THE FAMILY OF NAZAR BAHADUR

KHESHGI

The family of Nazar Bahadur Kheshgi enjoyed an important position in the court of Emperor Shahjahan. Nazar Bahadur his sons and other relatives played most crucial role in almost all important military campaigns during the reign of Shahjahan. The family belonged to Qasur in Punjab, about thirty five miles to the South-East of Lahore and among the Afghans Kheshgis were noted for their integrity and loyalty to the Mughal service. Nazar Bahadur joined Mughal service under Prince Parvez. After sometime, being impressed with his honesty and bravery Emperor Jahangir inducted him into imperial service and bestowed the rank of 1500 Zat and 700 Sawar. But unfortunately we do not get any information about Nazar Bahadur’s activities during the reign of Jahangir from any contemporary or near contemporary source. The author of Ma’asir-ul umara however informs us that soon after joining the imperial service, Nazar Bahadur Kheshgi came into contact of Prince Khurram and became his close associate during his rebellion.

After ascending the throne, Emperor Shahjahan because of his past association, confirmed Nazar Bahadur to his previous rank and appointed him as faujdar of Sambhal. The author of *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin* writes that Shahjahan was highly impressed with his learning, honesty and good behavior. He adds that generally his demands for expenditure were sanctioned without much questioning.

Nazar Bahadur’s first major appointment was against Jujhar Singh Bundela who had rebelled just after the accession of Shahjahan. In this campaign which was led by Mahabat Khan, Nazar Bahadur showed real valour. Later on Nazar Bahadur was exalted to the rank of 1500 Zat and 1000 Sawar.

In 1632, Nazar Bahadur was despatched to the Deccan along with Mahabat Khan who had been appointed to conquer Daulatabad and bring peace and order in the Deccan. On his arrival, Mahabat Khan found the situation in the Deccan very complicated. Shahji, the Maratha leader and Fateh Khan the successor of Malik Ambar, who have already accepted the overlordship of Mughals were at war with each other. The ruler of Bijapur was trying desparetly to impress upon Fateh Khan not to surrender the fort of Bijapur to Mughals. Fateh Khan who had invited

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8. Ibid, 399.
Mahabat Khan to hand over the fort, ultimately entered into an understanding with Bijapur against the Mughals. Mahabat Khan on this decided to launch an attack on the fort of Bijapuris. Nazar Bahadur and other Afghan officers who have also accompanied Mahabat Khan were ordered to press the siege vigorously. According to Lahori, Nazar Bahadur along with Nasiri Khan Khan-i-Dauran courageously entered the fort from the right and started a sharp hand-to-hand fight which forced the garrison to surrender and the fort was captured.\(^9\) It appears that Nazar Bahadur remained in the Deccan till 1632 sometime after the conquest of Daulatabad. Shahnawaz Khan inform us that after the conquest of Daulatabad Nazar Bahadur for some reason was out of imperial service for about two years.\(^10\)

In 1634, a royal army was sent to reduce Parenda under the supreme command of Prince Shuja, Nazar Bahadur who was posted under Khan-i-Zaman at Burhanpur, served imperial cause with complete loyalty and determination.\(^11\) The Parenda campaign was followed by an organised attempt on the part of Mughals to wash out the Maratha threat which was gradually assuming an alarming nature under the leadership of Sahu Bhonsle. The Maratha threat to Daulatabad and its vicinity was


\(^10\) Ibid.

confronted unitedly by both the governors of the Deccan. Khan-iZaman along with Nazar Bahadur successfully repulsed the Deccanis. Nazar Bahadur was promoted to the rank of 2500 Zat and 1500 Sawar.\(^{12}\) in reward for his service in the Deccan.

In 1641, Prince Murad was sent at the head of a large army against Jagat Singh, the rebellious Zamindar of Kangra. Nazar Bahadur who was at Nurpur was summoned to join the royal army at Mau. He and his son Shamsuddin distinguished themselves in the expedition to the Chaki country, the forts of Mau and Taragarh.\(^{13}\) Finally, Jagat Singh was forced to submit. He was thereafter sent to the court under the custody of Nazar Bahadur and Sayyid Khan-i-Jahan Barha.\(^{14}\) After that Nazar Bahadur was promoted to the rank of 3000 Zat 1500 Sawar.\(^{15}\) Shortly afterwards on the occasion of Lunar weighing ceremony he was again given an increase of 500 Sawar in his mansab.\(^{16}\)

In 1646 Nazar Bahadur was promoted to the rank of 3000 Zat 2500 Sawar\(^{17}\) and was sent along with Prince Murad to the Balkh and Badakshan campaign. After conquering Balkh and Badakshan, Prince

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15. Ibid, 294.
Murad decided to return to the court. When this news apprised to the Emperor come to know of the intention of the Prince, he at once despatched Sa’adullah Khan with the instruction to pursue the Prince to change his decision. He was also asked to make necessary administrative arrangements in the conquered area. Sa’adullah Khan appointed Nazar Bahadur Khan and Qulij Khan to jointly protect Badakshan. But according to Shahnawaz Khan Nazar Bahadur out of love for his country ‘left this post with a number of chiefs and came to Peshawar’\textsuperscript{18}. Thus he fell out the royal favour and forbidden to cross the Indus.

After Prince Murad, Shahjahan appointed Prince Aurangzed as supreme commander of the army to lead the campaign against Balkh and Badakshan. Nazar Bahadur who was well acquaintance with the topography of the region was also summoned to the court; he was pardoned of his past offences, promoted to the rank of 3000 Zat and 3000 Sawar and also asked to join the Mughal army\textsuperscript{19}. In this campaign Nazar Bahadur and other Afghan commanders played significant role and helped the army in achieving an important victory over Qizalbash soldiers. Shahnawaz Khan writes that his bravery and courage were almost legendary and as the enemy inspite of its large numbers could not

\textsuperscript{18} Lahori, vol. II, 551; Amal-i Saleh, vol. III, 10-23;
\textsuperscript{19} Amal-i Saleh, vol. III, 72-74.
achieve anything, they ‘turned back and joined the other forces.' After this victory he was elevated to the rank of 4000 Zat and 4000 Sawar. 20

Nazar Bahadur served the Mughals until his death at Lahore in 1652. 22 He left behind three sons namely Shamsuddin Qutbuddin, and Asadullah. Emperor Shahjahan extended royal favour to all of them in regard to the service rendered by their father. According to the author of Ma’asir-ul umara Nazar Bahadur was famous for his piety and honesty. He preferred to recruit his soldiers from his own clan and relation. 23

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid, 821
i. **Shamsuddin Kheshgi**

Shamsuddin Kheshgi was the eldest son of Nazar Bahadur.²⁴ He joined Mughal service in 1637, and was assigned the rank of 600 Zat and 600 Sawar.²⁵ He ably served in the campaign against Jagat Singh and in Balkh and Badakshan during the life time of his father. In 1640, he was appointed faujdar of Mandsore²⁶ and after some years he was transferred to the faujdari of Kangra by replacing Murshid Quli.²⁷ He was also promoted to the rank of 1000 Zat and 900 Sawar.²⁸

In 1652 when his father Nazar Bahadur Kheshgi died at Lahore and this news was conveyed to the court Shamsuddin Kheshgi was granted the promotion of 1500 Zat and 1500 Sawar.²⁹ Thereafter, he accompanied Prince Aurangzeb who had been appointed to lead a campaign to Qandhar.³⁰

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²⁴ Ma'asir-ul umar. vol. III, 821
After returning from Qandhar campaign he was once again entrusted with the faujdari of Junagarh in succession of Muhammad Salih, son of Muhammad Isa Tarkhan. After some time a dissension arose between him and his brother over the issue of jagirdari of Junagarh. The dispute was resolved only by the active intervention of imperial authority. He was ordered to proceed to the Deccan to join Prince Aurangzeb, who it was assured would give him some suitable assignment. During his stay in the Deccan he greatly impressed Aurangzeb with his ability and in due course of time Shamsuddin became very close to him.

When the news of Shahjahan’s illness spread in the Deccan, Aurangzeb, at once proceeded towards Agra. Shamsuddin also accompanied him and served him in the battle of Samugarh and Dharmat with distinction. After Aurangzeb’s accession he was raised to the rank of 3000 zat 2000 sawar and despached again to the Deccan to serve under Shaishtha Khan. After that we have no information about his activities. According to the author of Ma’asir-ul Umara, none of his sons could distinguish themselves. Only his grand son Munwwar rose to a prominent position.

33. Ibid.
34. Alamgir nama, 45; Ma’asir-ul umar, vol. II, 677.
35. Alamgir nama, 587.
ii. **Qutbuddin Kheshgi**

He was the second son of Nazar Bahadur. In 1647, he was enrolled into Mughal service and was placed under his father. He was assigned a *mansab* of 800 *Zat* and 800 *Sawar*. Contemporary chronicles do not provide any information about his early career until his father’s death in 1652. After his father’s death Emperor Shahjahan showed special favour to him by promoting him to the rank of 1500 *Zat* and 1400 *Sawar*. As it has been discussed earlier he and his elder brother Shamsuddin Kheshgi had a dispute over the *faujdari* of Junagarh which was assigned to them jointly by the Emperor. When the Emperor was apprised of these development, he immediately transferred Shamsuddin to Deccan and Qutbuddin was despatched to Gujarat where he was assigned *faujdari* of Pattan.

Having come to know about the illness of Emperor Shahjahan, the then governor of *Suba* of Gujarat, Prince Murad acted hurriedly to assume sovereignty. He managed to get the support of almost all the nobles serving under him. Qutbuddin too joined him and

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38. Waris, 164.
accompanied the Prince. He greatly impressed Prince Murad in the battle at Dharmat with his military skills. However, after the battle of Samugarh, (29 May 1658). When Aurangzeb imprisoned Murad at Mathura, Qutbuddin like several other nobles of Murad shifted his loyalty and joined Aurangzeb. His loyalty was reciprocated by Aurangzeb. He was honoured by Aurangzeb by being appointed faujdar of Sorath. During his long career under Aurangzeb he served in the Deccan but was never given any independent charge.

   For more details see, J. N. Sarkar History of Aurangzeb, vol. I 432-436
41. Alamgirnana, 146
   Ma’asir-ul Umara, vol. III, 103