

Mughal-Afghan Conflict in South Asia: Origin and Development

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Abstract:

Afghans and Mughals remained at war with each-others not only in the mainland of India but also along the porous north-western border inhibited largely by the Afghans. In fact, Zahir-ud-Din Babur, the founder of Mughal Dynasty, had faced the Afghan danger not only in border areas but also had to compete with them for the throne of Delhi. However, very little academic work has been done to discover the origin of their conflict that took the contour of an un-ending rivalry between the two nations. The Afghans in general, throughout the Mughal rule in India, never reconciled with them and most of the time resisted their intrusions. The paper aims at to dig out the actual cause or causes of their conflict and its development in historical perspective. The objective is to relocate roots of their relationship in Kabul when Ulegh Beg Mirza, brother of Umar Shaikh Mirza, was ruling over there. In addition, its effects, on the Indian political events that unfolded during Babur and Humayun times, would be judged to comprehend its true nature. It would be judged that how their relationship in Kabul fashioned future Indian political discourse between the two nations.

Mughal-Afghan Relations in Kabul

After the death of Timur, there was chaos in his vast empire. His vast empire was divided amongst his four sons; Miran Shah, Jahangir, Amir Shaikh and Shah Rukh Mirza. In the family of Timur, Abu Said was the son of Sultan Muhammad Mirza, grandson of Miran Shah and grand-grandson of Timur. Abu Said ruled over Mavraunnahr and then came to the Province of Kabul. Two of his sons which are important in the aforesaid discussion were Umar Shaikh and Ulugh Beg, the rulers of Farghana and Kabul respectively.(1) In those days there was chaos in the Mughal dominions everywhere. Around that time all the *Khakhi* or *Khashi* tribes (Yusufzai, Gugyani, Tarklani and Muhammadzai) got

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permanent settlements in Kabul, Ghazni and the environs. The leading malak of all these tribes was Malak Sulaiman Shah, son of Malak Taj-ud-Din Khan bin Malak Razzar. As time passed on, the Yusufzai grew in numbers and gained power and influence around Kabul and Ghazni. It was difficult for any Mughal prince to rule over Kabul and Ghazni without their support.(2)

It was around 1460 when Mirza Ulegh Beg reached Kabul with only handful of his men. Helpless and depressed after successive defeats in *Mavraunnahr* (Transoxiana), he requested Malak Sulaiman Shah of his help in recapturing Kabul and Ghazni. The Yusufzai malak at once agreed and provided him the much needed help. Malak Sulaiman Shah treated him like his son and gave him his entire tribal force for capturing the lost Timurids' territories. Very wisely and cleverly, Ulegh Beg manoeuvred the situations in his favour with the help of the Afghan tribes led by Sulaiman Shah. For some time he got the much needed support from the tribes and consolidated his position. In fact, Malak Sulaiman Shah, worked as an informal but powerful prime minister of Ulegh Beg. The inhabitants of Kabul considered Ulegh Beg a nominal head and the real authority were vested in the hands of Sulaiman Shah.(3) With unbounded power and influence, a number of Yusufzai malaks became too arrogant and openly defied the orders of Ulegh Beg. Their forays on the neighbouring tiny principalities some time created law and order situation which naturally embarrassed Mughal princes who gathered around Ulegh Beg in Kabul.

Ulegh Beg looked for an opportunity to ward off the kingdom of Kabul from the Yusufzais' arrogance. He set to exploit the differences between the Yusufzai and Gugyani, another powerful Afghan tribe. It is now a trade-mark of their social and political structure that they can be easily exploited even against their own fellow tribesmen. Accordingly on account of these internal hostilities Ulegh beg skilfully broken their power in Kabul. Ignoring Malak Sulaiman Shah, Gugyani malaks were given great respect in those days. They were received warmly by his men in the court. His intention was to smash the strength of the Afghan powerful confederacy. He considered Yusufzai and Gugyani two strong arms of that confederacy and the diminishing of any of them would be in his interest.(4)

Consequently, the Gugyani malaks and Ulegh Beg formed an alliance and their combined army marched towards the Yusufzai.

The battle of '*Ghwarah Marghah*'(5) was fought in which initially the Yousafzai were defeated and dispersed. However, after the initial setback they assembled and inflicted a crushing defeat on the combined army of Ulegh Beg Mirza and Gugyanis. This defeat again restored their former position and influence. Ulegh Beg hurriedly arranged a council of peace with them after which he cunningly reinstated them with their earlier position in the court. Pretended himself as a good friend of the Afghans, he strengthened his position by the accession of many Mughal princes and soldiers. He was in search of an appropriate opportunity to transform his defeat into an everlasting success. Thus he once again resolved to crush the power of this turbulent ally. It has been mentioned in *Tawarikh Hafiz Rahmat Khani* that Gugyani malaks Hasan Ibn Changa and Shibly Ibn Tory advised Ulegh Beg of inviting the leading Yousafzai malaks for a feast and do away with their power. Without this tactic, they asserted on Ulegh Beg, the Yusufzai would never be reduced to submission. They even pledged to join his men in this large-scale massacre.(6)

Accordingly, he invited the leading malaks, around 800 in number, according to *Hayat-i-Afghani*. At the site of the feast, Mahmud, the malak of Chagharzai branch of the Yousafzai, observed and felt the treacherous setting around them. In fact, he suggested to his other friends that Ulugh Beg should be overpowered and killed at once. But majority of the elder malaks opposed his idea and pressed him to restrain from such an eventuality. They, perhaps did not expecting such sort of breach by a Temurid's prince whom they helped in restoring his dominions. However Mahmud's observations were based on thoughtful judgement of the court environment which he never seen earlier. Meantime, Janga, a Gugyani Malak and a bitter enemy of the Yousafzai proposed to Mirza Ulugh Beg that it is a golden opportunity of getting rid of the power of Yousafzai. Accordingly they overpowered all the malaks and killed them one by one in the imperial palace at Kabul.(7) This large-scale massacre of the leading Yousafzai malaks including Malak Sulaiman Shah was a rare precedent in the Mughal-Afghan relationship in which a mass murder took place in deception. It was an exceptional display of trickery and deceit on the part of a Mughal prince. This exceptional event can be rightly called as the root of the Mughal-Afghan conflict that occurred in Kabul however; it gravely affected the relationship of both the nations throughout the Mughal reign in India.

It has been stated in local sources that Malak Sulaiman Shah passionately requested Ulegh Beg for saving the lives of his tribesmen. He reminded him of his past services. But to no avail. At last he begged three things from Ulegh Beg. First was that he should be killed first that he could not be able to see the murder of his tribesmen, second request was that Malak Ahmad Khan should be kept unhurt for there was not a single capable man to lead the tribe, and the third request was not to give any harm to the Yousafzai tribe and let them migrate anywhere out of your dominions. Mirza Ulegh Beg accepted all these three requests and then finished his plan of crippling the Afghan might by killing some 700 Malaks.

So far no confirmed figure of the persons killed by Ulegh Beg is available. Akhun Darwaiza had mentioned the figure 200 while *Tawarikh Hafiz Rahmat Khani*, Roshan Khan and Olaf Caroe stated that 700 Malaks were murdered.(8) Similarly the exact date of the event is also not known. Olaf Caroe pointed out that probably the massacre happened between 1460 and 1480.(9) Afterwards, the dead bodies were buried in a graveyard which is famous among the Kabul inhabitants by the name of “*Shaheedan-iYusufzai Muqbara*” (Graveyard of the Yousafzai Martyrs). After the carnage, a *jirga* of the Yousafzai and the allied tribes was held in which Malak Ahmad Khan was declared as the new malak of Yusufzai tribe. In the same *Jirga* it was decided to migrate to Peshawar valley along with Othman Khel, Khalil, Muhammadzai and Gadoon tribes. At the time of Babur’s Kabul and Indian invasions, the Afghan tribal confederacy under Malak Ahmad occupied most of the territories in the Peshawar valley along with Bajaur and Swat.(10) In fact, the occupation of Swat provided the Yousafzai an upper-hand on all the Afghan tribes. It placed them in such a strategically important position that even threatened Babur’s future designs at large.

The contemporary literature did not mention any thing about the response of the Delhi Sultan towards the murder of the Yousafzai malaks. Probably at the time of that large-scale massacre there were incessant wars between Sultan Bahlul Lodhi and the Sharqi Sultan of Jaunpur. Probably, at that time Multan was independent under Sultan Hussain Langa. And was a buffer state between Delhi and Kabul. Its rulers were engaged in their wars against Ghazi Khan, the Timuride ruler of the Indian dominions.(11) Their silence probably was due to the Timuride

ruler of the Indian dominions readiness to acknowledge the authority of Sultan Sikandar Lodhi and started reading the *Khutba* and issuing *Sikkha* in the latter's name.(12) Around this time the Mughals of Kabul were also engaged in wars against each other. With the death of Ulugh Beg chaos was added by confusion. Abdur-Razzaq, son and successor of Ulugh Beg was very young and inexperienced. Hence he was unfit to properly manage the intricate duties of the court. General disorder was the natural outcome. In the midst of this disorder Zahir-ud-Din Babur appeared on the scene and captured it in 1504.

Babur's Indian Invasions and the Afghan Tribes

In 1504, Babur tried his luck successfully in Kabul. He besieged the city and captured the throne. After firmly establishing his position he made Kabul a centre of his operation against the Afghan bordering tribes and Ibrahim Lodhi as well. At that time Sayed Ali Khan son of Ghazi Khan was the ruler of the Timuride dominions, which included Bhera, Khushab, Chenab and Chiniot. Babur undertook the task of recapturing all these dominions. For the first time he left Kabul in January 1505, he came to Bagram (Peshawar) *via* Jamrud and Khyber. Peshawar was inhabited by Gugyanis at that time. Two of its leading Malaks Yahya Khan and Khusrow Khan served him as guides in his campaign in Kohat.(13) He crossed the river Jhelum and marched towards Kohat through Adamkhel and Kotal up to Indus. At Hangu the Bangash tribe halted his advance and a fierce battle was fought with the Afghans. At last they submitted. According to the custom of the tribe they came to us along with few stripes of grass in their mouths. However they were killed and a minaret of heads were erected on the top of a hill. The place where the Mughal forces stationed is famous by the name of 'Babur Mila'.(14) At Bannu he faced a little resistance from the local population. Looting and plundering however, continued. A large amount was snatched from some Afghan merchants and one of leading trader Khizar Lohani was put to death.(15) His intention during his first campaign was not to invade India rather he looked for money and large

stuff of food-grain. After Babur's departure, Dawlat Khan entrusted all the Timuride possessions to his son Ali Khan.

In 1519, Babur led his army again into the Indian plains. In his autobiography *Babur Nama* he stated "As it was always in my heart to possess Hindustan, and as these several countries, Bhera, Khushab, Chenab and Chiniot, had once been held by the Turk, I pictured them as my own and was resolved to get them into my hands whether peacefully or by force." (16) This time the circumstances also favoured him due to the large-scale differences between Ibrahim Lodhi and his nobles. They considered the inroads of Babur as the continuation of the old Mongol's policy of looting and sacking. For the first time Babur used artillery and gunpowder and issued order of general massacre against the Afghans in Bajaur because, according to *Babur Nama*, the people were infidels. But there is no truth in the assumption of Babur that the people of Bajaur were infidels. At that time the whole population were strictly the followers of Islam. (17)

Abdur Rahim Bakhtani mentioned that Sultan Hyder Ali, the ruler of Bajaur was approached through a Dalazak Malak to handover the fort to Babur. Hyder Ali was not ready to submit and preferred rather a battle with the Mughal contingent. Finally with the help of fire-artillery and gun-powder Babur captured the fort and about three thousands men were killed inside the fort. A minaret of the human skulls was then raised on the top of a hill to create fear of the Mughal army among the Afghans. (18) It was perhaps a tactical move on the part of Babur for building up horror hysteria among the Afghan tribes particularly Yousafzai. In fact, he considered it a hard challenge that how to subdue that powerful tribe.

Having completed his task in Bajaur, he then turned his attention towards Yousafzai, an influential Afghan tribe that lived in Swat. He was keenly interested to get the support of the tribe because without its help it would have been impossible for him to bring completely the other Afghan tribes under his firm control. The firm control of the Yousafzai on the strategically important areas of Swat and the *samah* (settled areas i.e. Mardan, Swabi Newshehra up-to Attock and Charssadda plains) was an added power of strength. Furthermore, it was probably his reading of the power and military might of the Yousafzai that he avoided direct confrontation with them. Perhaps he proved himself much wise than his grandson, Akbar the Great in keeping his finger out of the Swat pie. While

terrorizing the tribal malaks with his usual attacks in the adjacent areas, Babur avoided entering his army into the valley of Swat. At the outset, he marched and stationed his troops between the water of Panjkora and the united water of Jandol and Bajauar. He kept his vigilant eyes on the moment of the Yousafzai tribal force and the rugged hilly terrains. While avoiding tactfully his force entry into Swat, he spread havoc in the nearby areas. Probably an entry into the Swat hilly passes would prove counter-productive in terms of military strategy. He deemed it fit to befriend them through diplomacy. Therefore, he summoned Malak Ahmad Khan, and spread rumours among the Kabul inhabitants, that he would be murdered in the court. But Malak Ahmad after a diplomatic session with Babur in Kabul returned safely to his tribe in Swat. When he was again invited to the court, Malak Ahmad Khan politely refused to make his presence possible.(19)

Pir Muazzam Shah and a number of other writers have given a detailed account of these developments. After storming the fort of Malak Haider Ali, the ruler of Bajauar, Babur then crossed river Panjkora and encamped in a place called Dyarun. (20) He sent his spies to get him informed about the activities of the Yousafzai but in every strategic point they found the men of Malak Ahmad Khan. Thereafter, he disguised himself as *a fakir* and went out to acquaint himself of the current situations. It was the occasion of the *Bakr Kid* and there was gathering at the house of Shah Mansur; situated on the back of Maura Hill and today the place is called the “Throne of Shah Mansur.” Babur went there and set among the crowd in the courtyard. At that very moment Bibi Mubarak, the daughter of Malak Shah Mansur, sent cooked meat folded between bread stripes to Babur.

Then he returned to his camp at Dyarun and thought of establishing matrimonial relations with the Yousafzai. He wrote to Malak Ahmad and informed him about his intention. Malak Ahmad refused at once the proposal and replied that Malak Shah Mansur has no daughter to give. Babur wrote them about his visit in disguise. Still Malak Ahmad was adamant and strongly opposed the idea but the other leading malaks urged him to consider the proposal once again because it was a matter of the whole tribe and urged Malak Shah Mansur to save the tribe from the anger of Babur. After a lot of deliberations they agreed to accept his proposal.(21) One may also call it a ‘marriage of convenience’

because it has created a direct link between Babur and the Yousafzai and thus he kept himself in touch with the day-to-day happening in the frontier region. Sultan-i-Rome is of the opinion that the marriage gave Babur a strong and intimate connection with the tribe and a sort of guarantee of protection the Mughal army from the usual forays of several of its sub-branches. He negates the elements of romance in the whole story and concluded that the knot was just to for political and diplomatic gains for both the sides.(22) Bibi Mubarak was mentioned by the name of '*Afghan Aghacha*' in Gul Badan Begum's *Humayun Nama*. The date of the marriage, according to *Humayun Nama* was January 30, 1519.(23) A brother of Bibi Mubarak by the name of Mir Jamal entered in the services of Babur and accompanied him in the famous battle of Panipat and rose to high status under Humayun and Akbar. A detailed account about Bibi Mubarak is given in the *Tarikh-i-hafiz-i-Rahmat Khani*.(24)

Some writers mentioned the role of the Shaikh Mali in establishing matrimonial alliance with Babur. He wanted to save his tribe from the brutality of Mughals as the memories of the murder of their malaks were still alive in their minds. In return Babur left them undisturbed and never interfered in their internal affairs. Shaikh Mali was in hurry to compile his '*Dafter*' and also establish the Yousafzai's sway on the surrounding areas. In a nutshell, the Yousafzais' alliance made it possible for Babur to safely cross the Afghan borderland and crush the Lodhi might in Delhi. These writers made the tribe responsible in giving Babur a chance of winning the throne of Delhi. Without the active help of Yousafzais it was quite impossible for Babur to have a smooth sail among the Afghan porous borderland.(25)

The fact of the matter however is different. The Yousafzai's alliance with Babur was not a permanent union. Throughout the Mughal era tribe never compromised with them and frequently resisted its intrusions in the Afghan Areas. In fact, a little earlier of Babur's invasion the tribe underwent a very harsh experience of the perfidy of their Afghan brethren in dealing with Ulegh Beg in Kabul. It was due to the treachery of the Gugyanis that such large-scale massacre took place. The options with the Yousafzai Malaks were either to face the Mughal savagery or to work out a policy of diplomatic engagement. And choosing of the latter option has shown their political wisdom. These writers overlooked the

dynamics of the internal disunity between the Lodhi nobles in Delhi. The fact is that Babur dealt all the Afghan tribes, chiefs, nobles, governors, and malaks separately and most of them reduced to submission. Malak Hamza Khan, a chief of Gugyani in Peshawar, separately visited the court of Babur at Kabul and allied himself with the Mughals against his Afghan tribesmen.

In 1519 again Babur invaded the Peshawar valley with the help of Dalazak tribal chiefs. He expected large amount of food-grain in the area but he found very little therein. He briefly stayed in the vicinity of Hashtnagar where his skirmishes occurred with Mohmand tribe. Afterwards he went to Shahbazgarhi nowadays situated in Mardan district. According to *Babur Nama* he proceeded further and preyed wild buffalos in the vicinity of Swabi. The place is probably Yaqubi, a village in the tehsil of Razzar. It was the spring season in which he decided to go back to Kabul via Jamrud. At Peshawar he has given precious gifts to a number of Dalazak and other tribal Malaks for their services which they rendered in support of Mughal expeditions.(26) During his brief stay at Ali Masjid a feast was given in his honour by Yaqub, another Dalazak Malak. Here some of his advisors pressed him for going to devastate the Afridi areas but Babur was very much apprehensive about the might of the Yousafzais. Their military strength always haunted him despite his matrimonial alliance.(27)

In the autumn of 1519 Babur marched towards Afghan borderland through Khyber Pass. This time his objective was to subdue the Yousafzai tribe. Despite all his methods and mechanism he was not sure of their cooperation. In the midst of his journey he changed his plan and rather went on to destroy the Afridi, Shinwari and Wazir tribes. He snatched some three hundreds goat from the Wazir tribe. Although, Babur devastated here and there the Afghan mainland however he remained unsuccessful in the complete subjugation of the area.(28)

Babur's Campaign against Ibrahim Lodhi

During the time of Sultan Sikandar Lodhi the nobles were completely loyal and obedient because he did not tolerate any fault on the part of them. Unlike his father he behaved like an all-powerful monarch but at the same time he kept the nobles completely loyal and subservient due to his humanism, tactfulness and high sense of purpose. He also established a sound

administrative system and renovated the intelligence department through which he kept himself informed about the general condition of the people in his empire. But despite all these measures the expansion of the Lodhi Empire also gave birth to the powerful *muqtas* of the frontier *iqtas* who had 30,000 and 45,000 *sawars* under them. Therefore, it was difficult for the Sultan to control completely these powerful elements. The net result was that when Sikandar Lodhi died, the entire powerful nobles rose in rebellions, which further increased the differences between Sultan Ibrahim and the rebel Prince Jalal Khan. With the death of a Sultan, usually the emergence of the internal conflicts within the nobility has been a common feature throughout the Sultanate period. However, with the accession of Ibrahim Lodhi to the throne of Delhi it assumed such a high proportion that he witnessed the end of the Lodhi dynasty at the hands of Zahir-ud-Din Babur, a Mughal invader of Central Asia.(29)

With the accession of Ibrahim Lodhi (Nov 22, 1517), an internal conflict had started between the Sultan and the powerful and self-seeking nobles in the court. They wanted to get maximum advantages by dividing sovereignty between the Sultan and Jalal Khan. The new Sultan was not in the position to bring normality to the Sultanate. He emerged as an autocrat, hence frequently resorted to force to implement his political will over the arrogant nobles. In the beginning, he crushed the powerful nobles of his father's time and then favoured his own petty nobles who gathered around him just to exploit and gain favours from the young Sultan for their own sake. Thus the administration of the government went into the hands of these incompetent persons.(30) In an utter frustration many nobles shifted their loyalties and joined other monarchs. Mian Hussain went to the camp of Rana Sanga, a powerful Rajput warlord of Mewar. Another blow to the prestige of Ibrahim was that many nobles including Qasim Khan (Sambhal), Nizam Khan (Bayana), Hasan Khan (Mewat), Muhammad Zaitun (Dholpur), Tatar Khan Sarang Khani (Gwalior), Hussain Khan Nuhani (Rapri), Qutb Khan (Etawah) and Alam Khan (Kalpi) had firmly established themselves in their respective *iqtas*. Besides they openly defied the authority of the central government. On one such occasion Ibrahim summoned Dawlat Khan, governor of the Punjab to his court. Dawlat Khan excused himself and instead sent his son Dilawar Khan, which was perceived as an act of defiance against the Sultan. Dilawar was sent to prison. However, he managed his escape and

after wondering for six days reached Lahore and narrated the whole ordeal to his father. Considering himself very weak and unable to resist the Sultan, Dawlat summoned another son Ghazi Khan and other loyal nobles to Lahore. He also invited Alam Khan (Ala-ud-Din), son of the late Sultan Bahlul Lodhi, who was unhappy with Ibrahim and was living as a refugee with Sultan Muzaffar Shah of Gujarat. Dawlat Khan Lodhi openly defied the orders of Ibrahim Lodhi. He sent his son Dilawar Khan with some gifts including Indian mangoes preserved in honey, to Babur at Kabul. Babur was informed of the dissatisfaction of the nobles and was also requested to help them against the atrocities of the Sultan. Prior to all these recent developments, Babur had long been eagerly waiting for such an opportunity.(30)

On the eve of his invasion in 1519, Babur sent his ambassador named Mulla Murshid to Dawlat Khan and Ibrahim Lodhi to negotiate the restoration of the Timuride dominions in India. But neither Dawlat Khan nor Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi met him and he returned without getting anything in hands. On account of an attack on Kabul by Shah Beg Argon, Babur had to leave Bhera for Kabul. Afterwards, Babur sent an advance army with Alam Khan and after some time joined them and marched towards Lahore and Dipalpur, which they occupied on 1523. Again he went back to Kabul. On the course of his way back near Peshawar a meeting was arranged by Khalifa between Babur and Dawlat Khan.

Babur Nama, which was resumed from November 17, 1526, gives a vivid account of the Babur's fifth invasion of India. On December 9, 1525, he came to Peshawar through Khyber Pass. A deal was concluded between Alam Khan, Ghazi Khan and Dilawar Khan. They forget their past differences and decided to restore Dawlat Khan on Punjab while Alam Khan should occupy the throne of Delhi. Thus Alam Khan at once assumed the title of Sultan Ala-ud-Din and started preparation for a final assault on Delhi. Ismael Jilwani and Shahzada Sulaiman Farmuli, governor of Idri, also joined him. Thus his army swelled to about 30 to 40 thousand and encamped at a point twelve miles from Delhi. But at the end an advance army of Ibrahim Lodhi defeated Alam Khan. He fled to Doab and took shelter in the fort of Ginguta. It was the state of affairs in India and Babur kept his vigilant eyes on all these events. Dawlat Khan sent his grandson Ismael Khan to Babur and after some time surrendered with a lot of shame. Babur imprisoned him

and his property was distributed among the Mughal soldiers. He met with his natural death probably in the prison at Bhera. Frustration prevailed in the ranks of Dilawar Khan and Alam Khan who soon offered submission to Babur. Rana Sanga of Mewar and Hussain Khan Mewati also promised of their help to Babur against Sultan Ibrahim.

On February 26, 1526, Humayun defeated an advance army of the Sultan at Hissar Ferozah. Another advance party of the Sultan was routed out in the vicinity of Doab. After these defeats Ibrahim Lodhi went out from Delhi with one hundred thousand cavalry under him. On April 12, Babur also reached to the town of Panipat and encamped there at a distance of 12 miles from the camp of Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi. On April 21, Ibrahim marched upon the Mughals and directed his attack on the right wing of Babur's army and a general war started. The Afghans pressing from the front and both wings were caught by confusion and were unable to advance or retire. Sultan Ibrahim fought with usual courage and bravery. The Mughal artillery caused much panic in his army attempting to flee. Some fifteen thousand Afghans were killed including Ibrahim, Shadi Khan and Raja Bikramajit. The dead body of Ibrahim was found in the midst of six thousand slain soldiers. On the order of Babur, Dilawar Khan found his body and was brought before Babur, who exclaimed, "*praised be thy heroism.*" Dilawar Khan and Amir Khalifa buried his body on the same spot where he had died. The same day Babur entered Delhi and ordered that *Khutba* to be read and *Sikkha* to be issued in his name. Humayun captured Agra on May 5, and Babur founded the Mughal dynasty with Delhi, Agra and Punjab under him.(31)

After his victory in Panipat, Babur shaped his policy towards the Afghan nobles with two aims in mind. Elimination of the powerful Afghans around Agra and Delhi and winning their support against Rana Sanga was his foremost objectives. He proclaimed general amnesty for the time being and warmly received those Afghans who joined him and admitted them into the Mughal nobility. A large number of them submitted.(32) But still he was not completely sure of their loyalty and hence kept them at a distance from one another. He sent Alam Khan Lodhi to Gwalior and Muhammad Zaiton to Sambhal. According to *Tarikh-i-Khurshid Jahan*, Babur treacherously murdered Dawlat Khan Lodhi. Afterward, the mother of Ibrahim Lodhi was banished from the

palace and then killed on the plea that she tried to kill Babur by giving him poison in meal. Ghazi Khan Tareen and Alam Khan were put to death in front of his courtiers in palace.(33) Moreover, if one observes the political response of the Afghan tribes and their chiefs to the Babur invasion, it is amply clear that the reaction of the Afghans were tribal in nature. Babur dealt almost the whole of them separately. And the Afghan at that time completely failed to have a combined or united approach to the Mughal invasion. Or the elements of nationalism were altogether absent in their organizational structure. The Afghans were largely under the influence of a confusing type of tribal parochialism. If unity ever prevailed among them, they could have been such a formidable force which could rule over India and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, some Afghan nobles joined Rana Sanga against Babur. Probably they realized their futility of joining Babur, who was their political rival. They thought that like Timur, Babur after sacking and looting Delhi, would return to his native land. But quite contrary to their expectations, Babur decided to stay in India. Soon resistance was launched against the Mughals by the Afghans. Hence the rebellion of Ilyas Khan in Mian Doab, of Qutb Khan in Chandwar and of Babban Khan in Kanauj occurred in intervals. After the death of Sultan Muhammad Nuhani, the centre of gravity of the Afghans shifted to Bihar where they joined hands with Sultan Mahmud Lodhi, brother of Ibrahim who fled to Bengal after the battle of Panipat. Some Afghan nobles, who had earlier joined Babur, also shifted their loyalty and rallied round Sultan Mahmud Lodhi. Though the assemblage of the Afghans was a new development but it hardly hindered Babur's designs because militarily he was in a better position as compare to Sultan Mahmud Lodhi.(34)

Qazi Zia was among those who informed Babur about the large-scale preparation of the Afghans in Bihar. Sultan Mahmud also took maximum advantages of Babur's preoccupation elsewhere. Initially, the Mughals were driven away from Shamsabad, Kanauj and Lucknow and the Afghans occupied the entire region. It seemed that the Afghans ceased their factions and almost all chiefs, except Lohanis, took the battle against Babur. Sher Khan Sur, a de facto ruler of Bihar at that time also joined them and formed an advance army of the Afghans.(35) On December 19, 1528, Babur sent Mirza Askari against them and he

himself proceeded towards Rapri, Etowah and crossed the Ganges. At Ghazipur, a number of Afghans deserted Mahmud Lodhi including Sher Khan Sur. Many other Afghan nobles who were not sure of their success against Babur decided to offer submission including Jalal-ud-Din Sharqi, Taj Khan Sarang Khani and Shah Mahmud Farmuli, Sher Khan Sur, Alau Khan Sur, many Farmuli Shaikhzadas, Jalal Khan Lohani and his mother Dudu.

In February 1529, Babur occupied his lost territories including Sambhal and Kanauj. Then he marched further against Mahmud Lodhi whose army became weak because of large-scale desertion. Without facing Mughal army, he fled to Bengal and took asylum with Nusrat Shah, the then ruler of Bengal. Babur faced the combined army of Nusrat Shah and Mahmud Lodhi at Ghaghara on 6 May 1529, and inflicted a crushing defeat on them. With that defeat at Ghaghara, resistance of the Afghan in the east came to an end.(36)

Sher Shah Suri and Humayun

Till his death, in December 1530, though Babur considerably diminished the Afghan menace but had not completely liquidated the Afghan power in the eastern region. Due to their close attachment with the Lodhis, a large number of Afghans arrived in Bihar from different parts of India and permanently settled there. The Nuhanis made a bid to restore their position and regain the throne of Bihar. But they did not succeed. The main problem was the absence of an able leader to infuse into them a new vigour and to guide them against the Mughals. A man of character and talent was required to provide them cohesion and divert their energies through which they could achieve the desired results. Hence the rise of Sher Shah in such circumstances was welcomed by majority of the Afghans.(37) He learned from the blunders of his predecessors and emerged as a national hero of the Afghans in India. His efforts culminated in the expulsion of Humayun and the subsequent establishment of the Sur Afghan Dynasty in India.

Trough Junaid Barlas, Sher Khan entered the services of Babur and took part in the expedition of Chanderi. He also exploited the Mughal soldiery and recovered his own *Jagirs*. Having submitted to the Mughal authority, Sher Khan was duty bound to attend the court of Babur at Agra. He closely studied and observed the military tactics of the Mughals and their administrative structure. At Agra,

he came into contact with Babur. Though describing the siege of Chanderi, Babur did not mention Sher Khan in his autobiography, but in recording the events of February 1529, he writes that Sher Khan had joined Mahmud Lodhi.(38) Once an incident took place at the court of Babur due to which Sher Khan left Delhi without the permission of the king.(39)

From the very beginning Sher Khan was convinced that the Mughals were in no way stronger and superior to the Afghans and that the Afghans had lost their empire because of their internal petty disputes and disunity. He thoroughly studied the strategies of the Mughals and formed an opinion that their ministers and chiefs could be seduced through bribery and gold.(40) Therefore, he was determined and felt confident to bring unity and cohesion to the Afghans and of driving the Mughals out of India. Afterwards he started to play a wise game and wished to keep the Mughals in dark about his real designs. He discussed the matter with his brother Nizam Khan and informed about his intentions and told him that he had no faith in the Mughals. He wrote a letter to Junaid Barlas and sent it with presents and apologized for his sudden departure from the court. Then he went to the court of Sultan Muhammad at Bihar. Thus he again joined his old master and patron, who received him with much delight and reinstated him as the deputy and tutor of his minor son Jalal Khan. After the death of Sultan Muhammad, Sher Khan Suri became the virtual ruler of the kingdom of Bihar, a post that he filled with brilliant success. The influence, which he exerted over the young Jalal Khan, has excited much jealousy and opposition of the nobles of Bihar. They tried to poison the ears of Jalal Khan against Sher Khan, who conceived the mad idea of flying to Bengal and requested the ruler of Bengal for his help against Sher Khan. Thus a battle was fought between Sher Khan and the Bengali army. The Bengalis were defeated and Sher Khan stood victorious. He administered properly the *pargana* with utmost care and warned his Afghan soldiers against unjust and arrogant behaviour with the local population. His victory also won him the favour of Lad Malika, the widow of Sultan Muhammad. Afterwards, he was on the point of being recognized as virtual ruler of Bihar. He also tried to win over the support of other Afghan *malaks* as far as possible.(41)

For Sher Khan an unfavourable development took place when some Afghan *malaks* of Bihar and Bengal invited Sultan Mahmud, the son of Sultan Sikandar Lodhi and an official candidate for the throne of Delhi. Sultan Mahmud, after the battle of Kanawha had taken refuge in Chittor. Majority of the influential Afghan chiefs and *malaks* including Azam Humayun, Isa Khan, Ibrahim Khan, Bayazid Farmuli and Mian Biban Jiwani went to Patna and rendered their enthusiastic support to Sultan Mahmud. Thus Sher Khan's scheme of seizing the leadership of the Afghan nation suffered a temporary blow. But he was wise enough to obtain a *firman* from Sultan Mahmud bestowing upon him the kingdom of Bihar as soon as Jaunpur and the districts to the west should have recovered by the Afghans.

For the moment, the death of Babur spread discord and confusion in the files and ranks of the Mughals. Sher Khan decided to exploit indolent and easy-going Humayun and to make use of the Mughals to secure the leadership of his own people. He also foresaw the jealousies between Biban and Bayazid, two influential Afghan *malaks* and leading figures of his army. According to Abbas Sarwani, the other Afghan *malaks* accused him as an ally of the Mughals. Therefore, before marching on Jaunpur, they first swooped down upon Sher Khan and compelled him to reinforce them against the Mughals. The Afghans under Sultan Mahmud recaptured Jaunpur and then advanced towards Lucknow. Here Sher Khan secretly wrote to Hindu Beg that he had been reluctantly joined the Afghans and that he would leave them on the day of the battle. It clearly manifests his fitness for the task he was struggling. He showed his loyalty to Sultan Mahmud and the same time negotiated terms with the Mughals. Sher Khan deserted the Afghan main army, which caused great panic and consequently their power was completely broken. Sultan Mahmud seeing no chance of success abdicated his claim and settled as *jagirdar* at Patna.(42)

Sher Khan's alliance with the Mughals was just a diplomatic venture for the purpose to achieve his own goal. Thus he enhanced his sphere of influence and strengthened his position. Humayun though did not consider him harmful but prepared his army to reduce him to submission. When Sher Khan heard the news of Humayun's marching eastward, sent a protest. He assured Humayun of his loyalty and non-interference with the Emperor in any way. But for Humayun it was not the time to ignore the growing power

of the Afghans in Bengal. On the other hand, the death of Junaid Barlas also left the eastern provinces in a state of confusion, which was aggravated by Sher Khan's rapid successes in Bengal. Thus Humayun was bent upon to crush the Afghan power in the east. He marched towards Bengal but received the news of capture of Gaur, the capital of Bengal by Sher Khan. Plenty of booty including the insignia of royalty fell into his hands. Mahmud Shah, the king of Bengal rushed to Humayun's camp and requested for shelter there. Humayun sent his envoy to Sher Khan for negotiation but the uncompromising attitude of Mahmud Shah was mainly responsible for the failure of the whole process. Sher Khan gained considerable advantage from every moment of negotiation and replaced his treasury to the fort of Rohtas. Then he let Humayun to enter into Bengal and seized the entire area and the most strategic passes including Bihar. He cut off all the communications of Humayun with Agra and Delhi. Humayun occupied Gaur without much difficulty in 1538, but took no pain to befriend the local population or to properly manage the administration of the conquered areas. Between the rainy season of 1538 and the cold weather of 1538-39, Humayun wasted his time but the Afghans were not idle. Sher Khan exploited all the opportunities and organized all his resources for a final encounter with the Mughals.(43)

Humayun received another blow when the news of the desertion of his brother Hindal reached his camp. Hindal threw off his allegiance and went to Agra. His desertion had completely placed the entire communication links of Humayun completely on Sher Khan's mercy. The Afghans had seized the areas of Mungher, Banaras, Sambhal and the entire area west of Bengal. They also collected the revenue for both the autumn and the spring harvest from all these areas. Like his predecessor Bahlul Lodhi, Sher Khan also made an appeal to all the Afghans *malaks* and impressed upon them the need for a united action. Around this time he assumed the title of 'Shah' and marched out to meet the Mughals. Humayun on his part advanced from Patna to Monia with his usual coolness and on the fourth day reached Chaunsa. Sher Shah also appeared with a great force under his command to resist the Mughals.

While Humayun was at Chaunsa confronting the Afghans, Hindal occupied the Royal Palace at Agra and issued *firman*s in his name. This was an open revolt against Humayun. Humayun send

messages to Kamran, the governor of the Punjab and the most powerful of his brothers to come to his rescue. But Kamran's advisers persuaded him not to help Humayun. Thus Kamran and Hindal left Humayun to his unfortunate fate.(44)

From April to June 1539, Humayun and Sher Shah confronted each other. Sher Shah tactfully delayed his course of action. With long delays Humayun became desperate. At last on 26 June 1539, Sher Khan stormed the Mughal camp. He inflicted huge losses upon Humayun soldiers. Humayun was wounded in his arm, fled from the field. He attempted to swim his horse across the Ganges. He was half-drowned but his life was saved by a water carrier who offered him an inflated *mashk*. Nearly seven or eight thousands Mughal soldiers perished. Gul Badan Begum mentioned the names of several notable ladies of the harem of whom no trace could be found in spite of diligent search. Humayun's Queen Haji Begum fell into the hand of the Afghans but the victors honourably treated her. Sher Shah issued an immediate order that no Mughal women should be made captive or enslaved and that the family of officers left behind should be conducted safely to the camp of Empress.(45)

Humayun made his escape from the battlefield and was pursued by Sher Shah's Gaur's party. At this crucial juncture Raja Bir Bhan of Arail helped Humayun to escape death. Humayun left Kalpi and hurriedly went to Agra where he met his disloyal brothers to decide the future course of their action against Sher Khan. Afghans were now supreme in Bengal and Bihar and Sher Shah openly announced his title. He ordered the *Sikkha* should be struck and *Khutba* should be read in his name and assumed the additional title of Shah Alam. Isa Khan prepared the *firman* of victory and the Afghan youths came from the surrounding areas to celebrate the victory with their traditional tribal dance.(46)

Sher Shah was now the undisputed master of Bengal, Bihar and the whole country west of Kanauj and the dominions of Humayun had shrunk to little more than Delhi and Agra. He was now convinced of the Afghan's power and saw clearly that success against them was impossible without unity of plan and purpose. Another encounter between the Afghan and the Mughals took place at Kanauj. According to some historian, Panipat was revenged at Kanauj by Sher Shah. Humayun succeeded in saving his life, he left Delhi for Serhind from where he went to Multan. But Sher Shah was determined to expel Humayun from India at any cost. He

dispatched a force, which shepherded him out of the boundaries of India. Another force followed Kamran who was retreating to Kabul.

When the task had been successfully accomplished and having expelled the Mughals from the country, there remained the less difficult task of ordering the affairs of the state. Sher Shah intended to plant Afghans from Roh in the tract of land from Nilab to Lahore so their swords might serve as a barrier against the return of the Mughals to India. Without any difficulties he turned his attention towards the subjugation of different areas and between 1540 and 1545, he conquered Bengal, Malwa, Raisin, Rajasthan, Multan and Sindh.

The institutions, which he devised for the better administration of these areas, won him the admiration and esteem of friends and foes alike. His great achievement was his unremitting industry with which he united the scattered Afghans and provided them a strong bond of cohesiveness and eliminated from their minds the separatist tendencies. In 1545, Sher Shah turned his attention to subdue the fort of Bundelkhand. Kirat Singh, the ruler of Kalinjar did not come to offer his submission and started preparation for resistance. Therefore, the Afghans besieged the fort of Kalinjar and Sher Shah himself directed the operation and ordered loaded rockets to be discharged. One of these rocket rebounded from the wall and tailing on the ground and blew up the whole magazine. Sher Shah along with Shaikh Khalil, Shaikh Nizam and Babu, another young man were dreadfully burnt. Sher Shah directed his soldiers to continue the siege and do the best to capture the fort. According to Abbas, the chiefs and commanders attacked the fort from all the sides succeeded in their attempt. With his face lit up with joy Sher Shah hearing the news died on May 22, 1545.(47)

The death of Sher Shah brought confusion and discard to the Afghans. He did not nominate any successor to the throne. But amid anarchy and disorder Jalal Khan ascended the throne and assumed the title of Islam Shah. During this time, the disgruntled Afghan chiefs began to show signs of insubordination. But he adopted very rigid policy towards these elements and many of them were put to death. He strengthened his position by crushing the power of the rebel nobles and stationed troops throughout the kingdom. Islam Shah was succeeded by Muhammad Adil (1553-57). During his time the Sur Empire divided into five parts and with the decline of

the central authority, the old separatist tendencies of the Afghans once more asserted themselves. The independent governor of Punjab Sikandar Shah marched on Delhi and expelled the unfortunate Ibrahim. Bengal was independent under Muhammad Shah Sur. In the north, Sindh, Malwa and Gujarat had been in a distracted condition. The Afghans were fighting themselves and the rest of the country seemed to be indifferent to what was happening around them. Already with the death of Salim Shah, the Mughals had started their preparation. In the beginning of 1554, Humayun gathered equipments for his army in Kabul. He also got rid of his turbulent and selfish brothers and captured Qandahar. In November, he started his march and in December 1554, he reached to Peshawar via Jalalabad. This was very favourable time for Humayun because all the fighting men of the Afghan were in Delhi with Sultan Sikandar Shah, still busy in consolidating his position. Therefore, the fort of Rohtas, which was built by Sher Shah for such emergency, was captured without any resistance. The chiefs of Lahore submitted and Humayun entered the city on February 24, 1555. At Lahore Humayun settled the country and collected the revenue from the people. At Dipalpur, Shah Abdul Ma'ali defeated an advanced party of the Afghan under Shahbaz Khan and Nasir Khan and the Mughal force proceeded to Jalandhar and expelled the Afghans from the town. Sultan Sikandar Sur divided his army into two sections. Tatar Khan with 30,000 soldiers under him marched towards Serhind. The Mughal soldiers moved from Jalandhar towards Macchiwara on the bank of the Sutlej. Bairam Khan, the most trusted and loyal noble of Humayun wrote to the Emperor about the inadequacy of his force. But Humayun infused into them with new energy and vigour. Due to superior war strategy on the part of Bairam Khan, the Afghans were at last routed out and began to flee from the battlefield. After this victory, the whole of the Punjab, Serhind and Hissar Ferozah came under the Mughals. The incessant attacks of Humayun on the dependencies of Delhi alarmed Sultan Sikandar. He started preparation, gathered his entire force and went out from Delhi to meet the Mughals.

On May 28, 1555 Humayun reached Serhind and the morale of the Mughal soldiers boosted up. Discouraged by the presence of the Humayun, Sultan Sikandar constructed a forfeited camp to block the road to Delhi. The Afghans were defeated and Humayun ascended once again the throne of Delhi on Tuesday, July 23, 1555.

Conclusion

The nature and temperament of the Mughal-Mughal Afghan conflict was political. They proved to be the toughest rival of each-others not only in the Afghan borderland but also in India and Afghanistan. In terms of political and military strategies the Mughal invaders exhibited outstanding capabilities. While in most of the cases the Afghans resistance was tribal, however among them Sher Shah Suri was a superb leader and military commander. The ideal of Sher Shah was to bring about regeneration among the Afghans. To a large extent he succeeded in bringing them on a common platform and infused them a new spirit. Thus under the brilliant leadership of Sher Shah, they tried their best to retain unity, understanding and cohesion among each-others. Their co-operation with the central authority and devotion towards the Afghan Empire cherished the lofty ideal of kingship, which they considered a sacred and hard duty to perform. Sher Shah used to say, “It behoves the great to be always very active.” But this kind of feeling was altogether absent among Sher Shah’s successors and other Afghan chiefs. They waged wars and struggled more for their personal and petty goals and thus shattered the very bases of the Afghan Empire. Consequently, their dissention ruined the larger cause of the Afghans in India. In the years to come, many Afghan leaders tried their level best to protect their independence at least in the north-western frontier region. Some of them were spiritual leaders while other led particular tribes in resistance the Mughal authorities.



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 17. Halim, History of the Lodi Sultans, pp. 171-72.
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24. Muazzam Shah, *Tawarikh-i-Hafiz Rahmat Khani*.
 25. Bakhtani, *Babur au Pukhtana*, pp. 81-83.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
 29. Siddiqui, *Some Aspects of Afghan*, pp. 37-38.
 30. For instance the post of Dar-al-Mulk Delhi was bestowed upon Haibat Khan Gurgandaz, Karim Dad Togh and Dawlat Khan Indar. Shahzada Manjhu was given the muqta of Chanderi. These appointments must have caused discontentment among the sensitive Afghan nobles who still held important positions. But they did not conceal their feeling and grievances when the Sultan dismissed his able but aged wazir Mian Bhua and Azam Humayun Sarwani. The natural outcome of this highhandedness was that wide spread rebellions broke out in every part of the Sultanate against the Sultan.
 31. William Erskin, *A History of India under Babur* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 412-13.
 32. Halim, *History of the Lodi Sultans*, pp. 171-90.
 33. For instance Shaikh Ghuran of Koel, Ali Khan Farmuli and other Afghan leaders who joined Babur after Humayun defeated Sultan Muhammad Nuhani. Before the battle of Kanawha, Hussain Nuhani of Rapri, Alam Khan Lodi of Kalpi, Haibat Khan Gurgandaz and Sher Khan joined and assisted Babur in his campaigns.
 34. Gandapur, *Tarikh-i-Khurshid Jahan*, p. 253.
 35. Joshi, *The Afghan Nobility*, pp. 39-45.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. The original name of Sher Khan was Farid. He was the grandson of Ibrahim Sur and the son of Hussain. His grandfather had come to India in search of employment in the time of Bahlul Lodhi, from their original homeland near Peshawar and joined services in the Punjab. Farid is said to have been born in the Punjab in 1472 AD. After his birth, both his grandfather and father entered the services of Jamal Khan in the Punjab. When Jamal Khan was transferred to Jaunpur in the time of Sikandar Lodhi, he granted the jagir of Sahsaram, Khawaspur and Thanda to Hussain in Bihar. As Farid was a brilliant and promising youth, he caught the eye of Jamal Khan, the patron of his father. Due to his father's extreme love for his slave girls and indifferent attitude to Farid's
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mother, he left his home and went to Jaunpur but after some time they were reconciled. However, he again left his home due to his father favoritism.

39. Zahir-ud-Din Babur, *Tuzk-i-Baburi*, Eng. tr., Annette S. Beveridge (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publication, 1979), pp. 651-659.
 40. Once Sher Shah was at Delhi to pay his allegiance to Babur in a banquet at which he was served with a plateful of some strange dishes not known in his country. Being an Afghan he, without hesitation, cut it into pieces with his dagger to the amusement of Babur, who said to Khalifa, one of his trusted noble: 'keep an eye on Sher Khan; he is a clever man and the marks of royalty are visible on his forehead.' When Babur turned away to other things, Sher Khan at once left the banquet and hurriedly left for Sahsaram. Later on, he used to say that during his attendance at court he acquired full insight into the manners and habits of the Mughals. So it would not be difficult for the Afghans to expel them from their home country. All the contemporary historians had mentioned this event including Abbas Sarwani, Abul Fazal and Niamatullah. Abbas had given the name of the dish as Ash mahicha.
 41. Ishwari Prasad, *the Life and Time of Humayun*, (Calcutta: Orient Longman Ltd, 1956), pp. 109-113.
 42. Ibid.
 43. Ibid., pp. 109-113.
 44. Ibid., pp. 120-121.
 45. Ibid., 127.
 46. Ibid., 128.
 47. Ibid., pp. 132-133.
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