

**Abstract:**

The Afghans and Mughals remained in a war with each other for a long time even before the arrival of Babur. This tussle was not limited in Kabul and its surroundings, but it continued in India as well where Afghans were influential. Babur had to subjugate powerful and stubborn Afghans before the conquest of India as they were present between Delhi and Kabul. The Afghans were Babur's rival and they never reconciled with Babur happily. They had always resisted Babur invasion and most of the time, they were put to the sword. In this paper, we will try to examine the actual cause and the origin of Mughal-Afghans conflict.

This tussle had started during the time of Ulugh Beg Mirza, when he was ruling Kabul. The major cause of this conflict was brutal carnage of approximately seven hundred Yusufzai nobles by Ulugh Beg Mirza. In fact, most of the Afghans were not united at all and Babur exploited their internal differences. If they would had been united, they would have been able to expel Babur from Kabul. It can be stated that it was the Afghans who facilitated Babur in the conquest of India.

**Background of Mughal-Afghan conflict:**

Intense rivalry between Mughals and Afghans had began before Babur initiated the invasion of Kabul in 1504. This conflict was not only limited in Kabul and its vicinity, but the conflicts also affected the Indian land as well. After Amir Timor demise, the empire was distributed between his four sons. Abu Said, was the grandson of Sultan Muhammad who was the grandson of Miran Shah, the son of Timor. Abu Said came to Kabul from Transoxiana and settled there and started to rule Kabul as his forefather dominion. Abu Said had two sons; Umar Sheikh and

Ulugh Beg. Umar Sheikh was Babur's father and the ruler of Fergana while Babur Uncle Ulugh Beg was the ruler of Kabul **1**.

In approximately 1460, Ulugh Beg Mirza travelled to Kabul with a small army, where at the time, Yusufzai, Gigyani and Muhmadzai were dwelling in Kabul and its surroundings. Suleiman Shah of Yusufzai was the dominator of such tribe and Ulugh Beg requested Suleiman for help to recapture Kabul, as it was his forefathers dominion. Suleiman shah agreed to help in occupation of Kabul and its district **2**.

Hence, this resulted in Ulugh Beg becoming an undisputed master of Kabul and its surroundings. Suleiman Shah guided Ulugh Beg in his daily affairs and got influence in the court. Several Yusufzai's secured prominent posts at court of Ulugh Beg.

With the passage of time, Yusufzai's grew powerful and arrogant and started to openly defy Ulugh Beg. This was a very troublesome situation for the emperor. They also started to pillage the vicinity of Kabul and those who resisted their plunder, were killed immediately. Consequently, different tribes started to muster around Ulugh Beg for safety, who was also annoyed with their attitude. However he was dependent on their help for the safety of empire. Now, he was in search of a golden opportunity to get rid of the Yusufzai's.

Gigyani tribe was a political rival of the Yusufzai's and wanted to secure Ulugh Beg assistance against the wrath of Yusufzai's. Ulugh Beg also needed them, so he invited Gigyani chiefs at court while ignoring Suleiman Shan **3**. The Gigyani chiefs were highly respected in the court and their positions were escalated. Hence, Ulugh Beg wanted to break backbone of both Yusufzai's and Gigyani by using them and developing conspiracy between each other. The presence of Gigyani in the

court offended Suleiman Shah and he refused to visit the court<sup>4</sup>. As a result, it was natural for Yusufzai's to adopt hostile attitude towards all Mughals and started to plunder Mughals in Kabul.

This situation was unacceptable for Ulugh Beg and decided to march against Yusufzai's, along with Gigyani's tribe. This initiated the battle of Ghwarah Marghah between two rivals. Yusufzai's fought with great courage and inflicted a crushing defeat on Ulugh Beg and Gigyani's.<sup>5</sup> This led to Ulugh Beg being compelled to accept Yusufzai's in the court and resume their former position. Princes and soldiers were recruited into Kabul from central Asia in an aim to defeat the Yusufzai's power; but Gigyani chiefs advised Ulugh Beg to crush Yusufzai's power permanently by inviting its leading chiefs on a feast. They also convinced Ulugh Beg that without this tactic, he would not be able to get rid of Yusufzai's permanently. Gigyani also agreed to participate in this deception.

According to this plan, Ulugh Beg invited around 700 leaders for a feast.<sup>6</sup> One of the Yusufzai leader felt treacherous due to the court setting and alarmed the rest of his kit and kin. He also asked them to kill Ulugh Beg, but they refused to do so. Yusufzai's were not expecting any treachery from Ulugh Beg, whom they rendered service to recapture Kabul. Against Yusufzai's expectation, all the members were killed. Before his demise, Suleiman Shah requested Ulugh Beg to save the life of Ahmad Shah so he could lead the tribe and allow Yusufzai's to move somewhere else. Lastly, he requested to kill him first because he would not be able to witness the bloodshed of his relatives. Ulugh Beg accepted all requests. This event took place near the 1490s, because the birth date of Ahmad Shah is 1475.<sup>7</sup> Afterwards,

bodies of slain were buried in a graveyard in Kabul, which today is referred to as “Shaheedan-i-Yusufzai Muqbara”. Following this, a Jirga of Yusufzai’s and its allied was called and Ahmad Shah was the chosen tribe leader unanimously. It was also decided to migrate to Peshawar Valley along with Utham Khel, Khalil, Muhmandzai and Gadoon tribe. Under the sagacious leadership of Ahmad Shah, Yusufzai became influential in the area and extended their frontiers up to Swat and Bajur. When Babur invaded India, the tribe was quite influential in the vital strategically area and it proved a hurdle in Babur in the conquest of India. Sikandar Lodhi did not have any response on the brutal massacre of Yusufzai’s because he had to subdue many of his nobles. After some years Ulugh Beg died and anarchy prevailed in Kabul. It was submitted that the successor of Ulugh Beg, Abdur Razaq was incompetent and could not control crises. Meanwhile Babur emerged on the scene and the city withstood a siege, finally capturing it in 1504. **8**

### **Babur relations with Afghans of borderland areas**

In 1494, at the age of eleven, Babur succeeded his father throne in Fergana. He had to overcome crisis' and with influential tactics he strengthened his position. He bravely faced misfortunes and during 1197, he occupied Samarqand. However, he had to face stiff resistance from Shaibani Khan in order to defend his title on the crown. Shaibani Khan tortured him and even expelled him from Fergana. In 1500, Babur reoccupied his lost throne but he now had lost Samarqand. Until 1503, continuous skirmishes took place between Babur and Shaibani Khan. Meanwhile, Ulugh Beg died and chaos prevailed in Kabul. It was at this time, Babur thought that it was the golden opportunity to test his luck in Kabul. In 1504, he came to Kabul and forced Muhammad Muqem to vacate the throne to his favour. He

deemed this area as his right because it was subjugated by his great-grandfather Amir Timor. Hence, Babur became an undisputed master of Kabul.

Now, Babur used Kabul as a foundation for his future attacks on Afghans of borderland and India. In fact, occupation of Indian throne was Babur's old dream. But to fulfil his purpose, he had to smash power of his two rivals. The first and major barrier in Babur's way were Afghans living near the borderland of India and secondly his enemy was Ibraheem Lodhi, the emperor of Delhi.<sup>9</sup> At that time, the Lodhi empire was extended from river Jhelum to Bihar. The area beyond west Indus river was under firm control of tribal Afghans, who were independent in their policies. Yusufzai's were mostly strong in this area along with their allies which included Muhammadzai, Khalil, Gadoon and Daudzai and Malik Ahmad Khan, nephew of Suleiman shah was their leader. They had also defeated Dalazaks, an Afghan tribe and became its master. This led to the Lodhi's losing their control over their original homeland.

Now Babur decided to subjugate his forefather dominions and Syed Ali Khan was the ruler of Timuride dominions of Bhera, Khushab, Chenab and Chiniot in India. Nevertheless, before subjugating the Indian territory, he had to deal with the Afghans who were located at the borderland who were obstacles in his way and a source of trouble for him.

First of all, he launched his operation against Afghans of Qandhar, Ghazni and its vicinity. Tribes of Yusufzai, Afirdi, Aurakzai, Bangash, Turi, Dalazak, Lohani, Wazir, Isa Khel and Mehsud were dominant in this area. Given the fact that Babur was sagacious, he dealt with most of these tribes separately and did not face much difficulty. Due to deep tribal jealousy against each other, they were unable to form

alliance against the common enemy. This was a major cause to their defeat at the hands of Babur.

Babur was at Kabul when a chief of Bhera, Yar Hussain visited Babur and acknowledged his master and invited him to India.<sup>10</sup> This was the initial invitation received by Babur from any Indian noble or chief. Within a few days, Babur decided to depart for India.

### **First two attack on India: Plunder and carnage**

In 1505, he left Kabul for the first time and came to India via Peshawar. Peshawar was inhibited by a powerful Gigyani tribe but were unable to face the wrath of Babur alone. Given this, it was asserted that they submitted themselves to Babur. Later on, a Gagyani chief named Malak Yahiya Khan advised Babur to march towards Kohat due to its richness in fertility, so he guided Babur on his way to Kohat and crossed Jhelum river. After plundering Kohat, he appointed a Gigyani chief in Kohat as his subservient. **11**

Moreover he further marched towards Hangu and faced resistance from Bangash's tribe. A fierce battle was fought which resulted in the defeat of the Bangash's. Some of them also surrendered to Babur and according to the customs, they came with grass in their mouth. A minaret of head dead was erected on the top of the mountain to spread Mughal's fear amongst the people of the vicinity. An estimated number of three hundred were also taken as war prisoners. He then moved for Bannu and faced little defiance from natives. He ordered for plunder and a trader named Khizar khan was put to sword for showing opposition. Following that commotion, he announced pardon for all those who submitted to him. From here,

he dispatched some of his army in surroundings for loot and carnage and also abducted white cloth from natives. Now, he decided to leave for Kabul via Gomal. As he crossed Gomal pass, a small group of Afghans appeared from the hills and contested against Babur.**12** Devastated, from the appearing of this group, he continued with the plunder of Afghan tribes until he reached Kabul.

In Kabul and its vicinity, he destroyed the power of many Afghan tribes including Khilji, Gagyani and khizer Khel. Meanwhile, a rebellion broke out in his army at Kabul and he reached on the spot and crushed it. Marching to Ghazni to smash Mesh Khel, another powerful tribe appeared. The Afghans fought with great courage but most of them were put to sword. About ten thousands of sheep were captured by Babur from this area and in addition to create fear amongst the natives, he ordered to build a minaret of dead bodies. He always showed great brutality with Afghans.

In the last quarter of 1507, he left Kabul for India for the second time and adopted the title of Padshah.**13** On his way to India, he crushed many Afghan tribes between Jalalabad and Laghman and also took possession of a fort near Jalalabad. This time, he chastised Afghans and Hazaras of hilly areas and compelled them to pay annual tribute. From here, he moved towards India and entered through passing Kabul. He proceeded a little ahead, when he had to return back due to fear of revolt within his own army.

### **Third invasion of India**

In his autobiography, Babur stated that "...it was my deep desire to subjugate India and other several countries of Bhare, Khushab, Chinot and Cheenab as they

belonged to my forefathers. I decided to possess them through peace or force". **14**

Meanwhile, Ibraheem Lodhi became an emperor of Delhi and an intense tussle had started between Ibraheem and his nobles. Babur reached Bajaur and a large scale massacre of Afghans took place. Babur justified his reasons for this massacre, claiming that natives of Bajaur were infidels. However, this is not true at all because the Afghans had always been staunch followers of Islam. Having said that, he proceeded and decided to take possession of the Bajaur fort. Hayder Ali was the ruler of Bajaur and he preferred to fight. This led to a fierce battle and Babur used fire artillery and gun powder against Hayder Ali. On the second day, Babur took possession of the fort and ordered for a massacre. At least three thousand and one hundred men were put to death including Hayder Ali. **15** As it was Babur custom, he ordered to build a minaret of human skull on top of a mountain. This was Babur's strategy to produce fear amongst Afghans in an attempt for them to halt their resistance. But the Afghans were also stubborn and continued to rebel against Babur with the passage of time. Malak Mansur, a Yusufzai chief was an eye witness of the Bajaur massacre. To celebrate his victory at Bajaur, he drank wine with Khawaja Kalan, a chief of Dalazak tribe.

The Dalazak's were worst enemies of Yusufzai's and instigated Babur against the Yusufzai's. This was because Malak Ahmad Shah expelled Dalazak's from the Peshawar valley and occupied it. Now, Babur also turned his attention towards Yusufzai's, who were quite influential in the area of Swat. The Yusufzai's had firm control on Swat, Peshawar, Mardan, Charsada and Attock and were hurdles in Babur's way to his expedition towards India. It was the first priority of Babur to subjugate them by force or connivance. However, he did not direct his army into

the hilly area of Yusufzai's as it purported to be impossible to defeat Yusufzai's there. Thus, Babur marched towards Swat and encamped his army near Diyarun. He realised that he was unable to subjugate Yusufzai's by force, so he decided for diplomatic methods. In fact, Babur wanted to secure a safe passage to India through Yusufzai's area. Therefore he planned to save a passage for retreat as a second plan, if he was to be defeated by Ibraheem Lodhi.

### **Political alliance with Yusufzai's: Babur marriage with Bibi Mubarks**

Babur invited Malak Ahmad Khan in his court and a friendly meeting took place between them. Now, it was clear that both wanted cordial relation with each other and shared personal interest in it. Yusufzai's were also afraid from Gigyani's, who were allies of Babur. After sometime, he again summoned Malak Ahmad Khan in his court but this time Ahmad Khan denied politely. This had offended Babur and he sent his spies in Yusufzai's areas to acquire information about their activities. Nevertheless the men of Malik Ahmad Shah were also alarmed from Babur. Hence, Babur decided to visit Yusufzai's area himself in disguise as a Saint. The occasion of Bakr Eid arrived and huge gatherings of poor people were present at the house of Malak Mansur Shah. Babur was one of them and received bread from the daughter of Malak Mansur Shah. **16**

Babur returned to Diyarun in his camp and contemplated about having matrimonial relations with Yusufzai's. So, he wrote to Malak Ahmad Shah about his intention, but Malak Ahmad Shah refused at once and said that Mansur Shah has no Daughter. Then, Babur wrote about his personal visit of area and mentioned the whole incident. Even then Malak Ahmad Shah was firm on his decision. However the rest of the leading Malaks of the tribe forced him to reconsider as it concerned the fate

of the whole tribe. Compelled by the whole tribe, Malak Ahmad Shah had to accept Babur proposal. It was asserted that it was a political alliance between the two tribes. Now, Babur was free from Yusufzai's forays and did not intervene in internal affairs of Yusufzai's. Political maturity was evident from this decision of the Yusufzai's. The marriage took place in January 1519<sup>17</sup> and some historians are of an opinion that Sheikh Mali played a vital role in this marriage as he wanted to save Yusufzai's from Babur's wrath. Now, some prominent Yusufzai's entered in the Mughal army and served him against his Afghan fellows. In fact, it was Yusufzai tribe which made it possible for Babur to cross the Afghan borderland areas safely and crush Ibraheem Lodhi at the battle of Panipat. But, we should also keep in mind that Gagyani and Dalazak made secret alliance with Babur against Yusufzai's while, Babur also dealt with all Afghan tribes separately.

#### **Fourth attack on India**

Babur directed his fourth attack on India in 1524. He stayed near Hashtnagar and many skirmishes took place with Mohmand tribe. He continued his policy of looting and plundering and moved towards Mardan. Here he subdued some Afghan tribes and went to Yaqubi, a village near Swabi. Moving towards Peshawar he bestowed precious gifts to Dalazak's for their valuable services. Here Dalazak's noble's also gave a feast to Babur. Following this, Babur went to devastate Afridi, Shinwari and Wazir tribe. Hundreds of Afghans were put to sword and their belongings were plundered. From Wazir tribe about 300 goats were taken.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, a rebellion broke out in his army at Kabul and Babur returned. Although Babur devastated many Afghan tribes he was unsuccessful in completion of subjugation.

## **Downfall of Lodhi's and establishment of Mughal dynasty:**

During the time of Bahlol Lodhi: nobles were much strong and influential due to lenient attitude of sultan. With the passage of time, nobles became arrogant. During this time, a tussle was present between Sultan and nobles. In the time of Sikandar Lodhi, nobles were obedient due to monarch like attitude of Sultan. He held very high intellect and through that he was aware about his subjects. But, the empire was so expanded that some nobles held the same power as of the head and had 30000 to 45000 sawars under them. **19** But when Sikandar Lodhi died, the entire nobility rose in revolt due to the harsh attitude of Ibraheem and for his favouritism policy.

In fact, when Ibraheem became an emperor, he started to remove nobles of his father and instead appoint his own favourite ones. In fact, nobles wanted to culminate the power of sultan by dividing the empire. They wanted to appoint Ibraheem as the emperor of Delhi and his brother as the emperor of Jaunpur. This had offended Sultan and he started to crush them. Sultan tried to redress a balance by recruiting non-afghan nobles.

Simultaneously, revolts broke out in different parts of the empire and people of Bihar acknowledged Bihar Khan as their king and under Dawlat Khan a revolt broke out in Punjab. Punjab was strategically crucial and revolt was also at its peak. Ibraheem killed two sons of Dawlat Khan, who were present at court. As a result, many nobles shifted their loyalties. Mian Hassan joined Rana Sanga and other nobles including Qasim khan of Sambhal, Nizam khan of Bayana, Hassan Khan of Mewat, Kutab Khan of Etowah established their petty dynasties in their respective

areas<sup>20</sup>. Ibraheem Lodhi asked Dawlat Khan for help to crush revolt in Bihar, but Dawlat sent his son Dalawar Khan. This offended Ibraheem emperor and he imprisoned Dalawar Khan and aimed to kill each other. Now, Dawlat Khan was suspicious about Ibraheem intentions so invited Alam Khan, son of Bahlul Lodhi to join him against the King.

Babur had a vigilant eye on all these events. Dawlat Khan sent his son to Babur along with mangoes and invited him for help against Ibraheem. Babur was also aware about the noble's dissatisfaction. Dilawar Khan also informed Babur about treacherous nature of his father. Therefore as a result, Babur exploited a situation and he decided to eliminate Lodhi's permanently. Now Babur marched towards India and sent an army under Alam Khan towards Lahore and then Dipal Pure and captured both in 1523<sup>21</sup>. Now due to suspect of revolt in his army, Babur left India for Kabul. Near Peshawar, he met Dawlat Khan and accepted his submission. Olaf Caroe is of an opinion that the fifth expedition of Babur against India took place in 1524. He took possession of Lahore but returned due to his weak position at Kabul. In the last month of 1525, Babur again came to India for its complete conquest. But, now Alam Khan Lodhi, uncle of Ibraheem, Ghazi Khan and Dawlat Khan made a treaty to attack on Delhi as a restoration of Alam Khan. Hence a structured army of three nobles marched towards Delhi but was defeated by a hand of Ibraheem general. Dawlat Khan fled from the battle field and after sometime submitted to Babur however he was imprisoned. Now, Alam Khan and Dilawar Khan were also afraid from Babur and thought it was better to submit before Babur. Meanwhile, Rana Sanga and Hussain Khan also promised to help Babur against Ibrahem Lodhi.

In February 1526, Hamayun defeated an advance army of Ibraheem and now Ibraheem had decided to march himself against Babur. Ibraheem marched out of Delhi and came to a halt at a town named Panipat with one hundred thousand soldiers under his command. Babur also reached there on 12 April, 1526 with a well-formed army. Afghan nobles and mercenaries seemed that it was contest between two Afghans **22**.

On 21 April, both armies faced each other. Ibraheem attacked with full force but was unable to break Babur army lines. Babur artillery proved disastrous for Lodhis and about sixteen thousand soldiers perished this day including Ibraheem Lodhi. After the death of Ibraheem, his army fled from the battle field and Babur was successful in acquiring the throne of Delhi. Entering Delhi a Khutba was read in his name.

Now Babur wanted to secure Afghans aid against Rana Sanga but still did not trust the Afghans. He announced a general apology for all those who submitted before him. He also recruited Afghans in his army as mercenaries and sent Afghan nobles in remote areas and allotted them Jagir's there. Now, he wanted to get rid of Afghans. He also murdered Dawlat Khan Lodhi following with putting the mother of Ibraheem Lodhi to the sword. Ghazi Khan Train and Alam Khan were killed in the court due to charges of treachery **23**.

Due to this harsh attitude of Babur, some of the Afghans joined Rana Sanga against Babur with revolts occurring in different parts of India. Ilyas Khan of Doab and Biban Khan also revolted against Babur in Bihar and joined Mahmood Lodhi, a brother of Ibraheem Lodhi. Meanwhile, some loyal nobles of Babur also deceived

him and Joined Mahmud Lodhi. The rebels then occupied Qanauj and Lucknow and it was a great shock for Babur. As a result of this he sent Mirza Askari against the rebels and they submitted including Sher Shah Suri. Now, Mahmood Lodhi fled to Bengal and sought asylum there. Babur faced a combined army of Bengal and Mahmood Lodhi. A fierce battle took place at Gogra during 1529 and Babur defeated them<sup>24</sup>. Now, whole part of East was under Babur control. Now, Babur health was deteriorating and died in 1530, at the age of forty seven years. He was buried at Agra but in 1539, his wife Bibi Mubarka shifted his body near Kabul. This grave is now known as Bagh-i-Babur.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the nature of the Mughal-Afghan conflict was political. This tussle did not start due to the arrival of Babur; the cause was traced back to many deeper roots. This conflict started during the era of Ulugh Beg Mirza, uncle of Babur. Even at that time, the Afghans were not united and held tribal animosity. Babur was forced to leave Fergana and he tried his luck in India and was successful. Babur always claimed India as his legal dominion as it belonged to his forefathers. To subjugate India, Babur had to smash power of Afghans of border lands. He was committed to conquer India by peace or by force while Yusufzai had a strong tribe in Peshawar and its adjoining areas.

Afghans gave tough time to Babur in Kabul and its vicinity and were regarded as hurdles in Babur way during the conquest of India. In fact, Babur was very sagacious and a talented man and he dealt with all the Afghan tribes separately. Along with political supremacy, Babur had an upper hand on the Afghans in Military

perspective as well. Due to personal conflicts, the Afghans were unable to unite against common enemy, Babur. By using different Afghan tribes, he conquered the throne of Delhi from another Afghan. But when Babur was successful in his objective, he rejected them. He was always in a doubt of the Afghans loyalty.

With the help of Yusufzai's, Babur took control of Peshawar and its surroundings. Later on, he made matrimonial alliance with Yusufzai's and then married Bibi Mubarka, a sister of Malik Mansur Shah. Hence, he secured a safe path for Indian conquest. He plundered India again and again and hundreds of Afghan were put to death, who defied Babur. Babur realised that Afghans had intense rivalry for each other. He used to raid India and loot grains and money from different tribes. But, central authorities in Delhi never took notice of Babur forays. After killing Afghans, forming a minaret of skulls was a typical practice for Babur. Despite all these brutalities, Afghans never reconciled with Babur. If Afghans would had been reunited, they would have had the opportunity to become masters of India instead of Babur.

Ibraheem Lodhi proved himself a barbaric against his nobles and they turned against him and instead invited Babur to try and defeat India. When Babur invaded India last time in 1524, many nobles had declared themselves as independent, hence it was easy for Babur to subjugate them separately. When Babur took possession of Lahore, many Afghans realized that they could not defy Babur's army so they submitted. At the battle of Panipat in 1526, Ibraheem had a much stronger army in comparison to Babur, but they still were defeated. When Babur became the emperor of Delhi, he appointed Afghans nobles in remote areas and kept them away from each other. Secretly, he assassinated many Afghans, whom he

considered a threat to his empire. The death of Babur resulted in most of the Afghan nobles submitting themselves and the empire was safe from the Afghans rebellion.

## References