

Three Letters of Maharani Jind Kaur

BY

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The story of the incarceration of Maharani Jind Kaur (popularly known as *Mai Jindan*), the mother of Maharaja Duleep Singh, in the fort of Lahore, her removal from there to the fort of Sheikhpura as a State prisoner and her ultimate banishment from the Panjab is very tragic. But it has become all the more tragic and painful by the discovery of three of her letters, which form the subject of this paper. These letters were purchased by me in October 1940 from Pt. Kirpa Ram, a grandson of the late Rai Sahib Pandit Wazir Chand Trikha of Jhang, for the Khalsa College, Amritsar, and are now preserved there in the collection of the Sikh History Research Department. One of these letters is in the Maharani's own handwriting while the other two are transliteration of the originals, rendered into Persian characters by Herbert B. Edwardes, whose initials (H.B.E.) are inscribed thereon. One of them bears the initials (J.L.) of John Lawrence.

The first letter was written on, or a day or two after, the 14th of August, 1847, when it was decided by the British Resident at Lahore, Colonel Henry Lawrence, that "the Maharani is to confine herself to the Summan [Burj]" in the fort of Lahore and that some of her old servants were to be dismissed and replaced by those chosen by the Government.

Ever since the arrival of the British in the Panjab after the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46, there had been a clash of interests. On the one side there were the politicals of the East India Company who wished to establish themselves permanently in the Panjab. They had got a foothold in the country and they did not want to go back. In fact they had their eyes far beyond the Sikh frontiers to the north west. On the other side was the Queen-mother, Maharani Jind Kaur, who had been in favour of the retention of the British troops, to begin with, as long as, under the terms of the treaties of the 9th and 11th March, 1846 "the British Government will not exercise any interference in the

internal administration of the Lahore State—but in all cases or questions which may be referred to the British Government, the Governor-General will give the aid of his advise for the furtherance of the interests of the Lahore Government.”¹ But she had been disillusioned to find that in the course of their nine months’ stay in the country the British had won over, by liberal grants and promises of *Jagirs*, high offices, titles and other favours, most of the leading chiefs of the State and had so lubricated them in their own favour as to make them turn their backs upon the interests of the Lahore State and to petition to the British Government to tighten the British hold upon the Panjab. Maharani Jind Kaur stoutly opposed the treaty of Bharowal (December 16, 1846) which placed the administration of the Panjab entirely into the hands of the British Resident with “full authority to direct and control all matters in every department of the State.”²

Maharani Jind Kaur wished to save the Panjab from the clutches of the British Government. In the words of Henry Lawrence to the Government, December 17, 1846—a day after the treaty of Bharowal—“During the last day or two, her whole energies have been devoted to an endeavour to win over the Sardars of high and low order and to unite them all together in a scheme of independent government of which she herself was to be the head.” But this was successfully foiled by Frederick Currie with the help of councillors like Tej Singh—a non-Panjabi³ Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh forces—who had played to the tune of the British in 1845-46 war and brought about the defeat of the Lahore army.

The treaty of Bharowal, December 16, 1846, made the British Resident at Lahore an absolute and sole dictator in the Panjab. The Governor General, Sir Henry Hardinge, was very particular about reducing Maharani Jind Kaur to a nonentity. He had, therefore, written to Currie on December 7, 1846, that “in any agreement made for continuing the occupation of Lahore, her

1. Aitchison, *Treaties*. 1892 Vcl. IX. No. XVI, p. 42.

2. Ganda Singh, *Some New Light on the Treaty of Bharowal*, Proceedings I.H.R.C., XVII (1940), p. 96; Article 2 of the Treaty.

3. Tej Singh was a nephew of Jaganadar Khushal Singh, a Gaur Brahmin of Ikri in Sardhana pargannah of Meerut District in the U.P.—*The Panjab Chiefs*, 1865, p. 29.

deprivation of power is an indispensable condition."⁴ And it was with this object in view that he had further suggested in the same letter, "If the Sardars and influential chiefs, and especially the Attareewala family, urge the British Government to be guardian of the Maha-Raja during his minority, the Ranee's power will cease silently and quietly, the admission being recorded that the British Government, as guardian of the Boy and administering the affairs of the State; is to *exercise all the functions and possess all the powers* of the Regent on behalf of the Prince."⁵

This was accomplished by the Treaty of Bharowal. The Maharanee was pensioned off with an annual allowance of one lakh and fifty thousand rupees.

But the British politicals at Lahore were not fully satisfied. The Ranee", according to Herbert Edwardes, "...had more wit and daring than any man of her nation."⁶ And according to the *History of the Panjab, 1846, Vol. II*, she was possessed of a wonderful ability "to act with energy and spirit" and was well known as "being skilful in the use of her pen, whereby, it is supposed, she was able to arrange and combine means of Hira Singh's overthrow." (p. ii, 311) As long as she was in Lahore, the British could not feel secure in their saddle in the Panjab, thought the British Resident. He, therefore, tried to "give the dog a bad name and hang it." She was advertised as implicated in everything anti-British in the country. She was said to be at the bottom of the Prema conspiracy for the murder of Sardar Tej Singh and of the insurrection at Multan. But there was no proof, nor could any evidence be got against her. As such, no legal action could in any case be taken against her.

A strong pretence, however, came handy to the British Resident, Col. Henry Lawrence, on the 7th of August, 1847, when in the *Darbar* held for the purpose of conferring titles and honours on those selected by the Resident, the young Maharaja Duleep Singh refused to anoint Sardar Tej Singh with the *tilak* of the title of *Raja*. The Maharaja could not have done this on his own

4. Ganda Singh, *Some New Light on the Treaty of Bhyrowal*, Pro. I.H.R.C., XVII (1940), pp. 92-93.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

6. Bell, *Annexation of the Punjab*, 13.

initiative, argued the Resident. He construed it as an affront to the British Government who had decided to create Tej Singh a *Raja*, evidently, in recognition of his services to them. But his loyalty to and complicity with the British in the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46, when he was himself the Commander-in-chief of the Sikh forces arrayed against the British, was, according to all interpretations of political morality, nothing short of treachery to the Government of the Panjab whose trusted servant he was. And the Maharani could not have willingly allowed a traitor to be anointed by her own son whose cause he had so basely betrayed.

The Resident considered such an influence of the Maharani on her son as not conducive to the up-bringing of the young Maharaja and the moulding of his mind and character according to the future plans and designs of the British Government who had decided upon the annexation of his country sooner or later. The Governor-General, therefore, readily agreed to the proposal of separating the mother from her son prior to her removal from Lahore and ultimate banishment from the country. To begin with, she was ordered to confine herself to the Samman Burj in the fort of Lahore, from where she wrote as follows to Henry Lawrence:

Likhtam Bibi Sāhib, Alāra Sāhib jog. Robkārī

Asān apnū sir tuhādē hawālē kitā sī, tusān nimak harāmān dé pairān vich dé dittā su. Tusān sadī manshī nā pāi. Tuhānū jo chāhidā sī jo daryāfatī kar ké sadé jummé lagdā so lāondé. Nimak harāmān dé kahé nahīn sī lagnā. Tusān vaddé Mahārāj dī dostī val bhī nahīn dīthhā. Tusān mēri ābrū lokān ton luhāi é. Tusān kerāmāniān té ahdnāmiān upper bhī kujh amal nahīn kitā.

Rājā Lāl Singh mērā mohtbar té khāirikhāh té nimākhālāl sī. Sō tusān tāksirī ker ké bhēj dittā. Tān asān kujh nahīn tusān nū akhiā. Sadé dil bich éh gal sī jō āp Sāhib sadé pās nē, sānnū dar kisdā é. Sānu is gal dī khābar nahīn sī jhuthiān gallān sadé jummé lā ké té kāid chahā kitā.

Kōi sadī likhat dassō vā kujh saté jummé lāo ā phér jō tuhādī marjī hundi sō kardé. Ik māin té Mahārāj té bāi tehlān, asin samman bich kāid vān. Hōr wāukar sabh kadh ditté né. Asīn bahut lāchār hoé ān. Pānī té rōtī bhī nahīn āun dēndé. Is tarāh jō sānu tang kerdé o; is gall kolōn phānsī lagā deō.

Jō tusān sadī edālat kitī tūn achhī gall, nahīn tūn Nandan Sattār bich pharyād karāngé. Hōr jehrā dudh lakh lāyā sī, oh bhī

nahin kisé dittā. Hōr jehrā chār mahinā dé bich kharch kitā si ikvanjā hazār, sō bhī gahné béch ké Missar Méghrāj nūn dé dittā é. Kiśi kolōn kujh mangdē nahin sūn. Apné gahné béch ké gujrān kardé sūn. Benhakk sādī ābrū kīun lāhī. Manglān kī taksīr kitī unū bhī kaddh dittā.

Aj Mahārāj sādē pās ā ké bahut rondé rahé né; ākhan laggé sūnū Bishan Singh té Gulāb Singh darāundé né. Jé tān Mahārāj nū dar nāl kujh hō giā tān phir māin kī karāngī. Unhān nū ākhiā né tuhānū Sāhib dā hukam hāi jō Shālā bāg jā ké utrō. Oh sun ké té bahut rondé rahé.

Ā jēhriān gallān sādē nāl kardé hō kisé rajwāré bich nahin hōiyān. Tusin gujjhē rāj kiōn sāmhdé hō? Zāhrā hō ké kiōn nahin kardé. Nālé bich dostī dā harf rakhdē ō, nālé bich dostī dā harf rakhdē ō, nālé kaid kardé ō!! Mērī adālat, karō, nahin tān Nandan faryād karāngī. Tinnān chaūh nimāk-harāmā nū rakh lao, hor sūrī Pajab nū katal krā dīo inhān dé ankhe lag ké té.

(Mohar)

Akāl Sahāé

Bibi Jind Kaur⁷

Translated into English, it reads as under:

"Robkar

From Bibi [Jind Kaur] Sahib to [Colonel] Lawrence. I had entrusted my head to your care. You have thrust it under the feet of traitors. You have not done justice to me. You ought to have instituted an enquiry, and then charged me with what you found against me. You ought not to have acted upon what the traitors told you.

"You have kept no regard of the friendship of the great Maharaja. You have caused me to be disgraced by other people. You have not even remained true to treaties and agreements. Raja Lal Singh was true and faithful to me. He was loyal. Having levelled charges against him, you sent him away. Then we never said anything to you. We thought that as the Sahib himself was with us, we had no fear from any one. We could never imagine that we will be put in prison with baseless charges concocted against us. Produce any writings of ours. Prove any charges against me. Then you could do anything you liked.

7. Transliterated into Roman script from the original Panjabi autograph.

"Myself, the Maharajah and twenty-two maid-servants are imprisoned in the Samman [Burj]. All other servants have been dismissed. We are in a very helpless condition. Even water and food are not allowed to come in. Now that you persecute us in this way, it is better that you hang us instead of it.

"If you administer justice to us well and good; otherwise I shall appeal to London headquarters. Even the allowance of one lakh and fifty thousand that had been fixed has not been paid by any body. The amount of fifty-one thousand that I had spent in four months, I have paid to Missar Meghraj after having sold my ornaments. I never begged for anything from anyone. Having sold my ornaments, I was managing to live on. Why should you have caused me to be disgraced without any fault? What was the fault of Manglān that she too has been turned out?

"The Maharaja came to me today and wept bitterly for a long time. He said that Bishan Singh and Gulab Singh had been frightening him. If something happened to the Maharajah through fright, then what shall I do? He was told that orders of the *Sahib* for him were to reside in the Shalimar. He wept very bitterly when he heard this. The treatment that is thus meted out to us has not been given to any ruling house.

"Why do you take possession of the kingdom by underhand means? Why don't you do it openly? On the one hand you make a show of friendship and on the other you have put us in prison. Do justice to me or I shall appeal to the London headquarters. Preserve three or four traitors, and put the whole of the Panjab to the sword at their bidding.

(SEAL)

Akal Sahai

Bibi Jind Kaur"

In the above letter Maharani Jind Kaur challenges the bonafides of the British Resident and accuses him of maleficence in condemning her to public disgrace and imprisonment without any judicial or other enquiry, and without producing any documentary or other evidence or proving any allegations against her. She says that she had trusted the *Sahib* and that her trust had been betrayed. She calls for an enquiry and appeals for justice, but both were denied to her. She complains of the non-payment of her allowance of 150 thousand rupees as laid down in the treaty of Bharowal and tells him that she had been reduced to the pain-

ful necessity of selling her ornaments to meet her expenses. "Even food and water are not allowed to come in", she says. She protests against the rudeness and misbehaviour of Bishan Singh and Gulab Singh, the men appointed by the Resident to accompany the Maharajah to Shalimar Garden, and feels very nervous about his welfare in consequence of their frightening attitude towards him. The words 'What shall I do if something happened to him through fright?' are indicative of the feelings of the mother for her young son. She clearly foresees in this affair, the ultimate intentions of the British Government when she says, "Why do you take possession of the kingdom by underhand means? Why don't you do it openly?" There was not the least doubt in her mind that three or four traitors were dancing to the tune of the Resident and working the ruin of the independent *Raj* of the Panjab. That is why she says at the end, "Preserve three or four traitors and put the whole of the Panjab to the sword at their bidding."

The Resident, Henry Lawrence, ultimately prevailed upon the Councillors of the State to agree to the removal of the Maharani to the fort of Sheikhpura for close imprisonment. In his letter of August 9, 1847, Sir Henry Lawrence had suggested to the Governor General "that Her Highness ought to be banished from the Panjab".⁸ The Governor-General suggested three places—Nurpur, Chamba and Kangra—in the British territories as the most suitable for the Maharani's residence.

On the morning of the 19th of August, 1847, the young Maharaja was sent away to the Shalimar Garden at a distance of about two miles from the palace in the fort and arrangements for the removal of the Maharani were taken into hand. The Resident expressed his decided opinion that the fort of Kangra (annexed to the British territories after the Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46) was a better abode for the Maharani than the fort of Sheikhpura, "but finding the chiefs decidedly averse to incur what they consider the odium of participating in effecting the banishment of the Maharani,"⁹ he yielded the point and agreed to her imprison-

8. *Panjab Papers*, 1847-49, p. 47; Secy. to G. G. to Resident at Lahore, August 16, 1847.

9. *Panjab Papers*, 1847-49, p. 51. inclosure 8 in No. 9, Resident at Lahore to the Secretary to G.G., August 20, 1847.

ment in fort of Sheikhpura "as the first step to the final banishment of Ranee Jhunda [*sic.* Jindan] from the country."¹⁰

This decided, the Maharani was removed from Lahore between 8 and 9 P.M. under a strong military escort, accompanied by Sardars Arjan Singh Rangharnagli and Gurmukh Singh Lamma, and was lodged in Sheikhpura fort in the early hours of Friday, the 20th August, 1847, under the charge of Sardar Boor Singh.

In addition to this, the Maharani's annual allowance of one lac and fifty thousand rupees, stipulated in Article 10 of the Treaty of Bharawal, was reduced, by 69 per cent, to four thousand rupees per mensem.¹¹

Not long after her arrival at Sheikhpura, she wrote the following letter to the Resident at Lahore giving vent to her wretched and indignation at being so ruthlessly separated from her young son who was yet in his ninth year of age.

Sat Gur Prasad

Likhtam Bibi Sahib ji Jaran Sahib jog.

Asin naji baji Shikhpurē an pihunchē. Tusān sādā asbīb sāmlih kē bahājnī. Hor jāisē Samma bich baithē sé tāisē Shikhpurē baithē hān. Dorēn thēn ikko jēhé sānu lan. Tusān méré nāl bahut jhūp kitā ē. Mērā puttār khōh liā. Das mahinē māin dhid bich rakhiā tē, . . . manū manū paliā i. Binā gall mērā puttār méré nalōn vicchoriā. Māinu tē kaid rakhdē méré ādmū kadh dindē mērian talhōn kadh dindē, jis tahrā nī tūnādī marji chāhundī us tarīh mērē nāl kardē, par ik mērē puttār-vichhōrā nā kardē. Vastā ē apnē rabb dī, vastā ē apnē bādshāhī dā, jis dī namak khāndē hō, mērā puttār māinu milē. Eh dukh nētōn sahiā nahin jāndā, nahin tūn māinu marrā dindē.

Puttār mērā bahut ayānā ā, kujh karan jogā nahin. Main bādshāhī chhodī. Māinu bādshāhī dī loī lōr nahin. Vastē rabb dē mērē arz mānuō. Es vélé mērā koī nahin. Main aggē bhī koī ujjār nahī. Jō ākhogē, sō main mānugī. Mērē puttār kol koī nahin, Bhai Bhai nahin; kol chāchā tājā nahin, bāp is dā nahin. Is nū kihdē harīlē kitā jē?

10. Panjab Papers, 1847-49, p. 143-44 Governor-General to the Secret Committee.

11. Governor-General in Council to Secret Committee (No. 50), June 3; 1848 Panjab Papers, 1847-49, No. 27, p. 143.

Méré nāl aidi jūmī aiwén jē. Hor, main Shekhūpurē rahāngī, main, Lāhaur nahinī jāvāngī. Méré puttār nū méré kol bhēj devo. Main unhin dinī tusān pās āvāngī jis din darbār lāunā hosī. Us din us nū main bhēj diāngī. Hor, méré nāl bhī bahut sī hoī hai, té méré puttār nāl bhē, bahut sī hoī hai. Té lokān dā kihā mann liā. Hun bas karo, bahut hoi haīgē.

*With the Grace of the Great Guru*¹²

From Bibi Sahib to Lawrence Sahib.

We have arrived safely at Sheikhpura. You should send our luggage with care. As I was sitting in the Samman, in the same way I am in Sheikhpura. Both the places are same to me. You have been very cruel to me. You have snatched my son from me. For ten months I kept him in my womb. Then I brought him up with great difficulty. Without any fault you have separated my son from me. You could have kept me in prison. You could have dismissed my men. You could have turned out my maid-servants. You could have treated me in any other way you liked. But you should not have separated my son from me.

"In the name of God you worship, and in the name of the king whose salt you eat, restore my son to me. I cannot bear the pain of this separation. Instead of this you put me to death.

"My son is very young. He is incapable of doing anything. You want his kingdom. I have no need of kingdom. For God's sake, pay attention to my appeals. At this time I have no one to look to. I raise no objections. I will accept what you say. There is no one with my son. He has no sister, no brother. He has no uncle, senior or junior. His father he has lost. To whose care has he been entrusted? Without any fault why is so much cruelty being done to me?

"I shall reside in Sheikhpura. I shall not go to Lahore. Send my son to me. I will come to you at Lahore only during the days when you hold *darbar*. On that day I will send him. A great deal [of injustice] has been done to me. A great deal [of injustice] has been done to my son also. You have accepted what other people have said. Put an end to it now Too much has been done."

In spite of all the efforts and camouflage of the British politicians and their native associates, the sadness of the Maharaja on account of his separation from his mother could not be completely

¹² Transliterated into Roman script from Herbert Edwardes' transliteration.

hidden. And the Officiating Resident, Mr. John Lawrence,¹³ had to admit in his letter dated August 23, 1847, to the Secretary with the Governor-General that even on the evening of the third day (August 21, 1847) of his mother's removal from Lahore, a 'slight shade of sadness' was visible on the face of the Maharaja. On his return to the palace in the fort, he gave up the old apartments where he had lived with his mother and shifted to the *Takht-gah*.

In justification of his action, the British Resident issued on August 20, 1847, a *General Proclamation for the Information of the Chiefs of the Lahore Darbar, Priests, Elders and the People of the Countries belonging to Maharaja Duleep Singh*.

With the grace of the great Akāl Purkh

PROCLAMATION

Lahore, August 20, 1847

"The Right Honourable [Sir Henry Hardinge] the Governor General of India, taking into consideration the friendly relations subsisting between the Lahore and British Governments, and the tender age of Maharaja Duleep Singh, feels the interest of a father in the education and guardianship of the young Prince.

"With this end in view, it appeared to the Governor General to have become absolutely necessary to separate the Maharaja from the Maharanee, his mother; an opinion in which the Darbar perfectly coincided; accordingly, on the 19th day of August (5th Bhadon, 1904 Bk.), 1847, Her Highness left the palace of Lahore, and was taken to Sheikhoopora.

"The reasons for this step are shortly these: First, that, at the time of making the Treaty of Bhyrowal, it was considered necessary to exclude Her Highness the Maharanee from all share in the administration of public affairs; and that she should have a separate maintenance appointed her, to enable her to pass the rest of her life in honorable retirement. Notwithstanding this, Her Highness has, ever since, been intriguing to disturb the Government, and carried her opposition to the Ministers so far as quite to embarrass and impede the public business.

"Secondly. The Maharaja is now a child, and he will grow up in the way he is trained. It was only too probable, therefore,

13. Henry Lawrence left Lahore for England on August 21, 1847, and made over the charge of the British Residency to his brother, John Lawrence.

that his mother would instil into him her own bitter feelings of hostility to the chiefs, and that he would have grown up at variance with the Sirdars and Ministers, of his kingdom. This could not be allowed. The young prince should be reared up in the cultivation of every natural and acquired excellence of mind and disposition, so that, at the expiration of the present treaty, peace should be preserved, by the kindly understanding existing between the Maharaja and all classes of his subjects, a blessing which could not be hoped for, if the young Prince remained with his mother.

"Thirdly. So long as Her Highness the Maharanee occupied the Lahore Palace, strangers visited her without restriction, and every seditious intriguer who was displeased with the present order of things, looked up to the Queen-Mother as the Head of the State; some of them even went so far as to plan the subversion of the restored Khalsa Government.

"Let all ranks, therefore rejoice [be thankful] throughout the kingdom that the Right Honorable the Governor General of India has so much at heart the peace and security of this country, the firm establishment of the State, and the honour of the Maharaja and his Ministers."¹⁴

The third letter of the Maharani was written on the 16th of Bhadon, 1904 Bk. (August 30, 1847), evidently in reply to a communication from Mr. John Lawrence. It is not in the original language of the Maharani but is translated into Urdu (Persian script) and it bears the initials (J.L.) of John Lawrence at the left-hand bottom corner of the first page. At the end of the letter there is a foot-note in Persian saying, 'this is the translation of a Hindvi [Panjabi] letter that the Maharani had written in Gurmukhi script.'¹⁵

Sat Gur Prasad

Likhtam Mahārānī Sāhibā

Murāslā āp kā pahunchā. Bahut khushī huī kī main tum ko jād hūn. Tum né jo likhā hai Mahārāj khushī hai, sun kar bahut dīl khush huā hai. Jis dīn cé ham Lāhaur sé chalé āé hain us dīn sē āj ham né Mahārāj kī khushī kī khabar sunī hai. Jo tum né

14. The copy of the Proclamation sent to Mehta Gurbakhsh Rai, from which the above translation into English has been made, was written on Bhadon 11, 1904 Bk. (August 25, 1847).

15. In tarjumā chitthī Hindvī ba-khat Gurmukhī nawishtā Mahāhānī Sāhibā būdā ast.

likhā hai so sab sach hovégā. Aur ménā dil gavāhī nahīn déttā ki Mahārāj rājī hovén. Jin kī mūn bichhar gāi hové voh kionkar rājī hovéngé. Mahārāj banā to pēh phal détté ho. Ek to nadān aur ék kabhī bichhré nahīn thé. Ap siānē ho, budhvān ho, apné dil main samjho kī Mahārāj kis tarāh rājī hongé.

Yah jo tum né likhā hai nazar uppar dostī dono Sarkār kī bahut khushī khātār Mahārāj kā hai. Jo tum né Mahārāj kī khushī khātār rakhī hai voh sārē jamāné main mashhūr huī hai kī roté huī ko chhīn kar Shālā-bāg ko lé gae, aur mūn ko bāl pakar kar bāhar nikāl diyā. Tumhare dil main itnā nā āyā kī Mahārāj nadān hai kionkar rahégā.

Tumhāre tain isī izzat abrū ké tain rakhlchā thā, so nimakharamon né voh izzat abrū bhī nahīn rahné dī. Ek aphisos hai kī tum né hamārē jummé samjho kar takśir nahīn lagāī. Namakharamon ké kahné par amal kar kar dés-nikālā dé dī. Jo kiyā so sab ap kī nék-nāmū huī hai. Méri izzat-abrū aur tuhmārā zabān kā sukhan gayā. Aur jo tum né méré sāth kī hai aisā kisi khūnī ké sāth bhī nahīn guzartā hai. Main sabh kujh chhor, kar fakīr huī thī, so tum né fakīr bhī nahīn rahné dī. Aur kharch sé ham bahut tang hain.

Aur Bandhūjīt ko tumhāre pās bhéjā hai. Is ko apné pās rakhnā. Aur adhā asbāb hamārē pās pahunch gayā hai, adhā nahīn déttā. Ham ko dilvādo, aur kharch lé kar bhéjo.

(Lafāse par)

John Lawrence Sahib jog murāslā pahunché, Mahāné Bhādrōn kī Solhvīn murāslā likhā.

With the Grave of the Great Guru

From the Queen-mother to John Lawrence, dated 16th Bhadon

[August 30, 1847]

"Your letter has been received. It is a matter of great pleasure that you remember me. I am very glad to learn from your letter that Maharaja is happy. Since the day I left Lahore, it is today that I have heard of the Maharaja being happy. Whatever you write may be true. But my mind does not believe that the Maharaja is happy. How can he, whose mother has been separated from him, be happy? You call him Maharaja and then treat him like this. On the one hand he is very young; on the other he had never separated [from his mother]. You are an intelligent and a wise man. Think over it in your mind how the Maharaja can be happy. You write to me that on account of friendship between the two Governments you are very particular of the wel-

fare of the Maharaja. How far you look to the welfare of the Maharaja is now well known all over the world. Weeping, he was torn away from his mother and taken to Shalimar Garden, while the mother was dragged out by her hair. Well has the friendship been repaid. You never thought in your mind how the Maharaja who was very young, could live [happily without his mother].

"You had been kept for the protection of our honour and dignity. But the traitors have robbed us of these also. It is a matter of sorrow that you did not weigh things before accusing me. You have exiled me on the instigation of traitors. Whatever you have done has earned a good name for you! I have lost my dignity and you have lost regard for your word (*Méri izzat ābrū aur tumhārā zabān kā sukahn gayā*). The treatment that you have given to me is not given even to murderers. Having renounced everything, I had become a *faqir*, but you have not allowed me to live even like a *faqir*. I am very much hard up for money.

"I have sent Bandujit to you. Keep him with you. Half of my luggage has been received by me. The other half, they do not give. Get that sent to me, and also get the allowance and have it sent to me."

In this letter again she expresses her grief and indignation at being separated from her son and tells the British Resident, Mr. John Lawrence, "It is a matter of sorrow that you did not weigh things before accusing me. You have exiled me on the instigation of traitors." She strongly resents the treatment given to her in Sheikhpura and says that such treatment "is not given even to murderers."

Finding herself helpless and seeing no prospect of either an enquiry of the allegations against her or of justice at the hands of the politicals in the Panjab, she sent an agent, Sardar Jiwan Singh, to represent her case to the Governor-General at Calcutta. He seems to have arrived there in December, 1847, and submitted a representation to the Secretary to the Government of India on January 2, 1848, complaining of "the cruel and unworthy treatment under which she now suffers; to demand of British justice a full and impartial investigation of the charges (but imperfectly known even to herself) under which she has, by British authority, been condemned to incarceration; and to request that the restraint to which she may be subjected pending that investigation, may be such as becomes the widow of one Sovereign Prince and the mother of another; such as is compatible with the safety of her

person and such as will not deprive her of that intercourse with her friends and advisers which is necessary for bringing the truth of her cause to light."¹⁶

But the Governor-General declined to recognise him as her *Vakcel* and directed "that all her communications must be made through the Resident." This amounted to complete denial of justice to the Maharanee, contended Sardar Jiwan Singh, and he appealed to the Secretary to the Government of India on February 23, 1848, for modification of the Governor-General's resolution.

"The confinement in which the Ranee is now kept, is of the most close and rigid description. She is shut up in the fort of Sheikhoopoor, formerly used as a gaol for common felons, under the custody of those Sirdars from whose dangerous machinations against her own life, and that of her son, she first solicited the protection of a British force stationed at Lahore—all intercourse with her friends and advisers, or even with the ministers of her religion, is strictly prohibited, and the only attendants allowed her are a few female servants, not of her own selection, but appointed by her keepers. So penal is the nature of the treatment she undergoes, that she is not allowed even the privilege of choosing her own diet.

* * * *

"The friends of the Ranee now in Lahore are so much intimidated that they dare not call the attention of the Resident to the hardships which she suffers.

* * * *

"And, on the same behalf, I further request that the Resident at Lahore be directed to institute an investigation into the charges under which the Ranee has been imprisoned, and to take down, and transmit to his Lordship in Council, the evidence of all witnesses which may be produced, in support, or in rebuttal, of the accusation. His Lordship, in directing such investigation, will, no doubt, order that, under all precautions which may appear to him prudent, or necessary to prevent an abuse of the privileges, the Ranee shall be allowed such intercourse with her friends and advisers as will enable her to plead her cause effectually."

16. *Punjab Papers*, 1847-49, Inclosure No. 2 in 22.

17. Jeewan Singh to the Secretary to the Government of India, Calcutta, February 23, 1848, *Punjab Papers*, 1847-49, Inclosure No. 5 in No. 22, p. 108.

But all this was of no avail. The Government did not¹⁷ find it safe, for political reasons, to institute an enquiry, because in the absence of any proof of her delinquency, she might have been acquitted. And this would have exposed the intentions of the British and upset their plans about the Panjab. As early as the 9th of August, 1847, the Resident at Lahore, when recommending "her expulsion from the Panjab for ever", had written to the Secretary with the Governor-General, "I do not disguise from myself, nor do I wish the Governor-General to be ignorant of the fact, that *the Maharanee is the only effective enemy to our policy that I know of in the country.*"¹⁸

To add to her misfortunes came the Multan rebellion which began with an attack on Mr. P. A. Vans Agnew and Lieut. William Anderson at Multan on April 19, 1848. There again the hidden hand of the Maharani, closely imprisoned in the fort of Sheikhpura, was said to have been working, although there was nothing to prove it. "*There is no proof*", wrote the Resident to the Secretary to the Government of India on May 16, 1848, "*though there is some ground for suspicion that the Maharanee was the instigator of the late violence in Mooltan; but it is certain that, at this moment, the eyes of Diwan Moolraj, of the whole Sikh army and military population are directed to the Maharanee as the rallying point of their rebellion or disaffection. Her removal from the Panjab is called for by justice, and policy, and there is no time for us to hesitate about doing what may appear necessary to punish State offenders, whatever may be their rank and station, and to vindicate the honour and position of the British Government.*"¹⁹

It is difficult for a student of history to accept things done on mere suspicion as "called for by justice" and to call a person a "State offender" when "there is no proof" of his or her offence. However, the Maharani was removed from the fort of Sheikhpura on the afternoon of May 15, 1848, to spend the remainder of her life in exile far away from the land of her birth and the kingdom of her son—the Panjab—which was taken possession of by the British within ten months.

18. *Panjab Papers*, 1847-49, p. 39. Inclosure 2 in No. 9.

19. *Panjab Papers*, 1847-49, p. 108. Inclosure No. 24 in No. 37.

The Maharani's banishment from the Panjab created a stir amongst the Sikhs and a general demand for her restoration was made everywhere. But the Governor-General had already made up his plans and was determined on the annexation of the Panjab. He, therefore, refused to entertain any suggestion that stood in his way of removing the last independent kingdom from the north-west frontier of India which he wished to extend to the borders of Afghanistan. The restoration of the Maharani was, for political reasons, therefore, out of question. And, Lord Dalhousie wrote the following letter to Brigadier Mountain. The letter is self-explanatory.

PRIVATE

Camp Ferozepore,
January 31, 1849

My dear Mountain,

* * * *

The pretences of the Sikhs of their anxiety to get back the Rance ... are preposterous. And the more sincere they are, the stronger are the grounds for not acceding to them. She has the only manly understanding in the Panjab; and her restoration would furnish the only thing which is wanting to render the present movement [the so-called Second Sikh War] truly formidable, namely an object and a head.

Trust me this is no time for going back or giving back or winking an eye-lid.

Brigr. Mountain,
C.B., &c.

Em Yrs. most sincerely,
DALHOUSIE

20. The original of this letter is in the possession of the writer of this paper.