

Understanding the anti-Mughal Struggle of Khushal Khan Khattak

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Abstract

Khushal Khan Khattak, a seventeenth century Pakhtun writer, poet and swordsman, and his forefathers had served the Mughal for a long time. However, his fortune took a sudden twist when Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb imprisoned him in 1664, and kept him in solitary confinement at Ranthambore fort. After his release from prison, Khushal Khan was a different person. He remained no more a loyal Mughal official afterwards. Although, Aurangzeb Alamgir and a number of Mughal governors of Kabul tempted him several time to accept a position in the frontier areas but he out-rightly declined. This transformation is clearly visible in his poetry. He took up arms against the Mughals in 1673 and declared a war against them despite the fact that some of his family members even his son had sided with the Mughals. He continued his anti-Mughal struggle till his death in 1689. Some of the critics look at the anti-Mughal role of Khushal Khan with suspicion and have raised a few queries in this connection. This study looks into the circumstances that saw transformation in his outlook towards the Mughals. Then it explores, whether it was a personal vendetta or the start of a collective anti-Mughal Pakhtun struggle. The article looks into various dimensions, nature and direction of his struggle. This research paper is an attempt to evaluate objectively as to why and how Khushal Khan joined the anti-Mughal camp in the borderland area. Some more related questions are also discussed in details in this article.

Key words: Khushal Khan Khattak, Pakhtun, Mughal, Yousafzai, Kabul, Uprising

Introduction

Akor Khan, the great grandfather of Khushal Khan, had been deputed by Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) for the protection of the high way

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between Khairabad¹ and Nowshehra in the region lying on Indian border with Afghanistan. After his death in an encounter with Bolaq, a rival Khattak section, Yahya Khan, his son, was appointed chief of the Khattak tribe. Accordingly, he was assigned the same duty by the Mughals. Yahya Khan took revenge from the Bolaq Khattaks by killing a large number of their tribesmen during various skirmishes. Many of the Bolaqs then took shelter in safe areas. The enmity continued for long time in which Malik Shadi Khan took revenge by killing Yahya Khan at Pir Sabaq. In retaliation, Shahbaz Khan, son and successor of Yahya Khan, killed the son of Shadi Khan. After some time, a truce was concluded between the two sub-sections.² Shahbaz Khan died on 18 January 1641 and was succeeded by his son Khushal Khan.

Khushal Khan Khattak was a loyal Mughal servant under Emperor Shah Jahan (1628-1658). He had demonstrated no sign of unfaithfulness and was performing his duty well; however, he was imprisoned by the orders of Aurangzeb Alamgeer (1658-1707) which changed his way of thinking towards the Mughals. The north-western frontier area had remained a flash point which was strategically more important for the Mughals. Frequently, the tribes took up arms against the central authority and created trouble for the smooth transportation of goods and passing of royal caravans to Kabul and Central Asia onwards. It was the time when many Pakhtun tribes created big problems for the Mughal Empire in various parts of the borderland areas. To resolve the issue of law and order in the area Aurangzeb once again thought of getting help from Khushal Khan Khattak. Khushal Khan got freedom from prison in 1667, by the help and support of Mughal nobles like Muhammad Amin Khan and Mahabat Khan. He had a few other friends among the nobles of Emperor Aurangzeb, however, the main cause of his release was to utilize his services in bringing about peace to the frontier area. This rapport was political in nature because at that time a number of tribes had been up against the Mughals and this was one of the major sources of trouble for Aurangzeb.

Mughal authorities faced difficult situation in the frontier areas. Especially, the time period of Aurangzeb was the most critical phase in Mughal-Pakhtuns' relations. It was due to the Yusufzais' uprising under

¹ Khairabad is situated on the northern side of river Indus when one enters Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through G. T. Road. On the southern side of the river is the famous Attock fort built by Emperor Akbar in 1585.

² Himayatullah Yaqubi, *Mughal-Afghan Relations in South Asia: History and Development* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2015), 152.

Bkahu Khan that Aurangzeb brought some administrative changes in the province of Kabul. He was apprehensive of any confederacy of the Pakhtun tribes which would have the potential to oust Mughals political scene of the frontier. For that reason he appointed Muhammad Amin Khan as the new governor of Kabul in 1670. The emperor personally stayed in the fort of Attock and supervised the military expeditions which he sent to suppress the resistance. Pakhtuns had staged two uprisings during the reign of Aurangzeb Alamgir. The first one was initiated by the Yusufzais in 1667. It was a prolonged conflict which assumed various manifestations. The settled and plain areas were easily captured, however, Aurangzeb faced tough resistance in the hilly terrains. In 1675, while settling in Attock, Aurangzeb sent Mukarram Khan *en route* to Bajaur. Mukarram Khan's brother, Shamsher Khan, along with 2,000 Mughal soldiers, lost his lives, but Mukarram Khan fled from Bajaur in miserable condition.³

The second Pakhtuns' uprising against the Mughal started in the year 1672. Nevertheless, the 1672 resistance was so huge that it became a daunting task for Aurangzeb to quell it. The 1672 Pakhtun resistance was led by Aimal Khan Mohmand and Darya Khan Afridi. Interestingly, Khushal Khan fought alongside the Mughals in the famous Landi Khana (Gharib Khana) disaster. The daughter, sister and mother of Muhammad Amin were taken into custody, but his wife committed suicide. From his release till that time Khushal Khan was a confused person who neither openly rebelled nor accepted any *mansab* from the Mughals. Later, Khushal Khan Khattak joined the uprising in 1673. He, after the death of Aimal Khan and Darya Khan, carried it on till his death in 1689.⁴

This mysterious transformation in the perception of Khushal Khan regarding the Mughals has been discussed from various angles by the researchers. To some scholars he had turned into a Pakhtun nationalist from a loyal servant of the Mughals. However, some of his critics view his turnaround with suspicion and level different allegations against him. Khwaja Muhammad Sail, for instance, argues that Khushal Khan and his elders were loyal Mughal servants. Earlier, Khushal not only fought for the Mughals against his fellow Pakhtuns but he also took pride in it which he demonstrated in his poetry. His opposition to the

³ Ibid., 177.

⁴ This uprising was led by Aimal Khan, belonged to Khoezi sub-branch of the Mohmand tribe. His descendents were called Badshah Khel. The other leader of the Pakhtuns was Darya Khan, an Adamkhel Afridi. Both these tribal commanders successfully mobilized the borderland tribes for an offensive against the Mughals.

Mughals was temporary and in reality he was not anti-Mughal. According to Sail, Pakhtuns knew that Khushal's resentment against the Mughals was transitory and artificial, and they knew that Khushal disguised his personal grudge as a national cause for wooing the support of the Pakhtuns.⁵

Allah Bakhsh Yusufi holds the opinion that even after the imprisonment of Khushal, the Mughals showed confidence in him, engaged him against the Yusufzais and made him the governor of Langar Kot in Mardan.⁶ He further writes that despite the fact that Khushal was fighting for the Mughals against the Pakhtuns, he was losing importance and relevance for the imperialists.⁷ Allah Bakhsh is of the view that when Afridis and Mohmands stood up in 1672 against the Mughal Empire, Khushal Khan availed that chance and through his poetry opposed the Mughals. Khushal Khan, in 1676, after meeting with Shah Alam (Prince Bahadur Shah) ended his struggle, however, he remained engaged in a civil war against them.⁸ Allah Bakhsh concludes that Khushal Khan had neither opposed the Mughals due to any national cause nor did he want to be expelled them from his country.⁹ Sultan-i-Rome, on the other hand, also criticises Khushal Khan for his dubious role. He argues that Khushal at times sided with the Mughals, or remained silent, and at another time fought against them. Rome declares him a pro-Mughal warlord in the frontier area where he killed his Pakhtun fellows. However, gradually he lost the favour and trust of Aurangzeb. Once Khushal was a mansabdar who got boundless incentives and perks, but when he was deprived of that position, he turned against them. So this turn-around was due to his personal vendetta not for the cause of Pakhtun nationalism.¹⁰

In this article an attempt has been made to find out whether the charges against Khushal Khan Khattak have some truth in them or are mere allegations. It would explore that under what circumstances Khushal Khan Khattak became an anti-Mughal. These and similar other questions would be investigated in this research study.

⁵ Khwaja Muhammad Sial, *Khushalyat Aw Haayeq*, (Peshawar: n.p., 2006), 349

⁶ Allah Bakhsh Yusufi, *Yusufzai Pathan*, 4th ed. (Karachi: Muhammad Ali Educational Society, 1973), 225

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 226

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Sultan-i-Rome, 'Khushal Khan Khattak and Swat', *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, Vol. 51, No. 1, (January-June 2014).

Period of transition

Undoubtedly, Khushal Khan Khattak's shift from a Mughal mansabdars to an arch rival is an interesting event. Most of the enquiries of the scholars, however, are polemical having least analytical suppositions. It was not an instantaneous change but a phase of transition, in which he slowly turned away from a pro-establishment figure to an anti-Mughal warlord. This transitional period must be understood in true historical perspective. For this change in his mood and perception he has been hailed as the first Pakhtun leader who instilled a sense of belonging among them. Based on his anti-Mughal stance and some verses of his poetry, it has been observed that he was the leader who propagated and fought against the Mughal for the common Pakhtun cause.¹¹ To understand this transition, it is quite essential to look into the matter in a wider juxtaposition. It is clear that Khushal Khan, after being released freedom from prison in 1667, was no more interested in serving the Mughals, and had different ideas striking in his mind. As he described that state of affairs in his Diary: 'Wish I could once took up my sword against the Mughals but there were considerations of family, of advanced age and a deep impression left by ancestors who had died in Mughal service. There were thus great debt of gratitude and I could not be unfaithful.'¹²

The above extract from his diary suggests that Khushal Khan was opposed to the Mughals; however, he was in dilemma due to his past relationship with them. If he, on the one hand, wished to take revenge from the Mughals for the injustice done to him, on the other hand, he had personal regard for the favours and countless blessings of Mughal emperors, especially of Shah Jahan, which were showered on him and his elders. In fact, a number of Mughal nobles also helped him during the difficult days of his imprisonment. Even Muhammad Amin Khan was like a trusted friend who made efforts to get him release from the prison. Moreover, Khushal Khan never tried to hide the fact that he and his elders were Mughals servants. Rather in his poetry he has clearly and openly admitted their services to the Mughals.

This was the time (?????) when Mughal local authorities in the frontier area recommended the construction of small forts for checking the Yusufzais' forays on the imperial caravans. Mahabat Khan, the

¹¹ See for this assertions Afzal Khan Khattak, *Tarikh-i- Murassa*, ed. Dost Muhammad Khan Kamil Mohmand, (Peshawar: University Book Agency, 2006) and *Iqbal Nasim Khattak, Da Khushal Aw Da Aurangzeb da Muqqadamy Yaw Jayeza*, Peshawar University Journal, Vol. 10 No 1.

¹² Afzal Khan Khattak, *Tarikh Murassa*, 345.

newly appointed governor of Kabul, got strict instructions from Aurangzeb Alamgir for undertaking similar kinds of measures. Accordingly, a small fort was built at Langar Kot for checking the activities of the Yusufzais. Khushal Khan never openly opposed the construction because of his close liaison with Mahabat Khan but showed his unwillingness to take field against the Yusufzais. Unlike his previous track record of waging wars against his fellow Pakhtun tribesmen, he constrained himself from taking up arms against them for the sack of the Mughals. He was more cautious in this matter. Notwithstanding his connections with local Mughal authorities, Khushal Khan now viewed his ethnic background as being one of his major political and social constituencies. For that matter he restrained himself from further damaging his position among the Pakhtuns. It is evident from his talk with Mahabat Khan to dissuade him from constructing fort at Langar Kot. It has been vividly stated in *Tarikh-i-Murassa*:

Mahabat Khan offered a rank of one thousand and command of Yusufzais to Khushal. He said to Mahabat Khan “for fifty years I was loyal servant of the state and Yusufzais were rebels. I attacked them constantly, made them submit to the Emperor and erected towers of their skulls. I was innocent but they imprisoned me without any fault of mine. My family became scattered and it was the Yusufzais who in spite of enmity came to their [my family’s] help. Now with what face should I begin hostilities against them.”¹³

Khushal Khan felt indebted under the help extended to his family members by the Yusufzais when he was taken into custody by the Mughals. Being a Pakhtun Khushal Khan never concealed that gratitude. He, several time, fully appreciated his gratefulness towards Yusufzais’. Yusufzais were no more his rivals. He also changed his perception regarding inter-tribal conflicts. This changing mood has amply been demonstrated on the issue of construction of fort at Langar Kot. Khushal Khan says in one of his verses:

لنگر کوټ مغلو ساز کړه په ننگ بیاډ افغان شوم
که یوسف وه که مندر وه د دواړو نگهبان شوم¹⁴

Translation: The Mughals constructed the fort of Langar Kot; I stood by the honour of the Afghans. Whether it was Yusuf or Mandanar, I become their saviour.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Khushal Khan Khattak, *Kulyat*, ed. Dost Muhammad Khan Kamil Mohmand (Peshawar: Idara-e-Ishaat-e-Sarhad, 1960), 823

According to Iqbal Naseem Khattak, Khushal's opposition to the construction of the fort of Langer Kot was his first and open disagreement with the Mughals.¹⁵ He had neither been made the governor of Langar Kot nor did he remain engaged against the Mughals, rather he disagreed with the idea of constructing a fort. At the same time, he was not in the position to openly challenge the Mughal and disrespect Mahabat Khan. He had still relationship with few Mughal nobles; this was the reason that they were his personal friends and had favoured him on a few occasions. The fact of the matter is that Khushal Khan could not ignore the favours done to him and whenever the moment arrived he tried to acknowledge it to the best of his abilities. His early track record was bitter against the Yusufzais. He even had requested Shah Jahan to give him equipment, arms and ammunitions against the Yusufzais because they were anti-Mughals.¹⁶

Khushal Khan and the Uprising of 1672

In 1670, Muhammad Amin Khan replaced Mahabat Khan as the governor of Kabul. It was during his tenure that another Pakhtun uprising broke out.¹⁷ Muhammad Amin, like all the previous governors of Kabul province, moved from Peshawar to his summer capital Kabul through the Khyber Pass. He was accompanied by a few Pakhtun tribal chiefs (malaks) including Khushal Khan Khattak and Arbab Mustajab Khan Mohmand. Meanwhile, Pakhtun tribes of Afridis, Mohmand and Shinwari had blocked the way of the governor at Gharib Khana situated at a distance of four miles to the northwest of Landi Kotal (present day in district Khyber). Arbab Mustajab was sent to negotiate with Aimal Khan, leader of the armed tribesmen, but negotiations failed. He along with other Pakhtun aides of Amin Khan at last mustered courage and informed him of the danger. He advised the governor a parley with the armed tribesmen. He had informed him of the strategic advantages and the guerrilla war tactics of the hilly Pakhtuns but met with a rebuff. Afterwards, Amin Khan sought the advice of Khushal Khan. Khushal suggested him that war should be the last option. In the rugged

¹⁵ *Iqbal Nasim Khattak, Da Khushal Aw Da Aurangzeb da Muqqadamy Yaw Jayeza*, 90-110.

¹⁶ Yaqubi, *Mughal-Afghan Relations*, 171.

¹⁷ Though Mughal-Pakhtun enmity was deep rooted, however the immediate cause of 1672, uprising was the disgrace of a Paracha girl (non-Pakhtun) by some Mughal soldiers of Hussain Beg, *Faujdar* of Kunar (Afghanistan). The aggressors were put to death by two or three Safi Pakhtuns which ignited the whole uprising. Aimal Khan Mohmand and Darya Khan Afridi led the uprising which continued for several years.

mountains they would trim down the Mughal force and would then annihilate it easily. The Mughal force was not a match to them because of their striking ability of fighting in that unique geographical setting.¹⁸ Amin Khan rather bluntly replied: ‘O Khushal, a man put a winter stricken snake into a bag, which when warmed, bit the same man, I did good to you, and you give me this advice! How should I account for my conduct before the king?’¹⁹ Afzal Khan writes that Khushal Khan become alarmed and said, “If your Excellency is pleased to have an encounter I will go ahead of your Excellency.”²⁰ The Mughals, however, tasted a crushing defeat at the hands of the Pakhtuns. Embellish.

Due to Muhammad Amin’s uncompromising attitude, the Mughal force resumed its upward march and reached Landi Khana. Without realizing the looming threat, they were slowly heading to the trap. Expecting a mild and manageable resistance here and there, Muhammad Amin, however, was met with complete disaster. It was one of the major defeats Mughal had ever experienced after the 1585 stampede against the Yusufzais in which Raja Birbal, along with eight thousand Mughal soldiers, was routed in Buner. The same tactics and strategy was adopted in both the offensives. Mughal force was targeted in the narrow passages bounded by mountains giving the tribesmen a strategic deepness. Muhammad Amin Khan, an able warrior in the field, ignored this plus point of the tribesmen which was missing in his planning. In Khyber, the armed tribesmen were fully prepared and anxiously waiting for the attack. Very adroitly they utilized and exploited the strategic blunder of the governor. Initially, the Mughal force struggled to avert total disaster and to keep the Pakhtuns’ *lashkar* at distance from taking the upper hand. He, however, soon found himself in the middle of virtual disaster. Confusion and chaos engulfed his force and most of them were slain. Even the *howdah* of Muhammad Amin Khan was exposed to the attackers when his force faced tough resistance and large-scale massacre. His mother, sister and daughter were taken into custody by the Pakhtuns. Seeing no escape from the horrific scene and uncertain of the impending consequences, his wife committed suicide. In the middle of the scuffle his son Abdullah got killed by the attackers.²¹ Such was the situation in the horrific tussle between the imperial Mughal force and opposing Pakhtuns’ tribal *lashkar*. It was due to Muhammad

¹⁸ Dost Muhammad Khan Kamil Mohmand, *Khushal Khan Khattak*, 2nd ed. (Peshawar: Shaheen Books, 2006), 182.

¹⁹ Afzal Khan Khattak, *Tarikh-i-Murassa*, 348.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Yaqubi, *Mughal-Afghan Relations*, 179.

Amin's nonsense or may be his ignorance of the geographical oddity of the area. Or he indulged himself in extra superiority complex to such an extent that it bore horrendous outcomes.

Interestingly, Khushal Khan Khattak fought alongside the Mughals in the battle of Landi Khana. He had suggested Amin Khan not to confront the Pakhtuns, nevertheless, when the latter taunted the former, he agreed to go with him, as he was not only his friend but benefactor as well. Khushal, if on one hand, felt happy on the loss of the Mughals, on the other was extremely sorry for the personal loss of Amin Khan.²² This indicates the fact that Khushal had great regard for friendship even if they were Mughal officials. Especially for Muhammad Amin Khan he held great and high regard in his heart. His great regard for the Mughal governor is clear from his poetry as well. He has mentioned about the favours of Muhammad Amin Khan in one of his verses:

آفرين د مير جمله په زويه باندي
چي نن دي د مير بخشي په استقلال
که هزار توري چاري غشي وريري
ده زما په سر نيولي دي خپل ډال

Translation: Blessed be upon the son of Mir Jumlah. Firmly occupying the office of *Mir Bakhshi* (pay master general), though swords, daggers and darts in thousands are looming like shower at me, he is holding his shield over my head.²³

It is clear from the behaviour of Muhammad Amin that he has treated Khushal Khan as his subordinate petty commander. The way he thrown out Khushal's advice with taunt, did not indicate altogether, friendly relations between the two personalities. Khushal Khan's aversion for the Mughals seems harnessed in this time period. He glorified the triumph of the Pakhtun *lashkar* but could not rejoice the defeat and humiliation of Muhammad Amin Khan. Being an experienced commander he warned the Pakhtuns to be much vigilant because the Mughal would not easily forget the defeat of one of their provincial governors. Despite all these personal, ethnic and tribal considerations still Khushal Khan was not acceptable to most of the Pakhtuns as a leader in their struggle against the Mughals. It has been stated by Himayatullah Yaqubi in the *Mughal-Afghan Relations in South Asia* that:

²² Iqbal Nasim Khattak, *Pushtoon Shanah*, (Peshawar: Pashto Academy, Peshawar University, 2011), 127-8.

²³ Yaqubi, *Mughal-Afghan Relations*, 179.

Khushal Khan's personal regard for Muhammad Amin, the Mughal governor, gave the impression that he sacrificed the greater cause of the Afghan nationalism. The placement of his 'personal regard' greatly jeopardised his standing as a nationalist hero of the Afghans. It clearly indicated his tangible preferences of personal friendship against larger interest of the Afghan nationalism.²⁴

One can better understand the feelings of Khushal Khan about his service to the Mughals and the treatment he received from them in a poem from *Swat Nama*. He, in the poem, has admitted that he not only served the Mughals but killed hundreds of Pakhtuns to please his masters. Nevertheless, the Mughals did not consider his contributions worthwhile and imprisoned him without any fault.²⁵ The poem in first place shows the candour of Khushal who is openly admitting his wrong deeds. It also depicts his repentance for killing his brethren. It was this mental situation Khushal Khan was passing through, which would have certainly played a key role in molding his way of thinking which later on culminated in the shape of rivalry with the Mughals and making efforts to unite the Pakhtuns against them.

After the disaster of Khyber, Aurangzeb Alamgeer had ordered Fidayee Khan, governor of Lahore, to go to Peshawar for the support of Amin Khan, when Fidayee Khan reached Attock, Khushal Khan was suggested to attack the Mughal contingent and loot the treasure Fidayee Khan was carrying but he rejected it by saying; "Although I am against the Mughals, they imprisoned me without a fault. But I will not loot the treasure for we have ate their (the Mughals) salt for four or five generations, I will not loot the treasure."²⁶ In fact, from the impression he has created at that time one can assume his confusing state of mind. At that moment of time he refrained from taking up arms against the Mughals either due to heavy imperial presence or his personal regard for most of Mughal officials and commanders who were posted in the area. Or Khushal Khan refrained from looting the treasure which testifies the fact that he avoided cheap tactics to harm even his enemies. It is to be mentioned here that if he was against taking up arms because he ate their (Mughal) salt then under which logic afterwards he waged wars against them? How in the later stage when he transformed his perceptions completely against the Mughals that salt became lawful for Khushal?

²⁴ Ibid., 180.

²⁵ Khushal Khan Khattak, *Swat Nama*, English Tr. Shakeel Ahmad, (Peshawar: Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar, n.d.), 8-14.

²⁶ Afzal Khan Khattak, *Tarikh-i-Murassa*, 350.

Another consequence of the Khyber Pass carnage was putting to death Arbab Mustajab Mohmand, a Mughal servant accompanying Amin Khan. Fidayee Khan upon his arrival at Peshawar, immediately killed Mustajab, most probably for his inefficiency in the battle.²⁷ It is quite possible that Khushal Khan avoided meeting with Fidayee Khan because of that kind of disgraceful fate. Bazid Khan an uncle of Arbab Mustajab met Khushal Khan. The details of the meeting have not been mentioned, however, the reaction of the latter suggests that they had vowed to put up a joint resistance against the Mughals. Khushal Khan in his diary narrates: ‘I, for the Pakhtun cause, shifted my family from Saraye (because Saraye Akora lied on the main route) to Nizampur. I intended to take Attock and block the road to Peshawar, that more Mughals could be killed’.²⁸

He was waiting for an opportunity to challenge the Mughals, for as soon as the relatives of Arbab Mustajab approached him, he immediately devised a plan and was ready for killing the Mughals. However, one of the uncles of Arbab Mustajab deprived him of the opportunity and started negotiations with the Mughals to get a *mansab*. Mohmand chiefs met some Mughal officials and expressed their desire that Bocha Khan (uncle of Arbab Mustajab) was interested in serving the Mughals. When Khushal Khan heard the news he got stunned,²⁹ because his plan of challenging the enemy had received a severe jolt.

Meanwhile, Emperor Aurangzeb once again appointed Mahabat Khan as the governor of Kabul in place of Amin Khan. He tried to overpower the Pakhtuns through a political ploy instead of taking up arms against them. The appointment of Mahabat Khan as the new governor proved to be a turning point in his relations with the Mughals. Mahabat Khan, after his arrival, wrote to Khushal Khan to come to his court. As reported by his grandson Afzal Khan, being loyal and well-wisher of the Mughals and having no bad intentions for Mahabat Khan, Khushal Khan preferred to retire from his home-town for Teri-Bulaq so as to remain at bay from the Mughal-Pakhtun conflict. Mahabat Khan once again tried to enlist Khushal Khan in his fold but failed to do so. He contacted the latter for devising a plan how to manage the land of Pakhtuns.³⁰ Khushal Khan, however, avoided meeting the governor and left for Lachi (Kohat) He writes: “I had made up my mind once for all

²⁷ Dost Muhammad Khan, *Khushal Khan Khattak*, 189

²⁸ Afzal Khan Khattak, *Tarikh-i-Murassa*, 350.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

and removed from my heart the taste of Mughal service.³¹” Khushal Khan in Lachi fell ill and in the same physical condition moved to Khwara. This muddled situation has increased the possibility of the perception that Khushal Khan has lost support even in his own tribe. Those people who were his supporters now aligned themselves with other power centres. His grievances, from those Khattaks who turned away from him, are evident in his poetry. He has clearly mentioned it in his *Kulyat*:

هم د بخت و ماته ثنا شوه، هم د خلکو په مغول کر ځکه مخ له همه ما
که مي لاس وای په رضا مي به کي نه بنول د مغول په لوري دوه قدمه ما
د هغو د خولي کړي خبري اورم چي خبره ورته نه کړه سمه ما
نښم د خپلو د پرديو را معلوم شو که هر څو ساته خپل خان له نښه ما³²

Translation: Fortune and people turned away from me. That’s why Mughal also turned away from me. I will never take up, on my free well, even two steps towards the Mughal. I am hearing bad talks of those people who I considered not able to talk with. Even I did not have bad intentions, became aware of the intentions of my kinsfolks and aliens.

Mahabat Khan and Mughal-Behram rapprochement

In this state of affairs, Mahabat Khan tried to win the confidence of his son Ashraf Khan. He was persuaded to take up arms against his father but to no avail. But after some time he found in Behram Khan, his third son, a person who was ready enough to counterbalance and challenge Khushal Khan. Accordingly, Behram Khan was made chief of the Khattak tribe through imperial *Farman*. Besides, Mahabat Khan conferred upon him several other privileges. Behram Khan became an open ally of the Mughals not only against his father but also against other Pakhtun tribes. Differences were created not only between Khushal Khan and his sons but also his near relatives as well. Khattak tribe got divided, some fighting for and other against the Mughals. It created a lot of trouble and resulted in a series of fighting among the tribesmen. In the midst of these scuffles, Khushal Khan was running from post to pillar like a fugitive for his own survival.

Khushal Khan himself, as has been reported by his grandson Afzal Khan, has made Mahabat Khan responsible for all that tricky mess. Moreover, he was pushed to the wall by extracting a bond or affidavit

³¹ Ibid.

³² Khushal Khan Khattak, *Da Khushal Khan Khattak Kulyat*, ed. Abdul Qayum Zahid Mashwani (Kabul: Danish Publications, 2013), 13.

from his son Ashraf Khan not to allow his father in his *jagir* in their home-town. Interestingly, Khushal Khan had criticized Ashraf Khan for giving such a bond and expressed that rather submitting such a bond, he may have given only the surety that his father would not create any troublesome situation for the Mughals. Because of their humiliating treatment towards Khushal Khan, it seems an out of the box excuse that Khushal Khan had great regard for the Mughal friends. Mahabat Khan was not a friend of Khushal Khan rather he made his position subordinate in front of those people who served him during his high days. In fact, Mahabat Khan, like many other governors, was an imperial agent (governor) with clear agenda of consolidating Mughal rule in the borderland areas. Having observed his weak position, deprived of his *jagir* by his own son, Khushal Khan intended that he will, henceforth, refrain from the Mughals and will spend the rest of his life in worship. He said at this time in one of his *ghazals* (amatory poem):

د فساد فکر مي نشسته خدائے حاضر دے
خپل ساعت به تيروم عمر آخر دے³³

Translation: Allah knows, I have no intention of turmoil;
and will pass my time as it is old age.

Ashraf Khan,³⁴ meanwhile, met Mahabat Khan at Khairabad. The latter took him along with himself till Nowshera and gave him a robe of honour. On that occasion Mahabat Khan took assurance from Ashraf Khan not to permit his father to enter his native area.³⁵ Mahabat Khan, not satisfied with the performance of Ashraf Khan, contacted Behram, the third son of Khushal Khan. Behram wanted chieftainship even if it was at the expense of his father and brother. He, therefore, met Mahabat Khan and assured the latter of arresting both, if he was made the chief.³⁶ Mahabat Khan agreed on the condition that after subduing his father and

³³ Khattak, *Kulyat-e-Khushal Khan Khattak*, 50.

³⁴ Ashraf Khan was the eldest son of Khushal Khan Khattak, when Khushal was imprisoned (1664), Ashraf replaced him as chief of the tribe. He also remained in Mughal service. His fortune took a turn and Behram, his younger brother took his place in 1673. Behram proved to be source of trouble for both his father and brother. Behram, after a few years lost the confidence of the Mughals and resultantly gave way to Ashraf Khan. Ashraf Khan, although, was not as blunt as Behram but still had strained relations with his father. Unfortunately, Ashraf Khan was imprisoned in 1681 and was taken to Bijapur (Deccan) as prisoner, where he died in 1695.

³⁵ Afzal Khan Khattak, *Tarikh-i-Murassa* 351.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 352.

brother, he would expel them from the area, or even put them to death.³⁷ According to Khushal Khan, the ill-fated Behram was not aware of Mughals' intention, who wanted to weaken them by making the Khattaks embroiled in internal feuds.³⁸ Khushal Khan tried his utmost to avoid a tussle between his sons, so much so when Behram went to Saraye (Akora Khattak) in order to vacate it from Ashraf's men Khushal prevented the latter from confronting the former.³⁹ All his efforts proved abortive, as Behram was bent upon becoming the chief. The opposition of Behram to Khushal Khan Khattak proved a turning point as it gave way to an unending strife between Khushal and the Mughals starting in 1673. Muhammad Kamil, in this regard, writes: "As Behram was doing this with the help and support of the government, therefore, a practical war broke out between Khushal and the Mughals."⁴⁰

The outmoded revolt and another rapprochement

Mahabat Khan, after his arrival at Peshawar, once again approached Khushal Khan tried to gain the much crucial support. He in this connections deputed Bazid Khan and a few other Mohmands for arranging a meeting of the governor with Khushal Khan. Bazid contacted Khushal for the purpose, however, received a negative response in the shape of a poem, wherein, he has not only rejected the offer but has expressed his emotions as well as his future plan. As it is a long poem. Therefore, only the first and the last verses of it are written below:

پروردہ کہ د مغلو پہ نمک یم
د اورنگ له جورہ ہم له غریو ہ بک یم
.....
د افغان پہ ننگ مے اوترلہ تورہ
ننگیالے د زمانے خوشحال ختک یم⁴¹

Translation: Although I have eaten the salt of the Mughals
Nevertheless I have become a victim of the cruelties of Aurangzeb

.....

I have taken up arms for the protection of Afghans'
(because) I am the valiant Khushal Khattak.

He was in Tirah when he received a message from Emperor Aurangzeb through Raja Jaswant Singh that if he visited the King, he would be

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, 353.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Dost Muhammad Khan Kamil Mohmand, *Khushal Khan Khattak*, 192.

⁴¹ Khushal Khan Khattak, *Kulyat*, 363-66.

pardoned and rewarded.⁴² But the offer was turned down. Meanwhile, Aurangzeb Alamgeer appointed Amir Khan as the governor of Kabul in 1677. The latter was the son of Khalilullah Khan, a close friend of Khushal Khan. Aurangzeb had also deputed prince Bahadur Shah⁴³ (Prince Muazzam) for making peace with the Pakhtuns.⁴⁴ He and Amir Khan on their arrival at Attock contacted Khushal Khan to meet them. Khushal, however, turned down their offer, but at the same time assured them that he would not give any trouble to them.⁴⁵ Khushal Khan ultimately met Bahadur Shah and Amir Khan at Peshawar.

The claim made by Allah Bakhsh Yusufi that Khushal Khan had ended his struggle after meeting with prince Bahadur Shah, needs a little enquiry. Khadija Ferozuddin, in this regard states: “Khushal having visited Bahadur Shah and his nobles Amir Khan, Jaswant Singh and others, and having expressed his unwillingness to serve the Mughals any more, returned to Saraye laden with presents and robes of honour.”⁴⁶ Her statement creates a little confusion which needs clarification. *Tarikh Murassa*, while narrating the event states: “Khushal Khan came from Swatra (Karak) and joined the Mughal service at Peshawar. Amir Khan had left in advance for Gharib Khana (Khyber Pass). When Bahadur Shah reached Gharib Khan, Amir Khan welcomed him. Khushal joined his (Amir Khan’s) service. Amir Khan whole-heartedly welcomed Khushal. When the king got informed that Khushal had joined his service, he wrote to Amir Khan to keep Khushal with you at every cost, whatever rank he is contended with, give it to him. Bahadur Shah, through a noble Saif Khan, informed him (Khushal Khan) that the king has offered you a rank of one or two thousand and urged him to accept. He (Khushal) replied that as the king had persecuted me I do not have the desire to serve the king. If you (ever) became the king, I would serve you (even) in old age”.⁴⁷ Amir Khan, afterwards, told Khushal Khan to

⁴² Afzal Khan Khattak, 373.

⁴³ Prince Muhammad Muazzam was the son of Aurangzeb Alamgeer. He was the seventh Mughal emperor of India and the first one among the Latter Mughals. He ruled from 1707 to 1712. He remained the governor of Agra, Punjab and Kabul. He also conspired against his father and was kept in confinement several times. After assuming kingship he adopted the title of Bahadur Shah I.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Khadija Begum Ferozuddin, *Life and Works of the Illustrious Khushal Khan Khattak* (Peshawar: Pashto Academy, University of Peshawar, 2007), 184.

⁴⁷ Afzal Khan Khattak, *Tarikh-i-Murassa* 395.

join him up to Kabul so that peace could be brought about in the area, by using his good offices.⁴⁸ Khushal Khan replied that he wanted to meet Amir Khan but he had no concern with the Mughals making peace with the Pakhtuns.⁴⁹ It is ironic that Khushal Khan separated his “Mughal friends” from the Mughal imperial designs which was completely an irrational and illogical approach. Several time he met and made parleys with them and has given the same excuse of friendship.

Sultan-i-Rome is of the view that it was just for his personal survival that he was fighting, to which he tried to give the name of the Pakhtuns *nang*.⁵⁰ Bahadur Shah Zafar Kaka Khel endorses that it was due to his personal disgrace and un-acknowledgement of his personal and family services that broke Khushal Khan’s heart vis-à-vis the Mughals. However, the breach was so much deep that was not to be remedied by gifts and rank.⁵¹ He, moreover, admits that the severed relation between Khushal Khan and Aurangzeb was due to personal reasons rather than ‘Pakhtuns’ *nang*’.⁵² According to Allah Bakhsh Yusufi, Khushal Khan’s taking arms against the Mughals was neither for the Pakhtun cause, nor any national necessity made him to oppose them and nor did the desire to expel the Mughals from the Pakhtuns land guided him. He and his ancestors have remained loyal to the Mughals. The sole reason of the fury that erupted was taking revenge of personal grudges. He painted his personal opposition and revenge as a national one and aroused the tribesmen against the Mughals in which he made thousands of the Pakhtuns to be sacrificed in vain that brought no benefit to their land.⁵³

Conclusion

Khushal Khan Khattak and his elders had served the Mughals for a long time, the turning point in Khushal’s life proved to be his imprisonment without a fault. This occurrence changed his way of thinking. When set free he remained in dilemma whether to raise arms against his former masters or live a quiet life. When his son Behram joined the Mughal service on the condition of expelling Khushal Khan from his ancestral area, the latter then decided to take up arms against the imperialists but

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Sultan-i-Rome, ‘Khushal Khan Khattak and Swat’, 120.

⁵¹ Bahadur Shah Zafar Kaka Khel, *Pukhtanah da Tarikh Pa Ranra Key*, 621.

⁵² Allah Bakhsh Yusufi, *Yusufzai Pathan* [Urdu], (Karachi: Muhammad Ali Educational Society, 1973), pp. 279-80.

⁵³ Ibid.

still he kept a liaison with them through friendly nobles. Although in the latter stage he made efforts to unite the Pakhtuns against them.

As far as the question of Khushal Khan's struggle against the Mughals is concerned one can assert that it was unclear to him what step should be taken in the given circumstances. It was a perplexing sort of situation for him. Although, he outwardly was opposing the Mughals but he had helped a few Mughal officers due to the fact that they were not only his close friends but his benefactors as well. However, he failed to realize that whether his friends or not, all the Mughal officers were imperial agents irrespective of their relations with Khushal Khan. This was an out of the context excuse of Khushal Khan. In fact, Khushal Khan had made clear to them that he would not be part of any activity conducted against the Pakhtuns and, especially the Yusufzais, who in his absence had taken care of his family. He, on a few occasions, turned down the Mughal offer of rank and command as well. The right moment for the full-fledged uprising came later in his life. It was a time when he was disillusioned by his family and tribesmen. In fact, he then made efforts to mobilize other tribes against the Mughals. But one thing is clear beyond doubt that, unlike his previous track record, after his release Khushal Khan never fought or wage any war or campaign against his fellow Pakhtun tribes.