Darya Khan: Politician and War Strategist

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The Sama dynasty which ruled Sind for 160 years was founded by Jam Unar in the year 1351 A.D. after the assassination of last Soomra ruler named Hamir. During the days of its zenith the country extended from the Arabian Sea to Mirpur Mathelo and Ubauro; they also held the fortress of Sevi and Bakhar. Samas were original inhabitants of Sind, it appears that they were of Rajput descent; the Jarejah of Kutch still derive their origin from them.[1] The grandson of Jam Tamachi (Noori-Jam Tamachi of Shah Abdul Latif fame) named Jam Babinah after taking over reign of Sind, built the city of Samui—the new capital of Sama dynasty. The foundations of newly built capital were laid below the Makli hill, and quite close to present Thatta. During the rule of Jam Salahuddin, Jam Nizamuddin and Jam Ali Sher there were constant invasions on Sind by the Delhi troops and as a result of this, the people of Sind suffered heavy loss in life and property, but people faced them courageously. During these days Sehwan and Bakhar were important seats of Governorships and in the Lower Sind Samui remained centre of power being in the hands of Sama dynasty.[2] Jam Sanjer successfully ruled for eight years and after his death he was followed by Jam Nizamuddin nicknamed Jam Nindo. He was the first ruler of independent Sind and last ruler of Sama dynasty who eventually ruled hearts of his subjects. Jam Nizamuddin was contemporary of Sultan Hussain Langah, the ruler of Multan. They were on most friendly terms and used to send presents to each other.

Jam Nizamuddin (ruled 1461–1509 A.D.) was a great scholar.

He keenly patronized and encouraged scholars throughout the country and also invited religious scholars in his court from the neighbouring countries. He always liked to remain in company of scholars. It is said whenever he paid a visit to stable, he pet the back of horses with immense love and affection and said, "God forbid me, if I take ride without giving you food and during ride I shall not kill an innocent person of my subject so that I may not be ashamed of my misdeeds on the day of judgement".[3] Mulla Abdul Baqi Nahvandi, a historian of Moghal period, writes about Jam Nizamuddin that "he was refined and highly cultured amongst all the kings of India".[4]

One cannot imagine for a medieval king as the historian has depicted the character of this great Sindhian King. He never committed torture, neither he victimized any innocent person of his subjects. He was so kind and benevolent to every one that people loved him immensely and every body was happy with him. The same author further quotes him: "During his reign, scholars, poor and pious persons, sepoys and subjects had lived in peace and prosperity".[5]

Jam Nizamuddin left Samui, the old capital of Sama dynasty and shifted its capital to Thatta where history dates back to 2000 years. It was the place where the weary troops of Alexander the Great stayed after a long and dusty march from the north. His Admiral Nearchus assembled his fleet at the apex of the Indus delta to lead it down the tortuous channels of uncharted waters of the great Indus river to the sea. "Long before him, the rulers of Sind were known to the annalists of the Aryan epic Mahabharta who mention their part in the battles between the legendary enemies, the Konravas and the Pandavas".[6]

The reign of Jam Nizamuddin was the hey days of Sama dynasty and considered to be a glorious period. He ruled Sind independently and occupied the territory much more than the present Sind. Soon the city of Thatta emerged as a centre of trade and commerce, it gained importance in industries and about 400 educational institutions were functioning to educate the people of Sind. He provided equal opportunities to Muslims and Hindus having

their share in the administration. Names of many Hindu ministers and officers have been mentioned who were assigned important positions to run the administration of the kingdom.[7] The country was footing on sound economy and social justice, law and order was strictly maintained in the entire kingdom. Thus the masses were prosperous; peace and complete normalcy prevailed throughout the country.

Once Mirza Issa Tarkhan (962-974 A.H.), a ruler of Sind, was talking to Makhdoom Jaffer Bubakai, a prominent religious scholar of Sehwan, in connection with the prosperity of Sind during the reign of Jam Nizamuddin Sama. He narrated to Makhdoom "that Shah Beg in a series of attacks made by him against Sind, once made a sudden attack on a village named Baghban, a settlement of Gaha tribe in Sehwan province, in the year 1515 A.D. which Arghuns looted, burnt, and killed hundred thousands of innocent people. After staying one week there they had stolen one thousand camels which were working in the Persian-wheels for single night shift to irrigate gardens of that vicinity."[8]

In such atmosphere of contentment, prosperity, and happiness a dynamic personality emerged to run the administration of this great staunch Muslim king. He was Darya Khan, adopted son of the King, a distinguished politician, prime minister, and a brave General of the Muslim Kingdom.

Very little is known about the early life of Darya Khan. He has been mentioned in the various histories of Sind, viz. Tarikh-i-Masoomi, Beglar Nama, Tarikh-i-Taheri and Tuhfat-ul-Karam. Tarikh-i-Masoomi has mentioned him as trustworthy slave of Jam Nizamuddin. According to Tarikh-i-Taheri his original name was Qabuliyo and he was an ordinary servant. According to a traditional tribal account of Lashari Baluch: "After the death of Mir Fateh Khan Lashari, the ruler of Seistan and Makran, his state was divided into two parts. Both states were ruled by the two brothers named Mir Moin Khan and Mir Abdul Razak Khan respectively. Darya Khan's father Laung Khan descended from the family of Mir Moin Khan. Darya Khan and Sarang Khan both were brothers who entered in the Royal service at Thatta in their early ages. This fact has

been supported by Mir Masoom, the author of Tarikh-i-Masoomi who says that both the brothers Darya Khan and Sarang Khan were trustworthy and influential slaves of Jam Nizamuddin. However, Darya Khan had extra-ordinary talents who took his education in early age under the direct supervision of Jam Nizamuddin. Considering his intelligence and loyalty, the king adopted him as his son. It is known that Darya Khan as a young boy was particularly active, skilful and helpful to others. He showed precocious energy and steadfastness. He was imperious and eager for action. Darya Khan's bravery, his tenacity and above all his sense of justice established him as the undisputed leader of the troops as well as of the masses of Sind. Later on he was promoted to various ranks and finally he was appointed as prime minister of the king and the supreme commander of Sindhian Army for which he suited most. The king being further pleased with his outstanding military and political achievements soon conferred upon him the titles of "Mubarak Khan" and "Khan-i-Azam".[9]

"The Jam had many good men around him, such as Dilshad (a minister and later on Governor of Bakhar) who in the year 912 A.H. (1506 A.D.) carried his victorious arms from Thatta as far as the city of Uch, yet Darya Khan carried off from all of them the ball of good fortune, and was honoured by the king with the management of the affairs of the state in preference to his own son, Jam Feroze". He extended the borders of the country from Multan to the borders of Kandhar and from Cutch to Makran. His administration was so strong that if at midnight one of his officers carried an order to any of the Zamindars and Hindus of these territories, it was instantly and gratefully obeyed. Such was the terror of his name in these turbulent provinces, that a pregnant woman miscarried if she heard of his approach. So far had spread this fame and dread of his incursions, that the words "Silence, the terrible chieftain is coming", were enough to stop the crying of a wayward child.[10] He was neither cruel nor tyrant, his terrifying personality was not for his own people, to them he was benevolent, and kind. He was terrifying only to the aggressors, invaders and enemies of his country.

If one goes through the medieval history of Sind, the Soomras

were native people whose tense struggle against feudalism and its ruthless exploitation of people had given birth to a cultural revolution. This was the first step of its kind taken by the native ruling dynasty in this part of the world, to uplift the cause of toiling masses and national liberation. Subsequently Sama dynasty followed the path of Soomra dynasty and they further strengthened the power and political sovereignty of the country. During this time Darya Khan emerged on the political arena of Sind as towering and dynamic personality whose historical struggle for national liberation proved him a brilliant politician. His whole life is a relentless struggle against invaders and aggressors being the enemies of his homeland.

Taking in view his capability and ability, the king handed over powers to his prime minister. Darya Khan took over the control of Sind from Multan to Kandhar and from Makran to Cutch (geographical territories of old Sind) and maintained strict law and order in the country. In 1485-86 Shah Beg Arghun made a sudden attack on the fort of Sevi (Sibi) which was in the possession of Bahadur Khan, an officer incharge of the fort appointed by the king. Darya Khan alongwith his brother Sarang Khan prepared a huge army and attacked Sivi. A fierce battle took place in which Arghun army suffered heavy loss of life and Abu Mohammad Mirza (incharge of the fort), brother of Shah Beg, was killed and the army of Shah Beg fled to Kandhar.[11] Darya Khan took control of the fort of Sivi. It was an outstanding military achievement of Darya Khan. The return of Darya Khan was an occasion of big success which was celebrated by the people of Sind in a rejoicing manner. It seems that Darya Khan had fought continuously and achievements attached with his military career in the first two decades of the sixteenth century gave birth to many romantic folk-tales and war ballads centred around the legendary life of this great warrior.[12]

Jam Nizamuddin ruled for 48 years and died in the year 1509 A.D. His son Jam Feroze took over reign of Sind. He was young and inexperienced, therefore, he could not run the administration smoothly. Darya Khan announced his retirement taking in view the non-cooperative attitude of Jam Feroze. He left Thatta and came at Gaha village near Talti in Sehwan province where he was granted

jagir during the reign of Jam Nizamuddin. Darya Khan settled there with his family. Taking advantage of the weak administration of Jam Feroze, Jam Salahuddin rushed from Cutch and attacked Thatta. Meanwhile the queen, the widow of Jam Nizamuddin, came personally at Gaha village and requested Darya Khan to face the situation at this critical juncture. Darya Khan agreed and after necessary preparations he made attack on Jam Salahuddin who fled away to Cutch. This was another opportunity for Jam Feroze to take Darya Khan into confidence but he did not do so. Jam Feroze trusted Arghuns and he posted them on the key posts in the kingdom. They took advantage of this situation and invited Shah Beg to invade Sind. Shah Beg alongwith his huge army made a sudden attack on Thatta. Sindhian forces under the command of Darya Khan met them near Thatta where fierce battle took place. Arghuns tried to enter Thatta but war strategy of Darya Khan became obstacle in their way to succeed. Finally Arghuns invited Darya Khan on December 23, 1520 A.D. for peace negotiations. In fact it was a conspiracy hatched by Shah Beg. During talks according to prearrangements Darya Khan was killed by the Arghuns.[13] However, Darya Khan fought courageously and laid down his life in order to defend the country being a martyr on the gates of the historic city of Thatta, the capital of Sind. He was buried on Makli Hills in the west of Jam Nizamuddin's beautiful tomb. His grave is surrounded by royal fortification which he might have ordered to be built in about 895 A.H.

If we look at the military and political career of Darya Khan, his whole life is a struggle against foreign aggressors which is a remarkable contribution towards a struggle for national liberation. It may be mentioned here that Shah Beg Arghun during his military campaigns on Sind between 1517–1523 A.D., (Darya Khan's martyrdom took place in 1520 A.D.) had devastated most of Sind, specially Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Larkana, Dadu, Thatta and Hyderabad districts, and destroyed the settlements on both sides of Indus in a width of 10-15 miles between Sukkur and Talhar.[14] During the life time of Jam Nizamuddin, Darya Khan had fought many battles against Arghuns at Bolan Pass and he never allowed them to enter the country.

It was, thus due to his genius, his strategy and his method of

combat, adapted to the objective conditions of the battlefield that Darya Khan, in spite of inferiority of armament, was able to prolong his resistance to Arghuns and other invaders for twelve years.[15] Darya Khan fought with reckless courage which won him popular applause and established his charisma which enabled him to achieve something unique in history.

Darya Khan took personal interest and prepared a unique military force to meet the need of defence whenever the country was threatened by foreign aggression. Military spirit was created to such an extent whenever Arghuns attacked Sind that people from all walks of life gathered on one platform to face the enemy. Even Hindus, prominent among them were Sodhas and Ranas, joined with the Muslims against aggressor to defend their homeland. It was rare example of Hindu-Muslim unity and cohesion which was the result of Darya Khan's wisdom and political farsightedness. Makhdoom Bilawal and Syed Hyder Sannai, both prominent religious scholars, had always supported Darya Khan and gave him proper advise at difficult times. The main cause of defeat of the Sind army at the hands of Shah Beg was the result of the role played by Qazi Kadan, an adviser of Jam Feroze. He deceived Sind at the cost of retaining his own power. Secondly, Jam Feroze could not differentiate between his friends and foes; he always tried to save his own throne and not the country as a whole. On the contrary, Darya Khan alongwith common masses of Sind stood firmly against the enemy. Religious leaders, pirs of Bakhar, greedy elites, Jagirdars and sycophant courtiers supported Shah Beg and sold freedom of the country at the hands of the tyrant Shah Beg.[16] After the fall of Thatta, Shah Beg's army looted, burnt and committed mass killing in the capital for nine days. Thus the historic city was completely burnt and destroyed leaving behind no trace of important record. The Arghuns who invaded Sind killed the local population without ayn discrimination.

Thus Darya Khan pioneered the resistance of the masses of Sind against colonial hordes from Central Asia, especially Arghuns and Tarkhans. He had an exceptional skill and highly developed abilities particularly in the field of military strategy. Many sublime sacrifices that he had made to preserve the freedom and sovereignty of his

country are a rare example of his great firmness and devotion to the ideal of patriotism. He was a symbol of the anti-colonial struggle against the Arghun invaders, an able and just administrator, a great war strategist and passionate patriot who defended the independence of the Muslim state to the end of his life.

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