

The last of Madaar ul

Lohari Darwaaza precinct is reputed to be one of the oldest quarters of Lahore, definitely built after the city was re-constructed following its gutting and capture by the forces of Mahmood of Ghazni, a thousand years ago. It is the place where the elite and their descendants and those who mattered, have lived of ages.

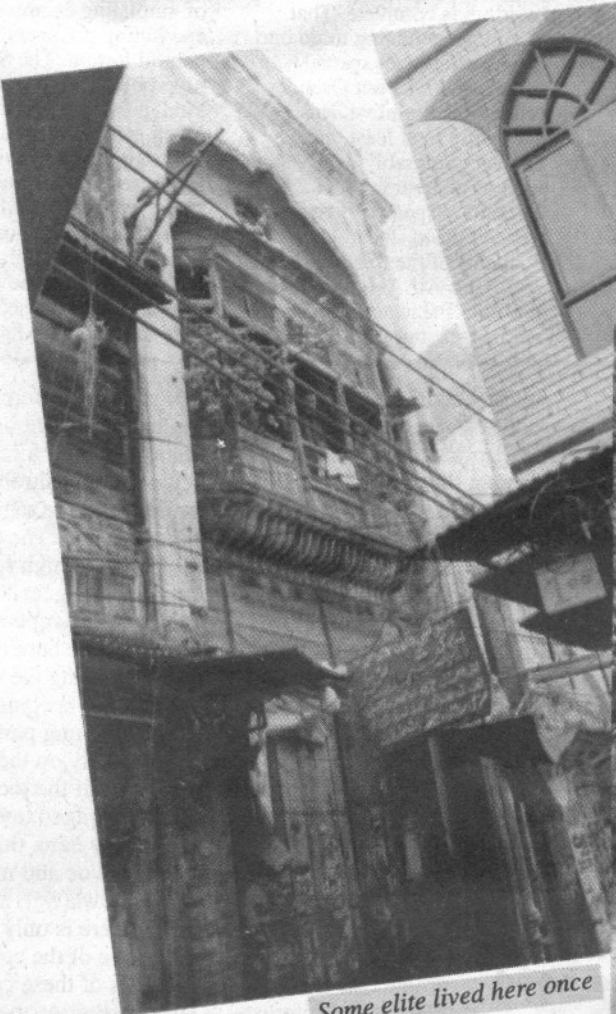
In the mohallas not far from the bazaars of the Lohari Darwaaza one can still find remains of the magnificent palaces of the most prominent Nawabs of their days. There are remains of old palatial mansions which were the abode of the top-most servants of the State, a century and a half or so ago. Though, almost half of a great mansion, in the precinct, has fallen down, but, whatever remains displays the glory that it once possessed when one of the last Madaar-ul-Mahaams or Prime Ministers of the Land occupied that place as his residence. It is a pity that the place is in a questionable state, today. Its entrance is literally blocked by an encroachment, of a most dreary type. Where, once the access was by palanquins through a wide, wide door, rising high above the street level, one is now greeted by a shabby wall, forming the rear of an outhouse. One wonders, if there anybody in Lahore to look after matters and prevent things from deteriorating to such an extent that they are lost to history.

The last notable occupant of the place is said to have been Jowahar Singh, brother of Ranee Jindaan and uncle of Duleep Singh, the child and last ruler of the Punjab. Jowahar Singh was one of the Madaar-ul-Mahaams before the Administration of the Punjab was, finally, taken over by the Regency Council under the supervision of the English Resident and part of the Land and its people were sold to Gulab Singh of Jammu.

Jowahar Singh was a character who appeared on the screen, towards the end, to play his roll in the self destructive drama that was going on, on

the stage of Lahore of those days. After the death of Kharak Singh, things never remained normal in the Punjab. In fact the vacuum created by the death of Ranjeet Singh could never really be filled. Dhiyan Singh, the Madaar-ul-Mahaam or the Prime Minister at the time the Lion of the Punjab made his exit, always strove to keep his party i.e. the Dogras supreme. This resulted in a running tussle of power between the Dogras, the Sikhs and the Khalsa. The final outcome was that within a matter of a few years, many a personality were made to quit the scene by the well-tried methods of the cloak and dagger. Rulers came and

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Some elite lived here once



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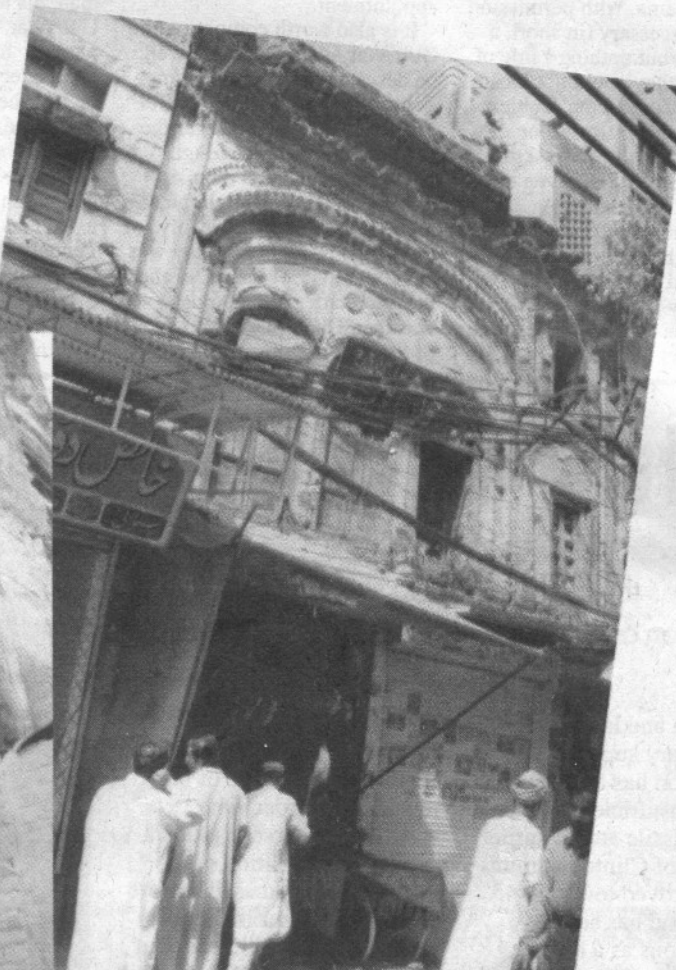
went with more or less clockwork regularity. Sher Singh, Dhiyan Singh, Heera Singh. By the time Duleep Singh was on the Gaddi or throne, her mother had brought her brother Jowahar Singh to hold the office of the Madaar-ul-Mahaam.

Before Jowahar Singh became the Madaar-ul-Mahaam, he used to stay at Amritsar instead of being present at the Court in Lahore, despite being reminded by the (previous) Prime

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An imposing facade in the Lohari - gradually crumbling but still occupied by Khurshid

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Minister, several times to the effect. It was suspected that while staying in Amritsar, away from the Court, he used the opportunity to organise forces and matters against the Dogra Rule, and in his favour. That, is said to have been his real intentions. Over a period he received the support of many a Sikh Sirdar who were tired of the Dogra Supremacy.

But things were never cordial between Jowahar Singh and Peshawra

Singh, younger son of Ranjeet Singh, the former always wished the latter to be out of his way. It so happened that Peshawra Singh, too, was amongst the rulers and elite who fell victim to intrigue. At last Peshawra Singh was murdered, Jowahar Singh was perhaps the happiest man on the face of the earth that day. Since, this happened in Jowahar Singh's time, he was openly blamed for the murder. The death of Peshawra Singh was not taken lightly by the Khalsa. The troops had been horrified and were seething with anger. The Dogras welcomed such a situation. Prithvee Singh and his

accomplices got busy in spreading dissension amongst the ranks. Very soon the Aitable Division and others made up their minds to put Jowahar Singh to the sword. Having done so they moved out of their quarters, assembled near Mian Mir and then sent for other battalions.

They then sent a message to Jowahar Singh asking him to come and present himself before them to explain the murder. This Jowahar Singh avoided. In the meantime the deputies went to the city and took Prithvee Singh bodily to place him at the head of the Army. Before the end of the day all the troops had been brought in line. One or two battalions belonging to Jowahar Singh along with three or four guns remained in the Fort. These too, behaved as they were guarding Jowahar Singh as their prisoner.

Jowahar Singh was now trapped. Though he offered heavy sums to save his life, his appeals and solicitations, howsoever polite and respectful, turned out to be of little effect. On 21, September, 1845, battalions of Court's Division went into action and moved to the vicinity of the Dilli Darwaaza. Jowahar Singh realising that it was useless to keep himself in the safety of the Fort, mounted an elephant with his nephew, Duleep Singh in his arms and made for the spot where the troops had assembled outside the Darwaaza. Upon reaching the plain outside Dilli Darwaaza, he was received by a proper salute and with full ceremony. Re-assured somewhat, he moved on to find himself amongst a section of the troops which was rather hostile.

Jowahar Singh's elephant was abruptly brought to a halt by the soldiers of Court's Division, they demanded the child ruler, Duleep Singh, from the arms of his uncle. Jowahar Singh had no choice but to hand over, reluctantly, what he considered to be his best insurance. Next, the Madaar-ul-Mahaam made an attempt to address the troops, but, before he could utter a word, he received a jab by a bayonet on his left. Reacting, he recoiled to the right where a soldier sent a bullet through his brains despatching him quickly to meet his Maker. He fell from the howdah but was dragged off and hacked to pieces by his murderers. His other accomplices received similar treatment.