

The Login inventory of the Fort

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By Mahmood Zaman

MUCH has been written on Lahore Fort and its grandeur since the days of Emperor Akbar. But the book by Nazir Ahmad Chaudhry, the secretary-administrator of the Punjab Archives, has the distinction of throwing light on some of the missing aspects of the historic fort.

One of the chapters of the book, Lahore Fort — A Witness To History, talks about Dr John Spencer Login who was appointed the first governor of Lahore Fort when the British annexed the Punjab in 1849.

A personal friend of Sir Henry William's, the first head of the board of administrators of the Punjab (the predecessor of the lieutenant governors), Dr Login was in the service of the East India Company at Lucknow and came to Lahore for a job. Sir Henry recommended his name and Governor-General Lord Dalhousie approved his appointment as the fort's governor in March 1849.

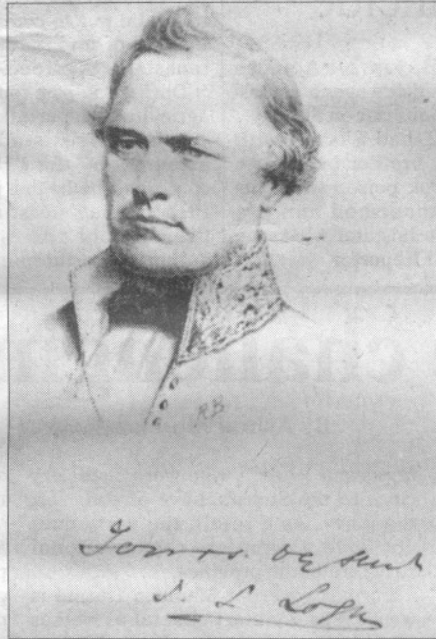
Dr Login's job was to prepare an inventory of all assets of the Sikh period like jewels including the Koh-i-Noor, look after young Maharaja Dilip Singh and his personal staff and 'ranis' and the widows of Sikh rulers and top officials. He was also supposed to take care of state prisoners undergoing trial at the Fort — the 'diwan' (prime minister) of Multan Moolraj, Raja Chhattar Singh, Raja Sher Singh and Raja Lal Singh.

The Sikh regime's state Toshakhana (treasury) was then inside the Moti Masjid. He writes how he wondered when he first saw how precious diamonds were kept in rolled up bits of rags which were placed in velvet purses. These purses were found strewn all around. When Login placed one of the diamonds on his palm, he wondered about its price. Later, he ordered wooden boxes to keep them in order.

This inventory was to be presented to the governor-general who, in consultation with the British government in London, was to dispose of all the Fort belongings "in a befitting manner."

As the first governor of Lahore Fort, and later as Punjab's general, Login used to correspond with his wife in London. These letters throw light on his activities.

When he finished his work, he wrote a let-



Dr John Login

ter to Lord Dalhousie giving a description of his inventory. Also attached to the letter was a Memorandum of Memorabilia which discussed some of the most important personnel and articles under his charge. They included "the young ruler of the Sikhs (Dilip Singh), the families of Ranjit Singh and of all the successive Maharajas of the Punjab including 33 ranis and 130 concubines. The princes of the Abdali family, rulers of Afghanistan and Kashmir. The court of establishment of all the Lahore Maharajas, including six sets of courtesans, natives of Kashmir, and five full bands of musicians. The Nawab of Multan (Diwan Moolchand) and his families."

In addition to four main state prisoners, the Lahore Fort also imprisoned "10 other men of note, including Hakim Rai and his two sons. The female attendants of Rani Jindan from Chunar" were also added to the list.

The inventory included "keys and royal

seals of Moti Mandir (Moti Masjid inside Lahore Fort was turned into Moti Mandir by Ranjeet Singh) and of (the fort of) Givindgarh" where Sikh rulers had set up royal treasuries.

Dr Login's list of "memorabilia" reads that "the diamond (Koh-i-Noor), the state jewels and treasure in gold, silver and precious stones; dishes, plates, cups, cooking pots and *gurrahs* (water pitchers) of gold and silver. The vast store of Kashmir shawls, chogas (robes), satin and velvet *shamianas* embroidered with gold, richly colourful Iranian and Bokhara carpets, gold, silver tent poles, etc, was also a part of the huge fortune the Sikhs had left behind.

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's "golden chair of state; his silver summer-house, gold and silver poled tents and camp equipage of rich Cashmere; arms and armoury, very magnificent, the wedding garments of Maha Singh; besides these many valuable curiosities and relics of all kinds, too numerous to note" also formed the Sikh assets.

Login writes that "Shah Shuja's state pavilion, gorgeously embroidered; the Kulgee (head-gear plume) of last Sikh spiritual leader Guru Gobind Singh; the sword of Holkar (Maratha ruler); the sword of Wazir Fateh Khan, the founder the Baruksye family of Kabul and Kandhar; the sword of Persian hero Rustam (which Ranjit Singh received from Shah Shuja); the armour worn by warriors and Sardars of note, many of them stained with their blood — are very very precious."

Also listed by Login were the relics of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) like his shoes, walking stick, shirt, cap, pyjama, books of prayer (Holy Quran) in Kufic characters, several locks of his hair etc. These relics were subsequently donated by the British to the Badshahi Masjid where they are still on display at a separate gallery.

The value of the Sikh jewellery alone was estimated by Login to be around Rs1,650,000. This did not include the price of the Koh-i-Noor which was acknowledged to be "priceless."