

## The Resistance Strategy of James Abbott against the Sikh Government in Hazara

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### Abstract:

This paper attempts to analyze the role of James Abbott as a soldier of British imperialism against the Sikh regime in Hazara. After facing defeat in the first Anglo Sikh War, Sikhs had lost their military power, whereas Treaty of Lahore opened the doors for the East India Company to control the entire land. Annexation of the Punjab finally compelled Sikh rulers to obey the authority of the British administration. Present study has tried to pinpoint how James Abbott, under the supervision of Resident Sir Henry Lawrence, kept an eye on Punjab's administration to contain the Sikh rule. Taking advantage of the situation, where harsh and strict rule of the Sikhs had created an environment of mistrust among the majority Muslim population of Hazara, James Abbott successfully used his power to restrict the Sikh rule. With the help of both primary and secondary sources, the present study tries to focus on the role of James Abbott against the Sikh regime especially during the Second Anglo Sikh War in Hazara, which ultimately terminated the Sikh Raj from these areas of the Sub-Continent.

**Keywords:** Hazara, James Abbott, Sikh Raj, resistance movement, Anglo Sikh Wars, British rule

### INTRODUCTION

Aftermath of the first Anglo-Sikh war (1845-46) and signing the Treaty of Lahore resulted in the gradual decline of the Sikh Kingdom. The rules framed under the treaty provided a procedural upper hand of the British Colonial authorities over the Sikh empire. The appointment of British officers in almost every administrative division of the Sikh Empire to perform as Assistants to Residents, was a significant step in this regard. These Assistants were required to report to the Lahore based Resident, the highest British official in the Sikh Empire. Lord Hardinge, the then Governor General, was very ambitious to see the Punjab annexed in the British India ruled by the British East India Company (BEIC) but this wish was not fulfilled during his tenure as Governor General. He expressed this desire through a letter to Fredrick Currie on December 16, 1846 stating, "Personally, I regret that it has not been my fate to plant the British standard on the banks of the Indus" (Seetal, 1970). Unable to fulfill his desire, Harding was removed and Lord Dalhousie replaced him as the new Governor General of India. Before his appointment, the English and the Sikh fought the First Sikh War but English could not annex the Punjab even after victory (Rahim, 1963). However, the British wanted annexation of Punjab at any cost to establish their rule in entire India. It was vital for British survival in India since Punjab consisted of a vast territory and population and the British did not want to see Punjab as a royal state. They believed that Sikhs will

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again try to establish complete monarchy and could establish links with neighbouring states undermining the British supremacy over India. In Punjab, the situation was different as the Sikhs were in the minority, but they had ruled over 50 years by crushing the Muslim majority. The Muslim population was depressed during the Sikh rule and wanted to get themselves free. Expeditions of Syed Ismail Shaheed and Syed Ahmed Shaheed resulted from such maltreatment and dissatisfaction among the Muslims against Sikh rule in Punjab (Rasool, 1952).

Lord Dalhousie, after assuming authority in January 1848, reshuffled his power against the Sikh raj. At the very outset of his appointment, he decided to meet with severe crises in Punjab and soon the British and Sikh confronted each other in the battlefield, what is remembered as The Second Anglo Sikh War. This war became a turning point in the history of India in general and Punjab in particular. Before that time, Rani Jindan, widow of Ranjeet Singh and guardian of young Maharaja Dalip Singh was duly recognized as Regent, Lal Singh as Minister while Tej Singh was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh forces (Khilnani, 1951). Neither Lahore Darbar nor Dalip Singh opposed the English, however; the hostility was initiated by Dewan Moolraj and Sher Singh when Darbar instructed Moolraj to provide the detailed accounts of income and expenditure of Multan for the last ten years which brought him to an offensive stance as he had been appointed as Governor for the last four years only. Upon receiving his reply, Lahore Darbar issued a royal proclamation to increase the revenue of Multan area from Rs. 12 Lacs to Rs. 18 Lacs This infuriated Dewan Moolraj who was already unhappy with the ongoing state of affairs with Lahore Darbar. In Moolraj's grievances, the English forces stationed in Punjab, however, Sher Singh believed that the English were behind the issue between Moolraj and Darbar to annex the entire Punjab. So he called all the Sikh leaders to unite against the English and chase them away from the Punjab and extend support to Moolraj against English forces (Christopher, 2000).

Multan was an administrative unit of the Sikh Kingdom captured from Muzzaffar Khan by Ranjit Singh in 1818 (Roseberry, 1987). After the prevalence of peace, Dewan Sawan Mal, father of Dewan Moolraj was appointed as the Governor of Multan in 1824. Sawan could not manage to bring absolute peace in the area and the situation deteriorated to the extent that a soldier of his own army shot him dead in 1844 and he was succeeded by his son Moolraj as Governor of Multan. During his reign, Multan was under loose domination of Lahore Darbar. After the First Anglo Sikh War, Dewan started behaving independently since Lahore Darbar became too weak to handle the situation. When the revenue collector of Darbar required Dewan to pay tax based on new revenue assessment in addition to the outstanding tax amount, he overlooked such orders. Moolraj made peace with his over lord government by promising to pay eighteen lac rupees by ceding to it as a part of his territory. Minister Lal Singh marched a detachment of the Lahore army for an attack on Multan for not paying revenue and subsidy. A battle was fought near Jhang but could not end in favour of Lahore. Henry Lawrence came in between the two in arranging a truce at the terms that Moolraj was to part with one third of his territory and had to pay almost twenty lac rupees in term of compensation to Darbar. The amount of his revenue payable to Lahore was to be increased, and the right to appeal against it, if necessary, lay with Lahore Darbar (Seetal 1970, p.219). Consequently, Moolraj had to pay, according to this arrangement, rupees 19, 68,000 in place of the old sum of rupees 15, 47,183 for the future. He was pleased with the new terms at first but later when he found himself unable to pay this revenue, he resigned from his post and at the same time preferred an appeal for a charges to be granted him for his living.

In late 1840s, Henry Lawrence had departed from Lahore and John Lawrence was the acting Resident in the place of the newly appointed Resident Currie till his arrival. As an officiating Resident, Lawrence did not pass any orders on the request of Moolraj who returned to Multan and gave up his post (Charles, 2001). He attempted to relinquish his power to his son, to keep his hereditary position as rulers. Resident Fredrick Currie did not agree with son of Moolraj and instead appointed a Sikh Governor, Sardar Khan Singh aided by British Assistants Lieutenant Patrick Vans Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson. The Resident sent Sardar Khan Singh Maan, the new Governor, to Multan to take administrative control of the area. He was accompanied by the two British officers along fourteen hundred strong Sikh Army and seven hundred Gurkhas aided by heavy artillery. They reached Multan in April 1848 where Moolraj welcomed the new Dewan of Multan and his British Officers. He handed over all his powers and duties to the new Governor Sardar Khan Singh Maan. However, few soldiers who had been dismissed from the army attacked the British soldiers and disturbed the prevailing situation (Charles, 2005). Though the incident was portrayed as a criminal act by defunct soldiers but later on it revealed as preplanned act orchestrated on the orders of Dewan family which ultimately led to an open confrontation with the British authorities in India (Charles 2005, p. 53).

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The current research mainly focuses on the resistance strategies of James Abbott against the Sikh government in Hazara. His role as a soldier of the resistance movement against Sikh Army during second Anglo Sikh War has largely remained unexplored. His personal and political diaries are the major primary sources of this research paper, while few old and rare books also give information about James Abbott's military life. Charles Allen (2001) beautifully highlighted the role of James Abbott as Victorian Army Officer but it remained silent to express his soldier strategies against Sikhs. Shair Bahadur Khan Panni's Tareek-e-Hazara (1996) provides superficial information about James Abbott but does not cover his military strategies against the tyrannical rule of Sikhs. In his article Syed Saqib briefly tells about Colonel Canara, who scarified his life and made it impossible for Sikh soldiers to reach the cannons. This article gives a glimpse of Canara's sacrifice and Abbott's wisdom before starting the Second Anglo Sikh War. Evans Bell (1882) writes about the annexation of Punjab and H. B. Edwards (1873) nicely describes the life of Resident Sir Henry Lawrence but does not highlight the role of his assistant James Abbott in Hazara. Lionel James Trotter (London: 1886) tries to cover the history of India under Queen Victoria but does not provide enough knowledge about Hazara before and after second Anglo Sikh War. N. M. Khilnani (1951) explains the condition of Punjab under Resident Henry Lawrence while Sohan Singh Seetal (1970) tells about those mistakes and weaknesses of Khalsa Army which led to the end of Sikh Raj. Bhakshish Singh Najjar (1976) describes both the wars fought between the British and the Sikhs. Edwards Joseph Thackwell (London: 1851) presents a profound overview of second Anglo Sikh War 1848-49 and it reveals all the facts that led to the British victory.

### **BRITISH SIKH CONFRONTATION AND UNREST IN HAZARA**

As discussed earlier, the news of the coldblooded murder of the officers spread all over the Punjab, which further destabilized the already fragile security situation. British showed signs of resentment on the murder of their officers, and the situation heated up leading to the open revolt. Large groups

of Sikh soldiers deserted their regiments attached to Lahore Darbar and started assembling under the flag of Moolraj and disaffected Sardars. Considering the sensitivity of the emerging situation, the Governor General Lord Dalhousie proclaimed war against the Punjab on October 10, 1848 (Paradeep, 1994). The second Anglo Sikh war is considered as a decisive round between English and the Sikh resulting in the fall of the Sikh Empire. Among all the battles fought by British in India, the Second Anglo Sikh war is considered significant because it brought the large area of Punjab to the English domain at once, and brought an end to the Sikh rule.

The British Army under the command of General Sir Hugh Gough comprised 12000 British and Bengali soldiers having 66 artillery guns, whereas the Sikh camp had 35000 soldiers with 65 artillery guns commanded by the Sikh General Sher Singh. The Second Anglo Sikh War was initiated by Moolraj, the Governor of Multan, but later, it turned as a collective national war of the Sikh Empire against the British as the Sikh army on September 14, 1848 joined Moolraj (Rahim 1963, pp. 77-9). Khalsa army joined Moolraj to reinforce his strength bringing a clear numerical superiority over English Army. The rival forces fought a series of battles at various places, starting with a significant conflict at Ramnagar on 22 November and culminating end at Gujarat on February 1849. Chillianwala was the epic round where Moolraj surrendered to the English. During these battles, English army fought with great ferocity but the Sikh forces were plagued by weak leadership and lack of discipline (Charles, p. 228).

Like other parts of the Punjab, the Second Anglo War left impacts on the land and people of Hazara, which was governed by Sikh Governor Chatar Singh Atarivala aided by Captain James Abbott as the Assistant to Resident. To aid the Governor of Hazara, James Abbott was sent as Resident's Assistant to communicate between Sikh Governor and English Resident. Although he was assigned to advise the Governor in his official duties, however, his relations with the Muslim populace of Hazara made him one of the most popular personalities of the British era. Due to this contribution of Abbott, which is still remembered, majority of the Muslim population of Hazara were considering him as their Khan (Khilnanni, p. 22). Overtime, Abbott gained an extraordinary popularity among the local tribes. During the Sikh rule, he tried to win the local inhabitants' trust and stood by them in every moment of distress. By realizing the importance of the locals, Abbott never treated them harshly. During the war he rendered his country most vital service when Chattar Singh, the Sikh Governor of Hazara declared allegiance to Moolraj with a large army of the Khalsa (Abbott, 1911).

After the outbreak of revolt under Dewan Moolraj at Multan, Abbott became convinced that Chatar Singh was among the leaders of a conspiracy to overthrow the English from the Punjab and launch a war against the English forces at Lahore (Bell, 1882). Chattar Singh was one of the most exalted Sikh dignitaries who, besides being father of Sher Singh, the commander of Sikh Army, was also going to become father in law of Maharaja Dalip Singh since his daughter was betrothed to the young Maharaja. He was Governor of Hazara province since 1847 and it was difficult for Abbott to challenge his authority in any of the official matters (Gough, 1897). However, he had increased his influence among the local population to make allies. Locals in return, honoured Abbott respect for tribesmen and stood with him when Chattar Singh joined the columns of Moolraj for revolt.

After parting his ways from Chattar Singh, Abbott stationed 35 miles away from Singh's garrison and disconnected himself from all communication with external world by focusing on local tribesmen around him. He wrote a series of communiqué to the Resident to keep him aware of the

developments in the Sikh camp and informed him about the changing loyalties of Chattar Singh in favour of Dewan Moolraj. In the beginning, his observations were taken light, even to the extent that Resident wrote about Abbott to the Governor General that “though Abbott is an excellent officer but he is too quick to take gloomy views situation,” however, later the circumstances drifted the same way as anticipated by Abbott (Seetal 1970, pp. 223-5). Abbott proved his wit and strategic skills during and after the second Anglo Sikh War which brought him good repute among his colleagues and seniors.

### **Revolt of Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala**

Due to the atrocities of the Sikh rule, majority of the Muslim population of Hazara was so fed up that arrival of Major Abbott as an Assistant Resident and advisor of the Sikh rulers proved a blessing upon them. The people of the region started approaching him promptly for their rights and justice. Although Sardar Chattar Singh was the Governor, the army was of Sikh, Major Abbott’s staff was Sikh but the people of Hazara, Chaach, Ghaib, Khattar even as far as Pothowar used to bring their applications and petitions to Abbott (Edwards, 1973). He recorded in his diaries from April 1848 to June 1849 that from 11 am to sunset, he spent his day in dealing with people and their concerns and grievances. It clearly shows that the writ of the Sikh government had weakened. It is well-known that when the power and dignity of the government is no more in people’s heart, it takes less time for them to liberate their bodies, too (Edwards, p. 128). In the case of Sikhs, the decline was so prompt that in March 1849, the British rule was established. In this way grandeur and glory of the British Empire overpowered the Sikh rule. When the influence of the government vanished from the hearts of the people, the edifice of decade’s old government wrecked to ground in a few years (Panni, 1997).

Even though Abbott was a consultant to the Governor of Hazara Sardar Chattar Singh, he soon became de-facto administrator of the entire region including areas of Chujh, Khatar, Pothowar and Kahuta (Rawalpindi). Mobilization of Army, embossment of salaries, revenues and other Government areas, collection, management of the treasury in Hazara, all these issues were settled and managed by him. He was also the head of the judicial system and advisor to the British officers posted in Peshawar and advised them effectively about the issues and difficulties of the Frontier area. He kept informed the Resident of Lahore through his daily diary. His diary was very useful, he regarded his opinion as credible and he stressed the execution of his opinion. Even the Resident of Lahore took serious notice of the corresponding language of Abbott by denoting it as commanding tones, whereas, he was expected to behave like a subordinate. In response, Abbott wrote: “I take it my duty to give sincere and effective opinion and advice in the favor of my nation and Empire. There is no doubt that I am subordinate, I am aware of this position by law and practice but I give my clear and effective opinion boldly for the betterment of the Empire” (Abbott, p. 311).

Time and again, Sardar Chattar Singh and other Sikh officers plotted conspiracies against Abbott because they believed the fall of this useful symbol of the British was equal to the end of the British Empire. They were up to his arrest and murder. It is said that the Maharaja and ruler of Kashmir were also internally involved in this plan. However, he was double-crossing Abbott but keeping his sympathies with Chattar Singh. Abbott knew the conspiracies but he took himself aside (Panni, p. 212). During this time, a new development emerged when a portion of Darbar troops stationed at Pukhli, showed some signs of joining the insurgents at Multan. At that time, Abbott settled at



Haripur but the area's environment affected his health condition along with his many staff members. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1848, he camped at Khacchi in Tanawal area for the change of environment but his leaving created law and order problem (Khilnani 1951, p. 128). However, he successfully curbed the conspiracies against him and made all tricks and traps weaker, plotted against him.

In addition to this, he took many measures that made the people of Hazara his fans. The people of Hazara, Chuj, Khattar, Pothowar and Kahuta were sick of the atrocities of the Sikh regime. They considered Abbott as their saviour and took him as a guarantor to liberate them from the Sikh atrocities. Abbott acknowledged the affection of the people in his diary on June 1, 1848 by saying, "The Sikh Army can be defeated with the help of local people. My strength can be measured by the trust of the local people not by the numerical Army. That is why I cannot waste my time and influenced by listening guiles" (Charles, 1986). Infact, Abbott had reasonable suspicion that Sardar Chatar Singh Atarivala, Governor of the province was hatching deep conspiracy to support Dewan Moolraj and to wipe away the Englishmen from the administrative spheres. Abbott marched away from the headquarters of Hazara along with the Muslim peasantry. This move coincided when fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar was occupied on July 29, 1848 by the orders of the British Resident (Nijjar, 1976). He further sent out detachments of troops to the eastern district in search of political suspects. Captain James Abbott organized the Muslims of Hazara and armed them against Sardar Chatar Singh Atarivala. Since the British government had decided to pull down the structure of the Punjab's independence, Sardar Chatar Singh whose daughter had been engaged to Maharaja Dalip Singh could not be allowed to gain greater strength by the proposed matrimonial alliance of the house of Attari with the Royal family (Watson, 1908). On August 6, 1848, the Muslims of Hazara assembled and surrounded the town of Haripur where Sardar Chatar Singh encamped. The Sardar instead of appeasing the locals directed the Lahore troops to bring guns and open fire on them (Saqib, 2011). Chatar Singh on the pretext that Abbott's influence had made the local population hostile, ordered out the troops at Haripur. An officer Colonel Canara (an American) refused to move his guns without the instructions from Abbott and was shot dead. Abbott, however, called forth the local peasantry whose appearance in arms checked the movement of the Sikh Soldiery (Saqib, 2011).

The commander of the Sikh artillery, Colonel Canara, an American by origin, maintained good relations with Abbott and local people. During the Muslim uprising at Haripur, Chattar Singh ordered him to move the cannon and position them for opening fire at Muslim peasantry (Gough, 1897). He refused to carry out such orders which were against humanity. Chattar Singh got infuriated with his refusal and ordered the withdrawal of troops under his command. Sardar Chattar Singh repeated his orders stressing upon that Abbott had no authority to position the guns but Canara insisted not to use the guns for local population. Consequently, on the directions of Chattar Singh, Colonel Canara was shot dead (Panni, p. 207). Abbott called this most cruel homicide, "an atrocious deed," a cold-blooded murder and talked about Chattar Singh that he had committed a premeditated murder of Colonel Canara.

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1849, Abbott moved from Sherwan to Narra, a station located at the foot of tough mountainous Gandgar range, this place was nearer to Haripur, therefore, more suitable to be used as a base for launching offensive operations against Chattar Singh if he had marched his troops in that direction. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, he sent Lieutenant Robinson to oversee Mangal area and to

keep the narrow passes under control for the Pakhli force. In the meanwhile, Abbott got news that John Nicholson from Peshawar had conquered the Attock fort which motivated him and raised the morale of his forces (Edwards, 1851). Chattar Singh finally resorted to open rebellion. Abbott had long before predicted his intentions but tried to appease the situation but finally his prediction came true. Having cleared all suspicions, he played an aggressive part and utilized all his resources and united the local peasantry to force out Chattar Singh. He maintained a strong position in Hazara till the end of the war which happened with the retreat of Chatter Singh. The local uprising in Hazara was, in fact, the uprising of local Muslims supported and organized by Abbott with the aim to liberate themselves from the Sikh rule (Peter, 2013).

### **The Politics of Conspiracies and Intrigues**

An important aspect to understand the events of Second Anglo Sikh war was underlying conflict between Muslims and Sikhs. Historians often raised a question about the support of Muslim peasantry for Abbott against the Sikh rulers. There was a deep rooted bitterness and resentment in Muslims against the Sikh rulers due to their tyrannical and oppressive rule. It explains the influence which Abbott obtained in Muslim community of Hazara. For them, it was a perfect opportunity to revenge all the cruelties of the Sikh rulers, the obstinate persecutors of the locals (Henry, 1890). Chattar Singh, as discussed earlier, was involved in a deep conspiracy to plot a successful mutiny but he was keeping himself covert. He supported his units to rebel but had maintained his face as a loyal soldier to Lahore Darbar. However, the turning point came with the murder of Canara which cleared the intentions of Sikh governor (William, 1876). As soon as the news of the disturbance reached Peshawar, Major Lawrence promptly sent John Nicholson to secure the Attock close to the confluence of the River Kabul and Indus. Chatar Singh, however, while affirming that he was loyal in his proceedings which Abbott displayed, was engaged in active intriguing. He sent messages to Multan inciting Sher Singh to revolt but he opened communication with Gulab Singh of Kashmir who followed the policy of inactivity and with the troops in Peshawar, Amir at Kabul and with Sultan Mohammad. It is said that these letters and intriguing proved more successful. The special object of drawing in Dost Mohammad was to obtain Muslim support which had never been readily given to Sikhs, for this purpose, Chatar Singh counted it worthwhile to offer Peshawar itself as a bribe (Abbott, pp. 401-5). By this time the rebellion was limited to isolated defunct soldiers which soon spread to the battalions. This started all across the Punjab when Chattar Singh intrigued in Hazara to support Moolraj covertly. This old chief had a great influence among his own Sikh community. By August 9, Lawrence received a mail that a faithful colonel of Sikh artillery Canara had been murdered in the columns of Sikh Army on the orders of Chatar Singh and that Chatar Singh was organizing the Sikhs in Hazara and adjoining districts to join him in a march to attack Lahore (Panni, p. 302).

The character of Chatter Singh and his role in mutiny was cleared by now which had been predicted by Abbott since long but the Resident at Lahore was repeatedly rejecting his claims. Abbott was keen in tracing the drift of loyalties in the Sikh columns but it was finally the murder of Canara which provided concrete evidence to prove the apprehensions of Abbott. Meanwhile, Abbott remained careful in his responses and relationship with Governor Chattar Singh and his men. However, the outbreak of resistance from Muslim peasantry at Haripur gave him challenge he had long been waiting for. The Muslim peasantry of Hazara, assembled to play a final round against the

Sikh rulers. In the second Anglo Sikh war, Abbott fought well though the Sikh Army engaged him from four sides and he could not get any external assistance (Charles, p. 200). Chattar Singh, at this occasion, tried to change the meaning of the incidents by writing to Resident at Lahore:

Abbott is instigating the people of Hazara against the Sikhs. He neither trusts me nor has left any power to me. He declared me nobody. I have brought out Army and guns from the city and from the fear of Mutiny. So, that they should marched to the safe point. Colonel Canara ignored my order and was killed by people which cannot be my fault (Gough, p. 227).

Ironically Resident agreed to Chattar Singh and declared him free from the murder of Colonel Canara. He also sent his assistant in Hazara for further investigation by taking power from Abbott. However, soon this order was cancelled by keeping in view the sensitive situation of Hazara. Former deputy administrator of Haripur, Jhanda Singh was sent to Hazara that he should bring Abbott and Chattar Singh to a pact where the situation was deteriorating day by day. Abbott tried his best that Chattar Singh could not get any sort of assistance from inside or outside of Hazara due to which Jhanda Singh went back unsuccessful. Then Dewan Dina Nath was sent for truce due to which both Nicholson and Abbott could not attack Chattar Singh who along with his Army started to move to Hasanabdal. While negotiation was going on, Abbott followed Singh's camp which was located between Hasanabdal and Haripur. He, once again tried to negotiate with him but could not reach to any truce pact. Chattar Singh moved to Hasanabdal, and continued along with his Army towards Usman Khatra so he could meet Partab Singh who was coming back from Rawalpindi and had already crossed Margalla Hills (Andrew, 1991). Now, the Sikh Army camped at Rajoya via Haripur (September 1848) to reach at the aid of Pakhli Army. Abbott and Nicholson faced them at Salhad and Dhamtor but could not succeed to achieve their objective.

In addition to this, Abbott's men could not arrange their position, and lost valuable time in organizing the stragglers. Eventually, when Abbott reached near the front, he saw a body of irregular troops pushing towards a path leading over to Sarban and head of the Salhad pass. By fearing their designs, in order to seize that pass, he ordered fifty of his men to take possession near village Nagakki (half-way up the hill). Meanwhile, the Sikh troops had advanced with cannon shot and opened fire on the spurs singling out especially where Abbott himself was taking position, although no damage was done but it disturbed the atmosphere of Sarban hill for the long time to come (Andrew, p. 203). On a high hill opposite to where Abbott stood one of the foremost of the defenses. He was alarmed to see the top quite bare and a force of 1,000 Sikhs making for it. The latter Nicholson saw also, and collecting fifty men, whom he could only induce to advance by convincing them through arguments, he led them up the hill as reinforcement to the post which he imagined to be still on the top. He was dismayed to find the place deserted and leaving his fifty men there, he retired to make arrangements for the defense of other positions (Trotter, 1886). The little party held its ground creditably till the Sikhs were within ten paces, and then fled precipitately. Their flight was the signal for that of the whole force. The day was lost, and all hope of preventing the release of the Pakhli Bridge was gone. Disgusted with the behavior of their levies and realizing that it was useless to expect them to face the Sikhs again. Nicholson and Abbott withdrew their men and retired. Nicholson went to Hasanabdal and Abbott went to Narra where surrounded by the splendid loyalty of the Mishwanis of Sirikot and the Utmanzai of Khalabat, he could still feel personally safe (Trotter, p. 55).



The weeks that followed were comparatively inactive for Abbott. All that he could do was to secure possession of a number of small Sikh forts scattered in the district, which were as a rule peacefully evacuated by their garrisons, and to sink some of the boats on the Indus in order to prevent a junction between the Peshawar and Haripur bridges. Abbott himself remained at Narra watching Chattar Singh's movements and prepared to resist the attack that was threatened more than once. Meanwhile, a welcome remittance of money arrived from the Maharaja of Kashmir, who thus proved that he had resisted the Sikh overtures (Patrik, 2009). After staying for few days at Haripur, Chattar Singh moved off in the direction of Attock, and camped in the Chach plain. From there on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1848, he entered Hazara district via left bank of Indus keeping in mind to release the soldiers of Slamkhand Fort.

Abbott was determined to resist these movements to the best of his ability. He posted his levies on the hills overlooking the advancing force consisted upon two columns with four guns and two howitzers carried by elephants. The right column commanded by Chattar Singh in person made its way without opposition to a hill south of the fort, but as it was pushed forward it came under a hot fire and was driven back with loss. The left column began to climb a hill to the north, along with a path to Sirikot and where Abbott himself was positioned. Under the eye of their commander, the levies gallantly disputed every inch of the ground and at two o'clock in the afternoon the Sikhs, having won only the easiest slope, turned back and retired in good order (Patrik, p. 342). The garrison meanwhile had evacuated and fired the fort and the whole force then marched away. Abbott faced him but he came back along with the soldiers of SlamKhand. Two hundred Sikh soldiers were killed and wounded while Abbott lost only twenty or so. From the Abbott side Atta Mohammad Khan Tarkhili was killed while fighting. Abbott must have felt great satisfaction in paying off some old scores against Chattar Singh in this successful little fight. He was materially assisted by Ingram, who displayed great gallantry in rallying the levies (Charles, p. 442). After this incident, Abbott settled peacefully at Sirikot and Narra. His isolated position caused the Resident at Lahore and the Governor-General great concern, but for the security reasons they could not venture to send any force to his succor, however, urgently he pressed for such a measure.

In the meanwhile, a new cause for anxiety arose, when Amir of Kabul, Dost Mohammad Khan, marched down to Peshawar. By the end of October, the troops had mutinied and compelled George Lawrence to seek refuge in flight and proceeded to make common cause with Chatter Singh. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, 1849, Lieutenant Herbert was obliged to abandon the Attock fort, and the Afghan army crossed the Indus. Abbott had tried to check Dost Muhammad Khan's advance in December, when he heard about his entry to Peshawar. Abbott wrote a letter to Amir Dost Mohammad, "your arrival is hopefully friendly. The Government is managing to crush the Sikh Army and your help is needed in this regard." To take on himself the role of spokesman of the British Government in this unauthorized fashion was rather an audacious proceeding. Although this letter was without the approval of Governor General yet this letter helped release the personal views of Dost Mohammad, in which he made no secret of his hostile intentions and of his design to acquire the districts of Peshawar, Dera's and Hazara for himself (Beckett, 2006).

Although, both Afghans and the people of Hazara became a bigger force compared to the Sikhs, however, the approach of the Afghans was a severe test of the loyalty of Abbott's following than the successes of the Sikhs. Afghan loathed the latter and their only temptation was to be on the winning

side, but the others were fellow Muhammadans, with whom they had much more sympathy and so, Dost Mohammad Khan sent his Army to Hazara in January 1849 under the command of his son Ghulam Haider Khan. Few Khans of Hazara specifically, Khan Zaman Khan Tahirkheli and Ghulam Khan Tarin also joined him (Panni, p. 52). Abbott came from Gandhgar to Sherwan, when the Afghan forces entered into Hazara being the safest point leading to Kashmir. Here, it was easily possible to stop them from going to Kashmir. Afghan forces captured Sirikot under the guidance of Khan Zaman Khan Tahirkheli when Abbott had gone from Ghandgar. The turning point of the crises had reached. Descending from the hills, the Afghan Army crossed river Dour and stationed at Bharokot to attack Sherwan against the British Army who were moving toward the north but due to the British victory in the Battle of Gujrat on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 1849, these plans failed. The Afghan forces crossed Attock promptly and reached Afghanistan while vacating Peshawar (Gough, p. 203). Finally, Abbott reached Margalla along with the Levies and from there; he viewed Sikhs surrendering to the British Army at Rawalpindi. The British Government and Parliament appreciated his services and thanked velour and influence.<sup>50</sup>

In acknowledging his services especially to the land and people of Hazara, abolishing the Sikh rule was never forgotten. The Governor General, in this regard, wrote:

It is a gratifying spectacle to witness the intrepid bearing of this officers in the midst of difficulties of no ordinary kind not only maintain his position, but offering a bold front, at one time to the Sikhs, at another to the Afghans, notwithstanding that religious fanaticism has been at work to induce the Mohammadan levies to desert his cause. He must have secured the attachment of the people amongst whom he has been sent by his mild and conciliatory demeanor in times of peace, as well as by his gallantry as their leader in action, thus enhancing the credit of our national character and preparing the way for the easy occupancy of an almost impregnable country. (Watson, pp. 213-20).

After becoming the first Deputy Commissioner of Hazara, whatever he did for the advancement of the people of Hazara, has left deep impacts, and he is still remembered by the people of Hazara.

## **CONCLUSION**

Like other parts of the Subcontinent, land and the people of Hazara are the witness of rise and fall of Sikh Raj. Under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sikhs gained the control of Hazara, mainly because of its access to Kashmir. Throughout the Sikh period, Hazara region could never be considered as a settled area as, on most of the occasions, the revenue was collected here by the authorities only through military expeditions. That's why after the death of Ranjit Singh, Sikh kingdom shattered, and they lost their control from the territories of Hazara and the entire Punjab. Although lack of dedicated leadership, mistrust and modern weapons were the main cause of their defeat, however, the role of James Abbott as a soldier of resistance movement cannot be overlooked.

Sikhs ruled almost 35 years in Hazara but majority population comprising Muslims suffered badly. They lived a miserable life and had no religious freedom; Hazara could never be settled to peace during Sikh Raj as First Anglo Sikh War brought BEIC to control Punjab, a very little resistance from the region had been shown. During that difficult time, the Muslims of Hazara found their savior in the shape of Assistant to Resident James Abbott, who not only understood the Sikh atrocities against Muslims but also helped them to resist the terrine of the Sikh regime. Chatar Singh, who was

responsible for all sorts of cruelty on Muslims, was contained by Abbott in many ways. He played a significant role in planning, organizing and arming the local tribesmen against the Sikh rule in Hazara.

It is scholarly admitted that Abbott, being a major player, remained successful in elimination of Sikh Raj. He successfully used both Hazara and Afghan forces to stop the Sikh army to reach Kashmir. Year 1849 proved the last year of the Sikh kingdom who could never established their Raj in any part of the Sub-Continent again. In different parts of Hazara, James Abbott, by providing a stiff resistance to Chatar Singh due to effective battle techniques, successfully obtained extraordinary influence and honour among the locals. From that day onwards, majority of the population in Hazara started to acknowledge the contribution of James Abbott to liberate them from the terrine of the Sikh rule.

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Date of Publication	January 25, 2022
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