

but not wishing to embroil himself with the chief of Balti while the campaign in Ladák was still before him, he contented himself with giving promises of future assistance to the Balti prince. After a time the prince returned to his father; but the reconciliation could not have been very cordial, for early in 1840 the prince fled to Lé, and sought refuge with the Gyalpo, whom he believed to be a puppet of the Dogra chief. The real authority was not, however, in the Gyalpo's hands, but in those of his two ministers, the Káhlon of Banka and the Káhlon of Bazgo; and as they were anxious to have Ahmed Shah on their side during their intended outbreak against the Dogra authority, they suggested to him the propriety of sending a party to seize his son to which no resistance would be offered. Ahmed Shah at once agreed to this proposal, and a small party of fifty men was allowed to carry off the Balti prince to Lé.

When Zoráwar Sing arrived in Zanskar (Zańs-dkar) and heard of the flight of Muhammed Shah, he sent strict orders that the prince should be treated with kindness and respect, intending, perhaps, to use him as a tool for the furtherance of his master's view upon Balti. But shortly after, when he heard of the prince's seizure by a party of Balti troops, he determined at once upon the conquest and annexation of that principality. A letter was, however, first addressed to Ahmed Shah, informing him that his son, who had sought the Maharaja's protection, had been forcibly carried off by a party who had invaded the Ladák territory, and that, unless the prince was sent back again, the Dogra troops would enter Balti and force his release. To this letter Ahmed Shah deigned no reply.

Accordingly, in the end of the year 1840, the Vazir assembled an army of 15,000 men, and a large body of Ladákis for the conquest of Balti. Ahmed Shah also prepared himself for the struggle, and was joined by a large party of discontented Ladákis, who, after crossing the Indus, destroyed the bridge, to delay the advance of the Dogras. Zoráwar Sing was obliged, therefore, to march down the right bank of the river, which he followed steadily for twenty-five days, receiving the submission of the chiefs of Khatakchau (Mkhar-man or Parkuda) and Khapolor (Kha-pu-lu), but without finding any place where the army could be crossed. He then detached Mia Nidhán Sing, with a body of 5,000 men, by way of Shigar (Śi-dkar), to look for a road, and to collect provisions, which had now become very scarce in the Dogra camp. But the Baltis kept a good look-out, and had early intelligence of this movement. Mia Nidhán Sing was allowed to advance unmolested for about fifteen miles, when his party was surrounded and attacked by thousands, and he himself was cut off with nearly the whole of his detachment.

About 400 men only managed to find their way back to the Dogra camp with the tale of their defeat. At the same time the winter set in with a heavy fall of snow, and as provisions were extremely scarce, the Dogra troops became so much dispirited, that their discipline was seriously affected. With an impassable river in their front, and certain starvation both from cold and hunger, whether they retreated or remained in their present position, the majority of the troops paid no attention to orders, and of the few who still obeyed, none did so with alacrity.