

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCES

PEER REVIEWED, INDEXED & REFEREED QUARTERLY INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

ISSN 0302-9298

<https://www.jndmeerur.org>

[Vol. 33, No. 1 (January-March), 2024]

<https://doi.org/10.62047/CSS.2024.03.31.201>

House of Najibabad and its Entry in Indian Revolution of 1857

Vighnesh Kumar and Sheetal Tyagi***

*Professor and Head, Department of History, Chaudhary Charan Singh University,
Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail: <vighneshkmr@gmail.com>

**Research Scholar, Maharaja Agrasen Himalyan Garhwal University,
Uttarakhand (India) E-mail:<sheetaltyagi91@gmail.com>

Abstract

Najib Khan, a foreign Afghan came to India with his teenager son entered in the military service. Soon he rose to prominence and after the Afghan victory over the Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat, he assumed the charge of the Mir Bakhshi i.e., Commander-in-Chief of the Mughal Empire as a reward for assisting the foreign invader Ahmad Shah Abdali. Najib Khan thus became Najibuddaula. His descendants showed a particular type of uncommon behaviour towards the emperor. But his great grandson Nawab Mahmud Khan, to resumed the charge of the District Administration on June 7, 1857.

Keywords

Najibuddaula, Zabita Khan, Gausgarh Fort, Shukratal Fort, Patthargarh Fort, Alexander Shakespeare, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Bhambu Khan, Mahmud Khan, Jalaluddin Khan, Ahmad Allah Khan, Shafi Allah Khan.

Research Foundation International, New Delhi
(Affiliated to UNO)

Editorial Office : D-59, Shastri Nagar, Meerut - 250 004 (INDIA)

Ph. : 0121-2763765, +91-9997771669, +91-9219658788

17

House of Najibabad and its Entry in Indian Revolution of 1857

The *District Gazetteer*, referring to the geographical location of the town of Najibabad, thus describes¹:

“The place which gives its name to the pargana and tehsil is a large town standing 29°37'N. and 78°21'E., at an elevation of about 875 feet above the level of the sea, and at a distance of 21 miles north-east from Bijnor.”

It further records²:

“Along the north-eastern outskirts flows the Malin river, though most of the town stands high, well above the flood bank; but owing to the close proximity of the forest, which renders the rainfall very heavy, and perhaps also because of the large number of pilgrims who pass through Najibabad on their way to Hardwar, the place has the reputation of being unhealthy. The sanitary condition are however, satisfactory, since the area is well drained by the many ravines and channels leading down to the river.”

In the paragraph mentioned above, the *District Gazetteer Bijnor* throws light on 2 major points though unintentionally. The first is that a number of ravines are there to the close proximity of the forest at the town, and secondly many channels also exist at Najibabad leading down to the river. One more fact about the road to the pilgrimage of Haridwar is also mentioned. It seems reasonable to think that perhaps Najib Khan, taking these important safety points into consideration, would have found it fit to found a war time shelter at this place. And the same thing has been written in the Gazetteer in its next paragraph which reads³ :

“The town was founded in the days of Rohilla supremacy, and derives its name from Najib-ud-daula, who removed the head-quarters of the paragana hither from Jalalabad. He also built in 1775 the great fort of Patthargarh or Najafgarh, which stands about a mile and a half to the east.”

Though the site was not a new one but much contrarily an very old which was named after Raja Mordhaj or more correctly Raja Mordhwaj⁴ :

“This building, now in ruins, is constructed of brick and stone, the latter having been taken, it is said, from the more ancient castle of Mordhaj. It is square in plan, and is surrounded by an wall, with bastions at each angle; there are gateways on each side, the chief being that opening towards the town.”

Describing the remains and locations of few important buildings and other structural signs, it further records⁵ :

“Within are a few palm trees, and the remains of considerable buildings, half hidden among the jungle which has grown up. The tomb of Najibuddaula stands to the south of the town, while to the north is that of his brother, Jahangir Khan, which was constructed in 1173H [Hazri].”

Throwing light on the important names of the family and the places or the sites related to them, it refers to as given below⁶ :

“The name of Najibudaula’s son is preserved in the *muhalla* of Zabitaganj, which comprises the eastern portion of the town. There are several other old buildings, the chief being the palace of the *Nawabs* in the north-eastern quarter. It is now used for the *tehsil* offices, but little remains of the former structure except the fine carved entrance and a small portion of the frontage. Within is a large court, where the dispensary, registration office and the police-station are also located. Opposite the gateway in the centre of the square are the remains of the Nawab’s *naubat-khana*, and immediately to the north-east is a fine garden, which was laid out by Nawab Muin-ud-din, the grandson of Najib-ud-daula, and his nephew Jalal-ud-din. The garden contains a spacious building known as the Kothi Mubarak Bunyad, so called because a son was born to Jalal-ud-din on the day when he began to build it; the place is now used as a rest-house.”

Giving information about the Nawab Tola, Baradari and the Maratha attack in 1772, it further mentions⁷ :

“In the Nawab-tola there is an old *baradari*, which is now in a ruinous condition, and the town also contains a number of mosques and other buildings of little architectural importance. The town was sacked by the Marathas in 1772, and in 1774 it passed into the hands of Nawab Wazir of Oudh. Its importance then declined, and when Captain Hardwicke visited Najibabad in 1796, he found that it had already fallen into decay. Nawab Muinuddin Khan took up his residence here in 1801, after the

cession of the district, and his son was Mahmud Khan, whose conduct in the Mutiny has been described in chapter V. When the town was reoccupied in 1858, the palace of the Nawab was destroyed, and the whole place was given to plunder.”

In fact Ahmad Shah Abdali, the foreign Afghan invader was invited by Najib Khan⁸, a foreign Afghan, who had come from Afghanistan and the military service as a foot soldier initially but in due course of time he had risen to such prominence that Vazir Imadul Mulk⁹ had remained always suspicious towards him. When Dattaji Sindhia¹⁰ besieged him in Shukratal Fort¹¹ for nearly four months it was Ahmad Sah who had come to India for his support. The Third Battle of Panipat¹² proved a destruction to the Marathas and Ahmad Shah Abdali rewarded Najib by appointing him the Mir Bakshi i.e., the Commander-in-Chief of the Mughal empire.¹³ Thus he was made an ud-daula and so he was renamed as Najibuddaula.¹⁴

Najibuddaula an illiterate with his grown son, after coming to India and gaining a seat of prominence, managed his strong military position at Delhi. He had already founded 2 Afghan colonies in much strong forts built by him. The Gausgarh fort¹⁵ was situated in Than Bhawan-Jalalabad-Gausgarh territory in the district of Shamli, while the Shukratal fort¹⁶ was built on the right bank of the Ganga, just below the point where the Solani meets the Ganga in the district of Muzaffarnagar. Both these fort were of geographical importance from military point of view. The third one of the series was Pathhargarh fort¹⁷ near Najibabad which has been described in detail in the previous paragraphs.

Najibuddaula acted as Supreme Regent in Delhi from 1761 to October 1770 till his last breath. he died on 31st October 1770 at Hapur¹⁸ when on the way from the Maratha camp at Mathura to the town of Najibabad. He was greatly suffering from piles with too much bleeding that had broken both his health¹⁹ as well as his confidence. His body was brought to Najibabad²⁰ and was buried in the tomb now know as Najibuddaula’s Tomb²¹ which is a fine example of architecture of the Later Mughal period.²²

Zabita Khan was the eldest son of Najibuddaula and after his father’s death, he was made Commander-in-Chief.²³ But soon there were some delicate matters o the harem with in the Red Fort of Delhi because of them the Queen mother appealed his son, Shah Alam II to come from Allahabad. The Crown Prince was ready to come into

terms with the Marathas if those decided to escort the emperor when the latter had to come to Delhi.²⁴ The terms and conditions were discussed and Shah Alam II, the Mughal Emperor could return his capital on January 6, 1772. It was the joyous occasion of Eid that very day.²⁵

Zabita Khan did not give ear to emperors calls through it was his duty to escort the latter. And in those conditions, Shah Alam II appointed Mirza Najaf Khan as Mir Bakshi and without further delay, the military expedition against Zabita Khan was declared. With the help of the Marathas, the Mughals attacked the strong fort of Grausgarh. It was sacked and raised to ground. Zabita Khan tried to take shelter at Shukratal Fort but failed.²⁶ The Marathas were attacking his ports and reached Najibabad. The Patthargarh Fort was attacked and won.²⁷ The Afghans had to flee from the actual scene of battle. Zabita Khan was bitterly and completely defeated.

In due course of time Zabita Khan could regain his position to some extent that was due to Mirza Najaf Khan's liberal attitude. He was given only 7 *parganas* back out of 52 he owned.

Zabita Khan had 2 sons, Ghulam Qadir²⁸ and Muinuddin Khan alias Bhambu Khan. After the Red Fort episode by Mir Bakhshi Ghulam Qadir, the Marathas had arrested and executed him.²⁹ He remained issueless. Bhambu Khan had 2 sons, Mahmud Khan³⁰ and Jalaluddin Khan.³¹ Nawab Mahmud Khan had 2 sons named Ghaznafar Ali Khan and Muazzam Ali Khan, and a daughter.³² Jalaluddin Khan had 2 sons Ahmad Allah Khan and Shafi Allah Khan.

Ahmad Allah Khan was *tehsildar* of Najibabad during 1857.³³ His brother Shafi Allah Khan was present at the *varandah* of the Collectorate on 29th March, 1857 when he was telling bad names to the British openly though he had come there to meet Mr. Alexander Shakespear, the Collector and Magistrate of Bijnor.³⁴

With the help of Ahmad Allah Khan, Nawab Mahmud Khan declared himself as the Nawab, the Governor on behalf of Bahadur Shah II, the Mughal Emperor. Prior to this, on 7th June, 1857, he was handed over the charge of the District Administration by the collector in presence of Sadr Amin Sayyid Ahmad Khan and others. The very morning early hours, the drum was beaten with the declaration to the effect that the earth belongs to god, the country belongs to the Emperor and the Administration belongs to Nawab Mahmud Khan :

*Khalq Khuda Ka,
Mulk Badshah Ka,
Hukum Nawab Mahmud Khan [Bahadur] ka.*³⁵

As an eye-witness, Sir Sayyid mentions the above declaration of the Nawab as follows³⁶ :

“The People belong to God; the Country belong to the King; and the Authority belongs to Nawab Mahumd Khan.”

Notes and References

1. H. R. Nevill, *Bijnore : A Gazetteer being Volume XIV of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, United Provinces' Government Press, Allahabad, 1908, pp. 276-77.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 277-78.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Volume II, Calcutta : M.C. Sarkar and sons, 1952, pp. 38, 41.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. H. R. Nevill, *Muzaffarnagar : A Gazetteer being Volume III of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, Allahabad : United Provinces' Government Press, 1903, pp. 177-79; Vighnesh Kumar, *Ghaziabad ke Char Hazar Varsha* (in Hindi) Hastinapur, Research Institute, Meerut, 2006, pp. 122, 129, 130, 206.
12. Jadunath Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. H. R. Nevill, *op. cit.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. H. R. Nevill, **Bijnore** : *op. cit.*
18. Vighnesh Kumar, *op. cit.*
19. *Ibid.*; Jadunath Sarkar, *op. cit.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. T. G. Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, New Delhi : Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, Reprint December 1969, Photoplate facing page No. 28.

22. *Ibid.*
23. Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Volume III, 1771-1788, Second Edition Revised, Calcutta : M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1952, pp. 34-35; Hari Ram Gupta, *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Punjab 1707-1793*, Lahore, 1944 pp. 94, 134, 171-72, 176-79, 183, 192.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
26. *Ibid.*, Miskin (present) 278-79; *Ibratnama*, i, 207.
27. *Ibratnama*, i, 208-210; E. T. Atkinson, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India*, Volume V, Allahabad : Government Press, 1888, p.352.
28. Vighnesh Kumar, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-34.
29. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tarikh-i-Sarkashi-i-Zila Bijnor* (published in Urdu in 1858) *History of the Bijnor Rebellion*, translated into English by Hafeez Malik and Morris Dembo, Chapter II, 'Transfer of Power to Nawab Mahmud Khan', Point No. 5 - "Nawab Mahmud Khan's Genealogical Table."
30. *Interview*, 12-03-2011, Kunwar Shailendra Pratap Singh Tyagi s/o Late Kunwar Jasjeet Singh Tyagi 'Raja Saheb' of Raja ka Tajpur, Bijnor.
31. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *op. cit.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, Preface, Point no.V - "Tehsildars [A tehsil is a sub-district]" serial no. 19 : "Ajmad Allah Khan, *Tehsildar* of Najibabad a nephew of Mahmud Khan (a rebel)."
34. Vighnesh Kumar (ed.), *1857 IN 1857 : Original Mutiny Narratives*, Volume I, Hastinapur Research Institute, Meerut, 2013 p. 111; *Narratives of Events Regarding the Mutiny in India 1857-58*, Volume I, Calcutta, 1881, Deposition No. 1 - "Statement of Frances Shester, Native Christian of Sirdhana."
35. *Interview*, *op. cit.*
36. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *op. cit.*, Chapter Ii, Point no. 4 - "Departure of the Officers from Bijnor." ★