

THE COMPOSITION AND CIRCULATION OF INDO- AFGHAN NARRATIVES IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RAJOSHREE GHOSH



Centre for Historical Studies

School of Social Sciences

Jawaharlal Nehru University

New Delhi- 110067

July 2019

Date: 19/7/2019

DECLARATION

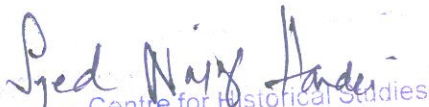
I, Rajoshree Ghosh, declare that the thesis entitled "*The Composition and Circulation of Indo-Afghan Narratives in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*", submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted in part or full for the award of any other degree to this or any other university.



Rajoshree Ghosh

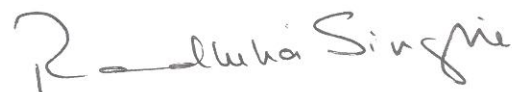
CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067
JNU Supervisor

Prof. Najaf Haider



Prof. Sucheta Mahajan

Chairperson



Chairperson
Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to many who have contributed to this thesis, both academically and otherwise.

I am most indebted to my supervisor, Prof. Najaf Haider, whose keen eye for details and comments, contributed tremendously to the conception and shaping up of this thesis. This work would not have been accomplished without his patience and support.

I am also grateful to Prof. Chander Shekhar for introducing me to the Persian language and rearing my interest in it. Credit is also due to Sharjeel and Mussadique for helping me with some of the Persian texts.

My interest in history was nurtured at the foundational level by my teachers at Kamala Nehru College. It was then at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University that the Professors expanded the horizons in engaging and interactive ways. My gratitude to each of them cannot be expressed through words.

I would also like to thank the Indian Council of Historical Research, for funding a part of this study through their Junior Research Fellowship. This study has equally been supported by the Librarian and staff at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Council of Historical Research, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts. The cooperation that the K.P Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna and the Institut Francais De Pondicherry, Pondicherry, extended by sending me across some of their rare publications, is also appreciated. Finally, it is to the cooperative non academic staff at the Centre for Historical Studies for assisting with the complex paperwork procedures, that recognition is due.

Over the years I have received invaluable encouragement from my family. It is the enthusiasm of my grandparents, parents and sister, which has sustained mine. Heartfelt gratitude is also due to my dogs.

Finally, it are my friends and our discussions on work and life that will remain the most cherished part of my decade long journey here. Without them this adventure would not have been possible.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Introduction	1- 26
1. The Content and Form of the Waqiat i Mushtaqi	27-62-
2. Reconstructing the Lodi Past: The Imperial Interventions	63-92
3. Remembering Sher Shah: The Afghan Past in the Mughal Present	93-124
4. Resisting the Mughal Hegemony: The Tarikh i Daudi and the Tarikh i Shahi	125-169
5. Changing Narratives in Changing Times	170-205
Conclusion	206-211
Bibliography	212-217

Introduction

The period located between the invasion of Timur and the foundation of Akbar's empire, was dominated by the Afghans in Northern and Eastern India. Notable amongst them were the Lodis and the Surs, who politically emerged from either ends of the Indo Gangetic plains. They were able to make their way to the revered seat of power, Delhi, and established control over considerable territories and resources. In due course of time they were able to carve out a significant space for themselves, which has led modern scholarship to engage with the nature of their kingship, organisation of power, economic structures and cultural vibrancy. The most interesting aspect of the sources recording the history of these two Afghan dynasties is that all of them were written after their rule was over. It is not just the absence of contemporary sources, but also that of any official text, that has made the reconstruction of these Afghan regimes an unconventional one. Moreover, many of them were produced during the years that witnessed the expansion and consolidation of Mughal power. This has stressed their reading further, given that the Mughals and the Afghans did not share an amicable past; the former not only being responsible for ending the latter's political domination, but the latter too, had at a point, made it impossible to imagine the return of the Mughals.

The Mughals, after the weakening of the Afghan power, returned to the subcontinent. They established a formidable empire that in its course of a century and a half of uninterrupted rule did much to ensure that they could preserve their past, on their own terms. This realisation and the responsibility to fulfil it, was not solely borne by the emperor, but by many others in his familial and political circles. Many thus contributed

their share by recording the developments they had witnessed, and where required, they made the effort to consult pre existing sources as well. Some of these writings also touched upon the Afghans, not only as they had a direct connect with them, but also because some Mughal texts went back a long way to begin with the coming of Mahmud Ghazni and came down to their times. They thus had to make space for the Lodis and the Surs, but it would not be proper to think that it was just with the intention to traverse a chronological span.

This stark contrast in the culture of history writing between the Afghans and the Mughals had its effect on modern scholarship where the former has been sympathised of being ‘overshadowed by its successor’,¹ in specific, and the medieval period to have ‘suffered from what is characterised as Mughal centrism’, in general.² Efforts to reconstruct the Afghan period has given rise to an arena of historiography, that is neither as intensive or as extensive as their Mughal counterpart, nor have been able to demand the autonomy that their Mughal counterparts enjoy. Though the former has been caused by the relative absence of diverse and contemporary sources, the latter is the result of the need that some scholars have felt to justify their academic persuasion of this period. Even one of the most recent and fresh collection of articles on the fifteenth century, has been introduced by its editors as a response to the need to understand ‘what the Mughals changed’ and therefore the quest to understand ‘what was South Asia like before the Mughals’ begins.³ This is not to say that a study of continuities and changes across

¹ Francesca Orsini and Samira Shaikh, *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in fifteenth century North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007, p. 1.

² Raziuddin Aquil, *Sufism, Culture and Politics: Afghans and Islam in Medieval North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 1-5, 12-13.

³ Orsini and Shaikh, *After Timur Left*, p. 1.

regimes is not desirable, but it should follow rather than lead the study of a period that displays the traits, individualistic enough to be recognised by its own.

A similar problem becomes evident, when once again the significance of the Afghan period is ascertained in relation to another, with the intention to clear the ground for its study. Thus the period of Afghan rule was identified to have been a highly constructive one, as the damages done by Timur's invasion and a fading Tughluq power were considered to have been reversed, to lay the foundation on which the Mughals built their administrative, fiscal and judicial structures.⁴ This unnecessary weighing of one period against the other does little to further our historical understanding. It instead places the Mughals on a high pedestal, to reach which the fifteenth century had to be traversed. Moreover, by making such justifications a premise to academically pursue a period can also be self defeating, pressurising the scholar to move towards a predetermined conclusion. Thus to begin with, the presence of sources for a period, contemporary or not, should be a sufficient reason to generate academic interest therein.

The coming of the Afghans to the Indian subcontinent has been traced to the arrival of the invading Ghaznavid and Ghorid armies. They formed a separate wing consisting of twelve thousand Afghan horsemen. Qutbuddin Aibak, Iltutmish and Balban utilised their presence, primarily as warriors, rather than administrators. They later rose to bureaucratic positions under the Khaljis and the Tughluqs, and we begin to come across specific names and the offices held by them. The Afghan presence and visibility intensified with the coming of the Saiyyids when many prominent names surface, like

⁴ S.M. Imamuddin, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani Wa Makhzan i Afghani*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1960, introduction p. v.

that of Malik Sulaiman Lodi, Husain Khan Afghan, Qutb Khan Afghan, Malik Allahdad Lodi, Darya Khan and Islam Khan.⁵ However, none of them made a bid for gaining power at Delhi until Bahlul Lodi ascended the throne, marking the beginning of the Afghan's tryst with kingship. This continued till the fall of Ibrahim Lodi against Babur, only to re emerge with the rise of Sher Shah Sur till the resurgence of the Mughals. Thus, even though the Mughals shared an uneasy equation with the Afghans, as did the Afghans with them, their pasts were inseparable from one another. It was not just on account of the sequence in which events unfolded themselves, which intertwined their past, but it was also the production of the texts recording the Afghan past during the Mughal regime, which is of greater relevance to the present study.

The period from the mid sixteenth to the seventeenth century witnessed the composition of a series of narratives on the Afghan past, in quick succession, either specifically dedicated to this subject or as a part of a larger narrative on the history of the subcontinent. These are far from being uniform in nature, varying considerably in terms of the patronage they received, the way in which the narratives were arranged, the audience they intended to address and the diverse background of their authors. Despite of these divergences they display continuity, each relying on their preceding works, as sources to write the history of the Lodis and Surs. As expected, this flow is far from smooth, as the variations mentioned above comes into play, giving each work a unique identity of its own. Since these works were removed in time from the period that they brought under observation, scholars have emphasised on the need to analyse the sources

⁵ Rita Joshi, *Afghan Nobility and the Mughals*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 21-27.

that they used, to determine their credibility to be used for reconstructing the history of this period.

The first text that we encounter on the Afghan past is the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*. It was written by Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, who initially used to conduct oral sessions attended by people interested to hear anecdotes about the Afghan kings and their times. The popularity that this narrative attained can be gauged by Mushtaqi's observation of noticing people writing down his oral sessions, which then enabled them to hold their independent sessions as well. The narrative assumed a written form when his friends persuaded him to do so, for the benefit of those who wished to derive lessons from it. However, the text does not mention of any source, either oral or written, and its author does not appear to be concerned by its absence, limiting himself only to the phrase 'Praise God, it is right and true'.⁶

Scholars have identified the strengths and the shortcomings of the text, leaving us with no clear impression on it. On one hand the text is appreciated for being the only one to have been authored by a writer who lived during Sikandar and Ibrahim Lodi's reigns, thereby witnessing some events himself.⁷ On the other the statement is soon contradicted as Ibrahim Lodi is held guilty of harbouring grudges against Mushtaqi, raising suspicion on his claims.⁸ He is also held guilty of accepting, uncritically, popular traditions circulating on Bahlul's life,⁹ and of incorporating stories of miracles and enchantments

⁶ Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, ed. I.H.Siddiqui and W.H. Siddiqui, Rampur Raza Library, Rampur, 2002, pp. 1-2.

⁷ I.H. Siddiqui, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi., 1993, see introduction, pp. xvi.

⁸ I.H. Siddiqui, *Tarikh i Daudi*, Aligarh, 1969, see introduction, p. 12.

⁹ I.H. Siddiqui, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. xvii, xix-xx.

which deformed his work,¹⁰ but was valued for providing the earliest independent account of the Surs.¹¹ The *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* has also received harsh criticism for being devoid of dates which made it come across as a disorderly narrative,¹² and incapable being perceived as 'strictly historical.'¹³ Adding to these shortcomings, the presence absurd stories of miracles and enchantments are held to have created unnecessary digressions, reflective of his spiritual pursuits, but of no historical value.¹⁴ But yet again others have refused to completely abandon them, recognising them for their cultural value, as an indicator of the standard of fictional stories produced in medieval India.¹⁵

The other work which completely ignored the need to mention its sources is the *Afsana i Shahan*. Written by Shaikh Muhammad Kabir, it does not mention of any written or oral sources, apart from what is taken to be a possible one. Therefore his grandfather, who served Sher Shah, till the first round of conflict against the Mughals is recognised as one,¹⁶ but the author's indifference towards the issue is not perceived to be an encouraging one. His writings are thus taken to be a product of imagination and false traditions.¹⁷ Unlike Mushtaqi, he was not a contemporary of the Afghan rulers, and therefore theoretically should have found even fewer takers. This however does not turn out to be completely true, as some sections of the *Afsana i Shahan* is considered to have

¹⁰S.M. Imamuddin, 'Some Persian Literary Sources on the Afghan history of India', *Islamic Culture*, 33, 1959, p. 45.

¹¹ Hameed ud-Din, 'Historians of Afghan Rule In India', in *Journal of American Oriental Society*, vol. 82, No. 1, 1962, p. 48.

¹² Simon Digby, 'After Timur Left', in Orsini and Sheikh ed. *After Timur Left*, p. 58.

¹³ Imamuddin, 'Some Persian Literary Sources of the Afghan History of India', pp. 45-6.

¹⁴ B.P. Ambashthya, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, K.P Jayaswal Research Institue, Patna, 1974, p. 18.

¹⁵ I.H. Siddiqui, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, introduction, p. xvii.

¹⁶ Hussain Khan, 'Afsanah i Shahan: A Critique' in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1987, p. 352.

¹⁷ I.H. Siddiqui, *Mughal Relations with the Indian Ruling Elite*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1983, p. 111.

assisted in expanding our knowledge on the Afghans.¹⁸ Therefore the existence of such contradictory opinions does set the stage for furthering our understanding of the factors that determined these variations in the evaluation of a work.

This approach of evaluating a work based on its sources does not translate into a general suspicion towards works based on oral sources, as is evident in the case of *Tuhfah i Akbar Shahi*. Also known as the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, it is one of the most widely acknowledged and trusted sources on the Afghan past. Scholars have not just appreciated Abbas Khan Sarwani's reliance on the reminiscences of the nobles who served the Sur ruler, but his familial connection with many of them is considered to have added to the value of the text. Moreover, Sarwani himself adds a word of caution against using oral testimonies blindly, stating that he has rejected 'whatever did not withstand the touchstone of truth',¹⁹ convincing scholars further on the reliability of the text. This is not all, as Abbas Khan's claim to have written under Mughal patronage has led scholars to assume that he had the privilege of accessing the documents preserved in the imperial library,²⁰ even when the author did not claim to have done so. Though Sarwani refers to some written sources, as 'reports and histories of Sher Shah', they not only remain anonymous, but he states to have heard about what has been recorded in them, rather than to have read them himself.²¹ Therefore a combination of oral and written documents, the former as listed by the author and the latter as assumed by scholars, has earned the work a

¹⁸ S.H Askari, 'Historical Value of Afsana i Badshahan', in *Journal of Indian History*, No. 43, 1965, p. 185, Hussain Khan, 'Afsanah i Shahan: A Critique', p. 353.

¹⁹ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *The Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, ed. S.M. Imamuddin, University of Dacca, 1964, p. 2.

²⁰ Ambashthya, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 34.

²¹ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *The Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 218, 232.

distinct reputation of being ‘fortified with unshakeable evidences’.²² It is not surprising that it often serves as the backbone of secondary works on Sher Shah.

The remaining texts on Afghan past primarily depended on written sources. Foremost among them are the *Tabaqat i Akbari* and the *Tarikh i Firishta*, both providing its readers with a list of sources, which has been instrumental in securing the faith of scholars. The former mentions the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* and the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi*, considered to have been the official text of Ibrahim Lodi, as the only two sources for the Afghan period. The problem arises not only as the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi* is no longer extant, but as scholars assumed it to be the source of information not to be found in the only other mentioned one, the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*.²³ Similarly we also come across information without any precedents or affiliation in the *Tarikh i Firishta*, which though is noticed and suspected, but it does little or nothing to question the credibility of the text.²⁴ It is with such a perception, that even Simon Digby, who questioned Nizamuddin Ahmad’s claim of having used a contemporary Lodi court chronicle, in the case of ‘plausible and dependant account of Firishta’ is confident of him having access to an independent source, probably oral, on the basis of which he made some additions.²⁵

A differing sensibility towards the use of sources is shown by Abdullah and Ahmad Yadgar, the former mentioning the *Tabaqat i Akbari* and the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, for the composition of the *Tarikh i Daudi* while the later states to have used the *Tarikh Ma’dan i Akhbar i Ahmadi* along with Nizamuddin Ahmad’s work for his *Tarikh i Shahi*.

²² Ambashthya, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 19.

²³ Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, *Some Aspects of Afghan Despotism in India*, Aligarh, 1969, p. 15 fn. 2.

²⁴ Imamuddin, ‘Some Persian literary sources on the Afghan history of India’ p. 49.

²⁵ Simon Digby, ‘The Indo Persian Historiography of the Lodi Sultans’, in *Les Sources et le Temps*, ed, Grimal, Pondicherry, 2001, pp.255-256, 258.

However, what is noticeable that neither of them acknowledged the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, despite drawing heavily from it.²⁶ The *Tarikh i Daudi* by Abdullah combined the writings of Shaikh Mushtaqi and Nizamuddin Ahmad to rewrite the Lodi period but Siddiqui has expressed his reservations about using the former, specially when it came in conflict with the latter. Siddiqui also did not consider it desirable of Abdullah to have left out many sections and details from the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. Furthermore, the neglect of certain portions from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, that the scholar considered to have been reliable and detailed, is also not appreciated. The work is also criticised for mixing up names and events. Similarly for the section on the Surs, the scholar did not approve of the utilisation of Mushtaqi to record the early days of Sher Shah, as he believed that it relied on fabrications to cover up Sher Shah's humble and obscure origins.²⁷ However, for the period following Sher Shah's accession, Mushtaqi is given much more recognition and hence no reservations are expressed against its utilisation.²⁸

The *Tarikh i Shahi* is also considered to have been plagued by similar problems as the author is said to have written an untrustworthy work, as he believed all that he read and heard.²⁹ Thus, not only is he criticised for failing to sieve out fiction, but also for omitting important information on polity and society, as provided in his sources, primarily that in the *Tabaqat i Akbari*.³⁰ The *Tarikh i Shahi*, is also not appreciated for

²⁶ Siddiqui, *Tarikh i Daudi*, introduction, p.4, and K.R. Qanungo, 'Assessment of the historical value of the *Tarikh i Shahi*', in *Bengal: Past and Present*, vol. 82, serial no. 153, 1963, p. 58.

²⁷ Siddiqui, *Tarikh i Daudi*, introduction, pp.4-15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17.

²⁹ Ambasthya, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 24, S.M. Imamuddin, 'Some Persian literary sources on the Afghan history of India', p. 46, Qanungo, Assessment of the historical value of the *Tarikh i Shahi*' p. 60.

³⁰ Qanungo, 'Assessment of the historical value of the *Tarikh i Shahi*', pp. 63

providing additional information, is characterised as gossipy and unreliable.³¹ Thus unlike the *Tarikh i Daudi*, which is assumed and valued for incorporating some rare information from other lesser used sources, like the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi*, the *Tarikh i Bahadur Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Haqqi*,³² the *Tarikh i Shahi* had to pay a price for incorporating new information without backing them with credible sources. Thus the emphasis was not just on the reference to sources but care had to be taken regarding the choice of source as well. These works therefore had to face harsh criticism for choosing to depend on the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, which earned them the unwanted perception of being desultory histories.³³ Further, the absence of chronology and presence of fanciful stories, has led scholars to characterise these texts as ‘original fiction out of an ill set skeleton of history’, against which statements of caution had to be issued.³⁴ The *Afsana i Shahan* has also been grouped alongside, as it is similarly based on imagination, false traditions and fiction. Scholars identify it as a successor of the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, as it too ‘reduces history to a collection of anecdotes’ and ‘presents stories as facts of history’.³⁵

Another source in the corpus of the Indo-Afghan narratives is the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani*. It presents an extensive account of the Afghans, beginning with their migration from Jerusalem to Ghur to India, mentions the emergence of three clans within the tribe, gives a detailed list of the Afghan saints, identifying each through their line of descent and finally an account on Khan i Jahan Lodi’s pursuits at the Mughal court. The author,

³¹ Qanungo, ‘Assessment of the historical value of the *Tarikh i Shahi*’, *Bengal: Past and Present*, vol. 83, serial no. 155, 1964, pp. 32.

³² Siddiqui, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 22-7.

³³ Imamuddin, ‘Some Persian Literary Sources of the Afghan History of India’, p. 40.

³⁴ Qanungo, ‘Assessment of the historical value of the *Tarikh i Shahi*’, p. 41-2.

³⁵ I.H. Siddiqui, *Mughal Relations with Indian Ruling Elite*, p. 114.

Niamatullah lists quite a few works on the Afghans, produced not just for recording the history of the Lodis, Surs and Karranis but also those that throw light on tracing the descent of the Afghan tribe. The only ones identified to have escaped explicit listing were the *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi*, *Tarikh i Daudi*, *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Muntakhabu' al Tawarikh*.³⁶ These omissions have not been considered to have affected his writing, partly because scholars had reservations against them and partly because they had nothing original. Infact the credentials of the author was so strong, him being the son of a *waqia-nawis* at Akbar's court,³⁷ before finally being employed by Khan iJahan Lodi to write an extensive history of the Afghans.

Even though the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* appears to be well furnished with almost all existing sources, scholars have expressed their doubts regarding the opening section of the text that recorded the trajectory of the descent of the Afghans. This part of the text has majorly received disapproval from scholars who have thought it to be 'not of much historical value because the account is more in the nature of legends',³⁸ which were 'taken uncritically from the commonest sources without a statement to encourage correctness, research, novelty and probability'.³⁹ Hameed ud Din was the only one who partially defended this section of the text, recognising that despite 'the lack of a historical basis, it was meant to serve a political purpose'.⁴⁰ However there is no clarification on what the political purpose was or how did the text attempt to fulfil it. This criticism is not held valid for the entire text, as 'a truly historical part' has been identified, in terms of it 'not being abound with absurd and ridiculous stories in connection with the Lodis and the

³⁶ Imamuddin, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani*, p. 23.

³⁷ Ambasthya, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 21, Hameed ud din, 'Historians of Afghan rule in India', p. 50.

³⁸ Imamuddin, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani*, p. 24.

³⁹ Ambashthya, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Hameed ud Din, 'Historians of Afghan Rule in India', p. 50.

Surs as was the case with Mushtaqi's, Abdullah's and Ahmad Yadgar's works'.⁴¹ Therefore, it is the presence of these stories which is held to have primarily devalued many of the works on the Afghan past.

From our above discussion on the secondary works that have examined the merits and demerits of the Indo-Afghan texts, the existence of two distinct strands comes to light. The first one exhibits certain defining characteristics like little concern over the rigid use of sources, which in some cases like the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* and the *Afsana i Shahan* does not exist at all. In other cases like that of the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi*, despite explicitly listing a few sources, did not necessarily abide by them. On the other hand the rest of the texts, associated with the Mughals, took great caution to back up their writings with references to sources. However, as we will see in this study, their equation with their sources was not as straightforward as it appears and did not necessarily ease their reading.

Other than the issue of sources there is a major difference in their content, which reflect diversity in their definition of what could and could not be included in their works recording the past. In this respect it was the presence of the fictional stories, which has been so severely criticised, that mark the sharpest divergence between them. Other than these the Afghans also displayed a noticeable ease with which they wrote about their past without mentioning dates. This was unthinkable for the Mughals, who were very particular with dating events, not just in years but the exact day and month were recorded.

⁴¹ Imamuddin, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani*, p. 25.

Thus on recognising these two distinct lines of history writing and their characteristics, it is easy to find that modern historiography have continued to adopt the same approach that the texts associated with the Mughals displayed. This thus explains our partiality, in recognising and utilising them for the reconstruction of the period, at the cost of ignoring the rest. This unfair othering of the Afghan sources have given rise to an arena of scholarship that can be sustained only as long as we continue with this divide, which makes it extremely fragile. Thus evoking evidences from the other side, which many a times presented a contradictory picture, resulted in the falling apart of the ongoing flow of ideas, making the Afghan scholarship academically unsatisfying. However before we turn to the methods that we can adopt to minimise such internal contradictions, a quick glance at the existing works will help us to assess the situation better.

One of the most discussed themes on the Afghan period is the nature of its power structure. A debate exists between R.P Tripathi and I.H Siddiqui to understand shift in the nature of the Lodi polity from tribal to centralised one. Thus Bahlul Lodi is said to have exercised hegemony, while Ibrahim Lodi displayed many traits of controlling a centralised state. The transition had begun with Sikandar Lodi's accession where he showed resistance to anything that could weaken his control on the affairs of the state. Thus he sternly dealt with his brothers, specially Barbak Shah, as did Ibrahim with Jalal Khan. He, unlike his father sat on a throne, whose majesty was further increased by Ibrahim Lodi. He thus had one specially made, bedecked with precious gems and jewels. The *farmans* of Sikandar were received with unprecedented respect and the nobility was kept under check. However, since the Afghans were reared in different political ethos, the

transition could not be brought about so suddenly and Sikandar Lodi was careful enough not to ruffle them either. Ibrahim Lodi failed to strike the balance resulting in a series of revolts and internal crisis that made it easy for Babur to establish the Mughal rule in India.⁴² Siddiqui on the other hand gave a much stronger term to identify the centralised power structure as that of despotism, but insisted that it was despotic since Bahlul came to power.

For our purpose it is not the debate per se that is of interest, but the sources that scholars employed. In the case of Bahlul Lodi, the two scholars offered differing positions, utilising differing sources. Thus, R.P Tripathi used the *Afsana i Shahan* to refer to Kala Lodi's attitude towards his clansmen, who insisted upon the construction of a throne spacious enough to accommodate them all. This was followed by Bahlul's unwillingness to sit on the throne, even while granting public audience, from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*. In contrast Siddiqui relied only on the *Tabaqat i Akbari* and the *Tarikh i Firishta*, which represented Bahlul as a despot, and also criticised Tripathi for falling for a source which was he considered to have been written on imagination.⁴³ Thus the dichotomy that existed between these works becomes apparent, as well as a hierarchy, where some came to be considered historical and others fictional.

These scholars are however unable to continue with limiting themselves to one side of the divide and as Raziuddin Aquil noticed, I.H Siddiqui's soon goes over to the other side, following the *Afsana i Shahan* to arrange the early phase of Sher Shah's career, at the cost of ignoring *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*.⁴⁴ This is not to imply that Raziuddin

⁴² R.P Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, pp. 80-93.

⁴³ Siddiqui, *Some Aspects of Afghan Despotism in India*, Aligarh, 1969, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Aquil, *Sufism, Culture and Politics*, p. 41.

Aquil is able to escape a similar situation himself, as he despite denying Abbas Sarwani's text as a safe guide, utilised it to a great extent. To emphasise his suspicion of the text, Aquil quoted the statement that 'the Afghans came from Roh like ants and locusts', which he then claimed had to be read 'with a pinch of salt'.⁴⁵ However, Aquil's heavy reliance on Abbas Khan Sarwani throughout his study does not appear to have been based on this principle and nor do we find any clarification from his side to clear this contradiction.

An inconsistency of a different kind was displayed by Tripathi, who moved seamlessly between the texts ranging from the *Afsana i Shahan* to the *Tabaqat i Akbari* to the *Tarikh i Firishta* to the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* to the *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani*, thus covering the entire spectrum of sources available for this period. One might think it to be a comprehensive approach, but the fact is that it presented a partial picture, as he was unable to incorporate any work in its totality. He chose sections from each work keeping in mind that they would not come in conflict from the sections taken from the rest. This misguided the readers very gravely, as neither were they informed about the individuality of each text, nor could they gauge the gap that existed between them. This thus cannot be considered to be a desirable method to deal with the works on the Afghan period.

In the case of Sher Shah, the presence of the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* that was exclusively dedicated to him was responsible for changing the perspective to a great extent. In addition, the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* also assumed a different form in its narrative on Sher Shah, leaving out on the many concerns that had dominated the section on the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Lodis. (See chapter 3) However it was the *Tabaqat i Akbari* which lost out drastically for being partial against the Afghan ruler, given that he had caused the biggest setback the Mughals had ever faced. Therefore the harmony between the secondary works on Sher Shah is quite understandable, except for when Siddiqui resorted to the *Afsana i Shahan*, (as mentioned above) given the commonality in the sources that scholars display while accessing the period. The *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* was successful in appeasing all, including Harbans Mukhia, who observed that the Mughal patronage of the text placed many restrictions on the author,⁴⁶ and perhaps he regretted that the text was not allowed to reach its full potential.

This contradictory premise, on which the foundation of the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* rests, has understandably generated curiosity. Hameed ud-Din tried to ease the irony by suggesting that Sarwani did manage to balance both sides by recognising Humayun as a better warrior, and attributed his defeat to the intervention of supernatural forces, while the Afghans on the other hand were considered to be collectively braver. However, the scholar himself confesses for the awkwardness to have remained.⁴⁷ Rahim Raza, innovatively recognised the text to be devised as a sermon to both the Afghans and the Mughals. Here the former was reminded of the glories they could achieve by standing united, while the latter were urged to induct them into their power structure as they had the potential to contribute to the strengthening of the empire.⁴⁸ However the period of Mughal-Afghan conflict appears to be the most inappropriate one that could be possibly evoked to impart advice on their reconciliation, for the simple reason that the political

⁴⁶ Harbans Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography during the reign of Akbar*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, p. 162.

⁴⁷ Hameed ud Din, 'Historians of Afghan Rule in India', p. 48.

⁴⁸ Rahim Raza, 'Abbas Khan Sarwani and the Tuhfah-i-Akbar Shahi: A Critical Study', in *East and West*, Vol. 33, No. ¼, December, 1983, pp. 156-7.

ascent of one meant a simultaneous downfall of the other. It is therefore difficult to imagine Abbas Khan Sarwani as a 'self appointed propagandist in favour of Afghan Mughal reconciliation'. Raziuddin Aquil offers another perspective in perceiving Sarwani as an apologist for Sher Shah.⁴⁹ This statement does not go well with the choice of Akbar as the patron of the text. The Mughal emperor ordering Sarwani to write in defence of the one who had uprooted his father's power base, is completely inconceivable. Therefore none of these clarifications have been of much help, but it is important for us to note that despite all the sources that had been claimed by the author to be at his service, the text could not escape contradiction at the fundamental level. Thus the presence of sources was not the only component required to compose a cohesive work on the past.

Therefore the whole spectrum of historiography on the Lodis and the Surs, ranging from source critical to political to even economic, appears to be plagued by the inconsistencies in the sources pertaining to this period. J.F Richards in an attempt to explain the paucity of coins in the Lodi period, held the tribal and decentralised nature of Bahlul's polity as responsible. The economic power of the Sultan was seriously curtailed and he redistributed resources collected in kind without being able to convert it into cash. This representation of Bahlul's organisation of power was gathered by the scholar from the *Tarikh i Daudi*,⁵⁰ which though suitable to his argument cannot deny the presence of a contradictory picture in the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. Richards furthers his study into Sultan Ibrahim's reign where the Sultan empowered by a centralised power structure, instructed his nobles to collect revenue in kind but sell them to obtain cash. However, due to rich

⁴⁹ Aquil, *Sufism, Culture and Politics*, p. 28.

⁵⁰ J.F. Richards, 'The Economic History of the Lodi Period', in *Money and the Market in India 1100-1700*, ed. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p. 152-3.

harvests and the haste that the nobles were in to sell it off, prices fell drastically, limiting the procurement of cash for them. The explanation that Richards based on the *Tarikh i Daudi*, goes back to the *Tarikh i Haqqi*.⁵¹ However what is more suspicious is the absence of such a crucial development in the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, given that it claimed to have utilised the official history of Ibrahim Lodi's reign, the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi*.

By now one can sense the complex nature of the Indo-Afghan sources and the ways in which they were intertwined. Going by the existing approach, where it is easy to dismiss a work as inaccurate, an environment has been created where neither it is possible to forge constructive association between texts, nor does it support the generation of a sustainable volume of cohesive historiography. Thus with the exception of a few articles that do not engage with the question of authenticity of sources,⁵² there has been little progress in the methodology on this subject. To restore these clogged arteries, there is an urgent need to channelize our attention to raise some appropriate questions. The broadest question that can be raised is that the parameters that have so far shaped our understanding meant to be understood in that very manner, or do we stand to gain better insights into the composition and our reception of these texts by bringing about some modifications in them?

One of the first aspects's that a reader of a historical text judges it by is its content. The question here is not as simple as how much information do they contain, but rather how much of it can be profitably used in the reconstruction of the past. Thus the sizeable section in the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, which recorded imaginative stories, has hardly

⁵¹ Siddiqui, *Tarikh i Daudi*, introduction, p. 23.

⁵² Ali Annoshahr, 'Author of one's fate: Fatalism and agency in Indo Persian Histories' in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 49: 197, 2102, pp. 197-224, Nile Green, 'Tribe, Diaspora and Sainthood in Afghan History' in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 67, no. 1, Feb. 2008, pp. 171-211.

crossed the threshold of being considered as reflective of the cultural beliefs of the period.⁵³ However on the other hand attention has been paid to employ every little detail from the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, *Tarikh i Firishta* and the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* to form opinions on the Afghan power structure. The *Tarikh i Daudi* was also called upon to serve the interest of scholars enquiring on the economic conditions of the period, but the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Afsana i Shahan* have largely remained on the margins, despite of the rich corpus of raw information that is to be found in them. It is therefore important to clarify that the notion of evidential hierarchy that we create, of some texts being superior to the rest, actually rests on our ability or limitation to satisfactorily utilise them. It is also equally crucial to note, that the restrictions we have imposed on the themes of enquiry, can be equally held responsible for the creation of a hierarchy. Therefore breaking away to look at other innovative themes is crucial to provide an inlet for the other texts to come in as well. Thus the question of which text is more historically valuable than others, changes with the answers one is seeking from them.

The second and more raging issue in the study of these Afghan texts is the use of sources. Though it is crucial to determine the flow and blockade of ideas and information from one text to another, which can be done by studying them in comparison to one another, to equate it with authenticity and reliability, may not be the right approach. The more engrained thought that finds the opportunity to surface here is whether it is necessary to determine the authenticity of a work, which alone can then weigh its contribution to the subject of history. In many cases, as we shall see, authors did not put their claims of using certain sources necessarily into practice. Not only was this difficult

⁵³ Siddiqui, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, introduction, pp. xvii-xviii.

to test in the period when the production and circulation of texts was limited, but it appears that it was acceptable for the author to take some liberties, as long as the desired result could be achieved.

In some cases where such liberties were exercised, the works came to be identified by modern scholars as fiction. From the way they have objected to the presence of fiction in works like *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, *Tarikh i Shahi*, *Tarikh i Daudi* and *Afsana i Shahan*, it becomes clear that they did not perceive it to have contributed constructively to the text. This perception arose because fiction has been understood to be anything that stood in contrast to history, and therefore should not be used to arrive at any conclusion. The question that then arises is how does one identify fiction? One way in which it has been done is by looking at any fresh information, which could not be traced to an acceptable source, with suspicion. This is however far from being so simple, as there are multiple cases where scholars have eagerly awaited the unearthing of new information, which could be used to extend their scope of scholarship. Thus scholars are not averse to receiving new information, but it is their ability or inability to use them satisfactorily, which determined the categorisation of information as fact or fiction. If we follow Julie Scott Meisami's observation that 'fiction' was the necessary rhetorical embellishment that authors incorporated with the intention to add meaning to their writings,⁵⁴ the value of such episodes and the texts recording them drastically changes. Therefore rather than targeting the misconstrued concept of fiction and sourcing of texts, we will try to identify other parameters to determine what takes us away from history and what brings us closer to it.

⁵⁴ Julie Scott Meisami, 'History as Literature' in *Iranian Studies*, vol. 33, No. 1, 2000, p. 15.

Another feature considered essential to history writing, the absence of which has been widely stated to be unacceptable, is that of dates. Therefore texts like the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, *Tarikh i Daudi*, *Tarikh i Shahi* and *Afsana i Shahan* have generally been placed a notch lower than those recording dates regularly. Rethinking about this approach towards our sources leads to questions like is the absence of dates synonymous with an absence of a sense of time or chronology? Are dating of events the only way to impart a sense of progression of time or there were other devices that could be used to give a similar impression? Though the mentioning of dates is important but there could be episodes whose significance is not dependent on their location at a very specific point of time, as they are capable of retaining their value across longer time spans. The identification of such sections also raises the possibility that chronology, in terms of dates, was not the only criterion that determined the arrangement of the narrative. Other factors, that gave its author a sense of providing better trajectories, to convey his ideas more effectively, could have also been at work.

Another observation that requires reassessment is that contemporary sources are more valuable than those written later.⁵⁵ In the case of the Afghans, where contemporary sources are virtually absent, it has been easier for us to target the later sources. The time lapse is said to have facilitated the coating of the 'truth' with perspectives depending upon the positioning of the author. Thus Mughal writers, like Nizamuddin Ahmad and Abul Fazl, are considered to have been writing under the influence of the bitterness that the Mughals and the Afghans shared. The Afghan writers on the other hand, like Abbas Sarwani and Shaikh Kabir were said to be striving to glorify their past, even when there

⁵⁵ Hameed ud Din, 'Historians of Afghan Rule in India', p. 45.

was no hope for its revival in the future.⁵⁶ Though these later writers had some agenda which drove the composition of their works, but to use them to say that contemporary authors would not have presented the Afghan period without subjecting it to any perception, and presented the distilled ‘truth’, is a very unlikely disposition.

With so many aspects crisscrossing through these texts, one wonders if it is possible to classify them in one way or the other. S.M. Imamuddin grouped them into Afghan and non Afghan sources, the concern being the prejudices that the Chaghtai Turks harboured, and refrained from giving the Afghans credit for their attainments.⁵⁷ Such a categorisation which placed the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* in the Afghan sources, does not take into account the fact that the author claims it to have been patronised by Akbar and that it also praised Humayun’s valour. (See chapter 3) Similarly when the *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi* were recognised as Afghan texts in the first place, their reference to the *Tabaqat i Akbari* as their source, breaks down the clear compartmentalisation of the Afghan texts once more. Therefore the division of sources into Afghan and non Afghan overlooked many crucial details, and thus cannot be accepted as a convincing way.

The other way in which an attempt was made to group these texts based on the similarities that they shared, which also distinguished it from the rest, does not work either. Thus when Hameed ud Din claimed that the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani*, *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi* could be grouped together against the rest, the criterion that he based it on are not convincing at all. He identified these texts to have been written by contemporaneous authors, covering an identical period and to be depending on the same

⁵⁶ Siddiqui, *Mughal Relations with Indian Ruling Elite*, p. 111.

⁵⁷ Imamuddin, ‘Some Persian Literary Sources of the Afghan History of India’, p. 39.

set of texts as their sources.⁵⁸ This claim can be easily contested on various grounds. Firstly the exact date of composition of the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi* is not known, and that there are other texts, like the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* and the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, which despite being composed in chronological proximity, are diverse from each other. Secondly, though the *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi* can be argued to have roughly addressed the same span of Lodi and Sur period, if we ignore the section that the latter incorporates on the Karranis of Bengal, the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* can certainly be not adjudged to fall in their category. The scope of Niamatullah's text was much wider as he begins with tracing the descent of Afghans from the prophet Muhammad, incorporated a section on Khan Jahan Lodi and records the history of different Afghan clans and the saints hailing from each as well. Lastly, the notion to group these texts together based on the sources that they utilised is the most frivolous of all, as the texts that are mentioned is all that was available. It is however interesting to note that none of these three mention each other in their writings.

In such a scenario, where the categorisation of the Indo-Afghan narratives appears to be impossible, the arrangement of chapters is challenging. Though there is an attempt to abide by chronology, but that is not the main concern in a rigid sense. What instead has been kept in mind is that the discussion about a text, that served as a source for another should precede it, to facilitate better understanding. To maintain the flow, a text has also been spread over two chapters, as is the case with the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. Thus the section on the Lodis, is dealt with in the second and the section on the Surs in the third, as Nizamuddin Ahmad displays a greater degree of engagement with the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*

⁵⁸ Hameed ud Din, 'Historians of Afghan Rule in India', p. 49.

in his section on the Lodis, with which I will open the study, while in the case of the Surs a dialogue with the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, which occupies the centre stage in the third chapter, is unavoidable.

Apart from facilitating a sense of continuity between the texts, a similarity in the genre was the deciding factor that brought the *Tabaqat i Akbari* and the *Tarikh i Firishta* together. This however was not taken into consideration when the very different *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* and the *Afsana i Shahan* were incorporated in the fifth chapter. Instead here it was a similarity in the context that these texts were set in, which brought them together. A similarity in the principle that determined the composition of the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi* is what led to the formulation of the fourth chapter. However this certainly was not the case when the very contrasting *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* and the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, which represent very different principles of composition, were given space in the third chapter. Thus there is no one principle that determined the scheme of chapters. Different concerns are evoked to bind a set of texts together with the intention to identify their historical spaces, as well as also pave the way for the forthcoming ones. Thus while the chapters lend individuality to these texts, their arrangement has been done to give a sense of their circulation.

In the quest to locate the historical space that each of these texts occupied, a note of caution has been issued against falling for Mughal hegemony. Raziuddin Aquil has expressed his disappointment that ‘the Afghan period became a victim of this hegemony’, not only as Mughal chroniclers spared no chance to demean them, but as modern scholars have shown their preference for the Mughal over Afghan sources. To illustrate this he gave the example of Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Muzaffar Alam doubting the *Tarikh i*

Sher Shahi and buying into Jauhar Aftabchi's account.⁵⁹ He however misses the point that it is not possible to identify Abbas Sarwani's work as free from Mughal affiliation, as it claims to have been written on the orders of Akbar.

The approach of contempt towards the Mughal sources, serves well to remind the readers of their perspective on Sher Shah, but that was not the only way in which the Mughals exercised influence on the corpus of Indo-Afghan narratives. It is crucial to keep in mind that works like the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* held the Mughal emperors in high esteem and welcomed their arrival that brought an end to the tyrannies of Ibrahim Lodi and Hemu.⁶⁰ The contradiction of the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* has been emphasised, while that of the *Tarikh i Shahi*, *Tarikh i Daudi*, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani Lodi* and *Afsana i Shahan* will have to wait at their allocated spaces. However for the time being it is sufficient to say that the presence of the Mughals was a factor that the authors utilised in many innovative ways, which reflect that they had moved on from the clichéd framework. It is thus in our interest as well to recognise their varied influences and use it to our advantage to unravel the layers in which these texts were written.

This study has been undertaken to set up an interactive environment between these texts. Given that the survey of the existing scholarship has displayed the futility of establishing a hierarchy or determining their reliability, no such attempt will be made. Instead efforts will be directed towards recognising the circulation of pre existing texts as the primary context, in which the composition of subsequent texts is to be studied. Other than that, the prevailing political, social and cultural conditions are also to be taken into

⁵⁹ Aquil, *Sufism, Culture and Politics*, p. 29.

⁶⁰ Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, ed. I.H.Siddiqui and W.H. Siddiqui, Rampur Raza Library, Rampur, 2002, pp. 106-118.

account. However it was not just the immediate circumstances which shaped up these texts, and nor was its reach limited to the political elite. Certain perceptions that had been directed against the Afghans for centuries found their way to the popular level and could be addressed there too. This ultimately found an expression in the sixteenth century, when Mushtaqi composed a series of anecdotes on the Afghan Sultans, to readdress their grievances within the framework of history writing, a subject which will be taken up in detail in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 1

The Content and Form of the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*

The *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, is a collection of narratives, written by Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi in the early 1570s. Mushtaqi belonged to a family whose history can be traced to Agha Muhammad Turk, who came to India during the reign of Alauddin Khalji. Agha Turk joined the Sultan's service, served him in various expeditions and enjoyed royal favours, till he retired to settle at the *khanqah* of Shaikh Salahaldin Suhrawardi. Agha Turk's grandson, Malik Musa, held high position at the court of Sultan Firoz Tughluq, whose death and ensuing political instability forced him to move to Transoxiana. Malik Musa returned with Timur's invading forces in 1398. His son, Malik Firuz, was a man of eminence during the reign of Bahlul Lodi and is reported to have written a poem on the battle fought between Bahlul Lodi and Husain Sharqi in 1469. Malik Firuz's son, Shaikh Sa'dullah, the father of Shaikh Rizqullah, led a life of chastity and poverty, serving as an *imam* and devoting himself to Shaikh Muhammad Magan. Mushtaqi hailed from a respectable family, many of its members being known for their piety, scholarship and martial skills.⁶¹

Mushtaqi was born in 1495-1496, educated under the guidance of Shaikh Magan, and like his father served as an *imam*, patronized by the nobles of Sikandar and Ibrahim Lodi. He later became a disciple of the Shattari saint, Shaikh Buddhan, and in the best tradition of Shattari saints composed poems of love in Persian and Hindwi, using his pen

⁶¹ I.H Siddiqui, *The Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, Indian Council of Historical Research and Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 1993, pp. xii-xiii.

names, Mushtaqi and Rajan, respectively.⁶² In the introduction to the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, he states that after the demise of the learned, who had sheltered him so far, he began to keep the company of common men, with whom he shared strange tales and anecdotes that he had heard or even witnessed. These were initially transmitted orally, in sessions, conducted by Mushtaqi, and were later written down, at the insistence of his audience.⁶³ The narrative that developed primarily revolves around the rulers of the regional sultanates that flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A major part is devoted to the Lodis and the Surs, followed by the Sultanates of Malwa, Gujarat and the Deccan (Bahmanis). The nobles of the Afghan rulers also find a significant space in the narrative. The contents of the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* are extremely varied, consisting of narratives based on politically relevant themes like accession, battles, friction with the nobility, on the one hand, and wonder tales ones on the other, about men with powers to fly and the ability to speak any language.

1

The *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* opens with episodes that laid the foundation for Bahlul Lodi's rise to power. The first episode displays uncle, Islam Khan's, affection for the young Bahlul. Islam Khan was confident of Bahlul's caliber, which was to bring glory and honour to the family, in the near future.⁶⁴ The second episode is about the bestowal of the throne of Delhi by Shaikh Ibban in exchange for sixteen hundred *tankas* (Bullion coins) that Bahlul gave him. In the episode, Bahlul was returning from one of his trading ventures in Hindustan and stopped in Samana. Here he decided to visit Syed Ibban,

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. xv.

⁶³ Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, ed. Prof. I.H.Siddiqui and W.H. Siddiqui, Rampur Raza Library, Rampur, 2002, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3.

celebrated for having spiritual powers. When Bahlul and his companions reached there, the saint was heard offering the throne of Delhi to anyone willing to purchase it for two thousand *tankas*. Bahlul expressed his desire to offer him one thousand and six hundred *tankas*, as that was all he had then, and the Shaikh agreed to accept it. Although his companions thought it was foolish of him to have done so, Bahlul was convinced that the purchase was profitable. He justified his action saying that if the saint's words proved to be true, it was a small cost to be paid for the throne of Delhi, and if not, service to a saint was always good.⁶⁵

Bahlul Lodi was soon to become the Sultan of Delhi, but the claim made by the saint is not the only factor in the narrative. The other incidents that are cited prior to his accession are his induction and rise in the court of Sultan Muhammad, where he proved his worth by subduing and extracting revenue from a group of rebellious people, for which he was rewarded with a *pargana* and the booty he had seized. Bahlul Lodi also displayed great courage against the Sultan of Malwa, and the title of Khan i Khanan was bestowed on him.⁶⁶ After the death of Sultan Muhammad, his son and successor, Sultan Alauddin proved to be inefficient. He soon left the fort of Delhi in charge of his *wazir*, Hamid Khan, and retreated to Badaun. This led Hamid Khan to look for people who could ascend take throne, and Bahlul, along with Qayam Khan Nagauri were summoned, the former being selected as he turned up earlier. They agreed upon an arrangement, where Bahlul was made responsible for the defence of the city and Hamid Khan was to attend to all administrative matters, which lasted for a while. Suddenly Bahlul decided to stage Hamid Khan's arrest as he was no longer to be trusted, given that he had deceived

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Sultan Alauddin by inviting Bahlul in his absence. Thus Bahlul did away with him and declared himself as Bahlul Shah Ghazi, the ruler of Delhi.⁶⁷

This long and meandering series of events, that Mushtaqi weaves to set the stage for Bahlul's accession, is reflective of his anxiety to explain to the audience of the phenomenal rise of a horse trader to the throne of Delhi. Given that Bahlul had no political background, the author was well aware of the magnitude of the transition that was to occur. It was thus crucial for him to think of ways to strengthen his narrative to the extent that the audience would be convinced of this momentous turn of events. He thus decided to build it up in stages, yet be careful of retaining the interest of the audience. In order keep to his audience engrossed, as the narrative progressed, he dropped hints here and there, but withheld the climax till the very end. Thus Bahlul's uncle had seen his promising future but says nothing more. The saint at Samana moves a step further by bestowing the throne of Delhi upon him, but again the suspicion that Bahlul's companions express, keeps the suspense. It is to be noted that the saint here does not make a prediction, but performs the miracle of bestowing the throne on him. Mushtaqi could have managed with a simple prediction but he chose not to, perhaps because it was a commonly utilised device. The uncertainty that looms over is intensified by Bahlul being able to pay only a part of the price demanded, and like his companions was not fully sure of what the outcome will be.

Bahlul's entry to the court is facilitated by stating the statement that he had initially gone there in concern to his business of selling horses, but the Sultan offered him a position on recognizing his martial skills that he displayed when given a chance. From

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

here on he earned name, fame and money by serving the Sultan on different occasions, but for the time being the author continues to maintain a silence on how and if the saint miracle was going to take effect. At this stage we have nothing to believe that Bahlul was consciously plotting his way to the throne and the desire that he had expressed so passively to the saint, had assumed such a magnified proportion.

Going along the flow of the narrative, the audience was likely to expect Bahlul to stage a coup to attain the throne, more so now that Sultan Alauddin was an inefficient ruler. However Mushtaqi once again manages to stretch the narrative and build curiosity further, by introducing the character of Hamid Khan, who invites Bahlul to take the throne, which surprisingly, he initially refuses, but then agrees to, when they decide to divide administrative and military responsibilities. Mushtaqi does not end the story here but takes it a step ahead, to eliminate Hamid Khan, which then truly places Bahlul as the sovereign of Delhi with no division in his powers.

Amidst the development of the narrative in various phases, Mushtaqi does not lose sight of what he had started with, the miracle of the saint of Samana. Therefore at various junctures, one may notice that Bahlul was able to progress towards the throne only because he was, inexplicably, presented with the opportunities that took him closer to the throne. Otherwise there is no rationale to how did a horse trader manage to defeat the rebels even when the Sultan's commanders had failed.⁶⁸ Similarly it is baffling that Hamid Khan did not ascend the throne himself and instead was looking for a suitable candidate to fill in, and the other candidate, Qayam Khan Nagauri left, without asserting

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4

himself, only because Bahlul had arrived earlier.⁶⁹ Since the throne of Delhi was not a one that could be so easily overlooked, the author's desire to emphasize on the role of destiny, which led these inexplicable developments to have paved the way for Bahlul's accession, cannot be ruled out. Moreover the fact that he was a religious figure, a disciple of sufi saints and at other places recognized destiny as a driving force,⁷⁰ it is very likely that he was vouching for the same here as well. However, because the effects of the Shaikh's miracle are not immediately visible and the narrative takes its time, building up excitement on the way by implanting seeds of doubt in the minds of the audience, it is not very surprising that it initially created an atmosphere of ambivalence.⁷¹ However, when we look at the larger picture, the author's preference is quite evident.

II

Bahlul Lodi was firmly seated on the throne and the Afghans assumed a position of power for the very first time. This meant, that they could now be heard, which gave Mushtaqi the ground to discuss concerns that had plagued them for a long time. One such issue which the *Waqiat* refers to in multiple ways, is the perception of cultural inferiority, the Afghans were subjected to. References to them being considered rustics, devoid of taste and refinement are found in works of Amir Khusrau written in the fourteenth century.⁷² The cultural judgement reverberates in Babur, who was shocked by their lack of court etiquettes, when Bibban, an Afghan asked if he could be seated in Babur's presence. Babur wrote that the Afghans were rustic and ignorant of court protocols, when

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4, 238.

⁷¹ Ali Anooshahr, 'Author of one's fate: Fatalism and Agency in Indo Persian Histories', in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 49:197, 2012, pp. 207-8

⁷² Amir Khusrau, *Tuhfat al-sighar*, IOL Persian Ms 412, f. 50 seq., cited in Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusraw*, Delhi, 1974, pp. 51-2.

courtiers of much higher status were standing.⁷³ The Turks and the Mughals shared their perception of the cultural inferiority of the Afghans, and for Mushtaqi, who had close encounters with many of them, an effort to change this generalized perception, through his narrative, is understandable.

The first step that Mushtaqi takes to break the stereotype can be located in the episode where Bahlul conspires with his followers to trap and arrest Hamid Khan. Here Bahlul Lodi, while laying the trap instructed the Afghans to behave in a strange way so that Hamid Khan may consider them simpletons and not fear them. Following Bahlul's instructions, the Afghans began to act strangely, placing their shoes on their heads, asked Hamid Khan to give them pieces of his carpet as gifts, ate flowers, leaves and created a mess in his house. Hamid Khan was disturbed, and Bahlul too, disapproved of their strange behaviour, calling them rustics, who knew nothing apart from eating and dying. This had the desired effect as a few days later, Hamid Khan, unaware of their intentions allowed the Afghans to accompany Bahlul, to his inner chamber. The Afghans, outnumbering Hamid Khan's guards, took him into captivity.⁷⁴ In the course of this incident, one can discern that Bahlul and the Afghans were aware of what generally constituted of strange behaviour, which they displayed here on purpose.

The cultural stereotype persisted. People began to categorise Afghans as strange and used derogatory adjectives like *dajjal* (antichrist) for them. The Afghans were ridiculed for speaking a different language. Mushtaqi narrates an episode in this context when a cleric derided the Afghans after a sermon at the Jami Masjid, and Bahlul, who

⁷³ Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *The Baburnama*, ed and tr. Wheeler Thackston, The Modern Library, New York, 2002, p. 321.

⁷⁴ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 5-6.

happened to be present, rebuked him for discriminating the followers of Islam.⁷⁵ It is striking that Bahlul left the cleric only with a warning, when the king could have inflicted a harsh punishment on him. What may have held him back was the understanding that punishment may not have been effective in changing perceptions. Another episode which immediately follows reflects an inversion, where the Sultan mocks a Mulla for being short in stature. This was objected to by the Mulla and the Sultan, on realizing his mistake, apologized.⁷⁶ Thus there is an attempt to generalize the concerns that were actually specific to the Afghans, by pointing that it would be equally unacceptable to all, and therefore unfair to subject Afghans to them either.

The treatment of physical appearance of the Afghans attains another interesting dimension, as Sikandar Lodi's beauty captured the attention of Shaikh Hasan. The Sultan, instead of accepting the compliments gracefully, maltreated and imprisoned him. Later, on realizing the Shaikh's powers the Sultan, regretted his act.⁷⁷ The violent reaction to appreciation may be incomprehensible at first, but it can be understood when viewed from the other side. The Afghans, though, were objecting to the perception they had been subjected to, had yet been unable to bring about a change in their self perception. However this was to be an essential part of the process and when in a subsequent episode, Sikandar Lodi refused to grow a beard, even when Shaikh Abdul Wahab strongly recommended him to, a shift is discernable. The Shaikh, here, was upset with the Sultan for not growing a beard, which to him was a righteous thing for Muslims to do. The

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

Sultan excused himself that he was not genetically endowed with an appropriate one and growing a beard that is not perfect could invite mockery.⁷⁸

As soon as we begin to read it as reflective of his apprehensions, the Sultan brings a twist in the tale, by refusing to take help from the Shaikh's miraculous powers. Thus the idea that gets conveyed is that the Sultan was not consenting to the Shaikh's idea of altering his inherited characteristics. He even says that his religious preceptor had never advised him to do so, thereby saving himself from the possibility of religious persecution. However he was not able to hide his displeasure against the Shaikh, who cursed the Sultan. This curse took the form of a disease that ultimately claimed the Sultan's life, but not before he had settled the accounts of his unislamic deeds, by ordering the payment of *kaffara*(compensation), an act that was highly praised by the *ulama*.⁷⁹ Thus Mushtaqi manages to deftly balance both sides, by portraying that the Sultan neither disrespected the *sharia*, nor gave up on his genetically endowed individuality, because, unlike in the previous case, he had now developed a sense of self worth. Yet he understood that people had some preconceived notions, and it was important to abide by them, therefore choosing not to sport a beard rather than invite mockery.

The reconstruction of the history of the Afghans also provided an outlet for ideas and concepts, placed outside the arena of the Persianate culture. One such concept that finds ample space in this text is an alternate theory of kingship. The Sultan's actions, in many places, stands in contrast to the ones recommended for ensuring stability and magnificence of his position, as the head of a strong state in the Persianate tradition. This

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

has generated a trajectory of scholarship that perceived the Afghans to have developed a tribal, decentralized and loosely controlled form of governance.⁸⁰ However Bahlul's humble approach, where he is willing to give up his throne to please his dissatisfied nobles,⁸¹ or easily giving away stipends on receiving recommendations in the most inappropriate way,⁸² or Sikandar Lodi permitting men to possess treasures that they came across by chance as well as not readjusting assignments that paid the assignees much more than their fixed allowances,⁸³ or his supernatural powers that he used to keep a track of important developments in his Sultanate instead of an espionage system,⁸⁴ did not change the fact that they established and managed considerable territories and resources. Thus, even though they did not adhere to the Persianate traditions of kingship, their success at state building, created the ground, to challenge the ideas, which had dominated the creation and functioning of state structures. The Afghans, being demeaned by Persian ideals, proved to be an appropriate choice to have voiced these alternative ideologies of power.

III

Apart from suggesting that the Afghans represented a different ideology of power, the author was equally interested in establishing the virtuous nature of the Lodi regime, by connecting the period to the occurrence of several instances of miracles, made possible by love.⁸⁵ These episodes reflect Sufi orientation, as annihilation of the self for the beloved, a powerful theme in Sufi philosophy, formed the crux of these stories. Rizqullah

⁸⁰ R.P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1972, p. 80 .

⁸¹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 10.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54, 63-4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-46.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 47-51.

Mushtaqi being a follower of the Shattari order was familiar with such stories and made the attempt to make it relevant to the larger narrative by connecting it to the nature of kingship. In all of these episodes, one of the protagonists was a local inhabitant of the area, while the other was an immigrant, much like the local subjects and the immigrant Lodi rulers. The bond that developed between them, irrespective of the differences that their varied geographical and cultural positioning may have had, persisted even after their death, was to communicate that affiliation to diverse backgrounds may not necessarily act as a hindrance to development of strong bondages. Such stories not only infused the idea, that it was possible for people of divergent backgrounds to foster strong bondages, but also utilized them to advice people to assimilate people of diverse affiliations. Such acts were to be rewarded by installing a virtuous ruler;⁸⁶ the absence of one at the time of narration, though had nothing to do with Akbar, as he is explicitly appreciated at other places in the narrative,⁸⁷ but was to motivate people to cultivate an open atmosphere, where people from diverse backgrounds, including the Afghans, could respectfully and meaningfully cohabit.

The *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* also makes ample effort to build up a character sketch of the Afghan Sultans and their nobles. However on comparing the overall nature of the stories related to the Sultan with that of his nobles, an interesting observation comes to light. The stories related to the Sultan are wider in scope when compared to that of the nobles, which confine themselves only to the sole purpose of portraying the individual's characteristics. In the other case, the narrative not only builds up the character of the Sultan as wise, brave, generous, tolerant and an adherent of the *sharia* but connects him,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 52.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-8.

benevolently, to his nobles and subjects. Thus when we juxtapose episodes that revolve around the physical appearance of Afghans, in the context of a noble, Mian Mahabat Farmuli, with that of the Sultan, the former contains itself to just an appreciation,⁸⁸ while those associated with the latter acquire multiple hues. Bahlul Lodi can be seen as acting in the capacity of a representative of the collective Afghan identity rather than just as a individual, as he does not order harsh punishment for Mulla Danishmand but advises him to broaden his view, instead of discriminating them for their differing ethnic backgrounds. Similarly Sikandar Lodi defends his decision of not growing a beard as it would cause his subjects to mock him and thereby be penalized. This kind of reasoning, where he thinks of caring for his subjects even at the cost of flouting the *sharia*, shows that the narratives associated with the Sultans were formed to expand its scope, to give space to others as well. In contrast, though his nobles are too appreciated for not violating the *sharia*, even under difficult circumstances,⁸⁹ the anecdotes do not go beyond that.

In another instance, when these narratives attempt to portray a noble as generous, they simply give details of the offerings made by them to men of spiritual attainments, their relatives and to the soldiers who served them. However, for the Sultan, the act of being generous was accompanied by other larger concerns like recognizing other's destiny, holding regard for which he does not claim treasures found by individuals as state property nor revokes the land grants that were yielding revenues much more than the assignee's share.⁹⁰ Again, the episodes that display the martial skills of the nobles also detach themselves from the larger picture as evident in Dariya Khan's response to

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.

the ruler of Bengal's intention of advancing into Bihar on Sikandar Lodi's demise. Dariya Khan made it clear that the Sultan's demise did not imply in the weakening of his defenses as he was far off, in the capital, even in his lifetime.⁹¹ Thus, Dariya Khan was distancing himself from the larger context by stating that the death of the Sultan had no implications on the functioning of the empire. Mian Husain Farmuli, too, lamented the death of Mangali Karrani in an expedition against the Raja of Champaran, so much so, that he says, that even a defeat would not have had aggrieved him to this extent,⁹² also conveys a similar idea. In contrast to the narrow outlook that these stories convey, Prince Nizam (later Sikandar Lodi) while contesting for the throne, asked the dervish to pray for the victory of the one with whom the interest of Islam resided,⁹³ just as Shaikh Said (a high noble of Bahlul Lodi) reminded him of the duties that he had to fulfill to prove himself worthy of the throne, as it was not meant to be obtained easily.⁹⁴ Thus Mushtaqi had a criterion to decide on what kind of stories were to be associated with whom, even though they were directed towards conveying similar characteristics of these characters.

This difference can also be observed in the responses of Humayun Sarwani and Bahlul Lodi, when they were questioned of trusting a dream and in a recluse's promise, respectively. In the first case, Humayun Sarwani, decided to march against infidels, whose presence was revealed to him by the Prophet in a dream. He instructed Saif Khan to prepare forces and after marching for twenty *krohs*, when no one was in sight Saif Khan expressed his doubts over the dream. To this Humayun Sarwani rebuked him for

⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 99-100.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

suspecting the Prophet's directions.⁹⁵ In contrast when Bahlul's companions questioned his decision to pay heed to the Shaikh Ibban's words, he did not brush it away completely. Bahlul justified his act by taking into account both the possibilities, unlike Humayun Sarwani. Though the dream proved to be true and Sarwani was victorious, just as Bahlul ascended the throne, but the fact that he did pay heed to these alternate voices, is an important deviation that Mushtaqi created. Even though, in content, Mushtaqi has seldom placed the ruler at a higher pedestal than his nobles, the form certainly gives a sense of him being the larger character, connected to different people, ideas and concepts.

Another concept through which the Sultan's character is magnified was that of justice. The episodes that are framed are far not uniform in content and form, with varied degrees of intervention by the Sultan. In the first episode, the Sultan pressurized the concerned officials to speed up the investigation, after there was a delay to settle it satisfactorily.⁹⁶ In the second, the Sultan's role shifts to the pardoning of a prisoner, as he gave him a chance to reform himself, which the man did.⁹⁷ Thus justice was not limited to punishing the culprit but also reforming them. The next episode sees the Sultan as taking charge of an investigation, to locate a lost ruby, after his officials failed to do so. Even when false testimonies were created with the intention to misguide the Sultan and convince him that the soldier's wife was the real culprit, the Sultan was able to unearth the truth, with which, the audience had been familiarized beforehand.⁹⁸

After the audience is convinced of the Sultan's wisdom to deliver justice, the author uses it to his advantage in the next episode, where the case is framed in such a

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-35.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-40.

way, that decision in favour of either the boatman or the owner of the bag, could be justified. In this case, a man lost his bag containing one thousand and five hundred gold coins, when a boat capsized in the river Yamuna. The man offered the boatman hundreds gold coins to recover the bag, but none accepted the offer. One boatman agreed to get the bag on the condition that “I will give you whatever amount pleases me and keep the rest for myself.” They agreed and the bag was found. The owner of the bag changed his mind and insisted on paying the boatman a hundred coins only. The boatman threatened to throw the bag into the river saying “just as I lost my labour, you will lose your money.” The dispute reached the *Wazir* who was unable to settle it, and the Sultan had to intervene. After hearing both parties the Sultan instructed them to divide the coins into two parts, one of hundred coins and the second of the remaining fourteen hundred coins and asked the boatman “which amount pleases you?” The boatman pointed to the larger share and the Sultan ordered it to be given to the owner of the bag. The boatman protested but the Sultan reminded him of his words.⁹⁹ So either the Sultan’s genius can be appreciated in resolving what can be perceived as an unfair agreement, or it can be said that the boatman was cheated, as he had clearly stated the price for retrieving the bag beforehand. In the latter case, it becomes important for the audience to show their faith in the Sultan’s judgment, which Mushtaqi had tried to win through the elaborate investigation that he conducted in the previous case of the lost ruby.

To further strengthen faith in the Sultan’s wisdom, Mushtaqi follows it up with another case where the Sultan once again came to the rescue, by investigating a difficult case, where the gold coins a man had entrusted to a *sarrafi*, mysteriously disappeared,

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 40-41.

despite of the seal and the bag being intact. To solve the case the sultan decided to punch holes in his garments that were about to be sent to the washerman. When they returned, he found them to be in perfect condition. The washerman was called and he told him of the danner who had mended them. The danner was called and he confirmed to have mended a bag for the *sarrafa*.¹⁰⁰ The detailed description of how the Sultan reaches the right conclusion is given by Mushtaqi, to convince his audience of the Sultan's wisdom and his commitment towards the deliverance of justice, which elevates him above all the nobles, who had been unable to solve these cases.

IV

Another feature of the text worth our attention is that whereas episodes that are woven around a broad theme are clustered together, as evident with stories on the Sultan's deliverance of justice or the love stories, one episode, which is similar but not identical, is placed at a distance from the others. If this placement is not to be considered accidental, then some explanation has to be sought for their positioning in the narrative. When one compares the narrative of how a groom died of a snake bite while he was trying to help a girl, as it had crept under her clothes, on the way to his marriage, the girl, aggrieved, decided to perform *sati*,¹⁰¹ to the other love stories, two fundamental differences can be identified. First there is no mention of love, which is clearly indicated in the other stories, to have blossomed between the two protagonists and secondly the story does not end with a miracle, to reflect their union after death. Though the ritual of *sati* was performed, there is no miraculous element in it. However, like the other love stories, it talks about the

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-44.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

positive interaction of a local with a migrant. Similarly, the story where the Sultan passed judgment in favour of a *sarraf*, against whom two men had complained for not returning their deposits, gives the audience no idea about how did the Sultan arrive at the decision, without carrying out an investigation, or even summoning the other man involved in the transaction.¹⁰² This stands in contrast to the other stories where the details of the investigation were elaborately given, therefore revealing little about the Sultan's wisdom. The distancing of these episodes from the others was possibly done by Mushtaqi to create awareness among his audience of these subtle yet important differences, and, thereby allow them to identify the kind of stories, amongst the many in circulation that could be associated with a particular idea, and those, which despite of a similar structure, could not.

The scope of a Sultan's wisdom is expanded by not just utilizing it to dispense justice, but as in the case of Sher Shah, to settle the doubts that his subjects raised at him. In the first set of stories, though, Sher Shah's wisdom is a given, the story does not evade a cross examination of the same, as he does not remain unchallenged. However he passes the test easily, proving that his decisions to fix four *badrahs* for the horse rider and two *badrahs* for a trooper, was what they actually deserved.¹⁰³ This does not continue for long as soon a poor scholar comes to the Sultan, and draws attention towards his unaddressed grievances. Though Sher Shah makes repeated attempts to defend himself, he is unable to do so, and enraged, he orders the man to be lashed four hundred times, which he later regrets and compensates for.¹⁰⁴ This contrasting imagery of the Sultan,

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

where his confident decision making and failures are both highlighted, is bridged by the intervening episodes. Here he is depicted as giving space to self doubt, as he wonders if he had actually checked the rolls of a trooper, as was being claimed by him, while on another occasion even agreed to alter his earlier decision by increasing the pay of a soldier in Ahmad Khan's contingent.¹⁰⁵ Mushtaqi's decision to incorporate contrasting stories appears problematic, but one can assume that he must have done so on realizing that the stories he wanted to tell had to coexist with pre existing stories of a contrasting nature. Thus the next best thing he could do was to reconcile them in a way so that they would not leave jarring ends, by cushioning it with episodes to balance Sher Shah's imagery.

A similar strategy can be seen in the section outlying characteristics of the Lodi nobles, where the introduction of their martial skills, when so far only their generosity, piety and wisdom were being appreciated, was smoothed through Humayun Sarwani's account. In this episode the Prophet informs him of the location of the infidels, and he is able to defeat him through his superior martial skills. This enmeshing is also seen for Mian Muhammad Farmuli, where the possibility of an adverse outcome, when men with divine powers are ignored, is also made clear as his troops suffered heavily, after they ignored the *ulama*, while remaining engaged with others who had assembled to congratulate them after a victory.¹⁰⁶ Thus Mushtaqi, by introducing stories that had elements of both, gave his narrative a structure and content that blended the changes that it underwent, as it progressed. So accounts like that of Dariya Khan, which only talks of his valour on the battlefield, did not appear out of tune, in contrast to that of his fellow

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 130.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.

nobles at Sultan Sikandar's court, most of whom were appreciated for their piety and adherence to religious practices and never for their martial skills.

However, it is not that Mushtaqi always intended to blend in differences, in some cases he wanted them to stand out as well. The section dealing with Sher Shah's ascendancy, fades in comparison to that of Bahlul Lodi as the stories are much shorter, simpler and less dramatic. It cannot be said that such stories associated with Sher Shah were not in circulation or could not have been composed, but Mushtaqi's decision to leave it at that, meant that he was not willing to let it overshadow the accession of Bahlul Lodi. At the same time, Mushtaqi was mindful of not giving out an inaccurate impression of them not being distinct political entities, given that both being Afghans could leave the audience confused. To achieve this, he portrayed the Lodis and Surs as not having cordial relations, as Bahlul Lodi advised not to employ Surs in his service¹⁰⁷ and Sher Shah repeatedly condemned Ibrahim Lodi for being unable to protect Islam in Raisin and Nagaur.¹⁰⁸ The effort that Mushtaqi puts in to give, relatively, a vivid account of Sher Shah's expedition against these two,¹⁰⁹ when many of his other expeditions are either briefly glanced over, or were 'too well known to be repeated', was done to reinforce differences and tensions between the two. The purpose to create this gap was not just to clarify their distinct political entities but the author's investment in constructing their narratives as well.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 143.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-144.

The fall of the Lodis and the Surs was an equally compelling aspect that was to be treated, in a similar way. A comparative reading of the sections dealing with their demise reveals that Mushtaqi dramatized the fall of Lodis to a much greater extent than that of the Surs. From the very onset of narrating Ibrahim's reign, Mushtaqi condemns his unjustified acts towards his brother and nobles, amongst whom the case of Azam Humayun and Mian Hussain Farmuli have been described in detail to evoke disgust against him and sympathy for the nobles. The former, was without any reason suddenly recalled from a successful siege of the fort of Gwalior, and was ordered to be arrested. Though his companions and the *ulama* repeatedly advised him to flee, but he continued to remain loyal and proceeded to the court. There he was humiliated, chained and eventually he died in prison.¹¹⁰ As if this was not enough for the author to evoke empathy for the nobles, he goes another step ahead. This time it was Mian Hussain Farmuli who was treacherously murdered, on the orders of the Sultan, even after they had reconciled, after he had initially opposed the Sultan for killing many of the senior nobles.¹¹¹ Both these instances are highly dramatized by Mushtaqi, possibly to ensure that the audience is convinced that the end of Ibrahim Lodi was well justified.

A similar case of a noble, Khwas Khan being executed on royal orders, has been mentioned by Mushtaqi in reference to Islam Khan. Khwas Khan was initially a supporter of Islam Khan's brother and contender, Adil Khan. Though the latter's death caused Khwas Khan to accept Islam Khan's authority,¹¹² but for the ruler not to trust him again,

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-169.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 151-3.

as he had challenge not some of his decisions, but his identity as the Sultan, is not so unfair after all. However this is far from an attempt to clarify the picture as during Haibat Khan's revolt, it was due to Khwas Khan's desertion of the Niazis, that Islam Khan was able to suppress the rebellion. This was not due to any personal fallout but an act through which Khwas Khan intended to prove his loyalty for Sher Shah's family.¹¹³ Further, Mushtaqi on one hand says that Islam Khan had preserved all the rules and regulations of Sher Shah but shortly thereafter contradicts himself to record that many nobles in apprehension of the changes he had brought about in Sher Shah's practices. He had many nobles killed in a cruel manner, yet Mushtaqi mentions the name of Daulat Khan Ujyala, a favourite of the Sultan, but with no other consequence.¹¹⁴ He also surprisingly forgave Karamullah, one of his nobles who had made an attempt on his life, by merely demoting him.¹¹⁵ One can thus sense that Mushtaqi lacked a clear sense of direction that confused the reader and left him unable to form a clear image of the equation between the Sultan and his nobles. This could however have been an intentional move rather than a careless composition.

The reign of Islam Khan Surwas followed by that of Adil Shah, but many of his nobles turned against him as he favoured only a few, Himu being one of them.¹¹⁶ However after being defeated by Ibrahim Khan Sur, Adil Shah retreated to Kalpi, where Himu usurped the throne from him. Mushtaqi displays intense contempt for Himu, charging him of several atrocities against Afghans and Muslims in general, rejoicing the

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-7.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 186, 188.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

coming of Akbar and Bairam Khan against Himu.¹¹⁷ It is clear that Himu was targeted by Mushtaqi for being responsible for the demise of Afghan sovereignty, but in the process the events that led to the end of the Sur dynasty has been left out by him. Mushtaqi says nothing about Ibrahim Khan Sur or Ahmad Khan Sur, both of whom had emerged as contenders for the throne. It also remains unclear how could Himu have benefitted from arresting Adil Shah as he had already lost and retreated to Kalpi. Thus the silence that Mushtaqi leaves us with, once again fails to match the narrative on the Lodi's, indicating that he was primarily writing to etch the history of the Lodi's and not really that of the Surs, whom he decided to accommodate, only because they were Afghans as well. The sudden change in the style of narration, where episodes are fewer in number and even miss out on forming a complete and cohesive picture, including the prominent omission of the conflict between Humayun and Sher Shah, was an attempt that pushed people to hear, retell and read the section on the Lodis, in preference to that of the Surs.

VI

The narrative then moves onto the reigns of Sultans of Malwa, Gujarat and Bahmanis. The episodes associated with Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji of Malwa have been given a structure that despite projecting him as a careful observer of religion, places him in situations where his beliefs were exploited by others for their personal gains. Thus the Sultan ended up paying for more than four hoofs of the ass of Christ¹¹⁸ or for grains of wheat, over each of which, a man, falsely, claimed to have recited the Quran,¹¹⁹ or

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-7.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8.

accepted a girl whose immoral acquisition, he was not informed of.¹²⁰ People could and did, repeatedly fool the Sultan as he did not condition his religiosity with rationality. His rigidity becomes evident when not only he refuses to accept things for himself that were otherwise useful to him, only because they were prohibited by religion, but does not allow others, who would be genuinely benefitted by them, to use them either.¹²¹ Thus although so far, Mushtaqi appreciated a conduct in accordance with the *sharia*, yet here he appears to be cautioning against blindly following religious regulations, without subjecting them to rationality and the demands of the situation. The Khalji Sultan became an example to avoid, whereas the Lodis, who despite of their religious inclination, never fell prey to it. They could not be swayed easily, even in name of religion, as they were aware of the existence of multiple perspectives. Thus to go back to the story as mentioned earlier, Sikandar Lodi was not convinced by Shaikh Abul Wahab's insistence on growing a beard, as his own religious preceptor had not, conveying that the Lodis could not be influenced easily, unlike the Khaljis, who came across as vulnerable and fell prey in many situations.

Similarly the story of Amin Shah's accession, when compared to that of Bahlul Lodi's, offers interesting parallels and differences. Amin Shah got the kingdom of Malwa from Sultan Firoz, who was requested to do so by a merchant in exchange for relaxation on customs duties.¹²² Thus Amin Shah readily compromised on his duty for the greed of suzerainty. This leaves a negative impact when compared to Bahlul who gave all of his money, even when he was not completely sure of the credibility of the saint's powers, but

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

was pleased to have been of service to him. This is followed by the treacherous accession of Mahmud Khalji, who poisoned Hoshang Shah and his son to usurp the throne.¹²³ Even though Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi waged wars against their brothers to succeed to the throne, it was not as a treacherous move as Mahmud Khalji's. These instances appear to have been given with the intention of establishing the superiority of the ideals and practices followed the Lodis in comparison with that of the neighbouring Sultanates.

The effort that Mushtaqi had invested to consciously build contrasting portrayals of the Lodis against their Turkish counterparts,¹²⁴ would not have reaped dividends if he could not push his audience towards realizing it. Thus to ensure that the Lodis are not forgotten, as his narrative was well past the section on them, Mushtaqi did well to remind them. This can be inferred not only from the couple of instances, where he brings in the Lodi Sultan,¹²⁵ even if the ongoing narrative focussed on the Turks, but also from a story, whose climax is based on the revival of a memory. This was not done explicitly, but by gently dropping hints that were meant to be picked up by the intended person. Thus, when Sultan Nasiruddin Shah of Malwa was displeased with his beloved queen, she was advised to appear before him donning soiled clothes, just as the Sultan had seen her for the first time and was enamoured. This had the desired effect, as the two reconciled.¹²⁶ Thus Mushtaqi not only narrating stories, but was also conveying the technique that had to be applied, in order to extract their intended meanings, through these stories itself.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

¹²⁴ There is a difference in our sources regarding the ethnicity of the Khaljis. Though Barani and Juzjani claim that the Khaljis were Afghans, Nizamuddin Ahmad says that the Khaljis were Turks. His statement is accepted by Badauni and Firishta, thus indicating that in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the Khaljis were regarded as Turks. Mushtaqi appears to be writing with the same understanding. K.S. Lal, *The History of Khaljis*, Indian Press, Allahabad, 1950, pp. 11-13.

¹²⁵ Shaikh Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 206.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9.

VII

The final section stands out, in comparison to the rest of the text, both for its content and form. It is neither a continuous narrative about the reign of a particular Sultan nor is he a character in these stories. References to the Sultan in power, was given only to place the episode in a particular time frame. Some of these revolved around either episodes of crime and justice or carried the reader to a fantasy world of unrealistic beings and events. They initially appear to be just randomly placed with no coherence, but on reading them closely, this section begins to reveal perspectives on the concepts of stories and the issues that audiences raised upon encountering them.

Nowhere in the text, so far, does Mushtaqi give us an impression that he was burdened by the weight of having to prove the credibility of his narrative. But that should not lead us to conclude that doubts were not being raised for such narratives. Mushtaqi chose to relate several episodes on occurrences of crimes as it was an appropriate avenue for exploring the question of how could people be convinced of the plausibility of an event. Some people believed it, as they were a witness to the event, but there were a very few who gained access to an event by actually witnessing it. The other way, on which the state primarily relied, to prove the occurrence of an event or adjudication a dispute, was by examining evidence, or on the confession of the accused. For the masses, for whom neither of these trajectories were available, often reposed their faith in someone who could devise and exercise a reasoning which would not require him to depend either on a witness or on any material evidence but yet would bring out the truth in an acceptable manner. A reflection of the different ways in which an event was brought into light is found in the story of a carpenter that Mushtaqi records. He was famed for his wisdom and

people came from near and far to settle their disputes, but his son refused to believe that he possessed the knowledge to do so. One day, the son went to another village, where he secretly witnessed that a woman killed her son in the absence of her husband, and placed the weapon in the vicinity of her husband's other wife. They approached the carpenter, as in the absence of a witness it had become difficult to reach any conclusion. The carpenter said that the woman who would remove her clothes faster than the other would be proclaimed innocent. The culprit did not hesitate, while the other woman could not do so. Thus the carpenter could identify the culprit as she did not hesitate to compromise on her modesty in public, to prove herself innocent.¹²⁷ In another episode, a neighbour witnesses two murders through a hole in the wall, and he was able to bring the culprit to justice, only when the *amil* found the corpses and the weapon, hidden away in the place that the witness had indicated.¹²⁸ Thus the existence of multiple ways of effecting revelation is what Mushtaqi appears to have been suggesting, through these episodes.

VIII

This is followed by a section on fantastic stories about dragons, magicians, flying men, people with horse tails and so on. The characteristic feature of this section is that Mushtaqi mentions the people who had narrated these stories to him, as their personal experiences or having heard from others, and found them interesting enough to be retold. We come across almost a dozen of references to such people, from different walks of life, all being men of prominence in their respective fields, including Shaikh Buddhān. To add to this Mushtaqi praises them for their wisdom and integrity, saying that they always

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-1.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

spoke the truth.¹²⁹ Thus the circulation of such wonder tales gained sanctity, as men of learning and good character, encouraged, and played an active part in their transmission.

It is equally important to note that mentioning the trajectory through which a story circulates, may not necessarily have to do anything with establishing its credibility.¹³⁰ At times, even stating first hand experiences may not suffice, as evident in the story that Mian Walid narrated to Mushtaqi. Mian Walid was travelling with Lad Khan, and when the army camped en route, they along with a few men went out to hunt. While roaming they reached a cave and found its floor to be wet. Curious, he went looking for the source of water and saw water dripping from the roof. As long as only two men were present, two drops of water was dripping. As more men came to the spot, the drops increased in proportion to the number of men present there. On their return the flow of water began to decrease likewise. Despite hearing it from a person who was an eye-witness, Mushtaqi does not appear to be convinced by it. He narrated it to Hazrat Jalaluddin Shirazi, in the hope of getting some explanation. It was only when Mushtaqi was explained that what Mian Walid saw was the result of magic and similar instances can be found in other places too, that Mushtaqi was convinced.¹³¹ This story brings forth another dimension that in addition to sourcing, which played a crucial role in lending credibility to an episode narrated, the presence of an explanation of the logic behind an event, was equally important.

Mushtaqi was not the only one to have sought explanation to the wonder tales that he heard. Many others, who had heard or even witnessed mysterious events, tried to seek

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 229- 251.

¹³⁰ Seeger Bonebakker, 'Some Medieval Views on fantastic stories', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, vol. 10, 1992, pp. 38-9.

¹³¹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 244-245.

an explanation as well. In some cases we come across very clear explanations like the effects of poison had caused the head of a deer to come off from its body,¹³² or that it was the effect of a special grass that had changed silver into gold,¹³³ or that the people of a remote island could communicate in many languages because they kept files with information on them.¹³⁴ In other cases, explanations are offered through concepts like magic and fate, to rationalize what otherwise appeared to have been impossible. So it was destiny that saved the shepherd from death,¹³⁵ or it was by magic that an orchard was formed in Jodhpur,¹³⁶ or it was a magical potion, prepared by a *jogi* that gave a man, who consumed it, the power to fly,¹³⁷ or it was the effect of the stars that had permanently blackened the moustache of a man.¹³⁸ Thus Mushtaqi lays out many possible explanations that people resorted to satisfy their curiosity, and gave these stories a more credible form.

Despite these efforts that one may make to win the confidence of the audience, there is nothing to assure that people would not negate them. In such cases, the next level at which Mushtaqi approaches a narrative, is by raising the question that how wise is it to test the credibility of a story. Some stories have nothing that can be used, to prove that they are not credible, while others could be so deeply entrenched in a culture that an attempt to question them can be futile, no matter how irrational they may appear to be for some. Such ideas, Mushtaqi appears to convey, through the episode where Mian Shaikh Jamal and Ibrahim decided to accompany Shaikh Mushtaqi to test the attainments of Qazi

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 227-228.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

Muinuddin. To their surprise the *qazi* was already aware of their intentions, and he not only settled their doubts, but safeguarded Mushtaqi's reputation as well. He advised them not to suspect the powers of *faqirs* in future. This wisdom, he said, he acquired, when he had foolishly consumed poison to test its effectiveness, and narrowly escaped death. After recovering, he renounced the world to become a *faqir*.¹³⁹ Thus the powers of a *faqir* and the deadly effect of poison were an inherent attribute of each, to test which was foolishness, just as it was to test the relevance of a story.

So the question that arises is what sustained the stories? The life of a story is depended on the audience it is able to draw, both to hear and to retell it, just as the volume of water flowing increased or decreased, in proportion to the number of people assembling at the cliff.¹⁴⁰ Some may pass it on irrespective of their belief in it, while others may insist on narrating it, even if they faced opposition. Thus the shepherd did not give up on narrating his story to Khwaja Khan Mewati, even when his wife repeatedly tried to discourage him from doing so.¹⁴¹ Thus it was the recall value of a story that was the most important factor, which could be due to its strange and unbelievable element, which ensured that it lingered in the memory of its audience and generated a sense of keenness to retell it to others as well. However a story is not solely at the mercy of its audience. Rather, a well structured story, that could capture the interest of the majority, was bound to sustain for long, its content and form lending it the agency for sustenance.

Stories circulating orally, depended on memory, implying that there was the need to establish the sanctity of memory and confidence on storytellers, that they would not

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 246-248.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 244.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 234-5.

misuse their agency to change stories but would simply reproduce them, as they have been received. Thus people, in Mushtaqi's stories, who misused the power of memory to misguide people met with a terrible fate. Mushtaqi tells us of a woman, who cunningly misled a lady and her husband by narrating a fabricated past, where she claimed to be lamenting the death of her husband, only to win their trust. She later took advantage of their trust and trapped lady to fulfill the fancy of a merchant's son, who was enamoured by her. The lady died accidentally that brought the state into the picture, and when after investigation, the king came to know of the wicked woman, he cleverly got her to assemble others, who like her deceived people and ordered them to be drowned. Even though the merchant's son was pardoned, the woman and her companions, who, misused the power of memory, were not.¹⁴² Conversely, men who did not remove things from the places they were originally placed, were held in high regard. Thus when an old and poor man did not pick gold coins that had been lying in an exposed grave for seven years,¹⁴³ can be read allegorically, to indicate that the belief in the integrity of the narrator was a very important aspect in the process of circulation of stories, as they were to be trusted, to faithfully transmit stories without altering their content and/or form.

Mushtaqi was also aware that stories could gain or lose their relevance and charm according to changing cultural contexts they were narrated in. Some narratives could be of equal or more interest in areas across vast geographical distances, as was the case with the brother of Malik Adhu who earned a fortune in Iran, where people treasured the peacock features, that was all that was left with him after being robbed. Since peacock features were used to read the Quran, but were a rare find in Iran, they gave him fine

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 216-220.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

horses and enough money in exchange.¹⁴⁴ Other stories are more appropriate to a specific setting and could lose their value in a different context, just as it was more appropriate to inter a Saiyyid in a garden blooming with flowers and fruits rather than a food caterer or like the *huffaz*, who insisted on being buried at the spot where their coffins have been drifted to, instead of the original spot.¹⁴⁵

Yet, at the same it was considered advisable to be able to develop a broad sensibility that would enable a person to appreciate stories in all their variations. It could serve as the key to understand different cultures and open doors of communication with them, just as the strange people with horse tails were able to communicate with the people, who were washed away to their land after a storm, as they had a database which stored information about all the languages that were spoken in the world.¹⁴⁶ One may choose not to adopt and associate with every story that they hear, as many may appear to be strange, but they should be graceful enough to give them a chance, as no matter however different, they will possess some logic of their own. Thus even though the merchants did not require the armours and shields that were manufactured in this distant land, they bought it and discarded it, after sailing for a considerable distance,¹⁴⁷ so that its producers would not be offended. Also just as these people were entrusted with the responsibility of providing livelihood to them, for which they bought the weapons that they did not even require, it is important for people to realize their responsibility towards different cultures, by respecting their distinctiveness, of which stories are an integral part.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 254-256.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 251-252.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 238-240.

IX

An attempt to analyze this text remains incomplete without forming an understanding of the ways in which Mushtaqi tried to incorporate his audience. The most evident is that the author chose characters from everyday life, wherever he could. Thus we find soldiers, boatman, *sarrafs*, recluse, a bride, a student, travellers, housewives driving stories directed towards crucial issues like nature of kingship and justice, who possibly formed sections from which his audience was drawn from. The other way is that where one can identify a deviation from the ongoing narrative, which initially baffles the reader, but then they appear to have been inserted as a response to some clarifications that his audience must have sought, on the preceding piece. Thus we find three episodes that appear suddenly and seem to be at odds with the ongoing narrative, talking of the divine powers of three saintly men that they transferred to others, to help them out of a situation.¹⁴⁸ What made Mushtaqi include them can be explained by going back to the preceding section where treasure was unearthed from Shaikh Muhammad's land, which Sultan Sikandar allowed him to retain.¹⁴⁹ There is no mention of the Shaikh distributing this treasure amongst the poor nor did he give a share to the peasant who was ploughing the field and came across a stone underneath which the treasure was buried. This challenged the popular imagery of saints, who were associated with charitable acts, possessed miraculous powers and as righteous figures, which is exactly how Shaikh Ahmad and anonymous saints of the stories that follow, come across. Thereby these three episodes sought to counter balance the portrayal of saints, which was disturbed by Shaikh

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-57.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4.

Muhammad's act of amassing treasures, leaving the audience puzzled and could have built a sense of distrust towards the narrative, if left unaddressed.

The other similar instance that we come across is that of Mian Hussain, who joined forces with the Hindu Rana, against Ibrahim Lodi, is clarified not to have compromised on his religious beliefs. Thus he is shown to have maintained a religious distance from his political ally, as he refused to hear to them reciting their prayers.¹⁵⁰ The cropping up of such an episode in the midst of the ongoing contestation between them, though not completely off track, was not necessary either. There was hardly the need for him to define the nature of the alliance. However Mushtaqi decided to do so as his audience was not able to draw the line. Thus clarifications had to be made every time there were references to any constructive interaction between the adherents of different religions, also as was to be seen at a gathering at the Rana's place, where the Afghans were invited as well¹⁵¹.

Mushtaqi was also aware and respected the possibility that his audience was not completely ignorant of the period and its characteristics, in which, his narrative has been located. He does this by not only upholding popular notions about public figures like saints, but also acknowledges their awareness of the past by saying that some events were so 'well known' that there was no need to elaborate on them. An overall sense of responsibility towards the audience is also evident, as he clearly states that the purpose of his narration was to tell 'people that the qualities of kings and officials were much superior even to the saints of present age',¹⁵² only to convey that he not just wasted their

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 181-2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

time by engaging in pointless narration. In addition, whenever Mushtaqi changes the course of his narrative and did not intend to move towards what his audience was expecting, they were informed of the same, with the assurance of filling in the gaps, at a later stage. Thus when Mushtaqi decides against placing a narrative of Islam Shah's reign at its chronological position, he clearly states so,¹⁵³ and comes back to it, later, as promised.

An effort was also made to emotionally connect the audience to the past, by finding ways to convince them, that it was a better period to have inhabited, not to demean the present but to evoke a sense of nostalgia for a time that was not directly accessible to them. This also validated the exercise of visiting it as well. He thus praises the virtuous rulers, their officials and soldiers, none of whom were to be found in the contemporary times. To strengthen his claims, he very cleverly creates situations, and exploits common sensibilities of the audience, without allowing them to realize so. Thus Mulla Tughluq is able to get a stipend for a person Bahlul Lodi has never encountered, and for no good reason, while the Sultan was hurriedly heading to the toilet.¹⁵⁴ It was obvious that no king would have allowed this, which is the conclusion that Mushtaqi wanted his audience to arrive at. By directing the question of how would the present day king react to the situation, he was giving his audience a false sense of agency, (given the situation presented, it is hard to imagine that someone could have disagreed with Mushtaqi) as well as affirming their emotional connect to a better past, which is here defined as unhindered access to the Sultan. He also utilized other relevant issues, like

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11

inflation, as he remembered the fair prices which prevailed then,¹⁵⁵ with the same intention, of convincing his audience of the superiority of the past in general and of the period his narrative in specific.

A study of the language used in the text, can also make certain revelations. The narration is not uniform, losing its characteristic as a story, at several places, thereby transforming the language from first and second person to the third person. There are multiple reasons that can be used to explain this change in the language. One is that, while stories are used for a specific instance, for general observations, that hold true for a longer duration, the nature of narration can be changed. Thus Sultan Sikandar's daily routine has been narrated in third person.¹⁵⁶ However, it is not, as if it was not possible to talk of specific instances without resorting to storytelling. Therefore one indulged in storytelling not only because a particular episode was being addressed but more so as stories could more effectively convey ideas and concepts. This form of narration has a greater chance of being recollected and re-narrated, much more effortlessly, and thereby, contribute to its circulation. Despite these advantages, narrations in third person were meant to provide the upcoming story a base or direct the audience towards the conclusions that were to be drawn from them. It also broke the monotony of the narrative and gave the impression that the narrator had greater agency over his narrative, which in the case of stories narrated in the first person, reduced the narrator only to a voice.

It could be tricky to determine the impact of a narration on its intended audience. One may not always achieve the desired result and in some cases the outcome could have

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 41-42.

been dramatically opposite. Such an example is illustrated though the episode of Mallu Khan, who grew cold feet on hearing of Sher Shah's exploits. Though the Sultan had narrated to him, his experiences on his way to power, to instil a sense of awe and loyalty, the effect it had was a contrasting, as Mallu Khan, found himself incapable of serving this great ruler and deserted him.¹⁵⁷ Thus it was essential to shape up narrations according to the audience and contain them to a level, as going overboard, could ruin the entire effort.

The value of this text, as a source of history has been recognized, as it devotes enough space to rulers and their nobles, who have, largely, dominated modern history writing. However it is the section narrating stories that have bewildered scholars. Even if we argue that these stories were narrated with the intention to explain concepts that would facilitate the reading of the 'historical' section of the text, the question arises why did Mushtaqi seek the assistance of stories to communicate concepts on the narration of history? An answer to that can be given if we understand that the boundaries distinguishing history from literature was not so well defined.¹⁵⁸ Once we recognize this, the potential of the text that has been seldom pushed further, due to the absence of certain yardsticks that have been associated with texts to qualify as sources of history, like the clear mention of dates, opens up new horizons. We thus begin to see the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* in a new light, and when read with some degree of flexibility; it proves itself, to be a unique and fascinating text, to study a not so conventional representation of the past.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134-5.

¹⁵⁸ Julie Scott Meisami, 'History as Literature', in *Iranian Studies*, vol. 33, No. ½, 2000, pp. 15.

Chapter 2

Reconstructing the Lodi Past: The Imperial Interventions

Rizqullah Mushtaqi's work initiated a process of recording the Afghan past that gained momentum with the composition many successive narratives on it. The *Tabaqat i Akbari* (written 1594) and the *Tarikh i Firishta* (written 1609), which will be the focus of this chapter dedicate a section to the Lodis, in the run up to their contemporary times. These works are very similar to one another, in their structure, content and style. They, cover an overlapping chronological span. Furthermore, both owe their allegiance to a ruler, Akbar and Ibrahim Shah, respectively. Though, Nizamuddin Ahmad had no royal patronage, he dedicated his work to Akbar, stating that the political unification that the emperor had achieved, inspired him to write the histories of all these provinces under one title.¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, though Firishta, was keen to write a history on the conquests of Islam in Hind, he was able to do so only when Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur helped him with the sources required for the magnum project.¹⁶⁰ He had even, appropriately, titled it *Gulshan i Ibrahim*. These authors wrote not only in the eulogy of rulers, but that of the institution of kingship, which guided their narratives and the course of history, as charted by them, therefore earning their rightful place in the *tarikhi* genre of history writing.

The *Tabaqat i Akbari* and *Tarikh i Firishta* have unique representations of the Lodi past, as it was through them, that the Lodi past entered the *tarikhi* genre for the very

¹⁵⁹ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, Vol. 1, ed. Brijendra Nath De, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁰ Muhammad Qasim Hindushah Astarabadi *Firishta, Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, ed. Muhammad Reza Nasiri, Tehran, 2009, p. 8.

first time. Given, that the authors were removed in time, from the rulers they wrote about, except for their patrons, their reliance on sources is obvious. Although both these works draw information from a similar pool of sources, which they list in the introduction to their works, this does not hold true for their narratives on the Lodis. While Nizamuddin Ahmad lists the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi* and the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, as the sources that assisted him in recording the Lodi past,¹⁶¹ Firishta mentions that the *Tabaqat i Akbari* was the only source he consulted for recording the history of the Lodis.¹⁶² Although one may say that the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* and the *Tarikh i Ibrahimimi* found their way into Firishta's writings through his use of *Tabaqat i Akbari*, but had that been Firishta's approach, there would have been no need for him to have consulted many of the other sources, which were common to both. Thus a work, even though produced from sources, cannot be identified to be replaceable with them. On the contrary, Firishta appears to have been unsettled by existence of Nizamuddin Ahmad's chronicle.

In the long list of sources that Firishta mentions, the *Tabaqat i Akbari* had his special attention. Firishta says that he found his precursor's work to be defective in parts, which he could fill in with his personal knowledge.¹⁶³ There are two aspects underlying this statement. First, it is clear that Firishta was uncomfortable with the presence of a text that was so close, in format and genre, to the one he was writing, as it could have overshadowed his own work. Second, to avoid such a situation he had to think of ways in which his work could claim to have an edge over it. So he expresses his reservations about the *Tabaqat i Akbari* in the introduction itself, claiming that his text provided more

¹⁶¹ Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 4.

¹⁶² Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 9.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 8.

accurate information than that available in Nizamuddin Ahmad's work. However, he does not state any source from which he drew the additional information, but credits them to be based on his personal knowledge. So, even though Firishta, had listed his sources extensively, and had sought the assistance of the ruler of Bijapur for their acquisition, he had good reasons to simultaneously depend on personal knowledge to write his text.

As we turn our attention to the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, with the intention to understand its equation with its source, the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, one can see that its use was not just limited but also filtered. Nizamuddin Ahmad justified his decision to use the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, only in parts, as he suspected it to be largely ridden with exaggerations.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, he does not offer us any insight into his approach towards the other source, the *Tarikh i Ibrahimi*, which now being lost leaves us with no means to determine it either. However, it would not be prudent to take the author's word to be the final one, as testing his claims brings forth many other aspects which, though, are not stated explicitly, but contributes immensely in understanding the utilisation of the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* by the *Tabaqat i Akbari*.

The first thing to notice is the contrasting nature of these works, as reflected by their contents and treatment. The *Tabaqat*, focuses on developments such as territorial expansion, defence against the repeated intrusion by the Sharqis and the agreements that were subsequently enforced between them. On the other hand the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, though mentions some of them, these events are not the centre of the narrative. Mushtaqi gives more space and attention to build up the cultural reputation of the Afghans, as a race, rather than an imperial power. The events that he recorded were channelized to

¹⁶⁴ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 338-9.

leave a cultural impression on the reader. Therefore, there is a fundamental difference in these works, which becomes evident through the differences in their content and structure. It is therefore important to examine how the *Tabaqat i Akbari* incorporated the few episodes from a source that presented a different narration of the Lodi past.

Both these works open Bahlul Lodi's account by referring to the strong bond that he shared with his uncle, Islam Khan. But unlike Mushtaqi, Nizamuddin claims Islam Khan to have held power in Sirhind, since the days of Khizr Khan's rule. He recognized his nephew's ability to be his worthy successor, and hence passed on his position to him. This enraged Qutb Khan, the son of Islam Khan, who lured the Sultan of Delhi, to launch an attack on Bahlul. However the Sultan's forces were defeated, paving the way for Bahlul to assert his influence at the court of Delhi.¹⁶⁵ Mushtaqi had followed a completely different trajectory to Bahlul's rise. Neither did his family hold power in Sirhind, nor was there any confrontation between him and the Sultan. Instead, he claimed him to have been a horse trader, who caught the Sultan's attention and inducted in his service after he was able to extract the outstanding revenue from a rebellious tribe, as the price for the horses that they had sold to the Sultan.¹⁶⁶ Nizamuddin steered clear of Mushtaqi's version and chose to reiterate the information provided by Ahmad bin Abdullah Sirhindi in his *Tarikh i Mubarakshahi*, based on which he wrote the history of Islam Khan and Bahlul Lodi, before the latter began asserting himself at Delhi.

Islam Khan, then known as Sultan Shah Lodi, served as the governor of Sirhind, which was bestowed to him by Khizr Khan, when he gave him the responsibility of

¹⁶⁵ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 294-5.

¹⁶⁶ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 4.

suppressing a rebellion in Bajwara. He was also appointed to check the activities of Jasrath Khokhar, by the next Saiyyid ruler, Mubarak Shah. Islam Khan died during the reign of the latter, while pursuing Shaikh Ali, who had come in aid of Pulad, who had caused insurrection in the fort of Tabarhind.¹⁶⁷ As the *Tarikh i Mubarakshahi* ends with the reign of Mubarakshah, Nizamuddin picks up information about Bahlul Lodi's feat against the invasion of the Sultan of Malwa, Mahmud Khilji, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad, from the *Waqiat*. Mushtaqi, briefly, records him to have displayed great courage, for which he was given the title of Khan i Khanan.¹⁶⁸ However by this time, Nizamuddin had gained a hold over his narrative on the Lodis to build further on Sirhindi's foundation.

Hereon, Nizamuddin makes considerable additions, both about the war as well as about Bahlul's role in it. The *Tabaqat* provides fresh statements on the war, recording that after many inconclusive battles, Sultan Muhammad Shah proposed a peace treaty, which Mahmud Khalji agreed to, as his capital was threatened by Sultan Ahmad Shah's advancing forces from Gujarat, and he was in a rush to return. Although the peace treaty was agreed upon, Muhammad Shah's men were displeased with it. Bahlul, presumably to make up for it, pursued and plundered Sultan Mahmud's retreating forces, which pleased Sultan Muhammad, and he thus bestowed him with the title of *farzand*.¹⁶⁹ However, till this point there is no reference of him to have harboured any imperial ambitions.

The *Tabaqat* states that it was only after Bahlul interacted with Jasrat Khokhar, that he began to harbour ambition of attaining sovereignty. Henceforth there are

¹⁶⁷ Ahmad bin Abdullah Sirhindi, *Tarikh i Mubarakshahi*, tr. Beverdidge, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 2010, pp. 196, 216, 206, 227, and Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 269, 273, 282.

¹⁶⁸ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁹ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 291.

references of him gathering followers, besieging Delhi twice, directing the Sultan on who should be appointed as *wazir* and taking forcible possession of Lahore and Divalpur.¹⁷⁰ Simultaneously the Sultan's powers were on the decline and he had no promising successor who could have countered Bahlul's steady approach towards the throne. The extent to which Nizamuddin Ahmad succeeded in convincing his readers of Bahlul's impending elevation to the throne can be gauged in Firishta's writing. He thus records that on Sultan Alauddin's accession, all of his nobles except for Bahlul came to pay their homage.¹⁷¹ This not only gives one an idea of how powerful Bahlul had become that he did not care to come to pay customary homage but also overlooked Nizamuddin Ahmad's statement, claiming that Bahlul did arrive to pay their respects to the new Sultan.¹⁷² Clearly Firishta was convinced by Nizamuddin's claims, so much so that he not just portrayed Bahlul to have emerged as the most powerful noble in the court, but also took it further, to say that he refused to recognise the new Sultan. It is difficult to say that Nizamuddin would have approved of Firishta's statement, not only as he makes a contradictory statement, but throughout has been careful of maintaining the aura of the throne, irrespective of the strength of a ruler.

Going back to the portrayal of Bahlul in Mushtaqi's and Nizamuddin's narratives, we notice that despite the stark differences so far, they agree upon Bahlul's visit to a Shaikh, who bestowed him with the throne of Delhi in exchange for sixteen hundred *tankas*.¹⁷³ In the sequence of events that Mushtaqi follows in his narration, Bahlul's encounter with the Shaikh took place before his brush with political power. So it is quite

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 291, 297.

¹⁷¹ Firishta, vol 1, p. 570.

¹⁷² Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 292.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 295, Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 3-4.

logical to say that Mushtaqi used it as the first step to induce Bahlul, ideologically, to the power structure, which was required, given the transition he had to make, from being a horse trader to the Sultan of Delhi. On the other hand, Nizamuddin Ahmad had already given Bahlul a strong political background, as his uncle and the governor of Sirhind, Islam Khan, had declared Bahlul to be his heir. His political standing was further strengthened as Bahlul was able to sustain the attack by the *wazir* of the Sultan, Hisam Khan.¹⁷⁴ Thus, even though Nizamuddin reproduced this episode, at this stage, it does not appear to have been indispensable, as the span of transition was significantly reduced. Also, given that Nizamuddin had not shown much favour to Mushtaqi's writings, especially for such dramatised episodes, his decision to retain it, is surprising. One cannot even question the intent of the author here, as the couplet that he follows it with, clarifies it, saying that it was the piety of Bahlul, towards the saint, which bestowed him with the sovereignty of Delhi.

Nizamuddin does not leave the episode at that and utilises it further to say that the *darvesh's* words along with that of Jasrath Khokhar fuelled Bahlul's ambition.¹⁷⁵ However one can question why Jasrath Khokhar's incitement was not enough for Bahlul to have taken a similar course of action? Though it might have been, but Nizamuddin saw no reason to leave out on one more episode contributing to Bahlul's journey to the throne. Many Sultans were associated with similar experiences of encountering mystics who had predicted their ascent to the throne, as we find in many of the works that Nizamuddin utilised, like Juzjani's *Tabaqat i Nasiri*, Afif's *Futuhāt i Firozshahi* and Abdul Malik

¹⁷⁴ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 294-295.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

Isami's *Futuh us Salatin*.¹⁷⁶ Thus there was little for him to suspect Mushtaqi, here in particular. Firishta followed Nizamuddin in referring to this episode, despite deepening Bahlul's political roots, by providing information on Bahlul's lineage, childhood and pre accession days. Thus not only had his grandfather held power in Multan, his father was martyred in a battle and Bahlul had distinguished himself as a warrior, Bahlul was also given the responsibility to avenge the death of his brother, Shaheen Khan, from the Sultan's *wazir*.¹⁷⁷ This set of new information further reduced the utilisation of the *darvesh*'s incident in the way that Mushtaqi did, yet its sustenance is indicative of the niche that such episodes had carved for themselves, especially for those who were not in direct succession line to the throne.

It would not be fair to say that the saint's words served no purpose at all. One possibility is that this episode served as the basis for Nizamuddin to refer to Mushtaqi's claim of Bahlul being a horse trader, as, according to Mushtaqi, he met the Shaikh while returning from one of his trading ventures, only to refute it.¹⁷⁸ The other purpose it was serving was to lay the ground for the geographical transfer of his power base from Sirhind to Delhi. Also, as Nizamuddin records Bahlul's failure to take Delhi in a siege, twice,¹⁷⁹ and that he was able to ascend the throne only on being invited by Hamid Khan, the former *wazir* of the Sultan, the concern to suppress his failure was a valid one. Thus the saint's bestowal made his rise to exercise imperial power over Delhi a matter of time, pushing the trajectory through which he gained it, or had failed to do so earlier, into the background. To further reinforce this idea, Bahlul is not shown to have made the first

¹⁷⁶ Simon Digby, 'The Sufi Shaykh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India', in *Iran*, vol. 28, 1990, pp. 75-77.

¹⁷⁷ Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, pp. 572-575.

¹⁷⁸ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 295.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 296, 297.

move, but rather an opportunity presented itself to him, when the Saiyyid Sultan got embroiled in their interclan dispute, and Qutb Khan approached him for assistance against Bahlul. Bahlul was able to successfully contain his advances, which gradually made him strong enough to assert his authority, in the court of Delhi, to the extent of demanding a replacement of the *wazir*.¹⁸⁰ This built up of political tension that culminated with Bahlul's accession is completely missing in Mushtaqi's work. He on the other hand narrates an exceptionally smooth process, of power changing hands, without any tensions, enmity, revenge or deceit, as Sultan Alauddin left for Badaun and Hamid Khan, had two candidates in mind, amongst whom Bahlul succeeded, simply by the virtue of arriving first.¹⁸¹

Nizamuddin Ahmad and Firishta had read and written about several political turmoils that had preceded the accession of a new dynasty, to have gained the firm impression that the coming of a new dynasty was far from a process, as easy as Mushtaqi had projected it to be. The corpus of new information, provided by the later chroniclers, appears to have been directed to do away with the ease, with which the Lodis occupied Delhi. So they introduced intra clan rivalry that led Qutb Khan to summon the forces of Sultan Mahmud, defeating whom Bahlul began to intervene in the court of Delhi.¹⁸² The assistance that he provided against the Sultan of Malwa, further strengthened his position, and Bahlul took the opportunity to add territories at the cost of the Sultan.¹⁸³ It was because the episode of Hamid Khan's arrest assisted in adding to the unstable conditions

¹⁸⁰ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 295-6 and Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 576.

¹⁸¹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸² Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 294, Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, pp. 572-575.

¹⁸³ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 296, Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 576.

prevailing in the interim period, that Nizamuddin Ahmad and Firishta decided to incorporate it, as the last hurdle, after which the Lodis were seated firmly in Delhi.

However for Nizamuddin and Firishta, it was not just the progression of events that was to comply with their sense of history, but the reasons that caused the events to unfold were also as important. This is evident when the works display difference while ascribing the reason for Hamid Khan to have selected Bahlul as the next Sultan of Delhi. While Mushtaqi states that Hamid Khan summoned Bahlul Lodi, as he recognised Bahlul's accession to have been in the interest of Islam,¹⁸⁴ Nizamuddin Ahmad decided to lend him a personal motive, for the act. Nizamuddin therefore backtracks a little to record that the Sultan, in response to Rai Pratap's promise to add forty *parganas* to the Sultan's limited domain, agreed to imprison Hamid Khan. Nizamuddin also informs us that it was on account of an old enmity between Rai Pratap and Hamid Khan that the former provoked the Sultan against the latter. This built up the *wazir's* contempt towards Sultan Alauddin, which could be satisfied only by avenging his maltreatment. On sensing an opportunity, when he realised that the Sultan was left virtually powerless and was absent from the capital, he chose to replace him with one of his competitors. Nizamuddin states that Hamid Khan did not call the Sultan of Jaunpur as he was Alauddin's son in law. Instead Bahlul Lodi and the Sultan of Malwa were his choices, both sharing a not so comfortable equation with Alauddin. He then managed to shortlist Bahlul as he was nearer to the capital than the other.¹⁸⁵ Even after Bahlul's arrival, Hamid Khan continued to command significant power. However, this was soon to change, as Mushtaqi

¹⁸⁴ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* p. 4-5.

¹⁸⁵ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 297-8.

says, that Bahlul being unsure of Hamid Khan's loyalty, decided to corner and imprison him.¹⁸⁶

Nizamuddin and Firishta decided to give a completely different reason for Hamid Khan's arrest. Neither of them questioned Hamid Khan's loyalty towards Bahlul, and there is nothing to indicate any form of treachery either. It appears that they simply held Bahlul's desire to exercise undivided power, as the sovereign, responsible for the act. Though neither mentions this clearly, but the couplet that is inserted here,¹⁸⁷ clearly points to Hamid Khan's foolishness in trusting Bahlul, as it was inevitable for him to act this way. Nizamuddin's and Firishta's opinion on shared sovereignty is expressed in clear words in the section on Sultan Ibrahim, when his nobles advocated a division in territory and powers, with his brother, Jalal Khan. The authors laud the intervention of Khan i Jahan, who warned all, of the perils of this form of organisation of power.¹⁸⁸ Mushtaqi, on the other hand, is silent on the effects of division of power, restricting himself to criticising Ibrahim Lodi for retracing from his promise of dividing the territory with his brother,¹⁸⁹ venting his personal anger on the Sultan who had mistreated many of his patrons.¹⁹⁰

In contrast to Mushtaqi, Nizamuddin and Firishta, were more concerned with expounding the adverse effects that the creation of an alternate centre of power, would have. While Nizamuddin records that the nobles were taking this opportunity to weaken the throne, and thereby strengthen their position, Firishta goes deeper, to show that they

¹⁸⁶ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 4-5.

¹⁸⁷ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 300, Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 579.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 341-3, *Ibid.*, pp. 617-8.

¹⁸⁹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 101.

¹⁹⁰ I.H. Siddiqui's introduction to *Tarikh i Daudi*, ed. Shaikh Abdur Rashid, Aligarh, 1969, p. 12.

had grudges against the new Sultan and were thus looking for ways to sideline him. He thus records that since Ibrahim Lodi had begun to curtail the honour and prestige that the Afghan nobles had enjoyed so far at the Lodi court, they were in favour of establishing a new court, with a new Sultan, where they could continue with their previous practices, thereby retaining their prestige as well.¹⁹¹ Despite stating a reason, neither could allow such an idea to prevail, as they realised the danger of setting such an example. Thus given that Nizamuddin and Firishta supported the concept of the presence of a strong sovereign, they were not upset by Bahlul's act of imprisoning Hamid Khan. They, rather, swiftly moved over to another pertinent issue, that of legitimacy.

Seeking political legitimacy was a concern that rulers had carefully addressed, each modifying it according to their varying requirements. Nizamuddin addresses the issue of legitimacy in a limited way. After Bahlul gained complete control over the throne; Nizamuddin began to look for a source that could provide him legitimacy. He identified a potential source in the previous ruler, Alauddin. Nizamuddin claimed that Bahlul gained the approval of Sultan Alauddin, who honouring the equation that Bahlul shared with his father, Sultan Muhammad Shah, who had bestowed him with the title of *farzand*, addressed him as his elder brother and thereby the rightful heir to the throne.¹⁹² Firishta also has the same statement. This thought is completely absent in the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, where Bahlul after declaring himself as Bahlul Shah Ghazi, simply granted the territory of Badaun to Alauddin for maintenance¹⁹³ and he was not to be heard of anymore. Such is not the case with Nizamuddin who used the recognition that Sultan

¹⁹¹ Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 617.

¹⁹² Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 300.

¹⁹³ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 7.

Alauddin had granted him, to assert his right over Mubarak Shah's territorial possessions against the Sharqi's.¹⁹⁴ He also evicted the Sharqis from Badaun, which they had attempted to take after the death of Sultan Alauddin.¹⁹⁵ Thus by being granted political legitimacy by Sultan Alauddin, Bahlul Lodi secured an ideological foothold, which was perceived to be very crucial in the political culture of the period.

Another deviation, pointing to the difference between Mushtaqi and Nizamuddin, surfaces when we notice the silence that Mushtaqi maintained on the reason(s) that led the Sharqis to launch an expedition against Bahlul Lodi and the developments that brought it to a close. Nizamuddin and Firishta inform us that a section of the nobility, dissatisfied with the ascendancy of the Lodis, had appealed to the Sharqi Sultan to come and overthrow the Lodis. In response, Sultan Mahmud arrived with a large force and besieged Delhi. The absence of Bahlul Lodi from the capital caused great distress. Though Bahlul returned to the vicinity soon, as Nizamuddin and Firishta record, but Mushtaqi does not, the deciding moment arrived when Qutb Khan Lodi, while engaged in battle, in an attempt to dissuade Dariya Khan Lodi, who had joined the Sharqis, evoked his kinship affiliation. When Dariya Khan Lodi realised that the women of his clan were threatened by the invading army, he decided to quietly retreat, after which the Sharqis could not withstand the Lodis in the battlefield.¹⁹⁶

Mushtaqi too has a similar narration of the event, with the exception of not mentioning either the arrival of Bahlul Lodi or the presence of Qutb Khan Lodi. He, unlike the other two, mentions of a private negotiation that took place, where Mubarak

¹⁹⁴ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 303.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-310.

¹⁹⁶ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 301-2, Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, pp. 579.

Khan Lodi decided to retreat on realising the dishonour that his mothers and sisters would be subjected to. However it is what follows in Mushtaqi's narration hereon, that brings out the difference in the nature of the works. Mubarak Shah Lodi did not disclose his change of heart to the Sharqi Sultan, but instead convinced him to await Bahlul's arrival, as defeating him in person would give them a decisive victory.¹⁹⁷ The Sharqi Sultan, unaware of his true intentions, agreed, but was unable to face Bahlul as he arrived with his forces. This helped to balance Mubarak Khan Lodi's image, as Mushtaqi did not want to portray an Afghan as a traitor to his master, something that Nizamuddin and Firishta were not bothered about. They were focussed on his withdrawal from the battle that resulted in the defeat of the Sharqis.

This battle that was fought near Narela, was one of the several engagements that took place between the two powers, each of them resulting in the defeat of the Sharqis. While describing one of them, when the Sharqis had besieged the fort of Delhi, Mushtaqi records Bahlul to have visited the tomb of Bakhtiyar Kaki, in the hope of deliverance. After spending the night at the shrine, a man appeared and handed Bahlul a staff, directing him to hit the enemy with it. Bahlul, won against the Sharqis, putting them to flight.¹⁹⁸ This episode provided divine sanction to Bahlul's victories against the Sharqis. Inversely, the Sharqis were devoid of such a divine sanction, when Shaikh Badiul Haque refused to bless Sultan Husain Sharqi, for his expedition to Delhi. In addition, Husain Sharqi's disregard for Malik Suman, who was considered to have saint like attributes,¹⁹⁹ is another step in this direction. Nizamuddin Ahmad, on the other hand was not seeking

¹⁹⁷ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

to describe the Lodi-Sharqi conflicts in spiritual-political terms. Instead he gives details of what led to these conflicts, the site of battles, peace proposals and treaties that concluded the war. Unlike Mushtaqi, there is no space given to sway his audience in favour or against either of them.

It is on understanding this basic difference, to that the account of Sikandar Lodi's reign, which displays an increasing reduction of Nizamuddin Ahmad's reliance on Mushtaqi's text, can be explained. Mushtaqi's efforts, to vouch for the cultural refinement of the Afghans, in terms of their physical appearance, expertise in statecraft, dispensing justice and generosity, intensified significantly in his account on Sikandar Lodi. Nizamuddin does not partake anything from Mushtaqi till the closing section of the narration on the Sultan's reign, and when he does, a word of caution on the exaggerated nature of the source is left.²⁰⁰ This exclusion justifies itself as Mushtaqi's treatment of the Lodi past was decided by a different set of cultural concerns, to which the *Tabaqat* was not sensitive to. Despite not approving the source, Nizamuddin Ahmad incorporates some of the Sultan's characteristics as portrayed by Mushtaqi. Thus he was said to be adorned with personal beauty, mental perfection, was god fearing and did everything to uphold the interest of Islam. The Sultan was well informed about the developments within his dominion, ensured that inflation was kept in check and his subjects were not deprived of justice,²⁰¹ all of which found space in the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. So ironically, though Nizamuddin was not convinced of the episodes that Mushtaqi fills his text with, to convince his readers that the Sultan actually possessed such qualities, but he does not find it difficult to associate these qualities with him, possibly as these were quite commonly

²⁰⁰ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 334-5.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 335-340.

attributed to many rulers of those times. It appears quite likely that Nizamuddin had missed the context of Mushtaqi's writings, and was unaware of the cultural inferiority that the Afghans had been subjected to, to counter which Mushtaqi's narrative had taken its existing shape.

Of the many episodes through which Mushtaqi reinforces his claims, Nizamuddin reproduces only two, one on to his sense of justice and the other on the divine sanction that had been bestowed on his rule,²⁰² overlooking many others, as the author suspected hyperbole. What is worth noticing is that, Nizamuddin places the episodes, which he borrowed from the *Waqiat*, separately from the rest of the narrative. This disturbs the flow, as one comes across incidents that do not unfold in a linear form. Therefore the narrative that revisits Sikandar Lodi's rivalry with Barbak Shah, on which Nizamuddin had shed light at the very onset of the Sultan's account, again resurfaces, towards the end. There was not just a conscious spatial segregation but a conceptual distancing as well, that Nizamuddin effected, by not only avoiding Mushtaqi's content altogether, but the episode was either utilised in a different way, or was modified, sometimes, almost beyond recognition.

Such an alteration is evident when one comes across an instance of conflict between Sikandar Lodi and Sultan Husain Sharqi, inflamed by a *zamindar*. This basic premise apart, there is little in common in the versions found in these works. Not only the characters involved differ, but the initiation and the development of the episode varies significantly, the only common aspect being that both end with the victory of Sikandar Lodi over the Sharqi Sultan. In the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, Sikandar Lodi gets infuriated

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 335, 338-9.

when his noble, Mubarak Khan was defeated and imprisoned by a *zamindar*, Joga Hindu. In response he launched an attack against him. Certain of his inability to face the Sultan he took refuge with Sultan Husain Sharqi, who refused to withdraw his protection, and that led to a battle and defeat of the Sharqis. However Sikandar Lodi readily forgave Mian Sayyid Khan, a Sharqi noble who came as an envoy, but refused to comply with Sikandar's suggestion of advising the Sharqi Sultan to hand over Joga Hindu to him. After the war Sikandar Lodi did not hold any grudge against Mian Sayyid Khan, detaching him of any agency to have prevented the war, and held the Sultan as solely responsible for the devastation.²⁰³ Thus Mushtaqi utilized this incident, yet again, to say that the fortunes of Islam and Sultan Sikandar were intertwined, and despite the political pressures, Sikandar Lodi always found a reason to the honour men of religious distinction.

In contrast, for Nizamuddin Ahmad, the coming of the Lodi Sultan to Jaunpur, in 1491, was intimidating enough for the Raja to release Mubarak Khan. Sikandar Lodi's conflict with the Sharqis was initiated for a different reason and in a different year as well. It was when Barbak Shah found it difficult to chastise the rebellious *zamindars* of Jaunpur, in 1494 that the imperial army had to march in that direction. The situation was brought under control soon after, but the imperial army suffered heavy losses, which was communicated to Sultan Husain Sharqi by the *zamindar*, Raja Bhid. Sensing their vulnerability, he decided to launch an attack on the Lodis, only to be routed and lose Behar to them.²⁰⁴ Therefore we see Nizamuddin splitting up a single episode from Mushtaqi into two, and by providing the year of their occurrence, chronologically

²⁰³ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 25-28.

²⁰⁴ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 317-9.

distances them, removing any scope of confusion. Further, he does not extend the episode to bring in the character of Mian Sayyid Khan, through whom Mushtaqi displayed Bahlul Lodi's piety and large heartedness. Therefore one can sense that the Mughal official was investing efforts to distance his writing from the one he listed as one of his sources for the Lodi period.

A continuity in this direction is reflected in Nizamuddin Ahmad's account of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi's reign. Though in comparison to the preceding Sultans, the author's addition of fresh episodes that are not found Mushtaqi is nominal, yet he ensures that the impression that one gathers, points in the opposite direction. The contrasting characterisation of Ibrahim Lodi, that the *Tabaqat i Akbari* presents, bears witness to this statement. Whereas Mushtaqi, right from the beginning, gives every possible reason, for his audience to despise the last Lodi Sultan, Nizamuddin Ahmad appears to be writing with the purpose of controlling the damage caused by his precursor. Mushtaqi succeeds to highlight the unjust and cruel nature of his rule, by not assigning any reasons for him to have inflicted harsh punishments on many of his senior nobles and breeched political agreement that he had made with his brother. To leave a deeper impact, Mushtaqi simultaneously evokes a sense of empathy for those who were at the receiving end, as they chose to endure the suffering rather than rise in rebellion, in loyalty for the dynasty they had served throughout their lives.²⁰⁵

In contrast, Nizamuddin Ahmad began not only by appreciating the Sultan's wisdom, courage and morality, but strove to assign politically valid reasons to justify Ibrahim Lodi's acts which Mushtaqi had utilized to build up a negative portrayal of the

²⁰⁵ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 101-2.

Sultan. Therefore Ibrahim Lodi agreed on the division of the sultanate with his brother, Jalal Khan, on the advice of the nobles, who did so to fulfil their desire of weakening the central authority. Later he took steps to dissolve the power of Jalal Khan when another noble, Khan Jahan Lohani, warned him of the undesirable repercussions of sharing sovereignty.²⁰⁶ Nizamuddin thus passed the agency of these developments to the nobles, who earlier were portrayed to be just victims of the Sultan's unjustified decisions.

A prime character, through whom Nizamuddin strove to reform the Sultan image was Azam Humayun Sarwani. He had been previously shown to be a loyal official, so much so that he did not attempt to challenge the Sultan's unjust orders to imprison him, even when he had the support of other nobles.²⁰⁷ Here, not only does Azam Humayun harbour a past grudge against the king but also vents it by supporting Jalal Khan against Ibrahim Lodi, for the throne.²⁰⁸ Though he later withdrew from Jalal Khan's camp, the damage was done, which gave the Sultan a strong reason to suspect his loyalty and order his imprisonment. Other nobles who had begun to assert power, beyond their permissible limits, invited the wrath of the Sultan, who now began to distrust them.²⁰⁹ Islam Khan, too, rose in rebellion,²¹⁰ and the Sultan's harsh response was justified, to protect his position and install fear among rebels. However, despite assigning reasons to justify Ibrahim's actions, Nizamuddin appears to have been affected by Mushtaqi's writing, as

²⁰⁶ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 341-3.

²⁰⁷ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 101-2.

²⁰⁸ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 343-44.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.347, 348, 351.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

his insertion of a verse, disapproving the killing of a brother for gaining power,²¹¹ is a complete misfit in the narrative.

It is interesting to compare the ways in which these works brought the account of Ibrahim Lodi to a close. In both the cases it was Ibrahim Lodi's harsh attitude towards a noble which can be traced as the root cause of his downfall, but with a very crucial difference. In the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, apart from the many atrocities that Ibrahim Lodi had inflicted on his nobles, the climax came when he had Mian Hussain Farmuli killed, by deceit. This led Shaikh Salman, a venerated saint of Farmul and the forefather of the Farmuli clan, to take responsibility upon himself of ensuring that revenge would be taken.²¹² Soon after Babur was, invited by Daulat Khan Lodi and defeated Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat. In contrast, Nizamuddin, mentions of Mian Hussain Farmuli in passing, devoiding the episode of the drama that Mushtaqi associated with it, to etch it in audience's imagination. The focus instead is on Daulat Khan Lodi, who extended an invitation to Babur, as his son had returned without offering homage to the Sultan. Being petrified of the Sultan's wrath, he decided to divert his attention by engaging him against the Timurid scion.²¹³ A significant difference is that while in the former Babur's invasion took place in response to a reality, the execution of Mian Farmuli, in the latter it was based on a probability, in anticipation of having to face the wrath of the Sultan. Therefore Nizamuddin distanced himself further, by evoking a polar emotion that Shaikh Mushtaqi had of anger and revenge, that of fear.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

²¹² Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 168-9.

²¹³ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 351-2.

Another level at which we can decipher Nizamuddin Ahmad to be withdrawing himself from Mushtaqi's writings, is when we turn attention to the variation with which they utilised the concept of destiny, to explain the progression of the narrative. Ali Anooshahr, has argued that Nizamuddin relied only on human actions to propel his narrative.²¹⁴ However, here the *Tabaqat* evoked destiny to explain not just the demise of Sultan Bahlul, but also the repeated reversals that Sultan Husain Sharqi had to face against him.²¹⁵ Though the former instance can be accepted, the latter event was of the nature for which human actions could have been easily held responsible. Therefore a more appropriate way to address this issue will be, to understand, when did Nizamuddin evoke fate to explain the outcome of events, and what differences exist in the circumstances in which fate is evoked by Mushtaqi and Nizamuddin Ahmad.

For Mushtaqi, the concept of fate came into play when the unexpected occurred, such as Sikandar Lodi not asserting the state's right to claim the treasure unearthed within his territory or as, in the story of a shepherd and his lost wife, the poisonous snake spared the shepherd on whom it crawled down and instead contaminated the drink of an Afghan warlord who had captured the woman, even when he was at a safe distance from it.²¹⁶ In contrast, for Nizamuddin Ahmad, destiny was associated with either an inevitable event, like death, or when there is a pattern that continued unchanged, like the repeated defeats that the Sharqis had to face, whenever pitched against Sikandar Lodi. Thus though Nizamuddin Ahmad chose not to apply the concept of divine fatalism to those very episodes to which Mushtaqi did, the concept does appear in other places, thereby

²¹⁴ Ali Anooshahr, 'Author of one's fate: Fatalism and agency in Indo Persian histories', pp. 205-18.

²¹⁵ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 310, 313.

²¹⁶ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 53-4, 238.

indicating that he was not avoiding it in general. Rather it appears to have been another step towards the principle that Nizamuddin Ahmad uniformly applied to his writing, to use the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, yet distance it conceptually from his work.

Firishta's approach to his source for the Lodi period, Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Tabaqat i Akbari* appears to have been very different from that of Nizamuddin Ahmad's approach to his only source that has survived, the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*. Unlike his precursor, the historian's account written at the court of Bijapur, follows his source very closely, majorly reproducing it in an exact form, reflecting, his acceptance of the authority of what he calls 'the jewel stringing pen'.²¹⁷ Yet he makes it clear in the introduction that he was not satisfied with the information provided by Nizamuddin and found it defective in parts and, rectified with personal information.²¹⁸ In the section pertaining to the Lodis, this assertion of Firishta takes the shape of him adding to the corpus of existing information.

The additions made by Firishta, though may not be as many as Nizamuddin supplements or even contradicts the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* with, are significant. Firishta provides information about Bahlul's father, Malik Kala Lodi, another uncle, Firoz Lodi and his son Shaheen Khan, who was killed in an encounter against the invading army of Delhi. So Firishta was able to not just provide more layers but also skilfully tied it to the pre-existing picture by stating that Firoz Khan, was confident that Bahlul would avenge the death of his son,²¹⁹ thereby pushing him towards Delhi. Bahlul, in his act to seek revenge defeated the Sultan's forces and gained a strong foothold at the court. Similarly

²¹⁷ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 572.

²¹⁸ Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, p. 8.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 573-4.

Firishta, again, intervenes towards the end of Bahlul's reign, while setting the stage for Sikandar's accession. So there are details of Bahlul dividing territories amongst his sons, grandsons and nephews, with Delhi being bestowed to Prince Nizam. On falling ill, the nobles pressurised him to alter his will of recognising Nizam as his successor, in favour of his grandson, Azam Humayun.²²⁰ Many did not perceive Nizam to be a claimant to the throne because he was born of the daughter of a goldsmith. However, Prince Nizam, was able to succeed his father, as Sultan Sikandar Lodi, on receiving the support of Khan i Khanan Lohani.²²¹ Objections were also voiced against Ibrahim as nobles were upset with him enforcing regulations that were perceived to be denting the prestige they had enjoyed so far.²²²

Both Nizamuddin and Firishta provide us with additional information than that available in the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* and the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, respectively. An important question that then arises is why did they make additions and what sources did they use for them? In this respect, these works reveal very different answers. In the case of the *Tabaqat*, it will be useful for one to recollect that Nizamuddin mentions another source, the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi*. It now being lost, we are deprived of the opportunity to carry out an intertextual analysis. This has led scholars to assume that whatever information we have in the *Tabaqat*, which is not found in the *Waqiat*, came to Nizamuddin from the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi*.²²³ As much as logical it sounds, it is in our interest to rethink of this claim and reassess the equation of these works to their sources.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 588.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 590.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 617.

²²³ Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi, *Some Aspects of Afghan Despotism in India*, Aligarh, 1969, p. 15 fn. 2.

The *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi*, as the title suggests, was dedicated to the last Lodi Sultan, and is considered to be his official history.²²⁴ It is quite safe to assume that it would have had rare information, not to be found in any other source. Given this calculated assumption, Nizamuddin's claim can be challenged on two accounts. First, Nizamuddin does not appreciate the source that he is supposed to have agreed and depended upon, to a great extent, unlike him voicing criticism for Mushtaqi's exaggerated nature of writing. Second more strikingly, Nizamuddin provides us with the least amount of new information on Ibrahim Lodi, when compared to Bahlul and Sikandar Lodi. It is difficult to imagine that the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi*, being the history of Ibrahim Lodi, did not have anything worthwhile, to have been incorporated by Nizamuddin, for the history of that ruler, but was supposed to have had important information only for Bahlul and Sikandar Lodi, that could not have been overlooked. Thus whether Nizamuddin himself had access to the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi* or not, as Simon Digby also suspects,²²⁵ is not a question that can be neglected. As a corollary, despite Nizamuddin not being satisfied with the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, he made its utilisation visible, so for him not to acknowledge the *Tarikh i Ibrahim Shahi* beyond that in the introduction is surprising and does sow seeds of doubt.

Firishta, as we saw above, also made considerable additions to the only source, he mentions to have consulted. Unlike Nizamuddin, he does not state of any alternate source, yet has managed to escape any suspicion on the reliability of these fresh claims. Simon Digby was also convinced by the text's claims, acknowledging 'our dependency

²²⁴ I.H. Siddiqui, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. xi-xii, fn. 1.

²²⁵ Simon Digby, 'Indo Persian Historiography of the Lodi Sultans', *Les Sources et le Temps: Sources and Time*, Pondicherry, 1997 p. 252-5.

on the plausible and realistic account of Firishta, who had access to some independent source'.²²⁶ However, one is intrigued to ask, that even in the absence of any reference to sources, textual or oral, what has led scholars to trust the writings of Firishta? This can be ascertained by assessing the nature of the information that Firishta provides. We therefore notice that all of his fresh information centre round a basic development that has repeatedly occurred in the past, disagreements amongst the nobles and clansmen over the succession of a new ruler. Therefore by exploiting a very fundamental concept involved in functioning of power, the tussle over of sharing power among nobles, clansmen and the ruler, Firishta was able to gain confidence of his readers on the information that he added to his narrative. Though this was a very important step taken by Firishta to ensure its acceptance, it was not the only measure that he took.

The other dimension in Firishta's approach to the information that he added to Nizamuddin's narrative, was that its contours were determined by the pre existing ones in the *Tabaqat*. Thus Firishta chose to begin the history of Lodi clan not before the time they came in contact with the Sultans of Delhi, serving Malik Mardan Daulat, the governor of Multan under Firoz Shah Tughluq, as they were themselves to occupy the throne of Delhi in the future. Bahlul's father, Malik Kala, received a special mention, despite him being of no political consequence, as Bahlul's accession was not a lineal one. Malik Kala held a district under his brother, Islam Khan and did not live to see Bahlul's accession. Firishta introduced another brother of Islam Khan, Firoz Khan, the death of

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

whose son against the invading army of Delhi, was instrumental in igniting Bahlul's desire to seek revenge, giving him the way to approach the throne.²²⁷

Firishta also identifies certain gaps in Nizamuddin's narrative, which he elucidated upon to clarify the picture for his readers. When Nizamuddin wrote that Juna Khan resisted Bahlul's march to take his territory of Shamsabad, despite of it being agreed upon by the Sharqi Sultan, it does not quite form a logical narrative.²²⁸ So Firishta, to make the picture clearer wrote that Juna Khan was a former courtier of Bahlul, had left and joined the service of the Sharqi Sultan. In the war that was waged, Bahlul Lodi was victorious and demanded Juna Khan to be banished from Mahmud Sharqi's service and the territory of Shamsabad, which he held, was to be transferred to the Lodis. Mahmud Sharqi did not agree to this and proceeded to Shamsabad to defend it.²²⁹ In this incident one can see the clarity that Firishta brought to Nizamuddin's narrative at certain junctures. Similarly, Firishta was not satisfied with Nizamuddin's statement that Sikandar Lodi allowed his brother, Barabak Shah, to hold Jaunpur after he had submitted to him following an uprising, and adds that Sikandar did so only to ensure that the Sharqis would be kept in check.²³⁰ Similarly while Nizamuddin leaves the fate of the Sharqis open ended after they lost to the Lodis near Banaras,²³¹ Firishta mentions that Husain Shah Sharqi had sought refuge with the Sultan of Bengal, after which they were not heard of anymore,²³² giving the readers a proper closure. This too he does thoughtfully, taking cues from Nizamuddin who mentions that after vanquishing the Sharqis, the Lodis took

²²⁷ Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, pp. 573-4.

²²⁸ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 303.

²²⁹ Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 581

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 593.

²³¹ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 319.

²³² Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 596.

Bihar and advanced against Bengal. The Sultan of Bengal came to propose peace and they agreed to honour each other's territory and promised not to give refuge to enemies.²³³ These instances are reflective of Firishta's skill in history writing, where he filled gaps in Nizamuddin's text and created openings for himself, which enabled the *Tarikh i Firishta* to carve a place for itself.

Another text which drew inspiration from the *Tabaqat i Akbari* was the *Muntakhab'u l Tawarikh* of Abdul Qadir Badauni. Badauni mentions that he took some sections from the *Tabaqat i Akbari* and *Tarikh i Mubarakshahi*, and added his personal observations to them.²³⁴ In the case of the Lodis, his reliance on the *Tabaqat* is clearly evident, but he does not reproduce it. Instead of the strategy that Firishta followed, of not just reproducing but supplementing it with fresh information, Badauni, considerably, abridged the account that was available in the *Tabaqat*. Here, neither, do we not encounter several episodes and the detailed information that Nizamuddin recorded, nor are we provided with any significant additional finds. Therefore Badauni's text has hardly been used by contemporary scholars in their endeavour to reconstruct the Lodi period.

Some glaring omissions that Badauni made include the episodes where the Shaikh of Samana bestowed Bahlul with the throne, the plot to that Bahlul laid to imprison Hamid Khan, Dariya Khan's withdrawal from the battlefield when he realised that the honour of the women of his clan was at stake, the prediction that a *qalandar* made of Sikandar Lodi prevailing over his brother, Barbak Shah, and the justice that Sikandar

²³³ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 320.

²³⁴ Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab'u l Tawarikh*, ed. Munshi Ahmad Ali, Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1865, p. 7.

Lodi delivered in the case of the missing ruby. Omissions were not restricted to the parts that Nizamuddin had taken from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, as equal, if not more sections were left out from the sections that Nizamuddin wrote independently of Mushtaqi's work. So we do not find the episode that led Hamid Khan to harbour grudge against Sultan Alauddin, the latter's recognition of Bahlul as his elder brother and the rightful claimant to the throne, Qutb Khan's sister despising Bahlul to have left him in the captivity of the Sharqis, the dramatic end of Muhammad Shah Sharqi, the capture of Mubarak Khan by the Bachgotis, the details of the peace treaty concluded with the Sultan of Bengal and the details of the brawl that happened during a *chuagan* match. Badauni also skips out the details of Azam Humayun Sarwani's fluctuating relation with Ibrahim and Jalal Khan, the former's orders to all nobles to withdraw their allegiance from the latter and the splendid court that he established thereafter.

These omissions do not appear to have a pattern, based on which we could have deduced Badauni's preference for either a specific source or a particular kind of content. However what is evident that though these exclusions did not disturb the basic structure and content of the narration, informing the readers of all the basic developments that took place in the Lodi period, but took away the layers and textures that these episodes provided to the overall narrative. As the previous and current chapters suggest, discussions have been centred around these very episodes, indicating that they were not passive embellishments, but have the potential to generate academic interactions, an absence of which resulted in the elimination of the text from modern scholarship on the Lodi regime. It is difficult to say what made Badauni leave out a sizeable section of the Lodi narrative, but it appears that he did not invest much in the sections prior to that of

the Mughals, including them only to follow the pattern that Nizamuddin had established, of tracing the past from the Ghaznavids upto the present time. Badauni did not ponder on the possible effects that these eliminations would have had as he was not writing with the intention of circulating his text and therefore competing with the existing ones, Badauni had a leverage that Nizamuddin Ahmad and Firishta did not. However for us, the presence of a work marked by the absence of these episodes, enables us to appreciate them further, as we realise that their absence not only restricts the scope of academic engagements with the sources of Afghan history but the experience of reading it is also compromised.

The production of an array of similar works offered an advantage, as more sources to write about the past were now available, yet it challenged the authors to look for ways to ensure that their texts were not left unrecognised. When thought along this trajectory, one can sense that Nizamuddin was bothered by the same concern, as was Firishta, on how to divert from his source without compromising on the accountability of his writings. Both found an answer to the issue in different ways, as the distance that each had to bridge between the form and content of their source, to that in which they desired to present the past, considerably varied. Nizamuddin's *Tabaqat i Akbari* is vastly removed from that of *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, which could be due to the former's inability to recognise the issues that Mushtaqi had masked behind the unconventional form of recording history, or such concerns had significantly dwindled in the times that Nizamuddin was writing in, or simply because Nizamuddin desired to write an explicit political history of the subcontinent. Firishta is much closer to his source, yet he was careful enough to introduce fresh elements in ways, that would not arise suspicion but

appreciation. In the process both left an interesting trail, which this chapter has attempted to trace, to highlight that for these authors the past was not a corpus of information alone and it would not be fair to recognise their value only on matters of fact. Rather they are fine examples to understand the versatile art of history writing, the ways in which it could be manipulated to produce effects as desired.

CHAPTER 3

Remembering Sher Shah: The Afghan Past in the Mughal Present

Apart from the Lodis, the other Afghan clan to have held imperial power in India were the Surs. The history of the Surs is prominently known by that of its founder, Sher Shah Sur. He was succeeded by Islam Shah Sur and Adil Shah Sur, but neither of them, have come close to the founder in capturing our imagination. Sher Shah rose to power, defeated and pushed back Humayun to as far as Kabul, disrupting the Mughal power, till Humayun returned a decade and a half later. This intertwining of their pasts made it difficult to write about one without involving the other. Even though we do not have any contemporary or official history that was commissioned by the Surs, Sher Shah has been the subject of numerous academic works by modern scholars. These have drawn information and perspectives from sources which were not only written during the years that were politically dominated by the Mughals, but Akbar had himself either ordered or inspired their composition. So while the *Humayunnama*, the *Akbarnama*, and the *Tuhfa i Akbar Shahi* were written on the orders of Akbar, the composition of the *Tabaqat i Akbari* was inspired by the conquests of Akbar. As these texts were Mughal oriented in nature, it is fair to expect them to be hostile to the Surs. However, on examining the above mentioned texts we find them neither to be uniform in their approach nor necessarily gratifying our preconceived notion on their recording of the Afghan past.

The *Akbarnama*, in the course of narrating the history of Akbar's father, Humayun, records the struggles that he had to endure against the Afghans, and ultimately lost all of his territorial possessions to Sher Shah. In addition to the uncomfortable past that the Mughals shared with the Afghans, it continued to be aggravated even after Akbar's accession, as they frequently rose in rebellion across the empire.²³⁵ Both contributes to reasoning the harsh characterisation of

²³⁵ Rita Joshi, *The Afghan Nobility and the Mughals*, Vikas Publishing House, Ghaziabad, 1985, pp. 56-82.

not just Sher Shah, but his successors, Islam Shah, Adil Shah and the latter's commander, Hemu, in the *Akbarnama*.²³⁶ No opportunity has been spared to characterise Sher Shah and his followers as treacherous, deceptive and wicked, resorting to which they won against Humayun, at Chausa.²³⁷ This portrayal was not restricted to Sher Shah's tactics on the battlefield against the Mughals, but was applied to other spheres as well. Thus Farid Khan was also an arrogant and evil disposed son, who troubled his father. Babur was quick to recognise him as a turbulent individual, who had created troubles in his father's *pargana*, after the latter's death.²³⁸ He also deceived Raja Chintaman, to sneak his soldiers into the fort of Rohtas and captured it.²³⁹ A similar strategy led Puran Mal to be tricked to leave his fort by a dishonest treaty.²⁴⁰ The repeated acts of deceit were enough for the reader of the *Akbarnama*, to form a strong negative image of the Afghan ruler, while simultaneously being convinced that Humayun's reversals were caused by the lack of coordination amongst his brothers and followers.²⁴¹

This harsh characterisation of the Surs is not recorded with the same intensity in every Mughal oriented text. In contrast to Abul Fazl, the two other sources, which present to us a narrative on the Afghan challenge that the Mughals had to encounter, Gulbadan Begum's *Humayun Nama* and Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Tabaqat i Akbari*, follow a different approach. Gulbadan Begam, who had witnessed and suffered during the reversals that Humayun had to endure, as Sher Shah steadily took over his territorial possessions, does not except for once, despise the Afghan ruler; when Sher Shah refused to accept Humayun's plea of letting him stay in Lahore and fixed Sirhind as the boundary between them. He, instead, proceeded towards Lahore which forced Humayun to retreat further to Kabul. Gulbadan Begum, to express her anguish, calls

²³⁶ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol. 1, ed. Thackston, Harvard University Press, London, 2016, pp. 460,462, vol. 2, p. 24, 422-28.

²³⁷ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol. 1, pp. 490, 492.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 460.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 22.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 508.

him to be unjust and fearless of God.²⁴² Other than this she never attempted to defame the Afghan ruler, or his followers, ascribing the defeat of the Mughals to the will of God,²⁴³ rather than to the treacherous nature of the Afghans.

Between the harsh and mild characterisations of Sher Shah, stands the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. A shift from the *Humayunnama* towards the *Akbarnama* is evident when Nizamuddin Ahmad begins to characterise Sher Shah's actions as deceit, in a few instances. He records Sultan Mahmud's men warning him of Sher Shah's treacherous nature, advising him to physically escort him to the battlefield, as otherwise he may not turn up at all. The author represents the excuses that Sher Shah gave, as he was reluctant to give up the fort of Chunar, as deceit. He also considered Sher Shah's act of taking the fort of Rohtas, by sneaking in soldiers disguised as women, as trickery. In addition, his victory at Chausa was considered to be unjustified, as he gained it by breaking a peace treaty and thus catching the Mughals unaware.²⁴⁴ Though Sher Shah is not relived of being portrayed as treacherous, unlike Abul Fazl, it is not expanded to explain every act of his, but is contained to some specific incidents. Therefore Nizamuddin Ahmad was the one who had begun to characterise Sher Shah, in reaction to the experience that he had with the Mughals. Though it is justified of him to have had this thought, but it may not have been sufficient for him to give shape to his narrative, until he could find a way to resolve the issue with his sources. So an examination of the text that was written in a different framework, but was utilised by him, is necessary. This will enable us to understand how and where he brought about the alterations, and the probable reason for him to have left his source unacknowledged.

The *Tuhfa i Akbar Shahi*, later and better known as the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, was written by Abbas Khan Sarwani, an Afghan who was serving the Mughals as an *ahadi*. It was originally

²⁴² Gulbadan Begum, *Humayunnama*, tr. Annette Beveridge, Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1902, p. 144.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²⁴⁴ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, Vol. 1, ed. Brijendra Nath De, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 97, 98, 100, 101.

written in three volumes, of which only the third, recording the pursuits of Sher Shah, has survived. Though the author has left it undated, his reference to Akbar's twenty fourth regnal year²⁴⁵ and the clear traces of the text being used for the composition of the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, gives us a fair idea of its chronological location. Abbas Sarwani was entrusted with the responsibility of recording the Afghan past, presumably as his familial connections with many men of eminence at Sher Shah's court, placed him in a privileged position to access reliable information from them. Utilising these sources Sarwani wrote the work, beginning from the arrival of Sher Shah's grandfather in search of employment, to the establishment of a well organised state, extending over the entire Indo Gangetic plains, Rajasthan and Malwa. To traverse this wide span, of elevating a man of no significant political lineage and with a limited power base, was an uphill task for Sarwani. So to ease its construction and effectively communicate the rise of Sher Shah, Sarwani divided it into phases, each representing a stage in the evolution of Sher Shah's career, assembling of followers and the forming a collective Afghan political identity. This is also reflected in the way the author addresses his protagonist, initially as Farid, then as Sher Khan and finally as Sher Shah. A study of the ways in which Sarwani developed parameters is crucial, to realise the direction in which the narrative was heading, and the concerns that the author intended to address.

Sarwani's effort to develop the character of Sher Shah, then known as Farid begins with him leaving for Jaunpur, following a fallout with his father, Mian Hasan. Farid was miffed with his father, who was always partial in favour of his concubine and their son, Sulaiman. Convinced of Farid's merit and promising future, Mian Husain's aides were annoyed that he had allowed Farid to leave. After Farid completed his education at Jaunpur, Mian Hasan, on the insistence of his closest confidants, went to pacify and get him back. Urged by his father's aides, Farid agreed to return and took over the management of his *parganas*. He fulfilled his duties exceptionally

²⁴⁵ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, ed. S.M. Imamuddin, University of Dacca, Dacca, 1964, p. 168.

well, establishing unprecedented justice and prosperity to the delight of Mian Hasan and his supporters, but alarming Sulaiman and his mother. She was eventually able to convince Mian Hasan of evicting Farid, even when he was reluctant and his aides strongly urged him not to.²⁴⁶ Farid left, and joined the service of Daulat Khan, who was serving Ibrahim Lodi at Agra. It was only after the death of Mian Hasan, that Farid was given a *farman* in his favour, recognising him to be his father's heir in the *parganas* of Sahsaram and Khwaspur-Tanda.²⁴⁷

The political complexities that followed, with Sulaiman asserting his claim to succeed his father, did not end with Farid leaving for Agra. Infact it is from hereon that we see Sarwani bringing forth varied reactions, from each of whom either Farid or Sulaiman sought support from. This significantly broadened the existing conversation that had so far been circulating at the personal level, between Sulaiman's mother, Mian Hasan and his confidants. Sarwani begins with Daulat Khan, who expressed his admiration for Farid and felt that it was justified of him to seek Sultan Ibrahim Lodi's intervention in his favour.²⁴⁸ However when the Sultan was informed of Farid's plea, he rebuked him for complaining against his father, but after the latter's demise, issued a *farman* declaring him to be the holder of these *parganas*.²⁴⁹ Muhammad Khan Sur, another chief of the Surs and the holder of the *pargana* of Chaund, intervened in the matter on behalf of Sulaiman, only with the intention to prolong the conflict, as he held some past grudges against Mian Hasan.²⁵⁰ The fourth perspective is drawn from that of Sultan Muhammad, the Afghan ruler of Bihar, who despite appreciating Farid's sincerity in his service, did not deem it wise to directly intervene in the matter. Sher Khan had already gauged his stand, as it was understandable that he would not have liked to offend Muhammad Khan Sur, who was one of his leading nobles, for Farid's sake. However, Muhammad Khan was unable to sway him to his side

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-39.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 43.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.

either, and Sultan Muhammad advised him to settle the dispute in a fair manner.²⁵¹ To conclude, Sarwani inserts Sher Khan's perspective as well, where he refuses to share his father's patrimony with any of his brothers, evoking Sultan Sikandar's practice of devolving the charge of the soldiers and land only to the most able son of the deceased assignee.²⁵²

The variation in the responses to the political crisis that Farid was experiencing, which Sarwani recorded in a long section, displays the commonality of them being forwarded by not just Afghans but by those serving the state in some capacity as well. With this Sarwani brings out the broad political bandwidth that existed within the Afghan community, to do away with the reader's misconception of perceiving them to be a homogenous political entity. By this time not only were there multiple imperial centres, one in Delhi and the other in Bihar, as Sultan Muhammad had separated from the Lodi sultanate and established independent power, but even at the sub imperial level things had assumed complex dimensions. Therefore, not only was Muhammad Khan Sur trying to benefit at the cost of the warring brothers, as he held grudges against Mian Hasan, but even those who shared amicable relations with Farid's father, could at best offer him temporary refuge.²⁵³ The political importance of remaining affiliated to one's clan is also indicated through the example of Shaikh Ismail Sur, who had moved away from his clan and was residing with the Sarwanis. Shaikh Ismail's identity as a Sur was overlooked, and the Sarwanis did not show any affinity to him, readily allowing him to depart with Farid, for Agra.²⁵⁴ Therefore Abbas Khan Sarwani alerts his readers to the complex political functioning of the Afghan power structure, who were grappling with multiple identities and interests, displaying a high degree of political incoherence.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-9.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 38-39.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

The prevalence of such unstable conditions, which Sher Khan recognised and disliked, prepared the ground for Sarwani to introduce us to the vision that was to set him apart. It is after defeating Muhammad Khan Sur and regaining the *parganas* of Sasharam and Khwaspur Tanda, but very amicably reinstating him with his former position and territories, that Sher Khan proposed the formation of a united front.²⁵⁵ However given the prevailing fissiparous tendencies, it is not difficult to ascertain the level of challenge that Sher Khan had thrown at himself, but he was not an ordinary individual either. Sarwani had made this clear by recording his extraordinary achievements that he was a man of exceptional insight and calibre. During his brief stint at managing the *parganas*, he had displayed a deep understanding of his responsibilities and implemented measures for the welfare and prosperity of his people.²⁵⁶ Even after his eviction, his merit was acknowledged by Mian Hasan, Daulat Khan and Sultan Muhammad, who bestowed him with the title of Sher Khan, in recognition.²⁵⁷ Despite his achievements, his father did not stop him from leaving, nor was he able to secure effective support from within the Afghan community. Ultimately he had to approach the Mughal noble, Sultan Junaid Barlas, who agreed to join him against Sulaiman.²⁵⁸ Before delving any deeper, Sarwani utilised the opening section to convince the reader of Farid's merits and establish the Afghans as a fragmented political community, both essential to the development of the narrative.

The second phase in Sarwani's narrative begins with Sher Khan serving Sultan Muhammad as the regent of his son. Following the demise of Sultan Muhammad and the accession of his minor son, Jalal Khan, all effective powers devolved in the hands of Sher Khan. Sher Khan's victory against the invading forces of Bengal strengthened his position further, and alarmed a section of the Nuhanis present at the court. Jalal Khan was also made to realise that Sher Khan had reduced him to a mere puppet, and teaming up against him an attempt was made

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-30.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

on his life. Though initially Sher Khan adopted a milder approach by denying the Nuhanis of new revenue assignments, but soon after realising their escalating threats, he decided to take drastic action against them. Sarwani clarifies that by this time Sher Khan had gathered considerable number of loyal followers around him and unaware of Jalal Khan being a partisan to them, alerted him of the situation. Jalal Khan thought that it would be in his interest to join hands with the forces of Bengal against Sher Khan. Despite that Sher Khan won the battle.²⁵⁹

It was in this period that Abbas Khan Sarwani had begun to build a stable political circle around Sher Khan. Though, he had a loyal faction at Jalal Khan's court, who alerted and supported Sher Khan against the conspiracy that was hatched against him, the elimination of Jalal Khan from the political scene did not result in the elevation of Sher Khan to the throne. This brings us to the question to determine Sher Khan's political position in the changed situation. Though Sarwani states that after he defeated the combined forces of Bengal and Jalal Khan, Sher Khan became the *hakim* or supreme commander of Bihar,²⁶⁰ he himself gives us reasons to suspect his claim. This can be deduced when we examine the equation that he shared with his associates, before and after this incident, expecting changes to be reflected with the newly established hierarchy, but are unable to trace them.

There are two instances that throw light on the above issue. One, when faced with the conspiracy of the Nuhanis, Sher Khan involved his partisans while deciding on the possible actions that could be taken against them. Though he came up with the suggestion to allow them to go over to the other side, he had to back it up with some form of reasoning as well.²⁶¹ The need to forward an explanation was felt, as it would enable others to agree or disagree with him. The second instance unfolds on the battlefield when Sher Khan proposes the call for an open battle against the combined forces of Bengal and Jalal Khan. Here too he explains himself, sharing his

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-79.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

observation of witnessing the Afghans to be superior to their contenders as well alerting them to the possibility of arrival of reinforcements from Bengal.²⁶² In both the cases, his allies ended up agreeing to his proposals but the fact that he required their consent, indicate that he was not exercising absolute command over them.

This can be observed again, in an instance that took place much later, on the eve of the battle of Chausa. When Sher Khan changed his mind and decided to break the peace treaty with the Mughals, he had to once again seek the consent of those who were going to join him in the battle. He therefore points out that the ongoing internal strife between the brothers of the emperor and the war wearied Mughal army, gave them a good opportunity to turn it in their favour.²⁶³ So nothing appears to have changed much as Sher Khan continued to depend on securing the consensus of his allies. Sher Khan was also hesitant to put the lives of his supporters at risk, to safeguard his, as is evident when Saif Khan Sarwani offered to block the Mughal contingency chasing him. It was only after much persuasion that Sher Khan agreed.²⁶⁴ In contrast, when Saif Khan was captured by the Mughals, Humayun praised him for rendering such a service to his master. The difference echoes again as despite referring to Sher Khan as the *hakim* of Bengal and the chief of the tribe,²⁶⁵ Sarwani was unable to see it in his actions. Therefore the terminology of control was used by Sarwani to communicate that Sher Khan was now a man of political eminence and the focal point of his narrative, rather than the one with absolute command over his followers. However there are two instances where Sher Khan's actions break this pattern.

Sher Khan displayed considerable authority while forging alliances with Lad Malika and Bibi Fath Malika. The complete absence of him seeking counsel on political matters here is quite a break from the trend that has been so prominent in the incidents preceding and succeeding

²⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 73-4.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-8.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2.

them. Therefore when Sher Khan acquired the fort of Chunar, through a matrimonial alliance with Lad Malika, there is no role of his allies that Sarwani records in the matter. On the contrary Sher Khan displays unprecedented agency as he approached Mir Ahmad with the proposal, knowing that its fulfilment would not only give him the crucial fort of Chunar but also enrich his coffers.²⁶⁶ Another such instance comes to light when Sher Khan reached out to Bibi Fath Malika, with the intention to secure her fabled treasures that would enable him to organise an expedition to Bengal.²⁶⁷ Even though Sher Khan was yet to come across as a strong leader in other incidents, the clarity and firmness which he displayed on these two occasions stand out as exceptions, before Sarwani lapsed back into his previous image again.

A decisive shift in this image of Sher Khan, where he was constantly looking for approval from his supporters, is visible only after his enthronement. Sher Shah was initially hesitant to ascend the throne, aware of the hierarchy it was bound to create, expressing his discomfort at the thought of sitting on the throne in the presence of many senior nobles. However, given that he was the one who had assembled and successfully led them against the Mughals at Chausa, the Afghans led by Azam Humayun Sarwani insisted.²⁶⁸ Therefore upto his accession, Sher Khan remained dependent on seeking approvals which had minimised hierarchical differences, so much so that Sher Khan was disturbed by the court etiquettes that reinforced them. However, soon thereafter, we begin to come across incidents reflecting a clear change from the existing pattern. Henceforth, Sher Shah no longer sought approvals, but is rather shown to have exercised independent agency. So, he ruled in favour of executing the captured Mughal official, Khan i Khanan Yusuf Khail, even though he was an Afghan and against the advice of all except for Masnad Ali Isa Khan.²⁶⁹ Sher Shah also refused to comply with Hamid Khan Kakar's advice

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-85.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-101.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-143.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

of launching an attack on the Mughals, while they were crossing the river.²⁷⁰ It is another pointer towards the changing characterisation of the Afghan ruler. Sher Shah also rebuked his forces for breaching his orders, even though they were provoked by the Rajputs challenging their mettle on the battlefield.²⁷¹ All of these instances make it clear that henceforth not only was Sher Shah freed from being under any obligation to seek approvals from his followers, but now, it was imperative for them to act according to his orders, irrespective of the prevailing circumstances.

Along with modifying Sher Shah's equation with that of his camaraderie, Sarwani recognised the need to bring about a parallel change in the way in which Sher Shah was evoking leadership. In the initial stages it was on being recognised for his merit and being offered the opportunity to manage his father's *parganas*, which he did with resounding success that established Farid as a leader. Later we see him utilising the Afghan sentiment against the Mughals, who had caused the loss of their power and prestige. Therefore all his advices and proposals like the need to overcome internal feuds, self-belief in martial skills, and war strategies were met with consensus,²⁷² as they were targeted against the Mughals. Once the Mughals were expelled, Sher Shah ascended the throne and consensus was no longer an indispensable component of decision making, Sarwani, had to look for alternate concepts on which Sher Shah's power would rest.

A change in the circumstances also meant that he had to not just to bind them together, but also give a sense of hierarchy. He thus now began to portray the followers of Sher Shah as being inspired by the actions and wisdom of their master. So when Mallu Khan expressed his astonishment over the ability of Afghans to toil so hard, beyond the capacity of men, the Afghans credited Sher Shah to have led them by example.²⁷³ Also, though Sher Shah did not seek their

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148-149.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-6.

approval any longer, his followers were inspired with his thoughts and actions, thereby communicating that he continued to enjoy the confidence and admiration of his followers.²⁷⁴

The change in Sher Shah's equation with his nobles gets clarified further, as we juxtapose the nature of his interactions with them, before and after his accession. Whereas earlier, Sher Shah was sceptical of ascending the throne, just because others would have to stand in his presence, he had now not only introduced radical changes in the court etiquettes,²⁷⁵ but exercised firmer control over them. Thus when Khizr Khan married the daughter of the Sultan of Bengal, without securing his permission and had begun to use royal insignias, he had him imprisoned.²⁷⁶ Similarly he demoted Shujaat Khan, when he failed to capture Mallu Khan, and revoked his assignment of Mandu.²⁷⁷ He also posted spies to keep an eye on his nobles, soldiers and subjects,²⁷⁸ realising that formal channels of communication could not always be trusted to present the actual state of affairs.

The other concept, which displays a simultaneous evolution to match that of Sher Shah's changing character, is that of justice. Though from early on, he was vocal against tyranny and oppression, promising not to spare anyone if found guilty of committing them, there is a world of difference between how Sarwani used it before and after Sher Shah's accession. There is a considerably deep understanding on the importance of deliverance of impartial justice that Farid displayed at the very onset of the narrative, placing it at the very core, around which he organised the functioning of his father's *parganas*. Here, Sarwani displays Farid to have had an innate sense of justice that he also linked with the sustenance of state. Farid thus draws an interesting analogy stating, 'it is obligatory to keep the roots of the tree of a kingdom alive with waters of justice.' Therefore his deep understanding of justice and its role in ensuring the welfare of subjects,

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193, 195.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 166-7.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 171-2.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 178-9.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

prosperity of the country and majesty of a ruler,²⁷⁹ left a strong impression on the reader and was utilised by the author to display the evolution of the character.

In the next phase, as a leader amassing supporters, Sher Khan emphasised on the need to dispense justice, impartially, without taking into account the affiliations of the oppressor. This enabled him to gather a large number of supporters as many came to join him, free from the fear of being tyrannised, as before inducting anyone in his service, he warned them of the dire consequences of doing so.²⁸⁰ However after his accession, Sarwani used the concept as a pretext to expand Sher Shah's territorial possessions. Thus when Sher Shah received complaints from the women of Chanderi, accusing Puran Mal of tyranny and pleading for justice, he immediately set out against him. Sher Shah not only took over his fort of Raisin but mercilessly wiped out his lineage.²⁸¹ Sarwani thus modified the concept at every stage, to adapt it to the phase of the narrative, in which it was being narrated. Therefore Sarwani appears to have traced the development of Sher Shah's character in quite a systematic manner, also investing considerable thought in the concepts that supported it, but it is equally important to examine the context within which the development unfolded.

The trajectory that Sarwani followed makes it more than clear that he was developing the character of Sher Shah on political lines, tracing its growth from that of a meritorious individual to that of a ruler. The political nature of Sarwani's work comes across when one notices his efforts to develop the political implications of the Afghan identity, not only at an individual but also at the collective level. In the initial stages, Sarwani had recognised the absence of a cohesive Afghan political identity, but as Sher Shah grew in power and stature, he was able to absorb them all under his leadership. This process had very humble beginnings when Sher Shah, in continuance of Bahlul Lodi's practice of inviting the Afghans from their homeland in Central

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-21.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-192.

Asia, offered them employment and rewards in India. There are multiple references of Sher Khan assembling Afghans and training them in warfare,²⁸² but their numerical presence in his army, which he claims consisted only of Afghans, was not the only way in which the Afghan identity was shown to be operating politically.

Much more effective in this regard are the two instances which bring out the political reverberations that the Afghan identity had. First it was Sher Khan's success at taking Bibi Fath Malika into confidence, and taking control of her wealth to carry out expeditions, by evoking her Afghan descent. This not just enabled him to gain her support, but also the fact that she deflected from allying with the Raja of Patna, because he was no longer treating the Afghans residing in his realm well,²⁸³ shows that alliances were both forged and broken based on ethnic considerations. Another instance is of Shaikh Khalil, who was sent by Humayun to Sher Khan, to propose a peace treaty. He ended up divulging confidential information about the Mughals and their vulnerability. Sarwani suggests that the reason for him to have done so was because his family had enjoyed the friendship and goodwill of the Afghans for generations, and thus when Sher Khan pleaded him for advice, he could not mislead him.²⁸⁴ Such an effort to build the political implications of the Afghan identity was not exclusive to Sher Shah.

Though the first two volumes of this text are lost, the opening section of the third one gives us a glimpse into Sarwani's treatment of the Lodi period. It is from this early on that one sees Bahlul Lodi to have identified the absence of creation of power bases, based on tribal affiliations, in India. When faced with an external threat, he decided to summon his tribesmen from Central Asia. This was not just going to benefit him as his tribesmen were known for their valour and bravery, but also them, as they were living under difficult circumstances in Central Asia. The offer was appreciated by all as it would not only enable them to maintain the Afghan

²⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 95, 137.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-3.

power in Delhi but also save them from the humiliation of seeking assistance from others.²⁸⁵ With the othering of the non Afghans in the political sphere, Sarwani clarifies that the term Afghan was not to be used only in its ethnic capacity, but for it to function as a political one the external pressure from non Afghans had to be exerted. In the case of Bahlul Lodi it was the threat from the Sharqi Sultan, which loomed not just over him but over the Afghan pride that led many to come to his assistance. However, he did not demand for a long lasting internal coherence from them. Thus many returned to Central Asia, some even empty handed, refusing to accept any reward for the service done.²⁸⁶

Sher Shah's call for fostering coherence and overcoming of internal differences was of a very different kind. Since it was to be made against a force which had previously uprooted the Afghans from Delhi, and was threatening their existence in the eastern provinces, so to match the intensity, neither was his reach limited to those settled in faraway lands nor was it meant to be of a temporary nature. Rather Sher Shah focussed on local conditions, to bring about long lasting changes. Therefore Sher Khan emphasised on the need to forge internal political coherence, when he faced challenges from his immediate surroundings, initially from Muhammad Khan Sur²⁸⁷ and later from Jalal Khan.²⁸⁸ Also while giving those who had come from Roh, the permission to depart, Sher Shah told them to come back every year to receive gifts, thereby giving a sense of long term association.²⁸⁹ Moreover, to make Sher Shah's rise appear in the larger interest of the Afghans, Sarwani brought in the Mughals. It was the pressure of the Mughal advances, which proved to be the external force that brought the Afghans together. Thus Sher Shah repeatedly identified that it was the apathy that the emperor had shown against them, despite the services

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 53.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

rendered,²⁹⁰ which gave Sher Shah the platform to bring the Afghan together. This political identity of being against the Mughals perfectly overlapped with the Afghan ethnic identity, and thus Sarwani did not use any other term to address Sher Shah's followers, other than Afghans. This also overlooked multiple political allegiances that the Afghans may have had, towards different centres of Afghan power like that of Sultan Mahmud (See later in this chapter). It however worked in favour of Sher Khan, as he was relieved of being represented as a power hungry individual, but rather was portrayed to be the saviour of the Afghans. So the Mughals offered much more to Sher Shah than resistance to his political ambitions and to Sarwani than patronage.

The first couple of instances where the Mughals made their first appearances in the text are Sarwani's record of the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi and then Farid approaching the Mughal noble, Junaid Barlas for assistance against Muhammad Khan Sur. After securing his *parganas* with the aid of the Mughal noble, Sher Khan suddenly begins to display aggression towards the Mughals, hoping to expel them from Hindustan in the near future.²⁹¹ This sudden change of Sher Khan's attitude towards the Mughals, who had helped him to regain his lost territory, is sure to baffle the reader. Shortly hereafter, Sarwani records Babur to have organised a feast for his nobles, where Sher Khan also arrived. Here, exchange of suspicious glances made Sher Khan feel insecure and he left without intimating anyone.²⁹² His reaction is quite surprising, as without even trying to figure out what the conversation between Babur and Junaid Barlas was about, he left. Though the reader is informed that Babur had marked Sher Khan, Junaid Barlas had pacified and assured him of the Afghans not to be a source of trouble. Babur did not meddle in Sher Khan's affairs any further. So Sarwani sowed the seeds of the forthcoming Mughal-Afghan conflict here, much before than when it actually arises. This could have been it a little unconvincing for the reader.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-4, 141-2.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

However, it is in retrospect, when one realised the extent to which the narrative and the development of Sher Khan's character were to revolve around the Afghan-Mughal conflict, that we realise these early efforts of the author to built tensions between them. However, this leaves the reader with a sense of irregularities at certain junctures, where like in the case above and also in those involving Lad Malika and Bibi Fath Malika, Sher Khan's actions do not appear to be a natural progression to the previous one.

This unexpected behaviour of Sher Khan continued as he now suddenly decided to withdraw from the forces of Sultan Mahmud, the son of Sikandar Lodi, who was leading the Afghans in a contest against Babur. Given, that this could be the chance for Sher Khan to have ousted the Mughals, as he had just expressed his desire to, it is quite difficult for the reader to comprehend his move. Moreover this also stood in opposition to the principle that Sher Khan had repeatedly emphasised on, to overcome internal differences and present a united front. Though he tries to justify his act by stating that it was invariable for the Sultan to have lost the war as there was no unity amongst his forces and they were being led by inexperienced commanders, yet it is not enough to convince the reader as Sher Khan is recorded to be the only one to have withdrawn. Sher Khan also tries to pass on the burden to some senior and wise men, who despite of being aware of the outcome of the battle, had agreed to join forces only to honour their kinsmen.²⁹³ But for them to have remained by Sultan Mahmud's side, irrespective of the outcome, does little to favour Sher Khan's stand.

We come across another such instance, when Sher Khan displayed his eagerness to serve the Mughals, in return for being allowed to retain control over the forts of Chunar and Gaur. He even sent his son, Jalal Khan, with the Mughal forces on their expedition to Gujarat.²⁹⁴ It is very surprising that Sher Khan agreed to submit his royal insignias, pay annual revenue of ten lakh

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-5.

rupees and hand over the province of Bihar to the Mughals, even after Humayun had turned down Sher Khan's request and took over the fort of Chunar.²⁹⁵ With these developments taking place after Sarwani had recorded Sher Khan's intention of expelling the Mughals, it becomes important for us to take note of these inconsistencies.

The purpose, with which Sarwani brought in these statements that appear to be in resistance to the flow of narrative, is clarified at a later stage. Sher Khan, while addressing the Afghans, on the eve of the battle of Chausa, strings these incidents together to give out the impression that Humayun never valued the service that the Afghans had rendered. So, even after they withdrew from battle, helping it to turn it in Babur's favour, offered to be at his service, and promised an annual remittance, it was not enough for the Mughals to have allied with them. This is repeated by Sarwani, thrice, every time to fuel the Afghan sentiment against the Mughals,²⁹⁶ who had not just overlooked the goodwill that was extended, but had also considered them to be inferior warriors,²⁹⁷ and thereby not a desirable ally. Instead of reciprocating their goodwill, Humayun, giving in to the counsel of the ruler of Bengal, proceeded to take over their territories in Bihar and Bengal, and leave the Afghans devoid of resources and territory. This infuriated Sher Khan, and thus ended his efforts at establishing cordial relations with the Mughals. He now promised to cause the Mughals remorse and repentance for advancing with the intention to kill the Afghans.²⁹⁸ Therefore Sarwani is able to bring about an evolution in the reason that caused the Mughal-Afghan conflict, not limiting it just to avenging of Ibrahim Lodi's defeat with which he had begun, but moves on to locate reasons that can be associated, specifically with Sher Shah. However, Sher Shah had to pay a price as the growth of his character remained inconsistent, as his actions could not be understood with reference to the claims he had made in the past. They were to make sense, but only at a much later stage, leaving the reader in confusion till then. This

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-3.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 127, 133.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-4.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

gave an opportunity to the future writers, in recognising the spaces to deviate from Sarwani's writings.

One example in this context is the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. Nizamuddin Ahmad, having written his text before Abul Fazl, was not influenced by it. However, given the past that they shared, it was quite safe for him to have assumed that the Mughals would not have liked to present one of their most successful contenders in a positive light. The absence of a Mughal oriented text, that would give him a fair idea on how to go about it, must have made it difficult for the author to construct the section recording the Mughal-Afghan conflict. Therefore the only way left for him, was to identify if his only available source, the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, gave him the occasions to mould the character of Sher Shah, to his requirement.

Sarwani's inattentiveness towards maintaining a consistency in the development of the imagery of Sher Shah gave Nizamuddin Ahmad some direct references, while in other cases he made certain alterations to achieve the desired result. Nizamuddin did not have to make any effort in cases when Sarwani recorded Sher Shah's deceit and false promises, one of which, the followers of Sultan Mahmud identified. They, suspecting that Sher Khan had plans to escape from accompanying them to battle against Babur, warned their master and advised him to escort him personally.²⁹⁹ Nizamuddin picks this up, as it is, to characterise Sher Shah as being concerned only of his personal elevation rather than the victory of the Afghans, and therefore withdrawing, as he was not the one to lead the forces.³⁰⁰ In another instance in which Sher Khan gained possession of the fort of Rohtas,³⁰¹ Sarwani gave another opportunity to Nizamuddin. Therefore the whole story of Sher Khan resorting to deceit, by sneaking in his soldiers in the

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁰⁰ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. i, p. 98.

³⁰¹ Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 110-111.

disguise of women, was used by Nizamuddin, overlooking Sarwani's efforts to negate it by referring to an eyewitness, as it served his purpose.³⁰²

In contrast to these explicit opportunities, Nizamuddin found it odd for Sher Shah to have earnestly extended his services to Humayun, offered to submit his royal insignias and pay an annual tribute in exchange for allowing him to retain the fort of Chunar. Nizamuddin characterised it as another act of treachery, accusing Sher Khan of making excuses, only with the intention to deflect Humayun's attention and strengthen himself.³⁰³ Similarly, by omitting Shaikh Khalil's act of divulging confidential information that led Sher Khan to break off the peace treaty, Nizamuddin was able to effectively characterise Sher Khan's sudden attack on the Mughals as a breach of treaty and an act of deceit.³⁰⁴ Here too as in the previous case, Nizamuddin may not have been willing to buy Sarwani's claim that Shaikh Khalil gave up his loyalty towards Humayun for the sake of the general goodwill that his family had for the Afghans. Therefore Nizamuddin does not appear to have been blindly driven only by his intention to demean the Afghans, but it were the inconsistencies that Sarwani had allowed to persist in his narrative that determined how and where he could bring about these alterations.

Nizamuddin Ahmad, despite being able to locate spaces that enabled him to portray Sher Shah as desired, left out on mentioning Sarwani's text. This could not have been due to the divergences that Nizamuddin made, as a similar situation with Mushtaqi's text, did not deter him from omitting it from his list of sources. Thus there was something else, much deeper, that was bothering him, failing to resolve which, Nizamuddin decided to skip mentioning of his source on Sher Shah. It appears quite likely that Nizamuddin Ahmad had identified the irregularities in Sher Shah's character sketch, as it was at these very junctures that he effected changes in Sher Shah's imagery. Though Nizamuddin was able to overcome them through his own ingenuity, but to refer

³⁰² Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. i, p. 100.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

and vouch for a text that did not display a clear line of thought, even if it differed from his, did not seem to be a good idea, in the larger interest of history writing.

The other source on Sher Shah, which claims to have been available, even prior to Akbar's accession, is the *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi*. It claimed to be a firsthand account of one of Sher Shah's companions, Hasan Ali Khan, who wrote it before the Mughals returned to power. This can be deduced from the colophon of the text which says that the author died in 957 A.H or 1550 A.D.³⁰⁵ The work could have been considered to be a rare treasure, as it was written by a firsthand witness and close companion of Sher Shah and was free from Mughal influence. However, severe doubts over its authenticity have been expressed, pointing to the some very obvious flaws in its colophon and content.³⁰⁶ Also, its absence from Nizamuddin Ahmad's list and usage, as can be figured out by a parallel reading of their contents, are reasons good enough to investigate this partially surviving text further.

With regards to the content, the narrative of the *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi* resembles, yet differs significantly from the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*. A comparative reading of both reveals them to have agreed on Farid's banishment from his father's *pargana*, but the premise varies considerably. While Sarwani held Farid's stepmother responsible for it,³⁰⁷ Hasan Ali Khan mentions of Farid's infatuation for Jai Singh's daughter. Jai Singh was not pleased and made an attempt on Farid's life, losing his own in the process. His daughter was aggrieved by the news and committed suicide. When Farid's father was informed of these events he grew furious and as

³⁰⁵ S.A.A Rizvi, 'The Authenticity of the Title Page and the Colophon of *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi*' in *Medieval India Quaterly*, vol. 1, no. 2, October, 1950, pp. 74.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-78 and I.H. Siddiqui, 'Examination of the Contents of *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi* of Hasan Ali Khan' in *Mughal Relation with Indian Ruling Elite*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1983, pp.178-189.

³⁰⁷ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 31-33.

a punishment decided to deprive him of his rights on the *parganas*.³⁰⁸ The difference in the progression of events leaves a contrasting impression on the readers.

The second deviation occurs at the juncture where Sulaiman approached Muhammad Khan for support against Farid. Sarwani records that Muhammad Khan agreed to assist Sulaiman with the intention to worsen things between the brothers, thereby satisfying a past grudge that he had with Mian Husain. On the other hand, Hasan Ali Khan says nothing about either Muhammad Khan sharing an uncomfortable equation with Mian Husain, nor of his intention to spill bad blood between the brothers. Instead Muhammad Khan is recorded to have advised Farid to overcome their internal disputes and unite against the advancing Mughal forces. Farid refused to adhere, which enraged Muhammad Khan and he took the opportunity to turn Sultan Muhammad Khan against him, forcing Farid to reach out to Sultan Junaid Barlas for aid.³⁰⁹ Here too, as above, Hasan Ali Khan's account fails to portray Farid as a potential future leader of the Afghans, as he did not give priority to their collective cause over that of his own.

The difference in the effect that each of these narratives create, is remarkable. The empathy that Sarwani evokes for Sher Shah, when he was unjustly expelled from his patrimony and the troubles that Muhammad Khan Sur brewed for him are missing in Hasan Ali Khan's writings. On the contrary Farid's action against Jai Singh is difficult to defend, and his decision to withdraw from putting up a united Afghan defence in face of Mughal invasion and harbouring of personal ambition, paints a different picture. Sher Shah also did not enjoy the support of Sultan Muhammad Khan, who was convinced by Muhammad Khan Sur to oust him from his *pargana*. Farid is also shown to have behaved in an irresponsible manner when he claimed that he could topple the Mughals and re-establish Afghan sovereignty, not as Sarwani claims, by identifying their inherent weaknesses, but under the influence of alcohol. They narrowly escaped, after Babur

³⁰⁸ Hasan Ali Khan, *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi*, tr. N.B.P Nigam, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 13-15.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

was informed of Sher Khan's behaviour, as Hasan Ali Khan had raised the alarm.³¹⁰ Unfortunately, the text's survival in a fragmentary form has prevented us from accessing the entire narrative, and its progression that enabled the author to incorporate the royal orders of Sher Shah. However, the pattern is indicative of the idea that this text was clearly attempting to record a narrative that would provide an alternate version to Abbas Khan Sarwani's history and imagery of Sher Shah.

There are variations in the versions of the history of Sher Shah by Abbas Khan Sarwani and Hasan Ali Khan. Still both share a concern for employing strategies to win the confidence of their readers. Hasan Ali claims to have written a firsthand account, being not just a passive spectator but in many cases a participant, while Sarwani had meticulously referred to those who had served the ruler and witnessed these incidents, as his sources. The other similarity that they share is the presence of the Mughals, beyond them being the political power that the Afghans had to confront. Sarwani recognised the Mughal emperor, Akbar, to be the patron of his text, while the colophon of the *Tawarikh i Daulat Sher Shahi*, gives a reference to the official chronicler of the Emperor, Abul Fazl, of having utilised it for his pursuits. However, when looked at these claims closely, one cannot help but be suspicious of their claims.

In the case of *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, it is difficult to rationalise Akbar patronising a work that took pride in the resurgence of the Afghans, which brought about an inglorious phase in the history of the Mughals. On the other hand the colophon in Hasan Ali Khan's text, which claims that Abul Fazl used it in 1552, much before Akbar's accession and a couple of years after the future chronicler's birth, has been identified to be unrealistic.³¹¹ Other than the wrong date that the colophon gives with regard to Abul Fazl, it also looks doubtful that the text was completed before Akbar's reign. This has been deduced from the presence of terms like *suba*, *jagir* and

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³¹¹ Rizvi, 'The Authenticity of the Title Page and the Colophon of *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi*', pp. 74.

hakim in the text which came into use only during Akbar's reign.³¹² Therefore both these claims that the colophon makes, fail when tested.

This brings us to a very basic question, of the need to identify the purpose with which they were inserted in the very first place. When thought through carefully, it is possible to argue that Hasan Ali's text had better chances of being received positively without its colophon. The absence of the colophon would have directed its readers to conclude that it was written during Akbar's reign and hence the usage of Mughal terms was natural. But the colophon, which stated that Hasan Ali had died in 1550 and Abul Fazl utilised it as early as 1552, sealed the fate of the text. Even if a reader may not be aware that these terms were not in existence when the book claims to have been written, it is not unlikely that they would have missed out on the date associated with Abul Fazl. Hence, if we do not underestimate the readers, who on realising the flaw could have defamed the text and the bookseller, one can strongly consider the possibility that the colophon was inserted, not with the intention to enhance the value of the text, but rather to damage it.

This perspective can be further strengthened if we can identify a potential reason for someone to have benefitted by doing so. Even though there is no evidence to establish the point, it is possible to suspect Sarwani or one of his partisans, who would not have wanted to share the stage with another narrative, even more so when contradictions were apparent. This hypothesis is strengthened by noticing a reversal in the strategy, with which Sarwani had attempted to win the confidence of his readers. Instead of capitalising upon the presence of the Mughals, which Sarwani did by various many ways, (see later), stating of a fact as inconceivable as that of Abul Fazl having utilised it to write the *Ain* in 1552, turned the reference to the Mughals into a liability. Moreover, a comparative reading of Nizamuddin Ahmad's or Abul Fazl's texts with that

³¹² Siddiqui, 'Examination of the Contents of *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi of Hasan Ali Khan*', pp. 180, 183.

of Hasan Ali Khan's, further clarifies the picture, as we do not see them using the latter to write the section on Sher Shah, even when doing so would have assisted the chroniclers to demean the Afghan ruler. The episodes that Hasan Ali Khan records of Sher Shah behaving in an unacceptable manner with Jai Singh, Muhammad Khan and at the court of Babur were opportunities that Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin Ahmad would not have liked to miss to defame the Afghan ruler.

Though the Mughal patronage to Sarwani's and Hasan Ali Khan's texts, are equally suspicious, they have been received very differently by scholars. While scholars have nearly written off the *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi*, for good reasons,³¹³ attempts have been made to rationalise it in the case of the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*. So the latter is either characterised as an apologist text, which was written by an Afghan to seek favours from the Emperor,³¹⁴ or as an advisory text, advising the Afghans to remain united, as it was instrumental to their success. The Mughals were also advised to recognise the Afghans for their abilities, and benefit by giving them a greater role in the functioning of their empire.³¹⁵ However these explanations could have been given a chance, only if the initiative to write the work, had been taken by the author himself rather than it being written in obedience to an order from the Emperor. The possibility of Akbar demanding an apology from the Afghans in the form of a text recording the rise of Sher Shah is as improbable as him seeking advice on his conduct with the Afghans, from an Afghan.

The widespread acceptance that the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* enjoys is not only on account of the reliable oral sources that the author claims to have referred to, but also because denying its reliability, would have made it increasingly difficult to keep this period academically alive. So given the very few reliable and unbiased sources, recording the history of Sher Shah that scholars

³¹³ Rizvi, 'Authenticity of the Title Page and the Colophon of *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi*', pp. 74-78.

³¹⁴ Aquil, *Sufism, Culture and Politics*, p. 28.

³¹⁵ Raza, 'Abbas Khan Sarwani and The *Tufah-i-Akbar Shahi*: A Critical Study', in *East and West*, vol. 33, December 1983, p. 156.

consider to have, it became crucial to emphasise on its strengths and relevance. In both these cases Sarwani manages to deflect our attention towards the Mughals. Apart from stating of sources, his claim to Mughal patronage has added immense value and stature to the text. Known for their advocacy on book production, by associating his text with the Mughals, Sarwani was hoping to garner the attention and respect that he desired for his writing. True to his aspirations, his reference to have written the work under the Mughals has undoubtedly earned him a few extra points. Scholars have even assumed him to have accessed the imperial library and utilised some documents from there,³¹⁶ even when Sarwani does not say so. Similarly, the purpose with which Akbar ordered its composition is identified to be for the composition of his official history.³¹⁷ Though it is well known that Akbar did command people to write down whatever they knew of Babur and Humayun, but whether the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* as the *Tuhfah i Akbar Shahi* can be placed in the same league or not, needs to be assessed.

It looks unlikely for Sarwani to not to have elaborated on the purpose with which he was entrusted the project, had it been so. But what is much more striking, is to note the difference in the content between what was demanded by Akbar and what was provided by Sarwani. The focus of this text was not on the history of either of the two Mughal emperors, as the statement issued by Akbar directs to record, but on Sher Shah, and therefore it is unconvincing to say that it was written in obedience to this order. Moreover, for Akbar, to have patronised two works, presenting contrasting portrayals of Sher Shah, with the intention of one serving as a source for the other, does not appear logical. However, it is quite possible that Abul Fazl laid his hands on Sarwani's text, which explains his awareness on Sher Shah's administrative achievements, which he lauds in the *Akbarnama*. He however managed to align it with his line of thought by stating that Sher Khan should have channelized his abilities under the guidance of Akbar.³¹⁸ Therefore for

³¹⁶ Ambasthya, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, introduction p. 19.

³¹⁷ Raza, 'Abbas Khan Sarwani and the Tufah i Akbar Shahi', p. 147.

³¹⁸ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol. ii, p. 428.

Sarwani to have written with the foresight that his writing would be used for composing the *Akbarnama*, and that of Abul Fazl using it, even if it was not written for him, are two separate issues. Disconnecting the purpose of Sarwani's writings from that of Abul Fazl's meant that it had to be sought in some other direction.

Given that the odds are against Sarwani's claim that he wrote at the command of Akbar,³¹⁹ the question arises that what inspired him to write? In the absence of any source of patronage or incentive, it is difficult to explain what Sarwani would have stood to gain by investing so much of effort in this project. The presence of the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* and possibly the *Tawarikh i Daulat Sher Shahi* as well, meant that there was no need for Sarwani to have feared the loss of the Afghan past. Also the fact that each of these texts advocated a varied version of the Afghan, indicate that each had their independent objectives to fulfil. Apart from the divergences between Hasan Ali's and Sarwani's texts that we noted above, Mushtaqi presents us with another variation, glancing over the Afghan engagements against the Mughals, a theme that occupied central position in Sarwani's text. Apart from this, Sarwani does not agree with the Shaikh on matters that they both addressed, like the incident that led Farid to be bestowed with the title of Sher Khan,³²⁰ his memory of Ibrahim Lodi and the purpose of leading forces against Maldeo.³²¹ Though Sarwani presented us with a different trajectory of the Afghan past, but it can be hardly argued that he wrote to counter Mushtaqi's account.

We once again seek answer to what motivated Sarwani to write? A more definitive solution to this question is provided by one of the most distinctive features of this text, the author's reference to his family members who had served the Afghan ruler, as sources for his writing. Though they were the author's kinsmen, but that does not mean they could not have been consulted by someone else who wished to write the history of Sher Shah. Thus the presence and

³¹⁹ Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 2.

³²⁰ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 121, Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 47.

³²¹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 138, 143, Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 193.

access to sources cannot be considered as the only prerequisite required for one to formally write history. The oral testimonies, which he has referred to, were majorly given by members of his family, connected to him either through lineage, like Shaikh Muhammad,³²² or by marriage, like Muzaffar Khan and Masnad Ali Khan.³²³ However references to Sarwani stating the source of his information, when compared to the volume of his writing are few and far between, not being provided for each and every event that he narrates. Therefore, these references do not appear to be serving just the purpose of securing confidence of the readers. Moreover, the insertion of these witnesses did not guarantee immunity of Sarwani's version to modifications. There is no better illustration of this than Nizamuddin Ahmad who chose not only to abide by the very occurrences that Sarwani had warned against, and also took the liberty to negotiate with them. Sarwani, being a writer of historical text, must have been aware of the limited purpose that stating of sources could serve, and thus may have had other motives, for referring to them in his narrative.

The presence of Sarwani's kinsmen, as witnesses of the events he was narrating, was just one aspect of the purpose with which they were made a part of the narrative. Rather, it looks like Sarwani took this opportunity to record the honourable position that his ancestors had held within the Afghan community. Abbas Khan Sarwani was not only related to the chief of Sarwanis in Roh, but was also the great grandson of Shaikh Bayazid Kakbur Sarwani, the spiritual successor of Shaikh Ahmad Kakbur Sarwani, who was revered by the majority of the members of the Afghan race. The esteem of Shaikh Bayazid was also recognised by Sher Shah, who despite having changed the rules of receiving high dignitaries in his court, adhered to the old tradition in his honour. Abbas Khan Sarwani records that the king received him personally, as well as saw him off. Sher Shah granted him the *pargana* of Nadah and the village of Khurkharan, but on demanding his ancestral lands that was then held by the Baluchis, the king agreed to exchange these territories amongst the two. While departing he also received a lakh of *tankas*, fine cloth

³²² Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 55.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 162

and as a mark of respect was accompanied to the banks of Yamuna, by the king himself. On his subsequent visit, he was granted two thousand *bighas* of land in Binaur. Roh, the ancestral land of Afghans was also promised along with Multan and Sindh, on Sher Shah's return from Kalinjar. Islam Khan continued to hold the family in reverence, and Abbas Khan being a descendant was allowed to retain the land in Binaur till the twenty fourth year of Akbar's reign.³²⁴

It was not just by lineage but also through matrimony that Sarwani was well placed. While one of Sarwani's cousins, Dariya Khan, was married to the uterine sister of Sher Shah,³²⁵ he was married to the daughter of the nephew of Masnad Ali Isa Khan, the nephew being Muzaffar Khan, who is repeatedly referred to as a high official of the Afghan ruler and was one of Sarwani's principal informants. Not only were they close confidants of the Sher Shah, but belonged to lineage of men who had served many other rulers. So the father of Masnad Ali Isa Khan, Masnad Ali Haibat Khan, had served in high positions for the rulers of Mandu, Gujarat and at the court of Ibrahim Lodi.³²⁶ Thus Abbas Sarwani was well cushioned on both sides, with someone as recent as Bairam Khan too, acknowledging the position that Masnad Ali Isa Khan commanded.³²⁷ However in contrast to the achievements of his kinsmen, Abbas Khan, as an individual had failed to carve out a niche for himself, holding a modest rank of five hundred and his land grant of Binah was also resumed. Given that the Afghans were no longer relevant in the prevailing political setup, Sarwani could now hope to draw a position for himself only through the honour of being related to such influential individuals. But for that it was necessary to keep their legacy alive, which itself was under threat in the changed circumstances, as we can sense in the anxiety that he expressed when Qazi Ali was unable to introduce him as the descendant of these illustrious individuals, to the Emperor Akbar.³²⁸

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-8.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-2.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-2.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

At this point one can sense the core intention of Sarwani to have undertaken this project. Recording the history of Sher Shah, which was not even titled so, was meant to serve only as the framework in which he could embed the legacy of his clan. Even though the reading of the text gives the impression that its primary purpose was to record the history of Sher Shah, and thus it was later renamed as the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, Sarwani clearly had other intentions in mind, and thus did not name it so. It was through Sher Shah that Sarwani attempted to bring his family members to light. Sarwani was thus attempting to establish a symbiotic relation between the two, where on the one hand Sher Shah would bestow recognition on Sarwani's clansmen, and on the other, the latter would bear testimonies to the greatness of Sher Shah, enabling the writing of a work that would rescue them from being lost in time. This also explains his aggressiveness towards the *Tawarikh i Daulat Sher Shahi*, as its acceptance would have served a severe blow to the credibility of Sarwani's sources, in appreciation of whom Sarwani had embarked on this project in the first place.

Apart from writing the text, it was equally important for Sarwani to take some measures that would have widened its circulation. Given the challenge that a text recording the history of Sher Shah was likely to face in a Mughal dominated present, of being marginalised or even dismissed, Sarwani, had to think of a strategy to survive. To avoid such a situation, he decided to use the Mughal presence to his advantage. Thus Sarwani made Babur and Humayun recognise the political agility of the Afghans. Thus it was on the very first glance of Sher Shah that Babur identified the possibility of him rising to royalty.³²⁹ Humayun too, by visioning divine intervention in favour of the Afghans at the battle of Qannauj,³³⁰ appears to be suggesting that there was nothing that he or anyone else could have done to reverse the political ascendancy of the Afghans. Through these episodes, and the claim to Akbar's patronage, Sarwani recognised the

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 155.

Mughals to be a source that attested to his version of Afghan past, as they acknowledged and ordered the recording of the rise of the Afghan monarchy.

With Sarwani seeking support from the Mughal emperors, it was but natural that he could not taint their image. So we come across the author applauding Humayun's bravery,³³¹ to the extent that he records him to be more than a match for the Afghan ruler.³³² Though Sarwani criticised Humayun for falling prey to the sense of pride, he was also unable to hold Humayun responsible for the reversals he met with at Chausa and Qannauj. This explains Humayun's absence at the very moment when the Afghans launched a surprise attack at Chausa,³³³ while at Qannauj, he was blessed with a divine vision, to see invisible men fighting on behalf of the Afghans. This made it understood that destiny had mandated Sher Shah's rule, to honour which Humayun retreated from the battle. Conversely it was the ill luck of the Lodis that they failed against Babur³³⁴ and it was the good luck of Sher Shah that Humayun did not adopt the strategies that would have gone in his favour.³³⁵ Given that Sarwani had elaborated on the efforts that Sher Shah had taken to identify and overcome their shortcomings and had personally organised and trained the Afghans, it is surprising that luck or destiny was held responsible for Sher Shah's victories, rather than his ability and preparedness. But on second thoughts we realise that it was the concept of destiny which provided an outlet for Sarwani to continue with the narrative without compromising on his ambiguous position that he had maintained so far.

By being ambiguous on his position regarding the Mughal-Afghan conflict, Sarwani suggests that for him it were the concerns of the text that preceded all others. Since both the Mughals and the Surs were in a position to contribute constructively to the text, he refrained from voicing his personal stance, which would have disrupted the process. Thus despite being an

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-8.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104, 145-6.

Afghan himself, which may lead us to expect him to justify and glorify Sher Shah's victories and look down upon the Mughals, Sarwani placed the Mughals on an equal footing. With this he was able to tap into the reputation that the Mughals had as patrons of qualitative recording of the past. It is thus his alternative approach to the Mughal-Afghan dynamic that scholars who were seeking an escape from the imagery of the Afghans that Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin Ahmad present us with, were enticed by. However it has been largely overlooked that Sarwani was so engrossed in the construction of this dynamic, that the inconsistencies he was thereby causing to the portrayal of Sher Shah did not occur to him. It was partly due to these irregularities in the text that Nizamuddin Ahmad could find the gaps to forward his version of Sher Shah's past. Sarwani's eagerness to ensure the survival of the text could not have been for the sake of preserving of the history of Sher Shah, the recording of which though was not completely devoid of efforts, but it appears to have been done only for it to serve as the means to another end. The intention behind the composition of *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* can be deduced only when it is not read in the way it is written and focus is shifted to what appears to be on the periphery. It was partly Sarwani's skill in history writing, partly the nature of other surviving texts recording the history of Sher Shah and finally our impatience to break away from Mughal pervasiveness that made it possible for Sarwani to distract us so effectively. As the identity of the text as the history of Sher Shah has always remained primary, it has taken away our attention from the other aspects of the text, turning to which may change our characterisation of the text to a great extent.

CHAPTER 4

Resisting the Mughal Hegemony: The *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi*

By the close of the sixteenth century the Mughals had reached a strong momentum of producing narratives on the past, which were either commissioned by the ruler or were written privately. Many of these texts gave space to the Afghan past, either due to the conventions of political history or for the reason that the Mughal and the Afghan pasts could not be neatly separated from each other. As we noticed in the second chapter, the composition of the *Tabaqat i Akbari* and the *Akbarnama*, brought them into conflict with the space that the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* had created to present the Afghan past. Nizamuddin Ahmad had questioned Shaikh Mushtaqi's text and had warned against uniformly utilising his writing. It is in this context of Mughal-Afghan tensions that the composition of the *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi* has to be seen.

The *Tarikh i Daudi* was written by Abdullah and the *Tarikh i Shahi*, also known as the *Tarikh i Salatin i Afghana*, was composed by Ahmad Yadgar. Neither of the two authors are well known to us. However they do inform their readers that both the texts were connected to Daud Shah, the ruler of Bengal, who is claimed to have commissioned the latter, while the former was dedicated to him. Both of these works were written after his death in 1575, which can be deduced from their reference to the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, which was completed in 1594, but the exact date of composition is unknown. Since the *Tarikh i Daudi* acknowledged the Mughal emperor, Jahangir ³³⁶ (d. 1627), it is assumed

³³⁶ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, ed. Shaikh Abdur Rashid, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1969, p. 24

that it was composed within the first three decades of the seventeenth century. In addition, their reference to the *Tabaqat i Akbari*,³³⁷ leaves us with little choice but to place them in the seventeenth century. However, other than this concern to affix the chronological position of these texts, there are other issues which have far reaching implications on the reading of this text, and hence need to be addressed. The first thing which demands attention is the imbalance that the authors created by evoking Mughal oriented texts as sources for the composition of texts claiming affiliation to Daud Shah. Here it is not just Daud Shah's identity of being an Afghan that creates problems, but the fact that he refused to give in to the Mughal advances and had to be ultimately executed, which definitively sets the tone of the text. What is even more surprising is that both the authors leave out on mentioning the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, which occupies an honourable position for being the flag bearer of Afghan history. However despite of its exclusion in name, Shaikh Mushtaqi's writing found a prominent place in the content of both of these texts. Therefore right at the beginning we are confronted by some tough questions, the answers to which can be provided only after a thorough reading of these texts.

Other than these above mentioned texts, Abdullah and Ahmad Yadgar also invoke the classic works of the Delhi Sultanate and display their familiarity with the definition of history and the benefits that one can derive by studying it. The author of the *Tarikh i Shahi* clearly states that his patron wished to commission a text that was to be modelled on the *Tabaqat i Nasiri* and the *Tarikh i Firozshahi*.³³⁸ The *Tarikh i Daudi* also begins by stating Barani's theory of history and how history as a science expands the intellect and

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

³³⁸ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, ed. Hidayat Hosain, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. Calcutta, 1939, p. 2.

furnish the wise with examples.³³⁹ The inclusion of these statements was not incidental, but as we will see as the study progresses, that both the authors had good reasons to convince their readers that not only did they understand these works in the spirit that their authors intended them to, but could also follow its principle to produce their own works as well. The *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi* thus displayed several commonalities, an overlap in their content being another of them. Both begin with Bahul Lodi's reign but differ slightly towards the end. Whereas Ahmad Yadgar concludes with Hemu's defeat at Panipat, Abdullah goes a bit further to include the reign of the Karannis of Bengal and the fall of Daud Shah against the Mughals.

I

The *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi* begin their coverage of the Afghan past with the rise and reign of Bahlul Lodi. Both commence on the trail of Nizamuddin Ahmad, identifying Islam Khan, the uncle of Bahlul Lodi, to be the governor of Sirhind. However, soon enough, the *Tarikh i Daudi*, favouring the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, mention them to have been horse traders,³⁴⁰ a claim which the *Tabaqat i Akbari* had categorically rejected. It then goes on to record Bahlul's rise as was traced by the Mughal official, till the name of Qiyam Khan Nagauri, who was the other one to have been considered by Hamid Khan for the throne, comes up.³⁴¹ Here Abdullah again reverts back to abide by Mushtaqi's text, rather than Nizamuddin Ahmad's, who had mentioned the name of Mahmud Wali, the Badshah of Mandu as the other possible choice.³⁴² (See chapter 2 for full details) This is followed by the episode where Bahlul tricked Hamid Khan, stripping

³³⁹ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, p. 2.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

³⁴² Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 298.

him off all powers,³⁴³ which is common to both of his the sources. The *Tarikh i Daudi* then mentions of the cultural inferiority that the Afghans had been subjected to, a central theme of Mushtaqi's writing, following it up with two anecdotes displaying the same,³⁴⁴ from the same source. It then brings in Bibi Matto into the narrative, while describing the siege laid by the Sharqis, who is not to be found in the *Tabaqat*. It also does not promote Nizamuddin's version of the Sharqi siege of Delhi, where Dariya Khan Lodi had fled from the battlefield when charged emotionally of his Afghan identity. The *Tarikh i Daudi* rather followed the *Waqiat*, where Dariya Khan decided to await the return of Bahlul Lodi, defying his master's advice to take over Delhi in his absence.³⁴⁵ Another prominent marker of Abdullah's intention to give space to the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* is found, when it rounds up the section on Bahlul with the strange anecdotes³⁴⁶ that are characteristic of Mushtaqi's writing, and are not to be found in the *Tabaqat i Akbari*.

Unlike the *Tarikh i Daudi*, which allowed the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* to loom over from the very beginning, the *Tarikh i Shahi* did not. Therefore Ahmad Yadgar is silent on the Afghans formerly being horse merchants, mentions Mahmud Wali³⁴⁷ as the other possible candidate for the throne and has nothing on the Afghans being targeted culturally. It continued to follow the *Tabaqat* while narrating the confrontation between the Dariya Khan Lodi and Qutb Khan Lodi, where on being reproached by the latter, Dariya Khan fled without awaiting the arrival of Sultan Bahlul.³⁴⁸ Nizamuddin Ahmad's text continued to exercise its influence, not only on the *Tarikh i Shahi* but also returns

³⁴³ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 8-10.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10- 12.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12- 15.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21-27.

³⁴⁷ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, p. 6.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

strongly in the *Tarikh i Daudi*. They thus record Qutb Khan being imprisoned by the Sharqis and the protection that the Sultan's mother, Bibi Raji extended to ensure his survival for seven years in captivity. The subsequent episodes of Bahlul's conflict against Sultan Muhammad Sharqi, the latter's aggression towards his brothers, his falling prey to a conspiracy, the accession of Sultan Husain and the conclusion of peace treaty with the Lodis, reflect the strong hold that the *Tabaqat i Akbari* continued to have on these narratives.³⁴⁹

Other than merely copying incidents from the sources, leaving each untouched individually, Ahmad Yadgar went a notch higher when he was able to integrate two separate incidents, one from each source, into each other. This could have been done, only if one could cleverly select the right incidents that could be tied together. Ahmad Yadgar's brilliance at it shone through when he chose to merge the episode mentioned by Shaikh Mushtaqi, of Sultan Bahlul praying for deliverance, in the face of a powerful Sharqi invasion³⁵⁰ with that of Qutb Khan suing for peace in the name of the Sultan Husain Sharqi's mother,³⁵¹ as was recorded in the *Tabaqat*. Sultan Bahlul had this time decided to remain in Delhi and sent Qutb Khan at the head of a large force to counter the advancing Sharqis. Despite of many rounds of battles, the Lodis were unable to decisively turn it in their favour. This episode from the *Tabaqat*, where neither the Sultan was present at the scene nor were his forces able to display supremacy, was identified to be a perfect setting for inducting an episode revealing his vulnerability. Ahmad Yadgar thus inserts here the episode recording Bahlul's presence at the tomb of Khwaja

³⁴⁹ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 16-20, Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 14-16.

³⁵⁰ Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 12.

³⁵¹ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 310.

Bakhtiyar Kaki, praying for deliverance in the face of a powerful invasion. This was answered in the form of a truce that Qutb Khan was able to forge with the Sharqis by evoking his gratitude for the late Bibi Raji, for whom both the Sharqi Sultan and Qutb Khan had great regard for.³⁵² This episode thus deserves a special mention in the reading of Ahmad Yadgar's text, as it familiarised us with the author's alertness to his sources and his skill at evolving different techniques to bring them together.

Though the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi* displayed significant dependence on the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, they also chose to leave out much of the information that was exclusive to Nizamuddin's text. Hence there are no references to the two sieges that Bahlul laid on Delhi prior to his accession in either of the texts. The *Tarikh i Shahi* not only furnished a different date for Bahlul's accession but also chose to locate it at a different juncture of the narrative. Therefore whereas the *Tabaqat* mentions Bahlul to have ascended the throne before the arrest of Hamid Khan, the *Tarikh i Shahi* describe his coronation and grand festivities to have taken place only after Hamid Khan was removed.³⁵³ The *Tarikh i Daudi* too, overlooked the existence of an old enmity between Hamid Khan and Pratap Rai, which led the latter to incite Sultan Alauddin against the former, adhering to which cost Alauddin his throne. In contrast to these significant omissions, both the texts reproduced the episodes which are shared by the *Waqiat* and the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, like Bahlul's visit to the *darvesh* who bestowed him with the throne of Delhi or the trap that Bahlul laid to remove Hamid Khan from power.³⁵⁴ This however does not imply that the *Waqiat* was reproduced in totality, the

³⁵² Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, p. 16.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁵⁴ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 4, 8-10, Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 3-4, 8-9.

omission of the episode on Malik Suman from both, being the sole but a glaring one. Thus for the section on Bahlul, though both Abdullah and Ahmad Yadgar sourced information from the *Waqiat* and the *Tabaqat*, but overall the *Tarikh i Daudi* favoured Mushtaqi's writing to a greater extent while the *Tarikh i Shahi*, displays the opposite. But as we proceed to the next section, the gulf in the proportion between the sections that are taken as well as left out from the *Waqiat* and the *Tabaqat*, widens further.

II

The section on Sikandar Lodi commences in both the texts with anecdotes from his early days,³⁵⁵ all sourced from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*. They convey his attractive appearance, bravery on the battlefield, his religious outlook and his reverence for Shaikh Samauddin, who he visited prior to his enthronement. These texts then briefly refer to the *Tabaqat* for mentioning the place where Sikandar assumed kingship,³⁵⁶ before falling back on the *Waqiat* again. They discussed the Sultan's generosity through the anecdotes where he returned the treasures to those who found them, instead of confiscating them.³⁵⁷ The *Tarikh i Daudi* also applauds the Sultan's commitment towards deliverance of justice, a reiteration from Mushtaqi's writings as well. This continues with a *qalandar* blessing Sikandar in a contest against his brother, Barbak Shah, the Sultan's interest in literary discussions, in accumulating pearls and in birds. It mentions of his and Malik Adam's supernatural powers which enabled them to bring back a dead man to life. Amidst all of these the text does not leave out on the strange stories revolving around the platonic love between a bride and a recluse, a girl and a traveller, a magician conjuring a garden within

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-34, *Ibid.*, 29-34.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35, *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-3, *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

seconds, a hare's blood that could prevent greying of hair and the highway robbers who would cast spell on travellers to rob and kill them. The text also produces information on the Sultan's nobles like Mian Mahmud, Said Khan and Dilawar Khan from Mushtaqi's text as well.³⁵⁸

Though Abdullah lifts a sizeable section from the *Waqiat*, he continued to access portions from Nizamuddin Ahmad's text as well. We thus come across the names of the Sultan's sons, rebellion of Barbak Shah, his march against Bayana, death of Khan i Jahan and the Sultan's bestowal of the title of Azam Humayun on his eldest son. This was followed by him ravaging the country of Patna, as the Raja had refused to give his daughter to him. The conflict that broke out between Haibat Khan and Sulaiman Khan Sarwani, during a *chugan* match along with the conspiracy to kill the Sultan, which was informed to him by his brother Fath Khan are again taken from Nizamuddin Ahmad's text. Abdullah also incorporates the anecdote of a *Brahman* whose conversion became a point of debate and discussions as well as the conquest of Dholpur from the Mughal official's text.³⁵⁹ Thus a clear section from Nizamuddin's text did find its way into the account of Sikandar Lodi, as was constructed by the *Tarikh i Daudi*. Abdullah therefore can be seen to have continued with a strategy similar to the one it had followed in the case of Bahlul Lodi, of creating an impression that the author was trying to bring about reconciliation between them. However as one progresses further, it becomes evident that the text had more in store.

³⁵⁸ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 50-1, 54-8, 63-73, 74-9, 81-84.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1, 44--50, 53-61.

In contrast to the *Tarikh i Daudi*, the *Tarikh i Shahi* completely sidelined the *Tabaqat i Akbari* and relied solely on the *Waqiat* to write an account on Sikandar Lodi. This is reflected not only by the heavy inclusion of episodes that were unique to the *Waqiat*, but the choice that Ahmad Yadgar exercises when confronted with different versions of the same episode, is also a pointer to his vision for the text. Here, the reproduction of the episode on the rebellion by Joga zamindar³⁶⁰ as found in the *Waqiat* rather than that in the *Tabaqat*, more so as despite of following different trajectories both arrived at the same conclusion, assists us to gauge Ahmad Yadgar's stand better. The text further records the Sultan's practice of dining with his nobles, his wisdom in settling complex disputes, awareness of every minute development in his kingdom, fondness for music, availability of grains at cheap prices, his sincerity in offering prayers regularly and empathy for the less privileged and poor,³⁶¹ of which we learn only from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*.

In continuation of its loyalty for the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, the *Tarikh i Shahi* does not miss out on the strange tales that Mushtaqi had attributed to Sikandar's reign. It therefore reproduced the strange sight that Saiyyid Khan Lodi witnessed of the volume of water flow changing according to the number of people present, the creation of a magical garden in Jodhpur and some old graves found to be miraculously filled with fresh flowers while others with inauspicious objects. The *Tarikh i Shahi* did not waver from its preferred source while narrating accounts of some prominent nobles like Bhikhan Khan, Daulat Khan and Husain Khan.³⁶² Therefore the *Tarikh i Shahi*, while recounting

³⁶⁰ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 38-40.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-46, 48-9.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 50-64.

Sikandar Lodi's reign displayed a clear shift from the strategy it had previously employed. Instead of bringing together sections from each of the sources, it almost discarded the *Tabaqat* in favour of the *Waqiat*. Since this move cannot be defended on account of the sources being too diverse to have been juxtaposed, as the *Tarikh i Daudi* displayed that it was possible to do so, it can therefore be explained only as a conscious decision, taken to serve the intent of the author.

The *Tarikh i Daudi*, which had so far simultaneously incorporated episodes from both sources, presents its account on Ibrahim Lodi as a reproduction of the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*. We therefore come across the cancellation of the division of the empire, the outbreak of hostilities between the brothers and the eventual execution of Jalal Khan. This is then followed by a series of atrocities inflicted by the Sultan on many of his senior nobles, including the execution of Mian Husain Farmuli and the imprisonment of Azam Humayun and Mian Bhua. Following the *Waqiat*, the text characterised the nobles as innocent and therefore by default held Ibrahim as responsible for breaking trust and coordination with his nobles, triggering several rebellions and the end of the Lodi dynasty as well.³⁶³

III

The case of Ibrahim Lodi is unique and deserves special attention, as unlike previous sections, it was impossible to string sections from the *Tabaqat* and the *Waqiat* together. This was due to the contrasting accounts each had presented, in their attempt to rationalise the end of the Lodi regime. On the one hand the *Waqiat* claimed that the

³⁶³ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 85-104.

Sultan vented his ill disposition towards the nobles by imprisoning and executing many, without valid reasons, thereby increasingly alienating himself from them.³⁶⁴ The *Tabaqat*, on the other, held that the Sultan was forced to take harsh and punitive measures, as his nobles had become unruly and rebellious.³⁶⁵ This contrasting perspective was achieved, not so much by introducing fresh episodes, but by their thoughtful arrangement and minor alterations in the existing narrative. Thus unlike the preceding sections, we stand to benefit not by engaging with the presence or the absence of certain episodes, but by identifying the emerging perspective from it.

The *Tarikh i Shahi* not only followed Mushtaqi's claims, but was able to further strengthen his perspective by dramatising the death of Mian Bhua. Not only was Mian Bhua one of the most senior and respectable nobles at the Lodi court, but had been a confidant of Sikandar Lodi. The *Tabaqat* accused him of having becoming negligent towards his duties, of which we receive no instances. It was however enough to irk the Sultan and order his imprisonment. According to the *Tarikh i Shahi*, not only was he imprisoned, but the Sultan on the advice of some who were envious of Mian Bhua's influence, decided to execute him. To add to the drama of this episode, it was not to be a conventional execution. The Sultan had a building constructed with an underground chamber filled with gunpowder. Mian Bhua was released, honoured and escorted to his new house. The house was set on fire and blown away, killing the unsuspecting noble and all his supporters.³⁶⁶ Thus not only was Ahmad Yadgar following Mushtaqi's point in condemning the unjustified executions that Sultan Ibrahim ordered, including Mian Bhua,

³⁶⁴ Shaikh Rizquallah Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 100-105, 154-169.

³⁶⁵ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 341-352.

³⁶⁶ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 75-6.

but by adding drama to it, describing the setting and the Sultan's treachery, re enforced it. A similar episode that narrates the Sultan's inhumane treatment of Azam Humayun, a senior noble who had effected the capture of Gwalior, is directly mentioned to have been the cause of the decline of the sultanate, as Ahmad Yadgar states that 'the Sultan destroyed the roots of the empire with his own hands'.³⁶⁷

The other juncture, at which the Sultan's ill disposition towards his nobles was dramatised, is during the expedition against Rana Sanga. The Sultan had first of all, undesirably, placed some of his senior nobles like Mian Husain and Mian Maruf under the command of an inexperienced noble. He had further instructed the latter to imprison them during the expedition. Mian Husain on learning of the same decided to join the Rana and was accused of being faithless. However as the narrative progresses, the reader is informed that Mian Husain's real intention was to deceive the Rana on the battlefield. It was with the assistance of Mian Maruf that they were able to turn the Rana's victory into defeat.³⁶⁸ The *Tarikh i Shahi* was thus able to convince its readers that the Sultan was being unfair to those whom he should have rewarded and valued. The turning away of such loyal and competent nobles was bound to weaken the state, and thus Ibrahim was unable to put forth a strong defence in face of Mughal invasion.

It is in the same vein that Ahmad Yadgar explained the outcome of the battle of Panipat. Though there are multiple versions on it, Ahmad Yadgar's leaves a deep impact on the reader. Given that Ibrahim Lodi showed no traits of mending his equation with his nobles, many lost their faith and loyalty for him. One among them was Dilawar Khan,

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 85-6.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 78-83.

who on witnessing the Sultan's unjust actions sought refuge from Babur. The Timurid prince, who had secured a foothold at Kabul, initially rebuked Dilawar Khan for being disloyal towards his master. However when Dilawar Khan narrated the atrocities of Ibrahim Lodi, Babur agreed to proceed against the Lodi Sultan. Thus Babur was portrayed to have come in deliverance of the pleas of the Lodi nobles, many of whom were ready to serve him even prior to his arrival.³⁶⁹ To strengthen his position further, Ahmad Yadgar portrays Ibrahim Lodi to have repented for having mistreated his faithful nobles, in the face of the Mughal invasion. He pleaded Dilawar Khan to send Babur back, but Dilawar Khan reminding him of his misdeeds against the nobles who had served the Lodis throughout their lives, refused. Thereafter Ibrahim Lodi also tried to pacify those who remained with him by granting treasures and gifts, but it was not enough to motivate them to win the war. Thus despite of having a larger army, Ibrahim lost.³⁷⁰ His realisation and repentance over his misdeeds was the ultimate testimony one could possibly seek and give to validate the perspective. Though all texts had taken measures to build and convey perspectives, the *Tarikh i Shahi*, in this case, outdid them all.

Another feature of the text in question is that it offered last minute redemption for the Sultan. Hence a change in his character is displayed when he refused to leave his nobles in the face of defeat and choose to attain martyrdom with them. Ibrahim Lodi gained respect and honour in death, something that he could not in life. Not only did Babur come to pay his respects but ordered Ibrahim to be buried with full rites.³⁷¹ This redemption of Ibrahim's character appears to have effected by Ahmad Yadgar,

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-89.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-97.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

presumably as he did not wish Ibrahim Lodi's negative image to linger on. In contrast, the *Tarikh i Daudi* made no such attempt, recording that the Sultan Ibrahim fled the battlefield, but died of drowning, as was witnessed by a hundred and twenty year old man.³⁷²

IV

As we move to the section on the Surs, one expects that the tension that existed between the *Waqiat* and the *Tabaqat* would dissolve due to the presence of the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*. Abbas Khan Sarwani's text was written without reference to the *Waqiat*, and had served as the basis for the *Tabaqat*. The *Tabaqat* utilised it with some modifications, to give a one sided portrayal of the Mughal-Afghan conflict.(see Chapter 3) Other than the presence of a full length text on Sher Shah, the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi*, had strong reasons not to even consider the *Waqiat* and the *Tabaqat* for writing their narratives on the Sur ruler. On the one hand Nizamuddin's prejudice against the Afghans and in favour of the Mughals was too apparent, while on the other Mushtaqi left an incomplete account in the *Waqiat* on Sher Shah, shedding partial light on Farid's early days and on his conflict against Humayun. Thus given that both the *Waqiat* and the *Tabaqat* had their respective shortcomings, the *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi* should have ideally preferred the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* to write about Sher Shah. However that hardly turns out to be so, as they continued to develop their narrative on the crevasses that had developed between the *Waqiat* and the *Tabaqat*.

³⁷² Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 103-4.

The *Tarikh i Daudi* begins its section on Sher Shah based on the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. It records the arrival of Sher Shah's grandfather during the reign of Bahlul Lodi. He received service in Hissar Firoza and Narnul, while his son, Hasan, Farid's father, was given charge of the parganas of Sahsaram and Khwaspur Tanda. Farid left for Jaunpur when he realised that his father had less affection for him and more for his from a different mother. After completing his education in Jaunpur, he was convinced to return and manage his father's parganas. Farid did so and within a short period brought about unprecedented prosperity. However on realising his father's soft corner for his concubine and her sons, Farid left for Agra. Here he entered the service of Daulat Khan and on learning of Hasan's death, Ibrahim Lodi granted him his father's parganas.³⁷³ So far the narrative solely depended on Nizamuddin's text, which in turn had abridged it from Sarwani's. Shaikh Mushtaqi forays into the narrative at this point and henceforth his influence on the *Tarikh i Daudi* becomes increasingly evident once more.

The first instance of *Tarikh i Daudi*'s reliance on the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* is the remark that Mian Nizam (Sher Shah's uterine brother) brought the turban and sword of their late father, Mian Hassan, for Farid, in recognition of him being the rightful heir.³⁷⁴ Thereafter with Ibrahim Lodi's defeat at Panipat and the advances of Sulaiman (Sher Shah's half brother), who was backed by a powerful Afghan chief, Muhammad Khan, forced Farid to seek service from Sultan Muhammad, the ruler of Bihar. He was greatly impressed with Farid's sincerity and on being saved from a tiger by him bestowed the title of Sher Khan on him.³⁷⁵ Though this anecdote is the only one mentioned by Sarwani

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-110.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 110.

³⁷⁵ Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 47-48, Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. ii, pp. 90.

and Nizamuddin, Abdullah decided to precede it with the one found in the *Waqiat*. Shaikh Mushtaqi recorded Farid being given the title in lieu of his success in undertaking a difficult expedition, which many including the Sultan's cousin brother, Daulat Khan Nuhani had refused to lead. As Farid agreed to do it, the Sultan promised to bestow him with the title of Daulat Khan's father, Sher Khan, if he succeeded at it.³⁷⁶ This is then followed by another episode from the *Waqiat*, where on seeing Sher Khan offering his afternoon prayers, Muhammad Khan learnt of his ambition to take Bihar, once his master took Delhi.³⁷⁷ Thus Abdullah, despite of the presence of a full fledged text on Sher Shah, did not give up on the *Waqiat* and continued to reproduce the anecdotes that were exclusive to it.

The *Tarikh i Daudi's* preference for the *Waqiat* over other available sources continued becomes when it uses the same explanation as found in the *Waqiat* to trace the beginning of Sher Khan's conflict against the Sultan of Bengal, overlooking the alternatives present in other texts. According to Sarwani and Nizamuddin, the Sultan of Bengal grew suspicious of the growing friendship between Sher Khan and his noble Makhdum Alam. Abdullah however chose to follow Mushtaqi as he mentions that it were the raids that Sher Khan had instructed his forces to carry out in the neighbouring kingdom of Bengal, that prompted the Sultan to launch an attack in his defence. Even though Sher Khan emerged victorious, he was aggrieved on the death of his foe, Qutb Khan. The *Waqiat* brought the scene to life, vividly describing Sher Khan to have placed the head of Qutb Khan on his knee and could not stop lamenting. He finally had him buried with full rites, reminding all of Alexandar and Darius. The *Tarikh i Daudi*

³⁷⁶ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 111.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

followed the *Waqiat*, in describing Sher Khan's victory, his grief and its resemblance to the story of the two legendary kings.³⁷⁸ The *Tarikh i Daudi* also mentions of the short route through Tirhut that Sher Khan took to reach Bengal,³⁷⁹ as well as reiterates Hindu Beg's refusal to let him retain the fort of Chunar, it being a call that only the Badshah could take,³⁸⁰ both being unique to the *Waqiat*. Thus though the share of the narrative from the *Waqiat*, in comparison to what we had witnessed in the previous sections had reduced significantly, it cannot be held to be indicative of the text falling out of Abdullah's favour. Rather this was caused due to the gaps that Mushtaqi had left in his narrative, leaving Abdullah with little choice but to fall back on the other texts. However he continued to do his best, not sparing any occasion to reproduce anecdotes from the *Waqiat*, not even when confronted with variations from other texts.

For the section on Afghan-Mughal conflicts, which was overlooked by Mushtaqi, the *Tarikh i Daudi* presents a combination from the *Tabaqat* and the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*. Once the narration on the Mughal-Afghan conflict is wrapped up, the *Waqiat* comes into force once more. Thus the anecdotes on Sher Shah's ability to assess the true potential of a man, irrespective of what they displayed, which enabled him fix their salaries accurately, are reproduced here³⁸¹. After narrating four of such incidents, Abdullah did not hesitate to reproduce another anecdote which questioned Sher Shah's wisdom, when a man turned up to express his plight and his inability to secure redressal despite of all the mechanisms the King had put in place.³⁸² Therefore though this episode does not fall in line with the ongoing narrative, yet Abdullah considering that it was recorded in the

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-9.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-137.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

*Waqiat*³⁸³ did not eliminate it, but tried to camouflage it by introducing another fresh episode reflecting Sher Shah's wisdom and deliverance of justice.³⁸⁴ Therefore we once again notice the loyalty that Abdullah had for Mushtaqi's text, as he never questioned it, even implicitly, even when it displayed internal inconsistencies.

A continuity in *Tarikh i Daudi*'s loyalty for the *Waqiat* is evident in the episode of Mallu Khan. It records that Mallu Khan fled from Sher Shah's service on seeing the Mughals, who were captured at Gwalior, being humiliated by given the task of building a fort for the Afghans. Unlike other sources where Mallu Khan is recorded to have been disheartened on realising that he could not match the labour that the Afghans could perform, here Mushtaqi, and subsequently Abdullah make a crucial addition. Thus it was not only because Mallu Khan realised his inability to keep up with the Afghans that deterred him, but it was his fear of being subjected to humiliation in the future that got the better of him.³⁸⁵ Such additions do not appear to have been made simply to put together scattered information and maximise his base, as unlike the above episode Abdullah refrains from doing so in the case of an important noble at the Sur court, Sikandar Khan.

The *Waqiat* records Sikandar Khan to be the brother of Nasir Khan, who had come to pay obeisance to Sher Shah. However after Mallu Khan fled, Sher Shah instructed Sikandar Khan to be held in captivity. This enraged Nasir Khan who decided to launch an attack on Shujaat Khan, a prominent noble of Sher Shah, and keep him as a

³⁸³ Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 130-131.

³⁸⁴ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, p. 139.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

hostage.³⁸⁶ Though Nizamuddin skipped any reference to this episode, Sarwani had offered a slight variation of the same. According to him Shujaat Khan was stripped off his rank and *jagir* as he had failed to capture Mallu Khan. He was demoted and given charge of the *pargana* which was held by Sikandar Khan, igniting hostility between them.³⁸⁷ These developments could have definitely served as a background to the conflict between Shujaat Khan and Nasir Khan, the absence of which in the *Tarikh i Daudi* indicates that it was not written simply with the intention to put all information together. Abdullah also refrained from following Sarwani's version on the epilogue of this incident, where Shujaat Khan was able to free himself from Nasir Khan. Instead he followed the *Waqiat* to record the intervention of Mubarak Khan Sirbani and Raja Ram who came to Shujaat Khan's rescue.³⁸⁸ Thus though the inclusion of incidents from *Waqiat* may appear only as an effort to put together scattered information from all existing sources, a claim that Abdullah makes in the introduction,³⁸⁹ but his overlooking sections from Sarwani's text does not quite verify his claim.

This pattern of relying completely on the *Waqiat* undergoes some modification in the last section where Sher Shah had confrontations against Puran Mal, Maldeo (the Rana of Marwar) and went on his last expedition to Kalinjar. Initially, the *Tarikh i Daudi* followed on the footsteps of *Waqiat*, identifying the first two campaigns to have been not just like any other. Sher Shah had set out against Raisin and Nagaur as he had promised deliverance to the Muslims residing in these regions from the maltreatment of these rulers, something that had been continuing since the reign of Ibrahim Lodi, but had never

³⁸⁶ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, 136-7.

³⁸⁷ Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 176-9.

³⁸⁸ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 146-7.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

been looked into. Sher Shah had then promised to relieve them of the atrocities in the future, if God bestowed him with the power to do so. After Sher Shah secured power, he decided to advance against Puran Mal who had kept two thousand women in captivity and maltreated them. He also secured a *fatwa* against him. On reaching Raisen, Sher Shah considered giving Puran Mal a chance to redeem himself and release the women. He however denied the charge and agreed to give the fort to Sher Shah, but only on being assured of refuge. Sher Shah sent Qutb Khan and he was made to take an oath after which Puran Mal came to reside with his family in the royal camp. Sher Shah suddenly developed high temperature and was reminded of his promise made twenty years ago. He directed Habib Khan to surround their camp from all sides to ensure that none would escape. The Afghans surrounded Puran Mal's forces and on realising the trap, they fought till death. In the fearsome battle Puran Mal's young nephews and his daughter remained alive. To punish them, Sher Shah had the boys castrated while the girl was handed to street dancers.³⁹⁰ Though this episode was mainly derived from Mushtaqi's rendition, but the *Tarikh i Daudi* incorporated the role of Qutb Khan, the oath he took to assure Puran Mal of safety, which was eventually dishonoured,³⁹¹ from the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*. Nizamuddin Ahmad presented minimal details of the incident and is completely sidelined by Abdullah.

The induction of a small detail from the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, which magnified the dramatic effect of the episode, continued in the subsequent episode on Sher Shah's expedition against Maldeo.³⁹² Though Mushtaqi guided the first part of Abdullah's

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-155.

³⁹¹ Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 189.

³⁹² Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 156-157.

narration, where Maldeo's harsh treatment is informed to Sher Shah by the former's *wakil*, refreshing his memory of having promised deliverance, he doesn't say anything more, leading Abdullah towards the other source. As the incident continues, Sher Shah reached the desert region of Marwar and realised that it was not possible to build entrenchments there. The use of sand bags to raise a wall was thus suggested. After a few days, on realising the strength of Maldeo's forces, Sher Shah resorted to deceit and wrote a fake letter which shook Maldeo's faith in his allies. Though many of his nobles tried to convince him of it being a ploy, Maldeo fled.³⁹³ Thus Sher Shah was able to gain victory and fulfilled his promise of avenging the maltreatment that the Rana had subjected his *wakil* and son in law to.³⁹⁴ These details which were borrowed from the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* and the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, challenges the notion that we had formed so far of the *Tarikh i Daudi* being not just partial to the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, but also of utilising it in an unfiltered manner. Thus the induction of some of the developments from the *Tabaqat* and the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* may appear to have unsettled this notion, but it can be rationalised when one realises that it was done to dramatise the episodes, specially as Mushtaqi fell short of it, in some cases.

V

The *Tarikh i Shahi* when faced with an incomplete account of Sher Shah in the *Waqiat*, responded very differently. Rather than putting together episodes from the *Tabaqat* and the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, as Abdullah did, the *Tarikh i Shahi* began to distance itself from

³⁹³ Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 196-198.

³⁹⁴ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 156-157.

the existing narrative, subtly at first, which then escalated gradually. This becomes evident when Ahmad Yadgar gave no reason for the rift between Farid and his father, which prompted the former to leave for Jaunpur. He again deviates from the standard narrative by claiming that it was Farid's mother's demise which led Mian Hasan to remarry.³⁹⁵ Another similar instance can be identified when Ahmad Yadgar chose not to abide by either of the causes mentioned by any of the existing texts on Sher Khan's enmity against the Sultan of Bengal, but rather chose to offer a more generic explanation. It thus claims that it was Sher Khan's growing powers, after the death of Sultan Muhammad and the accession of his minor son, Jalal Khan, which alarmed the Sultan.³⁹⁶ Ahmad Yadgar also surprises us when he makes an unprecedented claim of Sher Khan imprisoning Lad Malika and her step sons when the latter killed their father, the holder of the fort of Chunar.³⁹⁷

Though so far Ahmad Yadgar had made efforts to change the course of Sher Shah's past, but going by the above instances, where the deviations merged into the pre-existing narrative too soon, they were unlikely to leave lasting impressions. The deviations become pronounced from hereon, the first instance being Sher Shah's capture of the fort of Rohtas. This incident appears to have captured the imagination of the previous writers, as each offered their own version of the incident. Sher Shah gained control over the fort by sneaking in his soldiers in palanquins, is common to all except Sarwani. While he denied the charges, Nizamuddin utilised it to demean the Afghan leader, the *Tarikh i Madan i Akhbar i Ahmadi* attempted to disassociate Sher Shah from

³⁹⁵ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi* pp. 172, 175.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

this incident altogether. Ahmad bin Kanbo thus claimed that people had confused the incident, which was resorted to by some other ruler to take the fort, with Sher Khan's conquest.³⁹⁸ Ahmad Yadgar offered another addition to the existing versions. He thus records that on receiving Sher Khan's request to seek refuge, the *raja* of the fort called for his advisory council, where all tried to pursue him to turn down Sher Khan's plea. However an astrologer, who was revered by the *raja*, advised him to accept Sher Khan's request, as it was crucial to establish goodwill with the future ruler of Delhi.³⁹⁹ The *Raja* thus extended an invitation but Sher Shah had other plans in mind. He thus, as other texts also agreed sneaked in soldiers and took over the fort. Thus without overturning the narrative, Ahmad Yadgar was able to leave some impressive impressions on the existing narrative.

The divergences that the *Tarikh i Shahi* was developing from the existing narrative were taken to the next level in the section recording the confrontations between the Mughal and Sher Shah's forces. The first and the most noticeable point of divergence presented itself when one realises that Ahmad Yadgar mentions neither Chausa nor Qannauj as the sites where the two armies clashed. Despite the differences, each and every text so far, regarded these places to have been the ones that witnessed the fateful battles. He instead leaves out on giving any reference to the site where the first war took, only mentioning that the armies were encamped on the either sides of the Ganges.⁴⁰⁰ Sarwani also mentions a stream at Chausa that separated the camps, but does not identify

³⁹⁸ Ahmad bin Bahbal bin Jamal Kanbo, *Tarikh i Madan i Akhbar i Ahmadi*, tr. SBP Nigam, *Sur Vansh Ka Itihas*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1973, pp.295-6.

³⁹⁹ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 187-188.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

it as the Ganges.⁴⁰¹ The second battle, which by all accounts took place at Qannauj, is mentioned here as Saket.⁴⁰² Apart from disagreeing with the sites, the *Tarikh i Shahi* also reverses the claim of Sarwani who states that while in the first round the Afghans took the Mughals by surprise, in the second a fair battle took place. Ahmad Yadgar on the contrary records a month long battle to have taken place on the banks of the Ganges, before a truce was called by Sher Khan, who sent Shaikh Khalil with a peace proposal. On the other hand, it was in the second round of battle at Saket that Sher Shah launched a surprise attack when the Mughals were busy shifting their encampment, as it being in a lowlying area was flooded by heavy rains. Thus the Mughals were unable to launch a counter attack and many either died or fled away.

Other than jumbling up these instances, Ahmad Yadgar also gives a unique prologue to the first round of Mughal-Afghan contest. Here he informs us that proceeding against Sher Shah, from Agra, Humayun encamped near Kara Manikpura while Sher Khan halted at Mominabad, which was at a distance of eighty kos from the Mughal camp. Sher Khan ordered his men to block the supply of grains to the Mughal forces. This raised the cost of grains and Humayun had to send Yakub Beg to reinstate its supply. However Yakub Beg failed and Humayun appointed Shaikh Bayazid for the task. On the latter's success Humayun gave him the title of Fath Jung Khan.⁴⁰³ Other than opening the first face off between the Afghans and the Mughals in an unprecedented manner, Ahmad Yadgar decided to bring it to a close in a similar, yet distinct way. The *Tarikh i Shahi* agreed with Sarwani and Nizamuddin that Sher Khan broke the peace

⁴⁰¹ Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 129.

⁴⁰² Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, p. 204.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-196.

treaty that he had forged with the Mughals, but diverges from the existing narrative when it came to reasoning what lead him to do so.

Unlike Sarwani and Nizamuddin Ahmad who record that Sher Khan broke the peace treaty as he came to know of Humayun's vulnerable position to take the Mughal forces by surprise, the *Tarikh i Shahi* achieves the same end through one of Sher Khan's dreams. He thus records that after a month long war remained inconclusive and Humayun was pressurised by growing concerns in Gujarat, a peace treaty was forged between them. As both parties turned around, Sher Khan dreamt of the Prophet ordering Humayun to leave the court and inviting Sher Khan, as the latter was blessed with kingship for a few days. He thus consulted his advisors and returned, to surprise the Mughals in a night attack, leaving them baffled and gave Humayun the scope only to escape, with much difficulty.⁴⁰⁴

VI

Other than the repeated attempts to create an alternate narrative, another distinguished feature of the *Tarikh i Shahi* is the place given to omens and prophecies. Scattered throughout the text, each can be recognised to have its own individuality, constructed with effort, going beyond its seemingly basic purpose of giving a glance of the future. In the case of Ahmad Yadgar, it is very likely for him not to have intended them to have served the narrative in the same manner. Familiarity with the basic developments that marked Sher Shah's career trajectory meant that the audience could not be held in suspense as they already aware of what was to come. However, these could have served

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 198-200.

as sources of divine legitimacy, each being associated with a milestone in Sher Shah's ascent that also encouraged him to go to the next level.

Other than the need to identify the purpose with which episodes revolving around such concepts were designed, it is equally important to appreciate the skill which the author possessed, to identify junctures where such prophecies and omens could be planted and shaped to fit a pre determined outcome. The factors that an author may take into consideration while constructing such episodes may be infinite, depending upon the context each one is faced with, but a few can be listed from what can be observed in the *Tarikh i Shahi*. One of the foremost concerns appears to have been the distance which the author desired to maintain between the narration of the prophecy or an omen to its realisation. While in some cases it is immediate, in others it could be significantly spaced out. A glaring example of the latter is when a *faqir* addressed Farid as the ruler of Delhi.⁴⁰⁵ As the author knew that this would not have generated suspense, as all knew that it would eventually prove itself to be true, the maximum he could gain out of it was a sense of wonder on the *faqir's* farsightedness. Thus to achieve that he located it at the farthest possible point, when Farid had practically lost everything and his ascendancy to the throne of Delhi appeared next to impossible. In another case where astrologers predicted the defeat of Himu against Akbar,⁴⁰⁶ it was distanced from its occurrence, as he was to win against the Mughals in their first confrontation. Himu is therefore portrayed to have been undisturbed by the prediction, but when he dreamt of the same on the eve of the battle of Panipat, he responded in a contradictory manner. Therefore Himu's

⁴⁰⁵ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, p. 174.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

inconsistent behaviour was required by the author to align it with the turn of events that the future had in store.

Ahmad Yadgar was also able to utilise these predictions and omens, which enjoy a strong recall value, to draw attention to his original contributions to the narrative. He thus presents the birth of Sikandar Lodi to have preceded by a dream that his mother had.⁴⁰⁷ Similarly Bahlul's expedition against the Rana, an episode not recorded in any other text was intersected by an episode where the Sultan called upon his son, Prince Nizam, to ascertain the fate of the expedition. Thus the prince was asked to aim at a flower, and when he was able to skilfully do so it gave Bahlul the assurance of his victory.⁴⁰⁸ Ahmad Yadgar was also able to divert the attention of his readers away from the concerns that repeatedly plagued the former narratives, for instance that of Sher Shah's imagery when he was accused of deceit, while taking the fort of Rohtas. Ahmad Yadgar was able to do so by giving the episode a more dramatic backdrop by bringing in the character the royal astrologer who advised the Raja to let Sher Shah in, as he was soon to become the king of Delhi. Another similar attempt was made by him in the case of capturing a celebrated white elephant, Shyam Sundar, which is utilised as another indicator to his future as the ruler of Delhi.⁴⁰⁹ The author thus utilised prophecies and omens to keep his audience occupied, boost the recall value of the text and highlight some of the original contributions made by him.

The use of prophecies and omens was not restricted to the *Tarikh i Shahi* but was quite widespread during this period. When we examine many of the Mughal texts, they

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

do come across as making a conscious effort to make space for episodes with such elements. One of the many such instances is narrated by Nizamuddin Ahmad, when he records of Humayun contemplating the re conquest of Hindustan. One day while he was proceeding for a hunt, to test the viability of the thought, he decided to enquire the names of three men who would cross his path that day. He thus came across Daulat, meaning sovereignty, Murad meaning desire and Saadat meaning good fortune. These were taken to be as omens validating the thought he was unsure about so far. Humayun, thus assured of destiny to be on his side, commenced on his expedition.⁴¹⁰ This episode was originally recorded by Khwandamir and later reproduced by Nizamuddin Ahmad. Another instance where Humayun received a premonition of Akbar's birth was narrated by Gulbadan Begam and later included by Abul Fazl in the *Akbarnama*. She stated that when Humayun was disheartened by his defeat against Sher Shah, Shaikh Ahmad i Jam appeared in his dreams to foretell him of the birth of a son who would change his fortunes, Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar.⁴¹¹

There are many such instances in the Mughal texts, another interesting one being when Akbar was advancing against Daud Shah of Bengal. On his way, while crossing the Ganges on an elephant, a fish jumped out and rested in front of the emperor. When the soothsayers were informed, they took it to be an auspicious omen, indicative of the emperor's victory.⁴¹² The presence of such well constructed episodes around omens and prophecies contributes immensely in captivating the imagination of their readers. Ahmad Yadgar also appears to have noticed the same and in his effort to match the Mughal texts

⁴¹⁰ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, Vol. 1, p. 80.

⁴¹¹ Gulbadan Begum, *Humayunnama*, tr. A.S Beveridge, Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1902, p. 145.

⁴¹² Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol. 2, p. 92.

in their style of narration, to leave a lasting impression on the reader, inspired him to take a leaf out of the Mughal texts. This also enabled them to ensure that the audience would place the Afghans at par with the Mughals in the art of history writing.

Other than developing a style to match the Mughals and construct an alternate narrative on Sher Shah, Ahmad Yadgar continued to display his loyalty for the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* by imitating his style, even while inducting fresh episodes. One such example is when Ahmad Yadgar introduces us to a mulla's accidental discovery of a magical lamp. The lamp when lit, released two ferocious beings. Though the *mulla* was initially scared but when they told him about their magical powers and offered him their services, the *mulla* did not refuse. He was thus able to spend a night with a woman he had no access to, and also received news from the beyond. One day the *mulla* realised the potential danger of possessing the lamp for too long and had it sent to the Sultan.⁴¹³ The construction of such fascinating anecdotes also reflect an indirect effort by Ahmad Yadgar to preserve Mushtaqi's style of history writing, where the effort was to grasp the reader's attention and fascination through such imaginative content.

The *Tarikh i Shahi* continued to experiment by introducing new episodes that despite of finding their groove in the pre existing narrative, managed to stand out for the readers. Such an improvisation is evident when Ahmad Yadgar dramatised the coming of Babur and the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi. Even after Babur received Dilawar Khan and came to know of Ibrahim's atrocities, he was not sure of advancing to Hindustan. He sought divine intervention by promising to act on Dilawar Khan's proposal, given that he was presented by mangoes and betel leaves, as an omen of his victory in the expedition. Soon

⁴¹³ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, p. 44.

enough Ahmad Khan, the ambassador of Daulat Khan, the governor of Punjab arrived, with mangoes and betel leaves. Babur, now convinced of his destiny, proceeded to Hindustan.⁴¹⁴ Ahmad Yadgar also offers a corollary when he states Ibrahim Lodi to have consulted his astrologers on the outcome of the battle. The astrologers aware of his impending defeat, and the ill temperament of the Sultan, gave a vague description of envisioning his forces to have gone over to the Mughal side. The Sultan interpreted this to be an omen of his victory.⁴¹⁵ However that was not to be.

Ahmad Yadgar continued to display his efforts at dramatising the narrative, where the progress of Sher Shah's political career gets recorded not just by the milestones he crosses each time he is able to strengthen himself by securing more resources. A sense of his progress is also communicated by identifying these milestones as omens, a sign for the success of his future endeavours. The author repeatedly evokes Sher Khan's fortunes to have worked in his favour by utilising events, both pre existing as well as those which were being recorded for the first time as reflections of his promising future. To the first category, Ahmad Yadgar identified Sher Khan securing considerable treasures, elephants and horses after he married Lad Malika. His fortune from here is said to have taken a favourable turn as he was able to arrange the expedition to Bengal from the booty that fell into his hands.⁴¹⁶ Also, the taking of the fort of Rohtas, which was considered to have been an important one, without much effort or a full scale war, is portrayed to have been another omen hinting at Sher Khan's ascent.⁴¹⁷ Alongside these two pre existing incidents, the anecdote around the capture of an elephant named Shyam Sundar is also

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

streamlined to have served a similar purpose. The elephant was in possession of the Raja of Jharkhand, and was considered an unique one. It white in colour and was invincible on the battlefield. The dramatic capture of the elephant was taken as an omen indicating Sher Khan's destiny to be the ruler of Delhi.⁴¹⁸

The *Tarikh i Daudi* had also added a few dramatised episodes, notable amongst them Sikandar Lodi's interaction with Babur Qalandar⁴¹⁹ and the laying of a trap by Sher Shah to halt Humayun's advances against him. Abdullah utilises the well known claim that *Waqiat* had made of Humayun passing two to three months indulging in pleasures at Gaur, buying Sher Khan the time to strengthen himself. Though Mushtaqi had dramatised it to an extent by mentioning that Sher Khan, when refused the possession of Chunar, promised to bring about the emperor's downfall in a similar manner,⁴²⁰ the *Tarikh i Daudi* chose another path. Here it mentions of Maharath Chero, a *zamindar* against whom Sher Khan had deputed Khawas Khan. According to the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, Sher Khan recalled Khawas Khan to join the imperial forces at Chausa, thus postponing the attack on Maharath Chero. It was only after Sher Shah had brought the region from Kalpi to Qannauj under his control that he turned against Maharath Chero, defeating and executing him this time.⁴²¹ Abdullah, continuing on this, records that while raiding his harem, Sher Khan was struck by the beauty of one of his daughters. He had her sent to Humayun, who enamoured by her, and as Sher Khan had desired, withdrew from all his duties.⁴²² Thus Abdullah while abiding by Mushtaqi's claim, managed to give his own spin to the tale by borrowing the character of Maharath Chero, from Sarwani's text. Thus

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁴¹⁹ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 63-4.

⁴²⁰ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 115.

⁴²¹ Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 132-133.

⁴²² Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, p. 123.

Abdullah was able to amalgamate elements, one from each of his source, to produce a composite version which became his own.

VII

With regard to Islam Shah, the *Tarikh i Daudi* once again offered its readers a blend from the *Waqiat* and the *Tabaqat*. However the concerns guiding the same, at each step of the narrative, were different. In the opening section, the reasons presented for the tensions between the Sultan and the nobles, are very different. The *Waqiat* held that it were the changes that Islam Shah had brought in the pre existing arrangements of Sher Shah, which unreasonably favoured the soldiers and lower rank commanders, and sowed seeds of dissention among the nobles.⁴²³ On the other hand the *Tabaqat* records that it was the support that Adil Khan, the eldest son and heir apparent of Sher Shah, received for asserting his right to ascend the throne that fractured the political equilibrium at the court.⁴²⁴ Though the *Waqiat* had too mentioned of Adil Khan and the presence of a few who supported him, unlike the *Tabaqat*, here he just sympathised with him, for being left out of the power structure despite being the eldest son of the late Sultan.⁴²⁵ The *Tabaqat* by claiming him to be heir apparent, who missed out on ascending the throne only because of being away when Sher Shah died suddenly, strengthens the legitimacy of his position and the support base he commanded to a great extent. The effort that Salim Shah had to invest to suppress the rival prince and his faction also had to match the strength of his contender. Therefore while in the *Waqiat*, it was just a battle that did the job, the

⁴²³ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* p. 186.

⁴²⁴ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. ii, pp. 109

⁴²⁵ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* p. 145.

Tabaqat gave a long and dramatised narration, mentioning how Islam Shah tried to trick Adil Khan, on realising which many of those who supported the latter rose in rebellion. However on being cornered, Islam Shah resorted to diplomacy that finally enabled him to win. Though after this Adil Khan was not to be heard of anymore, but the nobles who had supported him, continued on with their struggle against the Sultan.⁴²⁶

Abdullah when confronted with the two versions, like always, attempted to give recognition to both. He thereby follows on Nizamuddin Ahmad's footsteps, identifying Adil Khan to have been the heir apparent who being at Ranthambore could not arrive for the coronation at a short notice. However soon Mushtaqi's version begins to surface as Abdullah not just states of Islam Shah to have brought about changes that were unfair to the senior nobles but also gives a few details of what these were. He however reverts back to Nizamuddin Ahmad's version, to clear the space required for dramatising the conflict between the ruler and the nobles.⁴²⁷ The inclusion of the *Waqiat*'s version did not hamper its progression either, but allowed to introduce an aspect that supported the idea of the unrest further. However, it is important to note that in the account of Islam Shah, the dramatisation that had been the hallmark of Mushtaqi's writing, diminishes to a great extent, while that in the *Tabaqat* escalates.

Abdullah continued to weave together the contents from the *Tabaqat* and the *Waqiat*, but at times to fill the gaps, he introduces some fresh developments. He adopted this strategy to record the conflict between Shuja Khan, a grandee at the Afghan court, and Usman Khan. Nizamuddin gives a bare outline of the incident, mentioning that a man

⁴²⁶ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. ii, pp. 107-110.

⁴²⁷ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 164-9.

named Usman, whose hands were amputated by Shuja Khan, took opportunity to seek revenge; but failed.⁴²⁸ Abdullah used this skeletal structure to build up an entire episode. He begins by tracing it back to identify the reason of this conflict, informing us that it was Usman Khan's inappropriate conduct at an informal gathering that led to a spat between him and Shuja Khan. The amputation was a punishment given for that. Though Usman Khan approached Islam Shah, seeking his intervention, the latter refused and asked him to personally settle scores with Shuja Khan. Usman Khan thereby attacked Shuja Khan, wounding but failing to kill him. Instead he was overpowered and killed.⁴²⁹ Abdullah could have concluded this incident here but he chose to take it forward and for a good reason.

After this incident, Shuja Khan's associates sowed seeds of suspicion in his mind. They made him believe that it was Islam Shah who had instigated Usman Khan for the attack. Thus when the Sultan expressed his willingness to come to visit and enquire of Shuja Khan's recovery, the latter out of anxiety, refused. Nevertheless Islam Shah went to visit Shuja Khan. However while departing, Shuja Khan remarked to the Sultan, in a polite way not to take the trouble of coming again.⁴³⁰ This offended the Sultan and it worsened relations between them. This concluding part of the episode which emphasised on the deteriorating relation between the Sultan and Shuja Khan was not just to synchronise with the general tenor of the narrative, where many nobles had fallen out with the Sultan, but to latch itself to Mushtaqi's narrative as well. Mushtaqi mentions that

⁴²⁸ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. ii, p. 113.

⁴²⁹ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 173-4.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-5.

Shuja Khan fled to Sarangpur,⁴³¹ but gives no reason whatsoever. The *Tarikh i Daudi* is thus able to construct a bridge between Mushtaqi and Nizamuddin Ahmad, by giving its readers a reason for Shuja Khan's departure, and thus succeeds in bringing the texts together.

Apart from binding his sources in ways other than merely juxtaposing them, Abdullah also engaged with each separately. This can be illustrated by the character of Daulat Khan Ujyala, a noble at the Afghan court. Though the *Tabaqat* does not mention him at all, the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* mentions him to be a favourite of the Sultan. He was present when a man attacked Islam Shah with the intention to kill him but failed. Daulat Khan Ujyala got hold of the man and suggested that he should be kept alive for further investigation, but the Sultan did not agree.⁴³² With only a basic premise in place, not only was the character of Daulat Khan Ujyala recognised to have been underutilized, but the scope to expand its reach was also created. He was thus identified by the author of *Tarikh i Daudi*, as the adopted son of Shuja Khan. Being a favourite of Islam Khan, the Sultan overlooked his contempt for Daulat Khan's father, Shuja Khan. So even after Shuja Khan had fled, Islam Khan took him back in service with full honour as Daulat Khan Ujyala requested him to.⁴³³ This thus gave a proper closure to Shuja Khan, who had been a prominent character in the narrative, and to leave his account midway would not be satisfactory.

⁴³¹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 187.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, pp. 188-9.

⁴³³ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 176-177.

VIII

The *Tarikh i Daudi* which had so far abided by the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* in one way or the other, distances itself in its section on Muhammad Adil Shah. Except for its portrayal of Hemu, Abdullah relied on the *Tabaqat* to frame this part of his text. However before turning to the *Tarikh i Daudi*, it would be appropriate to discuss the possible sources that Nizamuddin Ahmad might have tapped into for constructing Adil Shah's past. There being nothing on him in Sarwani's writings, one realises that the *Waqiat* was the sole text which could have guided any subsequent writings. Yet at the first reading this does not appear to be so, until one realises that Nizamuddin's writing was a derivative of Mushtaqi's, both when he developed ideas that had scope for expansion and dramatisation, or avoided those that hindered the progress and cohesiveness of his narrative.

To the first set we can ascribe Nizamuddin's claim that Islam Khan had recognised his brother in law, Mubariz Khan's ill intentions to usurp the throne. He had therefore warned his wife Bibi Bai against him and tried to convince her of Mubariz Khan's removal. She however failed to recognise her brother's intentions. After Islam Shah's demise, Mubariz Khan acted on his plans to remove Firoz Khan, son of Islam Shah, and assumed sovereignty. Even though his sister pleaded him to spare her son and promised to leave for good, but it fell on deaf ears.⁴³⁴ Though Mushtaqi lacks in the dramatisation of this episode, he does record the murder of Firoz Khan and the desire of senior nobles to avenge it from Adil Shah.⁴³⁵ One can thus sense that the strong contempt

⁴³⁴ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. ii, pp. 118-9.

⁴³⁵ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 191-2.

that nobles had developed, when the throne slipped out of the hands of the descendants of Sher Shah that inspired Nizamuddin to provide a dramatised version of this episode. Similarly when Mushtaqi recorded nobles to have felt humiliated when Adil Shah favoured a few nobles over the rest, the *Tabaqat* developed it into specific incidents, like that of Shah Muhammad Farmuli. His *jagir* of Qannauj was suddenly revoked and bestowed on Sarmast Khan Sarwani. This enraged Muhammad Farmuli's son Sikandar Khan, who ended up attacking Sarmast Khan and even the Sultan. Both son and father were killed. Nizamuddin closes this incident by reflecting on the advice that Taj Khan Karrani had given to Muhammad Farmuli, of quitting Adil Shah's service. He refused and thus had to pay a heavy price for it.⁴³⁶

Other than identifying the cues which could be developed into episodes, Nizamuddin Ahmad also recognised junctures where following or developing on Mushtaqi's writing was not considered to be favourable. He therefore does not reiterate Mushtaqi, when he held that it was the desire to seek revenge of Firoz Shah's murder, from Adil Shah, that led Sikandar Khan to rise in rebellion. Nizamuddin Ahmad, on the other hand, held that tensions between Adil Shah and his nobles broke out when one of them, Ibrahim Khan, was informed of Adil Shah's intention to imprison him. Ibrahim Khan fled but he Sultan's forces chased him and a battle ensued. Here Ibrahim emerged victorious and assumed the title of Sultan Ibrahim. Another noble, Ahmad Khan also rose against Muhammad Adil Shah in Punjab, defeated Ibrahim and carved his independent power.⁴³⁷ These actions of Ibrahim and Ahmad Khan's can hardly be justified as undertaken to avenge Firoz Shah's murder. They rather indicate to have been directed, initially for their

⁴³⁶ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. ii, pp. 120-121.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.

political survival, which later assumed ambitious dimensions. Similarly Ahmad Yadgar found it absurd to reason the rise of Adil Shah's brother in laws in the way that Mushtaqi did, but nonetheless to accommodate the Shaikh's perspective, introduced Salim Sur, another noble who stood up against the murder of Firoz Shah, but was unable to achieve anything significant.⁴³⁸

IX

Despite the reservations that the *Tarikh i Daudi* had for the *Waqiat*, while narrating Adil Shah's account, they disappeared with the portrayal of Hemu, a very competent commander of Adil Shah's army. The intention to defame Hemu is quite apparent in the writings of Shaikh Mushtaqi and Abdullah. Shaikh Mushtaqi presented Hemu to have misused his powers once he had sidelined Adil Shah. He thus ousted all Afghans from power and deprived them of honour and resources. The Afghans were said to have been seized with such terror that none of them dared to raise their head in his presence. Hemu also did not spare the Qazi of Awadh and had him exterminated and his corpse was left unattended for a few days till it was taken for burial. The Saiyyids of Rewari were also put to death and people were left powerless to restore the honour of Islam. It was under such extreme circumstances that the coming of Akbar was contextualised. It was perceived to have been in the form of deliverance and people were granted a new lease of life.⁴³⁹ Abdullah did not hesitate to follow Hemu's characterisation,⁴⁴⁰ reflecting that despite of some minor deviations, he had not given up on Mushtaqi's text. Nizamuddin

⁴³⁸ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 277-278.

⁴³⁹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 193-4.

⁴⁴⁰ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 200-201.

Ahmad completely avoided this track, focussing only on the developments that took place on the battlefield,⁴⁴¹ which solely determined the course that the future was to take.

However, Ahmad Yadgar decided not to follow either Nizamuddin or Mushtaqi, while framing his account on Hemu, but resorted to constructing a narrative that would enable him to continue with the defining feature of his text, dramatisation of the narrative through dreams and their interpretations. The *Tarikh i Shahi*, at the initial stages, invested in communicating that Hemu had become an important and deserving official of Adil Shah. He offered to advance against Junaid Khan who had risen in rebellion at Ajmer. Adil Shah was not initially confident of him but decided to give him an opportunity. Hemu proved to be more than a match for him, pleasing Adil Shah to no end. The Sultan bestowed him with all possible favours.⁴⁴² After this Hemu disappears from the narrative, when Ahmad Yadgar discusses the capture of Andardun and the Sultan's fallout with some nobles, a few of whom he got executed. It was not till the Mughals appeared on the horizon that Hemu returns to the narrative. When faced with the invading Mughal army, Hemu consulted astrologers, who warned him of an impending defeat. He however dismissed their fears as he thought that the Mughals, after the sudden demise of Humayun, could not have been in a more vulnerable position.⁴⁴³ However before the battle at Panipat, Hemu dreamt of his defeat,⁴⁴⁴ which came true the next day.

Other than this instance, as we have noticed in our discussion on Sher Shah, Ahmad Yadgar utilised dreams and premonitions generously throughout his text. A similar treatment of an episode is also to be found in Adil Shah's expedition against the

⁴⁴¹ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. ii, pp. 124-5.

⁴⁴² Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 283-89.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 349-50.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

Raja of Andrun. The Sultan was initially unsuccessful and had incurred tremendous loss of lives. One night a *darwesh* appeared in his dreams, instructing him to acquire the beautiful daughter of a shopkeeper who was accompanying his army on this expedition. She was to be decked in the finest of jewels and clothes and sent off towards the desert before dawn. When Adil Shah complied, he saw a man appear on horseback from the opposite direction, carrying well crafted weapons. The woman greeted him and both then disappeared, leaving Adil Shah and others present wonder struck. The next day when the Sultan was preparing for the battle, the Raja of Andrun sent a message promising submission in return for mercy and protection.⁴⁴⁵ Thus the power of the darvesh was proved, which was essential even for Ahmad Yadgar to continue with the practice of incorporating dreams and prophecies as a device to propelled his narrative forward.

However destiny formed only a part of the story as Ahmad Yadgar gave these characters the opportunity to mould it for themselves as well. In the case of Adil Shah's expedition against the Raja of Andrun, the dream instructed him to perform a task, the completion of which was to determine his success. Similarly Sher Shah recognised the completion of certain tasks like taking of the fort of Rohtas and the capture of Shyam Sundar as omens of him being on the right path to the throne of Delhi. Hemu was also subjected to the same treatment as him being destined to lose power was not arbitrarily imposed on him, but his past deeds also played a role in shaping it. Ahmad Yadgar therefore reflects on his past actions when Hemu, while proceeding for a contest against the Mughals had encamped near Old Delhi. He, realising the severity of the upcoming battle went to pray at the tomb of Qutb ul Haqq, vowing to accept and propogate Islam, if

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 293-4.

he would bestow him with victory and the throne of Delhi. Despite of vanquishing the Mughals, Hemu not only went back on his words but also persecuted many Muslims to satisfy his heathen prejudices.⁴⁴⁶ Therefore not only Ahmad Yadgar showcased his skill to weave in premonitions in between a pre existing narrative, with which he was already negotiating at various levels, but did not leave it just at that. The adding of the space for human intervention, lent a unique character to them.

X

Despite of all the observations on these texts, a predominant question that remains to be addressed is why did the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* remained unacknowledged by both, despite of their heavy reliance on them. One immediate response to it could be that it was a case of plagiarism, where both Abdullah and Ahmad Yadgar intended to pass on the content found in the *Waqiat* as their original contribution to the narrative. This possibility however turns out to be extremely unlikely, as the reader realises that neither of the authors, at any point in their texts, make any effort to credit themselves with providing new information. Apart from acknowledging the *Tabaqat*, the *Madan i Akhbar i Ahmadi* and the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, they generically credited ‘narrators of the past’ as a source for their writings. What further strengthens this thought is that even at junctures where these authors genuinely provide their readers with fresh information; they do not display any effort to emphasise on the same. Rather, when the *Tarikh i Daudi* familiarises its readers with the interaction that Sikandar Lodi had with Babur Qalandar, which does not appear to have any precedent, he states it to have been recorded by some text that he

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 357.

could not recollect.⁴⁴⁷ Thus plagiarism clearly is not what we can accuse either the two of, but that confronts us with the puzzling question of what led the two to write these texts, if they were not interested in seeking recognition for the same.

The intention driving the composition of the *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi* can be recognised when we associate it beyond an individual, be it the author or the patron. These texts can be better contextualised when we perceive them to represent the collective voice of the Afghans, who were asserting themselves to regain control over the representation of their past. The Mughal intervention had brought about some significant changes, both in style and content, which was not accepted by the Afghans. Thus to gain an upper hand and capture the imagination of the readers more effectively, these texts emphasised so much on dramatisation of the narrative, a technique Mushtaqi utilised in full force. Though this does not imply that the Mughals did not employ strategies to keep their readers captivated, as the presence of dreams and omens clarify, but this is absent in the section on the Lodis. The adoption of a dramatised narrative by the Afghans, not just captured the interest of the reader, but also placed it at par with the Mughal texts. Thus the effort that the Mughals had made to suppress the appeal of the narrative on the Lodi past by limiting it only to their conflicts against the Sharqis, was reversed by these texts. This not only generated the interest of the readers in the Afghan past, but placed the authors of the non Mughal texts on the Afghan past at par with their Mughal counterparts. This had a tremendous impact on the cultural prestige of the Afghans, who could now boast to have the same skills in history writing as the Mughals.

⁴⁴⁷ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 63-4.

This effort to elevate themselves to a level that could match up with the Mughals, indicates that the Afghans were aware of the respect that the Mughals commanded. In the case of history writing, the honourable position that the Mughals held was culturally irresponsible to overlook. Thus it was in the cultural interest of these texts that the authors decided to display their allegiance to the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, hence openly acknowledging it as their main source. On the other hand the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, is left unacknowledged, possibly as it was not considered to be a fine example of history writing, and thus undesirable to be followed. Once these authors had secured their readership base by referring to the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, they then used it to circulate Mushtaqi's work. Though it might not have been the ideal situation as the identity of the text continued to be camouflaged, but it ensured that Mushtaqi's work continued to in circulation in one way or the other.

The worth of the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi* can also be appreciated when one is able to discern the principle that guided the inclusions, the exclusions and the construction of new episodes by their authors. This task became all the more challenging as the sources that they had for reference were not always uniform in nature. Their variations were expressed in numerous ways which also meant that the distance that they kept from each other, both in style and content, varied as well. However, our observation is not to be limited only to identifying these variations, but rather on how reconciliation is effected between them. Once we are able to recognise that, along with the nature of the fresh episodes, that their repeated attempts to reclaim control over the presentation and content of the Afghan past, becomes apparent. These found expression at many levels, be it the choice of their patron, their choice to avoid the content of the Mughal oriented texts

as much as possible and at places also display the superiority of the Afghan rulers, over their non Afghan counterparts,⁴⁴⁸ were all a part of the plot. To these it is important to add that the Afghans desired to be perceived as a race with a high level of sophistication in history writing. This explains their claim of being well versed with the classic works of Barani and Juzjani that they could imbibe to produce works on the same lines.

After taking care of so many concerns, these authors did not forget to maintain a distance between their respective texts as well, as not doing so could merge them into being perceived as one, given that they were essentially composed on the same principle. It was not a coincidence that we often find them to take different paths, when it came to choosing episodes from the sources. Ahmad Yadgar's emphasis on evoking dreams, omens and prophecies repeatedly, whereas Abdullah consciously abstaining from it except for once, is not inconsequential either. Similarly Abdullah resorted to the imagery that Ahmad Yadgar had associated with Mian Bhua's death, at a different location altogether. We thus find Islam Shah to have made the same arrangements for the rebellious nobles who had been imprisoned at Gwalior. They were taken to a house filled with gunpowder which was then blown apart. The survival of Kamal Khan Ghakkar, led Islam Shah to recognise it as God's will and reinstated him in his service.⁴⁴⁹ These strategies therefore reflect an effort by the authors to distance their writings from each other, which made it possible for two apparently distinct texts to come into existence. Also the fact that neither of the texts mentions each other, gave an impression of their

⁴⁴⁸ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 104-5. Abdullah lauds Ibrahim Lodi for being able to effectively control prices to the extent that it could match that of the fame that Alauddin Khalji had achieved for the same. Abdullah however is not content by placing the Lodi Sultan at par with Khalji ruler but attempts to push him even further by stating that Ibrahim Lodi achieved it with much more ease, without resorting to the harsh and strict measures that Alauddin had to implement.

⁴⁴⁹ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, p. 183.

independent composition, but the coordination that they display while striving to achieve that, reflects the close association that they had. However it appears that their effort was to project them as two independent texts, which would not only reach a wider audience than one, but would back up one another in strongly communicating their central idea, of the Afghans being capable and deserving to tell the story of their past.

The *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi* represent very unique position in the development of the narratives on the Indo-Afghan past. On one hand they represent that the Afghans took note of the Mughal dominance in history writing, but on the other they refused to submit it either. As much as contradictory the premise sounds, the works were able to exploit it to the advantage of the Afghans. To realise the nuances of the process, a detailed examination of the texts has been carried out, as the picture shifted with the account of every individual ruler. Despite the effort that these works have shown to avoid overlapping of content, the harmony in the principle that guided their composition is undeniable. This leaves one with the thought that they were possibly written in consultation with each other, where their authors, of whom we are not informed anything about, were highly skilled at not letting their readers easily realise so. They are therefore to be considered to be much more than mere reproductions of their sources, a study of which is essential to understand the evolution of the recording of the Indo-Afghan past.

CHAPTER 5

Changing Narratives in Changing Times

The competitive atmosphere generated by the *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi*, which was expressed by passing off the contents of the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* as that of the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, raises many deep rooted issues. Here it was not just the attempt by the Afghans to establish control over the past that was at stake but larger questions of what history meant and the parameters for a narrative to be recognised as historical, were the fundamental concerns. With respect to the reconstruction of the Lodi and Sur pasts, we saw the emergence of two distinct traditions, the first being helmed by the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, representative of a distinct content and style, while the other made interventions in its attempt to bring the recording of the Afghan past within the precincts of the *tarikh* genre of writing. Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Tabaqat i Akbari* was the first one to do so, but what made it a more layered interaction was its affiliation to the Mughal Emperor. Thus a second layer of conflict came into existence, the Afghans and Mughals being not only bearers of different methods of history writing but that of a shared past, which was a subject matter of this text, but an uncomfortable one.

The struggle to establish control over the recording of an antagonistic past was intense enough to perpetuate itself to the next generation of works. Nizamuddin Ahmad was the first to display hostility towards the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, and was met with retaliation by the *Tarikh i Daudi* and *Tarikh i Shahi*. Thus, as we saw in the previous chapter, these works employed multiple strategies to reinvigorate Shaikh Mushtaqi's writings, against the work that strangled it. Amidst such a strenuous context the

emergence of two more works on the history of the Lodis and the Surs, went on to significantly add another distinct layer to the development of history writing. Though these works were placed in very different spaces, one at the sub imperial level and the other far from it, they do share the common ground of attempting to break away from the binary that had begun to dominate and direct the recording of the Afghan past. Given that the former was in a much more restrictive space than the latter, the scale of their attempt in this direction is incomparable.

The *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* was written under the patronage of a very prominent Mughal noble, Khan Jahan Lodi. He was an Afghan, and a close aide of Jahangir. With the accession of Jahangir, the Afghan-Mughal equation transformed to a great extent. The entire race was kept at bay during Akbar's regime, but with the accession of Jahangir many Afghans were inducted into the royal service. Thus the bitterness of the Afghan-Mughal past had begun to settle down. However, even under these changed circumstances, the author of the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani*, Nimatullah, who, given the scheme of the work, was required to have a section on the Lodis and the Surs, was faced with a dilemma. This was caused by the tussle that existed between the two confronting strands of history writing that had developed, and caught the text in-between the identities of being patronised by a Mughal noble who was also an Afghan. This makes the study of the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* an important stopover for examining the development of Afghan history writing.

As compared to the anticipation generated, given the political pressure that this text had to withstand, it is not difficult to understand the expected choice that it made. Nimatullah was not only unable to acknowledge the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, the *Tarikh i*

Daudi and the *Tarikh i Shahi*, but can be seen to be silently reproducing the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. Though this is the case for most of the part, a careful reading brings to the fore the presence of those limited but undeniable junctures where the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* gave space to the other works as well. This however had to be done in a very subtle way, given that with the circulation of the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* had also become too well known in the Mughal academic circle as a text to be avoided. It could not be slipped in unsuspectingly. Thus the *Tarikh i Daudi* and the *Tarikh i Shahi*, which had aligned with the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, were Nimatullah's next best choices. Since these works had primarily reproduced episodes from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, it was difficult for the reader to spot the few camouflaged episodes that were exclusive to them. Nonetheless, even if someone suspected Nimatullah of incorporating episodes which were not to be found in the *Tabaqat*, he could have defended himself by pointing to the presence of their subject matter, although in a much basic form, in Nizamuddin Ahmad's text. However it appears that the version of these episodes that we find in the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi* were the actual source of inspiration for Nimatullah, who despite of developing them a little more, remained closer to them. Thus neither could he be fairly charged of reproducing from these works, nor could a connection with the *Tabaqat* be completely denied. It was this safe space that Nimatullah utilised to express his limited but definitive stand to recognise the presence of other works, which had challenged the Mughal hegemony on the Afghan past.

The first of such episodes is woven around the discovery of a magical four cornered lamp which when lit produced two monsters. They awaited and fulfilled the wishes of the possessor of the lamp. The *Tarikh i Shahi* records that a Mulla found the

lamp and the monsters emerged, he expressed his desire to meet a woman who was out of bounds for him. The monsters readily fulfilled his wish. However after some time, fearing that people will come to know of this lamp, the Mulla handed it over to Qutb Khan. It was further passed onto Sultan Sikandar Lodi and it was believed that he used it to acquire rare information about the developments in his empire.⁴⁵⁰ Interestingly one may trace this episode to be rooted in a similar claim that Mushtaqi and then Nizamuddin Ahmad made of the Sultan possessing knowledge about every minute development in his land, which made people think that he was assisted by *jinns*, who gathered information for him.⁴⁵¹

The *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* offered a more developed form of this incident. A man while having the foundation of his house excavated came across a four faced lamp. Following the earlier version, the lamp when lit, beckoned two spirits who placed themselves at the command of the man. They not only brought him rare treasures but the daughter of a merchant who the man coveted. The girl was presented to him at dusk and she found herself back at her home by dawn. When this went on for a few days her father noticed her disturbed and enquired. Her parents were shocked by what she said and decided to approach the Sultan for help. The Sultan ordered the *kotwal* to investigate the matter but he could not make any headway. The Sultan now decided to adopt an unconventional strategy and ordered the girl to pour saffron on the man the next time she met him. The spirits were however alert enough and decided to sprinkle it on everyone to ensure that their secret was not exposed. The Sultan declared that he would grant the position of twelve thousand *mansabdari* to anyone who could solve the case but no one

⁴⁵⁰ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, p. 44.

⁴⁵¹ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 337.

turned up. In the meantime the man had amassed enough wealth and decided to join the Sultan's court. He reached the court with the lamp and narrated his experiences. The lamp was then handed over to the Sultan who was said to have accomplished many strange deeds with the spirits residing in it.⁴⁵² This episode as was developed in the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani*, clearly shows that despite the little improvisations, it had majorly retained the spirit and character with which Ahmad Yadgar had narrated it. Although it had taken a turn from where it could be developed into an episode showcasing different characteristics, but did not quite reach there.

The presence of a couple of more such instances where the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* can be seen to be depending on the *Tarikh i Shahi*, indicates that it intended to leave a trail of connections with it. Nimatullah thus again elucidates on the Sultan's interaction with Shaikh Jamali, whose presence at the Sultan's court was acknowledged earlier by Nizamuddin Ahmad.⁴⁵³ Other than that Ahmad Yadgar was the one to share an episode on the beginning of the Shaikh's association with the Sultan. As Ahmad Yagar states, the Sultan on learning of Shaikh Jamali's return from a long journey to West and Central Asia, expressed his desire to meet him by sending him an invite through one of his couplets. Though the Shaikh initially refused, he agreed when Shaikh Samauddin, his religious preceptor and father in law persuaded him. The Sultan and Shaikh Jamali soon developed a close bond.⁴⁵⁴ Nimatullah added to this by informing his readers of the Sultan's flair for poetry and that he wrote under the pen name of Gulrukhi. He also recorded the lines that the Sultan wrote in honour of the Shaikh, expressing his desire to

⁴⁵² Nimatullah, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan i Afghani*, vol. 1, ed. S.M. Imamuddin, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1960, pp. 219-222.

⁴⁵³ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 340.

⁴⁵⁴ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 47-8.

be granted audience and the text in which the Shaikh had recorded his moral teachings, informing that the descendants of the Shaikh had preserved the invite till date. It was on Shaikh Samauddin's insistence that the meeting materialised. Shaikh Jamali and the Sultan soon developed mutual admiration so much so that the former composed eulogies for him.⁴⁵⁵

A third case comes to light when Nimatullah recorded the foundation of Agra by Sikandar Lodi. While Nizamuddin Ahmad had already taken note that Agra became the capital during Sikandar Lodi's reign, the *Tarikh i Daudi* touched on the history of the city. The city was once a village, since the time of Kans, the legendary ruler of Mathura. The city housed a prison for those punished by him. Later Mahmud Ghazni levelled the city during one of his invasions and it remained insignificant till Sikandar Lodi planned to develop it.⁴⁵⁶ Here Nimatullah unlike previous instances shows maximum improvisation, while maintaining a thread of continuity. One has to appreciate his eye to identify junctures that would bind the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, the *Tarikh i Daudi* and his text in a desirable manner. Nimatullah records that Sultan Sikandar Lodi was concerned by the growing disturbances on the banks of the Yamuna in the *sarkar* of Bayana and decided to encourage the settlement of this sparsely populated area. Thus one day while sailing at leisure he reached the place and asked his entourage to suggest him an appropriate site to build a city. The head of the entourage pointed to the area in the foreground (*ag i rah*), and it was approved by the Sultan who decided to name it Agra.⁴⁵⁷ The author, as is evident from the above three examples, fashioned anecdotes around events that not been

⁴⁵⁵ Nimatullah, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan i Afghani*, vol. 1, pp. 224-228.

⁴⁵⁶ Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, pp. 40.

⁴⁵⁷ Nimatullah, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan i Afghani*, vol. 1, pp. 190-191.

so prominently highlighted by Nizamuddin Ahmad, but had expanded itself in the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi*. Their incorporation brings forth the realisation that it is possible for a text to reach out to the ones written earlier, not only through exact reproductions, but also through improvisations of varying degrees.

This strategy of improvisations continued in the section on Sher Shah where Nimatullah recorded the Shah ruler to have stopped the supply of grains to Humayun's advancing forces,⁴⁵⁸ a development not to be found in any other work, except for the *Tarikh i Shahi*.⁴⁵⁹ This is again evident when he mentions of Khawas Khan gifting Sher Shah an elephant,⁴⁶⁰ but unlike *Tarikh i Shahi* where the episode is presented in an elaborate form,⁴⁶¹ Nimatullah decided to cut short on both, but doing so did not sever its ties from the *Tarikh i Shahi* either. Therefore despite the limitations that chained the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* to the *Tabaqat i Akbari*, Nimatullah found out creative ways to reach out to the *Tarikh i Shahi* and *Tarikh i Daudi*. He thus redefined the ways in which association between works could be built, without necessarily having to reproduce narrative from another text, leaving no scope for internally improvising a particular episode, as could be desired by the author. This approach was developed and utilised to a much greater extent by the author of the *Afsana i Shahan*.

The *Afsana i Shahan* written by Shaikh Muhammad Kabir was the last of the series of works composed on the Indo-Afghans. Although the year of its composition remains unknown, just as the original manuscript, the only two to have survived, date to the eighteenth century. One of the first things to notice about the *Afsana i Shahan* is that

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

⁴⁵⁹ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 195-6.

⁴⁶⁰ Nimatullah, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan i Afghani*, vol. 1, p. 302.

⁴⁶¹ Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh i Shahi*, pp. 191-2.

it does not acknowledge any source that it used. Although the author informs his readers about the presence of many different narratives on the Afghan rulers of Delhi and Agra, and he only presented the ones that were authentic and believable,⁴⁶² there is no insight provided into how he discriminated them from the rest.

The other point that is to be noted about this text is the absence of any form of patronage. Shaikh Kabir states a very personal reason for writing it. He mentions of his son's tragic death, to cope with which he decided to divert himself by writing this book. The introduction to the text mentions that the young son of the author died of a snake bite while at school. When he complained about it to his teacher who was then unnecessarily punishing him, he did not pay any heed to him.⁴⁶³ Reading about the unfortunate circumstance that the author was writing under, many would have immediately empathised with him and thus transported to a different mood where technical questions like use of sources, were likely to have taken a backseat. Thus Shaikh Kabir can be seen to have employed strategies to divert attention from issues that he was not keen to address and attempted to win the confidence of his readers.

Apart from establishing an emotional connect, Shaikh Kabir designed a second layer of defence against the section of the audience who had penetrated the first, but were still expecting the text to proceed on the path that had been laid out by earlier works. He thus deliberately made claims, at the very onset of the Lodi and Sur regimes, which would have been completely unacceptable to those who had limited themselves to the boundaries that the preceding narratives had drawn. This explains the unprecedented

⁴⁶² Shaikh Muhammad Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, British Library MS. Add 24,409, f. 2b.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*, ff. 3a-5a.

claim of Kala Lodi, the father of Bahlul, to have been the founder of the Lodi dynasty.⁴⁶⁴ Though introduced by Firishta, but he was identified to have been serving his brother, Islam Khan.⁴⁶⁵ It would have been equally difficult for some to digest the difference in the role that a *zamindar*, Rao Dashrath Khokhar, played in the establishment of the Lodi power. In contrast to the *Tabaqat i Akbari* which claims that he had done nothing more than propose Bahlul to take over the throne at Delhi,⁴⁶⁶ the *Afsana i Shahan* records Dashrath Khokhar to have been the one to have introduced Kala Lodi to the Sultan of Delhi. Adding to the divergences is the position that the each of the works claims the founder of the Lodi dynasty to have been in, when he came in contact with Rao Dashrath. According to the *Tabaqat*, Bahlul Lodi had by then acquired significant position at the Sultan's court. He was sent against Rao Dashrath by Sultan Alauddin, who in order to please Bahlul and thereby save his own position, gave him the idea to usurp the throne of Delhi.

On the other hand the *Afsana i Shahan* records Kala Lodi to have been a politically insignificant person and was hardly a match for Rao Dashrath, as is evident when the latter marched against him after a fallout. It was only after Kala Lodi gathered reinforcements from Roh that he proceeded against Rao Dashrath, and killed him in a sudden attack.⁴⁶⁷ Such extreme deviations continued when the *Afsana i Shahan* recognised Shah Alam to have been the Sultan whom Kala Lodi eventually replaced.⁴⁶⁸ It also recognised Qutb Khan to have served his brother, Bahlul, with utmost loyalty, which

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 14a-14b.

⁴⁶⁵ Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 573.

⁴⁶⁶ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 291.

⁴⁶⁷ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 9b-10a, 12a-12b.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. 10a-10b, 14a.

became evident when Qutb Khan rescued Bahlul from Qiyam Khan's clutches;⁴⁶⁹ whereas Nizamuddin Ahmad claimed him to have been discontented with the latter's accession, so much so that he invited Sultan Alauddin against him.⁴⁷⁰ Thus for a reader who could not disentangle from the works he had read so far, all this should have been enough for him from being encouraged to proceed further with the text.

Shaikh Kabir also employed a similar approach while recording the opening section on Sher Shah Sur. The founder of the Sur dynasty is said to have been an ally of Bahar Khan, who when defeated by Ibrahim Lodi, caused the Surs an immense loss of resources. This enraged Sher Shah's father, Mian Hasan Khan, and disappointed, Sher Shah retreated to Shaikh Adhan's abode at Jaunpur. Before one can even fathom the distance that Shaikh Kabir had gone from the claim that each and every text so far had made on Sher Shah's fallout with his father, he is hit hard by the death of Mian Hasan and Muhammad Khan's intentions to take over all of his lands and resources. Here the character of Mian Sulaiman, the half brother of Sher Shah and his mother, who was instrumental in convincing Mian Husain to have recognised her son as his successor, has been completely sidelined. Further, as Sher Shah returns to rescue the situation, he instead of securing Mughal assistance against Muhammad Khan, to first defeat and then forgive him, tricked and imprisoned him. Shaikh Kabir continued to shake up his readers by claiming that not only Sher Shah was not in the service of Jalal Khan, the son and successor of Sultan Bahar Khan, but also refused to join him when the Nuhanis asked him to.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 15a-15b, 16a-18a.

⁴⁷⁰ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 294-5.

⁴⁷¹ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahana*, ff. 50a-52b.

Apart from such drastic digressions on the early days of Sher Shah's political ascension, Shaikh Kabir did not spare the narrative on the arrival of Babur against Ibrahim Lodi, at the behest of Daulat Khan, either. Though he begins with the familiar narrative of Daulat Khan inviting Babur to put an end to Ibrahim Lodi's unjustified atrocities, he once again takes a sharp turn when the noble suddenly, on realising that he should not betray his master, requested Babur to retrace his steps. However one of his sons, Dilawar Khan, born of a concubine and not treated at par with his brothers, reached out to Babur. It was eventually with his assistance that Babur killed Daulat Khan and secured the throne of Delhi. Further, in contrast to Babur's memoirs, it records the emperor to have killed the young son of Ibrahim Lodi, in a fit of rage.⁴⁷² Thus for a considerable span, Shaikh Kabir's narrative marked prominent departures at the commencement of Lodi and Sur regimes. This however cannot be considered to have been made by a blatant desire to overturn the existing narratives, as soon hereafter the text begins to showcase proximities to the ones it had just defied, although with improvisations.

The accession of Bahlul Lodi was soon followed by the most highlighted event of his reign, the invasion by the Sharqi Sultan Husain. He came to assert the claims of the sons of the late Sultan, who also happened to be his brother in laws. Though Nizamuddin Ahmad also mentions of the Sultan of Jaunpur being the son in law of the Sultan of Delhi⁴⁷³ and therefore a likely contender for the throne, he is silent about the presence of his sons. Thus the coming of Sultan Husain, who held Delhi for nine years before leaving it

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, ff. 52b-55b.

⁴⁷³ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 312.

to his brother in laws,⁴⁷⁴ is a serious improvisation that Shaikh Kabir made, yet one cannot deny that he continued to maintain a connection with the earlier narratives. Not only did Bahlul regain his power, but in the process of narrating him to have done so, Shaikh Kabir dropped a few clues reflecting his intention to remain connected with the earlier works. Therefore we find that both parties arrived at an agreement to recognise Qannauj as the boundary dividing their territories, the suspicion that the Sharqis harboured of the Afghans dishonouring the treaty, as they indeed did by chasing and plundering the retreating Sharqi army in Nizamuddin Ahmad's text, the imprisonment of Qutb Khan and the subsequent capture of the Sharqi *wazir*, Qutlugh Khan.⁴⁷⁵ Though these incidents were repackaged and presented in a very different manner, the fact that the *Tabaqat* also recognises these developments to have taken place in course of the Lodi-Sharqi conflicts,⁴⁷⁶ makes it difficult to argue in favour of a complete disassociation between the two works.

Similarly, Shaikh Kabir's efforts to reach out to Nizamuddin's text can be seen as he recorded that Sultan Sikandar Lodi's accession was challenged by his brother Barbak Shah, and that Mubarak Khan, who was one of the highest nobles sided with the latter. He was taken prisoner, as both works agree, but Shaikh Kabir decided to add a dash of his flavour by stating that Sikandar Lodi treated him in the most generous way by handing over his sword to him, asking him to bestow it to the person who he felt was worthy of the throne. Mubarak Khan returned it to him and thus Sikandar was able to win

⁴⁷⁴ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 15b-16a.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 19b-22a.

⁴⁷⁶ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 310.

him over.⁴⁷⁷ This however cannot be accepted to have been formed completely by the author's ingenuity, as a similar instance, in reference to Kala Pahar, another prominent noble siding with Barbak Shah, was narrated by Firishta at this very juncture of the narrative.⁴⁷⁸ So apart from the *Tabaqat*, Shaikh Kabir can be deduced to be taking note of the *Tarikh i Firishta*, thereby gradually expanding his connections.

Another instance where Shaikh Kabir can be seen to have evoked the *Tarikh i Firishta* is when he claimed Sikandar Lodi to have been born of a goldsmith's daughter. Though the *Tarikh i Shahi* also mentions the same, the differences in the implications that it had in each of these works is staggering. While in the former it was utilised to object to his accession,⁴⁷⁹ the *Tarikh i Shahi* headed in a completely different direction. (See chapter 4) Keeping up with strategy of implicating the same information in differing ways, Shaikh Kabir furnishes an anecdote where Ismail Halwani refused to get his daughter married to Sultan Sikandar due to his mixed descent. The former felt so offended on receiving this proposal that he decided to leave the empire. It was only on being apologised and requested to stay back by the Sultan and Mubarak Khan Lodi that Ismail Halwani agreed.⁴⁸⁰ The *Afsana i Shahan* once again displayed its bond with the *Tabaqat* while recording that Sultan Sikandar did not hand over Bayana to the son of Ahmad Khan Jilwani following the latter's death.⁴⁸¹ It also records the capture of Mubarak Khan by the Raja of Bhid, who on witnessing the grandeur of the approaching

⁴⁷⁷ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 18b-19a.

⁴⁷⁸ Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta*, vol. 1, p. 593.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 590.

⁴⁸⁰ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, f. 41a.

⁴⁸¹ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 316, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, f. 25a.

royal army set him free,⁴⁸² just as we find that Husain Farmuli left for Bengal after he fell out of favour in the Lodi court.⁴⁸³

Though so far Shaikh Kabir's association with the *Tabaqat* has emerged to be the dominant one, but his incorporation of elements from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* cannot be overlooked either. To understand the extent to which Shaikh Kabir utilised Shaikh Mushtaqi's writing, the most prominent section to begin with is that on Ibrahim Lodi. Not only did Shaikh Kabir opt to abide by Mushtaqi's version, even when the *Tabaqat* came in direct confrontation with it, he did little to improvise upon it. He therefore records of the unreasonable execution of Mian Bhua, adding that Ibrahim Lodi ordered it only because the noble had refused to pay the son of Raja Man a few lakh rupees. Mian Bhua's stand is justified as the transaction served no purpose for the state, but was rather directed by the personal bond that Raja Man shared with the Sultan. Similarly Azam Humayun was imprisoned as he was unable to come to the court as summoned and requested the Sultan to postpone it by a few days. His imprisonment caused his son to rebel, who was soon executed and his head was sent to his father. Ibrahim Lodi's atrocities turned Dariya Khan, Nasir Khan and Ismail Halwani against him as well.⁴⁸⁴

Other than the section on Ibrahim Lodi, Shaikh Kabir also appears to have picked up a very crucial point that Mushtaqi had tried to communicate, of the Afghans adhering to very different principles of kingship, than those which were celebrated in the Persian tradition. (See chapter 1) He thus records Kala Lodi to have ordered the construction of a

⁴⁸² Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, pp. 317-318, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 26b-27a.

⁴⁸³ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 333, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 45a-45b.

⁴⁸⁴ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, 46a-48b.

throne that could accommodate thirty to forty of his fellow clansmen.⁴⁸⁵ Also the act of Sikandar Lodi wielding his sword to Mubarak Khan, asking him to bestow it on anyone he considered to be worthy of the throne,⁴⁸⁶ resonated very closely with the episode that the *Waqiat* associated with Bahlul Lodi. Here Bahlul is recorded to have pacified his displeased nobles by visiting their houses and handing over his sword and turban to them, so that they could install a more deserving person on the throne.⁴⁸⁷ Shaikh Kabir also developed an episode around the cultural inferiority of the Afghans that Mushtaqi had highlighted. (See chapter 1) Shaikh Kabir thus recorded the surprise that Nasib Shah expressed when he saw Husain Farmuli drink water from a leather bag and gifted him three sixty goblets for use.⁴⁸⁸ However, whether these concerns continued to be relevant after a century, remains debateable. The absence of multiple episodes reinforcing this point, as Shaikh Mushtaqi did, leaves room for doubt. These incidents along with the episode where the Sultan was able to identify the person who had cheated a merchant by removing his jewels from a sealed bag,⁴⁸⁹ clearly communicate the intention of Shaikh Kabir to maintain some degree of continuity with Mushtaqi's work as well.

Similar efforts to ensure that the *Afsana i Shahan* would remain within the established tradition can be deduced in its section on the Surs as well. Other than displaying affinity to works we have discussed so far, Shaikh Kabir surprises the reader by bringing in the *Baburnama* as well. It is thus from the memoirs of the Mughal emperor that he is able to draw information on Bayazid Farmuli deflecting away from the Mughals, the conflict that ensued against Bengal and that of Jalal Khan allying with the

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 14a.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 27b.

⁴⁸⁷ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 10.

⁴⁸⁸ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan* ff. 45b.

⁴⁸⁹ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 39a-40a, Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 42-44.

Mughals.⁴⁹⁰ Since the above information is not to be found in any of other works, the possibility of a connection between them, despite improvisations, cannot be dismissed. It is however the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* that can be adjudged to be the one, which the *Afsana i Shahan* drew much from for its section on Sher Shah Sur. However there were multiple ways in which it was done, requiring further discussion.

At the broadest level Shaikh Kabir can be seen to be adhering to the political events that were recorded by Abbas Khan Sarwani. We thus find reference to the coming of Sultan Mahmud, the son of Sikandar Lodi to Bihar from where he led a united front against Humayun.⁴⁹¹ Shaikh Kabir also records of the assaults that Humayun made twice on Chunar, the first ending with an agreement as Humayun was forced to leave for another part of the empire, and the second resulting in his victory.⁴⁹² Other familiar incidents include the taking of Rohtas by Sher Shah, the execution of Shaikh Bahlul by Mirza Askari, Humayun's perusal of Sher Shah to Bengal, Saif Khan's attempt to block the Mughals from reaching the Afghan King, the successful defence of Gaur by Sher Shah's son, Jalal Khan, the imprisonment of *khan i khanan* Yusuf Khalil and the failure of Jahangir Quli Khan to retain Gaur for the Mughals.⁴⁹³ The work also records the two dramatic battles fought between the Afghans and the Mughals, both ending in favour of

⁴⁹⁰ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 56a-57a, 59b-60b, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama*, tr, Beveridge, Modern Library, New York, 2001, pp. 403, 408, 438, 44-453.

⁴⁹¹ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 85-88, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 66a-66b.

⁴⁹² Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 92-95, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 66b-68b, 94a-95b.

⁴⁹³ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 117-125, 144, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 81a, 96a-103b.

the former, with Humayun being saved from drowning by Atka Khan after the first and his escape to Multan after the second.⁴⁹⁴

Shaikh Kabir continued to honour earlier narratives while describing Sher Shah's expedition against Puran Mal who was charged of imprisoning and forcefully converting Muslim women of Chanderi. He thus records that though Sher Shah had initially only imprisoned Puran Mal after the latter submitted, it was on falling ill that Sher Shah was reminded of his oath to kill him as a punishment for dishonouring the Muslim women of Chanderi. He was thus executed along with the men of his family while the women were handed over to butchers and cooks.⁴⁹⁵ A similarity is also discernable in the section recording Sher Shah's march against Maldeo, who on realising his inability to face the Afghan forces fled away. It was his generals Chittha and Gopa who refused to give up, but could not survive the battle.⁴⁹⁶ Shaikh Kabir also chose to stay with the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* while describing the accident at Kalinjar which injured Sher Shah and resulted in his death.⁴⁹⁷

Other than these milestones, the *Afsana i Shahan* also picked up on the detailing of the narrative from Abbas Sarwani and Mushtaqi. Therefore the narrative almost reproduces a scene from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* where Sher Shah lamented the death of Qutb Khan. Despite being from the rival camp of Bengal, Sher Shah on finding him grievously wounded on the battle field, placed his head on his lap and took him to his

⁴⁹⁴ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* pp. 125-138, 156, 163-4, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 104a-109a, 114b-120a.

⁴⁹⁵ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 190-192, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff 128b, 130b-132a.

⁴⁹⁶ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 195-198, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 132a-132b.

⁴⁹⁷ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, pp. 200-203, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 134a-134b.

camp.⁴⁹⁸ Shaikh Kabir also staged Khawas Khan's death in the exact manner as Sarwani did. Therefore according to both the works he drowned in a moat, although the location was variously identified as Chunar by the former and Gaur by the latter.⁴⁹⁹ In some other cases Shaikh Kabir jumbles up the location of an incident and the characters involved therein. He however leaves it intact enough for the reader to make immediate connections and realise its presence in one of the earlier works. For instance, when Shaikh Kabir records the Mughal army to have lost to the sudden attack by the Afghans as they were caught resting without their armoury, which they felt extremely uncomfortable in,⁵⁰⁰ a reader, familiar with the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* was immediately reminded of it. This happens due to the presence of an incident where in response to Mallu Khan's astonishment over the Afghans constantly being laden with their armoury, Husain Khan replied that they were very comfortable in them and had not taken them off since they begun marching from Bengal.⁵⁰¹

Similarly, when Shaikh Kabir informs Humayun to have ignored a strategic advice that Mian Badan Muneri gave him to effectively corner Sher Shah,⁵⁰² it is not difficult to be reminded of a close parallel that Abbas Sarwani narrated. Though there is a difference in the setting, as in the latter case Humayun was seeking advice on the sequence in which he should take the fort of Gaur and Chunar, the similarities cannot be overlooked. First in both cases not only was Humayun seeking advice against Sher Shah, but those who gave him the best ones were either earlier associated with the Afghans, as was the case with Mian Badan, or was an Afghan himself, as was Yusuf Khail. Extending

⁴⁹⁸ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 69a, Shaikh Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 123.

⁴⁹⁹ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 107, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 94b.

⁵⁰⁰ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 63b.

⁵⁰¹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 134.

⁵⁰² Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 112b-113a.

their resemblances, the authors of both the works gave their readers the idea that Humayun was very likely to have succeeded, had he abided by their advice, by adopting the identical technique of recording Sher Shah to have been alarmed by their presence in his enemy's camp. Thus the Afghan ruler vowed to kill Mian Badan and poisoned Yusuf Khail, despite of many advising him not to, considering he was of a revered descent.⁵⁰³

Other than designing episodes that would direct the reader to recollect earlier works, Shaikh Kabir also made the effort to build upon pre existing information. Thus when Sarwani left out on recording what exactly led to unrest in Bengal after the death of Sultan Nasib Shah and the accession of Sultan Mahmud, Shaikh Kabir was able to identify the gap and filled it an appropriate manner. Thus it is not a coincidence that we see him elaborate on the strife that broke out after the demise of the Sultan of Bengal, by claiming that the late Sultan's brother in the attempt to secure the throne had his nephews killed. This was bound to create stir amongst the nobles and Makhdum Alam who was a faithful ally of the late Sultan did his best to rise against it.⁵⁰⁴ In both the works the internal dissention gave Sher Shah an opportunity to advance against his neighbouring state, but Shaikh Kabir, who stopped by the narrative unlike Sarwani, was not only able to supplement it but created a space to narrate other related episodes. He was thus able to trace the establishment of the Sultanate in Bengal by Nasib Shah's father, Makhdum Alam's association with them and also familiarised us with some of his characteristics, particularly emphasising the unmatched hospitality he offered to his guests.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 146.

⁵⁰⁴ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 70b,75b.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 71b-75b, 76b-77a.

At this point Shaikh Kabir did something unexpected to further strengthen our belief in the connection between these works. This happens when the *Afsana i Shahan* while describing Sultan Mahmud's siege of the fort of Hajipur, a site that witnessed the contest between him and Makhdum Alam, suddenly brings in Kala Phar, without clarifying anything on his identity or on how he came to be present there. This out of the dark appearance of Kala Pahar, who had nothing to do with the ongoing situation, and randomly happens to be there, awaiting the arrival of Sher Shah who he had written to, requesting aid to evacuate from there.⁵⁰⁶ Kala Pahar's presence in the Shaikh's writing can be understood only when we find him to be present in Sarwani's text at this very juncture as well. However, his presence in the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* was of a completely different nature and purpose. He is introduced to be the brother of Sultan Bahlul and the father of Bibi Fath Malika, who had left considerable treasures with her.⁵⁰⁷ Sher Shah decided to utilise it to organise his expedition against Bengal and hence Sarwani's reference to Kala Pahar can be understood. Though by now we are able to make sense of the sudden appearance of Kala Pahar but it was Shaikh Kabir's inability to properly integrate him into the narrative that makes one stumble on this unusual display of association between the works.

Shaikh Kabir goes back to his strategy of identifying the junctures in Sarwani's text where he could intervene to provide some extra information. He thus stopped by the episode where Sarwani was narrating Bairam Khan's stint in Sher Shah's service. He however was looking for an opportunity to leave for Gujarat from where he intended to go back to Humayun's service. Bairam Khan was finally able to escape when Sher Shah

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 75b-76a.

⁵⁰⁷ Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 100.

took him to Ujjain, but unfortunately his companion, Muhammad Qasim was slain on the way.⁵⁰⁸ Shaikh Kabir, on sensing that he could do much better with this episode, invested a lot to detail out the adventures of Bairam Khan while making his escape. They first proceeded to Burhanpur where they sold their horses and left for Ahmedabad on bullocks. However the Afghans managed to reach there and started to enquire about them. A chance encounter resulted in the Afghans arresting many who had fled with Bairam Khan. He was however overlooked by them due to his short stature and shabby clothes. He then reached Champaner where the drunken Bhils forced Bairam Khan to dance with them all night. It was only after receiving help from the minister of the Sultan of Gujarat that Bairam Khan was finally able to leave for Thatta.⁵⁰⁹ Thus the association between the works gets clarified once more, there being no other source which recorded Bairam Khan's tryst at the Afghan court and his eventual escape.

The continuity in Shaikh Kabir's efforts to maintain association with earlier works is evident in the section on Islam Shah and Adil Khan. He thus records the presence of an alternate centre of power in the form of the eldest son of Sher Shah, Adil Khan, the unrest that broke out when Islam Shah begun to mindlessly imprison and kill many of his senior nobles and the eventual leaning that they developed towards Adil Khan.⁵¹⁰ At the same time improvisations were carried out as before, the instance of Islam Shah killing the son of Adil Khan being one worth detailing out. After gaining decisive victory over Adil Khan and his allies, Islam Shah imprisoned the sons and partisans of Adil Khan in a house with the intent to set it ablaze. One of Islam Shah's

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

⁵⁰⁹ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff.128b-130b.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 138b-140b.

well wishers advised him against doing so, reminding him of the special affection that Sher Shah had for one of Adil Khan's sons.⁵¹¹ Here Shaikh Kabir cleverly inserted the claim made by Abbas Sarwani of Sher Shah being extremely pleased with his grandson when he suggested a way to build fortification in the desert region of Marwar.⁵¹² This implantation helped Shaikh Kabir to take the episode further as Sher Shah went onto place his turban on his grandson, declaring him to be his successor. Thus the execution of Sher Shah's favourite grandson was read as a bad omen for the empire. Islam Shah however did not take notice of this and despite his nephew surviving the fire, did not spare him. So, even though Ahmad Yadgar had also informed us of Islam Shah's cruel act, Shaikh Kabir built upon it by bringing it together with Sarwani's version, to present a new rendition and impart a fresh meaning to the episode.

The *Afsana i Shahan* continued to display affiliation to the *Tabaqat i Akbari* by recording the dispute that broke out between the Niazis and Azam Humayun as they could not agree on who to replace Islam Shah with. However Islam Shah defeated their combined forces and Azam Humayun retreated to Kashmir, where he was killed.⁵¹³ Shaikh Kabir also brought in a dramatic episode from the *Waqiat* where Islam Shah was suddenly attacked while he was descending a hill.⁵¹⁴ Shaikh Kabir continued to build his narrative based on the events recorded by Nizamuddin Ahmad till the end, describing the accession of Mubariz Khan, the execution of Firoz Shah, rebellions by Taj Khan and

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 143a-144a.

⁵¹² Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 196.

⁵¹³ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. ii, p. 112, Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 144b-146a.

⁵¹⁴ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 147b-149b, Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, pp. 188.

Ibrahim Khan and finally the rise and fall of Hemu which marked the reestablishment of the Mughal rule.⁵¹⁵

Other than displaying continuities by centring his improvised narratives on pre-existing events and characters, Shaikh Kabir also utilised the names of certain places that the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* mentioned, but as always not without bringing in his own variations to it. The two places which caught Shaikh Kabir's eye, as he realised their potential to add value to his narrative were Bajwara and Balnath. Sarwani had recognised the former to be the place where Sher Shah's grandfather, Ibrahim Khan, took up his abode, after being inducted in the service of one of Sultan Bahlul's nobles.⁵¹⁶ This place was thus of immense significance to the Surs, witnessing their arrival in the geographical and political landscape of India. However, Bajwara cannot be traced to have held any relevance for the Lodis, with whom Shaikh Kabir chose to associate it with, keeping up with his repetitive style to interfere with the arrangement of the earlier works. Despite his disregard for the placement, Shaikh Kabir retained its essence by recording it to be the place where Kala Lodi fought against the residing *kafirs*, which immensely pleased Rao Dashrath Khokar. He thus invited Kala Lodi to accompany him the court of the Sultan of Delhi, setting in motion his political ascendancy.⁵¹⁷ Thus in both cases Bajwara was identified as the launching pad from where the Lodis and the Surs began to script their political careers. This was, however, not to be the case with Shaikh Kabir's narrative of Balnath.

⁵¹⁵ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 160a-164a, 164b-169a.

⁵¹⁶ Ahmad Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 8.

⁵¹⁷ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 7b-10a, 10b-14b.

Sarwani's reference to the mound of Jogi Balnath served the sole purpose of identifying the location of the fort of Rohtas which was constructed at a site close to it. The fort was of immense importance to Sher Shah, who placed it under the command of Azam Humayun with thirty thousand horsemen, as it could keep the territories of Kashmir and Ghakkar in check.⁵¹⁸ Shaikh Kabir displayed no interest in the strategic importance of this place or the fort. He rather narrates Islam Shah's visit to the mound and when he heard of a local heresy claiming that Jogi Balnath could walk in air, the Sultan decided to challenge it. The Sultan thus climbed up the branch of a tree, extending over a cliff, on which the *jogi* had left his mark. Though the locals requested the Sultan not to, he was able to cross that mark and went even further.⁵¹⁹ Thus this episode was designed in an attempt to hold the interest of the audience, rather than limit itself to narrating a monotonous political narrative of the period. (See below)

Apart from the above mentioned texts, the *Afsana i Shahan* can be seen to have invested itself into the *Tarikh i Khan Jahani* as well. This becomes apparent when we come across Shaikh Kabir's rendition of the episodes that Nimatullah had contrived in his effort to display association with the *Tarikh i Shahi* and *Tarikh i Daudi*. (See the opening section of this chapter) However, Shaikh Kabir appears to have built upon Nimatullah's version, as he was much closer to it than to that found in Ahmad Yadgar's and Abdullah's writings. At the same time he was not necessarily restrained by it either. So while narrating the incident on the magical four cornered lamp, Shaikh Kabir expanded its scale by claiming that a *maulawi* residing in Agra, who came to possess it, ordered the spirits to bring the princess of Rum. The King was very concerned as his daughter

⁵¹⁸ Ahmad Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, p. 212.

⁵¹⁹ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, f. 146b.

mysteriously disappeared every night. As the princess was not familiar with Hindi, she was unable to enquire of his identity. It was only after learning the language that the situation became comprehensible. The king of Rum immediately wrote to Sultan Sikandar and as a proof of his words sent him a betel leaf that the princess had carried back with her. The Sultan immediately ordered an investigation and the wife of the *maulawi* was also asked to keep an eye on him. Soon after the *maulawi*, in a state of intoxication, confessed to his crimes and was killed immediately. The king of Rum honoured Sikandar Lodi, by granting him a letter of recognition, in the capacity of being the khalifa of the Islamic world.⁵²⁰ Thus here the deliverance of justice by the Sultan rounds off the episode, unlike that in the previous cases.

Shaikh Kabir continued to escalate the magnitude of the narrative in the *hikayat* revolving around Shaikh Jamali's experiences during his sojourn to Khurasan. Instead of concentrating on the developments that occurred following the Shaikh's return, here the narrative began with him leaving the realm of the Lodi Sultan. Shaikh Jamali was very disturbed that the Sultan no longer harboured the same affection for him as before. He therefore left the court and reached Khurasan, in the guise of a *qalandar* and happened to meet Jami. Though Jami was familiar with Shaikh Jamali, but he could not recognise him. When he came to know that this man was from Delhi, he begun to enquire him of Shaikh Jamali and requested him to recite a poem of the famed poet. Shaikh Jamali came up with a spontaneous one, revealing his true identity to Jami. They soon bonded very well over their common interest in poetry. In the meantime Sultan Sikandar wrote to him, requesting his return but Shaikh Jamali, being unable to overcome the grief that his

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 34a-36b.

behaviour had caused, refused. The Sultan passed away soon after.⁵²¹ Therefore as far as utilisation of sources is concerned, the *Afsana i Shahan* can be recognised to have drawn from multiple works. Scholars have also recognised the *Sirat i Firozshahi* and the Portuguese source, *Campos*, to have attested the information that Shaikh Kabir furnished.⁵²²

While it is important to acknowledge what got carried forward it is equally crucial to take note of what was left behind. It is not difficult to note that the last section in the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, consisting of the creative stories were singularly omitted, while the *Tabaqat i Akbari* lost out on its section on the Ibrahim Lodi. These were not random omissions but had significantly added and reflected the character of each of the works. Thus in the former case along with these imaginative stories, we lost out on Mushtaqi's idea of history, (See chapter 1) while in the latter case Nizamuddin Ahmad's unwillingness to compromise on the aura of kingship can be deduced as he refused to allow Sultan Ibrahim to, even partially, shoulder the responsibility of the downfall of the Lodi power. (See chapter 2) So by omitting Nizamuddin Ahmad's version Shaikh Kabir freed himself of the Mughal official's perspective as well. A similar pattern can be observed in the case of the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi* where all events tracing the development of a political circle around Sher Shah and the interdependency that the author established between the Mughals and the Afghans, for his benefit, (See chapter 3) was eliminated. Neither was Shaikh Kabir influenced by the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi*, as he did not allow Mushtaqi's writings to overpower him, (see chapter 4) nor could the *Tarikh*

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 36b-38a.

⁵²² S.H Askari, 'Historical Value of Afsana i Badshahan or Tarikh i Afghani', *Journal of History*, 1965, pp.189-190.

i Khan Jahani convince him to stick to the *Tabaqat i Akbari*. The only aspect of Nimatullah's writings which appears to have left an impression on Shaikh Kabir's text was that of improvising upon a pre existing text, but without losing touch with them. This not just gave him the ability to remain within the broad tradition, but also the space to make changes according to his requirements. It also becomes quite clear that Shaikh Kabir had recognised the underlying currents that directed the composition of each of these works, and by avoiding from bringing them into his text; he was able to assign it its unique place.

The *Afsana i Shahan* had indeed displayed some unique qualities, breaking away from the existing norms of recording the Afghan past. One very significant way through which Shaikh Kabir achieved that was by breaking the divide that had aggressively distanced the works from each other. Thus he partook from all of the pre existing works, and notably brought the *Tabaqat i Akbari* and the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* together. This was an unprecedented move, as so far they were considered to have represented different sensibilities of history writing, aggravated by the friction between their patrons. Thus acknowledging one implied disregarding the other, which was done in varied ways as can be seen in the case of the *Tabaqat* itself along with the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi*.

Other than overcoming this barrier, the *Afsana i Shahan* was responsible for bringing the Afghan past back into circulation in the public sphere. Although the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* was the first one to have done so, it was soon absorbed into works that had nothing to do with the audience which it was originally composed for. The *Afsana i Shahan* employed unpolished language, which was crude and informal in many places, as

well as freely utilised Hindwi for connecting with its targeted audience. A consciousness about the language is evident when the author records of an interaction to have taken place between Mirza Kamran and Shah Muhammad. When the latter recited a couplet in Hindwi, the former objected to the choice of his language, expressing his preference for Persian. Shah Muhammad defended his choice, explaining that his beloved, for whom he recited it, was familiar with the language.⁵²³ Thus Shaikh Kabir clarifies the importance of communicating in the language which the intended audience would be comfortable with.

Once we are able to identify the audience that the text desired to address, one cannot help but notice that the content was not quite appropriate. The *Afsana i Shahan* recorded some very grim realities of the political realm. It thus notes of constant conflicts, conspiracies, violent executions, death on battlefield and instability in political alliances. Though such developments were a way of life for those in the game of power, those outside it could have been very disturbed by it. This brought the text in a peculiar position where considering the sources that were at its disposal, a political narrative was its preferred framework, but the audience that it intended to cater to was unlikely to have been able to endure it for so long. Therefore to break the seriousness of the narrative, Shaikh Kabir inserted certain episodes of relief, helping the audience to remain invested in the text.

One of the most effective ways in which Shaikh Kabir was able to do so was through humour. We thus find characters to be acting or reacting in unexpected ways, allowing them to bring in humour without breaking the flow of the narrative. Thus when

⁵²³ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, f., 146b.

Sultan Husain proceeded to Delhi at the insistence of his wife, who wanted him to secure the throne for her brothers after the demise of their father, he after securing it, stayed on for nine years. It was after so many years that his wife reminded him of handing over the charge to her brothers. The Sultan initially refused, saying that he was not under any compulsion to honour her word, but then agreed.⁵²⁴ It was also surprising when one of Sikandar Lodi's nobles, Az Humayun, unable to keep pace with him during an expedition, went off in a completely different direction. It was after six to seven years that he returned, and got away without facing the wrath of the Sultan.⁵²⁵ Another amusing episode featured Shaikh Illahadad of Jaunpur. Sultan Sikandar was very keen to meet him but the Shaikh's manservant was not in favour of it at all. So to avoid it he led the Shaikh to his house and insisted on getting his clothes washed there. Thus the Shaikh was sitting, wrapped in a sheet, when the Sultan arrived looking for him. The servant denied the Shaikh's presence, identifying him as an ordinary teacher. The Sultan could not recognise him and went away.⁵²⁶

Such episodes continue to make appearances as Shaikh Kabir records the extent to which Sultan Sikandar used to shy away in the presence of women. When an old woman wished to get her daughters married, she on the instruction of one of the Sultan's nobles, Mian Bhua, asked her daughters to walk past the Sultan. In the meantime Sikandar Lodi was leaving for prayers, but on seeing the girls he turned his face towards a wall and asked the noble to arrange for their marriage.⁵²⁷ The audience could have either found it to be humours for a Sultan of his stature to have found himself in a spot, on seeing girls

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 15b-16a.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 27b.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 30b-31a.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 40a-40b.

walk past by him, or in some cases where such extreme segregation was considered to be desirable, a mark of his integrity. Thus the cultural heterogeneity of the audience meant that the author could not be always sure of their exact reaction, but nonetheless in both cases it did the trick of creating a diversion for them.

At other times the author also mocked some of the Sultan's political decisions, like assigning high positions to incompetent people. Thus when Shaikh Kabir claimed that a man who was earlier in charge of tents and the royal stable, was elevated to a position of twenty thousand *mansabdari*, the audience was unlikely to have fallen for it. So to turn it into a humorous situation and get away with its improbability, Shaikh Kabir extended the episode to record the amusing enthusiasm with which the man set out against the Sultan of Mandu. Sultan Sikandar Lodi, pointing to his incapacity, reminded him of his inability to do so, ordered him to retreat. Though it may appear that the narrative was against the man, but it on second thoughts the Sultan was ridiculed for appointing an unsuitable person to this high position. Similarly, when an Afghan who was assigned a village by the Sultan disappeared for seven years, the Sultan remained ignorant of his absence.⁵²⁸

The author also did not mind turning episodes on death to ones providing comic relief. This is evident when he reproduced the episode recording the drowning of the Sultan of Malwa, from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*.⁵²⁹ The Sultan was in an intoxicated state when he drowned in his bath. What added the element of humour to it was the rage that he had expressed when his maidens had saved him earlier, by pulling him out by his hair.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. 41b-44a.

⁵²⁹ Mushtaqi, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, p. 209.

They thus did nothing to save him this time.⁵³⁰ Just as misplaced rage could evoke humour, Shaikh Kabir utilised a violent interaction between a wrestler and the son of Sultan Husain, resulting in their deaths, to leave the audience amused. To be able to do so, Shaikh Kabir, instead of recording an expected wrestling match, provided with an unusual setting. Here the wrestler decided to give the Sharqi prince a head massage. In the process he intentionally injured him. The prince on realising the wrestler's intentions, instead of executing him decided to pay him back in the same coin. The prince thus offered the wrestler a head massage as well but did it so forcefully that 'his brain came out of his ear' and he died instantly. The prince also died a few days later and so did Sultan Husain.⁵³¹ Shaikh Kabir was thus able to transform the emotions that such grim incidents evoked, by focussing the reader's attention to the amusing presentation of these incidents.

Shaikh Kabir continued with a similar strategy, but with lesser frequency, in his section on Sher Shah. Here we see Sher Shah to have fooled Muhammad Khan, who was keen to take over Mian Hasan's territories and resources. Sher Shah, in order to get better of Muhammad Khan initially submitted to him and later when asked to display his weapons and troops, was able to convince the latter's soldiers to lend him some. Not only was Muhammad Khan unable to recognise his men and weapons in Sher Shah's array, but it took little effort by the former to corner the latter. Thus when the audience should have been disturbed by the deceit that Sher Shah resorted to, they were left amused by Muhammad Khan's foolishness.⁵³² After this incident Shaikh Kabir did not employ

⁵³⁰ Shaikh Kabir, *Afsana i Shahan*, ff. 44a-45a.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 33b-34a.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, ff. 51a-51b.

humour to break the monotony on Sher Shah's narrative for a long while till it resurfaces in his account on the battle at Qannauj.

Realising the pressure on the decisive upcoming battle, it was not unfair for Shaikh Kabir to have felt the need to ease the tension. Thus we see across unusual conversation between the two rulers, as they contemplated on a suitable site and a convenient date on which the battle was to take place. Surprisingly when Humayun informed Sher Shah of Qannauj being his preferred battlefield, Sher Shah did not express any disapproval. Rather Shaikh Kabir records that the two armies marched upto the site, parallel to each other, on either sides of the Ganges, exchanging friendly banter on the way.⁵³³ The developments that led to the fixing of the date of the battle is even more amusing. Humayun decided upon *ashura* (tenth day of Hijri calendar) to be the day on which the fateful battle would take place, but Sher Shah on realising that it was a Tuesday, disagreed, stating it to be an inauspicious day for him. Humayun, however, refused to shift the date and ultimately Sher Shah gave in, realising that it would be wise to await the arrival of Khawas Khan till then.⁵³⁴ Though the arrival of Khawas Khan was a valid consideration, by claiming that neither the site nor the day of battle was fixed in advance, the author amusingly trivialised the event. Similarly while recording the aftermath of the war, the author continued to lighten the seriousness of the situation by portraying Humayun to be enjoying a watermelon under the shade of a tree. He also received Sher Shah's envoy with unnatural pleasantries, sent to enquire of Humayun's well being. It was on receiving the news that Khawas Khan was on his heels, that Humayun left, but not before asking the envoy to communicate his greetings to Sher

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, ff. 116a.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 117a-117b.

Shah. Even more amusingly, when Khawas Khan failed to capture Humayun, Sher Shah appointed Baramzid Gaur to go on his trail, but at a slow pace,⁵³⁵ as if he meant no harm to him.

This effort to lighten the narrative, continued in the section on Islam Shah where amidst the troubles that the Sultan was facing from his powerful nobles, many of whom joined his elder brother against him, the author found the spaces to relive his readers periodically. Thus when Islam Khan sent Daulat Khan to seek Haji Khan's assistance, the Lodi envoy was surprised to see him put on so much of armoury that he could not stand on his own. It was with the support of four to five people that Haji Khan was able to mount his horse. When Daulat Khan pointed out the inconvenience that it was going to cause him, Haji Khan silenced him by asking him not to worry about it.⁵³⁶ It was also amusing to see the Sultan approach Khawas Khan's mother, when he refused to follow his orders.⁵³⁷ Other than inducting humour into episodes of political consequences, Shaikh Kabir designed episodes that had no bearing on political developments but kept the audience entertained. Thus the Sultan cheekily devised a way to catch a glimpse of the wife of a Niazi, who was famed for her beauty,⁵³⁸ and challenged the fame of Jogi Balnath. Similarly the incidents where the Sultan and his courtiers joked about the uneasiness that a Hindu Raja faced while crossing a meat shop and the Sultan's habit of bestowing positions on those who had troubled him in his childhood,⁵³⁹ all appear to be in the same vein.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 119b-120a.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 144a-144b.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 139b.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. 152a-152b.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 154b-157a.

These attempts by Shaikh Kabir to provide occasional relief to his audience did not mean that the author avoided recording some gruesome episodes. Other than frequently referring to conspiracies and treacheries, the text evokes some very disturbing visuals as well. Thus Ibrahim Lodi had the severed head of Salim Khan sent to his father, Azam Humayun.⁵⁴⁰ Similarly the incident where Shaikh Khalil's grandfather was murdered by the Mughals on his prayer mat, just before he was about to offer his prayers, is another instance reflecting the author's intent not to avoid them.⁵⁴¹ Instead the author went on to escalate on such horrifying imagery, like the one we encounter recording the death of Fath Khan. When Humayun launched a sudden attack on Sher Shah's camp, the latter panicked. Being caught unaware, Sher Shah abused Fath Khan for not arriving immediately. Fath Khan took offence and to prove his diligence headed for the battle and was slain. Azam Humayun, who was the cousin brother of Fath Khan, insisted on retrieving his corpse. However, on reaching the spot, he was unable to identify Fath Khan's headless corpse. It was a permanent mark on his leg that Azam Humayun had seen during their childhood, that he could verify the identity of the headless corpse.⁵⁴² Therefore though this appears to a contradictory effort by the author, where on the one hand he provide respite from the disturbing nature of politics, on the other presented his readers with such unsettling images. However it was the presence of one that helped to maximise the impact of the other. So it was the presence of the disturbing developments that made the audience take note of the humorous interventions that the narrative provided and vice versa. Both, however, served the same purpose of embedding themselves and the text in their audience's memory.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 47a-47b.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 62a.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, ff. 105a-105b.

Despite being a narrative of political events, the *Afsana i Shahan*, does not appear to be driven by any political position. Unlike the earlier works, which represented one political position or the other, regardless of their targeted audience, Shaikh Kabir's writing did not. Moreover the opening section of the text, where Shaikh Kabir exercised maximum liberty, is the one that appears to be the least impressive to those seeking politically oriented explanations. Thus Sultan Husain Sharqi's sudden withdrawal after ruling Delhi for nine years, the rare diligence with which Qutb Khan served his brother, Bahlul Lodi, the silence on the identity of Qiyam Khan and the intention with which he joined the Rajputs against Bahlul, are some crucial questions left unanswered. The author thus left some gaping holes in the political structure of his narrative, reinforcing the thought that the text was did not want to deal with one.

The question that arises is what led to the vacuum, the absence of a political context that had so far supported the composition of Afghan narratives in so many different ways. What we can be quite certain about is that it was not the choice of the audience that the text primarily intended to reach out to, as is evident with the case of the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*. The anecdotes composed by Mushtaqi, for circulation at the popular level, had a strong political context as the author negotiated with the cultural discrimination that the Afghans had been subjected to by the power holders of other ethnicities. (See chapter 1) Instead it appears that with the weakening of the Mughal power in the eighteenth century, which the author sought to communicate by identifying Shah Alam, instead of the Sayyid Sultan Alauddin, as the ruler of Delhi, the interest to exploit the Afghan-Mughal past shrunk. The ideological tussle did not generate any further interest and thus the memory of the Afghan kings could now survive in a very

generic manner. The Afghan kings thus acquired characteristics that any ruler attempting to carve their place in the public sphere would, of being religious, humble, just, merciful, benevolent and so on. Though this is not to mark a clear distinction between the imagery of kings in works written for public and those with restricted access, a change in the context would have had their own implications.

The *Afsana i Shahan* has some rare merits but the work did not gain traction in modern historiography for the reconstruction of the Afghan past. This can be partially explained by its silence on sources, absence of dates, the liberty that the author took to intervene on the existing narrative rather than reproducing them, jumbling up of characters with events and also the presence of a sizeable chunk of episodes that were not to be found in any of the earlier works. Though, some have tried to trace the source of these anecdotes to the author's grandfather who was in the service of Sher Shah till he relinquished his position after the first battle against the Mughals,⁵⁴³ and therefore it being a reliable account,⁵⁴⁴ but even accepting that would cover a very limited section of the text, leaving the rest of the text open to questioning due to the lack of sources. Shaikh Kabir's intention appears to have been familiarising his readers of his descent rather than hint towards the source of his writing. Thus Shaikh Kabir, much like Mushtaqi, hardly displayed any concern over clarifying his sources and their power to validate his writing. However if we choose to move beyond these parameters of history writing, and identify the historical space that these works occupied, they open up new horizons, essential to expand our understanding of the subject.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, ff. 109a-111b.

⁵⁴⁴ Hussain Khan, 'Afsanah i Shahan: A Critique', in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1987, p. 352.

Conclusion

The significance of the period that was politically occupied by the Lodis and the Surs has not been overlooked in modern historiography. However, its present state, which can be broadly divided into focussing either on their polity and economy or being source critical, has been identified to have several methodological problems. Many of the sources available for this period has been characterised as 'fictional' and thereby unreliable, creating a false sense of divide between them and the 'reliable' ones, written under Mughal patronage. Yet due to the limited availability of sources for the period, scholars have not been able to evade their use. This has created a strange situation where the reconstruction of the Indo-Afghan past has been laid on the sources which are considered to be unreliable. Other than that little attention has been paid to the individuality of these texts, as their historical value was determined only through comparative readings. A critical approach to the existing historiography has thus exposed the presence of a strong prejudice againsts the texts that did not comply with the formalised form of history recording.

Other than adopting this narrow approach, modern scholarship can also be criticised for being unable to justify its academic pursuit, independent of the period preceeding or succeeding it. The presence of sources that enables us to access this span of history should be considered good enough by itself. Despite this attempt to keep the focus on the period, one cannot help but notice the distinct nature of the sources that are available, when compared to others. In stark contrast to the regimes that led and followed it, there are no official histories that have survived for either the Lodis or the Surs. Infact

their presence, at any point, is suspicious. This absence has understandably limited the extent to which we can reconstruct the history of these dynasties, and has also simultaneously placed greater responsibility on the texts that were composed much later. In our eagerness to extract answers to some very standard questions on the nature of their polity, their economic policies and state formation, there has been a strong tendency to ignore that many of these texts were not written with the prime intention to address such concerns. Thus despite of having the ruler as the central character, we rarely come across information on the administrative and fiscal measures that were institutionalised by the state. In the rare instances that we do, they are either set apart from the main narrative, as in the case of the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, or are absent from texts which were the most likely to have recorded them, like the *Tabaqat i Akbari*.

This study of the Afghan period that we embarked upon, brought us in confrontation with a range of texts, each different from the other in their approach to history writing. There have been certain factors that we have identified, the absence, presence and the way in which it was employed by each of the authors have been studied, both to understand and reflect upon the historical space that they occupied. This historical space has been divided into many, the space of the author and his patron, the space in which the targeted audience could be located and the space in which the journey of text did not end with it being read or communicated to its intended audience. The text thus went further to serve as a source, contributing to the composition of another text, and the circle continued. It would be too naive to assume that this was as simple as it sounds, and the only way in which a text could support another was by passing on information. Texts are much more than carriers of facts and figures. They carry ideas, perspectives and in the

case of history were representations of an assertion that one sought to establish by claiming to control the way in which the present and the future would remember the past to have been. It was in this attempt to establish control over their shared past, that the framework of this study has been located. The Mughals and the Afghans were anxious not only to unfold events in a certain way so that the perspectives drawn from it would be favourable to them, but also struggled against each other to forward their theory of history writing.

It is on this basis that two broad strands has been recognised, one very different from the other. The factors which differed between them ranged from the way in which they acknowledged and utilised sources, imparted a sense of the progress of time and identified the content that could be accepted as historical enough to be incorporated in a text recording the past. However as we saw, many a times, these texts did not keep to themselves, but rather consciously looked for ways to interact with other, which more often than not was not accompanied with friendly intentions. Though this aggressiveness was rarely expressed directly (other than against the *Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi*), but attention was given to control and channelize it in a way that would benefit the intended side. It is here that we encounter a thick layer of complications where texts displayed a whole range of innovative tactics, ranging from conjuring up imaginative texts and patrons, claiming to have utilised some text in the name of other and also found ways to slip in some new information without bothering to associate any reference with them. Thus it became clear that the use of sources was never an absolute but always a relative exercise, varying according to what the text under construction desired itself to be.

However not all texts were concerned with this tussle in the larger interest, as they had their personal intentions to serve. It is here that one can locate the *Tarikh i Firishta*, which challenged Nizamuddin Ahmad's work to be incomplete, only because he did not want an overlap to lead his text into obscurity. Another text that can be identified to have had nothing to do with this conflict was the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*. Despite of these texts being distant from the concern that engulfed all of the other texts, it would be wrong to presume that they, specially the latter, had nothing to contribute in furthering our understanding of history writing. On the contrary, Abbas Khan Sarwani displayed unmatched competence in balancing the Afghans and the Mughals, only to ensure that his text would benefit from the presence of both in the end.

The other text that was not affected by the Afghan-Mughal conflict, although for a very different reason, was the *Afsana i Shahan*. Given that it was composed after the Mughals had lost their glory, the framework of struggle between the Mughals and the Afghans to establish control over their shared past was no longer an appealing one. However this meant that the history of the Afghan Sultans stood the chance of fading away too. Shaikh Kabir, in order to give it another lease of life, composed this text to keep their memory alive at the popular level. This text did not only dissolve boundaries between the texts that had been composed so far, but also displayed an innovative way to build association, without directly reproducing from them. It was with this text, that after a century of Mushtaqi's writings, the recording of the Afghan past came back to the audience with whom it had begun its journey. There was no hunt for sources, no rigidity with facts and care was taken to ensure that the audience continued to remain invested in the narrative.

With the wide range of texts that are available on the Afghan past, many of which do not confirm to the standard notion of what has been categorised as history, scholars had often advised against their utilisation. However by adopting a more flexible approach, not only have these sections been identified to have added an entertainment value, through its content and by adopting storytelling as its form of narration, but also conveyed some crucial ideas on the subject itself. This intention of the author appears to have succeeded as many texts which were originally not suffixed by the term used to recognise formal history writing, *tarikh*, were subsequently named so. However it is important to keep in mind that though they adopted the nomenclature but the differences in their practices remained. Thus the *Afsana i Shahan* also came to be known as the *Tarikh i Badshahan*, the texts reproducing from the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi* were titled as the *Tarikh i Shahi* and the *Tarikh i Daudi*, while the *Tuhfah i Akbar Shahi* was recognised as the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*. This thus brings into the equation the role of the audience, as it is important to recognise that other than the intention of the author, it is the presence of an audience, who was receptive to such texts, that the composition of these texts should also be attributed to. It was for them, which made it possible for the authors like Mushtaqi and Shaikh Kabir to move away from the formalised form of this craft, just as it was for these authors which enabled the Afghan past to be accessed by a much wider audience. Thus it was both the intention with which the author wrote and the presence of an audience with the ability to receive it, which made the composition and circulation of these texts a mutually engaging and satisfying exercise.

Though this study has greatly emphasised on the intertextual approach, there are cases where composition of texts have been studied independent of their use of sources.

Therefore the *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, which does not refer to any source and is the first in the series, its composition had to be examined internally. Similarly the composition of the *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, which acknowledged only oral sources, has been studied without any external interventions. However the circulation of these texts brought the intertextual approach back into the game, which by default also became an examination of the composition of the texts that utilised them for it. It therefore becomes apparent that the composition and circulation of these texts were not two independent processes, not only because the circulation of one laid the basis for the composition of the other, but also as it was keeping in mind the sphere that the author intended his text to reach that determined the strategies he employed to compose it.

The Indo-Afghan Narratives which were composed and circulated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and also appears to have spilled over to the eighteenth, are an unconventional set of sources. It, however, has not been fair to take their unconventionality for their unreliability. Though majority of modern scholars have criticised these texts for showing little concern to evaluate their sources, in the same way that they do, this approach completely overlooks the fact that these medieval authors were intending to produce works that cannot be compared to the ones that modern scholars have. Thus it on devising a methodology that would develop the distinctive characteristics of these texts in a positive light, that we can appreciate these texts, rather than merely use them, out of a sense of liability to reconstruct the period. This study is a humble step in this direction, with the hope that the Indo-Afghan narratives will be given their due, which has not been the case so far.

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Published Sources

Abdullah, *Tarikh i Daudi*, ed. S.A. Rashid, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1969.

Abul Fazl, *The History of Akbar*, ed. Wheeler Thackston, 2 vols., Harvard University Press, 2016.

Ahmad, Nizamuddin, *Tabaqat i Akbari*, vol. 1 & 2, ed. Brijendra Nath De, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1927.

Babur, Zahiruddin Muhammad, *The Baburnama*, ed. and tr. Wheeler Thackston, The Modern Library, New York, 2002.

Badauni, Abdul Qadir, *Muntakhab'u l Tawarikh*, ed. Munshi Ahmad Ali, Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1865.

Begum, Gulbadan, *The History of Humayun: Humayunnama*, tr. Annette Beveridge, Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1902.

Firishta, Muhammad Qasim, *Tarikh i Firishta*, 2 vols., ed. Muhammad Reza Nasiri, Tehran, 2009.

Khan, Hasan Ali, 'Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi', tr. S.B.P Nigam *Sur Vansh ka Itihas*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1973.

Mushtaqi, Shaikh Rizqullah, *Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, eds. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui and Waqarul Hasan Siddiqui, Rampur Raza Library, Rampur, 2002.

Nimatullah, *Tarikh i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan i Afghani*, ed. S.M. Imamuddin, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1960.

Sarwani, Abbas Khan, *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, ed. S.M Imamuddin, University of Dacca, Dacca, 1964.

Sirhindi, Ahmad bin Abdullah, *Tarikh i Mubarakshahi*, tr., Beveridge, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 2010.

Yadgar, Ahmad, *Tarikh i Shahi*, ed. Hidayat Hosain, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1939.

- Unpublished Sources

Kabir, Muhammd, *Afsana i Shahan*, British Library, Ms Add. 24,409.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Alam, Muzaffar and Sanjay Subrahmanyam eds. *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

Ambasthya, B.P., *Tarikh i Sher Shahi*, K.P Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, 1974, Introduction.

Anooshahr, Ali, 'Author of One's fate: Fatalism and agency in Indo-Persian histories', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 2012, pp 197-224.

Aquil, Raziuddin, *Sufism, Culture and Politics: Afghans and Islam in Medieval North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007.

Askari, Syed Hasan, 'Historical Value of the Afsana i Badshahan or Tarikh i Afghani', *Journal of Indian History*, 1965, serial 43, pp. 183- 200.

Digby, Simon, 'Dreams and Reminiscences of Dattu Sarwani: A Sixteenth Century Indo-Afghan Solider', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 52, no. 2, 1964, pp. 52-80.

-----, 'The Sufi Shaykh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India', in *Iran*, Vol. 28, 1990, pp. 71-81.

-----, 'The Indo-Persian Historiography of the Lodi Sultans', ed. Francois Grimal, *Les Sources Et Le Temps: Sources and Time*, Institut Francais De Pondicherry, Pondicherry, 2001, pp. 243-264.

Green, Nile, 'Tribe, Diaspora and Saints in Afghan History', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2008, pp. 171-211.

Habib, Irfan, 'Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class in the Thirteenth Century', ed. Irfan Habib, *Medieval India: Researches in History of India*, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 1-21.

Halim, Abdul, *History of Lodi Sultans of Delhi and Agra*, Idrah i Adabiyat, Delhi, 1974.

Hameed ud-Din, 'Indian Culture in the Late Sultanate Period: A Short Study', *East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 1, March 1961, pp. 25-39.

-----, 'Historians of Afghan Rule in India', *Journal of American Society*, Vol. 82, No. 1, 1962, pp. 44-51.

Imamuddin, S.M., 'The Tarikh i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan i Afghani', *Islamic Culture*, vol. 22, No. 2, 1948, pp. 128-142.

-----, 'The Tarikh i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan i Afghani', *Islamic Culture*, vol. 22, No. 2, 1948, pp. 280-291.

-----, 'Some Persian Literary Sources of the Afghan History of India', *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 33, 1959, pp. 39-49.

Joshi, Rita, *Afghan Nobility and the Mughals*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1985.

Khan, Hussain, 'Afsanah i Shahan: A Critique', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 26, No. 4, 1987, pp. 351-372.

Kolff, Dirk, 'A Warlord's fresh attempt at Empire', Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam eds., *The Mughal State*, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 75-114.

Meisami, Julie Scott, History as Literature, *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2000, pp. 15-30.

Mottahedeh, Roy P., 'Aja'ib in the Thousand and One Nights', eds. Richard Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh, *The Thousand and One Nights in Arabic Literature and Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 29-39.

Mukhia, Harbans, *Historians and Historiography during Reign of Akbar*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976.

Nizami, K.A., 'The Lodis', in M. Habib and K.A. Nizami eds. *A Comprehensive History of India*. Vol. 5, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1970, pp. 664-709.

Orsini, Francesca and Samira Shaikh, *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007.

Qanungo, Kalika Ranjan, 'Assessment of Historical Value of the Tarikh i Shahi', *Bengal: Past and Present*, vol. 82, no. 153, 1963, pp. 58-64.

Qanungo, Kalika Ranjan, 'Assessment of Historical Value of the Tarikh i Shahi', *Bengal: Past and Present*, vol. 82, no. 155, 1964, pp. 32-42.

-----, *Sher Shah and his Times*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1965.

Raza, Rahim, 'Abbas Khan Sarwani and the Tuhfah i Akbar Shahi: A Critical Study', *East and West*, Vol.33, No. 1/4, December 1983, pp. 143-176.

Richards, J.F., 'The Economic History of the Lodi Period: 1451-1526', ed. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Money and Market in India 1100-1700*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, pp. 137-155.

Rizvi, S.A.A, 'Authenticity of the Title Page and the Colophon of Tawarikh i Daulat i Sher Shahi', *Medieval India Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 2, October, 1950, pp. 74-78.

Siddiqui, Iqtidar Husain, *Some Aspects of Afghan Despotism in India*, Three Men Publication, Aligarh, 1969.

-----, *Mughal Relations with the Indian Ruling Elite*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1983.

-----, *The Waqiat i Mushtaqi*, Indian Council of Historical Research and Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 1993, Introduction.