
Pattern of Afghan Migrations to India during Medieval period

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Introduction

Before the foundation of the First Afghan Empire in India (1451-1526), numerous Afghans had migrated to India who played a prominent role under Delhi Sultanate. The Afghans entered India during this period in varying numbers and capacities at different times. They came as mercenaries, as warriors under the command of mighty alien captains, or as nobles. Some came to escape hardship and adversity that menaced them in their own land,¹ while others were lured by the special patronage available to them in India. Sometimes, the influx of the Afghans into India during the Muslim rule was encouraged by the general expansive wave of Islam to India.² Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made to survey the pattern of Afghan migrations to India during medieval period.

The flow of Afghan emigrants to India in search of new lives and the greater opportunities of Hindustan would, in all probability, have occurred under the Hindu rulers³ before the foundation of Muslim rule in India; the establishment of the Muslim rule under Delhi Sultans certainly accelerated the process. However, before serving the Delhi sultans Afghans had made an attempt to conquer north-western Indian territory much before the establishment of Muslim rule in India and even before the conquest of Sindh by Mohammad bin Qasim in 712 A.D. In 682 A.D. "the Muslim Afghans" invaded and laid waste the north-western territories of India such as Peshawar and its surrounding territories.⁴ The Raja of Lahore sent two expeditions to oust them from these territories but failed. In alliance with Gokhars (who were in dispute with Raja of Lahore), Afghans concluded a treaty with the Raja of Lahore and compelled him to submit to the dictated terms from Afghans and Gokhars. Eventually Afghans seized Peshawar and erected a fort there which was named as *Khaibar*.⁵

¹ Inhabiting the main route of invasion into India from the north-west, they have had to pay a heavy price for their proximity to a country which, from the dawn of history, has drawn to herself swarms of invaders from that direction, who all, before entering India or touching her borders, necessarily had to pass through Afghan land.

² Basheer Khan Matta, *Sher Shah Suri: A Fresh Perspective*, Oxford, 2005, p. 3.

³ Afghans are said to have served the army of *Prithvi Raj Chauhan* in the Battle of *Panipat* against Muhammad Ghori. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., Leiden and E.J. Brill, 1986, vol. I, p. 217.

⁴ Firishta, *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, (tr.) John Briggs, *The History of the Rise and Fall of the Mohammadan Power in India*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1908, p. 8.

⁵ *Ibid*;

However, the reference of Muslim historian Al-Utbi about the areas of eastern Afghanistan, particularly of Laghman city (var. Lamghan, Lamghanat), contradicts what we have stated above. According to Al-Utbi, the region was converted to Islam towards the end of the tenth century by the Ghaznavids, led by Abu Mansur Sabuktigin:

"The Amir marched out towards Lamghan, which is a city celebrated for its great strength and abounding in wealth. He conquered it and set fire to the places in its vicinity which were inhabited by infidels, and demolishing the idol-temples, he established Islam in them, He marched and captured other cities and killed the polluted wretches, destroying the idolatrous and gratifying the Musulmans. After wounding and killing beyond all measure, his hands and those of his friends became cold in counting the value of the plundered property. On the completion of his conquest he returned and promulgated accounts of the victories obtained for Islam, and every one, great and small, concurred in rejoicing over this result and thanking God." ⁶

However, Utbi's mention of Laghman as being inhabited by infidels cannot be said to stress the overall absence of Muslim Afghans in eastern Afghanistan. He was mentioning about the Laghman city proper in relation of war between Sabuktigin and Jaipal, the later had come from Lahore with a huge army of non-Muslims to fight Sabuktigin.⁷

Moreover, we see the Afghans were influential and politically strong in eastern Afghanistan, Peshawar, the borderland areas and its suburbs at a time when Ghaznavids were making inroads into Indian territories. It was in the latter half of the 10th century that Afghans politically established themselves on the Indian soil under Hameed Lodi who held the governance of Laghman and Multan from Raja Jaipal of Lahore with a promise to defend India from Invasions of central Asia.⁸ With the political expansion of Afghans under Hamid Lodi in the territories of Multan, Lamghan and Peshawar, many Afghan settlements sprung up in those places. Hamid Lodi was succeeded by his son Nasir at Multan and Nasir was followed by his son Abul Fath Daud.⁹ Thus during the rule of sheikh Hamid Afghans got an opportunity to descend from their mountainous habitations and to establish their colonies in plain areas and such opportunity was again provided by the time of Ghazni and Ghoris.¹⁰

The Afghan migration to India has generally been treated as separate from the greater

This is in consonance with the Afghan claim that several tribes among them had converted to Islam at the hands of Prophet Mohammad (i.e. in 7th century A.D.) and after converting to Islam they propagated the same faith among other Afghan and non-Afghan tribes living in and close to Afghanistan—see Niamatullah, *Makhzan-i-Afghani*, tr. Nirodbhusan Roy, West Bengal, 1958, pp.1-8. See also Bernhard Dorn's translation of the same work as '*The History of Afghans*', Oriental Translation Committee, London, 1829, Part I, pp. 10-42;

⁶ Al-Utbi, *Tarikh Yamini or Kitabu-l Yamini*, in Sir H. M. Elliot, *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians, The Muhammadan Period*, Vol. II, Trubner and Co., London, 1869, p. 22.

⁷ Ibid.

At the time of invasion of Sind by Mohammad bin Qasim Afghans had already converted to Islam and provided "protection to his followers who remained with them".Firishta, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 6.

⁸ Firishta, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 9.

⁹ Khan Roshan Khan, *Tazkira*, Karachi, 1980, p. 121.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 123.

narrative of Afghan history.¹¹ Material and commercial incentives are recurrent themes in the Indian chronicles concerning the Afghan inroads. However, the official Afghan accounts point at their eagerness for the *jihad* (holy war) against *kuffar* (infidels) of Hind (India) as the main motive behind migration, although the Afghan work *Khulasat ul-Ansab* makes mention of the lure of Indian wealth, by referring to *qismat-abkhwur* (share of fortune) as an incentive to migrate to India.¹²

Reasons for Afghan migration from Afghanistan to India were of both a "push" and a "pull" nature. Afghan migration to India was thus linked to several factors:

- (1) Opportunities for employment as horsemen and foot soldiers in the Delhi sultanate and later on in the Mughal Empire and Regional dynasties,
- (2) Overpopulation and keen competition for land in Afghanistan, and
- (3) The commercial networks of Afghan trader-nomads in the subcontinent.

It would be pertinent to discuss these "push" and "pull" factors in some detail here.

(1) Opportunities for Employment as Horsemen and Foot Soldiers in the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire:

It was during Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni's Indian campaigns that Afghans showed better of their martial qualities and took part in Mahmud's military inroads to India.¹³

For Indian expeditions, Mohammad Ghorī also made it sure to enlist Afghans in his army. About 12,000 Afghans fought under their leader Malik Mahmud Lodi on the side of Muhammad Ghorī against Prithvi Raj Chauhan.¹⁴ Niamatullah mentions that Shihabuddin Mohammad Ghorī on his way back from the country of *Hind*, founded the fort of Sialkot.¹⁵ He appointed Malik Shahu, a brother of Malik Mahmud to populate this town and invested him with great powers.¹⁶

The employment of Afghans by different Sultans of Delhi at strategic locations of their empire with assignments of lands for their maintenance attracted large number of Afghans towards India. For example, Balban (as a noble under Nasir al-Din Mahmud 1246 to 1266 A.D.) is said to have employed 3,000 Afghans in 1260 A.D. to secure Delhi against the turbulent Mewatis.¹⁷ 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.

¹¹ For details see Abdul Halim, *History of the Lodi Sultans of Delhi and Agra*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, New Delhi 1974; Kalika Ranjan Qanungo, *Sher Shah and His Times*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1965; and I.H. Siddiqi, "The Afghans and Their Emergence in India as Ruling Elite during the Delhi Sultanate Period." *Central Asiatic Journal* 26, 1982, pp. 241-61.

¹² Hafiz Rahmat Khan, *Khulasat ul-Ansab*, BM. Egerton, f. 13a, cf. J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of The Indo-Afghan Empire*, Brill and Leiden, Netherlands, 1995, p. 21 (29).

¹³ Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its own Historians*, London, 1869, vol. II, p. 32.

¹⁴ Niamatullah, *Makhzan-i-Afghani*, (tr.) by Bernhard Dorn as 'The History of Afghans' in two parts, Oriental Translation Committee, London, 1829, Part I, p. 40.

¹⁵ Niamatullah, *Tarikh-i-Khan Jehani Wa Makhzan-i-Afghani*, (tr.) N. B. Roy, Decca, 1962, p. 13.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Minhaj-us-Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, tr. H. G. Raverty, London, 1881, vol. 2, p. 852.

Major frontier forts were mainly garrisoned by the Afghans.¹⁸ However, Afghans were 'notorious for their uncouth manners' which took them a long time to attain positions of rank in the army and administration.¹⁹

Thus the Afghans played a prominent role under Delhi sultans. They were not only recruited in army in large numbers but were also included in the nobility. With such an opportunity of employment in India, a large number of Afghans had come and settled in India during this period. Around this time Afghans has created such a fair space for themselves in Deccan that *Barni* named their settlements as '*Afghanistan*'.²⁰ As a matter of fact there was no name of '*Afghanistan*' as is used in modern times for their mountainous territory of present day Afghanistan.²¹ Nevertheless, they continued in a state of political weakness, as a disjointed people, and devoid of the will to evolve a strong and unified political entity of their own.

The political ascendancy of the Afghans in northern India begins from the time of the Saiyid rulers of Delhi (1414-1451 A.D.) when the Afghans strengthened their positions in the strategically important *Iqtas* of the Sultanate²² and consequently laid the foundation of first Afghan Empire in India in 1451 A.D.²³ With the establishment of their own rule in India Afghan aristocracy participated in the empire as governors and courtiers, as military leaders and as a prelude to settlement in India.

However, when Afghans under Bahlul ascended the throne in Delhi, "different provinces of India were governed by many petty princes; and in every single town the *Khutba* was read for a different individual".²⁴ But Sultan Hussain of Jaunpur was foremost among the opponents and adversaries of Bahlul and during the absence of later in Multan, he laid siege to Delhi.²⁵

On receiving information of the Jaunpur army's advance, Sultan Bahlul met with his amirs. According to Abbas Sarwani, who wrote his history during the reign of the Emperor Akbar, Sultan Bahlul analyzed the situation in the following manner:

*The country of HIND is broad and rich and that all the kings here have got no national followings of their own. In my own land I have got a large number of kinsmen who are famous for their valour and bravery and noted for intrepidity and heroism and who are economically hard pressed. If they are brought to HIND, they would be freed from their degrading poverty and I would also be able to overwhelm my enemies and establish my hold over the country of HIND.*²⁶

The *amirs* agreed with Sultan Bahlul's analysis and they sent *farmans* or official announcements to the chiefs of all the tribes of *Roh* to the effect that God had given the kingdom of Delhi to the Afghans, but other kings were trying to drive them out of the country. The immediate concern was the honor of the Afghan women who were besieged in Delhi. He called

¹⁸ Agha Hussain Hamdani, *The Frontier Policy of the Delhi Sultans*, Islamabad, 1986, p. 84; Firishta, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 391 and 404; Rita Joshi, *op. cit.*, p.23.

¹⁹ Andrew Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of Indo-Islamic World*, vol. II, New York, 1996, p. 193.

²⁰ Mahdi Husian, *op. cit.*, 1938, p. 180.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Firishta, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 536-43.

²³ Firishta, *op.cit*, p. 551; Bernhard Dorn, *op.cit.*, p.46.

²⁴ Dorn, *op.cit.*,p. 80.

²⁵ Ibid., see also Abbas Sarwani, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

²⁶ Abbas Sarwani, *op. cit.*, p.5

upon the men of *Roh* to come to his aid so that the army of Jaunpur might be dispersed and the honor of the Afghan women preserved.²⁷ He expected that those Afghans who came to India and saw its wealth would remain there in his service.

The Afghans came from *Roh* in large numbers and they defeated the army of Jaunpur. Many famous chiefs came from *Roh* to aid the Afghans under Sultan Bahlul, but they desired to return to *Roh* after the victory even though Sultan Bahlul offered them every inducement to remain.²⁸ The sultan gave everyone returning to *Roh* rich presents and those who remained in his service received *Iqtas* which pleased them. Bahlul instructed his amirs not to let any Afghan return to *Roh* without first trying to bring him into the royal service.²⁹

Nevertheless, after consolidation of Afghan rule in India, a steady stream of Afghans came from *Roh* to take service with Sultan Bahlul. This is Abbas Sarwani's and Niamatullah's account of Sultan Bahlul's policy of fostering Afghan migration to India.

The opportunity of service with a Lodi sultan encouraged a steady stream of immigrants from the various branches of the Lodi tribe to India. They came not in the form of tribes but mostly as individuals and families. They often came out of economic necessity.³⁰

Both Niamatullah and Sarwani state that the Lodi sultans encouraged Afghan migration to India and that the tribesmen of Afghanistan began to conceive of migration to India as a safety valve for their excess population and a land of opportunity for Afghans. Bahlul Lodi instructed his *amirs* to show favor to any man coming from *Roh*. If men coming from *Roh* were incapable of providing for themselves, they were to be taken into the sultan's service.³¹ According to Niamatullah, this policy of the sultan gained renown in *Roh* and Afghans displayed a tendency for returning to India and entering the sultan's service. After annual migrations between Hindustan and *Roh*, men gradually settled in India.³²

However, the fact that they were able to establish their own independent political power over vast territories in northern India in the middle of the 15th century shows that they had in the preceding period already consolidated their position. The emergence of Afghan kingdom was the culmination of a long process of their settlements and fulfillment of ambition which their ever-growing numbers, position and the existing political circumstances had aroused. Thus, the entire period between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the process of Afghan immigration to India seems to have been a continuous one; but after the fall of the Lodi and Sur Afghan dynasties, the Afghan immigrants suffered greatly and their settlements in various areas were either destroyed or deprived of their prosperity.³³ Nevertheless Mughals continues to enroll Afghans in

²⁷ Ibid., p.6.

²⁸ Dorn, *op. cit.*, p. 80; Abbas Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ I.H. Siddiqui cites the *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi* in arguing that only "poverty-stricken individuals belonging to various tribes and clans came to India permanently." *Some Aspects of Afghan Despotism in India*, p. 12.

³¹ Abbas Sarwani, *op. cit.*, p.9, Dorn, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

³² Dorn, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

³³ Afghanpur, an Afghan settlement in the modern district of Muradabad, was renamed Mughalpur and the Afghans driven out of it. F. H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the N.W.P. of India*, pt. IX, Vol. II, p.206. For Afghan dispersal from Punjab and resumption of *madad-i ma'ash* grants, see Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol.III, p. 247 and his *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, (tr. Blochmann) Calcutta, 1977, p. 279.

their armies, and assigned them *mansabs* and *jagirs* for their services at Mughal court. One of the important areas into which Afghan immigration took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Katiher, which the Afghans were to name Ruhelkhand. During the Sultanate period Katiher was one of the most troublesome areas from the point of view of central control. Mughal rulers established Afghan settlements in this entire area to check the refractory zamindars of Katiher.³⁴ Given to the martial abilities of Afghans, Mughals encouraged such settlements of Afghans to enhance the center's control on centrifugal periphery.

(2) Overpopulation and Keen Competition for Land in Afghanistan.

The stiff competition for both pasturage and arable land was sufficient reason for leaving Afghanistan, and the abundance of land and opportunities in India fostered immigration. The Afghan tribes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were expanding both in terms of their numbers and their territory. Population increase among the Pashtuns was significant, although it is impossible to document the growth. However, one should view the citation of the following passage in the *Ain-i Akbari* of Abul Fazl as suggestive for population increase in Afghanistan. After noting that the revenues of Kabul Province had increased dramatically throughout the sixteenth century, Abul Fazl offers three reasons for the increase: first, that the region had become more settled (well-populated or well-cultivated), second, that areas such as Peshawar and Ashtagar (present Hashtanagar *tehsil* in Peshawar district) were included in the current account but had not been included during Babar's day, and third, that revenue collectors had become more capable during the reign of Akbar.³⁵

Pashtun tribes competed for limited grazing lands. Neighboring tribes pushed out their weaker competitors, who were usually kinsmen of a parallel descent group. Those who lost in the competition for land moved mainly towards India. Many families and lineages of the Lodi tribes (including their Sarwani and Bhattani cousins), which had been making the annual migration from the Ghazni Plateau to the Derajat, began to settle along the right bank of the Indus or to immigrate to India.³⁶

Four Afghan tribes or tribal confederation were competing for dominance in the area in the fifteenth century. They were the Khashi Khel, the Ghoriya Khel, the Abdalis, and the Ghilza'is. The Ghoriya Khel pushed out the Khashi Khel from the Ghazni-Qandahar region in the middle of the fifteenth century.³⁷ Thus Khashi Khel or Yusufzai tribal confederation migrated to Peshawar region and permanently settled down there.³⁸ When Babar came to Kabul in the early sixteenth century, the Ghoriya Khel and the Ghilza'is were the most powerful tribes between Ghazni and Qandahar, but about the time Babar invaded Hindustan, the Ghilza'is were able to expel the

³⁴ Iqbal Husain, *The Ruhela Chieftaincies: The Rise and Fall of Ruhela Power in India in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 4-7.

³⁵ Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, (tr.) H. S. Jarrett, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1891, Vol. II, p. 411; and the Persian text ed. by E. Blochmann, RASB, Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1872 ed., Vol. I, p. 594.

³⁶ Muhammad Hayat Khan, *Afghanistan and its Inhabitants (Hayat-i-Afghani)*, (tr.) H. Priestly, Lahore, 1874, pp. 182-97; see also Pir Mo'azzam Shah, *Tarikh-i-Hafiz Rahmat khani*, translated into Urdu by Khan Roshan Khan, Pashtu Academy, Peshawar, 1971, pp.57-81.

³⁷ For details see Pir Mo'azzam Shah, *Tarikh-i-Hafiz Rahmat khani*, *op.cit.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.75-81.

Ghoriya Khel from the area.³⁹

Mountstuart Elphinstone traced Pashtun migration to Pashtun cultural values and identities based on land control. He recorded his analysis in an extended footnote:

“The number of the Eusofzyes that are to be met with in India, recall my attention to the Afghaun emigrations, which I have omitted in the proper place. The frequency, with which they emigrate, seems inconsistent with the love of their country, which I have ascribed to them; but the same thing takes place among the Highlanders, whose local attachments are known to be so strong. The cause is the same in both cases; the absence of trades among the Highlanders, and the disgrace of engaging in them among the Afghauns, render land absolutely necessary to the support of each individual, and whoever is without land, must quit the country.”⁴⁰ He also recognized a socio-economic basis for regional Afghan dynamics:

“In the west of Aghaunistan, where marriages are late and land plenty, emigration is rare; but east has poured out a continued stream of adventurers, for a period of great duration. These have always taken the direction of India. The greater part of that country was many centuries in the possession of Afghaun dynasties, and, even after their fall, the Mogul armies were always recruited by foreigners in preference to natives. These cause filled India with colonies of the descendants of the Afghauns, who are now called Patans, and who are found in all parts of Hindostan and the Deccan, sometimes mixed with the rest of inhabitants, and sometimes collected under chiefs of their own, like the Nabobs of Farrukabad and Bopaul, Curnoule and Cudduppa. The greatest colony is that founded chiefly by Eusofzyes, at no very remote period. I allude to the settlement of Rohillas, whose wars with us have rendered their name so well known in England.....Their constitution had nothing of Afghaun democracy; the chiefs were the lords of the soil, and the other Afghauns their tenants, and generally their soldiers; but there, and everywhere, the common Afghauns showed an independence, and the chiefs a kind of conciliation peculiar to themselves.”⁴¹ The most powerful Afghan tribes thus expelled weaker tribes and peoples. Once expelled from its land a tribe usually migrated to India, where land and opportunities existed in plenty. This phenomenon will be broadly discussed later in the following chapter.

(3) The commercial networks of Afghan trader-nomads in the subcontinent:

Though in many cases migration was a result of the prospect of military service, as we have noted, the search for agricultural or pastoral land was of similar importance. These factors notwithstanding, it was the hugely profitable "arms trade" in horses that played the pivotal role in Afghan migration to India.⁴² Mainly the early Afghan communities in India constituted a trading diaspora.⁴³

Through their network of business contacts in India Afghans developed a sophistication

³⁹ Zahiru'din Babur, *Babur-Nama*, (tr.), A. S. Baveridge, Luzac and Co., London, 1922, Vol. I. pp. 323-31.

⁴⁰ Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Cabul*, Indus Publications, reprint Karachi: 1992, Vol, 2, fn. pp. 34-5.

⁴¹ Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Cabul*, 1815, reprint Karachi: Indus Publications, 1992, Vol, 2, fn. pp. 35-6

⁴² For more see Joss Gommans, , *The Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire, c.1710-1780*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999. , pp. 68-135.

⁴³ For details see Joss Gommans, *op.cit.*

which contrasted with the simplicity and rusticity of ordinary nomads and cultivators. When tribesmen engaged in trade discrepancies in wealth became pronounced. This in turn contributed to the breakdown of tribal social structure which was predicated on "the kinship of equals." The wealthy became more likely to migrate to India because of their familiarity with the ease and amenities of life there. The poor were also likely to migrate, but for the opposite reason: their search for employment opportunities. The peculiar characteristics of Afghans have been noticed by Munucci who says that for the greater part they served as soldiers, but they also were ready to act as merchants or engage in trade, particularly in horse.⁴⁴ Thus, trade, disparity of wealth, and detribalization were interrelated and all contributed to increased migration to India.

Thus the Afghans, given to the central geographical location of their territory, were horse traders in the road to India. In India, especially during the 13th–14th centuries there were many, usually military or political, causes for dependence on the horse imports. Hence from the early 12th century on, the horse was the main merchandise to be exported to India. Beginning in the time of the Delhi Sultanate, political stability depended on the loyalty of Turkish slave cavalry, whose need for mounts had to be met.⁴⁵ An example is Bahlul, the founder of the Lodi Sultanate in Delhi, and his uncle Islam Khan engaged themselves in the horse trade.⁴⁶ In so far as the Lodi Afghans were camel nomads who developed a near-monopoly of the caravan trade between Hindustan and Khurasan, the Afghan familiarity with the trade centers and military weaknesses of the Delhi sultanate contributed to their conquest and settlement in Hindustan. However, many Afghan tribes were not involved in trade and had few contacts with India.

The eighteenth century witnessed the rise and expansion of a contiguous series of Afghan states. Many of the new Indo-Afghan rulers started their political careers as horse-traders-cum-mercenaries. As such they helped to promote and widen the Afghan trading network. Afghan mercenaries served in almost every army of the subcontinent and thus acted as valuable contacts, being both agents and customers for the native states of India. Therefore, it is no coincidence that nearly all Afghan states were carved out along the traditional horse-trade routes. Most of the native states were strongly indebted to Afghan mercenary chiefs and intermediaries for both man and horsepower. In fact Afghans rivaled the British in terms of military "subsidiary alliance". Instead of a disciplined infantry, they could offer horses and cavalry, and during eighteenth century it was still not clear which of the two was the most important.⁴⁷ According to Gommans, with the European conquests on the Indian coast, market conditions in India also triggered off burgeoning of already existing trade activities between India and Central Asia- activities which became increasingly dominated by Afghan nomads and traders.⁴⁸ According to him in India,

⁴⁴ Niccolao Manucci, *storia do Mogur*, II, reprint, Calcutta, 1966, pp.425-26.

⁴⁵ Ziya al –Din Baranī, *Tarikh-i-Firuz shahi*, Sheikh Abdul Rashid ed., Muslim University of Aligarh, Aligarh, 1957, pp. 120–21; cf. Ali Bahrani Pour, *The Trade in Horses between Khorasan and India in the 13th-17th centuries*, Silk Route Journal, volume 11, 2013, p. 126.

⁴⁶ Rizq Ullah Mushtaqui, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

[bahlol]Hamesha ba wilayat mi raft wa azan ja aspaha awarda ba Hindustan mi farokht; Abdullah, *Tarikh-i-Daudi*, ed. Abdul Rasheed, Aligarh, 1904, p.3.

⁴⁷ P.J. Marshall, *The New Cambridge History of India, Vol. 2.2: Bengal: The British Bridgehead* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 51,71, Cf. Jos Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, E.J. Brill Leiden, New York, 1995, pp. 111-12

⁴⁸ Jos Gommans, *op. cit.*, p.12.

Rohilla-Afghans succeeded in establishing thriving principalities along the routes of long-distance trade in association with military service.⁴⁹

Conclusion:

The foregoing account makes it clear that in the beginning of the Muslim rule in India Afghans had migrated to this country and some of their members had joined the imperial service. The Turkish Sultans, realising their potential as soldiers, kept them usefully engaged in military service. But they were not yet politically conscious enough that they could have thought of dominating the Turks. The Afghans profited considerably by the lack of far sight on the part of the Sayyid sultans of Delhi in assigning Jagirs to the Afghan nobles in the areas where Afghan settlements had already stabilized. It gave them an opportunity to strengthen their position when the weak Sayyids further declined politically. As a result, the whole of the Punjab and a considerable portion of present western Uttar Pradesh had slipped into the hands of the Afghans where they started asserting their political supremacy. This facilitated the process of control by the Lodis over the areas around Delhi and their final bid to capture the throne of Delhi under the able stewardship of Bahlul Lodi in 1451 AD. Thus with the accession of Sultan Bahlul Lodi began the period of the Afghan ascendancy in imperial politics. They ruled there until displaced by Babur, the first of the Mughal emperors, in 1526 A.D. Thus the Afghan kings ruled India before they ruled the mountainous areas of their Homeland.

The establishment of Afghan political power in north India during the fifteenth century reflected a protracted period of migration in which Pashtun tribal groups were able to establish sustainable settlements throughout northern India, and later in the Deccan. Under the aegis of the Afghan Lodi (1451-1526) and Sur (1540-1555) rulers, there emerged a large number of Afghan settlements across northern India (in Punjab in particular) with economic ties to the land.⁵⁰

Despite a short-lived revival of Afghan power under the Sur dynasty, in 1555 the Afghans were finally displaced by the Mughals as the dominant ethnic group in north India, and the Mughals subsequently developed an ethnically and religiously plural state structure in relation to which the Afghan tribal elite was forced to redefine itself through accommodation or rebellion. Begrudgingly at first, increasing numbers of Afghan headsmen became servants of the new dispensation. However, their success was to vary considerably under different Mughal rulers as the Afghans vied for influence with the Persian (Irani), Central Asian (Turani), and Rajput factions of the imperial body politic.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁰ I. Husain, *The Ruhela Chieftaincies: The Rise and Fall of Ruhela Power in India in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 1-18.

⁵¹ Rita Joshi, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-20.