

MONGOL-AFGHAN CONFLICT DURING THE DELHI SULTANS

Most of the inquiries produced by historians on medieval and Mughal India usually limited the scope of the Mughal-Afghan conflict only to the period of the Greater Mughals (1526-1707). In fact, there occurred some major Afghan uprisings during the Mughal era, but one cannot overlook the relationship of Mongols, the predecessors of the Mughals, during the Delhi Sultans. The available literature on the subject revealed an overlapping development of the events occurred in Kabul, the Afghan borderland and the Delhi Sultanate. As the Afghans lay on the main route of the Mongol invaders, therefore their policy and response towards them must be judged to understand its varying dimensions. Both the nations portrayed a tribal, social and political cohesion which made them a little closer with each-others. The paper aims at to discover the activities of the Afghan nobility in India during the Mongol's Indian invasion. The objective of the study is to discover the changed dynamics of their approach to each-others and to comprehend its relative impact on the then political scene. It would try to explore the real cause of the conflict between the two martial races.

The Emergence of Afghan Nobility in India

At the dawn of the eleventh century the Afghans were influential and politically strong in eastern Afghanistan, Peshawar, the borderland areas and its suburbs. One Shaikh Hamid Lodhi was a *jagirdar* (fief-holder) in Laghman and Multan on behalf of a Hindu Raja Jaipal. Raja Jaipal concluded a treaty with him, through which Raja Jaipal conferred his suzerainty on Laghman and the surrounding areas and he, in return, agreed to guard the frontier against the inroads of the Arabs. During the Hindu Shahi Dynasty some Afghans attained

important positions. *Fakhr-i-Mudabbir* has mentioned Adhira Afghan as *kotwal* under Jaipal. Subaktagin, after ascending the throne of Ghazni, also befriended Shaikh Hamid and retained his *jagir* (fief). After the death of Shaikh Hamid, his son Nasr succeeded him. The last influential *jagirdar* in this line was Fatah Khan Daud, who was attacked by Mahmud Ghaznavi due to his adoption and propagation of Ismaelite sect. Subsequently *the jagir* of Multan and Laghman was taken away from him.²

In the available literature the subsequent history of the Afghans was very little recorded. They were reduced to submission by Mahmud Ghaznavi and recruited them as mercenaries in his army for his Indian campaigns. They trickled into the Indian mainland when a large number of them got permanent settlement along with their families. At that time, Peshawar was an important and strategic place and its importance was next to Ghazni. Several local Afghan officers including Abdur Razzaq and Mubarak Mard administered it on behalf of the Ghaznavidi Sultans.³

The Afghans also formed a significant contingent in the army of Muhammad Ghori, himself an Afghan. About twelve thousand Afghans fought under their leader Malik Mahmud Lodhi on the side of Muhammad Ghori against Prithvi Raj Chauhan. Malak Shahu, brother of Mahmud Lodhi, was also a leading figure in the court of Muhammad Ghori. The Afghans also enjoyed favour in the courts of Qutb-ud-din Aibak and Sultan Iltutmish. It has been said that Sultan Iltutmish employed them in his army to counteract the recalcitrant Turkish nobility who had gained much power and influence during his reign.⁴

Mongols' Indian Adventurism

The term of 'Mongol' or 'Mughal' has been used for a number of nations by the European historians. The original word was '*Mungkur*' which was used to denote brave and courageous people. They belonged to an old Turkish tribal race which lived in Siberia. Herodotus referred to them with the name of 'Sabhtin' while Chinese people used the name of 'Hangtohano' for them. Their first abode was the area of Gobi desert and the

Tundra region. According to Bahadar Shah Zafar Kaka Khel, Mughal and Mongol are the same words which represent the same meaning.⁵

Like the hard climate of the Afghans' abode, the environment of Mongolia, most of the time wrought by rainstorms, snowstorms and sandstorms. The first Mongols' tribal settlement has been recorded in the area between the Onon and Kerulen rivers, tributaries of Amur River. The steppes was chosen by one of their tribal leader Bodonchar because of its fertile fields and geographically safe from the attacks of other tribes and Chinese adventurers. In their habitat they spoke a variety of languages mostly of Turkic origin. Very little history is recorded of these tribes before the emergence of Genghiz Khan. Before coming into prominence, Mongols referred to themselves as Turks and their language as Tatar.⁶ In fact, Mongol and Tatars had spent times mostly in the same locality and their history was shaped by overlapping events. The Tatar tribes, in fact, were the rivals of the Mongols. They mostly lived in fields near Lake Buyur, Lake Kolun and near Khingan hills. Corresponding to the Afghan social cohesion, there were tribes divided into several other sub-clans dwelling in the hard steppes of Mongolia. The Mongol tribe itself was divided into two leading branches: Taijiut and Borjigin, the tribe of Genghiz Khan. These tribes were often at war with each-others on petty issues.

During Sultan Qutb-ud-din Aibak's time, the Mongols, appeared in the East of India and emerged as a great power under the leadership of Genghiz Khan (1165-1227).⁷ He was born in 1165 to Yesugei and Hoelun. He was brought up by his ablest mother Hoelun after his father was poisoned to death by Tatars. In his incessant wars, he exhibited such remarkable traits of heroism and diplomacy that led him to transform the entire social and military structure of Mongolia. Along with tactics of diplomacy, Genghiz Khan ruthlessly crushed his adversaries in the open battlegrounds. In 1189 the chiefs of Mongol tribal confederacy conferred on him the title of Genghiz Khan.

However, it was in fact, during the Kuriltay ceremony of all the united tribes held in 1206 that he adopted this title.⁸

Temujin, as he was popularly known, Genghiz Khan proved himself master of the time and established Mongol power in the East. He turned the barbaric Mongol tribes into a strong and formidable force through his leadership, discipline and organizational abilities. Between 1207 and 1215 Genghiz invaded northern China and sacked Peking. However, after the death of Genghiz Khan the world witnessed the Mongol conquests of Europe and Asia within the span of a century.

During these developments in Mongolia, the Sultanate of Delhi had faced many internal and external challenges. On external front it felt threatened by the growing power of the Khwarzamsahs and the Mongols, the later knocking at its north-western border. For the first time the Mongols came into contact with the Afghans when Genghiz Khan undertook his attacks on the forces of Jalal-ud-Din Khwarzam Shah. In these battles Afghans fought on the side of Khwarzam Shah and once inflicted a crushing defeat on the Mongol army near Parwan (Afghanistan). After winning the ground, Khwarzam Shah was unable to devise a good strategy of keeping the Mongols at bay and to manage the situation with skills. In the meantime, the vulnerable combined army of Khwarzam Shah and Afghans came under a severe attack of the Mongols. As a result many Afghans were perished and their influx was abandoned towards Khwarzam Shah.⁹

In 1222 AD, Genghiz Khan returned towards Ghazni and completely ruined the great city of era. His successors ruled over Afghanistan till 1251, and the present ethnic stocks of Hazaras are the descendants of those Mongols who permanently settled in Afghanistan. In 1245, the area of Herat was entrusted to Shams-ud-Din Kurt, an Afghan Malak. He administered the region on behalf of the Mongols. However, with the degeneration of the Mongols' power, Ghayas-ud-Din, fourth ruler of the Kurt family, was strong enough to declare independence from the Mongol yoke. In 1383, Timur Lame

overthrew this Afghan Kurt dynasty. He was the son of a *sardar* belonged to the Barlas Tatar tribe of Turkish origin, while from his mother side he was a Mongol a descendent of Genghiz Khan.¹⁰

While chasing Jalal-ud-Din Khwarzam Shah, Genghiz Khan stormed Afghanistan and the territories nowadays parts of Pakistan. Initially, Jalal-ud-Din defeated an advance Mongol army with the help of the Afghan fighters. However after the coming of Genghiz Khan, Jalal-ud-Din left Ghazni and entered into the areas of the Delhi Sultanate and encamped at the west bank of river Indus. In December 1221 AD, Genghiz Khan followed him and crushed his army while he fled crossing the Indus waters. He was given refuge by the Delhi Sultan. Genghiz Khan marched back due to hot summer. But in his way back he devastated the present day Punjab, Afghan borderland, Ghazni and Herat.¹¹

After Genghiz Khan's invasion it became a precedent for the later Mongols and afterwards for the Mughals to frequently cross over the Afghan borderland in their onward march to India. This trend was made a continue practice in the historical development of the region. During Bahram Shah's time (1240-42) the Mongols invaded Lahore under Bahadar Tair, a lieutenant of Chaghtai Khan, a son of Genghiz Khan. They captured Lahore on December 22, 1241, and massacred its population. Again encouraged by the intrigues in the court of Ala-ud-Din Masud (1242-46), the Mongols captured Multan in 1245, and besieged the city of Uchch. But they had to retired from the area due to some ugly developments in Mongol Khanate.¹²

After the death of Genghiz Khan in 1227, his empire was divided between his sons, in which Chaghtai Khan received Kashgharia and most parts of modern Afghanistan. After a prolonged civil war with varying intervals, at last Dava or Deva succeeded and ruled for about thirty-two years. He was the upholder of the Mongol cause in the Indian territories and between 1296 and 1301 launched several attacks on Sindh,

Punjab, Multan, Peshawar, Delhi and Lahore. Afterwards, anarchy prevailed in the Mongol dominion which further was divided between a numbers of contenders. In Transoxiana the emerging political scene was more intricate due to which anarchy prevailed for about fifty years. In this state of affairs, Amir Timur, a Tatar, conquered most of the area and proclaimed himself master of the land, brought back order and controlled the mischief mongers with iron hands.¹³

Halaku Khan, who founded the Il Khan dynasty in Persia, had no aggressive designs regarding the Delhi Sultanate and was always keen to establish friendly relations with the Sultans. But on account of his large-scale atrocities and high-handedness in Western and Central Asia, many people were dislocated; majority of them migrated to India and settled there. Moreover, Halaku seemed to have been adopted a policy of non-involvement in the affairs of the Delhi Sultanate. He considered the territories of Sindh, Uchch and Multan as enough under Mughal vassalage and regarded these areas as a buffer zone between the Il Khan of Persia and Delhi Sultanate.

Afghans and the Mongols in India

In the initial phase successive Sultans of Delhi tried to win over the Mongols by conciliation and diplomacy but after Sultan Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud's reign (1246-66), their policies were changed and a more aggressive approach was adopted in dealing with the Mongol's menace. Ghayas-ud-Din Balban, first as *wazir* (1245-66) and then Sultan (1266-86), was never overawed by the Mongol terror. He devised a well-defined and articulated forward policy and led a punitive expedition against the Raja of Koh-i-Jud who had supported the Mongols since Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud's time. As a result, Lahore and Multan were regained from them. The damaged walls of the Lahore fort were repaired and as a part of his forward policy, Balban won over the support of the tribes like Khokars, Jats, Rajputs and Afghans, who lived on western frontier.¹⁴ It was around this time that the Afghans came into prominence in the court of the Delhi rulers. Balban recruited three thousands Afghans in subduing the hill tribe of Mewat. Threatened by the incursion of the Mongols,

Balban concentrated on the security of the Sultanate from the north-western side. For this purpose the Afghan commanders, *sawars* (horse-riders) and other regular mercenaries were deployed in a large number at strategic places in the Sultanate. Major frontier forts were mainly garrisoned by the Afghans at that time. One of them Ahmad Nabi Khan was given the fort of Dipalpur, who maintained a well-equipped army of several thousand horsemen under him. In Multan, the contingent under the command of Prince Muhammad Khan was largely composed of the Afghan soldiers.¹⁵

In the process of establishing a strong defence line, Balban built new forts and young Afghan recruits were stationed there. In the internal security apparatus, they were entrusted with the charge of military outposts (*thanas*) around Delhi and the *parganas* of Jalali, Patiali, Kampila and Bhojpur with a view to defend these important places and to suppress the dacoits and highway robbers.¹⁶ In 1285 AD, the Mongols invaded Multan and killed Prince Muhammad Khan. This was the greatest of the shocks received by Balban. In the same invasion they captured Amir Khusrow Dihlavi, the famous poet. However after some time he managed his escape from the Mongols and safely reached Delhi. Amir Khusrow once narrated the description of Mughals, his captors, in the following words:

Their eyes were so narrow and piercing that they might have bored a hole in a brazen vessel, and their stench was more horrible than their colour. Their heads were set on their bodies as if they have no necks, and their checks resembled leathern bottles, full of wrinkles and knots. Their noses extended from cheek to cheek and their mouth from cheekbone to cheekbone...their origin is derived from dogs, but they have large bones. The king marvelled at their beastly countenances and said that God had created them out of hell fire.¹⁷

Balban was replaced by Malak Jalal-ud-Din Feroz Khalji, an officer who was a fief-holder of Samana. The

Khaljis¹⁸ ruled over India for some 30 years. During the time of Muhammad Ghauri, Khaljis formed the most important section of the population in Ghazni. One Ikhtiar-ud-Din Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khalji was recruitment officer in the army of Muhammad Ghauri. He came to India with his master during his Indian campaign. He exhibited marvellous bravery in the Indian campaign of Muhammad Ghauri. He had conquered Eastern Bihar and Northern Bengal with only eighteen horsemen in a sensational manner. He overpowered the Hindu ruler of Bengal in 1206, and thus founded the first Khalji dynasty under Ghauride vassalage in Bengal.¹⁹ It indicated that around this time the Afghans would have come and settled down in Bengal and Bihar. After about twenty years Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish overthrew the Khalji dynasty in Bengal in 1226.²⁰

During the Khalji dynasty the Mongol inroads continued with fresh zeal. In 1292, Sultan Jalal-ud-Din defeated a strong Mongol army consisted of 150,000 strong men. Their leader Ulghu, along with his contingent sued for peace and accepted Islam. Most of them permanently settled in India and joined the services under the Khalji rulers of Delhi. Afterwards Jalal-ud-Din, on account of their services for the Sultanate, displayed extra-ordinary attitude towards them. He gave Ulghu, the defeated Mongol commander, his daughter in marriage. Majority of them had acquired residence in the suburbs of Delhi and came to known among the local population as the “New Muslims.”²¹ In this regard Barani wrote that the Mongols, who followed Ulghu, were brought into the city with their wives and children. Provision was made for their support and houses were provided for them in Kilughari and Indarpal. Their locality was called Mughalpur.²² Sultan Jalal-ud-Din Khalji’s relations with the Mongols were to some extent cordial his policy can be termed as a policy of peace.

With the accession of Ala-ud-Din Khalji to the throne of Delhi, the relations between the Mongols of Transoxiana and Afghans deteriorated to a large extent. Like Sultan Jalal-ud-Din, he continued friendly relations with the Il Khanide rulers Ghazan Khan (1295-1304) and Al-Jaitu (1304-16). The former sent an

envoy, Khwaja Rashid-al-Din, to Delhi who was warmly received by Ala-ud-Din. As a gesture of good will a *jagir* also bestowed upon him. Al-Jaitu sent a message of goodwill and warm wishes to Ala-ud-Din at the time of the later succession. But the Sultan faced almost six invasions from another Mongol ruler Deva Khan of Transoxiana, who held bad intentions towards the Sultan due to his friendly relations with Il Khanide rulers of Persia.²³

Unlike his uncle, Ala-ud-Din Khalji (1296-1326) never compromised or reconciled with the Mongols intrusions. From the available literature it can be rightly said that he was extremely harsh as far as his north-western and Mongol policies were concerned. However, despite his strong measures, the inroads of the Mongols continued with frequent intervals. In 1296, Deva Khan, the ruler of Transoxiana, sent an expedition towards India under the command of Kadar with 10,000 soldiers. This time they crossed the river Indus and ravaged the Jud hills. In the vicinity of Jalandhar a fierce battle took place in which the Mongols suffered heavy losses with thousands of them killed and their heads were sent to Delhi. At the time of the invasion the tribes of Koh-i-Jud, unlike their previous track record, remained loyal to Ala-ud-Din Khalji. In the past, these tribes were a constant source of trouble for the Delhi Sultans because they facilitated and provided help to the Mongols in their Indian invasions. However, this time they refused to stand with the Mongol against the Sultan. The manoeuvring of situations in his favour greatly boosted the leverage of the Delhi Sultanate. It strengthened the position of the Sultan in facing the Mongol menace. In the year 1299, the Mongols again faced a humiliating defeat. This time again, their commander was arrested and brought to Delhi along with thousands of other captive soldiers.²⁴

By the end of 1299, Qutlagh Khwaja, a prominent Mongol military general, crossed the river Indus with the intention to avenge the humiliating defeats in the previous battles. "He started from Mavraunnahr," writes Barani, "and passing the Indus with a large force, he marched in the vicinity

of Delhi. In this campaign Delhi was the object of the attack, so the Mongols did not ravage the countries bordering on their march nor did they attack the forts..." He further stated that, "Great anxiety prevailed in Delhi, and the people of the neighbouring villages took refuge within its walls and distress fell upon the people."²⁵ At this critical moment some nobles advised the Sultan that it would be suicidal to face the Mongol and the best plan would be to stand a siege and to tire out their patience. But owing to the great number of the Mongol army, Sultan Ala-ud-Din himself marched out and encamped in the plains of Kilukari where a horrible battle took place between the two armies. In this encounter more than 5,000 Mongols were killed. With the approach of the night, the invading army retreated and returned to their country with another humiliating and formidable defeat. Albeit this battle caused the death of Zafar Khan, a great commander of the Sultan of Delhi, but it also worked as an unyielding warning to Sultan; therefore, he fortified the defence of the Sultanate and built strong forts for the purpose to secure the territorial integrity of his empire.²⁶

These successive defeats greatly hampered the Mongol might. Though they again tried to avenge their repeated defeats but every time they suffered defeats. In December 1305, in one such battle, thousands of Mongols were perished and their leaders Ali Beg and Tartaq were arrested and the heads of the thousands of their soldiers were used in the construction of the Siri. Sultan Ala-ud-Din was wise enough to pardon Ali Beg and Tartaq for the purpose to go back home and create a sense of awe and horror in the Mongol's ranks.²⁷

Ala-ud-Din due to his military reforms, and, partly due to the confusion caused by the death of Deva Khan, the ruler of Transoxiana, adopted an aggressive policy to tackle the Mongols. He followed rather an expansionist policy towards the north-western frontier. He led several expeditions on regular basis to Kabul, Qandahar, and Garmsir and consequently ravaged and in some cases levied tribute from its inhabitants. At that time, there was turmoil, confusion, and chaos and the Mongols in Transoxiana were not in the position to challenge the

authority of the Sultan of Delhi. Even in the territory of Ghazni, the *Khutba* was read in Sultan's name. Due to his wise forward policy, Sultan Ala-u-Din completely secured the north-western border of India. Particularly after 1307; the Mongol completely ceased their raids against Delhi. When this constant problem eliminated, the region of north-western India remained calm and quite and the people of these areas once again carried on their agriculture and business pursuits in peace and tranquillity.²⁸

As stated earlier, those Mongols who permanently settled in and around Delhi were called the "New Muslims or New Mussalmans". Sultan Jalal-ud-Din accorded them great privileges and also established matrimonial relations by giving his daughter to Ulghu, the Mongol leader. However, these "New Muslims" were a constant source of headache for Ala-ud-Din.

In 1297, Ala-ud-Din sent Nusrat Khan and Ulugh Khan to subdue Raja Karan who had been for long enjoyed immunity and an independent status. Consequently the sway of the Sultan over Gujarat was established and after rejoices of the victory, a new development took place. During their march back towards Delhi, Nusrat Khan started distributing the war booty among the soldiers. The allotment caused discontent in the files and ranks of the "New Muslims". The situations aggravated and the drums of danger were sounded. On the plea of injustice in distribution of the war-booty the "New Muslims" mutinied and killed a brother of Nusrat Khan along with a nephew of Ala-ud-Din. They were generally discontented; not entirely without cause, but at that moment Sultan Ala-ud-Din was preoccupied with the Mongols of Transoxiana. Under the prevailing circumstances, Sultan deemed it as an act of treason. He did not tolerate this act on the part of the "New Muslims". As a result, he not only removed all of them from the state services but also blinded Ulghu Khan. It caused great anxiety among them and later some of them hatched a plot to kill the Sultan while he was hawking near Delhi. On the discovery of this plot, Sultan issued an immediate order of the *en masse* massacre of the "New Muslims" both in Delhi and in provinces. Around twenty to thirty thousand were killed and their belongings including wives,

children and property were distributed amongst the state soldiers.²⁹ He thus got rid of them.

In Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq's time there were internal disturbances in the Mongol dominion and they were not able to take notice of the activities beyond the Indus. On the other hand, Afghans continued to enjoy prominence under the Tughlaq Sultans. They needed their services to defend the north-west frontier against the Mongol and to suppress internal rebellion as well.³⁰ Around this time the Afghans gained considerable prominence. With the passage of time, due to their strong influence and power, a number of their commanders revolted but their rebellions were suppressed by Tughlaq Sultans. But one thing is clear that the Afghans lost a golden opportunity to establish an independent kingdom in the Deccan where they were much stronger militarily.

To dominate the eastern part of Central Asia, a war ensued between the Il Khans of Persia and the Chaghtai of Transoxiana. This political rivalry was intensified on account of sectarian bitterness because the Il Khans were Shiite whereas the Chaghtais were Sunnis. The internal rivalry had considerably weakened the military strength of the Mongols. Therefore, when there existed no interruption from the western side, the Afghans shifted their energies to the development and progress of their community. They entered in the imperial services in large number. Bihar and Tughlaqpur were entrusted to Malak Bir Afghan and Muhammad Shah Afghan respectively, where both of them succeeded by their sons. The *iqta* of Rapri was under Malak Khattab Afghan. Malak Mardan Dawlat, the *muqta* of Multan, had largely recruited the Afghans to defend the frontier against the Mongol attacks. Among them was Malak Bahram, the ancestor of Sultan Bahlul Lodi.³¹

The successors of Feroz Shah Tughlaq were too incompetent to handle smoothly the affairs of the Sultanate and the disintegration of the empire took place. A civil war between different claimants to the throne coupled with increased interference in the nomination of the king by the court's nobles

considerably weakened the position of the sultans. About the same time he also suppressed the rebellion of Shaikh Khokar, a former and powerful governor of Lahore. Therefore, he approached Amir Timur and persuaded him to invade India. The Afghan territory was also in disarray due to incessant wars between Sarang Khan and Khizar Khan, the governor of Multan. However Khizar Khan fled to Bayana where he allied himself to Amir Timur in the invasion of India.

Timur's Indian Invasion

It appears from *Babur Nama* and *Malfuzat-i-Timuri* that Amir Timur was ninth in descent from Toman Khan, great-great-grandfather of Chingiz Khan.³² The real aim of his Indian expedition was only to plunder and loot the cities and collect its wealth. He never exercised the idea to subjugate permanently the throne of Delhi. During his campaign he also exploited the services of the Afghans and recruited them in his army. For instance, the Lodis and Shiranis swelled his army with large contingents. He spent almost six months amongst the Afghans in tribal areas. In the first phase of his invasion he started to subdue tribal malaks of the Afghans. Some other Afghan malaks of Roh supported his cause. The famous among them were Malak Sarbani, Malak Khizar Khan Sarwani, Malak Baha-ud-Din Niazi, Malak Yusuf Sarwani and Malak Habib Sarbani.³³ Timur crossed Hindu Kush near Indarab with an army of ninety-two thousands under his command. Before capturing Delhi, he fought a battle with the forces of Sultan Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud Tughlaq.

In Meerut, his soldiers indiscriminately plundered the houses of the common masses. This brutal treatment greatly perturbed the local population, including Hindus and Afghans. They resented this highhandedness and consequently rebelled under the leadership of Ilyas Afghan and Ahmad Thanseri. Equally assisted by the Hindus, the Afghans offered tough resistance to the invading army. Timur besieged the city and a fierce fight took place. At the end the invading army captured the city in January 1399. This incident increased the already existing gulf between the Afghans and the Mongols.³⁴ According to

Tarikh-i-Khurshid Jahan, the brutal devastation of the Afghan houses and the killing of their men was the first case in terms of conflict between the two peoples. Moreover, on his way back to Samarqand, Timur brought havoc in Kabul by large-scale plundering. For the second time he faced the Afghan challenge in Kabul. As a result he destroyed their localities indiscriminately and thousands of them were executed.³⁵

In the last phase of his Indian campaign Timur established a puppet regime in Delhi. On the bank of river Dandana (Jhelum) Timur held a court on 6 March 1399 wherein robes and rewards were bestowed on the officers and other princes. Then he appointed Khizar Khan, the governor of Multan, from which Sarang Khan had expelled him before Timur's invasion, as the new Sultan of Delhi.

Dawlat Khan Lodhi, the *faujdar* (Commander) of Mian Doab, had tried his level best to protect the interests of the former Sultan in that hour of trial. He won the support of most of the nobles and sent several expeditions to establish the imperial hold over Punjab but in vain. He defeated Bairam Khan, *naib* (second in command) of Khizar Khan on 22 December 1406, and then established himself at Samana. But on the approach of Khizar Khan's army, majority of his soldiers deserted and went to the enemy camp. With the passage of time his own people, for instance Ikhtiyar Khan also joined the army of Khizar Khan. At last in March 1414, Dawlat Khan Lodhi was besieged at Siri by 60,000 strong army of Khizar Khan. The unrelenting process of desertion gravely weakened his position and at the eleventh hour too some of his officers treacherously deserted and went to the side of Khizar Khan. In this way he was forced by circumstances to surrender. On May 28, Khizar Khan Captured Delhi, imprisoned Dawlat Khan Lodhi and founded a new dynasty known as the Sayed Dynasty of India.³⁶

The impact of Timur's invasion of India was tremendous, because it not only shattered the very structure of its administrative machinery but also led to the emergence of a large number of small independent states. Consequently the authority

of the Sultan over the frontier *iqtas* became extremely weak. Most importantly the establishment of the Sayed dynasty by Khizar Khan brought about a tricky controversy in the political structure of the Delhi throne in India. From this political development the Mughal successors of Timur in Kabul and Central Asia perceived the impression that not only the *iqtas* of Multan and Lahore but also the whole of India was their rightful dominions.³⁷ As far as the Afghans were concerned, the whole of their country including that of Ghakkar came under the control of the Central Asian Empire built by Timur. A large number of the people were dislocated and for the time being the frontier was wiped out from the contemporary historical narration.

As mentioned earlier, Lodhis were not new in the realm of Indian politics. Their ancestors once enjoyed eminence and high prestige during the time of Hindu Raja Jaipal. Shaikh Hamid Lodi was a *jagirdar* in the area of Multan and Laghman on behalf of Raja Jaipal. He was made responsible in protecting his western border from the foreign invasions. Subaktagin, after ascending the throne of Ghazni, befriended him and conferred on him his *jagir*. After the death of Shaikh Hamid Lodi his son Nasar succeeded him.³⁸

Like their predecessors, the Sayed Sultans also relied upon the Afghans nobility for the stability of their rule. It was a time when the Afghans strengthened their positions in the strategically important *iqtas* of the Sultanate. Due to their martial and administrative abilities they won the support of the Sultan who in return gave them high positions in imperial services. Among them was Malak Shah Bahram Lodhi who held the territory of Serhind on behalf of Khizar Khan. He was the commander of 12,000 Mughal and Afghan *sawars*. During that time the Afghans had very firmly established their position in various places but due to their internal feuds, they were not in the position to exploit the fluid political condition for their advantage.

Accession of Bahlul Lodhi on the throne of Delhi

In 1436, Sultan Muhammad Shah ceased to take any interest in the affairs of the state. As a result of his slackness, rebellions broke out in the nook and corner of the Sultanate. Accordingly, he lost control over some important part of his dominion. In the prevailing circumstances the *malakzadas* of Mewat invited Sultan Mahmud Khalji of Malwa to capture Delhi. However, Malak Bahlul Lodi was strong enough to repel the attack. By his bravery he won the support of the Sultan. He was addressed as his son and was given the title of *Khan-i-Khanan* (Khan of the Khans). Bahlul was a wise and politically shrewd commander. He further strengthened his position by inviting Afghan tribesmen from Roh to support him against the enemies. He held the whole of the Punjab up to Panipat and appointed his trusted commanders in districts around Delhi. Important positions were entrusted to the Afghan chiefs in the administration of these areas. After strengthening his position firmly, Bahlul twice tried his luck to capture the throne of Delhi but in vain. It was in 1448, when Sultan Ala-ud-Din Alam Shah on his own free will left the capital and went to Badayun to spend the rest of his life in tranquillity away from the problematic court events. Thereafter, Hamid Khan, the *wazir*, invited Bahlul to settle the affairs of the state in the absence of the Sultan.³⁹ For some time he remained quite obedient and exhibited loyalty to Hamid Khan. He pretended himself to be a trusted officer of the court while making preparation for the last bid to capture the throne.

The position of Bahlul Lodi was subordinate immediately to that of his master Hamid Khan but he was intelligent and clever. He at once assumed the title of Sultan Bahlul Lodhi after the occupation of Delhi.⁴⁰ After confidently establishing his writ, he was searching for an opportunity to raise himself into the status of Sultan of Delhi. He cleverly gained the confidence of Hamid Khan and frequently visited his court along with his Afghan personal guards. At last on April 19, 1451, Bahlul Lodhi arrested Hamid Khan and crowned himself as Abul Muzaffar Bahlul Shah and founded the Lodhi Afghan dynasty. After capturing the supreme position in the Sultanate he did not

severe his connection with Sultan Ala-ud-Din and very diplomatically won his support. According to *Tarikh-i-Shahi*, Bahlul wrote letter to Ala-ud-Din explaining his intention of eradicating an evil in the Sultanate. He left the Sultan undisturbed in his residence at Badayun and kept his name along with his own in the *Khutba* (sermon) and the *Sikkha* (currency) which he issued immediately after his elevation to the throne of Delhi.⁴¹

The aforesaid accounts reveal that after the invasion of Timur the Sultanate began to disintegrate and the recalcitrant elements emerged on account of subsequent political unrest and turmoil. But Afghans did not give up hope of reviving the authority of the Sultan. They first tried to secure Delhi from the invasion of Khizar Khan and then made several bids to oust the Sayed Sultans from the capital. It was due to the Syed Sultans previous connections with the Timurids successors in Kabul for which they were perceived as usurpers and the vassals of the Mongol rulers.

In 1451, immediately after his accession to the throne of Delhi, Bahlul Lodhi went out to capture the *iqta* of Multan. Since the establishment of the Sayed dynasty the control of the Delhi Sultans over its frontier provinces had become waning down to the maximum level. In such circumstances, Multan became unprotected and exposed to invasion from all sides. At that time it was independent under a local ruler Shaikh Yusuf Qureshi. Bahlul was determined to conquer it because of its strategically important geographical location. It played an important role in the politics of the north-western frontier region. It was situated on Qandahar-Quetta route and controlled most of the foreign trade of India. The most important factor for the occupation of Multan was that it was a legitimate territory belonging to the empire of Delhi.

However, his desire of the occupation of Multan did not materialize and he had to return from Dipalpur due to the attack on Delhi by Mahmud Shah Sharqi, ruler of Jaunpur. At that time the fort of Delhi was vulnerable and there were very few soldiers

inside the fort. In that hour of danger, Bibi Matto, mother-in-law of Bahlul, displayed great astuteness and courage. She clad all the Afghan ladies of the fort in men's attire and stationed them on the walls of the fort.⁴² Meanwhile, when the news of the siege reached Bahlul, he sent an invitation to the Afghans of Roh because he seriously felt the vulnerability of his throne in case of his leading an expedition to the far-flung *iqtas*. In the face of such endangerment he rightly thought that for the safety of his throne the Afghans of Roh could be a challenging force to be reckoned with. Thus he wrote letter of invitation to the Afghans of Roh in the following enthralling words:

If my dear friends are pleased to come down to this country, I shall have only the name of king, while each kingdom and territory that has been conquered and will pass under our control will be shared by us as between brothers.⁴³

As a result of this invitation, different Afghan border tribes warmly responded and many of them belonging to Lodhi, Lohani, Niazi, Marwat, Bhattani, Mandanr Yusufzais and Karlanris came down and settled in various parts of the empire.⁴⁴ They rendered great services for the safety of the Delhi throne and in expeditions against the disobedient elements. In terms of Afghan national cohesion, the depressing situation that prevailed in those days did not represent a united front strategy.

During the time of Bahlul Lodhi the trans-Indus territories were under the control of the Mughals, which had become an Indianized term for the Mongols. But due to incessant hostilities between the house of Abu Said, Babur's grandfather, and Mirza Hussain Baiqara the political situation of the area remained fragile. Samarqand, Ghazni and Kabul were under the control of Mirza Abu Said, who was powerful as compared to Mirza Hussain Baiqara, the ruler of Herat and Qandahar. During Bahlul's reign no Mughal invasion took place. On the other hand, his internecine warfare with the Sharqi Sultans of Jaunpur, Bahlul did not give much attention to consolidate his rule over the frontier *iqtas*. His forays and expeditions against Sultan Qutb-ud-Din Langa, an independent ruler of Multan, continued

unabated during that period. Notwithstanding his large-scale attacks, Bahlul never succeeded to capture Multan. Quite contrary, Hussain Shah Langa, son and successor of Qutb-ud-Din Langa, adopted an expansionist policy and fought many wars against neighbouring tiny states and captured considerable territory. He also captured many territories from Ghazi Khan, a Timuride prince. He succeeded to retain the independent status of Multan by protected it from the Mughals and Delhi forces. He cleverly maintained cordial relations with major frontier Afghan tribes and won their support against any adventurism.⁴⁵

Bahlul Lodhi was typically an Afghan character. He was wise, simple, brave and courageous. He was religious in his thought and lenient in his habits. He allotted all the high posts of the Sultanate to his relatives and other Afghan officers. He failed however, in adopting such policies through which all the Afghan tribes could be united on a single platform. He also patronized a number of Rajputs and Hindus whom he considered men of merit. The prominent Hindu chiefs during his period were Rai Dudu, Rai Sakit Singh and Rai Mansingh.⁴⁶ He never behaved like an autocrat and considered his position as first among equals. Hence his position may be rightly called like the leader of a democratic tribe or a citizen king. He was very kind towards his nobles and never treated them harshly. If any of the noble got offended, he went to his house and put his turban and sword before him by saying "If you do not consider me fit for the royal office, entrust it to somebody else." Unlike other sultans of Delhi, Bahlul never used to sit on a throne neither chose a special dignified place when accompanied by his nobles. He used to say "It is enough if my name is associated with the kingdom".⁴⁷

At the time of the thickest danger he remained steadfast and never lost temper or got nervous. In every encounter, he preferred to conduct it personally. He died at the age of 80 years in a camp while returning from a battle. He also kept under his command many thousand Mughal *Sawars*. He was an admirer of their bravery and soldier-ship. Even he kept many Mughal soldiers in his personal army called *Khasa Khali* and also

recruited them as bodyguard for the princes. He learnt a lot of tactics from the Mughal war strategies and successfully applied it in his war against the Sharqi Sultans.⁴⁸ He considered Mughals trusted soldiers. For that matter he recruited about twenty thousand Mughal princes and nobles in his court. A number of able administrators were invited to join state service under him.⁴⁹

As a result of the wise policies of the Sultan, majority Afghan and other nobles of different racial stock took great interest in the safety of the Lodhi Sultanate and considered it as their own. Many of them then settled permanently while some went back after the need of their support was over. As the Afghan nobles belonged to different tribes and were jealous of one another's power and positions, the only authority to wield these heterogeneous elements into one organized and harmonious unit was the personality of the Sultan.⁵⁰

Conclusion

The conflict of Mongol and Afghan in India was the offshoot of their political rivalry that ensued because of the frequent forays of the former on Kabul and India. The western borderland of India was largely inhibited by the defenseless Afghan tribes. They were vulnerable to every foreign invasion that took place from the north-western side. Often they faced devastation and massacres in defending their homeland right from Alexander the Great to Genghiz Khan and Timur. Another important factor was the settlement of the Afghans in the Indian mainland in frequent intervals. Armed with the capabilities of fighting in the battlefields, they carved out a strong and respectable place for themselves in the Delhi Sultanate. As time passed on, some of their nobles for instance Ala-ud-Din Khalji and Bahlul Lodhi rose to the position of Sultan and established their own ruling dynasties in Delhi. However, the frequent Mongols' incursions did not spare them even in the Delhi Sultanate. The brutal treatment of the Mongol caused much resentment among the rank and files of the Afghans. In fact, the conflict was started with the annihilation of the Afghan localities by Genghiz Khan and Timur.

Unlike the Mongols, the Afghan represented a miserable picture of national cohesion. They were utterly disorganized and disunited. They failed to establish a united front against the Mongol invasion. Very often they depicted a gloomy response which cannot be termed as a concerted effort on the part of the whole community. As compare to the Afghans, the Mongol however, displayed acts of political maturity and supreme martial capabilities in subduing the obstacles in their ways.

Notes and References

- 1 Research Fellow, National Institute of Historical and Cultural research, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad.
- 2 Bahadar Shah Zafar Kakakhel, *Pukhtana Da Tarikh pa Ranra Kay*, (Peshawar: University Book Agency, 1999), pp. 362-63.
- 3 Dani, Ahmad Hasan Dani, *Peshawar: Historic City of the Frontier* (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publications, 1995), p. 85.
- 4 Rita Joshi, *The Afghan Nobility and the Mughals: 1526-1707* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), pp. 21-22.
- 5 Kakakhel, *Pukhtana da Tarikh pa Ranra Kay*, p. 315.
- 6 Paul Lococo, Jr., *Genghiz Khan: History's Greatest Empire Builder* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2009).
- 7 The term Tatar was changed with the coming of Zahir-ud-Babur to India and they were called by the local people as Mughal. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the Mongols spoke a Paelo-Asiatic language, represented today by the 'Ket' dialect of the Yenisey valley in Siberia. In the roll of tribes the name Mongol first appeared in a tribal list prepared under T'ang dynasty and was again used in the eleventh century when the Khitan ruled and controlled a large part of Mongolia. The Khitan, who established the Chinese dynasty of Liao (907-1125), were themselves of Mughal origin.
- 8 Lococo, Jr., *Genghiz Khan*, p. 24.
- 9 Zafar, *Da Tarikh pa Rama Kay*, p. 319.
- 10 Timur was born at the town of Kesh near Samarqand in 1335. He conquered Herat, Sistan, Ghazni, Kabul and Qandahar in

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- between 1379 and 1383. He attacked India in 1397. Himayatullah Yaqubi, 'Pukhtono aur Mughlon Kay Siyasi Tanazai Kay Bunyadi Awamil aur Muharikat' in *Majjala Tarikh wa Saqafat-i-Pakistan*, October-2011 March-2012, p. 26.
- 11 Lococo, Jr., *Genghiz Khan*, p. 68.
- 12 Yar Muhammad Khan, 'The Political Relations of the Turkish Sultans of Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent with the Mongols in the 13th Century', *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, Vol. XXV, No 4 (December, 1988), p. 19.
- 13 Mirza Muhammad Haider Dughlat, *Tarikh-t-Rashidi*, Eng. tr. E. Denison Ross (Lahore: Book Traders, n.d), p. 36-40.
- 14 Yar Muhammad Khan, 'The Political Relations of the Turkish Sultans of Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent with the Mongols in the 13th Century', *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, Vol. XXV, No 4 (December, 1988), p. 29.
- 15 Agha Hussain Hamadani, *The Frontier Policy of the Delhi Sultans* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1986), p. 104.
- 16 Joshi, *The Afghan Nobility*, p. 22.
- 17 Wellesley Haig, *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III (Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1958), p. 84.
- 18 There is controversy regarding the origin of the Khaljis. To some scholars they are of Turkish origin while some assert that they are predominantly Afghans. Major Raverty is of the view that the Khaljis are not Afghans and there is no truth in the idea that one calls them Ghilzai Afghans. In the *Cambridge History of India*, Sir Wellesley Haig writes that due to their long stay in Afghanistan they intermingled with the native Afghans and adopted the customs and traditions of the natives. He further states that majority of the Turkish nobles in court opposed the cause of Khaljis due to the fact that they belonged to the second generation in India and thus refused to acknowledge Khaljis as Turks. If one accepts this statement then one also have to accept that Jalal-ud-Din Feroz Shah never held the *jagir* at Samana and that the Khaljis were totally new in the Indian political environment. But historically mere assertions cannot determine the origin of a

community. It seems plausible that the Turkish nobility never reconciled with the Khaljis and were always looking for an opportunity to dethrone them. Khushal Khan Khattak in his *Dewan* of poetry also calls the Khaljis as Ghiljis Afghans. See Abdul Qayum Zahid Mashwani, ed. *Da Khushal Khan Khattak Kulyat* [Pashto] (Kabul: Danish Publications, 2013), p. 1302.

Preshan Khattak opines that most of the historians wrongly write "Khaljis" instead of "Ghiljis". There are also several similarities between the Khalji and other Afghan dynasties. For instance majority of the Afghan monarchs were very lenient and the simplicity of the court was a common feature shared by all these dynasties. Many Afghan monarchs fell victim of their own relatives and so was the fate of Jalal-ud-Din. Another common feature of the different Afghan dynasties was their disunity and inter-tribal warfare, every monarchy ceased to exist after its third heir such as Khaljis ruled over northern India with three monarchs and so were Lodhis. Suris, royal Khalji family of Qandahar, Abdalis and Barakzais etc. See Preshan Khattak, *Pashtun Kaun? Tarikh, Tahqiq, Tanqeed* (Peshawar: Pashto Academy, 2005), p. 64.

- 19 Haig, *The Cambridge History*, p. 85.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p.92.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Hamadani, *The Frontier Policy*, p. 1 18.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 25 Zia-ud-Din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi* (Lahore: Sindh Sagar Academy, 1974), p. 67.
- 26 *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 132-33.
- 29 Haig, *The Cambridge History*, p. 117.
- 30 Joshi, *The Afghan Nobility*, p. 23.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

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- 32 Amir Timur, *Tuuzk-i-Timuri*, Eng. tr. H. M. Elliot (Lahore: Sindh Sager Academy, 1974), p. 55.
- 33 Sardar Sher Muhammad Gandapur, *Tarikh-i-Khurshid Jahan*, Urdu tr. Siraj Ahmad Alvi (Karachi: Shaikh Shaukat Ali and Sons, 1991), p. 208.
- 34 Haig, *The Cambridge History*, p. 199.
- 35 Gandapur, *Tarikh-i-Khurshid Jahan*, p. 208.
- 36 Joshi, *The Afghan Nobility*, p. 26.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- 38 Kakakhel, *Da Tarikh pa Ranra Kay*, p. 363.
- 39 Abdul Halim, *History of the Lodi Sultans of Delhi and Agra* (Dacca: University of Dacca, 1961), pp. 15-16.
- 40 Humaira Faiz Dasti, 'Multan on the Eve of the Mughal Invasion', *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2 (December. 1995), p. 27.
- 41 Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh-i-Shahi*, Urdu tr. Syed Nazir Niazi (Lahore: Urdu Science Board, 1985), p. 11.
- 42 Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh-i-Shahi*, p. 13, also see Halim, *History of the Lodi Sultans*, p. 21.
- 43 Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, *Some Aspects of Afghans Despotism in India* (Lahore: Book Traders, n.d), p. 9.
- 44 Caroe, *The Pathans*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 38.
- 45 Dasti, *Multan*, p.29.
- 46 Siddiqui, *Some Aspects of Afghans*, p. 24.
- 47 Halim, *History of the Lodi Sultans*, p. 53.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- 49 Gandapur, *Tarikh-i-Khurshid Jahan*, p. 223.
- 50 Siddiqui, *Some Aspects of the Afghans*, p. 25.