

The Role of Afghan Nobles during the Delhi Sultanate

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Abstract

Afghan history in India constitutes a connecting link between the earlier ruler of the Turks, Saiyyad and the subsequent period of the Mughal authority. The Afghan occupies an especially significant position in the history of Muslim rule in India. The foundation of Delhi sultanate by the Muslim conquerors of Northern India attracted Afghan immigrants in a fairly large number because the sultan wanted them to help and stabilize their political supremacy over the territories conquered by them. This provided the Afghan immigrants from Muslim countries with fresh job opportunities. Afghans were poverty stricken and they had no traditions of urban culture. So they gradually rise to certain important ranks and position in the army and administration of Delhi sultanate and paved a new way for their cultural advancement in Indo-Muslim society.

Keywords: - Afghan, Nobles, Sultanate, Shiq, Iqta, Amir-i- Sadah.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight the role of Afghan nobles during the Delhi sultanate in the light of Tarikh-I - Firozshahi. This study intends to draw a frame work about the attitude and relation of Delhi Sultans with the Afghan nobles. After reading the history of Farishta and others we realize that Afghans came from the Roh (a Pashtun word meaning mountain) in the Peshawar and other places of Punjab and Kashmir, which belonged to Raja Jayapal. But after the many struggle of some months, Jayapala who had also to face the rising Ghaznavid power, made peace with the Afghans by allowing them to settle in some places of Langhana. The Afghan then erected a fort in the mountains of Peshawar which they called khaibar.

II. POSITION OF AFGHANS IN DELHI SULTANATE

Subuktagin realized the importance of the fighting material in the Afghan and enrolling them in his army he favored them in every possible way. They continued to be appointed as mercenaries in the army of sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi. They formed a significant wing in the army of sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi and sultan Muhammad Ghori. After the death of his patron and master, Qutubuddin also extended his patronage and raised them to the position of nobles. But in the reign of Iltutmish, Afghans were not raised to the position of the nobles either during his reign or his successors. But with the advent of Balban Afghan power again came into prominence. Balban could not ignore those Afghans who were rustic and awkward people.

He gave him important ranks and positions in his sultanate. They were entrusted with the charge of military posts (thanas) around Delhi and in the parganas of Jalali, Kampli, Bhojpur and Patiali with the view to suppress the dacoits and highway robbers. Since this time the Afghan began to rise in status and dignity in the sultanate of Delhi. As a result the Afghan sawars and amirs were placed in sizeable numbers at strategic places in the empire. Many of the strong fort which built by Balban were garrisoned by the Afghans. But in the reign of Balban Afghans didn't participated in administration, they serve their activities only the life of soldiers.

However, the advent of Khalji's to the throne of Delhi paved a successful way for their rapid promotion. By this time a new generation of the Afghan immigrants had come to the forefronts. To come in the contact of Indian environment, the number of this generation not only got accustomed to the political system of the sultanate but also acquired learning and a certain level of urban culture.

The principal of noble-birth of Delhi sultan was not taken into consideration, but the merit of a candidate was supposed to be the essential qualification for the state service. Thus person could rise in status and position according to their abilities. Sultan Alauddin Khilji admitted them in his army in very large numbers and even enrolled those in his nobility. Malik Makh Afghan was an afghan, who enjoyed a prominent place in the administration till the time of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. His brother Malik Afghan also rose to prominence during the khilji's period, which was

sent by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq to the expedition against Warangal in A.D.1321 under the leadership of his son prince Ulugh Khan.

Both Isami and Barani mention these two brothers along with the nobles of Alauddin Khilji in their section related to military expeditions that were led by the Delhi generals for the conquest of south India during the reign of sultan Qutubuddin Mubarakshah Khalji and sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq Shah. This tends to imply that both of them were held in esteem for their post experience of the Deccan affairs. Under Muhammad Bin Tughlaq the most important nobles were Malik Khattab Afghan, Malik Khan Afghan, Jalhu Afghan, Tughan al Afghan, Bahram Afghan and Malik Makh Afghan.

Malik Khattab Afghan was the governor of the fort of Rapri during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, supported by a group of devoted followers (including 300 Afghans) he held the ground against a large number of powerful and recalcitrant zamindars who had combined and laid siege to fort Rapri. Later the sultan became doubtful of his loyalty in 1345 A.D., when Malik Makh Afghan rebelled, and throw him in the prison along with other afghan amirs. But shortly afterwards he was released and restored to his previous position.

Qazi Jalal another famous Afghan held the post of a Qazi, was posted with his afghan followers in Gujrat. He raises in rebellion but was defeated and killed by the imperial army. He rebelled along with Jhilu Afghan and some other non-afghan nobles, against sultan repressive measures. Malik Makh Afghan a very well-known Afghan, who was one of the Amir-i-Sada (foreign amirs), who was posted in the vilayat of Daulatabad. He held the rank of 2,000 sawars. The Amir-i-Sadah was dissatisfied with the administrative policy of the sultan, so they rebelled. Malik Makh Afghan spearheaded the great revolution of A.D.1345.

His supporters raised the canopy over his head and proclaimed his sultan under the title of Nasiruddin. With no time he gathered 30,000 sawars and brought about the destruction of those who were unwilling to cooperate with him. When the sultan learned about such developments he marched with a large army to suppress his rebellion. Malik Makh and his supporters were defeated by the sultan and he had to flee to take shelter in the fort. But the rebellion of Malik Taghi in Gujrat compelled the sultan to return to Gujrat without fully suppressing the rebellion chieftains of Daulatabad. Therefore, the voluntarily abdicated in favour of Hasan Gangu and withdrew himself public life. The Afghan thus lost an opportunity to establish an independent kingdom in the Deccan.

The attitude of sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq towards the Afghan nobles was also sympathetic. There were a large number of Afghans in imperial service during this period. Malik Bir afghan was the Muqta of the vilayat of Bihar, where he was succeeded by his son Daud Khan. Another afghan noble, Muhammad Shah Afghan, was entrusted with the fort for Tughlaqpur to keep a close watch over the turbulent zamindars of the vilayat of Etawah. About the same time Afghans continued to hold it during this period. Farishta informs that Malik Mardan Daulat the Muqta of Multan had employed a large number of Afghans in army. Among these Afghans was Malik Bahman the ancestor of sultan Bahlol Lodi.

The Afghan continued to enjoy prominence under the Tughlaq sultans as well as Khalji sultans. In the reign of sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq a large number of Afghan live there. It deserves to be highlighted that the sultan didn't raise the Afghans alone to high rank but also promoted even those who belonged to the lower strata of the Hindu society. In actual fact they emerged as a new social formation in the indo-Muslim society at this time.

During the period of the successors of Firoz Shah Tughlaq also the Afghan nobles maintained their position in the sultanate of Delhi. Sarabli Khan whom Sultan Firozshah had thrown in to prison, was reinstated by sultan Tughlaq Shah IInd (1388 A.D 1389 A.D), when the Tughlaq regime began to decline the position of the Afghan in Etawah also become quite weak.

But the political ascendancy of the Afghans in Northern India began from the time of saiyyid rulers of Delhi. It was during their period that the Afghan become conscious of their power, for many of them, especially those belonging to the Lodi and Nuhani tribes, held important Shiqqs and Iqtas (territorial unit) in the sultanate of Delhi which was much

reduced in area amongst that Malik Shah Bahman Lodi was assigned the territory of Sirhind by Khizr Khan Saiyyid in 1417 A.D. He had under him 12,000 Afghans and Mughal sawars. He was succeeded by his nephew, Bahlol as the muqta of Sirhind. Another noble Malik Sulaiman Lodi enjoyed high status in Multan where he lost his life while fighting against Sheikh Ali a Mughal of Kabul in A.D.1418. The extensive Iqta of Rapri was held by Hussain Khan Afghan who was succeeded by his son Kutub Khan Afghan, during the reign of Mubarak Shah Saiyyid. In A.D.1432 Malik Allahadad Lodi another Afghan was assigned Tarbindah, but soon he was driven away from there by Jasarath Khokar.

Sultan Muhammad Shah, the successor of Sultan Mubarak Shah, thereupon honored the loyal nobles with titles and officers. For his parts Allahadad Khan refused to accept any title and recommended his younger brother for the royal from the Sultan conferred the title of Darya Khan upon his younger brother.

By the end of Saiyyid rule through the Afghans of various clans had established their hold over a large number of places but because of their personal feuds and long standing jealousies and rivalries they could not take advantage of the fluid political conditions.

So in addition to Delhi sultanate the Afghans had established themselves in various provincial kingdoms. They had totally Indianized themselves and had adopted Indian custom and manners in this way, the Afghans slowly but steadily had assumed the position of a pressure group in the rapidly disintegrating sultanate of Delhi. He increased his power. The strength of his contingent, comprising Afghan, Mughal and also Indians soldiers caused by chaos and anarchy by Bahlol to aspire for sovereignty.

III. CONCLUSION

As a result we noticed that the factious spirit of the Amirs and the consequent confusion in the country offered Bahlol Lodi an opportunity to organize the Afghans power under his leadership and to make a bid to throne of Delhi. Upon accession to the throne of Delhi in A.D.1415. Bahlol Lodi adopted the policy of Afghanistan state administration. Thus Bahlol Lodi fulfills their dreams of establishing their rule in this country. After that he sent invitations to the leaders of Afghans tribes in Roh to come to Hindustan and offered very liberal terms to them. As a result thousands of Afghans "like ants and locusts" arrived in Hindustan to seek their fame and fortune under the leadership of Bahlol.

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