

Khattar Tribe

I remember like yesterday when I accompanied my father, late Sardar Misri Khan, to the ruins of old Mithial village, located at about two miles west of its present location and talked about Baba Mitha Khan who brought his tribe to settle at its watery green location. Not long after the tribe could solidify its base, a small family feud resulted in many people killed. After the dust settled, proud tribe elders placed the blame on bad location of settlement and decided to move the village to its present location. New settlers were experienced horsemen and good fighters, and could easily dominate the local population. They controlled the land extending all the way to southern ranges of Kala Chita Pahar (Black and white mountain).

They were not only brave warriors but also just and proud people. My father talked about incidence when one of Khattar Khan, on his way to morning prayer, saw a Muslim woman from another village located at about fifty miles from Mithial without a head cover and asked her why she has come to Mithial. She told him, how a Hindu Bunia is harassing her, she has learnt about proud Khattar Khans and seek their protection. He covered her head with dopatta and promised her to protect his sister's respect. Proud Khan went to mosque for Isha prayer and then travelled on his horse fifty miles, killed Hindu Bunia, travelled back fifty miles and attended morning prayers. When case was investigated, every person in mosque testified that Khan was in the mosque at Fajar and Isha prayer. About the turn of eighteenth century British Raj was at its peak and local population was suppressed through intricate system of English Deputy commissioners, police superintendents and session judges at district levels. Only lower level police jobs were allocated to locals who will go extra length to please their masters. There was no concept of human rights and verbal, physical abuse was a norm to investigate any case.

During such a small incident a police inspector came to Mithial village for investigation. He was cursing the suspects and a Khattar Khan named Shahinchi Khan stopped him from using such language. Police inspector used the same profanity to Khan who shot him dead. To kill a police officer of British Raj was equivalent to mutiny against the imperial crown. Five Mithial Khans were rounded up, two of them were hanged in Rawalpindi Jail and rest of three exiled to Andaman Islands. Every Khattar from village Mithial, Basal, Domail and Thutta walked to Rawalpindi as token of respect and sympathy for the fallen heroes. It was a small incident but signified the unity and strength of Khattar tribe.

I went to King Edward Medical College Lahore and met Sardar Shaukat Hayat, a Khattar Khan from Wah village while he was under treatment in Mayo Hospital Lahore. He was very well read man and long time associate of Quid-Azam. It give me opportunity to know more about back ground of Khattars. He attributed Khattar tribe to an Arab tribe who marched with Tariq Bin Ziyad, crossed Gibraltar and took over Spain. Abu-Al- Khattar head of this tribe was popular governor in Moorish Andalusia. After the downfall of Moorish Empire in Spain, Muslims were forced to either convert to Christianity or leave Europe. Khattar tribe left Spain and made its way back to Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and northwestern part of present Pakistan. He talked about Khattar tribe came to India with invading armies of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi.

He goes more into detail about his Khattar's history in his book - Nation that lost its soul. My father-in-law, Col. Sardar Mumtaz Ahmad Khan was knowledgeable person and took great pride in being a Khattar. He talked about, around 1840, rivalry between two brothers - Sardar Karam Khan and Sardar Fateh Khan, led to Fateh Khan killing his younger brother Karam Khan. Fearing the worst for the heirs, a neighboring landlord took his widow and her five sons in his protection. A few weeks later General Abbot provided British protection to the bereaved family.

The eldest son was Sardar Mohammed Hayat Khan who remained loyal to British and fought against Sikhs while Fateh Khan family sided with Sikhs. Sikhs were defeated and British rewarded Sardar Mohammed Hayat with adequate favors. He talked about two sets of Khattar's, dark and fair colors like Kala Chitta Pahar (Black and White Mountain). The good example was fair colored Shaukat Hayat and his brother of relatively darker complexion, Brigadier Azmat Hayat. He considered Khattar tribe, a marshal race, which excelled in Indian army and produced many politician like Sir Sakinder Hayat the famous chief minister of united Punjab and many colonels, Brigadiers and generals. His understanding of Khattar origin concurred with Sardar Shaukat Hayat's version. Mr. Tariq Ali from Wah Kattar family is an intellectual historian and his work can also provide some information where he writes mostly about Hayat family.

The British historians and researchers produced voluminous work on people and places in the whole of sub-continent and their work is mostly an authentic image of the reality. H.A. Rose provides insight into the genealogy of tribes in his famous collection titled; Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and NWFP. Sir Lepel Henry Griffen also wrote about tribes in Punjab in his book called; The Punjab Chiefs. He traced Khattar's origin from Khorasan and

(Khorasan province which is located in north east of Iran, covering an area of 313,335 sq.km, is the largest province of the country and includes one fifth of the country's area. The townships of this province are: Esfarrayen, Birjand, Taibad, Torbat-e-Jam, Torbat-e-Heydariyeh, Chenaran, Khaf, Daregaz, Shirvan, Tabas, Ferdows, Fariman Ghayenat, Ghoochan, Kashmar, Gonabad, Mashad, Nahbandan, Neyshabour, Bardaskan, and Bojnord).

wrote, how tribe came to India with invading Muslim armies from central Asia. He mentioned about common heritage of Awans and Khattars and traced their pedigree to Kutb Shah who came to India with Mahmud Ghaznavi in beginning of

eleventh century. One of his son named Chohan, the ancestor of Khattar tribe took over a large town Nilab and settled his tribe along the Indus banks.

For many years the descendants of Chohan held Nilab without opposition till the days of Khattar Khan in the sixth generation from Chohan. The Hindus, growing powerful, drove the tribe out of Nilab, and compelled it to leave India for Afghanistan, where Khattar Khan, about the year 1175, entered the service of Muhammad Ghori who had just overran the province of Ghazni and was preparing to attack India. With him Khattar Khan, returned to the Punjab, and recovered Nilab by a strategem. He dressed his men as merchants and entered the town as if for trade, with large boxes filled with arms. No sooner had they got within the walls, than the disguise was thrown off, every man seized his arms, and the town, taken by surprise, was captured. The tribe now took the name of its leader Khattar. It was subordinate to the Imperial Governor of Attock, Langar Khan, who afterwards became Viceroy at Lahore.

Khattar Khan had six sons, Jand Khan, Isa Khan, Sarwar Khan, Firoz Khan, Sehra Khan and Pehru Khan. About three generations after his death the tribe lost Nilab, but they took possession of the open country between Rawalpindi and the Indus, which became known by the name of Khatar. The descendants of Sarwar Khan found their way to southern edges of Kala Chita Pahar and subjugated the locals. Today Khattars are inhabiting the villages of Mithial, Basal, Thutta and Domail. The descendants of Jand Khan took possession of the district called after them Jandal, between Khushhalgar and Nara, and the other sons settled in the neighboring areas, driving out the Gujars and even their own kinsmen the Awans.

From Firoz Khan, the fourth son of Khattar Khan, has the Drek family descended. His great grandson was Ratnah, from whom have descended the clan known as Rattial. Two generations later were Balu Khan, and Isa Khun, from the former of whom have sprung the Balwans who inhabit Darotah, where the river Haroh flows into the Indus. The offspring of the latter is the clan Isial, whose location is in Choi Gariala and Dher, to the South of Barota. Ghor Khan, the great nephew of Balu Khan, founded the Gharral clan who live at Akori. So, for many generations the tribe grew and prospered. They were not without good qualities, but were bad farmers, reckless and extravagant and never became rich or distinguished.

The best of their chiefs was Ghairat Khan who left his home and went to seek his fortune at Dehli, where he entered the service of an officer of the court, and gradually rose in favor till he was able to return home with a portion of the Khatar country, as an imperial grant, in jagir. His second son, Zul Kadar Khan, rebuilt the village of Drek, which had been founded long before by the Awans and named Rashidpur, which had fallen into ruins. Salabat Khan, grandson of Ghairat Khan, founded Kot Salabat Khan and Zindai.

Khattars resisted the Sikhs as long as they could, but resisted in vain and had to settle in compromise. When Sikh Kardar Diwan Mulruj was besieged in Hazara by the insurgents, Malik Ghulam Khan and Fatah Khan came to his aid, and rescued him. Fatah Khan possesses considerable influence in Rawalpindi district and his services were always at the disposal of Government. In 1857 (Independence War) he furnished levies for guarding the ferries on the Indus and testified his loyalties in other ways. He hold the villages of Bahtur, Bhagowi, Kot Shadi etc. in Jagir from Raj. In his famous book mentioned hereinabove, H.A. Rose on Pages 532-533 provided some insight into the roots of Khattars. According to him, Khattars claim kinship with the Awans and to be like them and the western Khokhars, descended from one of the sons of Qutb Shah Qureshi of Ghazni. But the Awans do not always admit the relationship.

Family Tree - Syad Ahmad Khan-Ghazzar Khan-Jamal Khan-Jalal Khan-Kamal Khan-Karam Khan-Buhadar Khan & Muhammad Hayat Khan.

HISTORY OF THE FAMILY.

Syad Ahmad Khan seems to have gone to Dehli about the same time as Ghairat Khan, with his son Ghazzar Khan, and to have entered the imperial service. He was not however so fortunate, for a chief officer at court fell in love with the reputation of the beauty of Gul Begum, sister of Ghazzar Khan, and threw him into prison when he refused to give her up. Syad Ahmad, the father, fled by night with his pretty daughter, and returned to his native country where he founded a village which he named Ahmadabad, now in ruins. Ghazzar Khan died in prison, and his son Jamal Khan, quarreling with his relations, left Ahmadabad and founded a village for himself in the jungle, calling it Jalalsar after the came of his son. But the memory of Jamal Khan's humble village has been lost in the palace built close at hand by the Emperor Shah Jahan, in 1645, when marching towards Kabul. Some traces of the buildings are still visible, as the Asaf Khani Mahal, and the name of the village Wah is said to express the satisfaction of the Emperor as he looked on the beauty of the scene, with its running water and pleasant groves.

The present head of the family was Muhammad Hayat Khan.

His father Karam Khan was a brave soldier, and in 1848 he raised a force which General Nicholson employed in holding the Margalla Pass. His house at Wah was burnt down by the rebel Sikh force, under the command of Utar Singh Atariwala, and he was shortly afterwards killed by Fateh Khan, an old enemy of his house, who surprised him when taking his noonday siesta in a garden. Muhammad Hayat Khan then joined Captain Abbott at Nara, with a few recruits, and remained with that officer till the close of the war. In 1857, General Nicholson was Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar, and when the mutiny first broke out he directed Hayat Khan to raise a body of Afridis for service, and when he was appointed to command the Punjab moveable column he nominated the young man as his native aide-de-camp.

Mohammed Hayat Khan was with the General when he so terribly punished the mutinous 55th Native Infantry at Hoti Murdan, and the 46th Native Infantry and the 9th Light Cavalry at Trimmu Ghat. He marched to Dehli with the force and fought gallantly throughout the siege. He was with the General when he was mortally wounded at the capture of the city, and remained with him to the last, attending him, for the few days that he survived, with the utmost devotion.

At his death bed General Nickolson wrote a letter of recommendation for young friend in his own blood. After this, Mohammed Hayat Khan returned to Peshawar, where he was appointed Thannadar and a few months later he was transferred to Jhelam, and made Tehsildar of Tallagang. In May 1861 he was raised to the rank of Extra Assistant Commissioner and posted to Shahpur, when he was transferred to Bannu. He has proved himself as good in the office as gallant in the field.

In the years ahead, Hayat continued to rise through the ranks, being appointed an Assistant Commissioner and later a Divisional Judge. Various awards also came his way, and in 1899, two years before his death, he was given the title of 'Nawab'. This tradition of service to the British, common to many feudal families of the Punjab, was followed by Muhammad Hayat's descendants. But it was one of his six sons, Sikander Hayat Khan, who emerged as the most significant political player in the family's history.

Born in 1892, Sikander was by the early 1920s making a mark on local administration, and had established strong links with the Unionist Party, founded in 1920. The party, essentially a coalition between Hindu farmers in the eastern Punjab and feudal Muslim landlords in the west, attempted to represent both peasants and land owners. It strongly opposed any division of the Punjab, and dominated the province for its first two decades of limited democracy under the British. Sikander Hayat, appointed a Revenue Member of the Punjab Government in 1929, became the Deputy Governor of the State Bank of India in 1935.

In 1936, he succeeded Sir Fazle Husain as the leader of the Unionist Party. The party swept the first election to the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1937, and Sikander Hayat became the premier of the Punjab - a post he held until his death due to a sudden heart attack in 1942. Sikander Hayat had acted for some months as Governor of the Punjab in 1932, while the British Governor was on leave, becoming the first Indian to hold the post. He served in a similar capacity again in 1934. Sikander Hayat, who had also served in the military, received a series of titles and awards from the British, and was knighted in 1933.

His eldest son, Sardar Shaukat Hayat, followed his father's foot steps and joined Unionist Party. Following an invitation from Mohammad Ali Jinnah, he, like most other Muslim members of the Unionist Party joined the Muslim League soon before Partition. Shaukat Hayat continued to play a role in Muslim League politics in the years after Independence, until his death a few years ago. His major contribution was in writing Pakistan's 1973 constitution and getting it approved from two third majority of Pakistan assembly.

His book, Nation that lost its soul, is wonderful collection of his memoirs and describes in detail about Indian's Muslim struggle in creation of Pakistan, his father's role - famous Sikander Jinnah pact, post Jinnah era General Ayub Khan's marshal law, Zulfakar Ali Bhutto and role of Mujib Ur Rehaman role in 1971 Indopak war and creation of Bangladesh.

Sardar Amir Daud Khan, M.D.,M.A.C.G
Website www.sdkhanmd.com