

## Turrebaz Khan Freedom Fighter

When Afzal-ud-dowlah became the fifth Nizam on 18th May, 1857 he did not know about the outbreak of the rebellion amongst the Indian soldiers against the British in the North a week earlier. While the 'Mutiny' as it was called was wide-spread and was strongly backed by the Marathas, it did not acquire adequate support in Hyderabad. Part of the reason for that was the traditional animosity between the Nizam and the Marathas since the days of the first Nizam who had advised his successor in his will not to trust the Marathas. By June, 1857 the anti-British sentiment penetrated Hyderabad and inflammatory placards appeared all over the city exhorting people, specially Muslims, to rise in the name of God and his Prophet.

They ridiculed Nizam for not coming forward and warned him and his Dewan, Salar Jung I that if they did not join the movement, they would be overthrown.

They asked moulvis to issue fatwas in favour of their 'jihad', threatening them with a curse on their progeny if they did not do so. The Nizam was urged to march to Delhi after doing away with Christians in Hyderabad.

The Resident, Col. Davidson was advised by his friends and well-wishers to either leave Hyderabad or take refuge in the cantonment at Bolarum. He brushed these suggestions aside and said that he would stick to his job. He also warned that the British government would hold the Nizam responsible if any harm came to him. However, he took precautions to strengthen the defenses of the Residency.

Reports about the disaffection spreading amongst the Indian soldiers of the Hyderabad Contingent stationed at Secunderabad were also received by him. A moulvi was caught preaching the doctrine of 'jihad' amongst the Indian troops.

There was an uprising amongst the Indian troops of Hyderabad Contingent on their way to Aurangabad. The troops refused to go further fearing that they would be asked to the North to fight against their fellow Indian soldiers. This uprising was overcome tactfully and a number of soldiers were arrested, put on court-martial, and given deterrent punishments including execution and transportation.

In July, 1857 when the Imam rose to deliver his Friday khutba in the Mecca Masjid, he was heckled by some members of the congregation. The crowd was about to break into a riot but the kotwal managed to arrest the ring leaders and also make good his own escape. Salar Jung sent a message to the Resident that the trouble had been nipped in the bud.

Later in the afternoon, an urgent message came from Salar Jung warning the Resident that some 500 Rohillas had broken loose from the walled city. They were led by Moulvi Alauddin and Turrebaz Khan and were followed by a large mob. They were headed for the Residency. The Resident had already taken precautions to defend it. The rebels occupied two buildings near the Residency belonging to two merchants, Jai

Gopal Das and Akbar Saheb. When the insurgents attacked the Residency, they were met with a volley of canon fire which continued till dawn. Unable to face this onslaught the Rohillas withdrew under the cover of darkness leaving behind four bodies of their comrades. The uprising thus came to an end.

The leaders of the rebellion, Turrebaz Khan and Moulvi Alauddin were declared offenders. A prize of 5,000 rupees each was announced for their capture. Both of them were captured. Turrebaz Khan was sentenced to life. Trying to escape while under arrest, he was shot dead by English soldiers. His body was brought to the city and hung by chains in a public place to serve as a deterrent to the people at large. Moulvi Alauddin was captured in Bangalore and transported for life to Andaman Islands where he died in 1884.

It is said that it was Hyderabad which saved the British from extinction in India. A nervous telegram of the Governor of Bombay to the Resident said that "if Hyderabad goes, everything goes". The rebellion fizzled out because it was not properly organized or led. It proved to be a flash in the Pan.

The disaffection against the English manifested itself in other places too. There is the tragic story of the rebellion of Raja Venkatappa Naik of Shorapur in which the astrological prediction about the death of the Raja made to Col. Meadows Taylor confidentially 20 years before the event found its fulfillment. When Taylor was the regent at Shorapur, a pundit had shown him the horoscope of the infant prince and gave his prediction that he would die in his 24th year and his estate would be forfeited. At that time Taylor simply laughed it off and in course of time even forgot about it. The young boy had been brought up by Taylor and had shown promise of becoming a good ruler of his estate, and loyal to the British. But he was abetted by his tribe of Beydurs, who attacked a small force of the English sent to reinforce Captain Campbell's garrison. This attack was repulsed and thereupon the Raja fled to Hyderabad. For his part in the rebellion, the Raja was sentenced to death.

On Taylor's appeal, the Resident, in the maximum exercise of his authority, commuted it to transportation for life. On further consideration the Governor-General reduced it to confinement for four years. The Raja's wives celebrated this show of mercy by the English, and, since he was permitted to keep them with him, they made ready to join him. However, the Raja after only one day's journey towards his destination, shot himself dead.

The gloomy predictions of the astrologer of Shorepur was thus fulfilled.