

**THE POLITICS OF THE NOBILITY:  
THE BARHA SAIYYIDS AND THE MUGHALS**

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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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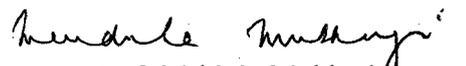
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**Certificate**

The dissertation entitled *The Politics of the Nobility: The Barha Saiyyids and the Mughals* is submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of this university. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree of this university or any other university and is my original work.

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

  
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## INTRODUCTION

Every structure or being has to have a constitution on which the foundation of its existence can be laid. And a structure becomes dynamic when the features of its very constitution can be termed as organically viable. To make an institution as encompassing as a 'state' the features those go into its making must be such that they inspire a mutually sustainable arrangement. It is like any other organism for the proper functioning of which all organs of its body structure need to be in perfect shape and unison with each other. To consider the state structure as an organic institution is necessary because the state emerges as the most visible institutions of the time that is under consideration. It is within the framework of the workability of the state apparatus that the proposed examination of the Saiyyids of Barha as a family will be undertaken.

To examine the state as an organic institution it is necessary to identify the discernible features that make it a viable entity. Though several such features can be identified, we are concerned with two of them--the ruler and the nobility. Both these factors, which make the working of the state apparatus possible, can be termed as the most important features as they either sustain the structure or become the cause for its degeneration more often than the others. They are also more significant because they can be taken as two forces at the ends of a seesaw, which not only enhance its movement but also can jeopardize it if they are not balanced properly.

Moreover, a state gets expressed in terms of its policies concerning its subjects, neighboring states (both friends and foes) and those related to economic, social and religious field. This expression can be possible only through an agency, in this case, which is the ruler and his bureaucracy. This study attempts to explore the equation between these two aspects in the context of the Barha Saiyyids.

The significance of the equation that is being hinted at comes out strikingly in the following notion of Humayun. According to him, the society could be divided into three classes-- *ahl-i-daulat*, the governing class comprising of the emperor, the members of the royal family, army and nobility; *ahl-i-saadat*, which includes the literati, *ulama*, *qazis*, *saadat* or the descendants of the Prophet, men of learning like physicians, poets, musicians etc; *ahl-i-murad*, who catered to the pleasures of the above two like minstrels, dancing girls etc.<sup>1</sup>

The acceptance of the equal social status of the emperor and the nobility on the basis of the above formulation is in accordance with the argument that is being forwarded in the discussion. It is this similarity in status that makes the relationship between them interesting as in no point in time the equation remained one to one. For practical purposes there was always a predominance of one over the other. The reasons and results of this divergence from idealism makes an interesting study and this aspect will be taken into consideration while examining the relation between

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<sup>1</sup> K. M. Ashraf: *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, p. 82.

various Emperors and the Saiyyids of Barha. Abul Fazl also gives a classification of the society into several categories out of which the four classes of men who could maintain the equilibrium of a welfare state were the nobles, assistants of victory, companions of the king and the servants in that order.<sup>2</sup>

The Saiyyids of Barha were an important kin group during medieval India, which rose to prominence in the early years of Akbar. The Barhas owe their emergence in the arena of medieval Indian history to the policy of Mughal Emperors to include indigenous elements to the body of nobles to check the overdependence on their own kins. The implications of this policy need to be examined.

The Barhas played an important role in the decisive battle between the Mughal and Afghan forces that made the Mughals establish a long lasting empire in the Indian subcontinent. The subsequent centuries, which witnessed the Mughals gaining firmer grounds, saw a corresponding rise in significance of the Barhas. To start from their humble origins, the Barhas managed to reach positions where Emperors speak of them fondly as companions.<sup>3</sup>

By the eighteenth century however, the equation between the ruler and the Barhas as a part of the nobility had become an unequal one. The Emperors after Aurangzeb occupied the throne only in name and the

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<sup>2</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, pp. 4-7.

<sup>3</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, tr. Z. A. Desai, Vol. II, p. 191. Shahjahan calls Saiyyid Khan Jahan Lodi as a friend for hunting excursions. The source also reveals the preference the Emperor had for this noble over others.

continuous intrigues of the nobility saw its manifestations in encroaching all power and authority by the Saiyyid brothers in 1712. How can this sequential increase in significance of the Barhas be explained? And what implications can one identify on the state, the ruler and the nobility as a result? It is this aspect that will remain the point of inquiry and the thread of connection for the present study.

The entire discussion has been divided into three chapters based on the broad categorizations that can be made. The first chapter will be an effort to understand the structure of the 'state' and the associated features that can help in a better understanding of the same. Since our objective is to locate the family of the Barhas within the larger apparatus of the state and its working in a particular period in history, the analysis of the structure itself becomes a necessary exercise.

The discussion will include the origin of the idea of a 'state' within the Indian context and the analysis of the Mughal state in particular. Whether the Emperor or the nobility was more important in sustaining the state? There will be an attempt to answer various queries that can be associated with the examination of the apparatus of the state.

The second chapter will be an analysis of the Barha family trying to trace their line of descent and the person, region and causes that can be associated with their origin. Whether the Barhas were a group that existed in India from earlier times or they immigrated from outside the boundaries of the subcontinent? What are the myths and stories that find

expression in the tracing the pedigree of the family? What was the region within the Indian subcontinent that they came to inhabit over time?

The third chapter will deal primarily with the individuals of the Barha family and their personal careers and contributions to history. This will include the members from the time of Akbar to the time of Muhammad Shah. Along with their personal achievements there will be an attempt to locate features that made them important forces in history. It will also include the aspect of the social and cultural implication of the ascendancy of the Barhas to the medieval society, if any.

## CHAPTER I

### The State and the Nobility: An Overview

Any study in the context of our times within any discipline, has to create a place of significance for itself in the sense that it has to provide some insight of having the potential of understanding the previous and contemporary systems and structures. At the same time any new initiative must also provide fresh perspective and ideas into already established approaches so that newer pictures can emerge from previous models and the process of evolution in understanding an issue never becomes irrelevant or redundant.

The structure of the Mughal Empire and its working in terms of the *zamindari* and *jagirdari* systems has been a favourite theme among the medieval Indian historians. Time and again the importance of the state edifice and the pillars of the same have been scrutinized and well documented. The central nature of the omnipresent Mughal Emperor and his power wielding authority has been emphasized in innumerable ways in various works that can be referred to for the understanding of the medieval Indian historical scene.

Along with the over emphasizing position of the Emperor, a group that can never be overlooked is the nobility, which in fact became the cornerstone of the empire as large as that of the Mughals. The equation however must not have been as simple as has been put in the two

sentences above. Instead only a complex balance of forces on both sides of the power equation could bring equilibrium in terms of a stable form of government.

Hence a fresh approach in the above direction seems to be always welcome and this is what is intended by this study taking the example of the Barha Saiyyids during the heyday of the Mughals and also in the years of their decline. To understand the two pillars of a structure called 'state', namely the Emperor and the nobility, it is necessary to understand the evolution of the very concept of a 'state' in general and in the Indian context in particular.

The first section of the chapter would deal with the various concepts of emergence of state in the ancient as well as the medieval Indian context. The second section will attempt to look into the equation of this state with the Emperor as the focus and the nobility that he either consciously or forcefully builds around himself. It will also include a discussion of various theories that became the guiding principles in forming the Mughal nobility eventually. The third section will be a brief analysis of the various features of the Mughal system of governance that made it possible for them to check any rebellious or fissiparous tendency. At the same time there will be an attempt to examine the forces within the nobility on the other end which could become strong enough to challenge the royal authority as in the case of the Saiyyid brothers during the later Mughals.

## I

To remain free and resist any kind of bondage, be it physical, social, economical or moral is an inherent nature of humankind. And at the same time, the desire to control lives of other individuals by any means, which makes possible to become powerful than the rest remains a potential threat to any kind of freedom or independence. Humans from the beginning of time seem to have undergone these conflicting desires, which result in the kind of society that evolves. The development of mankind from the nomadic and pastoral livelihood to a sedentary way of life brought in various significant changes in social norms as well. The herd gave way to tribes, which in turn paved way for kinsmen further stratifying into various classes according to their occupations.

Thus the early *Rig Vedic* society was based on egalitarian, communal concepts of owning the means of livelihood (mainly cattle) in the face of subsistence existence. As people realized greater returns from their investments in land, the concept of surplus came into existence. It became possible for people to get engaged in secondary activities for subsistence without bothering about where their food would come from. The society saw a spurt of newer occupations and accompanying this was the phenomenon of class and subsequently caste divisions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This explanation seems to be the most widely accepted one as has been provided by Gordon Childe for explaining the beginning of civilization in the Western world. In the early ancient Indian context, too, it seems to fit well when one looks for reasons for the development of society and has been accepted by historians by and large. Among the various theories put forward by Indian historians the ones by Romila Thapar, R. S.

By the later *Vedic* times, the boundary of the region that was inhabited by the *Aryans* has become immensely large<sup>5</sup> than what was known by them earlier. The number of tribes<sup>6</sup> had also gone up. The concept of four *varnas*<sup>7</sup> had come into existence and strife among those who possessed and those who could control the means of subsistence became an inevitable one. It is at the threshold of such conspicuous developments that the state comes into existence in the Ganga Valley for the first time by the sixth century B.C. And since then the Indian subcontinent has witnessed this process as a continuous one with necessary transformations as and when required according to the conditions prevailing in various regions and times.

There have been various explanations provided for the emergence of a state structure in the first place. In the ancient Indian literature, the emphasis seems to be on the prevention of any kind of anarchy and chaos in the absence of such an engulfing system deriving its

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Sharma and D. D. Koshambi have generated much thought process into the corresponding Indian system.

<sup>5</sup> The *Rig Vedic* people who concentrated around the Indus basin in the western part of the sub-continent had gradually shifted to the eastern regions around the Ganga Yamuna *doab*, which had proved to be more promising a region in terms of agricultural returns due to the alluvial tracts.

<sup>6</sup> The initial division of the society was only twofold, namely the *aryans* and the *dasas*. Subsequently, it came to be divided into various tribes like the *Kurus*, *Panchalas*, *Druhyus* and *Gandharas* etc. These numerous tribes not only suggested their territorial spread but also the emergence of multiple centres of power which could challenge each other's claims of superiority, territory, surplus and the like.

<sup>7</sup> The four *varnas* were the *brahmanas*, ones who performed the sacrifices for the well being and success of their benefactor; the *khsatriyas*, ones who were entrusted with the work of taking up arms for protecting the valuables of the society and later maintaining the social order of the times to avoid any kind of anarchy; the *vaishyas*, the agriculturalists and later the traders who formed the economic backbone of the society; the *shudras*, ones who were to perform all duties entrusted to them by the upper three *varnas* and later became the agriculturalists.

legitimacy from the person of the ruler. In *Santiparvan* of the *Mahabharata* as well as *Manusmriti* and the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, the justification for a king's authority comes from the prevention of anarchical situation that might arise in the society.<sup>8</sup> The latter two seem to have intertwined the concept of the '*kaliyug*' and hence consider that people without chiefs would perish because 'in the absence of one who wields the scepter the strong devours the weak as the larger fishes devour the smaller ones'.<sup>9</sup>

The *rajan* in the later Vedic times however was only supposed to be one amongst the rest of his *vis* concerned with the protection of cattle and deterring the raids of other tribes and groups. It was only later with the emergence of Magadha as the sole power around eastern India by the sixth century B.C. that the concepts of a state centered around a monarchy gains currency and acceptance.

The state therefore has been identified with certain conspicuous features, which converge together to represent a whole. In this context the exercise undertaken by Kautilya comes to us as the first and the most lucid one who talks of the state existing as a result of a *saptanga* theory. He specifies the seven limbs or *angas* of the state that are required for its proper functioning. The king or the *rajan* holds the key position in this formulation who is to be assisted by the ministers or *amatyas*. The other elements are the territory or *janapadal rastra*; fortified settlement or royal

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<sup>8</sup> See Ibn Hasan: *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire and its Practical Working up to 1657*, reprint New Delhi, 1970, p. 55.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

capital or *durga*; treasury or *kosa*; force, army or the right to coercion or *danda* and external ally or *mitra*.<sup>10</sup>

The features identified by modern scholars do not seem to be much different. Thus, a state is characterized by the concentration of political authority in the hands of either an individual (in our case the Emperor) or a group whose claims to the position are legitimized by the priestly class,<sup>11</sup> which in doing so also safeguards its own position in the whole structure. Such legitimacy more often is based on agencies other than human and hence become either divine or mythical and hence unquestionable.

To assist the central authority and carry on the work of administration effectively a group of functionaries (for our understanding the nobility) is constituted who belong either to the family of the ruler or are closely associated. In subsequent times this group needs to be enlarged with the expanding boundaries of the state itself and thus groups and families having either high credentials in terms of lineage or earlier service to the state are considered and inducted. This administrative system is to work towards maximizing the efforts in collecting the dues of the state for the peace and security it provided from both external enemies and internal disorder through a well developed revenue system.<sup>12</sup> The revenue collected found its way to the royal treasury and became the basis

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<sup>10</sup> Romila Thapar: 'The Evolution of the State', *Studies in History*, Vol. IV, 1982, p. 195.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182. The features outlined in this article have been taken as a guideline to look for a similar kind of an explanation for the medieval times. Hence the essential features have been addressed as such with inputs that can correspond for the period of this study.

<sup>12</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Jarrett, Vol. II, pp. 46-50.

for the redistributive system organized by the ruler. The state also claims control over a well-defined territory, which was to be defended by a standing army.<sup>13</sup> The medieval Indian scene seems to fall along the same model with some certain variations as will be seen subsequently.

Romila Thapar in the article, 'The Evolution of the State' published in the *Studies in History* in the year 1982 and also in her book, *From Lineages to State*, published in 1984 reiterates such a development of a state structure in terms of the changing equations from the 'lineage' systems to a state structure. She intends to make a contrast between two basic kinds of societies, one based on lineages and the other having a monarchical basis identified as a state. According to her, the system of lineages is characterized by a distinctive social structure and consists of a 'corporate group of unilineal kin held together by bonds of genealogy'.<sup>14</sup> The stratification among the lineages makes a separation between the 'senior lineage who holds power and the junior lineage which provide tributes and prestations to the former' where territorial sovereignty is insignificant and lineage is the legal sanction for any activity.

On the other hand, a state has a territorial existence and other associated features as enumerated earlier and thus 'acts as an instrument for integrating social segments identified not merely by ritual roles but also by economic functions'.<sup>15</sup> With the passage of time, the *rajanya* of the *Rig Vedic* times transforms to the *khsatrya* of the Later Vedic period

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<sup>13</sup> Romila Thapar: 'The Evolution of the State', *Studies in History*, Vol. IV, 1982, p. 182.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.181.

<sup>15</sup> Romila Thapar: *From Lineage to State*, pp. 3-20.

who enjoys a greater power because he leads settlements in new regions as well as protects already in existence. In due course of time, the 'household economy'<sup>16</sup> of the Later Vedic period gives way to *gana-sanghas* or confederacies, which gradually lead to the emergence of monarchies with a well defined, stratified state system.

R. S. Sharma on the other hand gives the emergence of the ancient Indian state within the Marxist understanding. According to him, the origin of the state should be seen through the 'materialistic approach' where the conflict among various classes was the reason for the development. He analyzes the labour process, the natural resources they worked on and the artifacts they used and how there could be 'no production, no history'. He attaches pre-eminence to the modes of production rather than social categorization in understanding the process of state formation in history.<sup>17</sup>

One fact that becomes clear by the above discussion is that a state generally has been considered to be a unitary structure focused around the personality of the ruler who weaves the various aspects as mentioned into a workable system and at the same time provides it a status recognizable as a whole. However, in the ancient Indian context itself one comes across views that differ from this established notion. Thus apart

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<sup>16</sup> The 'household economy' as explained by Thapar seems to refer to the Later Vedic times where with the increasing significance of rituals the upper two *varnas* are given great importance. This leads to the declining significance and control of the *vis*, both ritual and social, who now is known as the *gahapati* attesting his control only over the household that he overlooks and not the equal significance he enjoyed earlier. The *gahapati* now undertakes cultivation with the help of *sudra* and *dasa* labour.

<sup>17</sup> R. S. Sharma: *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1983.

from the 'conventional model' of a unitary, centrally organized kingdom with a strong central bureaucracy there are other models as well like the 'Indian feudalism model' and the 'segmentary state' model.<sup>18</sup>

The details of these models and the debates that follow about whether early medieval India was a feudal or a segmentary state remain outside the context of the present work. The concepts are mentioned here to highlight the significance of the fact that there can be and there are models other than that of a centralized state structure that are equally viable in explaining historical developments for both the ancient and the medieval times. Yet the predominance of themes of dynastic histories revolving around the ruler has overruled others the reason for which in medieval Indian context needs to be examined.

Before an analysis of the above however it becomes imperative to examine the various theories for the development of the state specifically in the medieval Indian context as that is what the present study deals with. The central position of the ruler in the working of the state seems to have dominated the medieval historiography as well. One of the initial attempts of understanding the medieval societies come from the Marxist model provided by Marx himself. He characterized the Eastern civilizations (China and India in particular) as being that of 'Oriental Despotism' and following the 'Asiatic mode of Production'. In broad terms as Marx understood, these societies witnessed the presence of a

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<sup>18</sup> Hermann Kulke: 'Fragmentation and Segmentation versus Integration? Reflections on the Concept of Indian Feudalism and Segmentary State in Indian History', *Studies in History*, Vol. IV, 1982, p. 237.

despot who appropriated the surplus of the cultivator in return of the irrigational support that his state structure provided for agriculture. The exploitative nature of the despot was thus justified by his assistance in the means of subsistence (this in theory would correspond to the ancient understanding of power in return of peace and stability).<sup>19</sup>

The emergence of state in the regions witnessing a shift from pagan ideas to that of Islam around Arabia must have followed a path of its own. The explanations provided by the Muslim jurists however are much similar to those already mentioned in the Indian context. Owing to the basal nature of man reflected in his selfishness and perversity, the social order and peace within a country becomes the foremost responsibilities. Since in initial Islam the bifurcation between the religious and temporal authorities was not absolute, the task of maintaining peace was the prerogative of the Caliph himself. Subsequently, with the expansion and assimilation of larger areas within the fold of Islam the secular functions were entrusted with the Sultan who became the vice-regent of the Caliph and gradually became powerful enough to discard the yolk of dependence to assert his own right in governance. A show of allegiance to provide legitimacy however remained a practice among all Muslim rulers.

It is in this stage of evolution that the Muslim invaders came to India and subsequently formed their empires. It must be understood that the empires that formed the historical scene in medieval India underwent influx of ideas in a two way process. The ancient ideals of state and the

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<sup>19</sup> Hermann Kulke: *The State in India 1000-1700*, Delhi, 1995, pp. 1-5.

prevailing notions of the regions that were conquered came in contact with the foreign ideas (Turko-Mongol notions in general for both the Sultanate and the Mughals if one wishes to specify). This interaction created a unique Indian feature that took centuries to evolve under the Sultans of Delhi and epitomized as the Mughal state by the sixteenth century.

According to the Muslim conception that were evolved to justify the emergence a secular centre of authority other than the Caliph, it came to be believed that God has ordained that amongst the people, there should be one *hakim-i- 'adil*, to direct the actions of the sons of Adam and the affairs of the people on the right path and to keep them safe and secure.<sup>20</sup> The manner in which protection was the primary concern of ancient Indian rulers, it became the cornerstone of policies of the Muslim sovereign as well.

The best conceptualization of the fact can be seen in the efforts of Abul Fazl, which also is an epitome of Mughal ideals. Abul Fazl reiterates the significance of the central authority by stating that 'if royalty did not exist, the storm of strife would never subside, nor selfish ambitions disappear. Mankind, being under the burden of lawlessness and lust would sink into the pit of destruction, the world.....would lose its prosperity and the whole earth becomes a barren waste.'<sup>21</sup> In a similar tone he states that 'By the light of imperial justice, some followed with cheerfulness the road

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<sup>20</sup> Ibn Hasan: *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire and its Practical Working till 1657*, OUP, Delhi, 1970, p. 56.

<sup>21</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann Vol. I, Delhi, 1927, pp. 2, 290.

of obedience, whilst others abstain through fear of punishment and out of necessity make choice of the path of rectitude.’

As has been the case with the ancient Indian priests, the medieval political writers and jurists too felt the need to strengthen the position of the ruler with notions that could not be challenged by ordinary mortals and hence the element of divine affiliations was deliberately introduced. The obedience to the ruler thus becomes a religious and moral duty rather than a contractual obligation as can be understood by the theory of protection. To Abul Fazl, ‘royalty is a light emanating from God and a ray from the sun.....the light called *farr-i-izidi* (the divine light) and the tongue of antiquity called it *kiyan khwarah* (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to the king without the intermediate assistance of anyone, and man in the presence of it bends the forehead of praise towards the ground of submission.’<sup>22</sup> The Emperor therefore is assigned a position that becomes the guiding light in the functioning of the empire.

In making the person of the emperor so central to the whole structure, the role of the geographical conditions that prevailed in the Indian subcontinent needs to be analyzed. As Ibn Hasan puts it, monarchy was the political necessity in the Indian context and was supported by the social organization of the Hindus<sup>23</sup> and later also by the Muslims. The geographical factors not only had influence in determining the boundaries of provinces but also added to the solidarity and unity of certain regions

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Hasan: *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire and its Practical Working up to the year 1657*, reprint, New Delhi, 1970, p. 37.

creating a feeling of oneness and unity of interests.<sup>24</sup> In a vast empire as that of the Mughals, physical configuration accentuated centrifugal tendencies of some parts and centripetal tendencies of others.

The geographical conditions therefore not only determined the profession and nature of the inhabitants but also lead to economical and commercial prosperity and thereby growth of strong and lasting political system. The fertile regions also become breeding grounds for ambitious chieftains and groups posing a threat to the central authority leading to ruinous warfare. To avoid any such fissiparous tendencies the centrality of a figure, which could become the rallying point for all other features to follow seems to be the best option. The population largely engaged in agricultural activities realized that an everlasting peace was in their favour and hence there seems to be no large-scale uproar when the early Turks, during the closing years of the twelfth century overran many of the existing dynasties of northern India.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of medieval Indian historiography of the state the centrality of the ruler thus seems to be an overpowering assumption. Sir Jadunath Sarkar safely concludes the formation and endurance of the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 36. Also P. Saran: *The Provincial Government of the Mughals (1526-1658)*, Allahabad, 1941, p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> To this one can add the assumption of Md. Habib that the masses in general favoured the coming of the Turks into northern India as it meant an enhancement of the position of many indigenous groups in terms of the social ladder apart from the fact that the Muslims brought along with them new professions and gradually a system which could bring an end to the never-ending internecine wars of the indigenous ruling families. This has been understood by Habib as an 'urban revolution' that came to be favored by masses in general. Habib & Nizami ed., *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, p. 188.

Mughal state to Akbar and his rational, secular policies and the collapse to the religious bigotry of Aurangzeb.

Following the same line are the Aligarh school of historians who believe in a highly centralized and bureaucratized 'absolutism' manifested in its highly centralized revenue system, *mansabdari*, coinage and high degree of control over the society in general. Other discernible features of the Mughal state were the extractive nature where the peasantry was the most suppressed class and the elite, namely the nobles, believed in conspicuous consumption of the wealth that concentrated in their hands as has been cited by Irfan Habib.<sup>26</sup>

Taking the argument to further conclusion, Athar Ali considers the Mughal state to be a perfection of medieval polity. The Mughal Empire was an improvement over the previous polities and a new experiment of Akbar.<sup>27</sup> This centralized structure owed its feature to the systematization of administration and to the theological basis for sovereignty. The latter drew its justification from the fact that Akbar had antecedents from the families of both Timur and Chengiz Khan from his maternal and paternal sides respectively.

The organization of the nobility in a way that it became the backbone of the central edifice has also been attributed to Akbar (the

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<sup>26</sup> Irfan Habib: *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Bombay, 1963, pp. 366-78.

<sup>27</sup> Athar Ali: 'The Foundation of Akbar's Organisation of the Nobility--An Interpretation', *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. 3, 1958, pp.290-291. Also by the same author, 'The Mughal Polity—A critique of "Revisionist" Approaches', *Proceedings, Indian History Congress—52<sup>nd</sup> Session*, 1991-92.

significance of this will be elaborated in the next section). This attempt reconciled the two opposite strands of the Mughal polity successfully—absolute despotic power of the Emperor strengthened by centralization and semi-divine sovereignty and the nobility given its position albeit under constant vigilance and checks.

The entire preceding discussion is so much centered around the character of the ruler who seems to be so magnanimous in his disposition that the whole structure appears to be resting on his shoulders. As a corollary then the stability of an empire in the times of an efficient and able ruler and the disintegration during a weak one would seem logical. However one needs to understand that processes of history are not as simple as they appear to be. The overdue importance assigned to the Mughal Emperor, particularly Akbar, has been subsequently questioned and various other explanations have been forwarded which attempt to give significance to features that can be best taken as centripetal tendencies.

J. F. Richards propounds the theory of ‘imperfect imperial structure’ stating that the Mughal Empire had limited powers both to manipulate the society and to change the long standing cultural patterns in the local administration and regional systems.<sup>28</sup> He understands the state as a ‘hybrid structure’—both centralized as well as decentralized, bureaucratic and patrimonial which had to counter the weaknesses of being heavily depended upon the loyalty of its officials who were more military than civilian.

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<sup>28</sup> J. F. Richards: *The Mughal Empire*, CUP, reprint 2002.

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On similar lines is the conception of Stephen Blake who suggests that in small, traditional states rulers attempt to administer and control the entire realm as a part of his own private domain. With the states growing in size gradually, a bureaucracy is brought in to compromise with the patrimonial ideal.<sup>29</sup> One realizes here that the segmentary model being referred to for the ancient states can very well be applied in this context too.

Agreeing somewhat to the segmentary model, Douglas Streusand concedes the Mughal state to be a 'hybrid'—Islamic at the centre and Hindu at the periphery.<sup>30</sup> The state was a compromise between the ideals and reality and the expectations of the ruler and the nobility. According to him, in spite of Akbar's best efforts, the empire at the time of his death remained less centralized as a structure.

A look at the view of Bernier, a contemporary traveler during the time of Aurangzeb, would attest the theories that hint more towards a less central state and greater regional autonomy. According to him, the Mughal state first represented a superstructure, comprising of a 'tyrant' who finds himself in a hostile country and requires numerous armies to maintain himself in the midst of domestic and powerful enemies. At a lower level, there existed the 'native princes' who were subordinate in position. There were numerous such centres or political domains where these native princes recognized the sovereignty of the Mughal ruler. The



<sup>29</sup> Stephen Blake: 'Patrimonial Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 29(1), 1979, pp. 77-94.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas Streusand: *The Formation of Mughal Empire*, Delhi, 1989.



latter in turn recognized their regional power not giving away his privileged superiority asserted through ritual and other forms.<sup>31</sup>

Certain aspects emerge out of this exercise of analyzing various theories explaining the state formation in the Indian context. The significance of the process through which the state comes into existence cannot be undermined as it provides answers to why certain individual or groups assume significance and certain others are relegated to oblivion. Falling in the same argument would be the significance that came to be attached to the position of the Emperor in both ancient and medieval polities. And it is the same argument, which will be taken forward in understanding the significance of nobility for the Muslim states. This would in turn make it clear why any particular group (or the Barhas for that matter) could attain more importance than others at one time and became insignificant at other times. That the Emperor alone cannot carry forward the large apparatus of a state is a natural understanding and hence the utility of the nobles in keeping the state in a viable and working condition becomes central.

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<sup>31</sup> Francois Bernier: *Travels in the Mughal Empire A. D. 1656-68*, tr. by A. Constable, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. revised by V. A. Smith, 1916. pp. 223-38; M. Athar Ali: 'The Mughal Polity—A Critique of "Revisionist" Approaches', *Proceedings, IHC*, 52<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1991-92, p. 303.

## II

The head of any social organization, whether he is an Emperor, Sultan or a *rajan*, cannot carry the entire apparatus of the so-called 'state' on his shoulders alone. Just the fact that such an organization entails the participation of the entire society towards a harmonious existence and at the same time requires mechanisms that can ensure it, demands an association across the section of the society. To expect an egalitarian society after humans discovered the existence of private property or even to expect any representative government before the modern times would be utopian. Thus, division of society in terms of class, caste or rank remains a norm till date. What is interesting is that each society across times churns up its own ways to ensure that people are so divided and remain that way. And this is where the class we wish to examine comes into the picture, the nobility in medieval India.

Since the times for which we have traced the emergence of the state in our discussion there has always existed a group which has assisted the ruler in delivering his duties in governing his realm, be it the *sabha* or *samiti* for the Vedic times, the *mantriparishad* for the ancient monarchies, the nobility (which included the secular officials called the *umara* and the religious ones called the *ulema*) for the medieval dynasties or the elaborate paraphernalia of the English in terms of their viceroys, governors and the civil servants. This group could have been the executors of the policies and ideals of the ruler or could have been his companions in war and victory or simply could have been advisors to the king, either legal or

ecclesiastical. But one would not be really incorrect in assuming that this class was the one that transformed the ideas of the ruler into reality and made sure that even whims and fancies of the ruler became fruitful.

It must be borne in our minds that since we are considering times when territorial loyalties could not be taken for granted in the absence of the concept called a *nation* as known to us in modern times, it was very necessary to keep all regions of the 'state' in question in good humour. And this became possible only when constant checks and appraisals were available within regions that a ruler wanted to keep under his control. These checks or control could have been possible in various ways but the way that was most readily available to ancient and medieval dynasties was that of sheer exhibition of force and power. This seems to be reiterating the most well known fact that the mighty rules the world but for medieval times it seems to be appropriate in face value.

The more important function of the nobility therefore must have been military than civil. Hence, the time tested mechanism for maintaining vigilance over areas as they came to be conquered, even before the time of the arrival of the Turks into the Indian subcontinent right up to the Mughals, remained that of appointing officials who were capable of shouldering the responsibility. These may not have been those who could be trusted blindly but had to be relied because they were the men who had substantial men and arms under their control and hence could not be overlooked. They were either co-inheritors of the area conquered and hence expected equal if not more claim over the captures or were those who had long inhabited the regions to have had inculcated

stronger ties with them which had to be respected by the ruler. Naturally then, the nobility considered themselves to be a part of the ruling class and exercised its rights in that very capacity as is known to us by the annals of history.<sup>32</sup>

But the class certainly was not stagnant and evolved along with the changing times. To assign them the role of just kingmakers or breakers would be seeing them from an isolated angle. And their being capable of doing just that i.e. make or pull down the ruler must have been a good reason enough for tensions between the two pillars of governance each attempting to diminish the influence of the other to maintain their own significance. And yet the realization that either could not do without each other seems to have existed which probably restored the equilibrium whenever threatened by circumstances.

Like all other medieval rulers even the Mughals had realized that keeping this class of functionaries within wits would become the most daunting job. What concerns us more here is that the nobility in all times of medieval history maintained the tradition of being both a supporter of the authority of the emperor as well as pose a potential threat to the same when circumstances favoured such a development. The delicate balance

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<sup>32</sup> One of the most conspicuous aspects of the nobility playing a role in the politics of medieval dynasties has been the manner in which it has governed the choices of individuals who have ascended the throne during the Sultanate. Most Sultans had to almost cajole the class to get their support and face the consequences in trying to do the vice versa. The examples of Firuz Tughlaq and Razia respectively stand out as references. For details about the role of nobility during the Sultanate, see S. B. P. Nigam: *Nobility under the Sultans of Delhi A.D. 1206-1398*, Delhi, 1968, p. 119-143. Also, M. Athar Ali: 'Foundation of Akbar's Organisation of the Nobility—An Interpretation' in *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, 1958, p. 290-291.

that needed to be maintained always makes the equation between the two vibrant and organic.

The Mughals when they came to India had behind them centuries of legacy both in the form of the experiments of the Sultans within Indian borders and those of their own ancestors in Central Asia. The Early Turks did not seem to be that fortunate and therefore began afresh in building their ideas about royalty, nobility, state structure and even religion.<sup>33</sup> Hence most of their systems had to face the test of time. Among certain things that remained the same for the nobility for both the Sultanate and the Mughals was their 'unity in outlook and historical role'<sup>34</sup> as being the backbone of the imperial bureaucracy. At the same time the predominant section of both were foreign in origin and still among them a vast majority were Muslims.<sup>35</sup>

It is true that both during the Sultanate and the Mughal periods there were constant efforts by conscious rulers to counter balance this composition by inducting indigenous elements into the nobility but the

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<sup>33</sup> As cited earlier, the Turks had come to India when Islam itself was in its incipient stage. Most armies that came along with the invaders were either fresh converts to Islam or still believers of pagan ideas. The *iqta* system that came into practice in India was also made to suit the conditions prevailing here. For a detailed discussion on the evolution of the *iqta* system see A. K. S. Lampton: 'The Internal Structure of the Saljuq Empire', *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. V, pp. 203-282. To cite a few more initiatives taken in this period, the attempt made by Balban in removing the royalty from the reach of plebeians was novel in itself. The experiments later by Allauddin Khalji in the field of fiscal arrangement and administration and Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the field of agriculture and composition of the nobility were also beginnings of processes that were perfected by the Mughals. For details see K. S. Lal: *The History of the Khaljis*, pp. 153-174.

<sup>34</sup> M. Athar Ali: 'Foundation of Akbar's Organisation of the Nobility—An Interpretation', *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, 1958, p. 290.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

larger character remained foreign (*Turani* and *Irani* primarily) and Muslim.<sup>36</sup> When one says that the group was not stagnant it is in this respect of evolution that is hinted at. It concerns us more because it is this induction of the indigenous elements into the nobility, which brings to the Barhas the status of commanding power by the times of Farrukh Siyar in the eighteenth century.

Along with all the above characteristics the Mughals also inherited the problems of the Sultanate, which were larger in size and graver in consequences assuming that the region that they came to control was much larger than that under the Sultans. More so, the course adopted by even the most assuming Sultan, Allaudin Khalji, had been to accept the dynasties farther in the South as mere tribute paying and not directly under his sovereignty.

For the Mughals on the other hand, India seemed to have been conceived in entirety in terms of territory and therefore even till the times of Aurangzeb as late as the seventeenth century the desire to fully conquer the kingdoms of the South does not fade away. In addition to the expanding frontiers, was the increasing number of nobles who if not assigned correct positions in the imperial hierarchy to avoid dissatisfaction and the feeling of neglect could have bred contempt and disloyalty.

Following this argument then there seems to be a divergence from the path of a ruler centric approach that has been discussed in the

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<sup>36</sup> Afzal Husain: 'Growth of Irani Element in Akbar's Nobility', *Indian History Congress*, 1975, pp. 166-174.

previous section and we should realize that the nobility deserves its due in making of history. This does not appear to be only a false realization because for Mughals too the nobility has had its claim to fame. For an Emperor as great as Akbar we have a time when Bairam Khan and later the so-called 'petticoat government' under Maham Anga were influential enough to turn the course of history according to their wishes. One would counter argue that for Akbar those were the formative years and he being a minor and under the regency of Bairam Khan could not have done much. But this very counter-argument highlights the significance of nobles gaining supreme importance due to reasons, which might have made the Emperor a puppet in their hands. Similarly for Jahangir's later years, the 'junta' of Nur Jahan became the actual holders of sovereignty.<sup>37</sup>

Yet the tone of understanding for Mughal history maintains that the nobility was the 'creation of the Emperor' as he alone could 'confer, increase, diminish and resume' the titles and ranks of his nobles.<sup>38</sup> How can then these two contrasting trends be situated within the same understanding? If Akbar could be moulded in his initial years how and what made him rise so high that the nobles for his later and for almost the rest of the Mughal rallied around the institution of the Emperor?

At the same time, if the Emperor was the master of his whims he needed no one to attest them. But he could not overlook the aspirations of his nobles as well. The consequences faced by the unfortunate Delhi

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<sup>37</sup> Beni Prasad: *History of Jahangir*, pp. 168-172; Irfan Habib: 'The Family of Nur Jahan during Jahangir's Reign' in *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, Vol. I, pp. 74-81.

<sup>38</sup> Afzal Husain: 'Elements of Continuity and Stability in the Mughal Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir', *Studies in History*, Vol. II, No. 2, 1980, p. 21.

Sultans were there to remind the Mughals of any untoward happening. What emerges during the sixteenth century is nobility that seems to draw all its power from the person of the Emperor himself.

Reiterating the above therefore J. F. Richards says that during Akbar there is a 'series of symbolic acts, built upon his personal appeal to establish an image or metaphor of the Emperor's person as an embodiment of the Empire'.<sup>39</sup> This process however was long drawn one and saw centuries of experimentation before its final bloom by the 1560s. It was an attempt to amalgamate the traditions of kingship of the Turks and the Mongols, which had emerged in their own spheres of influences.

For reference, the Mughals had the kingship theories of the Turks and the Afghans that had been put to practice within the Indian frontiers. The Sultans following the Persian injunctions had the constraint of the show of allegiance to the Caliph along with the principles of Islamic law, the *shariat*, to be their guiding light for governance. This not only made them subordinates of an authority, though primarily in theory which more often than not was flouted in practice, but at the same time made it necessary to follow the precepts of Islam which propounded equality of men and common brotherhood. To exercise control over another was against the Muslim law. However a practical compromise between theory and reality was a must for any expedient solution for new ideas and norms to evolve.

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<sup>39</sup> J. F. Richards: 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority Under Akbar and Jahangir' in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam ed. *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, p. 128.

For an amicable solution between the relationship between the Caliph and the Sultan, Muslim political jurists had begun working as early as the eleventh century. Nizam ul-Mulk Tusi in his *Siyasatnama* provides practically no overbearing reference of the Caliph who is simply mentioned as a pension-holder.<sup>40</sup> Since it was realized that aspects related to politics could be in opposition to the *shariat* juristically, they were tolerated as necessary evils though no attempts were made to redefine the latter.<sup>41</sup> To avoid the dilemma of being unjust and wrong religiously, the Sultans resorted to having slaves-officers in their contingents to begin with.<sup>42</sup> It thus became easier to physically control the individual without crossing the line of piety.

With historical developments forcing a slave to become the ruler himself in the example of Qutubuddin Aibak made many consequential statements on the nascent polity that was emerging in the early thirteenth century. His compatriots too would have felt that appropriate timing could possibly make them lords in their own right and this remained the tendency in the entire medieval political scenario between the ruler and his elite band of supporters. To counter this tendency the Turkish Sultans drafted ways peculiar to their own faculties and understanding of the situation. The initial recourse naturally became to restrain the entire governance into the hands of fellow members of the group.

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<sup>40</sup> See Muzaffar Alam: 'Akhlaji Norms and Mughal Governance', in Muzaffar Alam, F. N. Delvoye and Marc Gaborieau ed., *The Making of Indo- Persian Culture*, p. 69.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>42</sup> J. F. Richards; 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir' in M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam ed. *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, p. 158.

Thus racial and ethnic exclusivity came to be practiced with all severity. Entry of non-Turks into higher rungs of the government became next to impossible.<sup>43</sup> Balban also created his *wasaya*, which made nobility a privilege of the high born and even Indian Muslims were not allowed to hold any post of significance.<sup>44</sup>

Changing times saw corresponding changes in perception and the exclusivity of the nobles was interrupted not only by the Indian Muslims but also Hindus by the late thirteenth century. This process of 'plebeianisation of the bureaucracy'<sup>45</sup> was necessary to offset any vested interest of the older nobility.<sup>46</sup> Both Allaudin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq appointed newer elements into their nobility and thus ensured any concerted action by any disgruntled group by simply taking care that none of the groups were large enough. Precedents had thus been set by the Sultans, which were carefully followed by the Mughals in not allowing any particular group gain enough strength in numbers or power to challenge the authority of the Emperor.

Also the heterogeneity of the nobility ensured that the Emperor remained the sole unifying factor among the various groups. The Afghan experiment also left results that were avoided by the Mughals. The Afghans had attempted to govern along the racial and tribal lines and the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 158. Also M. Athar Ali: 'Foundation of Akbar's Organisation of the Nobility—An Interpretation', *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, p. 290.

<sup>44</sup> Md. Habib & K. A. Nizami ed.: *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. IV, pp. 280-284.

<sup>45</sup> Athar Ali: 'Foundation of Akbar's Organization of the Nobility—An Interpretation', *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, pp. 291-292.

<sup>46</sup> S. B. P. Nigam: *Nobility under the Sultans of Delhi A. D. 1206-1398*, Delhi, 1968, pp. 51-73 for the evolution of the nobility under Allaudin and pp. 74-92 for that under Muhammad Tughlaq.

king was considered one amongst the nobles. Both the examples of Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah proved that trying to govern on tribal lines was a futile exercise and absolute authority alone could bring stability.

The Mughals on the other hand were heirs to a tradition completely different from the Persian or Afghan. The Mongols inhabited a region, which had no direct contact or allegiance to the land of Islam. The Central Asian regions had remained practically out of the reach of Islam and hence the pagan ideals of the Mongols had no constraints in the name of *shariat* for whom the belief in the absolute power of the Khan was higher than any religious faith. For Mongols the precepts of Chengiz Khan in the form of his *yasas* were the tenets that were to be followed. Features that became conspicuous in the Mongol system were the superiority of the chief or the sovereign whose control was almost despotic in nature.<sup>47</sup> The Khan was associated with divine origin and was considered to be the Son of Light. Abul Fazl builds upon this concept of divinity and believes Akbar to be a descendant of Chengiz Khan from the line of a mythical lady called Alanqua.<sup>48</sup> This association was so strong that even the powerful general like Timur could not claim his independence and ruled under the cover of an alibi of the house of Chengiz Khan.

The Mongols at the same time believed in the tribal basis of division of territory, which saw expression in dividing the empire among

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<sup>47</sup> R. P. Tripathi: 'The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship' in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam ed. *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, pp. 115, 120. Also, Athar Ali: 'Akbar's Organization of Nobility', p. 293.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115-116. Also, J. F. Richards: 'Formulation of Imperial Authority', in Alam and Subrahmanyam ed. *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, pp. 144-150.

princes and sons who never became landed aristocrats but remained only masters of men. They were supposed to have only tents and were liable to get transferred as and when the Khan wished.<sup>49</sup> This formed the one of the basis of Akbar's *mansabdari* system that was created in later years to strategically maintain the nobility within the imperial fold. The preponderance of heredity and minority not being a disqualification were other aspects of Timurid principles that were imbibed freely by the Mughals while formulating their own precepts within the boundaries of India. Also the Central Asian ancestry and legacy seems to have been carried as a matter of pride by all the Mughals from Babur to Shah Jahan though is reflected in categorically in Babur's contempt of India in general in his memoir and his desire to speak in his mother tongue only and Shah Jahan's desire of territorial gains in Central Asia.<sup>50</sup>

The Mughal dynasty therefore had under its disposition the experiments of all preceding dynasties over centuries and they chose to carve out a system that imbibed the best aspects of each and rejected the unviable ones. This composite theory brought about a compromise between the aspirations of the nobility and the desire of the Emperor to supercede each other. Though during Babur and Humayun the nobility was influential enough to demand an equal treatment like that given to members of the same tribe,<sup>51</sup> by the time of Akbar owing to the personal endeavour of the Emperor and the intelligent craftsmanship of Abul Fazl

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<sup>49</sup> R. P. Tripathi: 'Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship', in *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, pp. 116-117; Athar Ali: 'Akbar's Organization of Nobility', *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, p. 294.

<sup>50</sup> Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam: *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> R. P. Tripathi: 'The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship' in *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, pp. 118, 119, 124.

the two institutions were established as far from each other that the nobility looked for its existence and support from the former for all times to come.

The supreme position that the Mughal Emperor came to demand for himself within the organization called the 'state' remained so till they were finally and completely routed by the British in 1857. Till then any potential source of power be it the Sikhs, Marathas or the English who thought of governing the whole of India considered it necessary to topple the Mughal Empire as a precondition. The fortunes of the nobility meanwhile saw crests and troughs of a very different nature. Unlike earlier times, the Mughal nobility came to be guided along personal and family lines. Since the composition of the nobility was as varied as possible and any deserving individual could dream of a decent future within the structure of governance, possibilities of one ethnic or racial group uniting against the Emperor became difficult. The rebellions that did take place were either by the princes themselves who were supported by nobles according to their personal capability and appeal (as those of Jahangir, Khusrau, Khurram and Aurangzeb) or on narrow grounds of solidarity which were successfully crushed as that of the Uzbeks during Akbar).

Recognizing the services of a particular noble and rewarding the same down to his sons and grandsons became a practice. Thus family background and achievements under previous rulers came to be considered the passports to meteoric rise in careers of the nobles. The Barha Saiyyids must have gained by this policy and this in turn supports the argument as well. The family history of the Barhas reveals their rise in significance from mere soldiers of repute in the vanguard of the army in

the sixteenth century to kingmakers for almost a decade in the early eighteenth century.

### III

The compromise between the two components of the state namely the Emperor and the nobility that have been discussed in the previous sections, is an aspect that requires a little more qualification in terms of their relationship. Since medieval economy and society was primarily land based, the outlook of both the above was not anywhere close to welfare as understood in the modern sense. Hence maintenance of law and order so that the normal functioning and collection of revenue could continue was considered as their primary function. The apparatus of the state was so designed as to incorporate both the Emperor and the nobility in a mutual co-existence to achieve the above goal. Here crops the question as to how mutually converging or diverging were the interests of these two components which must have defined the course of events in medieval history.

The question also demands an explanation about what constituted the ruling class in the first place. There seems to be a kind of ambiguity among scholars in demarcating fixed boundaries for this class. The Emperor at times has been incorporated as a 'part of the ruling

class'<sup>52</sup> rather than demanding an independent position. However it is the nobility proper that has diffused boundaries. Whether the nobility should include the part, which represents the bureaucracy or also incorporate the landed elements is something that has been left to individual preferences.

Therefore, some scholars would like us to believe that the landed aristocracy of centuries (the *khuts*, *muqaddams*, *rais*, *ranas* who constituted the core of the group identified as the *zamindars* as well as those who were granted land or tenures as *madad-i ma'ash* or *inam*) who commanded a significant position when it came to defining the economy and consequent political structures was a part of the nobility that is being discussed.<sup>53</sup> The fact that they possessed contingents of their own made it strategically more necessary to include them within the fold of the nobility so that their power could be both harnessed as well as checked.

There are others on the other hand who would want us to believe that the local potentates did not enjoy enough clout to wield power and position for themselves. However, one cannot deny the fact that the landed aristocracy definitely formed an 'important element of the

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<sup>52</sup> M. Athar Ali: *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, New Revised Edition, OUP, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> M. Athar Ali: *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, OUP, 1997, pp. 12-13; Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, OUP, 2002 reprint, pp. 3-7. Chandra outlines the group as one of the 'dominant classes in Medieval Indian society' which were economically and politically dominant, the other being the *jagirdars* or the class which actually constituted the ruling class; Irfan Habib: *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707*, OUP, 1999 revised edition, p. 201-202.

Medieval Indian Polity' but was 'next to the nobility both in importance and its dependence on the appropriation of the surplus produced.'<sup>54</sup>

Nonetheless the fact that the devices instituted (primarily the *mansabdari* system) by Emperors given concrete shape by Akbar identified the landed class or the *zamindars* as well as the *mansabdars* and *jagirdars* as equal claimants of the ruling class cannot be denied. Most *mansabdars* were given *jagirs*, which linked them to the land and at the same time *zamindars* were often given *mansabs* to include them into the state structure making the whole structure intricately complex and mutually dependent at the same time.

Having said this, the balance that the Emperor required to maintain the apparatus of the state in place seems to be dependent on the willing cooperation of these two sections of the ruling class, which makes the task of the former even more daunting. The Mughal imperial power thus rested on a balance between the interests of different regional and local magnates on the one hand and the ambitions of the Mughal Emperor and his nobles and other mansabdars on the other.<sup>55</sup>

Apart from the sectional division there was racial, caste, regional and religious differences within the nobility or the section that

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<sup>54</sup> I. H. Siddiqui: *Mughal Relations with Indian Ruling Elite*, 1983, p. 29. A similar kind of understanding can be traced in Afzal Husain's, *The Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir: A Study of Family Groups*, Delhi, 1999. Husain does not quote such a view but involves in the study of important families who had acquired a place in the nobility on the ground of either being members of the same racial group as the Emperors or had served them previously in various capacities.

<sup>55</sup> Muzaffar Alam: *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and Punjab (1707-1748)*, OUP, 1997, p. 305.

formed the part of the bureaucracy. Racially they were *Turanis* (Central Asians), *Iranis* (Persians), Afghans, *Shaikhzadas* (Indian Muslims) and Rajputs. Later with the advance of the Mughals into the Deccan newer elements like the Deccanis i.e. Bijapuris, Hyderabadis and Marathas were included within the structure.<sup>56</sup> In terms of the religious diversity there existed the *Sunnis* and *Shias* in particular within the Muslims and the Hindus and Muslims in general. In terms of descent they belonged to families having ancestry outside the subcontinent or more recent inducts had them within the borders. Regionally they were members of groups that had been subjugated within the ambit of the Empire either by force or tact, which could be a matrimonial alliance in most cases.<sup>57</sup>

The Emperor therefore has been considered as the force, which united all such divergent groups through his person and yet it is commonsensical to argue that such diversity in composition would have produced tensions. Not only seeing the Emperor as a source of their existence but also as a constraint to the development of any narrow clannish or racial or individual interest would appear to be a reason for an omnipresent conflict between the two. At the same time jealousies among various sections of the nobility as well cannot be ruled out<sup>58</sup> which must

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<sup>56</sup> Athar Ali: *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, p. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Here one needs to understand the attention demanded by the indigenous ruling elite and chiefs by the fact that they formed the backbone of the Mughal political system in regions that came under the latter's control but could be administered and maintained as a part only with the cooperation of former. Ahsan Raza Khan in his *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire*, Simla, 1977, identifies them into two groups: tribal and territorial and provides an interesting explanation about the indigenous chieftains forming the part of the nucleus of nobility, pp. 1-7.

<sup>58</sup> For a detailed discussion on the above see Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, OUP, 2002 reprint and M. Athar Ali: *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, OUP, 1997 revised edition.

have harboured internal rivalry and distrust at the cost of stability of the Empire.

The history of medieval India is replete with examples, which highlight the fissiparous tendencies that had come to engulf the nobles time and again in various times who acted according to the power that they possessed or expected they would wield if they rebelled against the imperial authority. In the founding years of the dynasty both Babur and Humayun faced serious challenges from their supporters who changed sides gauging the seriousness of a particular situation to the more favourable party.<sup>59</sup> The Barha Saiyyids were of the same disposition in the later years when they change sides to the Mughals, which substantiates the previous assumption as well.

During Akbar's reign the revolts of the Uzbeks and Mirzas<sup>60</sup> and the Yusufzais later around early 1600 were reminders of recalcitrant tendencies that existed even after almost absolute control and surfaced in the slightest opportunity available. Since the rules of primogeniture could not be established by the Mughals the rebellions of princes for the throne remained a perpetual feature of the dynasty. And the nobles found expression of their interests in supporting different candidates at different times.<sup>61</sup> The Barha Saiyyids exhibit a remarkable insight in this direction

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<sup>59</sup> Afzal Husain: *The Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir*, Delhi, 1999, pp. 1-10. Also see the discussion in the preceding section involving the emergence of Mughal nobility.

<sup>60</sup> I. A. Khan: 'The Nobility of Akbar and the Development of his Religious Policy 1560-1580', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1968, pp. 30-31.

<sup>61</sup> Afzal Husain: *Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir*, pp. 9-10.

and made crucial decisions in the wars of succession as will be seen in the following chapters.

The aspect of nobility taking advantage of slackness in the attitude of the state for whatever reason for fostering its own cause becomes more emphatic during and after Aurangzeb. The debate about the Mughal Empire falling on its own weight by the early eighteenth century has encompassed the imagination of medieval historians time and again. To go into the details of this debate is not within the scope of this dissertation but the consensus remains that a number of reasons were cumulatively responsible for it—structural and endemic as believed by Satish Chandra, economic as believed by Irfan Habib, political as understood by Muzaffar Alam and even religious as understood by Jadunath Sarkar. But in all of them the role of the nobility cannot be undermined. This in turn attests our assumption that in making of the state structure both stable and durable the mutual coexistence of both the Emperor and the nobles is a precondition.

The over emphasis of Akbar on the establishment of his nobility in strict order of preferences is thus justified in the above context. For the first time in the history of the subcontinent there was an attempt to clearly demarcate the position and privileges of the nobility in terms of their personal ranks, *mansabs*, which had corresponding scales of pay and contingents that had to be maintained, the *sawars*. Akbar therefore organized his nobility on the twin concepts of *mansab* and *jagir*, the first based on hierarchy and military capacity and the second based on fiscal

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responsibilities.<sup>62</sup> On realizing that such an arrangement could not become effective until it was accompanied with strict instruments of vigilance and control, the system of *dagh* and *chehra* were initiated by the 1580s.

The practice of transfer of the nobles, to avoid emergence of any personal interests in their *jagirs* in case of a long stay or as a penalty for any undesired conduct of a noble was followed diligently. Also the practice of escheat whereby the property of a noble was confiscated by the royal treasury after his death remained. In practice, however, both the above were carried in the favour of the nobles.<sup>63</sup> Another practice that had its precedent in the Sultanate period was the induction of fresh elements within the nobility time and again to counter balance the increasing importance of any particular group. This had remained a time-tested practice till the eighteenth century, which also underlines the fact that groups tend to assume power and significance soon and need constant supervision and vigilance. For instance the Afghans though being enemies of the Mughals were inducted within the nobility by Babur and Humayun as they realized that their support was a political compulsion.<sup>64</sup>

But history is also witness to the fact that the Afghans fought against Humayun when the strength and will exhibited by Sher Shah showed signs of a favourable future for them. For a similar kind of

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<sup>62</sup> Athar Ali: 'Foundation of Akbar's Organization of the Nobility—An Interpretation' *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, 1958, p. 296.

<sup>63</sup> For transfers see Afzal Husain: 'Elements of Continuity and Stability in the Mughal Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir', *Studies in History*, Vol. II, No. 2, 1980. For the practice of escheat see Athar Ali: *The Nobility under Aurangzeb*, pp. 63-64. He concludes that the 'escheat system had more theoretical and legal than economic significance', p. 68.

<sup>64</sup> Afzal Husain: *The Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir*, p. 2.

development in the later part of the eighteenth century, a number of regional dynasties sprang at the fringes of the Mughal Empire under those nobles who held important positions within the Empire. For example, Bengal became independent under Murshid Quli Khan, Hyderabad under Chin Qilich Khan and Awadh under Saadat Khan.

The entire discussion therefore establishes the fact that the Emperor and the nobility were entangled in a complex but precarious balance of power for almost the whole of medieval Indian history and in this sense was similar to the preceding periods. Where the Mughal Empire could make a departure from this was the innovative efforts primarily by Akbar that could give the dynasty a stable rule of almost one and a half century. The symbolism that came to be attached with the Mughal Empire could not be overthrown even by the British completely which speaks for the impact that the institutions created by the Mughals had. However, the Emperor had to acknowledge the existence of powerful nobles who in turn realized that their prosperity lied in a rather peaceful cooperation with the former.

## CHAPTER II

### The Historical Background of the Barha Family

The Mughals who entered the Indian scene by the early sixteenth century had the precedent of all the earlier experiments right from the beginning of time and history and they used this knowledge to better themselves and firmly established their roots in the Indian soil. The indigenous people within the Indian subcontinent by that time had faced enough number of outside attacks and their subsequent implications that they had come to accept the changes in the form of life in general and in the composition and organization of the ruling elite in particular. It is however difficult to say how much life in the ground level changed with respect to the transformations taking place in the governing bodies because it is known that even the mightiest of the rulers left the workings of the smallest units, namely the villages, untouched as a general rule. On the elite level, however, necessary transformations had already been taking place with a number of Indian Muslims on an increase over time.

The change in the social proportions of the indigenous groups time and again saw corresponding changes in their representation within the upper echelons of the society, particularly within the ruling classes. Emperors from Allaudin Khalji to Akbar and Jahangir therefore attempted to inculcate deserving individuals from these indigenous groups (commonly called *Shaikhzadas*) within their nobility. This was not only in acknowledgement of the growing importance of the latter but also an

attempt to counter-balance the dependence of those factions which had accompanied the rulers from their lands of migrations and felt they had a greater right on the posts of nobility.

One should also acknowledge the fear that might have been in the conscience of the kings and their nobles, of any threat from these indigenous factions, which in the process of growing in their sizes could even, become potential cores of resistance for any central authority.<sup>1</sup> This significance of the Indian groups becomes more alive when the histories of the regional powers are analyzed. These dynasties (for example, the Deccan dynasties, the southern kingdoms of Cholas and their contemporaries), which generally had their origin within the frontiers of the subcontinent neither had the option nor attempted to look for support from outside their borders. The workings of this process thus depended on the mutual acceptance of the potentials of both the groups of power on two ends and a symbiotic relationship became the most viable option.

The present chapter deals with the Barha Saiyyids as a group that filled the ranks of the army during the founding years of the Mughals and continued to hold significant posts till the twilight of the dynasty in the eighteenth century. The aspect of the Barha family emerging from humble backgrounds around the early sixteenth century to the position of

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<sup>1</sup> Ahsan Raza Khan: *Chieftains during the reign of Akbar*, pp. 219, 221. While discussing the indigenous chiefs and their categories he acknowledges that though they were forced to accept suzerainty of the Mughals, they 'rose in rebellion time and again to overthrow the burden of Mughal authority'. Also citing example of the chiefs who formed a part of the Afghan Sultanate prior to the Mughals, he argues that they rendered support to the Afghans as they had come to 'establish closer ties with the *zamindars* as they had settled in the countryside'.

making the most significant decisions as ‘kingmakers’ between 1713-1719 is what will be attempted in this chapter. The origin, gradual development and growing importance of this group of families have to be seen in the backdrop of the aforementioned phenomenon of historical developments.

Before joining the ranks of the Mughal army they were employed in the enemy ranks of the Afghans under Sikandar Afghan.<sup>2</sup> Their change of loyalty has been documented in all significant contemporary records indicating their significance and the desire of the Mughals to attract them to their own camp. It was during the siege of Mankot when Sikandar Sur faced a lot of hardship against the Mughals that Mahmud Barha like other *amirs* deserted him in desire of a better future.<sup>3</sup> Various notions and interesting fables are associated with the nobles of the Barha family, which help us to recreate their historical significance.

Though the importance of the Barhas has been reiterated by all historians of the medieval times, it seems to have skipped the attention of scholars of our own times. It is interesting to note that all exclusive works done on this family in our times are primarily those by the Pakistani scholars except the lone work of Afzal Husain<sup>4</sup>, which deals with the family with a fair amount of detail and space for Barhas during Akbar and Jahangir. A previous attempt had been in the form of portions within the

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<sup>2</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, p. 418.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 418; Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. G. Ranking, Vol. II, p. 11; Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Provinces*, p. 156

<sup>4</sup> Afzal Husain: *The Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir: a Study of Family Groups*, Manohar, 1999, chapter. 5.

larger discussions by Satish Chandra in his book, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740* published in 1959. Similarly the book by Athar Ali, *The Nobility under Aurangzeb*, published in 1966 takes into consideration the various Barha nobles during Aurangzeb within the course of its argument. Athar Ali's, *The Apparatus of Empire, Awards of Ranks, Offices and Titles to the Mughal Nobility (1574-1658)*, published in 1985 also gives names and mansabs of important Barha nobles of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century.

Efforts towards understanding the politics during the Saiyyid brothers in the eighteenth century have however attracted enough enthusiasm and scholars like Satish Chandra<sup>5</sup>, Zahiruddin Malik<sup>6</sup> have dealt with it in detail. On the other hand the attempt by the Pakistani scholars<sup>7</sup> seems to have been undertaken with the idea to locate their own identities as the descendants of the family and thereby leave imprints of the glory of their genealogy. This study may not be a work of totality in the respect to justify the lacuna within the Indian historiography; nonetheless it attempts to give due attention deserved by the family in the earlier centuries as well.

Before one enters into the actual discussion of the family it becomes necessary to examine the contemporary sources that talk of the Barha Saiyyids and certain peculiar characteristics that can be associated

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<sup>5</sup> Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics of the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, OUP, 1959, chapters 4, 5, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Zahiruddin Malik: *The Reign of Muhammad Shah, 1719-1748*, Bombay, 1977, chapters 1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Syed Muzaffar Ali Khan: *Tarikh-i-Saadat-i-Baihira*, 1987; Syed Safdar Husain Zaidi & Syed Shaida Ahsan Zaidi: *Saadat-i-Barha: Tarikh ke Muddojazar Mein*, Multan, 1990.

with them inferring from these references. Almost all the important contemporary chronicles, court histories and official records of the Mughal era record the valiant deeds of one or the other individual of the family.<sup>8</sup> The references, however, do not give a sequential record of the individuals and therefore makes tracing their lineage confusing. These contemporary sources however do not talk as much of the Barhas as of other noble families which can partly explain the negligence in part of the modern scholars but are invaluable nonetheless.

One of the first and most important aspects that capture the mind of a student intending to undertake the study of the Barhas is the association of the epithet 'barha' or 'bareha' with the names of the members. Both contemporary and modern writers have used the two interchangeably. What was the significance of the term and whether it meant a title or was associated as a matter of convention is an aspect that has to be examined. More commonly they are known as the 'Saadat-i-Barha'. The term 'saadat' should be understood as being the plural of 'Saiyyid', which underlines the pride that is naturally associated with the aspect of being the true descendants of the Prophet.<sup>9</sup>

Among other discernable features was their association with the military of their times. The underlying tones in all the sources, in whatever

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<sup>8</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, pp. 424-429; Al Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. G. Ranking, Vol. II, pp. 11, 18, 52-52, 143-46, 169, 224, 233, 336-37, 342, 371; Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, tr. Brajendra Nath De, Beni Prasad ed., Vol. II, pp. 374-76, 581-83, 590-92, 665, 673, 676, 681-83.

<sup>9</sup> The term *Saiyyid* originates from the name of the Prophet's sister, Saiyyida. This stresses the fact that saiyyids belonged to the kin of the Prophet and hence command equivalent respect and power within the Islamic society.

casual manner that they may have been referred to, suggest their infallibility for the Mughal army. The Barhas as a rule constituted the vanguard (*harawal*) of the army and this position was challenged by none. Even the fact that they were real descendants of the Prophet was not questioned though the seriousness of the claim had hushed disagreements from a few quarters. Therefore Jahangir in his memoirs states that there is no doubt about the fact that the Barhas are Saiyyids proving that such a claim was questioned nonetheless.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of their invaluable involvement in the army, the posts allotted to them in recognition to their service never included many high ranks at least in the initial few decades of their service.<sup>11</sup> They mostly filled the lower ranks of *subedars* and *faujdars* in far flung areas that they served. However, a process of gradual increase in their position and ranks can be discerned in subsequent years of the Mughal rule. Their strength in the sheer numbers of the clan must have been a constant reminder of their indispensability for the Emperor in any military campaign. How can the discrepancy in their utility and remuneration for the same be explained? And if they continued to be at lower ranks for centuries how could they rise to be the sole appropriators of authority by the eighteenth century? The reasons and implications of such a phenomenon require some examination.

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<sup>10</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. A. Rogers, Vol. II, p. 269.

<sup>11</sup> Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, p. 127. He agrees that they occupied an 'important place in the Mughal army, but none of them seem to have attained a high *mansab*, or been appointed to a high office'.

Another fact that must have bothered the consciousness of the contemporary individuals, as it can be sensed in their descendants even today, was that none of the members had any literary or intellectual achievement to their fame.<sup>12</sup> The Saiyyids as a clan are acknowledged to have faculties, which distinguish them in the ranks of individuals with exceptional mental qualities. The Barhas have not even a single individual to whom any such work or attempt can be attributed. Instead they were famous for using little practicality and only courage when it came to leading the army for a battle or giving up their lives for the cause of their master. Militarily they were recognized as 'alligator and leopard'<sup>13</sup> in bravery.

Interestingly enough, in matters of political exigencies they seemed to have made the right decisions more often than not. When Salim rebelled against his father, the Barhas under the leadership of Shaikh Farid Bukhari went to offer allegiance to him<sup>14</sup> and were generously rewarded for their support after he ascended the throne as Jahangir.<sup>15</sup> When Khurram revolted against Jahangir he had many Barhas like Saiyyid Khan Jahan Saiyyid Shuja'at Khan, who were in the personal service of the

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<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that even to this date the descendants of Barha Saiyyids feel the weight of their inability to produce anything worth the literary caliber that Saiyyids are associated with. However it is noteworthy at the same time that not many nobles of medieval times in the first place were scholars of any significant stature. Except for the name of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khana none appears substantial enough to consider for this category.

<sup>13</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin*, tr. Z. A. Desai, Vol. II, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> Abul Fazl: *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 797-98.

<sup>15</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. A. Rogers, Vol. I, pp. 32.

prince, as supporters and were held in high regard by Shah Jahan later.<sup>16</sup> The potential of the Saiyyid brothers, Abdullah Khan and Husain Ali, in raising Farukkhsiyar and two other insignificant individuals after him to the throne also questions the tag of 'wise fools', which has been attached to them.

Though the family could wrench real power only during the later Mughals the significance of other individuals before the Saiyyid brothers during their own times and in their respective fields of action needs to be acknowledged. How is it that they are remembered in the historical accounts? What perception does one create from the references that are available in the contemporary sources? The actual historical context in which they are discussed gives insights into the kind of people they were expected to be.

Most contemporary references tell us about their military and fighting skills. Their memory in history therefore is dominated primarily by the battles that they fought and the successes they met with. The above fact becomes most emphatic in the very first reference when the family is mentioned in the Mughal sources. The changing of sides of Mahmud Barha who was employed in the army of Sikandar Afghan fighting against Akbar has found mention in almost all sources.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, tr. H. Beveridge, Vol. II, pp. 35-37, 57, 355-56, 376-78, 494-95, 580; Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, tr. Z. A. Desai, Vol. II, pp. 112, 191-92, 206.

<sup>17</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, p. 418; Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. G. Ranking, Vol. II, pp. 11, 18.

The significance that can be attached to the incident and also Bairam Khan being instrumental in the change of heart of Mahmud Khan Barha goes without mentioning. If the latter had been an ordinary soldier or of value that could be ignored, neither a person as significant as Bairam Khan himself would have opted to be his mentor nor the event would have had any space in the imagination of the contemporary historians. But it has been put in the annals of history nonetheless which reiterates the importance of the event.

What is important to acknowledge here is that the Barhas by this time must have become a group who demanded attention by both potential pockets of power, the Afghans and the Mughals. And the joining of Mahmud Khan into the Mughal service must have also meant that all his followers, within his own immediate family and the others of the clan would have shifted allegiance meaning a considerable number of soldiers joining the ranks of the Mughals and a subsequent loss to the Afghans.

In an age where being militarily strong could be directly translated to the head count, this shift of numbers to the Mughal army must be significant and hence the mention in all sources. The Barhas as a clan were ones who martially excelled and this attribute has been duly recognized by all the contemporary sources. In other words, historically their memory for the earlier period of Mughal history is primarily in terms of valour and courage more than their political contribution in the context as mentioned earlier.

Having taken note of the characteristics that can be associated with the Barhas broadly; a note of the sources that provide references about them must be mentioned. Among the first and the most important sources are the *Ain-i-Akbari* and the *Akbarnama* of Abul Fazl.<sup>18</sup> For the initial periods of Akbar's reign other works that mention the members of the family are the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* of Al Badaoni<sup>19</sup> and the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* of Khwaja Nizamuddin Ahmad.<sup>20</sup> All these works mention the battles fought and military positions held by the Barha Saiyyids during the times of Akbar. The bibliographical account of Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, is an important work for his own period. The emperor's attempt gives certain important insights into various controversial aspects that have been mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The *Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin* of Shaikh Farid Bhakkari is another important work, which documents the achievements of significant nobles of the reigns of Shahjahan and beyond. Another similar biographical works accounting for nobles are the *Ma'asir-ul Umara* of Nawab Shahnawaz Khan and *Tazkirat-ul Umra* of Kewal Ram. The latter three works though primarily indulge in nobles from the later periods, mention about various individuals of the earlier period as well and hence prove invaluable. For the political turmoil and significance of the Barha Saiyyids

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<sup>18</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, pp. 424-429.

<sup>19</sup> Al Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. G. Ranking, Vol. II, pp. 11, 18-19, 52, 143-46, 169, 224, 233, 336-37, 342, 371.

<sup>20</sup> Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, tr. Brajendra Nath De, ed. Beni Prasad, Vol. II, pp. 374-76, 581-83, 590-92, 665, 689.

during the eighteenth century, the *Seir-Mutaqherin*<sup>21</sup> of Syed Ghulam Husain Khan is an important and indispensable work.

The Persian contemporary sources as mentioned above however require a careful analysis to weave the desired story, as they do not give enough direct information. Most of the sources are accounts of the nobility which give more information about the more known personalities like Abul Fazl, Bairam Khan, Azim Koka and their families but give very little or no information about the lesser famous ones. For the Barhas, except a few individuals like Mahmud Barha and Saiyyid Khan Jahan Barha, most of them belong to the second category. Thus, references in most of the cases come down to a few sentences with even fewer being really useful to answer the questions that one has in mind. And yet they are the only first hand sources that in real terms validate the claim of the group to significance and power. Moreover, various other aspects can be corroborated by these very contemporary sources.

The study therefore requires to go beyond the classical contemporary chronicles to become a somewhat complete analysis and this lacuna is filled by the gazetteers of the British period as those of Edwin T. Atkinson's *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Provinces of India*<sup>22</sup> and H. R. Neville's *District Gazetteer of*

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<sup>21</sup> Syed Ghulam Husain Khan: *The Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, tr. Nota Manus, 1926.

<sup>22</sup> Edwin Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Province of India*, 1876, pp. 88, 151-165.

*United Provinces, Muzaffarnagar District.*<sup>23</sup> The British in their attempt to understand the Indian conditions better undertook the practice of learning the Indian languages, which enabled them to know about the practices of their predecessors, the Mughals and the other medieval and ancient dynasties. Though this newfound knowledge of the British was put to use to subjugate the indigenous populations terming their civilization as barbarian, the biasness of these works did not mitigate their significance.

The initiation of research that was due for the Indian historical diaspora was an invaluable contribution of the British. This rightly made the Indian intellectuals realize the recognition of their own civilization and the need that it be understood on correct terms. However for areas where the Indians failed to pay due attention even after this initiation has to be documented only by the colonial official and non-official records of the British like the Factory records or the Imperial and District Gazetteers. It is here that settlement reports and the painstakingly assimilated Gazetteers of the colonial government become invaluable. The Gazetteers therefore prove to be indispensable in locating the Barha descent in terms of region and extent.

Having outlined the features that can be broadly attached with the family of the Barhas, the analysis about their emergence, origin and gradual assumption of supreme power and significance becomes a necessary exercise.

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<sup>23</sup> H. R. Neville: *District Gazetteer of United Provinces, Muzaffarnagar District*, 1903, pp. 114, 159-160. Also useful is Neville's *Hardoi: A Gazetteer, Vol. XLI of District of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, 1904, pp. 90-92.

### **The Origin of the Barha Family:**

Having the precedence of centuries old caste-ridden society within the Indian framework, it is not difficult to understand the implications of status differentiation within the Muslim community. The Barhas asserted to be Saiyyids, i.e. the true descendants of the Prophet himself. But this claim did not go unchallenged as seen earlier. To give a family the status of belonging to that of the founder of one's own religion meant assigning unquestioned authority to it. In any society such a claim could only mean the acceptance by the members at large of the superior status, spiritually and religiously if not politically, of one group over the others. It is in this light that the claim of the Barhas to be true Saiyyids has to be seen. Such claim therefore must have instilled doubt and opposition within the minds of other Muslim groups who would have certainly demanded for the validity of such an assertion. The exact reason propounded by the Barhas to liquidate such doubt about their status is not known to us; however the fact that such a doubt clearly existed is highlighted by the reference in Jahangir's *Tuzuk* asserting that the Barhas were certainly Saiyyids.<sup>24</sup> He mentions about some people making remarks over the lineage of the family and thereafter settles such questions by saying that the sheer bravery of the members of the family is a 'convincing proof enough of their being Saiyyids'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. H. Beveridge, Vol. II, p. 269; Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, tr. Z. A. Desai, Vol. II, p. 181.

<sup>25</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, p. 269.

Among the Indian Muslims who came to acquire powerful positions within the ruling class, there were a number of other families as well who associated themselves as Saiyyids for example the Saiyyids of Bilgram. It was considered that the two Saiyyid clans of the Bilgram and the Barha originated from the same ancestral tree and got diverted due migration to two different regions, the latter to the Doab and the former to Oudh and further down in the Deccan. The claims to be descendants of Ali and Fatima by both these strains and other Saiyyids as well implies towards a consequent strife within these groups amongst themselves and with the Islamic fraternity at large. Each contemporary clan or family trying to validate ones own pretensions and negate that of their rivals is attested by the assertions made in the sources as mentioned above.

What is hinted by such practices is the necessity to analyze the process through which the families might have originated in the first place. One fact which becomes clear enough is that they might not have been of such an exalted status right from their days of emergence and had come to acquire them in subsequent times thus requiring validity even till the times of the Mughals. About the sect of Islam that they followed, initially almost all of the members of the Barha Saiyyids were *Shia* Muslims. Their religious affiliation must have had a bearing on their political associations, as the medieval Indian history is replete with examples of religious interests being reflected in the political and socio-economic considerations. The later Barhas during the period of the Saiyyid brothers were doubted to have shifted to the *Sunni* sect, for which no clear reason or even proof is available. In general therefore they are considered to be

adherents of Shi'ite form of Islam the implications of which on life and society in general will be examined.

### **Meaning and Significance of the term '*Barha*':**

The assumption that the Bilgram and the Barha Saiyyids stemmed out of same ancestry<sup>26</sup> points towards the anomaly that they carried different titles and suffixes to their names like the '*barha*' specifically for the latter. These suffixes were different from the ones that were accorded to nobles and warriors by the emperors as a mark of their distinguishing courage or victory in any battle or any other such achievement. It is here that the significance of the title of '*barha*' needs to be examined. It is not really clear as to when and where in historical time was this title attached to the descendants of this family.

There are several explanations offered in various contemporary and modern sources to interpret the same. The consensus remains that the term came to be attached with the names of the members of the family around the time of Akbar. This can be assumed to be true as the *Ain-i-Akbari* mentioning the shift of allegiance by Mahmud Khan gives his name and of his co-members and descendants as such.<sup>27</sup> The other sources

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<sup>26</sup> An analysis of the Bilgram Saiyyids in terms of their ancestry, achievements and contributions to the medieval polity and society would lead to a more meaningful study of the Barhas as well as a comparison between them would help in making useful inferences. However the scope of this dissertation is limited in this direction hence such an exercise is always welcome.

<sup>27</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, pp. 424-432.

like the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* and *Tabqat-i-Akbari* however have the term 'barha' attached to the names of the individuals wherever mentioned suggesting that the family was not known by such an epithet from its initial days and came to acquire the recognition only subsequently.

The most frequent and commonly accepted interpretation of the term 'barha' is twelve or *bara* when translated into Hindi. The descendants of the *Saadat-i-Barha* by the times of the Mughals had come to inhabit twelve villages around the doab, the land between the two rivers Ganga and Yamuna, in the Muzaffarnagar district of modern Uttar Pradesh and hence their title. Jahangir states this interpretation when he writes that the twelve villages near each other in the Doab 'is the native country of these Saiyyids', which makes them to be known as the Saiyyids of Barha.<sup>28</sup> The same reason is attributed in other certain other sources as well.<sup>29</sup>

This explanation seems to be the most accurate as within the Indian context derivations of names and titles numerically is not uncommon. For example, landed intermediaries and their regions or villages of *zamindari* from time immemorial are called by names such as *chaurasis* meaning eighty-four, *chaubisis* meaning twenty-four etc. Also there associations like the *pathanon ki barah basti*, which follow the same logic. The Bilgrami Saiyyids therefore were known according to their area of influence and the Barhas according to theirs.

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<sup>28</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. H. Beveridge, Vol. II, p. 269.

<sup>29</sup> Shah Nawaz Khan: *Maa'sir-ul Umara*, tr. H. Beveridge, Vol. II, p. 37; Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, tr. Brajendra Nath De, ed. Beni Prasad, Vol. II, p. 665.

However, a note of caution has to be kept in mind here. The above assumption accommodates the understanding that the Saiyyids inhabited an area, which was large enough to give them the recognition in terms of a title. Also it would want us to believe that they themselves were influential enough by the early sixteenth century that they came to be referred to according to the region they inhabited. Both the assumptions require more qualification as twelve villages during that time could mean too small an area and Barhas may not have been as significant at this time as they became in later periods.

Another meaning for the same word '*barha*' given by a modern Pakistani author, Syed Muzaffar Ali Khan, explains it as forts in Persian.<sup>30</sup> Since the Saiyyids of this family were entrusted with the protection of the treasury and harem i.e. the innermost parts of the fort they were called so. This explanation however demands rectification, as Persian language nowhere gives the meaning of the word '*barha*' as forts. What reflects out of such an explanation is that there is a constant effort among the descendants till date to validate their position and secure their preceding titles but no consensus about the manner it should be done.

There are other explanations available as well. According to certain beliefs cited by Atkinson, the term was derived from '*bahir*' meaning outside and hence the derivative '*bareha*'. The reason associated with this is the fact that Saiyyids being pious and religious in their

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<sup>30</sup> Syed Muzaffar Ali Khan: *Tarikh-i-Saadat-i-Baihira*, p. 133.

disposition were 'disgusted with the debaucheries of the Mina Bazaar at Delhi and hence preferred to live outside the walled city'.<sup>31</sup>

In similar tones Atkinson provides us with certain other prevailing opinions in the nineteenth century among the Barha descendants about how the title or epithet came to be associated with this particular clan of Saiyyids. In documenting the popular beliefs that came down to his times, faithfully carried by the Saiyyids in their family histories, he mentions yet another mode of deriving the term. These Saiyyids being Shias were followers of the twelve or *barah* Imams, their name originally being '*salat abrar*' meaning the 'pure Saiyyids',<sup>32</sup> got transformed to Barhas in later times. This claim however does not appear to be satisfactory enough.

Since no conclusive explanation is available from any contemporary source except *Tuzuk* about this issue, one is prompted to say that the derivation of the title as an association with the twelve villages seems to be the most appropriate one.

#### **Tracing the origin of the Barha family:**

With the advent of the British and the dwindling hold of the indigenous potentates by the eighteenth century, the power equation in

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<sup>31</sup> Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Provinces*, 1876, p. 153.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

early modern India had undergone visible changes. The Barha Saiyyids were no exception to this phenomenon. The space provided to them in the descriptive accounts of almost all the British reports covering the region around Muzaffarnagar district (Jansath, Majhera etc) point towards the clout they must have held as landed potentates even during these times in spite of their declining influence.

One of the important regions of their influence was the village of Jansath about which Atkinson mentions that at the time when he is writing it exhibited 'an immense scene of ruins and the population consists of the impoverished descendants of the fallen families of former rank and splendor'.<sup>33</sup> He also acknowledges the fact that the Barhas were so intimately connected with this district that a brief notice of their history and influence is necessary to complete the local history of this portion of the Doab. It is to the reports like these of Atkinson and Neville that one has to largely depend for the construction of the early part of the history of the Barhas. The family chronicles, which provide some scattered information, do not give them in a chronological manner and are more often exaggerated and inaccurate accounts.

Apart from claiming to be true Saiyyids, the Barhas believed themselves to have descended from an individual called Saiyyid Abul Farah Wasit who was born in Medina, Saudi Arabia.<sup>34</sup> For reasons unknown he left Medina and came to a place called Waasata in Iraq and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>34</sup> Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Provinces*, p. 152; Neville: *District Gazetteer of United Provinces*, p. 159; Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics of Mughal Court*, pp. 127-128.

hence came to be known as Wasit. This was a prosperous city east of Dajla, between Basra and Baghdad, which has lost its existence in modern times.<sup>35</sup> The subsequent account of Abul Farah is anachronistic factually except attesting that he did come to the Indian subcontinent most probably with Ghoris. It is said that owing to the unrest caused by Halagu's invasion of Baghdad, he immigrated to India with his twelve sons.<sup>36</sup>

The time of his immigration is a matter of much debate and speculation as different works give different facts. Some sources also give the number of sons that accompanied him to be four and not twelve. According to the information that Atkinson refers to, Abul Farah seemed to have come to India at the time of Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, son of Iltutmish. After the confusion that had arisen because of Halagu subsided, he is said to have returned to Persia leaving behind four of his sons under the command of the emperor. These four sons eventually became the heads of the four branches of the Saiyyid family who came to inhabit the regions in Punjab initially and settled around Muzaffarnagar in the *sarkar* of Sirhind, between Saharanpur and Meerut,<sup>37</sup> in subsequent times. Interestingly, Abul Farah is said to have stayed in India till the time of Sikandar Lodi. The very chronology here points towards the inaccuracy that the facts accompany with themselves.

The confusion is further aggravated when some other modern works are referred to. The work of Saiyyid Muzaffar Ali Khan states

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<sup>35</sup> Saiyyid Muzaffar Ali Khan: *Tarikh-i-Saadat-i-Baihira*, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the Northern Provinces*, p. 152.

<sup>37</sup> Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, p. 127.

various assumptions given in different Persian and Arabic sources like the *Risala-i-Junaidia*, *Risala-i-Shijra* etc about the imminent migration of Abul Farah to Hindustan with his sons.<sup>38</sup> According to one of them, he came to Ghaznain with four of his sons but returned to Waasata with one of the four sons soon because he did not like the appearances and habits of people of Ghaznain. The other three who remained then came to India. Documenting yet another source Muzaffar Ali Khan mentions that he did come to Hindustan and was stationed around Jhabat, thirty *kos* from Ambala in Punjab. The people of nearby mauza Salaura complained to him about the cruelty of their ruler, which made him attack the mauza.<sup>39</sup> This mauza can now be identified with Sadhauraa. This source further states that during the times of Qutubuddin Aibak the fort of Thahaka was given to Farah. This claim has been cornered by Khan himself as being false one.

There is a notion of spiritual sanctity that has been associated with this whole issue in few of these sources. It is believed that Ghazni had a divine dream one night in which he was instructed to take Abul Farah along with him to his expeditions to Hindustan if he wished to become victorious.<sup>40</sup> On finding out that Farah was in Ghaznain itself he went to see him personally. Quite clearly the story has been weaved to give a legitimate, spiritual hue to the character of Farah himself so that the family attains religious sanctity in result. The idea in itself seems to be too

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<sup>38</sup> S. Muzaffar Ali Khan: *Tarikh-i-Saadat-i-Baihira*, pp. 14, 16, 19.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16. 19.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

far fetched and could be seen as a mechanism to attach religious sanction to the attacks of Ghazni as well.

Keeping aside all speculative assertions, which cannot be completely attested due to the lack of necessary data for the issue, what remains within the consensus of all sources and our own understanding is that Abul Farah had come to Hindustan with his four sons sometime around the early conquest of the Muslims. If the account of Atkinson is to be believed the earliest inscription that is available which speaks of the Saiyyids is that on the tomb of one Ibn Salar Chhatrauri bearing the date of 1375 A.D. from Punjab who is believed to be the eighth in descent from Abul Farah.<sup>41</sup> The local tradition of this area of Punjab around the Patiala district believes these Saiyyids to be 'in the service of Shihabuddin Ghori'. The four sons coming to the Indian subcontinent also seems to be true as this Saiyyid clan is known to have divided into four different branches thereafter spreading around the territory of Patiala. These four branches were known as the following according to the regions that they inhabited:

1. Saiyyid Daud in *mauza* Tihanpur whose descendants were known as *Tihanpuris*;
2. Saiyyid Abul Fazl in *gasba* Chhatbanur/ Chhatrauri whose descendants were known as *Chhatrauris*;
3. Saiyyid Abul Fazail in *mauza* Kundli whose descendants were known as *Kundliwals*;

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<sup>41</sup> Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Provinces*, 1876, p. 152.

4. Saiyyid Najm-ud-din Husain in *mauza* Jagner/Jhajari whose descendants were known as *Jagneris*.

Mahmud Barha and his family belonged to the Kundli branch of this tree.<sup>42</sup> It is primarily his family and the line of Kundliwal Barhas that has been examined in this study.

In subsequent times the settlements around Punjab began moving eastward and in the process divided further into two branches. One of these settled in the Oudh region, giving rise to the Bilgram Saiyyids and the other moved to the Doab becoming the Barhas. The Bilgram pedigree talks of Mohammad Shugra who is believed to be the common ancestor of both the branches according to some beliefs.<sup>43</sup> Abul Farah according to Neville's records was sixth in descent from Shugra and hence both the branches had common ancestral link.

Around the Doab the four branches that represented the Barhas came to settle around specific regions, which gradually became their strongholds and remained so till the times of the British. The Kundliwals settled in Majhera, the Chhatrauri in or near Sambhalera, the Jagneri in Bidauri and Palri and the Tihanpuris in Dhasri and Kumhera all being parganas and qasbas some of which mentioned in the Ain too.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, p.324; Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Provinces*, p. 156.

<sup>43</sup> H.R. Neville: *Hardoi Gazetteer*, p. 90.

<sup>44</sup> Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Provinces*, 1876, p. 153; Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Jarrett, Vol. II, p. 157

The probable reason for the shift from the region around Punjab to that of the Doab and Oudh calls for attention. One of them could be the gradual increase in the population in and around the former, which must have pushed the people to move out in search for greener pastures. The fertile tracts of the Ganga and Yamuna doab had caught the fantasies of man from the beginning of Indian history. Since the time the Turkish invasions began in the history of medieval India, the east had witnessed attacks from several adventurous military leaders quite periodically. The rulers of medieval India had recognized the potential of this region in time and were tapping the resources accordingly. The spread of Islam naturally had been emphatic around this area. To look towards this region for subsequent expansion, even in cases of emergency would seem to be an obvious and safer option. The spread of the Saiyyid here can thus be seen in this light.

The very assumption that the Doab was extremely fertile would reiterate the fact that the region must have been adequately harnessed and exploited by indigenous populations even before the new entrants, here meaning the Muslims in general and the Saiyyids in particular. The economy for the whole of medieval India largely depended upon agricultural produce hence to give away one's own means of livelihood could be accepted only if supplemented by other equally remunerative factors.

A glimpse of the above mentioned fact is available from Atkinson again. It is documented that the earliest settlements around the Sambhalera pargana were in the sandy tracts as the richer portions were

already occupied by the Hindu Jat and Rajput communities. The acquisitions of the richer tracts were initially made possible because of the goodwill of the Hindu owners who did so to pay off the obligations of the Saiyyids.<sup>45</sup> The nature of obligatory work offered by the Saiyyids, which could entitle them to be duly rewarded in terms of land making them most influential in this area is not known. This is a much interesting aspect, which for the want of necessary data cannot be further explored as both the Jats and the Rajputs are known to have been martially active. There are no contemporary records in terms of *sanads* or official records, which can corroborate the process. In such a situation one can only assume that the previous occupants could probably have given their claims on land, which then was the only principal source of income, only in dire sequences or not without much resistance.

One explanation for the above can be derived from the fact that the ruling dynasty was of the same religion of the Saiyyids. To this Atkinson adds that the Saiyyids were still not 'holding such high offices at the court which could enable them to obtain possession of fertile ownership already settled'.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless the aspect cannot be ignored and must have proved to be decisive. Atkinson asserts the ascendance of the Saiyyid dynasty on the throne of Delhi at the beginning of the fifteenth century to be of great implication in the gradual increase in the fortunes of the other Saiyyids families in the kingdom.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Northern Provinces*, p. 153.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

The Saiyyid rulers are known to have been great patrons of their co-religionists and important posts and ranks were offered to their own clan members, for example the *shiq* of Saharanpur was given to a Saiyyid Salim.<sup>48</sup> The four branches in Punjab by this time must have certainly progressed in their number and influence, which could decide their further direction of movement and subsequent settlement to their advantage. The coming of the Saiyyids towards the Muzaffarnagar area and settling there should be seen in this context and thus seems logical. The *Ain* also gives the category of the *zamindars* inhabiting the areas around the *parganas* of Saharanpur, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar, a large number of them being Saiyyids.<sup>49</sup> Though it does not give the name of the Barhas specifically, such a speculation holds well on the above reference.

By the fifteenth century therefore, when the Mughals entered the subcontinent the Saiyyids, the Barhas in particular, had attained enough power in terms of economic and social status that they attracted attention as potential associates. The number of men that they could muster from within their kinship groups became one of the deciding factors of their imminent support. Being known and highly regarded for excellent martial skills was complemented with their clan exclusivity in terms of physical, military support to each other in times of need. This became an important political tool in the hands of the Barhas, which emphatically surfaces as a significant aspect during the eighteenth century.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>49</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Jarrett, Vol. II, pp. 174, 189-90, 194-96.

During the crisis between the Saiyyid brothers and the Emperor Farukkhsiyar, the Barhas as a group remained loyal to the former following the principle of kinship not just once but many a times. Realizing the imminent danger of dissension between the Emperor and himself the *wazir*, Abdullah Khan, raised new troops which chiefly included 'a large body of the Saiyyids of Barha, who had flocked into the city, on hearing that the *wazir*, whom they looked upon not only as their countryman, but also as their kinsman, was in danger from his enemies'.<sup>50</sup> The close associations on the lines of family and common lineage became really crucial during these politically chaotic times and were exploited to maximum by the Barhas. The *Seir-Mutaqherin* provides us with number of such examples.<sup>51</sup>

The graph of significance of the Barhas in medieval polity therefore seems to be on a trough till the eighteenth century and touched its peak with the Saiyyid brothers. The position they held within the Mughal polity and society was certainly one that had significant implications as has been seen in the preceding discussion. The peculiar characteristics and nuances associated with the family thus become a tool in understanding and explaining them and the events of the times they existed in better.

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<sup>50</sup> Syed Ghulam Husain Khan: *The Seir-Mutaqherin*, tr. Nota Manus, Vol. I, p. 99.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117. Abdullah Khan is said to have admitted 'no man but those of the Barhas' who were 'Saiyyids like himself' and he could 'trust them above all'. These men are said to be numerically around twenty-five thousand raised 'without any distinction of country or nation'. At another place it is mentioned that a body of six thousand horses was obtained who were 'all veteran troops and all Saiyyids of Barha, who reckoned themselves to be so many countrymen, and so kinsmen of the two brothers', p. 149.

## CHAPTER III

### **The Barha Nobles: Analysis of their Political Careers and Contributions**

Having discussed the peculiar characteristics associated with the Barha family, which gave it a significant position within the Mughal nobility and the medieval society in general, analyzing the contributions made by the individuals of the family remains a necessary exercise. The nobility gives shape to the policies of the Empire but it is the individuals noble who are the real executors of such policies. Moreover, it is individuals who constitute a family and personal caliber of these individuals get translated to the crests and troughs in the fortune graph of a family. To take note of the contributions of a family therefore the individual members need to be taken note of accordingly.

All the Barha members though did not get inducted into the ranks of the nobility remained a reserved force that could be relied any and every time. The ones who did get *mansabs* thus need to be examined. As it has been said that among those who received *mansabs* not all of them received high ranks and most remained rather in the fringes of the nobility. How can then the rise of the Abdullah Khan and Husain Ali in the eighteenth century be accounted for? Analyzing the individual careers of the members of the family over time would help us to find an explanation for this anomaly.

The following chapter therefore will be an exercise in the above direction. In the first section the career of all individuals mentioned in various contemporary sources will be examined in terms of the *mansabs* and posts that they held and the important battles that they took part in the reigns from Akbar to Aurangzeb and then the ascent of the Saiyyid brothers. An attempt would be made accordingly to reach to a conclusion whereby their gradual ascendancy could be attempted to be explained. It is also necessary to examine the significant social and cultural implications as a result of this ascendancy as the Barhas were members of a particular sect of Islam, namely Shiaism. This aspect will be taken up in the second section of the chapter.

## I

The significance of Mahmud Barha Khan of the Kundliwal sept joining the Mughal service during the siege of Mankot from the army camp of Sikandar Afghan has already been analyzed. He was not the first but certainly the first significantly known Barha, which explains the space given to him in contemporary sources.<sup>1</sup> There has been some ambiguity about the occupation that the Barhas had before joining the service of the Mughals. On the basis of the private marks of recognition in terms of the nicknames accorded to their villages and families, Atkinson and Neville have concluded that they were menial officials working for Humayun

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<sup>1</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, p. 424; Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. Ranking, Vol. II, pp. 11, 18; Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the Northern Provinces*, p. 156.

during his time of distress and flight from Sher Shah.<sup>2</sup> This seems to be as a result of the notion that must have come down to their times as a part of local oral tradition of the region. The Barha villages around Muzaffarnagar thus had denominations like dog, ass, sweeper etc that also helped them in excluding imposters from their clans.<sup>3</sup> Both the history of the Barhas in terms of their occupation and the reason and implications of such specific names attached to their villages and groups are an area, which for the want of necessary data has to be largely relied on speculation.

It is believed that under the influence of local *zamindars* they took to military functions and mastered it in time. Here one could make an assumption that they arose from small *zamindaris* and expanded gradually attaching larger contingents numerically making themselves potentially stronger. Thus, after the death of one Raja Ram Chand of Sambhalera, Saiyyid Hasan of the Chhatrauri sept appropriated the whole estate at the request of the widow.<sup>4</sup>

Before the Mughals some of them must have taken initiative to serve the imperial forces and the same must have been true for the Mughals. The latter must have taken this opportunity to serve their own purpose as they needed local support and anyone offering it must have been included into the nobility.

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<sup>2</sup> Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the Northern Provinces*, p. 154. Also, Neville: *District Gazetteer of United Provinces*, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Atkinson: *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of United Provinces*, p. 154; Muzaffar Ali Khan: *Tarikh-i-Saadat-i-Baihira*, pp. 137-39.

<sup>4</sup> Neville: *District Gazetteer of the United Provinces*, p. 168.

With Mahmud Barha the political career of the Barhas within the Mughal service thus saw a beginning. Initially it was Bairam Khan whom he served and not the Emperor directly.<sup>5</sup> After the sack of Bairam Khan he presented himself to Akbar who readily inducted him into the Mughal service by offering him a *mansab*<sup>6</sup> which rose to 2000 in 1594-95 as reported by *Ain*<sup>7</sup> and also gave him a *jagir* reportedly around Delhi in 1561.<sup>8</sup> He was given the title of *Khan* as well. The *Tazkirat-ul Umara* also gives the same rank of 2000.<sup>9</sup> The *Tabaqat* on the other hand gives his *mansab* to be 4000 and a rank of *amir*.<sup>10</sup> He is said to be the head of the clan having many retainers and famous among the people of India for his bravery and courage.<sup>11</sup> Along with these characteristics he also possessed simplicity and benevolence and was a man of family.<sup>12</sup>

If one leaves aside the ambiguity about his rank in different sources, these ranks definitely establish his position as an important noble. However, what surprises one here is that the different sources give different ranks and statuses for the same individual over different periods of time. It is difficult to assign a reason for this as none of the

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<sup>5</sup> Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. Ranking, Vol. II, pp. 11, 12; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, tr. Beveridge, Vol. II, pp. 35, 375-77.

<sup>6</sup> It must be remembered here that the *mansab* system did not come into existence from the beginning of Akbar's reign and took shape only around the 1580s. As has been pointed out by A. J. Qaiser in his article, 'Distribution of Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire among the Nobility' *PIHC*, 1965 that the initial *mansabs* of the nobles before this period recorded in sources were fictitiously given to serve the purpose of arranging the nobles into a hierarchical order so that each one is assigned a particular status and the structure as a whole becomes unquestionable. Thus the *mansabs* given before 1580s should not be treated as final and correct.

<sup>7</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, p. 424.

<sup>8</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 375-77; Atkinson, p. 156.

<sup>9</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, tr. Azizuddin, p. 154.

<sup>10</sup> Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, tr. B. N. De, Vol. II, p. 665.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 665.

<sup>12</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, tr. Beveridge, Vol. II, p. 37.

contemporary writers give either their source of information or the reason why it is different from that given any other work of their time. What has been the normal exercise then is to account all the different sources leaving the question about their discrepancy open to any future explanation.

His first military campaign was in the very first regnal year of Akbar, which also decided the fate of the Mughals in India. Mahmud Khan was associated in the battle of Panipat in 1556 where the Mughal forces crushed the ambitions of the Afghan forces under Hemu for all times to come.<sup>13</sup> After this victory, in the second regnal year in 1557 he was dispatched to Ajmer and Nagor against Haji Khan.<sup>14</sup> In 1558 he went with Adham Khan to fight the Bhadauriyas of Hatkant, east of Agra and between Agra and Etawah, and also served in the expedition against fort Jaitaran in Jodhpur.<sup>15</sup>

After Bairam Khan left the political scene for Akbar to exercise his complete control, the fortunes of the indigenous families within the nobility in general and the Barhas in particular saw a rise in terms of numbers and influence. His policy of introducing the Indians into the nobility, Rajputs and *Shaikhzadas*, had a profound impact on the structure of the state that was to emerge in due course of time.<sup>16</sup> This should be seen

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<sup>13</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, p. 324. Also Abul Fazl: *Akbarnama*, Vol. II, p. 78; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 375-77; Atkinson, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, 46, 66; Atkinson, p. 156.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156; Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 78; Abul Fazl: *Akbarnama*, Vol. II, p. 78; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 375-77.

<sup>16</sup> I. A. Khan: 'The Nobility under Akbar and the Development of his Religious Policy, 1560-80', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1968, pp. 29-36.

as an important part of the process of Barhas rising up in their political significance being examined.

It is believed in some quarters of medieval Indian historians that the ones to be benefited the most out of this policy were the Saiyyids of Barhas. Afzal Husain argues, on the basis of his analysis of several important Indian families during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir, that 'no other clan equaled the Barhas except the families of Shaikh Mubarak and Shaikh Salim Chishti' and 'even these two families did not have as many *mansabdars* as the Barhas Saiyyids'.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from Mahmud Barha, his brother Saiyyid Ahmad Khan is as frequently mentioned.<sup>18</sup> As a rule followed during medieval times, he seemed to have changed loyalty along with his brother and the whole clan remained together as a single flock to exercise greater control over resources and situations. The *Ain* gives the rank of Ahmad Barha as 2000 *zat*<sup>19</sup> meanwhile the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* reports it to be 3000 *zat*.<sup>20</sup> The latter also states that he was included in the ranks of *amirs* and noted for bravery.<sup>21</sup>

The two brothers fought a number of battles together as well and became instrumental in the victories in Western India. In the Gujarat campaign, Saiyyid Mahmud Barha, Saiyyid Ahmad Khan along with the

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<sup>17</sup> Afzal Husain: *Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir*, p. 106.

<sup>18</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I, pp. 427,447; *Akbarnama*, Vol. II, pp. 11, 317, 372; Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. Ranking, Vol. II, pp. 139-40, 143-44, 336-37; Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, tr. B. De, Vol. II, pp. 374, 665.

<sup>19</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 427.

<sup>20</sup> Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 374.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 665.

two sons of Mahmud Barha, Hashim and Qasim Barha, were dispatched to accompany the advance guard of Khan-i-Kalan. Ahmad Khan Barha was given the *jagir* of Pattan by Akbar during this conquest of Gujarat and was placed as the guardian of Mirza Khan's contingent.<sup>22</sup> When Akbar halted on the bank of the river of Ahmadabad, Mahmud Barha and Shaikh Mahmud Bukhari brought the Emperor's *harem* into the royal camp.<sup>23</sup>

When Akbar decided to check the advances made by the Mirzas in Gujarat, he sent an army under Man Singh, Mahmud Barha and others to capture Surat. The army however had to be recalled as Ibrahim Husain Mirza was approaching from Broach. Saiyyid Mahmud and others, who fought a fierce battle at Sarnal defeating Ibrahim who fled from there, joined Akbar.<sup>24</sup> The royal army then marched towards Surat but Saiyyid Mahmud had to be sent to Agra along with Shah Quli Mahram and Bhagwan Das to intercept a rebellion raised by Ibrahim Husain there.<sup>25</sup> The Barha Saiyyids were in the centre of the command of the army, which became responsible for the victory over Husain Mirza in Surat. Saiyyid Mahmud was also responsible for the victorious campaign against Madhukar Shah Bundela in which he was assisted by the Saiyyids of Amroha.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. Ranking, Vol. II, pp. 143-46, 169; Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, pp. 374-75; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 378-79, 408-10.

<sup>23</sup> Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, pp. 145-46; Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 375.

<sup>24</sup> Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 141.

<sup>25</sup> Abul Fazl: *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 23; Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 376.

<sup>26</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 424-25; Abul Fazl: *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 77.

The two sons of Mahmud Barha seemed to have demanded significant positions within the nobles as they too are mentioned in various capacities in important battles along with their father as well as independently. They accompanied the imperial army diligently during the conquest of Gujarat. Even when the royal army went in the pursuit of Husain Mirza in 1573 Saiyyid Qasim was associated with it.<sup>27</sup> He was given a rank of 1500 *zat* according to the *Ain*.<sup>28</sup> The *Tazkirat-ul Umara*<sup>29</sup> and the *Ma'asir-ul Umara*<sup>30</sup> attest this information. However the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* gives it to be 2000. He was later appointed the *hakim* of Pattan in Gujarat.<sup>31</sup>

Saiyyid Hashim on the other hand held a *mansab* of 1000 *zat* according to the *Ain*<sup>32</sup> and the same is reiterated in the *Tazkirat*<sup>33</sup> and the *Ma'asir*.<sup>34</sup> The *Ma'asir-ul Umara* gives that this was raised to 1500 *zat* during the Deccan campaign in which he was significantly involved.<sup>35</sup> The *Tabaqat* on the other hand gives the *mansab* to be 2000 *zat*.<sup>36</sup> He was entrusted with the job of containing Husain Khan who had created chaos around Thanesar<sup>37</sup> and later attached with the force of Man Singh and asked to proceed to the hostile district of Kokanda near Udaipur.<sup>38</sup> In this battle Saiyyid Hashim and his uncle Saiyyid Ahmad were important men

<sup>27</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 494.

<sup>28</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, pp. 427,461.

<sup>29</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, tr. Azizuddin, p. 232.

<sup>30</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 378-79.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 495.

<sup>32</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, pp. 427, 461.

<sup>33</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 240.

<sup>34</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 494.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 495.

<sup>36</sup> Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, 673.

<sup>37</sup> Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 224.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

who formed 'important section of the army'.<sup>39</sup> He was sent to Sirohi with Rai Rai Singh for the chastisement of Sultan Deorah and 'became famous for his good service'.<sup>40</sup>

The two brothers became instrumental in the victorious campaign against Muzaffar Khan in Pattan, which appears to be the most important battle that they fought. Before this they seemed to have remained in Ajmer where they had *jagirs* and served the imperial army there. Later they were appointed to Gujarat with Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khana. The vanguard of the army was commanded by the Barha Saiyyids, which was to deal with the rebellion of Muzaffar. Saiyyid Qasim along with Nizamuddin Ahmad and a body of competent men went towards Surat where Muzaffar had led the seizure of the fortress of Chunagarh and forced him to flee towards Gujarat.<sup>41</sup> Saiyyid Hashim died fighting in 1584 against Muzaffar Khan at Sarkhij.<sup>42</sup>

The battle against Rana Pratap of Mewar undertaken under the supervision of Man Singh had Saiyyid Qasim and Saiyyid Hashim as important Barha chiefs. The fierce resistance characteristic of the Rajputs was visible in this campaign as well but the Barhas too exhibited commendable strength, which has been acknowledged by Badaoni when he says that it would have led to a disgraceful defeat, had the 'Barhas not

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 336-37.

<sup>40</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 494.

<sup>41</sup> Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p.371; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 495; Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, pp. 582-83, 590-92.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 494; Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 342; Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 673.

held the ground firmly'.<sup>43</sup> Among other exploits of Saiyyid Qasim that are mentioned in the sources are the battles against the rebellious rulers of Jam, the *zamindar* of Little Cutch and against Khangar, the *zamindar* of Great Cutch.<sup>44</sup>

There are several other individuals during the reign of Akbar who also find mention in our sources. Among the generation of Saiyyid Mahmud Khan there is a mention of two more of his brothers, Saiyyid Chajju and Saiyyid Hasan Khan. The latter finds a place only in the work of Kewal Ram and is conspicuous by his absence in other sources.<sup>45</sup> Saiyyid Hasan Khan thus is stated to have a *mansab* of 1000 and a title of *Khan*.<sup>46</sup>

Saiyyid Chajju however is mentioned in more than one contemporary work and the *Ain* gives his rank as 500.<sup>47</sup> Blochmann in his translation of the *Ain* mentions that his tomb still exists at Majhera. The *Tabaqat* does not mention his rank as it does for other Barhas but mentions him as Saiyyid Jhaju who was 'distinguished among men of his class for courage and manliness'.<sup>48</sup> Within the family of Saiyyid Mahmud was Saiyyid Jamaluddin who the son of Saiyyid Ahmad Khan Barha. He

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<sup>43</sup> Badaoni: *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 227-8, 230-33; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 403-4.

<sup>44</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 495.

<sup>45</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, pp. 427, 532.

<sup>48</sup> Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 676.

held a rank of 500<sup>49</sup> and was killed in a mine explosion during the siege of Chittor.<sup>50</sup>

There are several individuals who were not related to the family of Saiyyid Mahmud but have been mentioned as significant Barhas nonetheless. This would lead one to assume that they must have been of the other three septs that existed and not particularly Kundliwals as Saiyyid Mahmud and his brothers. Though asserting the exact genealogical history of such individuals would be a difficult task in the face of unavailable references their mention reiterates the fact that the Barhas followed a close kin relationship and were recognized in that capacity.

Thus, Saiyyid Raju is stated to hold a mansab of 1000 *zat* in the *Ain*<sup>51</sup> as well as the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*<sup>52</sup> and *Ma'asir-ul Umara*.<sup>53</sup> His most significant contribution seems to be the assistance that he provided the two Barha brothers in their campaign against Rana Pratap.<sup>54</sup> He was attached to prince Murad later and went with him to chastise raja Madhukar Shah Bundela in 1590 where he stayed back. During the siege of Ahmadnagar in 1594, he died fighting valiantly.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, pp. 427, 447, 532.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 532; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 379.

<sup>51</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 427, 501.

<sup>52</sup> Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 681.

<sup>53</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 580.

<sup>54</sup> Abul Fazl: *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 218-19, 425; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 580.

<sup>55</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 580.

Under the similar category of belonging to a different sept were individuals like Saiyyid Lad and Saiyyid Bahadur. The *Ain* gives the *mansab* of Saiyyid Lad as 200<sup>56</sup> and he served in Gujarat and later in Deccan. No such specific information is available about Saiyyid Bahadur. These two Barha men were also associated in the Gujarat campaign along with the other Barhas against Muzaffar Khan.<sup>57</sup> Yet another individual was Saiyyid Bayazid who held a rank of 300 and a title of Mustafa Khan.<sup>58</sup> He remained a significant figure during Jahangir as well.

One useful exercise that can be carried out at this juncture and which will be followed for the subsequent portions of the chapter as well is a comparative analysis of the ranks, *mansabs*, posts and the due remuneration that the Barhas as a family were accumulating in terms of their *mansab* and *jagir* salaries in lieu of their services rendered. The following table would help us understand how many individuals were inducted within the Mughals service during Akbar and what were their corresponding dues according to their ranks. A similar exercise for subsequent Emperors would give us the picture (in terms of salary, ranks and posts) how economically the Barhas were gaining strength.

The policy of Akbar therefore to counter the influence of the Irani and Turani factions in his court with the induction of indigenous elements gets reflected in the number of Barha Saiyyids that came to be included within the army and awarded suitable remuneration for their

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<sup>56</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 427, 594.

<sup>57</sup> Nizamuddin Ahmad: *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, pp. 581-83.

<sup>58</sup> Abul Fazl: *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 427, 562; Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers, Vol. I, p. 344.

TABLE I

Barha *mansabdars* during the reign of Akbar

S. No	Name	Year	Rank/ <i>Mansab</i>	Appointment/ Title
1	Saiyyid Mahmud Khan Barha	1574 - 75	2000/ X	
2	Saiyyid Fath Khan Barha	1574 - 75	-	
3	Saiyyid Ahmad Khan Barha	1572 - 73	-	
		1577 - 78	2000/X	<i>Qiladar</i> of Patan (Gujarat)
4	Saiyyid Qasim Barha	1593 - 4	2000/ X	<i>Hakim</i> of Patan (Gujarat)
		1595 - 6	1500/ X	
5	Saiyyid Raju Barha	1593 - 4	1000/ X	
		1595 - 6	900/ X	
6	Saiyyid Hashim Barha	-	1000/ X	
7	Saiyyid Bayazid Barha	1595 - 6	300/ X	
8	Saiyyid Lad Barha	1595 - 6	200/ X	
9	Saiyyid Chajju Barha	-	500/ X	
10	Saiyyid Jamaluddin Barha	1567 - 8	500/ X	
11	Saiyyid Hasan Barha	-	1000/ X	<i>Khan</i>

services. For the reign of Jahangir there seems to be an increase in their status and prestige as their number not only increases but also the ranks they came to hold appear to be more significant. This seems to be in recognition of the support that the Barhas offered to prince Salim during the last years of Akbar when the nobility was divided on the claims of Salim and his son Khusrau to the throne. The faction under Man Singh and Mirza Aziz Koka had wished to arrest Salim but were unsuccessful because the Barhas under Shaikh Farid Bukhari aligned for Salim and rendered great support to his cause.<sup>59</sup>

This support was duly rewarded by the Emperor on his accession as Jahangir himself acknowledges their bravery and courage in dispersing the rebels who accompanied the cause of Khusrau.<sup>60</sup> He mentions the Saiyyids Of Barhas to be the 'brave ones of the age' who though being not more than 50-60 in number cut the 1500 strong Badakshi horsemen into pieces.

Among individuals who served the prince and later the Emperor the *Tuzuk* gives the names of many. Saiyyid Ali Ashgar appears to be one the most important members of the Barha clan as he finds mention frequently in the account of Jahangir and there seems to an underlying tone of fondness whenever Jahangir mentions him. Jahangir mentions raising the rank of the Saiyyid, the son of Mahmud Barha and the head of the tribe during his time, to 2000 *zat* and 1000 horses in recognition of his services in the battle against Khusrau.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Abul Fazl: *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 797-98.

<sup>60</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers, Vol. I, p. 64.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 32, 35, 75; Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 82.

Jahangir mentions at another place that he bestowed the title of Saif Khan on Saiyyid Ali Ashgar in 1609.<sup>62</sup> He was later assigned the *faujdari* of the *sarkar* of Hissar and received a further promotion in his rank of 2500 *zat* and 1350 horses.<sup>63</sup> When Khurram is sent against the Rana of Mewar in 1613, Saiyyid Ali Ashgar was deputed with him and his *mansab* was further increased to 3000 *zat* and 1500 horses.<sup>64</sup>

With the transfer of Khurram from Rajputana to the Deccan as viceroy, the Saiyyid seemed to have changed bases as well as he is reported of dying in the Deccan in 1616.<sup>65</sup> The two minor sons of the Saiyyid, Ali Muhammad and Bahadur, were given ranks of 600 *zat* and 400 *sawars* and 400 *zat* and 200 *sawars*. His nephew, Saiyyid Ali Barha, meanwhile received an increase of 500 *zat* and *sawar*, which raised his rank to 2000 *zat* and 1500 *sawars*.<sup>66</sup>

The *Tuzuk* here and there mentions several Barha individuals and it is difficult to weave a single thread to establish the pedigree of the various members referred. At the same time the occurrence of the same name for a number of individuals accentuate the problem at hand. The best that can be done in such a situation is that a note of all the individuals is taken to emphasize on the relative importance of the family.

Apart from the sons of Mahmud Barha the descendants of other members during Akbar's time were recognized well into the reign of

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 157, 172; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 410-11.

<sup>65</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 325.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

Jahangir. The sons of Saiyyid Qasim, Saiyyid Ali Muhammad and Saiyyid Bahadur, were among the important men during Jahangir. The former received a title of Salabat Khan and a *mansab* of 1500 in 1610.<sup>67</sup> Another Barha named Saiyyid Qasim, the son of Saiyyid Lad, held a *mansab* of 1000 during Jahangir.<sup>68</sup> In 1617 Saiyyid Abdullah brought the news of the settlement with Ahmadnagar for which he was given a *jagir* worth 2,000,000 *dams* and the title of Saif Khan from the Emperor.<sup>69</sup>

Another significant noble was Saiyyid Abdul Wahab who was given the title of Diler Khan by Jahangir and raised from a *mansab* of 1000 *zat* and 800 *sawars* to 2000 *zat* and 1200 *sawars*.<sup>70</sup> He held a fief in Nanded in Gujarat and is said to have married hundred females there from the families of the zamindars and collected a large force.<sup>71</sup> This seems to be in consonance with the previous assumption that the Barhas acquired local roots in a region by either replacing the previous inhabitants or becoming a part of them.

This act of Saiyyid Diler Khan Barha also appears to be a continuation of the matrimonial policy followed by Akbar to placate his potential rivals by including them within the state apparatus. In 1620 he held a *mansab* of 1000 *zat* and 800 *sawars*<sup>72</sup>, which was later increased to

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<sup>67</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 87; Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 106.

<sup>68</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 232.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82. This gives his *mansab* to be 700. Also, Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, p. 188-89.

<sup>70</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, p. 269; Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 68; Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, tr. Z. A. Desai, Vol. II, p. 112.

<sup>71</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, Vol. II, p. 112.

<sup>72</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 307-8.

4000 *zat* and 3000 *sawars* in 1623.<sup>73</sup> He later entered the service of Shah Jahan and was given a raise in his *mansab* and honour. In 1633 he became the *faujdar* of Baroda.<sup>74</sup>

His brother Saiyyid Ghairat Khan Barha held a *mansab* of 1500<sup>75</sup> and is said to have performed outstanding feats in Bangash and Kabul.<sup>76</sup> Another brother of the above two Saiyyid Diler Khan Barha was Saiyyid Izzat Khan who served in Bangash also saw a raise in his *mansab* to 1500 *zat* and 800 *sawars*.<sup>77</sup> On receiving the news of his death, Jahangir transferred both his jagir and *mansab* to his minor son as he had high regards for the Barha Saiyyid.<sup>78</sup>

When Jahangir was in Gujarat in 1618, he promoted a number of Barha nobles who had been posted in that province. Saiyyid Hizabr Khan was promoted to the rank of 1000 *zat* and 400 *sawars* and later his rank was raised to 1500 in 1620 and 3000 in 1628.<sup>79</sup> He was also made the *faujdar* of Mewat.<sup>80</sup> In 1620 he was deputed with Khan-I Jahan Lodi to Multan.

The following table (Table II) shows the numerical increase of the Barha Saiyyids during the reign of Jahangir. This would also mean a

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<sup>73</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 68.

<sup>74</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, pp. 40, 73; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 493-94.

<sup>75</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 124.

<sup>76</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, Vol. II, p. 112.

<sup>77</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, p. 40.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 307-8.

<sup>79</sup> Jahangir: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, p. 223; Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 188; Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, Vol. II, 112

<sup>80</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 188.

corresponding increase in the amount that was being accrued by them as their salaries. The repercussions in terms of economic status that the Barhas could acquire as a result of their numerical increase needs some qualifications.

The significance of the Barhas as a group emerges more during the times of a change in the position at the level of the Emperor. It has been said earlier that Barhas as a group made crucial political decisions in terms support to the candidature of one claimant to the throne against others. This had become a recurring feature from the times of Akbar and was repeated for Salim as well. The claim of Khurram seemed no different. As seen earlier there were many Barhas who were attached to Khurram during his days of governorship in Deccan as a prince. When Jahangir died Saiyyid Diler Khan was one of the first to offer homage and support to Shahjahan.<sup>81</sup> Members of the family like Hizabr Khan even fought against Shahryar<sup>82</sup> and were regarded highly by Shahjahan.

For a later period, Saiyyid Khan Barha got a *mansab* and a title as recognition of his services against Alamgir. He again became important during Aurangzeb when he sided with the imperial forces against Dara.<sup>83</sup> However, the struggle between Aurangzeb and Dara appears to be an exception in the understanding that the Barhas mostly sided with those who happened to be victorious eventually. In the list of nobles provided by

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<sup>81</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. I, pp. 493-94.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 415-16.

<sup>83</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 91.

**TABLE II****Barha mansabdars during the reign of Jahangir**

S. No	Name	Year	Rank/ <i>Mansab</i>	Appointment/ Title
1	Saiyyid Ali Asghar Barha	1605 – 06	3000/ X	Saif Khan
		1605 - 06	2000/ 1000	
		1609 – 10	2500/ 1300	<i>Faujdar</i> of Hissar
		1614 - 15	3000/ 1500	
		1615 – 16	3000/ 2000	
		1616 - 17	-	Died
2	Saiyyid Izzat Khan Barha	1606 – 08	-	<i>Hakim</i> of Jalalabad
3	Saiyyid Ali Barha	1610 – 11	1000/ 700	
		1615 – 16	1500/ 1000	
		1616 – 17	2000/ 1500	
4	Saiyyid Qasim Barha (s/o Saiyyid Lad)		1000/ 600	
5	Saiyyid Abdullah Barha	1616 – 17	-	Saif Khan
		1615 – 16	600/ 250	
		1615 - 16	700/300	
6	Saiyyid Hizabr Khan Barha	1617 - 18	1000/ 400	
		1617 - 18	1000/ 500	<i>Faujdar</i> of Mewat
		1619 - 20	1500/ 700	
7	Saiyyid Abdul Wahab Barha (b/o Saiyyid Izzat Khan Barha)	1617 – 18	1000/ 500	
		1619 – 20	1000/ 800	
		1622 - 3	2000/ 1200	
8	Saiyyid Nasib Barha	1619 – 20	-	Died
9	Saiyyid Diler Khan Barha (b/o Saiyyid Izzat Khan)	--	2000/1200	

10	Saiyyid Bahwa Barha	--	2000/ 1000	
11	Saiyyid Ali Muhammad Barha (s/o Saiyyid Ali Ashgar Barha)	--	300/ 200	
12	Saiyyid Bahadur Barha (s/o Saiyyid Ali Asghar Barha)	--	400/ 200	
13	Saiyyid Bayazid Barha	--	2000/ 700	
14	Saiyyid Alam Barha	--	1500/ 60	
15	Saiyyid Ghairat Khan Barha	--	1500/ X	

Athar Ali, there are more Barha nobles in the camp of Dara most of them having *mansabs* between 1000-2500.<sup>84</sup>

The Barhas seemed to have possessed a kind of expertise in deciding whom to support as they significantly always chose the winning individual. It could be seen in the sense that they believed in sailing along the more forceful current. Contrarily it could be also said that they rather were lucky enough to make the right choices at the right times in history. Taking a still different approach, one can say that they were influential enough a group in terms of numbers and potential that their support always favoured the one they backed.

Following the rule of rewarding nobles for their exemplary service or valuable support during times of crisis, Shahjahan promoted many Barha Saiyyids after his accession.<sup>85</sup> Thus sons and other relatives of many Barha nobles who had rendered service under previous Emperors, Akbar and Jahangir, were given ranks and positions during Shahjahan.

We get a number of such references for Shahjahan's reign. Saiyyid Husain Khan Barha and Saiyyid Hasan Khan Barha were two sons of Saiyyid Diler Khan Barha who held *mansabs* during Shahjahan. The *Tazkirat-ul Umara* gives their *mansabs* in different years of his reign. In 1648, Saiyyid Husain held a *mansab* of 1000, which was raised to 1500 in

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<sup>84</sup> Athar Ali: *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, OUP, pp. 112-130. The list provides the names of at least 10 Barhas in Dara's camp and only 2 in the camp of Aurangzeb. It is interesting however that all of them are in the same range in terms of their *mansabs* also indicating their relative unimportance if one wishes to consider the fact in this sense.

<sup>85</sup> Afzal Husain: *Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir*, p. 115. There were no less than seven Barhas who were promoted by Shahjahan.

1661.<sup>86</sup> For Saiyyid Hasan it gives his initial *mansab* to be 500, which was subsequently raised to 2000 in 1655 and 2500 in 1658. He was also made the *faujdar* of Godrah and given the title of Khan.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, the son-in-law of Saiyyid Diler Khan, Saiyyid Shai Khan who held a *mansab* of 1000 *zat* and 500 *sawars* was also the *faujdar* of Behjad, Hillor.<sup>88</sup>

Many other noble families too found places within the official hierarchy following the principle of heredity. Saiyyid Zabardast Khan who was the son of Saiyyid Hizabr Khan, an important noble during Jahangir and Shahjahan, held a *mansab* of 1000.<sup>89</sup> Saiyyid Shahab or Sher Khan who was the son of Saiyyid Ghairat Khan earlier mentioned was an important noble during Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. He initially held a *mansab* of 800, which saw an increase on a regular basis in intervals till it was 3000 in 1659. He was also the *faujdar* of Tarhat at that time and was made the *qiladar* of Inder in 1665.<sup>90</sup>

Among the Barha nobles of Shahjahan's reign, one of the most important was Saiyyid Khan Jahan Barha whose original name was Saiyyid Abul Muzaffar. His significance for the Emperor can be gauged by the fact that the title of Khan Jahan was rendered to him after the downfall of Nawab Khan Jahan Lodi.<sup>91</sup> He is also said to have rendered 'laudable services' and was attached to the Emperor 'from the

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<sup>86</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 215.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>90</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 98.

<sup>91</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, Vol. II, p. 191.

beginning'.<sup>92</sup> His *mansab* was 4000 initially which was raised by 1000 in 1628 on the accession of Shahjahan.<sup>93</sup> In years that followed his position saw an upward mobility and soon he *mansab* was raised to 5000 *zat* and *sawar* and with 3000 *du-aspa-sih-aspa* in 1631.<sup>94</sup> In 1640 it again saw an increase by 1000 in *zat* making his rank 6000 *zat* and *sawar* with *du-aspa-sih-aspa* in 1641.<sup>95</sup>

The *Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin* gives interesting details about the personality of the Saiyyid and his relation with the Emperor. As mentioned earlier the Emperor gave significant titles and raises in regular intervals indicating the importance the Saiyyid must have demanded by his virtue of personal talent and potential. This gets reflected also in the manner the Saiyyid conducted himself with respect to the Emperor. During a private meeting with the Emperor after the Balkh campaign, he placed the slippers of the Emperor below his feet for which the latter remarked that the Saiyyid should at least have regard for his lofty title. The Saiyyid replied that he was only slave and a loyal servant.<sup>96</sup>

The above incident reflects the mutual respect and dependence on the part of both the Emperor and the noble. The Saiyyid held a position within the nobility that had certain prescribed notions of behaviour indicating the level it was placed in within the hierarchy of the nobles at the same time. The Emperor expected the noble to behave in a certain manner because it sent messages to other nobles as well.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 191; Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 58.

<sup>94</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 58.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>96</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, Vol. II, p. 192.

Apart from the equation between the Emperor and nobility, the dynamics within the nobility also gets reflected in examples of the Barhas available from the reign of Shahjahan. Logically there could not have been a level treatment to all the members of the Barhas. We already know that there were four major septs within the subcontinent by the times of the Mughals. In the following years they must have proliferated not only in numbers but also in area and interests. To believe that all the members of all the four septs had similar desires and aspirations would be a notion far from reality.

At the same time the aspect of preferential treatment and non-fulfillment of demands must have played their own role in the politics of the times. Therefore apart from behaving in a united manner when it came to politics at a larger level, they must have nurtured divergent aspirations on smaller personal level. For the initial years one comes across the references of the Kundliwals primarily. The family of Saiyyid Mahmud Khan Barha attracts maximum attention and hence gains most.

The above assumption also finds expression during the time of Shahjahan in the example of Saiyyid Nawab Jafar popularly known as Saiyyid Shujaat Khan. He was said to be the descendant of leading men whose 'greatness is more manifest than the sun'.<sup>97</sup> He was present in the service of Shahjahan and the *Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin* states that when Shahjahan put forth his desire to go to Iran the Saiyyid became so upset with the proposition that he left Deccan where he was posted and went

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

back to his native place.<sup>98</sup> On realizing the futility of the idea Shahjahan decided not to pursue it further and on his accession gave Saiyyid Shujaat Khan a *mansab* of 5000.<sup>99</sup> His *mansab* was later increased to 4000 *zat* and *sawar* in 1637 and 4000 *zat* and *sawar, du-aspa-sih-aspa* in 1640.<sup>100</sup>

However, the personal influence of the two nobles, Saiyyid Khan Jahan Barha and Saiyyid Shujaat Khan Barha, on the Emperor varied and it got reflected in the activities of the nobles. The *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin* states that Shahjahan 'liked Saiyyid Khan Jahan Barha more' in preference to Saiyyid Shujaat Khan.<sup>101</sup> The latter was greatly afflicted by this attitude of the Emperor and always complained about it. The preference got reflected during the campaign of Parenda where the advice of Saiyyid Khan Jahan was accepted by the Emperor against that of Saiyyid Shujaat Khan and Mahabat Khan and the campaign was abandoned during the rainy season.<sup>102</sup>

The preferential treatment is also evident by the fact that the sources mention a greater number of members from the family of Saiyyid Khan Jahan than the other. His son, Saiyyid Munnawar Khan<sup>103</sup> and brother, Saiyyid Firoz Ikhtisas Khan<sup>104</sup> are mentioned holding important posts. There is certain discrepancy about one Saiyyid Muzaffar Khan who

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 192; Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 93.

<sup>100</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, p. 93.

<sup>101</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, Vol. II, p. 192.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pp. 191-92.

<sup>103</sup> Kewal ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, pp. 147, 176; Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 355-56. He is said to be the *faujdar* of Gwalior and being given a title of Lashkar Khan by Aurangzeb. He held a *mansab* of 3000.

<sup>104</sup> Kewal Ram: *Tazkirat-ul Umara*, pp. 22, 128. He held a *mansab* of 2000 and was the *faujdar* of Bhandar and later *thanadar* of Korahatti.

is mentioned as his son in the *Tazkirat-ul Umara*<sup>105</sup> and *Ma'asir-ul Umara*<sup>106</sup> but is said to be the son of Shujaat Khan in the *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*.<sup>107</sup> Since more than one source speaks of him as the son one is tempted to accept it.

A definite increase in the position of the Barha family is evident from the corresponding table (Table III) for the reign of Shahjahan. Not only has their number increased many folds but it would also mean that their economic worth and corresponding political and social status must have enhanced. This would account for their assuming power in the early decades of the next century.

Most of the nobles of the reign of Shahjahan continued to serve the new Emperor, Aurangzeb and the principle of descent and heredity continued to hold good. The continuation of the inclusion of the Barhas into the nobility not only reflects that their position remained significant enough for recognition for decades but also their eventual rise after the death of Aurangzeb.

The following table (Table IV) shows that the Barhas had become a substantial force by the end of Aurangzeb's rule. Their number had increased considerably and the nature of posts that were being held by them had also undergone transformation. From mere members of

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 155. He had a *mansab* of 2500 and was appointed to Bengal during Aurangzeb.

<sup>106</sup> Shahnawaz Khan: *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, p. 355.

<sup>107</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, Vol. II, p. 206.

**TABLE III**

*Barha mansabdars during the reign of Shahjahan*

S. No	Name	Year	Rank/ Mansab	Appointment/ Title
1	Saiyyid Abul Muzaffar Barha	1627 - 28	4000/ 3000	
		1628- 29	4000/4000	<i>Qiledar of Gwalior</i>
		1630 - 31	5000/ 5000 1000 (2-3h)	<b>Khan-i-Jahan</b>
		1631 - 32	5000/ 5000 2000 (2-3h)	
		1631 - 32	5000/5000 3000 (2-3h)	
		1634 - 35	5000/5000 3000 (2-3h)	<i>Haris of Gwalior; Subedar of Akbarabad</i>
		1634 - 35	5000/5000 (2-3h)	
		1641 - 42	6000/6000 (5000x2-3h)	
		1641 - 42	6000/6000 (2-3h)	
		1645 - 46	Died	
2	Saiyyid Dilir Khan Barha	1627 - 28	2000/2000	-
			4000/2500	-
		1629 - 30	4000/3000	-
		1632 - 33	Died	<i>Faujdar of Baroda</i>

3	Saiyyid Alam Barha	1627 - 28	1500/600	
		1629 - 30	2000/800	
		1637 - 38	2000/800 (150x2-3h)	
		1640 - 41	2000/1000	
		1645 - 46		<i>Haris of Gwalior</i>
		1649 - 50		<i>Faujdar of Gwalior</i>
		1656 - 57	1000/400	
4	Saiyyid Hizabr Khan Barha	1627 - 28	3000/1000	
		1638 - 39	3000/1000	Died
5	Saiyyid Parwarish Khan Barha	1627 - 28	1000/500	
		1631 - 32	1000/500	Died
6	Saiyyid Jafar Khan Barha	1627 - 28	1000/1000	Shuja'at Khan; <i>Faujdar of Turhat</i>
		1637 - 38	4000/4000 2500(2-3h)	<i>Subedar of Ilahabad</i>
		1639 - 40	4000/ 4000 3500(2-3h)	
		1640 - 41	4000/4000 (2-3h)	
		1641 - 43	-	Died
7	Saiyyid Mansur Barha (s/o Saiyyid Khan-i-Jahan)	1628 - 29	-	<i>Qiladar of Gwalior</i>
		1642 - 43	1000/200	
		1655 - 56	1000/400	
8	Saiyyid Makhan Barha	1636 - 37	900/ 500	Died
9	Saiyyid Abdullah Barha	1637 - 38	600/400	
		1639 - 40	-	Died
10	Saiyyid Sulaiman Barha (s/o Saiyyid Qasim Barha)	1637 - 38	600/300	

11	Saiyyid Hasan Barha (s/o Saiyyid Dilir Khan)	1637 - 38	500/ 250	
		1647 - 48	800/800	
		1647 - 48	1000/ 900	
		1651 - 52	1500/ 1000	
		1653 - 54	1500/1500	<i>Faujdar of sarkar Godrah</i>
12	Saiyyid Nurul Ayan Barha (s/o Saif Khan)	1637 - 38	500/100	
		1640 - 41	1000/300	
		1641 - 42	1000/500	
13	Saiyyid Shahab Barha (s/o Saiyyid Ghairat Khan)	1637 - 38	900/600	
		1646 - 47	1000/600	
		1653 - 54	2000/700	
		1655 - 56	1000/500	
		1654 - 55	2000/800	
		1657 - 58	-	Sher Khan; <i>Faujdar of Mandasore</i>
14	Saiyyid Shah Ali Barha	1637 - 38	600/300	<i>Kotwal of Akbarabad</i>
		1647 - 48	700/450	
		1649 - 50	-	<i>Faujdar of Ajmer</i>
		1650	-	<i>Faujdar of Mandasore</i>
		1656 - 57	900/700	
		1657 - 58	900/800	
15	Saiyyid Muhammad Barha (s/o Saiyyid Afzal)	1640 - 41	1000/500	<i>Faujdar of Miyan-i-Doab</i>
		1646 - 47	1000/600	
		1649 - 50	1500/600	
		1656 - 57	1000/500	Died
16	Saiyyid Khadim Barha	1641 - 42	1000/500	<i>Faujdar of Mandasore</i>
		1646 - 47	1000/500	Died

17	Saiyyid Qutab Barha (s/o Saiyyid Shuja'at Khan)	1642 - 43	600/250	
		1645 - 46	1000/1000 (2-3h)	
18	Saiyyid Muzaffar Barha (s/o Saiyyid Shuja'at Khan)	1645 - 46	600/ 500	
		1654 - 55	1500/600	
		1656 - 57	1500/800	Himmat Khan
		1656 - 57	2000/1000	Muzaffar Khan
19	Saiyyid Firuz Barha (s/o Khan-i-Jahan)	1645 - 46	1000/400	
		1645 - 46	1500/1000	
		1647 - 48	2000/1000	
		1649 - 50	-	Khan
		1654 - 55	-	<i>Faujdar of Irij &amp; Shahjadpur</i>
20	Saiyyid Sherzaman Barha (s/o Khan-i-Jahan)	1645 - 46	1000/250	<i>Qiladar of Irak (Lahore)</i>
21	Saiyyid Munnawar Barha (s/o Khan-i-Jahan)	1645 - 46	1000/ 250	<i>Qiladar of Irak (Lahore)</i>
		1656 - 57	1000/400	
22	Saiyyid Salar Barha	1645 - 46	-	<i>Faujdar of Gwalior</i>
		1647- 48	700/700 (2-3h)	
		1647 - 48	1000/800 (2-3h)	<i>Faujdar of Irij; Khalsat- i-Gwalior</i>
		1649 - 50	1000/1000 (2-3h)	<i>Faujdar of Gwalior</i>
23	Saiyyid Shaikan Barha (s/o Saiyyid Dilir Khan)	1647 -48	1000/900	

		1652 - 53	1000/900	<i>Faujdar of Tharad (Gujarat)</i>
		1654 - 55	1000/900	<i>Faujdar of Piplod &amp; Sodhra (suba of Ahmadabad)</i>
		1656 - 57	1500/1500	
24	Saiyyid Ali Barha (s/o Khan-i-Jahan)	1647 - 48	500/250	
		1656 - 57	800/400	
25	Saiyyid Kabir Barha (s/o Saiyyid Muhammad)	1649 - 50	100/40	
		1650	1500/200	<i>Dy. Subedar of Punjab</i>
26	Saiyyid Sultan Barha (s/o Saiyyid Bayazid)	1650 - 51	2000/400	<i>Salabat Khan; Dy. Subedar of Ilahabad</i>
		1651 - 52	2000/1000	
		1654 - 55	2000/1500	
		1655 - 56	-	<i>Subedar of Ilahabad</i>
		1650 - 51	-	<i>Bakshi of Ahadis</i>
27	Saiyyid Bahadur Barha (s/o Saiyyid Salabat Khan)	1656 - 57	800/400	
		1657 - 58	1000/1000	
		1657 - 58	1000/500	
28	Saiyyid Shamsuddin Barha (s/o Saiyyid Jalal)	1652 - 53	-	<i>Faujdar of Miran-i-Doab</i>
		1656 - 57	700/200	
29	Saiyyid Najabat Barha (s/o Saiyyid Shuja'at Khan)	1653 - 54	1000/300	
		1654 - 55	1000/400	
		1656 - 57	1000/500	

30	Saiyyid Ali Akbar Barha	1656 - 57	800/400	
31	Saiyyid Zabardast Khan Barha (s/o Saiyyid Hizabr Khan)	1656 - 57	800/400	
32	Saiyyid Sher Muhammad Barha	1656 - 57	500/150	
33	Saiyyid Ahmad Kabir Barha (s/o Saiyyid Hizabr Khan)	1656 - 57	500/100	
34	Saiyyid Alam Barha (b/o Saiyyid Salar)	1656 - 57	500/100	
35	Saiyyid Karamullah Barha (brother-in-law of Khan-i-Jahan)	1656 - 57	500/100	
36	Saiyyid Qutb Barha	1656 - 57	500/100	

contingents they rose to positions within the nobility and in due course of time were given important posts like the *faujdari*, *thanadari* and *qiladari*.<sup>108</sup>

The fate of the mighty Mughal Empire began a downward trend the moment the all-enforcing character of the Emperor was questioned after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. The Empire by this time faced crisis from all directions, political, economic, geographical and social. By the early eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire had reached its maximum limits in terms of territorial expansion the consequences of which were not hard to discern.

The succession of rulers after 1707, who were weak in disposition and conviction, one after the other compounded the problems. When seen in the context of the argument that the Emperor and the nobility were complimentary structures in the normal functioning of the state, this situation appeared to be just right for the latter to assert its supremacy over the former. The Saiyyid brothers therefore made the best use of this opportunity to their benefit and came to the forefront of political matters during the reign of Farrukh Siyar between 1712-1719.

The two brothers-Saiyyid Hasan Ali Khan and Saiyyid Husain Ali Khan- were sons of Abdullah Khan Barha who under Aurangzeb held

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<sup>108</sup> The lesser number of nobles for the reign of Aurangzeb than that of Shahjahan can be accounted for by the fact that a complete study of Barha nobles in Aurangzeb's nobility cannot be undertaken because of unavailability of complete data.

**TABLE IV****Barha mansabdars under Aurangzeb**

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Mansab/ Rank</b>	<b>Appointment/ Title</b>
1	Saiyyid Sultan Salabat Khan Barha	1658 – 78	3500/2500	Ikhtisas Khan
2	Saiyyid Qasim Barha	1658 - 1707	3000/2000	Shahamat Khan
3	Saiyyid Mansur Barha		3000/1500	
4	Saiyyid Sherzaman Barha	1658-1707	2500/ 1200	Muzaffar Khan
5	Saiyyid Hasan Barha	1658-78	2000/2000 (500 2-3h)	Ikram Khan
6	Saiyyid Hasan Khan Barha (s/o Saiyyid Dilir Khan)	1658-78	2000/1500	
7	Saiyyid Munnawar Khan Barha	1658-1707	2000/1000	Lashkar Khan
8	Saiyyid Feroz Khan Barha	1658-78	2500/1500 (500 2-3h)	Ikhtisas Khan
9	Saiyyid Masud Barha	1658-78	2000/300	
10	Saiyyid Muzaffar Barha	1658-78	2000/ 250	Shuja'at Khan
11	Saiyyid Bahadur Barha	1658-78	1000/800	
12	Saiyyid Yadgar Husain Barha	1658-78	1500/600	
13	Saiyyid Nurul-Dahr Barha	1678-1707	1500/700	Saif Khan
14	Saiyyid Wajihuddin Barha	1678-1707	1000/1000	
15	Saiyyid Abdullah Khan Barha	1678-1707	1000/600	
16	Saiyyid Karamullah Barha	1678-1707	1000/500	

the *faujdari* of Nandair in the Deccan.<sup>109</sup> They had humble beginnings during Aurangzeb's reign and had also served Bahadur Shah I. Their gradual rise in ranks was in consonance with their increasing influence within the political circles. The first campaign where they made a mark of their talent was against the Marathas who had raided the province of Khandesh in 1698.<sup>110</sup> On finding their constantly increasing feats in wars and subsequent demands for recognition Aurangzeb mentioned that he could not grant them promotion in one step.<sup>111</sup> Their political career saw a rise till 1713 when they could finally play as significant a role as making choices about who should be the Emperor.<sup>112</sup>

Their initial career saw certain roadblocks in terms of non-recognition by the concerned authority but their ambition could not be contained for too long. Satish Chandra opines that the two brothers would have passed into oblivion had the 'circumstances created by civil war and rebellion of Farrukh Siyar' not taken place.<sup>113</sup> They were considered as 'haughty and ambitious', which probably explains the reluctance on the part of Aurangzeb in giving instant recognition to their claims and increasing their ranks.<sup>114</sup> They not only became instrumental in the accession of Farrukh Siyar to the throne in 1712 but were also raised to the

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<sup>109</sup> Zahiruddin Malik: *The Reign of Muhammad Shah 1719-1748*, Aligarh, 1977, p. 31, footnote 1.

<sup>110</sup> Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-1740*, pp. 127-28.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>112</sup> The details about their initial career are available in the works of Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-1740*, pp. 126-29; William Irvine: *The Later Mughals*, pp. 201-208 and Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah 1719-1748*, pp. 31-33.

<sup>113</sup> Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, p. 129.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129; Zahiruddin Malik: *The Reign of Muhammad Shah 1719-1748*, p. 32.

positions of *wazir* and *mir bakhshi*.<sup>115</sup> The elder brother Saiyyid Abdullah Khan who held the *subedari* of Multan was made the *wazir* and the younger, Saiyyid Husain Ali, the *subedar* of Bihar was given the post of *mir bakhshi*.

The support that the Saiyyid offered to the candidature of Farrukh Siyar made the latter an individual too insignificant to control the desires of the two brothers. The rift between the Emperor and the two Saiyyids became evident very soon and the 'discontent grew to such a height that their consequences produced the ruin of the Imperial family and the desolation of the whole Empire'.<sup>116</sup> They posted individuals of their own choice to important offices<sup>117</sup> and laid foundation of an institution, which has been termed by Satish Chandra as the 'New *Wizarat*'.

However, the success story of the Saiyyid brothers requires some qualifications. Apart from the fact that they established three individuals to the throne of the Empire, the last two being so incapable that even their names do not appear as significant in the records of history, the brothers could not manage anything spectacular. Instead they ignited the wrath of all sections of the society in their pursuits to keep the control of the Empire within their hands.

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<sup>115</sup> Syed Ghulam Husain Khan: *The Seir Mutaqherin*, tr. Nota Manus, Vol. I, pp. 44, 54-55, 58, 64.

<sup>116</sup> Syed Ghulam Husain Khan: *The Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, p. 64, 66.

<sup>117</sup> *The Seir Mutaqherin* gives such details. It says that Abdullah Khan though a man of abilities was too fond of women and addicted to feasting and dancing and had thus left all practical affairs of his office and household to be managed by Diwan Ratan Chand, Vol. I, p. 66. Similarly, Saiyyid Himmat Khan Barha was nominated as the guardian of the two insignificant emperors after Farrukh Siyar who was responsible for all their activities and movements, Satish Chandra: *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Empire*, p. 181.

The Saiyyids brothers faced problems at two fronts because of their over emphasizing designs. Externally they had to effectively manage all parts of the large Empire to avoid any development of centres of opposition. And internally they had to maintain their position within the nobility and vis-à-vis the Emperor so that they could face any possible opposition from the rival sections inside the nobility.

The above dilemma faced by the Saiyyid brothers reiterates the assumption that was underlined at the beginning of this dissertation. With the assumption of the status of 'kingmakers' the brothers could be assumed to have taken the position equivalent to the emperor in the structure of the state as taken by us. The other noble groups in this structure would then take the role of the nobility. The mutual dependence and contradictions that follow such an arrangement were reflected during the eighteenth century as well. There were a number of important nobles who dissented the ascendance of the Saiyyids and they faced the repercussions. Conspiracies were hatched against them and they lost their positions leaving the stage of history in disgrace.<sup>118</sup>

What concerns us more however is the manner in which the family and members of Barhas can be placed in the context of events of the eighteenth century? It is interesting to note that the Barhas do not abandon their notions of familial ties and kinship affinities. Their unity

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<sup>118</sup> Syed Ghulam Husain Khan: *The Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, pp. 174-77. 186-197. It gives the details of how the conspiracies against the brothers bore fruit and how Husain Ali died before the elder brother who perished after a bitter and severe battle of thirty hours against the forces of Muhammad Shah.

and cohesion as a group is mentioned over and over again in the *Seir Mutaqherin*.<sup>119</sup> However the unity against other groups did not necessarily mean a unity amongst themselves. There are references stating divergent interests and opinions of the two brothers between themselves to say the least. To believe that there existed one singular interest of all the Barhas would be to ignore facts of reality.

## II

The above discussion about the development of the Barha Saiyyids as a potent group in the politics of the Mughal Empire leads us to a crossroad questioning what could be implied of their rise in terms of other aspects of the times. To assume that their contributions were confined to the sphere of political and military affairs only would be to see one side of the coin. The Barhas were Shias and it would not be really incorrect to say that their emergence as the most important family after the symbolic significance of the Imperial family must have had serious connotations in other fields of eighteenth century life as well.

Making a purely hypothetical assumption one can say that coming of the Barha Saiyyids to the forefront of political matters could be viewed as having implications on the cultural and religious sphere as well. Before the eighteenth century religious practices of the Shias was a much

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<sup>119</sup> Syed Ghulam Husain Khan: *The Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, pp. 99, 117, 149.

guided and closed affair, which was carried out mostly within the boundaries of homes and communities. However, for the first time medieval Indian history witnesses the breaking away of the exclusivity of these affairs into the public domain and making an appearance openly. The eighteenth century thus sees the public performances of the Shia rituals and traditions. The explanation for this can be sought in the growing influence of the Shia families in general and the Barha Saiyyids in particular with the concentration of power within the hands of the Saiyyid brothers.

It is an interesting aspect and a little furtherance of inquiry would reveal insights that can help us reach a much better perspective of the equation between religion and social cultural aspects and how they not only borrow from and support each other as well for their mutual existence. How the rise of a family following a certain religion into central positions in the ruling class could influence other spheres of the society is quite distinctly highlighted in the following examples.

The traditions and practices associated with the Shias suddenly came to be involved within larger circles of the population, one of the most spectacular being the tradition of *marsiya*. The tradition of *marsiya* originated in the Deccan and appears that the Deccani *marsiya* became popular in North India about the second half of the seventeenth century, especially when Aurangzeb assumed the centre of political power. The *marsiyas* of some Deccani poets are included in the earliest known collection of the *marsiyas* of North India. This indicates that the Deccani *marsiya* had made a deep imprint on the Muharram observers of Northern

India as early as the end of seventeenth century. However, this literary tradition developed a distinctiveness of its own in respect of style and technique from the very beginning. *Marsiya* as a literary genre developed in and around Delhi during the early eighteenth century.<sup>120</sup>

The term *marsiya* (an elegy) is a derivative of *risa*, which means an oration in mourning. *Marsiya*, generally speaking a poem recited to express sorrow on the death of a person. It is also a poem to commemorate a particular pathetic event. In India, however, *marsiya* came to narrate the event of the martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grand son of the Prophet Muhammad and his kinsmen at Karbala (in Iraq) during Muharram, the first month of Islamic calendar. The tuneful recitation of *marsiya* is known as *marsiya-khwani*. This event, which has a great sentimental value for the Shi'ite sect of the Muslims, provided a tragic panorama of deep interest, so much so that a literature wholly dedicated to it came into existence.

The history of the evolution of *marsiya* in India had a uniqueness of its own. From solitary verses and songs of wails and laments it came to acquire the characteristics of epic and heralded a new era in Urdu poetry. It thrived on religious ritualism and this process came to integrate the ceremonies and rituals of Indian origin as well. It

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<sup>120</sup> Madhu Trivedi: 'Invoking Sorrow: Marsiya in North India' in Satish Sabbārwal and Supriya Choudhary ed. *Tradition in Motion*, OUP, Under Publication; Madhu Trivedi: 'An Appraisal of the Musical Arts at Shahjahanabad during the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Art and Culture*, ed. A. J. Qaiser and Som Prakash Verma, Aligarh, 1993, p. 99.

portrayed the ethics typical of the Indian way of life and presented the cultural canvass of northern India.<sup>121</sup>

The authors of *Rag Darpan* and *Tuhfat-al-Hind*, the well-known Persian musical treatises of the late seventeenth century, remain silent about *marsiya-khwani* and its performers. That *marsiya* does not figure as a musical or literary genre in north India prior to the eighteenth century appears to be strange in view of the fact that *marsiya* appears to be an established form and popular in the eighteenth century. Also, the Irani nobles were in considerable numbers at the Mughal court prior to and during the seventeenth century and there was constant cultural contact between the Mughal emperors and Shi'ite Safavid Iran. *Marsiya* did not gain ground earlier than this probably because Aurangzeb was not favorably inclined towards the Shias and banned Muharram processions.<sup>122</sup>

During the eighteenth century, however, the rule of the Mughal Emperors, especially Muhammad Shah, helped to strike a cordial note at the cultural level, which gave a new lease to the Shia community. Besides, the Shia nobles became prominent at the court, here not forgetting the increasing influence of the Barhas at the political level. This change in the patronage pattern and the cultural set up contributed to the observance of Muharram on a grand scale and also paved way for the fruition of the art of *marsiya-khwani* and *marsiyago'i* in northern India.

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<sup>121</sup> Madhu Trivedi: 'A Genre of Composite Creativity: *Marsiya* and its performance in Awadh' in paper presented in an International Conference 'on 'Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics', Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi, 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Dec., 2002.

<sup>122</sup> For details see, Madhu Trivedi: 'Invoking Sorrow: *Marsiya* in North India' in Satish Sabbarwal and Supriya Choudhary ed. *Tradition in Motion*, Under Publication.

The city of Shahjahanabad therefore in the eighteenth century becomes the cultural centre of north India which was not possible till the times of Aurangzeb who was under strong influences of the Sunni sect and believed in strict adherence to practices of that particular sect by the whole Muslim population. The attainment of central authority by the Barhas following the Shi'ite traditions tempts one to suggest the logical change in focus and preference.

The eighteenth century work *Muraqqa-I Dehli* gives details of the vibrant cultural life of the city. This illustrious work gives names and examples of a number of individuals who took conscious participation in the cultural life of eighteenth century Delhi. Miskeen, Hazeen and Ghamin were popular in the composition and recitation of *marsiya* and *manqabat* and epitomize melancholy and grief.<sup>123</sup> There are other instances, which support the assumption being made.

Thus the emergence of the Barhas has to be seen in a perspective other than political to reach to an understanding, which is unbiased. The economic, social and cultural implications thus have to be taken into consideration.

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<sup>123</sup> Dargah Quli Khan: *Muraqqa-I Dehli- The Mughal Capital in Muhammad Shah's Time*, tr. Shama Mitra Chenoy and Chandra Shekhar, Delhi, 1989, p. 67.

## CONCLUSION

The examination of the family of the Barhas from the initial days of their emergence to that of their maximum influence in the medieval times has to be seen as a process. It was not mere an event that can be explained in terms of one individual or another. Instead it was a part of the phenomenon that has time-tested credibility for survival. The features that emerge out of this exercise are useful for the analysis of the objective that the whole argument had set out with in the first place.

Since the beginning of time human beings had realized the necessity of remaining together as a group, the reason for which was always the same no matter which time in history is taken into consideration. The primary objective of security and sense of belonging demanded by humans as a virtue of being social animals different from other creatures on the earth explains the development and emergence of social communities like clan, tribe, caste and class over time.

To follow the age-old practice during the medieval period by the Barhas through which they maintained their identity as a group gives expression to this very ideal. However, this same aspect from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century needs to be examined along with other crucial dimensions that had come to play a role by this time and had made matters rather complex.

The aspect of the state as an institution in medieval society comes into the picture at this junction and it is this point of departure that substantiates our argument. The medieval polities were those, which had their foundation in the structure of either an autocratic, militaristic or religious despotism. It was only around the late eighteenth century that the first states on the principles of any representative government were even conceived in the world context. The Mughal state was no exception to this. The institution of the Mughal state has therefore been seen by various medieval historians as representing either a paternalistic autocracy or oppressive despotism. None of the explanations about the nature of the state however can deny the crucial dynamics between the Emperor and his nobles.

The Emperor and the nobility therefore were two pillars of the edifice of the state apparatus. The stability of the state could be achieved only with a harmonious existence of these two parameters. The increase in strength of any of the two at the cost of another would always affect the state dearly. At the same time the person of the Emperor and the body of nobles gave physical expression to the very notion of state. In this sense one can assume that there existed a 'tripolar relationship' among the three, which was more symbiotic in interest than diverging.

Nonetheless, keeping in mind the disposition of man the desire to become all powerful remains a potential threat to the stability of the state structure at all times. A strong personality, be it that of the Emperor or a noble, comes above the rest and becomes authoritative in the sense that he can command over the others. This seems to be true when Akbar

and the Saiyyid brothers are examined as representing the two ends of the same thread.

Apart from the above example however the Barhas must be seen as an important group in the sense of a clan, which held significant positions during the Mughal times. Their numerical, military and consequent political caliber allowed them to exercise a clout over the affairs between the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Their emergence from oblivion to that of supreme importance should be seen as a perfect example of the rising influences of the indigenous sections within the body politic of the medieval nobility. The initial attempt of the rulers to counter the foreign elements in the nobility to ensure their own position backfired when these very Indian elements gained enough strength to challenge their supremacy.

But before this could happen by the eighteenth century, the Barhas were a dominant section of the Indian Muslims who found a place in the ranks of the nobility and proved their utility time and again. They remained one of the most trusted groups of Emperors from Akbar to Shahjahan though they are not seen as holding many important official positions. Their *mansab* ranks largely remained between 1000-2500 with very few individuals being given higher ranks. This anomaly must be provided with an adequate explanation.

At the same time there seems to be another process at work by which the Barhas nobles appear to be on a constant increase numerically, which had greater repercussions at larger levels. As is made clear by the

various tables in the preceding chapters, there was a constant increase in the number of Barhas with time. From mere 11 Barha individuals who find mention in the contemporary sources during Akbar, the number rises to 15 during Jahangir and further to 36 during Shahjahan. At the percentage level this means an increase of 36.36% for Jahangir's reign and a 140% increase for Shahjahan's reign from that of Akbar. (*See Appendix B*)

That the Barhas were certainly gaining firmer grounds within the polity of Mughal India also becomes very clear when the salaries received by the various Barha nobles over time are analyzed. An exercise in the above direction reveals that the salary increment within the families of the Barha clan were to an extent of 211% for Jahangir and almost 545% for Shahjahan. (*See Appendix A and B*) Not only there is an increase in the number of Barhas but also an increase in the value of *mansabs* that was accorded to them by the seventeenth century.<sup>124</sup>

For their own kin members the Barhas exhibited great solidarity and unity. As has been seen in the previous sections the character of the Barhas, as a community emerges best when they faced any crisis. The notion of mutual co-operation and dependence seems to have been the guiding light of the Barhas. This probably helped them not only in maintaining their privileged status but also in keeping away encroachments to their privileged position by exclusivity.

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<sup>124</sup> The tabulation for Aurangzeb has not been undertaken here, as necessary sources have not been available in their English translation. The *Apparatus of the Empire* of Athar Ali, which has been used for the reign of Shahjahan, gives details till 1658 only. Any further research in this direction will always be a welcome exercise.

The study however, is not a complete analysis in the sense that certain limitations have to be considered while analyzing the effort. This study should be seen as a preliminary exercise in viewing the historical significance of the Barha Saiyyids in the backdrop of the larger state structure till the eighteenth century. There are various issues that have not been incorporated within the corpus of the work due to several reasons. For instance any study of a family group becomes more meaningful only when similar comparable data of other families of the same time are examined accordingly.

The analysis of the Barha family therefore should be modeled following the similar approaches and on those of the Rajputs or other noble families. The study of other Indian Muslim families especially like those of the Bilgram Saiyyids would make an interesting comparison of the favours and preferences to one family over the others. The same has not been done because the orientation of this particular study limits such scope.

Moreover, the entire effort seems to be focused on one particular sept of the clan (Kundliwals) of the Barhas though it is seen that there existed four of them. This makes it a sept-centric study and again points towards its limitations. But in the absence of necessary data research in the above direction cannot be undertaken. And it can be best assumed that the Kundliwals were the most important sept in all four that were present in medieval India and hence their mention predominates that of the others.

At another level the analysis is a limited one in the sense that it concerns primarily with the political careers, contributions and implications of the Barha Saiyyids. To reach to a comprehensive and complete picture there is need to analyze the all round development of the Barhas which should incorporate the local traditions, folktales of the regions they inhabited and the popular picture they evoked in the consciousness of people, contemporary and modern. Such an exercise is limited for the want of adequate data in the direction and at times the reluctance on the part of the descendants to reveal their origins. Whatever be the reason such an exercise will not only change the approach towards the Barhas but might also highlight various aspects otherwise hidden in the official contemporary records.

The above study, however, is an attempt towards orienting the approach and understanding of the institutions of the Mughal Empire into directions that have been not explored yet. This exercise would become more meaningful for the institution of the *mansab*, which sustained the edifice of the state on its shoulders and has more often been blamed for the breakdown of the mighty structure as well. Though the increase in the ranks of the Barhas along with their numbers in subsequent decades has been highlighted yet what is necessary is a fresh perspective and insight towards the understanding of the system that has received such an attention by scholars. A later much detailed exercise in this direction can be carried forward with the examples of the Barhas and in this sense this discussion could be just a beginning.

There has been an effort made with the present study to present the Barha Saiyyids in a light that made them indispensable forces of stability and change at different times during the period of our study. The emergence of this group should be viewed within the overall dynamics of the Mughal State. The changing character of the state not only found expression in the changing fortunes of the Barha nobles but was also influenced by them during the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

## APPENDIX A

### List of Salaries of the Barha *mansabdars* in lieu of their ranks.

#### A. Salaries of *mansabdars* during Akbar\*

S. No.	Name	Year	Mansab	Salary for Zat Mansab Rs.x10 <sup>6</sup>	Salary for Sawar Mansab	Total Salary (in Rs. x 10 <sup>6</sup> )
1	Saiyyid Mahmud Barha	1574 – 75	2000/X	288	--	288
2	Saiyyid Fath Khan Barha	1574 – 75	-	-	--	-
3	Saiyyid Ahmad Barha	1577 – 78	2000/X	288	--	288
4	Saiyyid Qasim Barha	1595 – 96	2000/X	288	--	288
5	Saiyyid Raju Barha	1595 – 96	1000/X	98.4	--	98.4
6	Saiyyid Hashim Barha	-	1000/X	98.4	--	98.4
7	Saiyyid Bayazid Barha	1595 – 96	300/X	5.04	--	5.04
8	Saiyyid Lad	1595 - 96	200/X	2.34	--	2.34
9	Saiyyid Chajju	-	500/X	15	--	15
10	Saiyyid Jamaluddin Barha	1567 - 68	500/X	15	--	15
11	Saiyyid Hasan Barha	-	1000/X	98.4	--	98.4
					<b>Total</b>	<b>1196.58 x 10<sup>6</sup></b>

\*Source: Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, tr. Blochmann, Vol. II and III, tr. H. S. Jarrett, Calcutta, 1948-49.  
 Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, ed. Brajendra Nath Dey, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1913-35.

**B. Salaries of *mansabdars* during Jahangir\***

S. No.	Name	Year	Mansab	Salary for <i>zat mansab</i> (Rs.x10 <sup>6</sup> )	Salary for <i>sawar mansab</i> (Rs.x10 <sup>4</sup> )	Total salary (in Rs. x 10 <sup>6</sup> )
1	Saiyyid Ali Asghar Barha	1615 – 16	3000/ 2000	428.4	400	828.4
2	Saiyyid Izzat Khan Barha	1606 – 08	--	--	--	--
3	Saiyyid Ali Barha	1616 – 17	2000/ 1500	285.6	300	585.6
4	Saiyyid Qasim Barha		1000/ 600	97.2	120	109.2
5	Saiyyid Abdullah Barha	1615 – 16	700/300	31.92	60	91.92
6	Saiyyid Hizabr Khan Barha	1619 - 20	1500/ 700	174.6	140	314.6
7	Saiyyid Abdul Wahab Barha	1622 – 23	2000/ 1200	285.6	240	525.6
8	Saiyyid Nasib Barha	1619 – 20	--	--	--	--
9	Saiyyid Diler Khan Barha	--	2000/1200	285.6	240	485.6
10	Saiyyid Bahwa Barha	--	2000/ 1000	283.2	200	483.2
11	Saiyyid Ali Muhammad Barha	--	300/ 200	4.5	40	44.5
12	Saiyyid Bahadur Barha	--	400/ 200	8.4	40	48.4
13	Saiyyid Bayazid Barha	--	2000/ 700	283.2	140	423.2
14	Saiyyid Alam Barha	--	1500/ 60	174.6	12	186.6
15	Saiyyid Ghairat Khan Barha	--	1500/ X	180	--	180
			<b>Total</b>	<b>2522.82</b>	<b>1.932</b>	<b>2524.752</b>

\*Source: *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. A. Rogers, ed. H. Beveridge, Delhi, 1989.

**C. Salaries of *mansabdars* during Shahjahan\***

S. No.	Name	Year	Mansab	Salary for <i>zat mansab</i> (in Rs. x 10 <sup>6</sup> )	Salary for <i>sawar mansab</i> ** (in Rs. x 10 <sup>4</sup> )	Total salary (in Rs. x 10 <sup>6</sup> )
1	Saiyyid Abul Muzaffar Barha	1645 - 46	6000/6000 (2-3h)	1800	240	2040
2	Saiyyid Dilir Khan Barha	1632 - 33	4000/3000	770	60	830
3	Saiyyid Alam Barha	1640 - 41	2000/1000	17	20	37
4	Saiyyid Hizabr Khan Barha	1638 - 39	3000/1000	405	20	425
5	Saiyyid Parwarish Khan Barha	1631 - 32	1000/500	45	10	55
6	Saiyyid Jafar Khan Barha	1640 - 41	4000/4000 (2-3h)	800	160	960
7	Saiyyid Mansur Barha	1655 - 56	1000/400	45	8	53
8	Saiyyid Makhan Barha	1636 - 37	900/ 500	32.625	10	42.625
9	Saiyyid Abdullah Barha	1639 - 40	600/400	13.5	8	19.5
10	Saiyyid Sulaiman Barha	1637 - 38	600/300	12.75	6	18.75
11	Saiyyid Hasan Barha	1653 - 54	1500/ 1500	112.5	30	142.5
12	Saiyyid Nurul Ayan Barha	1641 - 42	1000/500	45	10	55
13	Saiyyid Shahab Barha	1657 - 58	2000/800	170	16	186
14	Saiyyid Shah Ali Barha	1657 - 58	900/800	32.625	16	48.625
15	Saiyyid Muhammad Barha	1649 - 50	1500/600	90	12	102

16	Saiyyid Khadim Barha	1646 - 47	1000/500	45	10	55
17	Saiyyid Qutab Barha	1645 - 46	1000/1000 (2-3h)	50	40	90
18	Saiyyid Muzaffar Barha	1656 - 57	2000/ 1000	170	20	190
19	Saiyyid Firuz Barha	1654 - 55	2000/1000	170	20	190
20	Saiyyid Sherzaman Barha	1645 - 46	1000/250	170	5	175
21	Saiyyid Munnawar Barha	1656 - 57	1000/ 400	45	8	53
22	Saiyyid Salar Barha	1649 - 50	1000/1000 (2-3h)	50	40	90
23	Saiyyid Shaikan Barha	1656 -57	1500/1500	112.5	30	142.5
24	Saiyyid Ali Barha	1656 - 57	800/400	230	8	238
25	Saiyyid Kabir Barha	1649 - 50	100/40	0.45	0.8	1.25
26	Saiyyid Sultan Barha	1655 - 56	2000/1500	185	30	215
27	Saiyyid Bahadur Barha	1657 - 58	1000/1000	50	20	70
28	Saiyyid Shamsuddin Barha	1656 - 57	700/200	17.5	4	21.5
29	Saiyyid Najabat Barha	1656 - 57	1000/500	45	10	55
30	Saiyyid Ali Akbar Barha	1656 - 57	800/400	23	8	31
31	Saiyyid Zabardast Khan Barha	1656 - 57	800/400	23	8	31
32	Saiyyid Sher Muhammad Barha	1656 - 57	500/150	8.75	3	11.75
33	Saiyyid Ahmad Kabir Barha	1656 - 57	500/100	8.75	2	10.75
34	Saiyyid Alam Barha	1656 -57	500/100	8.75	2	10.75
35	Saiyyid Karamullah	1656 - 57	500/100	8.75	2	10.75

	Barha					
36	Saiyyid Qutb Barha	1656 - 57	500/100	8.75	2	10.75
			<b>Total</b>	<b>5812.45</b>	<b>898.80</b>	<b>6524.50</b>

\*Source for the ranks: Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire, Awards of Ranks, Offices and Titles to the Mughal Nobility (174-1658)*, OUP, Delhi, 1985.

Source for the salaries: Yusuf Husain, *Selected Documents of Shahjahan's Reign*, Hyderabad, 1950. This is to account for the revision of the salaries during the reign of Shahjahan from that of the *Ain* rates.

\*\*The *mansab* salaries were paid in *dams* but it has been converted to rupees for simplification taking the standard value of 40 *dams*=1 rupee as per the rates during Akbar. The changes and fluctuations brought about by the changing conditions of the economy by the seventeenth century is not being considered, which certainly had made changes in the standard rates.

## APPENDIX B

Comparative analysis of increase in numbers and salaries of Barha *mansabdars* during 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century:

S. No.	Emperor	No. Of Barha nobles	% Increase in number	Total amount received as salary by the family (in Rs.)	Index (1196.58 x 10 <sup>6</sup> = 100)
1	Akbar	11	--	1196.58 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	100
2	Jahangir	15	36.36	2524.752 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	211
3	Shahjahan	36	140	6524.50x 10 <sup>6</sup>	545.22

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