

ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥ Publication No.
354

Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa

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Published by
SIKH MISSIONARY COLLEGE (REGD.)
LUDHIANA - 141 008

Published by : Sikh Missionary College (Regd.)
Typesetting by : Surjit Computers, Jalandhar. Ph. : 0181-2432046
Printed at : Bright Printers, Jalandhar. Ph. : 0181-2292202

Available at :
SIKH MISSIONARY COLLEGE (REGD.)
1051/14, Field Ganj, Ludhiana - 141 008. Phone : 0161-5021815
Website : www.sikhmissionarycollege.net
E-mail : smcludh@satyam.net.in
Delhi Sub-Office : C-135, Mansarover Garden,
New Delhi-110015 Ph. : 011-25413986
and from all the Circles of Sikh Missionary College (Regd.)

S. HARI SINGH NALWA

Around 1881, a debate ensued in English and French papers as to who was the most successful military general in the world. Some names which were much talked about then were Napoleon, Marshal Handenberg, Lord Kitchner, General Carbuiser or Duke of Wellington. After mention of the generals from European sub continent, Halaku Khan, Changez Khan, Alaudin of Asia were also counted in. But when the mention of S. Hari Singh Nalwa came, the British writer bowed his head in reverence to the most successful army General of the world. For his ability to triumph over Afghanistan where the British rulers had failed despite unlimited resources of manpower and money available to them. If S. Hari Singh had so much resources, he could have conquered Europe and middle east. He was not only a capable General but an administrator of high caliber, a man of very high and noble character, a scholar, a farsighted person endowed with unique quality of self sacrifice. He spent his whole life in the service of the *Panth*. His love for the *Panth* is evident from his statement that he made when the time for choosing a worthy successor of *Khalsa Raj* came up. He said—

“I consider *Khalsa Raj* as something of trust of *Panth Khalsa*. Before its reigns are entrusted to any one, the subject demands greater deliberation.”

The life sketch of such a valiant, fearless and fair Sikh General can act as the light house for our coming generations. Let us know more about his life.

He was born in 1791 in the house of S. Gurdial Singh Kumedan of Gujranwala. His mothers name was Mata

Dharm Kaur. At the age of seven years, he lost his father due to some strange illness. The onus of his upbringing now fell upon his mother, who discharged her this duty with dedication. Special arrangements were made for his education, arms training and riding. At the age of ten years, he was baptised and attached with the holy feet of Guru.

In the Court of Lahore. Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to hold a fair every year on the day of Basant Panchami. Many brave and valiant soldiers used to show their skill of arms and riding, who were then suitably rewarded by the Maharaja. In the fair of 1805, S. Hari Singh Nalwa also exhibited his skill of handling horses and weapons. Maharaja blessed him with a gold necklace. He was also enrolled as his Aid-de-Camp.

Hunting a Lion. One day, he got an opportunity to go hunting with Maharaja Sahib. He had just entered the hunting area when a lion pounced upon him. Sardar Sahib held the lion by his jaws and smashed him down on the ground with force. Before the lion could recover himself, S. Hari Singh unsheathed his sword and dismembered his neck from his body.

The Maharaja saw the scene from a very close quarter. He was mighty pleased. S. Hari Singh was then appointed the Commander of Sher Dil Regiment, which had a strong force of 800 horsemen and infantry soldiers. For his ability to kill a lion with his hands, he became famous a Nalwa.

Battle of Kasur. Nawab Kutab Din of Kasur wanted to confront the *Khalsa Dal* with the assistance of Nawab Muzafar Khan of Multan. When the Maharaja learnt about it, he assembled an army of ten thousand strong Sikhs

under some strong and valiant Generals and attacked Kasur on 10th February 1807. The forces of Kasur ran helter-skelter with the first raid of *Khalsa Dal*. They took shelter in the fort. The fort was raided on 18th February and the Nawab was defeated. The Sher Dil Regiment of S. Hari Singh captured 200 soldiers of Kasur and presented them before the Maharaja. Pleased at this feat, Maharaja granted him a *Jagir* worth about 30,000 a year. He was also promoted. After Kasur, the Maharaja setted his score with Malerkotla and Sialkot and then planned a campaign against the Nawab of Multan.

Invasion of Multan. On 25th January 1810, the *Khalsa* army invaded Multan. Nawab Muzzafar Khan was advised to pay off all his dues of the revenue. Since he too had prepared himself for a confrontation, he did not accept the advise. On the very first day, *Khalsa* army captured the city. Nawab mustered all his escaping army and shut himself inside the fort. The fort was very strong. The Sikh generals drilled and filled mines under the fort wall and set them on fire. When the wall exploded, large chunks of debris flew and hit S. Atar Singh Dhari, S. Nihal Singh Atari and S. Hari Singh. All three of them were injured. The inmates of the fort threw burning/boiling liquid on the injured. One such burning pot fell on S. Hari Singh. It set fire to his uniform and he himself was badly burnt. S. Atar Singh Dhari was more seriously injured and he breathed his last soon. The *Khalsa* army was enraged at the harm caused to their leaders. They unsheathed their swords and entered the fort. They started genocide of the Pathans who tried to defend themselves in vain. Nawab Muzzafar Khan also surrendered. S. Hari Singh took much time to recover from his injuries. Pleased at his bravery, the Maharaja Sahib increased his *Jagir* by 20,000 rupees annually.

Procuring Koh-i-Noor Diamond and First Invasion of Kashmir. Having faced defeat at the hands of his brother Shah Mahmood, Shah Shujah reached Attock via Peshawar. He sent his family to Lahore. Jahan Khan was the Garrison Commander of Attock fort. He arrested Shah Shujah and sent him to his brother Atta Muhammad Khan who was Governor of Kashmir. Wazir Fateh Khan of Kabul was chasing Shah Shujah. When he learnt that Shah Shujah is in Kashmir, he planned to launch a military campaign against Kashmir. He also sent a proposal to Maharaja, that if he helped him in the campaign, he would share half the loot and also give 9 lakh rupees. Now the Begum of Shah Shujah also sent a message to Maharaja Sahib that if he would arrange release of Shah Shujah, she would part with her Koh-i-Noor in his favour.

S. Hari Singh and S. Dal Singh had just returned from their campaign against *Uch de Pir* of Mitha Tiwana. Weighing both the proposals mentioned above, and to help *Khalsa* army know the terrain and fighting conditions of Kashmir, Maharaja Sahib ordered his army to prepare for invasion of Kashmir. Wazir Fateh Khan headed for Kashmir. Hari Singh Nalwa, S. Sham Singh Attari, Diwan Mohkam Chand, S. Dal Singh and S. Jiwan Singh took an army of 12,000 strong and marched into Srinagar via Rajauri, Bhimbar and Pir Panjal ranges. Atta Muhammad Khan faced the invading forces initially but could not bear the combined pressure of *Khalsa* army and *Pathans*. He escaped into the hills saving his life. *Khalsa* army captured Shergarhi and took Shah Shujah under their safe custody. When *Khalsa* asked for the settled amount of 9 lakhs and half the loot, Wazir Fateh Khan started making excuses. It led to some heated arguments between *Khalsa* and Wazir

Fateh Khan. *Khalsa* army brought Shah Shujah to Lahore. His wife Wafa Begum was pleased and handed over the Koh-i-Noor diamond to the Maharaja.

Capture of Attock Fort. The Barkazae Sardars were becoming very powerful in Afghanistan. This caused concern in the mind of Jahandad Khan the Garrison Commander of Attock, both for himself and his brother Atta Mohammad Khan. Instead of reaching an accord with Barkazae leaders, he preferred coming to a suitable agreement with Lahore Court. He took a small territory for his needs and handed over the fort of Attock to Lahore kingdom.

When this news reached Kabul, it caused much annoyance to Wazir Fateh Khan. He wrote a nasty letter to Maharaja asking him to hand over Attock fort to him. At the same time he sent an army of 15,000 and some militia under his younger brother Nidar Dost Mohammad and attacked Attock. S. Hari Singh Nalwa was sent by Maharaja. Both armies fought a bloody battle near Hazron. Dost Mohammad Khan was wounded and he fell down. Thinking that their leader has been killed, his army retreated. This battle took place on 12th July 1813. The *Khalsa* army emerged victorious.

In 1815, S. Hari Singh Nalwa, Diwan Ram Dayal and S. Dal Singh were sent towards Rajouri and Bhimbar who had become rebellions on account of Wazir Fateh Khan. These leaders attacked the forts and raised them to the ground. After collecting tributes from there, these soldiers had just returned when the news of Nawab Multan and Bahawalpur becoming rebellions reached Lahore. S. Hari Singh Nalwa, Akali Phoola Singh, Sardar Nihal Singh Atari

and Diwan Chand Mishar were sent on this campaign. These valiant leaders collected the revenue from both Nawabs and returned home successfully.

In 1816, Maharaja crossed river Chenab and conquered the territory of Monger. He collected tributes from the Nawabs.

In appreciation of the services of S. Hari Singh, Maharaja granted the area of Gujranwala to him as a *Jagir*. S. Hari Singh constructed a fort here and also laid out a beautiful garden.

Annexing Multan into Khalsa Raj. From 1802 to 1818, the Nawab of Multan fought seven battles with *Khalsa* and each time, he was defeated. He was pardoned by the Maharaja every time. Nawab Muzzafar Khan prepared for another confrontation for the eighth time. A force of 25,000 set out for Multan on 30th January 1818 under the command of Prince Kharak Singh, S. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, S. Sham Singh Atari, Diwan Chand, Jafer Jang and S. Hari Singh Nalwa. The fort of Multan was considered to be amongst the strongest in the world. The gun of Bhangis, Zamzama and Jang-e-Bijli were positioned before Hijri gate and a volley of fire was let loose. A breach resulted in the wall. Akali Phoola Singh who had joined the campaign later took advantage of the situation and entered the fort with his soldiers. He killed Muzzafar Khan. The fort fell into the hands of *Khalsa* on 2nd June 1818. Multan was annexed with *Khalsa Raj* for good.

Annexing Kashmir in Khalsa Raj. Kashmir had remained under the rule of non-Indians from 1315 to 1819. The Hindu population of Kashmir was perpetrated untold cruelties.

During the reign of Pathans, no one was permitted to wear a turban on the head and shoes in the feet.

Pandit Birbal came to the Royal court at Lahore to describe the tribulations of Kashmiris. On 20th April 1819, Maharaja Ranjit Singh marched on Kashmir at the head of a strong force of 30,000 soldiers. Those who accompanied him were—Prince Kharak Singh, S. Hari Singh Nalwa, Baba Phula Singh Akali, S. Sham Singh Atari, S. Hukam Singh Chimni, Diwan Chand, Jafar Jang. The *Khalsa* army reached Saidpur via Bhimbar. Without any fight, they took over the fort there. On 1st May 1819, they attacked Rajouri and defeated Agar Khan decisively. The *Khalsa* army then attacked Behram Gali. The garrison commander ran away to Srinagar. Mir Mohammad Khan and Mohammad Ali Khan the ruler of Supan accepted defeat. Zabardast Khan the ruler of Poonch was defeated in a sharp encounter.

On 3rd July 1819, a bloody battle ensued between *Khalsa* army and Mohammad Jabbar Khan in the fields of Supaia. By evening, *Khalsa* had won the honours. Kashmir became part of *Khalsa Raj*. Diwan Moti Ram was appointed as Governor. After establishing sound administration, *Khalsa* army returned to their barracks. The administration of Diwan Moti Ram was weak and left much to be done. So the Maharaja sent S. Hari Singh as its Governor in place of Diwan Moti Ram. He took over the reign on 25th August 1820. He governed the state so well that Maharaja Sahib even permitted him to release coins of his own name.

For furtherance of *Khalsa Raj*, S. Hari Singh handed over the charge of Kashmir to Diwan Moti Ram and set out at the head of 7000 strong force towards Mungher.

On 10th November a bloody encounter took place in the

Mangli valley where a 30,000 strong force of Jadoon and Tinavali was confronted. By evening, the field fell into the hands of *Khalsa*. S. Hari Singh met Maharaja Sahib on 14th November 1821 at a place called Khushab.

Annexing Mungher. Mungher was under the Afghan rulers. Hafiz Ahmad Khan was the Governor of Mungher. He was a brave and a courageous ruler. To win this area was not an easy task since much of the terrain was sandy. The water was scarce. To protect Mungher, he had constructed about 12 forts. Maharaja Sahib made arrangements for water on priority. On first December 1821, the place was attacked after a brief supplication to the Almighty for success. Nawab Hafiz Khan begged mercy for his life through his ambassador. S. Hari Singh recommended his case. So Maharaja granted him a *Jagir* and left him.

S. Hari Singh—Governor of Hazara. Soon after the victory of Mungher, the news came that S. Amar Singh 'Kalal' Majithia who had gone to quell the rebellion at Hazara had fallen a martyr. To avenge his death, S. Hari Singh was appointed the Governor of Hazara.

Battle of Naushehra. Yaar Mohammad Khan had been appointed as Governor of Peshawar by the *Khalsa Darbar*. He was the brother of Azim Khan the ruler of Afghanistan. Mohammad Azim Khan was much unhappy at the continued prosperity of *Khalsa Raj*. So he invaded Peshawar. Yaar Mohammad Khan escaped into the mountains. Azim Khan occupied Peshawar and prepared himself to face the *Khalsa* army in the plains of Naushehra.

These news reached Lahore Darbar as well. In order to settle the issue with Pathans once for all, the cantonment commanders were instructed to leave just sufficient army

to look after the cantonment and mobilise the remainder to participate in the battle. On hearing the order, S. Hari Singh marched with his army to Attock. Prince Sher Singh also reached there and met S. Hari Singh. They constructed a boat bridge over river Attock. When they learnt that the enemy had taken up defensive position in the field of Jahangira, they launched an attack the next morning. The Pathan army was four times more than the *Khalsa* army.

Prince Sher Singh advanced deep into the hills in hot pursuit of the enemy. He was soon trapped by the Pathans. S. Hari Singh lost no time in breaking the encirclement. Mohammad Zaman Khan seized the opportunity in this chaos. He took some soldiers and cut loose the ropes of the boat bridge. The boats were washed away by the swift current of the river. As a result the route of re-inforcement of the *Khalsa* army was cut off.

When the Maharaja and Baba Phula Singh Akali reached river Attock at the head of their army, they were surprised to see the bridge washed away and damaged. Hearing the din of battle coming from across the river, in the surge of emotion of love for the nation, Akali Phoola Singh spurred his horse into the waters of river Attock. Maharaja Ranjit Singh followed him suit. Before the *Khalsa* army could join the fray, the battle had already been won. But a bigger battle was yet to take place. Countless Pathans assembled in the battlefield of Naushehra under the flag of *Jehad*. They were approximately 45,000. Mohammad Azim Khan provided 15,000 men and 30 guns to his brother Dost Mohammad Khan and ordered him to join the Pathan forces at Naushehra.

Pathans were now moving like swarm of locust. So a

supplication prayer was made after the singing of *Asâ kî Vâr* on the morning of 14th March 1823 and Lord's permission was sought to attack the enemy. Right then an informer conveyed the news that Muhammad Azim Khan has reached the open grounds of Khesghi with heavy artillery under his command. Hearing this Maharaja Sahib felt that the attack should be delayed for some times when the artillery of *Khalsa* army would also fetch up. Baba Phula Singh Akali did not subscribe to the views. Maintaining the sanctity of the supplication made a little while earlier, he marched towards the battlefield with his *Jatha* and charged at the enemy. By then *Khalsa* artillery had also arrived. So the Maharaja ordered S. Hari Singh and General Ilaral to head for Khesghi against Azim Khan. The artillery guns were also placed under their command. *Khalsa* army snatched away the guns of the Pathans and were used against them. Seeing the precarious position of his force now, Mohammad Azim Khan absconded from the battlefield and headed straight for Kabul. This field fell into the hands of the *Khalsa* but at the heavy cost of life of Baba Phula Singh Akali. Peshawar was invested. S. Hari Singh was asked to stay there for sometimes to set the administration in order.

Back to Hazara-S. Hari Singh. S. Hari Singh stayed in Peshawar for seven months and after establishing sound administration, returned to Hazara. On reaching there, he found that Tarim and Torkheli had left the planes and had gone into the hilly area of Gangadhar and were residing in the towns of Srikot and Narha. Under the leadership of Mohammad Khan Tarin they were indulging in dacoity and plundering the populations in the planes. He was also planning to take up cudgels with *Khalsa Raj* with the help

of 15000 Pathan soldiers. S. Hari Singh planned a campaign against him in the beginning of 1824. When S. Hari Singh was advancing towards Narha at the head of a band of soldiers, the enemy played a strange trick. They had collected big stone boulders and packed explosive in them to give them a semblance of mines. When the *Khalsa* army reached near, they set these mines on fire. As a result the big boulders flew all around with force and caused many to go down the ravines. S. Hari Singh too became victim of a stone and went into a gorge in an unconscious state. The news spread amongst the *Khalsa* and the enemy that Sardar Sahib have fallen a martyr. S. Mahan Singh Mirpuria took some Sikhs with him and descended into the ravine to look for the body of Sardar Sahib. They searched for him for long. At last a Sikh saw him leaning with a tree. He was still alive but because of a wound on the head, much blood had flowed. His wounds were dressed and he was sent to Haripur. Next day, S. Mahan Singh launched a furious attack on the enemy. Narha village was burnt down. They were punished for their sins.

When the news of injury of S. Hari Singh reached Lahore, the Maharaja Sahib himself came to Hazara with his body guard to enquire about the health of Sardar Sahib. By then S. Hari Singh had recovered much. Maharaja went around the area along with him. Mohammad Khan Tarin was captured and sent to Lahore alongwith Maharaja Sahib. He himself proceeded to Gujranwala to spend a few quiet days.

A few days later, Bostan Khan, a nephew of Mohammad Khan Tarin revolted. When Sardar Ji received the news, he reached Lahore to meet the arrested Mohammad Khan Tarin. Tarin asked for freedom and promised not to revolt again. He also accepted to clear all his pending dues. So

Sardar Hari Singh brought him to Hazara along with him. But after a few days, he violated all his promises and agreements, and started causing fresh disturbances and riots. But this time Sardar Ji attacked so vehemently that all his efforts to save his life went in vain. He was arrested alongwith his nephew Bostan Khan. Mohammad Khan felt so humiliated that he swallowed poison at night and died. Three other rebels were captured the next day and blown by guns.

Battle with Sayyad Ahmad Bareilvi. Sayyad Ahmad Khan was son of Mohammad Afran, and a resident of Bareilly. He had gone to Mecca on Haj in 1822. According to a planned programme Sayyad Ahmed Shah reached Kabul alongwith his followers and other Muslims, via Rampur, Delhi, Shikarpur and Kandhar. He had a meeting with Dost Mohammad Khan and asked for his assistance against *Khalsa*. He promised to get him back the territory across Attock. Dost Mohammad Khan not only helped him with much military hardware, money and militia soldiers but also wrote to his brothers Sultan Mohammad Khan and Yaar Mohammad Khan the ruler of Peshawar to extend much help to them. He started collecting Pathans against the Sikhs under the banner of *Jehad*. He made it known to all that God had revealed to him to plan a *Jehad* against the Sikhs and recover the lost territory. Their strength swelled to over 1,15,000 in no time. S. Budh Singh Sandhanwalia who was the Garrison Commander of Khairabad took up position at Okara to confront the Pathans. He also informed S. Hari Singh at Hazara. S. Hari Singh marched with his 8000 strong army. He learnt that Sayyad Ahmed Shah was camping in the plains of Saidoo. So he headed towards him.

In the early morning of February 1829, S. Hari Singh

attacked Pathans with his army of 8000. The army of Sayyad could not face the onslaught of *Khalsa* army. As the night fell, the Pathans crossed river Lunda and camped at Loond Khubarh. S. Budh Singh had joined S. Hari Singh by now. They both decided to follow the Pathans. Crossing the river Lunda, they attacked Loond Khubarh but Sayyad had escaped before the arrival of Sardar Ji. He had left 14,000 Pathans under the leadership of Ismail Khan at village Talandi. He himself headed toward Panjtar. Ismail Khan faced the *Khalsa* army for a while and then he too escaped. Sardar Ji went to Panjtar but Sayyad escaped into the hills. Mukrab Khan fought Sardar Ji's army valiantly but he was seriously wounded. As a result he left the battlefield. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh learnt about this victory, he sent him an expensive robe of honour.

Occupation of Peshawar by Sayyad Ahmad Shah. Soon after return of S. Hari Singh to Hazara, Ahmad Shah came out of the hills and attacked Hind (Sind) fort.

The '*Jehadis*' took control of Peshawar. But within four days, Prince Sher Singh and General Ventura beat the hell out of *Jehadis* and re-took the possession of Peshawar.

Finding no possibility of any success here, Sayyad Ahmad Shah headed for Kashmir with his army. S. Hari Singh came to know that Sayyad Ahmad Shah has reached Bala Kot. He took Prince Sher Singh and General Ventura and attacked Bala Kot in May 1831. They encircled the locust swarm of Sayyad from all four sides. A fierce battle was fought here. Sayyad Ahmad Shah and Ismail Mohammad were killed along with many of his associates. Maharaja Sahib rewarded both Prince Sher Singh and S. Hari Singh with rupees 50,000 each for their success in this battle.

A Complex Political Turn. Although the relationships between *Khalsa* and Britishers had been defined by a treaty of 1809, yet a series of successes of the *Khalsa* army during 1818 to 1827, in the form of victory over Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar had caused much concern to the Britishers. They were restless at the ever increasing glory of the *Khalsa Raj*. Where as winning the province of Sirhind and Afghanistan was a big challenge and solution of their political problems, the Britishers also wanted to keep and maintain their influence in these territories so as to establish a land line contact with England. S. Hari Singh was well conversant with the complex nature of their problems and felt that the good of the country were against the idea of meetings for enhanced relationship with the Britishers. S. Hari Singh presented the case before the courtiers so methodically and impressed upon them that it will establish the *Khalsa Raj* as an independent, self governing sovereign body unlike they treat other states of India. Secondly why should the authority of the army that has been blessed by the Lord not be displayed upon the neighbouring power in order to instil greater respect for them in their minds. This will establish *Khalsa* as a supreme power in India. Maharaja Sahib felt pleased and expressed his agreement. For the preliminary meetings, S. Hari Singh was appointed as the leader of the mission to meet Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India at Shimla. When S. Hari Singh met Governor General and other Generals of the British army, they were surprised to hear about many confidential policies of East India Company from the mouth of Sardar Ji.

After this meeting both Lord Bentinck and Maharaja Ranjit Singh reached Ropar with their armies on 25th

October 1831. Next day, Maharaja Sahib met the Governor General. The chief organiser of this meeting was S. Hari Singh.

At Ropar itself, a proposal was mooted to select the successor of Maharaja Sahib. Everyone suggested the name of Prince Kharak Singh. S. Hari Singh said that he had no personal enmity with Prince Kharak Singh; on the contrary they are very close friends, even then I seek time before agreeing to pass on the reigns of *Khalsa Raj* into the hands of one individual. The *Khalsa* have sacrificed their lives to establish this kingdom. Many were struggling in their mission without expecting any reward to them. They took no salary either. Therefore its reins should be in the hands of five beloved Sikhs (Panj Piarey) who should run the empire capably. Otherwise the outcomes could be disastrous (as it actually happened). It indicates that S. Hari Singh was well aware of the shortcomings of Lahore *Darbar*. Alas! the Maharaja paid no heed to the sound advice of Sardar Ji and leaned to the other side.

Occupation of Peshawar and Annexing it with Khalsa Raj. Although Peshawar had been occupied much earlier, the rule over the place was still exercised by Barkzaee Sardars who always posed problems for the Sikhs when it came to clearing of revenue. They were also making clandestine contacts with Amir of Kabul. In order to resolve the matter once for all, Maharaja Sahib sent a strong force on 5th April 1834 under Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh. S. Hari Singh handed over the charge of administration of Hazara to S. Maha Singh and set out for Peshawar on 20th April 1834 at the head of his army. These two armies overcame minor resistances on the way and attacked Peshawar on 6th May. Sultan Mohammad Khan hid in a garden of Ali

Mardan when he realized that he did not have the strength to face *Khalsa Dal*. But Hazi Khan Kakkad and Khan Mohammad Khan faced the army bravely. They both were bodily wounded in the afternoon. So they ran away. *Khalsa* army unfurled its saffron flag on the fort. *Khalsa* army entered the town in a procession on 6th May 1834.

S. Hari Singh's Gift to India. Annexation of Peshawar with the state of Punjab was one of the great works ever performed in the world. About 836 years earlier, this area was under the rule of king Jaipal of Lahore. He died fighting the Afghans on 27th November 998. Many combined powers of India tried to annexe Peshawar at the cost of millions of rupees and thousands of lives, but to no avail. But today, it had been done by S. Hari Singh Nalwa with the might of his sword, and that too after 836 years. Those Pathans who had been plundering and pillaging the glory of India for over eight centuries and there was none to face them right upto Bengal. People were scared of the name of a Pathans. S. Hari Singh had established his name among them so strongly that the Pathans of Yusafzaee hill feel much reverence at the name S. Hari Singh even today. Weeping children were caused a scare in their mind by the mention of S. Hari Singh's name. After winning Peshawar no Pathan dared look towards Punjab/India with evil eyes. They came to do labour work but never as invaders. Hearing the annexation of Peshawar, Dost Mohammad Khan of Kabul marched on Peshawar with a strong army. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had reached Peshawar by then. S. Hari Singh who was the commander in chief of the *Khalsa* army was ordered to prepare for the impending confrontation. He selected the plains of Tehkal Bala as the site of battle and prepared his field works for the ensuing battle. When out

of zeal, *Khalsa* army attacked the enemy, these field works proved very useful. Very soon the army of Amir of Kabul was encircled. When Dost Mohammad Khan realised the futility of a fight, he tried to escape. But he was trapped from all the four sides. At last, he forced his way on to a side of the encirclement during the later part of the night and headed towards Khyber pass. He then reached the safety of Kabul. He was now waiting as per the advice of Dogras when the attack on Peshawar would be convenient in the near future. After this defeat of Dost Mohammad Khan, Maharaja stayed at Peshawar for sometimes. Then he appointed S. Hari Singh as the Governor of Peshawar and accompanied by Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, the Maharaja returned to Lahore. The first decision that S. Hari Singh Ji took was to pardon the *Jazia* of Hindus that had been imposed upon them since the days of Aurangzeb. He then looked into the welfare needs of the people. He toured the whole area of Peshawar and commenced raising new forts wherever felt necessary. Many check posts of the *Khalsa* were established. The Maharaja was much pleased to see this and issued proclamation granting him right to cut coins of his name.

The border area was covered with a series of forts. The foundation of Jamraud fort near village Jammu was laid by him on 17th October 1836. This fort was completed in one month and 25 days. This fort was right on the entrance of Khyber Pass that checked and impeded all ingress from this pass into the plains of Panjab. Those Pathans who were the possible intruder from Khyber Pass were engaged as the labour force for the completion of this fort. They were paid one shell per basket.

Pathan's Invasion of Jamraud Fort. The construction of Jamrud Fort caused much consternation and chaos in Kabul

and they realised that it would shut off their ingress into Panjab for all their plundering activities. Dr. Harlan, an American had reached the Amir of Kabul as per the advice of Dogras. The army of Peshawar had gone to Lahore to participate in the marriage of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh. The continuous hard work at the border outposts had tired S. Hari Singh who had fallen ill. This information had also trickled down to Lahore. Dogras at Lahore lost no time in apprising the Amir of Kabul regarding the paucity of troops at Peshawar and sickness of S. Hari Singh. So Amir Dost Mohammad prepared to invade Jamraud fort. His five sons, 30,000 soldiers with much arsenal and many militias were led by Amir Akhun Zada, Mian Mohammad Khan and Zarin Khan Arzbegi. The whole army left Kabul on 15th April 1837. It reached Lundi Khana on 24th April 1837. Deputy Governor Mirza Sami Khan was appointed as the Chief administrator of the entire campaign.

Cleverness of S. Hari Singh—Laziness of Lahore Darbar.

The informers were reporting all development at Kabul to S. Hari Singh. Since he was down with fever, he kept informing Lahore through letters. He also requested for early return of Peshawar army. The bearer gave one letter to Dhian Singh Dogra on 26th April. But he hid this letter like all the earlier letters. Maharaja Sahib never came to know of the developments. So no help could reach S. Hari Singh on time. Amir Dost Mohammad kept building up his army.

First Day of Battle. Leaving Lundi Khana on 24th April 1837, the entire army reached the vicinity of Jamraud fort after passing through Khyber Pass. After a very deliberate planning, over 40,000 Afghans attacked the fort next day. S. Maha Singh Mir Kotia used to live in the fort those days.

He had only 800 soldiers with him. They fought valiantly and took a very heavy toll of the enemy with their accurate fire. Thus they did not let them come anywhere near the fort.

Second Day of the Battle. On 29th April, Sami Khan attacked with big guns. The Pathans could not come anywhere near the fort. By evening the west side wall of the fort got breached. Mohammad Afzal Khan tried to enter the fort with a band of his soldiers but Sami Khan stopped him saying that they cannot win the Sikhs in a hand to hand combat. S. Mahan Singh consulted his leading Sikhs to work out his future battle strategy. He said that the enemy may attack with greater force the next day and take over the fort, So they were left with two options. Firstly—fill up the breach of the wall with sand bags and Secondly—some one should go and inform S. Hari Singh. Thus the breach was filled at night while Bibi Harsharan Kaur took the duty of informing S. Hari Singh of the developments. Despite opposition from some young Sikhs, she insisted on doing this great service.

Bibi Harsharan Kaur belonged to a Hindu family. When she was married, a Pathans of Michni abducted her away. She was brought back by S. Hari Singh. So she refused to go with her family. She alongwith her husband partook *Amrit*, became a Sikh and both of them were then serving the Khalsa in the fort of Jamraud.

Fighting all odds and stray enemy, Bibi Harsharan Kaur reached Peshawar after mid night. S. Hari Singh was still in a state of illness. He ordered his army to prepare themselves and march towards Jamraud fort. He was forbidden by the *Vaid* to travel and impressed upon him that his life was needed for the good of the *Panth* for a long time. He replied, **That is why I am going to sacrifice it over the *Panth*. If the glory of *Panth* is maintained, many**

more S. Hari Singh will take birth. And if the glory of *Panth* is lost, lakhs of Hari Singh will become puppets in the hands of foreigners. Live for the glory of Sikhism and die for its grandeur.

There were about 5000 soldiers in Peshawar at that time. Even then, he sent a letter from his side alongwith the letter of S. Mahan Singh to Maharaja Sahib through a fast courier. This was his last letter to Maharaja Sahib. Alas! even this letter did not reach Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

S. Hari Singh marched with his 5000 soldiers and reached Hari Singh Burj before dawn. From here, he divided his army in three parts. One part was placed under command of S. Amar Singh 'Khurd' Majithia, the second part came under S. Nidhan Singh Panj Hatha, while the third part under his command. Before dawn of 30th April, they attacked the *Pathans* from three sides. The *Pathans* were surprised and it caused a great chaos in their rank and file. The inmates of the fort also came to know that S. Hari Singh has reached the scene of the battle. Their morale went up many nautches and they let loose volleys of fire from the fort. The Pathans also realised that they were now going to confront the might of S. Hari Singh. So they started absconding from the battlefield.

S. Hari Singh was now facing the army division of Deputy Governor Mirza Sami Khan and Akhunzada Mohammad Khan, which was known for its bravery. Encouraging his men Mirza Sami Khan was advancing rapidly. Soon, he found himself face to face with Hari Singh. He attacked Sardar Ji with his weapon. S. Hari Singh evaded the attack cleverly. In a retaliatory attack, S. Hari Singh cut the armoured coat of Sami Khan and a big wound appeared

on the shoulder. He fell on the ground. His soldiers picked him up and ran away from the scene of battle. By now, the army of S. Hari Singh had fully grasped the situation and by evening had cleared all opposition. With his 1500 soldiers, S. Nidhan Singh pressed on the retreating enemy right beyond Khyber Pass. S. Hari Singh also went after him in case any help was needed. The night was falling by now.

S. Hari Singh had hardly gone some distance from Khyber Pass when a stray bullet hit his body guard S. Ajaib Singh near Sarakmar Rock. He was riding very close to S. Hari Singh. He fell from his horse and died. S. Hari Singh stopped. Two more bullets were heard fired and these hit Sardar Ji. These bullets were fired by a Pathan who was with the band of soldiers of S. Hari Singh. He was killed by the Sikhs there and then. The wounds of these bullets on the body of S. Hari Singh were very deep. He was unable to stay in the field any more. He pressed his wounds and came back to the fort. He was carefully dismounted from the horse by S. Mahan Singh. Sardar Ji was placed in a separate tent and wound stitchers were summoned to stitch up the wounds. They took out the bullets but the shards of armour that he was wearing at that time had caused deep penetration into the veins. They were unsuccessful in removing them. The wounds were stitched. The bleeding stopped but not the pain due to the shards still lodged inside the body. When he saw his end near, he gave some instructions to S. Mahan Singh. One of them was not to disclose his death till help from Lahore arrived. S. Mahan Singh followed it very intelligently. Soon after, he bade 'Fateh' to the *Khalsa* and went into eternal sleep. Although Sikhs won the battle but it caused absolute silence in the soldiers.

This was the last battle of *Khalsa* with the Pathans. India was never invaded by them after this day. It should also be remembered that no new territory was annexed with *Khalsa Raj* after this day.

OPINION ON MARTYRDOM

It is recorded on page 360 of *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, Part-2, (Giani Gian Singh) that Sultan Mohammad Khan owed thirteen and a half lakh rupees to Lahore *Darbar*. Raja Gulab Singh Dogra conspired with Sultan Mohammad Khan that if ever he can have S. Hari Singh shot, he would help in ensuring that the sum of rupees thirteen and half lakh is excused. He writes that the people were very apprehensive of the misdeed of Raja Gulab Singh Dogra, but when the amount payable was excused, their fears were confirmed. Later on, a statement made by Bijay Singh Dogra who was part of the conspiracy established the nefarious act of Raja Gulab Singh. Soon after the death of S. Hari Singh, Raja Gulab Singh took permission of the Maharaja Sahib and confiscated the '*Jagir*' of S. Hari Singh. It amounted to 8.52 lakhs annually. (Other Sardars were deeply hurt to see the treatment meted out to the family and assets of S. Hari Singh). Unfortunately, Maharaja Sahib had become a puppet in the hands of Dogras. Some more evidence of this conspiracy is also available.

The meeting of Doctor Harlen with Dost Mohammad Khan and attacking Jamraud fort with his inspiration is another proof.

When Dost Mohammad Khan attacked Peshawar in 1835, Faquir Aziz-ud-Din, Sultan Mohammad Khan and Dr. Harlen (well briefed by Raja Gulab Singh) were sent to bring around Dost Mohammad Khan to accept an accord.

Dr. Harlen had taken side of Dost Mohammad Khan secretly. When the Maharaja Sahib suffered paralytic attack, this doctor was asked to treat him. Dr. Harlen started making excuses. So Maharaja became apprehensive of his ill intentions and he wanted to punish him. But the Dogra Sardars informed him before hand and he left Lahore during the night and reached Ludhiana. Then he reached Kabul via Shikarpur and briefed Dost Mohammad Khan about all the confidential matters of Lahore *darbar*. He also suggested to him that Peshawar was not attacked then, the Yusafzaee of the border area will have to become subservient to the *Khalsa*. So a plan to attack Jamraud was formulated. It proves beyond doubt that Dr. Harlen had reached Kabul in 1837.

Letters of S. Hari Singh. All letters sent by S. Hari Singh to Maharaja Sahib were intercepted by Raja Dhian Singh. He did not let any information reach Maharaja. These came to light of the Maharaja when Raja Dhian Singh read out the letter of the demise of S. Hari Singh to the Maharaja at a place called Rohtas. Out of anger, Maharaja hit Raja Dhian Singh with a small brass pitcher (Garhwa). Raja Dhian Singh was hit on the leg. Poet Hari Chand Kaderyar described the incident in the following words—

*Ghain gusey de nâl mahârâj yâro,
garhwâ mârey wazîrey dî tang uttey.
Akhey dûr ho jâ merî akhîân ton,
kujh faidâ nahî terey sang uttey.
Pehlon khabar na kîto mûl mainûn,
faujân madad nûn ghaldâ jang uttey.
Kâdaryâr â dasia us veley,
jadon sutt â pae ai rang uttey.*

The incident of hitting Raja Dhian Singh with *garhwâ* is

also found stated on Page-146 of *Chamakda Hira* of Khalsa Agency Lahore. It is stated there that the Maharaja snatched the *garhwa* from the hands of *Gharhwa-ee* and threw at Raja Dhian Singh deliberately. It did not cause much injury but left a bruise on the leg. He was called a a deceiver, dishonest and disloyal.

Close Proximity of the Gun Firing Bullets that Killed S. Hari Singh. The bullets those were fired at S. Hari Singh were fired from very close quarter, because these had penetrated the armour coat he was wearing. In fact it caused the edges of the bullet holes of the coat to turn deeply inward causing deep wounds. This could only be possible, when the bullets were fired from very close proximity. Had they come from far, the armoured coat would have protected him, at least the edges of bullet holes would not have buckled into the flesh. One who was part of the band accompanying Sardar Sahib could have fired these shots. He would certainly be in uniform of the *Jatha*. So the assassin was looking for an opportunity to come close and fire.

It proves beyond doubt that S. Hari Singh was assassinated by the conspiracy of Dogra brothers. Their henchmen enrolled themselves in the army and killed S. Hari Singh treacherously.

PERSONALITY OF S. HARI SINGH NALWA

Religious life. Sardar Hari Singh was a faithful Sikh who had full confidence on his Satguru. He had so much *Gurbânî* committed to his memory that he could quote most appropriate verse or line without difficulty. He was an early riser and was forever devoted to his *nitnem* (regular routine) at the ambrosial hour. He under took the construction service of the *Sarovar* of Gurudawara Panja Sahib and spent thousands of rupees to complete it. He extended much respect to those who were religious and righteous. He was proud to be a Sikh. On 14th March 1832, when he reached river Attock along with Sir Alexandar Barnes to cross it, the river was in spate. Sir Barnes was much disturbed to see the river in such a fury. At that time, S. Hari Singh said, “What good is it to be a Sikh if he cannot wade through river Attock on a horse back. They had just seen five men being washed away by the fast current, yet S. Hari Singh crossed the river on a horseback.”

Physical Fitness. Sardar Hari Singh was a tall, handsome, agile and physically fit person with impressive face that could spellbind any gazer. When Mohammad Azim Khan the great warrior of Afghanistan faced Sardar Ji in 1823 in the battlefield of Kheshgi, he felt mesmerised as soon as his eyes met Sardar Ji. The Barkazae leader could not stay in the field for any longer.

Education. It was not the time when books and newspapers were freely published. A very rare person would know what was happening in the world around. His education and knowledge was so good that even Britishers acknowledged it. Baron Haigal writes. “**Hari Singh was a highly intelligent man with an open mind. His manner**

of conversation was very attractive. He was fully aware of the state of kingdoms in Europe and well understood the functioning of East India Company.” During the meeting held with Lord William Bentinck at Shimla in 1833, some responsible officers and the Governor General himself were amazed at his wisdom, range of knowledge and all the confidential things that he knew and spoke of. He himself would prepare a blue print of a fort or a new building and display his engineering skills. The grand palace and garden that he had constructed with fondness at Gujranwala was famous all over for its beauty and splendour.

Skillful Administrator. During the Governorship of Kashmir, Hazara and Peshawar, he showed remarkable skill in the organisation of administration of these provinces. These three areas were so notorious and indisciplined that all others appointed as Governor failed. His over all reforms, encouragement to handicraft, expertise in collecting revenue and sorting out the miscreants were such deeds through which his organisational skills become conspicuous.

A Clearheaded Farsighted Statesman. The respect and honour that he enjoyed in resolving complex matter so skillfully places him as the top ranking courtier of Lahore *Darbar*, although proper action could not be taken on many of them due to dishonesty of the Dogras. The sharp skill that he used for solving the tangle of Afghanistan impressed the Britishers highly.

Soldierly Traits. He was a unique marksman of his time. His deftness of handling horse was unparalleled. It surprised many experts as well. He displayed remarkable horsemanship and sword fighting skill during the *Darbar* of 1831 at Ropar. It had put the Governor General, Commander in

Chief British Forces and other military official in the utter bewilderment. His fatigue factor was very high. He could stay on the horse back for days together. His attitude towards the lowest ranking person of his *Jatha* was highly cordial and brother like. He would share roasted grams with them and never let his high rank fall a barrier between him and the men he led in the battlefield. That is why his soldiers loved him. After every battle, he would organise the medical care of the wounded very skillfully and provide his soldiers with much deserved good and sumptuous meal.

Fearlessness. He would express opinion fearlessly. When it came to the selection of successor for *Khalsa Raj*, he held it as the trust of Almighty and opposed the concept of one person's rule. He expressed his opinion fearlessly that the succession should be passed on to the council of *Panjpiârâs*.

Embodiment of Sacrifice. He lived life to the words so proudly said by him that he lived for the glory of the Sikhs and would die for the grandeur of the Sikh glory. His spirit of sacrifice was conspicuous when he was engaged in blowing up the wall of Multan fort. Although he was hit by the flying debris at Hazara, he did not return or back out. In order to save the fort of Jamraud he came and fought despite his ill health and uprooted the enemy. In the process, he lost his life—although due to deceit and conspiracy of the Dogras.

A poet named 'Seetal' has rightly described his emotions of the battle of Jamraud in the following words—

*Merâ moohn val kâbul rakhnâ—jad tâmboo laonâ.
Merâ nân lai lai ke tusân ney—O Ranjît bajaonâ.
Main nahîn vairy toñ sikhiâ—kadey mûhn bhavaonâ.
Merâ khoon hai jhandâ rangiâ—vich maidân jhulâonâ.
Main nâl tusân dey rahângâ—tusân mat ghabrâonâ.*

EPILOGUE

A Competent General with Soft heart. Hazara is located in the foothills of Himalayas. It was 80x30 *kos* in size at that time. On the East, it touched Kashmir and in the West, it had river Sind. It separated the territory of Peshawar and Kabul. The Himalayan ranges were in its North while the district of Rawalpindi was in its South. Barring a small terrain which is flat, most of it is hilly.

It had been known to be the territory of invaders and rioters since the days of Mughal kings. It had always remained in a state of turmoil and perpetual cause of trouble for the administration due to their anti-social activities of loot and arson. Therefore on return from Kashmir, Maharaja Sahib appointed S. Hari Singh as Governor to sort out the affairs of the place. He held this post from 1822 to 1837 and this period was very busy for Sardar Ji.

It is said that his horse was always saddled. A little improvement could be seen in the area during first three years. The earlier Sikh leaders were unable to bring the area in their control. The people remained rebellions. The administrators only tried to pass their tenure since the people were not prepared to accept the *Khalsa Raj*. They did not know how to live a life of subjugation. They were cunning and liars while the Sikhs were infidels according to them. They were ever busy in destructive and fatal activities.

Mohammad Khan sent a letter of request for accord. Maharaja Sahib granted him a *Jagir* of two thousands rupees but Mohammad Khan held a grudge against S. Hari Singh Nalwa, and became a leader in spreading unrest in

the area. In order to stop his undesirable activities, S. Hari Singh Nalwa constructed a fort 'Harkrishan Garh' on the name of Sri Guru Harkrishan Sahib. The fort was fully occupied by *Khalsa* soldiers. Half a mile away, he also founded a township and called it Haripur after his name. Soon, it developed into a renowned center of commerce and trade.

When the above work was still in progress, the Maharaja Sahib called him towards 'Dera Jat' because the *Khalsa* army had involved itself in a serious confrontation in this area. As soon as S. Hari Singh left Hazara, the old trouble and the activities of the natives surfaced again. The people revolted. Many Hindu women were abducted forcibly and were converted into Islam. S. Hari Singh returned immediately and broke the siege of Harkrishangarh. Then he had the township vacated. Then the fort of Mansehra was repaired and arrested 1000 women and children of rebellious Muslim leaders. They were exchanged with Hindu women and children. After spreading goodwill all around, Sardar Ji attacked the village 'Shingari' which was held by Khan Sarbaland Khan of Pallal. He dealt a severe defeat to the Pathans.

During his stint as Governor of Hazara he faced maximum problems at the hands of Sayyad Ahmad Shah from 1827 to 1834. Sayyad Ahmad Shah was a resident of Bareilly who was an employ of Nawab Amir Khan Rohila. Sayyad was famous for his nefarious activities and every evil commenced from him. Much peeved at his notoriety, the British Government had warned him to improve his behaviour or leave the country. Sayyad came to Delhi in order to go to Mecca. He took Maulwi Ismail and Maulwi Abdul Aziz. He passed through Sind and went to Mecca.

He returned to Peshawar via Khurasan and Kabul.

On his way back, he preached Islam and propagated much adverse remarks against the Sikhs. According to letter No. 69 dt. 3rd March 1827, recorded in Panjab Record Book No. 95, one lakh Muslims were all prepared to die in order to uproot the Sikh rule from Panjab and North West part of India. Both the Maulwis propagated to the illiterate Muslims that their life for the *Jehad* will ensure them a place in heaven. So they brought these gullible Muslims under one flag and made them attack Hazara and other neighbouring territory.

Sardar Hari Singh was even a bigger teacher and an expert General. Severe battles and counter battles were raged by both sides. Much blood was shed. The *Ghazis* and *Sachkhandis* faced each other. Muslims inspired their fighters on the names of their prophets and Caliphs, yet kept eating a humble pie before the army of S. Hari Singh Nalwa. Sayyad Ahmad Shah was killed in the battlefield and that brought a heavenly calm on the area of Hazara. There was no revolt or rebellion from anyone any more.

Haripur the city founded by S. Hari Singh was an example in itself. Water arrangement was superb. His own garden had flower plants imported from Europe. These plants added glory to the garden. Some rare fruits of India were available in this garden. It is strange to think that a General who was a terror in the hearts of his enemies carried such a soft heart as to appreciate flowers and other delicate produce of the nature. He even had the goodness of extending his engineering skills to the people.
