

**STUDY OF ROHILKHAND IN THE  
BROADER PERSPECTIVE OF 18<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY POLITY**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**STUDY OF ROHILKHAND IN THE BROADER PERSPECTIVE OF 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY POLITY**”, submitted by **KHALID AKHTER**, is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this university, or any other university.

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

Prof. Majid Siddiqui

(Chairperson)

Prof. K. K. Trivedi

(Supervisor)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This study attempts to focus on the political, socio-cultural and economic aspects of Rohilkhand in the eighteenth century. Geopolitically, Rohilkhand in the medieval period had been the hub of affairs emanating from Delhi, right from the Sultanate period. Its proximity to the capital, its economic position and its background of tribal settlements made it imperative that the rulers of Delhi to keep the area under effective control. Rohilla Afghans who had settled in the region in large numbers in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a part of the imperial policy played a significant role in the power struggles/fluid political condition in the eighteenth century. They subsequently established their authority in the region. However they continued paying nominal allegiance to the imperial court at Delhi.

For long, the eighteenth century has been projected as a period of decadence and decline in every aspect of life. Such a thread of analysis is evident in the works of Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Jagdish Narain Sarkar, William Irvine, et al. But as we go on to analyse the different aspects at the regional level, Rohilkhand included we find a different pictures. Rohilkhand particularly was politically stable for nearly three quarters of the eighteenth century. In fact this stability was the basis of its economic prosperity and cultural growth.

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The vitality and importance of this region was recorded by W. Francklin who visited this place in 1795:

*"So happily situated by nature, Rohilkand has in all times been deemed of great political importance. In the early times of the Empire, commerce flourished. The great cities of Shahabad, Shajahanpore, Bareilly, Bissowlle, Bedaon, Ownla, Moradabad and Sumbul, formerly kept up a constant intercourse with the carvans of the north... There in many parts of Cuttair are to be seen the remains of the magnificent edifices, palaces, gardens, mosques, colleges and mausoleums. Among the first-rate cities of moderns days are to be placed, Ownla, Bissowlle, Bareilly and Pillibhit, which were the residences of those Rohilla chiefs who founded a new Empire of Cuttair".<sup>1</sup>*

Earlier, Rohilkhand was known by the name of Katehr. The name Rohilkhand came to be applied to the region in the mid eighteenth century in association with the Rohilla Afghans who had settled in the region in large numbers. The designation 'Rohilla' had in its turn evolved during the seventeenth century as a fairly broad designation for the people coming from Roh, corresponding roughly with the mountainous terrain of the eastern *Hindu Kush* and the Sulaiman mountain ranges. Roh as a geographical term was used only in the seventeenth century Indian and Indo-Afghan works and it roughly encapsulated the territory stretching from

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<sup>1</sup> W. Francklin, *The History of The Reigh of Shah Alam*, Allahabad, 1915, p. 55-56.

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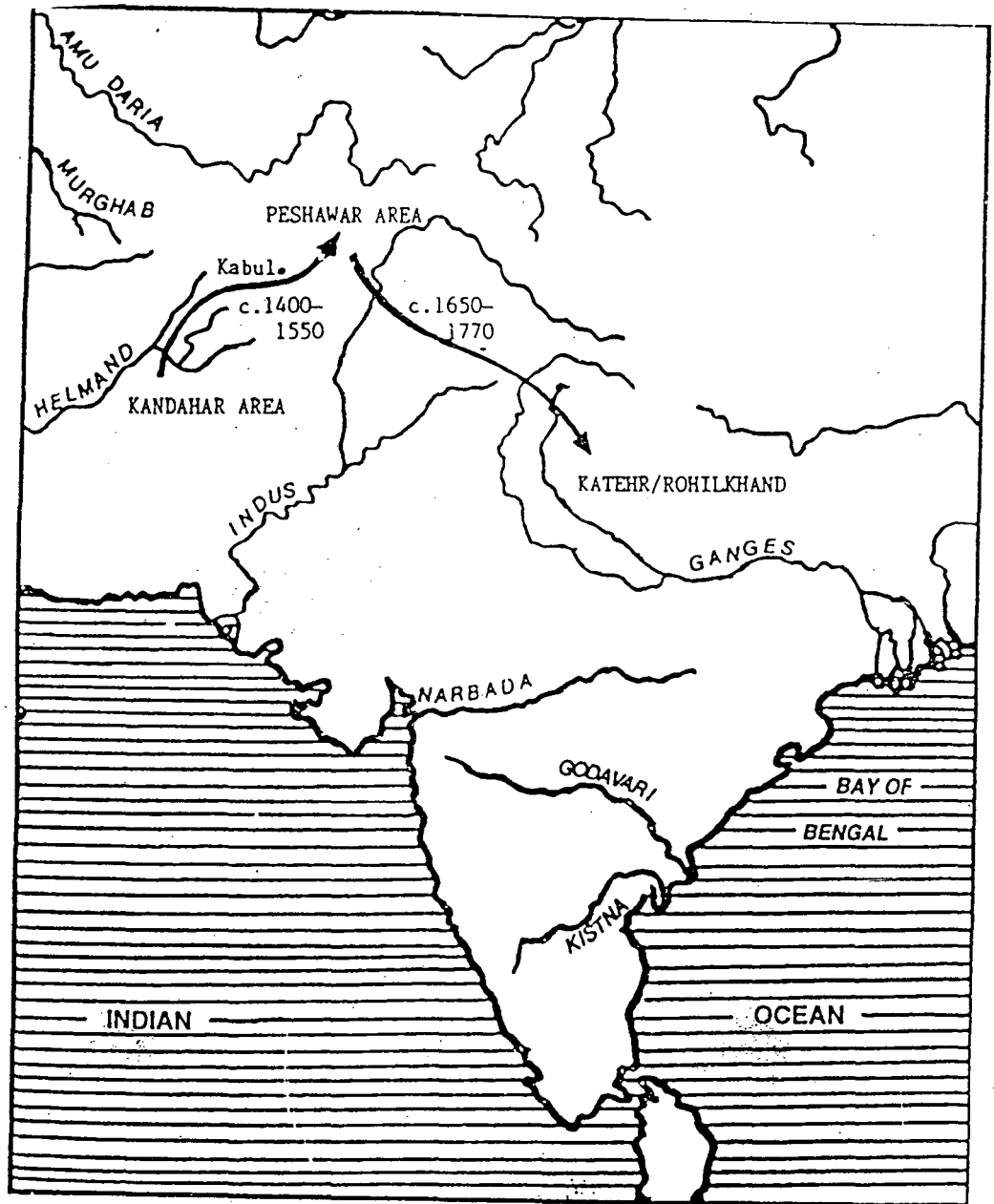
Swat and Bajaur in the north to Sikri and Bhakkar in Sind and from Hasan Abdal in the East to Kabul and Kandahar in the west.<sup>2</sup>

From the eighteenth century onwards the term Rohilla was used to refer to all Indo-Afghans who had settled in Rohilkhand or to those who served under a Rohilla chief. Most of these immigrants originated from the Peshawar area and belonged to the Yusufzai tribe. With the foundation of new Islamic sultanates which opened new prospects of employment and trading opportunities, more and more Afghans most notably in the capacity of merchants or mercenaries left their homeland in Roh and tried their luck in the promised land of India.

The Afghans had started immigrating into India as early as the Sultanate period. Afghans came to India mainly in pursuit of trade, especially horse trade and employment mainly as mercenary soldiers. They rendered their services to a wide range of people i.e. local *zamindars*, imperial officers and the rulers of Delhi. Afghan population in the Rohilkhand region rose significantly in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a result of imperial policy of encouraging their immigration with a view to curb the local recalcitrant *zamindars* (especially the Katehriya Rajputs) who were not always willing to pay the revenue dues.

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<sup>2</sup> Nizam-ud-din Harawi, *The Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, trans. Brjindranath, De. (Calcutta 1927-1939), cf Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of The Indo-Afghan Empire, c: 1710-1780*, Delhi 1999, p. 9.



Map-1: Yusufzai-Rohilla Migrations (1400-1800)  
Adapted from Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire*.  
c. 1710-1780, p. 103



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This imperial policy of encouraging the Afghan migration and using them against the refractory elements was successful as long as the centre was strong and exercised effective control over the province. But in eighteenth century, after the death of Aurangzeb, the centre became weak leading to a general disorder and instability. This was subsequently, accompanied by the slackening of imperial control over the provincial regions. Rohillas themselves defied imperial authority, seized imperial territories/*jagirs* and established an almost independent authority.

There were several factors leading to the rise of Rohilla authority. Firstly, as we have already discussed, there was the weakening of imperial authority, in the context of an imperial court which was ridden with factious court politics. The Rohillas capitalised fully on the factional politics of the court. Their services were used by various sections of the court against each other in the power struggles in the provincial region. As in the case of Ali Mohd Khan who was instigated by the imperial *wazir* to misappropriate the revenues of the *jagirs* of his rivals at the court.

Another factor which proved beneficial for the Rohillas in establishing their authority was their involvement in horse trade (horse being the most valued thing in the medieval period), in the mercenary soldier business and the economic prosperity of the region. In a way, all these were correlated. After coming to the

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region, they could take advantage of the economic prosperity of the region,<sup>3</sup> and hence employed large number of mercenary soldiers from their own tribe. Now, with the steady supply of good breed of horses, they were successful in overcoming the rebellious elements especially the Katehriya Rajputs.

The Rohillas also profited a lot because of the trade with the hill states. During the eighteenth century, trade was in a flourishing state in the hills states of the Himalaya<sup>4</sup>. For trade with these hill states, the Rohillas used the already existing pilgrim routes to Haridwar so as to connect their increasingly cultivated lands in the plains with the hills trade of Garhwal and Kumaon and further beyond with the market of Gartok which maintained further communications with Leh, Khotan, Yarkhand and Lhasa. The Rohilla interest in extending trade with these hill states can be seen from the fact that in 1757 the Rohilla chief Najib-ud-Daulah extended his authority to Dehradun and encouraged trade at a time when the Gurkhas had temporarily cut the more convenient route between Tibet and Kathmandu valley. It appears that the route from western Tibet through Garhwal to Najibabad in Rohilla

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<sup>3</sup> Economic prosperity of the region was due to the expansion of land under cultivation and trade relation of the region and this can be run clearly from the revenue figures of the region. For this see Muzaffar Alam, *Crisis of the Empire in Maghal North India*, Delhi 1986, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> For this see K. Chandala, *Across the Himalayas through the Ages. A study of Relations between central Himalayas and Western Tibet*; J. F. Fisher, *Trans Himalayan Traders, Economy, Society and Culture in Northern Nepal*; cf. Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire*, c. 1710-1780, p. 40-41.

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territory was an alternative for some of the trade, diverted from Nepal.<sup>5</sup>

The correlation between the flourishing trade and the emergence of the Rohilla power was due to the fact that Rohilkhand became the crossroad of the trade routes from the north, the north west as well as the east. Another factor which enhanced the importance of the Rohilkhand region was the diversion of the axis of the empire through which the Bengal treasury reached Delhi via Allahabad and Agra subas. During the eighteenth century, this route shifted north-wards, entering Rohilkhand via Farukabad. This was because of the reach of the turbulent Bundelas on the earlier route.<sup>6</sup> Now, from Rohilkhand the traffic could continue either South to Jaipur and other Rajput cities or through Bareilly along the hills via Najibabad, Haridwar, and Laldong to Jammu-Kashmir and from there to Kabul and Peshawar. Rohilkhand gained a lot from its new position. It commanded not only the northern route as has been already mentioned but also the commercial links to the Deccan on the one hand and to Sindh and Afghanistan on the other.

The prevalence of *ijardari* on a large scale in eighteenth century was another aspect which proved beneficial for the Rohilla

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<sup>5</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire c. 1710-1780*, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *Zamindar Uprisings And the Emergence of the Rohilla Power In Sarkar Muradabad*, Proceedings Indian History Congress , 1977, p. 226.

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Afghans. We see that in Rohilkhand the merchants who had hitherto been the most acceptable *mustajirs* did not possess sufficient military strength to meet the *zamindar's* growing challenge. In this scenario, the leaders of the Afghan adventures began to replace them as revenue farmers. These Afghan were now preferred as revenue farmers because they had sufficient strength to subdue the insubordinate *zamindars* and thus ensure the realization of revenue. It was through this practice of *ijardari* that the Rohillas got incorporated into the imperial power structure and subsequently rose to prominence.

## **Review Of Literature**

Iqbal Husain in his book '*Rise and Decline of Ruhela Chieftaincies in Eighteenth century*' has tried to explore in detail the rise and growth of Rohillas. Iqbal Husain has made an extensive use of Persian, Marathi, Urdu and English sources. Although Iqbal Husain has focussed on the growth and decline of the various Afghan chieftaincies as a result of the English Rohilla war in 1774, Prof Husain has tried to see these developments in the broader perspective of eighteenth century politics i.e. the disintegrating Mughal Empire, the Marathas, Sikhs, Awadh and finally the imposition of the pax-britannica.

Another work which has dealt about Rohillas in the eighteenth century is by Jos J.L. Gommans, '*The rise of the Indo-afghan*

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*Empire c. 1710-1780 A.D..'* In this book Jos Gommans has built his hypothesis on the basis of the Afghan's involvement in horse trade, as a mercenary soldier and the prevalence of the open military market economy in India. Along with these aspects Gommans has also tried to bring to light as to how Afghans profited largely from the diversion of trade routes in the eighteenth century by locating that almost all the Afghan states (successor state) of eighteenth century were located on the major trade routes.

Gommans views the decline of Rohilla power in the light of the shrinking north Indian market for Afghan man and horse power because of the expansion of the British East India Company. This was because the EIC maintained a regular infantry instead of an irregular army of free booters. All this decelerated the migrations of Afghans to India, which was the basis of creation of the Rohilla *riyasat* in India.

Sir John Stratchey in his book '*Hastings and The Rohilla War*' has dealt in brief about the political history of Rohillas. The major portion of the book covers the war of Hastings and Shuja-ud-Daulah against the Rohillas in 1774, which resulted in the decline of Rohilla power. He has dealt in brief with Rohillas in the post war period when Rampur state was created for Faizullah Khan Rohilla, after the treaty of Laldong. Sir John Stratchey has dealt a lot on

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the letters between Hastings and Rohilla chief Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Hastings and Colonel Champion, Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Colonel Champion and other British officials. Along with these and other sources sir John Stratchey has extensively used the Fifth Report printed in 1781. This report was presented by the committee of Secrecy appointed in 1781 to inquire into the causes of the war and of the condition and state of political connections and interests in India. This report also contains an account of the relations of the Bengal Government with the emperor, the *nawab wazir*, the Marathas, the Rohillas and other powers of the period.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar in his book '*Fall of the Mughal Empire*' has dealt about the rise of Rohillas in the region against the backdrop of the declining Mughal Empire. Decline of Mughal Empire according to Sarkar was the result of Hindu upsurge, because religious bigotry of Aurangzeb. It created serious law and order problems which the successors of Aurangzeb weren't able to control.

Jagdish Narain Sarkar in his work '*Study of 18<sup>th</sup> c. India*' see the rise of Rohillas as an attempt on the part of Afghans to revive their once lost power, taking advantage of the declining Mughal Empire. For the decline of the Mughal Empire he holds the same argument as that of Sir Jadunath Sarkar i.e. because of religious intolerance during the reign of Aurangzeb which led to simmering

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'Hindu discontent'. Jagdish Narain Sarkar views the period of Eighteenth Century as that of all round decadence while at the regional level he seems to be self contradictory when he talks of Rohilkhand with security, prosperity and moral obligation in the region.

Mazaffar Alam in his article '*Agraria Uprising and the Emergence of the Rohilla Power in Sarkar Muradabad*' has discussed the rise of Rohilla power in the backdrop of widespread *zamindar* revolts in the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, hastening the decline of Mughal Empire. Prof. Alam has discussed how these Afghans with sufficient horse and man power were used by imperial authorities to check these rebellious *zamindar* and how Rohillas after being incorporated in the imperial power structure capitalised on the factious court politics and economic prosperity of the region in establishing their authority.

In the book '*Devotional Islam and Politics in British India in 18<sup>th</sup> C. and 19<sup>th</sup> c.*' Usha Sanyal has dealt with the Rohillas / Rohilkhand in the chapter 'Politic in North India in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century' Apart from the rise and decline of the Rohillas after the war of 1774, Usha has described in some detail the remnants of Rohilla power at Rampur, under Faizullah Khan and his successors. In addition to the socio-cultural developments at Rampur, Usha

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has the role of the Rohillas at Rampur and other centres during the revolt of 1857 is also discussed.

The first chapter discusses the political scenario in Delhi and the Rohilkhand region, in the background of the imperial policy of encouraging Afghan settlements in the region, to check the rebellious *zamindars* of the region. It also assesses the factors that contributed to the foundation of Rohilla power in the region viz. the factious court politics at Delhi, a weak centre, the prevalence of *ijaradari* in eighteenth c, the involvement of Rohilla Afghans in the horse trade and their involvement in local politics both as *ijaradars* and mercenary soldiers.

This chapter also deals with the relation of the Rohillas with Ahmad Shah Abdali who had an alliance with the Rohillas for the liquidation of Maratha incursions into Delhi and Rohilla estate as to ensure the safety of his Indian possessions.

Chapter 2 deals basically about administration, society, religion and culture under Rohillas. Regarding the administrative aspects, it focuses on the administrative set up in the region, the administrative units, army and the judiciary.

In the religious and cultural aspects, it discusses the attitude of the Rohillas towards their subjects, both Hindu and Muslim. It deals with the emergence of Rohilkhand as the nursery of *sunni*



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faith and the reasons for such a development. It also deals with the relations that the Rohilla chiefs had with the *sufi* saints of the period.

Art, literature and painting: its prevalence, patronage and growth under the Rohillas are the cultural aspects that have been dealt in this chapter.

Regarding the economy, the aspects that have been dealt with are the condition and extension of agriculture, the condition of peasantry, the revenue figures, trade and commerce, and the main imports and exports of the region. Along with these aspects, the attitudes and efforts of the Rohillas for the promotion of trade and commerce are also dealt with.

Chapter 3 deals basically about the Rohilla war of 1774 and the subsequent decline of Rohilla power. Along with the reasons for the decline of Rohilla power, it contextualises the creation of Rampur state under Faizullah Khan after the treaty of Laldang and the remnants of Rohilla power at Rampur.

As far as the methodology and the nature of the work is concerned it is primarily a regional study for which regional primary sources both in Persian, Urdu and English have been used along with secondary sources of subjective relevance. In this study, an attempt has been made to look into the various developments in

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Rohilkhand by information/data from the regional sources. A subsequent attempt has been made to analyse and synthesize the findings in the broader perspective of the history of India in Eighteenth century. In fact, this study aims at an understanding of the undercurrent of the basic unity of the history of India in the light of the matrix of regional (Rohilkhand) polity, security, economy and culture.

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **EMERGENCE OF ROHILLA POWER**

Geographically Rohilkhand region is a part of Upper Gangetic basin. Earlier the Rohilkhand was known by the name of Katehr. The region seems to derive its name from the kind of soil that dominated this area. Katehr was a soft well aerated loam which is extremely suitable for cultivation. It was because of this that the Rajputs of the region were also known as Katehriya Rajputs, and it was the influence area of the Katehriya Rajputs. The main Rajput clans in the region were Chauhans, Rathores, Bachal and Gaur. This name continued to be applied till eighteenth century to this area when it was replaced by the Rohilkhand. Spate and Learmonth write that between Ganga - Yamuna doab and Awadh lies Rohilkhand so named after the Rohilla Afghans who emerged as dominant political authority in this region during Mughal decline. Rohilkhand territory, comprising of modern districts of Moradabad, Bareilly, Rampur, Bijnor, Shahjahanpur and parts of foothills in the region of modern Uttaranchal province, has an area of 12,000 square miles. It extends from Hardwar, where the Ganges enter the plains from the mountains along the foot of Garhwal and Kumaon Himalaya to the frontiers of Awadh, a distance of nearly 200 miles. River Ganga forms the south western boundary. To the north of the Rohilkhand territory are the

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mountains which rise like a wall, and in its south the plains comprises a belt of forest usually ten or twelve miles broad, which is locally known as Bhabars. Ramganga<sup>1</sup> is the main river of the region. Sot, Arit, Deoha, Garrah and Baghul are other rivers of the area. The soil of the region consists of vast deposits of sand or boulders. Much of the forest has been destroyed during last hundred years. At a distance of ten or twelve miles from the mountains the forest suddenly disappears and in place of the forest we enter on a tract covered with tall reeds and grasses. This is the Tarai, well known for its tigers, and is infamous during a portion of the year for its malaria. It has usually a breadth of about ten miles and gradually passes into the cultivated districts of the plains. Whenever the territory, Rohilkhand was threatened with an invasion the Tarai and forests afforded, in spite of their deadly climate, a comparatively safe asylum to the people of Rohilkhand. It was their established custom in time of danger to fly with their families, their cattle and their valuables to these refuges where an enemy was usually illdisposed to follow.

The climatic conditions of the region are characterized by extreme variations. During the summer it is very hot and in winters it is extremely cold. Its climate is humid during the rainy season. Micro

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<sup>1</sup> Ramganga in medieval period was known as Ab-i-Rahab-Minhaj us Siraj, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, ed., Abdul Hai Habibi, Kabul 1963, Vol. 1, p. 488, cf. Ifzal-ur-Rehman, *Rohilkhand Territory Medieval India*, Delhi, 1994, p. 11.

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level diversities are no doubt introduced by the proximity of the Himalayas.

The average weather condition emerging out of the combined effect of various elements lead to the recognition of four well marked seasons, i.e. the hot summer, the wet summer, the pre-winter transition and the winter. Average annual rainfall of the region is 100 cms. It is very much favourable for the cultivation of large number of crops thus forming a potential area for good revenue.

As far as the soil of the region is concerned it consisted mainly of soft well aerated loam, known as Katehr, which is supposed to be very much suitable for cultivation. It consist of strips of swampy soil (*khadar*) and loose sand (*bhur*) which stretches parallel to the numerous rivers in Katehr<sup>2</sup>.

The main crops, fruits and vegetables which were grown in regions included wheat, barley, peas carrots, onion, rice, sugarcane, mash, cotton, grapes and mango.<sup>3</sup> Wheat was the main crop exported from the region and Moradabad had become its main exporting center from where it was exported as far as Lahore.

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<sup>2</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *Rise of Indo Afghan Empire, c. 1710 1780*, Delhi 1999, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> Abul Fazl *Ain-i-Akbari*, Tr. Jarrett, Vol II, Calcutta, 1949, pp. 114-117.

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Proper care was taken for progress of agriculture assessment and realization of revenue in the region since the time of Alauddin Khalji as revenue was the main source of income.<sup>4</sup>

The first statistical information regarding the measured area under cultivation and the number of villages, *parganas* and *sarkars* of this region come from the *Ain-i-Akbari*<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the caste composition of the Rohilkhand territory Abul Fazl has given information<sup>6</sup>. According to Abul Fazl majority of the population in the region were Hindus. Large area in the region was under the control of Hindu chiefs designated as Rajas, Rais and *zamindars*. K.K. Trivedi gives us a detailed description of *zamindar* castes of the region in his article 'Changes In Caste Composition Of The *Zamindar* Class In Western Uttar Pradesh' which he has prepared on the basis of *Ain-i-Akbari* and Atkinson's District Gazetteers. According to *Ain* the dominant *zamindar* castes in the region were Shaikhs, Saiyyids, Afghans, Rajputs, Baniyas, Jats Kayasths etc. For district-wise caste compositions we see that in Moradabad and Barreilly the dominant *zamindar* castes were Jats and Rajputs<sup>7</sup>. In several other *mahals* (revenue districts) the dominant *zamindar* castes were Brahmins and Muslims (Sayyids,

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<sup>4</sup> Ifzar-ul- Rehman, *Rohilkhand Territory in Medieval India 1200-1707- A.D.*, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Tr Jarrett, Vol II, p.173-176.184&293-296.

<sup>6</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Tr Jarrett, Vol II, p.268.

<sup>7</sup> Muzaffar Alam, in *The Mughal State*, (ed.) By Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramanian. Delhi, 1998, p. 451.

Shaikhs, and Afghans). As far as the Afghan *zamindars* in Rohilkhand region are concerned the *Ain* does not list the Afghans as *zamindars* in the *sarkars* of Badaun and Sambhal which covered modern Rohilkhand region.<sup>8</sup> From the times of Shahjahan Afghan began to settle in the region and acquired *zamindari* rights<sup>9</sup>.

### **Political History Of The Region**

The Mughal Empire which had dazzled the contemporary world by extensive territories, military might and cultural achievements reached its maximum territorial dimensions by 1686-87 when the states of Bijapur and Golconda were absorbed in it. Administrative unification, which was brought about by the genius of Akbar and his successors began to wither away after the death of Aurangzeb. Central administration in north India had weakened while nine rulers followed one another in quick succession in the fifty years following the death of Aurangzeb; the imperial court was ridden with factionalism. Taking advantage of the fluid politics of the period dominant groups from the Mughal ruling elite carved out independent principalities for themselves. Mughal governors of Awadh, Bengal and the Deccan gradually severed themselves from the control of the central government. Invaders from the north

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<sup>8</sup> Iqbal Hussain, *Rise And Decline Of Ruhela Chieftaincies*; Delhi 1994. p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Iqbal Hussain *Rise and Declining Ruhela Chieftaincies* p. 19; Muzaffer Alam, *The Mughal State* ed. By Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramanian, p 451.

west also made repeated incursions in search of wealth and dabble in Indian politics. It was in this political scenario that the Rohilla Afghans established their authority in the Rohilkhand territory.

### **Afghan Immigration And Settlements In India**

When Babur invaded and founded Empire in India in 1526 there was scarcely a district in northern India without Afghan settlement.<sup>10</sup> The Afghan immigration can be traced back to the time of Ghorian conquests; they are found serving the sultans of Delhi in the thirteenth century with their own settlements at Gopalgir (Mewar)<sup>11</sup>, Afghanpur (Delhi)<sup>12</sup>, Bhojpur<sup>13</sup>, Kampil<sup>14</sup>, Patiyali<sup>15</sup> and other places. Afghans from being petty mercenaries rose to a high position under the Tughlaqs when they held the *iqtas* of Sambhal and Mathura and also in Bihar. Afghans held *iqtas* of Sirhind, Jaunpur, Gujarat and Bengal. This was a kind of prelude when Afghan ascended the throne of Delhi under the Lodhis.<sup>16</sup> Afghan immigration was unabated until the decline of the Surs. Afghan immigration suffered heavily under Akbar who followed hostile policy towards Afghans.

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<sup>10</sup> Sir John Stratchey-*Hastings and Rohilla War, Oxford, 1892, p.4.*; For Afghan settlements see Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire, Delhi 1971, Vol IV, p 36*; Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *India in the Eighteenth Century, Calcutta 1976, pp.417.*

<sup>11</sup> Ziauddin Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, (A.S.B. edition), p. 57.*

<sup>12</sup> Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, p. 57.*

<sup>13</sup> Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, p. 57*; Bhojpur was a pargana in *sarkar* Kanauj.

<sup>14</sup> Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, p. 57*; Kampil was also a pargana in *sarkar* Kanauj.

<sup>15</sup> Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, p. 57*; Patiyali was also a pargana in *sarkar* Kanauj.

<sup>16</sup> Iqbal Hussain, *Rise and Decline of Ruhela chieftaincies, p. 1*



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However the successors of Akbar adopted friendly policies towards Afghan officers. This can be seen from the fact that Khan-i-Jahan Lodi held high *mansab* and number of Afghans holding *mansabs* above the rank of 1000 under Jahangir was 11 and under Shahjahan 38.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the Afghans who migrated to India in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came to India in pursuit of employment as soldiers or as traders dealing especially in horse trade.<sup>18</sup>

Katehr was one of the regions where Afghan immigration took place during seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Katehr was supposed to be one of the most troublesome territories where imperial control was always precarious because of rebellious activities of the local chiefs especially the Katehriya Rajputs. This territory as we have already discussed, being covered with thick forests in the foot hills, always provided a safe shelter to the rebellious elements. Here Rajputs rebelled right from the period of the Turkish conquest in 1254 A.D. which was suppressed ruthlessly.<sup>19</sup> Another rebellion broke out during Balban's period in 1266 which was also suppressed<sup>20</sup>. As a result of these expeditions

<sup>17</sup> Lahori, *Baadshah Namah*, Vol I, Biblio Indica, p. 292-296.

<sup>18</sup> Nicolo Manucci, *Storio do Mogar*, Delhi, 1966, Vol II, pp. 425-26; Iqbal Hussain, *Rise and Decline of Ruhela Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*. p.-4, Jos J.L. Gommans, *Rise of Indo- Afghan Empire – 1710-1780*, p. 116.

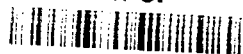
<sup>19</sup> Minhaj Siraj, *Tabaqat i-Nasiri*, p. 488.

<sup>20</sup> Zia-uddin Barani, *Tarikh-i- Firoz Shahi*, pp. 58-59.

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## *Emergence of Rohilla Power*

peace was restored but whenever central authority was weak the region witnessed a rebellion.

During the reign of Babar, Humayun, Akbar and Jahangir the region did not witness any large scale revolts. But Shahjahan's period witnessed large scale revolt in the region.<sup>21</sup> During eighteenth century the local chiefs taking advantage of the agrarian expansion, and consequent acquisition of wealth, rebelled in large numbers. It is against this background that we have to see the Afghan immigration into the region. The Afghans had settled in the region as a part of the Mughal policy of corroding the bastion of recalcitrant *zamindars* in the region. As we see that the Afghan settlement of Moradabad took place as a consequence of defiance of Raja Ram Sukh, a Katehriya Rajput against the Mughal authority.<sup>22</sup>

Mughal policy of encouraging the Afghan settlements in the region to check the recalcitrant elements in the region were successful as long as the central authority was strong and exercised effective control. However, soon as after the death of Aurangzeb, when centre became weak because of successive wars of succession, taking advantage of factional court politics and their involvement in horse trade and open military market economy in India, Afghans themselves rebelled and encroached upon the

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<sup>21</sup> Syed Sahibuddin, *Tarikh-i-Shahjahanpur*, Lucknow, 1932, pp 10-11.

<sup>22</sup> Iqbal Hussain, *Rise And Decline of Ruhella Chieftancies in Eighteenth Century* c. p. 7.

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imperial *jagirs*<sup>23</sup>. They succeeded in establishing a kind of independent successor state in the region although paying nominal allegiance to the imperial authority and getting their loot and plunder legitimized from Delhi.

### **Establishment Of Rohilla Power In The Region**

We saw that large number of Afghan settlements came up in the Katehr region because of the Mughal policy to check the recalcitrant elements. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century we see that Afghan population grew further because of natural factors as well as through migration. Some Afghans enrolled as soldiers in the armies of the Mughals or as *jagirdars* and helped them in controlling the area. A large number of them engaged themselves as mercenary soldiers, others as horse traders.<sup>24</sup> After the death of Aurangzeb at the beginning of eighteenth century, Mughal rule in Katehr was restricted to the immediate vicinity of larger cities of Bareilly, Moradabad and Badaon. The imperial *faujdar* found it difficult to deal with the power of *zamindars* who often refused to pay land revenues. The imperial nobility held large *jagirs* in the area, but for the revenue collection they had become entirely dependent on the local elite landholders and revenue farmers. Revenue farming (*ijara*) became widespread in Katehr because it facilitated the balancing of local power by

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<sup>23</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *Rise of Indo Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780*,

<sup>24</sup> Jos J. L. Gommans, *Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire 1710-1780*.

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employing the revenue farmer and his following in a certain *zamindari* without having to invest him with permanent powers and vested interests.<sup>25</sup>

Since the merchants who had hitherto been the most acceptable *mustajers* did not possess sufficient military strength to meet the *Zamindars'* growing challenge, the leaders of Afghan adventurers began to replace them as revenue farmers particularly during the reign of Farrukhsiyar when revenue farming (*ijaradari*) was recklessly encouraged.<sup>26</sup> For the Afghans, though not initially as rich as merchants, had sufficient strength to overpower the insubordinate *zamindars* and thus ensure the realization of revenue. Daud Khan and his successor Ali Mohammad Khan were one of these Afghans who knew how to profit from this fluid political situation. By frequently switching his allegiance to one or other local magnates they rose from being a petty mercenary soldier to an almost independent authority in the region through the practice of *ijara*.

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<sup>25</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire c- 1710-1780*, p. 119; Muzaffar Alam, *Zamindar Uprisings and The Emergence of Rohilla Power in Sarkar Moradabad*, Proceedings Indian History Congress, 1977, p. 224, Iqbal Hussain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Iqbal Hussain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 34, Muzaffar Alam, *Zamindar uprisings and the Emergence of The Rohilla Powers in Sarkar Moradabad*, Proceedings Indian History Congress 1977, p. 221, Also See Akhbarat-Farrukh Siyar 4<sup>th</sup> Reign Year II p. 278.

**Daud Khan 1710-1725.**

Daud Khan was one of the Afghan immigrants of eighteenth century who came to Katehr and assumed leadership of armed bands of Afghans. Regarding the early life of Daud Khan we find that he was a slave of Shah Alam Khan, the son of Muhammed Khan alias 'Shaikh Mooti' and the grandson of Shaikh Shihabuddin a *Qadiriya* saint who on account of his sanctity came to be known as Shaikh Koote Baba'. Shaikh Shihabuddin and his family traced their origin from Abraham. He belonged to Badalzai tribes of Afghans born at Pushun Sharawuk a province in Kandahar.<sup>27</sup> After the death of Shaikh Shihabuddin at Chyech Hijara his son Shaikh Moote Baba settled at Tor Sahamatpur.<sup>28</sup> Shaikh Moote had five sons viz. Azad Khan, Shahad Khan, Hakim Khan, Hasun Khan and Shah Alam Khan (father of Hafiz Rahmat Khan). On the death of Shaikh Moote and consequent division of his property among his sons, a slave named Daud Khan fell to the share of Shah Alam Khan whom Shah Alam entrusted the management of family estates.<sup>29</sup>

Jos Gommans, while discussing about the involvement of family of Shaikh Shihabuddin in horse trade with India suggests that Daud

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<sup>27</sup> See Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*; London 1891, p.5

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan Rahmat*, Aligarh; MS No. 180 ff. 5A-8A; Hafiz Rahmat Khan, *Khulasat-ul-Mansab* Aligarh MS No. 146 ff. 19b-29a; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ul-Moolk* p.5-6

<sup>29</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff5-6; Hafiz Rahmat Khan, *Khulasat-ul-Ansab*, ff-6a; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz ul Moolk* p. 6-7.

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Khan accompanied one such party. It is also possible that Daud Khan came to India in search of employment as a mercenary soldier.<sup>30</sup>

Daud Khan with a few other Afghans reached Katehr in the first decade of eighteenth century (1707). By this time, on the death of Aurangzeb and the subsequent war of succession among his sons, the reins of government had become relaxed, and a body of principal *zamindars* of the Rajput Katehriya caste, especially Raja Narpat Singh of Pipli, Kirat Singh of Akbarabad (in Sambhal) Kanchan Singh of Rajpur, Khem Karam of Ratangarh, Madar Shah of Madkars, Lachman Singh of Ajaonad, Arjun Singh of Aonla, emerged as major local potentates of the Katehr region. These *zamindars* started to pay only small sums to the *jagirdars*, then was due from their territories.<sup>31</sup> Some *zamindars* held *ijara* or contract for revenue over considerable areas and others took possession over the near by territories by force. Afghans under these conditions found a ready home to get suitable employment under these *zamindars*. Daud Khan with a few other Afghans entered the services of these recalcitrant *zamindars* and after some time Daud Khan joined services of Madar Shah of Madkar, a

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<sup>30</sup> George Forster, *A Journey From Bengal to England*, Vol. I, London 1798, p. 101; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool- Moolk*, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff 6a; George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I p. 101, 115.; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk* p 7.

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paragana in Budaon.<sup>32</sup> Daud took several expeditions under him. In the expeditions against the *zamindar* of Ratangarh he captured a boy of 7 yrs whom he adopted as his son and gave the name Ali Mohammad Khan.<sup>33</sup>

Daud gradually acquired the *zamindari* of Bisoli and embarked upon the expansion on his own. Daud also acquired the *ijara* of certain lands. On hearing of the success of Daud Khan a number of Afghans came from Roh and settled in the region acknowledging him as their leader.

The stories of Daud Khan's success in Hindustan induced Shah Alam Khan, after a lapse of several years, to visit Katehr in 1713. Shah Alam was received with great respect and gifts. Shah Alam visited again after six years and now wanted Daud to accompany him but Daud was reluctant and, instead, promised to pay him Rs 2000 annually. Shah Alam while returning back was murdered near Budaon.<sup>34</sup>

About 12 months after the death of Shah Alam Khan, Daud Khan quitted the service of Madar Shah and joined the services of Raja Debi Chand of Kumaon and was given the command of forces

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<sup>32</sup> George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol I, p. 101; Mustajaib Khan *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff 7a; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk* p7.

<sup>33</sup> Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul Mutakherien*, London, 1891 Vol. III, p. 233; George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol I, p. 102; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p.7.

<sup>34</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p 8; Sh. Abdur Rashid, *Najib-ud-Daulah, His Life And Times*, Aligarh 1952, p. XXXIII.

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stationed in the pargana at the foot hills. In a tussle between Azmatullah Khan and Debi Chand over the control of Kashipur and Rudrapur, the treachery of Daud Khan led to defeat of Debi Chand as he took bribe from Ajmatullah Khan. Debi Chand retreated to Kankurdurra and pretending ignorance of Daud's treachery invited him to attend to receive his arrears of pay. Daud fell into the trap and on reaching Kankurdurra was murdered.<sup>35</sup> After the death of Daud Khan the leaders of his following such as Malik Shadu Khan, son of Shahjad Khan the second son of Shaikh Mooti Sardan Khan, Dundey Khan and Fateh Khan elected Ali Mohammad as their new leader (malik, sardar)<sup>36</sup> as he was regarded as the most able man amongst them. Even Mahmud Khan the only natural son of Daud Khan, was passed over without consideration.

### **Ali Mohammad Khan 1725 – 1749**

There is a controversy regarding his origin. Some consider him as a Ahir<sup>37</sup> while other sources call him a Jat.<sup>38</sup> It therefore seems possible that he belonged to some peasant caste. Yet in spite of his doubtful or 'low' origin and not being an Afghan he was

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<sup>35</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff 11ab; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p 10; Sh. Abdur Rashid, *Najib-ud-Daulah his Life And Times*; p. XIII.

<sup>36</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk* p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherein* Vol. III, p. 233.

<sup>38</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 69; George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol I, pp. 102.



## *Emergence of Rohilla Power*

unanimously accepted as the leader by the Afghan followers of Daud.<sup>39</sup>

Ali Mohammad Khan inherited the private possessions in *zamindari* and the *ijara* holdings of Daud Khan. Ali Mohammad Khan also succeeded in obtaining the friendship of *faujdar* of Moradabad and his son Moin-ud-din Khan, the *hakim* of Bareilly. Ali Mohammad Khan served Azmatullah Khan in his expedition against the recalcitrant *zamindars*. Ali Mohammad Khan at this time capitalized fully on the factious court politics. Azmatullah Khan, *naib* of *wazir* Qamar-uddin Khan, pitted Ali Mohammad Khan against the rival factions at the Delhi Court many amongst whom held landed interests in the area. The main rival of Qamar-uddin Khan at Delhi was *mirbakshi* Amir Khan who held part of his jagirs in Manona and Aonla (in Bareilly) Ali Mohammad Khan with the tacit support of Azmatullah Khan, the *wazir*, wrested these villages from Amir Khan's agents and made them the center of his activities. Soon he became the principal *ijaradar* of this region and carved a fairly big *zamindari* in this territory, largely by conquering and dislodging old *zamindars*.<sup>40</sup> Almost all the *jagirdars* in and around Moradabad farmed out their *jagirs* to him.

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<sup>39</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohela Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherein*, Vol III, London 1891, p. 233; Sri Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of Mughal Empire*, Delhi, 1971, vol. 4, p. 48.

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Ali Mohammad Khan being fully knowledgeable about the fragile political atmosphere prevailing at that time and knowing how to capitalise on the factious court politics of the time, and that owing to these that he was hardly accountable to any body for his deeds or misdeeds as long as he was powerful enough utilized the situation to his maximum advantage. He knew that he only had to have good relations with the dominant sections of nobility and with the rest he could deal on his own terms. Apart from the wazir, his close associates and some big nobles, other *jagirdars* of the *sarkars* hardly received the stipulated amount from the *ijara* given to him. They could never demand any accounts from the Rohilla leader and had to content with whatever was sent out of the collected revenue.<sup>41</sup>

Another factor which enhanced the position of Ali Mohammad Khan during this period was the diversion of the route of Bengal treasury from the *Shahrah*. The road from Bengal to Delhi passing through the territory of Allahabad and Agra *Suba* by 1730s on account of widespread Bundela and Jat unrests, gave way to a diversion via Bareilly.<sup>42</sup> Since Ali Mohammad Khan commanded the main road which led from Delhi via Bareilly to the eastern provinces of Awadh, Bihar and Bengal the Mughal authority

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<sup>41</sup> Mirza Ghulam Hussain, *Seir ul Mutakherein*, Vol. III, p. 234; Iqbal Hussain, *Rise and Decline of Rohella Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 44.

<sup>42</sup> Mirza Ghulam Hussain, *Seir ul Mutakherien*, Vol III, pp. 467-8; Muzaffar Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, Delhi, 1986, p. 261-62.

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wanted to maintain amicable relations with this region so that treasury could pass through it undisturbed. It was in these circumstances that Ali Mohammad Khan could manage to flourish at the cost of the old, and apparently small *Zamindars* and small *jagirdars*.

Another factor which enhanced the power of Rohilla chief was large number of new recruits under Ali Mohammad Khan as a result of large scale migration of Afghans from Roh in the wake of Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739.<sup>43</sup> Afghans, mostly from the Yusufzai tribe and others from Peshawar area, began to swell the Rohilla ranks.<sup>44</sup>

By mid eighteenth century Ali Mohammad Khan with the help of Wazir Qamar-uddin Khan and *faujdar* of Moradabad – Azmatullah Khan, succeeded in gathering a territory which was made up of a mixture of de jure rights ranging from *zamindari ijara* and inam. After his services against the Saiyed Saifuddin Barha, a *jagirdar* of Jansath, the Wazir secured for Ali Mohammad Khan a *mansab* of 5000/5000.<sup>45</sup> Thus Ali Mohammad Khan from being a mercenary and outlaw obtained the status of a Mughal noble.

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<sup>43</sup> Mirza Ghulam Hussain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherein*, Vol. III, p. 234.

<sup>44</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo- Afghan Empires C 1710-1780*.

<sup>45</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *Agrarian Uprisings and Emergence of Rohilla Power in Moradabad*, PIHC, 1977, p. 226.

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Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739 and the consequent decline of the prestige of the Mughals emboldened Ali Mohammad Khan. He took possession of pargana Richcha and stopped payment of *ijara* dues.<sup>46</sup> He even withheld the revenue of the *jagirs* of *wazirs* as well. Raja Harnand the deputy *faujdar* of Moradabad was deputed to chastise Ali Mohammad. Abdul Nabi Khan *faujdar* of Bareilly was also asked to assist Raja Haranand.<sup>47</sup> In the encounter between Ali Mohammad Khan and Harnand the latter was killed. Wazir Qamruddin after this incident sent his youngest son Muin-ul-Mulk, alias Mir Munnu to punish Ali Mohammad Khan for this outrage. On the intercession of his mother Shalapuri Begum, Mir Mannu came to terms with the Afghan chief and married his daughter<sup>48</sup> and secured for him an imperial *farman* for the deputy *faujdari* of Moradabad.<sup>49</sup> Later Ali Mohammad Khan invaded the territory of Kumaon chief and annexed Kashipur, Rudrapur and two other parganas to his own territory.<sup>50</sup>

Safdar Jang, the governor of Awadh looked at these development with great envy. In 1745 he instigated the Emperor Mohammad Shah to take a punitious expedition against the Rohilla chief. This was on account that there was no effective barrier between the

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<sup>46</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff 10b.

<sup>47</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff 16b; Gulam Hussain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherin*, Vol 3, p. 234-236; George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, vol 1, p. 105-106.

<sup>48</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherein*, Vol 3 p. 236, George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol 1, p. 106.

<sup>49</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain; *Seir- ul-Mutakhrein*, Vol 3, p. 236.

<sup>50</sup> George Forster, *A journey from Bengal to England*, Vol I, p. 107

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sarkar of Muradabad and *suba* Awadh. Also the Wazir's alliances with the Afghan chief and subsequent developments at the court greatly alarmed the governor of Awadh. Safdar Jang around this time held the office of *Mir Atish* as well and belonged to the anti *wazir* faction. Safdar Jang and his associates induced and instigated the emperor Muhammad Shah in 1745 to set out in person on a punitive expedition against Ali Mohammad Khan.<sup>51</sup> Ali Mohammad Khan on hearing the news that Emperor Muhammad Shah in person accompanied by a huge train of followers including his allies, Qamar-uddin and Qaim Khan Bangash, Alim Mohammad Khan decided to entrench himself alongwith his allies at Bangarh, a mud fortress in the heart of a thick forest. Emperor encamped his forces at Garh Mukteshwar. Although cannonades were fired every morning but no serious effort was made to subdue the Rohilla chief. Here again we see how factious court politics led to a kind of failure to this expedition when Qaim Khan Bangash and Qamar-uddin Khan worked for a compromise on behalf of Ali Mohammad Khan. The *wazir* placed the petition before the Emperor for a pardon for the Ruhella chief who agreed to surrender and pay a suitable *peshkash*. According to the settlement the fort of Bangarh was destroyed<sup>52</sup> and in the

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<sup>51</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherin*, vol III, p. 236; Geroge Foster, *A Journey From Bengal to England*, Vol I, p. 108; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz -ool- Moolk*, p. 20; John Stratchey, *Hastings and Rohilla War*, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherin*, Vol III, P. 238; Musthjaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff 22b; Geroge Forster, *A journey From Bengal to England*, Vol I, P. 109.

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aftermath of the siege Ali Mohammad Khan was introduced in the presence of Wazir and decorated with *Khelat* (dress of honour) and appointed *faujdar* of Sirhind while his two elder sons were detained as hostages in Delhi.<sup>53</sup> Although the Rohilla chief was transferred from Rohilkhand the imperial officers who were appointed found it too difficult to establish their hold in the region.

Ali Mohammad Khan on reaching Sirhind was successful in checking refractory *zamindars* such as Bhalha Jat, Bhar Mal of Raypur, Migahu Mal Chief of Joulpur who had not been paying arrears of revenue due from them.<sup>54</sup>

In the year 1748 A.D. Ahmad Shah Durrani marched towards Hindustan he was opposed by the governor of Lahore, Shahnawaz Khan. Ahmad Shah soon took possession of the city when the governor fled to Delhi. Ali Mohammad Khan was at this time, at the head of 20,000 men, in Sirhind. Emperor Muhammad Shah suspected that Ali Mohammad Khan might be induced to join the Durrani. To guard against such an event, he was appointed to the government of Katehr.<sup>55</sup> Ali Mohammad Khan left his post in Sirhind and returned to Rohilkhand despite the fact that Ahmad Shah Durrani had offered him the post of *wazir* in the event he would agreed to join him. Rohilla chief chose to remain within the

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<sup>53</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 21.

<sup>54</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 22.

<sup>55</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 24.

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Mughal fold because at this time the fortunes of Ahmad Shah Durrani were uncertain. Ali Mohammad Khan was welcomed back by his fellow Rohilla and recovered his former territories without any show of force. At the time of his death in 1749 A.D. he had definitely succeeded in warding off all Mughal imperial influence, in Rohilkhand. Ali Mohammad Khan, before his death, summoned the council of Sardars and appointed Hafiz Rahmat Khan, son of Shah Alam Khan the erstwhile master of Daud Khan, who had migrated to India from Afghanistan on the invitation of Ali Mohammad Khan as the Rohilla chief.<sup>56</sup>

### **Hafiz Rahmat Khan 1749-1774**

As already discussed Ali Mohammad Khan died in 1749 little more than a year after the re-establishment of his power in Rohilkhand. He left six sons of whom the elder two, Faizullah Khan and Abdullah Khan were absent, having been taken by Ahmad Shah Abdali to Kandahar, the other four were still minors. From different sources we come to know that Ali Mohammad Khan made an arrangement according to which Hafiz Rahmat Khan was appointed the guardian of his son Sadullah Khan who would be the

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<sup>56</sup> Mustajab Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff. 31a, Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir ul Mutakherein*, Vol 3, p. 239; Geroge Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I, p. 111.

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nominal nawab. Dundey Khan, a cousin of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, was at the same time appointed commander of the troops.<sup>57</sup>

All the chiefs were to sit together and discuss matters during emergencies; each of them was to pay his share towards the common expenses of their government and to contribute troops for the common defence. However, these arrangements didn't last long. The death of Ali Mohammad Khan was soon followed by quarrels and differences among the chief.

In 1752 the two elder sons of Ali Mohammad Khan, Faizullah Khan and Abdullah Khan, having been released by Ahmad Shah came back to Rohilkhand and solicited their share in the paternal estate. Their claims were submitted to the deliberation of Rohilla sardars among whom Hafiz Rahmat Khan took the lead and it was resolved to partition the territory personally possessed by Ali Mohammad Khan among his sons.<sup>58</sup> There were dissensions and quarrels on 1st partition and then 2nd partition was done in which Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Dundey Khan managed to get the major share. Dundey with 23% of the total Rohilkhand and revenue mainly in the district of Moradabad, while Hafiz Rahmat Khan with 37% of the territory mainly in Bareilly. The remainders was given to some of the sardars. Ujhani, Sahaswan and Shahbazpur,

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<sup>57</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, p. 15; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 28.

<sup>58</sup> George Forster, *A journey from Bengal to England*, Vol I, p. 113.



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yielding an annual income of five lakh rupees were given to Abdullah Khan. To Faizzullah Khan were assigned the parganas of Rampur, Shahabad, Chachchat, with an annual income of rupees five lakhs, but no jagirs were assigned to Sadullah Khan.<sup>59</sup>

After the death of Ali Mohammad Khan Safdar jang, who had assumed the office of wazir after the death of Qammar-uddin Khan, started working against the Ruhelas. He first directed Quthbuddin Khan (Grandson of Azmatullah Khan) to proceed against them. He was defeated and slain by Dundey Khan.<sup>60</sup> Safdar Jung's enmity to Afghans was increased by this event. Safdar jang determined to subdue Rohillas made Qaim Khan of Farrukhabad the instrument of his vengeance. The Ruhellas at first tried to secure peace by negotiations with Bangash nawab of Farrukhabad but Qaim demanded their complete submission. The Ruhelas driven to bay fought him near Rasalpur and inflicted a crushing defeat on Qaim's army and Qaim Khan himself was killed. By this victory the Ruhelas acquired the parganas of Badaun and , Moradabad.

When Safdar Jung failed to crush the Ruhelas he turned against his former ally, the Bangash nawab. Safdar Jung seized the territory of Bangash nawab and captured his mother and family

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<sup>59</sup> Iqbal Hussain, *Rise and Decline of Ruhela Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p 80

<sup>60</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 28; Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff. 36a.



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and sent them to Allahabad. One son of Muhammad Khan, Ahmad Khan, who was a step brother of Qaim Khan, escaped and captured Farukhabad. When Nawal Rai, the deputy of Safdar Jung in Awadh, was sent against Ahmad Khan the latter defeated and killed Nawab Rai. Safdar Jang now himself marched against Ahmad Khan who utterly routed Safdar jang's troops. Exasperated at this defeat Safdar Jung invited the Marathas and Jats under Suraj Mal to lead an expedition. Ahmad Khan appealed to the Ruhelas at Aonla but Rehmat Khan and Dundey Khan decided to stay out. Sadullah Khan however decided to help. This dissension among Ruhelas show the hollowness of the Afghan confederacy and made the chiefs suspicious of each other. Ahmad Khan and Saadullah Khan were defeated and Safder Jung now proceeded to demand the arrears of three years revenue from the Ruhelas. Only then did Hafiz Rahmat and Dundey Khan realize their mistakes. They decided to resist the demand and removed their families to the forest of Chilka in the Kumaon hills. Resistance however was useless. The Ruhelas were defeated and forced to take refuge in the forests around Chilka. Safdar Jung ultimately decided to accept their submission. The Ruhellas promised to pay 50 Lakhs of rupees and an annual tribute of 5 lakhs.

**Najib –Ud- Daulah 1753- 1770**

Najib Khan was another Rohilla chief who taking advantage of the fluid political conditions in 18<sup>th</sup> c. and open military market economy rose from the position of a free booter to the first minister of Delhi. Najib –Ud- Daulah came to Rohilkhand during the administration of Ali Mohammad.<sup>61</sup> He was at first appointed to the charge of very small party, consisting 12 horses and foot. But because of his courage Ali Mohammad soon entrusted him with a respectful military command and procured for him in marriage the daughter of Dundey khan.<sup>62</sup>

While Ali Mohammad Khan governed the Sirhind districts, Najib Khan rendered important services in reducing to obedience refractory Hindu chiefs of that quarter.<sup>63</sup> After the return of Rohillas to Rohilkhand Dundey Khan bestowed districts of Chandpur and Daranagar on Najib Khan.<sup>64</sup>

Najib-ud-Daulah made a meteoric rise in 1753 when on the death of Muhammad Shah, Safdar Jung avowedly announced the hostile disposition to the court. The court at this time was wholly directed by Wazir Ghazi-ud-din Jmad-ul Mulk. Safder Jung persuaded on

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<sup>61</sup> Sh. Abdur Rashid, *Najib-ud-Daulah HisLife and Times*. p 1

<sup>62</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hasting and the Rohilla war*, p. 16; George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, p. 16; Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century.*, p. 79.

<sup>63</sup> George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, p. 121.

<sup>64</sup> George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, p. 121; Sir John Stratchey, *Hasting and Rohilla War*, p. 16.

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Rohilla chiefs to get their support in the expedition. Emperor persuaded Ulema to issue *fatwa* asking Afghan to desert the side of heretics Shia Safder Jang and support the rightful Emperor. Najib Khan Rohilla secretly agreed to take up the Emperor's cause and won promises of *mansab*, *jagirs*, titles and other honours to be bestowed upon him and his followers by the Emperor. Many Ruhelas deserted Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Dundey Khan and joined Najib whose forces now swelled to 8000 horses and 2000 foot as a result.<sup>65</sup> Najib's energy and valour earned him the esteem and trust of Emperor. Safdar Jung's efforts to enter Delhi were gallantly failed by the Ruhelas under the Najib.<sup>66</sup>

Another opportunity of which Najib Khan made the most was the attack of Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1757. The Afghan ruler marched rapidly, almost unopposed plundering and ravaging villages and towns. Imad-ul-Mulk held a war council where it was decided to stop the invader outside the capital. Najib-ud-Daulah was dispatched to stop the invader but he preferred to break with the Wazir. Najib joined Ahmad Shad Abdali at Panipat. Imad-ul Mulk and Hafiz Rahmat Khan were compelled to show loyalty to Ahmad Shah Abdali. Before returning to his own dominion Ahmad Shah Abdali appointed Najib as *mir bakshi*.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Sh-Abdur Rashid, *Najib-ud-Daulah his Life and Times*, p. LV. Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p 48;

<sup>66</sup> George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal To England*, Vol. I, p. 122.

<sup>67</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Ruhela chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p 88.

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After the departure of Ahmad Shah Abdali Imad-ul Mulk incited Marathas to help him against Najib ud Daulah. Marathas after laying waste the country of Najib ud Daulah crossed Ganga into Rohilkhand. Hafiz Rahmat Khan and other Rohillas could offered no effectual resistance, they retreated to the forest and sent urgent messages for help to Shuja-ud-Daulah (son of Safdar Jang, the new nawab of Awadh after Safdar Jang's death) who marched from Lucknow to help Rohillas. Shuja-ud-Daulah entered Rohilkhand and surprised the Marathas. By this time news came of the advance of Ahmad Shah Abdali towards India to support his Indian allies viz; Rohillas for which Najib and saint Shah Wallih Ullah had requested.<sup>68</sup> On hearing the news of Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion Marathas were compelled to retreat.

Ahmad Shah Abdali entered Punjab in September, 1759, and there was no where any power except that of the Marathas to oppose him. Najib-ud- Daulah, Hafiz Rahamat Khan , Dundey Khan and Saddullah Khan all waited on the Ahmad Shah Abdali at Kunjupara in December 1759. Shuja-ud-Daulah however decided to avoid the meeting and returned to Awadh. The arrival of Ahmad Shah Abdali greatly strengthened the Indian Afghans. Their combined forces inflicted a crushing defeat on the Marathas at Taraori on December 1759.<sup>69</sup> After Marathas, Ahmed Shah Abdali subdued the

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<sup>68</sup> For this see, K. A. Nizam, *Shah Wali Ullah Dehalvi Ke Siyasi Makhtubat*, Aligarh, 1953.

<sup>69</sup> Iqbal Hussain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p 59

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Jat stronghold by March 1760. After this and before the 'Third Battle of Panipat' in the mean-time Ahmad Shah was joined by Najib-ud-Daulah, Hafiz Rahmat Khan and other Rohilla chiefs, with all the troops they could command. The co-operation of Shuja -ud-daulah was for some time doubtful but at last he also threw in his lot with the invader in July 1760.

In 1761 the army of the Marathas under Ibrahim Gardi was destroyed at the battle of Panipat. Ahmad Shah remained only for a short time in India after his victory. Before his departure he acknowledged Shah Alam as Emperor, restored Najib ud Daulah to the post of *mir bakshi*, appointed Shuja-ud-daulah to the post of *wazir* and gave to the Rohilla chiefs the districts that he had occupied in the Doab. Etawa and the country between Agra and Kalpi fell to the share of Hafiz Rahmat and Dundey Khan. After the defeat at Panipat Marathas didn't interfere in the politics of northern Indian for a many years and did not enter Rohilkhand until the year 1768.<sup>70</sup>

Thus it was the fragile political scenario both at the centre and the regional level in eighteenth century that led to foundation of Rohilla power. At the centre it was the factious politics at the court and at the regional it was the weak imperial authority which made it extremely difficult to realise the revenue from the turbulent

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<sup>70</sup> Sir John Stretchy, *Hastings and The Rohilla War*, p. 33.

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*zamindars*. In order to increase the revenues figures the practice of *ijaradari* was adopted recklessly. It was through this practice of *ijara* that Rohillas rose to prominence. Along with this the economic prosperity of the region, their involvement in mercenary soldier and horse trade practice, diversion of the axis of the empire (*shahrah*) and trade routes passing through Rohilkhand were the other factors which contributed to the foundation of Rohilla authority in the region.



## CHAPTER –II

### ADMINISTRATION, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY UNDER THE ROHILLAS

Contrary to the portrayal of eighteenth century as a period of decline and decay in each and every aspect of society as highlighted by historians like Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Jagdish Narain Sarkar, William Irvine and others; we may argue that although the Mughal Empire disintegrated giving rise to successor states like Hyderabad, Bengal, Awadh etc. it was not a period of economic and administrative chaos. These successor states paid nominal allegiances to the Mughal Empire and remained within the Mughal framework, but were struggling to establish their authority for which they tried to keep the economy and administration of the region in order. This was also the case with Rohilkhand.

If we go through the primary sources and the works of English writers of eighteenth and early nineteenth century such as W. Franklin's '*History of the Reign of Shah Alam*', George Forster's '*A journey from Bengal to England*' James Mill's '*History of British India*', we see that in Rohilkhand administration was well established and trade and commerce was also in a flourishing state. For example James Mill while describing about the character of Rohillas and the government under them says that:

*"These soldiers of fortune from the hardy regions of the north, who constantly composed the principal part of the Mughal armies and according to their talents and influence procured themselves lands and governments in India, the Afghans had latterly occupied a conspicuous place: that a portion of this people, who took the name of Rohillas had given several chiefs, with large bands of followers to the imperial armies, that chiefs had in some instances been rewarded with jagirs in that fertile district of country which the principally between in Ganges and mountains, on the Western boundary of the Subah of Awadh, that amid the disturbances which attended the dissolution of the Moghul government; those leaders had endeavored to secure themselves in their possession, which they had filled with great number of their countrymen. It is completely proved that their territory was by far the best governed part of India: that the people were protected; that their industries were encouraged; and that the country flourished beyond all parallel"(emphasis mine).<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> James Mill, *History of British India*, London, 1840, Vol. 3, p.550

### **Administration Under the Rohillas**

Regarding the information about the administration under the Rohillas we encounter the same problem which usually a student of regional history faces, i.e. scanty sources. Reasons for this paucity of sources have been cited by Prof. Iqbal Husain that Rohillas had no centralised system of government and their territories were divided among the soldiers who administered them in whatever way they liked. Secondly because of the military campaigns from 1769 to 1774 against Rohilkhand whatever records existed were probably destroyed in the plunder and ransacking that took place. Shuja-ud. Daulah carried away Hafiz Rahmat Khan's library to Faizabad these records and which survived in Bareilly were destroyed during Mutiny.<sup>2</sup>

For administering their territory Rohillas adopted the administrative structure of the Mughals. Although they established their authority in Rohilkhand none of the Rohilla chiefs claimed himself to be the sultan or emperor of the territory and continued paying allegiance to the Mughal Emperor. The form of government adopted by Rohillas in India was decentralised and of near affinity to that which existed in their native country which may be denominated feudal.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise And Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 186

<sup>3</sup> George Forster, *A Journey From Bengal to England*, p.119; W.M. Torens, *Empire in Asia*, Allahabad, 1923, p.114.

For the governance the territory was divided into *Sarkars* and *Parganas* and assigned to Rohilla *sardars*, these *sardars* were expected to maintain law and order there.

**Army:** Regarding the army structure of Rohillas we see that *sardars* or Rohillas chiefs had to maintain a fixed number of troops in lieu of the territory assigned to them. These *sardars* had to be present with their troops whenever the Rohilla chief called them.

Rohillas were actually mercenary soldiers or free booters who served under different *zamindars* whoever paid them handsome amount. Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Ali Mohammad Khan organised them into an army which could be mobilised at any time.<sup>4</sup>

Infantry, cavalry and artillery formed the main branches of the Rohilla army. Special care was paid to musketry by Ali Mohammad Khan, every soldier in his army whether on horse or foot carried a musket.<sup>5</sup> For joining the army under the Rohillas, the share in the plundered booty was a great attraction which attracted large numbers of mercenaries from Afghanistan also.<sup>6</sup>

**Judicial System:** No changes were made in the Mughal office of *Qazi* which was adopted by Rohilla with the same functional powers as in the Mughal Empire. Rohillas though paying allegiance

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<sup>4</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff.19a.

<sup>5</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise And Decline Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 191; cf Anand Ram Mukhlis, *Safarname*, (ed.) S. Azhar Ali, Rampur 1946, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherein*, Vol III, p.234.

to the Mughal Emperor appointed *Qazis* independently. Duties of the *Qazi* included enforcement of law, solving the disputes in accordance with the established rules etc. He was also responsible for looking into the ecclesiastical matters ie. to see that the congregational and Friday prayers were held; has also to protect the properties of dead, orphans and absent persons.

The highest office of judiciary was held by Rohilla chief himself. He took pains in making a thorough investigation before passing judgment in accordance with the prevailing tradition and customs and Shariat.<sup>7</sup>

**Economy:** Jos J.L. Gommans while talking about the economy under Rohillas has talked about the 'Dual Economy' of the Rohillas in which he has talked about extensive horse breeding, horse trade and land reclamation activities. For the horse breeding activities of the Rohillas and their involvement in horse trade Gommans tells us that Rohilkhand because of its ecological conditions was suitable for breeding activities which was stimulated by Hafiz Rahmat Khan who supervised the regular distribution of stallion to the local *zamindars*. Most of the breeding *zamindars* were located in the delta of Mihrabad in southern Rohilkhand, between the Ramganga and the Ganges rivers.<sup>8</sup> Two

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<sup>7</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i- Rahmat*. ff. 227a-234b.

<sup>8</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire c.1710-1780*; p 145; Also see Reports of Moorecraft Fortescue and Nuthull in National Archives of India, Military Department Proceedings.

factors which facilitated large breeding activities in Rohilkhand were the alluvial pastures and the growing up of the very nutritious grass, *dub*, which was cut at the end of the rainy season stacked and given to horses during the dry season. Along with breeding Rohilkhand also imported horses regularly from abroad thus providing fresh livestock for transport and breeding. As the demand and prices of horses were high it stimulated the breeding economy.

Increased horse breeding activities under Rohilla coincided with extension of agriculture as more and more land was brought under plough. Rohilla continued the policy of extension of cultivation in the region which had started even before the establishment of Rohilla authority.<sup>9</sup> Many of the lower classes among Afghans were themselves involved in the activities of agriculture and cultivation.<sup>10</sup>

If we go through the revenue figures of Rohilkhand in 18<sup>th</sup> century and compare it with the revenue figures of *Ain* we see that the region experienced significant economic growth.

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<sup>9</sup> Tapan Rai Chowdary and Irfan Habib, *Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1982, 122-1750 A.D.

<sup>10</sup> Geoge Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol, p. 720.

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Region	<i>Ain</i> Jama in Dams	Jama in dams in early & mid 18 <sup>th</sup> century	Percent increment
Moradabad- Bareilly	10,17,58,494	35,35,07,068	247.3
Sambhal	6,69,41,431	21,16,82,068	216.21
Badaon	3,48,17,063	14,18,82,008	307.5

(\*These figures have been taken from Muzaffar Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India in 18<sup>th</sup> c*, p. 253-54.)

The rise in *jama* had a bearing on the increase in agricultural production. *Hasil* in Moradabad-Bareilly ranged between 84 percent to 87 per cent of the assessed revenues. The *hasil* figures whether taken as representing actual yield or as the revenue collected by the state official, it shows that the *jama* figures bore a relationship to the actual production and the paying capacity of the assesses.<sup>11</sup> But the conditions in Rohilkhand deteriorated after 1766 because of growing external pressures (military campaigns) on Rohilkhand leading to a dramatic decline of the realisation of the revenue of the assessment.<sup>12</sup>

As far as the revenue collection is concerned the basic structure of the Mughal revenue system was retained, also that the revenue management was not exclusive Rohilla affair. Most of the financial management and bureaucracy was in the hand of Hindu *diwans*

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<sup>11</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, p. 252

<sup>12</sup> Jos. J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire*, c. 1710-1748, p. 147-148.

and *munshis* who were rewarded with large assignments of revenue.<sup>13</sup>

For the revenue collection we see that Rohillas made extensive use of the practice of *ijaradari*, i.e. revenue farming which, had become common by the reign of Farukh Siyar. In the long term it would have proved detrimental to the peasantry as the rights of revenue collection were given to the highest bidder, thereafter the revenue farmer exacted as much as he could.

For the collection of revenue in the case of extension of cultivation or newly claimed land we see that since the production level here was uncertain therefore there was no fixed assessment. The government here claimed only one-fourth of the eventual produces leaving the greater share with the engaging manager / revenue farmer who was left undisturbed till the increase in production passed the estimated level. The risk of reclaiming new land was relegated to the revenue farmer who was willing to engage in it because of high share of revenue.<sup>14</sup>

For the extension of cultivation or to bring new land under plough Rohillas recruited bonded labour as ploughmen (*halis*). With the help of these *halis* Rohillas were able to expand agriculture and at

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<sup>13</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise & Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*; cf Anand Ram Mukhlis, *Safar Nama*, p.54-54, Forster. *A Journey from Bengal to England*. Vol. I. p 120.

<sup>14</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire*, c 1710-1780, pg 152



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the same time these *halis* could be used in the labour intensive paddy and sugar crops. On their part *halis* also had a sort of permanent employment for which they were paid monthly wages, food and clothing<sup>15</sup>

To facilitate the extension of agriculture and stimulate the agricultural production canals and new wells were dug, Rohillas also introduced the system of underground irrigation known as *karez* in the northern Rohilkhand.<sup>16</sup> For this Rohillas excavated underground channels which through a declining hill slopes quickly brought the water to the surface from where it was distributed to the fields by small earthen embankments. This system stimulated the rise in production and helped greatly in the extension of cultivation, leading to the prosperity of the region.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Trade and Commerce**

Trade under Rohillas was in a flourishing state in eighteenth century as it has been attested by several writers. W. Francklin who visited Bareilly in 1795 talks about the region as

*"Bareilly situated on the banks of the united streams of Jooah and Sunkra, is a large, handsome, well built*

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<sup>15</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire c.-1710-1780*; C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townmen & Bazaars*, Cambridge, 1984, p.42

<sup>16</sup> Jos. J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780*, p. 149.

<sup>17</sup> E Colvin, Report on the Settlement of Pilibhit NWP, Allahabad, 1837, p. 7; Documents Relating to Rohillakhand Canals 1827-43, pp.1-3; cf. J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire*, p. 151.

city. It was the capital of Hafiz Rahmat and a place of considerable trade. It is distant from Lucknow 180 miles and from the Ganges 120. Lastly the town of Pillibhit. This place, thirty six miles, to the north east of Bareilly was peculiarly selected by the discriminative foresight of Hafiz Rahmat Khan and of great importance in the commercial resources. For the encouragement of trade that prince built a spacious shehr Punnah or Pittah which is four miles in circumference. Admirably situated on the banks of Dewah, Pillibhit during the Rohilla government was an emposium of commerce."(emphasis mine)<sup>18</sup>

Hafiz Rahmat Khan's concern for the promotion of trade can be seen from the fact that he abolished *rahdari* (transit duties and tolls were collected at inland station upon grains and other articles) and *zakat* (a transit duty besides religious charity) in 1786-87 on all merchandise throughout his domain. Although this measure caused a big loss to the exchequer but it also contributed to the growth of trade and commerce<sup>19</sup> Hafiz Rahmat Khan also founded a place known as Hafiz Gunj on the road from Bareilly to Pillibhit which could serve as a resting place for the merchants.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> W. Francklin, *History of the Reign of Shah Alam*, Allababad, 1915, p.57.

<sup>19</sup> W. Francklin, *History of the Reign of Shah Alam*, p.58-59; also see Mustajaib Khan. *Gulistan-i. Rahmat* ff. 136-137a.

<sup>20</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780*, p. 156.

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Rohilkhand because of its rich fertile soil which is in general a rich black mould intermixed in many parts with sand and red earth and well supplied with several large rivers besides numerous smaller streams (large rivers such as Ramganga and Dewah or Garrah) along with high underground water level was capable of highest cultivation abounding in all sorts of grains, sugarcane and tobacco.<sup>21</sup> Since the conditions were very much favourable for cultivation the main supply of grain in this area was at its maximum during the times when there was scarcity in other regions and the prices were higher. These conditions led to the export of wheat from the region as we see that wheat was exported from Muradabad to the regions as far as Lahore. Other crops which were exported from the region were rice, sugarcane, indigo, tobacco and cotton. Most of the transportation of these crops was done by and with the help of *banjara* and *Gujar* trading tribes mainly inhabiting the large wastes along the river banks and northern hills. Under Rohilla rule, *banjaras* and *Gujars* in Saharanpur exported some 12 to 15,000 bullocks each year mainly to the West.<sup>22</sup>

Among the important trade centres of the region were Shahabad, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Badaon, Aonla, Muradabad and Sambhal. These cities kept a constant intercourse with the caravans of the

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<sup>21</sup> W. Francklin, *History of the Reign of Shah Alam*, p.54-55.

<sup>22</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire*, c. 1710-1780. P.151

north. By them were exported into Katehr, the products of Lahore, Kabul, Kashmir, Qandahar and Persia. Main items to be imported were, rubies, precious stones, , copper, iron, tin, lead borax, drug, Kashmiri shawls, Armenian wool, mules, horses and camels; in return they received, coarse cloths, sugar, grain and tobacco.<sup>23</sup>

Territory of Rohilkhand also had enough of the trade relations with the hill states of Nepal, Kumaon and Garhwal. Main imports from the hill states were mainly drugs such as *bhang*, *ganja* and *charras*.<sup>24</sup> These were exchanged for the goods of the plains, particularly food stuff and textiles. Important trade centres for the trade with hill states were Haridwar and Najibabad.<sup>25</sup> From Bengal, Bihar and Awadh mainly textiles and manufactured articles were imported and transferred to Delhi and the Punjab.

Another important factor which proved to be an impetus to the growth of trade and commerce in the region was the growth of urban culture with large number of *ganjs* and *qasbahs*. These *ganjs* and *qasbahs* acted as consumption centres for luxury and bulk products *ganjs* were also the focal points for the local

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<sup>23</sup> W. Francklin, *History of the Reign of Shah Alam*, p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire*. c. 1710-1780. p.155.

<sup>25</sup> Najibabad was founded by Najib-ud- Daulah in 1750s and its location also commanded the important long-distance connection through the Laldong pass along the northern hills with Kashmir and Peshwar; For this see Sh. Abdur Rashid, *Najib-ud-Daulah, His Life And Times*, p. 25.

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revenue collection; here revenue in kind could be exchanged for money and possibly made available for the long distance trade.<sup>26</sup>

Rohilkhand also had large number of manufactures and the region saw a considerable growth of crafts at various centres. This will can see from the list given below

Region	Product/ industry
Shahjahanpur	coarse chintz, Chola and kattiyam cloth, baint matting, brass
Rampur	garha (coarse cloth), pottery, glass and glass bangles
Amroha	clay pottery
Moradabad	brass industry
Saharanpur	coarse cloth, wooden furniture and handicrafts

As Rohilkhand was well supplied with rich forests supplying sal, teak and shisham so Saharanpur, Najibabad, Bareilly and Shahjahanpur became centres of wood work<sup>27</sup>.

Expansion of trade and cultivation can be seen in the significant increase in the number of mint centres from the reign of Akbar to

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<sup>26</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780*. p.156.

<sup>27</sup> W. Francklin, *History of the Reign of Shah Alam*, p. 57.

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that of Shah Alam. During the reign of Akbar Rohilkhand had 4.7% of the total mints centres which increased to 17.4% by the reign of Shah Alam II.<sup>28</sup>

Peasantry under Rohillas was classified or divided into three categories viz; *muqaddam*, *raqmi* and *asami* or ordinary cultivators. *Muqaddam* who was also known as *pradhan* was supposed to be the head of the cultivators and his office was also supposed to be hereditary. Although *muqaddams* could be removed at will by *zamindar* but his position/ status improved whenever and wherever Rohillas dispensed with *zamindars* as he was chosen the representatives of the cultivators. For their services rendered to the *zamindar* they got share in the revenue which was generally fixed at 1/10 or 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the rupee.<sup>29</sup>

Next to the *muqaddams* in the village hierarchy was *raqmis* the *raqmis* were allowed to hold land at slightly lower rates than the ordinary peasant (*asami*). If the rate for *asami* was half than *raqmi* payed only one third.<sup>30</sup>

As far as the position of peasantry is concerned although practice of revenue farming was very much followed in Rohilkhand but the peasantry was well protected against the reactions of *zamindars*

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<sup>28</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire c. 1710-1780*. P.157.

<sup>29</sup> For the duties rights and status of *Muqaddams* see Bareilly Settlement Report. 1874- p.111-173.

<sup>30</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*. p. 200; Also see Bareilly Settlement Report, 1874, p. 112-13.

and rent farmers as long as the peasant paid revenue no land holder could dispossess him.<sup>31</sup>

**Religion:** From the religious point of view Rohillas were *Sunni*. But we see that after the Rohilla war in 1774 in which Rohillas were defeated and Rampur estate was created the latter Nawabs were strongly influenced by the *Shiah* court of Asaf-ud Daulah, the *nawab* of Lucknow. Over the time the *nawabs* of Rampur became *Shiah* themselves. *Nawabs* of Rampur appear to have converted to *Shiah* sect in the mid nineteenth century. The first *nawab* to become Shia was Muhammad Said Khan (1840-55) and that he did so under the influence of Nawab Amjad Ali Shah (r. 1842-47) of Awadh. Subsequently all the succeeding Nawabs of Rampur were Shia.<sup>32</sup>

Rohillas of eighteenth century acted as patron of *ulema*, mystics religious scholars to whom they provided economic help as well. Rohilla *sardars* like Ali Muhammad Khan, Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Najib-ud-Daulah played a great role in promoting religious learning. During this period we can say that when Shiism in Awadh, Sikhism in Punjab and Hinduism among Jat and Maratha had early gained momentum the Rohillas were generally regarded as the champion of *Sunni* faith.

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<sup>31</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chiftancies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 201.

<sup>32</sup> cf. Amar Singh Baghel, *District Gazeteer of Uttar Pradesh, Rampur District*, p 52-53; Usha Sanyal, *Devoational Islam and Politics in British India*, Delhi, 1996, p. 24.

The precedence of inviting and patronising the religious scholars for the promotion of religious learning was set by Ali Mohammad Khan who invited scholars even from abroad such as Sayyid Ali Shah Timrizi and Sayyid Abdal Shan to settle into his domain.<sup>33</sup> After the invasion of Nadir Shah when the political condition at Delhi were fragile a large number of scholars from Delhi court moved to Aonla, the capital of Ali Mohammad Khan which became an important centre of religious learning. Hafiz Rahmat Khan another Rohilla Chief who himself was well versed in religious learning also paid a great attention for the maintenance of these scholars and the promotion of religious learning. In Shahjahanpur Hafiz Rahmat Khan established a small intellectual centre for Sunni theologians, a large number of *sunni* scholars moved to Rohilkhand from Farangi mahal, the prominent Muslim school in Lucknow who had left the place under increased pressure by *Shia nawabs*. Hafiz Rahmat Khan had leanings towards Sufism as well, as we see that he was among one of the disciples of Shah Madan a mystic of *Qadriya* order.<sup>34</sup> He patronised the *sufis* of other *silsilahs* as well, large number of *sufis* came and settled in different cities of Rohilkhand on the invitation of Hafiz Rahmat and Bareilly and Pilibhit especially became the seats of *sufis*. Some of the *sufis* who settled in Rohilkhand during this period were Mirza

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<sup>33</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 207 and cf. Anand Ram Mukhlis, *Safar Nama* p. 86.

<sup>34</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff 266a.



Izzatullah a descendant of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhind; Shah Jamalullah, Shah Abdul Fath, Hafiz Siddiq, Shah Kalimullah and Akhwand Faqir.<sup>35</sup>

Najib-ud-Daulah also played a significant role in patronising and promoting the religious learning. Najib-ud-Daulah was a follower of *Naqsbandi* saint Shah Wali-Ullah, Najib founded a *madrassa* in this tradition at Daranagar in Amroha and at Najibabad where teachers of repute including some from Farangi Mahal were employed.<sup>36</sup> Najib also invited the disciples of Shah Waliullah to settle at his court.<sup>37</sup> Najib-ud-Daulah received high sounding titles from the famous *sufi*, saint Shah Wali Ullah such as *Amir-ul-Mujahidin*.<sup>38</sup> Najib also made a serious attempt to bring the *ulema* of all the four Sunni Schools of jurisprudence together.<sup>39</sup>

The tradition of patronising and promoting the religious learning continued under Faizullah Khan who after the creation of Rampur state devoted the remaining years of his life to administering his little state and attracting men of artistic and literary talents to his court. The later Nawabs of Rampur , as we have discussed earlier, were strongly influenced by the Shia Court of Awadh and in time

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<sup>35</sup> Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i- Rahmat*, ff 226b.

<sup>36</sup> Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire*, p.168; Iqbal Husain, *Rise And Decline of Rohilla Chieftancies*, p.208..

<sup>37</sup> Jos. J. L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire*, p.168.

<sup>38</sup> K. A. Nizami, *Shah Wali Ullah Dehalvi ke Siyasi Makhtubat*, letters, 3-9.

<sup>39</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise And Decline of Rohilla Chieftancies in Eighteenth Century*, p.208.

they became Shia by mid 19<sup>th</sup> C.<sup>40</sup> Rampur's patronage of religious learning and arts blossomed in nineteenth century, during Mohammad Said Khan's reign (r-1840-55). He was acquainted with some of the leading literary and religious figures of his day such as Maulana Fazl-e-Haqq Khairabadi; a leading scholar of his day who was held in great esteem by *Ahl-i-Sunnat Wa Jamaat*.<sup>41</sup>

Rohillas also made frequent use of religion for their political motives to rally the fellow muslim against their opponents. This we can see from Hafiz Rahmat Khan who repeatedly mentions the *jihad* as the prime motive which brought the Afghans to India. Being muslim from the very beginning he boasted of the Afghans traditional role as *mujahidin* of the Ghaznavids, Ghurids, Delhi Sultans, Timurids and finally in his own age the Durranis.<sup>42</sup>

Hafiz Rahmat Khan also used the concept of *Nasab* (Genealogy) and *Asabiyyal* –(Tribal Feeling) justifying them from *Quran* and *Hadith* to further his political motives. In order to induce these feelings among his fellow Afghans he wrote the book '*Khulasat-ul-Ansab*'. The title of the book itself means interpretation/explanation of Genealogy. While talking about *nasab* in this book he says that, "over the period of time large

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<sup>40</sup> Usha Sangal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India*, p. 23-24.

<sup>41</sup> Usha Sangal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India*, p. 24; also see Abid Reza Badar, Raza Library (Institute of Oriental Studies), Rampur, 1966, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo Afghan Empire c. 1710-1780*, pg 168; Hafiz Rahmat Khan, *Khulasat-ul-Ansab*, ff. 47b- 49b.

*number of Ashrafs have come to India and have been living here in India for several generations". He further says that, "among these who came here except those from Ajam most of them have forgotten about their nasab and qabila" lamenting on this he says that "although Nasab doesn't mean a lot near God, rather God loves the most who observe restriction and practices described in Islam."*<sup>43</sup> He further describing about the importance of *Nasab* from worldly point of view says that 'A man in this world command respect on the basis of his *Asab-Nasab*.' He justifies this by telling that all the *Rasools* (prophets) were born in respectable tribes so that they should command respect by birth itself.<sup>44</sup> After describing about the importance of *Asab* and *Nasab* he gives a detailed account of genealogy of Afghans.

The political motive of Hafiz Rahmat Khan for writing this book would have been the unification of Afghan chief. This was because by this time all the major powers viz Marathas, Jats, East India Company, and the Nawab of Awadh had grown hostile to the Rohillas. Among Rohillas itself difference had occurred after the death of Ali Mohammad Khan leading to dissension and differences after the division of Rohilla territory among Rohilla Chiefs. In order to over come these differences and to rally the Afghan chiefs against enemies he might have written this book tracing the

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<sup>43</sup> Hafiz Rahmat Khan, *Khulasat-ul-Ansab*, ff. 10a-10b.

<sup>44</sup> Hafiz Rahmat Khan, *Khulasat-ul-Ansab*, ff. 10a-10b.

illustrious Genealogy of Afghans from a common descent viz Ibrahim.

Although Rohillas were fairly orthodox in religious idea who regarded religion to be an indispensable part of life, held their *nasab* in high esteem and repeatedly mention *jihad* to be the ultimate motive of Muslims coming to India, yet they never hurt the sensibilities of their Hindu subjects. Except in some instances as in the case of Ali Mohammad Khan's Kumaon expedition where he destroyed large number of Hindu idols, that too for economic reasons, as some of them being of gold were melted down to make coins, otherwise usually Rohillas refrained from interfering in the social and religious aspects of Hindus. Rohillas also employed a large number of Hindus for administering their territories. As already discussed that most of *diwans* under Rohillas were Hindus. Most of the secretarial posts were held by the Kayasths. Even in the army of Rohillas Khattris and Rajputs were given senior position.<sup>45</sup>

### **Art and Literature**

Art and literature also made significant growth under the patronage of Rohillas. We see that a famous *Pushto* poet Karim Khan Afghan was summoned by Ali Mohammad Khan and was

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<sup>45</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chiftaincies In Eighteenth Century*, pg 211.

made the court poet.<sup>46</sup> After Ali Mohammad Khan, his sons Mohammad yar Khan and Faizullah Khan provided patronage to the growth of Art and Literature. Muhammad yar Khan a great lover of music and art had a good collection of paintings by artist Aqil Khan.<sup>47</sup>

Faizullah Khan the first Nawab of Rampur state attracted men of artistic and literary talent to his court. It is also said the Raza library of Rampur was founded by Faizullah Khan.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore the late eighteenth century poet Qaim(d. 1793-4) a pupil of Sauda was patronised by the Rampur court. Among the later Nawabs of Rampur, Nawab Muhammad Said Khan was also acquainted with some of the leading literary and religious figure of his day such as Mufti Sadr-ud-Din Khan Azurda (d-1803) a poet and scholar of Persian.<sup>49</sup>

By mid nineteenth century when the Awadh state collapsed a large number of poets, writers and scholars were left without patrons, they chose to move to Rampur which under Yusuf Ali Khan had chosen to be loyal to the British during their hour of peril i.e. revolt of 1857. Some of the prominent scholars who moved to Rampur were Sayyed Muzaffar Ali Khan Asir, a scholar from

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<sup>46</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chiftaincies In Eighteenth Century*, p. 211.; cf. Anad Ram Mukhlis, *Safar Nama* (Introduction) p.87.

<sup>47</sup> See *Safar Nama* p 87.

<sup>48</sup> Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India*, p-23.

<sup>49</sup> Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India*, p.24

Firangi Mahl, Munshi Muhammad Amir, Ahmad Amir Minai, a writer of Ghazal poetry.<sup>50</sup> However the most famous personality who was patronised by the latter Nawabs of Rampur was Mirza Ghalib. Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan of Rampur used to send Ghalib a regular monthly grant for correcting his poetry. Although patronised by Rampur Ghalib was allowed to live in Delhi, making only occasional visits to the Rampur court.

Association of these scholarly figures with the Rampur court illustrates in fact the role that the princely state played in fostering and preserving Indo-Persian culture at a time when most of India was under British rule.

### **Architecture**

In the field of architecture Rohillas made a significant contribution by laying foundation of some new towns and by beautifying the others whom they made the seat of their power. Rohillas in these cities such as Aonla, Najibabad, Rampur, Pilibhit and Bisauli constructed a large number of buildings both of religious and non-religious nature. Large number of these buildings were destroyed by invaders, some were not able to tolerate the severities of climate and weather, while a few of them are still intact telling the story of interest in architecture of these Rohilla Chiefs.

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<sup>50</sup> Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India*, p.25

Ali Mohammad Khan chose Aonla a small town in Bareilly to be his capital in 1722. He beautified the city with large number of buildings which included a large number of mosques, a brick fort inside which were constructed buildings such as *Diwan Khana* (hall of audience) where he held his court and *Barah Burji* mosque. The best architectural piece of work in Aonla can be seen in the tombs of Ali Mohammad Khan which is still there. It is a large square building having a dome in the centre and octagonal cupolas at the corners.<sup>51</sup>

Bisauli was seat of power of Rohilla Dundey Khan since 1750. Dundey Khan beautified the city by constructing a large number of buildings such as a fort, a *sarai*, mosques and an *imambara*.<sup>52</sup>

Pilibhit was another city which rose to prominence after Hafiz Rahmat Khan made it his seat of power. The prosperity of Pilibhit and its importance from economic/trade point have been very well attested by Fracklin who visited this place in the last decades of eighteenth century<sup>53</sup>.

Hafiz Rahmant Khan did lot of construction in this city which included a spacious *Shehr Punnah* or *Pettah* which was four miles

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<sup>51</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 214; cf Fuhrer, *Monumental Antiquities*, Allahabad, 1891, Vol. II. P.24-25.

<sup>52</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 214.

<sup>53</sup> W. Francklin, *History of the reign of Shah Alam*, p. 57.

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in circumference. It was surrounded by a brick wall.<sup>54</sup> He built a place known as Hafiz Gunj between Bareilly and Pilibhit which could act as resting place for the merchants and traders. Hafiz Rahmat Khan also built a grand Mosque imitating Jama Masjid of Delhi in Pilibhit, a tank in Badaon, a castle, a market and a market at jalalabad in district Shahjanpur.<sup>55</sup>

The only town with the construction of which the name of Najib-ud-daulah is associated is that of Najibabad in the trans Gangetic plains at a distance of about 24 miles to the north east of Bijnor. According to Jai Mal and Abdullah Khan, two clerks of Nawab Moinuddin Khan alias Bhamboo Khan, one of the grandson of Najib uddaulah who took up his residence at Najibabad in 1801, Najibabad was founded in 1754.<sup>56</sup>

George Forster gives us an interesting account of Najibabad. He tells us "*in the northern division of Rohilkhand Najib founded the town of Najibabad, which in a short time was filled with commodious and beautiful structures and became a centre of extensive commerce.*"<sup>57</sup> According to Forster the reason for choosing this place as his capital by Najib was the diversion made of trade route to Kashmir from its former channel of Lahore and

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<sup>54</sup> W. Francklin, *History of the Reign of Shah Alam*, p. 57; Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p.215.

<sup>55</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p.215.

<sup>56</sup> Sh Abdur Rashid, *Najib-ud-Daulah his Life and Times*, p. 138.

<sup>57</sup> George Forster, *A Journey From Bengal to England*, p. 140.



Delhi because of the inroads of Sikhs and Marathas and was introduced into the Rohilla country through the Lal Dung pass.<sup>58</sup>

Najibabad was beautified by constructing a large number of commodious and beautiful structures. Some of them buildings included

1. Haveli and Diwan Khana
2. Mehman Khana
3. Bhatiyarin Sarai<sup>59</sup>

Najib also laid out two gardens, one Jawal Bagh around mausoleum of his wife Den Begum the daughter of Dundey Khan and another paen Bagh.

Najib-ud-daulah's name is also associated with the construction of three forts viz; Pathargarh, Ghausgarh and Sukkartal.

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<sup>58</sup> George Forster, *A Journey From Bengal to England*, p. 140.

<sup>59</sup> Sh. Abdur Rashid, *Najib-ud-Daulah his Life and Times*, p.140.

## CHAPTER-III

### ROHILLA WAR AND THE DECLINE OF ROHILLA POWER

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the power of the Marathas had been threatening every prince and state in India from Sutlej river southward to Cape Camorin. The shattering defeat that they had suffered in Panipat in 1761 had repelled them from the Punjab, yet in western India, they were supreme. In Rajputana and in Central India, they plundered and ransacked at their leisure, and they were incessantly making predatory incursions north-eastwards, into the fertile plains of Rohilkhand and the fiefdoms of other chieftains around Delhi, Agra and Allahabad.

At this time, i.e. the last quarter of the eighteenth century, we see that the British interests were rapidly expanding westward. In the 1770's Awadh and Benaras became virtually British satellites.<sup>1</sup> By this time, the power of Rohillas had declined significantly. After the death of Ali Mohd. Khan, the Rohilkhand territory was divided amongst Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Dundey Khan and the sons of Ali Mohd. Khan. With this division of Rohilkhand territory among the Rohilla chiefs, dissensions and differences crept into the Rohilla dominions. The death of Najib-ud-Daulah and Dundey Khan in 1770

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<sup>1</sup> Jos J.L. Gommen, *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire*, c. 1710-1780, p. 177.

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And 1779 respectively were irreparable damages for the Rohillas.<sup>2</sup> Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Awadh in the East saw the Marathas as a major threat as there was no state boundary between Awadh and Rohilkhand. To strengthen his position, Shuja wanted to secure Rohilkhand and make it a safe border of his territory in order to check the Maratha inroads into his territory.

Although the Marathas did not enter Rohilkhand until the beginning of 1772, in 1769 they had seized Etawah and the districts that had been given by Ahmad Shah Abdali to Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Dundey Khan.<sup>3</sup> After the death of Najib-ud Daulah, his son Zabita Khan was anxious to recover the position which his father had held as the first minister of the Empire but he was viewed with jealousy and apprehension by the Emperor. Emperor Shah Alam was staying at Allahabad as a pensioner of the East India Company ever since the battle of Buxar. It was on the persistent appeals of the Emperor and his promise of paying forty lakhs rupees<sup>4</sup> for the help to return to Delhi that Marathas took possession of Delhi in 1771, where Karim Khan, the representative of Zabita Khan held the fort.<sup>5</sup> After this it became clear that Rohilkhand would not escape attack for

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<sup>2</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and the Rohillas War*, p. 33; Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire c. 1710-1780*, p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and The Rohilla War*, p. 33; Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Ruhela Chiftincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Ruhela Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 134

<sup>5</sup> Sardesai, *New History of Marathas*, Bombay, 1948, Vol. II, p. 111 & 512.

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long. The territories of Zabita Khan who had proceeded to Sukkartal were the first to be attacked.

The Marathas now made arrangements for the return of Shah Alam, who was still residing at Allahabad. The terms of the agreement settled between the Marathas and the crown Prince Jawar Bakht on behalf of Shah Alam on 15 February 1771, were that the Marathas would give over to Shah Alam those parts of Delhi and its adjoining districts held by Zabita Khan. In return they were to receive Rs. 40 Lakh.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, the emperor's arrival was viewed as a move that would lead to an action against Zabita Khan. Now action against Zabita Khan awaited the arrival of Shah Alam. The Emperor entered the capital in 1772 accompanied by Sindhia. After the arrival of the emperor at Delhi the Marathas marched against Zabita Khan. The Emperor in person accompanied them, his troops being under the command of Najf Khan, a man of ability and courage. The Marathas and Najf Khan marched across the Ganga to Sukkartal a strong fort belonging to Zabita Khan. Zabita Khan sent his family and treasure to Pathargarh, to the newly built fort at Najibabad. However he himself stayed on Sukkartal expecting reinforcement from Hafiz Rahmant Khan and others.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Ruhela Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 138: cf Antonio Potier, *Shah Alam II and his Courts*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Ruhela Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 140-141; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 95-97.

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The Rohillas were divided on the issue of supporting Zabita Khan and only Faizullah Khan arrived with a contingent of 5000. The Rohillas tried to resist the passage of Marathas but when three of their officers viz. Karim Khan, Saadat Khan and Sadiq Khan who were guarding the fort of Chandighat were killed, they fled.<sup>8</sup>

And this has been described by the author of *Seir-ul-Mutakharein* in the following manner:

*"And here it must be recollected that the Rohillas are a race exceeding covetous, little susceptible of control, and of such a temper as prove ungovernable on the sight of ever so little plunder. The moment they saw their three commanders slain, they commenced plundering each other; and a scene of confusion and wounding and slaughtering taking place, they rushed furiously against each other and thought only of plunder and booty."<sup>9</sup>*

It was clear that a successful resistance of the invasion was impossible and Zabita Khan after holding consultations with Faizullah Khan and Fateh Khan fled from the battlefield leaving his men to the mercy of the invaders. Shah and the Maratha forces then invested the fort of Pathargarh, one mile east of Najibabad. After the surrender of Kallu Khan and Mallu Khan, who were

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<sup>8</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakharein*, Vol III, p. 250; Sir Charles Elliot. *Life of Hafizool-Moolk*, p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> Mirza Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakharein*, Vol III, p. 250

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guarding the fort, Zabita Khan's, family and treasure fell into the hands of the Marathas.<sup>10</sup>

The success of the Marathas against Zabita Khan alarmed all the powers lying to the east of the territory of Zabita Khan viz Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Nawab of Awadh and the English.

After the fall of Najibabad, the Rohillas who were weak to oppose the Marathas retreated to the forests below the mountains on the Kumaon borders and entrenched themselves in safe positions. Meanwhile bands of Maratha soldiers spread themselves over the country, plundering, burning and destroying in their usual fashion. The only chance of escape open to the Rohillas was to seek alliance with the *nawab wazir* of Awadh. Hafiz Rahmat and other chiefs wrote letters urgently begging for his assistance and Zabita Khan sent him a blank treaty which might be filled as he chose.<sup>11</sup>

Between Awadh and Rohilkhand there wasn't any natural boundary, the two provinces forming one continuous plain between Himalaya and the Ganga. It was because of this absence of natural boundary between Awadh and Rohilkhand, that the alarm of Shuja-ud- daulah was hardly less than that of the Rohillas. The Marathas who had by now become as formidable as before the disaster of Panipat, made

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<sup>10</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 96; Iqbal Hussain, *Rise And Decline of Rohela Chieftaincaes in Eighteenth Century*, p. 143; cf Munshi Chitraman Kayastha, *Daur Nama*, M.A.L. Aligarh MS No. 202, p. 53; Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and the Rohilla War* p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 98; Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, p.4.

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no secret of their intention, when they had finished the occupation of Rohilkhand, to carry their operation into Awadh where they would find not only full satisfaction for their lust of plunder, but ample opportunity of retaliation on *nawab wazir* for past injuries.<sup>12</sup> At the same time it was reported that Marathas had resolved to carry their conquests beyond the limits of Awadh into the rich possession of English in Bihar and Bengal.<sup>13</sup>

In this scenario, it was clear to the English that they might be forced to undertake military operations beyond the *wazir's* possession as the only means of protection to Awadh and their own territories. In January, 1772, the *nawab wazir* wrote to the Calcutta government, Cartier the then president of Calcutta government, insisting in the strongest terms on the peril to which he and the English were exposed and he asked the commander in Chief Sir Robert Barker to meet him at Faizabad. So as to evolve some arrangement for defence against the common danger.<sup>14</sup> By the end of March Shuja-ud-daulah accompanied by Barker arrived at Shahabad. Instead of providing any assistance to the Rohillas he now secretly entered into negotiations with Sindhia to seize as much of Rohilla territory as he could.<sup>15</sup> Sir Robert Barker strongly

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<sup>12</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings And the Rohilla War*, p. 45

<sup>13</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, p.45.

<sup>14</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and the Rohilla War* p.45; A.L. Shrivastava, *Shuja-ud-Daulah*, Lahore, 1945, Vol II. p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> Iqbal Hussain, *Rise And Decline of Ruhela chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 145; Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings and The Rohilla War*, p. 51-52.

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opposed this move and declined to approve this plan on the ground that the dismemberment of Rohilla territory would bring the Marathas nearer to the borders of Awadh exposing it to new dangers. Hoping to bring about some arrangement with the Rohillas Sir Robert Barker sent one of his officers, captain Harper to confer with Hafiz Rahmat Khan.<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime the separate negotiations which the two Maratha generals Visaji and Mahadji Sindia had been carrying out with Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Shuja-ud-daulah had broken down without yielding any result. Captain Harper had also returned with assurances from Hafiz Rahmat Khan. *Nawab wazir* also feared that the Marathas, having destroyed his neighbours, would be tempted to march into his dominions; this the English wished to prevent by compelling him to make some alliance with the Rohillas. At Robert Barker's insistence a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive was concluded between Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Shuja-ud-Daulah.<sup>17</sup>

The treaty was in two parts; the first part was of a general character and it talked of mutual friendship and a united front against the danger. It was concluded with the following effect :

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<sup>16</sup> Letters from Sir R. Barker to this select committee, April 9 and May 20, 1772. Fifth Report: App. No. 21; cf John Stratchey, *Hastings and The Rohilla War*, p. 53.

<sup>17</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hasting and Rohilla War* p. 54; W.M. Torrens, *Empire In Asia*, Allahabad, 1923 p. 115; Sir Alfred Lyall, *The Rise And Expansion of The British Dominion in India*, London, 1902, p. 187; Jos. J.L. Gommans. *The Rise of Indo Afghan Empire*, p. 177.



*'First friendship is established between us: and Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Zabita Khan and all the other Rohilla sardars, great and small have agreed and determined with the wazir of the empire Shuja-ud-Daulah that we adhere to the substance of this writing and never deviate from this agreement; that we esteem his friends as our friends and his enemies as our enemies; and that we and our heirs, during our lives, shall adhere firmly to our oath and agreement; that we shall be united and joined together for the protection of the country of the wazir, of the empire and of our own country; and if any enemy, which God forbid, should make an attempt against us and the wazir, we the Rohilla sardars and the wazir of the Empire shall use our joint endeavours to oppose him. We the Rohilla Sardars shall also join and unite in any measure that may be determined by the wazir of the empire for the benefit of the nawab Muhammad Zabita Khan. We both parties, swear by the Almighty, his prophet, and the sacred Koran, that we will firmly adhere to this solemn agreement nor ever deviate from this our treaty.'*<sup>18</sup>

In the second part of the treaty Shuja-ud-Daulah bound himself to establish the Rohilla Sardars in their different possessions, obliging the Marathas to retire either by peace or war. This part of the treaty was as follows:

*If at this time without either war or peace: the Marathas; on account of rains shall cross and retire,*

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<sup>18</sup> This treaty was confirmed by oath and sealed in the presence of General Robert Barker.

### *Rohilla War And The Decline Of Rohilla Power*

*and after the expiration of the raining season they should again enter the country of the Rohilla sardars in consequence of the above, agree to pay 40 Lakhs of rupees<sup>19</sup> to the wazir in the following manner: As the Marathas are now in the country of the Rohilla sardars the Wazir of the empire shall march from Shahabad as far as may be necessary, to enable the families of the Rohillas to leave the jungle and return to their habitation: Ten Lakhs of rupees in specie, in part of the above sum, shall then be paid; and remaining thirty lakhs in three years.<sup>20</sup>*

The signing of this treaty is one of the most important event in the annals of Rohilla history as the dispute over this amount led to the ruin of Rohillas.

After the treaty had been signed, Hafiz Rahmat, Zabita Khan and the other chiefs left the *wazir's* camp, with both parties giving strong assurances of cordial friendship for the future.

The treaty was signed on 17<sup>th</sup> June and by that time the Marathas would, under no circumstances, have remained in Rohilkhand during the rainy season. This was because they would not have ventured to leave the Ganga' which was an impassable obstacle at that time of the year. Also, their knowledge of the treaty concluded between the Rohillas and the *wazir* with the approval of the English General made their immobility all the more certain. Before the

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<sup>19</sup> The non payment of this amount by Rohillas became the pretext of war 2 years later.

<sup>20</sup> Sir John Stratechey, *Hasting and the Rohilla War* p. 54; cf Aitchision's Treaties, vol II p.5.

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treaty was actually signed they had made evident preparations for departure; immediately afterwards the rainy season began and before any further action could be taken by the *wazir* they crossed the river and evacuated Rohilkhand<sup>21</sup>. The *Wazir*, therefore could not ask for the 40 Lakhs rupees mentioned in the treaty.

On the departure of the Marathas the Rohillas reoccupied the country without opposition, Hafiz Rahmat Khan now returned to Pilibhit. Subsequently, when they learnt of Hafiz's return, the rest of the Rohillas came down from the hills and returned home.

Marathas retreated from Rohilkhand just to reappear six months later. This time they had persuaded Zabita Khan by promising him to restore his *jagirs*, to get him the title of *Amir-ul-Umara* and to secure him the royal pardon all for the sum of Rs 10 Lakhs.<sup>22</sup> Along with Zabita Khan emperor Shah Alam was also forced to agree. Zabita Khan was pardoned in a formal ceremony and raised to the office of *Amir-ul-Umara*. Now they also summoned Mir Qasim to join their ranks. Marathas now decided to march against Shuja-ud-Daulah.

Having made these settlements the Marathas also wanted to secure the friendship of Hafiz Rahmat Khan for which they sent their envoy

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<sup>21</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohela Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 147.

<sup>22</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 149; Sir Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol III, 1771-1788, Delhi 1964, p. 51-52; Also see Polier, *Shah Alam II And His Court*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 27.

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both with suggestions and warnings. The suggestions were that, if Hafiz Rahmat Khan will support Marathas in their attack on Shuja-ud daulah then half the territory that they might wrest from the Nawab should be given to him; or if he preferred being neutral, they would make over to him Shuja-ud-dulah's bond for 40 Lakhs of Rupees, on condition of his not opposing them. While crossing the Ganga, or during their march. They moreover added that in the event of his rejecting both these propositions, the Marathas would lay waste and plunder his country.<sup>23</sup>

Hafiz Rahmat Khan made known to Shuja-ud-daulah the proposition of the Marathas expressing his own reluctance to join them and requested him to prepare an army without delay. He concluded his appeal by requesting the return of his bond.<sup>24</sup>

When the *wazir* came to know of these proceedings his alarm was extreme. He believed that as in the case of Zabita Khan, Hafiz Rahmat Khan may also be induced to join the Marathas. The *wazir* wrote to the English government asking in urgent terms that Robert Barker, the commander in Chief, might immediately be sent to him to concert measures of military co-operation and defence.<sup>25</sup> He also sent Shah Madan (A descendant of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani) authorizing him to assure Hafiz Rahmat Khan, that he would bind

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<sup>23</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 101.

<sup>24</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 107-8; Mustajaib Khan, *Gulistan-i-Rahmat*, ff. 182a-187a.

<sup>25</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings, and the Rohilla War*, p. 67.

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himself in advance to any commitment which might be made by Shah Madan on his behalf. Shah Madan was also instructed to promise Hafiz Rahmat Khan the restitution of the bond as soon as the Marathas were defeated.<sup>26</sup>

During the time when these negotiations were going on, the Marathas and their allied forces traversed the Doab rapidly and reached Ramghat on the west bank of the Ganges. Shuja-ud-Daulah and General Barker who had left for Ramghat on 20<sup>th</sup> March were close to Ramghat. The main body of the Marathas was on the opposite bank of the Ganga. But a considerable force had already crossed the river and marched towards the camp of Hafiz Rahmat. By this time however, the English troops were so near that the Marathas did not venture further and they rapidly retreated to the Ganges. The Maratha forces were now posted on both sides of the river which was easily fordable. Robert Barker hoped to bring about a negotiation, but the Marathas were content in cannonading the English Camp.<sup>27</sup>

While these skirmishes were going on, the Marathas retreated rapidly because of the internal problems that had developed at Poona after the death of Madhav Rao Peshwa.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 108.

<sup>27</sup> Sir Jon Stratchey, *Hastings and The Rohilla War*, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies for in Eighteenth Century*, p. 155.

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During and immediately after the expedition against the Marathas some important developments had taken place. Firstly, during the encampment of the army, Shuja-ud-Daulah had seduced some Rohilla sardars from their allegiance to Hafiz and kept constant correspondence with them even after his return to Oudh<sup>29</sup>. Secondly, during the expedition, Shuja had come to know of the weaknesses of the Rohillas: paucity of resources, lack of strong armies and dependable allies, and the complete disunity prevalent within their ranks. Thirdly, the appointment of Warren Hastings as Governor General was a crucial development. He was deeply interested in expanding British influence and revenues, as for a long time the yearly income had been found to be short of the expenditure. To defray this deficit, a heavy bond debt had been gradually accumulating.<sup>30</sup> Shuja-ud-Daulah was fully aware that if he promised Hastings a major share in the spoils, he would readily agree to join hands with him. As far as the attitude of Hastings towards Shuja and Rohillas is concerned we can see from the following letters that he was interested in friendship with Shuja was bent upon the and destruction of Rohillas.

From the letter which Hastings wrote to Sir George Colebrooks in 1772, we can make out the policy/attitude of Hastings towards the

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<sup>29</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 155.

<sup>30</sup> W.M. Torrens, *Empire in Asia*, p. 116.

nawab of Awadh. The letter reads:

*"I forgot to add a list of benefactions the adverse and implicit part we have acted against our useful ally Shuja-ud-Daulah. From our earliest connection with this prince we have always entertained a jealousy of his powers, and a suspicion of his design upon these provinces. Such of the measures with which I have been acquainted as respect him has been all formed on these prepossessions. I know not how well they may be grounded, but this I know that the sure way to make a man your enemy, whether in public or on in private life, is to believe him one; and know too that Shuja-ud Daulah is so little able to contend with Company that he is unable to stand without them... it is most probable that I shall be in the chair by the time a formal requisition may come from the wazir for aid. I do not think he wants it but I shall wish before it is granted that a provision be made for the change of it. It is indeed stipulated by treaty that all extra changes are to be borne by the Wazir, but this is very insufficient. The pay and common batta of such a force are enormous. These charges are company's and their provinces are drained to defray them, while the country which we protect is enriched with so much additional circulation. The whole expense ought to be borne by the wazir. At the same time our alliance with him might be easily placed, as it ought to be, on a footing of more credit and satisfaction to him, and of more utility to ourselves. We should leave him the uncontrolled master of his own dominions. We should*

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*assist in making him such, and enabling him to be an useful ally instead of a burden to us.*<sup>31</sup>

Hasting's attitude towards the Rohilla territory can be made out from the part of a following letter which Hastings wrote to Shuja-ud-Daulah on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1772:-

*"I have long thought the junction of the Rohilla country with yours, either by a sure and permanent obligation of friendship by reducing them to obedience if they should render such an attempt justifiable by any act of enmity or treachery, would be an advisable point for you to attain because by the means the defensive line of your dominions would be completed by including within it all the land lying on that side of the river Ganges and you will be in no danger from an attack on that quarter."*<sup>32</sup>

It was against this background that a treaty was signed at Banares between Shuja-ud-Daulah and Hastings in September, 1772. In this treaty Hastings offered Kora and Allahabad to Shuja-ud-Daulah on the condition that he should pay 45 lakhs of rupees in three installments to the company and that company will provide military assistance to the Nawab on a monthly pay of Rs 2 Lakhs.<sup>33</sup> Along

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<sup>31</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 155-156, Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, p. 59-62.

<sup>32</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, p. 87-88

<sup>33</sup> Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, p.94-96; Iqbal Husain, *Rise and Decline of Rohilla Chieftaincies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 158.



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with this, the destruction of the Rohilla country and its addition to the dominion of *wazir* was also agreed upon.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, Hafiz Rahmat Khan after the return of Shuja-ud-daulah to Awadh (after the Maratha expedition), sent Abdullah Khan and Muhammad Khan to demand the restitution of his bond. The Nawab denied having made any promise to restore it, or having authorised his *vakeel* to do so.<sup>35</sup> More to this after the treaty of Banaras, Shuja wrote letters to Hastings seeking his support to lead an expedition for the submission and destruction of the Rohillas. In this letter he alleged as follows:-

*'he had learned that Hafiz Rahmat and other Rohilla chiefs had intentions of taking possession of Etawa and the rest of the country belonging to the Marathas. I therefore write to inform you that if such is their intention I will not put up with it, but shall undoubtedly undertake expedition against them, for in the first place they have not made a single of the forty Lakhs of rupees according to their agreement, and in the next, they are now going to take possession of another country. This I will never submit to, and I am therefore determined to punish them. During our interview at Banares we had some conversation on this subject and it was then agreed on that I should with the assistance of the English forces, endeavour to punish and exterminate the Rohillas out of their country. If*

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<sup>34</sup> W. M. Torrens, *Empire in Asia*, p. 116.

<sup>35</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 110.

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*therefore these terms are agreeable to you, I desire to know whether you will assist me with the English forces or not'.<sup>36</sup>*

Hastings now laid the question regarding military assistance to Shuja, before the council. In the council, where nine members were present, the question was debated for three successive days; no two members could agree exactly in their opinions and it was difficult to reconcile them. At last they agreed to leave it to Hastings to draw up a resolution. Accordingly, the resolution was drafted by Hastings and it was accepted by the council.<sup>37</sup>

Along with this, there were other measures which Shuja-ud-Daulah thought expedient. He went to Farrukhabad, and induced the Rohilla chief Muzaffar Jang to enter into engagements. Zabita Khan who in the aftermath of the departure of the Marathas had shown an inclination to once again join hands with Hafiz Rahmat was persuaded by Shuja-ud-Daulah to join him. The *wazir* also desired to obtain the Emperor's approval for his proposed expedition. With this view, he entered into communication with the minister, Najf Khan and assisted him in recovering Agra which had fallen into the hands of Jats.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Fifth parliamentary Report, Appendix No. 22; cf. John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup> John Stratchey, *Hastings and Rohilla War*, p. 123.

<sup>38</sup> Fifth Report, Appendix No. 27; cf Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, P. 128.

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After these arrangements, which were concluded by December 1773, Shuja again wrote to Hastings and declared his intention to immediately attack the Rohillas; he agreed to all the conditions on which the co-operation of the British had previously been offered to him, and he asked that a brigade be at once ordered to join him and take part in the proposed expedition.<sup>39</sup>

This urgency to ensure the expedition against Rohilla was because Shuja was confident and was elated from the success that he got in his operation in the Doab, particularly in the neighbourhood of Kanauj. At Etawa, Shuja had forced Hari Pandit the Maratha commandant to vacate the fort with his garrison of 5000 men.<sup>40</sup>

It was impossible for the Bengal Government, after what had passed, to refuse consent. Orders were issued for complying with the *wazir's* requisition. Colonel Champion had been appointed provisional Commander in Chief, succeeding to Robert Barker, who had resigned from the service on 14 February, 1774. He desired to assume the command of the troops which were already marching towards the *wazirs* territory; he was informed that the objective of the expedition was the reduction of the Rohilla country lying between the Ganges and the mountains.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Fifth Report, Appendix No. 27; cf Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, P. 128.

<sup>40</sup> Iqbal Hussain, *Rise And Decline of Ruhela Chieftancies in Eighteenth Century*, p. 161

<sup>41</sup> Fifth Report, Appendix No. 27; cf Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, P. 129.

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While Shuja-ud-Daulah was making these preparations for an expedition against Rohillas, Hafiz Rahmat Khan summoned the Rohilla sardars. When they assembled he gave them the following message:-

*'Shuja-ud-Daulah who has disciplined his troops, and mounted his artillery in the ferangi (European) manner, and who besides is supported by the English power, intends to attack you, and to make a conquest of your country as well as of mine. My opinion is that we shall never be able to stand before people that pour a shower of fire in the ranks of their enemies. Is it not better then to avert so great an evil by repaying him without delay the money promised and which after all it nothing but his due? For I inform you that we shall never be able to resist the attack.'*<sup>42</sup>

Hafiz Rahmat Khan wanted to avert the battle and this is evident from the letter that he sent to Colonel Champion even when the allied forces were hardly 20 km away from where Hafiz Rahmat had encamped. Hafiz Rahmat Khan wrote this letter on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1774. It reveals that he was unable to pay the amount demanded by *wazir* and was willing to make a settlement with Shuja-ud-daulah. The letter was as follows:-

*'A trusty accountant be sent on the part of Wazir, who informing himself of our enemies and expenses for troops, servants, family and travellers it would then*

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<sup>42</sup> Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherein*, Vol III, p. 260

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*appear whether after all necessary expenses sufficient remained to fulfil the Nawab's demands... Apparatus of war and multitudes of troops are purely for reserve and well government of the Country; it is befitting that he show favour me and turn to the adjusting his country.... I will duly perform my services and duty, nor fail in the smallest particular. In all respects we conform implicitly to the nawab's pleasure and whatever I have is his gift you Sir are wise and powerful and a doer of justice. What I have truly written without any deception that weigh well in the scales of justice and laying it before the nawab represent to him that I throw myself on his mercy for forgiveness and therefore am hopeful of pardon; and not withstanding he has much displeasure with me. Yet as I am acquainted with your noble and forgiving disposition, surely you will regard me as yourself, and show favour and compassion'*

But Shuja-ud-Daulah now demanded Rs 2 crore instead of Rs. 40 Lakh.<sup>43</sup> Left with no other choice, Hafiz prepared for the battle. The fateful battle took place at a place known as Miranpur Katra near Shahjahanpur in United Province on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1774.<sup>44</sup>

The Rohillas fought gallantly and displayed good fighting skills especially Faizullah Khan, Muhammad Yar Khan and Ahmad Khan who gave a tough fight despite their meagre resources and artillery.

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<sup>43</sup> Letter of colonel Champion to the Bengal Govt. on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1774; cf John Stratchey. *Hastings And The Rohilla War* p. 139; Ghulam Husain; *Seir-ul-Mutakherein* Vol III, p.260-264.

<sup>44</sup> Ghulam Husain, *Seir-ul-Mutakherein*, Vol III, p. 260-265.

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But as fate was against them, Hafiz Rahmat Khan died suddenly because of a dangerous shot which he received on his chest. The death of Hafiz Rahmat Khan led to the demoralization of the Rohillas and they took to flight. Thus after a gallant resistance the Rohillas were defeated with a loss said to amount more than 2000 men. Colonel Champion has described their gallant in the battle as *'it is impossible to describe a more obstinate firmness of resolution than the enemy displayed numerous were gallant men who advanced and often pitched their colours between both armies in order to encourage their men to follow them'*.<sup>45</sup> The battle broke the power of Rohillas. Shuja-ud-daulah now marched with the remaining troops and plundered the Rohilla Camp.

According to Hafiz Rahmat's son and grandson, the defeat of the Rohillas was in a great measure due to the treachery of several of their own chiefs who joined Shuja-ud-Daula while the action was going on.<sup>46</sup>

On the death of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Faizullah Khan the eldest surviving son of Ali Mohammad, a man of capacity and courage; became the acknowledged head of the Rohillas. Faizullah Khan fled with the remains of the army to Rampur. Taking his family and treasure, he subsequently retired northwards, through the Tarai and the forests in the Bijnor district, to Laldang a strongly fortified

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<sup>45</sup> John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, p. 141.

<sup>46</sup> Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk* p. 116.

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post at the foot of the Garhwal mountains, beyond the boundaries of the Rohilla Territories.<sup>47</sup>

While Shuja was ravaging the Rohilla territory, some of the Rohilla Chiefs were still involved in internal disputes which proved beneficial to Shuja. Shuja captured Bareilly without any resistance. After Bareilly the allied forces marched towards Pilibhit and laid siege to it. Eventually the remaining Rohillas also surrendered. The city was ransacked for some hidden treasure and almost all the beautiful buildings of the city were brought down to rubble.

After Bareilly and Pilibhit, the other Rohilla towns which fell to Shuja's powerful force were Bisauli and Aonla. Now, the only chief who had to be reckoned with was Faizullah at Laldang where he tried to consolidate his position by securing the support of a large number of Rohilla families.

Shuja-ud daulah wanted to pursue Faizullah Khan. He along with the allied forces even marched to Laldang but the thick forests hampered the movement of his forces and the harassing tactics of the Rohillas forced him to open negotiations with Faizullah Khan. Finally, after long negotiations, the treaty of Laldang was concluded on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1774. According to the terms of the treaty, all the major centres of power viz Bareilly, Pilibhit, Aonla and Bissauli were lost to the Rohillas. Faizullah Khan was allowed to retain his

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<sup>47</sup> Iqbal Husain, *Rise And Decline of Rohillas in Eighteenth Century*, p. 171.

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personal *jagir* in and around Rampur as his seat of power.(This continued as a native state until 1947). According to the treaty, Faizullah Khan was to disband his army and could maintain only 3000 troops at the disposal of Shuja-ud-Daulah. Thus seceding their right over the territory to Awadh.<sup>48</sup>

Now, the only Rohilla chiefs who were still maintaining their independence were in Saharanpur, to the west of the Ganges. Here the son and grandson of Najib-ud-Daulah, Zabita Khan and Ghulam Qadir Khan could still continue their independence and remained forces to be reckoned with in Hindustan. In 1789 their territory was finally annexed by the Marathas Twelve years later Rohilkhand was handed over to East India company.<sup>49</sup>

As we discussed in the first chapter, one of the reasons for the rise of Afghan power in Rohilkhand was the weak central authority (Mughals). Taking advantage of the scenario, these Afghans established their power and behaved independently. But by the last quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> c. another power i.e. the East India Company was emerging on the political scene in India. In fact East India Company and its interest were rapidly expanding westwards. The English were interested in the good prospects of revenue from the fertile and rich territory of Rohilkhand and along with this East India

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<sup>48</sup> Fifth Report, Appendix No. 44; cf Sir John Stratchey, *Hastings And The Rohilla War*, p. 151; Sir Charles Elliot, *Life of Hafiz-ool-Moolk*, p. 157.

<sup>49</sup> Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of Indo-Afghan Empire*, c. 1710-1780, p. 179.



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Company also wanted a safe border against Marathas. This was what they achieved with its annexation in 1774.

Another reason for decline was the division and differences among the Rohilla Chiefs. The differences crept up immediately after the death of Ali Mohd Khan leading to the division of Rohilla territory among his sons, Hafiz Rahmant Khan and Dundey Khan. This significantly weakened their power and the Rohillas were not united even at the time when Shuja and the British were leading their expedition against them. As we have seen, Zabita Khan was won over by the Nawab and that according to the son and grandson of Hafiz Rahmat, Rohilla were defeated in the battle of 1774 because of the treachery of Rohilla sardars.

Yet another reason can be seen for the decline, especially in the light of the migration of Afghan horse traders and mercenary soldiers. In fact the migration of Afghan horse traders and mercenary soldiers was a major factor in establishing the Rohilla authority. Now by the last quarter of eighteenth century, as a result of the regular expansion of the British East India Company in North India, the open military market for Afghan horse and man power was reduced. This was because the British maintained their own troops which could also be leased out. This resulted in a slump in their migration.

## CONCLUSION

To thematically tie up the hitherto fore themes under discussion, one may point out that the imperial administrative structure broke apart within two decades after the death of Aurangzeb. In the 13 years period between 1707 and 1720 A.D., four bitter wars of succession wracked the Mughal supremacy. The imperial administrative edifice lost its efficiency and impeccable hold on its fiefdoms. The revenue system slid into tax farming and the jagirs which were assigned deteriorated into defiant local fiefs. The emperor, the princes and the nobility of the empire tottered under the weight of the shrinking resources, the absence of control and the growing menace of regional disorders. By this time, the court became a fractured edifice as a result of severe factionalism. The nobles at Delhi were involved in grim intrigues that resulted in the slacking of imperial control.

This scenario of political flux benefitted some of the eminent Muslim families who had served the Mughals in military and administrative capacities. The *zamindars* now resisted the imperial authority and some of the big *zamindars* tried to establish their hegemony over other small *zamindars* of the region. By this time the collection of revenue had become a big problem. To facilitate an effective extraction of the dues the practice of *ijaradari* was recklessly initiated. In fact, the immigration of Rohilla Afghans was

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welcomed in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. in order to curb the refractory *zamindars* of the region. But in the eighteenth century taking the advantage of the general disorder, the instability, slackening of imperial control and the prevalence of *ijadardari*, these Rohilla Afghans rose to unprecedented prominence in the region. Having established an autonomous authority the Rohillas subsisted on the redistribution of revenues and agrarian resources.

Along with the fluid political condition and the weak imperial control there were several other factors that facilitated the establishment of a Rohilla state in the region. These include, the involvement of Rohillas in the mercenary soldier business, they made a fortune by joining the services of one or the other *zamindar* who ever paid them the most. The economic prosperity of the region which allowed them to employ new recruits who helped them to overcome the recalcitrant *zamindars* and the establishment of a large number of *ganjs* and *qasabahs*. The flourishing trade and commerce along the new trade routes was another factor which facilitated the establishment of Rohilla authority in the region.

During the Rohilla rule, Rohilkhand region witnessed significant growth in the fields of trade, art, literature, religion and architecture. In the case of trade, the town dwelling muslim

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warrior class which settled in the region from 1720's onwards gave rise to a greater density of market towns in the region. These densely situated market towns facilitated both artisan production and long distance trade. Further, these *Ganjs* and *Qasbahs* were the focal points for revenue collection where revenue in kind could be exchanged into money and made available for long distance trade.

In the field of religion, Rohilkhand emerged as the nursery for the *Sunni* faith. By the first quarter of eighteenth century, the decline of the court at Delhi, the emergence of the hostile Marathas and the emergence of Shiite power at Awadh led to the migration of *Sunni Ulema* to this region. Although the Rohillas were orthodox *Sunni* in their beliefs and time and again proclaimed '*jihad*' as their motive in India yet they refrained from interfering in the religious and social aspects of their Hindu subjects.

The Rohillas were benevolent patrons to people with proficient talent in the field of art and literature. They invited scholars and artists of repute from different territories, even from abroad. The Rampur court under Faizullah Khan attracted men of artistic and literary talent on a very large scale.

The economic prosperity of the region can be deduced from the references to the magnificent buildings constructed by the Rohilla

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chiefs. Some of them, still intact at different locations in Rohilkhand, tell us about the interest of Rohillas in architecture.

The Rohilla state founded by Daud Khan and Ali Mohammad Khan was destroyed by the combined forces of Shuja-ud-Daulah and the East India company in 1774. By the mid eighteenth century, the Marathas had been making repeated incursions into north India and the revenue interests of the East India Company were expanding westwards. The Rohillas were attacked and destroyed because Shuja-ud-daulah wanted to secure Rohilkhand in order to make it a safe border against the Maratha in roads. The compliance of East India Company to this plan was because of its interest in the high revenue prospects of the region.

The reason for the decline of Rohilla power can be seen in the light of differences and dissension among Rohilla chiefs which crept up immediately after the death of Ali Mohd Khan in 1749. Also, the open military market economy was shrinking rapidly as a result of the expansion of East India Company who maintained a disciplined army. This resulted in a the slump in the migration of mercenaries from Afghanistan who were one of the major players in the establishment of Rohilla authority.

The repeated incursions of the Marathas, the tussle with the authorities at Awadh and other regional chiefs especially after 1750's, severely strained the economy of the region. This

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economic recession significantly affected the Rohilla position as they were unable to recruit fresh soldiers who were the mainstay of their power.

After the Rohilla war in 1774 and the death of prominent Rohilla chief Hafiz Rahmat Khan, the treaty of Laldang was concluded with Faizullah Khan the son of Ali Mohd Khan in October 1774. In accordance with the edicts of the treaty, all the major towns and cities were lost to Rohillas and the Rampur state was created for Faizullah Khan.

While Rampur retained its nominal independence the rest of Rohilkhand came under Awadh in 1774 and then under East India Company in 1801. After the end of Rohilla military might Faizullah devoted the remaining years of his life to administer his little state and attracting men of artistic and literary talent to his court.

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