

[Hospitality, the sword, victory and conquest un-failing to Guru Gobind Singh from Nanak]

These coins did not bear Ranjit Singh's likeness or his name but that of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh to whom he owned all his victories. Likewise, the seal of government did not have any reference to him. The government was not to be his personal matter and it

<sup>1</sup> Baron, Hugal : Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab, P. 254,

1. Lawrence, Walter, Sir: The Valley of Kashmir, P. 235



was to be run in the name of *Sarkar Khalsaji*. He preferred to be called *Singh Sahib*.

Amidst shouts of *Sat Siri Akal*, Sahib Singh Bedi put saffron mark on Ranjit Singh's forehead and he was formally proclaimed the Maharaja of Punjab. A royal salute was fired. After the investiture ceremony was over, the Maharaja rode on an elephant and passed through the main streets of Lahore. The jubilant crowd showered flowers on the Maharaja who in turn showered back gold and silver coins.

In spite of all this, the Maharaja remained as humble and unassuming as before. He refused to wear an emblem of royalty on his turban. He did not sit on the throne and held his *darbar* sitting cross-legged in his small bath tub, using it as a chair. He received his admirers and other visitors reclining on cushions, sitting on a carpet.

The Sardars and chiefs offered *nazrana* to demonstrate their allegiance to the Maharaja. They were in turn given *Khillats*. Ranjit Singh's was a secular ruler in the true sense of the word. Courts presided over by the *Qctzis* and *Mirilas* were recognised and special care was taken to see that the feelings of the Muslim subjects were not injured in any way. Imam Bakhsh was appointed as the city *Kotwal* and some prominent citizens were named *Chaudries* who were to be held responsible for maintaining law and order in their respective jurisdictions. A sense of security prevailed among the people and civic life was restored to normalcy.

The assumption of the title of Maharaja by Ranjit Singh is of great significance in the history of Punjab.

It was a vital step towards the establishment of a sovereign power in the state. The Maharaja having discarded crown and bestowing power in the hands of *Sarkar Khalsa*, fostered a sense of unity and discipline among his subjects, particularly Sikhs. The other heads of *misals* were silenced once for all and their aspirations to attain sovereign power were curbed. They had no alternative but to recognise Ranjit Singh as the ruler of Punjab. The title of Maharaja gave Ranjit Singh a legal right to demand revenue from the territories which had once paid revenue to Lahore. These territories included Jammu, Multan, Kashmir, Bahawalpur, Derajats and Mankera. They were required to pay tribute to Maharaja and owe allegiance to the *darbar*.

Within a short span, the Maharaja convinced not only the people of Lahore, but also the people of the neighbouring areas that he did not intend a Sikh rule in Punjab. It would be a purely Punjabi State, secular in character and outlook in which all subjects of the State, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs would be given equal treatment. Nobody would be above law. Everybody irrespective to his religion, caste or creed would enjoy the same privileges, rights and responsibilities. The Maharaja offered State jobs to talented Hindus and Muslims and himself respected the sentiments of all religions. He participated in the festival of all religions. Dussehra and Diwali were celebrated with splendour and gaiety. All the State buildings were illuminated and fireworks displayed. The Maharaja paid homage to the tombs of Muslim divines. On *Amavas*, took bath in the holy tanks of Amritsar and Tarn Taran with his Sikh brethren.

After settling the affairs of Lahore, the Maharaja turned his eyes on Kasur. Kasur was a small colony governed by a Pathan Nawab Nizam-ud-Din. It was an eye sore to the Maharaja. In 1801, an expedition was sent to subdue the Pathan but stubborn resistance was offered by him. Later, the Nawab joined hands with Sahib Singh Bhangi and raised a banner of revolt against the Maharaja. The Maharaja sent a force under Fateh Singh Kalianwala to Kasur. The Nawab surrendered and agreed to acknowledge the authority of the Lahore *darbar*. He paid *nazrana* and offered a few of his men as hostages as a guarantee of future good behaviour.

Hardly a year passed in peace. The Nawab again became hostile and started attacking the Lahore *darbar's* territory. The Maharaja could not tolerate this open defiance. So a force was sent under the able command of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia to subdue Nawab Nizam-ud-Din. However, the Maharaja could not take risk in the matter and himself followed with a strong contingent of troops to chastise the Pathan ruler. Kasur was sacked. Very little resistance was offered by the Nawab and his ally, finding it difficult to hold the fort, he surrendered. The Nawab had to pay a huge sum of money as idemnity and was recognised as tributary of Lahore *darbar*.

However, the situation further changed with the assasination of Nawab Nizam-ud-Din and succession of his brother Nawab Qutb-ud-Din who, being somewhat arrogant, openly defied the authority of the Maharaja. Immediately, a force was sent to subdue him. The

Nawab remained inside the fort and fought the battles from within. After a sieze lasting several months, the Nawab surrendered with a promise to pay war idemnity. This victory lent further courage to the Maharaja's forces.

In 1807, however, trouble erupted again. Qutb-ud-Din revolted and challenged the authority of the Maharaja. On February 10, the Maharaja's forces attacked Kasur under the command of Jodh Singh Ramgarhia. For the first time since his joining the Maharaja's army Hari Singh Nalwa accompanied the commander and got a chance to show his valour. He was given the command of a division of army. Kasur contained many small forts, all of which were with a huge quantity of arms and ammunition and other war material. The march of the Sikhs cut off all the lines of communications. Sieze lasted about a month or so, by which time the Pathans had consumed all their provisions and had begun to live on the flesh of horses and other cattle. It was a terrible scene, The Sikhs laid waste the entire area and, using artillery, levelled the city walls to the ground. The city was plundered and everything the people of the town had was forcibly wrested from them. Qutab-ud-Din shut himself within the four walls of the fort. These were internal dissensions in the Nawab's family which resulted in his complete ruin. By the end of March, he was forced to surrender. 'Like a moth, Qutab-ud-Din fell upon the lamp of the glory of the armies, burst his wings and having failed to carry on the open battle, became besiegedy The Nawab's forces laid down their arms and

recognised Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a sovereign! However; the Maharaja took pity on Nawab and bestowed a *Jagir* on him at Mamdot. In turn, the Nawab promised to give 100 horsemen to the Lahore *darbar*. The *Jagir* had an annual income of fifty-two thousand rupees. This territory had been conquered by Qutab-ud-Din and his brother in 1800 from the Rai of Raikot. Fateh Din Khan, nephew of Qutab-ud-Din and son of Nizam-ud-Din, was given a *Jagir* at Marup, subject to the same conditions as imposed upon his uncle.

"The Sikh soldiers are said to have greatly enriched themselves by plundering Kasur, and the property of Qutab-ud-Din Khan in particular, which fell into the hands of the Maharaja, consisting of jewels, rich stuffs and fabrics, shawls, horses and camels, is said to have been enormous, while thousands of *Qurans* and Arabic and Persian books, plundered by the sikhs, were sold at very cheap rates in the bazars of Lahore."<sup>1</sup>

At the time of Metcalfe mission, the Nawab was present with the army of Ranjit Singh. When the Khan desired later to transfer his allegiance to the British as a Cis-Sutlaj chieftain, the British government declined protection to him, for he was by now regarded as an follower of the Lahore ruler.

On his return to Lahore, Ranjit Singh held a great *darbar* to celebrate his victory. The towns of Lahore and Amritsar were illuminated and a big sum of money was presented to *Hari Mandir* at Amritsar.

It was the first ever battle fought by Hari Singh Nalwa who showed his mettle in an exemplary fashion. The Maharaja appreciated his services and honoured him in an open *darbar*. Some of the gallant soldiers were also rewarded. Hari Singh's *Jagir* had an annual income of thirty thousand rupees. By this victory, Hari Singh's supremacy was well established over other generals and made for him a pride of place in the Maharaja's heart. It was the first feather on his turban which not only encouraged him but strengthened also his determination to further consolidate the Maharaja's army and render him all possible help in enlarging his territory. Hari Singh was also made commander of eight hundred horsemen. It was a great honour bestowed on any general after his first victory.

## CHAPTER V

*BATTLES OF MULTAN  
-HARI SINGH IS INJURED*

Multan was a rich fertile land in the southern part of Punjab and earned land revenue in abundance. It was a part of the Mughal empire and was known as *Dar-ul-Amaan*. When the Mughal power was disintegrating, Multan came in the possession of Pathans. In one part of the province of Multan was a territory which was bestowed on a landlord by Nadir Shah in 1739. Later, it came to be known as Bhawalpur. In 1752, Ahmad Shah Abdali conquered Multan but left out Bhawalpur. He appointed a separate Governor for the province. Till 1757, it was governed as a part of Ahmad Shah Abdali's Indian empire. In 1767, Jhanda Singh, the brave and fearless head of Bhangi *Misal*, launched a severe attack on Multan but he was unable to drive out the Durani Shuja Khan from there. Even his ally, Mubarak Khan, could not be uprooted. A fierce battle took place on the banks of the river Sutlej but it could not decide the fate of any of them. At last an understanding was reached between Jhanda Singh Bhangi and the Nawab to the effect that Pakpattan would form the boundary between their territories. But the Bhangi Sardar did not stick to the terms of the agreement. He again invaded Multan in 1771 but failed to capture it. However, a dispute arose

between Shuja Khan and Haji Sharif Beg, the two aspirants for the Governorship of Multan, Haji Beg sought the aid of Bhangis to subdue the former. His request was conceded and Jhanda Singh marched towards Multan along with his brother Ganda Singh. Fierce battle ensued in which Nawab Shuja Khan and his ally Mubarak Khan, were completely routed. The fort was seized by the Bhangis who refused to hand over the territory to Haji Beg. Multan was proclaimed territory belonging to the Khalsa. Haji Beg was driven out of it. The Bhangis ultimately divided the town among themselves. A portion of the city was given to Lehna Singh, the Bhangi Commandar, and on the remaining portion the authority of Diwan Singh was recognised, who was appointed Commander of the fort where Sikh forces were stationed.

The Bhangi rule of Multan did not last more than seven years. They could not administer the territory efficiently which resulted in widespread discontent. Jhanda Singh was constantly busy in wars and internal wrangles of divergent *misals*. Although he was able to conquer Jhang, Kala Bag and Mankera he could not subdue Shujabad. After sometime, Jhanda Singh was assassinated while at war in Jammu with Kanahayas and Sukerchakias.

In 1776, Shuja Khan died and his son Muzaffar Khan succeeded him. In 1779, Timur, the successor of Ahmad Shah Abdali, expelled the Bhangis from Multan and recognised Muzaffar Khan as its Governor. Timur also overran Sind and Bhawalpur, the ruler of which were again brought under subjugation, making them

tributories of Kabul. Timur then returned to Afganistan.

Multan thus again came under the Afghans who ruled it with an iron hand. Timur died in 1792. Nawab Muzaffar Khan remained loyal to Afghans and paid tribute regularly. However, Wazir Fateh Khan, the Minister of Amir Shah Mohmad of Kabul, conspired to replace Nawab Muzaffar Khan and appointed his own henchman as the Governor of Multan, but the move was strongly resisted by the Nawab Shuja-ul-Malik, who had regained power in the eastern part of Afghanistan, came to his rescue and confirmed Muzaffar Khan to the Governorship.

The Nawab governed Multan in a half-hearted manner and administered it only to fulfill his own ambitions. "Multan stood 4 miles from the left of river Chenab ; it was surrounded by a wall between forty and fifty feet high. A large portion of villages were in ruins, and there were signs of a well-cultivated country going to decay. Nothing could be worse than the government ; all sorts of direct exactions were aggravated by monopolies, rapacious ungovernable troops, and every other kind of abuse."<sup>1</sup>

It is estimated that the army of the Nawab consisted of 2,000 fully trained strong men and 20 guns. He had also 10,000 militia which could be utilised in case of exigencies.

Muzaffar Khan "was a brave and energetic man, and held his own gallantly against both the Sikhs and

the neighbouring tribes, Sials and others, who attacked him."<sup>1</sup>

From the very beginning, Ranjit Singh had an eye on Multan and wanted to annex it to his empire. Multan had then a strategic position. It was not only the capital of the State but was also a centre of trade with the countries across the Bolan Pass and had an annual revenue of Rs. 680,975 a year. There was a direct route between Multan and the Bolan Pass, leading to the Kandhar under the Persians. Bolan Pass had to be defended by the forces stationed at Multan. Moreover, it was situated in between the States of Bhawalpur and Southern Sind and could pose a threat to Maharaja Ranjit Singh anytime for all these Muslim States could join hands and attack Ranjit Singh's territory. Their power, therefore, had to be shattered.

In 1802, Ranjit Singh attacked Multan for the first time. The Nawab came out to meet him 30 *kos* from his capital but could not stand against Ranjit Singh's forces. In the end, he offered *nazrana* and promised to pay tribute to Ranjit Singh. Some valuable gifts were exchanged and both parted as friends.

In 1806 again, after having captured Jhang, Ranjit Singh marched towards Multan and reached Mahtam, 32 KM north of the city. The Nawab did not have the heart to engage him, so he gave him Rs 70 000 and requested him to retire to his own territory

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In 1807, the Maharaja once again marched to Mul-

<sup>1</sup> « fi », Lepel, Ranjit Singh. P, 183.

1. Elphinstone, Mountstuan An Account of the Kingdom of Kabul, I, PP 28, 27 8 28.

tan in force. A battle was fought on the outskirts of the town after which it was partially captured but the fort remained impregnable. "At last, an agreement was concluded through Fateh Singh Kalianwala, under which the Maharaja returned to his capital, securing a huge sum of money. Nawab Muzaffar Khan, weary of war now made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and on his return vainly tried to induce the English to take him under their protection. But this the British Government declined. Multan was remote and beyond the sphere of their desire to influence.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the Maharaja's desire to capture Multan could not be extinguished. Preparations were on once again to conquer the capital. So, in the early days of 1810, Ranjit Singh marched towards Multan with a considerable force. He had earlier met Shah Shuja of Afghanistan at Khushab. Shah Shuja was an exiled king of Kabul who desired Ranjit Singh to capture Multan and hand over the territory to him. Muzaffar Khan had in 1803, repulsed an attack of the Shah's troops and in the hope of conciliating him, had more than once offered him an asylum at Multan but the Shah desired to have the capital as his own by conquest. Shah was given due respect by the Maharaja, but the Shah did not offer any money to Ranjit Singh, who then decided to attack Multan.

A huge force preceded on February 15, 1810 which reached the outskirts of Multan on February 24.

On February 25, the Maharaja, who was himself commanding the forces sent an ultimatum to Nawab M.T/affar Khan through his general Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. It was stated that the Nawab had entered into an agreement with the Lahore *darbar* that he would be loyal to the *darbar* that he would have no connection with the enemies of the *darbar*; that he would pay regularly tribute and *nazrana* to the *darbar* through his own men; and that he would remain faithful and well-wisher of the *darbar* under all circumstances. But he had not implemented the terms of the treaty; was responsible for breaking the various clauses of the treaty giving shelter to Ahmad Khan, Sial of Jhang, who was the confirmed enemy of the *darbar*; was bound to arrest Ahmad Khan according to the terms of the treaty and hand him over to the Maharaja; had helped Nawab Qutab-ud-Din of Kasur against the Maharaja and given him arms, ammunition and money for which proof was available; and had failed to send tribute and *nazrana* in time.

In the end, the Nawab was called upon to pay the due amount immediately without any further loss of time. If he did not take speedy action in this regard, his territory would be annexed to the Lahore *darbar*. He was further asked to send an immediate reply through Fateh Singh Ahluwalia.

When the ultimatum was read to the Nawab, he became nervous and panicky. He did not give any satisfactory reply and tried to side-track the issue. Ahluwalia no longer stayed with the Nawab and returned to report to the Maharaja the gist of what had

1. Griffin, Lepel, Ranjit Singh P. 183.

happened. The Maharaja immediately ordered his forces to attack Multan. The Nawab had also made full preparations for war. He had collected a good **Quantity** of arms and **ammunition**. However, the Maharaja's forces took possession of the city, and laid siege of the fort. The Nawab had provided the fort with an abundance of water, provisions and supplies. "The appearance of the Sikh army at Multan and their occupation of the town spread alarm throughout the neighbouring country. Muhammad Khan, the chief of Leia and Bhakker, bought off the invader by the payment of Rs 1,20,000 as a ransom for his state and the chief of Bahawalpur, Sadiq Muhammad Khan, through a friend of Muzaffar Khan's, offered a lakh as tribute, but as the Maharaja wanted more substantial aid, the offer was not accepted. The Bahawalpur chief was at last compelled to furnish a contingent of 500 cavalry for service in the **impending** Multan campaign."

Now, the Maharaja's attention was diverted towards the capture of the fort. He himself took stock of the situation by going round the fort along its walls and ordered installation of the big guns outside Hathi and Khizri gates. Although, by now, the citadel of Multan was besieged by the Sikh army, the Pathans offered a stout resistance and the most strenuous attempts of the Sikh forces to capture the fort by assault failed miserably. A heavy bombardment was made for several days but without any result.

The Maharaja, finding the situation most critical, thought of an alternative. Under this plan, some of the

gallant soldiers had to come forward to lay mines under the walls of the fort. But to lay mines was a most dangerous task which could have very dangerous consequences. Anyone who tried to lay the mines might himself get destroyed in the process. The Maharaja summoned his Generals and Sardars and addressed them • "My dear brethren, Khalsa ji, it is my keen and earnest desire that we should gain victory in this battle. Daily skirmishes are taking lives of many innocent soldiers. Now the only way left out is to make sacrifices. So I demand the head of my few brave and gallant soldiers who could take the risk of even laying down their lives for ultimate victory. We should have faith in God and I am sure, the success will be ours." It is said that about a hundred soldiers offered themselves for the supreme sacrifice. And, of course, one of the first to offer himself for the arduous task was Hari Singh Nalwa, the pride of Maharaja's army. Then came Nihal Singh Attari and Attar Singh Dhari along with others. The Maharaja was extremely happy and, with great pride in his men, declared that the army which had such gallant soldiers could never be defeated by anyone. "But I am not a coward. I don't wish to remain aloof from the battle field, I will myself lead my men to lay mines under the walls of the fort and thus fulfil my duty". Upon this, Hari Singh Nalwa stood before the Maharaja with folded hands and said : "We are here to serve our Master, if we sacrifice our lives for the honour of our Motherland we shall be proud of it. Thousands will arise from the land to sacrifice their lives. But we do not desire that our great Master should be harmed in any way and suffer any casualty. Your honour will not be reborn to lead the nation to victory. Thus, this

should be our honour. We will perform the duty efficiently and diligently and think ourselves fortunate." The Maharaja was overwhelmed with joy and agreed to his general's request reluctantly.

The Maharaja's keen interest encouraged and inspired the soldiers. And with shouts of *Sat Siri Akal*; 75 brave soldiers under the the Command of Hari Singh Nalwa, Nihal Singh Attari and Attar Singh Dhari proceeded towards the fort. The Nawab's soldiers spat fire on them. But these bravemen unconcernedly went on laying mines under the walls of the fort. "Ranjit Singh made the most solemn and lavish promises to the chiefs who should distinguish themselves in the action, by the earliest effective advance. He personally reconnoitred the enemy's position, examined his posts and fixed his own, marking out the spots of the batteries and assigning lines of approach to the different chiefs, whose sense of duty to their countrymen was appealed to with vehemence. Extensive transport arrangements were made both by land and water from Lahore and Amritsar, and the whole resources of the country were unreservedly placed at the disposal of the military authorities to secure this much-coveted possession".<sup>1</sup>

By the time the mines were laid, several Sikh soldiers were injured any many others killed. The fort was besieged but the soldiers inside blew up the battery of Attar Singh Dhari, killing him and his twelve men. General Hari Singh Nalwa was seriously injured. On March 21, a general assault was ordered, but the Sikhs

were repulsed with a heavy loss. The provisions were exhausted and the soldiers were disheartened. Dewan Mokham Chand, the army general fell dangerously ill and many other notable chiefs were slain. But the Nawab's citadel remained as it was. On March 25, another assault was made but without any remarkable success. At last, no alternative was left with the Maharaja but to accept the terms offered by the Nawab. These terms had been rejected earlier several times. The Maharaja agreed to retire on receiving the payment of two-and-a-half lakh rupees, 20 war horses and a contingent in time of war. On April 14, the Maharaja ordered his forces to be withdrawn after receiving rupees thirty thousand in earnest of the ransom. Akbar Khan, brother-in-law of Muzaffar Khan, was handed over as a hostage for the payment of balance. The Maharaja reached Lahore on April 24, highly depressed on his fallure to subdue Multan. He blamed his chiefs and generals.

The famous Bhangi *top* named *Zamzama* was brought from Lahore to batter down the walls of the fort; but it made little impression on the besieged. It discharged a ball of two-and-a-half maunds (Kacha) or 80 lbs. in weight, but the appliance for working this huge piece of ordnance were wanting in the Sikh camp, while nobody possessed sufficient science and skill to make a proper use of it. Some little impression that was made on the ramparts of the citadel by the Sikh artillery had the effect only of redoubling the zeal of the besieged, who in countermining blew up the battery of Sardar Attar Singh Dhari, close to the fort, killing the Sardar and twelve others and severely wound-

<sup>1</sup>, Latif Mohd., History of the Punjabi P. 386.



ing many more, among whom were Sardar Nihal Singh Attariwala and the youthful Hari Singh Nalwa. Confused and panic-stricken the assailants fled, leaving their dead close to the fort, but, the high-minded Pathans sent the bodies to the besigers, that of Attar Sinsh being wrapped in a pair or shawls."<sup>1</sup>

When the Maharaja was about to retire he saw the dead body of Attar Singh Dhari and the badly injured Hari Singh Nalwa and Nihal Singh Attariwalla. He ordered immediate treatment of these generals and issued special instructions to Fakir Aziz-Ud-Din to look after them. Sardar Attar Singh Dhari's body was cremated with full military honours and the wounds of the injured generals were bandaged. The services of the brave soldiers who had laid down mines under the walls of the fort were highly appreciated and grant of *Jagirs* announced for many of them.

After a few days' effective treatment, Hari Singh Nalwa recovered and later he and General Attariwala were taken to Lahore in palanquins. There they were admitted to a hospital from where they were discharged after several months in a fit physical state.

The valour, courage and bravery shown by Hari Singh Nalwa in the battle of Multan raised his status in the eyes of the Maharaja as well as the army. After some time a *Shai darbar* was held in which the Maharaja confirmed on him a *Jagir* worth Rs. 20,000 and raised his rank in the army.

It is also said that "seeing that his own strength was insufficient for the capture of Multan, Ranjit Singh addressed the Governor-General requesting the cooperation of British troops. His proposition was not well received, the more so as he proposed that the force, instead of marching through the Punjab, should pass across the sterile country south of the Sutlej."<sup>1</sup>

However the Maharaja could not sit idle. His desire for the capture of Multan increased and he reinforced his forces for another attack as the successive failures had cast a gloom on his *darbar*. "The Maharaja was found depressed and in a remorseful mood when David Ochterlony visited Lahore in 1812 at the time of the marriage ceremony of Prince Kharak Singh."<sup>2</sup>

In February 1816, Multan was attacked again. The Sikh forces marched in good numbers, but they were not sufficient to conquer the territory. While some other parts of the fort were captured, the battle on the whole ended without any achievement. Fakir Aziz-ud-Din however, made the Nawab pay the tribute and the Sikh forces proceeded towards Mankera.

At that moment, Nawab Mohammad Khan of Mankera died and his grand son Sher Mohammad Khan succeeded him. He was asked to pay tribute to the extent of Rupees one lakh and twenty thousand to the Lahore *darbar*. Akali Phula Singh caused havoc in Khanpur and Mohmudkot forts. On the other hand, Missar Diwan Chand, general Ilhai Baksh, Fateh Singh

1. Griffin, Lepel, Ranjit Singh PP 184-185.

2. Ochterlony to Edmonstone, January 23, 1812.

Ahluwalia, Nihal Singh Attari and Hari Singh Nalwa bombarded the forts with seven platoons and heavy artillery. The walls of the fort collapsed and heavy casualties occurred in the Nawab's ranks. The Nawab became nervous and offered to pay rupees fifty thousand in cash as *nazrana*.

Hari Singh Nalwa had exhibited exemplary courage in the battle and the Maharaja greatly appreciated his services. As a token of his appreciation the Maharaja offered him a big *Jagir* at Gujranwala. "Gujranwala was earlier a small town with a few houses here and there. But now, whenever Hari Singh Nalwa got a little time out of his otherwise busy life, he spent his days at Gujranwala. He got repaired and made *pucca* the old fort. He also got constructed an English style bungalow for his residence alongwith metalled roads and streets. He also encouraged several people of the surrounding areas to come and live at Gujranwala. "It is said that once prince Kharak Singh requested Maharaja Ranjit Singh to bestow a *Jagir* on him at Gujranwala. But the Maharaja had so much love and affection for Hari Singh Nalwa that he bluntly refused, saying that it was in the charge of Hari Singh Nalwa who remained present day and night rendering service to the Noble Sarkar, adding that some other *Jagir* would be granted to him."<sup>1</sup>

The years 1805-1815 were spent by Hari Singh Nalwa in the service of the Maharaja. He assisted him in finding solutions to many ticklish political problems. In 1812, he was sent to Pakhli in Kashmir to collect a

tribute of Rs. 10,000 from the local Nawab. In 1815, Hari Singh's horsemen went towards Kundagarh alongwith a *ghari*. Sherbaz Khan of Kundagarh came out to fight them. Many men from both sides laid down their lives and in the end Sherbaz Khan felt that he could no longer fight. So he fled away and Nalwa's horsemen brought the *ghari* alongwith them in perfect safety.

In 1817, the Maharaja issued orders for a large scale campaign to conquer Multan. Troops were collected in large numbers, the entire transport system was re-organised, an effective line of communication was established, military provisions were collected and depots were reinforced. Ranjit Singh's generals were told to subdue Multan once for all. They were asked to tell the Nawab to surrender himself completely and hand over the fort to the Lahore *darbar*. No negotiations were to be held with the Nawab unless he surrendered. A 20,000 strong force was collected, fully armed to face any eventuality. In January, 1818 it was sent to Multan under the nominal command of Prince Kharak Singh but in reality commanded by Missar Diwan Chand. It included generals Hari Singh Nalwa, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Jaffar Jang, Dhana Singh Malwai, Nihal Singh Attari and others.

On the way, the forts of Khangarh and Muzaffargarh were taken. Hari Singh Nalwa showed extraordinary valour and skill. In February 1819, the city of Multan fell before the mighty Sikh forces. Then, the bombardment of the citadel started which continued for many days. The Nawab had an army of only 2000 men, but the fort was very well defended and such arrange-

1. Garrett, H.L.O. Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh—1810-1817 P. 213.

ments were made that even if the siege lasted several months, the provisions did not fall short.

The Nawab raised a cry of *Jehad* to fight the infidels and the entire Muslim population of the surrounding areas joined him. He also made a special appeal to the ruler of Afghanistan to help. The battle continued and the fort remained besieged for about four months. The Nawab's forces resisted the attack with courage and endurance. The Sikh soldiers, with the help of their canon, made breaches in the thick mud and-brick walls of the fort, across the wide moat which surrounded it, but the Nawab's forces soon filled them up. Even heavy bombardment of the fort was not showing any result.

In April, the Sikh forces were reinforced and an 80 pounder canon was brought in under the

command of Jamedar Khushal Singh. The Sikh forces encouraged by this made renewed assaults but were repulsed. It is said that at one time the Sikh forces lost 1800 of their men. The gates were blown in, but the garrison raised behind them mounds of earth on which they fought hand to hand with the Sikhs. The defenders of the fort were at last reduced to about two three hundred fighting men, most of them belonging to the family or tribe of the Nawab. The rest were killed.

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The storming of the fort continued till June 2 1818 when Ilhai Baksh's artillery was able to effect two breaches. Again, many assaults were made by the Sikhs who also crossed the moat, but then they were mowed down by the Nawab's men.

The fighting continued. The Nawab's forces refused surrender. They were adamant in their resolve to defend fort. However, on the night of June 2, a party of Akalis under the command of Sadhu Singh surprised the defenders by rushing through one of the breaches in Khizri gate, risking their own lives. Other Sikh forces followed. "Here, the old Nawab, with his eight sons and all that remained of his garrison, stood, swords in hand, resolved to fight to the death. So many fell beneath the keen Afghan swords that the Sikhs drew back and opened fire on the little party with their matchlocks. 'Come on like men' shouted the Afghans 'and let us fall in their fight'. But this was an invitation which the Sikhs did not care to accept. There died the white-bearded Muzaffar Khan, scorning to accept quarter and five of his sons. A sixth was wounded severely in the face, and two accepted quarter and were saved. Few of the garrisons escaped with their lives." "The city and fort were now given up to be plundered by the sikh troops : great were the ravages committed by the Sikhs on this occasion. About 400 to 500 houses in the fort were razed to the ground and their owners deprived of all they had. The precious stones, jewellery, shawls and other valuables belonging to the Nawab were confiscated to the State and kept carefully packed by Diwan Ram Dayal, for the inspection of the Maharaja. The arms were all carried away. In the town many houses were set on fire, and nothing was left with the inhabitants that was worth having. Hundreds were stripped even of their clothes. Outrages were committed on the women,

many of whom committed suicide by drowning themselves in the wells or otherwise putting an end to their lives to save themselves from dishonour. Hundreds were killed in the sack of the city; and indeed there was hardly a soul who escaped both loss and violence. So great in short, were the horrors inflicted upon the unfortunate inhabitants that the terrible incidents attendant on the sack of Multan are recollected to this day, and still not unfrequently from the topics of conversation."<sup>1</sup>

When the news of victory reached the Lahore *darbar*, the Maharaja could not contain his joy. He gave the messenger who brought the news of victory a pair of gold bracelets and rode out on the back of elephant and showered silver and gold on his subjects. Missar Diwan Chand was honoured with the title of *Zafarjang Bahadur*.

As Multan fell, a large booty was collected by the soldiers. Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself admitted that at the time of the conquest the wealth of the city was estimated at four crores of rupees. The Sikh officers, he said, did not restrain the soldiers from plunder after the fall of the town, but very little of the booty came to his share, even though the soldiary was made to disgorge part of it."<sup>2</sup>

With the capture of Multan, Afghan influence in the south of Punjab was over. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was in occupation of the rich province yielding a revenue of 700,000 rupees annually. It was a great commercial centre of trade and industry and had its strategic importance.

"After this, the walls of the fort were repaired and garrison of 600 men was placed in the fort. The victorious Sikh army hastened back to Lahore. The Maharaja issued strict orders to his officers and soldiers that they should restore their plunder and if they were found with them by a particular date any article the penalty would be death.

This order brought about rupees five lakhs to the State treasury- However, the plunder of Multan was estimated at two million sterling. It was supposed, in popular belief, to bring no luck to its possessors most of whom died in poverty or were killed in battle."<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja was over joyous at this victory. It not only consolidated his power but also enhanced his prestige. Canons were fired in Lahore to celebrate the victory. Celebrations were also held throughout the State. The victorious forces were received with full honour at Lahore and the Maharaja bestowed *Jagirs* on his valiant generals and soldiers.

Hari Singh Nalwa had proved his worth in this battle. He made a place of honour in the Maharaja's heart and the amount of Nalwa's *jagir* was doubled.

Hardly Hari Singh Nalwa had been cured of his injuries when he was directed by the Maharaja to subdue the ruler of Mitha Tiwana, who had raised a banner of revolt. He was further asked to mend sayyads of Uch, who were not behaving properly. They had created

1. Latif Mohd., History of the Punjab P. 412

2. Moorcraft, Williams Travels P. 61

1. Mohd. Latif, Punjab Chiefs P. 487

terror in the area and people were groaning under their cruelty.

Hari Singh Nalwa, fulfilling the Maharaja's desire and in accordance with the policy of the Khalsa, tried to mend these rulers but of no avail. The general did not want to pick up quarrel with them, but when they refused to oblige, Sardar Dal Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa came with four platoons of soldiers to subdue them. On February 7, 1812, the Sikh forces and artillery marched towards Mitha Tiwana, the capital of the Tiwana's territory and reached there in the shortest possible time. The Tiwanas, under the command of Ahamad yar Khan offered stout resistance. Artillery fire was opened and a fierce battle ensued. The Tiwanas fought bravely but suffered heavy casualties. The fighting continued the whole day.

After a couple of days one of the Muzaffar Khan's surviving sons was brought to the court of the Maharaja, who was very much impressed by the valour of the Nawab. As he placed gallantry above all other virtues of a soldier, the Maharaja got up from his seat and embraced the Nawab's son. After five days another son of the Nawab was brought up by Missar Diwan Chand. The Maharaja also embraced him and asked him to sit beside him.

By evening, the soldiers felt tired and the battle ceased. A *gurmatta* ; resolution was passed by the Sikh leaders that it was no use fighting and killing the innocent. Tiwanas were asked to cease hostilities as it would be useless to shed more blood. It was also made clear to them that if they did not do so, they would themselves

be responsible for the consequences. They could vacate the town by night after which they would not be attacked. Tiwanas retreated and their territory was captured. The Khalsa army fulfilled its promise and no blood was shed. Thereafter the Sikh flag was unfurled.

Now came the turn of the sayyads. Hari Singh Nalwa made up his mind to punish the sayyads for their misdeeds. These *Pirs* had created havoc for the Hindu population. They ill-treated them and looked on them with contempt. Whenever any Hindu used to cross their way, they would either cover their face with a piece of cloth or spit on them. The *Pirs* even went to the extent of looting the houses of these people without caring for any law. The innocent people., however, could not raise their voice against them and went on bearing injustice silently.

Uch was attacked by the Khalsa army under the command of Hari Singh Nalwa. The *Pirs* could not offer much resistance and were soon ready to surrender. They were asked to pay *nazrana* of Rs. 25,000 which they readily paid. They were then directed to remain in peace.

Hari Singh Nalwa reached Lahore victorious. He was well received by the Maharaja who bestowed on him the entire territory as *Jagir* to Nalwa. Others were also amply rewarded

CHAPTER VI

*THE FORT OF ATTOCK IS CONQUERED*

The Attock fort had its historical importance and was built at a strategic point. It lay on the main route through which all the Central Asian invaders came to India and plundered it to their heart's fill. The fort could act as a strong guard for the defence of India. Ranjit Singh had realised this and was convinced that once the fort was occupied he could only close this highway to India to future invaders but, with the fort beyond the Indus under his control, also expand his territories right up to the Kheyber Pass where Afgans had built up strong defences.

The Attock fort was built by Akbar with high quality stone in 1583 at a high altitude. Its construction was supervised by Khawaja Shams-ud-din who had earlier designed it too. The front wall was 400 yards long while the other three walls were 800 yards long. On the eastern side of the fort, it was engraved in Persian that it had been built by King Akbar in Hizri 991.

The Kabul *Wazir* was awfully annoyed with Ata Mohammad for the assistance he had given to Shah Mohammad and made up his mind to invade and capture Kashmir. In 1812, he put his designs into action. This was the time when Maharaja Ranjit Singh had also sent his forces to attack Kashmir. When they

came to know each other's aim they decided to co-operate and attack the Kasmir valley jointly. Fateh Khan sought Ranjit Singh's help as he was afraid that Ranjit Singh might help Ata Mohammad against him. On the other hand, Ranjit Singh had a definite motive in extending his hand of friendship to Fateh Khan. As he had not captured all the hill states, he felt unsure of himself to capture Kashmir alone. In the venture, he needed somebody's help which was now readily available.

Ranjit Singh promised assistance to Fateh Khan with 12,000 men under the command of Mokham Chand besides facility to the Afgans to pass through Rajouri and Pir Panjal in return for Rs. 9 lakhs from the Kashmir plunder and Afghan help in sub-duing Multan. It is said that "neither party desired to come to blows, and neither was inclined to advance into the hills with the possibility of having its retreat cut off by the other. There was but one alternative. The leaders met and agreed to finish the hunt together and divide the spoils. On this understanding the parties advanced, each having made a mental reservation to outwit the other if the opportunity offered."

Kashmir was occupied by Fateh Khan with the help of Ranjit Singh's forces. But he now refused to allow Ranjit Singh his share of the plunder as agreed "Pon. When the Maharaja came to know that Mokham Chand had returned empty handed, his wrath knew no

bounds, he became so furious that he decided to take revenge immediately.

Finding that his brother Ata Mohammad Khan Governor of Kashmir, had been driven out from his position, Jahandad Khan, the Governor of Attock also became panicky. Ranjit Singh started negotiations with him and offered him a big *Jagir* in return for the surrender of the fort of Attock. Jahandad Khan agreed to the Maharaja's proposals and allowed Dia Singh who was already present in the vicinity of Attock with a contingent of Sikh soldiers as a precautionary measure to occupy the fort. The fort was occupied by Ranjit Singh at a very low cost of Rs. 1 lakh. This amount had to be paid to Jahandan Khan's soldiers who would leave the fort only after the long outstanding arrears of pay were paid to them. It is also said that the Sikhs got in the fort 3510 maunds of grains, 429 maunds of ammunition, 70 pieces of guns and mortars, and 435 maunds of rock salt.

However, the Maharaja could not remain complacent and despatched a strong detachment of the troops under the command of Fakir Aziz-ud-din, Diwan Devi Das and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. Fateh Khan also became furious and remonstrated with the Maharaja and accused him of treachery. He demanded immediate surrender of the fort of Attock which the Maharaja bluntly refused as he was confident of his strength. Instead, Ranjit Singh asked for his share of the Kashmir plunder. No compromise was in sight and Fateh Khan marched towards the fort of Attock at the head of a 15,000 strong army, leaving the affairs of Kashmir to

the care of his brother Azim Khan. Thus the situation became tense. The fort was closely blocked. More troops were then sent from Lahore under the command of Karam Chand Chahel and Dewan Mohkam Chand was directed to proceed towards the fort from Burhan. The Afghan and Sikh armies were now poised each other, spoiling for a fight.

Frequent skirmishes took place in which both sides lost heavily. But the Sikhs waited for their main chance. On July 12, 1813 the Sikh forces took action when the Afghan supplies were exhausted. The Diwan marched towards Haidru, situated on the bank of river Indus, 8 K. M. from the fort of Attock. The Afghan troops took up positions to oppose the advance of the Sikhs, a portion of their cavalry being led by Dost Mohammad Khan, brother of Fateh Khan.

Diwan Mohkam Chand formed the cavalry into four divisions, one of them under the command of Hari Singh Nalwa. The only infantry battalion, forming a square, and the artillery under Ghouse Khan supported the entire body of troops. Dost Mohammad first made a resolute cavalry charge, which was repulsed by heavy fire from the Sikh side. The Afghans mustered strength and rallied under Dost Mahammad who launched an attack riding his horse. The Sikh troops were thrown into confusion and some of their guns were captured. It seemed the Sikhs were giving way but Mohkam Chand, riding a mighty elephant with two guns, fired on Afghans, checking their further movement. The scorching heat also compelled the Afghans to retire. The lost

guns were recovered by the Sikhs and Fateh Khan fearing Dost Mohammad's death, fled. Therefrom the victorious Sikh army pursued the Afghans and drove them out of Khyrabad.

According to Sinha, the battle was fought on June 26, 1813. However, the accepted date is July P 1813 "The decisive battle is described by banker's agent\* "Early in the morning of the 11th of this month (Ashar)' Diwan Mohkam Chand and other chiefs of the army gathered together and marched towards the fort of Attock with the intention of supplying rations of grain From the other side Dost Mohammad Khan, a brother of Sardar Fateh Khan wazir and other Sardars, who had arrived near the Bawli (well) at about a distance of one and a half *kos*, showed their readiness to plunge into battle. It was also mentioned that the Durranis made a sudden attack and the artillery and swivels were fired from this side and that after a great deal of fighting and killing the enemy felt that they could not withstand the shock and took to flight, that most of the enemy was drowned in the river Attock."

"Dost Mohammad Khan put up brave resistance and his gallantry has been acknowledged by one and all and 2,000 Afghans were killed in the battlefield." After the battle, a messenger who reached Lahore informed the *darbar* that "Sardar Fateh Khan Wazir was encamped near Kundagarh, that although he had offered every encouragement to his companions yet his soldiers

1. Monograph No. 13, 1st July 1813.

2. Amar Nath Diwan, Zaffarnama. P. 74

felt too starved to stay on and were proceeding towards Peshawar and that therefore the Wazir himself was compelled to march thither.<sup>1</sup>

"The battle of Haidru was fought on the 13th of July, 1813, and was the first on record in which the Sikh troops, under the Lahore *darbar* had beaten the Afghans, who from this time began to entertain a dread of their powers. There were great rejoicings at Lahore in honour of this great and decisive victory, royal salutes being fired at all the principle stations in the Raj, while the cities of Lahore, Amritsar and Batala were brilliantly illuminated. Two months were spent in Lahore in these rejoicings, at the end of which in Asu (September), the Maharaja himself paid a visit to his newly conquered province of Atak, with the view of further intimidating the Pathans, as well as of consolidating his authority in those distant regions."<sup>2</sup>

It is also said that "the messenger bringing the news of the surrender of Attock arrived in Lahore well after midnight. The Maharaja was awakened and told the good tidings. He roused the entire palace staff and ordered guns to be fired. The city rocked with the crash of canon and no one could get any sleep. In the early hours of the morning, the Maharaja rode out on his elephant showering gifts on his bleary-eyed but happy subjects."<sup>3</sup>

After a couple of days, the Maharaja personally visited the fort of Attock. *Jagirs* were conferred liberally

1. Monograph, 16th July, 1813.

2. Latif, Mohd., History of the Panjab. P. 397

3. Khushwant Singh, Ranjit Singh P. 107



on the generals and the Maharaja joyously inspect the tents, horses, food articles and ammunition capture from the fort.

"The success at Attock did indeed go to R<sub>a</sub>nj Singh's head. In a full *darbar* held in July to receive the felicitations of his courtiers, the news writer records some people having stated that 'the extirpation of the English who wear the mask of friendship but hold us in deadly hate should be attempted' Ranjit Singh replied 'After the conquest of Kashmir and Peshawar it should be a subject of consideration.'"

## KASHMIR IS ANNEXED

After the astonishing victory at Attock, Maharaja Ranjit Singh gained more confidence and thought of annexing other strategic areas to his empire. Kashmir came to his mind first. Kashmir had great importance because of its trade routes. It was a wealthy area rich in forests and other products. The valley grew fruit in abundance. Walnuts, apples, peaches, apricots and cherries were among the superior varieties of fruits grown in Kashmir. It had several health resorts and beauty spots.

Trade and commerce flourished between Kashmir and Tibet. Kashmir imported from Tibet annually 60,000 seers of raw wool and woven woolen cloth, tea, gold and silver ingots and dry fruit. The Kashmir exports included grain, cotton cloth, iron and spices.

Kashmir's capital, Srinagar, with a population of 80,000 was a flourishing town. Its shawls are known the world over. Finer quality shawls fetched 300 to 700 rupees. Leather goods, woolen products and woolen cloth were the other items produced in the valley.

In 1814, Maharaja Ranjit Singh made full preparations for a massive invasion of Kashmir. On June 6, 1814, the Maharaja himself reached Bhimber. The Raja

of Poonch, Ruhullah Khan, was asked to co-operate in the operations. But he refused to oblige the Maharaja. Upon this the Maharaja sent a detachment of troops under Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Dewan Ram Dayal. They were able to subdue the Raja and the Bakram Kalla pass was seized. Then two divisions of the Khalsa army marched towards Kashmir; the main body commanded by the Maharaja himself advanced through the Poonch route towards the Toshu Maidan Pass while another under Ram Dayal and Sardar Dal Singh passed through Baramula towards supin in the heart of the valley.

However, the expedition could not succeed as the rains set in. Pir Panjal was still snow-clad. This inclement weather had an adverse effect on the Sikhs. As they were not used to fighting in the hills, they suffered from cold. The supply line also could not be maintained and the operations had to be advanced temporarily. When the rains ceased, the Maharaja's division reached Poonch, the supplies were replenished and the forces marched towards Mandi. On July 18, they reached Toshu Maidan. Here Ata Mohammad Khan, the Governor of Kashmir, was ready to face the Sikh army. At the same time, the news was received that the Sikh forces had ascended Pir Panjal Pass, occupied Haripur and were advancing towards supin. The Sikhs attacked the well-defended town but did not succeed in dislodging the enemy forces. Meanwhile, Azim Khan's cavalry reached there. A fierce battle was fought but due to heavy rains, the Sikhs were badly mauled. The defeated army returned to Pir Panjal. They suffered heavy losses in men and material and the

situation became grave for the Sikhs. Azim Khan attacked the Sikhs at Toshu Maidan. No defence could be offered and the Sikh soldiers retreated to Mandi. The town was set on fire. The Afghans pursued the Sikhs and Ranjit Singh ordered reorganisation of the demoralised Sikh army. The roads were under deep water. The Sikhs could not fight and desertions began to take place. Many were slain. Much of the war material was lost.

“The remnants of the Sikh army fell back on Punch but the retreat was conducted so irregularly and in such disorder, that it became a disgraceful fight.”<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja was forced to be back to Bhimber and from there he returned to Lahore where he reached on August 12, 1814.

“Thus the whole expedition returned to Lahare, lost its best officers and men, and being short of everything that constituted its strength and utility as a military body. The Maharaja lamented that in the campaign he could not avail himself of his aged Diwan's determination and judgement, as well as of his skill and valour. Everything had come to pass exactly as the old Diwan had predicted, and the ruler of Lahore sighed at the political blunder he had committed.”<sup>2</sup>

“The failure of the Lahore expedition shook up the Sikh sway in the hill regions. Towards the close of the year, the Muslim chiefs of Bhimber and Rajauri broke

1. Ochterlony to Adams, August 13, 1814.

2. Latif Mohd. History of the Punjab P. 405.

out in open revolt, the Rajas of Poonch and Nurpur began assuming an independent tone. The reputation lost by the Sikhs could only be retrieved by successive punitive expeditions sent from Lahore during the next four years."<sup>1</sup>

The Maharaja could not sit idle. He still nourished the ambition of conquering Kashmir at the earliest possible opportunity. So he strengthened his forces, re-equipped them and gave them proper training to fight in the hills. However, it took him five years to give shape to his plans. Unless Maharaja's ambition was fulfilled, he could not relax and this opportunity came five years later in 1819.

Early in the year, Bir Dhar, a minister under Jabbar Khan, the Afghan governor of Kashmir betrayed Jabbar Khan and sought asylum with the Maharaja. Bir Dhar informed Ranjit Singh that Mohammad Azim Khan had gone to Kabul with his forces and the Kashmir valley was without any defence. The remnants of Jabbar Khan's forces were incapable of protecting Kashmir and the Maharaja had a good opportunity to annex the valley to his territory.

Ranjit Singh, the shrewd diplomat as he was, ordered his commanders to make preparations to attack Kashmir on a massive scale. Arms and ammunition were collected at Gujrat and Wazirabad and nothing was left to chance. On April 20, 1819, the Maharaja marched from Lahore at the head of a 30,000 strong force. Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was commanding a

division. The forces marched with shouts of *Sat Siri Akal* resounding in the sky. These were followed by more troops under the command of Diwan Chand, Jaffer Jang, Hukam Singh Chimni, Sadar Jawala Singh and Sardar Sham Singh Attari. Besides, the Maharaja kept in reserve a force of 10,000 strong so that in case of any exigency, it could be sent at a moment's notice.

The Khalsa forces reached Bhimber from where the hill tract starts. Drinking water was not available in the hills, so the soldiers were asked to fill their buckets. Then they reached Saidabad, where an old fort could be used for halt. The *hakim* of the fort fled without offering any resistance. The Khalsa army captured the fort without any loss of men or material. This was their first victory. The forces marched further and reached Rajouri on May 1, 1819. The Shalimar garden, situated on the banks of river Tawi and with a spacious *baradari*, was occupied. The local *hakim* tried to offer some resistance, but his forces were over-powered by the division under the command of Hari Singh Nalwa who gave him a crushing defeat. Agar Khan fled and his force was so much demoralised that it surrendered unconditionally. Many of Agar Khan's soldiers were slain and much of his war equipment was lost. The Sikhs too lost ten of their brave men of whom Sardar Jodh Singh Russa deserve a mention. He was a man of indomitable spirit and his dynamism impressed one and all. However, while fleeing Agar Khan was captured and was sent to Bhimber where Maharaja Ranjit Singh held his *darbar*.

Agar Khan sought mercy from the Maharaja and promised to remain loyal to him in future. He offered

1. Hasrat, Bikramjit : Life and Times of Ranjit Singh P. 104

to assist the Maharaja in the annexation of Kashmir. The Maharaja pardoned him and made him Raja of Rajouri.

The Sikh forces marched further and halted at Behram Pass. The route was hilly and rugged and the entire journey was strenuous. Here an Afghan *faujdar* was a petty chief. When he came to know of the massive Sikh attack he fled in panic towards Sirinagar, leaving his fortress unprotected. Behram Pass was thus captured. Mir Mohammad Khan, the *kotwal* of Poonch, submitted to the Sikh General and the *kotwal* of Supin, Mohammad Ali, followed in his foot-steps. Jabbar Dost Khan, the Raja of Poonch, who had closed the fort, did not surrender and offered some resistance. Raja Sultan Chand, who was acquainted with the topography of the area, was ordered to attack the fort. The Raja scaled the walls of the fort. Many soldiers defending the fort were slain in the battle that ensued. At last Jabbar Dost Khan was left with no alternative but to surrender to the Sikhs. The Governor of Basana was also made to swear allegiance to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Thus, the route to Pir Panjal pass was fully secured. Missar Diwan Chand divided the army into three divisions and directed them to march towards the valley of Kashmir through different routes. The Missar himself headed the forces which were to cross Pir Panjal. They marched at a lightning speed and entered the valley. Some resistance was offered by the Pathans and after many a dead and wounded, they made to flee in dismay, leaving behind large war equipment which was taken possession of by the Sikhs. The Sikh morale was very high and on June 16, 1819, the entire Sikh force took up

their position at Serai Ali, leading to Supin. Meanwhile, Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself arrived at Sahabad to supervise the arrangements and to see that the supply position was in perfect order.

Sardar Jabbar Khan faced the Sikh forces in the plains of Supin with a 5000 strong force. The Bugles sounded and the sky was rent with the cries of *Sat Siri Akal*. On July 5, 1819, a fierce battle was fought between the opposing armies. For sometime the Afghans held the Sikh forces and were also able to capture two of their guns. But then the Sikhs rallied and regrouped their forces and made a severe attack on the Afghans who fled towards Shergarh. Sardar Jabbar Khan was wounded and had a narrow escape. Kashmir was now captured and the Sikh territory was enlarged. The Maharaja's forces then made a triumphant entry into Srinagar. Next day the city was fully occupied. Jabbar Khan fled with a few of his men, crossed the mountains and eventually reached Peshawar.

In Srinagar Prince Kharak Singh announced that nobody should feel panicky, adding that full protection would be offered. No distinction would be made on the basis of caste, creed or colour. The soldiers were strictly warned not to plunder the city. A huge procession was taken out in the city. It was a unique thing in the history of Kashmir. Earlier, the town had been ransacked several times. For the first time, the victorious forces had remained peaceful and not a single case of loot or arson had taken place. The Sikh forces were, therefore, welcomed with open arms. A warm reception awaited the soldiers on whom flower petals were showered. Prince Kharak Singh encamped in Shergarh fort.

people showered *attar* and flowers on him. The Sardar along with the Maharaja, entered the fort. Canons were fired and a gun salute was given. At night the entire town was illuminated and crackers were fired. Next day an open *darbar* was held by the Maharaja in which *khillats* were offered to those who had conquered him. The Maharaja showered praises on the Nalwa Sardar and appreciated his services for consolidating the empire. He was conferred a *Jagir* of the Dhan *illaga*, worth six thousand rupees. People raised cries of *Sat Siri Akal* and gave a tremendous ovation to the Nalwa Sardar. However, the Sardar remained calm and humble in the midst of all this eulogy and admiration. The Maharaja was overjoyed and thanked the Lord for his success.

Dewan Moti Ram continued as Governor of Kashmir for about a year. Though he governed the province with a firm hand he had to levy heavy taxation as a huge sum of money was required for administering the territory. But it broke the backbone of the peasantry and the working class. "Everywhere, however, the people are in the most abject condition. Exorbitantly taxed by the Sikh Government, and subjected to every kind of extortion and oppression by its officers. The consequences of the system are, the general depopulation of the country. Not more than one-sixteenth of the cultivable surface is in cultivation, and the inhabitants, starving at home, are driven in great numbers to the plains of Hindustan. In the like manner the people of the city are rapidly thinning, though less from emigration, then poverty and disease ; the prevalence of the

latter in its most aggravated form was fearfully extensive."<sup>1</sup>

This statement of Moorcroft may be exaggerated yet it is clear that the great resentment prevailed among the people of Kashmir who lived in depressing conditions. Signs of rebellion were visible, and efforts were on to sabotage the government from inside. Many people refused to pay land revenue. The Government's orders were not implemented. Besides, cases of loot and arson were also reported. Ultimately complaints were lodged with the Maharaja about the mismanagement of Kashmir affairs. He ordered Dewan Moti Ram to bring about improvement in the administration but the Dewan lacked skill and the ability to manage the affairs. At last, the Maharaja sent Dewan Devi Dass to Kashmir to enquire into its problems. When he reached Kashmir, he found the administration totally at a breaking point. There was no respect for law and order, and general condition of the people had very much deteriorated. He reported to the Maharaja that if such a state of affairs continued for sometime more, there would be an open rebellion which would be difficult to control.

As the Maharaja read Dewan Devi Dass report on Kashmir his visage became tant and grim. Soon he took a firm decision to set matters right. Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed Governor of Kashmir. An open *darbar* was held by the Maharaja in which services of Hari Singh Nalwa to the Sikh empire were highly appreciated. A *khillat* was presented to him and he

1. Moorcroft, Travels, P. 344.

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was asked to proceed to Kashmir without delay. Special instructions were given to him to govern the province with an iron hand but at the same time remain humane, steadfast and humble in his actions.

Hari Singh Nalwa reached Kashmir on August 20, 1820. He took charge as Governor of Kashmir from Dewan Moti Ram the next day. It was a great day in the life of the great general as his ability, skill and courage were being put to test. He had already proved his worth as a formidable general ; now time had come for him to prove his mettle as an administrator.

As Hari Singh Nalwa took charge, he found that no land revenue had been collected nor soldiers had been paid their salaries for the last four months. On account of Dewan Moti Ram's lenient attitude, people were openly disobeying government orders. There were many cases of loot and arson and powerfull were sucking the blood of the poor and the down-trodden. The honour of women was not safe. In fact, there was no rule of law and complete chaos prevailed.

These conditions were unbearable for the Nalwa Sardar. He made a proclamation to the effect that he would rule the people of Kashmir with love. No harsh treatment would be meted out to anyone and steps should be taken to improve the lot of the poor. To achieve this, he solicited the cooperation of the people of Kashmir. People were directed to pay forthwith the land revenue and other taxes due to them. They were further warned that if, after the issue of the proclamation, any untoward incident took place and people failed in their duty, they would be taken to task and

would be dealt with severely. It was up to the people to choose the path they wanted to.

The proclamation had the desired effect. People paying started their dues to the government and respect for the law increased. Peace prevailed in the valley yet some signs of discontent were still there.

When things settled down a little, Nalwa sought the Maharaja's permission to strike coins in his name as it was necessary to do so to uphold the State's authority. The Maharaja readily agreed to the proposal and a coin was struck which contained ten *massas* of silver and six *massas* of bronze. The coin was known as Hari Singh's rupee. It was equal to fifty paise. Besides a rupee paisa coins were also mined. The under-mentioned words were engraved on the coin :

Siri Akal Sahai, Samat 1878, on the other side was Hari Singh's likeness and the words *Zak Rapehia* (one rupee).

The next step was to take drastic action against the inhabitants of Baramula and the people settled on the banks of the river. These people were originally Hindu *Brahmins* and *Khatris* who had been converted to Islam during the Mughal period. They still put B and K after their names denoting *Brahmins* and *Khatris*. Their present leaders were Raja Ghulam Ali Khan and Zulfikar Ali Khan who had revolted openly during the governership of Dewan Moti Ram and had refused to pay land revenue- Dewan Moti Ram had summoned them to his *darbar* many a time but they had refused to obey his orders. The situation was grim and demanded firm but diplomatic action. Hari Singh Nalwa had

to be very careful in dealing with these rebellious leaders.

Baramula was attacked and the people were not only forced to pay the balance of land revenue but were also made to pay Rs. 5 per family as war indemnity. Then Sardar Nalwa turned his attention towards B's and K's. One night Nalwa, alongwith Sardar Tek Singh, marched towards these villages with an infantry platoon. People were surrounded and their leaders arrested. No resistance was offered. Some of them tried to make mischief but they were properly taken to task. Both the top leaders Raja Ghulam Ali Khan and Zulafkhar Ali Khan were put in chains and were sent to Lahore, under heavy escort. Their arms were confiscated and were made to pay land revenue. They were further ordered to pay regular visits to Srinagar. Complete peace was now restored in the valley. The Maharaja issued a *firman* praising the senders rendered by Sardar Nalwa.

After restoring order, Nalwa attended to land reforms. Land revenue records were studied and new rates of revenue fixed. This was the most difficult task. Nalwa solved the problem efficiently without making much changes in the system and without hurting the feelings of the people. A man of shrewed disposition, Nalwa tried to pacify all sections of the people.

According to *Ain-e-Akbari*, Kashmir's land revenue amounted to 3,011,619 Kharwar, equivalent to 1,552,825 rupees. During the Afghan regime, it was 6,000,000 *chilak* rupees and under Dewan Moti Ram it amounted

to 2,100,000 Nanak Shahi rupees. Hari Singh reduced this figure to 1,300,000 Hari Singh rupees. This proved beneficial both to the people and the government. Nalwa fixed his signature after careful and deep consideration and giving due weightage to the aspirations of the people. The result was that the people started paying land revenue willingly without any hesitation. The step was highly applauded by the Maharaja.

Another evil that prevailed in Kashmir at that time was that of bonded labour. The system had been prevalent since the days of Shankar Verma who had ruled Kashmir in 907 A.D. Whenever any State official proceeded on tour or attended to some other official duty, thousands of labourers were forcibly caught and put to all sort of odd jobs. It is said that the Raja got the town of Pattan constructed by these labourers without paying them a single paise. In 1664 A.D., when Aurangzeb visited Kashmir, 30,000 Kashmiri labourers were used to carry the luggage.

When for the first time Sardar Nalwa toured the province his subordinates engaged hundreds of labourers to carry his luggage and provide him all sorts of facilities. Those were the days of harvesting and the labourers were extremely busy in their operations. They requested the *chaudries* with folded hands, to let them free so that their work did not suffer. But no heed was paid to their request ; rather they were beaten with *lathis*, as was the prevailing custom. When this came to Nalwa's notice he wanted to know what all the hue and cry was about. He was informed that the labourers had been collected to provide him the necessary facilities and to carry his luggage and other effects.



Nalwa refused to proceed further with the labourers and ordered that horses and donkeys be arranged for the transportation of his luggage. Immediately a *firman* was issued banning the system of bonded labour. Orders were also issued to the effect that when labour was required, paid worker should be engaged for the purpose.

Many other improvements were made by Nalwa in the administration. Relief was provided to flood victims - 2003 *Kharwar* of rice was procured and distributed among the sufferers.

Another tax *Tera* was in force which all the subjects were required to pay. This was levied at the time of birth, betrothal and marriage. It was a most unfair tax as people were already paying heavy taxes. Nalwa ordered the abolition of the tax forthwith.

In the system of administration, several other changes were made. A number of new police stations were opened in the villages. Hardened criminals were produced before the Governor and judgements were delivered there and then after hearing the arguments of both the parties. Officials were forbidden to implicate persons in false cases. The system of weights and measures was regularised. Iron measures were introduced and a uniform yard was put into use. This gave relief to people who were being cheated by unscrupulous traders. The result was that trade and industry flourished in Kashmir and many people who had fled the valley during the Afghan regime returned to their hearths and homes. Nalwa, Sardar thus gained the

confidence of the people and gave them justice of which they had lost all hopes from the rulers.

In the sphere of religion, Nalwa made drastic reforms. All the places where mosques had been constructed in place of temples were again ordered to be converted into temples. These places of worship were eye sore to the Hindus and unless they had the freedom to pay homage to their holy places, they could not live in peace. Nalwa was a great secular leader who believed that unless freedom of worship was given to each and every individual, the country could not prosper.

Another custom prevalent in Kashmir was that no non-Muslim was allowed to tie turban on his head or wear shoes. Nalwa issued orders that no restriction would be imposed on anybody's dress. Everyone was free to put on the dress of his choice. All those who desired or could afford could ride horses. Everybody was equal in the eyes of law; nobody was high or low.

In 1821, Kashmir was faced with the worst flood in its history. It rained continuously for several days and the overflowing rivers created havoc. Some dams were damaged and hundreds of people were encircled in the gushing waters of the rivers. Houses were damaged and crops destroyed. Bridges were washed away. Sardar Nalwa provided all possible help and assistance to the people. Cash relief was given, bridges were reconstructed, foodgrains were imported from Panjab and distributed freely among the people. More foodgrains were purchased from non-affected areas and sold in the

affected areas at cheaper rates. Nalwa thus won the hearts of the people and their sympathy. Soon the uprooted People engaged themselves in their professions and started leading the normal life.

Another notable feature of Kashmir was that crops were grown on water in the lakes. Nalwa paid special attention to this form of agriculture and gave liberal *taccavi* loans to the people besides reducing their land revenue.

The production, specially of vegetables increased and economy of the province was put on a firm footing-

New fields were laid on the water and cultivation of saffron was encouraged. The farmers of Palmpur, where saffron was cultivated on a very large scale were united and Nalwa himself became their patron. He ensured them all help and promised to provide them the necessary security against theft which was very common

[in the saffron fields.

Handicraft industries were encouraged. Special attention was given to paper matchie industries and fillip was given to shawl manufacture. With the development of these industries the condition of the people improved considerably-

The administration was now on a sound footing. The rule of law prevailed and people's respect for law also increased. In 1821, Nalwa attacked Poonch, Rajouri Dhammaur and annexed these areas to Kashmir. He prepared a balance sheet of all the accounts of Kashmir and submitted it to the Maharaja who was extremely

pleased to see the progress of the province. He appreciated Nalwa's services and offered him a *khillat*. According to Maulana Mohammad Din, the Maharaja was so overwhelmed with joy that he presented to Nalwa a chain, an elephant, and a pair of golden bangles.

In short, Kashmir prospered considerably under Nalwa. Trade and industry flourished. Cottage industry was revived. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs started living like brothers and in the eyes of law no distinction was made of caste, creed or colour. It was a unique thing to see that after so many years of communal rule, secular rule had been established in the valley- Even Shias and Sunnis among the Muslims joined hands and lived like one community. Land revenue was collected without any use of force and the soldiers were paid regularly. There was no resentment among them and they were ever ready to fight at the call of Nalwa Sardar. When the Maharaja found the conditions in Kashmir well settled, he decided to call back Nalwa to utilise his services elsewhere. Dewan Moti Ram was again appointed Governor of Kashmir.

A *Shahi firman* was issued by the Maharaja saying that the services rendered by the Nalwa were commendable. The *Sarkar* was confident that conditions in the valley had settled down and now anybody could be appointed its Governor, to administer the territory. Still many more responsibilities awaited Nalwa in the interest of consolidating the Sikh empire. The Maharaja would be extremely happy to see Peshawar annexed to the Sikh empire. It was, therefore, necessary that Nalwa should immediately join hands with the Maharaja in accomplishing the great tasks lying ahead.

Nalwa had rendered great service to Kashmir. He had not only consolidated the Sikh position there but also helped people to the extent possible. "He was formerly entrusted with the Government of Kashmir which he held for two years proving himself one of the most able and popular Sikh governors which the Sikhs have had."<sup>1</sup>

Hari Singh now started preparations to leave Kashmir. All arrangements were made for the long and tiresome journey. When Dewan Moti Ram arrived to take over charge, Nalwa held a *Shahi darbar* at Srinagar in which a large number of *Rais* and *Jagirdars* of all communities participated. It was a memorable occasion.

Nalwa addressed the audience thus • "The time spent with you in Kashmir was gayful and worth remembering. I have great love and respect for the people of Kashmir. You gave me full co-operation and assistance in running the administration. I have tried my best to serve the people with the best of my ability and capacity. It was a difficult task but with your affection and active cooperation I have succeeded in my mission. I am hopeful that the same cooperation would be offered to Dewan Moti Ram, my successor."

The *Jagirdars* eulogised Nalwa for his administrative ability and his capability to solve knotty problems. His services were appreciated in making the province prosperous by giving a fillip to trade and industry.

The *darbar* ended and November 6, 1821, was fixed for Nalwa's departure from Kashmir. On that day, the people of Kashmir bade him befitting farewell. The entire route was lined by the people and shouts of long live, 'Hari Singh Nalwa' resounded in the sky. Nalwa's eyes glistened with tears of joy and his heart was heavy. He responded to the people with *wah-i-guru-ji-ka-khalsa, wah-i-guru-ji-ki -fateh*.

Nalwa left Kashmir, but also left behind a lasting impression on the people of the valley. Even today he is remembered there as an able administrator, a valiant general and a courageous hero. He left his foot prints for the people to follow. He was a secular leader who treated everyone equally. While Muslims enjoyed full freedom of worship the Hindu minority was also given complete protection. Nalwa will ever be remembered in Kashmir. His name still resounds in the hills of the valley.

1. Wade to Governor General, March 18, 1831.

## CHAPTER IX

*THE VICTORY AT MANGLI  
AND MUNGHER*

Hari Singh hastened back to Punjab with fully armed 7000 strong troops to meet any exigency en route. When Sardar Nalwa reached Pakhli through Muzzafrabad, an intelligence report was received according to which 30,000 tribesmen were making preparations to oppose the Sikh forces at Mangli.

As was the practice with him, Hari Singh first negotiated with *the Ghazis* and made every effort to avoid war. He sent his *kardars*, Mohammad Ismil and Sardar Dhanna Singh Malwai to meet the *Ghazis* and reach an amicable settlement. They were told that Sardar Nalwa was interested in only passing through Mangli and had no intention of annexing any territory or fighting a war. But the *Ghazis* rejected a peaceful settlement and refused to allow the Sikhs to pass through Mangli. The emissaries returned empty handed and reported the result of their deliberations to the Nalwa Sardar.

Sardar Nalwa watched the entire situation from close quarters. As he found the war inevitable he visited forward areas in disguise and watched the defence arrangements. It rained for sometime and then cleared. The inhabitants of Mangli were seen levelling the earth on their roofs with wooden pieces in their hands. Nalwa was surprised to see this and inquired from the

inhabitants whether all the roofs were leaking. They replied that the earth of that area could be levelled with only wooden pieces. Then Nalwa returned to his camp and called an emergent meeting of his Sardars who were told that it was extremely easy to defeat the people of Mangli. The attack, he said, should be sudden and massive. The offensive was made from three sides. The *Ghazis* unsheathed their swords and put up stiff resistance.

Sardar Megh Singh Russa entered the enemy ranks with his platoon and broke their defences. A fierce battle ensued as Khalsa army advanced from all sides. Soon Russa was dead. Hundreds were killed and wounded on both sides. At the same time, some 2,000 *Ghazis* were dead. About 180 of Nalwa's brave soldiers laid down their lives and another 350 were injured. The enemy was completely demoralised and fled away from the battle-field. Mangli was captured. Some Sikhs seized a good deal of arms and ammunition which the pathans had left behind. Besides, there was substantial quantity of foodgrains and a large number of cows and buffaloes. It was a unique victory for Nalwa which he had won by his sheer dash and dynamism.

Early next day with white flags in their hands, the *Ghazis* presented themselves before the Nalwa Sardar and sought his pardon. Their backbone was already broken, so they were prepared for any peace settlement on Nalwa's terms. Nalwa pardoned them but imposed a fine of rupees five per family, which was collected without delay. This happened on November 10, 1821.

Nalwa then allowed his army to take rest for three days. Mangli had many fountains of clear and pure

water. Nalwa enjoyed sitting by them. He converted one of the fountains into a tank, which was used for bathing. On one side of the tank was constructed a memorial in the memory of the soldiers who laid down their lives in the battle of Mangli. *Damdama* was also constructed where Baisakhi *mela* continued to be held for years. Nalwa also got constructed a *Burj* on the hillock.

Mangli was the capital of Hazara for a very long time. Huen-Tsang, a well known Chinese traveller, has referred Mangli in his writings. He said : "I visited Mangli in 200 A.D.

The city was flourishing and it is the capital of Raja Vulashi's kingdom. It is situated in the north-west division of Kashmir. Nearby flows the Mangli stream."

Nalwa left Mangli on November 14, 1821 and on November 28 reached Khushab where the Maharaja was camping. Hari Singh was honoured with the firing of guns and celebrations were held on a large scale. Nalwa gave a detailed account of his victory in Mangli. The Maharaja was so happy that he embraced him in the open *darbar* and declared : "My brave general is raising the prestige and honour of Khalsa in all the corners of the world. Khalsa is shining like a sun on the sky because of great Nalwa." Nalwa was congratulated once again and the services rendered by him for the sake of *khalsaraj* were highly commended.

Sardar Nalwa presented to the Maharaja two lakh rupees collected as land revenue in Kashmir but the

latter returned him the money as a prize for the notable work done by him. Moreover, "Pakhli and Dhamtor in Kashmir were bestowed as a *Jagir* on the gallant Hari Singh Nalwa, in recognition of his services in that country."<sup>1</sup> However, during the same year, the tribes of Pakhli and Dhamtor rebelled and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, to whom these places had been given in *jagir*, was sent at the head of the troops to punish the offenders. Hari Singh spread havoc in the invaded country, and put the population of the disaffected villages to the sword. Pakhli and Dhamtor were burnt, and thousands of people rendered homeless."<sup>2</sup> After that Hari Singh returned to Lahore.

Pargana Mungher was situated on the right bank of river Attack. It was ruled by the Afghans and was one of their best governed territories. Its annual revenue was ten lakh rupees. Its present *Hakim* was Hafiz Ahmed Khan, who was a gallant soldier, well versed in horsemanship and archery.

Hafiz Ahmad Khan was not cooperating with the Khalsa *darbar*. He was strengthening his army and was preparing to defy Maharaja Ranjit Singh any time. Earlier, the Maharaja had subdued the *Tiwanas*, who had surrendered to the Sikh forces and promised to pay tribute to them. Missar Dewan Chand sent an intelligence report to the Maharaja to the effect that Hafiz Ahmad Khan was openly supporting the *Tiwanas* and was instigating them against the Maharaja. He had also

1. Latif Mohd History of the Panjab P. 427

2. Latif, Mohd. History of the Panjab. P. 428

given refuge to Ahmad Yar Khan, the leader of the *Tiwanas*. Besides, the Nawab had entered into a treaty with the Afghans and was spying against the Lahore *darbar*. The situation was grim and unbearable for the Maharaja. He became furious. As he had by now captured Kashmir and Multan and was well entrenched in these areas, he decided to attack Mungher and annex it to the Sikh empire although the task was difficult. It was approached by the sandy track without any road or other means of communications. For miles together no drinking water was available which was of prime necessity for the invading army. Besides the Nawab had constructed 12 forts around Mungher which were strong enough to repulse any invader. Thus, capturing the territory was an uphill task. The difficult terrain, lack of drinking water facility, absence of means of communication and Afghans support to the Nawab had detained Ranjit Singh from attacking the territory earlier.

Besides other defensive measures, the Nawab had an army of 25,000 strong ever ready to fight the invaders. Maharaja Ranjit Singh marched on the enemy territory at the head of his 3,000 troops. When he reached Khushab, Hari Singh Nalwa joined him along with his troops. They discussed war strategy when Nalwa Sardar made many useful suggestions on December 3, 1821, the Khalsa forces proceeded after performing *Bhog* of *Siri Akhand Path* and offering prayers to the Almighty for strength and courage.

The army was divided in such a way as to gain maximum ground. Sardar Dal Singh and Khushal Singh

were sent with 8,000 soldiers to attack the forts in Dera Ismail Khan area; Dewan Chand and Kirpa Ram were directed to attack Khangarh and Manjgarh with a 10,000 force and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was required to proceed towards Mungher with a 6,500 strong force. The remaining army was kept in reserve under the Maharaja himself so that, in case of any exigency, additional force could be despatched forthwith.

Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa planned his strategy in such a way that he was able to capture all the seven forts en route without any resistance from the enemy. This took him just three days and on the fourth day a massive attack was launched on Mungher. Hafiz Ahmad Khan offered stout resistance and his soldiers fought bravely. A fierce battle took place in which cannon fire dominated. The battle continued for several days. On the fifth day, after heavy artillery fire, the town of Mungher was captured by the Khalsa forces. The fort was besieged and the Nawab's forces were completely demoralised. Many of his soldiers deserted him and fled in whatever direction they could. Some of his principal Sardars, having secretly come out of the fort, joined Rani it Singh and pointed out the spots on which an attack could be successfully made. The dispositions for the attack were accordingly changed and the Nawab, seeing treachery on all sides and conceiving that he had done enough to preserve the honour of his ancestors, sent his agents, Kazi Gul Mohammad and Ali Jah Sikander Khan, to propose terms of capitulation. These were : the Nawab should be allowed safe conduct from the citadel of his camp taking with him all the members

of his family, men, arms and property ; should be permitted to retain possession of Dera Ismail Khan ; and receive a suitable *jagir*. The Maharaja agreed to these terms. The Nawab had studied the Sikh character, well and knew of the Sikh ruler's belief in good faith. He, therefore, asked him to put the impression of his hand, with the fingers extended, on a blank piece of paper, with saffron, as a solemn pledge for the execution of the agreement; Ranjit Singh, anxious to set an example of the Khalsa faith no less than to close a costly campaign in a country so ill provided with the means of prosecuting it, went through the formality. Rich dresses were sent to the Nawab who, his suspicious having been thus allayed, surrendered the fort and came out with 300 followers, bringing with him all his arms and property. His camp pitched within the lines of the Sikhs, he had an interview with the Maharaja on the 20th. The Maharaja half-stood up to receive him, and was seated close to him on the same *Masnad*. The Nawab implored his conqueror to save the city from plunder, and to provide his loyal troops with suitable employment. Both these requests were granted by the Maharaja who, as a further proof of his friendship for the Nawab, discarded those who had joined him as deserters from their now vanquished sovereign. The Nawab made over 22 guns, with a large quantity of ammunition, to the Maharaja, and was sent to Dera Ismail Khan under proper escort with the whole of his harem, family and attendants. "The country of Nawab Hafiz Ahmad Khan, annexed by the Maharaja, was worth annually ten lakhs of rupees, and its acquisition was the source of intense pleasure to Ranjit Singh, who ordered the towns of Lahore and

Amritsar to be illuminated in honour of the occasion."

Sardar Amar Singh Sindhawalia was appointed the first Governor. Before departure from Mungher the Maharaja held a *Shahi darbar* where the Maharaja praised Sardar Nalwa for his valour, presented him with a *Khillat* and his *Jagir* was further extended.

The Maharaja, along with Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa returned to Lahore on January 27, 1821. Victory parades were held, processions were taken out in the bazars and the town was illuminated.

## CHAPTER X

*HARI SINGH BECOMES  
GOVERNOR OF HAZARA*

After the capture of Mungher, the Maharaja turned his attention to Hazara which was considered to be the abode of the Aryans. The entire area lies on the foothills of Kashmir and is well known for its scenic beauty. Its boundaries were never static but in 19th Century its area was about 80 miles long and 30 miles wide. On its east lay Kashmir and river Jhelum, on the west Peshawar, on the south Rawalpindi and on the north the Himalayas.

When Maharaja Ranjit Singh was engaged in the Kashmir campaign the Pathans of Hazara, who had never admitted the authority of any other power, created some trouble. They attacked both the Sikh forces and the Afghans. In fact, they could never live in peace. Earlier, the Maharaja had captured the fort of Attock and had closed all the routes to Afghanistan, so the local Pathans started plundering the Hazara territory.

In those days, Hukma Singh Chimni a brave general was the *Qiledar* of Attock and under him was posted Bhai Makhan Singh. Everything was going on peacefully when suddenly there was a change in the situation. Hashim Khan of Hazara who had murdered his neighbour Kamal Khan and was attacked by the latter's brother Sardar Mohammad Khan, sought the

Maharaja's protection. The Maharaja issued orders to Sardar Makhan Singh, through Sardar Hukma Singh Chimni to redress the grievances of Hashim Khan.

Makhan Singh carried out the Maharaja's orders and invaded the Hazara territory along with 500 horsemen. Mohammad Khan surrendered. Bhai Makhan Singh realised tribute from Mohammad Khan and imposed strict restrictions on him. He was forced to implement all the terms of the treaty vigorously. But hardly a year had passed when in 1819, he collected a number of *Ghazis* and launched massive attack on the Sikh forces which were taken by surprise. Not only several Sikh soldiers were put to death but Bhai Makhan Singh was also slain.

This was unbearable for the Sikh general Sardar Hukma Singh Chimni who became red with rage and marched on Hazara from Attock. Sardar Mohammad Khan offered stout resistance and a bloody battle ensued but in the end he had to flee, leaving a large number of *Ghazis* dead. But as the entire population of Hazara had risen in revolt, complete peace could not be restored in the territory and Sardar Chimni had to hasten back to Attock.

When the news of the failure of Hazara campaign was broken to the Maharaja, he lost his temper. Meanwhile, more complaints were received against Sardar Hukma Singh Chimni. Mian Dhian Singh had complained that the Chimni Sardar had hanged Sayeed Khan Kot Hussan Ali, who was loyal to the Maharaja. The Maharaja, in his fury, called the Chimni Sardar back to Lahore, fined him rupees 25,000 and appointed



Dewan Ram Dayal as the Governor of Attock. At the same time, the Maharaja could not tolerate the rebellion in Hazara and directed Kanwar Sher Singh and Rani Sada Kaur, his mother-in-law who was a bold and courageous lady, to proceed to Hazara with a huge force. They were accompanied by Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Sardar Sham Singh Attari and the new Governor Dewan Ram Dayal. This was in January 1820.

The Hazara rebellion was widespread and was not confined to anyone part. Sardar Mohammad Khan had instigated the *Ghazis* to such an extent that they were filled with a revengeful spirit and the atmosphere was surcharged with deep enmity. The Sikh forces had, therefore, an uphill task to accomplish. The entire force was divided and put under different commanders. Pakhli, Dhamtor, Dharband, Tarbela and Ghandgarh, in short, all the areas were surrounded. Skirmishes took place at many places, but in the end the *Ghazis* fled and were chased into the deep corners of the hills. However the newly appointed Governor, Dewan Ram Dayal, was surrounded in one of the hill streams and fired upon. Firing back, he offered resistance, but was finally killed in the encounter. It was a great loss to the Khalsa and gloom was cast in the army's rank and file. Lahore *darbar* expressed sympathy to the bereaved family and the Maharaja himself sent a message of condolence.

The Khalsa forces were now enraged and a revengeful spirit engulfed them. They were looking for an opportunity to attack the *Ghazis*, to fulfil this task. They made fresh preparations. A massive attack was made with full strength. After some resistance the

*Ghazis* fled in whichever direction they could. Hazara was captured and the hills resounded with the cries of *Sat-Siri-AkaL*. The rebellion was crushed once for all. After the victory, Rani Sada Kaur held a *darbar* and announced that whosoever would raise the banner of revolt would be severely dealt with. Complete peace should prevail and nobody should create any trouble. Land revenue should be paid regularly in future and previous dues cleared. War indemnity was imposed on the *Ghazis* which they promised to pay, putting their hands on the *Quran*.

The Sikhs did not want to take any risk and so strengthened their forts. A lot of arms and ammunition were kept there and new forts like Ghandgarh, Tarbela Darband and Ghazigarh were constructed and fortified. A *samadh* of Dewan Ram Dayal was constructed at Khalanbat to commemorate his memory.

After peace was restored, Sardar Amar Singh Kalan was appointed the new Governor. He ruled the territory with the best of his ability and the situation remained under control. However after two years in 1822 and intelligence report was received to the effect that Hassan Ali, Leader of *Karals*, had raised the banner of revolt. Sardar Amar Singh marched at the head of his forces to crush the rebellion. He succeeded in putting down the revolt but on the way back to his headquarters he was attacked by *Ghazis* hiding in the bushes while he was drinking water in the stream. Amar Singh tried to defend himself but was fatally wounded with a dagger. When the news was conveyed to the Maharaja, he was deeply shocked.

The Maharaja now appointed Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa as the Governor of Hazara. As desired by the Maharaja, Nalwa reached Hazara on February 26 1822 along with his contingent. After taking stock of the situation for a couple of days, Nalwa's first action in Hazara was to attack the territory of Hashim Khan Karal, who had tracherously slain Sardar Amar Singh. The area was surrounded in a matter of minutes and Hashim Khan was arrested, his area was set on fire and he was presented before the Nalwa Sardar. He was trembling with fear. Nalwa gave him an option of either producing before him the murderers of Sardar Amar Singh or himself facing the

consequences by standing before the cannon and getting killed. Putting his hands on the *Quran*, he promised to produce the real culprits in a matter of days. Nalwa readily agreed. Hashim Khan was allowed to go with a Sikh and soon the real culprits were produced before Nalwa. Further investigations established their guilt. The Nalwa Sardar held a big *darbar* in which all the inhabitants of the area were ordered to participate. The *darbar* was attended by a large number of people. The culprits were fired upon by guns to teach a lesson to all. The people were so much terrified that for years they did not rise against the Khalsa. Hashim Khan promised to remain loyal to the *darbar*. His territory was annexed to the Sikh empire and he was let off. A big fort was got constructed at Narra and army was stationed in it.

To provide permanent defences in the plains of Hazara, a fort was constructed and named Harkrishan garh after the eighth Guru. A town was also constructed

near the fort which was named Haripur. When Baron Hugal visited the Hazara territory on December 23, 1835 he found the town of Haripur flourishing. He said that no other town was as humming with activity as Haripur. Around the town a wall four yards thick and 16 yards high was built. Four gates were constructed for entry into the town. Drinking water was provided by digging a tank. Many small drains were dug to carry water into the streets of the town. A shrine named Shaidganj was constructed in the memory of all those who had laid down their lives for the liberation of Hazara. A permanent *grant hi* was employed to ensure uninterrupted *kirtan* and *path*. A *mandir* called Ganesh Giri was also built. A mosque was constructed too. This was a concrete step in the direction of real integration of the people of all castes and creeds. Nalwa thus won the hearts of all sections of people.

Many gardens and parks were laid to beautify the town. Some more forts were constructed at Nawan Shair, Dhamtor, Darband and Sheenkiari. The whole of the year 1822 was spent in restoring peace in the area.

However, peace was broken shortly afterwards. Sardar Mohammad Khan, who had earlier had revolted against the Khalsa, became nervous and panicky when the people responsible for the murder of Sardar Amar Singh were given severe punishment. He lodged a complaint with the Maharaja against the Nalwa Sardar and was given a patient hearing by the Maharaja who sent instructions to Nalwa to grant Sardar Mohammad Khan a *Jagir* worth 2,000 rupees annually. Nalwa reluctantly offered a *Jagir* worth 1,700 rupees which he

refused to accept and once again complained to the Maharaja. The Maharaja granted to Sardar Mohammad Khan a *Jagir* worth Rs. 2,000 in some other area. Thus both Nalwa and Mohammad Khan were apparently satisfied for a while. But soon afterwards, the Khan instigated the people of Sirikot and raised the banner of revolt in Ghandgarh. But Nalwa crushed the rebellion with an iron hand and thus nipped the evil in the bud. Many *Ghazis* were killed and the Khan fled to some unknown place.

The Maharaja was pleased with the action taken by Nalwa and granted him the *Jagir* of SiriKot and Serai Selah. He took solid measures to improve the situation. Forts were built and fortified. Darband fort, which had been captured by Maharaja Ranjit Singh was placed under the control of Sardar Nalwa who put a large quantity of arms and ammunition, foodgrains and clothing so that, in case of any eventuality, these could be used as a defensive measure. Other forts, built earlier, were also fortified. In the Attock fort were stationed 500 gunmen while at Hazara 200 gunmen were kept to guard the fort.

Thus, in the entire Hazara territory defence measures were so strong that nobody could dare raise the banner of revolt. All the rebellions were crushed once for all. And for all this credit goes to Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, the brave and gallant general who never saw defeat in his life time.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE BATTLE OF NAUSHERA

Early in 1823, the Maharaja summoned Hari Singh to Lahore for urgent consultations as intelligence reports had been received that Mohammad Azim Barakzai was mustering his forces to fight against the Khalsa. It was a challenge for the Maharaja who thought it fit to nip the evil in the bud.

The Maharaja gathered his troops at Rohtas and marched towards Rawalpindi. Having halted there for a couple of days, he sent Fakir Aziz-ud-Din to Peshawar to realise tribute from the Governor Yar Mohammad Khan who owed allegiance to him. Yar Mohammad Khan gave right royal reception to the Fakir, the town was illuminated and parades were held in the honour of the visiting dignitary. The Fakir was duly impressed. Yar Mohammad Khan cleared his dues and presented to the Lahore *darbar* a gift of a few horses. It is said that Yar Mohammad Khan sent to the *darbar* 40,000 rupees, as tribute with a promise of further annual tribute of 20,000 rupees.

Fakir Aziz-ud-Din returned satisfied and reported the matter to the Maharaja. But the conduct of Yar Mohammad Khan irritated the tribesmen. Pathans flared up in an open revolt and raised the cry of *jehad* against the infidels. Their chief instigator was Azim Khan, Yar Mohammad's elder brother. He aroused

the religious feelings of tribesmen and declared that he would liberate the Pathans from foreign yoke. Cries of *jehad*, resounded in the Khyber Pass and shouts of *Allah-o-Akbar* were heard from the top of the hills.

Mohammad Azim Khan marched with a strong army of both regulars and irregulars from Kabul to Peshawar. Thousands joined him on the way spurred by their greed to loot and plunder. When Mohammad Azim Khan reached Peshawar on January 27, 1823, Yar Mohammad Khan fled into Yusuf-Zai territory.

The news was received by the Lahore *darbar* with surprise. Immediate action was ordered. Prince Sher Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa led the advance columns. They crossed the Attock by means of Pontoon bridge and reached the fort of Jahangira. A light skirmish took place, the Afghans left the fort and fled in whatever direction they could. When Azim Khan, who was encamping at Peshawar, came to know the fate of his comrades at Jahangira, he gathered more tribesmen by raising the cry of *jehad*. The religious sentiments of Afghans were inflamed and their enthusiasm reached its peak, raised the slogan of "do and die for the green banner" which was to be kept aloft at all costs. Tribesmen from all corners—Afridis, Yusufzais and Khat-tacks—gathered like a swarm of locusts to lay down their lives in *jehad* against the infidels.

The Maharaja, on the other hand, mobilised all his resources, gathered arms and ammunition, marched in stages and reached the eastern bank of the river. To his great disappointment he found that the Afghans had

already destroyed the bridge. Sher Singh, who had earlier captured Jahangira, was besieged by Afghans. Azim Khan was being assisted by his brothers Dost Mohammad and Jabbar Khan.

All the hUls were surrounded by hostile forces. It was almost impossible for the Khalsa army to cross the river and was not allowed to make a boat bridge for the purpose. The blood thirsty Afghans were camping all around and Sher Singh and his troops were put in the most awkward position. There was no escape for the Khalsa. The Maharaja had to take a quick decision, for there was no time for consultations. The time to strike had come. The Maharaja took a bold decision on the spur of the moment and ordered his troops to cross the river. The Maharaja was the first to plunge his horse into the river. He recited *japji* and prayed to the Lord for success. The troops followed him. All types of animals—camels, elephants, horses and mules—were used to cross the river. Many men and material were carried away by the strong current of the river. Some war equipment was lost too. But most of the troops were able to cross the river and were able to control its western bank. Before the Afghans could take any action, the Khalsa army was fully entrenched and had the upper hand. The Afghans retreated in dismay. The gates of Jahangira fort were opened. The triumphant Maharaja entered the fort and was received with great honour. Gun shots were fired and Prince Sher Singh welcomed his father with loud shouts of *Sat Siri Akal*. The first round was over. The Khalsa had carried the day.

The Afghans now encamped in the open fields ta Naushera—between Attock and Peshawar. In between

was Landi stream and on its western banks were stationed the Afghans. The Maharaja held consultations with his generals and decided that Afghans on the western banks of Landi should not be allowed to cross it and join the Afghans at Naushera. The Afghans on both sides of the stream somehow joined, the situation for the Khalsa would be beyond control. So they had to strike without any loss of time.

The Khalsa army surrounded Naushera and encamped on the bank of the river Landi. The artillery was put into action. Guns were fired opposite the Afghans. The Afghans were entrenched on the Pir Sabad hillock. The army of the Sikhs was estimated to be around 25,000 strong while the Afghans strength was not less than 40,000. The *Ghazis* were asked to wage a holy war against the infidels and were instigated in the name of *jihad*. They were told to 'do or die' for the sake of their religion. Khatak chief's son Feroze Khan with a considerable number of *Mujahids* had joined the Afghan regulars. On the other side, the contingent of the Khalsa army were commanded by its dashing and dynamic general Akali Phula Singh. He had a suicidal squad at his command which was imbued with the desire to fight and die for the sake of the *Panth*.

However, Akali Phula Singh's courage and bravery at Naushera surpassed his earlier achievements. Attempts were made to dislodge the Afghans from the hillock but nothing substantial could be achieved. Ultimately, Akali Phula Singh with his band of desperadoes moved along the foot of the hill. A musket ball struck him down his horse but not caring for his life he rode an elephant

and dashed into the enemy ranks. The Afghans fell on the Akalis and hand-to-hand fight ensued. The Akalis were surrounded by 1530 Afghan horsemen against shouts of *Sat Siri Akal* and *Allah-o-Akbar*. Many Afghans lost their lives but in the encounter another musket ball hit the brave general who in the thick of firing captured the hillock. But the general lost his life along with a number of his devoted soldiers. He was the hero of Multan and Kashmir and had proved his mettle in earlier battles. But his courage and bravery at Naushera surpassed all his earlier achievements. The loss of Akali Phula Singh was unbearable for Ranjit Singh who when informed of the death of his brave general became remorseful but bowed before the will of God. He ordered a *samadh* to be constructed at the place where the gallant general had lost his life.

Then, the Sikh troops advanced under Prince Kharak Singh but the Afghans did not budge an inch. Half the Afghans were slain but the remaining could not be dislodged from their position on the high ground. More Sikh forces were rushed. The battle lasted the whole day. Some 2,000 Sikh soldiers laid down their lives. Then by the evening many Afghans were dislodged from their positions. The remaining *Ghazis* fought their way out of the Sikh posts and fled in the hills to save their lives. The victory was of the Khalsa.

When Wazir Khan came to know of the happenings at Naushera, he rushed from Peshawar to join his co-religionists and his brother who was commanding the Afghans. But he was not allowed to cross the river by

the troops in the command of Hari Singh Nalwa. Nalwa's soldiers showered fire on Azim Khan's forces like rain in the month of *sawan* and many in the enemy ranks were killed. Ranjit Singh himself appeared on the scene, rode up to the top of the mouud, ordered his troops to march forward. The hills resounded with the cries of *Sat Siri Akal*. Ranjit Singh acknowledged the greetings of his troops by raising his naked *kirpan* to his forehead. Fierce fighting followed. Moorcroft, who was present on the battlefield, wrote to the Governor-General ; "The matchlock, the brow, the spear, the sword, the knife and even the staff of an undisciplined multitude were about to be opposed by the cannon, the musket, the matchlock and the sword directed by disciplined artillerists-under the command of Ranjit Singh himself and consisting of the flower of the Sikh army."

Infantry fire was opened. The Sikh cavalry charged. One line of horsemen galloped up to the enemy, fired, wheeled and turned back. The same thing was repeated again and again. The Afghans concluded that such a combat would not be beneficial to them. They climbed down the hillock and attacked the Sikhs with all their forces. Two of the Sikh guns were captured but in a matter of moments they were recaptured by the Sikhs. Gun fire continued. The Afghans were within the firing range of the Sikh army.

The Afghans made a desperate efforts to dislodge the Sikhs from their vantage position but all in vain. The Sikh cavalry rode into the ranks of the *Ghazis* and

transfixed them with lances. Hari Singh Nalwa once again established his courage, valour and determination. Azim Khan watched from a distance the slaughter of his *Mujahids*. In between was the stream, which he was not allowed to cross. When he saw his *Ghazis* fleeing attempting to cross the river and some of them drowning, his head hung in shame. The shock was too great for him to bear. He was broken-hearted and died some time afterwards. The battle of Naushera sounded the death knell of the Afghans. Three days later, the victorious Maharaja, alongwith his general Hari Singh Nalwa, entered Peshawar, The citizens gave them a rousing reception, presenting the Maharaja many gifts. At night the bazars and streets of the town were illuminated. Fire works were displayed. Shouts of *Sat Siri Akal* resounded in the sky in this far flung area inhabited by the Pathans, who had no respect for the law. The name of Hari Singh Nalwa became a byword for the Pathans who to this day remember him as the bravest of the brave. He alone could instil discipline in them and order them to obey the law of the land.

After a couple of days, both Yar Mohammed and Dost Mohammed appeared before the Maharaja, repented for their misdeeds and sought his forgiveness. The Maharaja, generous and liberal as he was, pardoned them who promised to pay him tribute regularly in future. Beautiful horses were presented to the Maharaja including the prestigious *Gauharbar*. *Shahi darbar* was held and Yar Mohammed was appointed as Governor of Peshawar as he promised to pay a revenue of one lakh and ten thousand rupees to the Maharaja.

After the victory the Maharaja returned to Lahore. Songs of welcome were sung and the Muslim festival, *Shab-i-barat* was celebrated by all the communities jointly. Roses and flowers and petals were showered on the victorious Ranjit Singh who in turn showered gold and silver coins on the large concourse of people who had gathered in the streets celebrating the victory. At night oil lamps were burnt and rockets were fired. The Maharaja thanked the Almighty for the victory.

## CHAPTER XII

*HARI SINGH VISITS  
SIMLA AND RUPAR*

By 1830, the British sought to expand their territory and had started exhibiting keen interest in Sind and other areas situated beyond the river Indus. They also wanted to put an end to the Sikh advance towards the South whose growing power was proving an eye-sore to them. Their interest in Sind was both political and commercial. River Indus was most suitable for navigation and the capture of area around it would facilitate the transport of British goods for sale in the North Indian markets. Politically, Sind was important because it could act as a base in case Baluchistan and Afghanistan were to be invaded.

It was, therefore, decided to send Alexander Burnes to the Lahore *darbar* on the pretext of creating goodwill but actually create the congenial atmosphere for holding a meeting between the Governor General and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The King of England sent five beautiful horses for presentation to the Maharaja and the Governor-General added a big coach which, in the absence of good roads could only be transported by boat.

Burnes left on his journey by boat in March 1831. Leekie, a surveyor and Parsi doctor, accompanied him. His boats were fully equipped with machines to record

all types of data for the navigation of big vessels. Burnes also had instructions to probe into the politics and military strength of Amirs. The Amirs were to be sounded on opening up the river to regular traffic. Everything was kept a secret and it was made to appear that Burnes was carrying gifts only as a gesture of goodwill from one empire to an other. If there was any obstruction in the route, Maharaja Ranjit Singh would be offended which would create ill-will between him and the Amirs of Sind.

Burnes established contacts with the Amirs and held consultations with them. His staff members busied themselves in preparing temperature charts. The whole thing was camouflaged in such a way that nobody could judge the real intentions of the British. But the shrewd Maharaja got an inkling and became suspicious of the British designs. Lehna Singh Majithia was sent to welcome Burnes as he was known for his scientific bent of mind. His knowledge of mathematics and astronomy as also his desire to know about the working of scientific instruments proved very useful in knowing Burnes' intentions.

On June 7, 1831, Burnes entered the Maharaja's territory and was given a royal welcome including salute of several guns and a guard of honour. A *darbar* was held to honour the guest and a letter of welcome from the Maharaja presented to him. It was a unique scene. Many Sardars presented *nazars* to the royal guest amounting to 1400 rupees. The horses were shown to the entire gathering which was duly impressed. A shoe of one of the horses was sent to the Maharaja to give him an idea of the gifts.

The *darbar* created a good impression on Burnes' mind. An incident which occurred at the time of hauling the boats from the banks of the river convinced him of the bravery, courage and strength of the Sikhs. As they were engaged in this, they disturbed a tiger which attacked one of the men. The monster was speedily wounded by someone and several riders were unhorsed from the fright of their steeds. The Sikhs then advanced on foot, swords in hand, to attack the tiger. He sprang on one most fiercely ; and as he fired on his left shoulder, the poor fellow bravely stuck his head by a well-directed blow. The contest was unequal and the men fell horribly lacerated. His comrades instantly ran up and with cuts and wounds the tiger soon fell. He was a large animal and measured 10 feet, his thigh was as large as that of a full grown man. The coolness of the courage of the Sikhs surpassed belief."

Burnes further writes : The Sikhs are doubtless the most rising people in modern India. Although they were unknown 400 years ago, the features of the whole nation are now as distinct from that of their neighbours as the Indian and the Chinese. That any nation possessing peculiar customs should have a common manner and character is easily understood ; but that, in such a short period of time, some hundred thousand people should exhibit a strong national likeness as is to be seen among the children of Israel is, to say the least, remarkable."<sup>2</sup>

On July 18, 1831, Burnes reached the outskirts of Lahore. He was welcomed by Fakir Azizuddin and Raja

1. Burnes, Alexander ; Travels into Bokhara, Vol.1 P. 119

2. Ibid, Voi. I P. 76



Gulab Singh and was made to stay in Allard's home for the night.

Next day, Captain Wade arrived from Ludhiana with his platoon to provide escort to Burnes. The colourful procession was greeted enroute to the palace by Sikh infantry. A big crowd collected to watch the procession. Guns were fired to salute the honourable guest. Raja Dhian Singh greeted Burnes at Palace gate.

"Burnes presented a letter from the Governor-General on behalf of the King of England. The Maharaja touched his forehead to the seal and the letter was handed over to Fakir Azizuddin, who began to read the Persian text mentioning the gifts of 'some' horses of the gigantic breed which is peculiar to England, and referring to the great friendship subsisting between the two nations. Ranjit Singh interrupted the Fakeer and said that the occasion called for a salute to the King of England. Once more the cannon roared. Sixty guns firing twenty one rounds each shook the walls of the palace and the people's homes in the city. Then the Maharaja stepped down to inspect the gifts."

Burnes' mission was successful. He reported to the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, that the Indus route could be utilised for navigation, that the Amirs of Sind were afraid of Ranjit Singh and that they would be willing to allow the British the passage if they were protected against the Lahore *darbar*.

Early in 1831, the Governor General sent a message to the Maharaja, through Captain Wade, for a

meeting between them. The Maharaja called his courtiers and placed the British proposal before them. The Sikh rule was fully established by this time and no Sardar was in favour of entering into another treaty with the British in view of 1809 treaty. But Hari Singh Nalwa showed presence of mind and, being aware of the problems of Afghanistan and Sind, suggested that a delegation be sent to meet the Governor General. He was supported by Fakir Azizuddin. "The Maharaja decided to send a delegation consisting of Hari Singh Nalwa, Fakir Azizuddin, General Gulab Singh and Diwan Moti Ram.

The delegation left Lahore and reached Simla in about five days' time. Some writers are of the opinion that the delegation also included Sardar Dhanna Singh Malwai Sardar Ajit Singh Sandhwalia and Sardar Lehna Singh Majitha." The delegation was welcomed by the Governor General who had several meetings with it. However, Bentinck's mind was occupied with more practical matters. The problem before him was as to how to persuade Ranjit Singh to give up the idea of Sind, allow British ships to navigate through all the rivers in his empire and, at the same time, a feeling should be generated in him that everything was being done in the interest of the Maharaja and that the British had no axe to grind.

"The deputation was received with much distinction by the Governor General who, observing the very favourable disposition in which the Sikh ruler seemed

to be proposed an interview between His Highness and himself. The rising fortunes of Ranjit Singh and the establishment of his power this side of the Indus were considerations which led to the Governor-General to propose a formal meeting at a time when the probable designs of Russia and Persia, and the further advance of that power towards the East were the subjects of warm discussion in political circles, and it was thought fit to give the world an impression that complete unanimity existed between the two States."\*

The Governor-General directed Captain Wade to proceed to Lahore immediately and to suggest to the Maharaja that the Governor-General himself would be glad to call on the Maharaja if only he was invited by him.

However, the suggestion was not appreciated by the Maharaja's courtiers, some of whom opposed it tooth and nail on the plea that the Maharaja should not meet a mere

Governor-General. Hari Singh Nalwa was one of them. However, the Maharaja set aside all the arguments and agreed to meet the Governor-General. This was a historic decision. It was agreed that the meeting should take place at Rupar on October 26, 1831.

The meeting at Rupar was full of glamour and gaiety. A bridge of ferry boats was constructed over the Sutlej and the Maharaja's camp was set on the opposite side of the river. A silver pavilion was constructed in an open field for parade and tents of dark red with mar-quees of yellow silk and satin were pitched. In the

\*. Latif, Mohd., History of the Panjab. P. 451

vicinity was raised a garden where wheat was specially sown in plots looking like birds, horses and other animals.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh reached Rupar on October 25, 1831, in the early hours of the morning, accompanied by 16,000 Cavalry, 6,000 infantry men, his Ministers, the Rulers of Jind, Ladwa and Kaithal, Prince Kharak Singh and other Princes, the Dogra Rajas, the Majithias, Sandhawalias, Kallianwalas and the Attariwala Sardars. General Hari Singh Nalwa was the most prominent figure included in the entourage. The Nalwa Sardar was taken along by the Maharaja for consultations on strategic points.

The Governor-General's party included his Principal Secretaries and several army officials, their total number being 60. The escort consisted of 2 squadrons of European Lancers, a mounted band of His Majesty's 16 Lancers, an European regiment two battalions of infantry of Indians, eight guns of horse artillery and two squadrons of Skinner's Irregular Horse.

Next morning, on October 26, 1831, the Maharaja ceremoniously worshipped the horse and the sword and, accompanied by 1000 horsemen wearing coats of mail covered with silk, crossed the bridge riding on a gold-caprisoned elephant. Across the bridge, Lord Willian Bentinck, also mounted on an elephant, received the Maharaja. The British troops lined both sides of the road. In the end, the Maharaja stood up on his elephant and went over to the Governor-General who embraced the Maharaja. It is said that a union took place of the

to be, proposed an interview between His Highness and himself. The rising fortunes of Ranjit Singh and the establishment of his power this side of the Indus were considerations which led to the Governor-General to propose a formal meeting at a time when the probable designs of Russia and Persia, and the further advance of that power towards the East were the subjects of warm discussion in political circles, and it was thought fit to give the world an impression that complete unanimity existed between the two States

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The meeting at Rupar was full of glamour and gaiety. A bridge of ferry boats was constructed over the Sutlej and the Maharaja's camp was set on the opposite side of the river. A silver pavilion was constructed in an open field for parade and tents of dark red with mar-quees of yellow silk and satin were pitched. In the

vicinity was raised a garden where wheat was specially sown in plots looking like birds, horses and other animals.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh reached Rupar on October 25, 1831, in the early hours of the morning, accompanied by 16,000 Cavalry, 6,000 infantry men, his Ministers, the Rulers of Jind, Ladwa and Kaithal, Prince Kharak Singh and other Princes, the Dogra Rajas, the Majithias, Sandhawalias, Kallianwalas and the Attariwala Sardars. General Hari Singh Nalwa was the most prominent figure included in the entourage. The Nalwa Sardar was taken along by the Maharaja for consultations on strategic points.

The Governor-General's party included his Principal Secretaries and several army officials, their total number being 60. The escort consisted of 2 squadrons of European Lancers, a mounted band of His Majesty's 16 Lancers, an European regiment two battalions of infantry of Indians, eight guns of horse artillery and two squadrons of Skinner's Irregular Horse.

Next morning, on October 26, 1831, the Maharaja ceremoniously worshipped the horse and the sword and, accompanied by 1000 horsemen wearing coats of mail covered with silk, crossed the bridge riding on a gold-caprisoned elephant. Across the bridge, Lord Willian Bentinck, also mounted on an elephant, received the Maharaja. The British troops lined both sides of the road. In the end, the Maharaja stood up on his elephant and went over to the Governor-General who embraced the Maharaja. It is said that a union took place of the

two auspicious stars in the Zodaic sign of Pisces. The Maharaja was then conducted into the tent by the Governor-General. They enquired about each other's health and then the Governor-General presented two hundred trays containing gifts which included silk, double-barrelled guns, pistols and 51 suits, ornaments, two horses with gold and an elephant with red valvet trappings. This was followed by reciprocal *sarwana* of 1100 gold ducates.

The meeting lasted about an hour or so. But no serious discussion took place. It seemed as if it was just a get-together. In the end, son-e dancing girls, brought by the British party, danced vs/hich was highly appreciated and enjoyed by the Sardars. The honourable ladies accompanying the Governor-General party presented a few items of English folk dance and songs which further thrilled the Maharaja's party. A lot of goodwill was created^ The Maharaja then took leave of the Governor-General, crossed the river in a canopied boat and reached his own camp alongwith his Sardars.

It is said that the Maharaja wanted to discuss with the Governor-General, in the presence of Sardar Nalwa, the Sind problem and the political complications being created by the East India Company. But the Governor-General evaded the issue and regained silent. Though captain Wade Governor-General's agent in Ludhiana, was present 'at the meeting, he too side-tracked the issue.

The next day, the Governor-General paid return visit escorted by Prince Kharak Singh. He was received on the bank of the river by tJie Maharaja when both

rode on the same elephant. The road was flanked by the Maharaja's infantry and cavalry. The Governor-General was taken to the silver pavilian. The Sardars of the court and other civil and army officers presented *nazars* and the Maharaja presented to him 43 pieces of robes of honour, 7 pieces of jewellery, 2 beje-welled swords, persian guns with golden carvings, pashmina goods and an elephant with a silver *howda*. The Maharaja himself put a pearl necklace around the neck of Lord Bentinck. The British party was entertained by Kashmiri dancing girls.

During the next four days, the troops were paraded. This was very much to the liking of the Maharaja. He minutely inspected the British troops and asked many thought-provoking questions about the British arms and ammunition and other war machinery. He requested repeated feats of the British troops, especially the square formation in which they were well-versed. "They are like walls of iron, he remarked. He was so pleased with their drill that he gave Rs. 11,000 to be distributed to the British soldiers. In every way, Ranjit proved himself to be a far superior soldier to any other native. He seemed as if gifted with the intelligence of an English Field Marshall and, in fact, he moved about as if he was himself in command of the troops."

The same evening the Maharaja threw a party in honour of Lord and Lady Bentinck. A well-decorated special tent was set up. A carpet of gold brocade was laid on the ground and a gilded throne and two bedsteads studded with precious stones provided for the

guests. On the arrival of the honoured guests, fireworks were displayed and Kashmiri dancing girls entertained them with folk songs and dances. Wine was served lavishly in golden cups. The Maharaja was extremely happy and personally looked after the guests. He gave them gentle smiles and enquired about their comforts time and again. The Maharaja drank to the full and merrily went round the party. It was a typical example of Indian luxury and extravagance.

The Maharaja was enjoying the party in a care free mood. But something else was bothering the Governor-General's mind. Both he and his agent Wade raised the question of navigation in the Punjab rivers. Ranjit Singh had his own doubts about the whole affair, although, on the face of it, the proposition sounded gainful. The Maharaja could not swallow the bitter pill regarding the Sind affairs ; so he asked them whether the British had intentions of extending their territory over Sind. '-No," came the prompt reply from Wade. It assured the Maharaja that the object was purely commercial and Amirs of Sind had been persuaded to accept this contention and Bentinck did not open his mouth but it was made clear to the Maharaja that his empires' southern boundry was final. However, a treaty of lasting friendship was signed. The Maharaja got nothing. Most of the Sardars, foremost among Sardar Nalwa, were not happy at the outcome: the meeting which was much talked about and on which a huge sum of money had been spent.

"A sense of disappointment soon set in. Ranjit Singh had tried to befriend the English man the

open-hearted way Punjabis do; but each time the English returned his embrace, they put a hand in his pocket and took what was dearest to him—and left protesting their goodwill."

On October 31, Ranjit Singh gave the British a joyous farewell. The Governor-General presented the Maharaja with two 9-pounder horse artillery guns. Not happy at the outcome of the meeting, the Maharaja left for Lahore the next day. The Governor-General reported to the Secret Committee, "I did not scruple to give the desired document, omitting, however, the declaration that our friends and enemies were to be one and the same, on the ground, that the relations between the two Governments would scarcely warrant such a pledge. The anxiety shown by His Highness for the introduction of this assurance and the reason assigned for it; are among the characteristic circumstances which attended the interview."<sup>2</sup>

The Lahore *darbar* was not happy over the turn of events.

## CHAPTER XIII

*AGAIN IN HAZARA-BUILDS  
SHRINE AT PAN J A SAHIB*

After the decisive victory at Naushera, Sardar Nalwa remained in the Peshawar area to restore peace and assist Yar Mohammad Khan in the administration. When things settled down, Sardar Nalwa returned to Hazara under instructions from Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

After reaching Hazara, Nalwa was informed that Tarin and Torkheli tribes had left the plains and were hiding themselves in the hills at Sirikote and Narra. They would occasionally come to plains under the command of Mohammad Khan Tarin for loot and plunder. The people of plains were tired of their tactics and Nalwa had to take quick and drastic action. So in the beginning of 1824, Nalwa attacked Sirikote.

When the tribes came to know of the invasion, they came together and organised themselves. Raising the cry of *Jihad*, 15,000 of them collected to face the Khalsa army. All the routes leading to their villages were blocked with stones and trees, and at certain places, they took up defensive positions.

When Nalwa reached there, along with his army he found all the routes blocked. He attacked the villages himself leading a body of troops. Amid shouts of *Sat Siri Akal* and *Allah-o-Akbar*, a fierce battle was

fought. The tribesmen fought with courage and devotion to their religion but the Khalsa army carried the day. Meanwhile, the ammunition kept under heavy stones blocking the way to Narra village burst and Nalwa fell into a deep *khad* and became unconscious. His soldiers made a desperate effort to locate him in the nearby villages but in vain. The Khalsa army then retired to its camp. The rumour that Nalwa Sardar was no more spread like wild fire. Now a contingent of the Sikh army proceeded towards the *Khad* under Sardar Maha Singh Mirpuria and Sardar Tek Singh and searched for Nalwa's body deep below but all their efforts proved to be of no avail. When they were about to return, Nalwa's body was found under a tree. He was profusely bleeding and was carried to the camp. His wounds were bandaged and taken to Haripur. He fully recovered after a couple of days. Narra was attacked the next day. The *Ghazis* fled from the battle field. Several villages were burnt and 500 cattle taken possession of.

The Khalsa army hastened back to Haripur. Nalwa got constructed five fortresses in the hills for future exigency. Another camp was demarcated for the Sikh army at Siria village. A well was also constructed. War preparations continued and forces were reorganised.

As the rumour of Nalwa's death spread in the surrounding villages, the *Ghazis* were encouraged and they joined hands to fight the Khalsa army. They collected at Bagra and made preparations to attack the Sikh army. However, their intentions were known to Nalwa, he attacked their hideouts with 500 men. Many *Ghazis* were slain. Many more fled. It was now known through-

out the area that Nalwa was very much alive and once again fear of his presence was felt forcing many *Ghazis* to hide themselves.

When the news of Nalwa's injury reached Lahore *darbar*, there was great anxiety regarding his health. The Maharaja himself was perturbed and he marched towards Hazara alongwith his body guards. When the Maharaja reached there, he found Nalwa quite hale and hearty and was extremely happy to see him. This was a measure of the respect Nalwa commanded at the hands of Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja expressed a desire to visit the border areas. By that time, the rebellion had been crushed and Mohammad Khan Tarin had been put behind bars. The fort of Sirikote was further strengthened and 500 soldiers stationed there to protect the fort from any onslaught. The Maharaja enjoyed the scenic beauty of the area and went on hunting expeditions. After staying there for a couple of days, he returned to Lahore. Mohammad Khan Tarin was also taken there.

In 1825, Nalwa toured the Karal's area where complete peace had been restored. *Jagirs* were bestowed and then at the same time they were strictly warned to remain peaceful in future. The same year Nalwa paid a visit to Gujranwala, his hometown. In his absence, the reins of administration were given to Sardar Maha Singh Mirpuria. Hardly had Nalwa spent a few days in Gujranwala when news came that a rebellion had spread in Sirikote under the leadership of Bostan Khan Tarin, nephew of Mohammad Khan Tarin. Nalwa hastened back to Hazara. But before going there he went to Lahore. There he got Mohammad Khan Tarin

released on the specific condition that he would pay a tribute of Rs. 55,000 to the Lahore *darbar* and maintain peace. However, on reaching Hazara, Mohammad Khan Tarin refused to pay the tribute and joined the rebellious army. Nalwa then attacked Sirikote. Soon Mohammad Khan and Bostan Khan were arrested and produced before the Nalwa Sardar. Mohammad Khan was given a day's time to explain his conduct. But next day before the sun dawned, the Khan took poison and committed suicide. The other rebellious leaders were made to stand before the *Tops* and killed. Once again peace was restored.

In 1828, the Maharaja directed Nalwa and Jamadar Khushal Singh to proceed to Katoch's territory in Kangra. Nalwa reached Lahore and joined the forces of Khushal Singh. The Khalsa army marched towards Kangra, occupied several forts and annexed the territories of Nadaun, Guler and Lambagaon to the Sikh empire. Nalwa returned to Lahore victorious. The Maharaja was very much pleased with him and duly honoured him.

Nalwa then went back to Hazara. Hardly had he spent there a few days when news came from beyond Attock that an outsider was instigating the Pathans to rise in revolt against the Sikhs. Sayeed Ahmad Shah who belonged to Barailly, was the head of the rebellious Pathans. He also met Amir Dost Mohammad Khan in Kabul, who promised him all help in fighting against the Sikhs. He further directed his brother Sultan Mohammad Khan and Yar Mohammad Khan to do the same. All joined at Landikotal and proceeded to-

wards Panjtar which was occupied by Zusafzai tribes. Fateh Khan was their head. A huge congregation of Pathans was arranged in which the Sayeed declared that he had been sent by God himself to fight against the infidels and finish them. Instigating them in the name of religion, he promised them a place in the heaven if they fought against the Sikhs courageously. Thereupon the cry of *jehad* was raised and thousands of Pathans joined the Sayeed.

A few days earlier, the Sikhs and constructed a fort at Khairabad and Sardar Budh Singh Sandhawalia was made incharge of the fort. To fight against the Sikhs, it was necessary for the Pathans to first occupy this fort. Nalwa also reached Khairabad with a strong force of 8,000. Next day was Friday. The Pathans had hardly performed their morning prayer when Nalwa's forces attacked them. A fierce battle ensued. Several men were slain on both sides. Riding the horse, Nalwa exhorted his men to fight to the end. Fighting continued the whole day and in the evening it started raining heavily. The guns stopped and firing discontinued. The Pathans took this opportunity as a boon and fled in storm and rain in whatever direction they could. The Sayeed ran away towards Mardan to save his life. According to Alexander Burnes, while the Pathans were 15,000 strong, the Sikhs had only an army of 8,000. It was thus a great victory of Nalwa whose prestige went up tremendously, making him the most honoured general of the *Sikh darbar*.

Nalwa then discussed with other generals including Sardar Budh Singh as to how the Afghan menace could be finished forever. It was agreed that Sayeed

Ahamad Shah should be pursued in whichever direction he had gone to see that he was unable to regroup his forces.

Leading a 6,000 strong force, Nalwa crossed the Landa river and pursued the Sayeed. When the Sayeed came to know the presence of Nalwa in the vicinity of his hide-out, he rushed further ahead. Nalwa followed him with all the speed. The Sayeed encamped at village Tulandi and raised the cry of *Jehad*. He was able to collect 14000 *Ghazis*. Moulvi Ismail also took sides with him. The *Ghazis* faced the Nalwa army but the Sayeed fled to Panjtar hills. Nalwa ordered his horsemen to attack with vigour, himself commanding the cavalry. The *Ghazis* fought bravely and offered stout resistance but ultimately Nalwa carried the day. The Nalwa army forced the *Ghazis* to flee and followed them with lightening speed.

The victorious Khalsa army reached ahead and proceeded towards Panjtar. The *Ghazis* were surrounded by the Nalwa's horsemen after some time. The *Ghazis* were totally demoralised and were left with no strength to face the valiant Sikh army. Only Mubark Khan of Panjtar offered some resistance. He tried his best to keep up the morale of the *Ghazis* but they could not persuade them to stay in the battlefield. Mubarak Khan himself was injured. Thereafter the Khalsa army captured Panjtar and took possession of the guns besides a huge stock of foodgrains. Nalwa recognised the administration and remained there for a month or so and returned to Hazara.



When the Maharaja was informed about Nalwa's latest achievements, his joy knew no bounds and sent a *Khillat* to the Nalwa Sardar. The battle of Panjtar was fought in **1829**.

The trouble in Hazara was not over yet. It was like a lull before the storm. The *Ghazis* were bent upon taking revenge. After being defeated, Sayeed Ahmad Shah hid himself in the Buner hills. In **1833**, he along with his several thousand followers, reached the border of Kagan and captured few villages. Kagani Sayeeds and Sawati also joined hands with the Sayeed. When informed of the situation, the Maharaja sent reinforcements under the command of Prince Sher Singh, Sardars Rattan Singh, Partap Singh Attari, Attar Singh Kalianwala, Jawala Singh and Sham Singh Nihang. This force consisted of **10,000** strongmen. War preparations were made and on May **30, 1831** Prince Sher Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa attacked Balakote. The *Mujahads* fought bravely and put up a stout defence, trying to check the advance of the Khalsa army. A fierce battle was fought. Many were slain on both sides. War feats of Prince Sher Singh and Nalwa surprised one and all. The battle continued for the whole day. The *Mujahads* too fought with courage and devotion. But the battle remained indecisive. In the meantime, the Sayeed came face to face with Prince Sher Singh when hand-to-hand fight took place. With one stroke of his sword the Prince cut off the Sayeed's head. *Ghazis* were totally demoralised and started fleeing from the battlefield. On the other hand, Maulvi Ismail faced Sardar Nalwa. He offered stout resistance but was killed too in the encounter. The *Ghazis* started funning in whatever

direction they could. The Khalsa army followed deer into the hills. Many more were cut to pieces. The Khalsa army was thus victorious. In the battle' the Sayeed, Maulvi Ismail and Bairam Khan were killed.' About **3,000** of their followers lost their lives. The Khalsa lost **800** men with many injured. Sardar Partap Singh Attari, the brave Sikh commander lost his life.'

After the battle was over, Prince Sher Singh and Sardar "Nalwa ordered their court painters to paint the likenesses of both the Sayeed and Maulvi Ismail. When the naintines were ready they were sent to the Manama at Lahore. Their bodies were buried with full military honours at village Talhat. When the news of his brave generals reached the Maharaja he not only presented *Khillats* to them but "also sent a prize of Rs. **50,000** to Sher Singh and Hari Singh for his victory over the Sayeed."<sup>2</sup>

The battle proved a landmark in the history of the Sikhs. "It ended the career of Sayeed Ahmad, the imposter who in the garb of religion, had endeavoured to promote his own private ends and those of his followers. His existence as the supporter of the Wahabi persuasion was as dangerous to the Mussalman community who followed the precepts of the *Quran* and the Hadis as propounded by the early writers of the faith, as it was to the non-Mussalman public. Immediately after his death became known, his deputies were expelled

1. District Gazeteer. Peshawar. P. 64

2. Punjab History. Book No. 137. letter No. 117

from the hills on the frontier, his *Ghazis* fled in disguise and his family sought protection with its old master the Nawab of Tonk. The neighbourhood of Peshawar was quiet after the Syad's death, and Ranjit Singh entered upon no military enterprise of importance after taking the field against this pretender."<sup>1</sup>

Alexander Gardner has described the action at Balakote in these memorable words • "Sayeed Ahmad and his Moulvi, surrounded by his surviving Indian followers, were fighting desparately hand to hand with the equally fanatical Akalis of the Sikh army They had been taken by surprise and isolated from the main body of the Sayeed's forces, which fought very boldly without their leader. Even as I caught sight of the Sved and the *moulvi* they fell pierced by a hundred weapons Those around them were slain to a man and the main body dispersed in every direction-I saw literally within a few yards of the Syed when he fell, but I did not see the angel descend and carry him off to paradise although many of his followers remember afterwards that they had seen it distinctly enough."<sup>2</sup>

Nalwa as a Governor of Hazara, worked wonders He helped Ranjit Singh to consolidate his empire. The Pathan menace was eradicated and an efficient administration established. People were given justice besides the rule of law. Nalwa had a religious bent of mind • he did not miss any occasion provided to him to serve the cause of the Panth. Nearby was the holy place of Hassan Abdal sanctified by fthe visit of Guru Nanak.

So far the place had remained neglected. In **1832**, Nalwa got constructed a shrine in memory of the great Master and installed *Sir'i Guru Granth Sahib* in it. The hand impression of the Master on the stone was still intact. A tank was constructed in which flowed the crystal clear water right from the *Panja*. Around the tank were made steps on which was fixed marble brought from Rajputana. To maintain the building properly a *Jagir* of Rs. **500** was attached with the shrine. When in **1832**, *Bhog of Guru Granth Sahib* was performed to celebrate the occasion, Nalwa presented utencils for the *langer* and many valuable carpets besides Rs, **2,500** in cash. Bhai Mahan Singh was appointed administrator of the shrine with Sadhu Singh Akali looking after the security arrangements. Another *Jagir* was attached to the shrine to meet the expenditure on administration. After the construction of the shrine was completed, it became a routine with the Nalwa Sardar to perform *Bhog* before laueehing any campaign. Thousands of devotees started paying homage to the memory of the great Guru.

Baron Hugal paid a visit to to the shrine in **1835** after the building was constructed. He records : "I had appointed the morning for my visit to the Sikh Guru, at which ceremony the whole population of Hassan abdal was present. When I came to the marble steps leading to this *darbar* ; which was held before the celebrated stone, and saw them there seated on carpets, I took of my shoes, a courtesy which gained for me with every mark of dignity, and accepted a present, which was certainly well bestowed, if only for the sight of the stone, on which the above named marvel still remains

imprinted."<sup>1</sup>

With the passage of time, people started visiting the shrine in thousands. In 1839, Shahamat Ali had an occasion to visit the shrine. He tells us: "Hassan Abdal has a fine bazar where plenty of supplies can be procured. To the eastward of the place is a large spring situated in a grove of shady trees. Just above the spring is the impression of a hand which the Sikhs say is that of Baba Nanak, their first Guru, and hence Hassan Abdal is called Panja Sahib by the Sikhs. This is another instance of the truth of the observation, that people appropriate traditions and legends to their own faith. They say that Nanak, when proceeding about the country, being wearied one day, asked the *Faqir* on the hill to give him a cup of water. The *Faqir* was surly, and an altercation ensued between them, when the *Faqir* told him that if Nanak was a man of any miracle he would supply his wants without any assistance, and would even move the hills. Nanak put out his hand and stamped his fingers on the rock, where the mark still remains ; and in commemoration of the Baba the late Sardar Hari Singh built a small temple, which he named Panja Sahib, from the five fingers."<sup>2</sup> The management of the shrine was taken over by SGPC in 1921.

In the beginning of 1833, Nalwa diverted his attention towards *Ghakkars*. In the battle of Balakote, they had helped the *Ghazis* with the supply of arms, ammunition and foodgrains. They also did not pay the land revenue to the Lahore *darbar* in time. Nalwa

surrounded their territory which was annexed .without much resistance after many were killed. A fort was constructed at Khanpur in which the Sikh army was stationed. The *Ghakkars* promised to behave in future. Nalwa pardoned them and bestowed *Jagirs* on them.

Now the entire Hazara territory came under the sway of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Nalwa administered it efficiently and diligently, crushing all rebellions. When things settled down, the Maharaja called Nalwa to Lahore. A *darbar* was held in which he was praised and honoured. Nalwa remained humble in his victory and moments of greatness. Now he was the most beloved general of the Khalsa army.

1. Baron. Hugal : Travels in Kashmir and Panjab, P. 226

2. Shahamat Ali : The Sikhs and Afghans P. 158

## CHAPTER XIV

*PESHAWAR IS ATTACKED  
AND ANNEXED*

It was in August 1818, that wazir of Kabul, Fateh Khan, who was very powerful and resourceful wazir fell. He became the victim of treachery and intrigues. Prince Kamran, son of the ruler, Shah Mohammad caused his fall. He got removed his eyes and killed him. The kingdom of Afganistan which was fast disintegrating was kept unified by his sheer tactfulness and ability. But his death at this juncture caused the division of the empire. Soon afterwards, the strong Barakzai brothers lamented to take revenge. Mohammad Azim Khan, the Kashmir Governor, when came to know of the latest developments, marched with his strong army towards Kabul to inflict Punishment on the culprits. Kashmir was left to be looked after his-youngerlbrother Jabbar Khan.

Mohammad Azim Khan reached Kabul. Some resistance was offered and in the battle that ensued, Kamran was defeated. Mohammad Azim Khan installed Ayub Khan, son of Taimur Shah as the ruler. Shah Mohammad fled to Harat and the Barakzai brothers became the Masters.

The upheavel had far reaching consequences. It created excitement in Lahore *darbar*. The Maharaja was alive to the exigencies. He held consultations with

his top aides, Sardar Nalwa and Sardar Dal Singh and decided to march towards Peshawar. The Maharaja desired to get full benefit from the prevailing situation and ordered the preparations to be made. In October 1808, the Khalsa army reached Attock and occupied the forts of Jahangira and Khairabad. There the Attock chief Feroz Khan submitted.

The Sikh army then marched towards Peshawar and no resistance was offered. It was an open field. The *Ghazis* fled and Peshawar was occupied by the Sikh army on November 18, 1818. The Governor of Peshawar, Yar Mohammad Khan left the territory and crossed the Khyber Pass to Yusafzai land.

Although, the Sikh army was victorious, hold on Peshawar could not be retained and the territory administered properly with a meagre army, so Ranjit Singh appointed Jahan Dad Khan of Attock as the Governor of Peshawar. The people of the town were not touched nor their properly looted. A *nazrana* of 25,000 rupees was collected from prominent citizens. The Maharaja stayed at Peshawar for 3 days, celebrated his victory and returned to Lahore. He took with him 14 heavy guns. The governor Jahan Dad Khan had no force to protect the land in case it was attacked by anybody. The Maharaja had hardly reached Lahore, when Yar Mohammad Khan, attacked Peshawar and recaptured it. Jahan Dad Khan fled leaving the territory to the mercy of the invaders.

The Maharaja was sore over the developments. In the mean while, Dost Mohammad Khan, the

Barakzai, offered to the Lahore *darbar* an annual tribute of 100,000 rupees. He was made the incharge of Peshawar. The offer of Barakzais was accepted but the Maharaja sent a force of 12000 men under the command of Prince Kharak Singh, Missar Dewan Chand and Sardar Nalwa were ordered to cross the Indus river to ensure the implementation of the terms. Peshawar was re-occupied by the Barakzais but paid only the half amount promised alongwith a horse. The Sikh forces quietly retrieved to Lahore.

By 1823 Abdali's Indian empire was sinking. The Sikh's victory at Naushera had practically liquidated Afghan supremacy between the river Indus and Peshawar. In Afghanistan, the Barakzai brothers were quarelling among themselves. Habibullah Khan, son of Mohammad Azim Khan was not in a position to keep the kingdom under his control. Sher Dil Khan, brother of Mohammad Azim Khan and already declared himself as the independent ruler of Kandhar. Dost Mohammad Khan wrested the masand at Kabul. The Bukhara chief annexed Balakh ; Harat was occupied by Kamran, the dethroned son of Shah Mohammad. Peshawar was retained as the tributary of Lahore *darbar*. Sind was no longer under the Afghans. Kashmir was annexed to the Sikh empire in 1819, Multan was occupied by the Sikhs in 1818, the Derajat in 1821, Attock in 1813 and Rawalpindi in 1820.

By 1826, the dismemberment was complete and final. Kabul had become a separate empire. Kashmir was ruled by three brothers Kohin Dil, Rustam Dil and Mihr Dil. The fourth brother, Sher Dil had already

died.

The situation had taken such a turn that it enabled the Sikhs to annex the Afghan Provinces in North India. After the death of Mohammad Azim Khan, who was a strong force in unifying the Barakzai family' the Afghans had suffered much. With the occupation of Peshawar by the Sikhs, the unity of Barakzai family was broken into pieces. The Sikhs never trusted the Barakzais and were being paid the tribute under coercion and threats. This position continued for about four years, but by 1827, the Afghans gained strength reorganised themselves, raised a cry of *jehad* and vowed to fight against the Sikhs whom they called infidels.

The upsurge was tremendous. All joined hands and gathered under the banner of Sayeed Ahmad so-called reformer, who proclaimed the doctrine of purity of *iman* for Muslims. He pretended to reform the Muslims among whom corruption and evil practices had crept in. Belonging to Bareilly, he was once a mercenary in the service of Amir Khan, the Rohilla chief. He left the service of Amir Khan after his fall. He then became religious enthusiast, went to Mecca for *Haj* and on his return became the exponent of the *wahabi* doctrines. He wrote a book *Taqwiyat-ul-Islam*, which contained several portions against the non-Muslims. This had appeal for the Muslims who became his followers in large numbers. He went to North-west frontier and Sind and converted to his faith the Nawab of Tonk and Amirs of Sind.

From Sind, he reached Kandhar and entered Yusafzai territory. He found the area suitable to enlist more followers to his faith and raised a cry of *jihad* against the Sikhs. He declared that to save Islam, the Sikhs must be annihilated and it would be *Swab* to wipe out the Sikhs. Many came to his fold. He preached against the Barakzais, denounced them for becoming the tributaries of the infidels.

After consolidating his position, Sayeed Ahmad moved from Panjtar to Akora in 1827. He was repulsed by the strong Sikh force under the command of Budh Singh Sindhawalia. Many died on Sayeed's side and he was forced to take shelter in the hills. However, he continued to preach hatred among the Afghans and in 1829 Sayeed Ahmed invested Peshawar. Yar Mohammad Khan, the Governor of Peshawar, came out to offer him resistance but he was wounded and killed in action. Meanwhile a strong Sikh army under General Ventura and Prince Sher Singh reached the spot and prevented the *Ghazis* from occupying the city of Peshawar. The Sayeed again fled and the Sikhs took possession of famous Lailli, the mare, which was in the custody of Yar Mohammad Khan.

Having settled the affairs, the Sikh army left Peshawar, appointing Sultan Mohammad Khan Barakzai, the brother of the slain ruler as the Custodian. Sayeed Ahmad entered the valley of Kashmir and preached his doctrine among the Kashmiris.

Meanwhile, the Maharaja consulted his astrologers for his chances of victory over his enemy the 'wicked

*Khalifa*'. 'The Maharaja enquired from Pandit Madusudan, the verdict of the almanac now that the wicked *khalifa* had been strictly besieged by Kanwar Sher Singh. The Pandit said that the horoscope told at that time the ascendancy in the Zodiac sign of virgo and Twins showed that either the *Sarkar* or the *khalifa* would succeed. The Maharaja, who was a touchstone of every kind of science, remarked that the victory of one or of the other could mean something, but the defeat or victory of either side could not be contemplated. The Pandit said that in his understanding the Zodiac Virgo had two aspects and only that could be the finding.'

In June 1830, a force under the command of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa and Allarad drove the Sayeed across the river Indus but soon afterwards, he regrouped his forces and fell on Peshawar, defeated the Governor and captured it. The Sayeed was proclaimed *Khalifat-ul-Musalmin* and the coins were struck in his name with the inscription-" Ahmad the just, Defender of the Faith, the glitter of whose sword scattereth destruction among infidels."

This state of affairs continued for sometime. The Sayeed's rule was shortlived. Even Muslims became against him as "his ill-conceived reforms and innovations in the administration of justice according to the doctrines propounded by him aroused the opposition of the Sunni *Mullahas* of Peshawar. He imposed a title on the peasants and issued a decree bestowing all Afghan marriageable maidens on his uncouth Indian followers, which created the wild storm. His Yusafzai

and other tribal adherents instantly denounced him as an imposter and an adventurer and clamoured for his expulsion from the region. Sayeed Ahmad opened up negotiations in November 1830 with Sultan Muhammad Khan, hastily surrendered Peshawar to him on a promise of tribute, and fled across the Indus."<sup>1</sup>

The Sikhs were not sitting idle. They were yearning to establish the Sikh rule in this far flung area. Ranjit Singh himself marched towards Peshawar to pursue the *khalifa* and teach him a lesson. But before the Maharaja could reach there, the *khalifa* once again fled to the hills. The Maharaja returned to Lahore. The *khalifa* entered Peshawar and forcibly collected a *nazrana* of Rs. 3,000 from the Governor and again disappeared to the hills. This hide and seek game by the *khalifa* was not liked by the Yusafzais who deserted him in large numbers. There was revolt against him and even the *Qazis* and the *Mullah* as denounced him. He was turned out of the region and was forced to take shelter in the areas surrounding the Kashmir valley. He joined hands with the Muzaffarabad chief. However, he was not allowed to rest in peace, was followed by Prince Sher Singh and was killed in action at Balakot. This was the end of the man who had pronounced that he would finish the infidels and wipe them out. In the words of Alexander Gardner :

"However, as it turned out, we set out to join the holy standard just an hour too late, for the Syad and his faithful *maulvi* were slain, fighting bravely side by side before we could join in the fight, They were taken by

surprise at a place near Balakot and surrounded by a large party of Sikhs, who had crossed the river Indus on *massaks*, or inflated skins. In his anxiety to rejoin his master Muhammad Ismail had left me and my force a much behind and, owing to the mistake or treachery of a guide, we took longer than was expected in coming up."

I well remember the scene as **1** and my Eusufzai and Khaibari followers came in view of the action.

Syad Ahmad and the *maulvi*, surrounded by his surviving Indian followers, were fighting desperately hand to hand with the equally fanatical *Akalis* of the Sikh army. They had been taken by surprise and isolated from the main body of the Syad's forces, which fought very badly without their leader. Even as **1** caught sight of the Syad and *maulvi* they fell pierced by a hundred weapons. Those around them were slain to a man, and the main body dispersed in every direction.

With some difficulty I kept my party together and withdrew to the hills, showing to hold a front to the Sikhs that they did not dare to follow us far. The Eusafzai mountain-passes always gave the Sikhs cholera, as Avitabile used to say :

I saw literally within a few hundred yards of the Syad when he fell, But I did not see the angel descend and carry him off to paradise, although many of his followers remembered afterwards that they had seen it distinctly enough.

I remained two nights at Panchthar, where I rested my men after their exertions, and divided the

booty between them. The death of the Syad broke the only link that held his followers together, and in the retreat many of the parties from different regions fell upon one another for plunder. My Khaibarites and Eusafzais were equal to the best in this matter, and cut down several of the Hindustani fanatics who had joined them for protection, and whose clothing or equipment seemed to them a desirable acquisition."<sup>1</sup>

The Sikh victory was complete. Celebrations were organised in Lahore at a large scale.

"A swift-bird (messenger) came from Kanwar Sher Singh with a letter announcing victory over the wicked *khalifa*, and all the details about that country became clear bit by bit. A special role of honour was entrusted to a man with a letter of praise and appreciation for Kanwar Sahib Sher Singh. And the grant of the country of tirah was made to the said Kanwar Sher Singh and a discharge of *Topkhana* took place. Letters were issued to the Sardars of Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and Attock, informing them about the victory over the *khalifa*, and asking them to discharge guns and make illuminations. On the fourth of the said month May 15, 1831 all the Sardars presented themselves to the Maharaja in the garden at Batala and unani- mously remarked that the good services which Kanwar Sher Singh had rendered could not be accomplished by anybody else."<sup>2</sup>

With the final liquidation of Sayeed Ahmad, it

became clear to the Maharaja that Peshawar had to be annexed to his empire at any cost. The Barakzais were ruling Peshawar on behalf of Lahore *darbar*. Dost Mohammad Khan, the Barakzai, had by now taken possession of Ghazni, Kabul and Jalalabad. He now wished to re-establish his control over the Afghan dependencies. Dost Mohammad's desire to capture Peshawar made him to seek British help. The fear of Persian designs on Afghanistan was still lurking in his mind. He requested the British to help him to capture Peshwar. He declared his intention of raising a cry of *rehad* against the Sikhs. The British news-writers in Kabul, Massan and British Political agent at Ludhiana, captain Wade recommended to the government to accept Dost Mohammad's proposal. But the British government refused to meddle in the affairs of Sikhs and Afghans.

On the other hand, Barakzais Sultan Mohammad Khan and Jabbar Khan were feeling panicky as Yusufzais had threatened them not to pay tribute to the Lahore *darbar*. They had fear about the intentions of Dost Mohammad too. They therefore, tried to make contact with the British Government and secretly made overtures but the British Government did not pay any heed to them. At this stage, the British Government was very cautious of maintaining good relations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Moreover, Shuja-u-Mulk, the Kabul King who was deposed earlier and had become the stipendiary of the British Government at Ludhiana was still making efforts to regain control of his lost empire. He was itching

1. Alexander Gardner—Memories PP 172-173.

2. Suri Sohan Lai, *umdat-ut-Tawarikh* P. 34.



to become the king once again. In 1826, Maharaja Ranjit Singh assured him that he would help him in his efforts. But the Shah did not accept the Maharaja's offer as he feared the British wrath which might ultimately lead to his exit from Ludhiana.

In July 1827, Shah sent a messenger to the Governor-General at Simla that he intended to gain control of his lost kingdom with the assistance of the Maharaja if the British did not object to it. He was told that the British Government had no objection if the Shah entered into treaty with the Lahore *darbar* but if he failed to succeed, the British Government would not be obliged to give him protection. This step of the British Government disheartened the Shah. He once again tried to seek the help of Ranjit Singh and in March 1829, the Shah sent a proposal to the Maharaja that in case the Maharaja gave him help and he was able to regain control of Kabul, he would present Ranjit Singh rupees 1,00,000 and a few horses of good breed. But when the British Government came to know of the proposal through their secret agents they warned him of the consequences. This again frightened the Shah and he remained quiet for some time.

But his desire to become the king was not diminished as yet. In August 1831, the Shah made another proposal to the Maharaja. "On 31st of Sawan 13 August, 1831 A.D.) Lala Kishan Chand presented himself to the Maharaja along with *Kazi*, wakil of Suja-ul-Mulk and stated that the countries of Shikarpur, Mankera, Multan, Peshawar, Kachhi, and Deras may belong henceforth to the Maharaja and said that though the Maharaja had

shown many favours yet he had not granted to him a crown upto that time. If the crown was granted to him it would make the good name of the Maharaja live for ever in the world. He must enthrone the Shah in Kabul by his royal support. He assured him further that the Shah or any of his descendants would not interfere in the country under the sway of the Maharaja. The Maharaja felt very happy and said that the thing would take place as desired provided some terms be written out and accepted by the Shah in the form of an agreement (treaty) and be presented to the Maharaja for it was simply after that the comradeship of the respectable Shah would take place". The Maharaja put 12 terms for the treaty as under—"The first condition was that his (Shuja)'s descendants, generation after generation, would never interfere with the countries of Shikarpur, Mankera, Kachhi, Multan and the Deras, for they belonged to the Maharaja Bahadur and they would have nothing to do with them. The second condition was that the troops which would go to help them from Maharaja Bahadur, half of their expenditure would be borne by the Maharaja and for the other half they themselves would be responsible. The third condition was that he would send to the Maharaja Bahadur every year one hundred and one good horses worthy of a special ride by way of *nazrana* of the country of Kabul. The fourth condition was that the fruit and other necessary presents and gifts would be sent year after year. The fifth was that he would leave one of his sons with 500 strong horsemen to remain in the service of the Maharaj Bahadur. The sixth condition was that he would never create loss to the

oxen or the cows at any time in the country of Kabul and the like, and whosoever did so he (Shuja) should punish the offender. The seventh condition was that all the *khattris* and *brahmans*, who were residing at Kabul, would be caused to anyone of them- The eighth condition was that he would send to the Maharaja Sahib, by way of *nazrana* the horse known as Shahzada Kamarn-wala. The ninth condition was that whatever articles of jewellery the Maharaja would demand from him he would supply the same without any delay. The tenth was that the ministers who were to work in Kabul through their maintenance was to be paid by the Maharaja Bahadur, they were to be granted separate estate as well. The eleventh was that he would consider friends of the Maharaja as his own friends and the enemies of the Maharaja as his own enemies. The twelfth was that he would never act contrary to the sweat will of Maharaja. These conditions were written out and handed over to *Kazi*, who was asked to present them to the Maharaja after having them written out like that so that the troops be appointed to help the Shah to regain his throne."

These conditions were found humiliating and degrading by the Shah. The Shah was shocked and perplexed. He refused to surrender his honour and in desperation the Shah turned again his eyes towards the British. He took advantage of the Persian threat to Herat which was then under the control of Kamran. He proposed to the British that an expedition should be launched against the tyrannical, authoritarian and re-

pressive rule of the Barakzai Dost Mohammad Khan who had been hob-knobbing with Shah Abbas of Persia. He said that it posed a threat to all the peace loving nations including the British. He promised that he would maintain friendly relations with the British government and would give an reception to the British agent in Afghanistan.

Again, the British did not oblige him. They still felt that it was not a time to annoy the Lahore ruler with whom they had entered into a treaty of mutual friendship and cooperation.

Meanwhile the Shah was offered help from the Amirs of Sind, who feared Ranjit Singh because of his intentions over Shikarpur. Help was promised to him in invading Afghanistan on the terms that he would not ask for Shikarpur and acknowledge him as the independent ruler. The Shah accepted the terms. Many Afghan and Balauch chiefs promised him help if he invaded Kandhar. The Shah negotiated with Ranjit Singh and sought his help and assistance in fulfilling his ambition. Ranjit Singh agreed on the condition that the Shah should hand over to him Shikarpur and also divide the territories of the Amirs with him.

The Shah did not have resources to organise such an expedition. He requested the British to give protection to his family at Ludhiana and also that the British Army advisors should accompany him to Afghanistan. He was told that "the British Government would remain perfectly neutral towards all parties in Afghanistan, that no financial or military help except the advance of his

half-yearly maintenance allowance of Rs. 16,000 could be given to him, and that his family during his absence would not be abandoned to destination."

Shah Shuja had no other alternative but to turn to Ranjit Singh for help and a treaty was signed on March 22, 1833, surrendering all claims to the territory north of Indus, in possession of the Sikhs. Ranjit Singh gave the Shah an assistance of Rs. 1,25,000 and Diwan Sawan Mai, the Multan Governor was ordered to send a reporter to stay with Shah's army and keep him informed of the developments.

In March 1834, the Shah marched towards the valley of Pishin, where the chiefs of Kandhar had collected 81,000 horsemen to check his advance. When the Shah's force approached the valley, the tribesmen scattered and Kohin Dil Khan retired to Kandhar. Dost Mohammad Khan made appeals to his brothers, and co-religionists to desert the Sikhs and join him. Prince Mohammad Akbar Khan left Kabul with 2,000 horsemen and cannons to fight the Shah. The battle ensued. Shah Shuja was defeated. He fled to Herat, leaving behind all that he had. Roaming about he reached Shikarpur in January 1835 and later returned to Ludhiana.

The Afghan pre-occupation at Kandhar gave the Sikhs an opportunity to capture Peshawar on May 6, 1834. However, Dost Mohammad Khan threatened Ranjit Singh with fire and sword if Peshawar was not

handed over to him. The Maharaja sent more troops towards north. He wrote to him that he was welcome to fight against him and all scores would be settled in the battlefield.

Dost Mohammad Khan sought help from all sources. The Amirs of Sind ignored him. Frustrated, he raised a cry of *jihad* against the Sikhs. But this also did not work. His treasury was empty.

The Sikhs built up the defence of the North-west frontier. Forces had moved upto Peshawar. Hari Singh Nalwa stopped Afghan's insurrection in the valley. A chain of posts along the Khyber Pass had been established. The Maharaja had moved upto Attock along with 25 battalions of the Sikh army with guns.

Ranjit Singh made up his mind to annex Peshawar to his empire in 1834. A strong force under Hari Singh Nalwa and Prince Nau-Nihal Singh accompanied by Generals Ventura and Court marched northwards. The Barakzai brothers readily paid the tribute, sent their families and guns across the river Kabul to Michni in the Yusufzai hills.

An order was served to them to vacate Peshawar. The Sikhs circled the city of Peshawar, occupied Bala Hissar, and fighting in the suburbs captured Peshawar on May 6, 1834. Pir Mohammad Khan fled to Kohat and other Afghan Sardars repaired to Takkal and Shekhan.

"The Sikh occupation of Peshawar resulted in a hectic activity for its defence immediately. Reinforce-

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1. Lord William Bentinck to Shah Shuja P. 109

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HARI SINGH NALWA

ments were sent to Attock under Prince Kashmira Singh, Gulab Singh and Tej Singh with strong detachments of infantry and Cavalry arrived at Peshawar ; and the Maharaja himself reached Rohtas with strong contingent and heavy guns."\*

It was, however, clear to Ranjit Singh that Peshawar could only be retained by taking adequate measures for its defence. The Maharaja issued orders for the construction of a new fort at Peshawar Hari Singh Nalwa was made Governor of the province. Steps were taken to consolidate Sikh power by strongly garrisoning the forts on the frontier. The Barakzai brothers, Sultan Mohammad Khan and Pir Mohammad was assigned *Jagirs* in the region to avoid further mischief.

After taking the possession of Peshawar the Maharaja alongwith his son Nau-Nihal Singh and some contingents of army returned to Lahore. However before returning, he made Hari Singh Nalwa as the Governor of Peshawar. Ranjit Singh bestowed *Jagirs* of Tappa Hasht Nagar and Khat on Sardar Sultan Muhammad who had helped him in his expedition. The annual revenue from these *Jagirs* was rupees three lakhs About 12,000 soldiers were placed at the disposal of Hari Singh Nalwa.

Hari Singh Nalwa took charge of the administration. The first step he took was to strengthen and construct the forts \of Sumergarh, Burj Hari Singh, Kailash Garh, Shankergarh and Fathgarh. Army guards were

posted. Thus, a halt was put on all the expected attacks from the Khyber pass. Peace was restored in Peshawar and anti-social elements were curbed. Life returned to normal and people's life and property was made safe.

Nalwa was fully aware as how to match the Afghans hatred against the Sikhs. His rule has been described as a rule of oppression and tyranny in the North-west frontier but he had no alternative but to be very harsh with the Pathans who understood the language of force only. Tributes were levied on the Yusafzais—a cess of rupees four per household which was collected in cash or in kind and for the realisation of which the people could be given severe punishment and their personal effects could be auctioned. "There is scare in the villages from the head of the Lundkhar valley to the Indus, which was not burnt and plundered by this celebrated commander. In such awe were his visitations held that his name was used by mothers as a term of affright to hush their unruly children."

The policy of depredation continued for many years in the North-west frontier. Nalwa remained in-charge of the administration of Peshawar till his death in 1837. He strengthened Sikh position, garrisoning the frontier forts. He built a new fort at Bala Hissar and placed strong contingents in the forts of Attock and Jahangira.

"Generally speaking, the Sikh rule in the valley of Peshawar could not change the traditional pattern of Afghan life both in the towns and villages. The acknow-

1. Peshawar District Gazetteer, P. 70

ledged heads of the clans, the Arbabs, the Khans and the Muliks controlled the tribes through their national institution, the Jirgah, or the Council of elders through which the general wishes of the community were ascertained. They could call tribes to arms and take the field. In villages the Afghan community had its own trade Guild and workmen. Each had its traditional gardeners, towners, shepherds, weavers, sweepers, cotton dressers, barbars, oilmen and potters. They lived on their trade, and if they possessed land, they had no proprietary rights in the soil."

Hari Singh was also able to crush rebellion of Yusufzais in Meidsn aiea. They were creating trouble in the Hazara territory. Land revenue was collected regularly. Some difficulties were experienced but Pathans were taken to task. The army was ordered to collect land revenue forcibly. Villages were burnt. Situation became under control and soon afterwards, the Pathans started sending land revenue on their own to Peshawar.

Hari Singh ruled Peshawar with an iron hand. Two German travellers Baron Hugel and C. T. Vigne reached Hazara in 1835. They were received with the honour they deserved by Nalwa's Diwan and his son. Hari Singh was away to Gujranwala. Baron Hugal has mentioned details of the journey in his travels. Later, he reached Gujranwala and met Nalwa.

While at Gujranwala Nalwa, engaged himself in several important construction works. He repaired the Sikh shrines and got constructed the *Samadhs* of Sardar

1. Hasrat Bikramjit : Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, P. 140.

Mahan Singh and Rajmata Raj Kaur. Nalwa sent a letter through Attar Singh with a plan of the *Samadh* of Singh Sahib Mahan Singh who had gone to live in paradise, and that of the highly respected eldest mother (grand mother) of the Maharaja, given to veil behind the screens of charity. On examining the plan the Maharaja felt very pleased and grant Rs. 12,000 for the preparation of the *Samadh*."

1. Suri. Sohan Lai, Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, P. 298.

## CHAPTER XV

## THE BATTLE OF JAMRAUD

Maharaja knew fully well that Peshawar could remain in his Empire only if adequate measures were taken for its defence. He ordered the construction of a new fort at Peshawar. Hari Singh Nalwa was made head of the province. Measures were taken to consolidate the Sikh power by strongly garrisoning the forts on the border. Nalwa's forceful measures, particularly the number of forts constructed, made the Afghans panicky. This led them to believe that the Sikhs would one day capture their country. Dost Mohammad raised a cry of *jehad* and instigated his co-religionists to fight the invaders tooth and nail in the name of Islam.

Hari Singh Nalwa, after settling administrative matters at Peshawar, turned his eyes towards Afghans. He personally visited the Khyber Pass and minutely inspected topography of the area. He selected a mound, where a small fortress called Jamraud already existed, and immediately decided to construct fort there. He ordered raising two regiments of Sipers and Miners along, with several thousand masons and carpenters and got collected a big quantity of stones and other building material.

On October 17, 1836, Hari Singh Nalwa called a huge gathering of his soldiers, prayed to the Almighty,

performed *ardas* and laid the foundation stone of the fort. Cannons were fired and martial tunes were played by the army band. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with devotional songs. Construction work was started in full swing. Work continued day and night and the huge fort was ready in about 55 days. It was a miraculous achievement of Nalwa. The walls of the fort were 4 yards wide and 12 yards long and double doors were fitted in the walls. When the fort was occupied, a big function was held celebrating its completion' *Akhand Path* of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* was performed and the fort was named Fatehgarh. The fort could contain 800 infantry men, 200 horsemen, 80 fire men, and 10 big and 12 small sized cannons. NaVa then appointed Sardar Mahan Singh as head of the fort and conferred on him the title of *Sarhaddar*. Mahan Singh was called specially from Hazara for the purpose ; he had earlier accompanied Nalwa on several campaigns and had shown great valour in the last battle of Multan. Nalwa appreciated his army powers and took him along when he was appointed the Governor of Kashmir.

At Jamraud, the army used to meet its requirements of water from the Jamraud stream which, originating from Khyber Pass, passed near the fort. For this, the *Afridis* of Khyber Pass were paid a sum of twelve hundred rupees. However, Nalwa got dug a well inside the fort for use in case the flow of water was stopped from outside. Adequate provisions and a huge stock of arms and ammunition were stocked inside the fort.

Another fort called Burj Hari Singh was got constructed on the road from Peshawar to Jamraud.

Here 100 jawans were posted for the defence of the fort. Another fort constructed was named Barra fort. This fort, which had 300 infantry men, 100 horsemen and 3 cannons, was put under the charge of Sardar Jhanda Singh Butalia. Likewise, Michni fort was constructed on the banks of Kabul river and was put under the command of Nichatar Singh, son of a well-known general Sardar Dhanna Singh Malwai. Posted in this fort were 300 infantry men, 100 horsemen, 10 artillery men and 2 big and 2 small cannons. Another fort constructed by Sardar Nalwa was Shankergarh. It was in the charge of Sardar Lehna Singh Sandhawalia. After completing all the arrangements, both defensive and offensive, Nalwa returned to Peshawar. The construction of forts and other measures taken by him disturbed the Afghan ruler. "This was very unwelcome news for the Kabul Amir. Dost Mohammad Khan, who saw that the measure adopted by the Sikhs was a prelude to further aggression, as from the Khaiber the roads lay open to Jallalabad. It was therefore thought necessary to make a display of force, if not run the risk of actual collision, and while he himself remained at Kabul, the Amir deputed his confidential minister, Mirza Sami Khan, to superintend the operations, and act as the exigencies of the moment might require."<sup>1</sup>

To meet any eventuality, Dost Mohammad started preparations for war on a very large scale. He had already seen the strength and valour of Nalwa. He was hesitant to face him directly. So he raised the cry of *jihad* against the infidels and created war atmos-

phere throughout the length and breadth of Afghanistan. He collected a big crowd of *Ghazis* and presented before them his five sons, namely, Mohammad Akbar Khan, Mohammad Afzal Khan, Gulam Haider Khan, Mohammad Azam Khan and Mohammad Akram Khan and addressed them thus : "To save the honour of Islam, I am prepared to sacrifice all my five sons. They are at your beck and call and will leave no stone unturned to defend Islam from enemy's onslaught. They are not my sons now, they are sons of Islam." The words of Dost Mohammad went deep into the hearts of the Afghans and their sentiments were aroused, which resulted in many people joining the Amir's army. The cry of *jihad* had united the Afghans. Mothers forced their sons to join the army. "The country has to be saved from infidels", they declared from the house tops. Not only the sons of poor and ordinary citizens joined the army but many sons of noblemen and chieftains offered their services.

On the other side, Nalwa had faith in the strength of the Almighty. He ruled Peshawar with a stern hand ; his rule had been described as that of dagger and sword. He had already taught a lesson to tribesmen and was bent upon unfurling the Sikh flag in Kabul. Early in 1837, Nalwa had seized the fortress of Bala Issar near the Khyber Pass. However, after sometime, Nalwa fell ill and was down with fever when *Hakims* advised him complete rest for many days. Moreover, in March, the Maharaja had performed the marriage of Prince. Nau-Nihal Singh with great pomp and show. In the marriage party were 70 elephants and 600 horse-



men. The Maharaja showered silver and gold coins on the beggars assembled en-route. According to Sir Henry Fane, Commander-in-Chief of the British army, "The crowd assembled surpassed belief. I should say it included from five to six hundred thousand persons, all shoving and fighting to get in the direction—near the Raja's elephant." To participate in the marriage and to display show of strength, a large force was called from Peshawar. These troops were inspected by Sir Henry Fane who remarked ; "Some few were beautifully dressed in chain armour, and looked so like the pictures are seen of warriors in the time of Richard Coeur de lion, that one might almost fancy one's self transported back to the times of the crusaders, for which all those gentlemen in yellow and all the colours of the rainbow would make a good appearance as the soldiers of saladin."

The army was called from Peshawar at a great risk to the security of the Sikh empire. Messages were being sent daily to Nalwa about the preparations being made by the Amir and in turn Nalwa informed the Maharaja about the developments. He requested the Maharaja to despatch the army immediately. The message was received by Raja Dhian Singh on April 26, 1837 but it seems he did not inform the Maharaja in time. Nalwa did not receive any reply till April 30.

The Amir had resolved to put an end to any further advance by the Sikhs into the tribal land. A strong force of ten thousand, equipped with 50 cannons under the command of Prince Akbar Khan and Sami Khan, proceeded towards the Khyber Pass to

encounter the Sikhs. However, in due course, the number of Afghan soldiers increased to 20,000 including horsemen.

The march started from Landi Khanna on April 27, 1837. They had known that Nalwa was not holding the fort at Jamraud and was lying on bed at Peshawar. This very factor increased the Afghan morale and they proceeded with fire for *jehad* burning in their hearts. Their target was the fort of Jamraud. On April 28, they reached the out-skirts of the historic fort and opened artillery fire. Sardar Mahan Singh who was incharge of the fort, opened fire in defence. Firing continued from both sides. The Afghan forces were held back by the courage and valour of the Sikh forces. They checked their advance, inflicting heavy casualties on them. In the battle-field lay several hundred dead bodies. It was a dreadful scene. In spite of day long firing, the Sikhs could not be dislodged from their strategic position. By the evening the fighting ceased.

The soldiers kept themselves busy in taking care of their dead and injured. It is said that "the temporary absence of Hari Singh from Jamraud tempred Mirza Sami Khan and the Amir's son to take an attempt to carry the castle by assault, and a cannonade was commenced upon the walls."

In the battle, a brave Sikh Sardar Ajab Singh Randhawa was seriously injured and died the same night. The next day, with the rising of the sun, firing again started. The Afghans were fighting with zeal as the cry of

*jehad* had the desired effect on them. A fierce attack was made on the fort. The Sikhs defended the fort with all their might and checked the Afghan advances. But the Afghan forces far outnumbered those of the Sikhs. They suffered heavy losses, both in men and material, but they did not lose heart and by the same evening were able to surround the fort. They were also able to capture the stream from which water flowed into the fort. A well of the fort also fell to the Afghans but, in spite of their strength, were unable to enter the fort.

The day passed. The Sikh forces could not be reinforced but the Afghans could not capture the fort. Sardar Mahan Singh collected all the Sardars in the fort and addressed them : "The time for our martyrdom has come. We have to sacrifice our lives for the sake of honour of the Khalsa *Panth*. More forces have not arrived, nor is there any hope in the near future. We should attain martyrdom. For us it is 'chamkaur's' night but if we muster courage we can forstall the danger. We should look towards our predecessors who had sacrificed their all for the sake of *Panth*. Remember Guru Gobind Singh who sacrificed his teen-aged sons, father, mother, in fact, everybody so that we may live in honour and lead a dignified life. The call has come. I want from among you, my comrades, a few gallant fighters who can repair the wall of the fort in no time and a few others who can go to Peshawar and deliver to Nalwa my letter narrating all the incidents." The words of Sardar Mahan Singh had the desired effect on the soldiers. They assured Sardar Mahan Singh that they would leave no stone unturned in perform their duty and were willing to sacrifice their lives for

the sake of the *Panth*. Their sole desire was to see that the Sikh's flag flying on the fort should remain there. They could not think of the time when the flag would be removed from the fort. That would be the darkest day in the annals of the Sikh history. Man had to die one day, they said, then why not die like brave men. As long as there was the last drop of blood in their veins, they had to save the honour of the flag.

The work of repairing the wall of the fort was started without delay. Several *jawans* jumped into the fray and the wall was repaired in no time. They worked with devotion and national fervour in their hearts. Several *jawans* offered their services for delivering the letter to Sardar Nalwa. A woman, named Harsharan Kaur also came forward, not lagging behind her brothers and offered her services for the purpose. She said that every *jawan* was required for the defence of the fort, so the task of delivering the letter should fall on her. It was an occasion of pride for her. The Sardar and other *jawans* were greatly impressed by the offer of supreme sacrifice made by the young lady. At this time they thought of Mai Bhago who had fought shoulder to shoulder with her brethren in the battle of Muktsar.

Some expressed the view that a lady should not be exposed to such a danger and she should remain in the fort but ultimately it was agreed that she be allowed to go in the guise of an Afridi woman. Before leaving the fort, Bibi Harsharan Kaur said with folded hands ; "My dear brethren, your bravery and courage have surpassed all limits. It is highly appreciable. A fire

is burning in my heart to share your burden, but I am a woman. This is my misfortune. But I am prepared to sacrifice my life for a noble cause. Kindly permit me to perform my duty. I pray, I may be permitted to take the letter to Peshawar. To reach Peshawar safe and sound will rest in God's hands as the fort is surrounded from all sides by the enemy forces." Sardar Mahan Singh gave his letter to her in Sardar Nalwa's name. Harsharn Kaur told him that if cannon fire was heard by 4 a.m., it should be presumed that she had reached safely and had succeeded in impressing upon the Nalwa Sardar to send more forces immediately. However, if no cannon fire was heard, it should be understood that she had died.

Sardar Mahan Singh wrote to Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa :

"Respected General Nalwa ji,

Gur Fateh. I did not want to disturb you in your illness. I do not want to put any burden on you in your hour of crisis. It is a known fact that the strength of our forces even at Peshawar is much less than required and it will take sometime for the forces to reach from Lahore. The Khalsa in the fort has decided to apprise you about the entire situation with which it is faced. It is an hour of crisis. The outer wall of the fort, which was damaged, is being repaired by our gallant soldiers by using sand bags. It is hoped the job will be completed shortly. Our honour was saved by the grace of God when even after the wall of the fort was damaged, the enemy could not dare to enter the fort ; otherwise, it would have been impossible for me to send you this last message. It means the Afghans would again attack the fort next

morning. They are making all the necessary arrangements for the same. You had reposed confidence in the *jawans* and given them the responsibility to defend the historic fort of Jamraud which is so dear to all of us. It is a symbol of your honour—Fatehgarh—its very name implies victory and if it is razed to the ground on prestige, honour and dignity will suffer greatly. Until now some how or other we have defended the fort but with the passing of every minute, it is becoming difficult to do the same. To the *jawans*, honour is dearer than their lives. At the moment, leaving aside the sick and the injured our total strength is about 700 soldiers which is insufficient to meet any eventuality. They have taken a vow before *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* that till the last drop of blood in their veins, they will not allow the honour of their national flag to suffer. We may not be able to write you any more letter. Kindly accept our last *Gur Fateh* from the *sarbat Khalsa* stramSJ in the fort." 1 5114111(360

By your honour,  
Yours affectionately  
The Khalsa of Fatehgarh  
April 29, 1837

Harsharn Kaur took the letter, changed her clothes and proceeded towards Peshawar—a journey full of risk and danger to the honour of a woman.

Harsharan Kaur reached Peshawar by 2.30 a.m. on April 30 1837 and was able to deliver the letter to the sick Nalwa Sardar. He roared like a lion and, forgetting his illness, got up from his bed. He had no alternative but to fight for the honour of the *Panth*. He immediately ordered his

troops—6,000 foot, 1,000 regular cavalry and 3,000 irregular to march towards Jamraud. Nalwa wrote a letter to Maharaja Ranjit Singh informing him about the happenings in the tribal area. This was Nalwa's last letter to the Maharaja. Earlier also, he had written letters to the Maharaja, the first on April 21, 1837 and the second on April 28, 1837. The first letter said • "Mohammad Afzal Khan and Akbar Khan have formed *morchas* near the walls of the Jamraud fort. I am holding at the garden of Nawab Ali Khan Mardan Khan near Peshawar. All the cannons have been installed and with the enemy's artillery fire the *bnrjs* of the fort are falling. The enemy is advancing towards Peshawar. The supply of water to the fort has been cut off. I shall be reaching Jamraud on April 29 to command and help the Sikh soldiers. The second letter said : "The Afghans continued their firing from morning till late in the evening with which several breaches have occurred in the fort's walls. A major breach has occurred in one of the walls which had already fallen. However, Sardar Mahan Singh is still holding the fort and is defending it with all his might. There has been heavy casualties on the Afghan side with 500 dead and several hundred injured. Last night, the enemy tried to lift their dead but Sardar Mahan Singh resorted to heavy firing and prevented the Afghans from coming near the fort."

Hari Singh Nalwa also sent a message to Sardar Lehna Singh Sandhwalia at Hashat Nagar for assistance and requested for reinforcement. But as Haji Khan Kokar, under instructions from Amir Dost Mohammad, was blocking all the routes, he was unable to reach Peshawar.

The Maharaja, after receiving these letters at Chinoit, became worried and ordered Sardar Tej Singh, Gullu Khan of artillery, Sardar Sham Singh Attari, Sardar Lehna Singh Majitha, General Allard Ventura, Jamedar Khushal Singh, Raja Gulab Singh and Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh, along with their forces to proceed towards Peshawar. Though the forces marched towards Peshawar, it was not possible for them to reach there in such a short time. The distance to be covered was too long for the time at their disposal.

Then the fateful day came, April 30, 1837. Cannon fire was heard at 3 a.m. from Peshawar. It encouraged the Sikh soldiers, fighting their life and death battle in the Jamraud fort. They could judge that the message had been received by the Nalwa Sardar, so they were confident that assistance would come soon.

Hari Singh Nalwa marched at lightning speed. When he reached near *Burj* Hari Singh, he divided his forces into three columns. One "was put under his own command, the second under Sardar Nidhan Singh 'Panjhatta' and the third under Amar Singh Majitha. He himself proceeded straight and ordered the other Commanders to attack from right and left. "His advance was, at first, irresistible, and the Afghans broke and fled; but the Sikhs carried their pursuit too far, and were overwhelmed by a charge of Afghan horses under Sardar Shamsuddin Khan. Hari Singh, seeing a desperate effort could alone retrieve the fortunes of the day, rode with his principal Sardars to the front and by his presence and example encouraged the Sikhs to stand. The day might still have been won, but Hari Singh fell,

mortally wounded by two bullets in the side and stomach and his men disheartened, fell back under the walls of Jamraud and waited for reinforcements. These at last arrived, when the water and provisions had been exhausted, and nothing remained for the besieged but to cut their way through the enemy as best they might. But when the news of the Afghan attack first reached Lahore, a large part of the force which had been assembled to do honour to the Prince Nau Nihal Singh was despatched north in all haste. The prince himself, his father Kharak Singh, General Ventura, Jamedar Khushal Singh, and all the flower of the Sikh chivalry, formed so formidable an array that, on their timely arrival at Peshawar, the Bara Kzai Sardars raised the siege and withdrew without further fighting to Jalalabad."<sup>1</sup>

Alexander Gardner has described the mobilisation of forces on both the sides, the Sikhs and Afghans. He tells us "that at Peshawar Dost Mohammad Khan had an army of 50,000 troops with 60,000-80,000 irregular *ghazis* supplementing it. Ranjit Singh had moved the whole of the Sikh army towards Peshawar." The Francese Campo or the French division of the Sikh army, then personally commanded by the four French and Italian generals-Messieurs Allard, Ventura Avitabile and Court, and having a strength 20,000 to 22,000 men, marched towards Hastnagar, and thence slowly and cautiously made its way westwards and southwards with the object of turning the left flank of dost's army, while the remainder of the Sikh army commanded by Ranjit Singh himself and 60,000 to 80,000 strong, horse

and foot, threatened Dost Mohammad's centre and right flank. The battle of Peshawar has been described as one month's spanning, coquetting and skirmishing."<sup>1</sup> Heavy cannonading and skirmishing took place along the whole front. The Afghan position being on rising ground, their every moment was visible. The entire Sikh army with the French division was ready to make an advance and a simultaneous attack on the Afghan position. A general advance and attack along the whole Afghan line was to commence at 4 O' clock in the morning."<sup>2</sup> But, "Dost Mohammad, with all his troops and *Ghazis* and retreated during the night into the Khaiber, and when day broke out not even a single tent or Afghan was to be seen."<sup>3</sup>

Turning back to the battle of Jamraud, when Hari Singh reached Jamraud, the Afghans were making preparations for a fierce attack on the fort. The sun had not risen as yet. Nalwa took advantage of the situation and attacked the Afghan force with all his might. Attacks were also made from the other two sides by Sardar Amar Singh and Sardar Nidhan Singh. Artillery fire was resorted to but the Afghans defended the attacks valiantly. When the besieged Sikh soldiers came to know about the arrival of the Nalwa Sardar, they were encouraged and started firing on the Afghans from inside the fort.

Nalwa forced the Division of Mohammad Khan. This division was known for its bravery, valour and

1. Alexander Gardner, *Memories*, P. 184-85
2. Hasat, *Bikramjit, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh* P. 134.
3. Alexander Gardner, *Memories* P. 184-185

gallantry. Mohammad Khan stood before the Nalwa Sardar, who attacked him fiercely, but he did not budge an inch. When he was attacked the third time he left his position. A battle ensued. The Afghans retreated and Mohammad Khan and Nawab Jabbar Khan were grievously injured. The moment, he fell from the horse back, confusion and chaos prevailed. Sardar Nidhan Singh showed his worth and killed several of the enemy soldiers. He faced the Division of Akbar Khan who fought with valour but was badly injured. There was confusion in the ranks and the soldiers who ran helter skelter. Sardar Amar Singh engaged the division of Afzal Khan and Mohammad Azam Khan. Thereafter the Afghan forces ran in all directions.

Now Hari Singh attacked Zarin Khan's division. There were many casualties and the battle-field was covered with dead bodies. Sardar Mangal Singh Ramgharia proved his mettle and killed several enemy soldiers. By this time, the Afghans had known that Hari Singh himself was present in the battle-field. They became panicky. When Mirza Sami and Dost Mohammad's sons came to know that Hari Singh is not present in the battle-field, they became courageous. They tried to attack the Jamraud fort with greater vigour and each time vying with one another to achieve the success. They were congratulated time and again but when on April 30, Sardar Had Singh made a bitter attack on them, they fled from the battle-field.<sup>1</sup>

Hari Singh next fell upon the Divisions of Naib Amir Akhundzada, Mullah Momand Khan Naib and

Zarin Khan, Arz Begi, which he threw into confusion, their leaders being severely wounded and fleeing from the scene of action in great dismay. The Division led by the Amir's sons and Nawab Jabbar Khan, which had not hitherto been in the field, was that of Mohamed Afzal Khan, the Amir's eldest son who, keeping together his body of two thousand men, showed a bold front. Hari Singh, finding him inflexible, unexpectedly wheeled round and observing the Amir's sons and the Nawab occupying small eminences in the defiles of the Khaibar, fell on their divisions. The assault was furious, and the Sikhs drove the Afghans from their positions with much slaughter, capturing fourteen guns. The Sikhs thinking the victory gained, pursued the enemy, in order to drive them into the plains, when their progress was checked by a large body of horses, led by Shams-ud-Din Khan who was coming to join in the battle."<sup>1</sup>

In the battle of Jamraud, Hari Singh Nalwa used *Parmar* rifles manufactured in the Lahore Ordnance Factory. These proved to be very effective. In the battle, while taking away some of the cannons captured from the enemy, Nawab Arbab Mohammad Khan, a Comrade-in-arms of Nalwa, was fired upon by a *Ghazi* and he died on the spot in front of Nalwa's eyes. Nalwa was awfully enraged and he killed the *Ghazi* along with several others.

The Afghans fled and entered the Khyber Pass. Nalwa did not want his forces to follow them instead he wished to consolidate his position and ordered his troops to remain in the fort and have some rest. However an enraged Sardar Nidhan Singh followed the Afghans

1. Masson, Charles : Narrative of various Journeys in Blauchisran, Afghanistan and the Punjab P. 483

inside the fort. He had only 1500 horsemen with him while Afghans numbered several thousand. Hari Singh could not check his pent-up emotions and entered the Khyber Pass to help Sardar Nidhan Singh. He ordered Nidhan Singh to return immediately from the Pass. In the twinkling of an eye, the Afghan general Shams-ud-Din appeared on the scene with 2,000 men. He condemned the action of the Afghans for running from the battlefield and bringing bad name to Islam. He instigated them to face the Sikhs boldly and fearlessly and appealed to them in the name of *jehad* to encounter the Sikhs. Some of them responded to his call and fighting again broke out. At this time, Sardar Nalwa was at *Surkamar*. It was a mound where some Afghans were hiding themselves in a cave. Nalwa's bodyguard Sardar Ajaib Singh Randhawa attacked them but he was fired upon by an Afghan. He fell from the horse back and died there and then. Nalwa immediately stopped his horse and proceeded towards the cave. Hardly had he gone a few paces when he was fired upon twice by the Afghans as a result of which he was hit in chest and stomach. Nalwa's soldiers attacked the Afghans fiercely and killed many of them. But the destiny had played its part.

"The battle of Jamraud, so fiercely contested, was, however, indecisive. Both the antagonists claimed victory, but neither had won it. The Afghans had failed to capture either Jamraud or recover Peshawar and their motley crows of frontier tribesmen soon dispersed beyond the barren defiles of the Khyber. The Sikhs had lost their valiant and brave commander Hari Singh Nalwa and had suffered enormous casualties."<sup>1</sup>

"The Afghans had really not much to boast of on this action, although Akbar Khan plumed himself on a transcendent victory, the Sikhs scarcely acknowledged defeat, but their loss in the person of their chief was irreparable."<sup>1</sup>

We may conclude that "Afghans could not carry it, although they threw the Sikhs into disorder. Hari Singh, by feigning a retreat drew the enemy more fully into the plains ; the brave leader was present everywhere amid his retiring and rallying masses but he fell mortally wounded, and the opportune arrival of another portion of the Kabul forces converted the confusion of the Sikhs into a total defeat. But two guns only were lost ; the Afghans could not master Jamraud or Peshawar itself, and after plundering the valley for a few days, they retreated rather than risk a second battle with the reinforced army at Lahore."<sup>2</sup>

"It seems that the Afghans were at first routed or repulsed with the loss of some guns, but that the opportune arrival of Shams-ud-Din Khan, a relation of the Amir, with a considerable detachment, turned the battle in their favour. It is nevertheless believed that had not Hari Singh killed, the Sikhs would have retrieved the day. The troops in the Peshawar valley had been considerably reduced by the withdrawal of large parties to Lahore, to make a display on the occasion of Nau Nihal Singh's marriage, and of the expected visit of the English Governor-General and Governor-in-Chief."<sup>3</sup>

1. Masson, Charles Vol. III P. 386

2. Capt. Wade to Government, May 13. 15 and July 5, 1837

3. Cunningham, J D. History of Sikhs P. 191

## CHAPTER XVI

*HARI SINGH IS INJURED  
AND MARTYRED*

As we have already seen, in the battle of Jamraud, the Nalwa Sardar was grievously injured. "Hari Singh was struck by two balls, one in the side and the other in the stomach. He knew he was mortally wounded but fearing to discourage his men, he turned his horse's head, and managed to ride as far as his tent. He swooned as he was taken from his horse."

After being wounded Sardar Nalwa reached the fort of Jamraud, which he himself had constructed with great determination. His wounds were bandaged but due to the heavy flow of blood from his wounds, he had gone very weak and was feeling giddy. He did not lose heart although he was having severe pain. The Sardars in the fort got worried and made all efforts to save their beloved general who had guided their destiny all these years. It was an hour of crisis for them.

The sun set in and the night was dark. In the pitch dark, the Afghans fearing further attack ran away. Sardar Dhanna Singh and Sardar Amar Singh, who were still outside the fort, returned. Every soldier hastened back to the fort as news of Nalwa's injury

spread. All of them had before them only one problem : How to save Nalwa's life ?

As all the Sardars collected inside the fort, Nalwa felt his end was near and he addressed his comrades for the last time : "I congratulate all of you heartily. You fought with valour and courage and have saved the fort of Jamraud from the enemy's onslaught. Your achievement is commendable. You have fought shoulder to shoulder with me for expanding and consolidating the Sikh Raj. You have suffered a lot. You have faced every

eventuality boldly and fearlessly."

"I have an intuition that I will leave my mortal body soon. I will be completing my last journey to this world. But today I am extremely happy that you have kept the Sikh flag unfurled in this far off land. You have almost subdued those people from whom the whole world trembles. Today you have gained victory. This is the land of those very people whose forefathers eight hundred years ago attacked Hindustan and gained victory over

Raja Jaipal. He was not only humiliated and his kingdom was annexed but also the country's honour, pride and prestige were trampled under their feet. We are grateful to the Almighty, by whose grace we have been able to unfurl Sikh flag in this distant land. The impossible has been made possible by our efforts and courage. I am leaving the world, fully satisfied and with a sense of pride in my heart. However, before leaving this mortal coil, I demand from you—my last demand—that unless and until our great Maharaja does not reach here with his army to suppress these so called *Ghazis*, you have to save the honour of our



flag which is today unfurling on the fort of Jamraud." Another small desire was expressed by the general that his death should be kept secret till the Maharaja arrives.

Hardly the general had finished his address to his comrades, he felt pain in his wounds and in a matter of moments, breathed his last. There was gloom all over. Tears rolled the eyes of Sardars and soldiers. It was a fateful day in the history of the Sikhs. A great general, who was a terror for the Afghans, was dead today. A general who was never defeated. "Such was the dread in which the Afghans held him, that to this day the name Hari Singh is repeated by mothers in Peshawar and its neighbourhood for frightening their children."<sup>1</sup>

The people were afraid of his name, He was a terror in Peshawar area, the mother's used to tell their naughty children that if they do not believe, they will be caught by Hari Singh and children thought him to be a great devil."<sup>2</sup> He was the bravest of the Sikh generals, the man with the terror of whose name Afghans mothers used to quieten their fretful children."<sup>3</sup>

An epoch ended in Sikh history. A hurried meeting of the Sardars was called by Sardar Mahan Singh. It was decided after a good deal of discussion that the body of Nalwa be cremated at midnight in pitch dark in the fort of Jamraud. No firing of guns, no other formal ceremony. All the necessary arrangements were made by Sardar Mahan Singh. At midnight the body of the great general was cremated, the place being under

1. Latif Mohd. History of the Panjab P. 483

2. Mir Ahamad, Maulana, Twarikh Sarhadi P. 149

3. Griffin. Lepel. The Panjab Chiefs Vol. II P. 149-50

a strict guard. With tears in their eyes, people stood there helpless and motionless. After a couple of days, some of the ashes of Nalwa Sardar were handed over to his relatives.

Latter, two *Samadhis* of the great general were constructed, one in the fort at Jamraud and the other at Gujranwala, in the house of Sardar Nalwa which was confiscated by the British in 1844. This was done in consequence of hesitating submission of his sons to the British. Later, it was sold to one of the Diwans of Eminabad for Rs. 5,000. The *Samadhi* was constructed by the Sardar's wife Mai Dessan.

The *Samadhi* at Jamraud was constructed by Lala Gajju Mai Kapoor of Peshawar. It bears the under-mentioned inscription :

"Tomb of the Sikh General Hari Singh Nalwa, cremated 30th April, 1837, commemorated by Gajju Mai Kapoor of Peshawar."

After sometime, as desired by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a shrine was constructed near the *Samadhi*. A *Guru Granth Sahib* was placed in it and a *grant hi* appointed on a monthly salary which was continued to be paid by the British. We may pray too ;

"May you rest in Heaven  
O, bravest of the creation  
Peace be to your ashes !  
Peace be to your ashes.

The *Samadhis* of Hari Singh Nalwa, now both in Pakistan, reminds us "of the days when the fate of

countries and nations hung on the point of a lance and when an individual whose bold heart beat fearlessly under his steel breast-plate was the sole founder of vast empires. To the proud inhabitants of the land of the five rivers it is memorial of their forefathers sovereignty over the arrogant Afghan tribes. To a sane and brooding mind it is of instability of human greatness. A soldier, the flash of whose sword dazzled once the eyes of the Afghans from Attock to Kabul, is now lying helpless under a few stones. He who triumphantly marched through foreign lands and climes is now being trodden over by rats and squirrels. He who crushed the proudest antagonists yesterday, cannot kill the serpents and snakes that surrounds him today. He who by the thunder of his voice scattered and dispersed the vast hosts of the enemy cannot frighten the owl that disturbs him in his rest. It is a pity."<sup>x</sup>

An account and a detailed description of the battle of Jamraud and death of Hari Singh Nalwa was sent by Dr. Wood to Wade, who forwarded the same to the Governor-General. There had been a great slaughter of Afghans; amongst those killed was Mohammad Afzal the eldest son of Dost Mohammad. The Punjabis lost about 6,000 of their total force of 12,000 men; the Afghans who outnumbered them, left 11,000 men dead on the field. Hari Singh received four wounds two sabre cuts across the chest, one arrow was fixed in his breast which he deliberately pulled out himself, and continued to issue orders as before until he received a

1. Sandhu A.S. Hari Singh Nalwa P. 85

gunshot wound in the side, from which he gradually sank and was carried off the field to the fort, where he expired, requesting that his death should not be made known until the arrival of the Maharaja's rebuffs."<sup>1</sup>

The death of Hari Singh Nalwa was a great blow to the morale of the Sikh forces. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who was on his way to Peshawar, came to know of Nalwa's injuries on May 4, 1837, w.i.e l he was halting at Gujarat. Some writers are of the opinion that by that time, the news of Nalwa's death had also reached but it was concealed by Raja Dhian Singh. The Raja hastily ordered his forces to march towards Peshawar. He was accompanied by Suchat Singh, Jawand Singh Mokol, Ajit Singh, Dhanna Singh Malwai and Mian Gullu Khan.

When the Maharaja reached Rohtas on May, 6, 1837, the news of the death of Nalwa Sardar was broken to him. The Maharaja closed his eyes for a while and then, "he broke down, beat his breast in anguish and wept bitter tears."<sup>2</sup> The Maharaja further said that he had lost a *Nimak Halal* servant of the Khalsa."<sup>3</sup>

It was the saddest day of his life. The man who brought him victory after victory in the battles of Kasur, Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar was no more. "The death of Hari Singh Nalwa caused some anxiety at the Court of Lahore. The Sikh leader had been Ranjit's plamates in boyhood, and was born in the same town

1. May 29, 1837

2. Khuswant Singh : Ranjit Singh PP. 194-95

3. Suri, Sohan Lai, Umdat-ud-Twarikh-Ilii P. 395

as himself. The Maharaja personally liked him, and was much affected by his death, for in him he had his most courageous and loyal lieutenant and an able and experienced Counsellor."<sup>1</sup> "The old man was moved to tears when he heard the fate of the only genuine Sikh chief of his creation."<sup>2</sup>

The Maharaja in his anguish said : "Today a great pillar of Khalsa Raj has fallen down. His loss is unbearable for me. Today I am feeling lonely and depressed. He was really a great general. May his soul rest in peace." Saying this the Maharaja again wept bitterly and reprimanded Raja Dhian Singh for not informing him the correct situation in Peshawar.

The Maharaja was so much depressed that he once again asked Raja Dhian Singh why he had not informed him about the real situation. The Raja told him that two letters were received by him from Sardar Nalwa but they were not placed before him as he was busy in bidding farewell to the honourable guests who had come to attend the marriage of Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh. The Maharaja was red with rage and once again pulled him up, saying that the victory at Jamraud was more important to him than the celebrations.

The Maharaja ordered his troop movement hurriedly. Raja Dhian Singh reached Jamraud and started reconstructing the fort. Field batteries were hurried up with great alacrity from Ramgarh on the

banks of the river Chenab to Peshawar, a distance of more than two hundred miles covered in just 6 days.

But by the time the Sikh forces reached Peshawar the Afghan forces had retreated and not a single soldier was there to face the Sikh army.

When the Afghan forces headed by Mohammad Afzal Khan and Akbar Khan reached Kabul, victory was celebrated on a large scale. The Afghans thought that with the death of Hari Singh Nalwa they had an occasion to celebrate the victory irrespective of the fact that they had not been able to uproot the Sikhs from the Jamraud fort. The city was illuminated and crackers were fired. A *darbar* was held by Amir Dost Mohammad. Akbar Khan was honoured and flowers were showered on him. There was rejoicing on a large scale. Amir's second son, Afzal Khan, who had fought bravely in the battle field, became annoyed with the Amir for being ignored."<sup>1</sup>

Raja Dhian Singh, not finding any Afghan soldier in the vicinity of the Jamraud fort, informed the Maharaja that the situation was under complete control, that the Afghans had retreated and that a new administrator should be appointed.

The Maharaja, before receiving the letter, had already appointed Sardar Tej Singh as the administrator of Peshawar. Tej Singh was a timid person and was unable to administer the affairs of the land efficiently. He later controlled the situation and remained the administrator of Peshawar till 1842.

1. Latif Mohd. History of the Panjab P. 483

2. Wade to Government. May 13, 1837.

1 Kashmiri, Mohan Lai : Life of Amir Dost Mohammad Khan.

When Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was lying wounded in the fort of Jamraud, he gave special instructions to Sardar Mahan Singh to the effect that, firstly, all the *sad/ms*, saints and *fakirs* who were part of his entourage should be departed with full honour and due respect given to them, secondly, his daughter should be married at an early date. Thirdly, the entire army under his command should remain loyal and obedient to Maharaja and, lastly, the news about his death should be kept secret till the forces had arrived from Lahore.

These wishes of Hari Singh Nalwa were obeyed by his colleagues, subordinates and followers both in letter and spirit. It is said that by the time Nalwa died the Afghans had already retreated and it had then rained very heavily.

Sikh forces arrived under Raja Dhian Singh. Nalwa's son, Jawahar Singh, followed him. He was given all the facilities in his journey to Peshawar and the Maharaja personally gave him a letter of introduction in the name of Raja Dhian Singh. But by the time Jawahar Singh reached Jamraud, Nalwa's dead body had already been cremated. He collected his father's ashes and brought them to Gujranwala where he constructed his *Samadhi*. Mahan Singh who fought gallantly at Jamraud was honoured by the Maharaja. Kanwar Nihal Singh and General Allard sent special reports to the Maharaja recommending awards for Mahan Singh. His services were greatly appreciated and he was given an annual *jagir* of Rs. 37,000. Out of this, *jagir* worth Rs. 12,000 was to be utilised for his personal benefit and Rs. 25,000 for the services rendered by his

100 horsemen. The *jagir* remained with Sardar Mahan Singh till the reign of Maharaja Sher Singh but when Sardar Mahan Singh died, *The jagir* was confiscated.

Nalwa had two wives, Sardarni Dissan and Sardarni Raj Kaur. Sardarni Dissan gave birth to two sons, Sardar Punjab Singh and Sardar Arjan Singh, and two daughters. Sardarni Raj Kaur gave birth to Sardar Gurdit Sinah and Sardar Jawahar Singh. Nalwa's daughters were married to Sardar Ganda Singh of Kotli Faqir Chand and the second to Sardar Kanahia Singh. It is said that "Nalwa had another son, Chattar Singh by name."

After Nalwa's death, a dispute arose among his sons about the distribution of property. Sardar Arjan Singh forcibly took possession of Nalwa's Gujranwala house and Sardar Jawahar Singh and Sardar Gurdit Singh declared themselves Masters of Gujranwala town. When reports about the dispute were received by the Maharaja, he confiscated the entire property of Sardar Nalwa including his *Jagir* at Pakhli, Dhamthor, Haripur Hazara, Khanpur, Khobra, Kachhi, Bannu, Kallar, Kahar, Nurpur, Mitha Tiwana, Chillayar and Gujranwala. The annual income from these *jagirs* amounted to Rs. 853,000. However, annual pension was granted to Nalwa's sons as under : Sardar Punjab Singh Rs. 5400, Sardar Arjan Singh Rs. 6500, Sardar Jawahar Singh Rs. 5500, and Sardar Gurdit Singh Rs. 2,200. The Maharaja gave the *jagirs* of Haripur Hazara and Gujranwala to Sardar Tej Singh and Missar Beli Ram respectively. Similarly, Nalwa's cash worth three lakh rupees,

which was lying with Lala Nar Singh Das of Gujranwala, was taken possession of.

Sardar Jawahar Singh had taken part in the campaigns of Jahangira in 1832 and of Peshawar in 1834. He had shown his worth and made a name as a brave soldier. So he was granted a *jagir* at Khanpur, Sardar Arjan Singh and Sardar Punjab Singh were given *jagirs* worth Rs. 40,000 so that no ill-will was created among them.

Jawahar Singh continued to remain in service of the Lahore *darbar* and was posted at Peshawar and Hazara.

In 1843-44, he joined the service of Bhai Vir Singh of Naurangabad (Amritsar). In 1845-46 he fought against the British army and became a eye sore for them on account of his fighting with great valour and courage. In 1847-48, he again fought against the British.

In 1848-49, both Jawahar Singh and Arjan Singh took part in the battles of Gujrat and Chillanwala in which they showed their mettle. They were instrumental in killing many British soldiers. As is well known the Sikhs fought with courage and determination but due to the treachery of the Sikh Generals, the battle was lost and Punjab was annexed by the British Government. Jawahar Singh was arrested, brought to Lahore and imprisoned in Gulab Singh Kalal's Haveli. Arjan Singh Nalwa went underground. Both the brothers were declared hostile and their property confiscated. After a short while, Arjan Singh died.

In March 1849, after the annexation of Panjab, Jawahar Singh was released alongwith many other Sardars and was appointed Risaldar in the British army. The British Government needed trained soldiers and jobs were provided to many of them. Jawahar Singh Nalwa took part in Burma, Lucknow and Kanpur campaigns. His regiment participated in 18 battles and he showed great courage. In recognition of his valour, Jawahar Singh was given a *jagir* of Rs. 12,000 annually. He was also bestowed with the title of Sardar Bahadur and in 1862 he was made honorary magistrate of Gujranwala.

Both the wives of Hari Singh Nalwa were also given pensions, Rs. 800 annually to Sardarni Dessan and Rs. 700 to Sardarni Raj Kaur. They continued to get this pension till their death.

## CHAPTER VI

*THE LAST CHAPTER*

Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa had never tasted defeat in his lifetime. He was a conquerer throughout his life. Whatever territory he attacked came within his fold. On any campaign he was sent by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he was successful. He was a dare devil, a terror for his enemy but humble and polite for his soldiers, from whom he got courage and strength. A man of determined will and action, Nalwa was a pillar of the Khalsa raj. If the boundries of Sikh raj were extended to far off areas, it was only due to his skill, valour and a burning desire to serve his Master, who always reposed confidence in him. So much so that the Maharaja wept bitterly when the news of his untimely death was conveyed to him. History would have been different if he had not died in the battle of Jamraud.

It is said, once Maharaja Ranjit Singh told Nalwa : "To rule a kingdom, it is necessary to have men like you."

From his early childhood, Nalwa was good looking and attractive with very sharp features and had a majestic bearing. Later, he became tall, handsome, with a broad chest, a wide and lofty forehead, quick and intelligent eyes, a pointed and sharp nose, a long flowing beard, strong and muscular arms, a thundering voice and a stern visage. Whenever he appeared he inspired

awe and respect. He was so much dreaded that people trembled at the sight of him. It is said that when he entered the British *darbar* at Simla, as the representative of Lahore *darbar*, the ladies assembled there fainted in the gallery on the sight of such a gigantic and well-built figure.

Nalwa had a versatile brain, he took prompt decisions and never wavered. Whatever he decided to do, he carried out with determination and a strong will. He remembered God and the great Guru, Gobind Singh's war-like qualities and worshipped the sword and the shield. He followed on the Guru's footsteps and fought against injustice and tyranny. Before going on any campaign or jumping into a fray, he took *vak* from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and performed *ardasa*. He firmly believed in the existence of one Supreme Being who was the Creator and the Destroyer. Even during the worst crisis, he never lost faith in Him and always achieved his motive.

Nalwa was a conservative Sikh. He was given religious instruction in his childhood by his parents. He became a strict adherent of Sikhism and had an unquestioning faith in the creed of Guru Nanak and his successors. He had gained a fairly good knowledge of *Gurbani*. When he addressed his soldiers, he extensively quoted from the sayings of the Gurus, notably from the sayings of Guru Gobind Singh, which enthused and encouraged the soldiers to fight for a cause. He very often repeated Guru Gobind Singh's words :

"O, the Great Lord, grant me this boon only,  
That from the noble deeds I may never turn away.

I may fear not him whom I face in fight,  
 certain be my victory.  
 And this be the instruction to my mind,  
 My desire be to sing Thy praises,  
 When the period of my life draws to a close,  
 I may fight my foes valiantly.  
 And die a heroic death.'

Epilogue to *Chandi Chairitar I*

Nalwa also loved to hear *Gurbani* and generally rewarded its reciters. Once Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent Sardar Nalwa to Amritsar with Rs. 10,000 as States donation for the *Darbar Sahib*. On the way, he came across a good musician, singing devotional songs of the Guru. He was so enchanted and thrilled that he gave him the entire amount. Later, he donated the money given to him by the Maharaja to the *Darbar Sahib* from his own pocket. Nalwa had so much faith in God that he had engraved the words *Akal Sahai*, "God help me," on the ring worn by him. A devoted and true Sikh, always ready to fight for faith, Nalwa has been described by some as a "bigoted and fanatic Sikh."<sup>1</sup> But this is not correct. To call Nalwa a fanatic is to do injustice to him. In fact, it is misleading of the Sikh character as well as the prevailing conditions of the time. A conservative Sikh is not necessarily a bigoted Sikh. The wars fought by Nalwa were not against Islam but were against rulers and were the outcome of a Napoleonic genius. He never differentiated between a Sikh and a Muslim. The Sikh army had many Muslims in its ranks. Nalwa commanded several battalions of Mohammadans

and some of the most trusted posts under him were held by Mohammadans. Sheikh Nur Elahi and Qazi-Hussain Baksh were his confidential agents. His private *jagirs* were administered by Muslims and, like his great Master Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he ruled his subjects, Muslims Hindus and Sikhs, alike and gave them equal treatment'.

Nalwa never had any formal schooling but had a very sharp intellect. He could both read and write Persian as we find many references to his letters to the court in *Persian* in *Umadat-ut-Tawarikh*. We do not know from where he gained knowledge of Persian as he had joined the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at an early age of 14 and fought many battles throughout his life. So we presume that, under the circumstances he must have learnt Persian during his childhood and later on developed its knowledge while staying in Hazara, "moving freely among and dealing with the board who knew Pashto and Persian only."<sup>1</sup>

Nalwa's conversation proved him to be a thoughtful who could reason justly. He was intelligent frank and bold, and affable in his talk, and was well informed about the events in any part of the world. He knew statistics of many of the European States and was well aware of the policy and intrigues of the East India Company. This is one of the reasons why Maharaja Ranjit Singh always requisitioned his services in connection with the missions he sent to the British Government for negotiations. It is said that Nalwa's deportment and intelligent conversation resembled those of

1. Hugal, Baron. Travels, in Kashmir and Punjab. P. 225

Maharaja Ranjit Singh who himself was a 'brilliant son of diplomacy'.

Hari Singh Nalwa was a soldier par excellence. He had all the qualities of a great fighter, nay, a general, who was a terror for the enemy. His career as soldier began at a very early age in his life. As early as 1807, when he was hardly of sixteen years, he took part in the battle of Kasur and showed his mettle. The Maharaja was greatly impressed by his dashing spirit and undaunted courage. Although he had not received any training as a soldier, it was his bold heart and a burning desire to serve his nation which turned him into an unconquered warrior and a great general. He was a born son of the sword with innate genius.

He can be compared with Alexander, the Great, who never cared for his life and always jumped into the fray, not caring for what would happen. He sustained twenty seven wounds on his body and was frequently wounded. Unlike Dupliex, Nalwa was a practical general. Dupliex made battle plans in his office room and was always sure of victory but his plans miserably failed in the field. Nalwa gained practical experience while fighting in the battlefield. He was always in forefront and through sheer bravery, will and determination changed the fate of his nation. His dauntless courage had frequently placed him in a grave situation ; even as he fell at last, he was victim of his bravery. At the siege of Kasur, Multan and during the battle of Jamraud, he showed remarkable bravery and won the field by sheer force of courageous heart and a strong hand. Besides his reckless heart and feats of strength, he was adept in

many risky and excellent war games. The Englishmen were wonderstruck to witness his feats at the meeting of the Governor-General with the sovereign of the Punjab—Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

"In strategy and tactics also Hari Singh out-generalised his enemies. Often times Nalwa won by his superior tactics. Once during the heat of a combat he showered rupees in the opponent's ranks. The soldiers directed their attention to collect money and thereby lost solidarity of their ranks. The Sikhs made the frontal attack and won the day."<sup>1</sup>

There are several occasions when we see that his enemies chose to run away rather than face him. This was due to his confirmed skill and established reputation as a general. "Once Abas Mirza of Persia inquired from me as to the powers of the Khalsa army. He replied as for his (Ranjit Singh's) army, if Sardar Hari Singh were to cross the Indus, His Highness (Dost Mohammad Khan) would soon be glad to make good his retreat to his original government in Tabriz."<sup>2</sup>

There is yet another cause of his success. His soldiers reposed implicit confidence in him and served him faithfully with devotion. Their loyalty to him was unchallenged. He had a democratic bent of mind and this instinct made him to consult his colleagues and subordinates alike in the matters of warfares.

Nalwa was very successful as a Statesman. His frontier policy was far-sighted. The terror of the Khalsa

1. Sandhu, A. S.—Hari Singh Nalwa P. 96  
2. Mohan Lai, Journal of Travels in the Punjab, Afghanistan. Introduction P. XIV.



was everywhere. The Sikh soldiers under the command of Hari Singh Nalwa created havoc in Afghan settlements in the country and "it undoubtedly kept the population in a depressed state, and deterred the Sardars from rising against the yoke they felt so irksome."<sup>1</sup>

The harsh rule of the Nalwa was an acknowledged fact. It was badly required under the prevailing conditions of the times. To deal with rustic, fanatic and brave pathans, Nalwa had to be strict. He had to be ruthless in quelling the disturbances. The Afghans were so rude and harsh that they did not tolerate orderly government or political control over them, especially that of the Sikhs, whom they called infidels.

Nalwa's strong frontier policy had some drawbacks too but he was helpless in the matter. Sometimes, use of force becomes so necessary that no alternative is left to control the situation. The same circumstances existed for Nalwa. He was there to annex territory for his Master and to curb the lawless activity of the disloyal elements.

"Nalwa was not only a great soldier, and a Statesman, he was a lover of art and architecture too. The first murals were found in the fort and village of Sardar Hari Singh at Gujranwala. To the German traveller Baron Hugal, Nalwa exhibited a portrait of himself which proved that he was a Nalwa—a man who had cloven the head of the tiger who had already seized him as his prey. Hugal also observed that the Nalwa

Sardar possessed E collection of paintings which he showed to him."<sup>1</sup>

The gigantic mural which adorned his garden villa, representing the battle of Jamraud, was a classic example of the prevailing conditions of the times. It was 3.5 metre long and 2 metre high, painted on the back of an apartment. It was divided into two compartments, one representing the Sikh camp and the other the Afghan. The mural was amazingly vivid and its description is given thus :

"The two upper rows tells us the advance of cavalry regiments on either side; the next two, of the formidable array of *jingals* carried on camel backs, preceded by a few horsemen, who have already come into action ; the fifth, which is the centre one, displays the valiant Hari Singh sumptuously clothed, and seated on an elephant, with an attendant holding a *Chhatar* over his head, the renowned Akbar Khan opposite him, similarly mounted and similarly attended. Below these are other Squadrons of cavalry and camel *Sowars*, of both nations, facing each other; and the concluding line is occupied by the detachment of the Sikh infantry marching in regular order to the tune of martial music, with a gun in front blowing a party of Afghans to eternity. The whole skill of the artist seems concentrated on the spot; for independent of grapeshot, which appear in multitude as the stars of firmament, he portrays with dignified ease and simplicity the muscular power of an Afghan, who is lifting his wounded comrade

1. Baron, Hugal, Travels in Kashmir and Punjab P. 254

from the ground with one hand, and that too with so little apparent exertion as to be seemingly a matter of ordinary occurrence with him.

"The same display of strength is exhibited among the cavalry in one of the upper rows, where a Sikh, with one stroke of his scimitar, has served a horse into two equal portions which, strange to say, in spite of dismemberment, are capable of retaining the uprightness of their position, and another, of the same nation has, by a clean sweep of his sabre, cut off the head off an Afghan, which is being returned with the velocity of a bullet into the ranks of his wondering countrymen, whose heads and arms are flying in every direction and are parted by their owners with all possible indifference and utter disregard of their value—nor ought the dignified complacency and perfect good humour visible in the countenance of the two chiefs, opposed to each other, to be over looked ; and it would be well if more civilised generals were to display equal urbanity of manner and coolness when brought in such close contact on similar occasions, and take example from their behaviour as depicted by the artist, whose skill is only equalled by his impartiality."

This is a wonderful mural, natural and real. It depicts the historical battle of Jamraud in such a manner that one feels what it was being fought before his very eyes. It is a master-piece of Sikh art. "However, in the fiercely contested battle (30 April 1837), the valiant general of the Sikhs, Hari Singh Nalwa, was killed. The

mural, therefore, must have been executed after death to perpetuate his memory by one of his descendants."

"The murals in Hari Singh Nalwa's place, however, beneath the sarcenic arches, were glazed paintings on small scale, finely executed. Some of these related to Hindu gods, others to the orgies of the Zenana, as may be supposed, were by no means decorous in their description." The walls of Hari Singh Nalwa's bedroom are described to be covered with pictures of dancing girls."<sup>2</sup>

Sardar Nalwa not only took interest in art but he showed keen interest in the construction of buildings and forts. He was an engineer of high calibre—the job he learnt through practical experience. Although many engineers worked in the army under his control, yet most of the buildings were designed by Sardar Nalwa himself. One of the outstanding tasks completed by him was to plan the town of Haripur Hazara and the construction of the fort of *Harkrishangarh* there. The whole plan was carried out with utmost care and Nalwa himself took interest in its implementation. The town's streets, alleys, parks and gardens were all well laid out. Haripur was considered to be one of the best towns in the empire. The fort was constructed at a high elevation so that defensive measures could be taken more effectively in case of an exigency.

Another monumental work completed by Sardar Nalwa was the *Baradari* and the garden at Gujranwala.

1. Barr, Wilfiam, *Journal of March from Delhi to Peshawar* PP 73-74

1. Hasrat. *Bikramjit—Life and Times of Ranjit Singh* P. 431

2. Wolf. J. *Travels and Adventures* (ii) P. 61

It has been described by Baron Hugal and Barr as a palace. Baron Hugal paid a visit to this Baradari while returning from Kashmir in 1835. He has given a vivid description of the palace, a glamorous one at that, to which was attached a garden. For the defence of the palace and the garden, a fort and a huge wall was constructed. In the garden, there were fruit trees. Such a beautiful garden was to be found nowhere else. Some of the trees were overloaded with oranges. The Nalwa Sardar brought trees for the garden from Europe, Afghanistan and Kashmir. The flowers were very attractive and charming.

In the three storied building palace were placed costly shawls and carpets, as well as excellent decorative pieces. There were three tigers in the palace, whom Sardar Nalwa loved immensely. He was not only fond of tiger hunting but also fed his tigers well.

The Sardar also got constructed a boat bridge on Attock. Another bridge was constructed on river Kabul. Some of the other notable buildings constructed by him are the fort of Jamraud, Burj Hari Singh, Shankargarh fort, Naushera fort and the forts of Jahangira, Mardan, Sirikot, Balakot, Nawanshair and Muzaffarbad, the Shrine of Panja Sahib, and tanks at Panja Sahib and Muketsar.

Hari Singh Nalwa's rule has been described as a strict and harsh. He has also been dubbed as a fanatic. To be harsh was the need of the hour. To deal with the rustic, unsophisticated Pathans, who were not used to orderly government, Nalwa had to be firm. There was

no other alternative for him. He had to face not only a hostile crowd of pathans, fully equipped with all the weapons of war, but also a trained army, well versed in warfare. They were bold and fearless and beyond control. To tame a lion Nalwa had to be a lion.

Nalwa was a deeply religious man. He had full faith in the existence of God and the Masters who showed the path to salvation. Rising in the early hours of the morning, only after reciting *Japji* and *Sukhmani* sahib, could have his breakfast. He remembered most of the *Gurbani* by heart and often repeated *Slokas* from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, while talking with others and addressing the soldiers. He respected men of learning and persons who could recite *Gurbani* correctly and devotedly. He used to pay them liberally. He constructed many important shrines and raised memorials in the memory of martyrs. He got constructed the famous shrine at Punja Sahib to commemorate the memory of Guru Nanak. The stair case was decorated with fine pieces of marble. He bestowed *jagir* on the *sewadars*. At Tarn Taran, he got a huge Bunga constructed for the residence of pilgrims. To meet the huge expenditure involved in maintaining the Bunga, he attached a well and 25 Bighas of land to it. At Muktsar, Nalwa made *pucca* the holy tank, built in the memory of 40 *muktas*. Such examples can be multiplied. He did not rest here. Besides constructing Sikh shrines, he constructed several mosques and temples for his Muslim and Hindu brethren. In his palaces at Gujranwala, Nalwa got built a mosque and a temple for worship of visitors.

The personal life of Nalwa had a great effect on his Sikh soldiers in the army. They followed the Sikh principles both in letter and spirit. They were *sampuran* Sikhs, who performed their daily prayers even in the battlefield.

Nalwa's faith in God and Gurus was immense. He was proud to be a true, devout Sikh. The word 'Sikh' thrilled him and gave him courage and strength. Says Burnes : "When I met Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa on March 14, 1832 at Attock, he received me warmly. When we were about to cross the river, I was afraid to see the strong stream and could not dare to enter it and if anybody would have asked me my desire, would have come back. But I could not utter a word and did not show my utter weakness to the Sikh Sardar as I had already agreed to cross the river on the horseback alongwith Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. In our presence the Sardar put his horse in the overflowing water of the river. We had to follow him. We crossed some portion of the river safely. Then an unfortunate happening took place. Some others followed us on horses. They were seven in number. Hardly they had entered the water, they were drowned in the strong current of the fast flowing river. Efforts were made to save them but they could save only two of them."<sup>1</sup>

"I started trembling at the very sight of the incident and fear empowered me. I told Sardar Nalwa not to go further and take any more risk. We shall go back. Nalwa laughed and said that it was futile to be

a Sikh if they are unable to cross the river. The Sikh cannot be drowned in Attock. Then I agreed to cross the river on the condition that nobody would follow us. But the Sardar remarked that some horsemen must follow us. Then he made me to cross the 'river on the horseback.

"We were shocked at the catastrophe and proposed to return, but the chief would not listen to it. He gave a laugh, and said, what is the use of a seik if he cannot pass the Attock? The principal branch, however, was still in our front ; and I only agreed to cross it if the horsemen were left behind. 'Leave my guard", cried the chief, impossible ! but we did leave it, and safely passed the fort."<sup>2</sup>

Such was the faith of the great general in God and Gurus that he was never afraid of taking risk. He was a true, devout Sikh, who could risk his life for the sacred cause so dear to him.

Nalwa's personal character was unblemished, above reproach with spotless character, he alone could set an example for his soldiers. Although he had two wives, this was in accordance with the custom of times. He was not addicted to social evils.

"Nalwa's services to Ranjit Singh and to the Punjab were too numerous to be counted. Their value can only be enumerated by future historians when they would decide Nalwa's place in history. He fought in almost all the important campaigns and many a times

2. Ibid P. 66

imperelled his life. In the frontier, campaigns, his contribution was so great that if it is said that without Nalwa, the history would have been different today it will not be an exaggeration. For these valuable services Ranjit Singh bestowed vast *jagirs* on him but with this privilege, he had to furnish two regiments of Cavalry, a battery of artillery and a camel Swirel battery. Nalwa was a contented man. He never bothered for pecuniary advantages. The Maharaja once told his courtiers that Nalwa was constantly engaged in hostilities with Afghans and Zamidars in the vicinity of Attock and devoted his life in promoting the interests of his Sarkar, still he took without hesitation what was offered to him."<sup>1</sup>

Nalwa, through his bravery, energy and promptness ever promoted interests of the Panjab, checked the invasions of greedy foreign invaders and establish peace and order by the policy of blood and iron in the land of revolt and treason. He moulded the destiny of the Panjab and raised it from a mere principality under Delhi or Kabul to a sovereign State. He was in fact a born leader of the invincible Khalsa army which proved an insurmountable barrier against the Muslim invaders and thus saved the wealth and honour of the Panjab and deserves praise and respect from the lips of all Hindus and Muslims alike. It is not difficult to determine Hari Singh's place in history. To the Mohamadans he is to this day a violently bigoted and cruel soldier who wounded their religious feelings and destroyed their independence. To the Sikhs he is their national hero, a man of super-human powers, a demigod, But the impartial writer must concede him as an

1. From Wade to Governor General, Punjab Records Book No. 139

intrepid and dashing soldier, far sighted Statesman, sagacious and just ruler, and faithful and loyal servant of Ranjit Singh."<sup>2</sup>

We conclude with the words of Baron Hugel who writes :—

Hari Singh's manner and conversation are very frank and affable, and having acquainted myself before hand with the history of this most distinguished member of Ranjit Singh's court, I surprised him by my knowledge when he had gained the appellation of Nalwa, and of his having cloven the head of a tiger who had already seiged him as its prey. He told the Diwan to bring some drawings and gave me his portrait, in act of killing the beast. Hari Singh Nalwa was the person sent by Ranjit Singh to invite Lord William Bentinck to confer with the Maharaja at Simla. And as I happened to know most of the persons he had met there, our conversation was very different from the majority of such interviews in India and really consisted of a due exchange of ideas and of reference to events which had actually taken place. His conversation proved him to have thought and reasoned justly. He is well informed on the statistics of many of the European states and what is very rare among the Sikhs, he can both read and write the Persian language."?

1, Sandhu, A.S. Hari Singh Naiwa PP 106-107

2' Baron Hugel, Travels in Kashmir and Punjab P, 255

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